



H.G. Wells
complete works

H(erbert) G(eorge) Wells (1866-1946)

BIOGRAPHY

English novelist, journalist, sociologist, and historian, whose science-fiction stories have been filmed many times. Wells's best known books are *THE TIME MACHINE* (1895), *THE INVISIBLE MAN* (1897), and *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS* (1898). Wells wrote over a hundred of books, about fifty of them novels.

"No one would have believed, in the last years of the nineteenth century, that human affairs were being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their affairs they were scrutinized and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinize the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water." (from *War of the Worlds*)

Along with George Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, which was an pessimistic answer to scientific optimism, Wells's novels are among the classical works of science-fiction, but his romantic and enthusiastic conception of technology later turned more doubtfull. His bitter side is seen early in the novel *BOON* (1915), which was a parody of Henry James.

H.G. Wells was born in Bromley, Kent. His father was a shopkeeper and a professional cricketer, and his mother served from time to time as a housekeeper at the nearby estate of Uppark. His father's business failed and to elevate the family to middle-class status, Wells was apprenticed like his brothers to a draper, spending the years between 1880 and 1883 in Windsor and Southsea. Later he recorded these years in *KIPPS* (1905). In the story Arthur Kipps is raised by his aunt and uncle. Kipps is also

apprenticed to a draper. After learning that he has been left a fortune, Kipps enters the upper-class society, which Wells describes with sharp social criticism.

In 1883 Wells became a teacher/pupil at Midhurst Grammar School. He obtained a scholarship to the Normal School of Science in London and studied there biology under T.H. Huxley. However, his interest faltered and in 1887 he left without a degree. He taught in private schools for four years, not taking his B.S. degree until 1890. Next year he settled in London, married his cousin Isabel and continued his career as a teacher in a correspondence college. From 1893 Wells became a full-time writer.

After some years Wells left Isabel for one of his brightest students, Amy Catherine, whom he married in 1895. As a novelist Wells made his debut with *The Time Machine*, a parody of English class division and a satirical warning that human progress is not inevitable. The Time Traveller lands in the year 802701 and finds two people: the Eloi, weak and little, who live above ground, and the Morlocks, carnivorous creatures that live below ground. Much of the realism of the story was achieved by carefully studied technical details.

The basic principles of the machine contained materials regarding time as the fourth dimension - years later Albert Einstein published his theory of the four dimensional continuum of space-time. The work was followed by such science-fiction classics as *THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU* (1896), in which a mad scientist transforms animals into human creatures, *The Invisible Man* (1897), a Faustian story of a scientist who has tampered with nature in pursuit of superhuman powers, and *The War of the Worlds* (1898), a novel of an invasion of Martians. The story appeared at a time when Percival Lowell's "observations" of "canals" on Mars arose speculations that there could be life on the Red Planet. In spite of the technological superiority of the Martians, their plan fails - they start to die off because they have no

immunity to the bacteria of Earth. *THE FIRST MEN ON THE MOON* (1901) was prophetic description of the methodology of space flight, and *THE WAR IN THE AIR* (1908) was a hybrid that places Kipps-like Cockney hero in the context of a catastrophic aerial war. Although Wells's novels were highly entertaining, he also tried to pave way for a wiser attitude about the future of the mankind.

Dissatisfied with his literary work, Wells moved into the novel genre, with *LOVE AND MR. LEWISHAM* (1900). He strengthened his reputation as a serious writer with *Kipps*, *TONO-BUNGAY* (1909), and *THE HISTORY OF MR. POLLY* (1909), an ode to vanished England. He also published critical pamphlets attacking the Victorian social order, among them *ANTICIPATIONS* (1901), *MANKIND IN THE MAKING* (1903), and *A MODERN UTOPIA* (1905).

Passionate concern for society led Wells to join in 1903 the socialist Fabian Society in London, but he soon quarreled with the society's leaders, among them George Bernard Shaw. This experience was basis for his novel *THE NEW MACHIAVELLI* (1911), where he drew portraits of the noted Fabians. At the outbreak of war in 1914, Wells was involved in a love affair with the young English author Rebecca West, which influenced his work and life deeply.

"Nothing could have been more obvious to the people of the early twentieth century than the rapidity with which war was becoming impossible. And as certainly they did not see it. They did not see it until the atomic bombs burst in their fumbling hands." (from *The World Set Free*, 1914)

After WW I Wells published several non-fiction works, among them *THE OUTLINE OF HISTORY* (1920), *THE SCIENCE OF LIFE* (1929-39), written in collaboration with Sir Julian Huxley and George Philip Wells, and *EXPERIMENT IN*

AUTOBIOGRAPHY (1934). At this time Wells had gained the status as a popular celebrity, and he continued to write prolifically. In 1917 he was a member of Reserch Committee for the League of Nations and published several books about the world organization. In the early 1920s he was a labour candidate for Parliament. Between the years 1924 and 1933 Wells livend mainly in France. From 1934 to 1946 he was the International president of PEN. In 1934 he had discussions with both Stalin and Roosevelt, trying to recruit them to his world-saving schemes. However, he despaired of the whole business when the global war broke the peace for the second time.

"The professional military mind is by necessity an inferior and unimaginative mind; no man of high intellectual quality would willingly imprison his gifts in such calling." (from *The Outline of History*, 1920)

In THE HOLY TERROR (1939) Wells studied the psychological development of a modern dictator based on the careers of Stalin, Mussolini, and Hitler. In 1938 Orson Welles' Mercury Theater radio broadcast, based on *The War of the Worlds*, caused a panic which spread across the United States. Wells lived through World War II in his house on Regent's Park, refusing to let the blitz drive him out of London. His last book, MIND AT THE END OF ITS TETHER (1945), expressed pessimism about mankind's future prospects. Wells died in London on August 13. 1946.

"Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe." (from *The Outline of History*, 1920)

For further reading: *The Invisible Man: The Life and Liberties of H.G. Wells* by Michael Coren (1993); *H.G. Wells* by Brian Murray (1990); *H.G. Wells under Revision*, ed. by Patrick Parrinder and Christopher Rolfe (1990); *H.G. Wells* by Brian Murray (1990); *H.G. Wells: A Comprehensive Bibliography*, published by

the H.G. Wells Society (1986); *The Time Traveller: Life of H.G. Wells* by N. and J. Mackenzie (1973); *H.G. Wells: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by P. Parrinder (1972); *H.G. Wells* by L. Dickson (1969); *The Early H.G. Wells* by Bernard Bergonzi (1961); *A Companion to Mr. Wells's "Outline of History,"* by Hilaire Belloc (1926); *The World of H.G. Wells* by Van Wyck Brooks (1915) - **See also:** Jules Verne, Edgar Rice Burroughs

Selected works:

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- HONOURS PHYSIOGRAPHY, 1893
- THE LORD OF THE DYNAMOS, 1894 - Voimakoneitten herra ja muita tapauksia
- THE STOLEN BACILLUS AND OTHER STORIES, 1895 - Varastettu basilli ja muita kertomuksia
- THE TIME MACHINE, 1895 - Aikakone - *film 1960, dir. by George Pal*
- THE WONDERFUL VISIT, 1895
- SELECT CONVERSATIONS WITH AN UNCLE, 1895
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- THE RED ROOM, 1896
- THE WHEELS OF CHANGE, 1896
- THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR MOREAU, 1896 - Kauhun saari - *film 1932, dir. by Erle C. Kenton; film 1977, dir. by Don Taylor; film 1996, dir. by John Frankenheimer*
- THE INVISIBLE MAN, 1897 - Näkymätön mies, suom. Tapio Hiisivaara - *film 1934, dir. by James Whale*

- THE VALLEY OF SPIDERS, 1897 - Hämähäkkilaakso ja muita kertomuksia
- THE PLATTNER STORY, 1897
- THIRTY STRANGE STORIES, 1897
- CERTAIN PERSONAL MATTERS, 1897
- THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, 1898 - Maailmojen sota - Orson Welles's radio dramatization of it in October 1938 caused widespread panic in the U.S. - *film 1953, dir. by Byron Haskin*; Roland Emmerich's film *Independence day* (1996) sticks closely to the plot of Well's story
- TALES OF SPACE AND TIME, 1899
- WHEN SLEEPER WAKES, 1899 - Kun nukkuja herää, suom. Jalmari Finne 1907
- A CURE FOR LOVE, 1899
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käy seurapiireissä - *film 1941, dir. by Carol Reed*
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- THE OPEN CONSPIRACY, 1928
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- THE SCIENCE OF LIFE, 1929-30 - Elämän ihmeet
- THE AUTOCRACY OF MR. PARHAM, 1930
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The Time Machine

**by
H. G. Wells
1898**

I

The Time Traveller (for so it will be convenient to speak of him) was expounding a recondite matter to us. His grey eyes shone and twinkled, and his usually pale face was flushed and animated. The fire burned brightly, and the soft radiance of the incandescent lights in the lilies of silver caught the bubbles that flashed and passed in our glasses. Our chairs, being his patents, embraced and caressed us rather than submitted to be sat upon, and there was that luxurious after-dinner atmosphere when thought roams gracefully free of the trammels of precision. And he put it to us in this way--marking the points with a lean forefinger--as we sat and lazily admired his earnestness over this new paradox (as we thought it:) and his fecundity.

`You must follow me carefully. I shall have to controvert one or two ideas that are almost universally accepted. The geometry, for instance, they taught you at school is founded on a misconception.'

`Is not that rather a large thing to expect us to begin upon?' said Filby, an argumentative person with red hair.

`I do not mean to ask you to accept anything without reasonable ground for it. You will soon admit as much as I need from you. You know of course that a mathematical line, a line of thickness NIL, has no real existence. They taught you that? Neither has a mathematical plane. These things are mere abstractions.'

`That is all right,' said the Psychologist.

`Nor, having only length, breadth, and thickness, can a cube

have a real existence.'

'There I object,' said Filby. 'Of course a solid body may exist. All real things--'

'So most people think. But wait a moment. Can an INSTANTANEOUS cube exist?'

'Don't follow you,' said Filby.

'Can a cube that does not last for any time at all, have a real existence?'

Filby became pensive. 'Clearly,' the Time Traveller proceeded, 'any real body must have extension in FOUR directions: it must have Length, Breadth, Thickness, and--Duration. But through a natural infirmity of the flesh, which I will explain to you in a moment, we incline to overlook this fact. There are really four dimensions, three which we call the three planes of Space, and a fourth, Time. There is, however, a tendency to draw an unreal distinction between the former three dimensions and the latter, because it happens that our consciousness moves intermittently in one direction along the latter from the beginning to the end of our lives.'

'That,' said a very young man, making spasmodic efforts to relight his cigar over the lamp; 'that . . . very clear indeed.'

'Now, it is very remarkable that this is so extensively overlooked,' continued the Time Traveller, with a slight accession of cheerfulness. 'Really this is what is meant by the Fourth Dimension, though some people who talk about the Fourth Dimension do not know they mean it. It is only another way of looking at Time. THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TIME AND ANY OF

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF SPACE EXCEPT THAT OUR CONSCIOUSNESS MOVES

ALONG IT. But some foolish people have got hold of the wrong side of that idea. You have all heard what they have to say about this Fourth Dimension?'

`_I_ have not,' said the Provincial Mayor.

`It is simply this. That Space, as our mathematicians have it, is spoken of as having three dimensions, which one may call Length, Breadth, and Thickness, and is always definable by reference to three planes, each at right angles to the others. But some philosophical people have been asking why THREE dimensions particularly--why not another direction at right angles to the other three?--and have even tried to construct a Four-Dimension geometry. Professor Simon Newcomb was expounding this to the New York Mathematical Society only a month or so ago. You know how on a flat surface, which has only two dimensions, we can represent a figure of a three-dimensional solid, and similarly they think that by models of thee dimensions they could represent one of four--if they could master the perspective of the thing. See?'

`I think so,' murmured the Provincial Mayor; and, knitting his brows, he lapsed into an introspective state, his lips moving as one who repeats mystic words. `Yes, I think I see it now,' he said after some time, brightening in a quite transitory manner.

`Well, I do not mind telling you I have been at work upon this geometry of Four Dimensions for some time. Some of my results are curious. For instance, here is a portrait of a man at eight years old, another at fifteen, another at seventeen, another at twenty-three, and so on. All these are evidently sections, as it were, Three-Dimensional representations of his Four-Dimensioned being, which is a fixed and unalterable thing.

`Scientific people,' proceeded the Time Traveller, after the pause required for the proper assimilation of this, `know very well that Time is only a kind of Space. Here is a popular scientific diagram, a weather record. This line I trace with my finger shows the movement of the barometer. Yesterday it was so high, yesterday night it fell, then this morning it rose again, and so gently upward to here. Surely the mercury did not trace this line in any of the dimensions of Space generally recognized? But certainly it traced such a line, and that line, therefore, we must conclude was along the Time-Dimension.'

`But,' said the Medical Man, staring hard at a coal in the fire, `if Time is really only a fourth dimension of Space, why is it, and why has it always been, regarded as something different? And why cannot we move in Time as we move about in the other dimensions of Space?'

The Time Traveller smiled. `Are you sure we can move freely in Space? Right and left we can go, backward and forward freely enough, and men always have done so. I admit we move freely in two dimensions. But how about up and down? Gravitation limits us there.'

`Not exactly,' said the Medical Man. `There are balloons.'

`But before the balloons, save for spasmodic jumping and the inequalities of the surface, man had no freedom of vertical movement.' `Still they could move a little up and down,' said the Medical Man.

`Easier, far easier down than up.'

`And you cannot move at all in Time, you cannot get away from the present moment.'

`My dear sir, that is just where you are wrong. That is just where the whole world has gone wrong. We are always getting away from the present movement. Our mental existences, which are immaterial and have no dimensions, are passing along the Time-Dimension with a uniform velocity from the cradle to the grave. Just as we should travel DOWN if we began our existence fifty miles above the earth's surface.'

`But the great difficulty is this,' interrupted the Psychologist. `You CAN move about in all directions of Space, but you cannot move about in Time.'

`That is the germ of my great discovery. But you are wrong to say that we cannot move about in Time. For instance, if I am recalling an incident very vividly I go back to the instant of its occurrence: I become absent-minded, as you say. I jump back for a moment. Of course we have no means of staying back for any length of Time, any more than a savage or an animal has of staying six feet above the ground. But a civilized man is better off than the savage in this respect. He can go up against gravitation in a balloon, and why should he not hope that ultimately he may be able to stop or accelerate his drift along the Time-Dimension, or even turn about and travel the other way?'

`Oh, THIS,' began Filby, `is all--'

`Why not?' said the Time Traveller.

`It's against reason,' said Filby.

`What reason?' said the Time Traveller.

`You can show black is white by argument,' said Filby, `but you will never convince me.'

`Possibly not,' said the Time Traveller. `But now you begin to see the object of my investigations into the geometry of Four Dimensions. Long ago I had a vague inkling of a machine--'

`To travel through Time!' exclaimed the Very Young Man.

`That shall travel indifferently in any direction of Space and Time, as the driver determines.'

Filby contented himself with laughter.

`But I have experimental verification,' said the Time Traveller.

`It would be remarkably convenient for the historian,' the Psychologist suggested. `One might travel back and verify the accepted account of the Battle of Hastings, for instance!'

`Don't you think you would attract attention?' said the Medical Man. `Our ancestors had no great tolerance for anachronisms.'

`One might get one's Greek from the very lips of Homer and Plato,' the Very Young Man thought.

`In which case they would certainly plough you for the Little-go. The German scholars have improved Greek so much.'

`Then there is the future,' said the Very Young Man. `Just think! One might invest all one's money, leave it to accumulate at interest, and hurry on ahead!'

`To discover a society,' said I, `erected on a strictly communistic basis.'

`Of all the wild extravagant theories!' began the Psychologist.

`Yes, so it seemed to me, and so I never talked of it until--'

`Experimental verification!' cried I. `You are going to verify THAT?'

`The experiment!' cried Filby, who was getting brain-weary.

`Let's see your experiment anyhow,' said the Psychologist, `though it's all humbug, you know.'

The Time Traveller smiled round at us. Then, still smiling faintly, and with his hands deep in his trousers pockets, he walked slowly out of the room, and we heard his slippers shuffling down the long passage to his laboratory.

The Psychologist looked at us. `I wonder what he's got?'

`Some sleight-of-hand trick or other,' said the Medical Man, and Filby tried to tell us about a conjurer he had seen at Burslem; but before he had finished his preface the Time Traveller came back, and Filby's anecdote collapsed.

The thing the Time Traveller held in his hand was a glittering metallic framework, scarcely larger than a small clock, and very delicately made. There was ivory in it, and some transparent crystalline substance. And now I must be explicit, for this that follows--unless his explanation is to be accepted--is an absolutely unaccountable thing. He took one of the small octagonal tables that were scattered about the room, and set it in front of the fire, with two legs on the hearthrug. On this table he placed the mechanism. Then he drew up a chair, and sat down. The only other object on the table was a small shaded lamp, the bright light of which fell upon the model. There were

also perhaps a dozen candles about, two in brass candlesticks upon the mantel and several in sconces, so that the room was brilliantly illuminated. I sat in a low arm-chair nearest the fire, and I drew this forward so as to be almost between the Time Traveller and the fireplace. Filby sat behind him, looking over his shoulder. The Medical Man and the Provincial Mayor watched him in profile from the right, the Psychologist from the left. The Very Young Man stood behind the Psychologist. We were all on the alert. It appears incredible to me that any kind of trick, however subtly conceived and however adroitly done, could have been played upon us under these conditions.

The Time Traveller looked at us, and then at the mechanism. `Well?' said the Psychologist.

`This little affair,' said the Time Traveller, resting his elbows upon the table and pressing his hands together above the apparatus, `is only a model. It is my plan for a machine to travel through time. You will notice that it looks singularly askew, and that there is an odd twinkling appearance about this bar, as though it was in some way unreal.' He pointed to the part with his finger. `Also, here is one little white lever, and here is another.'

The Medical Man got up out of his chair and peered into the thing. `It's beautifully made,' he said.

`It took two years to make,' retorted the Time Traveller. Then, when we had all imitated the action of the Medical Man, he said: `Now I want you clearly to understand that this lever, being pressed over, sends the machine gliding into the future, and this other reverses the motion. This saddle represents the seat of a time traveller. Presently I am going to press the lever, and off the machine will go. It will vanish, pass into future Time, and disappear. Have a good look at the thing. Look

at the table too, and satisfy yourselves there is no trickery. I don't want to waste this model, and then be told I'm a quack.'

There was a minute's pause perhaps. The Psychologist seemed about to speak to me, but changed his mind. Then the Time Traveller put forth his finger towards the lever. 'No,' he said suddenly. 'Lend me your hand.' And turning to the Psychologist, he took that individual's hand in his own and told him to put out his forefinger. So that it was the Psychologist himself who sent forth the model Time Machine on its interminable voyage. We all saw the lever turn. I am absolutely certain there was no trickery. There was a breath of wind, and the lamp flame jumped. One of the candles on the mantel was blown out, and the little machine suddenly swung round, became indistinct, was seen as a ghost for a second perhaps, as an eddy of faintly glittering brass and ivory; and it was gone--vanished! Save for the lamp the table was bare.

Everyone was silent for a minute. Then Filby said he was damned.

The Psychologist recovered from his stupor, and suddenly looked under the table. At that the Time Traveller laughed cheerfully. 'Well?' he said, with a reminiscence of the Psychologist. Then, getting up, he went to the tobacco jar on the mantel, and with his back to us began to fill his pipe.

We stared at each other. 'Look here,' said the Medical Man, 'are you in earnest about this? Do you seriously believe that that machine has travelled into time?'

'Certainly,' said the Time Traveller, stooping to light a spill at the fire. Then he turned, lighting his pipe, to look at the Psychologist's face. (The Psychologist, to show that he was not unhinged, helped himself to a cigar and tried to light it uncut.)

`What is more, I have a big machine nearly finished in there'--he indicated the laboratory--`and when that is put together I mean to have a journey on my own account.'

`You mean to say that that machine has travelled into the future?' said Filby.

`Into the future or the past--I don't, for certain, know which.'

After an interval the Psychologist had an inspiration. `It must have gone into the past if it has gone anywhere,' he said.

`Why?' said the Time Traveller.

`Because I presume that it has not moved in space, and if it travelled into the future it would still be here all this time, since it must have travelled through this time.'

`But,' I said, `If it travelled into the past it would have been visible when we came first into this room; and last Thursday when we were here; and the Thursday before that; and so forth!'

`Serious objections,' remarked the Provincial Mayor, with an air of impartiality, turning towards the Time Traveller.

`Not a bit,' said the Time Traveller, and, to the Psychologist: `You think. You can explain that. It's presentation below the threshold, you know, diluted presentation.'

`Of course,' said the Psychologist, and reassured us. `That's a simple point of psychology. I should have thought of it. It's plain enough, and helps the paradox delightfully. We cannot see it, nor can we appreciate this machine, any more than we can the spoke of a wheel spinning, or a bullet flying through the air.'

If it is travelling through time fifty times or a hundred times faster than we are, if it gets through a minute while we get through a second, the impression it creates will of course be only one-fiftieth or one-hundredth of what it would make if it were not travelling in time. That's plain enough.' He passed his hand through the space in which the machine had been. 'You see?' he said, laughing.

We sat and stared at the vacant table for a minute or so. Then the Time Traveller asked us what we thought of it all.

'It sounds plausible enough to-night,' said the Medical Man; 'but wait until to-morrow. Wait for the common sense of the morning.'

'Would you like to see the Time Machine itself?' asked the Time Traveller. And therewith, taking the lamp in his hand, he led the way down the long, draughty corridor to his laboratory. I remember vividly the flickering light, his queer, broad head in silhouette, the dance of the shadows, how we all followed him, puzzled but incredulous, and how there in the laboratory we beheld a larger edition of the little mechanism which we had seen vanish from before our eyes. Parts were of nickel, parts of ivory, parts had certainly been filed or sawn out of rock crystal. The thing was generally complete, but the twisted crystalline bars lay unfinished upon the bench beside some sheets of drawings, and I took one up for a better look at it. Quartz it seemed to be.

'Look here,' said the Medical Man, 'are you perfectly serious? Or is this a trick--like that ghost you showed us last Christmas?'

'Upon that machine,' said the Time Traveller, holding the lamp aloft, 'I intend to explore time. Is that plain? I was never

more serious in my life.'

None of us quite knew how to take it.

I caught Filby's eye over the shoulder of the Medical Man, and he winked at me solemnly.

II

I think that at that time none of us quite believed in the Time Machine. The fact is, the Time Traveller was one of those men who are too clever to be believed: you never felt that you saw all round him; you always suspected some subtle reserve, some ingenuity in ambush, behind his lucid frankness. Had Filby shown the model and explained the matter in the Time Traveller's words, we should have shown HIM far less scepticism. For we should have perceived his motives; a pork butcher could understand Filby. But the Time Traveller had more than a touch of whim among his elements, and we distrusted him. Things that would have made the frame of a less clever man seemed tricks in his hands. It is a mistake to do things too easily. The serious people who took him seriously never felt quite sure of his deportment; they were somehow aware that trusting their reputations for judgment with him was like furnishing a nursery with egg-shell china. So I don't think any of us said very much about time travelling in the interval between that Thursday and the next, though its odd potentialities ran, no doubt, in most of our minds: its plausibility, that is, its practical incredibleness, the curious possibilities of anachronism and of utter confusion it suggested. For my own part, I was particularly preoccupied with the trick of the model. That I remember discussing with the Medical Man, whom I met on Friday at the Linnaean. He said he had seen a similar thing at Tubingen, and laid considerable stress on the blowing out of the candle. But how the trick was done he could not explain.

The next Thursday I went again to Richmond--I suppose I was one of the Time Traveller's most constant guests--and, arriving late, found four or five men already assembled in his

drawing-room. The Medical Man was standing before the fire with a sheet of paper in one hand and his watch in the other. I looked round for the Time Traveller, and--'It's half-past seven now,' said the Medical Man. 'I suppose we'd better have dinner?'

'Where's----?' said I, naming our host.

'You've just come? It's rather odd. He's unavoidably detained. He asks me in this note to lead off with dinner at seven if he's not back. Says he'll explain when he comes.'

'It seems a pity to let the dinner spoil,' said the Editor of a well-known daily paper; and thereupon the Doctor rang the bell.

The Psychologist was the only person besides the Doctor and myself who had attended the previous dinner. The other men were Blank, the Editor aforementioned, a certain journalist, and another--a quiet, shy man with a beard--whom I didn't know, and who, as far as my observation went, never opened his mouth all the evening. There was some speculation at the dinner-table about the Time Traveller's absence, and I suggested time travelling, in a half-jocular spirit. The Editor wanted that explained to him, and the Psychologist volunteered a wooden account of the 'ingenious paradox and trick' we had witnessed that day week. He was in the midst of his exposition when the door from the corridor opened slowly and without noise. I was facing the door, and saw it first. 'Hallo!' I said. 'At last!' And the door opened wider, and the Time Traveller stood before us. I gave a cry of surprise. 'Good heavens! man, what's the matter?' cried the Medical Man, who saw him next. And the whole tableful turned towards the door.

He was in an amazing plight. His coat was dusty and dirty, and smeared with green down the sleeves; his hair disordered, and as it seemed to me greyer--either with dust and dirt or because

its colour had actually faded. His face was ghastly pale; his chin had a brown cut on it--a cut half healed; his expression was haggard and drawn, as by intense suffering. For a moment he hesitated in the doorway, as if he had been dazzled by the light. Then he came into the room. He walked with just such a limp as I have seen in footsore tramps. We stared at him in silence, expecting him to speak.

He said not a word, but came painfully to the table, and made a motion towards the wine. The Editor filled a glass of champagne, and pushed it towards him. He drained it, and it seemed to do him good: for he looked round the table, and the ghost of his old smile flickered across his face. 'What on earth have you been up to, man?' said the Doctor. The Time Traveller did not seem to hear. 'Don't let me disturb you,' he said, with a certain faltering articulation. 'I'm all right.' He stopped, held out his glass for more, and took it off at a draught. 'That's good,' he said. His eyes grew brighter, and a faint colour came into his cheeks. His glance flickered over our faces with a certain dull approval, and then went round the warm and comfortable room. Then he spoke again, still as it were feeling his way among his words. 'I'm going to wash and dress, and then I'll come down and explain things. . . Save me some of that mutton. I'm starving for a bit of meat.'

He looked across at the Editor, who was a rare visitor, and hoped he was all right. The Editor began a question. 'Tell you presently,' said the Time Traveller. 'I'm--funny! Be all right in a minute.'

He put down his glass, and walked towards the staircase door. Again I remarked his lameness and the soft padding sound of his footfall, and standing up in my place, I saw his feet as he went out. He had nothing on them but a pair of tattered blood-stained socks. Then the door closed upon him. I had half a mind to

follow, till I remembered how he detested any fuss about himself. For a minute, perhaps, my mind was wool-gathering. Then, 'Remarkable Behaviour of an Eminent Scientist,' I heard the Editor say, thinking (after his wont) in headlines. And this brought my attention back to the bright dinner-table.

`What's the game?' said the Journalist. `Has he been doing the Amateur Cadger? I don't follow.' I met the eye of the Psychologist, and read my own interpretation in his face. I thought of the Time Traveller limping painfully upstairs. I don't think any one else had noticed his lameness.

The first to recover completely from this surprise was the Medical Man, who rang the bell--the Time Traveller hated to have servants waiting at dinner--for a hot plate. At that the Editor turned to his knife and fork with a grunt, and the Silent Man followed suit. The dinner was resumed. Conversation was exclamatory for a little while, with gaps of wonderment; and then the Editor got fervent in his curiosity. `Does our friend eke out his modest income with a crossing? or has he his Nebuchadnezzar phases?' he inquired. `I feel assured it's this business of the Time Machine,' I said, and took up the Psychologist's account of our previous meeting. The new guests were frankly incredulous. The Editor raised objections. `What WAS this time travelling? A man couldn't cover himself with dust by rolling in a paradox, could he?' And then, as the idea came home to him, he resorted to caricature. Hadn't they any clothes-brushes in the Future? The Journalist too, would not believe at any price, and joined the Editor in the easy work of heaping ridicule on the whole thing. They were both the new kind of journalist--very joyous, irreverent young men. `Our Special Correspondent in the Day after To-morrow reports,' the Journalist was saying--or rather shouting--when the Time Traveller came back. He was dressed in ordinary evening clothes, and nothing save his haggard look remained of the change that had startled

me.

`I say,' said the Editor hilariously, `these chaps here say you have been travelling into the middle of next week! Tell us all about little Rosebery, will you? What will you take for the lot?'

The Time Traveller came to the place reserved for him without a word. He smiled quietly, in his old way. `Where's my mutton?' he said. `What a treat it is to stick a fork into meat again!'

`Story!' cried the Editor.

`Story be damned!' said the Time Traveller. `I want something to eat. I won't say a word until I get some peptone into my arteries. Thanks. And the salt.'

`One word,' said I. `Have you been time travelling?'

`Yes,' said the Time Traveller, with his mouth full, nodding his head.

`I'd give a shilling a line for a verbatim note,' said the Editor. The Time Traveller pushed his glass towards the Silent Man and rang it with his fingernail; at which the Silent Man, who had been staring at his face, started convulsively, and poured him wine. The rest of the dinner was uncomfortable. For my own part, sudden questions kept on rising to my lips, and I dare say it was the same with the others. The Journalist tried to relieve the tension by telling anecdotes of Hettie Potter. The Time Traveller devoted his attention to his dinner, and displayed the appetite of a tramp. The Medical Man smoked a cigarette, and watched the Time Traveller through his eyelashes. The Silent Man seemed even more clumsy than usual, and drank champagne with regularity and determination out of sheer nervousness. At last

the Time Traveller pushed his plate away, and looked round us. 'I suppose I must apologize,' he said. 'I was simply starving. I've had a most amazing time.' He reached out his hand for a cigar, and cut the end. 'But come into the smoking-room. It's too long a story to tell over greasy plates.' And ringing the bell in passing, he led the way into the adjoining room.

'You have told Blank, and Dash, and Chose about the machine?' he said to me, leaning back in his easy-chair and naming the three new guests.

'But the thing's a mere paradox,' said the Editor.

'I can't argue to-night. I don't mind telling you the story, but I can't argue. I will,' he went on, 'tell you the story of what has happened to me, if you like, but you must refrain from interruptions. I want to tell it. Badly. Most of it will sound like lying. So be it! It's true--every word of it, all the same. I was in my laboratory at four o'clock, and since then . . . I've lived eight days . . . such days as no human being ever lived before! I'm nearly worn out, but I shan't sleep till I've told this thing over to you. Then I shall go to bed. But no interruptions! Is it agreed?'

'Agreed,' said the Editor, and the rest of us echoed 'Agreed.' And with that the Time Traveller began his story as I have set it forth. He sat back in his chair at first, and spoke like a weary man. Afterwards he got more animated. In writing it down I feel with only too much keenness the inadequacy of pen and ink--and, above all, my own inadequacy--to express its quality. You read, I will suppose, attentively enough; but you cannot see the speaker's white, sincere face in the bright circle of the little lamp, nor hear the intonation of his voice. You cannot know how his expression followed the turns of his story! Most of us hearers were in shadow, for the candles in the smoking-room

had not been lighted, and only the face of the Journalist and the legs of the Silent Man from the knees downward were illuminated. At first we glanced now and again at each other. After a time we ceased to do that, and looked only at the Time Traveller's face.

III

`I told some of you last Thursday of the principles of the Time Machine, and showed you the actual thing itself, incomplete in the workshop. There it is now, a little travel-worn, truly; and one of the ivory bars is cracked, and a brass rail bent; but the rest of it's sound enough. I expected to finish it on Friday, but on Friday, when the putting together was nearly done, I found that one of the nickel bars was exactly one inch too short, and this I had to get remade; so that the thing was not complete until this morning. It was at ten o'clock to-day that the first of all Time Machines began its career. I gave it a last tap, tried all the screws again, put one more drop of oil on the quartz rod, and sat myself in the saddle. I suppose a suicide who holds a pistol to his skull feels much the same wonder at what will come next as I felt then. I took the starting lever in one hand and the stopping one in the other, pressed the first, and almost immediately the second. I seemed to reel; I felt a nightmare sensation of falling; and, looking round, I saw the laboratory exactly as before. Had anything happened? For a moment I suspected that my intellect had tricked me. Then I noted the clock. A moment before, as it seemed, it had stood at a minute or so past ten; now it was nearly half-past three!

`I drew a breath, set my teeth, gripped the starting lever with both hands, and went off with a thud. The laboratory got hazy and went dark. Mrs. Watchett came in and walked, apparently without seeing me, towards the garden door. I suppose it took her a minute or so to traverse the place, but to me she seemed to shoot across the room like a rocket. I pressed the lever over to

its extreme position. The night came like the turning out of a lamp, and in another moment came to-morrow. The laboratory grew faint and hazy, then fainter and ever fainter. To-morrow night came black, then day again, night again, day again, faster and faster still. An eddying murmur filled my ears, and a strange, dumb confusedness descended on my mind.

`I am afraid I cannot convey the peculiar sensations of time travelling. They are excessively unpleasant. There is a feeling exactly like that one has upon a switchback--of a helpless headlong motion! I felt the same horrible anticipation, too, of an imminent smash. As I put on pace, night followed day like the flapping of a black wing. The dim suggestion of the laboratory seemed presently to fall away from me, and I saw the sun hopping swiftly across the sky, leaping it every minute, and every minute marking a day. I supposed the laboratory had been destroyed and I had come into the open air. I had a dim impression of scaffolding, but I was already going too fast to be conscious of any moving things. The slowest snail that ever crawled dashed by too fast for me. The twinkling succession of darkness and light was excessively painful to the eye. Then, in the intermittent darkneses, I saw the moon spinning swiftly through her quarters from new to full, and had a faint glimpse of the circling stars. Presently, as I went on, still gaining velocity, the palpitation of night and day merged into one continuous greyness; the sky took on a wonderful deepness of blue, a splendid luminous color like that of early twilight; the jerking sun became a streak of fire, a brilliant arch, in space; the moon a fainter fluctuating band; and I could see nothing of the stars, save now and then a brighter circle flickering in the blue.

`The landscape was misty and vague. I was still on the hill-side upon which this house now stands, and the shoulder rose above me grey and dim. I saw trees growing and changing like puffs of vapour, now brown, now green; they grew, spread,

shivered, and passed away. I saw huge buildings rise up faint and fair, and pass like dreams. The whole surface of the earth seemed changed--melting and flowing under my eyes. The little hands upon the dials that registered my speed raced round faster and faster. Presently I noted that the sun belt swayed up and down, from solstice to solstice, in a minute or less, and that consequently my pace was over a year a minute; and minute by minute the white snow flashed across the world, and vanished, and was followed by the bright, brief green of spring.

^The unpleasant sensations of the start were less poignant now. They merged at last into a kind of hysterical exhilaration. I remarked indeed a clumsy swaying of the machine, for which I was unable to account. But my mind was too confused to attend to it, so with a kind of madness growing upon me, I flung myself into futurity. At first I scarce thought of stopping, scarce thought of anything but these new sensations. But presently a fresh series of impressions grew up in my mind--a certain curiosity and therewith a certain dread--until at last they took complete possession of me. What strange developments of humanity, what wonderful advances upon our rudimentary civilization, I thought, might not appear when I came to look nearly into the dim elusive world that raced and fluctuated before my eyes! I saw great and splendid architecture rising about me, more massive than any buildings of our own time, and yet, as it seemed, built of glimmer and mist. I saw a richer green flow up the hill-side, and remain there, without any wintry intermission. Even through the veil of my confusion the earth seemed very fair. And so my mind came round to the business of stopping,

^The peculiar risk lay in the possibility of my finding some substance in the space which I, or the machine, occupied. So long as I travelled at a high velocity through time, this scarcely mattered; I was, so to speak, attenuated--was slipping

like a vapour through the interstices of intervening substances! But to come to a stop involved the jamming of myself, molecule by molecule, into whatever lay in my way; meant bringing my atoms into such intimate contact with those of the obstacle that a profound chemical reaction--possibly a far-reaching explosion--would result, and blow myself and my apparatus out of all possible dimensions--into the Unknown. This possibility had occurred to me again and again while I was making the machine; but then I had cheerfully accepted it as an unavoidable risk--one of the risks a man has got to take! Now the risk was inevitable, I no longer saw it in the same cheerful light. The fact is that insensibly, the absolute strangeness of everything, the sickly jarring and swaying of the machine, above all, the feeling of prolonged falling, had absolutely upset my nerve. I told myself that I could never stop, and with a gust of petulance I resolved to stop forthwith. Like an impatient fool, I lugged over the lever, and incontinently the thing went reeling over, and I was flung headlong through the air.

`There was the sound of a clap of thunder in my ears. I may have been stunned for a moment. A pitiless hail was hissing round me, and I was sitting on soft turf in front of the overset machine. Everything still seemed grey, but presently I remarked that the confusion in my ears was gone. I looked round me. I was on what seemed to be a little lawn in a garden, surrounded by rhododendron bushes, and I noticed that their mauve and purple blossoms were dropping in a shower under the beating of the hail-stones. The rebounding, dancing hail hung in a cloud over the machine, and drove along the ground like smoke. In a moment I was wet to the skin. "Fine hospitality," said I, "to a man who has travelled innumerable years to see you."

`Presently I thought what a fool I was to get wet. I stood up and looked round me. A colossal figure, carved apparently in some white stone, loomed indistinctly beyond the rhododendrons

through the hazy downpour. But all else of the world was invisible.

My sensations would be hard to describe. As the columns of hail grew thinner, I saw the white figure more distinctly. It was very large, for a silver birch-tree touched its shoulder. It was of white marble, in shape something like a winged sphinx, but the wings, instead of being carried vertically at the sides, were spread so that it seemed to hover. The pedestal, it appeared to me, was of bronze, and was thick with verdigris. It chanced that the face was towards me; the sightless eyes seemed to watch me; there was the faint shadow of a smile on the lips. It was greatly weather-worn, and that imparted an unpleasant suggestion of disease. I stood looking at it for a little space--half a minute, perhaps, or half an hour. It seemed to advance and to recede as the hail drove before it denser or thinner. At last I tore my eyes from it for a moment and saw that the hail curtain had worn threadbare, and that the sky was lightening with the promise of the Sun.

I looked up again at the crouching white shape, and the full temerity of my voyage came suddenly upon me. What might appear when that hazy curtain was altogether withdrawn? What might not have happened to men? What if cruelty had grown into a common passion? What if in this interval the race had lost its manliness and had developed into something inhuman, unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful? I might seem some old-world savage animal, only the more dreadful and disgusting for our common likeness--a foul creature to be incontinently slain.

Already I saw other vast shapes--huge buildings with intricate parapets and tall columns, with a wooded hill-side dimly creeping in upon me through the lessening storm. I was seized with a panic fear. I turned frantically to the Time

Machine, and strove hard to readjust it. As I did so the shafts of the sun smote through the thunderstorm. The grey downpour was swept aside and vanished like the trailing garments of a ghost. Above me, in the intense blue of the summer sky, some faint brown shreds of cloud whirled into nothingness. The great buildings about me stood out clear and distinct, shining with the wet of the thunderstorm, and picked out in white by the unmelted hailstones piled along their courses. I felt naked in a strange world. I felt as perhaps a bird may feel in the clear air, knowing the hawk wings above and will swoop. My fear grew to frenzy. I took a breathing space, set my teeth, and again grappled fiercely, wrist and knee, with the machine. It gave under my desperate onset and turned over. It struck my chin violently. One hand on the saddle, the other on the lever, I stood panting heavily in attitude to mount again.

But with this recovery of a prompt retreat my courage recovered. I looked more curiously and less fearfully at this world of the remote future. In a circular opening, high up in the wall of the nearer house, I saw a group of figures clad in rich soft robes. They had seen me, and their faces were directed towards me.

Then I heard voices approaching me. Coming through the bushes by the White Sphinx were the heads and shoulders of men running. One of these emerged in a pathway leading straight to the little lawn upon which I stood with my machine. He was a slight creature--perhaps four feet high--clad in a purple tunic, girdled at the waist with a leather belt. Sandals or buskins--I could not clearly distinguish which--were on his feet; his legs were bare to the knees, and his head was bare. Noticing that, I noticed for the first time how warm the air was.

He struck me as being a very beautiful and graceful creature, but indescribably frail. His flushed face reminded me of the

more beautiful kind of consumptive--that hectic beauty of which we used to hear so much. At the sight of him I suddenly regained confidence. I took my hands from the machine.

IV

`In another moment we were standing face to face, I and this fragile thing out of futurity. He came straight up to me and laughed into my eyes. The absence from his bearing of any sign of fear struck me at once. Then he turned to the two others who were following him and spoke to them in a strange and very sweet and liquid tongue.

`There were others coming, and presently a little group of perhaps eight or ten of these exquisite creatures were about me. One of them addressed me. It came into my head, oddly enough, that my voice was too harsh and deep for them. So I shook my head, and, pointing to my ears, shook it again. He came a step forward, hesitated, and then touched my hand. Then I felt other soft little tentacles upon my back and shoulders. They wanted to make sure I was real. There was nothing in this at all alarming. Indeed, there was something in these pretty little people that inspired confidence--a graceful gentleness, a certain childlike ease. And besides, they looked so frail that I could fancy myself flinging the whole dozen of them about like nine-pins. But I made a sudden motion to warn them when I saw their little pink hands feeling at the Time Machine. Happily then, when it was not too late, I thought of a danger I had hitherto forgotten, and reaching over the bars of the machine I unscrewed the little levers that would set it in motion, and put these in my pocket. Then I turned again to see what I could do in the way of communication.

`And then, looking more nearly into their features, I saw some further peculiarities in their Dresden-china type of prettiness.

Their hair, which was uniformly curly, came to a sharp end at the neck and cheek; there was not the faintest suggestion of it on the face, and their ears were singularly minute. The mouths were small, with bright red, rather thin lips, and the little chins ran to a point. The eyes were large and mild; and--this may seem egotism on my part--I fancied even that there was a certain lack of the interest I might have expected in them.

`As they made no effort to communicate with me, but simply stood round me smiling and speaking in soft cooing notes to each other, I began the conversation. I pointed to the Time Machine and to myself. Then hesitating for a moment how to express time, I pointed to the sun. At once a quaintly pretty little figure in chequered purple and white followed my gesture, and then astonished me by imitating the sound of thunder.

`For a moment I was staggered, though the import of his gesture was plain enough. The question had come into my mind abruptly: were these creatures fools? You may hardly understand how it took me. You see I had always anticipated that the people of the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand odd would be incredibly in front of us in knowledge, art, everything. Then one of them suddenly asked me a question that showed him to be on the intellectual level of one of our five-year-old children--asked me, in fact, if I had come from the sun in a thunderstorm! It let loose the judgment I had suspended upon their clothes, their frail light limbs, and fragile features. A flow of disappointment rushed across my mind. For a moment I felt that I had built the Time Machine in vain.

`I nodded, pointed to the sun, and gave them such a vivid rendering of a thunderclap as startled them. They all withdrew a pace or so and bowed. Then came one laughing towards me, carrying a chain of beautiful flowers altogether new to me, and put it about my neck. The idea was received with melodious

applause; and presently they were all running to and fro for flowers, and laughingly flinging them upon me until I was almost smothered with blossom. You who have never seen the like can scarcely imagine what delicate and wonderful flowers countless years of culture had created. Then someone suggested that their plaything should be exhibited in the nearest building, and so I was led past the sphinx of white marble, which had seemed to watch me all the while with a smile at my astonishment, towards a vast grey edifice of fretted stone. As I went with them the memory of my confident anticipations of a profoundly grave and intellectual posterity came, with irresistible merriment, to my mind.

^The building had a huge entry, and was altogether of colossal dimensions. I was naturally most occupied with the growing crowd of little people, and with the big open portals that yawned before me shadowy and mysterious. My general impression of the world I saw over their heads was a tangled waste of beautiful bushes and flowers, a long neglected and yet weedless garden. I saw a number of tall spikes of strange white flowers, measuring a foot perhaps across the spread of the waxen petals. They grew scattered, as if wild, among the variegated shrubs, but, as I say, I did not examine them closely at this time. The Time Machine was left deserted on the turf among the rhododendrons.

^The arch of the doorway was richly carved, but naturally I did not observe the carving very narrowly, though I fancied I saw suggestions of old Phoenician decorations as I passed through, and it struck me that they were very badly broken and weather-worn. Several more brightly clad people met me in the doorway, and so we entered, I, dressed in dingy nineteenth-century garments, looking grotesque enough, garlanded with flowers, and surrounded by an eddying mass of bright, soft-colored robes and shining white limbs, in a melodious whirl of laughter and laughing speech.

`The big doorway opened into a proportionately great hall hung with brown. The roof was in shadow, and the windows, partially glazed with coloured glass and partially unglazed, admitted a tempered light. The floor was made up of huge blocks of some very hard white metal, not plates nor slabs--blocks, and it was so much worn, as I judged by the going to and fro of past generations, as to be deeply channelled along the more frequented ways. Transverse to the length were innumerable tables made of slabs of polished stone, raised perhaps a foot from the floor, and upon these were heaps of fruits. Some I recognized as a kind of hypertrophied raspberry and orange, but for the most part they were strange.

`Between the tables was scattered a great number of cushions. Upon these my conductors seated themselves, signing for me to do likewise. With a pretty absence of ceremony they began to eat the fruit with their hands, flinging peel and stalks, and so forth, into the round openings in the sides of the tables. I was not loath to follow their example, for I felt thirsty and hungry. As I did so I surveyed the hall at my leisure.

`And perhaps the thing that struck me most was its dilapidated look. The stained-glass windows, which displayed only a geometrical pattern, were broken in many places, and the curtains that hung across the lower end were thick with dust. And it caught my eye that the corner of the marble table near me was fractured. Nevertheless, the general effect was extremely rich and picturesque. There were, perhaps, a couple of hundred people dining in the hall, and most of them, seated as near to me as they could come, were watching me with interest, their little eyes shining over the fruit they were eating. All were clad in the same soft and yet strong, silky material.

`Fruit, by the by, was all their diet. These people of the

remote future were strict vegetarians, and while I was with them, in spite of some carnal cravings, I had to be frugivorous also. Indeed, I found afterwards that horses, cattle, sheep, dogs, had followed the Ichthyosaurus into extinction. But the fruits were very delightful; one, in particular, that seemed to be in season all the time I was there--a floury thing in a three-sided husk --was especially good, and I made it my staple. At first I was puzzled by all these strange fruits, and by the strange flowers I saw, but later I began to perceive their import.

`However, I am telling you of my fruit dinner in the distant future now. So soon as my appetite was a little checked, I determined to make a resolute attempt to learn the speech of these new men of mine. Clearly that was the next thing to do. The fruits seemed a convenient thing to begin upon, and holding one of these up I began a series of interrogative sounds and gestures. I had some considerable difficulty in conveying my meaning. At first my efforts met with a stare of surprise or inextinguishable laughter, but presently a fair-haired little creature seemed to grasp my intention and repeated a name. They had to chatter and explain the business at great length to each other, and my first attempts to make the exquisite little sounds of their language caused an immense amount of amusement. However, I felt like a schoolmaster amidst children, and persisted, and presently I had a score of noun substantives at least at my command; and then I got to demonstrative pronouns, and even the verb "to eat." But it was slow work, and the little people soon tired and wanted to get away from my interrogations, so I determined, rather of necessity, to let them give their lessons in little doses when they felt inclined. And very little doses I found they were before long, for I never met people more indolent or more easily fatigued.

`A queer thing I soon discovered about my little hosts, and that was their lack of interest. They would come to me with

eager cries of astonishment, like children, but like children they would soon stop examining me and wander away after some other toy. The dinner and my conversational beginnings ended, I noted for the first time that almost all those who had surrounded me at first were gone. It is odd, too, how speedily I came to disregard these little people. I went out through the portal into the sunlit world again as soon as my hunger was satisfied. I was continually meeting more of these men of the future, who would follow me a little distance, chatter and laugh about me, and, having smiled and gesticulated in a friendly way, leave me again to my own devices.

^The calm of evening was upon the world as I emerged from the great hall, and the scene was lit by the warm glow of the setting sun. At first things were very confusing. Everything was so entirely different from the world I had known--even the flowers. The big building I had left was situated on the slope of a broad river valley, but the Thames had shifted perhaps a mile from its present position. I resolved to mount to the summit of a crest perhaps a mile and a half away, from which I could get a wider view of this our planet in the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One A.D. For that, I should explain, was the date the little dials of my machine recorded.

^As I walked I was watching for every impression that could possibly help to explain the condition of ruinous splendour in which I found the world--for ruinous it was. A little way up the hill, for instance, was a great heap of granite, bound together by masses of aluminium, a vast labyrinth of precipitous walls and crumpled heaps, amidst which were thick heaps of very beautiful pagoda-like plants--nettles possibly--but wonderfully tinted with brown about the leaves, and incapable of stinging. It was evidently the derelict remains of some vast structure, to what end built I could not determine. It was here that I was

destined, at a later date, to have a very strange experience--the first intimation of a still stranger discovery--but of that I will speak in its proper place.

`Looking round with a sudden thought, from a terrace on which I rested for a while, I realized that there were no small houses to be seen. Apparently the single house, and possibly even the household, had vanished. Here and there among the greenery were palace-like buildings, but the house and the cottage, which form such characteristic features of our own English landscape, had disappeared.

`"Communism," said I to myself.

`And on the heels of that came another thought. I looked at the half-dozen little figures that were following me. Then, in a flash, I perceived that all had the same form of costume, the same soft hairless visage, and the same girlish rotundity of limb. It may seem strange, perhaps, that I had not noticed this before. But everything was so strange. Now, I saw the fact plainly enough. In costume, and in all the differences of texture and bearing that now mark off the sexes from each other, these people of the future were alike. And the children seemed to my eyes to be but the miniatures of their parents. I judged, then, that the children of that time were extremely precocious, physically at least, and I found afterwards abundant verification of my opinion.

`Seeing the ease and security in which these people were living, I felt that this close resemblance of the sexes was after all what one would expect; for the strength of a man and the softness of a woman, the institution of the family, and the differentiation of occupations are mere militant necessities of an age of physical force; where population is balanced and abundant, much childbearing becomes an evil rather than a

blessing to the State; where violence comes but rarely and off-spring are secure, there is less necessity--indeed there is no necessity--for an efficient family, and the specialization of the sexes with reference to their children's needs disappears. We see some beginnings of this even in our own time, and in this future age it was complete. This, I must remind you, was my speculation at the time. Later, I was to appreciate how far it fell short of the reality.

`While I was musing upon these things, my attention was attracted by a pretty little structure, like a well under a cupola. I thought in a transitory way of the oddness of wells still existing, and then resumed the thread of my speculations. There were no large buildings towards the top of the hill, and as my walking powers were evidently miraculous, I was presently left alone for the first time. With a strange sense of freedom and adventure I pushed on up to the crest.

`There I found a seat of some yellow metal that I did not recognize, corroded in places with a kind of pinkish rust and half smothered in soft moss, the arm-rests cast and filed into the resemblance of griffins' heads. I sat down on it, and I surveyed the broad view of our old world under the sunset of that long day. It was as sweet and fair a view as I have ever seen. The sun had already gone below the horizon and the west was flaming gold, touched with some horizontal bars of purple and crimson. Below was the valley of the Thames, in which the river lay like a band of burnished steel. I have already spoken of the great palaces dotted about among the variegated greenery, some in ruins and some still occupied. Here and there rose a white or silvery figure in the waste garden of the earth, here and there came the sharp vertical line of some cupola or obelisk. There were no hedges, no signs of proprietary rights, no evidences of agriculture; the whole earth had become a garden.

`So watching, I began to put my interpretation upon the things I had seen, and as it shaped itself to me that evening, my interpretation was something in this way. (Afterwards I found I had got only a half-truth--or only a glimpse of one facet of the truth.)

`It seemed to me that I had happened upon humanity upon the wane. The ruddy sunset set me thinking of the sunset of mankind. For the first time I began to realize an odd consequence of the social effort in which we are at present engaged. And yet, come to think, it is a logical consequence enough. Strength is the outcome of need; security sets a premium on feebleness. The work of ameliorating the conditions of life--the true civilizing process that makes life more and more secure--had gone steadily on to a climax. One triumph of a united humanity over Nature had followed another. Things that are now mere dreams had become projects deliberately put in hand and carried forward. And the harvest was what I saw!

`After all, the sanitation and the agriculture of to-day are still in the rudimentary stage. The science of our time has attacked but a little department of the field of human disease, but even so, it spreads its operations very steadily and persistently. Our agriculture and horticulture destroy a weed just here and there and cultivate perhaps a score or so of wholesome plants, leaving the greater number to fight out a balance as they can. We improve our favourite plants and animals --and how few they are--gradually by selective breeding; now a new and better peach, now a seedless grape, now a sweeter and larger flower, now a more convenient breed of cattle. We improve them gradually, because our ideals are vague and tentative, and our knowledge is very limited; because Nature, too, is shy and slow in our clumsy hands. Some day all this will be better organized, and still better. That is the drift of the current in spite of the eddies. The whole world will be intelligent,

educated, and co-operating; things will move faster and faster towards the subjugation of Nature. In the end, wisely and carefully we shall readjust the balance of animal and vegetable life to suit our human needs.

“This adjustment, I say, must have been done, and done well; done indeed for all Time, in the space of Time across which my machine had leaped. The air was free from gnats, the earth from weeds or fungi; everywhere were fruits and sweet and delightful flowers; brilliant butterflies flew hither and thither. The ideal of preventive medicine was attained. Diseases had been stamped out. I saw no evidence of any contagious diseases during all my stay. And I shall have to tell you later that even the processes of putrefaction and decay had been profoundly affected by these changes.

“Social triumphs, too, had been effected. I saw mankind housed in splendid shelters, gloriously clothed, and as yet I had found them engaged in no toil. There were no signs of struggle, neither social nor economical struggle. The shop, the advertisement, traffic, all that commerce which constitutes the body of our world, was gone. It was natural on that golden evening that I should jump at the idea of a social paradise. The difficulty of increasing population had been met, I guessed, and population had ceased to increase.

“But with this change in condition comes inevitably adaptations to the change. What, unless biological science is a mass of errors, is the cause of human intelligence and vigour? Hardship and freedom: conditions under which the active, strong, and subtle survive and the weaker go to the wall; conditions that put a premium upon the loyal alliance of capable men, upon self-restraint, patience, and decision. And the institution of the family, and the emotions that arise therein, the fierce jealousy, the tenderness for offspring, parental self-devotion,

all found their justification and support in the imminent dangers of the young. NOW, where are these imminent dangers? There is a sentiment arising, and it will grow, against connubial jealousy, against fierce maternity, against passion of all sorts; unnecessary things now, and things that make us uncomfortable, savage survivals, discords in a refined and pleasant life.

`I thought of the physical slightness of the people, their lack of intelligence, and those big abundant ruins, and it strengthened my belief in a perfect conquest of Nature. For after the battle comes Quiet. Humanity had been strong, energetic, and intelligent, and had used all its abundant vitality to alter the conditions under which it lived. And now came the reaction of the altered conditions.

`Under the new conditions of perfect comfort and security, that restless energy, that with us is strength, would become weakness. Even in our own time certain tendencies and desires, once necessary to survival, are a constant source of failure. Physical courage and the love of battle, for instance, are no great help--may even be hindrances--to a civilized man. And in a state of physical balance and security, power, intellectual as well as physical, would be out of place. For countless years I judged there had been no danger of war or solitary violence, no danger from wild beasts, no wasting disease to require strength of constitution, no need of toil. For such a life, what we should call the weak are as well equipped as the strong, are indeed no longer weak. Better equipped indeed they are, for the strong would be fretted by an energy for which there was no outlet. No doubt the exquisite beauty of the buildings I saw was the outcome of the last surgings of the now purposeless energy of mankind before it settled down into perfect harmony with the conditions under which it lived--the flourish of that triumph which began the last great peace. This has ever been the fate of energy in security; it takes to art and to eroticism, and then

come languor and decay.

`Even this artistic impetus would at last die away--had almost died in the Time I saw. To adorn themselves with flowers, to dance, to sing in the sunlight: so much was left of the artistic spirit, and no more. Even that would fade in the end into a contented inactivity. We are kept keen on the grindstone of pain and necessity, and, it seemed to me, that here was that hateful grindstone broken at last!

`As I stood there in the gathering dark I thought that in this simple explanation I had mastered the problem of the world--mastered the whole secret of these delicious people. Possibly the checks they had devised for the increase of population had succeeded too well, and their numbers had rather diminished than kept stationary. That would account for the abandoned ruins. Very simple was my explanation, and plausible enough--as most wrong theories are!

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`As I stood there musing over this too perfect triumph of man, the full moon, yellow and gibbous, came up out of an overflow of silver light in the north-east. The bright little figures ceased to move about below, a noiseless owl flitted by, and I shivered with the chill of the night. I determined to descend and find where I could sleep.

`I looked for the building I knew. Then my eye travelled along to the figure of the White Sphinx upon the pedestal of bronze, growing distinct as the light of the rising moon grew brighter. I could see the silver birch against it. There was the tangle of rhododendron bushes, black in the pale light, and there was the little lawn. I looked at the lawn again. A queer doubt chilled my complacency. "No," said I stoutly to myself, "that was not the lawn."

`But it WAS the lawn. For the white leprous face of the sphinx was towards it. Can you imagine what I felt as this conviction came home to me? But you cannot. The Time Machine was gone!

`At once, like a lash across the face, came the possibility of losing my own age, of being left helpless in this strange new world. The bare thought of it was an actual physical sensation. I could feel it grip me at the throat and stop my breathing. In another moment I was in a passion of fear and running with great leaping strides down the slope. Once I fell headlong and cut my face; I lost no time in stanching the blood, but jumped up and ran on, with a warm trickle down my cheek and chin. All the time

I ran I was saying to myself: "They have moved it a little, pushed it under the bushes out of the way." Nevertheless, I ran with all my might. All the time, with the certainty that sometimes comes with excessive dread, I knew that such assurance was folly, knew instinctively that the machine was removed out of my reach. My breath came with pain. I suppose I covered the whole distance from the hill crest to the little lawn, two miles perhaps, in ten minutes. And I am not a young man. I cursed aloud, as I ran, at my confident folly in leaving the machine, wasting good breath thereby. I cried aloud, and none answered. Not a creature seemed to be stirring in that moonlit world.

When I reached the lawn my worst fears were realized. Not a trace of the thing was to be seen. I felt faint and cold when I faced the empty space among the black tangle of bushes. I ran round it furiously, as if the thing might be hidden in a corner, and then stopped abruptly, with my hands clutching my hair. Above me towered the sphinx, upon the bronze pedestal, white, shining, leprous, in the light of the rising moon. It seemed to smile in mockery of my dismay.

I might have consoled myself by imagining the little people had put the mechanism in some shelter for me, had I not felt assured of their physical and intellectual inadequacy. That is what dismayed me: the sense of some hitherto unsuspected power, through whose intervention my invention had vanished. Yet, for one thing I felt assured: unless some other age had produced its exact duplicate, the machine could not have moved in time. The attachment of the levers--I will show you the method later--prevented any one from tampering with it in that way when they were removed. It had moved, and was hid, only in space. But then, where could it be?

I think I must have had a kind of frenzy. I remember running violently in and out among the moonlit bushes all round the

sphinx, and startling some white animal that, in the dim light, I took for a small deer. I remember, too, late that night, beating the bushes with my clenched fist until my knuckles were gashed and bleeding from the broken twigs. Then, sobbing and raving in my anguish of mind, I went down to the great building of stone. The big hall was dark, silent, and deserted. I slipped on the uneven floor, and fell over one of the malachite tables, almost breaking my shin. I lit a match and went on past the dusty curtains, of which I have told you.

There I found a second great hall covered with cushions, upon which, perhaps, a score or so of the little people were sleeping. I have no doubt they found my second appearance strange enough, coming suddenly out of the quiet darkness with inarticulate noises and the splutter and flare of a match. For they had forgotten about matches. "Where is my Time Machine?" I began, bawling like an angry child, laying hands upon them and shaking them up together. It must have been very queer to them. Some laughed, most of them looked sorely frightened. When I saw them standing round me, it came into my head that I was doing as foolish a thing as it was possible for me to do under the circumstances, in trying to revive the sensation of fear. For, reasoning from their daylight behaviour, I thought that fear must be forgotten.

Abruptly, I dashed down the match, and, knocking one of the people over in my course, went blundering across the big dining-hall again, out under the moonlight. I heard cries of terror and their little feet running and stumbling this way and that. I do not remember all I did as the moon crept up the sky. I suppose it was the unexpected nature of my loss that maddened me. I felt hopelessly cut off from my own kind--a strange animal in an unknown world. I must have raved to and fro, screaming and crying upon God and Fate. I have a memory of horrible fatigue, as the long night of despair wore away; of

looking in this impossible place and that; of groping among moon-lit ruins and touching strange creatures in the black shadows; at last, of lying on the ground near the sphinx and weeping with absolute wretchedness. I had nothing left but misery. Then I slept, and when I woke again it was full day, and a couple of sparrows were hopping round me on the turf within reach of my arm.

`I sat up in the freshness of the morning, trying to remember how I had got there, and why I had such a profound sense of desertion and despair. Then things came clear in my mind. With the plain, reasonable daylight, I could look my circumstances fairly in the face. I saw the wild folly of my frenzy overnight, and I could reason with myself. "Suppose the worst?" I said. "Suppose the machine altogether lost--perhaps destroyed? It behooves me to be calm and patient, to learn the way of the people, to get a clear idea of the method of my loss, and the means of getting materials and tools; so that in the end, perhaps, I may make another." That would be my only hope, perhaps, but better than despair. And, after all, it was a beautiful and curious world.

`But probably, the machine had only been taken away. Still, I must be calm and patient, find its hiding-place, and recover it by force or cunning. And with that I scrambled to my feet and looked about me, wondering where I could bathe. I felt weary, stiff, and travel-soiled. The freshness of the morning made me desire an equal freshness. I had exhausted my emotion. Indeed, as I went about my business, I found myself wondering at my intense excitement overnight. I made a careful examination of the ground about the little lawn. I wasted some time in futile questionings, conveyed, as well as I was able, to such of the little people as came by. They all failed to understand my gestures; some were simply stolid, some thought it was a jest and laughed at me. I had the hardest task in the world to keep my

hands off their pretty laughing faces. It was a foolish impulse, but the devil begotten of fear and blind anger was ill curbed and still eager to take advantage of my perplexity. The turf gave better counsel. I found a groove ripped in it, about midway between the pedestal of the sphinx and the marks of my feet where, on arrival, I had struggled with the overturned machine. There were other signs of removal about, with queer narrow footprints like those I could imagine made by a sloth. This directed my closer attention to the pedestal. It was, as I think I have said, of bronze. It was not a mere block, but highly decorated with deep framed panels on either side. I went and rapped at these. The pedestal was hollow. Examining the panels with care I found them discontinuous with the frames. There were no handles or keyholes, but possibly the panels, if they were doors, as I supposed, opened from within. One thing was clear enough to my mind. It took no very great mental effort to infer that my Time Machine was inside that pedestal. But how it got there was a different problem.

‘I saw the heads of two orange-clad people coming through the bushes and under some blossom-covered apple-trees towards me. I turned smiling to them and beckoned them to me. They came, and then, pointing to the bronze pedestal, I tried to intimate my wish to open it. But at my first gesture towards this they behaved very oddly. I don't know how to convey their expression to you. Suppose you were to use a grossly improper gesture to a delicate-minded woman--it is how she would look. They went off as if they had received the last possible insult. I tried a sweet-looking little chap in white next, with exactly the same result. Somehow, his manner made me feel ashamed of myself. But, as you know, I wanted the Time Machine, and I tried him once more. As he turned off, like the others, my temper got the better of me. In three strides I was after him, had him by the loose part of his robe round the neck, and began dragging him towards the sphinx. Then I saw the horror and repugnance of his

face, and all of a sudden I let him go.

`But I was not beaten yet. I banged with my fist at the bronze panels. I thought I heard something stir inside--to be explicit, I thought I heard a sound like a chuckle--but I must have been mistaken. Then I got a big pebble from the river, and came and hammered till I had flattened a coil in the decorations, and the verdigris came off in powdery flakes. The delicate little people must have heard me hammering in gusty outbreaks a mile away on either hand, but nothing came of it. I saw a crowd of them upon the slopes, looking furtively at me. At last, hot and tired, I sat down to watch the place. But I was too restless to watch long; I am too Occidental for a long vigil. I could work at a problem for years, but to wait inactive for twenty-four hours--that is another matter.

`I got up after a time, and began walking aimlessly through the bushes towards the hill again. "Patience," said I to myself. "If you want your machine again you must leave that sphinx alone. If they mean to take your machine away, it's little good your wrecking their bronze panels, and if they don't, you will get it back as soon as you can ask for it. To sit among all those unknown things before a puzzle like that is hopeless. That way lies monomania. Face this world. Learn its ways, watch it, be careful of too hasty guesses at its meaning. In the end you will find clues to it all." Then suddenly the humour of the situation came into my mind: the thought of the years I had spent in study and toil to get into the future age, and now my passion of anxiety to get out of it. I had made myself the most complicated and the most hopeless trap that ever a man devised. Although it was at my own expense, I could not help myself. I laughed aloud.

`Going through the big palace, it seemed to me that the little people avoided me. It may have been my fancy, or it may have had

something to do with my hammering at the gates of bronze. Yet I felt tolerably sure of the avoidance. I was careful, however, to show no concern and to abstain from any pursuit of them, and in the course of a day or two things got back to the old footing. I made what progress I could in the language, and in addition I pushed my explorations here and there. Either I missed some subtle point or their language was excessively simple--almost exclusively composed of concrete substantives and verbs. There seemed to be few, if any, abstract terms, or little use of figurative language. Their sentences were usually simple and of two words, and I failed to convey or understand any but the simplest propositions. I determined to put the thought of my Time Machine and the mystery of the bronze doors under the sphinx as much as possible in a corner of memory, until my growing knowledge would lead me back to them in a natural way. Yet a certain feeling, you may understand, tethered me in a circle of a few miles round the point of my arrival.

So far as I could see, all the world displayed the same exuberant richness as the Thames valley. From every hill I climbed I saw the same abundance of splendid buildings, endlessly varied in material and style, the same clustering thickets of evergreens, the same blossom-laden trees and tree-ferns. Here and there water shone like silver, and beyond, the land rose into blue undulating hills, and so faded into the serenity of the sky. A peculiar feature, which presently attracted my attention, was the presence of certain circular wells, several, as it seemed to me, of a very great depth. One lay by the path up the hill, which I had followed during my first walk. Like the others, it was rimmed with bronze, curiously wrought, and protected by a little cupola from the rain. Sitting by the side of these wells, and peering down into the shafted darkness, I could see no gleam of water, nor could I start any reflection with a lighted match. But in all of them I heard a certain sound: a thud-thud-thud, like the beating of some big engine; and I discovered, from the

flaring of my matches, that a steady current of air set down the shafts. Further, I threw a scrap of paper into the throat of one, and, instead of fluttering slowly down, it was at once sucked swiftly out of sight.

`After a time, too, I came to connect these wells with tall towers standing here and there upon the slopes; for above them there was often just such a flicker in the air as one sees on a hot day above a sun-scorched beach. Putting things together, I reached a strong suggestion of an extensive system of subterranean ventilation, whose true import it was difficult to imagine. I was at first inclined to associate it with the sanitary apparatus of these people. It was an obvious conclusion, but it was absolutely wrong.

`And here I must admit that I learned very little of drains and bells and modes of conveyance, and the like conveniences, during my time in this real future. In some of these visions of Utopias and coming times which I have read, there is a vast amount of detail about building, and social arrangements, and so forth. But while such details are easy enough to obtain when the whole world is contained in one's imagination, they are altogether inaccessible to a real traveller amid such realities as I found here. Conceive the tale of London which a negro, fresh from Central Africa, would take back to his tribe! What would he know of railway companies, of social movements, of telephone and telegraph wires, of the Parcels Delivery Company, and postal orders and the like? Yet we, at least, should be willing enough to explain these things to him! And even of what he knew, how much could he make his untravelled friend either apprehend or believe? Then, think how narrow the gap between a negro and a white man of our own times, and how wide the interval between myself and these of the Golden Age! I was sensible of much which was unseen, and which contributed to my comfort; but save for a general impression of automatic organization, I fear I

can convey very little of the difference to your mind.

`In the matter of sepulchre, for instance, I could see no signs of crematoria nor anything suggestive of tombs. But it occurred to me that, possibly, there might be cemeteries (or crematoria) somewhere beyond the range of my explorings. This, again, was a question I deliberately put to myself, and my curiosity was at first entirely defeated upon the point. The thing puzzled me, and I was led to make a further remark, which puzzled me still more: that aged and infirm among this people there were none.

`I must confess that my satisfaction with my first theories of an automatic civilization and a decadent humanity did not long endure. Yet I could think of no other. Let me put my difficulties. The several big palaces I had explored were mere living places, great dining-halls and sleeping apartments. I could find no machinery, no appliances of any kind. Yet these people were clothed in pleasant fabrics that must at times need renewal, and their sandals, though undecorated, were fairly complex specimens of metalwork. Somehow such things must be made. And the little people displayed no vestige of a creative tendency. There were no shops, no workshops, no sign of importations among them. They spent all their time in playing gently, in bathing in the river, in making love in a half-playful fashion, in eating fruit and sleeping. I could not see how things were kept going.

`Then, again, about the Time Machine: something, I knew not what, had taken it into the hollow pedestal of the White Sphinx. Why? For the life of me I could not imagine. Those waterless wells, too, those flickering pillars. I felt I lacked a clue. I felt--how shall I put it? Suppose you found an inscription, with sentences here and there in excellent plain English, and interpolated therewith, others made up of words, of letters even,

absolutely unknown to you? Well, on the third day of my visit, that was how the world of Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One presented itself to me!

`That day, too, I made a friend--of a sort. It happened that, as I was watching some of the little people bathing in a shallow, one of them was seized with cramp and began drifting downstream. The main current ran rather swiftly, but not too strongly for even a moderate swimmer. It will give you an idea, therefore, of the strange deficiency in these creatures, when I tell you that none made the slightest attempt to rescue the weakly crying little thing which was drowning before their eyes. When I realized this, I hurriedly slipped off my clothes, and, wading in at a point lower down, I caught the poor mite and drew her safe to land. A little rubbing of the limbs soon brought her round, and I had the satisfaction of seeing she was all right before I left her. I had got to such a low estimate of her kind that I did not expect any gratitude from her. In that, however, I was wrong.

`This happened in the morning. In the afternoon I met my little woman, as I believe it was, as I was returning towards my centre from an exploration, and she received me with cries of delight and presented me with a big garland of flowers--evidently made for me and me alone. The thing took my imagination. Very possibly I had been feeling desolate. At any rate I did my best to display my appreciation of the gift. We were soon seated together in a little stone arbour, engaged in conversation, chiefly of smiles. The creature's friendliness affected me exactly as a child's might have done. We passed each other flowers, and she kissed my hands. I did the same to hers. Then I tried talk, and found that her name was Weena, which, though I don't know what it meant, somehow seemed appropriate enough. That was the beginning of a queer friendship which lasted a week, and ended--as I will tell you!

She was exactly like a child. She wanted to be with me always. She tried to follow me everywhere, and on my next journey out and about it went to my heart to tire her down, and leave her at last, exhausted and calling after me rather plaintively. But the problems of the world had to be mastered. I had not, I said to myself, come into the future to carry on a miniature flirtation. Yet her distress when I left her was very great, her expostulations at the parting were sometimes frantic, and I think, altogether, I had as much trouble as comfort from her devotion. Nevertheless she was, somehow, a very great comfort. I thought it was mere childish affection that made her cling to me. Until it was too late, I did not clearly know what I had inflicted upon her when I left her. Nor until it was too late did I clearly understand what she was to me. For, by merely seeming fond of me, and showing in her weak, futile way that she cared for me, the little doll of a creature presently gave my return to the neighbourhood of the White Sphinx almost the feeling of coming home; and I would watch for her tiny figure of white and gold so soon as I came over the hill.

It was from her, too, that I learned that fear had not yet left the world. She was fearless enough in the daylight, and she had the oddest confidence in me; for once, in a foolish moment, I made threatening grimaces at her, and she simply laughed at them. But she dreaded the dark, dreaded shadows, dreaded black things. Darkness to her was the one thing dreadful. It was a singularly passionate emotion, and it set me thinking and observing. I discovered then, among other things, that these little people gathered into the great houses after dark, and slept in droves. To enter upon them without a light was to put them into a tumult of apprehension. I never found one out of doors, or one sleeping alone within doors, after dark. Yet I was still such a blockhead that I missed the lesson of that fear, and in spite of Weena's distress I insisted upon sleeping away from these slumbering

multitudes.

`It troubled her greatly, but in the end her odd affection for me triumphed, and for five of the nights of our acquaintance, including the last night of all, she slept with her head pillowed on my arm. But my story slips away from me as I speak of her. It must have been the night before her rescue that I was awakened about dawn. I had been restless, dreaming most disagreeably that I was drowned, and that sea anemones were feeling over my face with their soft palps. I woke with a start, and with an odd fancy that some greyish animal had just rushed out of the chamber. I tried to get to sleep again, but I felt restless and uncomfortable. It was that dim grey hour when things are just creeping out of darkness, when everything is colourless and clear cut, and yet unreal. I got up, and went down into the great hall, and so out upon the flagstones in front of the palace. I thought I would make a virtue of necessity, and see the sunrise.

`The moon was setting, and the dying moonlight and the first pallor of dawn were mingled in a ghastly half-light. The bushes were inky black, the ground a sombre grey, the sky colourless and cheerless. And up the hill I thought I could see ghosts. There several times, as I scanned the slope, I saw white figures. Twice I fancied I saw a solitary white, ape-like creature running rather quickly up the hill, and once near the ruins I saw a leash of them carrying some dark body. They moved hastily. I did not see what became of them. It seemed that they vanished among the bushes. The dawn was still indistinct, you must understand. I was feeling that chill, uncertain, early-morning feeling you may have known. I doubted my eyes.

`As the eastern sky grew brighter, and the light of the day came on and its vivid colouring returned upon the world once more, I scanned the view keenly. But I saw no vestige of my white figures. They were mere creatures of the half light.

"They must have been ghosts," I said; "I wonder whence they dated." For a queer notion of Grant Allen's came into my head, and amused me. If each generation die and leave ghosts, he argued, the world at last will get overcrowded with them. On that theory they would have grown innumerable some Eight Hundred Thousand Years hence, and it was no great wonder to see four at once. But the jest was unsatisfying, and I was thinking of these figures all the morning, until Weena's rescue drove them out of my head. I associated them in some indefinite way with the white animal I had startled in my first passionate search for the Time Machine. But Weena was a pleasant substitute. Yet all the same, they were soon destined to take far deadlier possession of my mind.

`I think I have said how much hotter than our own was the weather of this Golden Age. I cannot account for it. It may be that the sun was hotter, or the earth nearer the sun. It is usual to assume that the sun will go on cooling steadily in the future. But people, unfamiliar with such speculations as those of the younger Darwin, forget that the planets must ultimately fall back one by one into the parent body. As these catastrophes occur, the sun will blaze with renewed energy; and it may be that some inner planet had suffered this fate. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that the sun was very much hotter than we know it.

`Well, one very hot morning--my fourth, I think--as I was seeking shelter from the heat and glare in a colossal ruin near the great house where I slept and fed, there happened this strange thing: Clambering among these heaps of masonry, I found a narrow gallery, whose end and side windows were blocked by fallen masses of stone. By contrast with the brilliancy outside, it seemed at first impenetrably dark to me. I entered it groping, for the change from light to blackness made spots of colour swim before me. Suddenly I halted spellbound. A pair of eyes,

luminous by reflection against the daylight without, was watching me out of the darkness.

“The old instinctive dread of wild beasts came upon me. I clenched my hands and steadfastly looked into the glaring eyeballs. I was afraid to turn. Then the thought of the absolute security in which humanity appeared to be living came to my mind. And then I remembered that strange terror of the dark. Overcoming my fear to some extent, I advanced a step and spoke. I will admit that my voice was harsh and ill-controlled. I put out my hand and touched something soft. At once the eyes darted sideways, and something white ran past me. I turned with my heart in my mouth, and saw a queer little ape-like figure, its head held down in a peculiar manner, running across the sunlit space behind me. It blundered against a block of granite, staggered aside, and in a moment was hidden in a black shadow beneath another pile of ruined masonry.

“My impression of it is, of course, imperfect; but I know it was a dull white, and had strange large greyish-red eyes; also that there was flaxen hair on its head and down its back. But, as I say, it went too fast for me to see distinctly. I cannot even say whether it ran on all-fours, or only with its forearms held very low. After an instant's pause I followed it into the second heap of ruins. I could not find it at first; but, after a time in the profound obscurity, I came upon one of those round well-like openings of which I have told you, half closed by a fallen pillar. A sudden thought came to me. Could this Thing have vanished down the shaft? I lit a match, and, looking down, I saw a small, white, moving creature, with large bright eyes which regarded me steadfastly as it retreated. It made me shudder. It was so like a human spider! It was clambering down the wall, and now I saw for the first time a number of metal foot and hand rests forming a kind of ladder down the shaft. Then the light burned my fingers and fell out of my hand, going out as it

dropped, and when I had lit another the little monster had disappeared.

`I do not know how long I sat peering down that well. It was not for some time that I could succeed in persuading myself that the thing I had seen was human. But, gradually, the truth dawned on me: that Man had not remained one species, but had differentiated into two distinct animals: that my graceful children of the Upper-world were not the sole descendants of our generation, but that this bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing, which had flashed before me, was also heir to all the ages.

`I thought of the flickering pillars and of my theory of an underground ventilation. I began to suspect their true import. And what, I wondered, was this Lemur doing in my scheme of a perfectly balanced organization? How was it related to the indolent serenity of the beautiful Upper-worlders? And what was hidden down there, at the foot of that shaft? I sat upon the edge of the well telling myself that, at any rate, there was nothing to fear, and that there I must descend for the solution of my difficulties. And withal I was absolutely afraid to go! As I hesitated, two of the beautiful Upper-world people came running in their amorous sport across the daylight in the shadow. The male pursued the female, flinging flowers at her as he ran.

`They seemed distressed to find me, my arm against the overturned pillar, peering down the well. Apparently it was considered bad form to remark these apertures; for when I pointed to this one, and tried to frame a question about it in their tongue, they were still more visibly distressed and turned away. But they were interested by my matches, and I struck some to amuse them. I tried them again about the well, and again I failed. So presently I left them, meaning to go back to Weena, and see what I could get from her. But my mind was already in revolution; my guesses and impressions were slipping and sliding

to a new adjustment. I had now a clue to the import of these wells, to the ventilating towers, to the mystery of the ghosts; to say nothing of a hint at the meaning of the bronze gates and the fate of the Time Machine! And very vaguely there came a suggestion towards the solution of the economic problem that had puzzled me.

`Here was the new view. Plainly, this second species of Man was subterranean. There were three circumstances in particular which made me think that its rare emergence above ground was the outcome of a long-continued underground habit. In the first place, there was the bleached look common in most animals that live largely in the dark--the white fish of the Kentucky caves, for instance. Then, those large eyes, with that capacity for reflecting light, are common features of nocturnal things--witness the owl and the cat. And last of all, that evident confusion in the sunshine, that hasty yet fumbling awkward flight towards dark shadow, and that peculiar carriage of the head while in the light--all reinforced the theory of an extreme sensitiveness of the retina.

`Beneath my feet, then, the earth must be tunnelled enormously, and these tunnellings were the habitat of the new race. The presence of ventilating shafts and wells along the hill slopes--everywhere, in fact except along the river valley --showed how universal were its ramifications. What so natural, then, as to assume that it was in this artificial Underworld that such work as was necessary to the comfort of the daylight race was done? The notion was so plausible that I at once accepted it, and went on to assume the how of this splitting of the human species. I dare say you will anticipate the shape of my theory; though, for myself, I very soon felt that it fell far short of the truth.

`At first, proceeding from the problems of our own age, it

seemed clear as daylight to me that the gradual widening of the present merely temporary and social difference between the Capitalist and the Labourer, was the key to the whole position. No doubt it will seem grotesque enough to you--and wildly incredible!--and yet even now there are existing circumstances to point that way. There is a tendency to utilize underground space for the less ornamental purposes of civilization; there is the Metropolitan Railway in London, for instance, there are new electric railways, there are subways, there are underground workrooms and restaurants, and they increase and multiply. Evidently, I thought, this tendency had increased till Industry had gradually lost its birthright in the sky. I mean that it had gone deeper and deeper into larger and ever larger underground factories, spending a still-increasing amount of its time therein, till, in the end--! Even now, does not an East-end worker live in such artificial conditions as practically to be cut off from the natural surface of the earth?

`Again, the exclusive tendency of richer people--due, no doubt, to the increasing refinement of their education, and the widening gulf between them and the rude violence of the poor--is already leading to the closing, in their interest, of considerable portions of the surface of the land. About London, for instance, perhaps half the prettier country is shut in against intrusion. And this same widening gulf--which is due to the length and expense of the higher educational process and the increased facilities for and temptations towards refined habits on the part of the rich--will make that exchange between class and class, that promotion by intermarriage which at present retards the splitting of our species along lines of social stratification, less and less frequent. So, in the end, above ground you must have the Haves, pursuing pleasure and comfort and beauty, and below ground the Have-nots, the Workers getting continually adapted to the conditions of their labour. Once they were there, they would no doubt have to pay rent, and not a

little of it, for the ventilation of their caverns; and if they refused, they would starve or be suffocated for arrears. Such of them as were so constituted as to be miserable and rebellious would die; and, in the end, the balance being permanent, the survivors would become as well adapted to the conditions of underground life, and as happy in their way, as the Upper-world people were to theirs. As it seemed to me, the refined beauty and the etiolated pallor followed naturally enough.

“The great triumph of Humanity I had dreamed of took a different shape in my mind. It had been no such triumph of moral education and general co-operation as I had imagined. Instead, I saw a real aristocracy, armed with a perfected science and working to a logical conclusion the industrial system of to-day. Its triumph had not been simply a triumph over Nature, but a triumph over Nature and the fellow-man. This, I must warn you, was my theory at the time. I had no convenient cicerone in the pattern of the Utopian books. My explanation may be absolutely wrong. I still think it is the most plausible one. But even on this supposition the balanced civilization that was at last attained must have long since passed its zenith, and was now far fallen into decay. The too-perfect security of the Upper-worlders had led them to a slow movement of degeneration, to a general dwindling in size, strength, and intelligence. That I could see clearly enough already. What had happened to the Under-grounders I did not yet suspect; but from what I had seen of the Morlocks--that, by the by, was the name by which these creatures were called--I could imagine that the modification of the human type was even far more profound than among the "Eloi," the beautiful race that I already knew.

“Then came troublesome doubts. Why had the Morlocks taken my Time Machine? For I felt sure it was they who had taken it. Why, too, if the Eloi were masters, could they not restore the machine to me? And why were they so terribly afraid of the dark?

I proceeded, as I have said, to question Weena about this Under-world, but here again I was disappointed. At first she would not understand my questions, and presently she refused to answer them. She shivered as though the topic was unendurable. And when I pressed her, perhaps a little harshly, she burst into tears. They were the only tears, except my own, I ever saw in that Golden Age. When I saw them I ceased abruptly to trouble about the Morlocks, and was only concerned in banishing these signs of the human inheritance from Weena's eyes. And very soon she was smiling and clapping her hands, while I solemnly burned a match.

VI

`It may seem odd to you, but it was two days before I could follow up the new-found clue in what was manifestly the proper way. I felt a peculiar shrinking from those pallid bodies. They were just the half-bleached colour of the worms and things one sees preserved in spirit in a zoological museum. And they were filthily cold to the touch. Probably my shrinking was largely due to the sympathetic influence of the Eloi, whose disgust of the Morlocks I now began to appreciate.

`The next night I did not sleep well. Probably my health was a little disordered. I was oppressed with perplexity and doubt. Once or twice I had a feeling of intense fear for which I could perceive no definite reason. I remember creeping noiselessly into the great hall where the little people were sleeping in the moonlight--that night Weena was among them--and feeling reassured by their presence. It occurred to me even then, that in the course of a few days the moon must pass through its last quarter, and the nights grow dark, when the appearances of these unpleasant creatures from below, these whitened Lemurs, this new vermin that had replaced the old, might be more abundant. And on both these days I had the restless feeling of one who shirks an inevitable duty. I felt assured that the Time Machine was only to be recovered by boldly penetrating these underground mysteries. Yet I could not face the mystery. If only I had had a companion it would have been different. But I was so horribly alone, and even to clamber down into the darkness of the well appalled me. I don't know if you will understand my feeling, but I never felt quite safe at my back.

`It was this restlessness, this insecurity, perhaps, that

drove me further and further afield in my exploring expeditions. Going to the south-westward towards the rising country that is now called Combe Wood, I observed far off, in the direction of nineteenth-century Banstead, a vast green structure, different in character from any I had hitherto seen. It was larger than the largest of the palaces or ruins I knew, and the facade had an Oriental look: the face of it having the lustre, as well as the pale-green tint, a kind of bluish-green, of a certain type of Chinese porcelain. This difference in aspect suggested a difference in use, and I was minded to push on and explore. But the day was growing late, and I had come upon the sight of the place after a long and tiring circuit; so I resolved to hold over the adventure for the following day, and I returned to the welcome and the caresses of little Weena. But next morning I perceived clearly enough that my curiosity regarding the Palace of Green Porcelain was a piece of self-deception, to enable me to shirk, by another day, an experience I dreaded. I resolved I would make the descent without further waste of time, and started out in the early morning towards a well near the ruins of granite and aluminium.

Little Weena ran with me. She danced beside me to the well, but when she saw me lean over the mouth and look downward, she seemed strangely disconcerted. "Good-bye, Little Weena," I said, kissing her; and then putting her down, I began to feel over the parapet for the climbing hooks. Rather hastily, I may as well confess, for I feared my courage might leak away! At first she watched me in amazement. Then she gave a most piteous cry, and running to me, she began to pull at me with her little hands. I think her opposition nerved me rather to proceed. I shook her off, perhaps a little roughly, and in another moment I was in the throat of the well. I saw her agonized face over the parapet, and smiled to reassure her. Then I had to look down at the unstable hooks to which I clung.

`I had to clamber down a shaft of perhaps two hundred yards. The descent was effected by means of metallic bars projecting from the sides of the well, and these being adapted to the needs of a creature much smaller and lighter than myself, I was speedily cramped and fatigued by the descent. And not simply fatigued! One of the bars bent suddenly under my weight, and almost swung me off into the blackness beneath. For a moment I hung by one hand, and after that experience I did not dare to rest again. Though my arms and back were presently acutely painful, I went on clambering down the sheer descent with as quick a motion as possible. Glancing upward, I saw the aperture, a small blue disk, in which a star was visible, while little Weena's head showed as a round black projection. The thudding sound of a machine below grew louder and more oppressive. Everything save that little disk above was profoundly dark, and when I looked up again Weena had disappeared.

`I was in an agony of discomfort. I had some thought of trying to go up the shaft again, and leave the Under-world alone. But even while I turned this over in my mind I continued to descend. At last, with intense relief, I saw dimly coming up, a foot to the right of me, a slender loophole in the wall. Swinging myself in, I found it was the aperture of a narrow horizontal tunnel in which I could lie down and rest. It was not too soon. My arms ached, my back was cramped, and I was trembling with the prolonged terror of a fall. Besides this, the unbroken darkness had had a distressing effect upon my eyes. The air was full of the throb and hum of machinery pumping air down the shaft.

`I do not know how long I lay. I was roused by a soft hand touching my face. Starting up in the darkness I snatched at my matches and, hastily striking one, I saw three stooping white creatures similar to the one I had seen above ground in the ruin, hastily retreating before the light. Living, as they did, in

what appeared to me impenetrable darkness, their eyes were abnormally large and sensitive, just as are the pupils of the abysmal fishes, and they reflected the light in the same way. I have no doubt they could see me in that rayless obscurity, and they did not seem to have any fear of me apart from the light. But, so soon as I struck a match in order to see them, they fled incontinently, vanishing into dark gutters and tunnels, from which their eyes glared at me in the strangest fashion.

`I tried to call to them, but the language they had was apparently different from that of the Over-world people; so that I was needs left to my own unaided efforts, and the thought of flight before exploration was even then in my mind. But I said to myself, "You are in for it now," and, feeling my way along the tunnel, I found the noise of machinery grow louder. Presently the walls fell away from me, and I came to a large open space, and striking another match, saw that I had entered a vast arched cavern, which stretched into utter darkness beyond the range of my light. The view I had of it was as much as one could see in the burning of a match.

`Necessarily my memory is vague. Great shapes like big machines rose out of the dimness, and cast grotesque black shadows, in which dim spectral Morlocks sheltered from the glare. The place, by the by, was very stuffy and oppressive, and the faint halitus of freshly shed blood was in the air. Some way down the central vista was a little table of white metal, laid with what seemed a meal. The Morlocks at any rate were carnivorous! Even at the time, I remember wondering what large animal could have survived to furnish the red joint I saw. It was all very indistinct: the heavy smell, the big unmeaning shapes, the obscene figures lurking in the shadows, and only waiting for the darkness to come at me again! Then the match burned down, and stung my fingers, and fell, a wriggling red spot in the blackness.

`I have thought since how particularly ill-equipped I was for such an experience. When I had started with the Time Machine, I had started with the absurd assumption that the men of the Future would certainly be infinitely ahead of ourselves in all their appliances. I had come without arms, without medicine, without anything to smoke--at times I missed tobacco frightfully--even without enough matches. If only I had thought of a Kodak! I could have flashed that glimpse of the Underworld in a second, and examined it at leisure. But, as it was, I stood there with only the weapons and the powers that Nature had endowed me with--hands, feet, and teeth; these, and four safety-matches that still remained to me.

`I was afraid to push my way in among all this machinery in the dark, and it was only with my last glimpse of light I discovered that my store of matches had run low. It had never occurred to me until that moment that there was any need to economize them, and I had wasted almost half the box in astonishing the Upper-worlders, to whom fire was a novelty. Now, as I say, I had four left, and while I stood in the dark, a hand touched mine, lank fingers came feeling over my face, and I was sensible of a peculiar unpleasant odour. I fancied I heard the breathing of a crowd of those dreadful little beings about me. I felt the box of matches in my hand being gently disengaged, and other hands behind me plucking at my clothing. The sense of these unseen creatures examining me was indescribably unpleasant. The sudden realization of my ignorance of their ways of thinking and doing came home to me very vividly in the darkness. I shouted at them as loudly as I could. They started away, and then I could feel them approaching me again. They clutched at me more boldly, whispering odd sounds to each other. I shivered violently, and shouted again rather discordantly. This time they were not so seriously alarmed, and they made a queer laughing noise as they came back at me. I will confess I was horribly

frightened. I determined to strike another match and escape under the protection of its glare. I did so, and eking out the flicker with a scrap of paper from my pocket, I made good my retreat to the narrow tunnel. But I had scarce entered this when my light was blown out and in the blackness I could hear the Morlocks rustling like wind among leaves, and pattering like the rain, as they hurried after me.

̀In a moment I was clutched by several hands, and there was no mistaking that they were trying to haul me back. I struck another light, and waved it in their dazzled faces. You can scarce imagine how nauseatingly inhuman they looked--those pale, chinless faces and great, lidless, pinkish-grey eyes!--as they stared in their blindness and bewilderment. But I did not stay to look, I promise you: I retreated again, and when my second match had ended, I struck my third. It had almost burned through when I reached the opening into the shaft. I lay down on the edge, for the throb of the great pump below made me giddy. Then I felt sideways for the projecting hooks, and, as I did so, my feet were grasped from behind, and I was violently tugged backward. I lit my last match . . . and it incontinently went out. But I had my hand on the climbing bars now, and, kicking violently, I disengaged myself from the clutches of the Morlocks and was speedily clambering up the shaft, while they stayed peering and blinking up at me: all but one little wretch who followed me for some way, and wellnigh secured my boot as a trophy.

̀That climb seemed interminable to me. With the last twenty or thirty feet of it a deadly nausea came upon me. I had the greatest difficulty in keeping my hold. The last few yards was a frightful struggle against this faintness. Several times my head swam, and I felt all the sensations of falling. At last, however, I got over the well-mouth somehow, and staggered out of the ruin into the blinding sunlight. I fell upon my face. Even the soil smelt sweet and clean. Then I remember Weena kissing my

hands and ears, and the voices of others among the Eloi. Then, for a time, I was insensible.

VII

`Now, indeed, I seemed in a worse case than before. Hitherto, except during my night's anguish at the loss of the Time Machine, I had felt a sustaining hope of ultimate escape, but that hope was staggered by these new discoveries. Hitherto I had merely thought myself impeded by the childish simplicity of the little people, and by some unknown forces which I had only to understand to overcome; but there was an altogether new element in the sickening quality of the Morlocks--a something inhuman and malign. Instinctively I loathed them. Before, I had felt as a man might feel who had fallen into a pit: my concern was with the pit and how to get out of it. Now I felt like a beast in a trap, whose enemy would come upon him soon.

`The enemy I dreaded may surprise you. It was the darkness of the new moon. Weena had put this into my head by some at first incomprehensible remarks about the Dark Nights. It was not now such a very difficult problem to guess what the coming Dark Nights might mean. The moon was on the wane: each night there was a longer interval of darkness. And I now understood to some slight degree at least the reason of the fear of the little Upper-world people for the dark. I wondered vaguely what foul villainy it might be that the Morlocks did under the new moon. I felt pretty sure now that my second hypothesis was all wrong. The Upper-world people might once have been the favoured aristocracy, and the Morlocks their mechanical servants: but that had long since passed away. The two species that had resulted from the evolution of man were sliding down towards, or had already arrived at, an altogether new relationship. The Eloi, like the Carolingian kings, had decayed to a mere beautiful futility. They still possessed the earth on sufferance: since

the Morlocks, subterranean for innumerable generations, had come at last to find the daylight surface intolerable. And the Morlocks made their garments, I inferred, and maintained them in their habitual needs, perhaps through the survival of an old habit of service. They did it as a standing horse paws with his foot, or as a man enjoys killing animals in sport: because ancient and departed necessities had impressed it on the organism. But, clearly, the old order was already in part reversed. The Nemesis of the delicate ones was creeping on apace. Ages ago, thousands of generations ago, man had thrust his brother man out of the ease and the sunshine. And now that brother was coming back changed! Already the Eloi had begun to learn one old lesson anew. They were becoming reacquainted with Fear. And suddenly there came into my head the memory of the meat I had seen in the Under-world. It seemed odd how it floated into my mind: not stirred up as it were by the current of my meditations, but coming in almost like a question from outside. I tried to recall the form of it. I had a vague sense of something familiar, but I could not tell what it was at the time.

Still, however helpless the little people in the presence of their mysterious Fear, I was differently constituted. I came out of this age of ours, this ripe prime of the human race, when Fear does not paralyse and mystery has lost its terrors. I at least would defend myself. Without further delay I determined to make myself arms and a fastness where I might sleep. With that refuge as a base, I could face this strange world with some of that confidence I had lost in realizing to what creatures night by night I lay exposed. I felt I could never sleep again until my bed was secure from them. I shuddered with horror to think how they must already have examined me.

I wandered during the afternoon along the valley of the Thames, but found nothing that commended itself to my mind as inaccessible. All the buildings and trees seemed easily

practicable to such dexterous climbers as the Morlocks, to judge by their wells, must be. Then the tall pinnacles of the Palace of Green Porcelain and the polished gleam of its walls came back to my memory; and in the evening, taking Weena like a child upon my shoulder, I went up the hills towards the south-west. The distance, I had reckoned, was seven or eight miles, but it must have been nearer eighteen. I had first seen the place on a moist afternoon when distances are deceptively diminished. In addition, the heel of one of my shoes was loose, and a nail was working through the sole--they were comfortable old shoes I wore about indoors--so that I was lame. And it was already long past sunset when I came in sight of the palace, silhouetted black against the pale yellow of the sky.

`Weena had been hugely delighted when I began to carry her, but after a while she desired me to let her down, and ran along by the side of me, occasionally darting off on either hand to pick flowers to stick in my pockets. My pockets had always puzzled Weena, but at the last she had concluded that they were an eccentric kind of vase for floral decoration. At least she utilized them for that purpose. And that reminds me! In changing my jacket I found . . .'

The Time Traveller paused, put his hand into his pocket, and silently placed two withered flowers, not unlike very large white mallows, upon the little table. Then he resumed his narrative.

`As the hush of evening crept over the world and we proceeded over the hill crest towards Wimbledon, Weena grew tired and wanted to return to the house of grey stone. But I pointed out the distant pinnacles of the Palace of Green Porcelain to her, and contrived to make her understand that we were seeking a refuge there from her Fear. You know that great pause that comes upon things before the dusk? Even the breeze stops in the trees. To me there is always an air of expectation about that evening

stillness. The sky was clear, remote, and empty save for a few horizontal bars far down in the sunset. Well, that night the expectation took the colour of my fears. In that darkling calm my senses seemed preternaturally sharpened. I fancied I could even feel the hollowness of the ground beneath my feet: could, indeed, almost see through it the Morlocks on their ant-hill going hither and thither and waiting for the dark. In my excitement I fancied that they would receive my invasion of their burrows as a declaration of war. And why had they taken my Time Machine?

`So we went on in the quiet, and the twilight deepened into night. The clear blue of the distance faded, and one star after another came out. The ground grew dim and the trees black. Weena's fears and her fatigue grew upon her. I took her in my arms and talked to her and caressed her. Then, as the darkness grew deeper, she put her arms round my neck, and, closing her eyes, tightly pressed her face against my shoulder. So we went down a long slope into a valley, and there in the dimness I almost walked into a little river. This I waded, and went up the opposite side of the valley, past a number of sleeping houses, and by a statue--a Faun, or some such figure, MINUS the head. Here too were acacias. So far I had seen nothing of the Morlocks, but it was yet early in the night, and the darker hours before the old moon rose were still to come.

`From the brow of the next hill I saw a thick wood spreading wide and black before me. I hesitated at this. I could see no end to it, either to the right or the left. Feeling tired--my feet, in particular, were very sore--I carefully lowered Weena from my shoulder as I halted, and sat down upon the turf. I could no longer see the Palace of Green Porcelain, and I was in doubt of my direction. I looked into the thickness of the wood and thought of what it might hide. Under that dense tangle of branches one would be out of sight of the stars. Even were there

no other lurking danger--a danger I did not care to let my imagination loose upon--there would still be all the roots to stumble over and the tree-boles to strike against.

`I was very tired, too, after the excitements of the day; so I decided that I would not face it, but would pass the night upon the open hill.

`Weena, I was glad to find, was fast asleep. I carefully wrapped her in my jacket, and sat down beside her to wait for the moonrise. The hill-side was quiet and deserted, but from the black of the wood there came now and then a stir of living things. Above me shone the stars, for the night was very clear. I felt a certain sense of friendly comfort in their twinkling. All the old constellations had gone from the sky, however: that slow movement which is imperceptible in a hundred human lifetimes, had long since rearranged them in unfamiliar groupings. But the Milky Way, it seemed to me, was still the same tattered streamer of star-dust as of yore. Southward (as I judged it) was a very bright red star that was new to me; it was even more splendid than our own green Sirius. And amid all these scintillating points of light one bright planet shone kindly and steadily like the face of an old friend.

`Looking at these stars suddenly dwarfed my own troubles and all the gravities of terrestrial life. I thought of their unfathomable distance, and the slow inevitable drift of their movements out of the unknown past into the unknown future. I thought of the great precessional cycle that the pole of the earth describes. Only forty times had that silent revolution occurred during all the years that I had traversed. And during these few revolutions all the activity, all the traditions, the complex organizations, the nations, languages, literatures, aspirations, even the mere memory of Man as I knew him, had been swept out of existence. Instead were these frail creatures who

had forgotten their high ancestry, and the white Things of which I went in terror. Then I thought of the Great Fear that was between the two species, and for the first time, with a sudden shiver, came the clear knowledge of what the meat I had seen might be. Yet it was too horrible! I looked at little Weena sleeping beside me, her face white and starlike under the stars, and forthwith dismissed the thought.

Through that long night I held my mind off the Morlocks as well as I could, and whiled away the time by trying to fancy I could find signs of the old constellations in the new confusion. The sky kept very clear, except for a hazy cloud or so. No doubt I dozed at times. Then, as my vigil wore on, came a faintness in the eastward sky, like the reflection of some colourless fire, and the old moon rose, thin and peaked and white. And close behind, and overtaking it, and overflowing it, the dawn came, pale at first, and then growing pink and warm. No Morlocks had approached us. Indeed, I had seen none upon the hill that night. And in the confidence of renewed day it almost seemed to me that my fear had been unreasonable. I stood up and found my foot with the loose heel swollen at the ankle and painful under the heel; so I sat down again, took off my shoes, and flung them away.

I awakened Weena, and we went down into the wood, now green and pleasant instead of black and forbidding. We found some fruit wherewith to break our fast. We soon met others of the dainty ones, laughing and dancing in the sunlight as though there was no such thing in nature as the night. And then I thought once more of the meat that I had seen. I felt assured now of what it was, and from the bottom of my heart I pitied this last feeble rill from the great flood of humanity. Clearly, at some time in the Long-Ago of human decay the Morlocks' food had run short. Possibly they had lived on rats and such-like vermin. Even now man is far less discriminating and exclusive in his food than he was--far less than any monkey. His prejudice against

human flesh is no deep-seated instinct. And so these inhuman sons of men----! I tried to look at the thing in a scientific spirit. After all, they were less human and more remote than our cannibal ancestors of three or four thousand years ago. And the intelligence that would have made this state of things a torment had gone. Why should I trouble myself? These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon--probably saw to the breeding of. And there was Weena dancing at my side!

`Then I tried to preserve myself from the horror that was coming upon me, by regarding it as a rigorous punishment of human selfishness. Man had been content to live in ease and delight upon the labours of his fellow-man, had taken Necessity as his watchword and excuse, and in the fullness of time Necessity had come home to him. I even tried a Carlyle-like scorn of this wretched aristocracy in decay. But this attitude of mind was impossible. However great their intellectual degradation, the Eloi had kept too much of the human form not to claim my sympathy, and to make me perforce a sharer in their degradation and their Fear.

`I had at that time very vague ideas as to the course I should pursue. My first was to secure some safe place of refuge, and to make myself such arms of metal or stone as I could contrive. That necessity was immediate. In the next place, I hoped to procure some means of fire, so that I should have the weapon of a torch at hand, for nothing, I knew, would be more efficient against these Morlocks. Then I wanted to arrange some contrivance to break open the doors of bronze under the White Sphinx. I had in mind a battering ram. I had a persuasion that if I could enter those doors and carry a blaze of light before me I should discover the Time Machine and escape. I could not imagine the Morlocks were strong enough to move it far away. Weena I had resolved to bring with me to our own time. And

turning such schemes over in my mind I pursued our way towards the building which my fancy had chosen as our dwelling.

VIII

`I found the Palace of Green Porcelain, when we approached it about noon, deserted and falling into ruin. Only ragged vestiges of glass remained in its windows, and great sheets of the green facing had fallen away from the corroded metallic framework. It lay very high upon a turfy down, and looking north-eastward before I entered it, I was surprised to see a large estuary, or even creek, where I judged Wandsworth and Battersea must once have been. I thought then--though I never followed up the thought--of what might have happened, or might be happening, to the living things in the sea.

`The material of the Palace proved on examination to be indeed porcelain, and along the face of it I saw an inscription in some unknown character. I thought, rather foolishly, that Weena might help me to interpret this, but I only learned that the bare idea of writing had never entered her head. She always seemed to me, I fancy, more human than she was, perhaps because her affection was so human.

`Within the big valves of the door--which were open and broken--we found, instead of the customary hall, a long gallery lit by many side windows. At the first glance I was reminded of a museum. The tiled floor was thick with dust, and a remarkable array of miscellaneous objects was shrouded in the same grey covering. Then I perceived, standing strange and gaunt in the centre of the hall, what was clearly the lower part of a huge skeleton. I recognized by the oblique feet that it was some extinct creature after the fashion of the Megatherium. The skull and the upper bones lay beside it in the thick dust, and in one place, where rain-water had dropped through a leak in the roof,

the thing itself had been worn away. Further in the gallery was the huge skeleton barrel of a Brontosaurus. My museum hypothesis was confirmed. Going towards the side I found what appeared to be sloping shelves, and clearing away the thick dust, I found the old familiar glass cases of our own time. But they must have been air-tight to judge from the fair preservation of some of their contents.

Clearly we stood among the ruins of some latter-day South Kensington! Here, apparently, was the Palaeontological Section, and a very splendid array of fossils it must have been, though the inevitable process of decay that had been staved off for a time, and had, through the extinction of bacteria and fungi, lost ninety-nine hundredths of its force, was nevertheless, with extreme sureness if with extreme slowness at work again upon all its treasures. Here and there I found traces of the little people in the shape of rare fossils broken to pieces or threaded in strings upon reeds. And the cases had in some instances been bodily removed--by the Morlocks as I judged. The place was very silent. The thick dust deadened our footsteps. Weena, who had been rolling a sea urchin down the sloping glass of a case, presently came, as I stared about me, and very quietly took my hand and stood beside me.

And at first I was so much surprised by this ancient monument of an intellectual age, that I gave no thought to the possibilities it presented. Even my preoccupation about the Time Machine receded a little from my mind.

To judge from the size of the place, this Palace of Green Porcelain had a great deal more in it than a Gallery of Palaeontology; possibly historical galleries; it might be, even a library! To me, at least in my present circumstances, these would be vastly more interesting than this spectacle of oldtime geology in decay. Exploring, I found another short gallery

running transversely to the first. This appeared to be devoted to minerals, and the sight of a block of sulphur set my mind running on gunpowder. But I could find no saltpeter; indeed, no nitrates of any kind. Doubtless they had deliquesced ages ago. Yet the sulphur hung in my mind, and set up a train of thinking. As for the rest of the contents of that gallery, though on the whole they were the best preserved of all I saw, I had little interest. I am no specialist in mineralogy, and I went on down a very ruinous aisle running parallel to the first hall I had entered. Apparently this section had been devoted to natural history, but everything had long since passed out of recognition. A few shrivelled and blackened vestiges of what had once been stuffed animals, desiccated mummies in jars that had once held spirit, a brown dust of departed plants: that was all! I was sorry for that, because I should have been glad to trace the patent readjustments by which the conquest of animated nature had been attained. Then we came to a gallery of simply colossal proportions, but singularly ill-lit, the floor of it running downward at a slight angle from the end at which I entered. At intervals white globes hung from the ceiling--many of them cracked and smashed--which suggested that originally the place had been artificially lit. Here I was more in my element, for rising on either side of me were the huge bulks of big machines, all greatly corroded and many broken down, but some still fairly complete. You know I have a certain weakness for mechanism, and I was inclined to linger among these; the more so as for the most part they had the interest of puzzles, and I could make only the vaguest guesses at what they were for. I fancied that if I could solve their puzzles I should find myself in possession of powers that might be of use against the Morlocks.

`Suddenly Weena came very close to my side. So suddenly that she startled me. Had it not been for her I do not think I should have noticed that the floor of the gallery sloped at all.

[Footnote: It may be, of course, that the floor did not slope,

but that the museum was built into the side of a hill.-ED.] The end I had come in at was quite above ground, and was lit by rare slit-like windows. As you went down the length, the ground came up against these windows, until at last there was a pit like the "area" of a London house before each, and only a narrow line of daylight at the top. I went slowly along, puzzling about the machines, and had been too intent upon them to notice the gradual diminution of the light, until Weena's increasing apprehensions drew my attention. Then I saw that the gallery ran down at last into a thick darkness. I hesitated, and then, as I looked round me, I saw that the dust was less abundant and its surface less even. Further away towards the dimness, it appeared to be broken by a number of small narrow footprints. My sense of the immediate presence of the Morlocks revived at that. I felt that I was wasting my time in the academic examination of machinery. I called to mind that it was already far advanced in the afternoon, and that I had still no weapon, no refuge, and no means of making a fire. And then down in the remote blackness of the gallery I heard a peculiar pattering, and the same odd noises I had heard down the well.

`I took Weena's hand. Then, struck with a sudden idea, I left her and turned to a machine from which projected a lever not unlike those in a signal-box. Clambering upon the stand, and grasping this lever in my hands, I put all my weight upon it sideways. Suddenly Weena, deserted in the central aisle, began to whimper. I had judged the strength of the lever pretty correctly, for it snapped after a minute's strain, and I rejoined her with a mace in my hand more than sufficient, I judged, for any Morlock skull I might encounter. And I longed very much to kill a Morlock or so. Very inhuman, you may think, to want to go killing one's own descendants! But it was impossible, somehow, to feel any humanity in the things. Only my disinclination to leave Weena, and a persuasion that if I began to slake my thirst for murder my Time Machine might suffer, restrained me from going

straight down the gallery and killing the brutes I heard.

`Well, mace in one hand and Weena in the other, I went out of that gallery and into another and still larger one, which at the first glance reminded me of a military chapel hung with tattered flags. The brown and charred rags that hung from the sides of it, I presently recognized as the decaying vestiges of books. They had long since dropped to pieces, and every semblance of print had left them. But here and there were warped boards and cracked metallic clasps that told the tale well enough. Had I been a literary man I might, perhaps, have moralized upon the futility of all ambition. But as it was, the thing that struck me with keenest force was the enormous waste of labour to which this sombre wilderness of rotting paper testified. At the time I will confess that I thought chiefly of the PHILOSOPHICAL TRANSACTIONS and my own seventeen papers upon physical optics.

`Then, going up a broad staircase, we came to what may once have been a gallery of technical chemistry. And here I had not a little hope of useful discoveries. Except at one end where the roof had collapsed, this gallery was well preserved. I went eagerly to every unbroken case. And at last, in one of the really air-tight cases, I found a box of matches. Very eagerly I tried them. They were perfectly good. They were not even damp. I turned to Weena. "Dance," I cried to her in her own tongue. For now I had a weapon indeed against the horrible creatures we feared. And so, in that derelict museum, upon the thick soft carpeting of dust, to Weena's huge delight, I solemnly performed a kind of composite dance, whistling THE LAND OF THE LEAL as cheerfully as I could. In part it was a modest CANCAN, in part a step dance, in part a skirt-dance (so far as my tail-coat permitted), and in part original. For I am naturally inventive, as you know.

`Now, I still think that for this box of matches to have

escaped the wear of time for immemorial years was a most strange, as for me it was a most fortunate thing. Yet, oddly enough, I found a far unlikelier substance, and that was camphor. I found it in a sealed jar, that by chance, I suppose, had been really hermetically sealed. I fancied at first that it was paraffin wax, and smashed the glass accordingly. But the odour of camphor was unmistakable. In the universal decay this volatile substance had chanced to survive, perhaps through many thousands of centuries. It reminded me of a sepia painting I had once seen done from the ink of a fossil Belemnite that must have perished and become fossilized millions of years ago. I was about to throw it away, but I remembered that it was inflammable and burned with a good bright flame--was, in fact, an excellent candle--and I put it in my pocket. I found no explosives, however, nor any means of breaking down the bronze doors. As yet my iron crowbar was the most helpful thing I had chanced upon. Nevertheless I left that gallery greatly elated.

I cannot tell you all the story of that long afternoon. It would require a great effort of memory to recall my explorations in at all the proper order. I remember a long gallery of rusting stands of arms, and how I hesitated between my crowbar and a hatchet or a sword. I could not carry both, however, and my bar of iron promised best against the bronze gates. There were numbers of guns, pistols, and rifles. The most were masses of rust, but many were of some new metal, and still fairly sound. But any cartridges or powder there may once have been had rotted into dust. One corner I saw was charred and shattered; perhaps, I thought, by an explosion among the specimens. In another place was a vast array of idols--Polynesian, Mexican, Grecian, Phoenician, every country on earth I should think. And here, yielding to an irresistible impulse, I wrote my name upon the nose of a steatite monster from South America that particularly took my fancy.

As the evening drew on, my interest waned. I went through gallery after gallery, dusty, silent, often ruinous, the exhibits sometimes mere heaps of rust and lignite, sometimes fresher. In one place I suddenly found myself near the model of a tin-mine, and then by the merest accident I discovered, in an air-tight case, two dynamite cartridges! I shouted "Eureka!" and smashed the case with joy. Then came a doubt. I hesitated. Then, selecting a little side gallery, I made my essay. I never felt such a disappointment as I did in waiting five, ten, fifteen minutes for an explosion that never came. Of course the things were dummies, as I might have guessed from their presence. I really believe that had they not been so, I should have rushed off incontinently and blown Sphinx, bronze doors, and (as it proved) my chances of finding the Time Machine, all together into nonexistence.

It was after that, I think, that we came to a little open court within the palace. It was turfed, and had three fruit-trees. So we rested and refreshed ourselves. Towards sunset I began to consider our position. Night was creeping upon us, and my inaccessible hiding-place had still to be found. But that troubled me very little now. I had in my possession a thing that was, perhaps, the best of all defences against the Morlocks--I had matches! I had the camphor in my pocket, too, if a blaze were needed. It seemed to me that the best thing we could do would be to pass the night in the open, protected by a fire. In the morning there was the getting of the Time Machine. Towards that, as yet, I had only my iron mace. But now, with my growing knowledge, I felt very differently towards those bronze doors. Up to this, I had refrained from forcing them, largely because of the mystery on the other side. They had never impressed me as being very strong, and I hoped to find my bar of iron not altogether inadequate for the work.

IX

“We emerged from the palace while the sun was still in part above the horizon. I was determined to reach the White Sphinx early the next morning, and ere the dusk I purposed pushing through the woods that had stopped me on the previous journey. My plan was to go as far as possible that night, and then, building a fire, to sleep in the protection of its glare. Accordingly, as we went along I gathered any sticks or dried grass I saw, and presently had my arms full of such litter. Thus loaded, our progress was slower than I had anticipated, and besides Weena was tired. And I began to suffer from sleepiness too; so that it was full night before we reached the wood. Upon the shrubby hill of its edge Weena would have stopped, fearing the darkness before us; but a singular sense of impending calamity, that should indeed have served me as a warning, drove me onward. I had been without sleep for a night and two days, and I was feverish and irritable. I felt sleep coming upon me, and the Morlocks with it.

“While we hesitated, among the black bushes behind us, and dim against their blackness, I saw three crouching figures. There was scrub and long grass all about us, and I did not feel safe from their insidious approach. The forest, I calculated, was rather less than a mile across. If we could get through it to the bare hill-side, there, as it seemed to me, was an altogether safer resting-place; I thought that with my matches and my camphor I could contrive to keep my path illuminated through the woods. Yet it was evident that if I was to flourish matches with my hands I should have to abandon my firewood; so, rather reluctantly, I put it down. And then it came into my head that I would amaze our friends behind by lighting it. I was to discover the atrocious folly of this proceeding, but it came to my mind as

an ingenious move for covering our retreat.

`I don't know if you have ever thought what a rare thing flame must be in the absence of man and in a temperate climate. The sun's heat is rarely strong enough to burn, even when it is focused by dewdrops, as is sometimes the case in more tropical districts. Lightning may blast and blacken, but it rarely gives rise to widespread fire. Decaying vegetation may occasionally smoulder with the heat of its fermentation, but this rarely results in flame. In this decadence, too, the art of fire-making had been forgotten on the earth. The red tongues that went licking up my heap of wood were an altogether new and strange thing to Weena.

`She wanted to run to it and play with it. I believe she would have cast herself into it had I not restrained her. But I caught her up, and in spite of her struggles, plunged boldly before me into the wood. For a little way the glare of my fire lit the path. Looking back presently, I could see, through the crowded stems, that from my heap of sticks the blaze had spread to some bushes adjacent, and a curved line of fire was creeping up the grass of the hill. I laughed at that, and turned again to the dark trees before me. It was very black, and Weena clung to me convulsively, but there was still, as my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, sufficient light for me to avoid the stems. Overhead it was simply black, except where a gap of remote blue sky shone down upon us here and there. I struck none of my matches because I had no hand free. Upon my left arm I carried my little one, in my right hand I had my iron bar.

`For some way I heard nothing but the crackling twigs under my feet, the faint rustle of the breeze above, and my own breathing and the throb of the blood-vessels in my ears. Then I seemed to know of a pattering about me. I pushed on grimly. The pattering grew more distinct, and then I caught the same queer sound and

voices I had heard in the Under-world. There were evidently several of the Morlocks, and they were closing in upon me. Indeed, in another minute I felt a tug at my coat, then something at my arm. And Weena shivered violently, and became quite still.

`It was time for a match. But to get one I must put her down. I did so, and, as I fumbled with my pocket, a struggle began in the darkness about my knees, perfectly silent on her part and with the same peculiar cooing sounds from the Morlocks. Soft little hands, too, were creeping over my coat and back, touching even my neck. Then the match scratched and fizzed. I held it flaring, and saw the white backs of the Morlocks in flight amid the trees. I hastily took a lump of camphor from my pocket, and prepared to light it as soon as the match should wane. Then I looked at Weena. She was lying clutching my feet and quite motionless, with her face to the ground. With a sudden fright I stooped to her. She seemed scarcely to breathe. I lit the block of camphor and flung it to the ground, and as it split and flared up and drove back the Morlocks and the shadows, I knelt down and lifted her. The wood behind seemed full of the stir and murmur of a great company!

`She seemed to have fainted. I put her carefully upon my shoulder and rose to push on, and then there came a horrible realization. In manoeuvring with my matches and Weena, I had turned myself about several times, and now I had not the faintest idea in what direction lay my path. For all I knew, I might be facing back towards the Palace of Green Porcelain. I found myself in a cold sweat. I had to think rapidly what to do. I determined to build a fire and encamp where we were. I put Weena, still motionless, down upon a turfy bole, and very hastily, as my first lump of camphor waned, I began collecting sticks and leaves. Here and there out of the darkness round me the Morlocks' eyes shone like carbuncles.

^The camphor flickered and went out. I lit a match, and as I did so, two white forms that had been approaching Weena dashed hastily away. One was so blinded by the light that he came straight for me, and I felt his bones grind under the blow of my fist. He gave a whoop of dismay, staggered a little way, and fell down. I lit another piece of camphor, and went on gathering my bonfire. Presently I noticed how dry was some of the foliage above me, for since my arrival on the Time Machine, a matter of a week, no rain had fallen. So, instead of casting about among the trees for fallen twigs, I began leaping up and dragging down branches. Very soon I had a choking smoky fire of green wood and dry sticks, and could economize my camphor. Then I turned to where Weena lay beside my iron mace. I tried what I could to revive her, but she lay like one dead. I could not even satisfy myself whether or not she breathed.

^Now, the smoke of the fire beat over towards me, and it must have made me heavy of a sudden. Moreover, the vapour of camphor was in the air. My fire would not need replenishing for an hour or so. I felt very weary after my exertion, and sat down. The wood, too, was full of a slumbrous murmur that I did not understand. I seemed just to nod and open my eyes. But all was dark, and the Morlocks had their hands upon me. Flinging off their clinging fingers I hastily felt in my pocket for the match-box, and--it had gone! Then they gripped and closed with me again. In a moment I knew what had happened. I had slept, and my fire had gone out, and the bitterness of death came over my soul. The forest seemed full of the smell of burning wood. I was caught by the neck, by the hair, by the arms, and pulled down. It was indescribably horrible in the darkness to feel all these soft creatures heaped upon me. I felt as if I was in a monstrous spider's web. I was overpowered, and went down. I felt little teeth nipping at my neck. I rolled over, and as I did so my hand came against my iron lever. It gave me strength. I struggled up, shaking the human rats from me, and, holding the

bar short, I thrust where I judged their faces might be. I could feel the succulent giving of flesh and bone under my blows, and for a moment I was free.

`The strange exultation that so often seems to accompany hard fighting came upon me. I knew that both I and Weena were lost, but I determined to make the Morlocks pay for their meat. I stood with my back to a tree, swinging the iron bar before me. The whole wood was full of the stir and cries of them. A minute passed. Their voices seemed to rise to a higher pitch of excitement, and their movements grew faster. Yet none came within reach. I stood glaring at the blackness. Then suddenly came hope. What if the Morlocks were afraid? And close on the heels of that came a strange thing. The darkness seemed to grow luminous. Very dimly I began to see the Morlocks about me--three battered at my feet--and then I recognized, with incredulous surprise, that the others were running, in an incessant stream, as it seemed, from behind me, and away through the wood in front. And their backs seemed no longer white, but reddish. As I stood agape, I saw a little red spark go drifting across a gap of starlight between the branches, and vanish. And at that I understood the smell of burning wood, the slumbrous murmur that was growing now into a gusty roar, the red glow, and the Morlocks' flight.

`Stepping out from behind my tree and looking back, I saw, through the black pillars of the nearer trees, the flames of the burning forest. It was my first fire coming after me. With that I looked for Weena, but she was gone. The hissing and crackling behind me, the explosive thud as each fresh tree burst into flame, left little time for reflection. My iron bar still gripped, I followed in the Morlocks' path. It was a close race. Once the flames crept forward so swiftly on my right as I ran that I was outflanked and had to strike off to the left. But at last I emerged upon a small open space, and as I did so, a

Morlock came blundering towards me, and past me, and went on straight into the fire!

And now I was to see the most weird and horrible thing, I think, of all that I beheld in that future age. This whole space was as bright as day with the reflection of the fire. In the centre was a hillock or tumulus, surmounted by a scorched hawthorn. Beyond this was another arm of the burning forest, with yellow tongues already writhing from it, completely encircling the space with a fence of fire. Upon the hill-side were some thirty or forty Morlocks, dazzled by the light and heat, and blundering hither and thither against each other in their bewilderment. At first I did not realize their blindness, and struck furiously at them with my bar, in a frenzy of fear, as they approached me, killing one and crippling several more. But when I had watched the gestures of one of them groping under the hawthorn against the red sky, and heard their moans, I was assured of their absolute helplessness and misery in the glare, and I struck no more of them.

Yet every now and then one would come straight towards me, setting loose a quivering horror that made me quick to elude him. At one time the flames died down somewhat, and I feared the foul creatures would presently be able to see me. I was thinking of beginning the fight by killing some of them before this should happen; but the fire burst out again brightly, and I stayed my hand. I walked about the hill among them and avoided them, looking for some trace of Weena. But Weena was gone.

At last I sat down on the summit of the hillock, and watched this strange incredible company of blind things groping to and fro, and making uncanny noises to each other, as the glare of the fire beat on them. The coiling uprush of smoke streamed across the sky, and through the rare tatters of that red canopy, remote as though they belonged to another universe, shone the little

stars. Two or three Morlocks came blundering into me, and I drove them off with blows of my fists, trembling as I did so.

`For the most part of that night I was persuaded it was a nightmare. I bit myself and screamed in a passionate desire to awake. I beat the ground with my hands, and got up and sat down again, and wandered here and there, and again sat down. Then I would fall to rubbing my eyes and calling upon God to let me awake. Thrice I saw Morlocks put their heads down in a kind of agony and rush into the flames. But, at last, above the subsiding red of the fire, above the streaming masses of black smoke and the whitening and blackening tree stumps, and the diminishing numbers of these dim creatures, came the white light of the day.

`I searched again for traces of Weena, but there were none. It was plain that they had left her poor little body in the forest. I cannot describe how it relieved me to think that it had escaped the awful fate to which it seemed destined. As I thought of that, I was almost moved to begin a massacre of the helpless abominations about me, but I contained myself. The hillock, as I have said, was a kind of island in the forest. From its summit I could now make out through a haze of smoke the Palace of Green Porcelain, and from that I could get my bearings for the White Sphinx. And so, leaving the remnant of these damned souls still going hither and thither and moaning, as the day grew clearer, I tied some grass about my feet and limped on across smoking ashes and among black stems, that still pulsated internally with fire, towards the hiding-place of the Time Machine. I walked slowly, for I was almost exhausted, as well as lame, and I felt the intensest wretchedness for the horrible death of little Weena. It seemed an overwhelming calamity. Now, in this old familiar room, it is more like the sorrow of a dream than an actual loss. But that morning it left me absolutely lonely again--terribly alone. I began to think of this house of

mine, of this fireside, of some of you, and with such thoughts came a longing that was pain.

`But as I walked over the smoking ashes under the bright morning sky, I made a discovery. In my trouser pocket were still some loose matches. The box must have leaked before it was lost.

X

About eight or nine in the morning I came to the same seat of yellow metal from which I had viewed the world upon the evening of my arrival. I thought of my hasty conclusions upon that evening and could not refrain from laughing bitterly at my confidence. Here was the same beautiful scene, the same abundant foliage, the same splendid palaces and magnificent ruins, the same silver river running between its fertile banks. The gay robes of the beautiful people moved hither and thither among the trees. Some were bathing in exactly the place where I had saved Weena, and that suddenly gave me a keen stab of pain. And like blots upon the landscape rose the cupolas above the ways to the Under-world. I understood now what all the beauty of the Over-world people covered. Very pleasant was their day, as pleasant as the day of the cattle in the field. Like the cattle, they knew of no enemies and provided against no needs. And their end was the same.

I grieved to think how brief the dream of the human intellect had been. It had committed suicide. It had set itself steadfastly towards comfort and ease, a balanced society with security and permanency as its watchword, it had attained its hopes--to come to this at last. Once, life and property must have reached almost absolute safety. The rich had been assured of his wealth and comfort, the toiler assured of his life and work. No doubt in that perfect world there had been no unemployed problem, no social question left unsolved. And a great quiet had followed.

It is a law of nature we overlook, that intellectual

versatility is the compensation for change, danger, and trouble. An animal perfectly in harmony with its environment is a perfect mechanism. Nature never appeals to intelligence until habit and instinct are useless. There is no intelligence where there is no change and no need of change. Only those animals partake of intelligence that have to meet a huge variety of needs and dangers.

So, as I see it, the Upper-world man had drifted towards his feeble prettiness, and the Under-world to mere mechanical industry. But that perfect state had lacked one thing even for mechanical perfection--absolute permanency. Apparently as time went on, the feeding of the Under-world, however it was effected, had become disjointed. Mother Necessity, who had been staved off for a few thousand years, came back again, and she began below. The Under-world being in contact with machinery, which, however perfect, still needs some little thought outside habit, had probably retained perforce rather more initiative, if less of every other human character, than the Upper. And when other meat failed them, they turned to what old habit had hitherto forbidden. So I say I saw it in my last view of the world of Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One. It may be as wrong an explanation as mortal wit could invent. It is how the thing shaped itself to me, and as that I give it to you.

After the fatigues, excitements, and terrors of the past days, and in spite of my grief, this seat and the tranquil view and the warm sunlight were very pleasant. I was very tired and sleepy, and soon my theorizing passed into dozing. Catching myself at that, I took my own hint, and spreading myself out upon the turf I had a long and refreshing sleep.

I awoke a little before sunset. I now felt safe against being caught napping by the Morlocks, and, stretching myself, I came on down the hill towards the White Sphinx. I had my crowbar

in one hand, and the other hand played with the matches in my pocket.

`And now came a most unexpected thing. As I approached the pedestal of the sphinx I found the bronze valves were open. They had slid down into grooves.

`At that I stopped short before them, hesitating to enter.

`Within was a small apartment, and on a raised place in the corner of this was the Time Machine. I had the small levers in my pocket. So here, after all my elaborate preparations for the siege of the White Sphinx, was a meek surrender. I threw my iron bar away, almost sorry not to use it.

`A sudden thought came into my head as I stooped towards the portal. For once, at least, I grasped the mental operations of the Morlocks. Suppressing a strong inclination to laugh, I stepped through the bronze frame and up to the Time Machine. I was surprised to find it had been carefully oiled and cleaned. I have suspected since that the Morlocks had even partially taken it to pieces while trying in their dim way to grasp its purpose.

`Now as I stood and examined it, finding a pleasure in the mere touch of the contrivance, the thing I had expected happened. The bronze panels suddenly slid up and struck the frame with a clang. I was in the dark--trapped. So the Morlocks thought. At that I chuckled gleefully.

`I could already hear their murmuring laughter as they came towards me. Very calmly I tried to strike the match. I had only to fix on the levers and depart then like a ghost. But I had overlooked one little thing. The matches were of that abominable kind that light only on the box.

`You may imagine how all my calm vanished. The little brutes were close upon me. One touched me. I made a sweeping blow in the dark at them with the levers, and began to scramble into the saddle of the machine. Then came one hand upon me and then another. Then I had simply to fight against their persistent fingers for my levers, and at the same time feel for the studs over which these fitted. One, indeed, they almost got away from me. As it slipped from my hand, I had to butt in the dark with my head--I could hear the Morlock's skull ring--to recover it. It was a nearer thing than the fight in the forest, I think, this last scramble.

`But at last the lever was fitted and pulled over. The clinging hands slipped from me. The darkness presently fell from my eyes. I found myself in the same grey light and tumult I have already described.

XI

`I have already told you of the sickness and confusion that comes with time travelling. And this time I was not seated properly in the saddle, but sideways and in an unstable fashion. For an indefinite time I clung to the machine as it swayed and vibrated, quite unheeding how I went, and when I brought myself to look at the dials again I was amazed to find where I had arrived. One dial records days, and another thousands of days, another millions of days, and another thousands of millions. Now, instead of reversing the levers, I had pulled them over so as to go forward with them, and when I came to look at these indicators I found that the thousands hand was sweeping round as fast as the seconds hand of a watch--into futurity.

`As I drove on, a peculiar change crept over the appearance of things. The palpitating greyness grew darker; then--though I was still travelling with prodigious velocity--the blinking succession of day and night, which was usually indicative of a slower pace, returned, and grew more and more marked. This puzzled me very much at first. The alternations of night and day grew slower and slower, and so did the passage of the sun across the sky, until they seemed to stretch through centuries. At last a steady twilight brooded over the earth, a twilight only broken now and then when a comet glared across the darkling sky. The band of light that had indicated the sun had long since disappeared; for the sun had ceased to set--it simply rose and fell in the west, and grew ever broader and more red. All trace of the moon had vanished. The circling of the stars, growing slower and slower, had given place to creeping points of light. At last, some time before I stopped, the sun, red and very large, halted motionless upon the horizon, a vast dome glowing with a

dull heat, and now and then suffering a momentary extinction. At one time it had for a little while glowed more brilliantly again, but it speedily reverted to its sullen red heat. I perceived by this slowing down of its rising and setting that the work of the tidal drag was done. The earth had come to rest with one face to the sun, even as in our own time the moon faces the earth. Very cautiously, for I remembered my former headlong fall, I began to reverse my motion. Slower and slower went the circling hands until the thousands one seemed motionless and the daily one was no longer a mere mist upon its scale. Still slower, until the dim outlines of a desolate beach grew visible.

‘I stopped very gently and sat upon the Time Machine, looking round. The sky was no longer blue. North-eastward it was inky black, and out of the blackness shone brightly and steadily the pale white stars. Overhead it was a deep Indian red and starless, and south-eastward it grew brighter to a glowing scarlet where, cut by the horizon, lay the huge hull of the sun, red and motionless. The rocks about me were of a harsh reddish colour, and all the trace of life that I could see at first was the intensely green vegetation that covered every projecting point on their south-eastern face. It was the same rich green that one sees on forest moss or on the lichen in caves: plants which like these grow in a perpetual twilight.

‘The machine was standing on a sloping beach. The sea stretched away to the south-west, to rise into a sharp bright horizon against the wan sky. There were no breakers and no waves, for not a breath of wind was stirring. Only a slight oily swell rose and fell like a gentle breathing, and showed that the eternal sea was still moving and living. And along the margin where the water sometimes broke was a thick incrustation of salt--pink under the lurid sky. There was a sense of oppression in my head, and I noticed that I was breathing very fast. The sensation reminded me of my only experience of mountaineering,

and from that I judged the air to be more rarefied than it is now.

`Far away up the desolate slope I heard a harsh scream, and saw a thing like a huge white butterfly go slanting and flittering up into the sky and, circling, disappear over some low hillocks beyond. The sound of its voice was so dismal that I shivered and seated myself more firmly upon the machine. Looking round me again, I saw that, quite near, what I had taken to be a reddish mass of rock was moving slowly towards me. Then I saw the thing was really a monstrous crab-like creature. Can you imagine a crab as large as yonder table, with its many legs moving slowly and uncertainly, its big claws swaying, its long antennae, like carters' whips, waving and feeling, and its stalked eyes gleaming at you on either side of its metallic front? Its back was corrugated and ornamented with ungainly bosses, and a greenish incrustation blotched it here and there. I could see the many palps of its complicated mouth flickering and feeling as it moved.

`As I stared at this sinister apparition crawling towards me, I felt a tickling on my cheek as though a fly had lighted there. I tried to brush it away with my hand, but in a moment it returned, and almost immediately came another by my ear. I struck at this, and caught something threadlike. It was drawn swiftly out of my hand. With a frightful qualm, I turned, and I saw that I had grasped the antenna of another monster crab that stood just behind me. Its evil eyes were wriggling on their stalks, its mouth was all alive with appetite, and its vast ungainly claws, smeared with an algal slime, were descending upon me. In a moment my hand was on the lever, and I had placed a month between myself and these monsters. But I was still on the same beach, and I saw them distinctly now as soon as I stopped. Dozens of them seemed to be crawling here and there, in the sombre light, among the foliated sheets of intense green.

`I cannot convey the sense of abominable desolation that hung over the world. The red eastern sky, the northward blackness, the salt Dead Sea, the stony beach crawling with these foul, slow-stirring monsters, the uniform poisonous-looking green of the lichenous plants, the thin air that hurts one's lungs: all contributed to an appalling effect. I moved on a hundred years, and there was the same red sun--a little larger, a little duller--the same dying sea, the same chill air, and the same crowd of earthy crustacea creeping in and out among the green weed and the red rocks. And in the westward sky, I saw a curved pale line like a vast new moon.

`So I travelled, stopping ever and again, in great strides of a thousand years or more, drawn on by the mystery of the earth's fate, watching with a strange fascination the sun grow larger and duller in the westward sky, and the life of the old earth ebb away. At last, more than thirty million years hence, the huge red-hot dome of the sun had come to obscure nearly a tenth part of the darkling heavens. Then I stopped once more, for the crawling multitude of crabs had disappeared, and the red beach, save for its livid green liverworts and lichens, seemed lifeless. And now it was flecked with white. A bitter cold assailed me. Rare white flakes ever and again came eddying down. To the north-eastward, the glare of snow lay under the starlight of the sable sky and I could see an undulating crest of hillocks pinkish white. There were fringes of ice along the sea margin, with drifting masses further out; but the main expanse of that salt ocean, all bloody under the eternal sunset, was still unfrozen.

`I looked about me to see if any traces of animal life remained. A certain indefinable apprehension still kept me in the saddle of the machine. But I saw nothing moving, in earth or sky or sea. The green slime on the rocks alone testified that life was not extinct. A shallow sandbank had appeared in the sea

and the water had receded from the beach. I fancied I saw some black object flopping about upon this bank, but it became motionless as I looked at it, and I judged that my eye had been deceived, and that the black object was merely a rock. The stars in the sky were intensely bright and seemed to me to twinkle very little.

Suddenly I noticed that the circular westward outline of the sun had changed; that a concavity, a bay, had appeared in the curve. I saw this grow larger. For a minute perhaps I stared aghast at this blackness that was creeping over the day, and then I realized that an eclipse was beginning. Either the moon or the planet Mercury was passing across the sun's disk. Naturally, at first I took it to be the moon, but there is much to incline me to believe that what I really saw was the transit of an inner planet passing very near to the earth.

The darkness grew apace; a cold wind began to blow in freshening gusts from the east, and the showering white flakes in the air increased in number. From the edge of the sea came a ripple and whisper. Beyond these lifeless sounds the world was silent. Silent? It would be hard to convey the stillness of it. All the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives--all that was over. As the darkness thickened, the eddying flakes grew more abundant, dancing before my eyes; and the cold of the air more intense. At last, one by one, swiftly, one after the other, the white peaks of the distant hills vanished into blackness. The breeze rose to a moaning wind. I saw the black central shadow of the eclipse sweeping towards me. In another moment the pale stars alone were visible. All else was rayless obscurity. The sky was absolutely black.

A horror of this great darkness came on me. The cold, that smote to my marrow, and the pain I felt in breathing, overcame

me. I shivered, and a deadly nausea seized me. Then like a red-hot bow in the sky appeared the edge of the sun. I got off the machine to recover myself. I felt giddy and incapable of facing the return journey. As I stood sick and confused I saw again the moving thing upon the shoal--there was no mistake now that it was a moving thing--against the red water of the sea. It was a round thing, the size of a football perhaps, or, it may be, bigger, and tentacles trailed down from it; it seemed black against the weltering blood-red water, and it was hopping fitfully about. Then I felt I was fainting. But a terrible dread of lying helpless in that remote and awful twilight sustained me while I clambered upon the saddle.

XII

So I came back. For a long time I must have been insensible upon the machine. The blinking succession of the days and nights was resumed, the sun got golden again, the sky blue. I breathed with greater freedom. The fluctuating contours of the land ebbed and flowed. The hands spun backward upon the dials. At last I saw again the dim shadows of houses, the evidences of decadent humanity. These, too, changed and passed, and others came. Presently, when the million dial was at zero, I slackened speed. I began to recognize our own petty and familiar architecture, the thousands hand ran back to the starting-point, the night and day flapped slower and slower. Then the old walls of the laboratory came round me. Very gently, now, I slowed the mechanism down.

I saw one little thing that seemed odd to me. I think I have told you that when I set out, before my velocity became very high, Mrs. Watchett had walked across the room, travelling, as it seemed to me, like a rocket. As I returned, I passed again across that minute when she traversed the laboratory. But now her every motion appeared to be the exact inversion of her previous ones. The door at the lower end opened, and she glided quietly up the laboratory, back foremost, and disappeared behind the door by which she had previously entered. Just before that I seemed to see Hillyer for a moment; but he passed like a flash.

Then I stopped the machine, and saw about me again the old familiar laboratory, my tools, my appliances just as I had left them. I got off the thing very shaky, and sat down upon my bench. For several minutes I trembled violently. Then I became calmer. Around me was my old workshop again, exactly as it had been. I might have slept there, and the whole thing have been a dream.

`And yet, not exactly! The thing had started from the south-east corner of the laboratory. It had come to rest again in the north-west, against the wall where you saw it. That gives you the exact distance from my little lawn to the pedestal of the White Sphinx, into which the Morlocks had carried my machine.

`For a time my brain went stagnant. Presently I got up and came through the passage here, limping, because my heel was still painful, and feeling sorely begrimed. I saw the PALL MALL GAZETTE on the table by the door. I found the date was indeed to-day, and looking at the timepiece, saw the hour was almost eight o'clock. I heard your voices and the clatter of plates. I hesitated--I felt so sick and weak. Then I sniffed good wholesome meat, and opened the door on you. You know the rest. I washed, and dined, and now I am telling you the story.

`I know,' he said, after a pause, `that all this will be absolutely incredible to you. To me the one incredible thing is that I am here to-night in this old familiar room looking into your friendly faces and telling you these strange adventures.'

He looked at the Medical Man. `No. I cannot expect you to believe it. Take it as a lie--or a prophecy. Say I dreamed it in the workshop. Consider I have been speculating upon the destinies of our race until I have hatched this fiction. Treat my assertion of its truth as a mere stroke of art to enhance its interest. And taking it as a story, what do you think of it?'

He took up his pipe, and began, in his old accustomed manner, to tap with it nervously upon the bars of the grate. There was a momentary stillness. Then chairs began to creak and shoes to scrape upon the carpet. I took my eyes off the Time Traveller's face, and looked round at his audience. They were in the dark, and little spots of colour swam before them. The Medical Man

seemed absorbed in the contemplation of our host. The Editor was looking hard at the end of his cigar--the sixth. The Journalist fumbled for his watch. The others, as far as I remember, were motionless.

The Editor stood up with a sigh. 'What a pity it is you're not a writer of stories!' he said, putting his hand on the Time Traveller's shoulder.

'You don't believe it?'

'Well----'

'I thought not.'

The Time Traveller turned to us. 'Where are the matches?' he said. He lit one and spoke over his pipe, puffing. 'To tell you the truth . . . I hardly believe it myself. . . . And yet . . .'

His eye fell with a mute inquiry upon the withered white flowers upon the little table. Then he turned over the hand holding his pipe, and I saw he was looking at some half-healed scars on his knuckles.

The Medical Man rose, came to the lamp, and examined the flowers. 'The gynaeceum's odd,' he said. The Psychologist leant forward to see, holding out his hand for a specimen.

'I'm hanged if it isn't a quarter to one,' said the Journalist. 'How shall we get home?'

'Plenty of cabs at the station,' said the Psychologist.

'It's a curious thing,' said the Medical Man; 'but I certainly don't know the natural order of these flowers. May I have them?'

The Time Traveller hesitated. Then suddenly: `Certainly not.'

`Where did you really get them?' said the Medical Man.

The Time Traveller put his hand to his head. He spoke like one who was trying to keep hold of an idea that eluded him. 'They were put into my pocket by Weena, when I travelled into Time.' He stared round the room. `I'm damned if it isn't all going. This room and you and the atmosphere of every day is too much for my memory. Did I ever make a Time Machine, or a model of a Time Machine? Or is it all only a dream? They say life is a dream, a precious poor dream at times--but I can't stand another that won't fit. It's madness. And where did the dream come from? . . . I must look at that machine. If there is one!'

He caught up the lamp swiftly, and carried it, flaring red, through the door into the corridor. We followed him. There in the flickering light of the lamp was the machine sure enough, squat, ugly, and askew; a thing of brass, ebony, ivory, and translucent glimmering quartz. Solid to the touch--for I put out my hand and felt the rail of it--and with brown spots and smears upon the ivory, and bits of grass and moss upon the lower parts, and one rail bent awry.

The Time Traveller put the lamp down on the bench, and ran his hand along the damaged rail. `It's all right now,' he said. 'The story I told you was true. I'm sorry to have brought you out here in the cold.' He took up the lamp, and, in an absolute silence, we returned to the smoking-room.

He came into the hall with us and helped the Editor on with his coat. The Medical Man looked into his face and, with a certain hesitation, told him he was suffering from overwork, at which he laughed hugely. I remember him standing in the open

doorway, bawling good night.

I shared a cab with the Editor. He thought the tale a 'gaudy lie.' For my own part I was unable to come to a conclusion. The story was so fantastic and incredible, the telling so credible and sober. I lay awake most of the night thinking about it. I determined to go next day and see the Time Traveller again. I was told he was in the laboratory, and being on easy terms in the house, I went up to him. The laboratory, however, was empty. I stared for a minute at the Time Machine and put out my hand and touched the lever. At that the squat substantial-looking mass swayed like a bough shaken by the wind. Its instability startled me extremely, and I had a queer reminiscence of the childish days when I used to be forbidden to meddle. I came back through the corridor. The Time Traveller met me in the smoking-room. He was coming from the house. He had a small camera under one arm and a knapsack under the other. He laughed when he saw me, and gave me an elbow to shake. 'I'm frightfully busy,' said he, 'with that thing in there.'

'But is it not some hoax?' I said. 'Do you really travel through time?'

'Really and truly I do.' And he looked frankly into my eyes. He hesitated. His eye wandered about the room. 'I only want half an hour,' he said. 'I know why you came, and it's awfully good of you. There's some magazines here. If you'll stop to lunch I'll prove you this time travelling up to the hilt, specimen and all. If you'll forgive my leaving you now?'

I consented, hardly comprehending then the full import of his words, and he nodded and went on down the corridor. I heard the door of the laboratory slam, seated myself in a chair, and took up a daily paper. What was he going to do before lunch-time? Then suddenly I was reminded by an advertisement that I had

promised to meet Richardson, the publisher, at two. I looked at my watch, and saw that I could barely save that engagement. I got up and went down the passage to tell the Time Traveller.

As I took hold of the handle of the door I heard an exclamation, oddly truncated at the end, and a click and a thud. A gust of air whirled round me as I opened the door, and from within came the sound of broken glass falling on the floor. The Time Traveller was not there. I seemed to see a ghostly, indistinct figure sitting in a whirling mass of black and brass for a moment--a figure so transparent that the bench behind with its sheets of drawings was absolutely distinct; but this phantasm vanished as I rubbed my eyes. The Time Machine had gone. Save for a subsiding stir of dust, the further end of the laboratory was empty. A pane of the skylight had, apparently, just been blown in.

I felt an unreasonable amazement. I knew that something strange had happened, and for the moment could not distinguish what the strange thing might be. As I stood staring, the door into the garden opened, and the man-servant appeared.

We looked at each other. Then ideas began to come. 'Has Mr. ---- gone out that way?' said I.

'No, sir. No one has come out this way. I was expecting to find him here.'

At that I understood. At the risk of disappointing Richardson I stayed on, waiting for the Time Traveller; waiting for the second, perhaps still stranger story, and the specimens and photographs he would bring with him. But I am beginning now to fear that I must wait a lifetime. The Time Traveller vanished three years ago. And, as everybody knows now, he has never returned.

EPILOGUE

One cannot choose but wonder. Will he ever return? It may be that he swept back into the past, and fell among the blood-drinking, hairy savages of the Age of Unpolished Stone; into the abysses of the Cretaceous Sea; or among the grotesque saurians, the huge reptilian brutes of the Jurassic times. He may even now--if I may use the phrase--be wandering on some plesiosaurus-haunted Oolitic coral reef, or beside the lonely saline lakes of the Triassic Age. Or did he go forward, into one of the nearer ages, in which men are still men, but with the riddles of our own time answered and its wearisome problems solved? Into the manhood of the race: for I, for my own part cannot think that these latter days of weak experiment, fragmentary theory, and mutual discord are indeed man's culminating time! I say, for my own part. He, I know--for the question had been discussed among us long before the Time Machine was made--thought but cheerlessly of the Advancement of Mankind, and saw in the growing pile of civilization only a foolish heaping that must inevitably fall back upon and destroy its makers in the end. If that is so, it remains for us to live as though it were not so. But to me the future is still black and blank--is a vast ignorance, lit at a few casual places by the memory of his story. And I have by me, for my comfort, two strange white flowers--shrivelled now, and brown and flat and brittle--to witness that even when mind and strength had gone, gratitude and a mutual tenderness still lived on in the heart of man.

THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU

**by
H. G. Wells
1896**

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INTRODUCTION.

ON February the First 1887, the Lady Vain was lost by collision with a derelict when about the latitude 1' S. and longitude 107' W.

On January the Fifth, 1888--that is eleven months and four days after--my uncle, Edward Prendick, a private gentleman, who certainly went aboard the Lady Vain at Callao, and who had been considered drowned, was picked up in latitude 5' 3" S. and longitude 101' W. in a small open boat of which the name was illegible, but which is supposed to have belonged to the missing schooner Ipecacuanha. He gave such a strange account of himself that he was supposed demented.

Subsequently he alleged that his mind was a blank from the moment of his escape from the Lady Vain. His case was discussed among psychologists at the time as a curious instance of the lapse of memory consequent upon physical and mental stress.

The following narrative was found among his papers by the undersigned, his nephew and heir, but unaccompanied by any definite request for publication.

The only island known to exist in the region in which my uncle was picked up is Noble's Isle, a small volcanic islet and uninhabited. It was visited in 1891 by H. M. S. Scorpion. A party of sailors then landed, but found nothing living thereon except certain curious white moths, some hogs and rabbits, and some rather peculiar rats. So that this narrative is without confirmation in its most essential particular. With that understood, there seems no harm in putting this strange story before the public in accordance, as I believe, with my uncle's intentions. There is at least this much in its behalf: my uncle passed out of human knowledge

about latitude 5' S. and longitude 105' E., and reappeared in the same part of the ocean after a space of eleven months. In some way he must have lived during the interval. And it seems that a schooner called the Ipecacuanha with a drunken captain, John Davies, did start from Africa with a puma and certain other animals aboard in January, 1887, that the vessel was well known at several ports in the South Pacific, and that it finally disappeared from those seas (with a considerable amount of copra aboard), sailing to its unknown fate from Bayna in December, 1887, a date that tallies entirely with my uncle's story.

CHARLES EDWARD PRENDICK.

(The Story written by Edward Prendick.)

I. IN THE DINGEY OF THE "LADY VAIN."

I DO not propose to add anything to what has already been written concerning the loss of the "Lady Vain." As everyone knows, she collided with a derelict when ten days out from Callao. The longboat, with seven of the crew, was picked up eighteen days after by H. M. gunboat "Myrtle," and the story of their terrible privations has become quite as well known as the far more horrible "Medusa" case. But I have to add to the published story of the "Lady Vain" another, possibly as horrible and far stranger. It has hitherto been supposed that the four men who were in the dingey perished, but this is incorrect. I have the best of evidence for this assertion: I was one of the four men.

But in the first place I must state that there never were four men in the dingey,--the number was three. Constans, who was "seen by the captain to jump into the gig,"^{<1>} luckily for us and unluckily for himself did not reach us. He came down out of the tangle of ropes under the stays of the smashed bowsprit, some small rope caught his heel as he let go, and he hung for a moment head downward, and then fell and struck a block or spar floating in the water. We pulled towards him, but he never came up.

^{<1>} Daily News, March 17, 1887.

I say lucky for us he did not reach us, and I might almost say luckily for himself; for we had only a small breaker of water and some soddened ship's biscuits with us, so sudden had been the alarm, so unprepared the ship for any disaster. We thought the people on the launch would be better provisioned (though it seems they were not), and we tried to hail them. They could not have heard us, and the next morning when the drizzle cleared,--which was not until past midday,--we could see nothing of them. We could

not stand up to look about us, because of the pitching of the boat. The two other men who had escaped so far with me were a man named Helmar, a passenger like myself, and a seaman whose name I don't know,-- a short sturdy man, with a stammer.

We drifted famishing, and, after our water had come to an end, tormented by an intolerable thirst, for eight days altogether. After the second day the sea subsided slowly to a glassy calm. It is quite impossible for the ordinary reader to imagine those eight days. He has not, luckily for himself, anything in his memory to imagine with. After the first day we said little to one another, and lay in our places in the boat and stared at the horizon, or watched, with eyes that grew larger and more haggard every day, the misery and weakness gaining upon our companions. The sun became pitiless. The water ended on the fourth day, and we were already thinking strange things and saying them with our eyes; but it was, I think, the sixth before Helmar gave voice to the thing we had all been thinking. I remember our voices were dry and thin, so that we bent towards one another and spared our words. I stood out against it with all my might, was rather for scuttling the boat and perishing together among the sharks that followed us; but when Helmar said that if his proposal was accepted we should have drink, the sailor came round to him.

I would not draw lots however, and in the night the sailor whispered to Helmar again and again, and I sat in the bows with my clasp-knife in my hand, though I doubt if I had the stuff in me to fight; and in the morning I agreed to Helmar's proposal, and we handed halfpence to find the odd man. The lot fell upon the sailor; but he was the strongest of us and would not abide by it, and attacked Helmar with his hands. They grappled together and almost stood up. I crawled along the boat to them, intending to help Helmar by grasping the sailor's leg; but the sailor stumbled with the swaying of the boat, and the two fell upon the gunwale and rolled overboard together.

They sank like stones. I remember laughing at that, and wondering why I laughed. The laugh caught me suddenly like a thing from without.

I lay across one of the thwarts for I know not how long, thinking that if I had the strength I would drink sea-water and madden myself to die quickly. And even as I lay there I saw, with no more interest than if it had been a picture, a sail come up towards me over the sky-line. My mind must have been wandering, and yet I remember all that happened, quite distinctly. I remember how my head swayed with the seas, and the horizon with the sail above it danced up and down; but I also remember as distinctly that I had a persuasion that I was dead, and that I thought what a jest it was that they should come too late by such a little to catch me in my body.

For an endless period, as it seemed to me, I lay with my head on the thwart watching the schooner (she was a little ship, schooner-rigged fore and aft) come up out of the sea. She kept tacking to and fro in a widening compass, for she was sailing dead into the wind. It never entered my head to attempt to attract attention, and I do not remember anything distinctly after the sight of her side until I found myself in a little cabin aft. There's a dim half-memory of being lifted up to the gangway, and of a big red countenance covered with freckles and surrounded with red hair staring at me over the bulwarks. I also had a disconnected impression of a dark face, with extraordinary eyes, close to mine; but that I thought was a nightmare, until I met it again. I fancy I recollect some stuff being poured in between my teeth; and that is all.

II. THE MAN WHO WAS GOING NOWHERE

THE cabin in which I found myself was small and rather untidy. A youngish man with flaxen hair, a bristly straw-coloured moustache, and a dropping nether lip, was sitting and holding my wrist. For a minute we stared at each other without speaking. He had watery grey eyes, oddly void of expression. Then just overhead came a sound like an iron bedstead being knocked about, and the low angry growling of some large animal. At the same time the man spoke. He repeated his question,--"How do you feel now?"

I think I said I felt all right. I could not recollect how I had got there. He must have seen the question in my face, for my voice was inaccessible to me.

"You were picked up in a boat, starving. The name on the boat was the `Lady Vain,' and there were spots of blood on the gunwale."

At the same time my eye caught my hand, thin so that it looked like a dirty skin-purse full of loose bones, and all the business of the boat came back to me.

"Have some of this," said he, and gave me a dose of some scarlet stuff, iced.

It tasted like blood, and made me feel stronger.

"You were in luck," said he, "to get picked up by a ship with a medical man aboard." He spoke with a slobbering articulation, with the ghost of a lisp.

"What ship is this?" I said slowly, hoarse from my long silence.

"It's a little trader from Arica and Callao. I never asked where she came from in the beginning,--out of the land of born fools, I guess. I'm a passenger myself, from Arica. The silly ass who owns her,--he's captain too, named Davies,--he's lost his certificate, or something. You know the kind of man,--calls the thing the `Ipecacuanha,' of all silly, infernal names; though when there's much of a sea without any wind, she certainly acts according."

(Then the noise overhead began again, a snarling growl and the voice of a human being together. Then another voice, telling some "Heaven-forsaken idiot" to desist.)

"You were nearly dead," said my interlocutor. "It was a very near thing, indeed. But I've put some stuff into you now. Notice your arm's sore? Injections. You've been insensible for nearly thirty hours."

I thought slowly. (I was distracted now by the yelping of a number of dogs.) "Am I eligible for solid food?" I asked.

"Thanks to me," he said. "Even now the mutton is boiling."

"Yes," I said with assurance; "I could eat some mutton."

"But," said he with a momentary hesitation, "you know I'm dying to hear of how you came to be alone in that boat. Damn that howling!"

I thought I detected a certain suspicion in his eyes.

He suddenly left the cabin, and I heard him in violent controversy with some one, who seemed to me to talk gibberish in response to him. The matter sounded as though it ended in blows, but in that I thought my ears were mistaken. Then he shouted at the dogs, and returned to the cabin.

"Well?" said he in the doorway. "You were just beginning to tell me."

I told him my name, Edward Prendick, and how I had taken to Natural History as a relief from the dulness of my comfortable independence.

He seemed interested in this. "I've done some science myself. I did my Biology at University College,--getting out the ovary of the earthworm and the radula of the snail, and all that. Lord! It's ten years ago. But go on! go on! tell me about the boat."

He was evidently satisfied with the frankness of my story, which I told in concise sentences enough, for I felt horribly weak; and when it was finished he reverted at once to the topic of Natural History and his own biological studies. He began to question me closely about Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street. "Is Caplatzi still flourishing? What a shop that was!" He had evidently been a very ordinary medical student, and drifted incontinently to the topic of the music halls. He told me some anecdotes.

"Left it all," he said, "ten years ago. How jolly it all used to be! But I made a young ass of myself,--played myself out before I was twenty-one. I daresay it's all different now. But I must look up that ass of a cook, and see what he's done to your mutton."

The growling overhead was renewed, so suddenly and with so much savage anger that it startled me. "What's that?" I called after him, but the door had closed. He came back again with the boiled mutton, and I was so excited by the appetising smell of it that I forgot the noise of the beast that had troubled me.

After a day of alternate sleep and feeding I was so far recovered as to be able to get from my bunk to the scuttle, and see the green seas trying to keep pace with us. I judged the schooner was running

before the wind. Montgomery--that was the name of the flaxen-haired man--

came in again as I stood there, and I asked him for some clothes.

He lent me some duck things of his own, for those I had worn in the boat had been thrown overboard. They were rather loose for me, for he was large and long in his limbs. He told me casually that the captain was three-parts drunk in his own cabin. As I assumed the clothes, I began asking him some questions about the destination of the ship. He said the ship was bound to Hawaii, but that it had to land him first.

"Where?" said I.

"It's an island, where I live. So far as I know, it hasn't got a name."

He stared at me with his nether lip dropping, and looked so wilfully stupid of a sudden that it came into my head that he desired to avoid my questions. I had the discretion to ask no more.

III. THE STRANGE FACE.

WE left the cabin and found a man at the companion obstructing our way. He was standing on the ladder with his back to us, peering over the combing of the hatchway. He was, I could see, a misshapen man, short, broad, and clumsy, with a crooked back, a hairy neck, and a head sunk between his shoulders. He was dressed in dark-blue serge, and had peculiarly thick, coarse, black hair. I heard the unseen dogs growl furiously, and forthwith he ducked back,-- coming into contact with the hand I put out to fend him off from myself. He turned with animal swiftness.

In some indefinable way the black face thus flashed upon me shocked me profoundly. It was a singularly deformed one. The facial part projected, forming something dimly suggestive of a muzzle, and the huge half-open mouth showed as big white teeth as I had ever seen in a human mouth. His eyes were blood-shot at the edges, with scarcely a rim of white round the hazel pupils. There was a curious glow of excitement in his face.

"Confound you!" said Montgomery. "Why the devil don't you get out of the way?"

The black-faced man started aside without a word. I went on up the companion, staring at him instinctively as I did so. Montgomery stayed at the foot for a moment. "You have no business here, you know," he said in a deliberate tone. "Your place is forward."

The black-faced man cowered. "They--won't have me forward." He spoke slowly, with a queer, hoarse quality in his voice.

"Won't have you forward!" said Montgomery, in a menacing voice. "But I tell you to go!" He was on the brink of saying something further,

then looked up at me suddenly and followed me up the ladder.

I had paused half way through the hatchway, looking back, still astonished beyond measure at the grotesque ugliness of this black-faced creature. I had never beheld such a repulsive and extraordinary face before, and yet--if the contradiction is credible--I experienced at the same time an odd feeling that in some way I had already encountered exactly the features and gestures that now amazed me. Afterwards it occurred to me that probably I had seen him as I was lifted aboard; and yet that scarcely satisfied my suspicion of a previous acquaintance. Yet how one could have set eyes on so singular a face and yet have forgotten the precise occasion, passed my imagination.

Montgomery's movement to follow me released my attention, and I turned and looked about me at the flush deck of the little schooner. I was already half prepared by the sounds I had heard for what I saw. Certainly I never beheld a deck so dirty. It was littered with scraps of carrot, shreds of green stuff, and indescribable filth. Fastened by chains to the mainmast were a number of grisly staghounds, who now began leaping and barking at me, and by the mizzen a huge puma was cramped in a little iron cage far too small even to give it turning room. Farther under the starboard bulwark were some big hutches containing a number of rabbits, and a solitary llama was squeezed in a mere box of a cage forward. The dogs were muzzled by leather straps. The only human being on deck was a gaunt and silent sailor at the wheel.

The patched and dirty spankers were tense before the wind, and up aloft the little ship seemed carrying every sail she had. The sky was clear, the sun midway down the western sky; long waves, capped by the breeze with froth, were running with us. We went past the steersman to the taffrail, and saw the water come foaming under the stern and the bubbles go dancing and vanishing

in her wake. I turned and surveyed the unsavoury length of the ship.

"Is this an ocean menagerie?" said I.

"Looks like it," said Montgomery.

"What are these beasts for? Merchandise, curios? Does the captain think he is going to sell them somewhere in the South Seas?"

"It looks like it, doesn't it?" said Montgomery, and turned towards the wake again.

Suddenly we heard a yelp and a volley of furious blasphemy from the companion hatchway, and the deformed man with the black face came up hurriedly. He was immediately followed by a heavy red-haired man in a white cap. At the sight of the former the staghounds, who had all tired of barking at me by this time, became furiously excited, howling and leaping against their chains. The black hesitated before them, and this gave the red-haired man time to come up with him and deliver a tremendous blow between the shoulder-blades. The poor devil went down like a felled ox, and rolled in the dirt among the furiously excited dogs.

It was lucky for him that they were muzzled. The red-haired man gave a yawp of exultation and stood staggering, and as it seemed to me in serious danger of either going backwards down the companion hatchway or forwards upon his victim.

So soon as the second man had appeared, Montgomery had started forward.

"Steady on there!" he cried, in a tone of remonstrance.

A couple of sailors appeared on the forecastle. The black-faced man, howling in a singular voice rolled about under the feet of the dogs. No one attempted to help him. The brutes did their best to worry him,

butting their muzzles at him. There was a quick dance of their lithe grey-figured bodies over the clumsy, prostrate figure. The sailors forward shouted, as though it was admirable sport. Montgomery gave an angry exclamation, and went striding down the deck, and I followed him. The black-faced man scrambled up and staggered forward, going and leaning over the bulwark by the main shrouds, where he remained, panting and glaring over his shoulder at the dogs. The red-haired man laughed a satisfied laugh.

"Look here, Captain," said Montgomery, with his lisp a little accentuated, gripping the elbows of the red-haired man, "this won't do!"

I stood behind Montgomery. The captain came half round, and regarded him with the dull and solemn eyes of a drunken man. "Wha' won't do?" he said, and added, after looking sleepily into Montgomery's face for a minute, "Blasted Sawbones!"

With a sudden movement he shook his arm free, and after two ineffectual attempts stuck his freckled fists into his side pockets.

"That man's a passenger," said Montgomery. "I'd advise you to keep your hands off him."

"Go to hell!" said the captain, loudly. He suddenly turned and staggered towards the side. "Do what I like on my own ship," he said.

I think Montgomery might have left him then, seeing the brute was drunk; but he only turned a shade paler, and followed the captain to the bulwarks.

"Look you here, Captain," he said; "that man of mine is not to be ill-treated. He has been hazed ever since he came aboard."

For a minute, alcoholic fumes kept the captain speechless. "Blasted Sawbones!" was all he considered necessary.

I could see that Montgomery had one of those slow, pertinacious tempers that will warm day after day to a white heat, and never again cool to forgiveness; and I saw too that this quarrel had been some time growing. "The man's drunk," said I, perhaps officiously; "you'll do no good."

Montgomery gave an ugly twist to his dropping lip. "He's always drunk. Do you think that excuses his assaulting his passengers?"

"My ship," began the captain, waving his hand unsteadily towards the cages, "was a clean ship. Look at it now!" It was certainly anything but clean. "Crew," continued the captain, "clean, respectable crew."

"You agreed to take the beasts."

"I wish I'd never set eyes on your infernal island. What the devil--want beasts for on an island like that? Then, that man of yours--understood he was a man. He's a lunatic; and he hadn't no business aft. Do you think the whole damned ship belongs to you?"

"Your sailors began to haze the poor devil as soon as he came aboard."

"That's just what he is--he's a devil! an ugly devil! My men can't stand him. I can't stand him. None of us can't stand him. Nor you either!"

Montgomery turned away. "You leave that man alone, anyhow," he said, nodding his head as he spoke.

But the captain meant to quarrel now. He raised his voice. "If he comes this end of the ship again I'll cut his insides out, I tell you."

Cut out his blasted insides! Who are you, to tell me what I'm to do?
I tell you I'm captain of this ship,--captain and owner.
I'm the law here, I tell you,--the law and the prophets.
I bargained to take a man and his attendant to and from Arica,
and bring back some animals. I never bargained to carry a mad devil
and a silly Sawbones, a--"

Well, never mind what he called Montgomery. I saw the latter take
a step forward, and interposed. "He's drunk," said I. The captain
began some abuse even fouler than the last. "Shut up!" I said,
turning on him sharply, for I had seen danger in Montgomery's white face.
With that I brought the downpour on myself.

However, I was glad to avert what was uncommonly near a scuffle,
even at the price of the captain's drunken ill-will. I do not think
I have ever heard quite so much vile language come in a continuous
stream from any man's lips before, though I have frequented eccentric
company enough. I found some of it hard to endure, though I am
a mild-tempered man; but, certainly, when I told the captain to
"shut up" I had forgotten that I was merely a bit of human flotsam,
cut off from my resources and with my fare unpaid; a mere casual
dependant on the bounty, or speculative enterprise, of the ship.
He reminded me of it with considerable vigour; but at any rate I prevented
a fight.

IV. AT THE SCHOONER'S RAIL.

THAT night land was sighted after sundown, and the schooner hove to. Montgomery intimated that was his destination.

It was too far to see any details; it seemed to me then simply a low-lying patch of dim blue in the uncertain blue-grey sea.

An almost vertical streak of smoke went up from it into the sky.

The captain was not on deck when it was sighted. After he had vented his wrath on me he had staggered below, and I understand he went to sleep on the floor of his own cabin. The mate practically assumed the command.

He was the gaunt, taciturn individual we had seen at the wheel.

Apparently he was in an evil temper with Montgomery. He took not the slightest notice of either of us. We dined with him in a sulky silence, after a few ineffectual efforts on my part to talk.

It struck me too that the men regarded my companion and his animals in a singularly unfriendly manner. I found Montgomery very reticent about his purpose with these creatures, and about his destination; and though I was sensible of a growing curiosity as to both, I did not press him.

We remained talking on the quarter deck until the sky was thick with stars. Except for an occasional sound in the yellow-lit forecastle and a movement of the animals now and then, the night was very still. The puma lay crouched together, watching us with shining eyes, a black heap in the corner of its cage. Montgomery produced some cigars. He talked to me of London in a tone of half-painful reminiscence, asking all kinds of questions about changes that had taken place. He spoke like a man who had loved his life there, and had been suddenly and irrevocably cut off from it. I gossiped as well as I could of this and that. All the time the strangeness of him was shaping itself in my mind; and as I talked I peered at his odd, pallid face in the dim light of the binnacle lantern behind me. Then I looked out at the darkling sea, where in the dimness his little island

was hidden.

This man, it seemed to me, had come out of Immensity merely to save my life. To-morrow he would drop over the side, and vanish again out of my existence. Even had it been under commonplace circumstances, it would have made me a trifle thoughtful; but in the first place was the singularity of an educated man living on this unknown little island, and coupled with that the extraordinary nature of his luggage.

I found myself repeating the captain's question, What did he want with the beasts? Why, too, had he pretended they were not his when I had remarked about them at first? Then, again, in his personal attendant there was a bizarre quality which had impressed me profoundly.

These circumstances threw a haze of mystery round the man. They laid hold of my imagination, and hampered my tongue.

Towards midnight our talk of London died away, and we stood side by side leaning over the bulwarks and staring dreamily over the silent, starlit sea, each pursuing his own thoughts. It was the atmosphere for sentiment, and I began upon my gratitude.

"If I may say it," said I, after a time, "you have saved my life."

"Chance," he answered. "Just chance."

"I prefer to make my thanks to the accessible agent."

"Thank no one. You had the need, and I had the knowledge; and I injected and fed you much as I might have collected a specimen. I was bored and wanted something to do. If I'd been jaded that day, or hadn't liked your face, well--it's a curious question where you would have been now!"

This damped my mood a little. "At any rate," I began.

"It's chance, I tell you," he interrupted, "as everything is in

a man's life. Only the asses won't see it! Why am I here now, an outcast from civilisation, instead of being a happy man enjoying all the pleasures of London? Simply because eleven years ago-- I lost my head for ten minutes on a foggy night."

He stopped. "Yes?" said I.

"That's all."

We relapsed into silence. Presently he laughed.

"There's something in this starlight that loosens one's tongue. I'm an ass, and yet somehow I would like to tell you."

"Whatever you tell me, you may rely upon my keeping to myself-- if that's it."

He was on the point of beginning, and then shook his head, doubtfully.

"Don't," said I. "It is all the same to me. After all, it is better to keep your secret. There's nothing gained but a little relief if I respect your confidence. If I don't--well?"

He grunted undecidedly. I felt I had him at a disadvantage, had caught him in the mood of indiscretion; and to tell the truth I was not curious to learn what might have driven a young medical student out of London. I have an imagination. I shrugged my shoulders and turned away. Over the taffrail leant a silent black figure, watching the stars. It was Montgomery's strange attendant. It looked over its shoulder quickly with my movement, then looked away again.

It may seem a little thing to you, perhaps, but it came like a sudden blow to me. The only light near us was a lantern at the wheel. The creature's face was turned for one brief instant out of the dimness of the stern towards this illumination, and I saw that the eyes that glanced at me shone with a pale-green light. I did not know then

that a reddish luminosity, at least, is not uncommon in human eyes. The thing came to me as stark inhumanity. That black figure with its eyes of fire struck down through all my adult thoughts and feelings, and for a moment the forgotten horrors of childhood came back to my mind.

Then the effect passed as it had come. An uncouth black figure of a man, a figure of no particular import, hung over the taffrail against the starlight, and I found Montgomery was speaking to me.

"I'm thinking of turning in, then," said he, "if you've had enough of this."

I answered him incongruously. We went below, and he wished me good-night at the door of my cabin.

That night I had some very unpleasant dreams. The waning moon rose late. Its light struck a ghostly white beam across my cabin, and made an ominous shape on the planking by my bunk. Then the staghounds woke, and began howling and baying; so that I dreamt fitfully, and scarcely slept until the approach of dawn.

V. THE MAN WHO HAD NOWHERE TO GO.

IN the early morning (it was the second morning after my recovery, and I believe the fourth after I was picked up), I awoke through an avenue of tumultuous dreams,--dreams of guns and howling mobs,--and became sensible of a hoarse shouting above me. I rubbed my eyes and lay listening to the noise, doubtful for a little while of my whereabouts. Then came a sudden pattering of bare feet, the sound of heavy objects being thrown about, a violent creaking and the rattling of chains. I heard the swish of the water as the ship was suddenly brought round, and a foamy yellow-green wave flew across the little round window and left it streaming. I jumped into my clothes and went on deck.

As I came up the ladder I saw against the flushed sky--for the sun was just rising--the broad back and red hair of the captain, and over his shoulder the puma spinning from a tackle rigged on to the mizzen spanker-boom.

The poor brute seemed horribly scared, and crouched in the bottom of its little cage.

"Overboard with 'em!" bawled the captain. "Overboard with 'em! We'll have a clean ship soon of the whole bilin' of 'em."

He stood in my way, so that I had perforce to tap his shoulder to come on deck. He came round with a start, and staggered back a few paces to stare at me. It needed no expert eye to tell that the man was still drunk.

"Hullo!" said he, stupidly; and then with a light coming into his eyes, "Why, it's Mister--Mister?"

"Prendick," said I.

"Pendick be damned!" said he. "Shut-up,--that's your name. Mister Shut-up."

It was no good answering the brute; but I certainly did not expect his next move. He held out his hand to the gangway by which Montgomery stood talking to a massive grey-haired man in dirty-blue flannels, who had apparently just come aboard.

"That way, Mister Blasted Shut-up! that way!" roared the captain.

Montgomery and his companion turned as he spoke.

"What do you mean?" I said.

"That way, Mister Blasted Shut-up,--that's what I mean! Overboard, Mister Shut-up,--and sharp! We're cleaning the ship out,--cleaning the whole blessed ship out; and overboard you go!"

I stared at him dumfounded. Then it occurred to me that it was exactly the thing I wanted. The lost prospect of a journey as sole passenger with this quarrelsome sot was not one to mourn over. I turned towards Montgomery.

"Can't have you," said Montgomery's companion, concisely.

"You can't have me!" said I, aghast. He had the squarest and most resolute face I ever set eyes upon.

"Look here," I began, turning to the captain.

"Overboard!" said the captain. "This ship aint for beasts and cannibals and worse than beasts, any more. Overboard you go, Mister Shut-up. If they can't have you, you goes overboard."

But, anyhow, you go--with your friends. I've done with this blessed island for evermore, amen! I've had enough of it."

"But, Montgomery," I appealed.

He distorted his lower lip, and nodded his head hopelessly at the grey-haired man beside him, to indicate his powerlessness to help me.

"I'll see to you, presently," said the captain.

Then began a curious three-cornered altercation.

Alternately I appealed to one and another of the three men,-- first to the grey-haired man to let me land, and then to the drunken captain to keep me aboard. I even bawled entreaties to the sailors. Montgomery said never a word, only shook his head.

"You're going overboard, I tell you," was the captain's refrain.

"Law be damned! I'm king here." At last I must confess my voice suddenly broke in the middle of a vigorous threat.

I felt a gust of hysterical petulance, and went aft and stared dismally at nothing.

Meanwhile the sailors progressed rapidly with the task of unshipping the packages and caged animals. A large launch, with two standing lugs, lay under the lea of the schooner; and into this the strange assortment of goods were swung. I did not then see the hands from the island that were receiving the packages, for the hull of the launch was hidden from me by the side of the schooner. Neither Montgomery nor his companion took the slightest notice of me, but busied themselves in assisting and directing the four or five sailors who were unloading the goods. The captain went forward interfering rather than assisting. I was alternately despairful and desperate. Once or twice as I stood waiting there for things to accomplish themselves, I could not resist an impulse to laugh at my miserable quandary. I felt all the wretchered for the lack of a breakfast.

Hunger and a lack of blood-corpuscles take all the manhood from a man. I perceived pretty clearly that I had not the stamina either to resist what the captain chose to do to expel me, or to force myself upon Montgomery and his companion. So I waited passively upon fate; and the work of transferring Montgomery's possessions to the launch went on as if I did not exist.

Presently that work was finished, and then came a struggle. I was hauled, resisting weakly enough, to the gangway. Even then I noticed the oddness of the brown faces of the men who were with Montgomery in the launch; but the launch was now fully laden, and was shoved off hastily. A broadening gap of green water appeared under me, and I pushed back with all my strength to avoid falling headlong. The hands in the launch shouted derisively, and I heard Montgomery curse at them; and then the captain, the mate, and one of the seamen helping him, ran me aft towards the stern.

The dingey of the "Lady Vain" had been towing behind; it was half full of water, had no oars, and was quite unvictualled. I refused to go aboard her, and flung myself full length on the deck. In the end, they swung me into her by a rope (for they had no stern ladder), and then they cut me adrift. I drifted slowly from the schooner. In a kind of stupor I watched all hands take to the rigging, and slowly but surely she came round to the wind; the sails fluttered, and then bellied out as the wind came into them. I stared at her weather-beaten side heeling steeply towards me; and then she passed out of my range of view.

I did not turn my head to follow her. At first I could scarcely believe what had happened. I crouched in the bottom of the dingey, stunned, and staring blankly at the vacant, oily sea. Then I realized that I was in that little hell of mine again, now half swamped; and looking back over the gunwale, I saw the schooner standing away

from me, with the red-haired captain mocking at me over the taffrail, and turning towards the island saw the launch growing smaller as she approached the beach.

Abruptly the cruelty of this desertion became clear to me.

I had no means of reaching the land unless I should chance to drift there.

I was still weak, you must remember, from my exposure in the boat;

I was empty and very faint, or I should have had more heart.

But as it was I suddenly began to sob and weep, as I had never done since I was a little child. The tears ran down my face. In a passion of despair I struck with my fists at the water in the bottom of the boat, and kicked savagely at the gunwale. I prayed aloud for God to let me die.

VI. THE EVIL-LOOKING BOATMEN.

BUT the islanders, seeing that I was really adrift, took pity on me. I drifted very slowly to the eastward, approaching the island slantingly; and presently I saw, with hysterical relief, the launch come round and return towards me. She was heavily laden, and I could make out as she drew nearer Montgomery's white-haired, broad-shouldered companion sitting cramped up with the dogs and several packing-cases in the stern sheets. This individual stared fixedly at me without moving or speaking. The black-faced cripple was glaring at me as fixedly in the bows near the puma. There were three other men besides,--three strange brutish-looking fellows, at whom the staghounds were snarling savagely. Montgomery, who was steering, brought the boat by me, and rising, caught and fastened my painter to the tiller to tow me, for there was no room aboard.

I had recovered from my hysterical phase by this time and answered his hail, as he approached, bravely enough. I told him the dingey was nearly swamped, and he reached me a piggin. I was jerked back as the rope tightened between the boats. For some time I was busy baling.

It was not until I had got the water under (for the water in the dingey had been shipped; the boat was perfectly sound) that I had leisure to look at the people in the launch again.

The white-haired man I found was still regarding me steadfastly, but with an expression, as I now fancied, of some perplexity. When my eyes met his, he looked down at the staghound that sat between his knees. He was a powerfully-built man, as I have said, with a fine forehead and rather heavy features; but his eyes had that odd drooping of the skin above the lids which often comes with advancing years, and the fall of his heavy mouth

at the corners gave him an expression of pugnacious resolution. He talked to Montgomery in a tone too low for me to hear.

From him my eyes travelled to his three men; and a strange crew they were.

I saw only their faces, yet there was something in their faces-- I knew not what--that gave me a queer spasm of disgust.

I looked steadily at them, and the impression did not pass, though I failed to see what had occasioned it. They seemed to me then to be brown men; but their limbs were oddly swathed in some thin, dirty, white stuff down even to the fingers and feet: I have never seen men so wrapped up before, and women so only in the East.

They wore turbans too, and thereunder peered out their elfin faces at me,--faces with protruding lower-jaws and bright eyes.

They had lank black hair, almost like horsehair, and seemed as they sat to exceed in stature any race of men I have seen.

The white-haired man, who I knew was a good six feet in height, sat a head below any one of the three. I found afterwards that really none were taller than myself; but their bodies were abnormally long, and the thigh-part of the leg short and curiously twisted.

At any rate, they were an amazingly ugly gang, and over the heads of them under the forward lug peered the black face of the man whose eyes were luminous in the dark. As I stared at them, they met my gaze; and then first one and then another turned away from my direct stare, and looked at me in an odd, furtive manner. It occurred to me that I was perhaps annoying them, and I turned my attention to the island we were approaching.

It was low, and covered with thick vegetation,--chiefly a kind of palm, that was new to me. From one point a thin white thread of vapour rose slantingly to an immense height, and then frayed out like a down feather. We were now within the embrace of a broad bay flanked on either hand by a low promontory. The beach was of dull-grey sand, and sloped steeply up to a ridge, perhaps sixty or seventy feet above

the sea-level, and irregularly set with trees and undergrowth. Half way up was a square enclosure of some greyish stone, which I found subsequently was built partly of coral and partly of pumiceous lava. Two thatched roofs peeped from within this enclosure. A man stood awaiting us at the water's edge. I fancied while we were still far off that I saw some other and very grotesque-looking creatures scuttle into the bushes upon the slope; but I saw nothing of these as we drew nearer. This man was of a moderate size, and with a black negroid face. He had a large, almost lipless, mouth, extraordinary lank arms, long thin feet, and bow-legs, and stood with his heavy face thrust forward staring at us. He was dressed like Montgomery and his white-haired companion, in jacket and trousers of blue serge. As we came still nearer, this individual began to run to and fro on the beach, making the most grotesque movements.

At a word of command from Montgomery, the four men in the launch sprang up, and with singularly awkward gestures struck the lugs. Montgomery steered us round and into a narrow little dock excavated in the beach. Then the man on the beach hastened towards us. This dock, as I call it, was really a mere ditch just long enough at this phase of the tide to take the longboat. I heard the bows ground in the sand, staved the dingey off the rudder of the big boat with my piggin, and freeing the painter, landed. The three muffled men, with the clumsiest movements, scrambled out upon the sand, and forthwith set to landing the cargo, assisted by the man on the beach. I was struck especially by the curious movements of the legs of the three swathed and bandaged boatmen,--not stiff they were, but distorted in some odd way, almost as if they were jointed in the wrong place. The dogs were still snarling, and strained at their chains after these men, as the white-haired man landed with them. The three big fellows spoke to one another in odd guttural tones, and the man who had waited for us on the beach began chattering to them excitedly--a foreign language, as I fancied--as they laid hands on some bales piled near the stern.

Somewhere I had heard such a voice before, and I could not think where. The white-haired man stood, holding in a tumult of six dogs, and bawling orders over their din. Montgomery, having unshipped the rudder, landed likewise, and all set to work at unloading. I was too faint, what with my long fast and the sun beating down on my bare head, to offer any assistance.

Presently the white-haired man seemed to recollect my presence, and came up to me.

"You look," said he, "as though you had scarcely breakfasted." His little eyes were a brilliant black under his heavy brows. "I must apologise for that. Now you are our guest, we must make you comfortable,--though you are uninvited, you know." He looked keenly into my face. "Montgomery says you are an educated man, Mr. Prendick; says you know something of science. May I ask what that signifies?"

I told him I had spent some years at the Royal College of Science, and had done some researches in biology under Huxley. He raised his eyebrows slightly at that.

"That alters the case a little, Mr. Prendick," he said, with a trifle more respect in his manner. "As it happens, we are biologists here. This is a biological station--of a sort." His eye rested on the men in white who were busily hauling the puma, on rollers, towards the walled yard. "I and Montgomery, at least," he added. Then, "When you will be able to get away, I can't say. We're off the track to anywhere. We see a ship once in a twelve-month or so."

He left me abruptly, and went up the beach past this group, and I think entered the enclosure. The other two men were with Montgomery,

erecting a pile of smaller packages on a low-wheeled truck. The llama was still on the launch with the rabbit hutches; the staghounds were still lashed to the thwarts. The pile of things completed, all three men laid hold of the truck and began shoving the ton-weight or so upon it after the puma. Presently Montgomery left them, and coming back to me held out his hand.

"I'm glad," said he, "for my own part. That captain was a silly ass. He'd have made things lively for you."

"It was you," said I, "that saved me again".

"That depends. You'll find this island an infernally rum place, I promise you. I'd watch my goings carefully, if I were you. He--" He hesitated, and seemed to alter his mind about what was on his lips. "I wish you'd help me with these rabbits," he said.

His procedure with the rabbits was singular. I waded in with him, and helped him lug one of the hutches ashore. No sooner was that done than he opened the door of it, and tilting the thing on one end turned its living contents out on the ground. They fell in a struggling heap one on the top of the other. He clapped his hands, and forthwith they went off with that hopping run of theirs, fifteen or twenty of them I should think, up the beach.

"Increase and multiply, my friends," said Montgomery. "Replenish the island. Hitherto we've had a certain lack of meat here."

As I watched them disappearing, the white-haired man returned with a brandy-flask and some biscuits. "Something to go on with, Prendick," said he, in a far more familiar tone than before. I made no ado, but set to work on the biscuits at once, while the white-haired man

helped Montgomery to release about a score more of the rabbits.
Three big hutches, however, went up to the house with the puma.
The brandy I did not touch, for I have been an abstainer from
my birth.

VII. "THE LOCKED DOOR."

THE reader will perhaps understand that at first everything was so strange about me, and my position was the outcome of such unexpected adventures,

that I had no discernment of the relative strangeness of this or that thing. I followed the llama up the beach, and was overtaken by Montgomery, who asked me not to enter the stone enclosure. I noticed then that the puma in its cage and the pile of packages had been placed outside the entrance to this quadrangle.

I turned and saw that the launch had now been unloaded, run out again, and was being beached, and the white-haired man was walking towards us.

He addressed Montgomery.

"And now comes the problem of this uninvited guest. What are we to do with him?"

"He knows something of science," said Montgomery.

"I'm itching to get to work again--with this new stuff," said the white-haired man, nodding towards the enclosure. His eyes grew brighter.

"I daresay you are," said Montgomery, in anything but a cordial tone.

"We can't send him over there, and we can't spare the time to build him a new shanty; and we certainly can't take him into our confidence just yet."

"I'm in your hands," said I. I had no idea of what he meant by "over there."

"I've been thinking of the same things," Montgomery answered.
"There's my room with the outer door--"

"That's it," said the elder man, promptly, looking at Montgomery; and all three of us went towards the enclosure. "I'm sorry to make a mystery, Mr. Prendick; but you'll remember you're uninvited. Our little establishment here contains a secret or so, is a kind of Blue-Beard's chamber, in fact. Nothing very dreadful, really, to a sane man; but just now, as we don't know you--"

"Decidedly," said I, "I should be a fool to take offence at any want of confidence."

He twisted his heavy mouth into a faint smile--he was one of those saturnine people who smile with the corners of the mouth down,-- and bowed his acknowledgment of my complaisance. The main entrance to the enclosure we passed; it was a heavy wooden gate, framed in iron and locked, with the cargo of the launch piled outside it, and at the corner we came to a small doorway I had not previously observed. The white-haired man produced a bundle of keys from the pocket of his greasy blue jacket, opened this door, and entered. His keys, and the elaborate locking-up of the place even while it was still under his eye, struck me as peculiar. I followed him, and found myself in a small apartment, plainly but not uncomfortably furnished and with its inner door, which was slightly ajar, opening into a paved courtyard. This inner door Montgomery at once closed. A hammock was slung across the darker corner of the room, and a small unglazed window defended by an iron bar looked out towards the sea.

This the white-haired man told me was to be my apartment; and the inner door, which "for fear of accidents," he said, he would lock on the other side, was my limit inward. He called my attention to a convenient deck-chair before the window, and to an array of old books, chiefly, I found, surgical works

and editions of the Latin and Greek classics (languages I cannot read with any comfort), on a shelf near the hammock. He left the room by the outer door, as if to avoid opening the inner one again.

"We usually have our meals in here," said Montgomery, and then, as if in doubt, went out after the other. "Moreau!" I heard him call, and for the moment I do not think I noticed. Then as I handled the books on the shelf it came up in consciousness: Where had I heard the name of Moreau before? I sat down before the window, took out the biscuits that still remained to me, and ate them with an excellent appetite. Moreau!

Through the window I saw one of those unaccountable men in white, lugging a packing-case along the beach. Presently the window-frame hid him. Then I heard a key inserted and turned in the lock behind me. After a little while I heard through the locked door the noise of the staghounds, that had now been brought up from the beach. They were not barking, but sniffing and growling in a curious fashion. I could hear the rapid patter of their feet, and Montgomery's voice soothing them.

I was very much impressed by the elaborate secrecy of these two men regarding the contents of the place, and for some time I was thinking of that and of the unaccountable familiarity of the name of Moreau; but so odd is the human memory that I could not then recall that well-known name in its proper connection. From that my thoughts went to the indefinable queerness of the deformed man on the beach. I never saw such a gait, such odd motions as he pulled at the box. I recalled that none of these men had spoken to me, though most of them I had found looking at me at one time or another in a peculiarly furtive manner, quite unlike the frank stare of your unsophisticated savage. Indeed, they had all seemed remarkably taciturn, and when they did speak, endowed with very uncanny voices.

What was wrong with them? Then I recalled the eyes of Montgomery's ungainly attendant.

Just as I was thinking of him he came in. He was now dressed in white, and carried a little tray with some coffee and boiled vegetables thereon. I could hardly repress a shuddering recoil as he came, bending amiably, and placed the tray before me on the table. Then astonishment paralysed me. Under his stringy black locks I saw his ear; it jumped upon me suddenly close to my face. The man had pointed ears, covered with a fine brown fur!

"Your breakfast, sair," he said.

I stared at his face without attempting to answer him. He turned and went towards the door, regarding me oddly over his shoulder. I followed him out with my eyes; and as I did so, by some odd trick of unconscious cerebration, there came surging into my head the phrase, "The Moreau Hollows"--was it? "The Moreau--" Ah! It sent my memory back ten years. "The Moreau Horrors!" The phrase drifted loose in my mind for a moment, and then I saw it in red lettering on a little buff-coloured pamphlet, to read which made one shiver and creep. Then I remembered distinctly all about it. That long-forgotten pamphlet came back with startling vividness to my mind. I had been a mere lad then, and Moreau was, I suppose, about fifty,-- a prominent and masterful physiologist, well-known in scientific circles for his extraordinary imagination and his brutal directness in discussion.

Was this the same Moreau? He had published some very astonishing facts in connection with the transfusion of blood, and in addition was known to be doing valuable work on morbid growths. Then suddenly his career was closed. He had to leave England. A journalist obtained access to his laboratory in the capacity of laboratory-assistant, with the deliberate intention of making sensational exposures; and by the help of a shocking accident

(if it was an accident), his gruesome pamphlet became notorious. On the day of its publication a wretched dog, flayed and otherwise mutilated, escaped from Moreau's house. It was in the silly season, and a prominent editor, a cousin of the temporary laboratory-assistant, appealed to the conscience of the nation. It was not the first time that conscience has turned against the methods of research. The doctor was simply howled out of the country. It may be that he deserved to be; but I still think that the tepid support of his fellow-investigators and his desertion by the great body of scientific workers was a shameful thing. Yet some of his experiments, by the journalist's account, were wantonly cruel. He might perhaps have purchased his social peace by abandoning his investigations; but he apparently preferred the latter, as most men would who have once fallen under the overmastering spell of research. He was unmarried, and had indeed nothing but his own interest to consider.

I felt convinced that this must be the same man. Everything pointed to it. It dawned upon me to what end the puma and the other animals--which had now been brought with other luggage into the enclosure behind the house--were destined; and a curious faint odour, the halitus of something familiar, an odour that had been in the background of my consciousness hitherto, suddenly came forward into the forefront of my thoughts. It was the antiseptic odour of the dissecting-room. I heard the puma growling through the wall, and one of the dogs yelped as though it had been struck.

Yet surely, and especially to another scientific man, there was nothing so horrible in vivisection as to account for this secrecy; and by some odd leap in my thoughts the pointed ears and luminous eyes of Montgomery's attendant came back again before me with the sharpest definition. I stared before me out at the green sea, frothing under a freshening breeze, and let these and other strange memories of the last few days chase one another through my mind.

What could it all mean? A locked enclosure on a lonely island,
a notorious vivisector, and these crippled and distorted men?

VIII. THE CRYING OF THE PUMA.

MONTGOMERY interrupted my tangle of mystification and suspicion about one o'clock, and his grotesque attendant followed him with a tray bearing bread, some herbs and other eatables, a flask of whiskey, a jug of water, and three glasses and knives. I glanced askance at this strange creature, and found him watching me with his queer, restless eyes. Montgomery said he would lunch with me, but that Moreau was too preoccupied with some work to come.

"Moreau!" said I. "I know that name."

"The devil you do!" said he. "What an ass I was to mention it to you! I might have thought. Anyhow, it will give you an inkling of our--mysteries. Whiskey?"

"No, thanks; I'm an abstainer."

"I wish I'd been. But it's no use locking the door after the steed is stolen. It was that infernal stuff which led to my coming here,--that, and a foggy night. I thought myself in luck at the time, when Moreau offered to get me off. It's queer--"

"Montgomery," said I, suddenly, as the outer door closed, "why has your man pointed ears?"

"Damn!" he said, over his first mouthful of food. He stared at me for a moment, and then repeated, "Pointed ears?"

"Little points to them," said I, as calmly as possible, with a catch in my breath; "and a fine black fur at the edges?"

He helped himself to whiskey and water with great deliberation.
"I was under the impression--that his hair covered his ears."

"I saw them as he stooped by me to put that coffee you sent to me on the table. And his eyes shine in the dark."

By this time Montgomery had recovered from the surprise of my question. "I always thought," he said deliberately, with a certain accentuation of his flavouring of lisp, "that there was something the matter with his ears, from the way he covered them. What were they like?"

I was persuaded from his manner that this ignorance was a pretence. Still, I could hardly tell the man that I thought him a liar. "Pointed," I said; "rather small and furry,--distinctly furry. But the whole man is one of the strangest beings I ever set eyes on."

A sharp, hoarse cry of animal pain came from the enclosure behind us. Its depth and volume testified to the puma. I saw Montgomery wince.

"Yes?" he said.

"Where did you pick up the creature?"

"San Francisco. He's an ugly brute, I admit. Half-witted, you know. Can't remember where he came from. But I'm used to him, you know. We both are. How does he strike you?"

"He's unnatural," I said. "There's something about him--don't think me fanciful, but it gives me a nasty little sensation, a tightening of my muscles, when he comes near me. It's a touch--of the diabolical, in fact."

Montgomery had stopped eating while I told him this. "Rum!" he said.

"I can't see it." He resumed his meal. "I had no idea of it," he said, and masticated. "The crew of the schooner must have felt it the same. Made a dead set at the poor devil. You saw the captain?"

Suddenly the puma howled again, this time more painfully. Montgomery swore under his breath. I had half a mind to attack him about the men on the beach. Then the poor brute within gave vent to a series of short, sharp cries.

"Your men on the beach," said I; "what race are they?"

"Excellent fellows, aren't they?" said he, absentmindedly, knitting his brows as the animal yelled out sharply.

I said no more. There was another outcry worse than the former. He looked at me with his dull grey eyes, and then took some more whiskey. He tried to draw me into a discussion about alcohol, professing to have saved my life with it. He seemed anxious to lay stress on the fact that I owed my life to him. I answered him distractedly.

Presently our meal came to an end; the misshapen monster with the pointed ears cleared the remains away, and Montgomery left me alone in the room again. All the time he had been in a state of ill-concealed irritation at the noise of the vivisected puma. He had spoken of his odd want of nerve, and left me to the obvious application.

I found myself that the cries were singularly irritating, and they grew in depth and intensity as the afternoon wore on. They were painful at first, but their constant resurgence at last altogether upset my balance. I flung aside a crib of Horace I had been reading, and began to clench my fists, to bite my lips, and to pace the room. Presently I got to stopping my ears with

my fingers.

The emotional appeal of those yells grew upon me steadily, grew at last to such an exquisite expression of suffering that I could stand it in that confined room no longer. I stepped out of the door into the slumberous heat of the late afternoon, and walking past the main entrance--locked again, I noticed--turned the corner of the wall

The crying sounded even louder out of doors. It was as if all the pain in the world had found a voice. Yet had I known such pain was in the next room, and had it been dumb, I believe--I have thought since--I could have stood it well enough. It is when suffering finds a voice and sets our nerves quivering that this pity comes troubling us. But in spite of the brilliant sunlight and the green fans of the trees waving in the soothing sea-breeze, the world was a confusion, blurred with drifting black and red phantasms, until I was out of earshot of the house in the chequered wall.

IX. THE THING IN THE FOREST.

I STRODE through the undergrowth that clothed the ridge behind the house, scarcely heeding whither I went; passed on through the shadow of a thick cluster of straight-stemmed trees beyond it, and so presently found myself some way on the other side of the ridge, and descending towards a streamlet that ran through a narrow valley. I paused and listened. The distance I had come, or the intervening masses of thicket, deadened any sound that might be coming from the enclosure. The air was still. Then with a rustle a rabbit emerged, and went scampering up the slope before me. I hesitated, and sat down in the edge of the shade.

The place was a pleasant one. The rivulet was hidden by the luxuriant vegetation of the banks save at one point, where I caught a triangular patch of its glittering water. On the farther side I saw through a bluish haze a tangle of trees and creepers, and above these again the luminous blue of the sky. Here and there a splash of white or crimson marked the blooming of some trailing epiphyte. I let my eyes wander over this scene for a while, and then began to turn over in my mind again the strange peculiarities of Montgomery's man. But it was too hot to think elaborately, and presently I fell into a tranquil state midway between dozing and waking.

From this I was aroused, after I know not how long, by a rustling amidst the greenery on the other side of the stream. For a moment I could see nothing but the waving summits of the ferns and reeds. Then suddenly upon the bank of the stream appeared Something--at first I could not distinguish what it was. It bowed its round head to the water, and began to drink. Then I saw it was a man, going on all-fours like a beast. He was clothed in bluish cloth, and was of a copper-coloured hue, with black hair.

It seemed that grotesque ugliness was an invariable character of these islanders. I could hear the suck of the water at his lips as he drank.

I leant forward to see him better, and a piece of lava, detached by my hand, went pattering down the slope. He looked up guiltily, and his eyes met mine. Forthwith he scrambled to his feet, and stood wiping his clumsy hand across his mouth and regarding me. His legs were scarcely half the length of his body. So, staring one another out of countenance, we remained for perhaps the space of a minute. Then, stopping to look back once or twice, he slunk off among the bushes to the right of me, and I heard the swish of the fronds grow faint in the distance and die away. Long after he had disappeared, I remained sitting up staring in the direction of his retreat. My drowsy tranquillity had gone.

I was startled by a noise behind me, and turning suddenly saw the flapping white tail of a rabbit vanishing up the slope. I jumped to my feet. The apparition of this grotesque, half-bestial creature had suddenly populated the stillness of the afternoon for me. I looked around me rather nervously, and regretted that I was unarmed. Then I thought that the man I had just seen had been clothed in bluish cloth, had not been naked as a savage would have been; and I tried to persuade myself from that fact that he was after all probably a peaceful character, that the dull ferocity of his countenance belied him.

Yet I was greatly disturbed at the apparition. I walked to the left along the slope, turning my head about and peering this way and that among the straight stems of the trees. Why should a man go on all-fours and drink with his lips? Presently I heard an animal wailing again, and taking it to be the puma, I turned about and walked in a direction diametrically opposite to the sound. This led me down to the stream, across which I stepped and pushed

my way up through the undergrowth beyond.

I was startled by a great patch of vivid scarlet on the ground, and going up to it found it to be a peculiar fungus, branched and corrugated like a foliaceous lichen, but deliquescing into slime at the touch; and then in the shadow of some luxuriant ferns I came upon an unpleasant thing,--the dead body of a rabbit covered with shining flies, but still warm and with the head torn off.

I stopped aghast at the sight of the scattered blood.

Here at least was one visitor to the island disposed of!

There were no traces of other violence about it. It looked as though it had been suddenly snatched up and killed; and as I stared at the little furry body came the difficulty of how the thing had been done.

The vague dread that had been in my mind since I had seen the inhuman face of the man at the stream grew distincter as I stood there.

I began to realise the hardihood of my expedition among these unknown people. The thicket about me became altered to my imagination.

Every shadow became something more than a shadow,--became an ambush;

every rustle became a threat. Invisible things seemed watching me.

I resolved to go back to the enclosure on the beach. I suddenly turned away and thrust myself violently, possibly even frantically, through the bushes, anxious to get a clear space about me again.

I stopped just in time to prevent myself emerging upon an open space.

It was a kind of glade in the forest, made by a fall; seedlings were already starting up to struggle for the vacant space; and beyond, the dense growth of stems and twining vines and splashes of fungus and flowers closed in again. Before me, squatting together upon the fungoid ruins of a huge fallen tree and still unaware of my approach, were three grotesque human figures. One was evidently a female; the other two were men. They were naked, save for swathings of scarlet cloth about the middle; and their skins were of a dull pinkish-drab colour, such as I had seen in no savages before.

They had fat, heavy, chinless faces, retreating foreheads, and a scant bristly hair upon their heads. I never saw such bestial-looking creatures.

They were talking, or at least one of the men was talking to the other two, and all three had been too closely interested to heed the rustling of my approach. They swayed their heads and shoulders from side to side. The speaker's words came thick and sloppy, and though I could hear them distinctly I could not distinguish what he said. He seemed to me to be reciting some complicated gibberish. Presently his articulation became shriller, and spreading his hands he rose to his feet. At that the others began to gibber in unison, also rising to their feet, spreading their hands and swaying their bodies in rhythm with their chant. I noticed then the abnormal shortness of their legs, and their lank, clumsy feet. All three began slowly to circle round, raising and stamping their feet and waving their arms; a kind of tune crept into their rhythmic recitation, and a refrain,--"Aloola," or "Balloola," it sounded like. Their eyes began to sparkle, and their ugly faces to brighten, with an expression of strange pleasure. Saliva dripped from their lipless mouths.

Suddenly, as I watched their grotesque and unaccountable gestures, I perceived clearly for the first time what it was that had offended me, what had given me the two inconsistent and conflicting impressions of utter strangeness and yet of the strangest familiarity. The three creatures engaged in this mysterious rite were human in shape, and yet human beings with the strangest air about them of some familiar animal. Each of these creatures, despite its human form, its rag of clothing, and the rough humanity of its bodily form, had woven into it--into its movements, into the expression of its countenance, into its whole presence--some now irresistible suggestion of a hog, a swinish taint, the unmistakable mark of the beast.

I stood overcome by this amazing realisation and then the most horrible questionings came rushing into my mind. They began leaping in the air, first one and then the other, whooping and grunting. Then one slipped, and for a moment was on all-fours,--to recover, indeed, forthwith. But that transitory gleam of the true animalism of these monsters was enough.

I turned as noiselessly as possible, and becoming every now and then rigid with the fear of being discovered, as a branch cracked or a leaf rustled, I pushed back into the bushes. It was long before I grew bolder, and dared to move freely. My only idea for the moment was to get away from these foul beings, and I scarcely noticed that I had emerged upon a faint pathway amidst the trees. Then suddenly traversing a little glade, I saw with an unpleasant start two clumsy legs among the trees, walking with noiseless footsteps parallel with my course, and perhaps thirty yards away from me. The head and upper part of the body were hidden by a tangle of creeper. I stopped abruptly, hoping the creature did not see me. The feet stopped as I did. So nervous was I that I controlled an impulse to headlong flight with the utmost difficulty. Then looking hard, I distinguished through the interlacing network the head and body of the brute I had seen drinking. He moved his head. There was an emerald flash in his eyes as he glanced at me from the shadow of the trees, a half-luminous colour that vanished as he turned his head again. He was motionless for a moment, and then with a noiseless tread began running through the green confusion. In another moment he had vanished behind some bushes. I could not see him, but I felt that he had stopped and was watching me again.

What on earth was he,--man or beast? What did he want with me? I had no weapon, not even a stick. Flight would be madness. At any rate the Thing, whatever it was, lacked the courage to attack me. Setting my teeth hard, I walked straight towards him.

I was anxious not to show the fear that seemed chilling my backbone. I pushed through a tangle of tall white-flowered bushes, and saw him twenty paces beyond, looking over his shoulder at me and hesitating. I advanced a step or two, looking steadfastly into his eyes.

"Who are you?" said I.

He tried to meet my gaze. "No!" he said suddenly, and turning went bounding away from me through the undergrowth. Then he turned and stared at me again. His eyes shone brightly out of the dusk under the trees.

My heart was in my mouth; but I felt my only chance was bluff, and walked steadily towards him. He turned again, and vanished into the dusk. Once more I thought I caught the glint of his eyes, and that was all.

For the first time I realised how the lateness of the hour might affect me. The sun had set some minutes since, the swift dusk of the tropics was already fading out of the eastern sky, and a pioneer moth fluttered silently by my head. Unless I would spend the night among the unknown dangers of the mysterious forest, I must hasten back to the enclosure. The thought of a return to that pain-haunted refuge was extremely disagreeable, but still more so was the idea of being overtaken in the open by darkness and all that darkness might conceal. I gave one more look into the blue shadows that had swallowed up this odd creature, and then retraced my way down the slope towards the stream, going as I judged in the direction from which I had come.

I walked eagerly, my mind confused with many things, and presently found myself in a level place among scattered trees. The colourless clearness that comes after the sunset flush was darkling; the blue sky above grew momentarily deeper,

and the little stars one by one pierced the attenuated light; the interspaces of the trees, the gaps in the further vegetation, that had been hazy blue in the daylight, grew black and mysterious. I pushed on. The colour vanished from the world. The tree-tops rose against the luminous blue sky in inky silhouette, and all below that outline melted into one formless blackness. Presently the trees grew thinner, and the shrubby undergrowth more abundant. Then there was a desolate space covered with a white sand, and then another expanse of tangled bushes. I did not remember crossing the sand-opening before. I began to be tormented by a faint rustling upon my right hand. I thought at first it was fancy, for whenever I stopped there was silence, save for the evening breeze in the tree-tops. Then when I turned to hurry on again there was an echo to my footsteps.

I turned away from the thickets, keeping to the more open ground, and endeavouring by sudden turns now and then to surprise something in the act of creeping upon me. I saw nothing, and nevertheless my sense of another presence grew steadily. I increased my pace, and after some time came to a slight ridge, crossed it, and turned sharply, regarding it steadfastly from the further side. It came out black and clear-cut against the darkling sky; and presently a shapeless lump heaved up momentarily against the sky-line and vanished again. I felt assured now that my tawny-faced antagonist was stalking me once more; and coupled with that was another unpleasant realisation, that I had lost my way.

For a time I hurried on hopelessly perplexed, and pursued by that stealthy approach. Whatever it was, the Thing either lacked the courage to attack me, or it was waiting to take me at some disadvantage. I kept studiously to the open. At times I would turn and listen; and presently I had half persuaded myself that my pursuer had abandoned the chase, or was a mere creation of my disordered imagination. Then I heard the sound of the sea. I quickened my footsteps

almost into a run, and immediately there was a stumble in my rear.

I turned suddenly, and stared at the uncertain trees behind me. One black shadow seemed to leap into another. I listened, rigid, and heard nothing but the creep of the blood in my ears. I thought that my nerves were unstrung, and that my imagination was tricking me, and turned resolutely towards the sound of the sea again.

In a minute or so the trees grew thinner, and I emerged upon a bare, low headland running out into the sombre water. The night was calm and clear, and the reflection of the growing multitude of the stars shivered in the tranquil heaving of the sea. Some way out, the wash upon an irregular band of reef shone with a pallid light of its own. Westward I saw the zodiacal light mingling with the yellow brilliance of the evening star. The coast fell away from me to the east, and westward it was hidden by the shoulder of the cape. Then I recalled the fact that Moreau's beach lay to the west.

A twig snapped behind me, and there was a rustle. I turned, and stood facing the dark trees. I could see nothing--or else I could see too much. Every dark form in the dimness had its ominous quality, its peculiar suggestion of alert watchfulness. So I stood for perhaps a minute, and then, with an eye to the trees still, turned westward to cross the headland; and as I moved, one among the lurking shadows moved to follow me.

My heart beat quickly. Presently the broad sweep of a bay to the westward became visible, and I halted again. The noiseless shadow halted a dozen yards from me. A little point of light shone on the further bend of the curve, and the grey sweep of the sandy beach lay faint under the starlight. Perhaps two miles away was that little point of light.

To get to the beach I should have to go through the trees where the shadows lurked, and down a bushy slope.

I could see the Thing rather more distinctly now. It was no animal, for it stood erect. At that I opened my mouth to speak, and found a hoarse phlegm choked my voice. I tried again, and shouted, "Who is there?" There was no answer. I advanced a step. The Thing did not move, only gathered itself together. My foot struck a stone. That gave me an idea. Without taking my eyes off the black form before me, I stooped and picked up this lump of rock; but at my motion the Thing turned abruptly as a dog might have done, and slunk obliquely into the further darkness. Then I recalled a schoolboy expedient against big dogs, and twisted the rock into my handkerchief, and gave this a turn round my wrist. I heard a movement further off among the shadows, as if the Thing was in retreat. Then suddenly my tense excitement gave way; I broke into a profuse perspiration and fell a-trembling, with my adversary routed and this weapon in my hand.

It was some time before I could summon resolution to go down through the trees and bushes upon the flank of the headland to the beach. At last I did it at a run; and as I emerged from the thicket upon the sand, I heard some other body come crashing after me. At that I completely lost my head with fear, and began running along the sand. Forthwith there came the swift patter of soft feet in pursuit. I gave a wild cry, and redoubled my pace. Some dim, black things about three or four times the size of rabbits went running or hopping up from the beach towards the bushes as I passed.

So long as I live, I shall remember the terror of that chase. I ran near the water's edge, and heard every now and then the splash of the feet that gained upon me. Far away, hopelessly far, was the yellow light. All the night about us was black and still.

Splash, splash, came the pursuing feet, nearer and nearer. I felt my breath going, for I was quite out of training; it whooped as I drew it, and I felt a pain like a knife at my side. I perceived the Thing would come up with me long before I reached the enclosure, and, desperate and sobbing for my breath, I wheeled round upon it and struck at it as it came up to me,--struck with all my strength. The stone came out of the sling of the handkerchief as I did so. As I turned, the Thing, which had been running on all-fours, rose to its feet, and the missile fell fair on its left temple. The skull rang loud, and the animal-man blundered into me, thrust me back with its hands, and went staggering past me to fall headlong upon the sand with its face in the water; and there it lay still.

I could not bring myself to approach that black heap. I left it there, with the water rippling round it, under the still stars, and giving it a wide berth pursued my way towards the yellow glow of the house; and presently, with a positive effect of relief, came the pitiful moaning of the puma, the sound that had originally driven me out to explore this mysterious island. At that, though I was faint and horribly fatigued, I gathered together all my strength, and began running again towards the light. I thought I heard a voice calling me.

X. THE CRYING OF THE MAN.

AS I drew near the house I saw that the light shone from the open door of my room; and then I heard coming from out of the darkness at the side of that orange oblong of light, the voice of Montgomery shouting, "Prendick!" I continued running. Presently I heard him again. I replied by a feeble "Hullo!" and in another moment had staggered up to him.

"Where have you been?" said he, holding me at arm's length, so that the light from the door fell on my face. "We have both been so busy that we forgot you until about half an hour ago." He led me into the room and set me down in the deck chair. For awhile I was blinded by the light. "We did not think you would start to explore this island of ours without telling us," he said; and then, "I was afraid--But--what--Hullo!"

My last remaining strength slipped from me, and my head fell forward on my chest. I think he found a certain satisfaction in giving me brandy.

"For God's sake," said I, "fasten that door."

"You've been meeting some of our curiosities, eh?" said he.

He locked the door and turned to me again. He asked me no questions, but gave me some more brandy and water and pressed me to eat. I was in a state of collapse. He said something vague about his forgetting to warn me, and asked me briefly when I left the house and what I had seen.

I answered him as briefly, in fragmentary sentences. "Tell me what it all means," said I, in a state bordering on hysterics.

"It's nothing so very dreadful," said he. "But I think you have had about enough for one day." The puma suddenly gave a sharp yell of pain. At that he swore under his breath. "I'm damned," said he, "if this place is not as bad as Gower Street, with its cats."

"Montgomery," said I, "what was that thing that came after me? Was it a beast or was it a man?"

"If you don't sleep to-night," he said, "you'll be off your head to-morrow."

I stood up in front of him. "What was that thing that came after me?" I asked.

He looked me squarely in the eyes, and twisted his mouth askew. His eyes, which had seemed animated a minute before, went dull. "From your account," said he, "I'm thinking it was a bogle."

I felt a gust of intense irritation, which passed as quickly as it came. I flung myself into the chair again, and pressed my hands on my forehead. The puma began once more.

Montgomery came round behind me and put his hand on my shoulder. "Look here, Prendick," he said, "I had no business to let you drift out into this silly island of ours. But it's not so bad as you feel, man. Your nerves are worked to rags. Let me give you something that will make you sleep. That--will keep on for hours yet. You must simply get to sleep, or I won't answer for it."

I did not reply. I bowed forward, and covered my face with my hands. Presently he returned with a small measure containing a dark liquid. This he gave me. I took it unresistingly, and he helped me into the hammock.

When I awoke, it was broad day. For a little while I lay flat, staring at the roof above me. The rafters, I observed, were made out of the timbers of a ship. Then I turned my head, and saw a meal prepared for me on the table. I perceived that I was hungry, and prepared to clamber out of the hammock, which, very politely anticipating my intention, twisted round and deposited me upon all-fours on the floor.

I got up and sat down before the food. I had a heavy feeling in my head, and only the vaguest memory at first of the things that had happened over night. The morning breeze blew very pleasantly through the unglazed window, and that and the food contributed to the sense of animal comfort which I experienced. Presently the door behind me--the door inward towards the yard of the enclosure--opened. I turned and saw Montgomery's face.

"All right," said he. "I'm frightfully busy." And he shut the door.

Afterwards I discovered that he forgot to re-lock it.

Then I recalled the expression of his face the previous night, and with that the memory of all I had experienced reconstructed itself before me. Even as that fear came back to me came a cry from within; but this time it was not the cry of a puma.

I put down the mouthful that hesitated upon my lips, and listened. Silence, save for the whisper of the morning breeze. I began to think my ears had deceived me.

After a long pause I resumed my meal, but with my ears still vigilant. Presently I heard something else, very faint and low.

I sat as if frozen in my attitude. Though it was faint and low, it moved me more profoundly than all that I had hitherto heard of the abominations behind the wall. There was no mistake this time in the quality of the dim, broken sounds; no doubt at all of their source. For it was groaning, broken by sobs and gasps of anguish.

It was no brute this time; it was a human being in torment!

As I realised this I rose, and in three steps had crossed the room, seized the handle of the door into the yard, and flung it open before me.

"Prendick, man! Stop!" cried Montgomery, intervening.

A startled deerhound yelped and snarled. There was blood, I saw, in the sink,--brown, and some scarlet--and I smelt the peculiar smell of carbolic acid. Then through an open doorway beyond, in the dim light of the shadow, I saw something bound painfully upon a framework, scarred, red, and bandaged; and then blotting this out appeared the face of old Moreau, white and terrible.

In a moment he had gripped me by the shoulder with a hand that was smeared red, had twisted me off my feet, and flung me headlong back into my own room. He lifted me as though I was a little child.

I fell at full length upon the floor, and the door slammed and shut out the passionate intensity of his face.

Then I heard the key turn in the lock, and Montgomery's voice in expostulation.

"Ruin the work of a lifetime," I heard Moreau say.

"He does not understand," said Montgomery. and other things that were inaudible.

"I can't spare the time yet," said Moreau.

The rest I did not hear. I picked myself up and stood trembling, my mind a chaos of the most horrible misgivings. Could it be possible, I thought, that such a thing as the vivisection of men was carried on here? The question shot like lightning across a tumultuous sky; and suddenly the clouded horror of my mind condensed into a vivid realisation of my own danger.

XI. THE HUNTING OF THE MAN.

IT came before my mind with an unreasonable hope of escape that the outer door of my room was still open to me. I was convinced now, absolutely assured, that Moreau had been vivisecting a human being. All the time since I had heard his name, I had been trying to link in my mind in some way the grotesque animalism of the islanders with his abominations; and now I thought I saw it all.

The memory of his work on the transfusion of blood recurred to me. These creatures I had seen were the victims of some hideous experiment. These sickening scoundrels had merely intended to keep me back, to fool me with their display of confidence, and presently to fall upon me with a fate more horrible than death,--with torture; and after torture the most hideous degradation it is possible to conceive,--to send me off a lost soul, a beast, to the rest of their Comus rout.

I looked round for some weapon. Nothing. Then with an inspiration I turned over the deck chair, put my foot on the side of it, and tore away the side rail. It happened that a nail came away with the wood, and projecting, gave a touch of danger to an otherwise petty weapon. I heard a step outside, and incontinently flung open the door and found Montgomery within a yard of it. He meant to lock the outer door! I raised this nailed stick of mine and cut at his face; but he sprang back. I hesitated a moment, then turned and fled, round the corner of the house. "Prendick, man!" I heard his astonished cry, "don't be a silly ass, man!"

Another minute, thought I, and he would have had me locked in, and as ready as a hospital rabbit for my fate. He emerged behind the corner, for I heard him shout, "Prendick!" Then he began to run after me, shouting things as he ran. This time running blindly, I went northeastward in a direction at right angles to my previous expedition. Once, as I went running headlong up the beach,

I glanced over my shoulder and saw his attendant with him. I ran furiously up the slope, over it, then turning eastward along a rocky valley fringed on either side with jungle I ran for perhaps a mile altogether, my chest straining, my heart beating in my ears; and then hearing nothing of Montgomery or his man, and feeling upon the verge of exhaustion, I doubled sharply back towards the beach as I judged, and lay down in the shelter of a canebrake. There I remained for a long time, too fearful to move, and indeed too fearful even to plan a course of action. The wild scene about me lay sleeping silently under the sun, and the only sound near me was the thin hum of some small gnats that had discovered me. Presently I became aware of a drowsy breathing sound, the soughing of the sea upon the beach.

After about an hour I heard Montgomery shouting my name, far away to the north. That set me thinking of my plan of action. As I interpreted it then, this island was inhabited only by these two vivisectors and their animalised victims. Some of these no doubt they could press into their service against me if need arose. I knew both Moreau and Montgomery carried revolvers; and, save for a feeble bar of deal spiked with a small nail, the merest mockery of a mace, I was unarmed.

So I lay still there, until I began to think of food and drink; and at that thought the real hopelessness of my position came home to me. I knew no way of getting anything to eat. I was too ignorant of botany to discover any resort of root or fruit that might lie about me; I had no means of trapping the few rabbits upon the island. It grew blanker the more I turned the prospect over. At last in the desperation of my position, my mind turned to the animal men I had encountered. I tried to find some hope in what I remembered of them. In turn I recalled each one I had seen, and tried to draw some augury of assistance from my memory.

Then suddenly I heard a staghound bay, and at that realised a new danger. I took little time to think, or they would have caught me then, but snatching up my nailed stick, rushed headlong from my hiding-place towards the sound of the sea. I remember a growth of thorny plants, with spines that stabbed like pen-knives. I emerged bleeding and with torn clothes upon the lip of a long creek opening northward. I went straight into the water without a minute's hesitation, wading up the creek, and presently finding myself kneedeep in a little stream. I scrambled out at last on the westward bank, and with my heart beating loudly in my ears, crept into a tangle of ferns to await the issue. I heard the dog (there was only one) draw nearer, and yelp when it came to the thorns. Then I heard no more, and presently began to think I had escaped.

The minutes passed; the silence lengthened out, and at last after an hour of security my courage began to return to me. By this time I was no longer very much terrified or very miserable. I had, as it were, passed the limit of terror and despair. I felt now that my life was practically lost, and that persuasion made me capable of daring anything. I had even a certain wish to encounter Moreau face to face; and as I had waded into the water, I remembered that if I were too hard pressed at least one path of escape from torment still lay open to me,--they could not very well prevent my drowning myself. I had half a mind to drown myself then; but an odd wish to see the whole adventure out, a queer, impersonal, spectacular interest in myself, restrained me. I stretched my limbs, sore and painful from the pricks of the spiny plants, and stared around me at the trees; and, so suddenly that it seemed to jump out of the green tracery about it, my eyes lit upon a black face watching me. I saw that it was the simian creature who had met the launch upon the beach. He was clinging to the oblique stem of a palm-tree. I gripped my stick, and stood up facing him. He began chattering. "You, you, you," was all I could distinguish at first. Suddenly he dropped from the tree, and in another moment was holding the fronds apart and staring curiously

at me.

I did not feel the same repugnance towards this creature which I had experienced in my encounters with the other Beast Men.

"You, he said, "in the boat." He was a man, then,--at least as much of a man as Montgomery's attendant,--for he could talk.

"Yes," I said, "I came in the boat. From the ship."

"Oh!" he said, and his bright, restless eyes travelled over me, to my hands, to the stick I carried, to my feet, to the tattered places in my coat, and the cuts and scratches I had received from the thorns. He seemed puzzled at something. His eyes came back to my hands. He held his own hand out and counted his digits slowly, "One, two, three, four, five--eigh?"

I did not grasp his meaning then; afterwards I was to find that a great proportion of these Beast People had malformed hands, lacking sometimes even three digits. But guessing this was in some way a greeting, I did the same thing by way of reply. He grinned with immense satisfaction. Then his swift roving glance went round again; he made a swift movement--and vanished. The fern fronds he had stood between came swishing together,

I pushed out of the brake after him, and was astonished to find him swinging cheerfully by one lank arm from a rope of creeper that looped down from the foliage overhead. His back was to me.

"Hullo!" said I.

He came down with a twisting jump, and stood facing me.

"I say," said I, "where can I get something to eat?"

"Eat!" he said. "Eat Man's food, now." And his eye went back

to the swing of ropes. "At the huts."

"But where are the huts?"

"Oh!"

"I'm new, you know."

At that he swung round, and set off at a quick walk. All his motions were curiously rapid. "Come along," said he.

I went with him to see the adventure out. I guessed the huts were some rough shelter where he and some more of these Beast People lived. I might perhaps find them friendly, find some handle in their minds to take hold of. I did not know how far they had forgotten their human heritage.

My ape-like companion trotted along by my side, with his hands hanging down and his jaw thrust forward. I wondered what memory he might have in him. "How long have you been on this island?" said I.

"How long?" he asked; and after having the question repeated, he held up three fingers.

The creature was little better than an idiot. I tried to make out what he meant by that, and it seems I bored him. After another question or two he suddenly left my side and went leaping at some fruit that hung from a tree. He pulled down a handful of prickly husks and went on eating the contents. I noted this with satisfaction, for here at least was a hint for feeding. I tried him with some other questions, but his chattering, prompt responses were as often as not quite at cross purposes with my question. Some few were appropriate, others quite parrot-like.

I was so intent upon these peculiarities that I scarcely noticed the path we followed. Presently we came to trees, all charred and brown, and so to a bare place covered with a yellow-white incrustation, across which a drifting smoke, pungent in whiffs to nose and eyes, went drifting. On our right, over a shoulder of bare rock, I saw the level blue of the sea. The path coiled down abruptly into a narrow ravine between two tumbled and knotty masses of blackish scoria. Into this we plunged.

It was extremely dark, this passage, after the blinding sunlight reflected from the sulphurous ground. Its walls grew steep, and approached each other. Blotches of green and crimson drifted across my eyes. My conductor stopped suddenly. "Home!" said he, and I stood in a floor of a chasm that was at first absolutely dark to me. I heard some strange noises, and thrust the knuckles of my left hand into my eyes. I became aware of a disagreeable odor, like that of a monkey's cage ill-cleaned. Beyond, the rock opened again upon a gradual slope of sunlit greenery, and on either hand the light smote down through narrow ways into the central gloom.

XII. THE SAYERS OF THE LAW.

THEN something cold touched my hand. I started violently, and saw close to me a dim pinkish thing, looking more like a flayed child than anything else in the world. The creature had exactly the mild but repulsive features of a sloth, the same low forehead and slow gestures.

As the first shock of the change of light passed, I saw about me more distinctly. The little sloth-like creature was standing and staring at me. My conductor had vanished. The place was a narrow passage between high walls of lava, a crack in the knotted rock, and on either side interwoven heaps of sea-mat, palm-fans, and reeds leaning against the rock formed rough and impenetrably dark dens. The winding way up the ravine between these was scarcely three yards wide, and was disfigured by lumps of decaying fruit-pulp and other refuse, which accounted for the disagreeable stench of the place.

The little pink sloth-creature was still blinking at me when my Ape-man reappeared at the aperture of the nearest of these dens, and beckoned me in. As he did so a slouching monster wriggled out of one of the places, further up this strange street, and stood up in featureless silhouette against the bright green beyond, staring at me. I hesitated, having half a mind to bolt the way I had come; and then, determined to go through with the adventure, I gripped my nailed stick about the middle and crawled into the little evil-smelling lean-to after my conductor.

It was a semi-circular space, shaped like the half of a bee-hive; and against the rocky wall that formed the inner side of it was a pile of variegated fruits, cocoa-nuts among others. Some rough vessels of lava and wood stood about the floor, and one on a rough stool. There was no fire. In the darkest corner of the hut sat a shapeless

mass of darkness that grunted "Hey!" as I came in, and my Ape-man stood in the dim light of the doorway and held out a split cocoa-nut to me as I crawled into the other corner and squatted down. I took it, and began gnawing it, as serenely as possible, in spite of a certain trepidation and the nearly intolerable closeness of the den. The little pink sloth-creature stood in the aperture of the hut, and something else with a drab face and bright eyes came staring over its shoulder.

"Hey!" came out of the lump of mystery opposite. "It is a man."

"It is a man," gabbled my conductor, "a man, a man, a five-man, like me."

"Shut up!" said the voice from the dark, and grunted. I gnawed my cocoa-nut amid an impressive stillness.

I peered hard into the blackness, but could distinguish nothing.

"It is a man," the voice repeated. "He comes to live with us?"

It was a thick voice, with something in it--a kind of whistling overtone--that struck me as peculiar; but the English accent was strangely good.

The Ape-man looked at me as though he expected something. I perceived the pause was interrogative. "He comes to live with you," I said.

"It is a man. He must learn the Law."

I began to distinguish now a deeper blackness in the black, a vague outline of a hunched-up figure. Then I noticed the opening of the place was darkened by two more black heads. My hand tightened on my stick.

The thing in the dark repeated in a louder tone, "Say the words."
I had missed its last remark. "Not to go on all-fours; that is the Law,"
it repeated in a kind of sing-song.

I was puzzled.

"Say the words," said the Ape-man, repeating, and the figures
in the doorway echoed this, with a threat in the tone of their voices.

I realised that I had to repeat this idiotic formula; and then
began the insanest ceremony. The voice in the dark began intoning
a mad litany, line by line, and I and the rest to repeat it.
As they did so, they swayed from side to side in the oddest way,
and beat their hands upon their knees; and I followed their example.
I could have imagined I was already dead and in another world.
That dark hut, these grotesque dim figures, just flecked here and
there by a glimmer of light, and all of them swaying in unison and
chanting,

"Not to go on all-fours; that is the Law. Are we not Men?

"Not to suck up Drink; that is the Law. Are we not Men?

"Not to eat Fish or Flesh; that is the Law. Are we not Men?

"Not to claw the Bark of Trees; that is the Law. Are we not Men?

"Not to chase other Men; that is the Law. Are we not Men?"

And so from the prohibition of these acts of folly,
on to the prohibition of what I thought then were the maddest,
most impossible, and most indecent things one could well imagine.
A kind of rhythmic fervour fell on all of us; we gabbled
and swayed faster and faster, repeating this amazing Law.
Superficially the contagion of these brutes was upon me, but deep
down within me the laughter and disgust struggled together.
We ran through a long list of prohibitions, and then the chant swung round
to a new formula.

"His is the House of Pain.
"His is the Hand that makes.
"His is the Hand that wounds.
"His is the Hand that heals."

And so on for another long series, mostly quite incomprehensible gibberish to me about Him, whoever he might be. I could have fancied it was a dream, but never before have I heard chanting in a dream.

"His is the lightning flash," we sang. "His is the deep, salt sea."

A horrible fancy came into my head that Moreau, after animalising these men, had infected their dwarfed brains with a kind of deification of himself. However, I was too keenly aware of white teeth and strong claws about me to stop my chanting on that account.

"His are the stars in the sky."

At last that song ended. I saw the Ape-man's face shining with perspiration; and my eyes being now accustomed to the darkness, I saw more distinctly the figure in the corner from which the voice came. It was the size of a man, but it seemed covered with a dull grey hair almost like a Skye-terrier. What was it? What were they all? Imagine yourself surrounded by all the most horrible cripples and maniacs it is possible to conceive, and you may understand a little of my feelings with these grotesque caricatures of humanity about me.

"He is a five-man, a five-man, a five-man--like me," said the Ape-man.

I held out my hands. The grey creature in the corner leant forward.

"Not to run on all-fours; that is the Law. Are we not Men?"
he said.

He put out a strangely distorted talon and gripped my fingers. The thing was almost like the hoof of a deer produced into claws. I could have yelled with surprise and pain. His face came forward and peered at my nails, came forward into the light of the opening of the hut and I saw with a quivering disgust that it was like the face of neither man nor beast, but a mere shock of grey hair, with three shadowy over-archings to mark the eyes and mouth.

"He has little nails," said this grisly creature in his hairy beard. "It is well."

He threw my hand down, and instinctively I gripped my stick.

"Eat roots and herbs; it is His will," said the Ape-man.

"I am the Sayer of the Law," said the grey figure. "Here come all that be new to learn the Law. I sit in the darkness and say the Law."

"It is even so," said one of the beasts in the doorway.

"Evil are the punishments of those who break the Law. None escape."

"None escape," said the Beast Folk, glancing furtively at one another.

"None, none," said the Ape-man,--"none escape. See! I did a little thing, a wrong thing, once. I jabbered, jabbered, stopped talking. None could understand. I am burnt, branded in the hand. He is great. He is good!"

"None escape," said the grey creature in the corner.

"None escape," said the Beast People, looking askance at one another.

"For every one the want that is bad," said the grey Sayer of the Law.
"What you will want we do not know; we shall know. Some want to follow things that move, to watch and slink and wait and spring; to kill and bite, bite deep and rich, sucking the blood. It is bad. `Not to chase other Men; that is the Law. Are we not Men? Not to eat Flesh or Fish; that is the Law. Are we not Men?'"

"None escape," said a dappled brute standing in the doorway.

"For every one the want is bad," said the grey Sayer of the Law.
"Some want to go tearing with teeth and hands into the roots of things, snuffing into the earth. It is bad."

"None escape," said the men in the door.

"Some go clawing trees; some go scratching at the graves of the dead; some go fighting with foreheads or feet or claws; some bite suddenly, none giving occasion; some love uncleanness."

"None escape," said the Ape-man, scratching his calf.

"None escape," said the little pink sloth-creature.

"Punishment is sharp and sure. Therefore learn the Law. Say the words."

And incontinently he began again the strange litany of the Law, and again I and all these creatures began singing and swaying. My head reeled with this jabbering and the close stench of the place; but I kept on, trusting to find presently some chance of a new development.

"Not to go on all-fours; that is the Law. Are we not Men?"

We were making such a noise that I noticed nothing of a tumult outside, until some one, who I think was one of the two Swine Men I had seen, thrust his head over the little pink sloth-creature and shouted something excitedly, something that I did not catch. Incontinently those at the opening of the hut vanished; my Ape-man rushed out; the thing that had sat in the dark followed him (I only observed that it was big and clumsy, and covered with silvery hair), and I was left alone. Then before I reached the aperture I heard the yelp of a staghound.

In another moment I was standing outside the hovel, my chair-rail in my hand, every muscle of me quivering. Before me were the clumsy backs of perhaps a score of these Beast People, their misshapen heads half hidden by their shoulder-blades. They were gesticulating excitedly. Other half-animal faces glared interrogation out of the hovels. Looking in the direction in which they faced, I saw coming through the haze under the trees beyond the end of the passage of dens the dark figure and awful white face of Moreau. He was holding the leaping staghound back, and close behind him came Montgomery revolver in hand.

For a moment I stood horror-struck. I turned and saw the passage behind me blocked by another heavy brute, with a huge grey face and twinkling little eyes, advancing towards me. I looked round and saw to the right of me and a half-dozen yards in front of me a narrow gap in the wall of rock through which a ray of light slanted into the shadows.

"Stop!" cried Moreau as I strode towards this, and then, "Hold him!"

At that, first one face turned towards me and then others. Their bestial minds were happily slow. I dashed my shoulder into a clumsy monster who was turning to see what Moreau meant, and flung him forward into another. I felt his hands fly round,

clutching at me and missing me. The little pink sloth-creature dashed at me, and I gashed down its ugly face with the nail in my stick and in another minute was scrambling up a steep side pathway, a kind of sloping chimney, out of the ravine. I heard a howl behind me, and cries of "Catch him!" "Hold him!" and the grey-faced creature appeared behind me and jammed his huge bulk into the cleft. "Go on! go on!" they howled. I clambered up the narrow cleft in the rock and came out upon the sulphur on the westward side of the village of the Beast Men.

That gap was altogether fortunate for me, for the narrow chimney, slanting obliquely upward, must have impeded the nearer pursuers. I ran over the white space and down a steep slope, through a scattered growth of trees, and came to a low-lying stretch of tall reeds, through which I pushed into a dark, thick undergrowth that black and succulent under foot. As I plunged into the reeds, my foremost pursuers emerged from the gap. I broke my way through this undergrowth for some minutes. The air behind me and about me was soon full of threatening cries. I heard the tumult of my pursuers in the gap up the slope, then the crashing of the reeds, and every now and then the crackling crash of a branch. Some of the creatures roared like excited beasts of prey. The staghound yelped to the left. I heard Moreau and Montgomery shouting in the same direction. I turned sharply to the right. It seemed to me even then that I heard Montgomery shouting for me to run for my life.

Presently the ground gave rich and oozy under my feet; but I was desperate and went headlong into it, struggled through kneedeep, and so came to a winding path among tall canes. The noise of my pursuers passed away to my left. In one place three strange, pink, hopping animals, about the size of cats, bolted before my footsteps. This pathway ran up hill, across another open space covered with white incrustation, and plunged into a canebrake again.

Then suddenly it turned parallel with the edge of a steep-walled gap, which came without warning, like the ha-ha of an English park,-- turned with an unexpected abruptness. I was still running with all my might, and I never saw this drop until I was flying headlong through the air.

I fell on my forearms and head, among thorns, and rose with a torn ear and bleeding face. I had fallen into a precipitous ravine, rocky and thorny, full of a hazy mist which drifted about me in wisps, and with a narrow streamlet from which this mist came meandering down the centre. I was astonished at this thin fog in the full blaze of daylight; but I had no time to stand wondering then. I turned to my right, down-stream, hoping to come to the sea in that direction, and so have my way open to drown myself. It was only later I found that I had dropped my nailed stick in my fall.

Presently the ravine grew narrower for a space, and carelessly I stepped into the stream. I jumped out again pretty quickly, for the water was almost boiling. I noticed too there was a thin sulphurous scum drifting upon its coiling water. Almost immediately came a turn in the ravine, and the indistinct blue horizon. The nearer sea was flashing the sun from a myriad facets. I saw my death before me; but I was hot and panting, with the warm blood oozing out on my face and running pleasantly through my veins. I felt more than a touch of exultation too, at having distanced my pursuers. It was not in me then to go out and drown myself yet. I stared back the way I had come.

I listened. Save for the hum of the gnats and the chirp of some small insects that hopped among the thorns, the air was absolutely still. Then came the yelp of a dog, very faint, and a chattering and gibbering, the snap of a whip, and voices. They grew louder, then fainter again. The noise receded up the stream and faded away. For a while the chase was over; but I knew now how much hope of help for me lay in the

Beast People.

XIII. A PARLEY.

I TURNED again and went on down towards the sea. I found the hot stream broadened out to a shallow, weedy sand, in which an abundance of crabs and long-bodied, many-legged creatures started from my footfall. I walked to the very edge of the salt water, and then I felt I was safe. I turned and stared, arms akimbo, at the thick green behind me, into which the steamy ravine cut like a smoking gash. But, as I say, I was too full of excitement and (a true saying, though those who have never known danger may doubt it) too desperate to die.

Then it came into my head that there was one chance before me yet. While Moreau and Montgomery and their bestial rabble chased me through the island, might I not go round the beach until I came to their enclosure,--make a flank march upon them, in fact, and then with a rock lugged out of their loosely-built wall, perhaps, smash in the lock of the smaller door and see what I could find (knife, pistol, or what not) to fight them with when they returned? It was at any rate something to try.

So I turned to the westward and walked along by the water's edge. The setting sun flashed his blinding heat into my eyes. The slight Pacific tide was running in with a gentle ripple. Presently the shore fell away southward, and the sun came round upon my right hand. Then suddenly, far in front of me, I saw first one and then several figures emerging from the bushes,-- Moreau, with his grey staghound, then Montgomery, and two others. At that I stopped.

They saw me, and began gesticulating and advancing. I stood watching them approach. The two Beast Men came running forward to cut me off from the undergrowth, inland. Montgomery came, running also,

but straight towards me. Moreau followed slower with the dog.

At last I roused myself from my inaction, and turning seaward walked straight into the water. The water was very shallow at first. I was thirty yards out before the waves reached to my waist. Dimly I could see the intertidal creatures darting away from my feet.

"What are you doing, man?" cried Montgomery.

I turned, standing waist deep, and stared at them. Montgomery stood panting at the margin of the water. His face was bright-red with exertion, his long flaxen hair blown about his head, and his dropping nether lip showed his irregular teeth. Moreau was just coming up, his face pale and firm, and the dog at his hand barked at me. Both men had heavy whips. Farther up the beach stared the Beast Men.

"What am I doing? I am going to drown myself," said I.

Montgomery and Moreau looked at each other. "Why?" asked Moreau.

"Because that is better than being tortured by you."

"I told you so," said Montgomery, and Moreau said something in a low tone.

"What makes you think I shall torture you?" asked Moreau.

"What I saw," I said. "And those--yonder."

"Hush!" said Moreau, and held up his hand.

"I will not," said I. "They were men: what are they now? I at least will not be like them."

I looked past my interlocutors. Up the beach were M'ling, Montgomery's attendant, and one of the white-swathed brutes from the boat. Farther up, in the shadow of the trees, I saw my little Ape-man, and behind him some other dim figures.

"Who are these creatures?" said I, pointing to them and raising my voice more and more that it might reach them. "They were men, men like yourselves, whom you have infected with some bestial taint,-- men whom you have enslaved, and whom you still fear.

"You who listen," I cried, pointing now to Moreau and shouting past him to the Beast Men,--" You who listen! Do you not see these men still fear you, go in dread of you? Why, then, do you fear them? You are many--"

"For God's sake," cried Montgomery, "stop that, Prendick!"

"Prendick!" cried Moreau.

They both shouted together, as if to drown my voice; and behind them lowered the staring faces of the Beast Men, wondering, their deformed hands hanging down, their shoulders hunched up. They seemed, as I fancied, to be trying to understand me, to remember, I thought, something of their human past.

I went on shouting, I scarcely remember what,--that Moreau and Montgomery could be killed, that they were not to be feared: that was the burden of what I put into the heads of the Beast People. I saw the green-eyed man in the dark rags, who had met me on the evening of my arrival, come out from among the trees, and others followed him, to hear me better. At last for want of breath I paused.

"Listen to me for a moment," said the steady voice of Moreau; "and then say what you will."

"Well?" said I.

He coughed, thought, then shouted: "Latin, Prendick! bad Latin, schoolboy Latin; but try and understand. Hi non sunt homines; sunt animalia qui nos habemus--vivisected. A humanising process. I will explain. Come ashore."

I laughed. "A pretty story," said I. "They talk, build houses. They were men. It's likely I'll come ashore."

"The water just beyond where you stand is deep--and full of sharks."

"That's my way," said I. "Short and sharp. Presently."

"Wait a minute." He took something out of his pocket that flashed back the sun, and dropped the object at his feet. "That's a loaded revolver," said he. "Montgomery here will do the same. Now we are going up the beach until you are satisfied the distance is safe. Then come and take the revolvers."

"Not I! You have a third between you."

"I want you to think over things, Prendick. In the first place, I never asked you to come upon this island. If we vivisected men, we should import men, not beasts. In the next, we had you drugged last night, had we wanted to work you any mischief; and in the next, now your first panic is over and you can think a little, is Montgomery here quite up to the character you give him? We have chased you for your good. Because this island is full of inimical phenomena. Besides, why should we want to shoot you when you have just offered to drown yourself?"

"Why did you set--your people onto me when I was in the hut?"

"We felt sure of catching you, and bringing you out of danger. Afterwards we drew away from the scent, for your good."

I mused. It seemed just possible. Then I remembered something again. "But I saw," said I, "in the enclosure--"

"That was the puma."

"Look here, Prendick," said Montgomery, "you're a silly ass! Come out of the water and take these revolvers, and talk. We can't do anything more than we could do now."

I will confess that then, and indeed always, I distrusted and dreaded Moreau; but Montgomery was a man I felt I understood.

"Go up the beach," said I, after thinking, and added, "holding your hands up."

"Can't do that," said Montgomery, with an explanatory nod over his shoulder. "Undignified."

"Go up to the trees, then," said I, "as you please."

"It's a damned silly ceremony," said Montgomery.

Both turned and faced the six or seven grotesque creatures, who stood there in the sunlight, solid, casting shadows, moving, and yet so incredibly unreal. Montgomery cracked his whip at them, and forthwith they all turned and fled helter-skelter into the trees; and when Montgomery and Moreau were at a distance I judged sufficient, I waded ashore, and picked up and examined the revolvers. To satisfy myself against the subtlest trickery, I discharged one at a round lump of lava, and had the satisfaction of seeing the stone pulverised and the beach splashed with lead. Still I hesitated for a moment.

"I'll take the risk," said I, at last; and with a revolver in each hand I walked up the beach towards them.

"That's better," said Moreau, without affectation. "As it is, you have wasted the best part of my day with your confounded imagination." And with a touch of contempt which humiliated me, he and Montgomery turned and went on in silence before me.

The knot of Beast Men, still wondering, stood back among the trees. I passed them as serenely as possible. One started to follow me, but retreated again when Montgomery cracked his whip. The rest stood silent--watching. They may once have been animals; but I never before saw an animal trying to think.

XIV. DOCTOR MOREAU EXPLAINS.

"AND now, Prendick, I will explain," said Doctor Moreau, so soon as we had eaten and drunk. "I must confess that you are the most dictatorial guest I ever entertained. I warn you that this is the last I shall do to oblige you. The next thing you threaten to commit suicide about, I shan't do,-- even at some personal inconvenience."

He sat in my deck chair, a cigar half consumed in his white, dexterous-looking fingers. The light of the swinging lamp fell on his white hair; he stared through the little window out at the starlight. I sat as far away from him as possible, the table between us and the revolvers to hand. Montgomery was not present. I did not care to be with the two of them in such a little room.

"You admit that the vivisected human being, as you called it, is, after all, only the puma?" said Moreau. He had made me visit that horror in the inner room, to assure myself of its inhumanity.

"It is the puma," I said, "still alive, but so cut and mutilated as I pray I may never see living flesh again. Of all vile--"

"Never mind that," said Moreau; "at least, spare me those youthful horrors. Montgomery used to be just the same. You admit that it is the puma. Now be quiet, while I reel off my physiological lecture to you."

And forthwith, beginning in the tone of a man supremely bored, but presently warming a little, he explained his work to me. He was very simple and convincing. Now and then there was a touch of sarcasm in his voice. Presently I found myself hot with shame at our mutual positions.

The creatures I had seen were not men, had never been men. They were animals, humanised animals,--triumphs of vivisection.

"You forget all that a skilled vivisector can do with living things," said Moreau. "For my own part, I'm puzzled why the things I have done here have not been done before. Small efforts, of course, have been made,--amputation, tongue-cutting, excisions. Of course you know a squint may be induced or cured by surgery? Then in the case of excisions you have all kinds of secondary changes, pigmentary disturbances, modifications of the passions, alterations in the secretion of fatty tissue. I have no doubt you have heard of these things?"

"Of course," said I. "But these foul creatures of yours--"

"All in good time," said he, waving his hand at me; "I am only beginning. Those are trivial cases of alteration. Surgery can do better things than that. There is building up as well as breaking down and changing. You have heard, perhaps, of a common surgical operation resorted to in cases where the nose has been destroyed: a flap of skin is cut from the forehead, turned down on the nose, and heals in the new position. This is a kind of grafting in a new position of part of an animal upon itself. Grafting of freshly obtained material from another animal is also possible,--the case of teeth, for example. The grafting of skin and bone is done to facilitate healing: the surgeon places in the middle of the wound pieces of skin snipped from another animal, or fragments of bone from a victim freshly killed. Hunter's cock-spur--possibly you have heard of that--flourished on the bull's neck; and the rhinoceros rats of the Algerian zouaves are also to be thought of,--monsters manufactured by transferring a slip from the tail of an ordinary rat to its snout, and allowing it to heal in that position."

"Monsters manufactured!" said I. "Then you mean to tell me--"

"Yes. These creatures you have seen are animals carven and wrought into new shapes. To that, to the study of the plasticity of living forms, my life has been devoted. I have studied for years, gaining in knowledge as I go. I see you look horrified, and yet I am telling you nothing new. It all lay in the surface of practical anatomy years ago, but no one had the temerity to touch it. It is not simply the outward form of an animal which I can change. The physiology, the chemical rhythm of the creature, may also be made to undergo an enduring modification,--of which vaccination and other methods of inoculation with living or dead matter are examples that will, no doubt, be familiar to you. A similar operation is the transfusion of blood,--with which subject, indeed, I began. These are all familiar cases. Less so, and probably far more extensive, were the operations of those mediaeval practitioners who made dwarfs and beggar-cripples, show-monsters,--some vestiges of whose art still remain in the preliminary manipulation of the young mountebank or contortionist. Victor Hugo gives an account of them in 'L'Homme qui Rit.'--But perhaps my meaning grows plain now. You begin to see that it is a possible thing to transplant tissue from one part of an animal to another, or from one animal to another; to alter its chemical reactions and methods of growth; to modify the articulations of its limbs; and, indeed, to change it in its most intimate structure.

"And yet this extraordinary branch of knowledge has never been sought as an end, and systematically, by modern investigators until I took it up! Some of such things have been hit upon in the last resort of surgery; most of the kindred evidence that will recur to your mind has been demonstrated as it were by accident,--by tyrants, by criminals, by the breeders of horses and dogs, by all kinds of untrained clumsy-handed men working for their own immediate ends. I was the first man to take up this question armed with antiseptic surgery, and with a really scientific knowledge of the laws of growth. Yet one would imagine it must have been practised in secret before. Such creatures as the Siamese Twins--And in the vaults of

the Inquisition. No doubt their chief aim was artistic torture, but some at least of the inquisitors must have had a touch of scientific curiosity."

"But," said I, "these things--these animals talk!"

He said that was so, and proceeded to point out that the possibility of vivisection does not stop at a mere physical metamorphosis. A pig may be educated. The mental structure is even less determinate than the bodily. In our growing science of hypnotism we find the promise of a possibility of superseding old inherent instincts by new suggestions, grafting upon or replacing the inherited fixed ideas. Very much indeed of what we call moral education, he said, is such an artificial modification and perversion of instinct; pugnacity is trained into courageous self-sacrifice, and suppressed sexuality into religious emotion. And the great difference between man and monkey is in the larynx, he continued,-- in the incapacity to frame delicately different sound-symbols by which thought could be sustained. In this I failed to agree with him, but with a certain incivility he declined to notice my objection. He repeated that the thing was so, and continued his account of his work.

I asked him why he had taken the human form as a model. There seemed to me then, and there still seems to me now, a strange wickedness for that choice.

He confessed that he had chosen that form by chance. "I might just as well have worked to form sheep into llamas and llamas into sheep. I suppose there is something in the human form that appeals to the artistic turn more powerfully than any animal shape can. But I've not confined myself to man-making. Once or twice--" He was silent, for a minute perhaps. "These years! How they have slipped by!

And here I have wasted a day saving your life, and am now wasting an hour explaining myself!"

"But," said I, "I still do not understand. Where is your justification for inflicting all this pain? The only thing that could excuse vivisection to me would be some application--"

"Precisely," said he. "But, you see, I am differently constituted. We are on different platforms. You are a materialist."

"I am not a materialist," I began hotly.

"In my view--in my view. For it is just this question of pain that parts us. So long as visible or audible pain turns you sick; so long as your own pains drive you; so long as pain underlies your propositions about sin,--so long, I tell you, you are an animal, thinking a little less obscurely what an animal feels. This pain--"

I gave an impatient shrug at such sophistry.

"Oh, but it is such a little thing! A mind truly opened to what science has to teach must see that it is a little thing. It may be that save in this little planet, this speck of cosmic dust, invisible long before the nearest star could be attained--it may be, I say, that nowhere else does this thing called pain occur. But the laws we feel our way towards--Why, even on this earth, even among living things, what pain is there?"

As he spoke he drew a little penknife from his pocket, opened the smaller blade, and moved his chair so that I could see his thigh. Then, choosing the place deliberately, he drove the blade into his leg and withdrew it.

"No doubt," he said, "you have seen that before. It does not hurt a pin-prick. But what does it show? The capacity for pain is not needed in the muscle, and it is not placed there,--is but little needed in the skin, and only here and there over the thigh is a spot capable of feeling pain. Pain is simply our intrinsic medical adviser to warn us and stimulate us. Not all living flesh is painful; nor is all nerve, not even all sensory nerve. There's no tint of pain, real pain, in the sensations of the optic nerve. If you wound the optic nerve, you merely see flashes of light,--just as disease of the auditory nerve merely means a humming in our ears. Plants do not feel pain, nor the lower animals; it's possible that such animals as the starfish and crayfish do not feel pain at all. Then with men, the more intelligent they become, the more intelligently they will see after their own welfare, and the less they will need the goad to keep them out of danger. I never yet heard of a useless thing that was not ground out of existence by evolution sooner or later. Did you? And pain gets needless.

"Then I am a religious man, Prendick, as every sane man must be. It may be, I fancy, that I have seen more of the ways of this world's Maker than you,--for I have sought his laws, in my way, all my life, while you, I understand, have been collecting butterflies. And I tell you, pleasure and pain have nothing to do with heaven or hell. Pleasure and pain--bah! What is your theologian's ecstasy but Mahomet's houri in the dark? This store which men and women set on pleasure and pain, Prendick, is the mark of the beast upon them,--the mark of the beast from which they came! Pain, pain and pleasure, they are for us only so long as we wriggle in the dust.

"You see, I went on with this research just the way it led me. That is the only way I ever heard of true research going. I asked a question, devised some method of obtaining an answer, and got a fresh question. Was this possible or that possible?"

You cannot imagine what this means to an investigator, what an intellectual passion grows upon him! You cannot imagine the strange, colourless delight of these intellectual desires! The thing before you is no longer an animal, a fellow-creature, but a problem! Sympathetic pain,--all I know of it I remember as a thing I used to suffer from years ago. I wanted--it was the one thing I wanted--to find out the extreme limit of plasticity in a living shape."

"But," said I, "the thing is an abomination--"

"To this day I have never troubled about the ethics of the matter," he continued. "The study of Nature makes a man at last as remorse-less as Nature. I have gone on, not heeding anything but the question I was pursuing; and the material has--dripped into the huts yonder. It is really eleven years since we came here, I and Montgomery and six Kanakas. I remember the green stillness of the island and the empty ocean about us, as though it was yesterday. The place seemed waiting for me.

"The stores were landed and the house was built. The Kanakas founded some huts near the ravine. I went to work here upon what I had brought with me. There were some disagreeable things happened at first. I began with a sheep, and killed it after a day and a half by a slip of the scalpel. I took another sheep, and made a thing of pain and fear and left it bound up to heal. It looked quite human to me when I had finished it; but when I went to it I was discontented with it. It remembered me, and was terrified beyond imagination; and it had no more than the wits of a sheep. The more I looked at it the clumsier it seemed, until at last I put the monster out of its misery. These animals without courage, these fear-haunted, pain-driven things, without a spark of pugnacious energy to face torment,--they are no good for man-making.

"Then I took a gorilla I had; and upon that, working with infinite care and mastering difficulty after difficulty, I made my first man. All the week, night and day, I moulded him. With him it was chiefly the brain that needed moulding; much had to be added, much changed. I thought him a fair specimen of the negroid type when I had finished him, and he lay bandaged, bound, and motionless before me. It was only when his life was assured that I left him and came into this room again, and found Montgomery much as you are. He had heard some of the cries as the thing grew human,--cries like those that disturbed you so. I didn't take him completely into my confidence at first. And the Kanakas too, had realised something of it. They were scared out of their wits by the sight of me. I got Montgomery over to me--in a way; but I and he had the hardest job to prevent the Kanakas deserting. Finally they did; and so we lost the yacht. I spent many days educating the brute,--altogether I had him for three or four months. I taught him the rudiments of English; gave him ideas of counting; even made the thing read the alphabet. But at that he was slow, though I've met with idiots slower. He began with a clean sheet, mentally; had no memories left in his mind of what he had been. When his scars were quite healed, and he was no longer anything but painful and stiff, and able to converse a little, I took him yonder and introduced him to the Kanakas as an interesting stowaway.

"They were horribly afraid of him at first, somehow,--which offended me rather, for I was conceited about him; but his ways seemed so mild, and he was so abject, that after a time they received him and took his education in hand. He was quick to learn, very imitative and adaptive, and built himself a hovel rather better, it seemed to me, than their own shanties. There was one among the boys a bit of a missionary, and he taught the thing to read, or at least to pick out letters, and gave him some rudimentary ideas of morality; but it seems the beast's habits were not all that is desirable.

"I rested from work for some days after this, and was in a mind to write an account of the whole affair to wake up English physiology. Then I came upon the creature squatting up in a tree and gibbering at two of the Kanakas who had been teasing him. I threatened him, told him the inhumanity of such a proceeding, aroused his sense of shame, and came home resolved to do better before I took my work back to England.

I have been doing better. But somehow the things drift back again: the stubborn beast-flesh grows day by day back again. But I mean to do better things still. I mean to conquer that. This puma--

"But that's the story. All the Kanaka boys are dead now; one fell overboard of the launch, and one died of a wounded heel that he poisoned in some way with plant-juice. Three went away in the yacht, and I suppose and hope were drowned. The other one--was killed. Well, I have replaced them. Montgomery went on much as you are disposed to do at first, and then--

"What became of the other one?" said I, sharply,--"the other Kanaka who was killed?"

"The fact is, after I had made a number of human creatures I made a Thing." He hesitated.

"Yes," said I.

"It was killed." "I don't understand," said I; "do you mean to say--"

"It killed the Kanakas--yes. It killed several other things that it caught. We chased it for a couple of days. It only got loose by accident--I never meant it to get away. It wasn't finished. It was purely an experiment. It was a limbless thing, with a horrible face, that writhed along the ground in a serpentine fashion.

It was immensely strong, and in infuriating pain. It lurked in the woods for some days, until we hunted it; and then it wriggled into the northern part of the island, and we divided the party to close in upon it. Montgomery insisted upon coming with me. The man had a rifle; and when his body was found, one of the barrels was curved into the shape of an S and very nearly bitten through. Montgomery shot the thing. After that I stuck to the ideal of humanity--except for little things."

He became silent. I sat in silence watching his face.

"So for twenty years altogether--counting nine years in England--I have been going on; and there is still something in everything I do that defeats me, makes me dissatisfied, challenges me to further effort. Sometimes I rise above my level, sometimes I fall below it; but always I fall short of the things I dream. The human shape I can get now, almost with ease, so that it is lithe and graceful, or thick and strong; but often there is trouble with the hands and the claws,--painful things, that I dare not shape too freely. But it is in the subtle grafting and reshaping one must needs do to the brain that my trouble lies. The intelligence is often oddly low, with unaccountable blank ends, unexpected gaps. And least satisfactory of all is something that I cannot touch, somewhere--I cannot determine where--in the seat of the emotions. Cravings, instincts, desires that harm humanity, a strange hidden reservoir to burst forth suddenly and inundate the whole being of the creature with anger, hate, or fear. These creatures of mine seemed strange and uncanny to you so soon as you began to observe them; but to me, just after I make them, they seem to be indisputably human beings. It's afterwards, as I observe them, that the persuasion fades. First one animal trait, then another, creeps to the surface and stares out at me. But I will conquer yet! Each time I dip a living creature into the bath of burning pain, I say, 'This time I will burn out all the animal; this time I will make a rational creature of my own!' After all, what is ten years? Men have been a hundred thousand in the making."

He thought darkly. "But I am drawing near the fastness. This puma of mine--" After a silence, "And they revert. As soon as my hand is taken from them the beast begins to creep back, begins to assert itself again." Another long silence.

"Then you take the things you make into those dens?" said I.

"They go. I turn them out when I begin to feel the beast in them, and presently they wander there. They all dread this house and me. There is a kind of travesty of humanity over there. Montgomery knows about it, for he interferes in their affairs. He has trained one or two of them to our service. He's ashamed of it, but I believe he half likes some of those beasts. It's his business, not mine. They only sicken me with a sense of failure. I take no interest in them. I fancy they follow in the lines the Kanaka missionary marked out, and have a kind of mockery of a rational life, poor beasts! There's something they call the Law. Sing hymns about `all thine.' They build themselves their dens, gather fruit, and pull herbs--marry even. But I can see through it all, see into their very souls, and see there nothing but the souls of beasts, beasts that perish, anger and the lusts to live and gratify themselves.--Yet they're odd; complex, like everything else alive. There is a kind of upward striving in them, part vanity, part waste sexual emotion, part waste curiosity. It only mocks me. I have some hope of this puma. I have worked hard at her head and brain--" And now," said he, standing up after a long gap of silence, during which we had each pursued our own thoughts, "what do you think? Are you in fear of me still?"

I looked at him, and saw but a white-faced, white-haired man, with calm eyes. Save for his serenity, the touch almost of beauty that resulted from his set tranquillity and his magnificent build, he might have passed muster among a hundred other comfortable old gentlemen. Then I shivered. By way of answer to his second question, I handed

him a revolver with either hand.

"Keep them," he said, and snatched at a yawn. He stood up, stared at me for a moment, and smiled. "You have had two eventful days," said he. "I should advise some sleep. I'm glad it's all clear. Good-night." He thought me over for a moment, then went out by the inner door.

I immediately turned the key in the outer one. I sat down again; sat for a time in a kind of stagnant mood, so weary, emotionally, mentally, and physically, that I could not think beyond the point at which he had left me. The black window stared at me like an eye. At last with an effort I put out the light and got into the hammock. Very soon I was asleep.

XV. CONCERNING THE BEAST FOLK.

I WOKE early. Moreau's explanation stood before my mind, clear and definite, from the moment of my awakening. I got out of the hammock and went to the door to assure myself that the key was turned. Then I tried the window-bar, and found it firmly fixed. That these man-like creatures were in truth only bestial monsters, mere grotesque travesties of men, filled me with a vague uncertainty of their possibilities which was far worse than any definite fear.

A tapping came at the door, and I heard the glutinous accents of M'ling speaking. I pocketed one of the revolvers (keeping one hand upon it), and opened to him.

"Good-morning, sair," he said, bringing in, in addition to the customary herb-breakfast, an ill-cooked rabbit. Montgomery followed him. His roving eye caught the position of my arm and he smiled askew.

The puma was resting to heal that day; but Moreau, who was singularly solitary in his habits, did not join us. I talked with Montgomery to clear my ideas of the way in which the Beast Folk lived.

In particular, I was urgent to know how these inhuman monsters were kept from falling upon Moreau and Montgomery and from rending one another. He explained to me that the comparative safety of Moreau and himself was due to the limited mental scope of these monsters. In spite of their increased intelligence and the tendency of their animal instincts to reawaken, they had certain fixed ideas implanted by Moreau in their minds, which absolutely bounded their imaginations. They were really hypnotised; had been told that certain things were impossible, and that certain things were not to be done, and these prohibitions were woven into the texture of their minds beyond any possibility of disobedience or dispute.

Certain matters, however, in which old instinct was at war

with Moreau's convenience, were in a less stable condition. A series of propositions called the Law (I had already heard them recited) battled in their minds with the deep-seated, ever-rebellious cravings of their animal natures. This Law they were ever repeating, I found, and ever breaking. Both Montgomery and Moreau displayed particular solicitude to keep them ignorant of the taste of blood; they feared the inevitable suggestions of that flavour. Montgomery told me that the Law, especially among the feline Beast People, became oddly weakened about nightfall; that then the animal was at its strongest; that a spirit of adventure sprang up in them at the dusk, when they would dare things they never seemed to dream about by day. To that I owed my stalking by the Leopard-man, on the night of my arrival. But during these earlier days of my stay they broke the Law only furtively and after dark; in the daylight there was a general atmosphere of respect for its multifarious prohibitions.

And here perhaps I may give a few general facts about the island and the Beast People. The island, which was of irregular outline and lay low upon the wide sea, had a total area, I suppose, of seven or eight square miles. It was volcanic in origin, and was now fringed on three sides by coral reefs; some fumaroles to the northward, and a hot spring, were the only vestiges of the forces that had long since originated it. Now and then a faint quiver of earthquake would be sensible, and sometimes the ascent of the spire of smoke would be rendered tumultuous by gusts of steam; but that was all. The population of the island, Montgomery informed me, now numbered rather more than sixty of these strange creations of Moreau's art, not counting the smaller monstrosities which lived in the undergrowth and were without human form. Altogether he had made nearly a hundred and twenty; but many had died, and others--like the writhing Footless Thing of which he had told me--had come by violent ends. In answer to my question, Montgomery said that they actually bore offspring, but that these generally died.

When they lived, Moreau took them and stamped the human form upon them.

There was no evidence of the inheritance of their acquired human characteristics. The females were less numerous than the males, and liable to much furtive persecution in spite of the monogamy the Law enjoined.

<2> This description corresponds in every respect to Noble's Isle.
-- C. E. P.

It would be impossible for me to describe these Beast People in detail; my eye has had no training in details, and unhappily I cannot sketch. Most striking, perhaps, in their general appearance was the disproportion between the legs of these creatures and the length of their bodies; and yet--so relative is our idea of grace-- my eye became habituated to their forms, and at last I even fell in with their persuasion that my own long thighs were ungainly. Another point was the forward carriage of the head and the clumsy and inhuman curvature of the spine. Even the Ape-man lacked that inward sinuous curve of the back which makes the human figure so graceful. Most had their shoulders hunched clumsily, and their short forearms hung weakly at their sides. Few of them were conspicuously hairy, at least until the end of my time upon the island.

The next most obvious deformity was in their faces, almost all of which were prognathous, malformed about the ears, with large and protuberant noses, very furry or very bristly hair, and often strangely-coloured or strangely-placed eyes. None could laugh, though the Ape-man had a chattering titter. Beyond these general characters their heads had little in common; each preserved the quality of its particular species: the human mark distorted but did not hide the leopard, the ox, or the sow, or other animal or animals, from which the creature had been moulded. The voices, too, varied exceedingly.

The hands were always malformed; and though some surprised me by their unexpected human appearance, almost all were deficient in the number of the digits, clumsy about the finger-nails, and lacking any tactile sensibility.

The two most formidable Animal Men were my Leopard-man and a creature made of hyena and swine. Larger than these were the three bull-creatures who pulled in the boat. Then came the silvery-hairy-man, who was also the Sayer of the Law, M'ling, and a satyr-like creature of ape and goat. There were three Swine-men and a Swine-woman, a mare-rhinoceros-creature, and several other females whose sources I did not ascertain. There were several wolf-creatures, a bear-bull, and a Saint-Bernard-man. I have already described the Ape-man, and there was a particularly hateful (and evil-smelling) old woman made of vixen and bear, whom I hated from the beginning. She was said to be a passionate votary of the Law. Smaller creatures were certain dappled youths and my little sloth-creature. But enough of this catalogue.

At first I had a shivering horror of the brutes, felt all too keenly that they were still brutes; but insensibly I became a little habituated to the idea of them, and moreover I was affected by Montgomery's attitude towards them. He had been with them so long that he had come to regard them as almost normal human beings. His London days seemed a glorious, impossible past to him. Only once in a year or so did he go to Arica to deal with Moreau's agent, a trader in animals there. He hardly met the finest type of mankind in that seafaring village of Spanish mongrels. The men aboard-ship, he told me, seemed at first just as strange to him as the Beast Men seemed to me,--unnaturally long in the leg, flat in the face, prominent in the forehead, suspicious, dangerous, and cold-hearted. In fact, he did not like men: his heart had warmed to me, he thought, because he had saved my life.

I fancied even then that he had a sneaking kindness for some of these metamorphosed brutes, a vicious sympathy with some of their ways, but that he attempted to veil it from me at first.

M'ling, the black-faced man, Montgomery's attendant, the first of the Beast Folk I had encountered, did not live with the others across the island, but in a small kennel at the back of the enclosure.

The creature was scarcely so intelligent as the Ape-man, but far more docile, and the most human-looking of all the Beast Folk; and Montgomery had trained it to prepare food, and indeed to discharge all the trivial domestic offices that were required.

It was a complex trophy of Moreau's horrible skill,--a bear, tainted with dog and ox, and one of the most elaborately made of all his creatures.

It treated Montgomery with a strange tenderness and devotion.

Sometimes he would notice it, pat it, call it half-mocking, half-jocular names, and so make it caper with extraordinary delight; sometimes he would ill-treat it, especially after he had been at the whiskey, kicking it, beating it, pelting it with stones or lighted fuses.

But whether he treated it well or ill, it loved nothing so much as to be near him.

I say I became habituated to the Beast People, that a thousand things which had seemed unnatural and repulsive speedily became natural and ordinary to me. I suppose everything in existence takes its colour from the average hue of our surroundings.

Montgomery and Moreau were too peculiar and individual to keep my general impressions of humanity well defined.

I would see one of the clumsy bovine-creatures who worked the launch treading heavily through the undergrowth, and find myself asking, trying hard to recall, how he differed from some really human yokel trudging home from his mechanical labours; or I would meet the Fox-bear woman's vulpine, shifty face, strangely human in its speculative cunning, and even imagine I had met it before in some city byway.

Yet every now and then the beast would flash out upon me beyond doubt or denial. An ugly-looking man, a hunch-backed human savage to all appearance, squatting in the aperture of one of the dens, would stretch his arms and yawn, showing with startling suddenness scissor-edged incisors and sabre-like canines, keen and brilliant as knives. Or in some narrow pathway, glancing with a transitory daring into the eyes of some lithe, white-swathed female figure, I would suddenly see (with a spasmodic revulsion) that she had slit-like pupils, or glancing down note the curving nail with which she held her shapeless wrap about her. It is a curious thing, by the bye, for which I am quite unable to account, that these weird creatures--the females, I mean--had in the earlier days of my stay an instinctive sense of their own repulsive clumsiness, and displayed in consequence a more than human regard for the decency and decorum of extensive costume.

XVI. HOW THE BEAST FOLK TASTE BLOOD.

MY inexperience as a writer betrays me, and I wander from the thread of my story.

After I had breakfasted with Montgomery, he took me across the island to see the fumarole and the source of the hot spring into whose scalding waters I had blundered on the previous day. Both of us carried whips and loaded revolvers. While going through a leafy jungle on our road thither, we heard a rabbit squealing. We stopped and listened, but we heard no more; and presently we went on our way, and the incident dropped out of our minds. Montgomery called my attention to certain little pink animals with long hind-legs, that went leaping through the undergrowth. He told me they were creatures made of the offspring of the Beast People, that Moreau had invented. He had fancied they might serve for meat, but a rabbit-like habit of devouring their young had defeated this intention. I had already encountered some of these creatures,-- once during my moonlight flight from the Leopard-man, and once during my pursuit by Moreau on the previous day. By chance, one hopping to avoid us leapt into the hole caused by the uprooting of a wind-blown tree; before it could extricate itself we managed to catch it. It spat like a cat, scratched and kicked vigorously with its hind-legs, and made an attempt to bite; but its teeth were too feeble to inflict more than a painless pinch. It seemed to me rather a pretty little creature; and as Montgomery stated that it never destroyed the turf by burrowing, and was very cleanly in its habits, I should imagine it might prove a convenient substitute for the common rabbit in gentlemen's parks.

We also saw on our way the trunk of a tree barked in long strips and splintered deeply. Montgomery called my attention to this. "Not to claw bark of trees, that is the Law," he said. "Much some of them care for it!" It was after this, I think, that we

met the Satyr and the Ape-man. The Satyr was a gleam of classical memory on the part of Moreau,--his face ovine in expression, like the coarser Hebrew type; his voice a harsh bleat, his nether extremities Satanic. He was gnawing the husk of a pod-like fruit as he passed us. Both of them saluted Montgomery.

"Hail," said they, "to the Other with the Whip!"

"There's a Third with a Whip now," said Montgomery. "So you'd better mind!"

"Was he not made?" said the Ape-man. "He said--he said he was made."

The Satyr-man looked curiously at me. "The Third with the Whip, he that walks weeping into the sea, has a thin white face."

"He has a thin long whip," said Montgomery.

"Yesterday he bled and wept," said the Satyr. "You never bleed nor weep. The Master does not bleed or weep."

"Ollendorffian beggar!" said Montgomery, "you'll bleed and weep if you don't look out!"

"He has five fingers, he is a five-man like me," said the Ape-man.

"Come along, Prendick," said Montgomery, taking my arm; and I went on with him.

The Satyr and the Ape-man stood watching us and making other remarks to each other.

"He says nothing," said the Satyr. "Men have voices."

"Yesterday he asked me of things to eat," said the Ape-man. "He did not know."

Then they spoke inaudible things, and I heard the Satyr laughing.

It was on our way back that we came upon the dead rabbit. The red body of the wretched little beast was rent to pieces, many of the ribs stripped white, and the backbone indisputably gnawed.

At that Montgomery stopped. "Good God!" said he, stooping down, and picking up some of the crushed vertebrae to examine them more closely.

"Good God!" he repeated, "what can this mean?"

"Some carnivore of yours has remembered its old habits," I said after a pause. "This backbone has been bitten through."

He stood staring, with his face white and his lip pulled askew. "I don't like this," he said slowly.

"I saw something of the same kind," said I, "the first day I came here."

"The devil you did! What was it?"

"A rabbit with its head twisted off."

"The day you came here?"

"The day I came here. In the undergrowth at the back of the enclosure, when I went out in the evening. The head was completely wrung off."

He gave a long, low whistle.

"And what is more, I have an idea which of your brutes did the thing. It's only a suspicion, you know. Before I came on the rabbit I saw one

of your monsters drinking in the stream."

"Sucking his drink?"

"Yes."

"'Not to suck your drink; that is the Law.' Much the brutes care for the Law, eh? when Moreau's not about!"

"It was the brute who chased me."

"Of course," said Montgomery; "it's just the way with carnivores. After a kill, they drink. It's the taste of blood, you know.-- What was the brute like?" he continued. "Would you know him again?" He glanced about us, standing astride over the mess of dead rabbit, his eyes roving among the shadows and screens of greenery, the lurking-places and ambuscades of the forest that bounded us in. "The taste of blood," he said again.

He took out his revolver, examined the cartridges in it and replaced it. Then he began to pull at his dropping lip.

"I think I should know the brute again," I said. "I stunned him. He ought to have a handsome bruise on the forehead of him."

"But then we have to prove that he killed the rabbit," said Montgomery. "I wish I'd never brought the things here."

I should have gone on, but he stayed there thinking over the mangled rabbit in a puzzle-headed way. As it was, I went to such a distance that the rabbit's remains were hidden.

"Come on!" I said.

Presently he woke up and came towards me. "You see," he said,

almost in a whisper, "they are all supposed to have a fixed idea against eating anything that runs on land. If some brute has by any accident tasted blood He went on some way in silence. "I wonder what can have happened," he said to himself. Then, after a pause again: "I did a foolish thing the other day. That servant of mine--I showed him how to skin and cook a rabbit. It's odd--I saw him licking his hands--It never occurred to me." Then: "We must put a stop to this. I must tell Moreau."

He could think of nothing else on our homeward journey.

Moreau took the matter even more seriously than Montgomery, and I need scarcely say that I was affected by their evident consternation.

"We must make an example," said Moreau. "I've no doubt in my own mind that the Leopard-man was the sinner. But how can we prove it? I wish, Montgomery, you had kept your taste for meat in hand, and gone without these exciting novelties. We may find ourselves in a mess yet, through it."

"I was a silly ass," said Montgomery. "But the thing's done now; and you said I might have them, you know."

"We must see to the thing at once," said Moreau. "I suppose if anything should turn up, M'ling can take care of himself?"

"I'm not so sure of M'ling," said Montgomery. "I think I ought to know him."

In the afternoon, Moreau, Montgomery, myself, and M'ling went across the island to the huts in the ravine. We three were armed; M'ling carried the little hatchet he used in chopping firewood, and some coils of wire. Moreau had a huge cowherd's horn slung over his shoulder.

"You will see a gathering of the Beast People," said Montgomery.
"It is a pretty sight!"

Moreau said not a word on the way, but the expression of his heavy, white-fringed face was grimly set.

We crossed the ravine down which smoked the stream of hot water, and followed the winding pathway through the canebrakes until we reached a wide area covered over with a thick, powdery yellow substance which I believe was sulphur. Above the shoulder of a weedy bank the sea glittered. We came to a kind of shallow natural amphitheatre, and here the four of us halted. Then Moreau sounded the horn, and broke the sleeping stillness of the tropical afternoon. He must have had strong lungs. The hooting note rose and rose amidst its echoes, to at last an ear-penetrating intensity.

"Ah!" said Moreau, letting the curved instrument fall to his side again.

Immediately there was a crashing through the yellow canes, and a sound of voices from the dense green jungle that marked the morass through which I had run on the previous day. Then at three or four points on the edge of the sulphurous area appeared the grotesque forms of the Beast People hurrying towards us. I could not help a creeping horror, as I perceived first one and then another trot out from the trees or reeds and come shambling along over the hot dust. But Moreau and Montgomery stood calmly enough; and, perforce, I stuck beside them.

First to arrive was the Satyr, strangely unreal for all that he cast a shadow and tossed the dust with his hoofs. After him from the brake came a monstrous lout, a thing of horse and rhinoceros, chewing a straw as it came; then appeared the Swine-woman and two Wolf-women; then the Fox-bear witch, with her red eyes in her peaked red face, and then others, --all hurrying eagerly.

As they came forward they began to cringe towards Moreau and chant, quite regardless of one another, fragments of the latter half of the litany of the Law,--"His is the Hand that wounds; His is the Hand that heals," and so forth. As soon as they had approached within a distance of perhaps thirty yards they halted, and bowing on knees and elbows began flinging the white dust upon their heads.

Imagine the scene if you can! We three blue-clad men, with our misshapen black-faced attendant, standing in a wide expanse of sunlit yellow dust under the blazing blue sky, and surrounded by this circle of crouching and gesticulating monstrosities,-- some almost human save in their subtle expression and gestures, some like cripples, some so strangely distorted as to resemble nothing but the denizens of our wildest dreams; and, beyond, the reedy lines of a canebrake in one direction, a dense tangle of palm-trees on the other, separating us from the ravine with the huts, and to the north the hazy horizon of the Pacific Ocean.

"Sixty-two, sixty-three," counted Moreau. "There are four more."

"I do not see the Leopard-man," said I.

Presently Moreau sounded the great horn again, and at the sound of it all the Beast People writhed and grovelled in the dust. Then, slinking out of the canebrake, stooping near the ground and trying to join the dust-throwing circle behind Moreau's back, came the Leopard-man. The last of the Beast People to arrive was the little Ape-man. The earlier animals, hot and weary with their grovelling, shot vicious glances at him.

"Cease!" said Moreau, in his firm, loud voice; and the Beast People sat back upon their hams and rested from their worshipping.

"Where is the Sayer of the Law?" said Moreau, and the hairy-grey

monster bowed his face in the dust.

"Say the words!" said Moreau.

Forthwith all in the kneeling assembly, swaying from side to side and dashing up the sulphur with their hands,--first the right hand and a puff of dust, and then the left,--began once more to chant their strange litany. When they reached, "Not to eat Flesh or Fowl, that is the Law," Moreau held up his lank white hand.

"Stop!" he cried, and there fell absolute silence upon them all.

I think they all knew and dreaded what was coming. I looked round at their strange faces. When I saw their wincing attitudes and the furtive dread in their bright eyes, I wondered that I had ever believed them to be men.

"That Law has been broken!" said Moreau.

"None escape," from the faceless creature with the silvery hair. "None escape," repeated the kneeling circle of Beast People.

"Who is he?" cried Moreau, and looked round at their faces, cracking his whip. I fancied the Hyena-swine looked dejected, so too did the Leopard-man. Moreau stopped, facing this creature, who cringed towards him with the memory and dread of infinite torment.

"Who is he?" repeated Moreau, in a voice of thunder.

"Evil is he who breaks the Law," chanted the Sayer of the Law.

Moreau looked into the eyes of the Leopard-man, and seemed to be dragging the very soul out of the creature.

"Who breaks the Law--" said Moreau, taking his eyes off his victim,

and turning towards us (it seemed to me there was a touch of exultation in his voice).

"Goes back to the House of Pain," they all clamoured,--"goes back to the House of Pain, O Master!"

"Back to the House of Pain,--back to the House of Pain," gabbled the Ape-man, as though the idea was sweet to him.

"Do you hear?" said Moreau, turning back to the criminal, "my friend--Hullo!"

For the Leopard-man, released from Moreau's eye, had risen straight from his knees, and now, with eyes aflame and his huge feline tusks flashing out from under his curling lips, leapt towards his tormentor. I am convinced that only the madness of unendurable fear could have prompted this attack. The whole circle of threescore monsters seemed to rise about us. I drew my revolver. The two figures collided. I saw Moreau reeling back from the Leopard-man's blow. There was a furious yelling and howling all about us. Every one was moving rapidly. For a moment I thought it was a general revolt. The furious face of the Leopard-man flashed by mine, with M'ling close in pursuit. I saw the yellow eyes of the Hyena-swine blazing with excitement, his attitude as if he were half resolved to attack me. The Satyr, too, glared at me over the Hyena-swine's hunched shoulders. I heard the crack of Moreau's pistol, and saw the pink flash dart across the tumult. The whole crowd seemed to swing round in the direction of the glint of fire, and I too was swung round by the magnetism of the movement. In another second I was running, one of a tumultuous shouting crowd, in pursuit of the escaping Leopard-man.

That is all I can tell definitely. I saw the Leopard-man strike Moreau, and then everything spun about me until I was running headlong. M'ling was ahead, close in pursuit of the fugitive. Behind, their tongues

already lolling out, ran the Wolf-women in great leaping strides. The Swine folk followed, squealing with excitement, and the two Bull-men in their swathings of white. Then came Moreau in a cluster of the Beast People, his wide-brimmed straw hat blown off, his revolver in hand, and his lank white hair streaming out. The Hyena-swine ran beside me, keeping pace with me and glancing furtively at me out of his feline eyes, and the others came pattering and shouting behind us.

The Leopard-man went bursting his way through the long canes, which sprang back as he passed, and rattled in M'ling's face. We others in the rear found a trampled path for us when we reached the brake. The chase lay through the brake for perhaps a quarter of a mile, and then plunged into a dense thicket, which retarded our movements exceedingly, though we went through it in a crowd together,-- fronds flicking into our faces, ropy creepers catching us under the chin or gripping our ankles, thorny plants hooking into and tearing cloth and flesh together.

"He has gone on all-fours through this," panted Moreau, now just ahead of me.

"None escape," said the Wolf-bear, laughing into my face with the exultation of hunting. We burst out again among rocks, and saw the quarry ahead running lightly on all-fours and snarling at us over his shoulder. At that the Wolf Folk howled with delight. The Thing was still clothed, and at a distance its face still seemed human; but the carriage of its four limbs was feline, and the furtive droop of its shoulder was distinctly that of a hunted animal. It leapt over some thorny yellow-flowering bushes, and was hidden. M'ling was halfway across the space.

Most of us now had lost the first speed of the chase, and had fallen into a longer and steadier stride. I saw as we traversed the open

that the pursuit was now spreading from a column into a line. The Hyena-swine still ran close to me, watching me as it ran, every now and then puckering its muzzle with a snarling laugh. At the edge of the rocks the Leopard-man, realising that he was making for the projecting cape upon which he had stalked me on the night of my arrival, had doubled in the undergrowth; but Montgomery had seen the manoeuvre, and turned him again. So, panting, tumbling against rocks, torn by brambles, impeded by ferns and reeds, I helped to pursue the Leopard-man who had broken the Law, and the Hyena-swine ran, laughing savagely, by my side. I staggered on, my head reeling and my heart beating against my ribs, tired almost to death, and yet not daring to lose sight of the chase lest I should be left alone with this horrible companion. I staggered on in spite of infinite fatigue and the dense heat of the tropical afternoon.

At last the fury of the hunt slackened. We had pinned the wretched brute into a corner of the island. Moreau, whip in hand, marshalled us all into an irregular line, and we advanced now slowly, shouting to one another as we advanced and tightening the cordon about our victim. He lurked noiseless and invisible in the bushes through which I had run from him during that midnight pursuit.

"Steady!" cried Moreau, "steady!" as the ends of the line crept round the tangle of undergrowth and hemmed the brute in.

"Ware a rush!" came the voice of Montgomery from beyond the thicket.

I was on the slope above the bushes; Montgomery and Moreau beat along the beach beneath. Slowly we pushed in among the fretted network of branches and leaves. The quarry was silent.

"Back to the House of Pain, the House of Pain, the House of Pain!" yelled the voice of the Ape-man, some twenty yards to the right.

When I heard that, I forgave the poor wretch all the fear he had inspired in me. I heard the twigs snap and the boughs swish aside before the heavy tread of the Horse-rhinoceros upon my right. Then suddenly through a polygon of green, in the half darkness under the luxuriant growth, I saw the creature we were hunting. I halted. He was crouched together into the smallest possible compass, his luminous green eyes turned over his shoulder regarding me.

It may seem a strange contradiction in me,--I cannot explain the fact,--but now, seeing the creature there in a perfectly animal attitude, with the light gleaming in its eyes and its imperfectly human face distorted with terror, I realised again the fact of its humanity. In another moment other of its pursuers would see it, and it would be overpowered and captured, to experience once more the horrible tortures of the enclosure. Abruptly I slipped out my revolver, aimed between its terror-struck eyes, and fired. As I did so, the Hyena-swine saw the Thing, and flung itself upon it with an eager cry, thrusting thirsty teeth into its neck. All about me the green masses of the thicket were swaying and cracking as the Beast People came rushing together. One face and then another appeared.

"Don't kill it, Prendick!" cried Moreau. "Don't kill it!" and I saw him stooping as he pushed through under the fronds of the big ferns.

In another moment he had beaten off the Hyena-swine with the handle of his whip, and he and Montgomery were keeping away the excited carnivorous

Beast People, and particularly M'ling, from the still quivering body. The hairy-grey Thing came sniffing at the corpse under my arm. The other animals, in their animal ardour, jostled me to get a nearer view.

"Confound you, Prendick!" said Moreau. "I wanted him."

"I'm sorry," said I, though I was not. "It was the impulse of the moment." I felt sick with exertion and excitement. Turning, I pushed my way out of the crowding Beast People and went on alone up the slope towards the higher part of the headland. Under the shouted directions of Moreau I heard the three white-swathed Bull-men begin dragging the victim down towards the water.

It was easy now for me to be alone. The Beast People manifested a quite human curiosity about the dead body, and followed it in a thick knot, sniffing and growling at it as the Bull-men dragged it down the beach. I went to the headland and watched the bull-men, black against the evening sky as they carried the weighted dead body out to sea; and like a wave across my mind came the realisation of the unspeakable aimlessness of things upon the island. Upon the beach among the rocks beneath me were the Ape-man, the Hyena-swine, and several other of the Beast People, standing about Montgomery and Moreau. They were all still intensely excited, and all overflowing with noisy expressions of their loyalty to the Law; yet I felt an absolute assurance in my own mind that the Hyena-swine was implicated in the rabbit-killing. A strange persuasion came upon me, that, save for the grossness of the line, the grotesqueness of the forms, I had here before me the whole balance of human life in miniature, the whole interplay of instinct, reason, and fate in its simplest form. The Leopard-man had happened to go under: that was all the difference. Poor brute!

Poor brutes! I began to see the viler aspect of Moreau's cruelty. I had not thought before of the pain and trouble that came to these poor victims after they had passed from Moreau's hands. I had shivered only at the days of actual torment in the enclosure. But now that seemed to me the lesser part. Before, they had been beasts, their instincts fitly adapted to their surroundings, and happy as living things may be. Now they stumbled in the shackles of humanity, lived in a fear that never died, fretted by a law they

could not understand; their mock-human existence, begun in an agony, was one long internal struggle, one long dread of Moreau--and for what? It was the wantonness of it that stirred me.

Had Moreau had any intelligible object, I could have sympathised at least a little with him. I am not so squeamish about pain as that. I could have forgiven him a little even, had his motive been only hate. But he was so irresponsible, so utterly careless! His curiosity, his mad, aimless investigations, drove him on; and the Things were thrown out to live a year or so, to struggle and blunder and suffer, and at last to die painfully. They were wretched in themselves; the old animal hate moved them to trouble one another; the Law held them back from a brief hot struggle and a decisive end to their natural animosities.

In those days my fear of the Beast People went the way of my personal fear for Moreau. I fell indeed into a morbid state, deep and enduring, and alien to fear, which has left permanent scars upon my mind. I must confess that I lost faith in the sanity of the world when I saw it suffering the painful disorder of this island. A blind Fate, a vast pitiless Mechanism, seemed to cut and shape the fabric of existence and I, Moreau (by his passion for research), Montgomery (by his passion for drink), the Beast People with their instincts and mental restrictions, were torn and crushed, ruthlessly, inevitably, amid the infinite complexity of its incessant wheels. But this condition did not come all at once: I think indeed that I anticipate a little in speaking of it now.

XVII. A CATASTROPHE.

SCARCELY six weeks passed before I had lost every feeling but dislike and abhorrence for this infamous experiment of Moreau's. My one idea was to get away from these horrible caricatures of my Maker's image, back to the sweet and wholesome intercourse of men. My fellow-creatures, from whom I was thus separated, began to assume idyllic virtue and beauty in my memory. My first friendship with Montgomery did not increase. His long separation from humanity, his secret vice of drunkenness, his evident sympathy with the Beast People, tainted him to me. Several times I let him go alone among them. I avoided intercourse with them in every possible way. I spent an increasing proportion of my time upon the beach, looking for some liberating sail that never appeared,--until one day there fell upon us an appalling disaster, which put an altogether different aspect upon my strange surroundings.

It was about seven or eight weeks after my landing,--rather more, I think, though I had not troubled to keep account of the time,--when this catastrophe occurred. It happened in the early morning--I should think about six. I had risen and breakfasted early, having been aroused by the noise of three Beast Men carrying wood into the enclosure.

After breakfast I went to the open gateway of the enclosure, and stood there smoking a cigarette and enjoying the freshness of the early morning. Moreau presently came round the corner of the enclosure and greeted me. He passed by me, and I heard him behind me unlock and enter his laboratory. So indurated was I at that time to the abomination of the place, that I heard without a touch of emotion the puma victim begin another day of torture. It met its persecutor with a shriek, almost exactly like that of an angry virago.

Then suddenly something happened,--I do not know what, to this day. I heard a short, sharp cry behind me, a fall, and turning saw an awful face rushing upon me,--not human, not animal, but hellish, brown, seamed with red branching scars, red drops starting out upon it, and the lidless eyes ablaze. I threw up my arm to defend myself from the blow that flung me headlong with a broken forearm; and the great monster, swathed in lint and with red-stained bandages fluttering about it, leapt over me and passed. I rolled over and over down the beach, tried to sit up, and collapsed upon my broken arm. Then Moreau appeared, his massive white face all the more terrible for the blood that trickled from his forehead. He carried a revolver in one hand. He scarcely glanced at me, but rushed off at once in pursuit of the puma.

I tried the other arm and sat up. The muffled figure in front ran in great striding leaps along the beach, and Moreau followed her. She turned her head and saw him, then doubling abruptly made for the bushes. She gained upon him at every stride. I saw her plunge into them, and Moreau, running slantingly to intercept her, fired and missed as she disappeared. Then he too vanished in the green confusion. I stared after them, and then the pain in my arm flamed up, and with a groan I staggered to my feet. Montgomery appeared in the doorway, dressed, and with his revolver in his hand.

"Great God, Prendick!" he said, not noticing that I was hurt, "that brute's loose! Tore the fetter out of the wall! Have you seen them?" Then sharply, seeing I gripped my arm, "What's the matter?"

"I was standing in the doorway," said I.

He came forward and took my arm. "Blood on the sleeve," said he, and rolled back the flannel. He pocketed his weapon, felt my arm about painfully, and led me inside. "Your arm is broken," he said, and then, "Tell me exactly how it happened-- what happened?"

I told him what I had seen; told him in broken sentences, with gasps of pain between them, and very dexterously and swiftly he bound my arm meanwhile. He slung it from my shoulder, stood back and looked at me.

"You'll do," he said. "And now?"

He thought. Then he went out and locked the gates of the enclosure. He was absent some time.

I was chiefly concerned about my arm. The incident seemed merely one more of many horrible things. I sat down in the deck chair, and I must admit swore heartily at the island. The first dull feeling of injury in my arm had already given way to a burning pain when Montgomery reappeared. His face was rather pale, and he showed more of his lower gums than ever.

"I can neither see nor hear anything of him," he said. "I've been thinking he may want my help." He stared at me with his expressionless eyes. "That was a strong brute," he said. "It simply wrenched its fetter out of the wall." He went to the window, then to the door, and there turned to me. "I shall go after him," he said. "There's another revolver I can leave with you. To tell you the truth, I feel anxious somehow."

He obtained the weapon, and put it ready to my hand on the table; then went out, leaving a restless contagion in the air. I did not sit long after he left, but took the revolver in hand and went to the doorway.

The morning was as still as death. Not a whisper of wind was stirring; the sea was like polished glass, the sky empty, the beach desolate.

In my half-excited, half-feverish state, this stillness of things oppressed me. I tried to whistle, and the tune died away.

I swore again,--the second time that morning. Then I went to the corner of the enclosure and stared inland at the green bush that had swallowed up Moreau and Montgomery. When would they return, and how?

Then far away up the beach a little grey Beast Man appeared, ran down to the water's edge and began splashing about.

I strolled back to the doorway, then to the corner again, and so began pacing to and fro like a sentinel upon duty.

Once I was arrested by the distant voice of Montgomery bawling, "Coo-ee--Moreau!" My arm became less painful, but very hot.

I got feverish and thirsty. My shadow grew shorter.

I watched the distant figure until it went away again. Would Moreau and Montgomery never return? Three sea-birds began fighting for some stranded treasure.

Then from far away behind the enclosure I heard a pistol-shot. A long silence, and then came another. Then a yelling cry nearer, and another dismal gap of silence. My unfortunate imagination set to work to torment me. Then suddenly a shot close by.

I went to the corner, startled, and saw Montgomery,--his face scarlet, his hair disordered, and the knee of his trousers torn.

His face expressed profound consternation. Behind him slouched the Beast Man, M'ling, and round M'ling's jaws were some queer dark stains.

"Has he come?" said Montgomery.

"Moreau?" said I. "No."

"My God!" The man was panting, almost sobbing. "Go back in," he said,

taking my arm. "They're mad. They're all rushing about mad. What can have happened? I don't know. I'll tell you, when my breath comes. Where's some brandy?"

Montgomery limped before me into the room and sat down in the deck chair.

M'ling flung himself down just outside the doorway and began panting like a dog. I got Montgomery some brandy-and-water. He sat staring in front of him at nothing, recovering his breath. After some minutes he began to tell me what had happened.

He had followed their track for some way. It was plain enough at first on account of the crushed and broken bushes, white rags torn from the puma's bandages, and occasional smears of blood on the leaves of the shrubs and undergrowth. He lost the track, however, on the stony ground beyond the stream where I had seen the Beast Man drinking, and went wandering aimlessly westward shouting Moreau's name. Then M'ling had come to him carrying a light hatchet. M'ling had seen nothing of the puma affair; had been felling wood, and heard him calling. They went on shouting together. Two Beast Men came crouching and peering at them through the undergrowth, with gestures and a furtive carriage that alarmed Montgomery by their strangeness. He hailed them, and they fled guiltily. He stopped shouting after that, and after wandering some time farther in an undecided way, determined to visit the huts.

He found the ravine deserted.

Growing more alarmed every minute, he began to retrace his steps. Then it was he encountered the two Swine-men I had seen dancing on the night of my arrival; blood-stained they were about the mouth, and intensely excited. They came crashing through the ferns, and stopped with fierce faces when they saw him. He cracked his whip in some trepidation, and forthwith they rushed at him. Never before had a Beast Man dared to do that. One he shot through the head;

M'ling flung himself upon the other, and the two rolled grappling. M'ling got his brute under and with his teeth in its throat, and Montgomery shot that too as it struggled in M'ling's grip. He had some difficulty in inducing M'ling to come on with him. Thence they had hurried back to me. On the way, M'ling had suddenly rushed into a thicket and driven out an under-sized Ocelot-man, also blood-stained, and lame through a wound in the foot. This brute had run a little way and then turned savagely at bay, and Montgomery--with a certain wantonness, I thought--had shot him.

"What does it all mean?" said I.

He shook his head, and turned once more to the brandy.

XVIII. THE FINDING OF MOREAU.

WHEN I saw Montgomery swallow a third dose of brandy, I took it upon myself to interfere. He was already more than half fuddled. I told him that some serious thing must have happened to Moreau by this time, or he would have returned before this, and that it behoved us to ascertain what that catastrophe was. Montgomery raised some feeble objections, and at last agreed. We had some food, and then all three of us started.

It is possibly due to the tension of my mind, at the time, but even now that start into the hot stillness of the tropical afternoon is a singularly vivid impression. M'ling went first, his shoulder hunched, his strange black head moving with quick starts as he peered first on this side of the way and then on that. He was unarmed; his axe he had dropped when he encountered the Swine-man. Teeth were his weapons, when it came to fighting. Montgomery followed with stumbling footsteps, his hands in his pockets, his face downcast; he was in a state of muddled sullenness with me on account of the brandy. My left arm was in a sling (it was lucky it was my left), and I carried my revolver in my right. Soon we traced a narrow path through the wild luxuriance of the island, going northwestward; and presently M'ling stopped, and became rigid with watchfulness. Montgomery almost staggered into him, and then stopped too. Then, listening intently, we heard coming through the trees the sound of voices and footsteps approaching us.

"He is dead," said a deep, vibrating voice.

"He is not dead; he is not dead," jabbered another.

"We saw, we saw," said several voices.

"Hullo!" suddenly shouted Montgomery, "Hullo, there!"

"Confound you!" said I, and gripped my pistol.

There was a silence, then a crashing among the interlacing vegetation, first here, then there, and then half-a-dozen faces appeared,-- strange faces, lit by a strange light. M'ling made a growling noise in his throat. I recognised the Ape-man: I had indeed already identified his voice, and two of the white-swathed brown-featured creatures I had seen in Montgomery's boat. With these were the two dappled brutes and that grey, horribly crooked creature who said the Law, with grey hair streaming down its cheeks, heavy grey eyebrows, and grey locks pouring off from a central parting upon its sloping forehead,--a heavy, faceless thing, with strange red eyes, looking at us curiously from amidst the green.

For a space no one spoke. Then Montgomery hiccupped, "Who--said he was dead?"

The Monkey-man looked guiltily at the hairy-grey Thing. "He is dead," said this monster. "They saw."

There was nothing threatening about this detachment, at any rate. They seemed awestricken and puzzled.

"Where is he?" said Montgomery.

"Beyond," and the grey creature pointed.

"Is there a Law now?" asked the Monkey-man. "Is it still to be this and that? Is he dead indeed?"

"Is there a Law?" repeated the man in white. "Is there a Law, thou Other with the Whip?"

"He is dead," said the hairy-grey Thing. And they all stood watching us.

"Prendick," said Montgomery, turning his dull eyes to me.
"He's dead, evidently."

I had been standing behind him during this colloquy. I began to see how things lay with them. I suddenly stepped in front of Montgomery and lifted up my voice:--"Children of the Law," I said, "he is not dead!" M'ling turned his sharp eyes on me. "He has changed his shape; he has changed his body," I went on. "For a time you will not see him. He is--there," I pointed upward, "where he can watch you. You cannot see him, but he can see you. Fear the Law!"

I looked at them squarely. They flinched.

"He is great, he is good," said the Ape-man, peering fearfully upward among the dense trees.

"And the other Thing?" I demanded.

"The Thing that bled, and ran screaming and sobbing,--that is dead too," said the grey Thing, still regarding me.

"That's well," grunted Montgomery.

"The Other with the Whip--" began the grey Thing.

"Well?" said I.

"Said he was dead."

But Montgomery was still sober enough to understand my motive in denying

Moreau's death. "He is not dead," he said slowly, "not dead at all. No more dead than I am."

"Some," said I, "have broken the Law: they will die. Some have died. Show us now where his old body lies,--the body he cast away because he had no more need of it."

"It is this way, Man who walked in the Sea," said the grey Thing.

And with these six creatures guiding us, we went through the tumult of ferns and creepers and tree-stems towards the northwest. Then came a yelling, a crashing among the branches, and a little pink homunculus rushed by us shrieking. Immediately after appeared a monster in headlong pursuit, blood-bedabbled, who was amongst us almost before he could stop his career. The grey Thing leapt aside. M'ling, with a snarl, flew at it, and was struck aside. Montgomery fired and missed, bowed his head, threw up his arm, and turned to run. I fired, and the Thing still came on; fired again, point-blank, into its ugly face. I saw its features vanish in a flash: its face was driven in. Yet it passed me, gripped Montgomery, and holding him, fell headlong beside him and pulled him sprawling upon itself in its death-agony.

I found myself alone with M'ling, the dead brute, and the prostrate man. Montgomery raised himself slowly and stared in a muddled way at the shattered Beast Man beside him. It more than half sobered him. He scrambled to his feet. Then I saw the grey Thing returning cautiously through the trees.

"See," said I, pointing to the dead brute, "is the Law not alive? This came of breaking the Law."

He peered at the body. "He sends the Fire that kills,"

said he, in his deep voice, repeating part of the Ritual.
The others gathered round and stared for a space.

At last we drew near the westward extremity of the island.
We came upon the gnawed and mutilated body of the puma,
its shoulder-bone smashed by a bullet, and perhaps twenty yards
farther found at last what we sought. Moreau lay face downward
in a trampled space in a canebrake. One hand was almost severed
at the wrist and his silvery hair was dabbled in blood.
His head had been battered in by the fetters of the puma.
The broken canes beneath him were smeared with blood.
His revolver we could not find. Montgomery turned him over.
Resting at intervals, and with the help of the seven Beast People
(for he was a heavy man), we carried Moreau back to the enclosure.
The night was darkling. Twice we heard unseen creatures howling
and shrieking past our little band, and once the little pink
sloth-creature appeared and stared at us, and vanished again.
But we were not attacked again. At the gates of the enclosure
our company of Beast People left us, M'ling going with the rest.
We locked ourselves in, and then took Moreau's mangled
body into the yard and laid it upon a pile of brushwood.
Then we went into the laboratory and put an end to all we found living
there.

XIX. MONTGOMERY'S "BANK HOLIDAY."

WHEN this was accomplished, and we had washed and eaten, Montgomery and I went into my little room and seriously discussed our position for the first time. It was then near midnight. He was almost sober, but greatly disturbed in his mind. He had been strangely under the influence of Moreau's personality: I do not think it had ever occurred to him that Moreau could die. This disaster was the sudden collapse of the habits that had become part of his nature in the ten or more monotonous years he had spent on the island. He talked vaguely, answered my questions crookedly, wandered into general questions.

"This silly ass of a world," he said; "what a muddle it all is! I haven't had any life. I wonder when it's going to begin. Sixteen years being bullied by nurses and schoolmasters at their own sweet will; five in London grinding hard at medicine, bad food, shabby lodgings, shabby clothes, shabby vice, a blunder,-- I didn't know any better,--and hustled off to this beastly island. Ten years here! What's it all for, Prendick? Are we bubbles blown by a baby?"

It was hard to deal with such ravings. "The thing we have to think of now," said I, "is how to get away from this island."

"What's the good of getting away? I'm an outcast. Where am I to join on? It's all very well for you, Prendick. Poor old Moreau! We can't leave him here to have his bones picked. As it is--And besides, what will become of the decent part of the Beast Folk?"

"Well," said I, "that will do to-morrow. I've been thinking we might make that brushwood into a pyre and burn his body--and those other things. Then what will happen with the Beast Folk?"

"I don't know. I suppose those that were made of beasts of prey will make silly asses of themselves sooner or later. We can't massacre the lot--can we? I suppose that's what your humanity would suggest? But they'll change. They are sure to change."

He talked thus inconclusively until at last I felt my temper going.

"Damnation!" he exclaimed at some petulance of mine; "can't you see I'm in a worse hole than you are?" And he got up, and went for the brandy. "Drink!" he said returning, "you logic-chopping, chalky-faced saint of an atheist, drink!"

"Not I," said I, and sat grimly watching his face under the yellow paraffine flare, as he drank himself into a garrulous misery.

I have a memory of infinite tedium. He wandered into a maudlin defence of the Beast People and of M'ling. M'ling, he said, was the only thing that had ever really cared for him. And suddenly an idea came to him.

"I'm damned!" said he, staggering to his feet and clutching the brandy bottle.

By some flash of intuition I knew what it was he intended. "You don't give drink to that beast!" I said, rising and facing him.

"Beast!" said he. "You're the beast. He takes his liquor like a Christian. Come out of the way, Prendick!"

"For God's sake," said I.

"Get--out of the way!" he roared, and suddenly whipped out his revolver.

"Very well," said I, and stood aside, half-minded to fall upon him

as he put his hand upon the latch, but deterred by the thought of my useless arm. "You've made a beast of yourself,--to the beasts you may go."

He flung the doorway open, and stood half facing me between the yellow lamp-light and the pallid glare of the moon; his eye-sockets were blotches of black under his stubbly eyebrows.

"You're a solemn prig, Prendick, a silly ass! You're always fearing and fancying. We're on the edge of things. I'm bound to cut my throat to-morrow. I'm going to have a damned Bank Holiday to-night." He turned and went out into the moonlight. "M'ling!" he cried; "M'ling, old friend!"

Three dim creatures in the silvery light came along the edge of the wan beach,--one a white-wrapped creature, the other two blotches of blackness following it. They halted, staring. Then I saw M'ling's hunched shoulders as he came round the corner of the house.

"Drink!" cried Montgomery, "drink, you brutes! Drink and be men! Damme, I'm the cleverest. Moreau forgot this; this is the last touch. Drink, I tell you!" And waving the bottle in his hand he started off at a kind of quick trot to the westward, M'ling ranging himself between him and the three dim creatures who followed.

I went to the doorway. They were already indistinct in the mist of the moonlight before Montgomery halted. I saw him administer a dose of the raw brandy to M'ling, and saw the five figures melt into one vague patch.

"Sing!" I heard Montgomery shout,--"sing all together, `Confound old Prendick!' That's right; now again, `Confound old Prendick!'"

The black group broke up into five separate figures,

and wound slowly away from me along the band of shining beach. Each went howling at his own sweet will, yelping insults at me, or giving whatever other vent this new inspiration of brandy demanded. Presently I heard Montgomery's voice shouting, "Right turn!" and they passed with their shouts and howls into the blackness of the landward trees. Slowly, very slowly, they receded into silence.

The peaceful splendour of the night healed again. The moon was now past the meridian and travelling down the west. It was at its full, and very bright riding through the empty blue sky. The shadow of the wall lay, a yard wide and of inky blackness, at my feet. The eastward sea was a featureless grey, dark and mysterious; and between the sea and the shadow the grey sands (of volcanic glass and crystals) flashed and shone like a beach of diamonds. Behind me the paraffine lamp flared hot and ruddy.

Then I shut the door, locked it, and went into the enclosure where Moreau lay beside his latest victims,--the staghounds and the llama and some other wretched brutes,--with his massive face calm even after his terrible death, and with the hard eyes open, staring at the dead white moon above. I sat down upon the edge of the sink, and with my eyes upon that ghastly pile of silvery light and ominous shadows began to turn over my plans. In the morning I would gather some provisions in the dingey, and after setting fire to the pyre before me, push out into the desolation of the high sea once more. I felt that for Montgomery there was no help; that he was, in truth, half akin to these Beast Folk, unfitted for human kindred.

I do not know how long I sat there scheming. It must have been an hour or so. Then my planning was interrupted by the return of Montgomery to my neighbourhood. I heard a yelling from many throats, a tumult of exultant cries passing down towards the beach, whooping and howling, and excited shrieks that seemed to come to a stop near the water's edge. The riot rose and fell; I heard heavy blows

and the splintering smash of wood, but it did not trouble me then. A discordant chanting began.

My thoughts went back to my means of escape. I got up, brought the lamp, and went into a shed to look at some kegs I had seen there. Then I became interested in the contents of some biscuit-tins, and opened one. I saw something out of the tail of my eye,--a red figure,--and turned sharply.

Behind me lay the yard, vividly black-and-white in the moonlight, and the pile of wood and faggots on which Moreau and his mutilated victims lay, one over another. They seemed to be gripping one another in one last revengeful grapple. His wounds gaped, black as night, and the blood that had dripped lay in black patches upon the sand. Then I saw, without understanding, the cause of my phantom,--a ruddy glow that came and danced and went upon the wall opposite. I misinterpreted this, fancied it was a reflection of my flickering lamp, and turned again to the stores in the shed. I went on rummaging among them, as well as a one-armed man could, finding this convenient thing and that, and putting them aside for to-morrow's launch. My movements were slow, and the time passed quickly. Insensibly the daylight crept upon me.

The chanting died down, giving place to a clamour; then it began again, and suddenly broke into a tumult. I heard cries of, "More! more!" a sound like quarrelling, and a sudden wild shriek. The quality of the sounds changed so greatly that it arrested my attention. I went out into the yard and listened. Then cutting like a knife across the confusion came the crack of a revolver.

I rushed at once through my room to the little doorway. As I did so I heard some of the packing-cases behind me go sliding down

and smash together with a clatter of glass on the floor of the shed. But I did not heed these. I flung the door open and looked out.

Up the beach by the boathouse a bonfire was burning, raining up sparks into the indistinctness of the dawn. Around this struggled a mass of black figures. I heard Montgomery call my name. I began to run at once towards this fire, revolver in hand. I saw the pink tongue of Montgomery's pistol lick out once, close to the ground. He was down. I shouted with all my strength and fired into the air. I heard some one cry, "The Master!" The knotted black struggle broke into scattering units, the fire leapt and sank down. The crowd of Beast People fled in sudden panic before me, up the beach. In my excitement I fired at their retreating backs as they disappeared among the bushes. Then I turned to the black heaps upon the ground.

Montgomery lay on his back, with the hairy-grey Beast-man sprawling across his body. The brute was dead, but still gripping Montgomery's throat with its curving claws. Near by lay M'ling on his face and quite still, his neck bitten open and the upper part of the smashed brandy-bottle in his hand. Two other figures lay near the fire,--the one motionless, the other groaning fitfully, every now and then raising its head slowly, then dropping it again.

I caught hold of the grey man and pulled him off Montgomery's body; his claws drew down the torn coat reluctantly as I dragged him away. Montgomery was dark in the face and scarcely breathing. I splashed sea-water on his face and pillowed his head on my rolled-up coat. M'ling was dead. The wounded creature by the fire--it was a Wolf-brute with a bearded grey face--lay, I found, with the fore part of its body upon the still glowing timber. The wretched thing was injured so dreadfully that in mercy I blew its brains out at once. The other brute was one of the Bull-men swathed in white. He too was dead. The rest of the Beast People had vanished from

the beach.

I went to Montgomery again and knelt beside him, cursing my ignorance of medicine. The fire beside me had sunk down, and only charred beams of timber glowing at the central ends and mixed with a grey ash of brushwood remained. I wondered casually where Montgomery had got his wood. Then I saw that the dawn was upon us.

The sky had grown brighter, the setting moon was becoming pale and opaque in the luminous blue of the day. The sky to the eastward was rimmed with red.

Suddenly I heard a thud and a hissing behind me, and, looking round, sprang to my feet with a cry of horror. Against the warm dawn great tumultuous masses of black smoke were boiling up out of the enclosure, and through their stormy darkness shot flickering threads of blood-red flame. Then the thatched roof caught.

I saw the curving charge of the flames across the sloping straw. A spurt of fire jetted from the window of my room.

I knew at once what had happened. I remembered the crash I had heard. When I had rushed out to Montgomery's assistance, I had overturned the lamp.

The hopelessness of saving any of the contents of the enclosure stared me in the face. My mind came back to my plan of flight, and turning swiftly I looked to see where the two boats lay upon the beach. They were gone! Two axes lay upon the sands beside me; chips and splinters were scattered broadcast, and the ashes of the bonfire were blackening and smoking under the dawn.

Montgomery had burnt the boats to revenge himself upon me and prevent our return to mankind!

A sudden convulsion of rage shook me. I was almost moved to batter his foolish head in, as he lay there helpless at my feet.

Then suddenly his hand moved, so feebly, so pitifully, that my wrath vanished. He groaned, and opened his eyes for a minute. I knelt down beside him and raised his head. He opened his eyes again, staring silently at the dawn, and then they met mine. The lids fell.

"Sorry," he said presently, with an effort. He seemed trying to think. "The last," he murmured, "the last of this silly universe. What a mess--"

I listened. His head fell helplessly to one side. I thought some drink might revive him; but there was neither drink nor vessel in which to bring drink at hand. He seemed suddenly heavier. My heart went cold. I bent down to his face, put my hand through the rent in his blouse. He was dead; and even as he died a line of white heat, the limb of the sun, rose eastward beyond the projection of the bay, splashing its radiance across the sky and turning the dark sea into a weltering tumult of dazzling light. It fell like a glory upon his death-shrunken face.

I let his head fall gently upon the rough pillow I had made for him, and stood up. Before me was the glittering desolation of the sea, the awful solitude upon which I had already suffered so much; behind me the island, hushed under the dawn, its Beast People silent and unseen. The enclosure, with all its provisions and ammunition, burnt noisily, with sudden gusts of flame, a fitful crackling, and now and then a crash. The heavy smoke drove up the beach away from me, rolling low over the distant tree-tops towards the huts in the ravine. Beside me were the charred vestiges of the boats and these four dead bodies.

Then out of the bushes came three Beast People, with hunched shoulders, protruding heads, misshapen hands awkwardly held, and inquisitive, unfriendly eyes and advanced towards me with hesitating gestures.

XX. ALONE WITH THE BEAST FOLK.

I FACED these people, facing my fate in them, single-handed now,-- literally single-handed, for I had a broken arm. In my pocket was a revolver with two empty chambers. Among the chips scattered about the beach lay the two axes that had been used to chop up the boats. The tide was creeping in behind me. There was nothing for it but courage. I looked squarely into the faces of the advancing monsters. They avoided my eyes, and their quivering nostrils investigated the bodies that lay beyond me on the beach. I took half-a-dozen steps, picked up the blood-stained whip that lay beneath the body of the Wolf-man, and cracked it. They stopped and stared at me.

"Salute!" said I. "Bow down!"

They hesitated. One bent his knees. I repeated my command, with my heart in my mouth, and advanced upon them. One knelt, then the other two.

I turned and walked towards the dead bodies, keeping my face towards the three kneeling Beast Men, very much as an actor passing up the stage faces the audience.

"They broke the Law," said I, putting my foot on the Sayer of the Law. "They have been slain,--even the Sayer of the Law; even the Other with the Whip. Great is the Law! Come and see."

"None escape," said one of them, advancing and peering.

"None escape," said I. "Therefore hear and do as I command."

They stood up, looking questioningly at one another.

"Stand there," said I.

I picked up the hatchets and swung them by their heads from the sling of my arm; turned Montgomery over; picked up his revolver still loaded in two chambers, and bending down to rummage, found half-a-dozen cartridges in his pocket.

"Take him," said I, standing up again and pointing with the whip; "take him, and carry him out and cast him into the sea."

They came forward, evidently still afraid of Montgomery, but still more afraid of my cracking red whip-lash; and after some fumbling and hesitation, some whip-cracking and shouting, they lifted him gingerly, carried him down to the beach, and went splashing into the dazzling welter of the sea.

"On!" said I, "on! Carry him far."

They went in up to their armpits and stood regarding me.

"Let go," said I; and the body of Montgomery vanished with a splash. Something seemed to tighten across my chest.

"Good!" said I, with a break in my voice; and they came back, hurrying and fearful, to the margin of the water, leaving long wakes of black in the silver. At the water's edge they stopped, turning and glaring into the sea as though they presently expected Montgomery to arise therefrom and exact vengeance.

"Now these," said I, pointing to the other bodies.

They took care not to approach the place where they had thrown Montgomery into the water, but instead, carried the four dead

Beast People slantingly along the beach for perhaps a hundred yards before they waded out and cast them away.

As I watched them disposing of the mangled remains of M'ling, I heard a light footfall behind me, and turning quickly saw the big Hyena-swine perhaps a dozen yards away. His head was bent down, his bright eyes were fixed upon me, his stumpy hands clenched and held close by his side. He stopped in this crouching attitude when I turned, his eyes a little averted.

For a moment we stood eye to eye. I dropped the whip and snatched at the pistol in my pocket; for I meant to kill this brute, the most formidable of any left now upon the island, at the first excuse. It may seem treacherous, but so I was resolved. I was far more afraid of him than of any other two of the Beast Folk. His continued life was I knew a threat against mine.

I was perhaps a dozen seconds collecting myself. Then cried I, "Salute! Bow down!"

His teeth flashed upon me in a snarl. "Who are you that I should--"

Perhaps a little too spasmodically I drew my revolver, aimed quickly and fired. I heard him yelp, saw him run sideways and turn, knew I had missed, and clicked back the cock with my thumb for the next shot. But he was already running headlong, jumping from side to side, and I dared not risk another miss. Every now and then he looked back at me over his shoulder. He went slanting along the beach, and vanished beneath the driving masses of dense smoke that were still pouring out from the burning enclosure. For some time I stood staring after him. I turned to my three obedient Beast Folk again and signalled them to drop the body they still carried. Then I went back to the place by the fire where the bodies had fallen and kicked the sand until all the brown blood-stains were absorbed and hidden.

I dismissed my three serfs with a wave of the hand, and went up the beach into the thickets. I carried my pistol in my hand, my whip thrust with the hatchets in the sling of my arm. I was anxious to be alone, to think out the position in which I was now placed. A dreadful thing that I was only beginning to realise was, that over all this island there was now no safe place where I could be alone and secure to rest or sleep. I had recovered strength amazingly since my landing, but I was still inclined to be nervous and to break down under any great stress. I felt that I ought to cross the island and establish myself with the Beast People, and make myself secure in their confidence. But my heart failed me. I went back to the beach, and turning eastward past the burning enclosure, made for a point where a shallow spit of coral sand ran out towards the reef. Here I could sit down and think, my back to the sea and my face against any surprise. And there I sat, chin on knees, the sun beating down upon my head and unspeakable dread in my mind, plotting how I could live on against the hour of my rescue (if ever rescue came). I tried to review the whole situation as calmly as I could, but it was difficult to clear the thing of emotion.

I began turning over in my mind the reason of Montgomery's despair. "They will change," he said; "they are sure to change." And Moreau, what was it that Moreau had said? "The stubborn beast-flesh grows day by day back again." Then I came round to the Hyena-swine. I felt sure that if I did not kill that brute, he would kill me. The Sayer of the Law was dead: worse luck. They knew now that we of the Whips could be killed even as they themselves were killed. Were they peering at me already out of the green masses of ferns and palms over yonder, watching until I came within their spring? Were they plotting against me? What was the Hyena-swine telling them? My imagination was running away with me into a morass of unsubstantial fears.

My thoughts were disturbed by a crying of sea-birds hurrying towards some black object that had been stranded by the waves on the beach near the enclosure. I knew what that object was, but I had not the heart to go back and drive them off.

I began walking along the beach in the opposite direction, designing to come round the eastward corner of the island and so approach the ravine of the huts, without traversing the possible ambuscades of the thickets.

Perhaps half a mile along the beach I became aware of one of my three Beast Folk advancing out of the landward bushes towards me. I was now so nervous with my own imaginings that I immediately drew my revolver. Even the propitiatory gestures of the creature failed to disarm me. He hesitated as he approached.

"Go away!" cried I.

There was something very suggestive of a dog in the cringing attitude of the creature. It retreated a little way, very like a dog being sent home, and stopped, looking at me imploringly with canine brown eyes.

"Go away," said I. "Do not come near me."

"May I not come near you?" it said.

"No; go away," I insisted, and snapped my whip. Then putting my whip in my teeth, I stooped for a stone, and with that threat drove the creature away.

So in solitude I came round by the ravine of the Beast People, and hiding among the weeds and reeds that separated this crevice from the sea I watched such of them as appeared, trying to judge from their gestures and appearance how the death of Moreau and Montgomery and the destruction of the House of Pain

had affected them. I know now the folly of my cowardice. Had I kept my courage up to the level of the dawn, had I not allowed it to ebb away in solitary thought, I might have grasped the vacant sceptre of Moreau and ruled over the Beast People. As it was I lost the opportunity, and sank to the position of a mere leader among my fellows.

Towards noon certain of them came and squatted basking in the hot sand. The imperious voices of hunger and thirst prevailed over my dread. I came out of the bushes, and, revolver in hand, walked down towards these seated figures. One, a Wolf-woman, turned her head and stared at me, and then the others. None attempted to rise or salute me. I felt too faint and weary to insist, and I let the moment pass.

"I want food," said I, almost apologetically, and drawing near.

"There is food in the huts," said an Ox-boar-man, drowsily, and looking away from me.

I passed them, and went down into the shadow and odours of the almost deserted ravine. In an empty hut I feasted on some specked and half-decayed fruit; and then after I had propped some branches and sticks about the opening, and placed myself with my face towards it and my hand upon my revolver, the exhaustion of the last thirty hours claimed its own, and I fell into a light slumber, hoping that the flimsy barricade I had erected would cause sufficient noise in its removal to save me from surprise.

XXI. THE REVERSION OF THE BEAST FOLK.

IN this way I became one among the Beast People in the Island of Doctor Moreau. When I awoke, it was dark about me. My arm ached in its bandages. I sat up, wondering at first where I might be. I heard coarse voices talking outside. Then I saw that my barricade had gone, and that the opening of the hut stood clear. My revolver was still in my hand.

I heard something breathing, saw something crouched together close beside me. I held my breath, trying to see what it was. It began to move slowly, interminably. Then something soft and warm and moist passed across my hand. All my muscles contracted. I snatched my hand away. A cry of alarm began and was stifled in my throat. Then I just realised what had happened sufficiently to stay my fingers on the revolver.

"Who is that?" I said in a hoarse whisper, the revolver still pointed.

"I--Master."

"Who are you?"

"They say there is no Master now. But I know, I know. I carried the bodies into the sea, O Walker in the Sea! the bodies of those you slew. I am your slave, Master."

"Are you the one I met on the beach?" I asked.

"The same, Master."

The Thing was evidently faithful enough, for it might have fallen upon me as I slept. "It is well," I said, extending my hand for another licking kiss. I began to realise what its presence meant,

and the tide of my courage flowed. "Where are the others?"
I asked.

"They are mad; they are fools," said the Dog-man. "Even now they talk together beyond there. They say, 'The Master is dead. The Other with the Whip is dead. That Other who walked in the Sea is as we are. We have no Master, no Whips, no House of Pain, any more. There is an end. We love the Law, and will keep it; but there is no Pain, no Master, no Whips for ever again.' So they say. But I know, Master, I know."

I felt in the darkness, and patted the Dog-man's head. "It is well,"
I said again.

"Presently you will slay them all," said the Dog-man.

"Presently," I answered, "I will slay them all,--after certain days and certain things have come to pass. Every one of them save those you spare, every one of them shall be slain."

"What the Master wishes to kill, the Master kills," said the Dog-man with a certain satisfaction in his voice.

"And that their sins may grow," I said, "let them live in their folly until their time is ripe. Let them not know that I am the Master."

"The Master's will is sweet," said the Dog-man, with the ready tact of his canine blood.

"But one has sinned," said I. "Him I will kill, whenever I may meet him. When I say to you, 'That is he,' see that you fall upon him. And now I will go to the men and women who are assembled together."

For a moment the opening of the hut was blackened by the exit of the Dog-man. Then I followed and stood up, almost in the exact spot

where I had been when I had heard Moreau and his staghound pursuing me.

But now it was night, and all the miasmatic ravine about me was black; and beyond, instead of a green, sunlit slope, I saw a red fire, before which hunched, grotesque figures moved to and fro. Farther were the thick trees, a bank of darkness, fringed above with the black lace of the upper branches. The moon was just riding up on the edge of the ravine, and like a bar across its face drove the spire of vapour that was for ever streaming from the fumaroles of the island.

"Walk by me," said I, nerving myself; and side by side we walked down the narrow way, taking little heed of the dim Things that peered at us out of the huts.

None about the fire attempted to salute me. Most of them disregarded me, ostentatiously. I looked round for the Hyena-swine, but he was not there. Altogether, perhaps twenty of the Beast Folk squatted, staring into the fire or talking to one another.

"He is dead, he is dead! the Master is dead!" said the voice of the Ape-man to the right of me. "The House of Pain-- there is no House of Pain!"

"He is not dead," said I, in a loud voice. "Even now he watches us!"

This startled them. Twenty pairs of eyes regarded me.

"The House of Pain is gone," said I. "It will come again. The Master you cannot see; yet even now he listens among you."

"True, true!" said the Dog-man.

They were staggered at my assurance. An animal may be ferocious and cunning enough, but it takes a real man to tell a lie.

"The Man with the Bandaged Arm speaks a strange thing," said one of the Beast Folk.

"I tell you it is so," I said. "The Master and the House of Pain will come again. Woe be to him who breaks the Law!"

They looked curiously at one another. With an affectation of indifference I began to chop idly at the ground in front of me with my hatchet. They looked, I noticed, at the deep cuts I made in the turf.

Then the Satyr raised a doubt. I answered him. Then one of the dappled things objected, and an animated discussion sprang up round the fire. Every moment I began to feel more convinced of my present security. I talked now without the catching in my breath, due to the intensity of my excitement, that had troubled me at first. In the course of about an hour I had really convinced several of the Beast Folk of the truth of my assertions, and talked most of the others into a dubious state. I kept a sharp eye for my enemy the Hyena-swine, but he never appeared. Every now and then a suspicious movement would startle me, but my confidence grew rapidly. Then as the moon crept down from the zenith, one by one the listeners began to yawn (showing the oddest teeth in the light of the sinking fire), and first one and then another retired towards the dens in the ravine; and I, dreading the silence and darkness, went with them, knowing I was safer with several of them than with one alone.

In this manner began the longer part of my sojourn upon this Island of Doctor Moreau. But from that night until the end came, there was but one thing happened to tell save a series of innumerable small unpleasant details and the fretting of an incessant uneasiness. So that I prefer to make no chronicle for that gap of time, to tell only one cardinal incident of the ten months I spent as an intimate of these half-humanised brutes. There is much that sticks in my memory that I could write,--things that I would cheerfully

give my right hand to forget; but they do not help the telling of the story.

In the retrospect it is strange to remember how soon I fell in with these monsters' ways, and gained my confidence again. I had my quarrels with them of course, and could show some of their teeth-marks still; but they soon gained a wholesome respect for my trick of throwing stones and for the bite of my hatchet. And my Saint-Bernard-man's loyalty was of infinite service to me. I found their simple scale of honour was based mainly on the capacity for inflicting trenchant wounds. Indeed, I may say--without vanity, I hope--that I held something like pre-eminence among them. One or two, whom in a rare access of high spirits I had scarred rather badly, bore me a grudge; but it vented itself chiefly behind my back, and at a safe distance from my missiles, in grimaces.

The Hyena-swine avoided me, and I was always on the alert for him. My inseparable Dog-man hated and dreaded him intensely. I really believe that was at the root of the brute's attachment to me. It was soon evident to me that the former monster had tasted blood, and gone the way of the Leopard-man. He formed a lair somewhere in the forest, and became solitary. Once I tried to induce the Beast Folk to hunt him, but I lacked the authority to make them co-operate for one end. Again and again I tried to approach his den and come upon him unawares; but always he was too acute for me, and saw or winded me and got away. He too made every forest pathway dangerous to me and my ally with his lurking ambuscades. The Dog-man scarcely dared to leave my side.

In the first month or so the Beast Folk, compared with their latter condition, were human enough, and for one or two besides my canine friend I even conceived a friendly tolerance. The little pink sloth-creature displayed an odd affection for me, and took to following me about. The Monkey-man bored me, however;

he assumed, on the strength of his five digits, that he was my equal, and was for ever jabbering at me,--jabbering the most arrant nonsense. One thing about him entertained me a little: he had a fantastic trick of coining new words. He had an idea, I believe, that to gabble about names that meant nothing was the proper use of speech. He called it "Big Thinks" to distinguish it from "Little Thinks," the sane every-day interests of life. If ever I made a remark he did not understand, he would praise it very much, ask me to say it again, learn it by heart, and go off repeating it, with a word wrong here or there, to all the milder of the Beast People. He thought nothing of what was plain and comprehensible. I invented some very curious "Big Thinks" for his especial use. I think now that he was the silliest creature I ever met; he had developed in the most wonderful way the distinctive silliness of man without losing one jot of the natural folly of a monkey.

This, I say, was in the earlier weeks of my solitude among these brutes. During that time they respected the usage established by the Law, and behaved with general decorum. Once I found another rabbit torn to pieces,--by the Hyena-swine, I am assured,--but that was all. It was about May when I first distinctly perceived a growing difference in their speech and carriage, a growing coarseness of articulation, a growing disinclination to talk. My Monkey-man's jabber multiplied in volume but grew less and less comprehensible, more and more simian. Some of the others seemed altogether slipping their hold upon speech, though they still understood what I said to them at that time. (Can you imagine language, once clear-cut and exact, softening and guttering, losing shape and import, becoming mere limps of sound again?) And they walked erect with an increasing difficulty. Though they evidently felt ashamed of themselves, every now and then I would come upon one or another running on toes and finger-tips, and quite unable to recover the vertical attitude. They held things more clumsily; drinking by suction, feeding by gnawing, grew commoner every day. I realised more keenly than ever what Moreau had told me about the "stubborn beast-flesh." They were reverting, and reverting very

rapidly.

Some of them--the pioneers in this, I noticed with some surprise, were all females--began to disregard the injunction of decency, deliberately for the most part. Others even attempted public outrages upon the institution of monogamy. The tradition of the Law was clearly losing its force. I cannot pursue this disagreeable subject.

My Dog-man imperceptibly slipped back to the dog again; day by day he became dumb, quadrupedal, hairy. I scarcely noticed the transition from the companion on my right hand to the lurching dog at my side.

As the carelessness and disorganisation increased from day to day, the lane of dwelling places, at no time very sweet, became so loathsome that I left it, and going across the island made myself a hovel of boughs amid the black ruins of Moreau's enclosure. Some memory of pain, I found, still made that place the safest from the Beast Folk.

It would be impossible to detail every step of the lapsing of these monsters,--to tell how, day by day, the human semblance left them; how they gave up bandagings and wrappings, abandoned at last every stitch of clothing; how the hair began to spread over the exposed limbs; how their foreheads fell away and their faces projected; how the quasi-human intimacy I had permitted myself with some of them in the first month of my loneliness became a shuddering horror to recall.

The change was slow and inevitable. For them and for me it came without any definite shock. I still went among them in safety, because no jolt in the downward glide had released the increasing charge of explosive animalism that ousted the human day by day. But I began to fear that soon now that shock must come. My Saint-Bernard-brute followed me to the enclosure every night, and his vigilance enabled me to sleep at times in something like peace.

The little pink sloth-thing became shy and left me, to crawl back to its natural life once more among the tree-branches. We were in just the state of equilibrium that would remain in one of those "Happy Family" cages which animal-tamers exhibit, if the tamer were to leave it for ever.

Of course these creatures did not decline into such beasts as the reader has seen in zoological gardens,--into ordinary bears, wolves, tigers, oxen, swine, and apes. There was still something strange about each; in each Moreau had blended this animal with that. One perhaps was ursine chiefly, another feline chiefly, another bovine chiefly; but each was tainted with other creatures,--a kind of generalised animalism appearing through the specific dispositions. And the dwindling shreds of the humanity still startled me every now and then,--a momentary recrudescence of speech perhaps, an unexpected dexterity of the fore-feet, a pitiful attempt to walk erect.

I too must have undergone strange changes. My clothes hung about me as yellow rags, through whose rents showed the tanned skin. My hair grew long, and became matted together. I am told that even now my eyes have a strange brightness, a swift alertness of movement.

At first I spent the daylight hours on the southward beach watching for a ship, hoping and praying for a ship. I counted on the "Ipecacuanha" returning as the year wore on; but she never came. Five times I saw sails, and thrice smoke; but nothing ever touched the island. I always had a bonfire ready, but no doubt the volcanic reputation of the island was taken to account for that.

It was only about September or October that I began to think of making a raft. By that time my arm had healed, and both my hands were at my service again. At first, I found my helplessness appalling.

I had never done any carpentry or such-like work in my life, and I spent day after day in experimental chopping and binding among the trees. I had no ropes, and could hit on nothing wherewith to make ropes; none of the abundant creepers seemed limber or strong enough, and with all my litter of scientific education I could not devise any way of making them so. I spent more than a fortnight grubbing among the black ruins of the enclosure and on the beach where the boats had been burnt, looking for nails and other stray pieces of metal that might prove of service. Now and then some Beast-creature would watch me, and go leaping off when I called to it. There came a season of thunder-storms and heavy rain, which greatly retarded my work; but at last the raft was completed.

I was delighted with it. But with a certain lack of practical sense which has always been my bane, I had made it a mile or more from the sea; and before I had dragged it down to the beach the thing had fallen to pieces. Perhaps it is as well that I was saved from launching it; but at the time my misery at my failure was so acute that for some days I simply moped on the beach, and stared at the water and thought of death.

I did not, however, mean to die, and an incident occurred that warned me unmistakably of the folly of letting the days pass so,—for each fresh day was fraught with increasing danger from the Beast People.

I was lying in the shade of the enclosure wall, staring out to sea, when I was startled by something cold touching the skin of my heel, and starting round found the little pink sloth-creature blinking into my face. He had long since lost speech and active movement, and the lank hair of the little brute grew thicker every day and his stumpy claws more askew. He made a moaning noise when he was he had attracted my attention, went a little way towards the bushes and looked back at me.

At first I did not understand, but presently it occurred to me that he wished me to follow him; and this I did at last,--slowly, for the day was hot. When we reached the trees he clambered into them, for he could travel better among their swinging creepers than on the ground. And suddenly in a trampled space I came upon a ghastly group. My Saint-Bernard-creature lay on the ground, dead; and near his body crouched the Hyena-swine, gripping the quivering flesh with its misshapen claws, gnawing at it, and snarling with delight. As I approached, the monster lifted its glaring eyes to mine, its lips went trembling back from its red-stained teeth, and it growled menacingly. It was not afraid and not ashamed; the last vestige of the human taint had vanished. I advanced a step farther, stopped, and pulled out my revolver. At last I had him face to face.

The brute made no sign of retreat; but its ears went back, its hair bristled, and its body crouched together. I aimed between the eyes and fired. As I did so, the Thing rose straight at me in a leap, and I was knocked over like a ninepin. It clutched at me with its crippled hand, and struck me in the face. Its spring carried it over me. I fell under the hind part of its body; but luckily I had hit as I meant, and it had died even as it leapt. I crawled out from under its unclean weight and stood up trembling, staring at its quivering body. That danger at least was over; but this, I knew was only the first of the series of relapses that must come.

I burnt both of the bodies on a pyre of brushwood; but after that I saw that unless I left the island my death was only a question of time. The Beast People by that time had, with one or two exceptions, left the ravine and made themselves lairs according to their taste among the thickets of the island. Few prowled by day, most of them slept, and the island might have seemed deserted to a new-comer; but at night the air was hideous with their calls and howling.

I had half a mind to make a massacre of them; to build traps, or fight them with my knife. Had I possessed sufficient cartridges, I should not have hesitated to begin the killing. There could now be scarcely a score left of the dangerous carnivores; the braver of these were already dead. After the death of this poor dog of mine, my last friend, I too adopted to some extent the practice of slumbering in the daytime in order to be on my guard at night. I rebuilt my den in the walls of the enclosure, with such a narrow opening that anything attempting to enter must necessarily make a considerable noise. The creatures had lost the art of fire too, and recovered their fear of it. I turned once more, almost passionately now, to hammering together stakes and branches to form a raft for my escape.

I found a thousand difficulties. I am an extremely unhandy man (my schooling was over before the days of Slojd); but most of the requirements of a raft I met at last in some clumsy, circuitous way or other, and this time I took care of the strength. The only insurmountable obstacle was that I had no vessel to contain the water I should need if I floated forth upon these untravelled seas. I would have even tried pottery, but the island contained no clay. I used to go moping about the island trying with all my might to solve this one last difficulty. Sometimes I would give way to wild outbursts of rage, and hack and splinter some unlucky tree in my intolerable vexation. But I could think of nothing.

And then came a day, a wonderful day, which I spent in ecstasy. I saw a sail to the southwest, a small sail like that of a little schooner; and forthwith I lit a great pile of brushwood, and stood by it in the heat of it, and the heat of the midday sun, watching. All day I watched that sail, eating or drinking nothing, so that my head reeled; and the Beasts came and glared at me, and seemed to wonder, and went away. It was still distant when night came and swallowed it up; and all night I toiled to keep my blaze bright and high,

and the eyes of the Beasts shone out of the darkness, marvelling. In the dawn the sail was nearer, and I saw it was the dirty lug-sail of a small boat. But it sailed strangely. My eyes were weary with watching, and I peered and could not believe them. Two men were in the boat, sitting low down,--one by the bows, the other at the rudder. The head was not kept to the wind; it yawed and fell away.

As the day grew brighter, I began waving the last rag of my jacket to them; but they did not notice me, and sat still, facing each other. I went to the lowest point of the low headland, and gesticulated and shouted. There was no response, and the boat kept on her aimless course, making slowly, very slowly, for the bay. Suddenly a great white bird flew up out of the boat, and neither of the men stirred nor noticed it; it circled round, and then came sweeping overhead with its strong wings outspread.

Then I stopped shouting, and sat down on the headland and rested my chin on my hands and stared. Slowly, slowly, the boat drove past towards the west. I would have swum out to it, but something--a cold, vague fear--kept me back. In the afternoon the tide stranded the boat, and left it a hundred yards or so to the westward of the ruins of the enclosure. The men in it were dead, had been dead so long that they fell to pieces when I tilted the boat on its side and dragged them out. One had a shock of red hair, like the captain of the "Ipecacuanha," and a dirty white cap lay in the bottom of the boat.

As I stood beside the boat, three of the Beasts came slinking out of the bushes and sniffing towards me. One of my spasms of disgust came upon me. I thrust the little boat down the beach and clambered on board her. Two of the brutes were Wolf-beasts, and came forward with quivering nostrils and glittering eyes; the third was the horrible nondescript of bear and bull. When I saw them approaching those wretched remains, heard them

snarling at one another and caught the gleam of their teeth, a frantic horror succeeded my repulsion. I turned my back upon them, struck the lug and began paddling out to sea. I could not bring myself to look behind me.

I lay, however, between the reef and the island that night, and the next morning went round to the stream and filled the empty keg aboard with water. Then, with such patience as I could command, I collected a quantity of fruit, and waylaid and killed two rabbits with my last three cartridges. While I was doing this I left the boat moored to an inward projection of the reef, for fear of the Beast People.

XXII. THE MAN ALONE.

IN the evening I started, and drove out to sea before a gentle wind from the southwest, slowly, steadily; and the island grew smaller and smaller, and the lank spire of smoke dwindled to a finer and finer line against the hot sunset. The ocean rose up around me, hiding that low, dark patch from my eyes. The daylight, the trailing glory of the sun, went streaming out of the sky, was drawn aside like some luminous curtain, and at last I looked into the blue gulf of immensity which the sunshine hides, and saw the floating hosts of the stars. The sea was silent, the sky was silent. I was alone with the night and silence.

So I drifted for three days, eating and drinking sparingly, and meditating upon all that had happened to me,--not desiring very greatly then to see men again. One unclean rag was about me, my hair a black tangle: no doubt my discoverers thought me a madman.

It is strange, but I felt no desire to return to mankind.

I was only glad to be quit of the foulness of the Beast People.

And on the third day I was picked up by a brig from Apia to San Francisco.

Neither the captain nor the mate would believe my story, judging that solitude and danger had made me mad; and fearing their opinion might be that of others, I refrained from telling my adventure further, and professed to recall nothing that had happened to me between the loss of the "Lady Vain" and the time when I was picked up again,--the space of a year.

I had to act with the utmost circumspection to save myself from the suspicion of insanity. My memory of the Law, of the two dead sailors, of the ambuscades of the darkness, of the body in the canebrake, haunted me; and, unnatural as it seems, with my return to mankind came, instead of that confidence and sympathy I had expected, a strange

enhancement of the uncertainty and dread I had experienced during my stay upon the island. No one would believe me; I was almost as queer to men as I had been to the Beast People. I may have caught something of the natural wildness of my companions. They say that terror is a disease, and anyhow I can witness that for several years now a restless fear has dwelt in my mind,--such a restless fear as a half-tamed lion cub may feel.

My trouble took the strangest form. I could not persuade myself that the men and women I met were not also another Beast People, animals half wrought into the outward image of human souls, and that they would presently begin to revert,--to show first this bestial mark and then that. But I have confided my case to a strangely able man,--a man who had known Moreau, and seemed half to credit my story; a mental specialist,--and he has helped me mightily, though I do not expect that the terror of that island will ever altogether leave me. At most times it lies far in the back of my mind, a mere distant cloud, a memory, and a faint distrust; but there are times when the little cloud spreads until it obscures the whole sky. Then I look about me at my fellow-men; and I go in fear. I see faces, keen and bright; others dull or dangerous; others, unsteady, insincere,--none that have the calm authority of a reasonable soul. I feel as though the animal was surging up through them; that presently the degradation of the Islanders will be played over again on a larger scale. I know this is an illusion; that these seeming men and women about me are indeed men and women,--men and women for ever, perfectly reasonable creatures, full of human desires and tender solicitude, emancipated from instinct and the slaves of no fantastic Law,--beings altogether different from the Beast Folk. Yet I shrink from them, from their curious glances, their inquiries and assistance, and long to be away from them and alone. For that reason I live near the broad free downland, and can escape thither when this shadow is over my soul; and very sweet is the empty downland then, under the wind-swept sky.

When I lived in London the horror was well-nigh insupportable. I could not get away from men: their voices came through windows; locked doors were flimsy safeguards. I would go out into the streets to fight with my delusion, and prowling women would mew after me; furtive, craving men glance jealously at me; weary, pale workers go coughing by me with tired eyes and eager paces, like wounded deer dripping blood; old people, bent and dull, pass murmuring to themselves; and, all unheeding, a ragged tail of gibing children. Then I would turn aside into some chapel,--and even there, such was my disturbance, it seemed that the preacher gibbered "Big Thinks," even as the Ape-man had done; or into some library, and there the intent faces over the books seemed but patient creatures waiting for prey. Particularly nauseous were the blank, expressionless faces of people in trains and omnibuses; they seemed no more my fellow-creatures than dead bodies would be, so that I did not dare to travel unless I was assured of being alone. And even it seemed that I too was not a reasonable creature, but only an animal tormented with some strange disorder in its brain which sent it to wander alone, like a sheep stricken with gid.

This is a mood, however, that comes to me now, I thank God, more rarely. I have withdrawn myself from the confusion of cities and multitudes, and spend my days surrounded by wise books,--bright windows in this life of ours, lit by the shining souls of men. I see few strangers, and have but a small household. My days I devote to reading and to experiments in chemistry, and I spend many of the clear nights in the study of astronomy. There is--though I do not know how there is or why there is--a sense of infinite peace and protection in the glittering hosts of heaven. There it must be, I think, in the vast and eternal laws of matter, and not in the daily cares and sins and troubles of men, that whatever is more than animal within us must find its solace and its hope. I hope, or I could not live.

And so, in hope and solitude, my story ends.

EDWARD PRENDICK.

NOTE. The substance of the chapter entitled "Doctor Moreau explains," which contains the essential idea of the story, appeared as a middle article in the "Saturday Review" in January, 1895. This is the only portion of this story that has been previously published, and it has been entirely recast to adapt it to the narrative form.

THE WHEELS OF
CHANCE;
A BICYCLING IDYLL

by
H.G. Wells
1896

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTER IN THE STORY

I.

If you (presuming you are of the sex that does such things)--if you had gone into the Drapery Emporium--which is really only magnificent for shop--of Messrs. Antrobus & Co.--a perfectly fictitious "Co.," by the bye--of Putney, on the 14th of August, 1895, had turned to the right-hand side, where the blocks of white linen and piles of blankets rise up to the rail from which the pink and blue prints depend, you might have been served by the central figure of this story that is now beginning. He would have come forward, bowing and swaying, he would have extended two hands with largish knuckles and enormous cuffs over the counter, and he would have asked you, protruding a pointed chin and without the slightest anticipation of pleasure in his manner, what he might have the pleasure of showing you. Under certain circumstances--as, for instance, hats, baby linen, gloves, silks, lace, or curtains--he would simply have bowed politely, and with a drooping expression, and making a kind of circular sweep, invited you to "step this way," and so led you beyond his ken; but under other and happier conditions,--huckaback, blankets, dimity, cretonne, linen, calico, are cases in point,--he would have requested you to take a seat, emphasising the hospitality by leaning over the counter and gripping a chair back in a spasmodic manner, and so proceeded to obtain, unfold, and exhibit his goods for your consideration. Under which happier circumstances you might--if of an observing turn of mind and not too much of a housewife to be inhuman--have given the central figure of this story less cursory attention.

Now if you had noticed anything about him, it would have been chiefly to notice how little he was noticeable. He wore the black morning coat, the black tie, and the speckled grey nether parts (descending into shadow and mystery below the counter) of his craft. He was of a pallid complexion, hair of a kind of dirty fairness, greyish eyes, and a skimpy, immature moustache under his peaked indeterminate nose. His features were all small, but none ill-shaped. A rosette of pins decorated the lappel of his coat. His remarks, you would observe, were entirely what people used to call cliché, formulae not organic to the occasion, but stereotyped ages ago and learnt years since by heart. "This, madam," he would say, "is selling very well" "We are doing a very good article at four three a yard." "We could show you some thing better, of course." "No trouble, madam, I assure you." Such were the simple counters of his intercourse. So, I say, he would have presented himself to your superficial observation. He would have danced about behind the counter, have neatly refolded the goods he had shown you, have put on one side those you selected, extracted a little book with a carbon leaf and a tinfoil sheet from a fixture, made you out a little bill in that weak flourishing hand peculiar to drapers, and have bawled "Sayn!" Then a puffy little shop-walker would have come into view, looked at the bill for a second, very hard (showing you a parting down the middle of his head meanwhile), have scribbled a still more flourishing J. M. all over the document, have asked you if there was nothing more, have stood by you--supposing that you were paying cash--until the central figure of this story reappeared with the change. One glance more at him, and the puffy little shop-walker would have been bowing you out, with fountains of civilities at work all about you. And so the interview would have terminated.

But real literature, as distinguished from anecdote, does not concern itself with superficial appearances alone. Literature is revelation. Modern literature is indecorous revelation. It is the

duty of the earnest author to tell you what you would not have seen--even at the cost of some blushes. And the thing that you would not have seen about this young man, and the thing of the greatest moment to this story, the thing that must be told if the book is to be written, was--let us face it bravely--the Remarkable Condition of this Young Man's Legs.

Let us approach the business with dispassionate explicitness. Let us assume something of the scientific spirit, the hard, almost professorial tone of the conscientious realist. Let us treat this young man's legs as a mere diagram, and indicate the points of interest with the unemotional precision of a lecturer's pointer. And so to our revelation. On the internal aspect of the right ankle of this young man you would have observed, ladies and gentlemen, a contusion and an abrasion; on the internal aspect of the left ankle a contusion also; on its external aspect a large yellowish bruise. On his left shin there were two bruises, one a leaden yellow graduating here and there into purple, and another, obviously of more recent date, of a blotchy red--tumid and threatening. Proceeding up the left leg in a spiral manner, an unnatural hardness and redness would have been discovered on the upper aspect of the calf, and above the knee and on the inner side, an extraordinary expanse of bruised surface, a kind of closely stippled shading of contused points. The right leg would be found to be bruised in a marvellous manner all about and under the knee, and particularly on the interior aspect of the knee. So far we may proceed with our details. Fired by these discoveries, an investigator might perhaps have pursued his inquiries further--to bruises on the shoulders, elbows, and even the finger joints, of the central figure of our story. He had indeed been bumped and battered at an extraordinary number of points. But enough of realistic description is as good as a feast, and we have exhibited enough for our purpose. Even in literature one must know where to draw the line.

Now the reader may be inclined to wonder how a respectable young shopman should have got his legs, and indeed himself generally, into such a dreadful condition. One might fancy that he had been sitting with his nether extremities in some complicated machinery, a threshing-machine, say, or one of those hay-making furies. But Sherlock Holmes (now happily dead) would have fancied nothing of the kind. He would have recognised at once that the bruises on the internal aspect of the left leg, considered in the light of the distribution of the other abrasions and contusions, pointed unmistakably to the violent impact of the Mounting Beginner upon the bicycling saddle, and that the ruinous state of the right knee was equally eloquent of the concussions attendant on that person's hasty, frequently causeless, and invariably ill-conceived descents. One large bruise on the shin is even more characteristic of the 'prentice cyclist, for upon every one of them waits the jest of the unexpected treadle. You try at least to walk your machine in an easy manner, and whack!--you are rubbing your shin. So out of innocence we ripen. Two bruises on that place mark a certain want of aptitude in learning, such as one might expect in a person unused to muscular exercise. Blisters on the hands are eloquent of the nervous clutch of the wavering rider. And so forth, until Sherlock is presently explaining, by the help of the minor injuries, that the machine ridden is an old-fashioned affair with a fork instead of the diamond frame, a cushioned tire, well worn on the hind wheel, and a gross weight all on of perhaps three-and-forty pounds.

The revelation is made. Behind the decorous figure of the attentive shopman that I had the honour of showing you at first, rises a vision of a nightly struggle, of two dark figures and a machine in a dark road,--the road, to be explicit, from Roehampton to Putney Hill,--and with this vision is the sound of a heel spurning the gravel, a gasping and grunting, a shouting of "Steer, man, steer!" a wavering unsteady flight, a spasmodic turning of the missile edifice of man and machine, and a

collapse. Then you descry dimly through the dusk the central figure of this story sitting by the roadside and rubbing his leg at some new place, and his friend, sympathetic (but by no means depressed), repairing the displacement of the handle-bar.

Thus even in a shop assistant does the warmth of manhood assert itself, and drive him against all the conditions of his calling, against the counsels of prudence and the restrictions of his means, to seek the wholesome delights of exertion and danger and pain. And our first examination of the draper reveals beneath his draperies--the man! To which initial fact (among others) we shall come again in the end.

II

But enough of these revelations. The central figure of our story is now going along behind the counter, a draper indeed, with your purchases in his arms, to the warehouse, where the various articles you have selected will presently be packed by the senior porter and sent to you. Returning thence to his particular place, he lays hands on a folded piece of gingham, and gripping the corners of the folds in his hands, begins to straighten them punctiliously. Near him is an apprentice, apprenticed to the same high calling of draper's assistant, a ruddy, red-haired lad in a very short tailless black coat and a very high collar, who is deliberately unfolding and refolding some patterns of cretonne. By twenty-one he too may hope to be a full-blown assistant, even as Mr. Hoopdriver. Prints depend from the brass rails above them, behind are fixtures full of white packages containing, as inscriptions testify, Lino, Hd Bk, and Mull. You might imagine to see them that the two were both intent upon nothing but smoothness of textile and rectitude of fold. But to tell the truth, neither is thinking of the mechanical duties in hand. The

assistant is dreaming of the delicious time--only four hours off now--when he will resume the tale of his bruises and abrasions. The apprentice is nearer the long long thoughts of boyhood, and his imagination rides cap-a-pie through the chambers of his brain, seeking some knightly quest in honour of that Fair Lady, the last but one of the girl apprentices to the dress-making upstairs. He inclines rather to street fighting against revolutionaries--because then she could see him from the window.

Jerking them back to the present comes the puffy little shop-walker, with a paper in his hand. The apprentice becomes extremely active. The shopwalker eyes the goods in hand. "Hoopdriver," he says, "how's that line of g-sez-x gingham ? "

Hoopdriver returns from an imaginary triumph over the uncertainties of dismounting. "They're going fairly well, sir. But the larger checks seem hanging."

The shop-walker brings up parallel to the counter. "Any particular time when you want your holidays?" he asks.

Hoopdriver pulls at his skimpy moustache. "No--Don't want them too late, sir, of course."

"How about this day week?"

Hoopdriver becomes rigidly meditative, gripping the corners of the gingham folds in his hands. His face is eloquent of conflicting considerations. Can he learn it in a week? That's the question. Otherwise Briggs will get next week, and he will have to wait until September--when the weather is often uncertain. He is naturally of a sanguine disposition. All drapers have to be, or else they could never have the faith they show in the beauty, washability, and unfading excellence of the goods they sell you. The decision comes at last. "That'll do me very well," said Mr.

Hoopdriver, terminating the pause.

The die is cast.

The shop-walker makes a note of it and goes on to Briggs in the "dresses," the next in the strict scale of precedence of the Drapery Emporium. Mr. Hoopdriver in alternating spasms anon straightens his gingham and anon becomes meditative, with his tongue in the hollow of his decaying wisdom tooth.

III

At supper that night, holiday talk held undisputed sway. Mr. Pritchard spoke of "Scotland," Miss Isaacs clamoured of Bettws-y-Coed, Mr. Judson displayed a proprietary interest in the Norfolk Broads. "I?" said Hoopdriver when the question came to him. "Why, cycling, of course."

"You're never going to ride that dreadful machine of yours, day after day?" said Miss Howe of the Costume Department.

"I am," said Hoopdriver as calmly as possible, pulling at the insufficient moustache. "I'm going for a Cycling Tour. Along the South Coast."

"Well, all I hope, Mr. Hoopdriver, is that you'll get fine weather," said Miss Howe. "And not come any nasty croppers."

"And done forget some tinscher of arnica in yer bag," said the junior apprentice in the very high collar. (He had witnessed one of the lessons at the top of Putney Hill.)

"You stow it," said Mr. Hoopdriver, looking hard and

threateningly at the junior apprentice, and suddenly adding in a tone of bitter contempt,-- " Jampot."

"I'm getting fairly safe upon it now," he told Miss Howe.

At other times Hoopdriver might have further resented the satirical efforts of the apprentice, but his mind was too full of the projected Tour to admit any petty delicacies of dignity. He left the supper table early, so that he might put in a good hour at the desperate gymnastics up the Roehampton Road before it would be time to come back for locking up. When the gas was turned off for the night he was sitting on the edge of his bed, rubbing arnica into his knee--a new and very big place--and studying a Road Map of the South of England. Briggs of the "dresses," who shared the room with him, was sitting up in bed and trying to smoke in the dark. Briggs had never been on a cycle in his life, but he felt Hoopdriver's inexperience and offered such advice as occurred to him.

"Have the machine thoroughly well oiled," said Briggs, "carry one or two lemons with you, don't tear yourself to death the first day, and sit upright. Never lose control of the machine, and always sound the bell on every possible opportunity. You mind those things, and nothing very much can't happen to you, Hoopdriver--you take my word."

He would lapse into silence for a minute, save perhaps for a curse or so at his pipe, and then break out with an entirely different set of tips.

"Avoid running over dogs, Hoopdriver, whatever you do. It's one of the worst things you can do to run over a dog. Never let the machine buckle--there was a man killed only the other day through his wheel buckling--don't scorch, don't ride on the foot-path, keep your own side of the road, and if you see a tram- line, go

round the corner at once, and hurry off into the next county--and always light up before dark. You mind just a few little things like that, Hoopdriver, and nothing much can't happen to you--you take my word."

"Right you are!" said Hoopdriver. "Good-night, old man."

"Good-night," said Briggs, and there was silence for a space, save for the succulent respiration of the pipe. Hoopdriver rode off into Dreamland on his machine, and was scarcely there before he was pitched back into the world of sense again.--Something--what was it ?

"Never oil the steering. It's fatal," a voice that came from round a fitful glow of light, was saying. "And clean the chain daily with black-lead. You mind just a few little things like that--"

"Lord LOVE us!" said Hoopdriver, and pulled the bedclothes over his ears.

THE RIDING FORTH OF MR. HOOPDRIVER

IV.

Only those who toil six long days out of the seven, and all the year round, save for one brief glorious fortnight or ten days in the summer time, know the exquisite sensations of the First Holiday Morning. All the dreary, uninteresting routine drops from you suddenly, your chains fall about your feet. All at once you are Lord of yourself, Lord of every hour in the long, vacant day; you may go where you please, call none Sir or Madame, have a lappel free of pins, doff your black morning coat, and wear the

colour of your heart, and be a Man. You grudge sleep, you grudge eating, and drinking even, their intrusion on those exquisite moments. There will be no more rising before breakfast in casual old clothing, to go dusting and getting ready in a cheerless, shutterdarkened, wrapped-up shop, no more imperious cries of, "Forward, Hoopdriver," no more hasty meals, and weary attendance on fitful old women, for ten blessed days. The first morning is by far the most glorious, for you hold your whole fortune in your hands. Thereafter, every night, comes a pang, a spectre, that will not be exorcised--the premonition of the return. The shadow of going back, of being put in the cage again for another twelve months, lies blacker and blacker across the sunlight. But on the first morning of the ten the holiday has no past, and ten days seems as good as infinity.

And it was fine, full of a promise of glorious days, a deep blue sky with dazzling piles of white cloud here and there, as though celestial haymakers had been piling the swathes of last night's clouds into cocks for a coming cartage. There were thrushes in the Richmond Road, and a lark on Putney Heath. The freshness of dew was in the air; dew or the relics of an overnight shower glittered on the leaves and grass. Hoopdriver had breakfasted early by Mrs. Gunn's complaisance. He wheeled his machine up Putney Hill, and his heart sang within him. Halfway up, a dissipated-looking black cat rushed home across flile road and vanished under a gate. All the big red-brick houses behind the variegated shrubs and trees had their blinds down still, and he would not have changed places with a soul in any one of them for a hundred pounds.

He had on his new brown cycling suit--a handsome Norfolk jacket thing for 30/--and his legs--those martyr legs--were more than consoled by thick chequered stockings, "thin in the foot, thick in the leg," for all they had endured. A neat packet of American cloth behind the saddle contained his change of raiment, and the

bell and the handle-bar and the hubs and lamp, albeit a trifle freckled by wear, glittered blindingly in the rising sunlight. And at the top of the hill, after only one unsuccessful attempt, which, somehow, terminated on the green, Hoopdriver mounted, and with a stately and cautious restraint in his pace, and a dignified curvature of path, began his great Cycling Tour along the Southern Coast.

There is only one phrase to describe his course at this stage, and that is--voluptuous curves. He did not ride fast, he did not ride straight, an exacting critic might say he did not ride well--but he rode generously, opulently, using the whole road and even nibbling at the footpath. The excitement never flagged. So far he had never passed or been passed by anything, but as yet the day was young and the road was clear. He doubted his steering so much that, for the present, he had resolved to dismount at the approach of anything else upon wheels. The shadows of the trees lay very long and blue across the road, the morning sunlight was like amber fire.

At the cross-roads at the top of West Hill, where the cattle trough stands, he turned towards Kingston and set himself to scale the little bit of ascent. An early heath-keeper, in his velveteen jacket, marvelled at his efforts. And while he yet struggled, the head of a carter rose over the brow.

At the sight of him Mr. Hoopdriver, according to his previous determination, resolved to dismount. He tightened the brake, and the machine stopped dead. He was trying to think what he did with his right leg whilst getting off. He gripped the handles and released the brake, standing on the left pedal and waving his right foot in the air. Then--these things take so long in the telling--he found the machine was falling over to the right. While he was deciding upon a plan of action, gravitation appears to have been busy. He was still irresolute when he found the

machine on the ground, himself kneeling upon it, and a vague feeling in his mind that again Providence had dealt harshly with his shin. This happened when he was just level with the heathkeeper. The man in the approaching cart stood up to see the ruins better.

"THAT ain't the way to get off," said the heathkeeper.

Mr. Hoopdriver picked up the machine. The handle was twisted askew again. He said something under his breath. He would have to unscrew the beastly thing.

"THAT ain't the way to get off," repeated the heathkeeper, after a silence.

"I know that," said Mr. Hoopdriver, testily, determined to overlook the new specimen on his shin at any cost. He unbuckled the wallet behind the saddle, to get out a screw hammer.

"If you know it ain't the way to get off--whaddyer do it for?" said the heath-keeper, in a tone of friendly controversy.

Mr. Hoopdriver got out his screw hammer and went to the handle. He was annoyed. "That's my business, I suppose," he said, fumbling with the screw. The unusual exertion had made his hands shake frightfully.

The heath-keeper became meditative, and twisted his stick in his hands behind his back. "You've broken yer 'andle, ain't yer?" he said presently. Just then the screw hammer slipped off the nut. Mr. Hoopdriver used a nasty, low word.

"They're trying things, them bicycles," said the heath-keeper, charitably. "Very trying." Mr. Hoopdriver gave the nut a vicious turn and suddenly stood up--he was holding the front wheel

between his knees. "I wish," said he, with a catch in his voice, "I wish you'd leave off staring at me."

Then with the air of one who has delivered an ultimatum, he began replacing the screw hammer in the wallet.

The heath-keeper never moved. Possibly he raised his eyebrows, and certainly he stared harder than he did before. "You're pretty unsociable," he said slowly, as Mr. Hoopdriver seized the handles and stood ready to mount as soon as the cart had passed.

The indignation gathered slowly but surely. "Why don't you ride on a private road of your own if no one ain't to speak to you?" asked the heath-keeper, perceiving more and more clearly the bearing of the matter. "Can't no one make a passin' remark to you, Touchy? Ain't I good enough to speak to you? Been struck wooden all of a sudden?"

Mr. Hoopdriver stared into the Immensity of the Future. He was rigid with emotion. It was like abusing the Lions in Trafalgar Square. But the heathkeeper felt his honour was at stake.

"Don't you make no remarks to 'IM," said the keeper as the carter came up broadside to them. "'E's a bloomin' dook, 'e is. 'E don't converse with no one under a earl. 'E's off to Windsor, 'e is; that's why 'e's stickin' his be'ind out so haughty. Pride! Why, 'e's got so much of it, 'e has to carry some of it in that there bundle there, for fear 'e'd bust if 'e didn't ease hisself a bit--'E--"

But Mr. Hoopdriver heard no more. He was hopping vigorously along the road, in a spasmodic attempt to remount. He missed the treadle once and swore viciously, to the keeper's immense delight. "Nar! Nar!" said the heath-keeper.

In another moment Mr. Hoopdriver was up, and after one terrific lurch of the machine, the heathkeeper dropped out of earshot. Mr. Hoopdriver would have liked to look back at his enemy, but he usually twisted round and upset if he tried that. He had to imagine the indignant heath-keeper telling the carter all about it. He tried to infuse as much disdain as possible into his retreating aspect.

He drove on his sinuous way down the dip by the new mere and up the little rise to the crest of the hill that drops into Kingston Vale; and so remarkable is the psychology of cycling, that he rode all the straighter and easier because the emotions the heathkeeper had aroused relieved his mind of the constant expectation of collapse that had previously unnerved him. To ride a bicycle properly is very like a love affair--chiefly it is a matter of faith. Believe you do it, and the thing is done; doubt, and, for the life of you, you cannot.

Now you may perhaps imagine that as he rode on, his feelings towards the heath-keeper were either vindictive or remorseful,--vindictive for the aggravation or remorseful for his own injudicious display of ill temper. As a matter of fact, they were nothing of the sort. A sudden, a wonderful gratitude, possessed him. The Glory of the Holidays had resumed its sway with a sudden accession of splendour. At the crest of the hill he put his feet upon the footrests, and now riding moderately straight, went, with a palpitating brake, down that excellent descent. A new delight was in his eyes, quite over and above the pleasure of rushing through the keen, sweet, morning air. He reached out his thumb and twanged his bell out of sheer happiness.

"He's a bloomin' Dook--he is!" said Mr. Hoopdriver to himself, in a soft undertone, as he went soaring down the hill, and again, "He's a bloomin' Dook!" He opened his mouth in a silent laugh.

It was having a decent cut did it. His social superiority had been so evident that even a man like that noticed it. No more Manchester Department for ten days! Out of Manchester, a Man. The draper Hoopdriver, the Hand, had vanished from existence. Instead was a gentleman, a man of pleasure, with a five-pound note, two sovereigns, and some silver at various convenient points of his person. At any rate as good as a Dook, if not precisely in the peerage. Involuntarily at the thought of his funds Hoopdriver's right hand left the handle and sought his breast pocket, to be immediately recalled by a violent swoop of the machine towards the cemetery. Whirroo! Just missed that half-brick! Mischievous brutes there were in the world to put such a thing in the road. Some blooming 'Arry or other! Ought to prosecute a few of these roughs, and the rest would know better. That must be the buckle of the wallet was rattling on the mud-guard. How cheerfully the wheels buzzed!

The cemetery was very silent and peaceful, but the Vale was waking, and windows rattled and squeaked up, and a white dog came out of one of the houses and yelped at him. He got off, rather breathless, at the foot of Kingston Hill, and pushed up. Halfway up, an early milk chariot rattled by him; two dirty men with bundles came hurrying down. Hoopdriver felt sure they were burglars, carrying home the swag.

It was up Kingston Hill that he first noticed a peculiar feeling, a slight tightness at his knees; but he noticed, too, at the top that he rode straighter than he did before. The pleasure of riding straight blotted out these first intimations of fatigue. A man on horseback appeared; Hoopdriver, in a tumult of soul at his own temerity, passed him. Then down the hill into Kingston, with the screw hammer, behind in the wallet, rattling against the oil can. He passed, without misadventure, a fruiterer's van and a sluggish cartload of bricks. And in Kingston Hoopdriver, with the most exquisite sensations, saw the shutters half removed from a

draper's shop, and two yawning youths, in dusty old black jackets and with dirty white comforters about their necks, clearing up the planks and boxes and wrappers in the window, preparatory to dressing it out. Even so had Hoopdriver been on the previous day. But now, was he not a bloomin' Dook, palpably in the sight of common men? Then round the corner to the right--bell banged furiously--and so along the road to Surbiton.

Whoop for Freedom and Adventure! Every now and then a house with an expression of sleepy surprise would open its eye as he passed, and to the right of him for a mile or so the weltering Thames flashed and glittered. Talk of your joie de vivre. Albeit with a certain cramping sensation about the knees and calves slowly forcing itself upon his attention.

THE SHAMEFUL EPISODE OF THE YOUNG LADY IN GREY

V

Now you must understand that Mr. Hoopdriver was not one of your fast young men. If he had been King Lemuel, he could not have profited more by his mother's instructions. He regarded the feminine sex as something to bow to and smirk at from a safe distance. Years of the intimate remoteness of a counter leave their mark upon a man. It was an adventure for him to take one of the Young Ladies of the establishment to church on a Sunday. Few modern young men could have merited less the epithet "Dorg." But I have thought at times that his machine may have had something of the blade in its metal. Decidedly it was a machine with a past. Mr. Hoopdriver had bought it second-hand from Hare's in Putney, and Hare said it had had several owners. Second-hand was scarcely the word for it, and Elare was mildly puzzled that he should be selling such an antiquity. He said it was perfectly

sound, if a little old-fashioned, but he was absolutely silent about its moral character. It may even have begun its career with a poet, say, in his glorious youth. It may have been the bicycle of a Really Bad Man. No one who has ever ridden a cycle of any kind but will witness that the things are unaccountably prone to pick up bad habits--and keep them.

It is undeniable that it became convulsed with the most violent emotions directly the Young Lady in Grey appeared. It began an absolutely unprecedented Wobble--unprecedented so far as Hoopdriver's experience went. It "showed off"--the most decadent sinuosity. It left a track like one of Beardsley's feathers. He suddenly realised, too, that his cap was loose on his head and his breath a mere remnant.

The Young Lady in Grey was also riding a bicycle. She was dressed in a beautiful bluish-gray, and the sun behind her drew her outline in gold and left the rest in shadow. Hoopdriver was dimly aware that she was young, rather slender, dark, and with a bright colour and bright eyes. Strange doubts possessed him as to the nature of her nether costume. He had heard of such things of course. French, perhaps. Her handles glittered; a jet of sunlight splashed off her bell blindingly. She was approaching the high road along an affluent from the villas of Surbiton. fee roads converged slantingly. She was travelling at about the same pace as Mr. Hoopdriver. The appearances pointed to a meeting at the fork of the roads.

Hoopdriver was seized with a horrible conflict of doubts. By contrast with her he rode disgracefully. Had he not better get off at once and pretend something was wrong with his treadle ? Yet even the end of getting off was an uncertainty. That last occasion on Putney Heath! On the other hand, what would happen if he kept on? To go very slow seemed the abnegation of his manhood. To crawl after a mere schoolgirl! Besides, she was not

riding very fast. On the other hand, to thrust himself in front of her, consuming the road in his tendril-like advance, seemed an incivility--greed. He would leave her such a very little. His business training made him prone to bow and step aside. If only one could take one's hands off the handles, one might pass with a silent elevation of the hat, of course. But even that was a little suggestive of a funeral.

Meanwhile the roads converged. She was looking at him. She was flushed, a little thin, and had very bright eyes. Her red lips fell apart. She may have been riding hard, but it looked uncommonly like a faint smile. And the things were--yes!--RATIONALS! Suddenly an impulse to bolt from the situation became clamorous. Mr. Hoopdriver pedalled convulsively, intending to pass her. He jerked against some tin thing on the road, and it flew up between front wheel and mud-guard. He twisted round towards her. Had the machine a devil?

At that supreme moment it came across him that he would have done wiser to dismount. He gave a frantic 'whoop' and tried to get round, then, as he seemed falling over, he pulled the handles straight again and to the left by an instinctive motion, and shot behind her hind wheel, missing her by a hair's breadth. The pavement kerb awaited him. He tried to recover, and found himself jumped up on the pavement and riding squarely at a neat wooden paling. He struck this with a terrific impact and shot forward off his saddle into a clumsy entanglement. Then he began to tumble over sideways, and completed the entire figure in a sitting position on the gravel, with his feet between the fork and the stay of the machine. The concussion on the gravel shook his entire being. He remained in that position, wishing that he had broken his neck, wishing even more heartily that he had never been born. The glory of life had departed. Bloomin' Dook, indeed! These unwomanly women!

There was a soft whirr, the click of a brake, two footfalls, and the Young Lady in Grey stood holding her machine. She had turned round and come back to him. The warm sunlight now was in her face. "Are you hurt?" she said. She had a pretty, clear, girlish voice. She was really very young--quite a girl, in fact. And rode so well! It was a bitter draught.

Mr. Hoopdriver stood up at once. "Not a bit," he said, a little ruefully. He became painfully aware that large patches of gravel scarcely improve the appearance of a Norfolk suit. "I'm very sorry indeed--"

"It's my fault," she said, interrupting and so saving him on the very verge of calling her 'Miss.' (He knew 'Miss' was wrong, but it was deep-seated habit with him.) "I tried to pass you on the wrong side." Her face and eyes seemed all alive. "It's my place to be sorry."

"But it was my steering--"

"I ought to have seen you were a Novice"--with a touch of superiority. "But you rode so straight coming along there!"

She really was--dashed pretty. Mr. Hoopdriver's feelings passed the nadir. When he spoke again there was the faintest flavour of the aristocratic in his voice.

"It's my first ride, as a matter of fact. But that's no excuse for my ah! blundering--"

"Your finger's bleeding," she said, abruptly.

He saw his knuckle was barked. "I didn't feel it," he said, feeling manly.

"You don't at first. Have you any stickingplaster? If not--" She balanced her machine against herself. She had a little side pocket, and she whipped out a small packet of sticking-plaster with a pair of scissors in a sheath at the side, and cut off a generous portion. He had a wild impulse to ask her to stick it on for him. Controlled. "Thank you," he said.

"Machine all right?" she asked, looking past him at the prostrate vehicle, her hands on her handle-bar. For the first time Hoopdriver did not feel proud of his machine.

He turned and began to pick up the fallen fabric. He looked over his shoulder, and she was gone, turned his head over the other shoulder down the road, and she was riding off. "ORF!" said Mr. Hoopdriver. "Well, I'm blowed!--Talk about Slap Up!" (His aristocratic refinement rarely adorned his speech in his private soliloquies.) His mind was whirling. One fact was clear. A most delightful and novel human being had flashed across his horizon and was going out of his life again. The Holiday madness was in his blood. She looked round!

At that he rushed his machine into the road, and began a hasty ascent. Unsuccessful. Try again. Confound it, will he NEVER be able to get up on the thing again? She will be round the corner in a minute. Once more. Ah! Pedal! Wobble! No! Right this time! He gripped the handles and put his head down. He would overtake her.

The situation was primordial. The Man beneath prevailed for a moment over the civilised superstructure, the Draper. He pushed at the pedals with archaic violence. So Palaeolithic man may have ridden his simple bicycle of chipped flint in pursuit of his exogamous affinity. She vanished round the corner. His effort was Titanic. What should he say when he overtook her? That scarcely disturbed him at first. How fine she had looked, flushed with the

exertion of riding, breathing a little fast, but elastic and active! Talk about your ladylike, homekeeping girls with complexions like cold veal! But what should he say to her? That was a bother. And he could not lift his cap without risking a repetition of his previous ignominy. She was a real Young Lady. No mistake about that! None of your blooming shop girls. (There is no greater contempt in the world than that of shop men for shop girls, unless it be that of shop girls for shop men.) Phew! This was work. A certain numbness came and went at his knees.

"May I ask to whom I am indebted?" he panted to himself, trying it over. That might do. Lucky he had a card case! A hundred a shilling--while you wait. He was getting winded. The road was certainly a bit uphill. He turned the corner and saw a long stretch of road, and a grey dress vanishing. He set his teeth. Had he gained on her at all? "Monkey on a gridiron!" yelped a small boy. Hoopdriver redoubled his efforts. His breath became audible, his steering unsteady, his pedalling positively ferocious. A drop of perspiration ran into his eye, irritant as acid. The road really was uphill beyond dispute. All his physiology began to cry out at him. A last tremendous effort brought him to the corner and showed yet another extent of shady roadway, empty save for a baker's van. His front wheel suddenly shrieked aloud. "Oh Lord!" said Hoopdriver, relaxing.

Anyhow she was not in sight. He got off unsteadily, and for a moment his legs felt like wisps of cotton. He balanced his machine against the grassy edge of the path and sat down panting. His hands were gnarled with swollen veins and shaking palpably, his breath came viscid.

"I'm hardly in training yet," he remarked. His legs had gone leaden. "I don't feel as though I'd had a mouthful of breakfast." Presently he slapped his side pocket and produced therefrom a brand-new cigarette case and a packet of Vansittart's Red Herring

cigarettes. He filled the case. Then his eye fell with a sudden approval on the ornamental chequering of his new stockings. The expression in his eyes faded slowly to abstract meditation.

"She WAS a stunning girl," he said. "I wonder if I shall ever set eyes on her again. And she knew how to ride, too! Wonder what she thought of me."

The phrase 'bloomin' Dook' floated into his mind with a certain flavour of comfort.

He lit a cigarette, and sat smoking and meditating. He did not even look up when vehicles passed. It was perhaps ten minutes before he roused himself. "What rot it is! What's the good of thinking such things," he said. "I'm only a blessed draper's assistant." (To be exact, he did not say blessed. The service of a shop may polish a man's exterior ways, but the 'prentices' dormitory is an indifferent school for either manners or morals.) He stood up and began wheeling his machine towards Esher. It was going to be a beautiful day, and the hedges and trees and the open country were all glorious to his town-tired eyes. But it was a little different from the elation of his start.

"Look at the gentleman wizzer bicitle," said a nursemaid on the path to a personage in a perambulator. That healed him a little. "'Gentleman wizzer bicitle,'--'bloomin' Dook'--I can't look so very seedy," he said to himself.

"I WONDER--I should just like to know--"

There was something very comforting in the track of HER pneumatic running straight and steady along the road before him. It must be hers. No other pneumatic had been along the road that morning. It was just possible, of course, that he might see her once more--coming back. Should he try and say something smart? He speculated

what manner of girl she might be. Probably she was one of these here New Women. He had a persuasion the cult had been maligned. Anyhow she was a Lady. And rich people, too! Her machine couldn't have cost much under twenty pounds. His mind came round and dwelt some time on her visible self. Rational dress didn't look a bit unwomanly. However, he disdained to be one of your fortunehunters. Then his thoughts drove off at a tangent. He would certainly have to get something to eat at the next public house.

ON THE ROAD TO RIPLEY

VI

In the fulness of time, Mr. Hoopdriver drew near the Marquis of Granby at Esher, and as he came under the railway arch and saw the inn in front of him, he mounted his machine again and rode bravely up to the doorway. Burton and biscuit and cheese he had, which, indeed, is Burton in its proper company; and as he was eating there came a middleaged man in a drab cycling suit, very red and moist and angry in the face, and asked bitterly for a lemon squash. And he sat down upon the seat in the bar and mopped his face. But scarcely had he sat down before he got up again and stared out of the doorway.

"Damn!" said he. Then, "Damned Fool!"

"Eigh?" said Mr. Hoopdriver, looking round suddenly with a piece of cheese in his cheek.

The man in drab faced him. "I called myself a Damned Fool, sir. Have you any objections?"

"Oh!--None. None," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "I thought you spoke to

me. I didn't hear what you said."

"To have a contemplative disposition and an energetic temperament, sir, is hell. Hell, I tell you. A contemplative disposition and a phlegmatic temperament, all very well. But energy and philosophy--!"

Mr. Hoopdriver looked as intelligent as he could, but said nothing.

"There's no hurry, sir, none whatever. I came out for exercise, gentle exercise, and to notice the scenery and to botanise. And no sooner do I get on the accursed machine, than off I go hammer and tongs; I never look to right or left, never notice a flower, never see a view, get hot, juicy, red,--like a grilled chop. Here I am, sir. Come from Guildford in something under the hour. WHY, sir?"

Mr. Hoopdriver shook his head.

"Because I'm a damned fool, sir. Because I've reservoirs and reservoirs of muscular energy, and one or other of them is always leaking. It's a most interesting road, birds and trees, I've no doubt, and wayside flowers, and there's nothing I should enjoy more than watching them. But I can't. Get me on that machine, and I have to go. Get me on anything, and I have to go. And I don't want to go a bit. WHY should a man rush about like a rocket, all pace and fizzle? Why? It makes me furious. I can assure you, sir, I go scorching along the road, and cursing aloud at myself for doing it. A quiet, dignified, philosophical man, that's what I am--at bottom; and here I am dancing with rage and swearing like a drunken tinker at a perfect stranger--

"But my day's wasted. I've lost all that country road, and now I'm on the fringe of London. And I might have loitered all the

morning! Ugh! Thank Heaven, sir, you have not the irritable temperament, that you are not goaded to madness by your endogenous sneers, by the eternal wrangling of an uncomfortable soul and body. I tell you, I lead a cat and dog life--But what IS the use of talking?--It's all of a piece!"

He tossed his head with unspeakable self-disgust, pitched the lemon squash into his mouth, paid for it, and without any further remark strode to the door. Mr. Hoopdriver was still wondering what to say when his interlocutor vanished. There was a noise of a foot spurning the gravel, and when Mr. Hoopdriver reached the doorway, the man in drab was a score of yards Londonward. He had already gathered pace. He pedalled with ill-suppressed anger, and his head was going down. In another moment he flew swiftly out of sight under the railway arch, and Mr. Hoopdriver saw him no more.

VII

After this whirlwind Mr. Hoopdriver paid his reckoning and--being now a little rested about the muscles of the knees--resumed his saddle and rode on in the direction of Ripley, along an excellent but undulating road. He was pleased to find his command over his machine already sensibly increased. He set himself little exercises as he went along and performed them with variable success. There was, for instance, steering in between a couple of stones, say a foot apart, a deed of little difficulty as far as the front wheel is concerned. But the back wheel, not being under the sway of the human eye, is apt to take a vicious jump over the obstacle, which sends a violent concussion all along the spine to the skull, and will even jerk a loosely fastened hat over the eyes, and so lead to much confusion. And again, there was taking the hand or hands off the handlebar, a thing simple in itself, but complex in its consequences. This particularly was a feat Mr.

Hoopdriver desired to do, for several divergent reasons; but at present it simply led to convulsive balancings and novel and inelegant modes of dismounting.

The human nose is, at its best, a needless excrescence. There are those who consider it ornamental, and would regard a face deprived of its assistance with pity or derision; but it is doubtful whether our esteem is dictated so much by a sense of its absolute beauty as by the vitiating effect of a universally prevalent fashion. In the case of bicycle students, as in the young of both sexes, its inutility is aggravated by its persistent annoyance--it requires constant attention. Until one can ride with one hand, and search for, secure, and use a pocket handkerchief with the other, cycling is necessarily a constant series of descents. Nothing can be further from the author's ambition than a wanton realism, but Mr. Hoopdriver's nose is a plain and salient fact, and face it we must. And, in addition to this inconvenience, there are flies. Until the cyclist can steer with one hand, his face is given over to Beelzebub. Contemplative flies stroll over it, and trifle absently with its most sensitive surfaces. The only way to dislodge them is to shake the head forcibly and to writhe one's features violently. This is not only a lengthy and frequently ineffectual method, but one exceedingly terrifying to foot passengers. And again, sometimes the beginner rides for a space with one eye closed by perspiration, giving him a waggish air foreign to his mood and ill calculated to overawe the impertinent. However, you will appreciate now the motive of Mr. Hoopdriver's experiments. He presently attained sufficient dexterity to slap himself smartly and violently in the face with his right hand, without certainly overturning the machine; but his pocket handkerchief might have been in California for any good it was to him while he was in the saddle.

Yet you must not think that because Mr. Hoopdriver was a little uncomfortable, he was unhappy in the slightest degree. In the

background of his consciousness was the sense that about this time Briggs would be half-way through his window dressing, and Gosling, the apprentice, busy, with a chair turned down over the counter and his ears very red, trying to roll a piece of huckaback--only those who have rolled pieces of huckaback know quite how detestable huckaback is to roll--and the shop would be dusty and, perhaps, the governor about and snappy. And here was quiet and greenery, and one mucked about as the desire took one, without a soul to see, and here was no wailing of "Sayn," no folding of remnants, no voice to shout, "Hoopdriver, forward!" And once he almost ran over something wonderful, a little, low, red beast with a yellowish tail, that went rushing across the road before him. It was the first weasel he had ever seen in his cockney life. There were miles of this, scores of miles of this before him, pinewood and oak forest, purple, heathery moorland and grassy down, lush meadows, where shining rivers wound their lazy way, villages with square-towered, flint churches, and rambling, cheap, and hearty inns, clean, white, country towns, long downhill stretches, where one might ride at one's ease (overlooking a jolt or so), and far away, at the end of it all,--the sea.

What mattered a fly or so in the dawn of these delights? Perhaps he had been dashed a minute by the shameful episode of the Young Lady in Grey, and perhaps the memory of it was making itself a little lair in a corner of his brain from which it could distress him in the retrospect by suggesting that he looked like a fool; but for the present that trouble was altogether in abeyance. The man in drab--evidently a swell--had spoken to him as his equal, and the knees of his brown suit and the chequered stockings were ever before his eyes. (Or, rather, you could see the stockings by carrying the head a little to one side.) And to feel, little by little, his mastery over this delightful, treacherous machine, growing and growing! Every half-mile or so his knees reasserted themselves, and he dismounted and sat awhile by the roadside.

It was at a charming little place between Esher and Cobham, where a bridge crosses a stream, that Mr. Hoopdriver came across the other cyclist in brown. It is well to notice the fact here, although the interview was of the slightest, because it happened that subsequently Hoopdriver saw a great deal more of this other man in brown. The other cyclist in brown had a machine of dazzling newness, and a punctured pneumatic lay across his knees. He was a man of thirty or more, with a whitish face, an aquiline nose, a lank, flaxen moustache, and very fair hair, and he scowled at the job before him. At the sight of him Mr. Hoopdriver pulled himself together, and rode by with the air of one born to the wheel. "A splendid morning," said Mr. Hoopdriver, "and a fine surface."

"The morning and you and the surface be everlastingly damned!" said the other man in brown as Hoopdriver receded. Hoopdriver heard the mumble and did not distinguish the words, and he felt a pleasing sense of having duly asserted the wide sympathy that binds all cyclists together, of having behaved himself as becomes one of the brotherhood of the wheel. The other man in brown watched his receding aspect. "Greasy proletarian," said the other man in brown, feeling a prophetic dislike. "Got a suit of brown, the very picture of this. One would think his sole aim in life had been to caricature me. It's Fortune's way with me. Look at his insteps on the treadles! Why does Heaven make such men?"

And having lit a cigarette, the other man in brown returned to the business in hand.

Mr. Hoopdriver worked up the hill towards Cobham to a point that he felt sure was out of sight of the other man in brown, and then he dismounted and pushed his machine; until the proximity of the village and a proper pride drove him into the saddle again.

VIII

Beyond Cobham came a delightful incident, delightful, that is, in its beginning if a trifle indeterminate in the retrospect. It was perhaps half-way between Cobham and Ripley. Mr. Hoopdriver dropped down a little hill, where, unfenced from the road, fine mossy trees and bracken lay on either side; and looking up he saw an open country before him, covered with heather and set with pines, and a yellow road running across it, and half a mile away perhaps, a little grey figure by the wayside waving something white. "Never!" said Mr. Hoopdriver with his hands tightening on the handles.

He resumed the treadles, staring away before him, jolted over a stone, wobbled, recovered, and began riding faster at once, with his eyes ahead. "It can't be," said Hoopdriver.

He rode his straightest, and kept his pedals spinning, albeit a limp numbness had resumed possession of his legs." It CAN'T be," he repeated, feeling every moment more assured that it WAS. "Lord! I don't know even now," said Mr. Hoopdriver (legs awhirling), and then, "Blow my legs!"

But he kept on and drew nearer and nearer, breathing hard and gathering flies like a flypaper. In the valley he was hidden. Then the road began to rise, and the resistance of the pedals grew. As he crested the hill he saw her, not a hundred yards away from him. "It's her!" he said. "It's her--right enough. It's the suit's done it,"--which was truer even than Mr. Hoopdriver thought. But now she was not waving her handkerchief, she was not even looking at him. She was wheeling her machine slowly along the road towards him, and admiring the pretty wooded hills towards Weybridge. She might have been unaware of his existence

for all the recognition he got.

For a moment horrible doubts troubled Mr. Hoopdriver. Had that handkerchief been a dream? Besides which he was deliquescent and scarlet, and felt so. It must be her coquetry--the handkerchief was indisputable. Should he ride up to her and get off, or get off and ride up to her? It was as well she didn't look, because he would certainly capsize if he lifted his cap. Perhaps that was her consideration. Even as he hesitated he was upon her. She must have heard his breathing. He gripped the brake. Steady! His right leg waved in the air, and he came down heavily and staggering, but erect. She turned her eyes upon him with admirable surprise.

Mr. Hoopdriver tried to smile pleasantly, hold up his machine, raise his cap, and bow gracefully. Indeed, he felt that he did as much. He was a man singularly devoid of the minutiae of self-consciousness, and he was quite unaware of a tail of damp hair lying across his forehead, and just clearing his eyes, and of the general disorder of his coiffure. There was an interrogative pause.

"What can I have the pleasure--" began Mr. Hoopdriver, insinuatingly. "I mean" (remembering his emancipation and abruptly assuming his most aristocratic intonation), "can I be of any assistance to you?"

The Young Lady in Grey bit her lower lip and said very prettily, "None, thank you." She glanced away from him and made as if she would proceed.

"Oh!" said Mr. Hoopdriver, taken aback and suddenly crestfallen again. It was so unexpected. He tried to grasp the situation. Was she coquetting? Or had he--?

"Excuse me, one minute," he said, as she began to wheel her

machine again.

"Yes?" she said, stopping and staring a little, with the colour in her cheeks deepening.

"I should not have alighted if I had not--imagined that you--er, waved something white--" He paused.

She looked at him doubtfully. He HAD seen it! She decided that he was not an unredeemed rough taking advantage of a mistake, but an innocent soul meaning well while seeking happiness. "I DID wave my handkerchief," she said. "I'm very sorry. I am expecting--a friend, a gentleman,"--she seemed to flush pink for a minute. "He is riding a bicycle and dressed in--in brown; and at a distance, you know--"

"Oh, quite!" said Mr. Hoopdriver, bearing up in manly fashion against his bitter disappointment. "Certainly."

"I'm awfully sorry, you know. Troubling you to dismount, and all that."

"No trouble. 'Ssure you," said Mr. Hoopdriver, mechanically and bowing over his saddle as if it was a counter. Somehow he could not find it in his heart to tell her that the man was beyond there with a punctured pneumatic. He looked back along the road and tried to think of something else to say. But the gulf in the conversation widened rapidly and hopelessly. "There's nothing further," began Mr. Hoopdriver desperately, recurring to his stock of cliches.

"Nothing, thank you," she said decisively. And immediately, "This IS the Ripley road?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "Ripley is about two miles from

here. According to the mile-stones."

"Thank you," she said warmly. "Thank you so much. I felt sure there was no mistake. And I really am awfully sorry--"

"Don't mention it," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "Don't mention it." He hesitated and gripped his handles to mount. "It's me," he said, "ought to be sorry." Should he say it? Was it an impertinence? Anyhow!--"Not being the other gentleman, you know."

He tried a quietly insinuating smile that he knew for a grin even as he smiled it; felt she disapproved--that she despised him, was overcome with shame at her expression, turned his back upon her, and began (very clumsily) to mount. He did so with a horrible swerve, and went pedalling off, riding very badly, as he was only too painfully aware. Nevertheless, thank Heaven for the mounting! He could not see her because it was so dangerous for him to look round, but he could imagine her indignant and pitiless. He felt an unspeakable idiot. One had to be so careful what one said to Young Ladies, and he'd gone and treated her just as though she was only a Larky Girl. It was unforgivable. He always WAS a fool. You could tell from her manner she didn't think him a gentleman. One glance, and she seemed to look clear through him and all his presence. What rot it was venturing to speak to a girl like that! With her education she was bound to see through him at once.

How nicely she spoke too! nice clear-cut words! She made him feel what slush his own accent was. And that last silly remark. What was it? 'Not being the other gentleman, you know!' No point in it. And 'GENTLEMAN!' What COULD she be thinking of him?

But really the Young Lady in Grey had dismissed Hoopdriver from her thoughts almost before he had vanished round the corner. She had thought no ill of him. His manifest awe and admiration of her had given her not an atom of offence. But for her just now there

were weightier things to think about, things that would affect all the rest of her life. She continued slowly walking her machine Londonward. Presently she stopped. "Oh! Why DOESN'T he come?" she said, and stamped her foot petulantly. Then, as if in answer, coming down the hill among the trees, appeared the other man in brown, dismounted and wheeling his machine.

HOW MR. HOOPDRIVER WAS HAUNTED

IX

As Mr. Hoopdriver rode swaggering along the Ripley road, it came to him, with an unwarrantable sense of comfort, that he had seen the last of the Young Lady in Grey. But the ill-concealed blavery of the machine, the present machinery of Fate, the *deus ex machina*, so to speak, was against him. The bicycle, torn from this attractive young woman, grew heavier and heavier, and continually more unsteady. It seemed a choice between stopping at Ripley or dying in the flower of his days. He went into the Unicorn, after propping his machine outside the door, and, as he cooled down and smoked his Red Herring cigarette while the cold meat was getting ready, he saw from the window the Young Lady in Grey and the other man in brown, entering Ripley.

They filled him with apprehension by looking at the house which sheltered him, but the sight of his bicycle, propped in a drunk and incapable attitude against the doorway, humping its rackety mud-guard and leering at them with its darkened lantern eye, drove them away--so it seemed to Mr. Hoopdriver--to the spacious swallow of the Golden Dragon. The young lady was riding very slowly, but the other man in brown had a bad puncture and was wheeling his machine. Mr. Hoopdriver noted his flaxen moustache, his aquiline nose, his rather bent shoulders, with a sudden,

vivid dislike.

The maid at the Unicorn is naturally a pleasant girl, but she is jaded by the incessant incidence of cyclists, and Hoopdriver's mind, even as he conversed with her in that cultivated voice of his--of the weather, of the distance from London, and of the excellence of the Ripley road--wandered to the incomparable freshness and brilliance of the Young Lady in Grey. As he sat at meat he kept turning his head to the window to see what signs there were of that person, but the face of the Golden Dragon displayed no appreciation of the delightful morsel it had swallowed. As an incidental consequence of this distraction, Mr. Hoopdriver was for a minute greatly inconvenienced by a mouthful of mustard. After he had called for his reckoning he went, his courage being high with meat and mustard, to the door, intending to stand, with his legs wide apart and his hands deep in his pockets, and stare boldly across the road. But just then the other man in brown appeared in the gateway of the Golden Dragon yard--it is one of those delightful inns that date from the coaching days--wheeling his punctured machine. He was taking it to Flambeau's, the repairer's. He looked up and saw Hoopdriver, stared for a minute, and then scowled darkly.

But Hoopdriver remained stoutly in the doorway until the other man in brown had disappeared into Flambeau's. Then he glanced momentarily at the Golden Dragon, puckered his mouth into a whistle of unconcern, and proceeded to wheel his machine into the road until a sufficient margin for mounting was secured.

Now, at that time, I say, Hoopdriver was rather desirous than not of seeing no more of the Young Lady in Grey. The other man in brown he guessed was her brother, albeit that person was of a pallid fairness, differing essentially from her rich colouring; and, besides, he felt he had made a hopeless fool of himself. But the afternoon was against him, intolerably hot, especially on the

top of his head, and the virtue had gone out of his legs to digest his cold meat, and altogether his ride to Guildford was exceedingly intermittent. At times he would walk, at times lounge by the wayside, and every public house, in spite of Briggs and a sentiment of economy, meant a lemonade and a dash of bitter. (For that is the experience of all those who go on wheels, that drinking begets thirst, even more than thirst begets drinking, until at last the man who yields becomes a hell unto himself, a hell in which the fire dieth not, and the thirst is not quenched.) Until a pennyworth of acrid green apples turned the current that threatened to carry him away. Ever and again a cycle, or a party of cyclists, would go by, with glittering wheels and softly running chains, and on each occasion, to save his self-respect, Mr. Hoopdriver descended and feigned some trouble with his saddle. Each time he descended with less trepidation.

He did not reach Guildford until nearly four o'clock, and then he was so much exhausted that he decided to put up there for the night, at the Yellow Hammer Coffee Tavern. And after he had cooled a space and refreshed himself with tea and bread and butter and jam,--the tea he drank noisily out of the saucer,--he went out to loiter away the rest of the afternoon. Guildford is an altogether charming old town, famous, so he learnt from a Guide Book, as the scene of Master Tupper's great historical novel of Stephen Langton, and it has a delightful castle, all set about with geraniums and brass plates commemorating the gentlemen who put them up, and its Guildhall is a Tudor building, very pleasant to see, and in the afternoon the shops are busy and the people going to and fro make the pavements look bright and prosperous. It was nice to peep in the windows and see the heads of the men and girls in the drapers' shops, busy as busy, serving away. The High Street runs down at an angle of seventy degrees to the horizon (so it seemed to Mr. Hoopdriver, whose feeling for gradients was unnaturally exalted), and it brought his heart into

his mouth to see a cyclist ride down it, like a fly crawling down a window pane. The man hadn't even a brake. He visited the castle early in the evening and paid his twopence to ascend the Keep.

At the top, from the cage, he looked down over the clustering red roofs of the town and the tower of the church, and then going to the southern side sat down and lit a Red Herring cigarette, and stared away south over the old bramble-bearing, fern-beset ruin, at the waves of blue upland that rose, one behind another, across the Weald, to the lazy altitudes of Hindhead and Butser. His pale grey eyes were full of complacency and pleasurable anticipation. Tomorrow he would go riding across that wide valley.

He did not notice any one else had come up the Keep after him until he heard a soft voice behind him saying: "Well, MISS BEAUMONT, here's the view." Something in the accent pointed to a jest in the name.

"It's a dear old town, brother George," answered another voice that sounded familiar enough, and turning his head, Mr. Hoopdriver saw the other man in brown and the Young Lady in Grey, with their backs towards him. She turned her smiling profile towards Hoopdriver. "Only, you know, brothers don't call their sisters--"

She glanced over her shoulder and saw Hoopdriver. "Damn!" said the other man in brown, quite audibly, starting as he followed her glance.

Mr. Hoopdriver, with a fine air of indifference, resumed the Weald. "Beautiful old town, isn't it?" said the other man in brown, after a quite perceptible pause.

"Isn't it?" said the Young Lady in Grey.

Another pause began.

"Can't get alone anywhere," said the other man in brown, looking round.

Then Mr. Hoopdriver perceived clearly that he was in the way, and decided to retreat. It was just his luck of course that he should stumble at the head of the steps and vanish with indignity. This was the third time that he'd seen HIM, and the fourth time her. And of course he was too big a fat-head to raise his cap to HER! He thought of that at the foot of the Keep. Apparently they aimed at the South Coast just as he did, He'd get up betimes the next day and hurry off to avoid her--them, that is. It never occurred to Mr. Hoopdriver that Miss Beaumont and her brother might do exactly the same thing, and that evening, at least, the peculiarity of a brother calling his sister "Miss Beaumont" did not recur to him. He was much too preoccupied with an analysis of his own share of these encounters. He found it hard to be altogether satisfied about the figure he had cut, revise his memories as he would.

Once more quite unintentionally he stumbled upon these two people. It was about seven o'clock. He stopped outside a linen draper's and peered over the goods in the window at the assistants in torment. He could have spent a whole day happily at that. He told himself that he was trying to see how they dressed out the brass lines over their counters, in a purely professional spirit, but down at the very bottom of his heart he knew better. The customers were a secondary consideration, and it was only after the lapse of perhaps a minute that he perceived that among them was--the Young Lady in Grey! He turned away from the window at once, and saw the other man in brown standing at the edge of the pavement and regarding him with a very curious expression of face.

There came into Mr. Hoopdriver's head the curious problem whether he was to be regarded as a nuisance haunting these people, or whether they were to be regarded as a nuisance haunting him. He abandoned the solution at last in despair, quite unable to decide upon the course he should take at the next encounter, whether he should scowl savagely at the couple or assume an attitude eloquent of apology and propitiation.

THE IMAGININGS OF MR. HOOPDRIVER'S HEART

X

Mr. Hoopdriver was (in the days of this story) a poet, though he had never written a line of verse. Or perhaps romancer will describe him better. Like I know not how many of those who do the fetching and carrying of life,--a great number of them certainly,--his real life was absolutely uninteresting, and if he had faced it as realistically as such people do in Mr. Gissing's novels, he would probably have come by way of drink to suicide in the course of a year. But that was just what he had the natural wisdom not to do. On the contrary, he was always decorating his existence with imaginative tags, hopes, and poses, deliberate and yet quite effectual self-deceptions; his experiences were mere material for a romantic superstructure. If some power had given Hoopdriver the 'giftie' Burns invoked, 'to see oursels as ithers see us,' he would probably have given it away to some one else at the very earliest opportunity. His entire life, you must understand, was not a continuous romance, but a series of short stories linked only by the general resemblance of their hero, a brown-haired young fellow commonly, with blue eyes and a fair moustache, graceful rather than strong, sharp and resolute rather than clever (cp., as the scientific books say, p. 2). Invariably this person possessed an iron will. The stories fluctuated

indefinitely. The smoking of a cigarette converted Hoopdriver's hero into something entirely worldly, subtly rakish, with a humorous twinkle in the eye and some gallant sinning in the background. You should have seen Mr. Hoopdriver promenading the brilliant gardens at Earl's Court on an early-closing night. His meaning glances! (I dare not give the meaning.) Such an influence as the eloquence of a revivalist preacher would suffice to divert the story into absolutely different channels, make him a white-soured hero, a man still pure, walking untainted and brave and helpful through miry ways. The appearance of some daintily gloved frockcoated gentleman with buttonhole and eyeglass complete, gallantly attendant in the rear of customers, served again to start visions of a simplicity essentially Cromwell-like, of sturdy plainness, of a strong, silent man going righteously through the world. This day there had predominated a fine leisurely person immaculately clothed, and riding on an unexceptional machine, a mysterious person--quite unostentatious, but with accidental self-revelation of something over the common, even a "bloomin' Dook," it might be incognito, on the tour of the South Coast.

You must not think that there was any TELLING of these stories of this life-long series by Mr. Hoopdriver. He never dreamt that they were known to a soul. If it were not for the trouble, I would, I think, go back and rewrite this section from the beginning, expunging the statements that Hoopdriver was a poet and a romancer, and saying instead that he was a playwright and acted his own plays. He was not only the sole performer, but the entire audience, and the entertainment kept him almost continuously happy. Yet even that playwright comparison scarcely expresses all the facts of the case. After all, very many of his dreams never got acted at all, possibly indeed, most of them, the dreams of a solitary walk for instance, or of a tramcar ride, the dreams dreamt behind the counter while trade was slack and mechanical foldings and rollings occupied his muscles. Most of

them were little dramatic situations, crucial dialogues, the return of Mr. Hoopdriver to his native village, for instance, in a well-cut holiday suit and natty gloves, the unheard asides of the rival neighbours, the delight of the old 'mater,' the intelligence--"A ten-pound rise all at once from Antrobus, mater. Whad d'yer think of that?" or again, the first whispering of love, dainty and witty and tender, to the girl he served a few days ago with sateen, or a gallant rescue of generalised beauty in distress from truculent insult or ravening dog.

So many people do this--and you never suspect it. You see a tattered lad selling matches in the street, and you think there is nothing between him and the bleakness of immensity, between him and utter abasement, but a few tattered rags and a feeble musculature. And all unseen by you a host of heaven-sent fatuities swathes him about, even, maybe, as they swathe you about. Many men have never seen their own profiles or the backs of their heads, and for the back of your own mind no mirror has been invented. They swathe him about so thickly that the pricks of fate scarce penetrate to him, or become but a pleasant titillation. And so, indeed, it is with all of us who go on living. Self-deception is the anaesthetic of life, while God is carving out our beings.

But to return from this general vivisection to Mr. Hoopdriver's imaginings. You see now how external our view has been; we have had but the slightest transitory glimpses of the drama within, of how the things looked in the magic mirror of Mr. Hoopdriver's mind. On the road to Guildford and during his encounters with his haunting fellow-cyclists the drama had presented chiefly the quiet gentleman to whom we have alluded, but at Guildford, under more varied stimuli, he burgeoned out more variously. There was the house agent's window, for instance, set him upon a charming little comedy. He would go in, make inquiries about that thirty-pound house, get the key possibly and go over it--the

thing would stimulate the clerk's curiosity immensely. He searched his mind for a reason for this proceeding and discovered that he was a dynamiter needing privacy. Upon that theory he procured the key, explored the house carefully, said darkly that it might suit his special needs, but that there were OTHERS to consult. The clerk, however, did not understand the allusion, and merely pitied him as one who had married young and paired himself to a stronger mind than his own.

This proceeding in some occult way led to the purchase of a note-book and pencil, and that started the conception of an artist taking notes. That was a little game Mr. Hoopdriver had, in congenial company, played in his still younger days--to the infinite annoyance of quite a number of respectable excursionists at Hastings. In early days Mr. Hoopdriver had been, as his mother proudly boasted, a 'bit of a drawer,' but a conscientious and normally stupid schoolmaster perceived the incipient talent and had nipped it in the bud by a series of lessons in art. However, our principal character figured about quite happily in old corners of Guildford, and once the other man in brown, looking out of the bay window of the Earl of Kent, saw him standing in a corner by a gateway, note-book in hand, busily sketching the Earl's imposing features. At which sight the other man in brown started back from the centre of the window, so as to be hidden from him, and crouching slightly, watched him intently through the interstices of the lace curtains.

OMISSIONS

XI

Now the rest of the acts of Mr. Hoopdriver in Guildford, on the great opening day of his holidays, are not to be detailed here.

How he wandered about the old town in the dusk, and up to the Hogsback to see the little lamps below and the little stars above come out one after another; how he returned through the yellow-lit streets to the Yellow Hammer Coffee Tavern and supped bravely in the commercial room--a Man among Men; how he joined in the talk about flying-machines and the possibilities of electricity, witnessing that flying-machines were "dead certain to come," and that electricity was "wonderful, wonderful"; how he went and watched the billiard playing and said, "Left 'em" several times with an oracular air; how he fell a-yawning; and how he got out his cycling map and studied it intently,--are things that find no mention here. Nor will I enlarge upon his going into the writing-room, and marking the road from London to Guildford with a fine, bright line of the reddest of red ink. In his little cyclist hand-book there is a diary, and in the diary there is an entry of these things--it is there to this day, and I cannot do better than reproduce it here to witness that this book is indeed a true one, and no lying fable written to while away an hour.

At last he fell a-yawning so much that very reluctantly indeed he set about finishing this great and splendid day. (Alas! that all days must end at last!) He got his candle in the hall from a friendly waiting-maid, and passed upward--whither a modest novelist, who writes for the family circle, dare not follow. Yet I may tell you that he knelt down at his bedside, happy and drowsy, and said, "Our Father 'chartin' heaven," even as he had learnt it by rote from his mother nearly twenty years ago. And anon when his breathing had become deep and regular, we may creep into his bedroom and catch him at his dreams. He is lying upon his left side, with his arm under the pillow. It is dark, and he is hidden; but if you could have seen his face, sleeping there in the darkness, I think you would have perceived, in spite of that treasured, thin, and straggling moustache, in spite of your memory of the coarse words he had used that day, that the man

before you was, after all, only a little child asleep.

THE DREAMS OF MR. HOOPDRIVER

XII

In spite of the drawn blinds and the darkness, you have just seen Mr. Hoopdriver's face peaceful in its beauty sleep in the little, plain bedroom at the very top of the Yellow Hammer Coffee Tavern at Guildford. That was before midnight. As the night progressed he was disturbed by dreams.

After your first day of cycling one dream is inevitable. A memory of motion lingers in the muscles of your legs, and round and round they seem to go. You ride through Dreamland on wonderful dream bicycles that change and grow; you ride down steeples and staircases and over precipices; you hover in horrible suspense over inhabited towns, vainly seeking for a brake your hand cannot find, to save you from a headlong fall; you plunge into weltering rivers, and rush helplessly at monstrous obstacles. Anon Mr. Hoopdriver found himself riding out of the darkness of non-existence, pedalling Ezekiel's Wheels across the Weald of Surrey, jolting over the hills and smashing villages in his course, while the other man in brown cursed and swore at him and shouted to stop his career. There was the Putney heath-keeper, too, and the man in drab raging at him. He felt an awful fool, a--what was it?--a juggins, ah!--a Juggernaut. The villages went off one after another with a soft, squashing noise. He did not see the Young Lady in Grey, but he knew she was looking at his back. He dared not look round. Where the devil was the brake? It must have fallen off. And the bell? Right in front of him was Guildford. He tried to shout and warn the town to get out of the way, but his voice was gone as well. Nearer, nearer! it was

fearful! and in another moment the houses were cracking like nuts and the blood of the inhabitants squirting this way and that. The streets were black with people running. Right under his wheels he saw the Young Lady in Grey. A feeling of horror came upon Mr. Hoopdriver; he flung himself sideways to descend, forgetting how high he was, and forthwith he began falling; falling, falling.

He woke up, turned over, saw the new moon on the window, wondered a little, and went to sleep again.

This second dream went back into the first somehow, and the other man in brown came threatening and shouting towards him. He grew uglier and uglier as he approached, and his expression was intolerably evil. He came and looked close into Mr. Hoopdriver's eyes and then receded to an incredible distance. His face seemed to be luminous. "MISS BEAUMONT," he said, and splashed up a spray of suspicion. Some one began letting off fireworks, chiefly Catherine wheels, down the shop, though Mr. Hoopdriver knew it was against the rules. For it seemed that the place they were in was a vast shop, and then Mr. Hoopdriver perceived that the other man in brown was the shop-walker, differing from most shop-walkers in the fact that he was lit from within as a Chinese lantern might be. And the customer Mr. Hoopdriver was going to serve was the Young Lady in Grey. Curious he hadn't noticed it before. She was in grey as usual,--rationals,--and she had her bicycle leaning against the counter. She smiled quite frankly at him, just as she had done when she had apologised for stopping him. And her form, as she leant towards him, was full of a sinuous grace he had never noticed before. "What can I have the pleasure?" said Mr. Hoopdriver at once, and she said, "The Ripley road." So he got out the Ripley road and unrolled it and showed it to her, and she said that would do very nicely, and kept on looking at him and smiling, and he began measuring off eight miles by means of the yard measure on the counter, eight miles being a dress length, a rational dress length, that is; and then

the other man in brown came up and wanted to interfere, and said Mr. Hoopdriver was a cad, besides measuring it off too slowly. And as Mr. Hoopdriver began to measure faster, the other man in brown said the Young Lady in Grey had been there long enough, and that he WAS her brother, or else she would not be travelling with him, and he suddenly whipped his arm about her waist and made off with her. It occurred to Mr. Hoopdriver even at the moment that this was scarcely brotherly behaviour. Of course it wasn't! The sight of the other man gripping her so familiarly enraged him frightfully; he leapt over the counter forthwith and gave chase. They ran round the shop and up an iron staircase into the Keep, and so out upon the Ripley road. For some time they kept dodging in and out of a wayside hotel with two front doors and an inn yard. The other man could not run very fast because he had hold of the Young Lady in Grey, but Mr. Hoopdriver was hampered by the absurd behaviour of his legs. They would not stretch out; they would keep going round and round as if they were on the treadles of a wheel, so that he made the smallest steps conceivable. This dream came to no crisis. The chase seemed to last an interminable time, and all kinds of people, heathkeepers, shopmen, policemen, the old man in the Keep, the angry man in drab, the barmaid at the Unicorn, men with flying-machines, people playing billiards in the doorways, silly, headless figures, stupid cocks and hens encumbered with parcels and umbrellas and waterproofs, people carrying bedroom candles, and such-like ruffraff, kept getting in his way and annoying him, although he sounded his electric bell, and said, "Wonderful, wonderful!" at every corner....

HOW MR. HOOPDRIVER WENT TO HASLEMERE

XIII

There was some little delay in getting Mr. Hoopdriver's

breakfast, so that after all he was not free to start out of Guildford until just upon the stroke of nine. He wheeled his machine from the High Street in some perplexity. He did not know whether this young lady, who had seized hold of his imagination so strongly, and her unfriendly and possibly menacing brother, were ahead of him or even now breakfasting somewhere in Guildford. In the former case he might loiter as he chose; in the latter he must hurry, and possibly take refuge in branch roads.

It occurred to him as being in some obscure way strategic, that he would leave Guildford not by the obvious Portsmouth road, but by the road running through Shalford. Along this pleasant shady way he felt sufficiently secure to resume his exercises in riding with one hand off the handles, and in staring over his shoulder. He came over once or twice, but fell on his foot each time, and perceived that he was improving. Before he got to Bramley a specious byway snapped him up, ran with him for half a mile or more, and dropped him as a terrier drops a walkingstick, upon the Portsmouth again, a couple of miles from Godalming. He entered Godalming on his feet, for the road through that delightful town is beyond dispute the vilest in the world, a mere tumult of road metal, a way of peaks and precipices, and, after a successful experiment with cider at the Woolpack, he pushed on to Milford.

All this time he was acutely aware of the existence of the Young Lady in Grey and her companion in brown, as a child in the dark is of Bogies. Sometimes he could hear their pneumatics stealing upon him from behind, and looking round saw a long stretch of vacant road. Once he saw far ahead of him a glittering wheel, but it proved to be a workingman riding to destruction on a very tall ordinary. And he felt a curious, vague uneasiness about that Young Lady in Grey, for which he was altogether unable to account. Now that he was awake he had forgotten that accentuated "Miss Beaumont that had been quite clear in his dream. But the

curious dream conviction, that the girl was not really the man's sister, would not let itself be forgotten. Why, for instance, should a man want to be alone with his sister on the top of a tower? At Milford his bicycle made, so to speak, an ass of itself. A finger-post suddenly jumped out at him, vainly indicating an abrupt turn to the right, and Mr. Hoopdriver would have slowed up and read the inscription, but no!--the bicycle would not let him. The road dropped a little into Milford, and the thing shied, put down its head and bolted, and Mr. Hoopdriver only thought of the brake when the fingerpost was passed. Then to have recovered the point of intersection would have meant dismounting. For as yet there was no road wide enough for Mr. Hoopdriver to turn in. So he went on his way--or to be precise, he did exactly the opposite thing. The road to the right was the Portsmouth road, and this he was on went to Haslemere and Midhurst. By that error it came about that he once more came upon his fellow travellers of yesterday, coming on them suddenly, without the slightest preliminary announcement and when they least expected it, under the Southwestern Railway arch. "It's horrible," said a girlish voice; "it's brutal--cowardly--" And stopped.

His expression, as he shot out from the archway at them, may have been something between a grin of recognition and a scowl of annoyance at himself for the unintentional intrusion. But disconcerted as he was, he was yet able to appreciate something of the peculiarity of their mutual attitudes. The bicycles were lying by the roadside, and the two riders stood face to face. The other man in brown's attitude, as it flashed upon Hoopdriver, was a deliberate pose; he twirled his moustache and smiled faintly, and he was conscientiously looking amused. And the girl stood rigid, her arms straight by her side, her handkerchief clenched in her hand, and her face was flushed, with the faintest touch of red upon her eyelids. She seemed to Mr. Hoopdriver's sense to be indignant. But that was the impression of a second. A mask of

surprised recognition fell across this revelation of emotion as she turned her head towards him, and the pose of the other man in brown vanished too in a momentary astonishment. And then he had passed them, and was riding on towards Haslemere to make what he could of the swift picture that had photographed itself on his brain.

"Rum," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "It's DASHED rum!"

"They were having a row."

"Smirking--" What he called the other man in brown need not trouble us.

"Annoying her!" That any human being should do that!

"WHY?"

The impulse to interfere leapt suddenly into Mr. Hoopdriver's mind. He grasped his brake, descended, and stood looking hesitatingly back. They still stood by the railway bridge, and it seemed to Mr. Hoopdriver's fancy that she was stamping her foot. He hesitated, then turned his bicycle round, mounted, and rode back towards them, gripping his courage firmly lest it should slip away and leave him ridiculous. "I'll offer 'im a screw 'ammer," said Mr. Hoopdriver. Then, with a wave of fierce emotion, he saw that the girl was crying. In another moment they heard him and turned in surprise. Certainly she had been crying; her eyes were swimming in tears, and the other man in brown looked exceedingly disconcerted. Mr. Hoopdriver descended and stood over his machine.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" he said, looking the other man in brown squarely in the face. "No accident?"

"Nothing," said the other man in brown shortly. "Nothing at all, thanks."

"But," said Mr. Hoopdriver, with a great effort, "the young lady is crying. I thought perhaps--"

The Young Lady in Grey started, gave Hoopdriver one swift glance, and covered one eye with her handkerchief. "It's this speck," she said. "This speck of dust in my eye."

"This lady," said the other man in brown, explaining, "has a gnat in her eye."

There was a pause. The young lady busied herself with her eye. "I believe it's out," she said. The other man in brown made movements indicating commiserating curiosity concerning the alleged fly. Mr. Hoopdriver--the word is his own--stood flabber-gasted. He had all the intuition of the simple-minded. He knew there was no fly. But the ground was suddenly cut from his feet. There is a limit to knighterrantry --dragons and false knights are all very well, but flies! Fictitious flies! Whatever the trouble was, it was evidently not his affair. He felt he had made a fool of himself again. He would have mumbled some sort of apology; but the other man in brown gave him no time, turned on him abruptly, even fiercely. "I hope," he said, "that your curiosity is satisfied?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"Then we won't detain you."

And, ignominiously, Mr. Hoopdriver turned his machine about, struggled upon it, and resumed the road southward. And when he learnt that he was not on the Portsmouth road, it was impossible to turn and go back, for that would be to face his shame again,

and so he had to ride on by Brook Street up the hill to Haslemere. And away to the right the Portsmouth road mocked at him and made off to its fastnesses amid the sunlit green and purple masses of Hindhead, where Mr. Grant Allen writes his Hill Top Novels day by day.

The sun shone, and the wide blue hill views and pleasant valleys one saw on either hand from the sandscarred roadway, even the sides of the road itself set about with grey heather scrub and prickly masses of gorse, and pine trees with their year's growth still bright green, against the darkened needles of the previous years, were fresh and delightful to Mr. Hoopdriver's eyes. But the brightness of the day and the day-old sense of freedom fought an uphill fight against his intolerable vexation at that abominable encounter, and had still to win it when he reached Haslemere. A great brown shadow, a monstrous hatred of the other man in brown, possessed him. He had conceived the brilliant idea of abandoning Portsmouth, or at least giving up the straight way to his fellow-wayfarers, and of striking out boldly to the left, eastward. He did not dare to stop at any of the inviting public-houses in the main street of Haslemere, but turned up a side way and found a little beer-shop, the Good Hope, wherein to refresh himself. And there he ate and gossiped condescendingly with an aged labourer, assuming the while for his own private enjoyment the attributes of a Lost Heir, and afterwards mounted and rode on towards Northchapel, a place which a number of finger-posts conspired to boom, but which some insidious turning prevented him from attaining.

HOW MR. HOOPDRIVER REACHED MIDHURST

XIV

It was one of my uncle's profoundest remarks that human beings are the only unreasonable creatures. This observation was so far justified by Mr. Hoopdriver that, after spending the morning tortuously avoiding the other man in brown and the Young Lady in Grey, he spent a considerable part of the afternoon in thinking about the Young Lady in Grey, and contemplating in an optimistic spirit the possibilities of seeing her again. Memory and imagination played round her, so that his course was largely determined by the windings of the road he traversed. Of one general proposition he was absolutely convinced. "There's something Juicy wrong with 'em," said he--once even aloud. But what it was he could not imagine. He recapitulated the facts. "Miss Beaumont --brother and sister--and the stoppage to quarrel and weep--it was perplexing material for a young man of small experience. There was no exertion he hated so much as inference, and after a time he gave up any attempt to get at the realities of the case, and let his imagination go free. Should he ever see her again? Suppose he did--with that other chap not about. The vision he found pleasantest was an encounter with her, an unexpected encounter at the annual Dancing Class 'Do' at the Putney Assembly Rooms. Somehow they would drift together, and he would dance with her again and again. It was a pleasant vision, for you must understand that Mr. Hoopdriver danced uncommonly well. Or again, in the shop, a sudden radiance in the doorway, and she is bowed towards the Manchester counter. And then to lean over that counter and murmur, seemingly apropos of the goods under discussion, "I have not forgotten that morning on the Portsmouth road," and lower, "I never shall forget."

At Northchapel Mr. Hoopdriver consulted his map and took counsel and weighed his course of action. Petworth seemed a possible resting-place, or Pullborough; Midhurst seemed too near, and any place over the Downs beyond, too far, and so he meandered towards Petworth, posing himself perpetually and loitering, gathering wild flowers and wondering why they had no names--for he had

never heard of any--dropping them furtively at the sight of a stranger, and generally 'mucking about.' There were purple vetches in the hedges, meadowsweet, honeysuckle, belated brambles--but the dog-roses had already gone; there were green and red blackberries, stellarias, and dandelions, and in another place white dead nettles, traveller's-joy, clinging bedstraw, grasses flowering, white champions, and ragged robins. One cornfield was glorious with poppies, bright scarlet and purple white, and the blue corn-flowers were beginning. In the lanes the trees met overhead, and the wisps of hay still hung to the straggling hedges. In one of the main roads he steered a perilous passage through a dozen surly dun oxen. Here and there were little cottages, and picturesque beer-houses with the vivid brewers' boards of blue and scarlet, and once a broad green and a church, and an expanse of some hundred houses or so. Then he came to a pebbly rivulet that emerged between clumps of sedge loosestrife and forget-me-nots under an arch of trees, and rippled across the road, and there he dismounted, longing to take off shoes and stockings--those stylish chequered stockings were now all dimmed with dust --and paddle his lean legs in the chuckling cheerful water. But instead he sat in a manly attitude, smoking a cigarette, for fear lest the Young Lady in Grey should come glittering round the corner. For the flavour of the Young Lady in Grey was present through it all, mixing with the flowers and all the delight of it, a touch that made this second day quite different from the first, an undertone of expectation, anxiety, and something like regret that would not be ignored.

It was only late in the long evening that, quite abruptly, he began to repent, vividly and decidedly, having fled these two people. He was getting hungry, and that has a curious effect upon the emotional colouring of our minds. The man was a sinister brute, Hoopdriver saw in a flash of inspiration, and the girl--she was in some serious trouble. And he who might have helped her had taken his first impulse as decisive--and bolted.

This new view of it depressed him dreadfully. What might not be happening to her now? He thought again of her tears. Surely it was merely his duty, seeing the trouble afoot, to keep his eye upon it.

He began riding fast to get quit of such selfreproaches. He found himself in a tortuous tangle of roads, and as the dusk was coming on, emerged, not at Petworth but at Easebourne, a mile from Midhurst. "I'm getting hungry," said Mr. Hoopdriver, inquiring of a gamekeeper in Easebourne village. "Midhurst a mile, and Petworth five!--Thenks, I'll take Midhurst."

He came into Midhurst by the bridge at the watermill, and up the North Street, and a little shop flourishing cheerfully, the cheerful sign of a teapot, and exhibiting a brilliant array of tobaccos, sweets, and children's toys in the window, struck his fancy. A neat, bright-eyed little old lady made him welcome, and he was presently supping sumptuously on sausages and tea, with a visitors' book full of the most humorous and flattering remarks about the little old lady, in verse and prose, propped up against his teapot as he ate. Regular good some of the jokes were, and rhymes that read well--even with your mouth full of sausage. Mr. Hoopdriver formed a vague idea of drawing "something"--for his judgment on the little old lady was already formed. He pictured the little old lady discovering it afterwards--"My gracious! One of them Punch men," she would say. The room had a curtained recess and a chest of drawers, for presently it was to be his bedroom, and the day part of it was decorated with framed Oddfellows' certificates and giltbacked books and portraits, and kettle-holders, and all kinds of beautiful things made out of wool; very comfortable it was indeed. The window was lead framed and diamond paned, and through it one saw the corner of the vicarage and a pleasant hill crest, in dusky silhouette against the twilight sky. And after the sausages had ceased to be, he lit a Red Herring cigarette and went swaggering out into the twilight

street. All shadowy blue between its dark brick houses, was the street, with a bright yellow window here and there and splashes of green and red where the chemist's illumination fell across the road.

AN INTERLUDE

XV

And now let us for a space leave Mr. Hoopdriver in the dusky Midhurst North Street, and return to the two folks beside the railway bridge between Milford and Haslemere. She was a girl of eighteen, dark, fine featured, with bright eyes, and a rich, swift colour under her warm-tinted skin. Her eyes were all the brighter for the tears that swam in them. The man was thirty three or four, fair, with a longish nose overhanging his sandy flaxen moustache, pale blue eyes, and a head that struck out above and behind. He stood with his feet wide apart, his hand on his hip, in an attitude that was equally suggestive of defiance and aggression. They had watched Hoopdriver out of sight. The unexpected interruption had stopped the flood of her tears. He tugged his abundant moustache and regarded her calmly. She stood with face averted, obstinately resolved not to speak first. "Your behaviour," he said at last, "makes you conspicuous."

She turned upon him, her eyes and cheeks glowing, her hands clenched. "You unspeakable CAD," she said, and choked, stamped her little foot, and stood panting.

"Unspeakable cad! My dear girl! Possible I AM an unspeakable cad. Who wouldn't be--for you?"

"Dear girl!" How DARE you speak to me like that? YOU--"

"I would do anything--"

"OH!"

There was a moment's pause. She looked squarely into his face, her eyes alight with anger and contempt, and perhaps he flushed a little. He stroked his moustache, and by an effort maintained his cynical calm. "Let us be reasonable," he said.

"Reasonable! That means all that is mean and cowardly and sensual in the world."

"You have always had it so--in your generalising way. But let us look at the facts of the case--if that pleases you better."

With an impatient gesture she motioned him to go on.

"Well," he said,--"you've eloped."

"I've left my home," she corrected, with dignity. "I left my home because it was unendurable. Because that woman--"

"Yes, yes. But the point is, you have eloped with me."

"You came with me. You pretended to be my friend. Promised to help me to earn a living by writing. It was you who said, why shouldn't a man and woman be friends? And now you dare--you dare--"

"Really, Jessie, this pose of yours, this injured innocence--"

"I will go back. I forbid you--I forbid you to stand in the way--"

"One moment. I have always thought that my little pupil was at least clear-headed. You don't know everything yet, you know. Listen to me for a moment."

"Haven't I been listening? And you have only insulted me. You who dared only to talk of friendship, who scarcely dared hint at anything beyond."

"But you took the hints, nevertheless. You knew. You KNEW. And you did not mind. MIND! You liked it. It was the fun of the whole thing for you. That I loved you, and could not speak to you. You played with it--"

"You have said all that before. Do you think that justifies you?"

"That isn't all. I made up my mind--Well, to make the game more even. And so I suggested to you and joined with you in this expedition of yours, invented a sister at Midhurst--I tell you, I HAVEN'T a sister! For one object--"

"Well?"

"To compromise you."

She started. That was a new way of putting it. For half a minute neither spoke. Then she began half defiantly: "Much I am compromised. Of course--I have made a fool of myself--"

"My dear girl, you are still on the sunny side of eighteen, and you know very little of this world. Less than you think. But you will learn. Before you write all those novels we have talked about, you will have to learn. And that's one point--" He hesitated. "You started and blushed when the man at breakfast called you Ma'am. You thought it a funny mistake, but you did not say anything because he was young and nervous--and besides, the

thought of being my wife offended your modesty. You didn't care to notice it. But--you see; I gave your name as MRS. Beaumont." He looked almost apologetic, in spite of his cynical pose. "MRS. Beaumont," he repeated, pulling his flaxen moustache and watching the effect.

She looked into his eyes speechless. "I am learning fast, " she said slowly, at last.

He thought the time had come for an emotional attack. "Jessie," he said, with a sudden change of voice, "I know all this is mean, is villainous. But do you think that I have done all this scheming, all this subterfuge, for any other object--"

She did not seem to listen to his words. "I shall ride home," she said abruptly.

"To her?"

She winced.

"Just think," said he, "what she could say to you after this."

"Anyhow, I shall leave you now."

"Yes? And go--"

"Go somewhere to earn my living, to be a free woman, to live without conventionality--"

"My dear girl, do let us be cynical. You haven't money and you haven't credit. No one would take you in. It's one of two things: go back to your stepmother, or--trust to me."

"How CAN I?"

"Then you must go back to her." He paused momentarily, to let this consideration have its proper weight. "Jessie, I did not mean to say the things I did. Upon my honour, I lost my head when I spoke so. If you will, forgive me. I am a man. I could not help myself. Forgive me, and I promise you--"

"How can I trust you?"

"Try me. I can assure you--"

She regarded him distrustfully.

"At any rate, ride on with me now. Surely we have been in the shadow of this horrible bridge long enough."

"Oh! let me think," she said, half turning from him and pressing her hand to her brow.

"THINK! Look here, Jessie. It is ten o'clock. Shall we call a truce until one?"

She hesitated, demanded a definition of the truce, and at last agreed.

They mounted, and rode on in silence, through the sunlight and the heather. Both were extremely uncomfortable and disappointed. She was pale, divided between fear and anger. She perceived she was in a scrape, and tried in vain to think of a way of escape. Only one tangible thing would keep in her mind, try as she would to ignore it. That was the quite irrelevant fact that his head was singularly like an albino cocoanut. He, too, felt thwarted. He felt that this romantic business of seduction was, after all, unexpectedly tame. But this was only the beginning. At any rate, every day she spent with him was a day gained. Perhaps things

looked worse than they were; that was some consolation.

OF THE ARTIFICIAL IN MAN, AND OF THE ZEITGEIST

XVI

You have seen these two young people--Bechamel, by-the-bye, is the man's name, and the girl's is Jessie Milton--from the outside; you have heard them talking; they ride now side by side (but not too close together, and in an uneasy silence) towards Haslemere; and this chapter will concern itself with those curious little council chambers inside their skulls, where their motives are in session and their acts are considered and passed.

But first a word concerning wigs and false teeth. Some jester, enlarging upon the increase of bald heads and purblind people, has deduced a wonderful future for the children of men. Man, he said, was nowadays a hairless creature by forty or fifty, and for hair we gave him a wig; shrivelled, and we padded him; toothless, and lo! false teeth set in gold. Did he lose a limb, and a fine, new, artificial one was at his disposal; get indigestion, and to hand was artificial digestive fluid or bile or pancreatine, as the case might be. Complexions, too, were replaceable, spectacles superseded an inefficient eye-lens, and imperceptible false diaphragms were thrust into the failing ear. So he went over our anatomies, until, at last, he had conjured up a weird thing of shreds and patches, a simulacrum, an artificial body of a man, with but a doubtful germ of living flesh lurking somewhere in his recesses. To that, he held, we were coming.

How far such odd substitution for the body is possible need not concern us now. But the devil, speaking by the lips of Mr. Rudyard Kipling, hath it that in the case of one Tomlinson, the

thing, so far as the soul is concerned, has already been accomplished. Time was when men had simple souls, desires as natural as their eyes, a little reasonable philanthropy, a little reasonable philoprogenitiveness, hunger, and a taste for good living, a decent, personal vanity, a healthy, satisfying pugnacity, and so forth. But now we are taught and disciplined for years and years, and thereafter we read and read for all the time some strenuous, nerve-destroying business permits. Pedagogic hypnotists, pulpit and platform hypnotists, book-writing hypnotists, newspaper-writing hypnotists, are at us all. This sugar you are eating, they tell us, is ink, and forthwith we reject it with infinite disgust. This black draught of unrequited toil is True Happiness, and down it goes with every symptom of pleasure. This Ibsen, they say, is dull past believing, and we yawn and stretch beyond endurance. Pardon! they interrupt, but this Ibsen is deep and delightful, and we vie with one another in an excess of entertainment. And when we open the heads of these two young people, we find, not a straightforward motive on the surface anywhere; we find, indeed, not a soul so much as an oversoul, a zeitgeist, a congestion of acquired ideas, a highway's feast of fine, confused thinking. The girl is resolute to Live Her Own Life, a phrase you may have heard before, and the man has a pretty perverted ambition to be a cynical artistic person of the very calmest description. He is hoping for the awakening of Passion in her, among other things. He knows Passion ought to awaken, from the text-books he has studied. He knows she admires his genius, but he is unaware that she does not admire his head. He is quite a distinguished art critic in London, and he met her at that celebrated lady novelist's, her stepmother, and here you have them well embarked upon the Adventure. Both are in the first stage of repentance, which consists, as you have probably found for yourself, in setting your teeth hard and saying' "I WILL go on."

Things, you see, have jarred a little, and they ride on their way

together with a certain aloofness of manner that promises ill for the orthodox development of the Adventure. He perceives he was too precipitate. But he feels his honour is involved, and meditates the development of a new attack. And the girl? She is unawakened. Her motives are bookish, written by a haphazard syndicate of authors, novelists, and biographers, on her white inexperience. An artificial oversoul she is, that may presently break down and reveal a human being beneath it. She is still in that schoolgirl phase when a talkative old man is more interesting than a tongue-tied young one, and when to be an eminent mathematician, say, or to edit a daily paper, seems as fine an ambition as any girl need aspire to. Bechaniel was to have helped her to attain that in the most expeditious manner, and here he is beside her, talking enigmatical phrases about passion, looking at her with the oddest expression, and once, and that was his gravest offence, offering to kiss her. At any rate he has apologised. She still scarcely realises, you see, the scrape she has got into.

THE ENCOUNTER AT MIDHURST

XVII

We left Mr. Hoopdriver at the door of the little tea, toy, and tobacco shop. You must not think that a strain is put on coincidence when I tell you that next door to Mrs. Wardor's--that was the name of the bright-eyed, little old lady with whom Mr. Hoopdriver had stopped--is the Angel Hotel, and in the Angel Hotel, on the night that Mr. Hoopdriver reached Midhurst, were 'Mr.' and 'Miss' Beaumont, our Bechamel and Jessie Milton. Indeed, it was a highly probable thing; for if one goes through Guildford, the choice of southward roads is limited; you may go by Petersfield to Portsmouth, or by Midhurst to Chichester, in

addition to which highways there is nothing for it but minor roadways to Petworth or Pulborough, and cross-cuts Brightonward. And coming to Midhurst from the north, the Angel's entrance lies yawning to engulf your highly respectable cyclists, while Mrs. Wardor's genial teapot is equally attractive to those who weigh their means in little scales. But to people unfamiliar with the Sussex roads--and such were the three persons of this story--the convergence did not appear to be so inevitable.

Bechamel, tightening his chain in the Angel yard after dinner, was the first to be aware of their reunion. He saw Hoopdriver walk slowly across the gateway, his head enhaloed in cigarette smoke, and pass out of sight up the street. Incontinently a mass of cloudy uneasiness, that had been partly dispelled during the day, reappeared and concentrated rapidly into definite suspicion. He put his screw hammer into his pocket and walked through the archway into the street, to settle the business forthwith, for he prided himself on his decision. Hoopdriver was merely promenading, and they met face to face.

At the sight of his adversary, something between disgust and laughter seized Mr. Hoopdriver and for a moment destroyed his animosity. "'Ere we are again!" he said, laughing insincerely in a sudden outbreak at the perversity of chance.

The other man in brown stopped short in Mr. Hoopdriver's way, staring. Then his face assumed an expression of dangerous civility. "Is it any information to you," he said, with immense politeness, "when I remark that you are following us?"

Mr. Hoopdriver, for some occult reason, resisted his characteristic impulse to apologise. He wanted to annoy the other man in brown, and a sentence that had come into his head in a previous rehearsal cropped up appropriately. "Since when," said Mr. Hoopdriver, catching his breath, yet bringing the question

out valiantly, nevertheless,--"since when 'ave you purchased the county of Sussex?"

"May I point out," said the other man in brown, "that I object--we object not only to your proximity to us. To be frank--you appear to be following us--with an object."

"You can always," said Mr. Hoopdriver, "turn round if you don't like it, and go back the way you came."

"Oh-o!" said the other man in brown. "THAT'S it! I thought as much."

"Did you?" said Mr. Hoopdriver, quite at sea, but rising pluckily to the unknown occasion. What was the man driving at?

"I see," said the other man. "I see. I half suspected--" His manner changed abruptly to a quality suspiciously friendly. "Yes--a word with you. You will, I hope, give me ten minutes."

Wonderful things were dawning on Mr. Hoopdriver. What did the other man take him for? Here at last was reality! He hesitated. Then he thought of an admirable phrase. "You 'ave some communication--"

"We'll call it a communication," said the other man.

"I can spare you the ten minutes," said Mr. Hoopdriver, with dignity.

"This way, then," said the other man in brown, and they walked slowly down the North Street towards the Grammar School. There was, perhaps, thirty seconds' silence. The other man stroked his moustache nervously. Mr. Hoopdriver's dramatic instincts were now fully awake. He did not quite understand in what role he was

cast, but it was evidently something dark and mysterious. Doctor Conan Doyle, Victor Hugo, and Alexander Dumas were well within Mr. Hoopdriver's range of reading, and he had not read them for nothing.

"I will be perfectly frank with you," said the other man in brown.

"Frankness is always the best course," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"Well, then--who the devil set you on this business?"

"Set me ON this business?"

"Don't pretend to be stupid. Who's your employer? Who engaged you for this job?"

"Well," said Mr. Hoopdriver, confused. "No--I can't say."

"Quite sure?" The other man in brown glanced meaningfully down at his hand, and Mr. Hoopdriver, following him mechanically, saw a yellow milled edge glittering in the twilight. Now your shop assistant is just above the tip-receiving class, and only just above it--so that he is acutely sensitive on the point.

Mr. Hoopdriver flushed hotly, and his eyes were angry as he met those of the other man in brown. "Stow it!" said Mr. Hoopdriver, stopping and facing the tempter.

"What!" said the other man in brown, surprised. "Eigh?" And so saying he stowed it in his breeches pocket.

"D'yer think I'm to be bribed?" said Mr. Hoopdriver, whose imagination was rapidly expanding the situation. "By Gosh! I'd follow you now--"

"My dear sir," said the other man in brown, "I beg your pardon. I misunderstood you. I really beg your pardon. Let us walk on. In your profession--"

"What have you got to say against my profession?"

"Well, really, you know. There are detectives of an inferior description--watchers. The whole class. Private Inquiry--I did not realise--I really trust you will overlook what was, after all--you must admit--a natural indiscretion. Men of honour are not so common in the world--in any profession."

It was lucky for Mr. Hoopdriver that in Midhurst they do not light the lamps in the summer time, or the one they were passing had betrayed him. As it was, he had to snatch suddenly at his moustache and tug fiercely at it, to conceal the furious tumult of exultation, the passion of laughter, that came boiling up. Detective! Even in the shadow Bechamel saw that a laugh was stifled, but he put it down to the fact that the phrase "men of honour" amused his interlocutor. "He'll come round yet," said Bechamel to himself. "He's simply holding out for a fiver." He coughed.

"I don't see that it hurts you to tell me who your employer is."

"Don't you? I do."

"Prompt," said Bechamel, appreciatively. "Now here's the thing I want to put to you--the kernel of the whole business. You need not answer if you don't want to. There's no harm done in my telling you what I want to know. Are you employed to watch me--or Miss Milton?"

"I'm not the leaky sort," said Mr. Hoopdriver, keeping the secret

he did not know with immense enjoyment. Miss Milton! That was her name. Perhaps he'd tell some more. "It's no good pumping. Is that all you're after?" said Mr. Hoopdriver.

Bechamel respected himself for his diplomatic gifts. He tried to catch a remark by throwing out a confidence. "I take it there are two people concerned in watching this affair."

"Who's the other?" said Mr. Hoopdriver, calmly, but controlling with enormous internal tension his selfappreciation. "Who's the other?" was really brilliant, he thought.

"There's my wife and HER stepmother."

"And you want to know which it is?"

"Yes," said Bechamel.

"Well--arst 'em!" said Mr. Hoopdriver, his exultation getting the better of him, and with a pretty consciousness of repartee. "Arst 'em both."

Bechamel turned impatiently. Then he made a last effort. "I'd give a five-pound note to know just the precise state of affairs," he said.

"I told you to stow that," said Mr. Hoopdriver, in a threatening tone. And added with perfect truth and a magnificent mystery, "You don't quite understand who you're dealing with. But you will!" He spoke with such conviction that he half believed that that defective office of his in London--Baker Street, in fact--really existed.

With that the interview terminated. Bechamel went back to the Angel, perturbed. "Hang detectives!" It wasn't the kind of thing

he had anticipated at all. Hoopdriver, with round eyes and a wondering smile, walked down to where the mill waters glittered in the moonlight, and after meditating over the parapet of the bridge for a space, with occasional murmurs of, "Private Inquiry" and the like, returned, with mystery even in his paces, towards the town.

XVIII

That glee which finds expression in raised eyebrows and long, low whistling noises was upon Mr. Hoopdriver. For a space he forgot the tears of the Young Lady in Grey. Here was a new game!--and a real one. Mr. Hoopdriver as a Private Inquiry Agent, a Sherlock Holmes in fact, keeping these two people 'under observation.' He walked slowly back from the bridge until he was opposite the Angel, and stood for ten minutes, perhaps, contemplating that establishment and enjoying all the strange sensations of being this wonderful, this mysterious and terrible thing. Everything fell into place in his scheme. He had, of course, by a kind of instinct, assumed the disguise of a cyclist, picked up the first old crock he came across as a means of pursuit. 'No expense was to be spared.'

Then he tried to understand what it was in particular that he was observing. "My wife"--"HER stepmother!" Then he remembered her swimming eyes. Abruptly came a wave of anger that surprised him, washed away the detective superstructure, and left him plain Mr. Hoopdriver. This man in brown, with his confident manner, and his proffered half sovereign (damn him!) was up to no good, else why should he object to being watched? He was married! She was not his sister. He began to understand. A horrible suspicion of the state of affairs came into Mr. Hoopdriver's head. Surely it had not come to THAT. He was a detective!--he would find out. How was

it to be done? He began to submit sketches on approval to himself. It required an effort before he could walk into the Angel bar. "A lemonade and bitter, please," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

He cleared his throat. "Are Mr. and Mrs. Bowlong stopping here?"

"What, a gentleman and a young lady--on bicycles?"

"Fairly young--a married couple."

"No," said the barmaid, a talkative person of ample dimensions. "There's no married couples stopping here. But there's a Mr. and Miss BEAUMONT." She spelt it for precision. "Sure you've got the name right, young man?"

"Quite," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"Beaumont there is, but no one of the name of-- What was the name you gave?"

"Bowlong," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"No, there ain't no Bowlong," said the barmaid, taking up a glasscloth and a drying tumbler and beginning to polish the latter. "First off, I thought you might be asking for Beaumont-- the names being similar. Were you expecting them on bicycles?"

"Yes--they said they MIGHT be in Midhurst tonight."

"P'raps they'll come presently. Beaumont's here, but no Bowlong. Sure that Beaumont ain't the name?"

"Certain," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"It's curious the names being so alike. I thought p'raps--"

And so they conversed at some length, Mr. Hoopdriver delighted to find his horrible suspicion disposed of. The barmaid having listened awhile at the staircase volunteered some particulars of the young couple upstairs. Her modesty was much impressed by the young lady's costume, so she intimated, and Mr. Hoopdriver whispered the badinage natural to the occasion, at which she was coquettishly shocked. "There'll be no knowing which is which, in a year or two," said the barmaid. "And her manner too! She got off her machine and give it 'im to stick up against the kerb, and in she marched. 'I and my brother,' says she, 'want to stop here to-night. My brother doesn't mind what kind of room 'e 'as, but I want a room with a good view, if there's one to be got,' says she. He comes hurrying in after and looks at her. 'I've settled the rooms,' she says, and 'e says 'damn!' just like that. I can fancy my brother letting me boss the show like that."

"I dessay you do," said Mr. Hoopdriver, "if the truth was known."

The barmaid looked down, smiled and shook her head, put down the tumbler, polished, and took up another that had been draining, and shook the drops of water into her little zinc sink.

"She'll be a nice little lot to marry," said the barmaid. "She'll be wearing the--well, b-dashes, as the sayin' is. I can't think what girls is comin' to."

This depreciation of the Young Lady in Grey was hardly to Hoopdriver's taste.

"Fashion," said he, taking up his change. "Fashion is all the go with you ladies--and always was. You'll be wearing 'em yourself before a couple of years is out."

"Nice they'd look on my figger," said the barmaid, with a titter.

"No--I ain't one of your fashionable sort. Gracious no! I shouldn't feel as if I'd anything on me, not more than if I'd forgot-- Well, there! I'm talking." She put down the glass abruptly. "I dessay I'm old fashioned," she said, and walked humming down the bar.

"Not you," said Mr. Hoopdriver. He waited until he caught her eye, then with his native courtesy smiled, raised his cap, and wished her good evening.

XIX

Then Mr. Hoopdriver returned to the little room with the lead-framed windows where he had dined, and where the bed was now comfortably made, sat down on the box under the window, stared at the moon rising on the shining vicarage roof, and tried to collect his thoughts. How they whirled at first! It was past ten, and most of Midhurst was tucked away in bed, some one up the street was learning the violin, at rare intervals a belated inhabitant hurried home and woke the echoes, and a corncrake kept up a busy churning in the vicarage garden. The sky was deep blue, with a still luminous afterglow along the black edge of the hill, and the white moon overhead, save for a couple of yellow stars, had the sky to herself.

At first his thoughts were kinetic, of deeds and not relationships. There was this malefactor, and his victim, and it had fallen on Mr. Hoopdriver to take a hand in the game. HE was married. Did she know he was married? Never for a moment did a thought of evil concerning her cross Hoopdriver's mind. Simple-minded people see questions of morals so much better than superior persons--who have read and thought themselves complex to impotence. He had heard her voice, seen the frank light in her

eyes, and she had been weeping--that sufficed. The rights of the case he hadn't properly grasped. But he would. And that smirking--well, swine was the mildest for him. He recalled the exceedingly unpleasant incident of the railway bridge. "Thin we won't detain yer, thenks," said Mr. Hoopdriver, aloud, in a strange, unnatural, contemptible voice, supposed to represent that of Bechamel. "Oh, the BEGGAR! I'll be level with him yet. He's afraid of us detectives--that I'll SWEAR." (If Mrs. Wardor should chance to be on the other side of the door within earshot, well and good.)

For a space he meditated chastisements and revenges, physical impossibilities for the most part,--Bechamel staggering headlong from the impact of Mr. Hoopdriver's large, but, to tell the truth, ill supported fist, Bechamel's five feet nine of height lifted from the ground and quivering under a vigorously applied horsewhip. So pleasant was such dreaming, that Mr. Hoopdriver's peaked face under the moonlight was transfigured. One might have paired him with that well-known and universally admired triumph, 'The Soul's Awakening,' so sweet was his ecstasy. And presently with his thirst for revenge glutted by six or seven violent assaults, a duel and two vigorous murders, his mind came round to the Young Lady in Grey again.

She was a plucky one too. He went over the incident the barmaid at the Angel had described to him. His thoughts ceased to be a torrent, smoothed down to a mirror in which she was reflected with infinite clearness and detail. He'd never met anything like her before. Fancy that bolster of a barmaid being dressed in that way! He whuffed a contemptuous laugh. He compared her colour, her vigour, her voice, with the Young Ladies in Business with whom his lot had been cast. Even in tears she was beautiful, more beautiful indeed to him, for it made her seem softer and weaker, more accessible. And such weeping as he had seen before had been so much a matter of damp white faces, red noses, and hair coming

out of curl. Your draper's assistant becomes something of a judge of weeping, because weeping is the custom of all Young Ladies in Business, when for any reason their services are dispensed with. She could weep--and (by Gosh!) she could smile. HE knew that, and reverting to acting abruptly, he smiled confidentially at the puckered pallor of the moon.

It is difficult to say how long Mr. Hoopdriver's pensiveness lasted. It seemed a long time before his thoughts of action returned. Then he remembered he was a 'watcher'; that to-morrow he must be busy. It would be in character to make notes, and he pulled out his little note-book. With that in hand he fell a-thinking again. Would that chap tell her the 'tecks were after them? If so, would she be as anxious to get away as HE was? He must be on the alert. If possible he must speak to her. Just a significant word, "Your friend--trust me!"--It occurred to him that to-morrow these fugitives might rise early to escape. At that he thought of the time and found it was half-past eleven. "Lord!" said he, "I must see that I wake." He yawned and rose. The blind was up, and he pulled back the little chintz curtains to let the sunlight strike across to the bed, hung his watch within good view of his pillow, on a nail that supported a kettle-holder, and sat down on his bed to undress. He lay awake for a little while thinking of the wonderful possibilities of the morrow, and thence he passed gloriously into the wonderland of dreams.

THE PURSUIT

XX

And now to tell of Mr. Hoopdriver, rising with the sun, vigilant, active, wonderful, the practicable half of the lead-framed window

stuck open, ears alert, an eye flickering incessantly in the corner panes, in oblique glances at the Angel front. Mrs. Wardor wanted him to have his breakfast downstairs in her kitchen, but that would have meant abandoning the watch, and he held out strongly. The bicycle, cap-a-pie, occupied, under protest, a strategic position in the shop. He was expectant by six in the morning. By nine horrible fears oppressed him that his quest had escaped him, and he had to reconnoitre the Angel yard in order to satisfy himself. There he found the ostler (How are the mighty fallen in these decadent days!) brushing down the bicycles of the chase, and he returned relieved to Mrs. Wardor's premises. And about ten they emerged, and rode quietly up the North Street. He watched them until they turned the corner of the post office, and then out into the road and up after them in fine style! They went by the engine-house where the old stocks and the whipping posts are, and on to the Chichester road, and he followed gallantly. So this great chase began.

They did not look round, and he kept them just within sight, getting down if he chanced to draw closely upon them round a corner. By riding vigorously he kept quite conveniently near them, for they made but little hurry. He grew hot indeed, and his knees were a little stiff to begin with, but that was all. There was little danger of losing them, for a thin chalky dust lay upon the road, and the track of her tire was milled like a shilling, and his was a chequered ribbon along the way. So they rode by Cobden's monument and through the prettiest of villages, until at last the downs rose steeply ahead. There they stopped awhile at the only inn in the place, and Mr. Hoopdriver took up a position which commanded the inn door, and mopped his face and thirsted and smoked a Red Herring cigarette. They remained in the inn for some time. A number of chubby innocents returning home from school, stopped and formed a line in front of him, and watched him quietly but firmly for the space of ten minutes or so. "Go away," said he, and they only seemed quietly interested. He asked

them all their names then, and they answered indistinct murmurs. He gave it up at last and became passive on his gate, and so at length they tired of him.

The couple under observation occupied the inn so long that Mr. Hoopdriver at the thought of their possible employment hungered as well as thirsted. Clearly, they were lunching. It was a cloudless day, and the sun at the meridian beat down upon the top of Mr. Hoopdriver's head, a shower bath of sunshine, a huge jet of hot light. It made his head swim. At last they emerged, and the other man in brown looked back and saw him. They rode on to the foot of the down, and dismounting began to push tediously up that long nearly vertical ascent of blinding white road, Mr. Hoopdriver hesitated. It might take them twenty minutes to mount that. Beyond was empty downland perhaps for miles. He decided to return to the inn and snatch a hasty meal.

At the inn they gave him biscuits and cheese and a misleading pewter measure of sturdy ale, pleasant under the palate, cool in the throat, but leaden in the legs, of a hot afternoon. He felt a man of substance as he emerged in the blinding sunshine, but even by the foot of the down the sun was insisting again that his skull was too small for his brains. The hill had gone steeper, the chalky road blazed like a magnesium light, and his front wheel began an apparently incurable squeaking. He felt as a man from Mars would feel if he were suddenly transferred to this planet, about three times as heavy as he was wont to feel. The two little black figures had vanished over the forehead of the hill. "The tracks'll be all right," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

That was a comforting reflection. It not only justified a slow progress up the hill, but at the crest a sprawl on the turf beside the road, to contemplate the Weald from the south. In a matter of two days he had crossed that spacious valley, with its frozen surge of green hills, its little villages and townships

here and there, its copses and cornfields, its ponds and streams like jewelery of diamonds and silver glittering in the sun. The North Downs were hidden, far away beyond the Wealden Heights. Down below was the little village of Cocking, and half-way up the hill, a mile perhaps to the right, hung a flock of sheep grazing together. Overhead an anxious peewit circled against the blue, and every now and then emitted its feeble cry. Up here the heat was tempered by a pleasant breeze. Mr. Hoopdriver was possessed by unreasonable contentment; he lit himself a cigarette and lounged more comfortably. Surely the Sussex ale is made of the waters of Lethe, of poppies and pleasant dreams. Drowsiness coiled insidiously about him.

He awoke with a guilty start, to find himself sprawling prone on the turf with his cap over one eye. He sat up, rubbed his eyes, and realised that he had slept. His head was still a trifle heavy. And the chase? He jumped to his feet and stooped to pick up his overturned machine. He whipped out his watch and saw that it was past two o'clock. "Lord love us, fancy that!--But the tracks'll be all right," said Mr. Hoopdriver, wheeling his machine back to the chalky road. "I must scorch till I overtake them."

He mounted and rode as rapidly as the heat and a lingering lassitude permitted. Now and then he had to dismount to examine the surface where the road forked. He enjoyed that rather. "Trackin'," he said aloud, and decided in the privacy of his own mind that he had a wonderful instinct for 'spoor.' So he came past Goodwood station and Lavant, and approached Chichester towards four o'clock. And then came a terrible thing. In places the road became hard, in places were the crowded indentations of a recent flock of sheep, and at last in the throat of the town cobbles and the stony streets branching east, west, north, and south, at a stone cross under the shadow of the cathedral the tracks vanished. "O Cricky!" said Mr. Hoopdriver, dismounting in

dismay and standing agape. "Dropped anything?" said an inhabitant at the kerb. "Yes," said Mr. Hoopdriver, "I've lost the spoor," and walked upon his way, leaving the inhabitant marvelling what part of a bicycle a spoor might be. Mr. Hoopdriver, abandoning tracking, began asking people if they had seen a Young Lady in Grey on a bicycle. Six casual people hadn't, and he began to feel the inquiry was conspicuous, and desisted. But what was to be done?

Hoopdriver was hot, tired, and hungry, and full of the first gnawings of a monstrous remorse. He decided to get himself some tea and meat, and in the Royal George he meditated over the business in a melancholy frame enough. They had passed out of his world--vanished, and all his wonderful dreams of some vague, crucial interference collapsed like a castle of cards. What a fool he had been not to stick to them like a leech! He might have thought! But there!--what WAS the good of that sort of thing now? He thought of her tears, of her helplessness, of the bearing of the other man in brown, and his wrath and disappointment surged higher. "What CAN I do?" said Mr. Hoopdriver aloud, bringing his fist down beside the teapot.

What would Sherlock Holmes have done? Perhaps, after all, there might be such things as clues in the world, albeit the age of miracles was past. But to look for a clue in this intricate network of cobbled streets, to examine every muddy interstice! There was a chance by looking about and inquiry at the various inns. Upon that he began. But of course they might have ridden straight through and scarcely a soul have marked them. And then came a positively brilliant idea. "'Ow many ways are there out of Chichester?" said Mr. Hoopdriver. It was really equal to Sherlock Holmes--that." If they've made tracks, I shall find those tracks. If not--they're in the town." He was then in East Street, and he started at once to make the circuit of the place, discovering incidentally that Chichester is a walled city. In passing, he

made inquiries at the Black Swan, the Crown, and the Red Lion Hotel. At six o'clock in the evening, he was walking downcast, intent, as one who had dropped money, along the road towards Bognor, kicking up the dust with his shoes and fretting with disappointed pugnacity. A thwarted, crestfallen Hoopdriver it was, as you may well imagine. And then suddenly there jumped upon his attention--a broad line ribbed like a shilling, and close beside it one chequered, that ever and again split into two. "Found!" said Mr. Hoopdriver and swung round on his heel at once, and back to the Royal George, helter skelter, for the bicycle they were minding for him. The ostler thought he was confoundedly imperious, considering his machine.

AT BOGNOR

XXI

That seductive gentleman, Bechamel, had been working up to a crisis. He had started upon this elopement in a vein of fine romance, immensely proud of his wickedness, and really as much in love as an artificial oversoul can be, with Jessie. But either she was the profoundest of coquettes or she had not the slightest element of Passion (with a large P) in her composition. It warred with all his ideas of himself and the feminine mind to think that under their flattering circumstances she really could be so vitally deficient. He found her persistent coolness, her more or less evident contempt for himself, exasperating in the highest degree. He put it to himself that she was enough to provoke a saint, and tried to think that was piquant and enjoyable, but the blisters on his vanity asserted themselves. The fact is, he was, under this standing irritation, getting down to the natural man in himself for once, and the natural man in himself, in spite of Oxford and the junior Reviewers' Club, was a Palaeolithic

creature of simple tastes and violent methods. "I'll be level with you yet," ran like a plough through the soil of his thoughts.

Then there was this infernal detective. Bechamel had told his wife he was going to Davos to see Carter. To that he had fancied she was reconciled, but how she would take this exploit was entirely problematical. She was a woman of peculiar moral views, and she measured marital infidelity largely by its proximity to herself. Out of her sight, and more particularly out of the sight of the other women of her set, vice of the recognised description was, perhaps, permissible to those contemptible weaklings, men, but this was Evil on the High Roads. She was bound to make a fuss, and these fusses invariably took the final form of a tightness of money for Bechamel. Albeit, and he felt it was heroic of him to resolve so, it was worth doing if it was to be done. His imagination worked on a kind of matronly Valkyrie, and the noise of pursuit and vengeance was in the air. The idyll still had the front of the stage. That accursed detective, it seemed, had been thrown off the scent, and that, at any rate, gave a night's respite. But things must be brought to an issue forthwith.

By eight o'clock in the evening, in a little dining-room in the Vicuna Hotel, Bognor, the crisis had come, and Jessie, flushed and angry in the face and with her heart sinking, faced him again for her last struggle with him. He had tricked her this time, effectually, and luck had been on his side. She was booked as Mrs. Beaumont. Save for her refusal to enter their room, and her eccentricity of eating with unwashed hands, she had so far kept up the appearances of things before the waiter. But the dinner was grim enough. Now in turn she appealed to his better nature and made extravagant statements of her plans to fool him.

He was white and vicious by this time, and his anger quivered

through his pose of brilliant wickedness.

"I will go to the station," she said. "I will go back--"

"The last train for anywhere leaves at 7.42."

"I will appeal to the police--"

"You don't know them."

"I will tell these hotel people."

"They will turn you out of doors. You're in such a thoroughly false position now. They don't understand unconventionality, down here."

She stamped her foot. "If I wander about the streets all night--" she said.

"You who have never been out alone after dusk? Do you know what the streets of a charming little holiday resort are like--"

"I don't care," she said. "I can go to the clergyman here."

"He's a charming man. Unmarried. And men are really more alike than you think. And anyhow--"

"Well?"

"How CAN you explain the last two nights to anyone now? The mischief is done, Jessie."

"You CUR," she said, and suddenly put her hand to her breast. He thought she meant to faint, but she stood, with the colour gone from her face.

"No," he said. "I love you."

"Love!" said she.

"Yes--love."

"There are ways yet," she said, after a pause.

"Not for you. You are too full of life and hope yet for, what is it?--not the dark arch nor the black flowing river. Don't you think of it. You'll only shirk it when the moment comes, and turn it all into comedy."

She turned round abruptly from him and stood looking out across the parade at the shining sea over which the afterglow of day fled before the rising moon. He maintained his attitude. The blinds were still up, for she had told the waiter not to draw them. There was silence for some moments.

At last he spoke in as persuasive a voice as he could summon. "Take it sensibly, Jessie. Why should we, who have so much in common, quarrel into melodrama? I swear I love you. You are all that is bright and desirable to me. I am stronger than you, older; man to your woman. To find YOU too--conventional!"

She looked at him over her shoulder, and he noticed with a twinge of delight how her little chin came out beneath the curve of her cheek.

"MAN!" she said. "Man to MY woman! Do MEN lie? Would a MAN use his five and thirty years' experience to outwit a girl of seventeen? Man to my woman indeed! That surely is the last insult!"

"Your repartee is admirable, Jessie. I should say they do, though--all that and more also when their hearts were set on such a girl as yourself. For God's sake drop this shrewishness! Why should you be so--difficult to me? Here am I with MY reputation, MY career, at your feet. Look here, Jessie--on my honour, I will marry you--"

"God forbid," she said, so promptly that she never learnt he had a wife, even then. It occurred to him then for the first time, in the flash of her retort, that she did not know he was married.

"'Tis only a pre-nuptial settlement," he said, following that hint.

He paused.

"You must be sensible. The thing's your own doing. Come out on the beach now the beach here is splendid, and the moon will soon be high."

"_I_ WON'T" she said, stamping her foot.

"Well, well--"

"Oh! leave me alone. Let me think--"

"Think," he said, "if you want to. It's your cry always. But you can't save yourself by thinking, my dear girl. You can't save yourself in any way now. If saving it is--this parsimony--"

"Oh, go--go."

"Very well. I will go. I will go and smoke a cigar. And think of you, dear. . . . But do you think I should do all this if I did not care?"

"Go," she whispered, without glancing round. She continued to stare out of the window. He stood looking at her for a moment, with a strange light in his eyes. He made a step towards her. "I HAVE you," he said. "You are mine. Netted--caught. But mine." He would have gone up to her and laid his hand upon her, but he did not dare to do that yet. "I have you in my hand," he said, "in my power. Do you hear--POWER!"

She remained impassive. He stared at her for half a minute, and then, with a superb gesture that was lost upon her, went to the door. Surely the instinctive abasement of her sex before Strength was upon his side. He told himself that his battle was won. She heard the handle move and the catch click as the door closed behind him.

XXII

And now without in the twilight behold Mr. Hoopdriver, his cheeks hot, his eye bright! His brain is in a tumult. The nervous, obsequious Hoopdriver, to whom I introduced you some days since, has undergone a wonderful change. Ever since he lost that 'spoor' in Chichester, he has been tormented by the most horrible visions of the shameful insults that may be happening. The strangeness of new surroundings has been working to strip off the habitual servile from him. Here was moonlight rising over the memory of a red sunset, dark shadows and glowing orange lamps, beauty somewhere mysteriously rapt away from him, tangible wrong in a brown suit and an unpleasant face, flouting him. Mr. Hoopdriver for the time, was in the world of Romance and Knight-errantry, divinely forgetful of his social position or hers; forgetting, too, for the time any of the wretched timidities that had tied him long since behind the counter in his proper place. He was

angry and adventurous. It was all about him, this vivid drama he had fallen into, and it was eluding him. He was far too grimly in earnest to pick up that lost thread and make a play of it now. The man was living. He did not pose when he alighted at the coffee tavern even, nor when he made his hasty meal.

As Bechamel crossed from the Vicuna towards the esplanade, Hoopdriver, disappointed and exasperated, came hurrying round the corner from the Temperance Hotel. At the sight of Bechamel, his heart jumped, and the tension of his angry suspense exploded into, rather than gave place to, an excited activity of mind. They were at the Vicuna, and she was there now alone. It was the occasion he sought. But he would give Chance no chance against him. He went back round the corner, sat down on the seat, and watched Bechamel recede into the dimness up the esplanade, before he got up and walked into the hotel entrance. "A lady cyclist in grey," he asked for, and followed boldly on the waiter's heels. The door of the dining-room was opening before he felt a qualm. And then suddenly he was nearly minded to turn and run for it, and his features seemed to him to be convulsed.

She turned with a start, and looked at him with something between terror and hope in her eyes.

"Can I--have a few words--with you, alone?" said Mr. Hoopdriver, controlling his breath with difficulty. She hesitated, and then motioned the waiter to withdraw.

Mr. Hoopdriver watched the door shut. He had intended to step out into the middle of the room, fold his arms and say, "You are in trouble. I am a Friend. Trust me." Instead of which he stood panting and then spoke with sudden familiarity, hastily, guiltily: "Look here. I don't know what the juice is up, but I think there's something wrong. Excuse my intruding--if it isn't so. I'll do anything you like to help you out of the scrape--if

you're in one. That's my meaning, I believe. What can I do? I would do anything to help you."

Her brow puckered, as she watched him make, with infinite emotion, this remarkable speech. "YOU!" she said. She was tumultuously weighing possibilities in her mind, and he had scarcely ceased when she had made her resolve.

She stepped a pace forward. "You are a gentleman," she said.

"Yes," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"Can I trust you?"

She did not wait for his assurance. "I must leave this hotel at once. Come here."

She took his arm and led him to the window.

"You can just see the gate. It is still open. Through that are our bicycles. Go down, get them out, and I will come down to you. Dare you?"

"Get your bicycle out in the road?"

"Both. Mine alone is no good. At once. Dare you?"

"Which way?"

"Go out by the front door and round. I will follow in one minute."

"Right!" said Mr. Hoopdriver, and went.

He had to get those bicycles. Had he been told to go out and kill

Bechamel he would have done it. His head was a MaeIstrom now. He walked out of the hotel, along the front, and into the big, blackshadowed coach yard. He looked round. There were no bicycles visible. Then a man emerged from the dark, a short man in a short, black, shiny jacket. Hoopdriver was caught. He made no attempt to turn and run for it. "I've been giving your machines a wipe over, sir," said the man, recognising the suit, and touching his cap. Hoopdriver's intelligence now was a soaring eagle; he swooped on the situation at once. "That's right," he said, and added, before the pause became marked, "Where is mine? I want to look at the chain."

The man led him into an open shed, and went fumbling for a lantern. Hoopdriver moved the lady's machine out of his way to the door, and then laid hands on the man's machine and wheeled it out of the shed into the yard. The gate stood open and beyond was the pale road and a clump of trees black in the twilight. He stooped and examined the chain with trembling fingers. How was it to be done? Something behind the gate seemed to flutter. The man must be got rid of anyhow.

"I say," said Hoopdriver, with an inspiration, "can you get me a screwdriver?"

The man simply walked across the shed, opened and shut a box, and came up to the kneeling Hoopdriver with a screwdriver in his hand. Hoopdriver felt himself a lost man. He took the screwdriver with a tepid "Thanks," and incontinently had another inspiration.

"I say," he said again.

"Well?"

"This is miles too big."

The man lit the lantern, brought it up to Hoopdriver and put it down on the ground. "Want a smaller screwdriver?" he said.

Hoopdriver had his handkerchief out and sneezed a prompt ATICHEW. It is the orthodox thing when you wish to avoid recognition. "As small as you have," he said, out of his pocket handkerchief.

"I ain't got none smaller than that," said the ostler.

"Won't do, really," said Hoopdriver, still wallowing in his handkerchief.

"I'll see wot they got in the 'ouse, if you like, sir," said the man. "If you would," said Hoopdriver. And as the man's heavily nailed boots went clattering down the yard, Hoopdriver stood up, took a noiseless step to the lady's machine, laid trembling hands on its handle and saddle, and prepared for a rush.

The scullery door opened momentarily and sent a beam of warm, yellow light up the road, shut again behind the man, and forthwith Hoopdriver rushed the machines towards the gate. A dark grey form came fluttering to meet him. "Give me this," she said, "and bring yours."

He passed the thing to her, touched her hand in the darkness, ran back, seized Bechamel's machine, and followed.

The yellow light of the scullery door suddenly flashed upon the cobbles again. It was too late now to do anything but escape. He heard the ostler shout behind him, and came into the road. She was up and dim already. He got into the saddle without a blunder. In a moment the ostler was in the gateway with a full-throated "HI! sir! That ain't allowed;" and Hoopdriver was overtaking the Young Lady in Grey. For some moments the earth seemed alive with shouts of, "Stop 'em!" and the shadows with ambuscades of police.

The road swept round, and they were riding out of sight of the hotel, and behind dark hedges, side by side.

She was weeping with excitement as he overtook her. "Brave," she said, "brave!" and he ceased to feel like a hunted thief. He looked over his shoulder and about him, and saw that they were already out of Bognor--for the Vicuna stands at the very westernmost extremity of the sea front--and riding on a fair wide road.

XXIII

The ostler (being a fool) rushed violently down the road vociferating after them. Then he returned panting to the Vicuna Hotel, and finding a group of men outside the entrance, who wanted to know what was UP, stopped to give them the cream of the adventure. That gave the fugitives five minutes. Then pushing breathlessly into the bar, he had to make it clear to the barmaid what the matter was, and the 'gov'nor' being out, they spent some more precious time wondering 'what--EVER' was to be done! in which the two customers returning from outside joined with animation. There were also moral remarks and other irrelevant contributions. There were conflicting ideas of telling the police and pursuing the flying couple on a horse. That made ten minutes. Then Stephen, the waiter, who had shown Hoopdriver up, came down and lit wonderful lights and started quite a fresh discussion by the simple question "WHICH?" That turned ten minutes into a quarter of an hour. And in the midst of this discussion, making a sudden and awestricken silence, appeared Bechamel in the hall beyond the bar, walked with a resolute air to the foot of the staircase, and passed out of sight. You conceive the backward pitch of that exceptionally shaped cranium? Incredulous eyes stared into one another's in the bar, as his paces, muffled by

the stair carpet, went up to the landing, turned, reached the passage and walked into the dining-room overhead.

"It wasn't that one at all, miss," said the ostler, "I'd SWEAR"

"Well, that's Mr. Beaumont," said the barmaid, "--anyhow."

Their conversation hung comatose in the air, switched up by Bechamel. They listened together. His feet stopped. Turned. Went out of the diningroom. Down the passage to the bedroom. Stopped again.

"Poor chap!" said the barmaid. "She's a wicked woman!"

"Sssh!" said Stephen.

After a pause Bechamel went back to the dining-room. They heard a chair creak under him. Interlude of conversational eyebrows.

"I'm going up," said Stephen, "to break the melancholy news to him."

Bechamel looked up from a week-old newspaper as, without knocking, Stephen entered. Bechamel's face suggested a different expectation. "Beg pardon, sir," said Stephen, with a diplomatic cough.

"Well?" said Bechamel, wondering suddenly if Jessie had kept some of her threats. If so, he was in for an explanation. But he had it ready. She was a monomaniac. "Leave me alone with her," he would say; "I know how to calm her."

"Mrs. Beaumont," said Stephen.

"WELL?"

"Has gone."

He rose with a fine surprise. "Gone!" he said with a half laugh.

"Gone, sir. On her bicycle."

"On her bicycle! Why?"

"She went, sir, with Another Gentleman."

This time Bechamel was really startled. "An--other Gentlemen!
WHO?"

"Another gentleman in brown, sir. Went into the yard, sir, got out the two bicycles, sir, and went off, sir--about twenty minutes ago."

Bechamel stood with his eyes round and his knuckle on his hips. Stephen, watching him with immense enjoyment, speculated whether this abandoned husband would weep or curse, or rush off at once in furious pursuit. But as yet he seemed merely stunned.

"Brown clothes?" he said. "And fairish?"

"A little like yourself, sir--in the dark. The ostler, sir, Jim Duke--"

Bechamel laughed awry. Then, with infinite fervour, he said--But let us put in blank cartridge--he said, "--- ---!"

"I might have thought!"

He flung himself into the armchair.

"Damn her," said Bechamel, for all the world like a common man. "I'll chuck this infernal business! They've gone, eigh?"

"Yessir."

Well, let 'em GO," said Bechamel, making a memorable saying. "Let 'em GO. Who cares? And I wish him luck. And bring me some Bourbon as fast as you can, there's a good chap. I'll take that, and then I'll have another look round Bognor before I turn in."

Stephen was too surprised to say anything but "Bourbon, sir?"

"Go on," said Bechamel. "Damn you!"

Stephen's sympathies changed at once. "Yessir," he murmured, fumbling for the door handle, and left the room, marvelling. Bechamel, having in this way satisfied his sense of appearances, and comported himself as a Pagan should, so soon as the waiter's footsteps had passed, vented the cream of his feelings in a stream of blasphemous indecency. Whether his wife or HER stepmother had sent the detective, SHE had evidently gone off with him, and that little business was over. And he was here, stranded and sold, an ass, and as it were, the son of many generations of asses. And his only ray of hope was that it seemed more probable, after all, that the girl had escaped through her stepmother. In which case the business might be hushed up yet, and the evil hour of explanation with his wife indefinitely postponed. Then abruptly the image of that lithe figure in grey knickerbockers went frisking across his mind again, and he reverted to his blasphemies. He started up in a gusty frenzy with a vague idea of pursuit, and incontinently sat down again with a concussion that stirred the bar below to its depths. He banged the arms of the chair with his fist, and swore again. "Of all the accursed fools that were ever spawned," he was chanting, "I, Bechamel--" when with an abrupt tap and prompt opening of the

door, Stephen entered with the Bourbon.

THE MOONLIGHT RIDE

XXIV

And so the twenty minutes' law passed into an infinity. We leave the wicked Bechamel clothing himself with cursing as with a garment,--the wretched creature has already sufficiently sullied our modest but truthful pages,--we leave the eager little group in the bar of the Vicuna Hotel, we leave all Bognor as we have left all Chichester and Midhurst and Haslemere and Guildford and Ripley and Putney, and follow this dear fool of a Hoopdriver of ours and his Young Lady in Grey out upon the moonlight road. How they rode! How their hearts beat together and their breath came fast, and how every shadow was anticipation and every noise pursuit! For all that flight Mr. Hoopdriver was in the world of Romance. Had a policeman intervened because their lamps were not lit, Hoopdriver had cut him down and ridden on, after the fashion of a hero born. Had Bechamel arisen in the way with rapiers for a duel, Hoopdriver had fought as one to whom Agincourt was a reality and drapery a dream. It was Rescue, Elopement, Glory! And she by the side of him! He had seen her face in shadow, with the morning sunlight tangled in her hair, he had seen her sympathetic with that warm light in her face, he had seen her troubled and her eyes bright with tears. But what light is there lighting a face like hers, to compare with the soft glamour of the midsummer moon?

The road turned northward, going round through the outskirts of Bognor, in one place dark and heavy under a thick growth of trees, then amidst villas again, some warm and lamplit, some white and sleeping in the moonlight; then between hedges, over

which they saw broad wan meadows shrouded in a low-lying mist. They scarcely heeded whither they rode at first, being only anxious to get away, turning once westward when the spire of Chichester cathedral rose suddenly near them out of the dewy night, pale and intricate and high. They rode, speaking little, just a rare word now and then, at a turning, at a footfall, at a roughness in the road.

She seemed to be too intent upon escape to give much thought to him, but after the first tumult of the adventure, as flight passed into mere steady riding his mind became an enormous appreciation of the position. The night was a warm white silence save for the subtle running of their chains. He looked sideways at her as she sat beside him with her ankles gracefully ruling the treadles. Now the road turned westward, and she was a dark grey outline against the shimmer of the moon; and now they faced northwards, and the soft cold light passed caressingly over her hair and touched her brow and cheek.

There is a magic quality in moonshine; it touches all that is sweet and beautiful, and the rest of the night is hidden. It has created the fairies, whom the sunlight kills, and fairyland rises again in our hearts at the sight of it, the voices of the filmy route, and their faint, soul-piercing melodies. By the moonlight every man, dull clod though he be by day, tastes something of Endymion, takes something of the youth and strength of Endymion, and sees the dear white goddess shining at him from his Lady's eyes. The firm substantial daylight things become ghostly and elusive, the hills beyond are a sea of unsubstantial texture, the world a visible spirit, the spiritual within us rises out of its darkness, loses something of its weight and body, and swims up towards heaven. This road that was a mere rutted white dust, hot underfoot, blinding to the eye, is now a soft grey silence, with the glitter of a crystal grain set starlike in its silver here and there. Overhead, riding serenely through the spacious blue,

is the mother of the silence, she who has spiritualised the world, alone save for two attendant steady shining stars. And in silence under her benign influence, under the benediction of her light, rode our two wanderers side by side through the transfigured and transfiguring night.

Nowhere was the moon shining quite so brightly as in Mr. Hoopdriver's skull. At the turnings of the road he made his decisions with an air of profound promptitude (and quite haphazard). "The Right," he would say. Or again "The Left," as one who knew. So it was that in the space of an hour they came abruptly down a little lane, full tilt upon the sea. Grey beach to the right of them and to the left, and a little white cottage fast asleep inland of a sleeping fishing-boat. "Hullo!" said Mr. Hoopdriver, sotto voce. They dismounted abruptly. Stunted oaks and thorns rose out of the haze of moonlight that was tangled in the hedge on either side.

"You are safe," said Mr. Hoopdriver, sweeping off his cap with an air and bowing courtly.

"Where are we?"

"SAFE."

"But WHERE?"

"Chichester Harbour." He waved his arm seaward as though it was a goal.

"Do you think they will follow us?"

"We have turned and turned again."

It seemed to Hoopdriver that he heard her sob. She stood dimly

there, holding her machine, and he, holding his, could go no nearer to her to see if she sobbed for weeping or for want of breath. "What are we to do now?" her voice asked.

"Are you tired?" he asked.

"I will do what has to be done."

The two black figures in the broken light were silent for a space. "Do you know," she said, "I am not afraid of you. I am sure you are honest to me. And I do not even know your name!"

He was taken with a sudden shame of his homely patronymic. "It's an ugly name," he said. "But you are right in trusting me. I would--I would do anything for you. . . . This is nothing."

She caught at her breath. She did not care to ask why. But compared with Bechamel!--"We take each other on trust," she said. "Do you want to know--how things are with me?"

"That man," she went on, after the assent of his listening silence, "promised to help and protect me. I was unhappy at home--never mind why. A stepmother--Idle, unoccupied, hindered, cramped, that is enough, perhaps. Then he came into my life, and talked to me of art and literature, and set my brain on fire. I wanted to come out into the world, to be a human being--not a thing in a hutch. And he--"

"I know," said Hoopdriver.

"And now here I am--"

"I will do anything," said Hoopdriver.

She thought. "You cannot imagine my stepmother. No! I could not

describe her--"

"I am entirely at your service. I will help you with all my power."

"I have lost an Illusion and found a Knight-errant." She spoke of Bechamel as the Illusion.

Mr. Hoopdriver felt flattered. But he had no adequate answer.

"I'm thinking," he said, full of a rapture of protective responsibility, " what we had best be doing. You are tired, you know. And we can't wander all night--after the day we've had."

"That was Chichester we were near?" she asked.

"If," he meditated, with a tremble in his voice, "you would make ME your brother, MISS BEAUMONT."

"Yes?"

"We could stop there together--"

She took a minute to answer. "I am going to light these lamps," said Hoopdriver. He bent down to his own, and struck a match on his shoe. She looked at his face in its light, grave and intent. How could she ever have thought him common or absurd?

"But you must tell me your name--brother," she said,

"Er--Carrington," said Mr. Hoopdriver, after a momentary pause. Who would be Hoopdriver on a night like this?

"But the Christian name?"

"Christian name? MY Christian name. Well--Chris." He snapped his lamp and stood up. "If you will hold my machine, I will light yours," he said.

She came round obediently and took his machine, and for a moment they stood face to face. "My name, brother Chris," she said, "is Jessie."

He looked into her eyes, and his excitement seemed arrested. "JESSIE," he repeated slowly. The mute emotion of his face affected her strangely. She had to speak. "It's not such a very wonderful name, is it?" she said, with a laugh to break the intensity.

He opened his mouth and shut it again, and, with a sudden wincing of his features, abruptly turned and bent down to open the lantern in front of her machine. She looked down at him, almost kneeling in front of her, with an unreasonable approbation in her eyes. It was, as I have indicated, the hour and season of the full moon.

XXV

Mr. Hoopdriver conducted the rest of that night's journey with the same confident dignity as before, and it was chiefly by good luck and the fact that most roads about a town converge thereupon, that Chichester was at last attained. It seemed at first as though everyone had gone to bed, but the Red Hotel still glowed yellow and warm. It was the first time Hoopdriver had dared the mysteries of a 'first-class' hotel.' But that night he was in the mood to dare anything.

"So you found your Young Lady at last," said the ostler of the

Red Hotel; for it chanced he was one of those of whom Hoopdriver had made inquiries in the afternoon.

"Quite a misunderstanding," said Hoopdriver, with splendid readiness. "My sister had gone to Bognor But I brought her back here. I've took a fancy to this place. And the moonlight's simply dee-vine."

"We've had supper, thenks, and we're tired," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "I suppose you won't take anything,--Jessie?"

The glory of having her, even as a sister! and to call her Jessie like that! But he carried it off splendidly, as he felt himself bound to admit. "Good-night, Sis," he said, "and pleasant dreams. I'll just 'ave a look at this paper before I turn in." But this was living indeed! he told himself.

So gallantly did Mr. Hoopdriver comport himself up to the very edge of the Most Wonderful Day of all. It had begun early, you will remember, with a vigil in a little sweetstuff shop next door to the Angel at Midhurst. But to think of all the things that had happened since then! He caught himself in the middle of a yawn, pulled out his watch, saw the time was halfpast eleven, and marched off, with a fine sense of heroism, bedward.

THE SURBITON INTERLUDE

XXVI

And here, thanks to the glorious institution of sleep, comes a break in the narrative again. These absurd young people are safely tucked away now, their heads full of glowing nonsense, indeed, but the course of events at any rate is safe from any

fresh developments through their activities for the next eight hours or more. They are both sleeping healthily you will perhaps be astonished to hear. Here is the girl--what girls are coming to nowadays only Mrs. Lynn Linton can tell!--in company with an absolute stranger, of low extraction and uncertain accent, unchaperoned and unabashed; indeed, now she fancies she is safe, she is, if anything, a little proud of her own share in these transactions. Then this Mr. Hoopdriver of yours, roseate idiot that he is! is in illegal possession of a stolen bicycle, a stolen young lady, and two stolen names, established with them in an hotel that is quite beyond his means, and immensely proud of himself in a somnolent way for these incomparable follies. There are occasions when a moralising novelist can merely wring his hands and leave matters to take their course. For all Hoopdriver knows or cares he may be locked up the very first thing to-morrow morning for the rape of the cycle. Then in Bognor, let alone that melancholy vestige, Bechamel (with whom our dealings are, thank Goodness! over), there is a Coffee Tavern with a steak Mr. Hoopdriver ordered, done to a cinder long ago, his American-cloth parcel in a bedroom, and his own proper bicycle, by way of guarantee, carefully locked up in the hayloft. To-morrow he will be a Mystery, and they will be looking for his body along the sea front. And so far we have never given a glance at the desolate home in Surbiton, familiar to you no doubt through the medium of illustrated interviews, where the unhappy stepmother--

That stepmother, it must be explained, is quite well known to you. That is a little surprise I have prepared for you. She is 'Thomas Plantagenet,' the gifted authoress of that witty and daring book, "A Soul Untrammelled," and quite an excellent woman in her way,--only it is such a crooked way. Her real name is Milton. She is a widow and a charming one, only ten years older than Jessie, and she is always careful to dedicate her more daring works to the 'sacred memory of my husband' to show that there's nothing personal, you know, in the matter. Considering

her literary reputation (she was always speaking of herself as one I martyred for truth,' because the critics advertised her written indecorums in column long 'slates'),--considering her literary reputation, I say, she was one of the most respectable women it is possible to imagine. She furnished correctly, dressed correctly, had severe notions of whom she might meet, went to church, and even at times took the sacrament in some esoteric spirit. And Jessie she brought up so carefully that she never even let her read "A Soul Untrammelled." Which, therefore, naturally enough, Jessie did, and went on from that to a feast of advanced literature. Mrs. Milton not only brought up Jessie carefully, but very slowly, so that at seventeen she was still a clever schoolgirl (as you have seen her) and quite in the background of the little literary circle of unimportant celebrities which 'Thomas Plantagenet' adorned. Mrs. Milton knew Bechamel's reputation of being a dangerous man; but then bad men are not bad women, and she let him come to her house to show she was not afraid--she took no account of Jessie. When the elopement came, therefore, it was a double disappointment to her, for she perceived his hand by a kind of instinct. She did the correct thing. The correct thing, as you know, is to take hansom cabs, regardless of expense, and weep and say you do not know WHAT to do, round the circle of your confidential friends. She could not have ridden nor wept more had Jessie been her own daughter--she showed the properest spirit. And she not only showed it, but felt it.

Mrs. Milton, as a successful little authoress and still more successful widow of thirty-two,--"Thomas Plantagenet is a charming woman," her reviewers used to write invariably, even if they spoke ill of her,--found the steady growth of Jessie into womanhood an unmitigated nuisance and had been willing enough to keep her in the background. And Jessie--who had started this intercourse at fourteen with abstract objections to stepmothers--had been active enough in resenting this. Increasing

rivalry and antagonism had sprung up between them, until they could engender quite a vivid hatred from a dropped hairpin or the cutting of a book with a sharpened knife. There is very little deliberate wickedness in the world. The stupidity of our selfishness gives much the same results indeed, but in the ethical laboratory it shows a different nature. And when the disaster came, Mrs. Milton's remorse for their gradual loss of sympathy and her share in the losing of it, was genuine enough.

You may imagine the comfort she got from her friends, and how West Kensington and Notting Hill and Hampstead, the literary suburbs, those decent penitentiaries of a once Bohemian calling, hummed with the business, Her 'Men'--as a charming literary lady she had, of course, an organised corps--were immensely excited, and were sympathetic; helpfully energetic, suggestive, alert, as their ideals of their various dispositions required them to be. "Any news of Jessie?" was the pathetic opening of a dozen melancholy but interesting conversations. To her Men she was not perhaps so damp as she was to her women friends, but in a quiet way she was even more touching. For three days, Wednesday that is, Thursday, and Friday, nothing was heard of the fugitives. It was known that Jessie, wearing a patent costume with buttonup skirts, and mounted on a diamond frame safety with Dunlops, and a loofah covered saddle, had ridden forth early in the morning, taking with her about two pounds seven shillings in money, and a grey touring case packed, and there, save for a brief note to her stepmother,--a declaration of independence, it was said, an assertion of her Ego containing extensive and very annoying quotations from "A Soul Untrammelled," and giving no definite intimation of her plans--knowledge ceased. That note was shown to few, and then only in the strictest confidence.

But on Friday evening late came a breathless Man Friend, Widgery, a correspondent of hers, who had heard of her trouble among the first. He had been touring in Sussex,--his knapsack was still on

his back,--and he testified hurriedly that at a place called Midhurst, in the bar of an hotel called the Angel, he had heard from a barmaid a vivid account of a Young Lady in Grey. Descriptions tallied. But who was the man in brown?"The poor, misguided girl! I must go to her at once," she said, choking, and rising with her hand to her heart.

"It's impossible to-night. There are no more trains. I looked on my way."

"A mother's love," she said. "I bear her THAT."

"I know you do." He spoke with feeling, for no one admired his photographs of scenery more than Mrs. Milton. "it's more than she deserves."

"Oh, don't speak unkindly of her! She has been misled."

It was really very friendly of him. He declared he was only sorry his news ended there. Should he follow them, and bring her back? He had come to her because he knew of her anxiety. "It is GOOD of you," she said, and quite instinctively took and pressed his hand. "And to think of that poor girl--tonight! It's dreadful." She looked into the fire that she had lit when he came in, the warm light fell upon her dark purple dress, and left her features in a warm shadow. She looked such a slight, frail thing to be troubled so. "We must follow her." Her resolution seemed magnificent. "I have no one to go with me."

"He must marry her," said the man.

"She has no friends. We have no one. After all--Two women.--So helpless."

And this fair-haired little figure was the woman that people who

knew her only from her books, called bold, prurient even! Simply because she was great-hearted--intellectual. He was overcome by the unspeakable pathos of her position.

"Mrs. Milton," he said. "Hetty!"

She glanced at him. The overflow was imminent. "Not now," she said, "not now. I must find her first."

"Yes," he said with intense emotion. (He was one of those big, fat men who feel deeply.) "But let me help you. At least let me help you."

"But can you spare time?" she said. "For ME."

"For you--"

"But what can I do? what can WE do?"

"Go to Midhurst. Follow her on. Trace her. She was there on Thursday night, last night. She cycled out of the town. Courage!" he said. "We will save her yet!"

She put out her hand and pressed his again.

"Courage!" he repeated, finding it so well received.

There were alarms and excursions without. She turned her back to the fire, and he sat down suddenly in the big armchair, which suited his dimensions admirably. Then the door opened, and the girl showed in Dangle, who looked curiously from one to the other. There was emotion here, he had heard the armchair creaking, and Mrs. Milton, whose face was flushed, displayed a suspicious alacrity to explain. "You, too," she said, "are one of my good friends. And we have news of her at last."

It was decidedly an advantage to Widgery, but Dangle determined to show himself a man of resource. In the end he, too, was accepted for the Midhurst Expedition, to the intense disgust of Widgery; and young Phipps, a callow youth of few words, faultless collars, and fervent devotion, was also enrolled before the evening was out. They would scour the country, all three of them. She appeared to brighten up a little, but it was evident she was profoundly touched. She did not know what she had done to merit such friends. Her voice broke a little, she moved towards the door, and young Phipps, who was a youth of action rather than of words, sprang and opened it--proud to be first.

"She is sorely troubled," said Dangle to Widgery. "We must do what we can for her."

"She is a wonderful woman," said Dangle. "So subtle, so intricate, so many faceted. She feels this deeply."

Young Phipps said nothing, but he felt the more.

And yet they say the age of chivalry is dead!

But this is only an Interlude, introduced to give our wanderers time to refresh themselves by good, honest sleeping. For the present, therefore, we will not concern ourselves with the starting of the Rescue Party, nor with Mrs. Milton's simple but becoming grey dress, with the healthy Widgery's Norfolk jacket and thick boots, with the slender Dangle's energetic bearing, nor with the wonderful chequerings that set off the legs of the golf-suited Phipps. They are after us. In a little while they will be upon us. You must imagine as you best can the competitive raidings at Midhurst of Widgery, Dangle, and Phipps. How Widgery was great at questions, and Dangle good at inference, and Phipps so conspicuously inferior in everything that he felt it, and

sulked with Mrs. Milton most of the day, after the manner of your callow youth the whole world over. Mrs. Milton stopped at the Angel and was very sad and charming and intelligent, and Widgery paid the bill. in the afternoon of Saturday, Chichester was attained. But by that time our fugitives--As you shall immediately hear.

THE AWAKENING OF MR. HOOPDRIVER

XXVII

Mr. Hoopdriver stirred on his pillow, opened his eyes, and, staring unmeaningly, yawned. The bedclothes were soft and pleasant. He turned the peaked nose that overrides the insufficient moustache, up to the ceiling, a pinkish projection over the billow of white. You might see it wrinkle as he yawned again, and then became quiet. So matters remained for a space. Very slowly recollection returned to him. Then a shock of indeterminate brown hair appeared, and first one watery grey eye a-wondering, and then two ; the bed upheaved, and you had him, his thin neck projecting abruptly from the clothes he held about him, his face staring about the room. He held the clothes about him, I hope I may explain, because his night-shirt was at Bognor in an American-cloth packet, derelict. He yawned a third time, rubbed his eyes, smacked his lips. He was recalling almost everything now. The pursuit, the hotel, the tremulous daring of his entry, the swift adventure of the inn yard, the moonlight--Abruptly he threw the clothes back and rose into a sitting position on the edge of the bed. Without was the noise of shutters being unfastened and doors unlocked, and the passing of hoofs and wheels in the street. He looked at his watch. Half-past six. He surveyed the sumptuous room again.

"Lord!" said Mr. Hoopdriver. "It wasn't a dream, after all."

"I wonder what they charge for these Juiced rooms!" said Mr. Hoopdriver, nursing one rosy foot.

He became meditative, tugging at his insufficient moustache. Suddenly he gave vent to a noiseless laugh. "What a rush it was! Rushed in and off with his girl right under his nose. Planned it well too. Talk of highway robbery! Talk of brigands Up and off! How juiced SOLD he must be feeling It was a shave too--in the coach yard!"

Suddenly he became silent. Abruptly his eyebrows rose and his jaw fell. "I sa-a-ay!" said Mr. Hoopdriver.

He had never thought of it before. Perhaps you will understand the whirl he had been in overnight. But one sees things clearer in the daylight. "I'm hanged if I haven't been and stolen a blessed bicycle."

"Who cares?" said Mr. Hoopdriver, presently, and his face supplied the answer.

Then he thought of the Young Lady in Grey again, and tried to put a more heroic complexion on the business. But of an early morning, on an empty stomach (as with characteristic coarseness, medical men put it) heroics are of a more difficult growth than by moonlight. Everything had seemed exceptionally fine and brilliant, but quite natural, the evening before.

Mr. Hoopdriver reached out his hand, took his Norfolk jacket, laid it over his knees, and took out the money from the little ticket pocket. "Fourteen and six-half," he said, holding the coins in his left hand and stroking his chin with his right. He verified, by patting, the presence of a pocketbook in the breast

pocket. "Five, fourteen, six-half," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "Left."

With the Norfolk jacket still on his knees, he plunged into another silent meditation. "That wouldn't matter," he said. "It's the bike's the bother."

"No good going back to Bognor."

"Might send it back by carrier, of course. Thanking him for the loan. Having no further use--" Mr. Hoopdriver chuckled and lapsed into the silent concoction of a delightfully impudent letter.

"Mr. J. Hoopdriver presents his compliments." But the grave note reasserted itself.

"Might trundle back there in an hour, of course, and exchange them. MY old crock's so blessed shabby. He's sure to be spiteful too. Have me run in, perhaps. Then she'd be in just the same old fix, only worse. You see, I'm her Knight-errant. It complicates things so."

His eye, wandering loosely, rested on the sponge bath. "What the juice do they want with cream pans in a bedroom?" said Mr. Hoopdriver, en passant.

"Best thing we can do is to set out of here as soon as possible, anyhow. I suppose she'll go home to her friends. That bicycle is a juicy nuisance, anyhow. Juicy nuisance!"

He jumped to his feet with a sudden awakening of energy, to proceed with his toilet. Then with a certain horror he remembered that the simple necessities of that process were at Bognor!"Lord!" he remarked, and whistled silently for a space. "Rummy go! profit and loss; profit, one sister with bicycle complete, wot offers?--cheap for tooth and 'air brush, vests, night-shirt, stockings, and sundries.

"Make the best of it," and presently, when it came to hair-brushing, he had to smooth his troubled locks with his hands. It was a poor result. "Sneak out and get a shave, I suppose, and buy a brush and so on. Chink again! Beard don't show much."

He ran his hand over his chin, looked at himself steadfastly for some time, and curled his insufficient moustache up with some care. Then he fell a-meditating on his beauty. He considered himself, three-quarter face, left and right. An expression of distaste crept over his features. "Looking won't alter it, Hoopdriver," he remarked. "You're a weedy customer, my man. Shoulders narrow. Skimpy, anyhow."

He put his knuckles on the toilet table and regarded himself with his chin lifted in the air. "Good Lord!" he said. "WHAT a neck! Wonder why I got such a thundering lump there."

He sat down on the bed, his eye still on the glass. "If I'd been exercised properly, if I'd been fed reasonable, if I hadn't been shoved out of a silly school into a silly shop--But there! the old folks didn't know no better. The schoolmaster ought to have. But he didn't, poor old fool!--Still, when it comes to meeting a girl like this--It's 'ARD.

"I wonder what Adam'd think of me--as a specimen. Civilisation, eigh? Heir of the ages! I'm nothing. I know nothing. I can't do anything--sketch a bit. Why wasn't I made an artist?

"Beastly cheap, after all, this suit does look, in the sunshine."

"No good, Hoopdriver. Anyhow, you don't tell yourself any lies about it. Lovers ain't your game,--anyway. But there's other things yet. You can help the young lady, and you will--I suppose

she'll be going home--And that business of the bicycle's to see to, too, my man. FORWARD, Hoopdriver! If you ain't a beauty, that's no reason why you should stop and be copped, is it?"

And having got back in this way to a gloomy kind of self-satisfaction, he had another attempt at his hair preparatory to leaving his room and hurrying on breakfast, for an early departure. While breakfast was preparing he wandered out into South Street and refurnished himself with the elements of luggage again. "No expense to be spared," he murmured, disgorging the half-sovereign.

THE DEPARTURE FROM CHICHESTER

XXVIII

He caused his 'sister' to be called repeatedly, and when she came down, explained with a humorous smile his legal relationship to the bicycle in the yard. "Might be disagreeable, y' know." His anxiety was obvious enough. "Very well," she said (quite friendly); "hurry breakfast, and we'll ride out. I want to talk things over with you." The girl seemed more beautiful than ever after the night's sleep; her hair in comely dark waves from her forehead, her ungauntleted finger-tips pink and cool. And how decided she was! Breakfast was a nervous ceremony, conversation fraternal but thin; the waiter overawed him, and he was cowed by a multiplicity of forks. But she called him "Chris." They discussed their route over his sixpenny county map for the sake of talking, but avoided a decision in the presence of the attendant. The five-pound note was changed for the bill, and through Hoopdriver's determination to be quite the gentleman, the waiter and chambermaid got half a crown each and the ostler a florin. "Oolidays," said the ostler to himself, without

gratitude. The public mounting of the bicycles in the street was a moment of trepidation. A policeman actually stopped and watched them from the opposite kerb. Suppose him to come across and ask: "Is that your bicycle, sir?" Fight? Or drop it and run? It was a time of bewildering apprehension, too, going through the streets of the town, so that a milk cart barely escaped destruction under Mr. Hoopdriver's chancy wheel. That recalled him to a sense of erratic steering, and he pulled himself together. In the lanes he breathed freer, and a less formal conversation presently began.

"You've ridden out of Chichester in a great hurry," said Jessie.

"Well, the fact of it is, I'm worried, just a little bit. About this machine."

"Of course," she said. "I had forgotten that. But where are we going?"

"Jest a turning or two more, if you don't mind," said Hoopdriver.

"Jest a mile or so. I have to think of you, you know. I should feel more easy. If we was locked up, you know--Not that I should mind on my own account--"

They rode with a streaky, grey sea coming and going on their left hand. Every mile they put between themselves and Chichester Mr. Hoopdriver felt a little less conscience-stricken, and a little more of the gallant desperado. Here he was riding on a splendid machine with a Slap-up girl beside him. What would they think of it in the Emporium if any of them were to see him? He imagined in detail the astonishment of Miss Isaacs and of Miss Howe. "Why! It's Mr. Hoopdriver," Miss Isaacs would say. "Never!" emphatically from Miss Howe. Then he played with Briggs, and then tried the 'G.V.' in a shay. "Fancy introducing 'em to her--My sister pro tem." He was her brother Chris--Chris what?--Confound

it! Harrington, Hartington--something like that. Have to keep off that topic until he could remember. Wish he'd told her the truth now--almost. He glanced at her. She was riding with her eyes straight ahead of her. Thinking. A little perplexed, perhaps, she seemed. He noticed how well she rode and that she rode with her lips closed--a thing he could never manage.

Mr. Hoopdriver's mind came round to the future. What was she going to do? What were they both going to do? His thoughts took a graver colour. He had rescued her. This was fine, manly rescue work he was engaged upon. She ought to go home, in spite of that stepmother. He must insist gravely but firmly upon that. She was the spirited sort, of course, but still--Wonder if she had any money? Wonder what the second-class fare from Havant to London is? Of course he would have to pay that--it was the regular thing, he being a gentleman. Then should he take her home? He began to rough in a moving sketch of the return. The stepmother, repentant of her indescribable cruelties, would be present,--even these rich people have their troubles,--probably an uncle or two. The footman would announce, Mr.--(bother that name!) and Miss Milton. Then two women weeping together, and a knightly figure in the background dressed in a handsome Norfolk jacket, still conspicuously new. He would conceal his feeling until the very end. Then, leaving, he would pause in the doorway in such an attitude as Mr. George Alexander might assume, and say, slowly and dwindlingly: "Be kind to her--BE kind to her," and so depart, heartbroken to the meanest intelligence. But that was a matter for the future. He would have to begin discussing the return soon. There was no traffic along the road, and he came up beside her (he had fallen behind in his musing). She began to talk. "Mr. Denison," she began, and then, doubtfully, "That is your name? I'm very stupid--"

"It is," said Mr. Hoopdriver. (Denison, was it? Denison, Denison, Denison. What was she saying?)

"I wonder how far you are willing to help me?" Confoundedly hard to answer a question like that on the spur of the moment, without steering wildly. "You may rely--" said Mr. Hoopdriver, recovering from a violent wobble. "I can assure you-- I want to help you very much. Don't consider me at all. Leastways, consider me entirely at your service." (Nuisance not to be able to say this kind of thing right.)

"You see, I am so awkwardly situated."

"If I can only help you--you will make me very happy--" There was a pause. Round a bend in the road they came upon a grassy space between hedge and road, set with yarrow and meadowsweet, where a felled tree lay among the green. There she dismounted, and propping her machine against a stone, sat down. "Here, we can talk," she said.

"Yes," said Mr. Hoopdriver, expectant.

She answered after a little while, sitting, elbow on knee, with her chin in her hand, and looking straight in front of her. "I don't know--I am resolved to Live my Own Life."

"Of course," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "Naturally."

"I want to Live, and I want to see what life means. I want to learn. Everyone is hurrying me, everything is hurrying me; I want time to think."

Mr. Hoopdriver was puzzled, but admiring. It was wonderful how clear and ready her words were. But then one might speak well with a throat and lips like that. He knew he was inadequate, but he tried to meet the occasion. "If you let them rush you into anything you might repent of, of course you'd be very silly."

"Don't YOU want to learn?" she asked.

"I was wondering only this morning," he began, and stopped.

She was too intent upon her own thoughts to notice this insufficiency. "I find myself in life, and it terrifies me. I seem to be like a little speck, whirling on a wheel, suddenly caught up. 'What am I here for?' I ask. Simply to be here at a time--I asked it a week ago, I asked it yesterday, and I ask it to-day. And little things happen and the days pass. My stepmother takes me shopping, people come to tea, there is a new play to pass the time, or a concert, or a novel. The wheels of the world go on turning, turning. It is horrible. I want to do a miracle like Joshua and stop the whirl until I have fought it out. At home--It's impossible."

Mr. Hoopdriver stroked his moustache. "It IS so," he said in a meditative tone. "Things WILL go on," he said. The faint breath of summer stirred the trees, and a bunch of dandelion puff lifted among the meadowsweet and struck and broke into a dozen separate threads against his knee. They flew on apart, and sank, as the breeze fell, among the grass: some to germinate, some to perish. His eye followed them until they had vanished.

"I can't go back to Surbiton," said the Young Lady in Grey.

"EIGH?" said Mr. Hoopdriver, catching at his moustache. This was an unexpected development.

"I want to write, you see," said the Young Lady in Grey, "to write Books and alter things. To do Good. I want to lead a Free Life and Own myself. I can't go back. I want to obtain a position as a journalist. I have been told--But I know no one to help me at once. No one that I could go to. There is one person--She was

a mistress at my school. If I could write to her--But then, how could I get her answer?"

"H'mp," said Mr. Hoopdriver, very grave.

"I can't trouble you much more. You have come--you have risked things--"

"That don't count," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "It's double pay to let me do it, so to speak."

"It is good of you to say that. Surbiton is so Conventional. I am resolved to be Unconventional--at any cost. But we are so hampered. If I could only burgeon out of all that hinders me! I want to struggle, to take my place in the world. I want to be my own mistress, to shape my own career. But my stepmother objects so. She does as she likes herself, and is strict with me to ease her conscience. And if I go back now, go back owning myself beaten--" She left the rest to his imagination.

"I see that," agreed Mr. Hoopdriver. He MUST help her. Within his skull he was doing some intricate arithmetic with five pounds six and twopence. In some vague way he inferred from all this that Jessie was trying to escape from an undesirable marriage, but was saying these things out of modesty. His circle of ideas was so limited.

"You know, Mr.--I've forgotten your name again."

Mr. Hoopdriver seemed lost in abstraction. "You can't go back of course, quite like that," he said thoughtfully. His ears waxed suddenly red and his cheeks flushed.

"But what IS your name?"

"Name!" said Mr. Hoopdriver. "Why!--Benson, of course."

"Mr. Benson--yes it's really very stupid of me. But I can never remember names. I must make a note on my cuff." She clicked a little silver pencil and wrote the name down. "If I could write to my friend. I believe she would be able to help me to an independent life. I could write to her--or telegraph. Write, I think. I could scarcely explain in a telegram. I know she would help me."

Clearly there was only one course open to a gentleman under the circumstances. "In that case," said Mr. Hoopdriver, "if you don't mind trusting yourself to a stranger, we might continue as we are perhaps. For a day or so. Until you heard." (Suppose thirty shillings a day, that gives four days, say four thirties is hun' and twenty, six quid,--well, three days, say; four ten.)

"You are very good to me."

His expression was eloquent.

"Very well, then, and thank you. It's wonderful--it's more than I deserve that you--" She dropped the theme abruptly. "What was our bill at Chichester?"

"Eigh?" said Mr. Hoopdriver, feigning a certain stupidity. There was a brief discussion. Secretly he was delighted at her insistence in paying. She carried her point. Their talk came round to their immediate plans for the day. They decided to ride easily, through Havant, and stop, perhaps, at Fareham or Southampton. For the previous day had tried them both. Holding the map extended on his knee, Mr. Hoopdriver's eye fell by chance on the bicycle at his feet. "That bicycle," he remarked, quite irrelevantly, "wouldn't look the same machine if I got a big, double Elarum instead of that little bell."

"Why?"

"Jest a thought." A pause.

"Very well, then,--Havant and lunch," said Jessie, rising.

"I wish, somehow, we could have managed it without stealing that machine," said Hoopdriver. "Because it IS stealing it, you know, come to think of it."

"Nonsense. If Mr. Bechamel troubles you--I will tell the whole world--if need be."

"I believe you would," said Mr. Hoopdriver, admiring her. "You're plucky enough--goodness knows."

Discovering suddenly that she was standing, he, too, rose and picked up her machine. She took it and wheeled it into the road. Then he took his own. He paused, regarding it. "I say!" said he. "How'd this bike look, now, if it was enamelled grey?" She looked over her shoulder at his grave face. "Why try and hide it in that way?"

"It was jest a passing thought," said Mr. Hoopdriver, airily. "Didn't MEAN anything, you know."

As they were riding on to Havant it occurred to Mr. Hoopdriver in a transitory manner that the interview had been quite other than his expectation. But that was the way with everything in Mr. Hoopdriver's experience. And though his Wisdom looked grave within him, and Caution was chinking coins, and an ancient prejudice in favour of Property shook her head, something else was there too, shouting in his mind to drown all these saner considerations, the intoxicating thought of riding beside Her all

to-day, all to-morrow, perhaps for other days after that. Of talking to her familiarly, being brother of all her slender strength and freshness, of having a golden, real, and wonderful time beyond all his imaginings. His old familiar fancyings gave place to anticipations as impalpable and fluctuating and beautiful as the sunset of a summer day.

At Havant he took an opportunity to purchase, at small hairdresser's in the main street, a toothbrush, pair of nail scissors, and a little bottle of stuff to darken the moustache, an article the shopman introduced to his attention, recommended highly, and sold in the excitement of the occasion.

THE UNEXPECTED ANECDOTE OF THE LION

XXIX

They rode on to Cosham and lunched lightly but expensively there. Jessie went out and posted her letter to her school friend. Then the green height of Portsdown Hill tempted them, and leaving their machines in the village they clambered up the slope to the silent red-brick fort that crowned it. Thence they had a view of Portsmouth and its cluster of sister towns, the crowded narrows of the harbour, the Solent and the Isle of Wight like a blue cloud through the hot haze. Jessie by some miracle had become a skirted woman in the Cosham inn. Mr. Hoopdriver lounged gracefully on the turf, smoked a Red Herring cigarette, and lazily regarded the fortified towns that spread like a map away there, the inner line of defence like toy fortifications, a mile off perhaps ; and beyond that a few little fields and then the beginnings of Landport suburb and the smoky cluster of the multitudinous houses. To the right at the head of the harbour shallows the town of Porchester rose among the trees. Mr.

Hoopdriver's anxiety receded to some remote corner of his brain and that florid half-voluntary imagination of his shared the stage with the image of Jessie. He began to speculate on the impression he was creating. He took stock of his suit in a more optimistic spirit, and reviewed, with some complacency, his actions for the last four and twenty hours. Then he was dashed at the thought of her infinite perfections.

She had been observing him quietly, rather more closely during the last hour or so. She did not look at him directly because he seemed always looking at her. Her own troubles had quieted down a little, and her curiosity about the chivalrous, worshipping, but singular gentleman in brown, was awakening. She had recalled, too, the curious incident of their first encounter. She found him hard to explain to herself. You must understand that her knowledge of the world was rather less than nothing, having been obtained entirely from books. You must not take a certain ignorance for foolishness.

She had begun with a few experiments. He did not know French except 'sivver play,' a phrase he seemed to regard as a very good light table joke in itself. His English was uncertain, but not such as books informed her distinguished the lower classes. His manners seemed to her good on the whole, but a trifle over-respectful and out of fashion. He called her 'Madam' once. He seemed a person of means and leisure, but he knew nothing of recent concerts, theatres, or books. How did he spend his time? He was certainly chivalrous, and a trifle simpleminded. She fancied (so much is there in a change of costume) that she had never met with such a man before. What COULD he be?

"Mr. Benson," she said, breaking a silence devoted to landscape.

He rolled over and regarded her, chin on knuckles.

"At your service."

"Do you paint? Are you an artist?"

"Well." Judicious pause. "I should hardly call myself a Nartist." you know. I DO paint a little. And sketch, you know--skitty kind of things."

He plucked and began to nibble a blade of grass. It was really not so much lying as his quick imagination that prompted him to add, "In Papers, you know, and all that."

"I see," said Jessie, looking at him thoughtfully. Artists were a very heterogeneous class certainly, and geniuses had a trick of being a little odd. He avoided her eye and bit his grass. "I don't do MUCH, you know."

"It's not your profession?"

"Oh, no," said Hoopdriver, anxious now to hedge. "I don't make a regular thing of it, you know. jest now and then something comes into my head and down it goes. No--I'm not a regular artist."

"Then you don't practise any regular profession? Mr. Hoopdriver looked into her eyes and saw their quiet unsuspecting regard. He had vague ideas of resuming the detective role. "It's like this," he said, to gain time. "I have a sort of profession. Only there's a kind of reason--nothing much, you know "

"I beg your pardon for cross-examining you."

"No trouble," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "Only I can't very well--I leave it to you, you know. I don't want to make any mystery of it, so far as that goes." Should he plunge boldly and be a barrister? That anyhow was something pretty good. But she might

know about barristry.

"I think I could guess what you are."

"Well--guess," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"You come from one of the colonies?"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Hoopdriver, veering round to the new wind.
"How did you find out THAT?" (the man was born in a London suburb, dear Reader.)

"I guessed," she said.

He lifted his eyebrows as one astonished, and clutched a new piece of grass.

"You were educated up country."

"Good again," said Hoopdriver, rolling over again into her elbow.
"You're a CLAIRVOY ant." He bit at the grass, smiling. "Which colony was it?"

"That I don't know."

"You must guess," said Hoopdriver.

"South Africa," she said. "I strongly incline to South Africa."

"South Africa's quite a large place," he said.

"But South Africa is right?"

"You're warm," said Hoopdriver, "anyhow," and the while his imagination was eagerly exploring this new province.

"South Africa IS right?" she insisted.

He turned over again and nodded, smiling reassuringly into her eyes.

"What made me think of South Africa was that novel of Olive Schreiner's, you know--'The Story of an African Farm.' Gregory Rose is so like you."

"I never read 'The Story of an African Farm,'" said Hoopdriver. "I must. What's he like?"

"You must read the book. But it's a wonderful place, with its mixture of races, and its brand-new civilisation jostling the old savagery. Were you near Khama?"

"He was a long way off from our place," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "We had a little ostrich farm, you know--Just a few hundred of 'em, out Johannesburg way."

"On the Karroo--was it called?"

"That's the term. Some of it was freehold though. Luckily. We got along very well in the old days.--But there's no ostriches on that farm now." He had a diamond mine in his head, just at the moment, but he stopped and left a little to the girl's imagination. Besides which it had occurred to him with a kind of shock that he was lying.

"What became of the ostriches?"

"We sold 'em off, when we parted with the farm. Do you mind if I have another cigarette? That was when I was quite a little chap, you know, that we had this ostrich farm."

"Did you have Blacks and Boers about you?"

"Lots," said Mr. Hoopdriver, striking a match on his instep and beginning to feel hot at the new responsibility he had brought upon himself.

"How interesting! Do you know, I've never been out of England except to Paris and Mentone and Switzerland."

"One gets tired of travelling (puff) after a bit, of course."

"You must tell me about your farm in South Africa. It always stimulates my imagination to think of these places. I can fancy all the tall ostriches being driven out by a black herd--to graze, I suppose. How do ostriches feed?"

"Well," said Hoopdriver. "That's rather various. They have their fancies, you know. There's fruit, of course, and that kind of thing. And chicken food, and so forth. You have to use judgment."

"Did you ever see a lion?" "They weren't very common in our district," said Hoopdriver, quite modestly. "But I've seen them, of course. Once or twice."

"Fancy seeing a lion! Weren't you frightened?"

Mr. Hoopdriver was now thoroughly sorry he had accepted that offer of South Africa. He puffed his cigarette and regarded the Solent languidly as he settled the fate on that lion in his mind. "I scarcely had time," he said. "It all happened in a minute."

"Go on," she said.

"I was going across the inner paddock where the fatted ostriches

were."

"Did you EAT ostriches, then? I did not know--"

"Eat them!--often. Very nice they ARE too, properly stuffed. Well, we--I, rather--was going across this paddock, and I saw something standing up in the moonlight and looking at me." Mr. Hoopdriver was in a hot perspiration now. His invention seemed to have gone limp. "Luckily I had my father's gun with me. I was scared, though, I can tell you. (Puff.) I just aimed at the end that I thought was the head. And let fly. (Puff.) And over it went, you know."

"Dead?"

"AS dead. It was one of the luckiest shots I ever fired. And I wasn't much over nine at the time, neither."

"_I_ should have screamed and run away."

"There's some things you can't run away from," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "To run would have been Death."

"I don't think I ever met a lion-killer before," she remarked, evidently with a heightened opinion of him.

There was a pause. She seemed meditating further questions. Mr. Hoopdriver drew his watch hastily. "I say," said Mr. Hoopdriver, showing it to her, "don't you think we ought to be getting on?"

His face was flushed, his ears bright red. She ascribed his confusion to modesty. He rose with a lion added to the burthens of his conscience, and held out his hand to assist her. They walked down into Cosham again, resumed their machines, and went on at a leisurely pace along the northern shore of the big

harbour. But Mr. Hoopdriver was no longer happy. This horrible, this fulsome lie, stuck in his memory. Why HAD he done it? She did not ask for any more South African stories, happily--at least until Porchester was reached--but talked instead of Living One's Own Life, and how custom hung on people like chains. She talked wonderfully, and set Hoopdriver's mind fermenting. By the Castle, Mr. Hoopdriver caught several crabs in little shore pools. At Fareham they stopped for a second tea, and left the place towards the hour of sunset, under such invigorating circumstances as you shall in due course hear.

THE RESCUE EXPEDITION

XXX

And now to tell of those energetic chevaliers, Widgery, Dangle, and Phipps, and of that distressed beauty, 'Thomas Plantagenet,' well known in society, so the paragraphs said, as Mrs. Milton. We left them at Midhurst station, if I remember rightly, waiting, in a state of fine emotion, for the Chichester train. It was clearly understood by the entire Rescue Party that Mrs. Milton was bearing up bravely against almost overwhelming grief. The three gentlemen outdid one another in sympathetic expedients; they watched her gravely almost tenderly. The substantial Widgery tugged at his moustache, and looked his unspeakable feelings at her with those dog-like, brown eyes of his; the slender Dangle tugged at HIS moustache, and did what he could with unsympathetic grey ones. Phipps, unhappily, had no moustache to run any risks with, so he folded his arms and talked in a brave, indifferent, bearing-up tone about the London, Brighton, and South Coast Railway, just to cheer the poor woman up a little. And even Mrs. Milton really felt that exalted melancholy to the very bottom of her heart, and tried to show it in a dozen little, delicate,

feminine ways.

"There is nothing to do until we get to Chichester," said Dangle.
"Nothing."

"Nothing," said Widgery, and aside in her ear: "You really ate scarcely anything, you know."

"Their trains are always late," said Phipps, with his fingers along the edge of his collar. Dangle, you must understand, was a sub-editor and reviewer, and his pride was to be Thomas Plantagenet's intellectual companion. Widgery, the big man, was manager of a bank and a mighty golfer, and his conception of his relations to her never came into his mind without those charming oldlines, "Douglas, Douglas, tender and true," falling hard upon its heels. His name was Douglas-Douglas Widgery. And Phipps, Phipps was a medical student still, and he felt that he laid his heart at her feet, the heart of a man of the world. She was kind to them all in her way, and insisted on their being friends together, in spite of a disposition to reciprocal criticism they displayed. Dangle thought Widgery a Philistine, appreciating but coarsely the merits of "A Soul Untrammelled," and Widgery thought Dangle lacked, humanity--would talk insincerely to say a clever thing. Both Dangle and Widgery thought Phipps a bit of a cub, and Phipps thought both Dangle and Widgery a couple of Thundering Bounders.

"They would have got to Chichester in time for lunch," said Dangle, in the train. "After, perhaps. And there's no sufficient place in the road. So soon as we get there, Phipps must inquire at the chief hotels to see if any one answering to her description has lunched there."

"Oh, I'LL inquire," said Phipps. "Willingly. I suppose you and Widgery will just hang about--"

He saw an expression of pain on Mrs. Milton's gentle face, and stopped abruptly.

"No," said Dangle, "we shan't HANG ABOUT, as you put it. There are two places in Chichester where tourists might go--the cathedral and a remarkably fine museum. I shall go to the cathedral and make an inquiry or so, while Widgery--"

"The museum. Very well. And after that there's a little thing or two I've thought of myself," said Widgery.

To begin with they took Mrs. Milton in a kind of procession to the Red Hotel and established her there with some tea. "You are so kind to me," she said. "All of you." They signified that it was nothing, and dispersed to their inquiries. By six they returned, their zeal a little damped, without news. Widgery came back with Dangle. Phipps was the last to return. "You're quite sure," said Widgery, "that there isn't any flaw in that inference of yours?"

"Quite," said Dangle, rather shortly.

"Of course," said Widgery, "their starting from Midhurst on the Chichester road doesn't absolutely bind them not to change their minds."

"My dear fellow!--It does. Really it does. You must allow me to have enough intelligence to think of cross-roads. Really you must. There aren't any cross-roads to tempt them. Would they turn aside here? No. Would they turn there? Many more things are inevitable than you fancy."

"We shall see at once," said Widgery, at the window. "Here comes Phipps. For my own part--"

"Phipps!" said Mrs. Milton. "Is he hurrying? Does he look--" She rose in her eagerness, biting her trembling lip, and went towards the window.

"No news," said Phipps, entering.

"Ah!" said Widgery.

"None?" said Dangle.

"Well," said Phipps. "One fellow had got hold of a queer story of a man in bicycling clothes, who was asking the same question about this time yesterday."

"What question?" said Mrs. Milton, in the shadow of the window. She spoke in a low voice, almost a whisper.

"Why--Have you seen a young lady in a grey bicycling costume?"

Dangle caught at his lower lip. "What's that?" he said.

"Yesterday! A man asking after her then! What can THAT mean?"

"Heaven knows," said Phipps, sitting down wearily. "You'd better infer."

"What kind of man?" said Dangle.

"How should I know?--in bicycling costume, the fellow said."

"But what height?--What complexion?"

"Didn't ask," said Phipps. "DIDN'T ASK! Nonsense," said Dangle.

"Ask him yourself," said Phipps. "He's an ostler chap in the

White Hart,--short, thick-set fellow, with a red face and a crusty manner. Leaning up against the stable door. Smells of whiskey. Go and ask him."

"Of course," said Dangle, taking his straw hat from the shade over the stuffed bird on the chifffonier and turning towards the door. "I might have known."

Phipps' mouth opened and shut.

"You're tired, I'm sure, Mr. Phipps," said the lady, soothingly. "Let me ring for some tea for you." It suddenly occurred to Phipps that he had lapsed a little from his chivalry. "I was a little annoyed at the way he rushed me to do all this business," he said. "But I'd do a hundred times as much if it would bring you any nearer to her." Pause. "I WOULD like a little tea."

"I don't want to raise any false hopes," said Widgery. "But I do NOT believe they even came to Chichester. Dangle's a very clever fellow, of course, but sometimes these Inferences of his--"

"Tchak!" said Phipps, suddenly.

"What is it?" said Mrs. Milton.

"Something I've forgotten. I went right out from here, went to every other hotel in the place, and never thought--But never mind. I'll ask when the waiter comes."

"You don't mean--" A tap, and the door opened. "Tea, m'm? yes, m'm," said the waiter.

"One minute," said Phipps. "Was a lady in grey, a cycling lady--"

"Stopped here yesterday? Yessir. Stopped the night. With her

brother, sir--a young gent."

"Brother!" said Mrs. Milton, in a low tone. "Thank God!"

The waiter glanced at her and understood everything. "A young gent, sir," he said, "very free with his money. Give the name of Beaumont." He proceeded to some rambling particulars, and was cross-examined by Widgery on the plans of the young couple.

"Havant! Where's Havant?" said Phipps. "I seem to remember it somewhere."

"Was the man tall?" said Mrs. Milton, intently, "distinguished looking? with a long, flaxen moustache? and spoke with a drawl?"

"Well," said the waiter, and thought. "His moustache, m'm, was scarcely long--scrubby more, and young looking."

"About thirty-five, he was?"

"No, m'm. More like five and twenty. Not that."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Milton, speaking in a curious, hollow voice, fumbling for her salts, and showing the finest self-control. "It must have been her YOUNGER brother--must have been."

"That will do, thank you," said Widgery, officiously, feeling that she would be easier under this new surprise if the man were dismissed. The waiter turned to go, and almost collided with Dangle, who was entering the room, panting excitedly and with a pocket handkerchief held to his right eye. "Hullo!" said dangle. "What's up?"

"What's up with YOU?" said Phipps.

"Nothing--an altercation merely with that drunken ostler of yours. He thought it was a plot to annoy him--that the Young Lady in Grey was mythical. Judged from your manner. I've got a piece of raw meat to keep over it. You have some news, I see?"

"Did the man hit you?" asked Widgery.

Mrs. Milton rose and approached Dangle. "Cannot I do anything?"

Dangle was heroic. "Only tell me your news," he said, round the corner of the handkerchief.

"It was in this way," said Phipps, and explained rather sheepishly. While he was doing so, with a running fire of commentary from Widgery, the waiter brought in a tray of tea. "A time table," said Dangle, promptly, "for Havant." Mrs. Milton poured two cups, and Phipps and Dangle partook in passover form. They caught the train by a hair's breadth. So to Havant and inquiries.

Dangle was puffed up to find that his guess of Havant was right. In view of the fact that beyond Havant the Southampton road has a steep hill continuously on the right-hand side, and the sea on the left, he hit upon a magnificent scheme for heading the young folks off. He and Mrs. Milton would go to Fareham, Widgery and Phipps should alight one each at the intermediate stations of Cosham and Porchester, and come on by the next train if they had no news. If they did not come on, a wire to the Fareham post office was to explain why. It was Napoleonic, and more than consoled Dangle for the open derision of the Havant street boys at the handkerchief which still protected his damaged eye.

Moreover, the scheme answered to perfection. The fugitives escaped by a hair's breadth. They were outside the Golden Anchor at Fareham, and preparing to mount, as Mrs. Milton and Dangle

came round the corner from the station. "It's her!" said Mrs. Milton, and would have screamed. "Hist!" said Dangle, gripping the lady's arm, removing his handkerchief in his excitement, and leaving the piece of meat over his eye, an extraordinary appearance which seemed unexpectedly to calm her. "Be cool!" said Dangle, glaring under the meat. "They must not see us. They will get away else. Were there flies at the station?" The young couple mounted and vanished round the corner of the Winchester road. Had it not been for the publicity of the business, Mrs. Milton would have fainted. "SAVE HER!" she said.

"Ah! A conveyance," said Dangle. "One minute."

He left her in a most pathetic attitude, with her hand pressed to her heart, and rushed into the Golden Anchor. Dog cart in ten minutes. Emerged. The meat had gone now, and one saw the cooling puffiness over his eye. "I will conduct you back to the station," said Dangle; "hurry back here, and pursue them. You will meet Widgery and Phipps and tell them I am in pursuit."

She was whirled back to the railway station and left there, on a hard, blistered, wooden seat in the sun. She felt tired and dreadfully ruffled and agitated and dusty. Dangle was, no doubt, most energetic and devoted ; but for a kindly, helpful manner commend her to Douglas Widgery.

Meanwhile Dangle, his face golden in the evening sun, was driving (as well as he could) a large, black horse harnessed into a thing called a gig, northwestward towards Winchester. Dangle, barring his swollen eye, was a refined-looking little man, and he wore a deerstalker cap and was dressed in dark grey. His neck was long and slender. Perhaps you know what gigs are, --huge, big, wooden things and very high and the horse, too, was huge and big and high, with knobby legs, a long face, a hard mouth, and a whacking trick of pacing. Smack, smack, smack, smack it went along the

road, and hard by the church it shied vigorously at a hooded perambulator.

The history of the Rescue Expedition now becomes confused. It appears that Widgery was extremely indignant to find Mrs. Milton left about upon the Fareham platform. The day had irritated him somehow, though he had started with the noblest intentions, and he seemed glad to find an outlet for justifiable indignation.

"He's such a spasmodic creature," said Widgery. "Rushing off! And I suppose we're to wait here until he comes back! It's likely. He's so egotistical, is Dangle. Always wants to mismanage everything himself."

"He means to help me," said Mrs. Milton, a little reproachfully, touching his arm. Widgery was hardly in the mood to be mollified all at once. "He need not prevent ME," he said, and stopped. "It's no good talking, you know, and you are tired."

"I can go on," she said brightly, "if only we find her." "While I was cooling my heels in Cosham I bought a county map." He produced and opened it. "Here, you see, is the road out of Fareham." He proceeded with the calm deliberation of a business man to develop a proposal of taking train forthwith to Winchester. "They MUST be going to Winchester," he explained. It was inevitable. To-morrow Sunday, Winchester a cathedral town, road going nowhere else of the slightest importance,

"But Mr. Dangle?"

"He will simply go on until he has to pass something, and then he will break his neck. I have seen Dangle drive before. It's scarcely likely a dog-cart, especially a hired dog-cart, will overtake bicycles in the cool of the evening. Rely upon me, Mrs. Milton--"

"I am in your hands," she said, with pathetic littleness, looking up at him, and for the moment he forgot the exasperation of the day.

Phipps, during this conversation, had stood in a somewhat depressed attitude, leaning on his stick, feeling his collar, and looking from one speaker to the other. The idea of leaving Dangle behind seemed to him an excellent one. "We might leave a message at the place where he got the dog-cart," he suggested, when he saw their eyes meeting. There was a cheerful alacrity about all three at the proposal.

But they never got beyond Botley. For even as their train ran into the station, a mighty rumbling was heard, there was a shouting overhead, the guard stood astonished on the platform, and Phipps, thrusting his head out of the window, cried, "There he goes!" and sprang out of the carriage. Mrs. Milton, following in alarm, just saw it. From Widgery it was hidden. Botley station lies in a cutting, overhead was the roadway, and across the lemon yellows and flushed pinks of the sunset, there whirled a great black mass, a horse like a long-nosed chess knight, the upper works of a gig, and Dangle in transit from front to back. A monstrous shadow aped him across the cutting. It was the event of a second. Dangle seemed to jump, hang in the air momentarily, and vanish, and after a moment's pause came a heart-rending smash. Then two black heads running swiftly.

"Better get out," said Phipps to Mrs. Milton, who stood fascinated in the doorway.

In another moment all three were hurrying up the steps. They found Dangle, hatless, standing up with cut hands extended, having his hands brushed by an officious small boy. A broad, ugly road ran downhill in a long vista, and in the distance was a little group of Botley inhabitants holding the big, black horse.

Even at that distance they could see the expression of conscious pride on the monster's visage. It was as wooden-faced a horse as you can imagine. The beasts in the Tower of London, on which the men in armour are perched, are the only horses I have ever seen at all like it. However, we are not concerned now with the horse, but with Dangle. "Hurt?" asked Phipps, eagerly, leading.

"Mr. Dangle!" cried Mrs. Milton, clasping her hands.

"Hullo!" said Dangle, not surprised in the slightest. "Glad you've come. I may want you. Bit of a mess I'm in--eigh? But I've caught 'em. At the very place I expected, too."

"Caught them!" said Widgery. "Where are they?"

"Up there," he said, with a backward motion of his head. "About a mile up the hill. I left 'em. I HAD to."

"I don't understand," said Mrs. Milton, with that rapt, painful look again. "Have you found Jessie?"

"I have. I wish I could wash the gravel out of my hands somewhere. It was like this, you know. Came on them suddenly round a corner. Horse shied at the bicycles. They were sitting by the roadside botanising flowers. I just had time to shout, 'Jessie Milton, we've been looking for you,' and then that confounded brute bolted. I didn't dare turn round. I had all my work to do to save myself being turned over, as it was--so long as I did, I mean. I just shouted, 'Return to your friends. All will be forgiven.' And off I came, clatter, clatter. Whether they heard--"

"TAKE ME TO HER," said Mrs. Milton, with intensity, turning towards Widgery.

"Certainly," said Widgery, suddenly becoming active. "How far is it, Dangle?"

"Mile and a half or two miles. I was determined to find them, you know. I say though--Look at my hands! But I beg your pardon, Mrs. Milton." He turned to Phipps. "Phipps, I say, where shall I wash the gravel out? And have a look at my knee?"

"There's the station," said Phipps, becoming helpful. Dangle made a step, and a damaged knee became evident. "Take my arm," said Phipps.

"Where can we get a conveyance?" asked Widgery of two small boys.

The two small boys failed to understand. They looked at one another.

"There's not a cab, not a go-cart, in sight," said Widgery. "It's a case of a horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse."

"There's a harse all right," said one of the small boys with a movement of the head.

"Don't you know where we can hire traps? asked Widgery. "Or a cart or-- anything?" asked Mrs. Milton.

"John Ooker's gart a cart, but no one can't 'ire'n," said the larger of the small boys, partially averting his face and staring down the road and making a song of it. "And so's my feyther, for's leg us broke."

"Not a cart even! Evidently. What shall we do?"

It occurred to Mrs. Milton that if Widgery was the man for courtly devotion, Dangle was infinitely readier of resource. "I

suppose--" she said, timidly. "Perhaps if you were to ask Mr. Dangle--"

And then all the guilt came off Widgery. He answered quite rudely. "Confound Dangle! Hasn't he messed us up enough? He must needs drive after them in a trap to tell them we're coming, and now you want me to ask him--"

Her beautiful blue eyes were filled with tears. He stopped abruptly. "I'll go and ask Dangle," he said, shortly. "If you wish it." And went striding into the station and down the steps, leaving her in the road under the quiet inspection of the two little boys, and with a kind of ballad refrain running through her head, "Where are the Knights of the Olden Time?" and feeling tired to death and hungry and dusty and out of curl, and, in short, a martyr woman.

XXXI

It goes to my heart to tell of the end of that day, how the fugitives vanished into Immensity; how there were no more trains how Botley stared unsympathetically with a palpable disposition to derision, denying conveyances how the landlord of the Heron was suspicious, how the next day was Sunday, and the hot summer's day had crumpled the collar of Phipps and stained the skirts of Mrs. Milton, and dimmed the radiant emotions of the whole party. Dangle, with sticking-plaster and a black eye, felt the absurdity of the pose of the Wounded Knight, and abandoned it after the faintest efforts. Recriminations never, perhaps, held the foreground of the talk, but they played like summer lightning on the edge of the conversation. And deep in the hearts of all was a galling sense of the ridiculous. Jessie, they thought, was most to blame. Apparently, too, the worst, which would have made the

whole business tragic, was not happening. Here was a young woman --young woman do I say? a mere girl!--had chosen to leave a comfortable home in Surbiton, and all the delights of a refined and intellectual circle, and had rushed off, trailing us after her, posing hard, mutually jealous, and now tired and weather-worn, to flick us off at last, mere mud from her wheel, into this detestable village beer-house on a Saturday night! And she had done it, not for Love and Passion, which are serious excuses one may recognise even if one must reprobate, but just for a Freak, just for a fantastic Idea ; for nothing, in fact, but the outraging of Common Sense. Yet withal, such was our restraint, that we talked of her still as one much misguided, as one who burthened us with anxiety, as a lamb astray, and Mrs. Milton having eaten, continued to show the finest feelings on the matter.

She sat, I may mention, in the cushioned basket-chair, the only comfortable chair in the room, and we sat on incredibly hard, horsehair things having antimacassars tied to their backs by means of lemon-coloured bows. It was different from those dear old talks at Surbiton, somehow. She sat facing the window, which was open (the night was so tranquil and warm), and the dim light--for we did not use the lamp--suited her admirably. She talked in a voice that told you she was tired, and she seemed inclined to state a case against herself in the matter of "A Soul Untrammelled." It was such an evening as might live in a sympathetic memoir, but it was a little dull while it lasted.

"I feel," she said, "that I am to blame. I have Developed. That first book of mine--I do not go back upon a word of it, mind, but it has been misunderstood, misapplied."

"It has," said Widgery, trying to look so deeply sympathetic as to be visible in the dark. "Deliberately misunderstood."

"Don't say that," said the lady. "Not deliberately. I try and think that critics are honest. After their lights. I was not thinking of critics. But she--I mean--" She paused, an interrogation.

"It is possible," said Dangle, scrutinising his sticking-plaster.

"I write a book and state a case. I want people to THINK as I recommend, not to DO as I recommend. It is just Teaching. Only I make it into a story. I want to Teach new Ideas, new Lessons, to promulgate Ideas. Then when the Ideas have been spread abroad--Things will come about. Only now it is madness to fly in the face of the established order. Bernard Shaw, you know, has explained that with regard to Socialism. We all know that to earn all you consume is right, and that living on invested capital is wrong. Only we cannot begin while we are so few. It is Those Others."

"Precisely," said Widgery. "It is Those Others. They must begin first."

"And meanwhile you go on banking--"

"If I didn't, some one else would."

"And I live on Mr. Milton's Lotion while I try to gain a footing in Literature."

"TRY!" said Phipps. "You HAVE done so." And, "That's different," said Dangle, at the same time.

"You are so kind to me. But in this matter. Of course Georgina Griffiths in my book lived alone in a flat in Paris and went to life classes and had men visitors, but then she was over twenty-one."

"Jessica is only seventeen, and girlish for that," said Dangle.

"It alters everything. That child! It is different with a woman. And Georgina Griffiths never flaunted her freedom-- on a bicycle, in country places. In this country. Where every one is so particular. Fancy, SLEEPING away from home. It's dreadful-- If it gets about it spells ruin for her."

"Ruin," said Widgery.

"No man would marry a girl like that," said Phipps.

"It must be hushed up," said Dangle.

"It always seems to me that life is made up of individuals, of individual cases. We must weigh each person against his or her circumstances. General rules don't apply--"

"I often feel the force of that," said Widgery. "Those are my rules. Of course my books--"

"It's different, altogether different," said Dangle. "A novel deals with typical cases."

"And life is not typical," said Widgery, with immense profundity.

Then suddenly, unintentionally, being himself most surprised and shocked of any in the room, Phipps yawned. The yawning was infectious, and the gathering having, as you can easily understand, talked itself weary, dispersed on trivial pretences. But not to sleep immediately. Directly Dangle was alone he began, with infinite disgust, to scrutinise his darkling eye, for he was a neat-minded little man in spite of his energy. The whole business--so near a capture--was horribly vexatious. Phipps sat

on his bed for some time examining, with equal disgust, a collar he would have thought incredible for Sunday twenty-four hours before. Mrs. Milton fell a-musing on the mortality of even big, fat men with dog-like eyes, and Widgery was unhappy because he had been so cross to her at the station, and because so far he did not feel that he had scored over Dangle. Also he was angry with Dangle. And all four of them, being souls living very much upon the appearances of things, had a painful, mental middle distance of Botley derisive and suspicious, and a remoter background of London humorous, and Surbiton speculative. Were they really, after all, behaving absurdly?

MR. HOOPDRIVER, KNIGHT ERRANT

XXXII

As Mr. Dangle had witnessed, the fugitives had been left by him by the side of the road about two miles from Botley. Before Mr. Dangle's appearance, Mr. Hoopdriver had been learning with great interest that mere roadside flowers had names,--star-flowers, wind-stars, St. John's wort, willow herb, lords and ladies, bachelor's buttons,--most curious names, some of them. "The flowers are all different in South Africa, y'know," he was explaining with a happy fluke of his imagination to account for his ignorance. Then suddenly, heralded by clattering sounds and a gride of wheels, Dangle had flared and thundered across the tranquillity of the summer evening; Dangle, swaying and gesticulating behind a corybantic black horse, had hailed Jessie by her name, had backed towards the hedge for no ostensible reason, and vanished to the accomplishment of the Fate that had been written down for him from the very beginning of things. Jessie and Hoopdriver had scarcely time to stand up and seize their machines, before this tumultuous, this swift and wonderful

passing of Dangle was achieved. He went from side to side of the road,--worse even than the riding forth of Mr. Hoopdriver it was, --and vanished round the corner.

"He knew my name," said Jessie. "Yes--it was Mr. Dangle."

"That was our bicycles did that," said Mr. Hoopdriver simultaneously, and speaking with a certain complacent concern. "I hope he won't get hurt."

"That was Mr. Dangle," repeated Jessie, and Mr. Hoopdriver heard this time, with a violent start. His eyebrows went up spasmodically.

"What! someone you know?"

"Yes."

"Lord!"

"He was looking for me," said Jessie. "I could see. He began to call to me before the horse shied. My stepmother has sent him."

Mr. Hoopdriver wished he had returned the bicycle after all, for his ideas were still a little hazy about Bechamel and Mrs. Milton. Honesty IS the best policy--often, he thought. He turned his head this way and that. He became active. "After us, eigh? Then he'll come back. He's gone down that hill, and he won't be able to pull up for a bit, I'm certain."

Jessie, he saw, had wheeled her machine into the road and was mounting. Still staring at the corner that had swallowed up Dangle, Hoopdriver followed suit. And so, just as the sun was setting, they began another flight together,--riding now towards Bishops Waltham, with Mr. Hoopdriver in the post of danger--the

rear--ever and again looking over his shoulder and swerving dangerously as he did so. Occasionally Jessie had to slacken her pace. He breathed heavily, and hated himself because his mouth fell open, After nearly an hour's hard riding, they found themselves uncaught at Winchester. Not a trace of Dangle nor any other danger was visible as they rode into the dusky, yellow-lit street. Though the bats had been fluttering behind the hedges and the evening star was bright while they were still two miles from Winchester, Mr. Hoopdriver pointed out the dangers of stopping in such an obvious abiding-place, and gently but firmly insisted upon replenishing the lamps and riding on towards Salisbury. From Winchester, roads branch in every direction, and to turn abruptly westward was clearly the way to throw off the chase. As Hoopdriver saw the moon rising broad and yellow through the twilight, he thought he should revive the effect of that ride out of Bognor; but somehow, albeit the moon and all the atmospheric effects were the same, the emotions were different. They rode in absolute silence, and slowly after they had cleared the outskirts of Winchester. Both of them were now nearly tired out,--the level was tedious, and even a little hill a burden; and so it came about that in the hamlet of Wallenstock they were beguiled to stop and ask for accommodation in an exceptionally prosperous-looking village inn. A plausible landlady rose to the occasion.

Now, as they passed into the room where their suppers were prepared, Mr. Hoopdriver caught a glimpse through a door ajar and floating in a reek of smoke, of three and a half faces-- for the edge of the door cut one down--and an American cloth-covered table with several glasses and a tankard. And he also heard a remark. In the second before he heard that remark, Mr. Hoopdriver had been a proud and happy man, to particularize, a baronet's heir incognito. He had surrendered their bicycles to the odd man of the place with infinite easy dignity, and had bowingly opened the door for Jessie. "Who's that, then?" he imagined people

saying; and then, "Some'n pretty well orf--judge by the bicycles." Then the imaginary spectators would fall a-talking of the fashionableness of bicycling,--how judges And stockbrokers and actresses and, in fact, all the best people rode, and how that it was often the fancy of such great folk to shun the big hotels, the adulation of urban crowds, and seek, incognito, the cosy quaintnesses of village life. Then, maybe, they would think of a certain nameless air of distinction about the lady who had stepped across the doorway, and about the handsome, flaxen-moustached, blue-eyed Cavalier who had followed her in, and they would look one to another. "Tell you what it is," one of the village elders would say--just as they do in novels--voicing the thought of all, in a low, impressive tone: "There's such a thinas entertaining barranets unawares-not to mention no higher things--"

Such, I say, had been the filmy, delightful stuff in Mr. Hoopdriver's head the moment before he heard that remark. But the remark toppled him headlong. What the precise remark was need not concern us. It was a casual piece of such satire as Strephon delights in. Should you be curious, dear lady, as to its nature, you have merely to dress yourself in a really modern cycling costume, get one of the feeblest-looking of your men to escort you, and ride out, next Saturday evening, to any public house where healthy, homely people gather together. Then you will hear quite a lot of the kind of thing Mr. Hoopdriver heard. More, possibly, than you will desire.

The remark, I must add, implicated Mr. Hoopdriver. It indicated an entire disbelief in his social standing. At a blow, it shattered all the gorgeous imaginative fabric his mind had been rejoicing in. All that foolish happiness vanished like a dream. And there was nothing to show for it, as there is nothing to show for any spiteful remark that has ever been made. Perhaps the man who said the thing had a gleam of satisfaction at the idea of

taking a complacent-looking fool down a peg, but it is just as possible he did not know at the time that his stray shot had hit. He had thrown it as a boy throws a stone at a bird. And it not only demolished a foolish, happy conceit, but it wounded. It touched Jessie grossly.

She did not hear it, he concluded from her subsequent bearing; but during the supper they had in the little private dining-room, though she talked cheerfully, he was preoccupied. Whiffs of indistinct conversation, and now and then laughter, came in from the inn parlour through the pelargoniums in the open window. Hoopdriver felt it must all be in the same strain,--at her expense and his. He answered her abstractedly. She was tired, she said, and presently went to her room. Mr. Hoopdriver, in his courtly way, opened the door for her and bowed her out. He stood listening and fearing some new offence as she went upstairs, and round the bend where the barometer hung beneath the stuffed birds. Then he went back to the room, and stood on the hearthrug before the paper fireplace ornament. "Cads!" he said in a scathing undertone, as a fresh burst of laughter came floating in. All through supper he had been composing stinging repartee, a blistering speech of denunciation to be presently delivered. He would rate them as a nobleman should: "Call themselves Englishmen, indeed, and insult a woman!" he would say; take the names and addresses perhaps, threaten to speak to the Lord of the Manor, promise to let them hear from him again, and so out with consternation in his wake. It really ought to be done.

"Teach 'em better," he said fiercely, and tweaked his moustache painfully. What was it? He revived the objectionable remark for his own exasperation, and then went over the heads of his speech again.

He coughed, made three steps towards the door, then stopped and went back to the hearthrug. He wouldn't--after all. Yet was he

not a Knight Errant? Should such men go unproved, unchecked, by wandering baronets incognito? Magnanimity? Look at it in that way? Churls beneath one's notice? No; merely a cowardly subterfuge. He WOULD after all.

Something within him protested that he was a hot-headed ass even as he went towards the door again. But he only went on the more resolutely. He crossed the hall, by the bar, and entered the room from which the remark had proceeded. He opened the door abruptly and stood scowling on them in the doorway. "You'll only make a mess of it," remarked the internal sceptic. There were five men in the room altogether: a fat person, with a long pipe and a great number of chins, in an armchair by the fireplace, who wished Mr. Hoopdriver a good evening very affably; a young fellow smoking a cutty and displaying crossed legs with gaiters ; a little, bearded man with a toothless laugh; a middle-aged, comfortable man with bright eyes, who wore a velveteen jacket; and a fair young man, very genteel in a yellowish-brown ready-made suit and a white tie.

"H'm," said Mr. Hoopdriver, looking very stern and harsh. And then in a forbidding tone, as one who consented to no liberties, "Good evening."

"Very pleasant day we've been 'aving," said the fair young man with the white tie.

"Very," said Mr. Hoopdriver, slowly; and taking a brown armchair, he planted it with great deliberation where he faced the fireplace, and sat down. Let's see--how did that speech begin?

"Very pleasant roads about here," said the fair young man with the white tie.

"Very," said Mr. Hoopdriver, eyeing him darkly. Have to begin

somehow. "The roads about here are all right, and the weather about here is all right, but what I've come in here to say is--there's some damned unpleasant people--damned unpleasant people!"

"Oh!" said the young man with the gaiters, apparently making a mental inventory of his pearl buttons as he spoke. "How's that?"

Mr. Hoopdriver put his hands on his knees and stuck out his elbows with extreme angularity. In his heart he was raving at his idiotic folly at thus bearding these lions,--indisputably they WERE lions,--but he had to go through with it now. Heaven send, his breath, which was already getting a trifle spasmodic, did not suddenly give out. He fixed his eye on the face of the fat man with the chins, and spoke in a low, impressive voice. "I came here, sir," said Mr. Hoopdriver, and paused to inflate his cheeks, "with a lady."

"Very nice lady," said the man with the gaiters, putting his head on one side to admire a pearl button that had been hiding behind the curvature of his calf. "Very nice lady indeed."

"I came here," said Mr. Hoopdriver, "with a lady."

"We saw you did, bless you," said the fat man with the chins, in a curious wheezy voice. "I don't see there's anything so very extraordinary in that. One 'ud think we hadn't eyes."

Mr. Hoopdriver coughed. "I came, here, sir--"

"We've 'eard that," said the little man with the beard, sharply and went off into an amiable chuckle. "We know it by 'art," said the little man, elaborating the point.

Mr. Hoopdriver temporarily lost his thread. He glared malignantly

at the little man with the beard, and tried to recover his discourse. A pause.

"You were saying," said the fair young man with the white tie, speaking very politely, "that you came here with a lady."

"A lady," meditated the gaiter gazer.

The man in velveteen, who was looking from one speaker to another with keen, bright eyes, now laughed as though a point had been scored, and stimulated Mr. Hoopdriver to speak, by fixing him with an expectant regard.

"Some dirty cad," said Mr. Hoopdriver, proceeding with his discourse, and suddenly growing extremely fierce, "made a remark as we went by this door."

"Steady on!" said the old gentleman with many chins. "Steady on! Don't you go a-calling us names, please."

"One minute!" said Mr. Hoopdriver. "It wasn't I began calling names." ("Who did?" said the man with the chins.) "I'm not calling any of you dirty cads. Don't run away with that impression. Only some person in this room made a remark that showed he wasn't fit to wipe boots on, and, with all due deference to such gentlemen as ARE gentlemen" (Mr. Hoopdriver looked round for moral support), "I want to know which it was."

"Meanin'?" said the fair young man in the white tie.

"That I'm going to wipe my boots on 'im straight away," said Mr. Hoopdriver, reverting to anger, if with a slight catch in his throat--than which threat of personal violence nothing had been further from his thoughts on entering the room. He said this because he could think of nothing else to say, and stuck out his

elbows truculently to hide the sinking of his heart. It is curious how situations run away with us.

"Ullo, Charlie!" said the little man, and "My eye!" said the owner of the chins. 'You're going to wipe your boots on 'im?" said the fair young man, in a tone of mild surprise.

"I am," said Mr. Hoopdriver, with emphatic resolution, and glared in the young man's face.

"That's fair and reasonable," said the man in the velveteen jacket; "if you can."

The interest of the meeting seemed transferred to the young man in the white tic. "Of course, if you can't find out which it is, I suppose you're prepared to wipe your boots in a liberal way on everybody in the room," said this young man, in the same tone of impersonal question. "This gentleman, the champion lightweight--"

"Own up, Charlie," said the young man with the gaiters, looking up for a moment. "And don't go a-dragging in your betters. It's fair and square. You can't get out of it."

"Was it this--gent?" began Mr. Hoopdriver.

"Of course," said the young man in the white tie, "when it comes to talking of wiping boots--"

"I'm not talking; I'm going to do it," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

He looked round at the meeting. They were no longer antagonists; they were spectators. He would have to go through with it now. But this tone of personal aggression on the maker of the remark had somehow got rid of the oppressive feeling of Hoopdriver contra mundum. Apparently, he would have to fight someone. Would

he get a black eye? Would he get very much hurt? Pray goodness it wasn't that sturdy chap in the gaiters! Should he rise and begin? What would she think if he brought a black eye to breakfast to-morrow?" "Is this the man?" said Mr. Hoopdriver, with a business-like calm, and arms more angular than ever.

"Eat 'im!" said the little man with the beard; "eat 'im straight orf."

"Steady on!" said the young man in the white tie. "Steady on a minute. If I did happen to say--"

"You did, did you?" said Mr. Hoopdriver.

Backing out of it, Charlie?" said the young man with the gaiters.

"Not a bit," said Charlie. "Surely we can pass a bit of a joke--"

"I'm going to teach you to keep your jokes to yourself," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"Bray-vo!" said the shepherd of the flock of chins.

"Charlie IS a bit too free with his jokes," said the little man with the beard.

"It's downright disgusting," said Hoopdriver, falling back upon his speech. "A lady can't ride a bicycle in a country road, or wear a dress a little out of the ordinary, but every dirty little greaser must needs go shouting insults--"

"_I_ didn't know the young lady would hear what I said," said Charlie. " Surely one can speak friendly to one's friends. How was I to know the door was open--"

Hoopdriver began to suspect that his antagonist was, if possible, more seriously alarmed at the prospect of violence than himself, and his spirits rose again. These chaps ought to have a thorough lesson. "Of COURSE you knew the door was open," he retorted indignantly. "Of COURSE you thought we should hear what you said. Don't go telling lies about it. It's no good your saying things like that. You've had your fun, and you meant to have your fun. And I mean to make an example of you, Sir."

"Ginger beer," said the little man with the beard, in a confidential tone to the velveteen jacket, "is regular up this 'ot weather. Bustin' its bottles it is everywhere."

"What's the good of scrapping about in a publichouse?" said Charlie, appealing to the company. "A fair fight without interruptions, now, I WOULDN'T mind, if the gentleman's so disposed."

Evidently the man was horribly afraid. Mr. Hoopdriver grew truculent.

"Where you like," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "jest wherever you like."

"You insulted the gent," said the man in velveteen.

"Don't be a bloomin' funk, Charlie," said the man in gaiters. "Why, you got a stone of him, if you got an ounce."

"What I say, is this," said the gentleman with the excessive chins, trying to get a hearing by banging his chair arms. "If Charlie goes saying things, he ought to back 'em up. That's what I say. I don't mind his sayin' such things 't all, but he ought to be prepared to back 'em up."

"I'll BACK 'em up all right," said Charlie, with extremely bitter

emphasis on 'back.' "If the gentleman likes to come Toosday week--"

"Rot!" chopped in Hoopdriver. "Now."

"'Ear, 'ear," said the owner of the chins.

"Never put off till to-morrow, Charlie, what you can do to-day," said the man in the velveteen coat.

"You got to do it, Charlie," said the man in gaiters. "It's no good."

"It's like this," said Charlie, appealing to everyone except Hoopdriver. "Here's me, got to take in her ladyship's dinner to-morrow night. How should I look with a black eye? And going round with the carriage with a split lip?"

"If you don't want your face sp'iled, Charlie, why don't you keep your mouth shut?" said the person in gaiters.

"Exactly," said Mr. Hoopdriver, driving it home with great fierceness. "Why don't you shut your ugly mouth?"

"It's as much as my situation's worth," protested Charlie.

"You should have thought of that before," said Hoopdriver.

"There's no occasion to be so thunderin' 'ot about it. I only meant the thing joking," said Charlie. "AS one gentleman to another, I'm very sorry if the gentleman's annoyed--"

Everybody began to speak at once. Mr. Hoopdriver twirled his moustache. He felt that Charlie's recognition of his gentlemanliness was at any rate a redeeming feature. But it

became his pose to ride hard and heavy over the routed force. He shouted some insulting phrase over the tumult.

"You're regular abject," the man in gaiters was saying to Charlie.

More confusion.

"Only don't think I'm afraid,--not of a spindle-legged cuss like him shouted Charlie. "Because I ain't."

"Change of front," thought Hoopdriver, a little startled. "Where are we going?"

"Don't sit there and be abusive," said the man in velveteen. "He's offered to hit you, and if I was him, I'd hit you now."

"All right, then," said Charlie, with a sudden change of front and springing to his feet. "If I must, I must. Now, then!" At that, Hoopdriver, the child of Fate, rose too, with a horrible sense that his internal monitor was right. Things had taken a turn. He had made a mess of it, and now there was nothing for it, so far as he could see, but to hit the man at once. He and Charlie stood six feet apart, with a table between, both very breathless and fierce. A vulgar fight in a public-house, and with what was only too palpably a footman! Good Heavens! And this was the dignified, scornful remonstrance! How the juice had it all happened? Go round the table at him, I suppose. But before the brawl could achieve itself, the man in gaiters intervened. "Not here," he said, stepping between the antagonists. Everyone was standing up.

"Charlie's artful," said the little man with the beard.

"Buller's yard," said the man with the gaiters, taking the

control of the entire affair with the easy readiness of an accomplished practitioner. "If the gentleman DON'T mind." Buller's yard, it seemed, was the very place. "We'll do the thing regular and decent, if you please." And before he completely realized what was happening, Hoopdriver was being marched out through the back premises of the inn, to the first and only fight with fists that was ever to glorify his life.

Outwardly, so far as the intermittent moonlight showed, Mr. Hoopdriver was quietly but eagerly prepared to fight. But inwardly he was a chaos of conflicting purposes. It was extraordinary how things happened. One remark had trod so closely on the heels of another, that he had had the greatest difficulty in following the development of the business. He distinctly remembered himself walking across from one room to the other,--a dignified, even an aristocratic figure, primed with considered eloquence, intent upon a scathing remonstrance to these wretched yokels, regarding their manners. Then incident had flickered into incident until here he was out in a moonlit lane,--a slight, dark figure in a group of larger, indistinct figures,--marching in a quiet, business-like way towards some unknown horror at Buller's yard. Fists! It was astonishing. It was terrible! In front of him was the pallid figure of Charles, and he saw that the man in gaiters held Charles kindly but firmly by the arm.

"It's blasted rot," Charles was saying, "getting up a fight just for a thing like that; all very well for 'im. 'E's got 'is 'olidays; 'e 'asn't no blessed dinner to take up to-morrow night like I 'ave.--No need to numb my arm, IS there?"

They went into Buller's yard through gates. There were sheds in Buller's yard--sheds of mystery that the moonlight could not solve--a smell of cows, and a pump stood out clear and black, throwing a clear black shadow on the whitewashed wall. And here it was his face was to be battered to a pulp. He knew this was

the uttermost folly, to stand up here and be pounded, but the way out of it was beyond his imagining. Yet afterwards--? Could he ever face her again? He patted his Norfolk jacket and took his ground with his back to the gate. How did one square? So? Suppose one were to turn and run even now, run straight back to the inn and lock himself into his bedroom? They couldn't make, him come out--anyhow. He could prosecute them for assault if they did. How did one set about prosecuting for assault? He saw Charles, with his face ghastly white under the moon, squaring in front of him.

He caught a blow on the arm and gave ground. Charles pressed him. Then he hit with his right and with the violence of despair. It was a hit of his own devising,--an impromptu,--but it chanced to coincide with the regulation hook hit at the head. He perceived with a leap of exultation that the thing his fist had met was the jawbone of Charles. It was the sole gleam of pleasure he experienced during the fight, and it was quite momentary. He had hardly got home upon Charles before he was struck in the chest and whirled backward. He had the greatest difficulty in keeping his feet. He felt that his heart was smashed flat. "Gord darm!" said somebody, dancing toe in hand somewhere behind him. As Mr. Hoopdriver staggered, Charles gave a loud and fear-compelling cry. He seemed to tower over Hoopdriver in the moonlight. Both his fists were whirling. It was annihilation coming--no less. Mr. Hoopdriver ducked perhaps and certainly gave ground to the right, hit, and missed. Charles swept round to the left, missing generously. A blow glanced over Mr. Hoopdriver's left ear, and the flanking movement was completed. Another blow behind the ear. Heaven and earth spun furiously round Mr. Hoopdriver, and then he became aware of a figure in a light suit shooting violently through an open gate into the night. The man in gaiters sprang forward past Mr. Hoopdriver, but too late to intercept the fugitive. There were shouts, laughter, and Mr. Hoopdriver, still solemnly squaring, realized the great and wonderful truth--Charles had fled. He, Hoopdriver, had fought and, by all

the rules of war, had won.

"That was a pretty cut under the jaw you gave him," the toothless little man with the beard was remarking in an unexpectedly friendly manner.

"The fact of it is," said Mr. Hoopdriver, sitting beside the road to Salisbury, and with the sound of distant church bells in his ears, "I had to give the fellow a lesson; simply had to."

"It seems so dreadful that you should have to knock people about," said Jessie.

"These louts get unbearable," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "If now and then we didn't give them a lesson,--well, a lady cyclist in the roads would be an impossibility."

"I suppose every woman shrinks from violence," said Jessie. "I suppose men ARE braver--in a way--than women. It seems to me-I can't imagine -how one could bring oneself to face a roomful of rough characters, pick out the bravest, and give him an exemplary thrashing. I quail at the idea. I thought only Ouida's guardsmen did things like that."

"It was nothing more than my duty--as a gentleman," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"But to walk straight into the face of danger!"

"It's habit," said Mr. Hoopdriver, quite modestly, flicking off a particle of cigarette ash that had settled on his knee.

THE ABASEMENT OF MR. HOOPDRIVER

XXXIII

On Monday morning the two fugitives found themselves breakfasting at the Golden Pheasant in Blandford. They were in the course of an elaborate doubling movement through Dorsetshire towards Ringwood, where Jessie anticipated an answer from her schoolmistress friend. By this time they had been nearly sixty hours together, and you will understand that Mr. Hoopdriver's feelings had undergone a considerable intensification and development. At first Jessie had been only an impressionist sketch upon his mind, something feminine, active, and dazzling, something emphatically "above " him, cast into his company by a kindly fate. His chief idea, at the outset, as you know, had been to live up to her level, by pretending to be more exceptional, more wealthy, better educated, and, above all, better born than he was. His knowledge of the feminine mind was almost entirely derived from the young ladies he had met in business, and in that class (as in military society and among gentlemen's servants) the good old tradition of a brutal social exclusiveness is still religiously preserved. He had an almost intolerable dread of her thinking him a 'I bounder.' Later he began to perceive the distinction of her idiosyncracies. Coupled with a magnificent want of experience was a splendid enthusiasm for abstract views of the most advanced description, and her strength of conviction completely carried Hoopdriver away. She was going to Live her Own Life, with emphasis, and Mr. Hoopdriver was profoundly stirred to similar resolves. So soon as he grasped the tenor of her views, he perceived that he himself had thought as much from his earliest years. "Of course," he remarked, in a flash of sexual pride, "a man is freer than a woman. End in the Colonies, y'know, there isn't half the Conventionality you find in society in this country."

He made one or two essays in the display of unconventionality,

and was quite unaware that he impressed her as a narrow-minded person. He suppressed the habits of years and made no proposal to go to church. He discussed church-going in a liberal spirit.

"It's jest a habit," he said, "jest a custom. I don't see what good it does you at all, really." And he made a lot of excellent jokes at the chimney-pot hat, jokes he had read in the Globe 'turnovers' on that subject. But he showed his gentle breeding by keeping his gloves on all through the Sunday's ride, and ostentatiously throwing away more than half a cigarette when they passed a church whose congregation was gathering for afternoon service. He cautiously avoided literary topics, except by way of compliment, seeing that she was presently to be writing books.

It was on Jessie's initiative that they attended service in the old-fashioned gallery of Blandford church. Jessie's conscience, I may perhaps tell you, was now suffering the severest twinges. She perceived clearly that things were not working out quite along the lines she had designed-. She had read her Olive Schreiner and George Egerton, and so forth, with all the want of perfect comprehension of one who is still emotionally a girl. She knew the thing to do was to have a flat and to go to the British Museum and write leading articles for the daily papers until something better came along. If Bechamel (detestable person) had kept his promises, instead of behaving with unspeakable horridness, all would have been well. Now her only hope was that liberal-minded woman, Miss Mergle, who, a year ago, had sent her out, highly educated, into the world. Miss Mergle had told her at parting to live fearlessly and truly, and had further given her a volume of Emerson's Essays and Motley's "Dutch Republic," to help her through the rapids of adolescence.

Jessie's feelings for her stepmother's household at Surbiton amounted to an active detestation. There are no graver or more solemn women in the world than these clever girls whose scholastic advancement has retarded their feminine coquetry. In

spite of the advanced tone of 'Thomas Plantagenet's' antimarital novel, Jessie had speedily seen through that amiable woman's amiable defences. The variety of pose necessitated by the corps of 'Men' annoyed her to an altogether unreasonable degree. To return to this life of ridiculous unreality--unconditional capitulation to 'Conventionality' was an exasperating prospect. Yet what else was there to do? You will understand, therefore, that at times she was moody (and Mr. Hoopdriver respectfully silent and attentive) and at times inclined to eloquent denunciation of the existing order of things. She was a Socialist, Hoopdriver learnt, and he gave a vague intimation that he went further, intending, thereby, no less than the horrors of anarchism. He would have owned up to the destruction of the Winter Palace indeed, had he had the faintest idea where the Winter Palace was, and had his assurance amounted to certainty that the Winter Palace was destroyed. He agreed with her cordially that the position of women was intolerable, but checked himself on the 'verge of the proposition that a girl ought not to expect a fellow to hand down boxes for her when he was getting the 'swap' from a customer. It was Jessie's preoccupation with her own perplexities, no doubt, that delayed the unveiling of Mr. Hoopdriver all through Saturday and Sunday. Once or twice, however, there were incidents that put him about terribly--even questions that savoured of suspicion.

On Sunday night, for no conceivable reason, an unwonted wakefulness came upon him. Unaccountably he realised he was a contemptible liar, All through the small hours of Monday he reviewed the tale of his falsehoods, and when he tried to turn his mind from that, the financial problem suddenly rose upon him. He heard two o'clock strike, and three. It is odd how unhappy some of us are at times, when we are at our happiest.

XXXIV

"Good morning, Madam," said Hoopdriver, as Jessie came into the breakfast room of the Golden Pheasant on Monday morning, and he smiled, bowed, rubbed his hands together, and pulled out a chair for her, and rubbed his hands again.

She stopped abruptly, with a puzzled expression on her face. "Where HAVE I seen that before?" she said.

"The chair?" said Hoopdriver, flushing.

"No--the attitude."

She came forward and shook hands with him, looking the while curiously into his face. "And--Madam?"

"It's a habit," said Mr. Hoopdriver, guiltily. "A bad habit. Calling ladies Madam. You must put it down to our colonial roughness. Out there up country--y'know--the ladies--so rare--we call 'em all Madam."

"You HAVE some funny habits, brother Chris," said Jessie. "Before you sell your diamond shares and go into society, as you say, and stand for Parliament--What a fine thing it is to be a man!--you must cure yourself. That habit of bowing as you do, and rubbing your hands, and looking expectant."

"It's a habit."

"I know. But I don't think it a good one. You don't mind my telling you?"

"Not a bit. I'm grateful."

"I'm blessed or afflicted with a trick of observation," said Jessie, looking at the breakfast table. Mr. Hoopdriver put his hand to his moustache and then, thinking this might be another habit, checked his arm and stuck his hand into his pocket. He felt juiced awkward, to use his private formula. Jessie's eye wandered to the armchair, where a piece of binding was loose, and, possibly to carry out her theory of an observant disposition, she turned and asked him for a pin.

Mr. Hoopdriver's hand fluttered instinctively to his lappel, and there, planted by habit, were a couple of stray pins he had impounded.

"What an odd place to put pins!" exclaimed Jessie, taking it.

"It's 'andy," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "I saw a chap in a shop do it once."

"You must have a careful disposition," she said, over her shoulder, kneeling down to the chair.

"In the centre of Africa--up country, that is--one learns to value pins," said Mr. Hoopdriver, after a perceptible pause. "There weren't over many pins in Africa. They don't lie about on the ground there." His face was now in a fine, red glow. Where would the draper break out next? He thrust his hands into his coat pockets, then took one out again, furtively removed the second pin and dropped it behind him gently. It fell with a loud 'ping' on the fender. Happily she made no remark, being preoccupied with the binding of the chair.

Mr. Hoopdriver, instead of sitting down, went up to the table and stood against it, with his finger-tips upon the cloth. They were keeping breakfast a tremendous time. He took up his rolled serviette looked closely and scrutinisingly at the ring, then put

his hand under the fold of the napkin and examined the texture, and put the thing down again. Then he had a vague impulse to finger his hollow wisdom tooth--happily checked. He suddenly discovered he was standing as if the table was a counter, and sat down forthwith. He drummed with his hand on the table. He felt dreadfully hot and self-conscious.

"Breakfast is late," said Jessie, standing up.

"Isn't it?"

Conversation was slack. Jessie wanted to know the distance to Ringwood. Then silence fell again.

Mr. Hoopdriver, very uncomfortable and studying an easy bearing, looked again at the breakfast things and then idly lifted the corner of the tablecloth on the ends of his fingers, and regarded it. "Fifteen three," he thought, privately.

"Why do you do that?" said Jessie.

"WHAT?" said Hoopdriver, dropping the tablecloth convulsively.

"Look at the cloth like that. I saw you do it yesterday, too."

Mr. Hoopdriver's face became quite a bright red. He began pulling his moustache nervously. "I know," he said. "I know. It's a queer habit, I know. But out there, you know, there's native servants, you know, and--it's a queer thing to talk about--but one has to look at things to see, don't y'know, whether they're quite clean or not. It's got to be a habit."

"How odd!" said Jessie.

"Isn't it?" mumbled Hoopdriver.

"If I were a Sherlock Holmes," said Jessie, "I suppose I could have told you were a colonial from little things like that. But anyhow, I guessed it, didn't I?"

"Yes," said Hoopdriver, in a melancholy tone, "you guessed it."

Why not seize the opportunity for a neat confession, and add, "unhappily in this case you guessed wrong." Did she suspect? Then, at the psychological moment, the girl bumped the door open with her tray and brought in the coffee and scrambled eggs.

"I am rather lucky with my intuitions, sometimes," said Jessie.

Remorse that had been accumulating in his mind for two days surged to the top of his mind. What a shabby liar he was!

And, besides, he must sooner or later, inevitably, give himself away.

XXXV

Mr. Hoopdriver helped the eggs and then, instead of beginning, sat with his cheek on his hand, watching Jessie pour out the coffee. His ears were a bright red, and his eyes bright. He took his coffee cup clumsily, cleared his throat, suddenly leant back in his chair, and thrust his hands deep into his pockets. "I'll do it," he said aloud.

"Do what?" said Jessie, looking up in surprise over the coffee pot. She was just beginning her scrambled egg.

"Own up."

"Own what?"

"Miss Milton-- I'm a liar." He put his head on one side and regarded her with a frown of tremendous resolution. Then in measured accents, and moving his head slowly from side to side, he announced, "Ay'm a deraper."

"You're a draper? I thought--"

"You thought wrong. But it's bound to come up. Pins, attitude, habits--It's plain enough.

"I'm a draper's assistant let out for a ten-days holiday. Jest a draper's assistant. Not much, is it? A counter-jumper."

"A draper's assistant isn't a position to be ashamed of," she said, recovering, and not quite understanding yet what this all meant.

"Yes, it is," he said, "for a man, in this country now. To be just another man's hand, as I am. To have to wear what clothes you are told, and go to church to please customers, and work--There's no other kind of men stand such hours. A drunken bricklayer's a king to it."

"But why are you telling me this now?"

"It's important you should know at once."

"But, Mr. Benson--"

"That isn't all. If you don't mind my speaking about myself a bit, there's a few things I'd like to tell you. I can't go on deceiving you. My name's not Benson. WHY I told you Benson, I

DON'T know. Except that I'm a kind of fool. Well--I wanted somehow to seem more than I was. My name's Hoopdriver."

"Yes?"

"And that about South Africa--and that lion."

"Well?"

"Lies."

"Lies!"

And the discovery of diamonds on the ostrich farm. Lies too. And all the reminiscences of the giraffes--lies too. I never rode on no giraffes. I'd be afraid."

He looked at her with a kind of sullen satisfaction. He had eased his conscience, anyhow. She regarded him in infinite perplexity. This was a new side altogether to the man. "But WHY," she began.

"Why did I tell you such things? _I_ don't know. Silly sort of chap, I expect. I suppose I wanted to impress you. But somehow, now, I want you to know the truth."

Silence. Breakfast untouched. "I thought I'd tell you," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "I suppose it's snobbishness and all that kind of thing, as much as anything. I lay awake pretty near all last night thinking about myself; thinking what a got-up imitation of a man I was, and all that."

"And you haven't any diamond shares, and you are not going into Parliament, and you're not--"

"All Lies," said Hoopdriver, in a sepulchral voice. "Lies from

beginning to end. 'Ow I came to tell 'em I DON'T know."

She stared at him blankly.

"I never set eyes on Africa in my life," said Mr. Hoopdriver, completing the confession. Then he pulled his right hand from his pocket, and with the nonchalance of one to whom the bitterness of death is passed, began to drink his coffee.

"It's a little surprising," began Jessie, vaguely.

"Think it over," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "I'm sorry from the bottom of my heart."

And then breakfast proceeded in silence. Jessie ate very little, and seemed lost in thought. Mr. Hoopdriver was so overcome by contrition and anxiety that he consumed an extraordinarily large breakfast out of pure nervousness, and ate his scrambled eggs for the most part with the spoon that belonged properly to the marmalade. His eyes were gloomily downcast. She glanced at him through her eyelashes. Once or twice she struggled with laughter, once or twice she seemed to be indignant.

"I don't know what to think," she said at last. "I don't know what to make of you--brother Chris. I thought, do you know? that you were perfectly honest. And somehow--"

"Well?"

"I think so still."

"Honest--with all those lies!"

"I wonder."

"I don't," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "I'm fair ashamed of myself. But anyhow--I've stopped deceiving you."

"I THOUGHT," said the Young Lady in Grey, "that story of the lion--"

"Lord!" said Mr. Hoopdriver. "Don't remind me of THAT."

"I thought, somehow, I FELT, that the things you said didn't ring quite true." She suddenly broke out in laughter, at the expression of his face. "Of COURSE you are honest," she said. "How could I ever doubt it? As if I had never pretended! I see it all now."

Abruptly she rose, and extended her hand across the breakfast things. He looked at her doubtfully, and saw the dancing friendliness in her eyes. He scarcely understood at first. He rose, holding the marmalade spoon, and took her proffered hand with abject humility. "Lord," he broke out, "if you aren't enough--but there!"

"I see it all now." A brilliant inspiration had suddenly obscured her humour. She sat down suddenly, and he sat down too. "You did it," she said, "because you wanted to help me. And you thought I was too Conventional to take help from one I might think my social inferior."

"That was partly it," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"How you misunderstood me!" she said.

"You don't mind?"

"It was noble of you. But I am sorry," she said, "you should think me likely to be ashamed of you because you follow a decent

trade."

"I didn't know at first, you see," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

And he submitted meekly to a restoration of his self-respect. He was as useful a citizen as could be,--it was proposed and carried,--and his lying was of the noblest. And so the breakfast concluded much more happily than his brightest expectation, and they rode out of ruddy little Blandford as though no shadow of any sort had come between them.

XXXVI

As they were sitting by the roadside among the pine trees half-way up a stretch of hill between Wimborne and Ringwood, however, Mr. Hoopdriver reopened the question of his worldly position.

"Ju think," he began abruptly, removing a meditative cigarette from his mouth, "that a draper's shopman IS a decent citizen?"

"Why not?"

"When he puts people off with what they don't quite want, for instance?"

"Need he do that?"

"Salesmanship," said Hoopdriver. "Wouldn't get a crib if he didn't.--It's no good your arguing. It's not a particularly honest nor a particularly useful trade; it's not very high up ; there's no freedom and no leisure--seven to eight-thirty every day in the week; don't leave much edge to live on, does it?--real

workmen laugh at us and educated chaps like bank clerks and solicitors' clerks look down on us. You look respectable outside, and inside you are packed in dormitories like convicts, fed on bread and butter and bullied like slaves. You're just superior enough to feel that you're not superior. Without capital there's no prospects; one draper in a hundred don't even earn enough to marry on; and if he DOES marry, his G.V. can just use him to black boots if he likes, and he daren't put his back up. That's drapery! And you tell me to be contented. Would YOU be contented if you was a shop girl?"

She did not answer. She looked at him with distress in her brown eyes, and he remained gloomily in possession of the field.

Presently he spoke. "I've been thinking," he said, and stopped.

She turned her face, resting her cheek on the palm of her hand. There was a light in her eyes that made the expression of them tender. Mr. Hoopdriver had not looked in her face while he had talked. He had regarded the grass, and pointed his remarks with redknuckled hands held open and palms upwards. Now they hung limply over his knees.

"Well?" she said.

"I was thinking it this morning," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"Yes?"

"Of course it's silly." "Well?"

"It's like this. I'm twenty-three, about. I had my schooling all right to fifteen, say. Well, that leaves me eight years behind.--Is it too late? I wasn't so backward. I did algebra, and Latin up to auxiliary verbs, and French genders. I got a kind of

grounding."

"And now you mean, should you go on working?"

"Yes," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "That's it. You can't do much at drapery without capital, you know. But if I could get really educated. I've thought sometimes. . ."

"Why not? said the Young Lady in Grey.

Mr. Hoopdriver was surprised to see it in that light. "You think?" he said. "Of course. You are a Man. You are free--" She warmed. "I wish I were you to have the chance of that struggle."

"Am I Man ENOUGH?" said Mr. Hoopdriver aloud, but addressing himself. "There's that eight years," he said to her.

"You can make it up. What you call educated men--They're not going on. You can catch them. They are quite satisfied. Playing golf, and thinking of clever things to say to women like my stepmother, and dining out. You're in front of them already in one thing. They think they know everything. You don't. And they know such little things."

"Lord!" said Mr. Hoopdriver. "How you encourage a fellow!"

"If I could only help you," she said, and left an eloquent hiatus. He became pensive again.

"It's pretty evident you don't think much of a draper," he said abruptly.

Another interval. "Hundreds of men," she said, "have come from the very lowest ranks of life. There was Burns, a ploughman; and Hugh Miller, a stonemason; and plenty of others. Dodsley was a

footman--"

"But drapers! We're too sort of shabby genteel to rise. Our coats and cuffs might get crumpled--"

"Wasn't there a Clarke who wrote theology? He was a draper."

"There was one started a sewing cotton, the only one I ever heard tell of."

"Have you ever read 'Hearts Insurgent'?"

"Never," said Mr. Hoopdriver. He did not wait for her context, but suddenly broke out with an account of his literary requirements. "The fact is--I've read precious little. One don't get much of a chance, situated as I am. We have a library at business, and I've gone through that. Most Besant I've read, and a lot of Mrs. Braddon's and Rider Haggard and Marie Corelli--and, well--a Ouida or so. They're good stories, of course, and first-class writers, but they didn't seem to have much to do with me. But there's heaps of books one hears talked about, I HAVEN'T read."

"Don't you read any other books but novels?"

"Scarcely ever. One gets tired after business, and you can't get the books. I have been to some extension lectures, of course, 'Lizabethan Dramatists,' it was, but it seemed a little high-flown, you know. And I went and did wood-carving at the same place. But it didn't seem leading nowhere, and I cut my thumb and chucked it."

He made a depressing spectacle, with his face anxious and his hands limp. "It makes me sick," he said, "to think how I've been fooled with. My old schoolmaster ought to have a juiced HIDING.

He's a thief. He pretended to undertake to make a man of me, and he's stole twenty-three years of my life, filled me up with scraps and sweepings. Here I am! I don't KNOW anything, and I can't DO anything, and all the learning time is over."

"Is it?" she said ; but he did not seem to hear her. "My o' people didn't know any better, and went and paid thirty pounds premium--thirty pounds down to have me made THIS. The G.V. promised to teach me the trade, and he never taught me anything but to be a Hand. It's the way they do with draper's apprentices. If every swindler was locked up--well, you'd have nowhere to buy tape and cotton. It's all very well to bring up Burns and those chaps, but I'm not that make. Yet I'm not such muck that I might not have been better--with teaching. I wonder what the chaps who sneer and laugh at such as me would be if they'd been fooled about as I've been. At twenty-three--it's a long start."

He looked up with a wintry smile, a sadder and wiser Hoopdriver indeed than him of the glorious imaginings. "It's YOU done this," he said. "You're real. And it sets me thinking what I really am, and what I might have been. Suppose it was all different--"

"MAKE it different."

"How?"

"WORK. Stop playing at life. Face it like a man."

"Ah!" said Hoopdriver, glancing at her out of the corners of his eyes. "And even then--"

"No! It's not much good. I'm beginning too late."

And there, in blankly thoughtful silence, that conversation ended.

IN THE NEW FOREST

XXXVII

At Ringwood they lunched, and Jessie met with a disappointment. There was no letter for her at the post office. Opposite the hotel, The Chequered Career, was a machine shop with a conspicuously second-hand Marlborough Club tandem tricycle displayed in the window, together with the announcement that bicycles and tricycles were on hire within. The establishment was impressed on Mr. Hoopdriver's mind by the proprietor's action in coming across the road and narrowly inspecting their machines. His action revived a number of disagreeable impressions, but, happily, came to nothing. While they were still lunching, a tall clergyman, with a heated face, entered the room and sat down at the table next to theirs. He was in a kind of holiday costume; that is to say, he had a more than usually high collar, fastened behind and rather the worse for the weather, and his long-tail coat had been replaced by a black jacket of quite remarkable brevity. He had faded brown shoes on his feet, his trouser legs were grey with dust, and he wore a hat of piebald straw in the place of the customary soft felt. He was evidently socially inclined.

"A most charming day, sir," he said, in a ringing tenor.

"Charming," said Mr. Hoopdriver, over a portion of pie.

"You are, I perceive, cycling through this delightful country," said the clergyman.

"Touring," explained Mr. Hoopdriver. "I can imagine that, with a

properly oiled machine, there can be no easier nor pleasanter way of seeing the country."

"No," said Mr. Hoopdriver; "it isn't half a bad way of getting about."

"For a young and newly married couple, a tandem bicycle must be, I should imagine, a delightful bond."

"Quite so," said Mr. Hoopdriver, reddening a little.

"Do you ride a tandem?"

"No--we're separate," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"The motion through the air is indisputably of a very exhilarating description." With that decision, the clergyman turned to give his orders to the attendant, in a firm, authoritative voice, for a cup of tea, two gelatine lozenges, bread and butter, salad, and pie to follow. "The gelatine lozenges I must have. I require them to precipitate the tannin in my tea," he remarked to the room at large, and folding his hands, remained for some time with his chin thereon, staring fixedly at a little picture over Mr. Hoopdriver's head.

"I myself am a cyclist," said the clergyman, descending suddenly upon Mr. Hoopdriver.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Hoopdriver, attacking the moustache. "What machine, may I ask?"

"I have recently become possessed of a tricycle. A bicycle is, I regret to say, considered too--how shall I put it? --flippant by my parishioners. So I have a tricycle. I have just been hauling it hither."

"Hauling!" said Jessie, surprised.

"With a shoe lace. And partly carrying it on my back."

The pause was unexpected. Jessie had some trouble with a crumb. Mr. Hoopdriver's face passed through several phases of surprise. Then he saw the explanation. "Had an accident?"

"I can hardly call it an accident. The wheels suddenly refused to go round. I found myself about five miles from here with an absolutely immobile machine."

"Ow!" said Mr. Hoopdriver, trying to seem intelligent, and Jessie glanced at this insane person.

"It appears," said the clergyman, satisfied with the effect he had created, "that my man carefully washed out the bearings with paraffin, and let the machine dry without oiling it again. The consequence was that they became heated to a considerable temperature and jammed. Even at the outset the machine ran stiffly as well as noisily, and I, being inclined to ascribe this stiffness to my own lassitude, merely redoubled my exertions."

"'Ot work all round," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"You could scarcely put it more appropriately. It is my rule of life to do whatever I find to do with all my might. I believe, indeed, that the bearings became red hot. Finally one of the wheels jammed together. A side wheel it was, so that its stoppage necessitated an inversion of the entire apparatus,--an inversion in which I participated."

"Meaning, that you went over?" said Mr. Hoopdriver, suddenly much amused.

"Precisely. And not brooking my defeat, I suffered repeatedly. You may understand, perhaps, a natural impatience. I expostulated--playfully, of course. Happily the road was not overlooked. Finally, the entire apparatus became rigid, and I abandoned the unequal contest. For all practical purposes the tricycle was no better than a heavy chair without castors. It was a case of hauling or carrying."

The clergyman's nutriment appeared in the doorway.

"Five miles," said the clergyman. He began at once to eat bread and butter vigorously. "Happily," he said, "I am an eupeptic, energetic sort of person on principle. I would all men were likewise."

"It's the best way," agreed Mr. Hoopdriver, and the conversation gave precedence to bread and butter.

"Gelatine," said the clergyman, presently, stirring his tea thoughtfully, "precipitates the tannin in one's tea and renders it easy of digestion."

"That's a useful sort of thing to know," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"You are altogether welcome," said the clergyman, biting generously at two pieces of bread and butter folded together.

In the afternoon our two wanderers rode on at an easy pace towards Stoney Cross. Conversation languished, the topic of South Africa being in abeyance. Mr. Hoopdriver was silenced by disagreeable thoughts. He had changed the last sovereign at Ringwood. The fact had come upon him suddenly. Now too late he was reflecting upon his resources. There was twenty pounds or more in the post office savings bank in Putney, but his book was

locked up in his box at the Antrobus establishment. Else this infatuated man would certainly have surreptitiously withdrawn the entire sum in order to prolong these journeyings even for a few days. As it was, the shadow of the end fell across his happiness. Strangely enough, in spite of his anxiety and the morning's collapse, he was still in a curious emotional state that was certainly not misery. He was forgetting his imaginings and posings, forgetting himself altogether in his growing appreciation of his companion. The most tangible trouble in his mind was the necessity of breaking the matter to her.

A long stretch up hill tired them long before Stoney Cross was reached, and they dismounted and sat under the shade of a little oak tree. Near the crest the road looped on itself, so that, looking back, it sloped below them up to the right and then came towards them. About them grew a rich heather with stunted oaks on the edge of a deep ditch along the roadside, and this road was sandy; below the steepness of the hill, however, it was grey and barred with shadows, for there the trees clustered thick and tall. Mr. Hoopdriver fumbled clumsily with his cigarettes.

"There's a thing I got to tell you," he said, trying to be perfectly calm.

"Yes?" she said.

"I'd like to jest discuss your plans a bit, y'know."

"I'm very unsettled," said Jessie. "You are thinking of writing Books?"

"Or doing journalism, or teaching, or something like that."

"And keeping yourself independent of your stepmother?"

"Yes."

"How long'd it take now, to get anything of that sort to do?"

"I don't know at all. I believe there are a great many women journalists and sanitary inspectors, and black-and-white artists. But I suppose it takes time. Women, you know, edit most papers nowadays, George Egerton says. I ought, I suppose, to communicate with a literary agent."

"Of course," said Hoopdriver, "it's very suitable work. Not being heavy like the drapery."

"There's heavy brain labour, you must remember."

"That wouldn't hurt YOU," said Mr. Hoopdriver, turning a compliment.

"It's like this," he said, ending a pause. "It's a juiced nuisance alluding to these matters, but--we got very little more money."

He perceived that Jessie started, though he did not look at her. "I was counting, of course, on your friend's writing and your being able to take some action to-day." "Take some action' was a phrase he had learnt at his last 'swop.'

"Money," said Jessie. "I didn't think of money."

"Hullo! Here's a tandem bicycle," said Mr. Hoopdriver, abruptly, and pointing with his cigarette.

She looked, and saw two little figures emerging from among the trees at the foot of the slope. The riders were bowed sternly over their work and made a gallant but unsuccessful attempt to

take the rise. The machine was evidently too highly geared for hill climbing, and presently the rearmost rider rose on his saddle and hopped off, leaving his companion to any fate he found proper. The foremost rider was a man unused to such machines and apparently undecided how to dismount. He wobbled a few yards up the hill with a long tail of machine wobbling behind him. Finally, he made an attempt to jump off as one does off a single bicycle, hit his boot against the backbone, and collapsed heavily, falling on his shoulder.

She stood up. "Dear me!" she said. "I hope he isn't hurt."

The second rider went to the assistance of the fallen man.

Hoopdriver stood up, too. The lank, shaky machine was lifted up and wheeled out of the way, and then the fallen rider, being assisted, got up slowly and stood rubbing his arm. No serious injury seemed to be done to the man, and the couple presently turned their attention to the machine by the roadside. They were not in cycling clothes Hoopdriver observed. One wore the grotesque raiment for which the Cockney discovery of the game of golf seems indirectly blamable. Even at this distance the flopping flatness of his cap, the bright brown leather at the top of his calves, and the chequering of his stockings were perceptible. The other, the rear rider, was a slender little man in grey.

"Amateurs," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

Jessie stood staring, and a veil of thought dropped over her eyes. She no longer regarded the two men who were now tinkering at the machine down below there.

"How much have you?" she said.

He thrust his right hand into his pocket and produced six coins, counted them with his left index finger, and held them out to her. "Thirteen four half," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "Every penny."

"I have half a sovereign," she said. "Our bill wherever we stop--" The hiatus was more eloquent than many words.

"I never thought of money coming in to stop us like this," said Jessie.

"It's a juiced nuisance."

"Money," said Jessie. "Is it possible--Surely! Conventionality! May only people of means--Live their own Lives? I never thought ..."

Pause.

"Here's some more cyclists coming," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

The two men were both busy with their bicycle still, but now from among the trees emerged the massive bulk of a 'Marlborough Club' tandem, ridden by a slender woman in grey and a burly man in a Norfolk jacket. Following close upon this came a lank black figure in a piebald straw hat, riding a tricycle of antiquated pattern with two large wheels in front. The man in grey remained bowed over the bicycle, with his stomach resting on the saddle, but his companion stood up and addressed some remark to the tricycle riders. Then it seemed as if he pointed up hill to where Mr. Hoopdriver and his companion stood side by side. A still odder thing followed; the lady in grey took out her handkerchief, appeared to wave it for a moment, and then at a hasty motion from her companion the white signal vanished.

"Surely," said Jessie, peering under her hand. "It's never--"

The tandem tricycle began to ascend the hill, quartering elaborately from side to side to ease the ascent. It was evident, from his heaving shoulders and depressed head, that the burly gentleman was exerting himself. The clerical person on the tricycle assumed the shape of a note of interrogation. Then on the heels of this procession came a dogcart driven by a man in a billycock hat and containing a lady in dark green.

"Looks like some sort of excursion," said Hoopdriver.

Jessie did not answer. She was still peering under her hand. "Surely," she said.

The clergyman's efforts were becoming convulsive. With a curious jerking motion, the tricycle he rode twisted round upon itself, and he partly dismounted and partly fell off. He turned his machine up hill again immediately and began to wheel it. Then the burly gentleman dismounted, and with a courtly attentiveness assisted the lady in grey to alight. There was some little difference of opinion as to assistance, she so clearly wished to help push. Finally she gave in, and the burly gentleman began impelling the machine up hill by his own unaided strength. His face made a dot of brilliant colour among the greys and greens at the foot of the hill. The tandem bicycle was now, it seems, repaired, and this joined the tail of the procession, its riders walking behind the dogcart, from which the lady in green and the driver had now descended.

"Mr. Hoopdriver," said Jessie. "Those people--I'm almost sure--"

"Lord!" said Mr. Hoopdriver, reading the rest in her face, and he turned to pick up his machine at once. Then he dropped it and assisted her to mount.

At the sight of Jessie mounting against the sky line the people coming up the hill suddenly became excited and ended Jessie's doubts at once. Two handkerchiefs waved, and some one shouted. The riders of the tandem bicycle began to run it up hill, past the other vehicles. But our young people did not wait for further developments of the pursuit. In another moment they were out of sight, riding hard down a steady incline towards Stoney Cross.

Before they had dropped among the trees out of sight of the hill brow, Jessie looked back and saw the tandem rising over the crest, with its rear rider just tumbling into the saddle. "They're coming," she said, and bent her head over her handles in true professional style.

They whirled down into the valley, over a white bridge, and saw ahead of them a number of shaggy little ponies frisking in the roadway. Involuntarily they slackened. "Shoo!" said Mr. Hoopdriver, and the ponies kicked up their heels derisively. At that Mr. Hoopdriver lost his temper and charged at them, narrowly missed one, and sent them jumping the ditch into the bracken under the trees, leaving the way clear for Jessie.

Then the road rose quietly but persistently; the treadles grew heavy, and Mr. Hoopdriver's breath sounded like a saw. The tandem appeared, making frightful exertions, at the foot, while the chase was still climbing. Then, thank Heaven! a crest and a stretch of up and down road, whose only disadvantage was its pitiless exposure to the afternoon sun. The tandem apparently dismounted at the hill, and did not appear against the hot blue sky until they were already near some trees and a good mile away.

"We're gaining," said Mr. Hoopdriver, with a little Niagara of perspiration dropping from brow to cheek. "That hill--"

But that was their only gleam of success. They were both nearly

spent. Hoopdriver, indeed, was quite spent, and only a feeling of shame prolonged the liquidation of his bankrupt physique. From that point the tandem gained upon them steadily. At the Rufus Stone, it was scarcely a hundred yards behind. Then one desperate spurt, and they found themselves upon a steady downhill stretch among thick pine woods. Downhill nothing can beat a highly geared tandem bicycle. Automatically Mr. Hoopdriver put up his feet, and Jessie slackened her pace. In another moment they heard the swish of the fat pneumatics behind them, and the tandem passed Hoopdriver and drew alongside Jessie. Hoopdriver felt a mad impulse to collide with this abominable machine as it passed him. His only consolation was to notice that its riders, riding violently, were quite as dishevelled as himself and smothered in sandy white dust.

Abruptly Jessie stopped and dismounted, and the tandem riders shot panting past them downhill. "Brake," said Dangle, who was riding behind, and stood up on the pedals. For a moment the velocity of the thing increased, and then they saw the dust fly from the brake, as it came down on the front tire. Dangle's right leg floundered in the air as he came off in the road. The tandem wobbled. "Hold it!" cried Phipps over his shoulder, going on downhill. "I can't get off if you don't hold it." He put on the brake until the machine stopped almost dead, and then feeling unstable began to pedal again. Dangle shouted after him. "Put out your foot, man," said Dangle.

In this way the tandem riders were carried a good hundred yards or more beyond their quarry. Then Phipps realized his possibilities, slacked up with the brake, and let the thing go over sideways, dropping on to his right foot. With his left leg still over the saddle, and still holding the handles, he looked over his shoulder and began addressing uncomplimentary remarks to Dangle. "You only think of yourself," said Phipps, with a florid face.

"They have forgotten us," said Jessie, turning her machine.

"There was a road at the top of the hill--to Lyndhurst," said Hoopdriver, following her example.

"It's no good. There's the money. We must give it up. But let us go back to that hotel at Rufus Stone. I don't see why we should be led captive."

So to the consternation of the tandem riders, Jessie and her companion mounted and rode quietly back up the hill again. As they dismounted at the hotel entrance, the tandem overtook them, and immediately afterwards the dogcart came into view in pursuit. Dangle jumped off.

"Miss Milton, I believe," said Dangle, panting and raising a damp cap from his wet and matted hair.

"I SAY," said Phipps, receding involuntarily. "Don't go doing it again, Dangle. HELP a chap."

"One minute," said Dangle, and ran after his colleague.

Jessie leant her machine against the wall, and went into the hotel entrance. Hoopdriver remained in the hotel entrance, limp but defiant.

AT THE RUFUS STONE

XXXVIII

He folded his arms as Dangle and Phipps returned towards him.

Phipps was abashed by his inability to cope with the tandem, which he was now wheeling, but Dangle was inclined to be quarrelsome. "Miss Milton?" he said briefly.

Mr. Hoopdriver bowed over his folded arms.

"Miss Milton within?" said Dangle.

AND not to be disturbed," said Mr. Hoopdriver.

"You are a scoundrel, sir," said Mr. Dangle.

"Et your service," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "She awaits 'er stepmother, sir."

Mr. Dangle hesitated. "She will be here immediately," he said. "Here is her friend, Miss Mergle."

Mr. Hoopdriver unfolded his arms slowly, and, with an air of immense calm, thrust his hands into his breeches pockets. Then with one of those fatal hesitations of his, it occurred to him that this attitude was merely vulgarly defiant he withdrew both, returned one and pulled at the insufficient moustache with the other. Miss Mergle caught him in confusion. "Is this the man?" she said to Dangle, and forthwith, "How DARE you, sir? How dare you face me? That poor girl!"

"You will permit me to observe," began Mr. Hoopdriver, with a splendid drawl, seeing himself, for the first time in all this business, as a romantic villain.

"Ugh," said Miss Mergle, unexpectedly striking him about the midriff with her extended palms, and sending him staggering backward into the hall of the hotel.

"Let me pass said Miss Mergle, in towering indignation. "How dare you resist my passage?" and so swept by him and into the dining-room, wherein Jessie had sought refuge.

As Mr. Hoopdriver struggled for equilibrium with the umbrella-stand, Dangle and Phipps, roused from their inertia by Miss Mergle's activity, came in upon her heels, Phipps leading. "How dare you prevent that lady passing?" said Phipps.

Mr. Hoopdriver looked obstinate, and, to Dangle's sense, dangerous, but he made no answer. A waiter in full bloom appeared at the end of the passage, guardant. "It is men of your stamp, sir," said Phipps, "who discredit manhood."

Mr. Hoopdriver thrust his hands into his pockets. "Who the juice are you?" shouted Mr. Hoopdriver, fiercely.

"Who are YOU, sir?" retorted Phipps. "Who are you? That's the question. What are YOU, and what are you doing, wandering at large with a young lady under age?"

"Don't speak to him," said Dangle.

"I'm not a-going to tell all my secrets to any one who comes at me," said Hoopdriver. "Not Likely." And added fiercely, "And that I tell you, sir."

He and Phipps stood, legs apart and both looking exceedingly fierce at one another, and Heaven alone knows what might not have happened, if the long clergyman had not appeared in the doorway, heated but deliberate. "Petticoated anachronism," said the long clergyman in the doorway, apparently still suffering from the antiquated prejudice that demanded a third wheel and a black coat from a clerical rider. He looked at Phipps and Hoopdriver for a

moment, then extending his hand towards the latter, he waved it up and down three times, saying, "Tchak, tchak, tchak," very deliberately as he did so. Then with a concluding "Ugh!" and a gesture of repugnance he passed on into the dining-room from which the voice of Miss Mergle was distinctly audible remarking that the weather was extremely hot even for the time of year.

This expression of extreme disapprobation had a very demoralizing effect upon Hoopdriver, a demoralization that was immediately completed by the advent of the massive Widgery.

"Is this the man?" said Widgery very grimly, and producing a special voice for the occasion from somewhere deep in his neck.

"Don't hurt him!" said Mrs. Milton, with clasped hands. "However much wrong he has done her--No violence!"

"Ow many more of you?" said Hoopdriver, at bay before the umbrella stand. "Where is she? What has he done with her?" said Mrs. Milton.

"I'm not going to stand here and be insulted by a lot of strangers," said Mr. Hoopdriver. "So you needn't think it."

"Please don't worry, Mr. Hoopdriver," said Jessie, suddenly appearing in the door of the dining-room. "I'm here, mother." Her face was white.

Mrs. Milton said something about her child, and made an emotional charge at Jessie. The embrace vanished into the dining-room. Widgery moved as if to follow, and hesitated. "You'd better make yourself scarce," he said to Mr. Hoopdriver.

"I shan't do anything of the kind," said Mr. Hoopdriver, with a catching of the breath. "I'm here defending that young lady."

"You've done her enough mischief, I should think," said Widgery, suddenly walking towards the dining-room, and closing the door behind him, leaving Dangle and Phipps with Hoopdriver.

"Clear!" said Phipps, threateningly.

"I shall go and sit out in the garden," said Mr. Hoopdriver, with dignity. "There I shall remain."

"Don't make a row with him," said Dangle.

And Mr. Hoopdriver retired, unassaulted, in almost sobbing dignity.

XXXIX

So here is the world with us again, and our sentimental excursion is over. In the front of the Rufus Stone Hotel conceive a remarkable collection of wheeled instruments, watched over by Dangle and Phipps in grave and stately attitudes, and by the driver of a stylish dogcart from Ringwood. In the garden behind, in an attitude of nervous prostration, Mr. Hoopdriver was seated on a rustic seat. Through the open window of a private sitting-room came a murmur of voices, as of men and women in conference. Occasionally something that might have been a girlish sob.

"I fail to see what status Widgery has," says Dangle, "thrusting himself in there."

"He takes too much upon himself," said Phipps.

"I've been noticing little things, yesterday and to-day," said Dangle, and stopped.

"They went to the cathedral together in the afternoon."

"Financially it would be a good thing for her, of course," said Dangle, with a gloomy magnanimity.

He felt drawn to Phipps now by the common trouble, in spite of the man's chequered legs. "Financially it wouldn't be half bad."

"He's so dull and heavy," said Phipps.

Meanwhile, within, the clergyman had, by promptitude and dexterity, taken the chair and was opening the case against the unfortunate Jessie. I regret to have to say that my heroine had been appalled by the visible array of public opinion against her excursion, to the pitch of tears. She was sitting with flushed cheeks and swimming eyes at the end of the table opposite to the clergyman. She held her handkerchief crumpled up in her extended hand. Mrs. Milton sat as near to her as possible, and occasionally made little dabs with her hand at Jessie's hand, to indicate forgiveness. These advances were not reciprocated, which touched Widgery very much. The lady in green, Miss Mergle (B. A.), sat on the opposite side near the clergyman. She was the strong-minded schoolmistress to whom Jessie had written, and who had immediately precipitated the pursuit upon her. She had picked up the clergyman in Ringwood, and had told him everything forthwith, having met him once at a British Association meeting. He had immediately constituted himself administrator of the entire business. Widgery, having been foiled in an attempt to conduct the proceedings, stood with his legs wide apart in front of the fireplace ornament, and looked profound and sympathetic. Jessie's account of her adventures was a chary one and given amidst frequent interruptions. She surprised herself by skilfully

omitting any allusion to the Bechamel episode. She completely exonerated Hoopdriver from the charge of being more than an accessory to her escapade. But public feeling was heavy against Hoopdriver. Her narrative was inaccurate and sketchy, but happily the others were too anxious to pass opinions to pin her down to particulars. At last they had all the facts they would permit.

"My dear young lady," said the clergyman, "I can only ascribe this extravagant and regrettable expedition of yours to the wildest misconceptions of your place in the world and of your duties and responsibilities. Even now, it seems to me, your present emotion is due not so much to a real and sincere penitence for your disobedience and folly as to a positive annoyance at our most fortunate interference--"

"Not that," said Mrs. Milton, in a low tone. "Not that."

"But WHY did she go off like this?" said Widgery. "That's what I want to know."

Jessie made an attempt to speak, but Mrs. Milton said "Hush!" and the ringing tenor of the clergyman rode triumphantly over the meeting. "I cannot understand this spirit of unrest that has seized upon the more intelligent portion of the feminine community. You had a pleasant home, a most refined and intelligent lady in the position of your mother, to cherish and protect you--"

"If I HAD a mother," gulped Jessie, succumbing to the obvious snare of self-pity, and sobbing.

"To cherish, protect, and advise you. And you must needs go out of it all alone into a strange world of unknown dangers--"

"I wanted to learn," said Jessie.

"You wanted to learn. May you never have anything to UNlearn."

"AH!" from Mrs. Milton, very sadly.

"It isn't fair for all of you to argue at me at once," submitted Jessie, irrelevantly.

"A world full of unknown dangers," resumed the clergyman. "Your proper place was surely the natural surroundings that are part of you. You have been unduly influenced, it is only too apparent, by a class of literature which, with all due respect to distinguished authoress that shall be nameless, I must call the New Woman Literature. In that deleterious ingredient of our book boxes--"

"I don't altogether agree with you there," said Miss Mergle, throwing her head back and regarding him firmly through her spectacles, and Mr. Widgery coughed.

"What HAS all this to do with me?" asked Jessie, availing herself of the interruption.

"The point is," said Mrs. Milton, on her defence, "that in my books--"

"All I want to do," said Jessie, "is to go about freely by myself. Girls do so in America. Why not here?"

"Social conditions are entirely different in America," said Miss Mergle. "Here we respect Class Distinctions."

"It's very unfortunate. What I want to know is, why I cannot go away for a holiday if I want to."

"With a strange young man, socially your inferior," said Widgery, and made her flush by his tone.

"Why not?" she said. "With anybody."

"They don't do that, even in America," said Miss Mergle.

"My dear young lady," said the clergyman, "the most elementary principles of decorum--A day will come when you will better understand how entirely subservient your ideas are to the very fundamentals of our present civilisation, when you will better understand the harrowing anxiety you have given Mrs. Milton by this inexplicable flight of yours. We can only put things down at present, in charity, to your ignorance--"

"You have to consider the general body of opinion, too," said Widgery.

"Precisely," said Miss Mergle. "There is no such thing as conduct in the absolute." "If once this most unfortunate business gets about," said the clergyman, "it will do you infinite harm."

"But I'VE done nothing wrong. Why should I be responsible for other people's--"

"The world has no charity," said Mrs. Milton.

"For a girl," said Jessie. "No."

"Now do let us stop arguing, my dear young lady, and let us listen to reason. Never mind how or why, this conduct of yours will do you infinite harm, if once it is generally known. And not only that, it will cause infinite pain to those who care for you. But if you will return at once to your home, causing it to be understood that you have been with friends for these last few

days--"

"Tell lies," said Jessie. "Certainly not. Most certainly not. But I understand that is how your absence is understood at present, and there is no reason--"

Jessie's grip tightened on her handkerchief. "I won't go back," she said, "to have it as I did before. I want a room of my own, what books I need to read, to be free to go out by myself alone, Teaching--"

"Anything," said Mrs. Milton, "anything in reason."

"But will you keep your promise?" said Jessie.

"Surely you won't dictate to your mother!" said Widgery.

"My stepmother! I don't want to dictate. I want definite promises now."

"This is most unreasonable," said the clergyman. "Very well," said Jessie, swallowing a sob but with unusual resolution. "Then I won't go back. My life is being frittered away--"

"LET her have her way," said Widgery.

"A room then. All your Men. I'm not to come down and talk away half my days--"

"My dear child, if only to save you," said Mrs. Milton. "If you don't keep your promise--"

"Then I take it the matter is practically concluded," said the clergyman. "And that you very properly submit to return to your proper home. And now, if I may offer a suggestion, it is that we

take tea. Freed of its tannin, nothing, I think, is more refreshing and stimulating."

"There's a train from Lyndhurst at thirteen minutes to six," said Widgery, unfolding a time table. "That gives us about half an hour or three-quarters here--if a conveyance is obtainable, that is."

"A gelatine lozenge dropped into the tea cup precipitates the tannin in the form of tannate of gelatine," said the clergyman to Miss Mergle, in a confidential bray.

Jessie stood up, and saw through the window a depressed head and shoulders over the top of the back of a garden seat. She moved towards the door. "While you have tea, mother," she said, "I must tell Mr. Hoopdriver of our arrangements."

"Don't you think I--" began the clergyman.

"No," said Jessie, very rudely; "I don't."

"But, Jessie, haven't you already--"

"You are already breaking the capitulation," said Jessie.

"Will you want the whole half hour?" said Widgery, at the bell.

"Every minute," said Jessie, in the doorway. "He's behaved very nobly to me."

"There's tea," said Widgery.

"I've had tea."

"He may not have behaved badly," said the clergyman. "But he's

certainly an astonishingly weak person to let a wrong-headed young girl--"

Jessie closed the door into the garden.

Meanwhile Mr. Hoopdriver made a sad figure in the sunlight outside. It was over, this wonderful excursion of his, so far as she was concerned, and with the swift blow that separated them, he realised all that those days had done for him. He tried to grasp the bearings of their position. Of course, they would take her away to those social altitudes of hers. She would become an inaccessible young lady again. Would they let him say good-bye to her?

How extraordinary it had all been! He recalled the moment when he had first seen her riding, with the sunlight behind her, along the riverside road; he recalled that wonderful night at Bognor, remembering it as if everything had been done of his own initiative. "Brave, brave!" she had called him. And afterwards, when she came down to him in the morning, kindly, quiet. But ought he to have persuaded her then to return to her home? He remembered some intention of the sort. Now these people snatched her away from him as though he was scarcely fit to live in the same world with her. No more he was! He felt he had presumed upon her worldly ignorance in travelling with her day after day. She was so dainty, so delightful, so serene. He began to recapitulate her expressions, the light of her eyes, the turn of her face . .

He wasn't good enough to walk in the same road with her. Nobody was. Suppose they let him say good-bye to her; what could he say? That? But they were sure not to let her talk to him alone; her mother would be there as--what was it? Chaperone. He'd never once had a chance of saying what he felt; indeed, it was only now he

was beginning to realise what he felt. Love I he wouldn't presume. It was worship. If only he could have one more chance. He must have one more chance, somewhere, somehow. Then he would pour out his soul to her eloquently. He felt eloquently, and words would come. He was dust under her feet . . .

His meditation was interrupted by the click of a door handle, and Jessie appeared in the sunlight under the verandah. "Come away from here," she said to Hoopdriver, as he rose to meet her. "I'm going home with them. We have to say good-bye."

Mr. Hoopdriver winced, opened and shut his mouth, and rose without a word.

XL

At first Jessie Milton and Mr. Hoopdriver walked away from the hotel in silence. He heard a catching in her breath and glanced at her and saw her lips pressed tight and a tear on her cheek. Her face was hot and bright. She was looking straight before her. He could think of nothing to say, and thrust his hands in his pockets and looked away from her intentionally. After a while she began to talk. They dealt disjointedly with scenery first, and then with the means of self-education. She took his address at Antrobus's and promised to send him some books. But even with that it was spiritless, aching talk, Hoopdriver felt, for the fighting mood was over. She seemed, to him, preoccupied with the memories of her late battle, and that appearance hurt him.

"It's the end," he whispered to himself. "It's the end."

They went into a hollow and up a gentle wooded slope, and came at last to a high and open space overlooking a wide expanse of

country. There, by a common impulse, they stopped. She looked at her watch--a little ostentatiously. They stared at the billows of forest rolling away beneath them, crest beyond crest, of leafy trees, fading at last into blue.

"The end" ran through his mind, to the exclusion of all speakable thoughts.

"And so," she said, presently, breaking the silence, "it comes to good-bye."

For half a minute he did not answer. Then he gathered his resolution. "There is one thing I MUST say."

"Well?" she said, surprised and abruptly forgetting the recent argument. "I ask no return. But--"

Then he stopped. "I won't say it. It's no good. It would be rot from me--now. I wasn't going to say anything. Good-bye."

She looked at him with a startled expression in her eyes. "No," she said. "But don't forget you are going to work. Remember, brother Chris, you are my friend. You will work. You are not a very strong man, you know, now--you will forgive me--nor do you know all you should. But what will you be in six years' time?"

He stared hard in front of him still, and the lines about his weak mouth seemed to strengthen. He knew she understood what he could not say.

"I'll work," he said, concisely. They stood side by side for a moment. Then he said, with a motion of his head, "I won't come back to THEM. Do you mind? Going back alone?"

She took ten seconds to think. "No." she said, and held out her

hand, biting her nether lip. "GOOD-BYE," she whispered.

He turned, with a white face, looked into her eyes, took her hand limply, and then with a sudden impulse, lifted it to his lips. She would have snatched it away, but his grip tightened to her movement. She felt the touch of his lips, and then he had dropped her fingers and turned from her and was striding down the slope. A dozen paces away his foot turned in the lip of a rabbit hole, and he stumbled forward and almost fell. He recovered his balance and went on, not looking back. He never once looked back. She stared at his receding figure until it was small and far below her, and then, the tears running over her eyelids now, turned slowly, and walked with her hands gripped hard together behind her, towards Stoney Cross again.

"I did not know," she whispered to herself. "I did not understand. Even now--No, I do not understand."

THE ENVOY

XLI

So the story ends, dear Reader. Mr. Hoopdriver, sprawling down there among the bracken, must sprawl without our prying, I think, or listening to what chances to his breathing. And of what came of it all, of the six years and afterwards, this is no place to tell. In truth, there is no telling it, for the years have still to run. But if you see how a mere counter-jumper, a cad on castors, and a fool to boot, may come to feel the little insufficiencies of life, and if he has to any extent won your sympathies, my end is attained. (If it is not attained, may Heaven forgive us both!) Nor will we follow this adventurous young lady of ours back to her home at Surbiton, to her new

struggle against Widgery and Mrs. Milton combined. For, as she will presently hear, that devoted man has got his reward. For her, also, your sympathies are invited.

The rest of this great holiday, too--five days there are left of it--is beyond the limits of our design. You see fitfully a slender figure in a dusty brown suit and heather mixture stockings, and brown shoes not intended to be cycled in, flitting Londonward through Hampshire and Berkshire and Surrey, going economically--for excellent reasons. Day by day he goes on, riding fitfully and for the most part through bye-roads, but getting a few miles to the north-eastward every day. He is a narrow-chested person, with a nose hot and tanned at the bridge with unwonted exposure, and brown, red-knuckled fists. A musing expression sits upon the face of this rider, you observe. Sometimes he whistles noiselessly to himself, sometimes he speaks aloud, "a juiced good try, anyhow!" you hear; and sometimes, and that too often for my liking, he looks irritable and hopeless. "I know," he says, "I know. It's over and done. It isn't IN me. You ain't man enough, Hoopdriver. Look at yer silly hands! . . . Oh, my God!" and a gust of passion comes upon him and he rides furiously for a space.

Sometimes again his face softens. "Anyhow, if I'm not to see her--she's going to lend me books," he thinks, and gets such comfort as he can. Then again; "Books! What's books?" Once or twice triumphant memories of the earlier incidents nerve his face for a while. "I put the ky-bosh on HIS little game," he remarks. "I DID that," and one might even call him happy in these phases. And, by-the-bye, the machine, you notice, has been enamel-painted grey and carries a sonorous gong.

This figure passes through Basingstoke and Bagshot, Staines, Hampton, and Richmond. At last, in Putney High Street, glowing with the warmth of an August sunset and with all the 'prentice

boys busy shutting up shop, and the work girls going home, and the shop folks peeping abroad, and the white 'buses full of late clerks and city folk rumbling home to their dinners, we part from him. He is back. To-morrow, the early rising, the dusting, and drudgery, begin again--but with a difference, with wonderful memories and still more wonderful desires and ambitions replacing those discrepant dreams.

He turns out of the High Street at the corner, dismounts with a sigh, and pushes his machine through the gates of the Antrobus stable yard, as the apprentice with the high collar holds them open. There are words of greeting. "South Coast," you hear; and "splendid weather--splendid." He sighs. "Yes--swapped him off for a couple of sovs. It's a juiced good machine."

The gate closes upon him with a slam, and he vanishes from our ken.

**THE
INVISIBLE MAN**

**by
H.G. Wells
1897**

Chapter 1

The Strange Man's Arrival

The stranger came early in February one wintry day, through a biting wind and a driving snow, the last snowfall of the year, over the down, walking as it seemed from Bramblehurst railway station and carrying a little black portmanteau in his thickly gloved hand. He was wrapped up from head to foot, and the brim of his soft felt hat hid every inch of his face but the shiny tip of his nose; the snow had piled itself against his shoulders and chest, and added a white crest to the burden he carried. He staggered into the Coach and Horses, more dead than alive as it seemed, and flung his portmanteau down. "A fire," he cried, "in the name of human charity! A room and a fire!" He stamped and shook the snow from off himself in the bar, and followed Mrs. Hall into her guest parlour to strike his bargain. And with that much introduction, that and a ready acquiescence to terms and a couple of sovereigns flung upon the table, he took up his quarters in the inn.

Mrs. Hall lit the fire and left him there while she went to prepare him a meal with her own hands. A guest to stop at Iping in the winter-time was an unheard-of piece of luck, let alone a guest who was no "haggler," and she was resolved to show herself worthy of her good fortune. As soon as the bacon was well under way, and Millie, her lymphatic aid, had been brisked up a bit by a few deftly chosen expressions of contempt, she carried the cloth, plates, and glasses into the parlour and began to lay them with the utmost clat. Although the fire was burning up briskly, she was surprised to see that her visitor still wore his hat and coat, standing with his back to her and staring out of the window at the falling snow in the yard.

His gloved hands were clasped behind him, and he seemed to be lost in thought. She noticed that the melted snow that still sprinkled his shoulders dripped upon her carpet. "Can I take your hat and coat, sir," she said, "and give them a good dry in the kitchen?"

"No," he said without turning.

She was not sure she had heard him, and was about to repeat her question.

He turned his head and looked at her over his shoulder. "I prefer to keep them on," he said with emphasis, and she noticed that he wore big blue spectacles with side-lights and had a bushy side-whisker over his coat-collar that completely hid his face.

"Very well, sir," she said. "As you like. In a bit the room will be warmer."

He made no answer and had turned his face away from her again; and Mrs. Hall, feeling that her conversational advances were ill-timed, laid the rest of the table things in a quick staccato and whisked out of the room. When she returned he was still standing there like a man of stone, his back hunched, his collar turned up, his dripping hat-brim turned down, hiding his face and ears completely. She put down the eggs and bacon with considerable emphasis, and called rather than said to him, "Your lunch is served, sir."

"Thank you," he said at the same time, and did not stir until she was closing the door. Then he swung round and approached the table.

As she went behind the bar to the kitchen she heard a sound repeated at regular intervals. Chirk, chirk, chirk, it went, the sound of a spoon being rapidly whisked round a basin. "That girl!" she said. "There! I clean forgot it. It's her being so long!" And while she herself finished mixing the mustard, she gave Millie a few verbal

stabs for her excessive slowness. She had cooked the ham and eggs, laid the table, and done everything, while Millie (help indeed!) had only succeeded in delaying the mustard. And him a new guest and wanting to stay! Then she filled the mustard pot, and, putting it with a certain stateliness upon a gold and black tea-tray, carried it into the parlour.

She rapped and entered promptly. As she did so her visitor moved quickly, so that she got but a glimpse of a white object disappearing behind the table. It would seem he was picking something from the floor. She rapped down the mustard pot on the table, and then she noticed the overcoat and hat had been taken off and put over a chair in front of the fire. A pair of wet boots threatened rust to her steel fender. She went to these things resolutely. "I suppose I may have them to dry now," she said in a voice that brooked no denial.

"Leave the hat," said her visitor in a muffled voice, and turning she saw he had raised his head and was sitting looking at her.

For a moment she stood gaping at him, too surprised to speak.

He held a white cloth--it was a serviette he had brought with him--over the lower part of his face, so that his mouth and jaws were completely hidden, and that was the reason of his muffled voice. But it was not that which startled Mrs. Hall. It was the fact that all his forehead above his blue glasses was covered by a white bandage, and that another covered his ears, leaving not a scrap of his face exposed excepting only his pink, peaked nose. It was bright pink, and shiny just as it had been at first. He wore a dark-brown velvet jacket with a high black linen lined collar turned up about his neck. The thick black hair, escaping as it could below and between the cross bandages, projected in curious tails and horns, giving him the strangest appearance conceivable. This muffled and bandaged head was so unlike what she had anticipated, that for a moment she was rigid.

He did not remove the serviette, but remained holding it, as she saw now, with a brown gloved hand, and regarding her with his inscrutable blue glasses. "Leave the hat," he said, speaking very distinctly through the white cloth.

Her nerves began to recover from the shock they had received. She placed the hat on the chair again by the fire. "I didn't know, sir," she began, "that--" and she stopped embarrassed.

"Thank you," he said drily, glancing from her to the door and then at her again.

"I'll have them nicely dried, sir, at once," she said, and carried his clothes out of the room. She glanced at his white-swathed head and blue goggles again as she was going out of the door; but his napkin was still in front of his face. She shivered a little as she closed the door behind her, and her face was eloquent of her surprise and perplexity. "I never," she whispered. "There!" She went quite softly to the kitchen, and was too preoccupied to ask Millie what she was messing about with now, when she got there.

The visitor sat and listened to her retreating feet. He glanced inquiringly at the window before he removed his serviette and resumed his meal. He took a mouthful, glanced suspiciously at the window, took another mouthful, then rose and, taking the serviette in his hand, walked across the room and pulled the blind down to the top of the white muslin that obscured the lower panes. This left the room in twilight. This done, he returned with an easier air to the table and his meal.

"The poor soul's had an accident or an op'ration or something," said Mrs. Hall. "What a turn them bandages did give me, to be sure!"

She put on some more coal, unfolded the clothes-horse, and extended the traveller's coat upon this. "And they goggles! Why, he looked

more like a divin' helmet than a human man!" She hung his muffler on a corner of the horse. "And holding that handkerchief over his mouth all the time. Talkin' through it!...Perhaps his mouth was hurt too--maybe."

She turned round, as one who suddenly remembers. "Bless my soul alive!" she said, going off at a tangent; "ain't you done them taters yet, Millie?"

When Mrs. Hall went to clear away the stranger's lunch, her idea that his mouth must also have been cut or disfigured in the accident she supposed him to have suffered, was confirmed, for he was smoking a pipe, and all the time that she was in the room he never loosened the silk muffler he had wrapped round the lower part of his face to put the mouthpiece to his lips. Yet it was not forgetfulness, for she saw he glanced at it as it smouldered out. He sat in the corner with his back to the window-blind and spoke now, having eaten and drunk and being comfortably warmed through, with less aggressive brevity than before. The reflection of the fire lent a kind of red animation to his big spectacles they had lacked hitherto.

"I have some luggage," he said, "at Bramblehurst station," and he asked her how he could have it sent. He bowed his bandaged head quite politely in acknowledgment of her explanation. "To-morrow!" he said. "There is no speedier delivery?" and seemed quite disappointed when she answered "No." Was she quite sure? No man with a trap who would go over?

Mrs. Hall, nothing loath, answered his questions and developed a conversation. "It's a steep road by the down, sir," she said in answer to the question about a trap; and then, snatching at an opening said, "It was there a carriage was upsettled, a year ago and more. A gentleman killed, besides his coachman. Accidents, sir, happen in a moment, don't they?"

But the visitor was not to be drawn so easily. "They do," he said through his muffler, eyeing her quietly through his impenetrable glasses.

"But they take long enough to get well, sir, don't they? ... There was my sister's son, Tom, jest cut his arm with a scythe, tumbled on it in the 'ayfield, and, bless me! he was three months tied up, sir. You'd hardly believe it. It's regular given me a dread of a scythe, sir."

"I can quite understand that," said the visitor.

"He was afraid, one time, that he'd have to have an op'ration --he was that bad, sir."

The visitor laughed abruptly, a bark of a laugh that he seemed to bite and kill in his mouth. "Was he?" he said.

"He was, sir. And no laughing matter to them as had the doing for him, as I had--my sister being took up with her little ones so much. There was bandages to do, sir, and bandages to undo. So that if I may make so bold as to say it, sir--"

"Will you get me some matches?" said the visitor, quite abruptly. "My pipe is out."

Mrs. Hall was pulled up suddenly. It was certainly rude of him, after telling him all she had done. She gasped at him for a moment, and remembered the two sovereigns. She went for the matches.

"Thanks," he said concisely, as she put them down, and turned his shoulder upon her and stared out of the window again. It was altogether too discouraging. Evidently he was sensitive on the topic of operations and bandages. She did not "make so bold as to say," however, after all. But his snubbing way had irritated her, and

Millie had a hot time of it that afternoon.

The visitor remained in the parlour until four o'clock, without giving the ghost of an excuse for an intrusion. For the most part he was quite still during that time; it would seem he sat in the growing darkness smoking in the firelight, perhaps dozing.

Once or twice a curious listener might have heard him at the coals, and for the space of five minutes he was audible pacing the room. He seemed to be talking to himself. Then the armchair creaked as he sat down again.

Chapter 2

Mr. Teddy Henfrey's First Impressions

At four o'clock, when it was fairly dark and Mrs. Hall was screwing up her courage to go in and ask her visitor if he would take some tea, Teddy Henfrey, the clock-jobber, came into the bar. "My sakes! Mrs. Hall," said he, "but this is terrible weather for thin boots!" The snow outside was falling faster.

Mrs. Hall agreed with him, and then noticed he had his bag and hit upon a brilliant idea. "Now you're here, Mr. Teddy," said she, "I'd be glad if you'd give th' old clock in the parlour a bit of a look. 'Tis going, and it strikes well and hearty; but the hour-hand won't do nuthin' but point at six."

And leading the way, she went across to the parlour door and rapped

and entered.

Her visitor, she saw as she opened the door, was seated in the armchair before the fire, dozing it would seem, with his bandaged head drooping on one side. The only light in the room was the red glow from the fire--which lit his eyes like adverse railway signals, but left his downcast face in darkness--and the scanty vestiges of the day that came in through the open door. Everything was ruddy, shadowy, and indistinct to her, the more so since she had just been lighting the bar lamp, and her eyes were dazzled. But for a second it seemed to her that the man she looked at had an enormous mouth wide open,--a vast and incredible mouth that swallowed the whole of the lower portion of his face. It was the sensation of a moment: the white-bound head, the monstrous goggle eyes, and this huge yawn below it. Then he stirred, started up in his chair, put up his hand. She opened the door wide, so that the room was lighter, and she saw him more clearly, with the muffler held to his face just as she had seen him hold the serviette before. The shadows, she fancied, had tricked her.

"Would you mind, sir, this man a-coming to look at the clock, sir?" she said, recovering from her momentary shock.

"Look at the clock?" he said, staring round in a drowsy manner and speaking over his hand, and then getting more fully awake, "certainly."

Mrs. Hall went away to get a lamp, and he rose and stretched himself. Then came the light, and Mr. Teddy Henfrey, entering, was confronted by this bandaged person. He was, he says, "taken aback."

"Good-afternoon," said the stranger, regarding him, as Mr. Henfrey says with a vivid sense of the dark spectacles, "like a lobster."

"I hope," said Mr. Henfrey, "that it's no intrusion."

"None whatever," said the stranger. "Though I understand," he said, turning to Mrs. Hall, "that this room is really to be mine for my own private use."

"I thought, sir," said Mrs. Hall, "you'd prefer the clock--" She was going to say "mended."

"Certainly," said the stranger, "certainly--but, as a rule, I like to be alone and undisturbed."

"But I'm really glad to have the clock seen to," he said, seeing a certain hesitation in Mr. Henfrey's manner. "Very glad." Mr. Henfrey had intended to apologise and withdraw, but this anticipation reassured him. The stranger stood round with his back to the fireplace and put his hands behind his back. "And presently," he said, "when the clock-mending is over, I think I should like to have some tea. But not until the clock-mending is over."

Mrs. Hall was about to leave the room,--she made no conversational advances this time, because she did not want to be snubbed in front of Mr. Henfrey,--when her visitor asked her if she had made any arrangements about his boxes at Bramblehurst. She told him she had mentioned the matter to the postman, and that the carrier could bring them over on the morrow. "You are certain that is the earliest?" he said.

She was certain, with a marked coldness.

"I should explain," he added, "what I was really too cold and fatigued to do before, that I am an experimental investigator."

"Indeed, sir," said Mrs. Hall, much impressed.

"And my baggage contains apparatus and appliances."

"Very useful things indeed they are, sir," said Mrs. Hall.

"And I'm naturally anxious to get on with my inquiries."

"Of course, sir."

"My reason for coming to Iping," he proceeded, with a certain deliberation of manner, "was--a desire for solitude. I do not wish to be disturbed in my work. In addition to my work, an accident--"

"I thought as much," said Mrs. Hall to herself.

"--necessitates a certain retirement. My eyes--are sometimes so weak and painful that I have to shut myself up in the dark for hours together. Lock myself up. Sometimes--now and then. Not at present, certainly. At such times the slightest disturbance, the entry of a stranger into the room, is a source of excruciating annoyance to me--it is well these things should be understood."

"Certainly, sir," said Mrs. Hall. "And if I might make so bold as to ask--"

"That, I think, is all," said the stranger, with that quietly irresistible air of finality he could assume at will. Mrs. Hall reserved her question and sympathy for a better occasion.

After Mrs. Hall had left the room, he remained standing in front of the fire, glaring, so Mr. Henfrey puts it, at the clock-mending. Mr. Henfrey not only took off the hands of the clock, and the face, but extracted the works; and he tried to work in as slow and quiet and unassuming a manner as possible. He worked with the lamp close to him, and the green shade threw a brilliant light upon his hands, and upon the frame and wheels, and left the rest of the room shadowy. When he looked up, coloured patches swam in his eyes. Being

constitutionally of a curious nature, he had removed the works--a quite unnecessary proceeding--with the idea of delaying his departure and perhaps falling into conversation with the stranger. But the stranger stood there, perfectly silent and still. So still, it got on Henfrey's nerves. He felt alone in the room and looked up, and there, grey and dim, was the bandaged head and huge blue lenses staring fixedly, with a mist of green spots drifting in front of them. It was so uncanny-looking to Henfrey that for a minute they remained staring blankly at one another. Then Henfrey looked down again. Very uncomfortable position! One would like to say something. Should he remark that the weather was very cold for the time of year?

He looked up as if to take aim with that introductory shot. "The weather--" he began.

"Why don't you finish and go?" said the rigid figure, evidently in a state of painfully suppressed rage. "All you've got to do is to fix the hour-hand on its axle. You're simply humbugging--"

"Certainly, sir--one minute more, sir. I overlooked--" And Mr. Henfrey finished and went.

But he went off feeling excessively annoyed. "Damn it!" said Mr. Henfrey to himself, trudging down the village through the thawing snow; "a man must do a clock at times, sure-lie."

And again: "Can't a man look at you?--Ugly!"

And yet again: "Seemingly not. If the police was wanting you you couldn't be more wropped and bandaged."

At Gleeson's corner he saw Hall, who had recently married the stranger's hostess at the Coach and Horses, and who now drove the Iping conveyance, when occasional people required it, to Sidderbridge

Junction, coming towards him on his return from that place. Hall had evidently been "stopping a bit" at Sidderbridge, to judge by his driving. "Ow do, Teddy?" he said, passing.

"You got a rum un up home!" said Teddy.

Hall very sociably pulled up. "What's that?" he asked.

"Rum-looking customer stopping at the Coach and Horses," said Teddy. "My sakes!"

And he proceeded to give Hall a vivid description of his grotesque guest. "Looks a bit like a disguise, don't it? I'd like to see a man's face if I had him stopping in my place," said Henfrey. "But women are that trustful,--where strangers are concerned. He's took your rooms and he ain't even given a name, Hall."

"You don't say so!" said Hall, who was a man of sluggish apprehension.

"Yes," said Teddy. "By the week. Whatever he is, you can't get rid of him under the week. And he's got a lot of luggage coming to-morrow, so he says. Let's hope it won't be stones in boxes, Hall."

He told Hall how his aunt at Hastings had been swindled by a stranger with empty portmanteaux. Altogether he left Hall vaguely suspicious. "Get up, old girl," said Hall. "I s'pose I must see 'bout this."

Teddy trudged on his way with his mind considerably relieved.

Instead of "seeing 'bout it," however, Hall on his return was severely rated by his wife on the length of time he had spent in Sidderbridge, and his mild inquiries were answered snappishly and in a manner not to the point. But the seed of suspicion Teddy had sown

germinated in the mind of Mr. Hall in spite of these discouragements. "You wim' don't know everything," said Mr. Hall, resolved to ascertain more about the personality of his guest at the earliest possible opportunity. And after the stranger had gone to bed, which he did about half-past nine, Mr. Hall went aggressively into the parlour and looked very hard at his wife's furniture, just to show that the stranger wasn't master there, and scrutinised closely and a little contemptuously a sheet of mathematical computation the stranger had left. When retiring for the night he instructed Mrs. Hall to look very closely at the stranger's luggage when it came next day.

"You mind your own business, Hall," said Mrs. Hall, "and I'll mind mine."

She was all the more inclined to snap at Hall because the stranger was undoubtedly an unusually strange sort of stranger, and she was by no means assured about him in her own mind. In the middle of the night she woke up dreaming of huge white heads like turnips, that came trailing after her at the end of interminable necks, and with vast black eyes. But being a sensible woman, she subdued her terrors and turned over and went to sleep again.

Chapter 3

The Thousand and One Bottles

Thus it was that on the ninth day of February, at the beginning of the thaw, this singular person fell out of infinity into Iping

Village. Next day his luggage arrived through the slush. And very remarkable luggage it was. There was a couple of trunks indeed, such as a rational man might need, but in addition there were a box of books,--big, fat books, of which some were just in an incomprehensible handwriting,--and a dozen or more crates, boxes, and cases, containing objects packed in straw, as it seemed to Hall, tugging with a casual curiosity at the straw--glass bottles. The stranger, muffled in hat, coat, gloves, and wrapper, came out impatiently to meet Fearenside's cart, while Hall was having a word or so of gossip preparatory to helping bring them in. Out he came, not noticing Fearenside's dog, who was sniffing in a dilettante spirit at Hall's legs. "Come along with those boxes," he said. "I've been waiting long enough."

And he came down the steps towards the tail of the cart as if to lay hands on the smaller crate.

No sooner had Fearenside's dog caught sight of him, however, than it began to bristle and growl savagely, and when he rushed down the steps it gave an undecided hop, and then sprang straight at his hand. "Whup!" cried Hall, jumping back, for he was no hero with dogs, and Fearenside howled, "Lie down!" and snatched his whip.

They saw the dog's teeth had slipped the hand, heard a kick, saw the dog execute a flanking jump and get home on the stranger's leg, and heard the rip of his trousering. Then the finer end of Fearenside's whip reached his property, and the dog, yelping with dismay, retreated under the wheels of the waggon. It was all the business of a half-minute. No one spoke, every one shouted. The stranger glanced swiftly at his torn glove and at his leg, made as if he would stoop to the latter, then turned and rushed up the steps into the inn. They heard him go headlong across the passage and up the uncarpeted stairs to his bedroom.

"You brute, you!" said Fearenside, climbing off the waggon with his

whip in his hand, while the dog watched him through the wheel. "Come here!" said Fearenside--"You'd better."

Hall had stood gaping. "He wuz bit," said Hall. "I'd better go and see to en," and he trotted after the stranger. He met Mrs. Hall in the passage. "Carrier's darg," he said, "bit en."

He went straight upstairs, and the stranger's door being ajar, he pushed it open and was entering without any ceremony, being of a naturally sympathetic turn of mind.

The blind was down and the room dim. He caught a glimpse of a most singular thing, what seemed a handless arm waving towards him, and a face of three huge indeterminate spots on white, very like the face of a pale pansy. Then he was struck violently in the chest, hurled back, and the door slammed in his face and locked, all so rapidly that he had no time to observe. A waving of indecipherable shapes, a blow, and a concussion. There he stood on the dark little landing, wondering what it might be that he had seen.

After a couple of minutes he rejoined the little group that had formed outside the Coach and Horses. There was Fearenside telling about it all over again for the second time; there was Mrs. Hall saying his dog didn't have no business to bite her guests; there was Huxter, the general dealer from over the road, interrogative; and Sandy Wadgers from the forge, judicial; besides women and children,--all of them saying fatuities: "Wouldn't let en bite me, I knows"; "'Tasn't right have such dargs"; "Whad 'e bite'n for then?" and so forth.

Mr. Hall, staring at them from the steps and listening, found it incredible that he had seen anything very remarkable happen upstairs. Besides, his vocabulary was altogether too limited to express his impressions.

"He don't want no help, he says," he said in answer to his wife's enquiry. "We'd better be a-takin' of his luggage in."

"He ought to have it cauterised at once," said Mr. Huxter; "especially if it's at all inflamed."

"I'd shoot en, that's what I'd do," said a lady in the group.

Suddenly the dog began growling again.

"Come along," cried an angry voice in the doorway, and there stood the muffled stranger with his collar turned up, and his hat-brim bent down. "The sooner you get those things in the better I'll be pleased." It is stated by an anonymous bystander that his trousers and gloves had been changed.

"Was you hurt, sir?" said Fearenside. "I'm rare sorry the darg--"

"Not a bit," said the stranger. "Never broke the skin. Hurry up with those things."

He then swore to himself, so Mr. Hall asserts.

Directly the first crate was carried into the parlour, in accordance with his directions, the stranger flung himself upon it with extraordinary eagerness, and began to unpack it, scattering the straw with an utter disregard of Mrs. Hall's carpet. And from it he began to produce bottles--little fat bottles containing powders, small and slender bottles containing coloured and white fluids, fluted blue bottles labelled Poison, bottles with round bodies and slender necks, large green-glass bottles, large white-glass bottles, bottles with glass stoppers and frosted labels, bottles with fine corks, bottles with bungs, bottles with wooden caps, wine bottles, salad-oil bottles--putting them in rows on the chiffonier, on the mantel, on the table under the window, round the floor, on the book-shelf--

everywhere. The chemist's shop in Bramblehurst could not boast half so many. Quite a sight it was. Crate after crate yielded bottles, until all six were empty and the table high with straw; the only things that came out of these crates besides the bottles were a number of test-tubes and a carefully packed balance.

And directly the crates were unpacked, the stranger went to the window and set to work, not troubling in the least about the litter of straw, the fire which had gone out, the box of books outside, nor for the trunks and other luggage that had gone upstairs.

When Mrs. Hall took his dinner in to him, he was already so absorbed in his work, pouring little drops out of the bottles into test-tubes, that he did not hear her until she had swept away the bulk of the straw and put the tray on the table, with some little emphasis perhaps, seeing the state that the floor was in. Then he half turned his head and immediately turned it away again. But she saw he had removed his glasses; they were beside him on the table, and it seemed to her that his eye sockets were extraordinarily hollow. He put on his spectacles again, and then turned and faced her. She was about to complain of the straw on the floor when he anticipated her.

"I wish you wouldn't come in without knocking," he said in the tone of abnormal exasperation that seemed so characteristic of him.

"I knocked, but seemingly--"

"Perhaps you did. But in my investigations--my really very urgent and necessary investigations--the slightest disturbance, the jar of a door--I must ask you--"

"Certainly, sir. You can turn the lock if you're like that, you know--any time."

"A very good idea," said the stranger.

"This stor, sir, if I might make so bold as to remark--"

"Don't. If the straw makes trouble put it down in the bill." And he mumbled at her--words suspiciously like curses.

He was so odd, standing there, so aggressive and explosive, bottle in one hand and test-tube in the other, that Mrs. Hall was quite alarmed. But she was a resolute woman. "In which case, I should like to know, sir, what you consider--"

"A shilling. Put down a shilling. Surely a shilling's enough?"

"So be it," said Mrs. Hall, taking up the tablecloth and beginning to spread it over the table. "If you're satisfied, of course--"

He turned and sat down, with his coat-collar towards her.

All the afternoon he worked with the door locked and, as Mrs. Hall testifies, for the most part in silence. But once there was a concussion and a sound of bottles ringing together as though the table had been hit, and the smash of a bottle flung violently down, and then a rapid pacing athwart the room. Fearing "something was the matter," she went to the door and listened, not caring to knock.

"I can't go on," he was raving. "I can't go on. Three hundred thousand, four hundred thousand! The huge multitude! Cheated! All my life it may take me! Patience! Patience indeed! Fool and liar!"

There was a noise of hobnails on the bricks in the bar, and Mrs. Hall very reluctantly had to leave the rest of his soliloquy. When she returned the room was silent again, save for the faint crepitation of his chair and the occasional clink of a bottle. It was all over. The stranger had resumed work.

When she took in his tea she saw broken glass in the corner of the room under the concave mirror, and a golden stain that had been carelessly wiped. She called attention to it.

"Put it down in the bill," snapped her visitor. "For God's sake don't worry me. If there's damage done, put it down in the bill"; and he went on ticking a list in the exercise book before him.

"I'll tell you something," said Fearenside mysteriously. It was late in the afternoon, and they were in the little beer-shop of Iping Hanger.

"Well?" said Teddy Henfrey.

"This chap you're speaking of, what my dog bit. Well--he's black. Leastways, his legs are. I seed through the tear of his glove. You'd have expected a sort of pinky to show, wouldn't you? Well--there wasn't none. Just blackness. I tell you, he's as black as my hat."

"My sakes!" said Henfrey. "It's a rummy case altogether. Why, his nose is as pink as paint!"

"That's true," said Fearenside. "I knows that. And I tell 'ee what I'm thinking. That marn's a piebald, Teddy. Black here and white there--in patches. And he's ashamed of it. He's a kind of half-breed, and the colour's come off patchy instead of mixing. I've heard of such things before. And it's the common way with horses, as anyone can see."

Chapter 4

Mr. Cuss Interviews the Stranger

I have told the circumstances of the stranger's arrival in Iping with a certain fulness of detail, in order that the curious impression he created may be understood by the reader. But excepting two odd incidents, the circumstances of his stay until the extraordinary day of the Club Festival may be passed over very cursorily. There were a number of skirmishes with Mrs. Hall on matters of domestic discipline, but in every case until late in April, when the first signs of penury began, he over-rode her by the easy expedient of an extra payment. Hall did not like him, and whenever he dared he talked of the advisability of getting rid of him; but he showed his dislike chiefly by concealing it ostentatiously, and avoiding his visitor as much as possible. "Wait till the summer," said Mrs. Hall, sagely, "when the artisks are beginning to come. Then we'll see. He may be a bit overbearing, but bills settled punctual is bills settled punctual, whatever you like to say."

The stranger did not go to church, and indeed made no difference between Sunday and the irreligious days, even in costume. He worked, as Mrs. Hall thought, very fitfully. Some days he would come down early and be continuously busy. On others he would rise late, pace his room, fretting audibly for hours together, smoke, sleep in the armchair by the fire. Communication with the world beyond the village he had none. His temper continued very uncertain; for the most part his manner was that of a man suffering under almost unendurable provocation, and once or twice things were snapped, torn, crushed, or broken in spasmodic gusts of violence. He seemed under a chronic irritation of the greatest intensity. His habit of talking to himself in a low voice grew steadily upon him, but though Mrs. Hall listened conscientiously she could make neither head nor tail of what she heard.

He rarely went abroad by daylight, but at twilight he would go out muffled up enormously, whether the weather were cold or not, and he chose the loneliest paths and those most overshadowed by trees and banks. His goggling spectacles and ghastly bandaged face under the penthouse of his hat, came with a disagreeable suddenness out of the darkness upon one or two home-going labourers; and Teddy Henfrey, tumbling out of the Scarlet Coat one night at half-past nine, was scared shamefully by the stranger's skull-like head (he was walking hat in hand) lit by the sudden light of the opened door. Such children as saw him at nightfall dreamt of bogies, and it seemed doubtful whether he disliked boys more than they disliked him, or the reverse--but there was certainly a vivid enough dislike on either side.

It was inevitable that a person of so remarkable an appearance and bearing should form a frequent topic in such a village as Iping. Opinion was greatly divided about his occupation. Mrs. Hall was sensitive on the point. When questioned, she explained very carefully that he was an "experimental investigator," going gingerly over the syllables as one who dreads pitfalls. When asked what an experimental investigator was, she would say with a touch of superiority that most educated people knew that, and would then explain that he "discovered things." Her visitor had had an accident, she said, which temporarily discoloured his face and hands; and being of a sensitive disposition, he was averse to any public notice of the fact.

Out of her hearing there was a view largely entertained that he was a criminal trying to escape from justice by wrapping himself up so as to conceal himself altogether from the eye of the police. This idea sprang from the brain of Mr. Teddy Henfrey. No crime of any magnitude dating from the middle or end of February was known to have occurred. Elaborated in the imagination of Mr. Gould, the probationary assistant in the National School, this theory took the

form that the stranger was an Anarchist in disguise, preparing explosives, and he resolved to undertake such detective operations as his time permitted. These consisted for the most part in looking very hard at the stranger whenever they met, or in asking people who had never seen the stranger leading questions about him. But he detected nothing.

Another school of opinion followed Mr. Fearenside, and either accepted the piebald view or some modification of it; as, for instance, Silas Durgan, who was heard to assert that "if he choses to show enself at fairs he'd make his fortune in no time," and being a bit of a theologian, compared the stranger to the man with the one talent. Yet another view explained the entire matter by regarding the stranger as a harmless lunatic. That had the advantage of accounting for everything straight away.

Between these main groups there were waverers and compromisers. Sussex folk have few superstitions, and it was only after the events of early April that the thought of the supernatural was first whispered in the village. Even then it was only credited among the women folks.

But whatever they thought of him, people in Iping on the whole agreed in disliking him. His irritability, though it might have been comprehensible to an urban brain-worker, was an amazing thing to these quiet Sussex villagers. The frantic gesticulations they surprised now and then, the headlong pace after nightfall that swept him upon them round quiet corners, the inhuman bludgeoning of all the tentative advances of curiosity, the taste for twilight that led to the closing of doors, the pulling down of blinds, the extinction of candles and lamps--who could agree with such goings on? They drew aside as he passed down the village, and when he had gone by, young humorists would up with coat-collars and down with hat-brims, and go pacing nervously after him in imitation of his occult bearing. There was a song popular at that time called the "Bogey Man"; Miss

Statchell sang it at the schoolroom concert (in aid of the church lamps), and thereafter whenever one or two of the villagers were gathered together and the stranger appeared, a bar or so of this tune, more or less sharp or flat, was whistled in the midst of them. Also belated little children would call "Bogey Man!" after him, and make off tremulously elated.

Cuss, the general practitioner, was devoured by curiosity. The bandages excited his professional interest, the report of the thousand and one bottles aroused his jealous regard. All through April and May he coveted an opportunity of talking to the stranger; and at last, towards Whitsuntide, he could stand it no longer, and hit upon the subscription-list for a village nurse as an excuse. He was surprised to find that Mr. Hall did not know his guest's name. "He give a name," said Mrs. Hall--an assertion which was quite unfounded-- "but I didn't rightly hear it." She thought it seemed so silly not to know the man's name.

Cuss rapped at the parlour door and entered. There was a fairly audible imprecation from within. "Pardon my intrusion," said Cuss, and then the door closed and cut Mrs. Hall off from the rest of the conversation.

She could hear the murmur of voices for the next ten minutes, then a cry of surprise, a stirring of feet, a chair flung aside, a bark of laughter, quick steps to the door, and Cuss appeared, his face white, his eyes staring over his shoulder. He left the door open behind him, and without looking at her strode across the hall and went down the steps, and she heard his feet hurrying along the road. He carried his hat in his hand. She stood behind the door, looking at the open door of the parlour. Then she heard the stranger laughing quietly, and then his footsteps came across the room. She could not see his face where she stood. The parlour door slammed, and the place was silent again.

Cuss went straight up the village to Bunting the vicar. "Am I mad?" Cuss began abruptly, as he entered the shabby little study. "Do I look like an insane person?"

"What's happened?" said the vicar, putting the ammonite on the loose sheets of his forthcoming sermon.

"That chap at the inn--"

"Well?"

"Give me something to drink," said Cuss, and he sat down.

When his nerves had been steadied by a glass of cheap sherry-- the only drink the good vicar had available--he told him of the interview he had just had. "Went in," he gasped, "and began to demand a subscription for that Nurse Fund. He'd stuck his hands in his pockets as I came in, and he sat down lumpily in his chair. Sniffed. I told him I'd heard he took an interest in scientific things. He said yes. Sniffed again. Kept on sniffing all the time; evidently recently caught an infernal cold. No wonder, wrapped up like that! I developed the nurse idea, and all the while kept my eyes open. Bottles--chemicals--everywhere. Balance, test-tubes in stands, and a smell of--evening primrose. Would he subscribe? Said he'd consider it. Asked him, point-blank, was he researching. Said he was. A long research? Got quite cross. 'A damnable long research,' said he, blowing the cork out, so to speak. 'Oh,' said I. And out came the grievance. The man was just on the boil, and my question boiled him over. He had been given a prescription, most valuable prescription-- what for he wouldn't say. Was it medical? 'Damn you! What are you fishing after?' I apologised. Dignified sniff and cough. He resumed. He'd read it. Five ingredients. Put it down; turned his head. Draught of air from window lifted the paper. Swish, rustle. He was working in a room with an open fireplace, he said. Saw a flicker, and there was the prescription burning and

lifting chimneyward. Rushed towards it just as it whisked up chimney. So! Just at that point, to illustrate his story, out came his arm."

"Well?"

"No hand--just an empty sleeve. Lord! I thought, that's a deformity! Got a cork arm, I suppose, and has taken it off. Then, I thought, there's something odd in that. What the devil keeps that sleeve up and open, if there's nothing in it? There was nothing in it, I tell you. Nothing down it, right down to the joint. I could see right down it to the elbow, and there was a glimmer of light shining through a tear of the cloth. 'Good God!' I said. Then he stopped. Stared at me with those black goggles of his, and then at his sleeve."

"Well?"

"That's all. He never said a word; just glared, and put his sleeve back in his pocket quickly. 'I was saying,' said he, 'that there was the prescription burning, wasn't I?' Interrogative cough. 'How the devil,' said I, 'can you move an empty sleeve like that?' 'Empty sleeve?' 'Yes,' said I, 'an empty sleeve.'

"'It's an empty sleeve, is it? You saw it was an empty sleeve?' He stood up right away. I stood up too. He came towards me in three very slow steps, and stood quite close. Sniffed venomously. I didn't flinch, though I'm hanged if that bandaged knob of his, and those blinkers, aren't enough to unnerve any one, coming quietly up to you.

"'You said it was an empty sleeve?' he said. 'Certainly,' I said. At staring and saying nothing a barefaced man, unspectacled, starts scratch. Then very quietly he pulled his sleeve out of his pocket again, and raised his arm towards me as though he would show it to me

again. He did it very, very slowly. I looked at it. Seemed an age. 'Well?' said I, clearing my throat, 'there's nothing in it.' Had to say something. I was beginning to feel frightened. I could see right down it. He extended it straight towards me, slowly, slowly --just like that--until the cuff was six inches from my face. Queer thing to see an empty sleeve come at you like that! And then--"

"Well?"

"Something--exactly like a finger and thumb it felt--nipped my nose."

Bunting began to laugh.

"There wasn't anything there!" said Cuss, his voice running up into a shriek at the "there." "It's all very well for you to laugh, but I tell you I was so startled, I hit his cuff hard, and turned round, and cut out of the room--I left him--"

Cuss stopped. There was no mistaking the sincerity of his panic. He turned round in a helpless way and took a second glass of the excellent vicar's very inferior sherry. "When I hit his cuff," said Cuss, "I tell you, it felt exactly like hitting an arm. And there wasn't an arm! There wasn't the ghost of an arm!"

Mr. Bunting thought it over. He looked suspiciously at Cuss. "It's a most remarkable story," he said. He looked very wise and grave indeed. "It's really," said Mr. Bunting with judicial emphasis, "a most remarkable story."

Chapter 5

The Burglary at the Vicarage

The facts of the burglary at the vicarage came to us chiefly through the medium of the vicar and his wife. It occurred in the small hours of Whit-Monday--the day devoted in Iping to the Club festivities. Mrs. Bunting, it seems, woke up suddenly in the stillness that comes before the dawn, with the strong impression that the door of their bedroom had opened and closed. She did not arouse her husband at first, but sat up in bed listening. She then distinctly heard the pad, pad, pad of bare feet coming out of the adjoining dressing-room and walking along the passage towards the staircase. As soon as she felt assured of this, she aroused the Rev. Mr. Bunting as quietly as possible. He did not strike a light, but putting on his spectacles, her dressing-gown, and his bath slippers, he went out on the landing to listen. He heard quite distinctly a fumbling going on at his study desk downstairs, and then a violent sneeze.

At that he returned to his bedroom, armed himself with the most obvious weapon, the poker, and descended the staircase as noiselessly as possible. Mrs. Bunting came out on the landing.

The hour was about four, and the ultimate darkness of the night was past. There was a faint shimmer of light in the hall, but the study doorway yawned impenetrably black. Everything was still except the faint creaking of the stairs under Mr. Bunting's tread, and the slight movements in the study. Then something snapped, the drawer was opened, and there was a rustle of papers. Then came an imprecation, and a match was struck and the study was flooded with yellow light. Mr. Bunting was now in the hall, and through the crack of the door he could see the desk and the open drawer and a candle burning on the desk. But the robber he could not see. He stood there in the hall undecided what to do, and Mrs. Bunting, her face white and intent, crept slowly downstairs after him. One thing kept

up Mr. Bunting's courage: the persuasion that this burglar was a resident in the village.

They heard the chink of money, and realised that the robber had found the housekeeping reserve of gold--two pounds ten in half- sovereigns altogether. At that sound Mr. Bunting was nerved to abrupt action. Gripping the poker firmly, he rushed into the room, closely followed by Mrs. Bunting. "Surrender!" cried Mr. Bunting, fiercely, and then stopped amazed. Apparently the room was perfectly empty.

Yet their conviction that they had, that very moment, heard somebody moving in the room had amounted to a certainty. For half a minute, perhaps, they stood gaping, then Mrs. Bunting went across the room and looked behind the screen, while Mr. Bunting, by a kindred impulse, peered under the desk. Then Mrs. Bunting turned back the window-curtains, and Mr. Bunting looked up the chimney and probed it with the poker. Then Mrs. Bunting scrutinised the waste-paper basket and Mr. Bunting opened the lid of the coal-scuttle. Then they came to a stop and stood with eyes interrogating each other.

"I could have sworn--" said Mr. Bunting.

"The candle!" said Mr. Bunting. "Who lit the candle?"

"The drawer!" said Mrs. Bunting. "And the money's gone!"

She went hastily to the doorway.

"Of all the extraordinary occurrences--"

There was a violent sneeze in the passage. They rushed out, and as they did so the kitchen door slammed. "Bring the candle," said Mr. Bunting, and led the way. They both heard a sound of bolts being hastily shot back.

As he opened the kitchen door he saw through the scullery that the back door was just opening, and the faint light of early dawn displayed the dark masses of the garden beyond. He is certain that nothing went out of the door. It opened, stood open for a moment, and then closed with a slam. As it did so, the candle Mrs. Bunting was carrying from the study flickered and flared. It was a minute or more before they entered the kitchen.

The place was empty. They refastened the back door, examined the kitchen, pantry, and scullery thoroughly, and at last went down into the cellar. There was not a soul to be found in the house, search as they would.

Daylight found the vicar and his wife, a quaintly-costumed little couple, still marvelling about on their own ground floor by the unnecessary light of a guttering candle.

Chapter 6

The Furniture That Went Mad

Now it happened that in the early hours of Whit-Monday, before Millie was hunted out for the day, Mr. Hall and Mrs. Hall both rose and went noiselessly down into the cellar. Their business there was of a private nature, and had something to do with the specific gravity of their beer. They had hardly entered the cellar when Mrs. Hall found she had forgotten to bring down a bottle of sarsaparilla from their joint-room. As she was the expert and principal operator in this affair, Hall very properly went upstairs for it.

On the landing he was surprised to see that the stranger's door was ajar. He went on into his own room and found the bottle as he had been directed.

But returning with the bottle, he noticed that the bolts of the front door had been shot back, that the door was in fact simply on the latch. And with a flash of inspiration he connected this with the stranger's room upstairs and the suggestions of Mr. Teddy Henfrey. He distinctly remembered holding the candle while Mrs. Hall shot those bolts overnight. At the sight he stopped, gaping, then with the bottle still in his hand went upstairs again. He rapped at the stranger's door. There was no answer. He rapped again; then pushed the door wide open and entered.

It was as he expected. The bed, the room also, was empty. And what was stranger, even to his heavy intelligence, on the bedroom chair and along the rail of the bed were scattered the garments, the only garments so far as he knew, and the bandages of their guest. His big slouch hat even was cocked jauntily over the bed-post.

As Hall stood there he heard his wife's voice coming out of the depth of the cellar, with that rapid telescoping of the syllables and interrogative cocking up of the final words to a high note, by which the West Sussex villager is wont to indicate a brisk impatience. "Gearge! You gart what a wand?"

At that he turned and hurried down to her. "Janny," he said, over the rail of the cellar steps, "'tas the truth what Henfrey sez. 'E's not in uz room, 'e ent. And the front door's unbolted."

At first Mrs. Hall did not understand, and as soon as she did she resolved to see the empty room for herself. Hall, still holding the bottle, went first. "If 'e ent there," he said, "his close are. And what's 'e doin' without his close, then? 'Tas a most curious

basness."

As they came up the cellar steps, they both, it was afterwards ascertained, fancied they heard the front door open and shut, but seeing it closed and nothing there, neither said a word to the other about it at the time. Mrs. Hall passed her husband in the passage and ran on first upstairs. Some one sneezed on the staircase. Hall, following six steps behind, thought that he heard her sneeze. She, going on first, was under the impression that Hall was sneezing. She flung open the door and stood regarding the room. "Of all the curious!" she said.

She heard a sniff close behind her head as it seemed, and, turning, was surprised to see Hall a dozen feet off on the top-most stair. But in another moment he was beside her. She bent forward and put her hand on the pillow and then under the clothes.

"Cold," she said. "He's been up this hour or more."

As she did so, a most extraordinary thing happened--the bed-clothes gathered themselves together, leapt up suddenly into a sort of peak, and then jumped headlong over the bottom rail. It was exactly as if a hand had clutched them in the centre and flung them aside. Immediately after, the stranger's hat hopped off the bed-post, describing a whirling flight in the air through the better part of a circle, and then dashed straight at Mrs. Hall's face. Then as swiftly came the sponge from the washstand; and then the chair, flinging the stranger's coat and trousers carelessly aside, and laughing dryly in a voice singularly like the stranger's, turned itself up with its four legs at Mrs. Hall, seemed to take aim at her for a moment, and charged at her. She screamed and turned, and then the chair legs came gently but firmly against her back and impelled her and Hall out of the room. The door slammed violently and was locked. The chair and bed seemed to be executing a dance of triumph for a moment, and then abruptly everything was still.

Mrs. Hall was left almost in a fainting condition in Mr. Hall's arms on the landing. It was with the greatest difficulty that Mr. Hall and Millie, who had been roused by her scream of alarm, succeeded in getting her downstairs, and applying the restoratives customary in these cases.

"'Tas sperrits," said Mrs. Hall. "I know 'tas sperrits. I've read in papers of en. Tables and chairs leaping and dancing--!"

"Take a drop more, Janny," said Hall. "'Twill steady ye."

"Lock him out," said Mrs. Hall. "Don't let him come in again. I half guessed--I might ha' known. With them goggling eyes and bandaged head, and never going to church of a Sunday. And all they bottles--more'n it's right for any one to have. He's put the sperrits into the furniture. My good old furniture! 'Twas in that very chair my poor dear mother used to sit when I was a little girl. To think it should rise up against me now!"

"Just a drop more, Janny," said Hall. "Your nerves is all upset."

They sent Millie across the street through the golden five o'clock sunshine to rouse up Mr. Sandy Wadgers, the blacksmith. Mr. Hall's compliments and the furniture upstairs was behaving most extraordinary. Would Mr. Wadgers come round? He was a knowing man, was Mr. Wadgers, and very resourceful. He took quite a grave view of the case. "Arm darmed ef thet ent witchcraft," was the view of Mr. Sandy Wadgers. "You warnt horseshoes for such gentry as he."

He came round greatly concerned. They wanted him to lead the way upstairs to the room, but he didn't seem to be in any hurry. He preferred to talk in the passage. Over the way Huxter's apprentice came out and began taking down the shutters of the tobacco window. He was called over to join the discussion. Mr. Huxter naturally

followed in the course of a few minutes. The Anglo-Saxon genius for parliamentary government asserted itself; there was a great deal of talk and no decisive action. "Let's have the facts first," insisted Mr. Sandy Wadgers. "Let's be sure we'd be acting perfectly right in bustin' that there door open. A door onbust is always open to bustin', but ye can't onbust a door once you've busted en."

And suddenly and most wonderfully the door of the room upstairs opened of its own accord, and as they looked up in amazement, they saw descending the stairs the muffled figure of the stranger staring more blackly and blankly than ever with those unreasonably large blue glass eyes of his. He came down stiffly and slowly, staring all the time; he walked across the passage staring, then stopped.

"Look there!" he said, and their eyes followed the direction of his gloved finger and saw a bottle of sarsaparilla hard by the cellar door. Then he entered the parlour, and suddenly, swiftly, viciously slammed the door in their faces.

Not a word was spoken until the last echoes of the slam had died away. They stared at one another. "Well, if that don't lick everything!" said Mr. Wadgers, and left the alternative unsaid.

"I'd go in and ask'n 'bout it," said Wadgers, to Mr. Hall. "I'd d'mand an explanation."

It took some time to bring the landlady's husband up to that pitch. At last he rapped, opened the door, and got as far as, "Excuse me--"

"Go to the devil!" said the stranger in a tremendous voice, and "Shut that door after you." So that brief interview terminated.

Chapter 7

The Unveiling of the Stranger

The stranger went into the little parlour of the Coach and Horses about half-past five in the morning, and there he remained until near midday, the blinds down, the door shut, and none, after Hall's repulse, venturing near him.

All that time he must have fasted. Thrice he rang his bell, the third time furiously and continuously, but no one answered him. "Him and his 'go to the devil' indeed!" said Mrs. Hall. Presently came an imperfect rumour of the burglary at the vicarage, and two and two were put together. Hall, assisted by Wadgers, went off to find Mr. Shuckleforth, the magistrate, and take his advice. No one ventured upstairs. How the stranger occupied himself is unknown. Now and then he would stride violently up and down, and twice came an outburst of curses, a tearing of paper, and a violent smashing of bottles.

The little group of scared but curious people increased. Mrs. Huxter came over; some gay young fellows resplendent in black ready-made jackets and piqu paper ties, for it was Whit-Monday, joined the group with confused interrogations. Young Archie Harker distinguished himself by going up the yard and trying to peep under the window-blinds. He could see nothing, but gave reason for supposing that he did, and others of the Iping youth presently joined him.

It was the finest of all possible Whit-Mondays, and down the village street stood a row of nearly a dozen booths and a shooting gallery, and on the grass by the forge were three yellow and chocolate waggons

and some picturesque strangers of both sexes putting up a cocoanut shy. The gentlemen wore blue jerseys, the ladies white aprons and quite fashionable hats with heavy plumes. Wodger of the Purple Fawn and Mr. Jagers the cobbler, who also sold second-hand ordinary bicycles, were stretching a string of union-jacks and royal ensigns (which had originally celebrated the Jubilee) across the road...

And inside, in the artificial darkness of the parlour, into which only one thin jet of sunlight penetrated, the stranger, hungry we must suppose, and fearful, hidden in his uncomfortable hot wrappings, pored through his dark glasses upon his paper or chinked his dirty little bottles, and occasionally swore savagely at the boys, audible if invisible, outside the windows. In the corner by the fireplace lay the fragments of half a dozen smashed bottles, and a pungent tang of chlorine tainted the air. So much we know from what was heard at the time and from what was subsequently seen in the room.

About noon he suddenly opened his parlour door and stood glaring fixedly at the three or four people in the bar. "Mrs. Hall," he said. Somebody went sheepishly and called for Mrs. Hall.

Mrs. Hall appeared after an interval, a little short of breath, but all the fiercer for that. Hall was still out. She had deliberated over the scene, and she came holding a little tray with an unsettled bill upon it. "Is it your bill you're wanting, sir?" she said.

"Why wasn't my breakfast laid? Why haven't you prepared my meals and answered my bell? Do you think I live without eating?"

"Why isn't my bill paid?" said Mrs. Hall. "That's what I want to know."

"I told you three days ago I was awaiting a remittance--"

"I told you two days ago I wasn't going to await no remittances. You

can't grumble if your breakfast waits a bit, if my bill's been waiting these five days, can you?"

The stranger swore briefly but vividly.

"Nar, nar!" from the bar.

"And I'd thank you kindly, sir, if you'd keep your swearing to yourself, sir," said Mrs. Hall.

The stranger stood looking more like an angry diving-helmet than ever. It was universally felt in the bar that Mrs. Hall had the better of him. His next words showed as much.

"Look here, my good woman--" he began.

"Don't good woman me," said Mrs. Hall.

"I've told you my remittance hasn't come--"

"Remittance indeed!" said Mrs. Hall.

"Still, I daresay in my pocket--"

"You told me two days ago that you hadn't anything but a sovereign's worth of silver upon you--"

"Well, I've found some more--"

"UI-lo!" from the bar.

"I wonder where you found it!" said Mrs. Hall.

That seemed to annoy the stranger very much. He stamped his foot. "What do you mean?" he said.

"That I wonder where you found it," said Mrs. Hall. "And before I take any bills or get any breakfasts, or do any such things whatsoever, you got to tell me one or two things I don't understand, and what nobody don't understand, and what everybody is very anxious to understand. I want know what you been doing t' my chair upstairs, and I want know how 'tis your room was empty, and how you got in again. Them as stops in this house comes in by the doors--that's the rule of the house, and that you didn't do, and what I want know is how you did come in. And I want know--"

Suddenly the stranger raised his gloved hands clenched, stamped his foot, and said, "Stop!" with such extraordinary violence that he silenced her instantly.

"You don't understand," he said, "who I am or what I am. I'll show you. By Heaven! I'll show you." Then he put his open palm over his face and withdrew it. The centre of his face became a black cavity. "Here," he said. He stepped forward and handed Mrs. Hall something which she, staring at his metamorphosed face, accepted automatically. Then, when she saw what it was, she screamed loudly, dropped it, and staggered back. The nose--it was the stranger's nose! pink and shining--rolled on the floor.

Then he removed his spectacles, and every one in the bar gasped. He took off his hat, and with a violent gesture tore at his whiskers and bandages. For a moment they resisted him. A flash of horrible anticipation passed through the bar. "Oh, my Gard!" said some one. Then off they came.

It was worse than anything. Mrs. Hall, standing open-mouthed and horror-struck, shrieked at what she saw, and made for the door of the house. Every one began to move. They were prepared for scars, disfigurements, tangible horrors, but nothing! The bandages and false hair flew across the passage into the bar, making a hobbledehoy

jump to avoid them. Every one tumbled on every one else down the steps. For the man who stood there shouting some incoherent explanation, was a solid gesticulating figure up to the coat-collar of him, and then--nothingness, no visible thing at all!

People down the village heard shouts and shrieks, and looking up the street saw the Coach and Horses violently firing out its humanity. They saw Mrs. Hall fall down and Mr. Teddy Henfrey jump to avoid tumbling over her, and then they heard the frightful screams of Millie, who, emerging suddenly from the kitchen at the noise of the tumult, had come upon the headless stranger from behind.

Forthwith every one all down the street, the sweet-stuff seller, cocoanut shy proprietor and his assistant, the swing man, little boys and girls, rustic dandies, smart wenches, smocked elders and aproned gipsies, began running towards the inn; and in a miraculously short space of time a crowd of perhaps forty people, and rapidly increasing, swayed and hooted and inquired and exclaimed and suggested, in front of Mrs. Hall's establishment. Every one seemed eager to talk at once, and the result was babel. A small group supported Mrs. Hall, who was picked up in a state of collapse. There was a conference, and the incredible evidence of a vociferous eyewitness. "O'Bogey!" "What's he been doin', then?" "Ain't hurt the girl, 'as 'e?" "Run at en with a knife, I believe." "No 'ed, I tell ye. I don't mean no manner of speaking, I mean marn 'without a 'ed!" "Narnsense! 'tas some conjuring trick." "Fetched off 'is wrappin's, 'e did--"

In its struggles to see in through the open door, the crowd formed itself into a straggling wedge, with the more adventurous apex nearest the inn. "He stood for a moment, I heerd the gal scream, and he turned. I saw her skirts whisk, and he went after her. Didn't take ten seconds. Back he comes with a knife in uz hand and a loaf; stood just as if he was staring. Not a moment ago. Went in that there door. I tell 'e, 'e ain't gart no 'ed 't all. You just missed

en--"

There was a disturbance behind, and the speaker stopped to step aside for a little procession that was marching very resolutely towards the house--first Mr. Hall, very red and determined, then Mr. Bobby Jaffers, the village constable, and then the wary Mr. Wadgers. They had come now armed with a warrant.

People shouted conflicting information of the recent circumstances. "Ed or no 'ed," said Jaffers, "I got to 'rest en, and 'rest en I will."

Mr. Hall marched up the steps, marched straight to the door of the parlour and flung it open. "Constable," he said, "do your duty."

Jaffers marched in, Hall next, Wadgers last. They saw in the dim light the headless figure facing them, with a gnawed crust of bread in one gloved hand and a chunk of cheese in the other.

"That's him!" said Hall.

"What the devil's this?" came in a tone of angry expostulation from above the collar of the figure.

"You're a damned rum customer, mister," said Mr. Jaffers. "But 'ed or no 'ed, the warrant says 'body,' and duty's duty--"

"Keep off!" said the figure, starting back.

Abruptly he whipped down the bread and cheese, and Mr. Hall just grasped the knife on the table in time to save it. Off came the stranger's left glove and was slapped in Jaffers' face. In another moment Jaffers, cutting short some statement concerning a warrant, had gripped him by the handless wrist and caught his invisible throat. He got a sounding kick on the shin that made him shout, but

he kept his grip. Hall sent the knife sliding along the table to Wadgers, who acted as goal-keeper for the offensive, so to speak, and then stepped forward as Jaffers and the stranger swayed and staggered towards him, clutching and hitting in. A chair stood in the way, and went aside with a crash as they came down together.

"Get the feet," said Jaffers between his teeth.

Mr. Hall, endeavoring to act on instructions, receiving a sounding kick in the ribs that disposed of him for a moment, and Mr. Wadgers, seeing the decapitated stranger had rolled over and got the upper side of Jaffers, retreated towards the door, knife in hand, and so collided with Mr. Huxter and the Siddermorton carter coming to the rescue of law and order. At the same moment down came three or four bottles from the chiffonier and shot a web of pungency into the air of the room.

"I'll surrender," cried the stranger, though he had Jaffers down, and in another moment he stood up panting, a strange figure, headless and handless--for he had pulled off his right glove now as well as his left. "It's no good," he said, as if sobbing for breath.

It was the strangest thing in the world to hear that voice coming as if out of empty space, but the Sussex peasants are perhaps the most matter-of-fact people under the sun. Jaffers got up also and produced a pair of handcuffs. Then he started.

"I say!" said Jaffers, brought up short by a dim realisation of the incongruity of the whole business. "Darm it! Can't use 'em as I can see."

The stranger ran his arm down his waistcoat, and as if by a miracle the buttons to which his empty sleeve pointed became undone. Then he said something about his shin, and stooped down. He seemed to be fumbling with his shoes and socks.

"Why!" said Huxter, suddenly, "that's not a man at all. It's just empty clothes. Look! You can see down his collar and the linings of his clothes. I could put my arm--"

He extended his hand; it seemed to meet something in mid-air, and he drew it back with a sharp exclamation. "I wish you'd keep your fingers out of my eye," said the aerial voice, in a tone of savage expostulation. "The fact is, I'm all here: head, hands, legs, and all the rest of it, but it happens I'm invisible. It's a confounded nuisance, but I am. That's no reason why I should be poked to pieces by every stupid bumpkin in Iping, is it?"

The suit of clothes, now all unbuttoned and hanging loosely upon its unseen supports, stood up, arms akimbo.

Several other of the men folks had now entered the room, so that it was closely crowded. "Invisible, eigh?" said Huxter, ignoring the stranger's abuse. "Who ever heard the likes of that?"

"It's strange, perhaps, but it's not a crime. Why am I assaulted by a policeman in this fashion?"

"Ah! that's a different matter," said Jaffers. "No doubt you are a bit difficult to see in this light, but I got a warrant, and it's all correct. What I'm after ain't no invisibility--it's burglary. There's a house been broken into and money took."

"Well?"

"And circumstances certainly point--"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the Invisible Man.

"I hope so, sir; but I've got my instructions."

"Well," said the stranger, "I'll come. I'll come. But no handcuffs."

"It's the regular thing," said Jaffers.

"No handcuffs," stipulated the stranger.

"Pardon me," said Jaffers.

Abruptly the figure sat down, and before any one could realise what was being done, the slippers, socks, and trousers had been kicked off under the table. Then he sprang up again and flung off his coat.

"Here, stop that," said Jaffers, suddenly realising what was happening. He gripped the waist-coat; it struggled, and the shirt slipped out of it and left it limp and empty in his hand. "Hold him!" said Jaffers loudly. "Once he gets they things off--!"

"Hold him!" cried every one, and there was a rush at the fluttering white shirt which was now all that was visible of the stranger.

The shirt-sleeve planted a shrewd blow in Hall's face that stopped his open-armed advance, and sent him backward into old Toothsome the sexton, and in another moment the garment was lifted up and became convulsed and vacantly flapping about the arms, even as a shirt that is being thrust over a man's head. Jaffers clutched at it, and only helped to pull it off; he was struck in the mouth out of the air, and incontinently drew his truncheon and smote Teddy Henfrey savagely upon the crown of his head.

"Look out!" said everybody, fencing at random and hitting at nothing. "Hold him! Shut the door! Don't let him loose! I got something! Here he is!" A perfect babel of noises they made. Everybody, it seemed, was being hit all at once, and Sandy Wadgers, knowing as ever

and his wits sharpened by a frightful blow in the nose, reopened the door and led the rout. The others, following incontinently, were jammed for a moment in the corner by the doorway. The hitting continued. Phipps, the Unitarian, had a front tooth broken, and Henfrey was injured in the cartilage of his ear. Jaffers was struck under the jaw, and, turning, caught at something that intervened between him and Huxter in the mle, and prevented their coming together. He felt a muscular chest, and in another moment the whole mass of struggling, excited men shot out into the crowded hall.

"I got him!" shouted Jaffers, choking and reeling through them all, and wrestling with purple face and swelling veins against his unseen enemy.

Men staggered right and left as the extraordinary conflict swayed swiftly towards the house door, and went spinning down the half-dozen steps of the inn. Jaffers cried in a strangled voice-- holding tight, nevertheless, and making play with his knee--spun round, and fell heavily undermost with his head on the gravel. Only then did his fingers relax.

There were excited cries of "Hold him!" "Invisible!" and so forth, and a young fellow, a stranger in the place whose name did not come to light, rushed in at once, caught something, missed his hold, and fell over the constable's prostrate body. Halfway across the road, a woman screamed as something pushed by her; a dog, kicked apparently, yelped and ran howling into Huxter's yard, and with that the transit of the Invisible Man was accomplished. For a space people stood amazed and gesticulating, and then came Panic, and scattered them abroad through the village as a gust scatters dead leaves.

But Jaffers lay quite still, face upward and knees bent.

Chapter 8

In Transit

The eighth chapter is exceedingly brief, and relates that Gibbins, the amateur naturalist of the district, while lying out on the spacious open downs without a soul within a couple of miles of him, as he thought, and almost dozing, heard close to him the sound as of a man coughing, sneezing, and then swearing savagely to himself; and looking, beheld nothing. Yet the voice was indisputable. It continued to swear with that breadth and variety that distinguishes the swearing of a cultivated man. It grew to a climax, diminished again, and died away in the distance, going as it seemed to him in the direction of Adderdean. It lifted to a spasmodic sneeze and ended. Gibbins had heard nothing of the morning's occurrences, but the phenomenon was so striking and disturbing that his philosophical tranquillity vanished; he got up hastily, and hurried down the steepness of the hill towards the village, as fast as he could go.

Chapter 9

Mr. Thomas Marvel

You must picture Mr. Thomas Marvel as a person of copious, flexible visage, a nose of cylindrical protrusion, a liquorish, ample,

fluctuating mouth, and a beard of bristling eccentricity. His figure inclined to embonpoint; his short limbs accentuated this inclination. He wore a furry silk hat, and the frequent substitution of twine and shoe-laces for buttons, apparent at critical points of his costume, marked a man essentially bachelor.

Mr. Thomas Marvel was sitting with his feet in a ditch by the roadside over the down toward Adderdean, about a mile and a half out of Iping. His feet, save for socks of irregular openwork, were bare, his big toes were broad, and pricked like the ears of a watchful dog. In a leisurely manner--he did everything in a leisurely manner--he was contemplating trying on a pair of boots. They were the soundest boots he had come across for a long time, but too large for him; whereas the ones he had wore, in dry weather, a very comfortable fit, but too thin-soled for damp. Mr. Thomas Marvel hated roomy boots, but then he hated damp. He had never properly thought out which he hated most, and it was a pleasant day, and there was nothing better to do. So he put the four boots in a graceful group on the turf and looked at them. And seeing them there among the grass and springing agrimony, it suddenly occurred to him that both pairs were exceedingly ugly to see. He was not at all startled by a voice behind him.

"They're boots, anyhow," said the voice.

"They are--charity boots," said Mr. Thomas Marvel, with his head on one side regarding them distastefully; "and which is the ugliest pair in the whole blessed universe, I'm darned if I know!"

"H'm," said the voice.

"I've worn worse--in fact, I've worn none. But none so owdacious ugly--if you'll allow the expression. I've been cadging boots--in particular--for days. Because I was sick of them. They're sound enough, of course. But a gentleman on tramp sees such a thundering

lot of his boots. And if you'll believe me, I've raised nothing in the whole blessed county, try as I would, but THEM. Look at 'em! And a good county for boots, too, in a general way. But it's just my promiscuous luck. I've got my boots in this county ten years or more. And then they treat you like this."

"It's a beast of a county," said the voice. "And pigs for people."

"Ain't it?" said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "Lord! But them boots! It beats it."

He turned his head over his shoulder to the right, to look at the boots of his interlocutor with a view to comparisons, and lo! where the boots of his interlocutor should have been were neither legs nor boots. He turned his head over his shoulder to the left, and there also were neither legs nor boots. He was irradiated by the dawn of a great amazement. "Where are yar?" said Mr. Thomas Marvel over his shoulder and coming round on all fours. He saw a stretch of empty downs with the wind swaying and remote green-pointed furze bushes.

"Am I drunk?" said Mr. Marvel. "Have I had visions? Was I talking to myself? What the--"

"Don't be alarmed," said a voice.

"None of your ventriloquising me," said Mr. Thomas Marvel, rising sharply to his feet. "Where are yer? Alarmed, indeed!"

"Don't be alarmed," repeated the voice.

"You'll be alarmed in a minute, you silly fool," said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "Where are yer? Lemme get my mark on yer--"

"Are you buried?" said Mr. Thomas Marvel, after an interval.

There was no answer. Mr. Thomas Marvel stood bootless and amazed, his jacket nearly thrown off.

"Peewit," said a peewit, very remote.

"Peewit, indeed!" said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "This ain't no time for foolery." The down was desolate, east and west, north and south; the road with its shallow ditches and white bordering stakes, ran smooth and empty north and south, and, save for that peewit, the blue sky was empty too. "So help me," said Mr. Thomas Marvel, shuffling his coat on to his shoulders again. "It's the drink! I might ha' known."

"It's not the drink," said the voice. "You keep your nerves steady."

"Ow!" said Mr. Marvel, and his face grew white amidst its patches. "It's the drink," his lips repeated noiselessly. He remained staring about him, rotating slowly backwards. "I could have swore I heard a voice," he whispered.

"Of course you did."

"It's there again," said Mr. Marvel, closing his eyes and clasping his hand on his brow with a tragic gesture. He was suddenly taken by the collar and shaken violently and left more dazed than ever.

"Don't be a fool," said the voice.

"I'm--off--my--blooming--chump," said Mr. Marvel. "It's no good. It's fretting about them blarsted boots. I'm off my blessed blooming chump. Or it's spirits."

"Neither one thing nor the other," said the voice. "Listen!"

"Chump," said Mr. Marvel.

"One minute," said the voice penetratingly,--tremulous with self-control.

"Well?" said Mr. Thomas Marvel, with a strange feeling of having been dug in the chest by a finger.

"You think I'm just imagination? Just imagination?"

"What else can you be?" said Mr. Thomas Marvel, rubbing the back of his neck.

"Very well," said the voice, in a tone of relief. "Then I'm going to throw flints at you till you think differently."

"But where are yer?"

The voice made no answer. Whiz came a flint, apparently out of the air, and missed Mr. Marvel's shoulder by a hair's breadth. Mr. Marvel, turning, saw a flint jerk up into the air, trace a complicated path, hang for a moment, and then fling at his feet with almost invisible rapidity. He was too amazed to dodge. Whiz it came, and ricocheted from a bare toe into the ditch. Mr. Thomas Marvel jumped a foot and howled aloud. Then he started to run, tripped over an unseen obstacle, and came head over heels into a sitting position.

"Now," said the voice, as a third stone curved upward and hung in the air above the tramp. "Am I imagination?"

Mr. Marvel by way of reply struggled to his feet, and was immediately rolled over again. He lay quiet for a moment. "If you struggle any more," said the voice, "I shall throw the flint at your head."

"It's a fair do," said Mr. Thomas Marvel, sitting up, taking his wounded toe in hand and fixing his eye on the third missile. "I don't

understand it. Stones flinging themselves. Stones talking. Put yourself down. Rot away. I'm done."

The third flint fell.

"It's very simple," said the voice. "I'm an invisible man."

"Tell us something I don't know," said Mr. Marvel, gasping with pain. "Where you've hid--how you do it--I don't know, I'm beat."

"That's all," said the voice. "I'm invisible. That's what I want you to understand."

"Any one could see that. There is no need for you to be so confounded impatient, mister. Now then. Give us a notion. How are you hid?"

"I'm invisible. That's the great point. And what I want you to understand is this--"

"But whereabouts?" interrupted Mr. Marvel.

"Here! Six yards in front of you."

"Oh, come! I ain't blind. You'll be telling me next you're just thin air. I'm not one of your ignorant tramps--"

"Yes, I am--thin air. You're looking through me."

"What! Ain't there any stuff to you? Vox et--what is it?--jabber. Is it that?"

"I am just a human being--solid, needing food and drink, needing covering too--But I'm invisible. You see? Invisible. Simple idea. Invisible."

"What, real like?"

"Yes, real."

"Let's have a hand of you," said Marvel, "if you are real. It won't be so darn out-of-the-way like, then--Lord!" he said, "how you made me jump!--gripping me like that!"

He felt the hand that had closed round his wrist with his disengaged fingers, and his touch went timorously up the arm, patted a muscular chest, and explored a bearded face. Marvel's face was astonishment.

"I'm dashed!" he said. "If this don't beat cock-fighting! Most remarkable!--And there I can see a rabbit clean through you, 'arf a mile away! Not a bit of you visible--except--"

He scrutinised the apparently empty space keenly. "You 'aven't been eatin' bread and cheese?" he asked, holding the invisible arm.

"You're quite right, and it's not quite assimilated into the system."

"Ah!" said Mr. Marvel. "Sort of ghostly, though."

"Of course, all this isn't so wonderful as you think."

"It's quite wonderful enough for my modest wants," said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "Howjer manage it? How the dooce is it done?"

"It's too long a story. And besides--"

"I tell you, the whole business fair beats me," said Mr. Marvel.

"What I want to say at present is this: I need help. I have come to that--I came upon you suddenly. I was wandering, mad with rage,

naked, impotent. I could have murdered. And I saw you--"

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel.

"I came up behind you--hesitated--went on--"

Mr. Marvel's expression was eloquent.

"--then stopped. 'Here,' I said, 'is an outcast like myself. This is the man for me.' So I turned back and came to you--you. And--"

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel. "But I'm all in a dizzy. May I ask--How is it? And what you may be requiring in the way of help?-- Invisible!"

"I want you to help me get clothes--and shelter--and then, with other things. I've left them long enough. If you won't--well! But you will--must."

"Look here," said Mr. Marvel. "I'm too flabbergasted. Don't knock me about any more. And leave me go. I must get steady a bit. And you've pretty near broken my toe. It's all so unreasonable. Empty downs, empty sky. Nothing visible for miles except the bosom of Nature. And then comes a voice. A voice out of heaven! And stones! And a fist--Lord!"

"Pull yourself together," said the voice, "for you have to do the job I've chosen for you."

Mr. Marvel blew out his cheeks, and his eyes were round.

"I've chosen you," said the voice. "You are the only man, except some of those fools down there, who knows there is such a thing as an invisible man. You have to be my helper. Help me--and I will do great things for you. An invisible man is a man of power." He stopped for a moment to sneeze violently.

"But if you betray me," he said, "if you fail to do as I direct you--"

He paused and tapped Mr. Marvel's shoulder smartly. Mr. Marvel gave a yelp of terror at the touch. "I don't want to betray you," said Mr. Marvel, edging away from the direction of the fingers. "Don't you go a-thinking that, whatever you do. All I want to do is to help you--just tell me what I got to do. (Lord!) Whatever you want done, that I'm most willing to do."

Chapter 10

Mr. Marvel's Visit to Iping

After the first gusty panic had spent itself Iping became argumentative. Scepticism suddenly reared its head--rather nervous scepticism, not at all assured of its back, but scepticism nevertheless. It is so much easier not to believe in an invisible man; and those who had actually seen him dissolve into air, or felt the strength of his arm, could be counted on the fingers of two hands. And of these witnesses Mr. Wadgers was presently missing, having retired impregnably behind the bolts and bars of his own house, and Jaffers was lying stunned in the parlour of the Coach and Horses. Great and strange ideas transcending experience often have less effect upon men and women than smaller, more tangible considerations. Iping was gay with bunting, and everybody was in gala dress. Whit-Monday had been looked forward to for a month or more. By the afternoon even those who believed in the Unseen were beginning to

resume their little amusements in a tentative fashion, on the supposition that he had quite gone away, and with the sceptics he was already a jest. But people, sceptics and believers alike, were remarkably sociable all that day.

Haysman's meadow was gay with a tent, in which Mrs. Bunting and other ladies were preparing tea, while, without, the Sunday-school children ran races and played games under the noisy guidance of the curate and the Misses Cuss and Sackbut. No doubt there was a slight uneasiness in the air, but people for the most part had the sense to conceal whatever imaginative qualms they experienced. On the village green an inclined string, down which, clinging the while to a pulley- swung handle, one could be hurled violently against a sack at the other end, came in for considerable favour among the adolescent. There were swings and cocoanut shies and promenading, and the steam organ attached to the swings filled the air with a pungent flavour of oil and with equally pungent music. Members of the Club, who had attended church in the morning, were splendid in badges of pink and green, and some of the gayer-minded had also adorned their bowler hats with brilliant-coloured favours of ribbon. Old Fletcher, whose conceptions of holiday-making were severe, was visible through the jasmine about his window or through the open door (whichever way you chose to look), poised delicately on a plank supported on two chairs, and whitewashing the ceiling of his front room.

About four o'clock a stranger entered the village from the direction of the downs. He was a short, stout person in an extraordinarily shabby top hat, and he appeared to be very much out of breath. His cheeks were alternately limp and tightly puffed. His mottled face was apprehensive, and he moved with a sort of reluctant alacrity. He turned the corner by the church, and directed his way to the Coach and Horses. Among others old Fletcher remembers seeing him, and indeed the old gentleman was so struck by his peculiar agitation that he inadvertently allowed a quantity of whitewash to run down the brush into the sleeve of his coat while regarding him.

This stranger, to the perceptions of the proprietor of the cocoanut shy, appeared to be talking to himself, and Mr. Huxter remarked the same thing. He stopped at the foot of the Coach and Horses steps, and, according to Mr. Huxter, appeared to undergo a severe internal struggle before he could induce himself to enter the house. Finally he marched up the steps, and was seen by Mr. Huxter to turn to the left and open the door of the parlour. Mr. Huxter heard voices from within the room and from the bar apprising the man of his error. "That room's private!" said Hall, and the stranger shut the door clumsily and went into the bar.

In the course of a few minutes he reappeared, wiping his lips with the back of his hand with an air of quiet satisfaction that somehow impressed Mr. Huxter as assumed. He stood looking about him for some moments, and then Mr. Huxter saw him walk in an oddly furtive manner towards the gates of the yard, upon which the parlour window opened. The stranger, after some hesitation, leant against one of the gate-posts, produced a short clay pipe, and prepared to fill it. His fingers trembled while doing so. He lit it clumsily, and folding his arms began to smoke in a languid attitude, an attitude which his occasional quick glances up the yard altogether belied.

All this Mr. Huxter saw over the canisters of the tobacco window, and the singularity of the man's behaviour prompted him to maintain his observation.

Presently the stranger stood up abruptly and put his pipe in his pocket. Then he vanished into the yard. Forthwith Mr. Huxter, conceiving he was witness of some petty larceny, leapt round his counter and ran out into the road to intercept the thief. As he did so, Mr. Marvel reappeared, his hat askew, a big bundle in a blue table-cloth in one hand, and three books tied together--as it proved afterwards with the Vicar's braces--in the other. Directly he saw Huxter he gave a sort of gasp, and turning sharply to the left, began

to run. "Stop thief!" cried Huxter, and set off after him. Mr. Huxter's sensations were vivid but brief. He saw the man just before him and spurting briskly for the church corner and the hill road. He saw the village flags and festivities beyond, and a face or so turned towards him. He bawled, "Stop!" again. He had hardly gone ten strides before his shin was caught in some mysterious fashion, and he was no longer running, but flying with inconceivable rapidity through the air. He saw the ground suddenly close to his face. The world seemed to splash into a million whirling specks of light, and subsequent proceedings interested him no more.

Chapter 11

In the Coach and Horses

Now in order clearly to understand what had happened in the inn, it is necessary to go back to the moment when Mr. Marvel first came into view of Mr. Huxter's window. At that precise moment Mr. Cuss and Mr. Bunting were in the parlour. They were seriously investigating the strange occurrences of the morning, and were, with Mr. Hall's permission, making a thorough examination of the Invisible Man's belongings. Jaffers had partially recovered from his fall and had gone home in the charge of his sympathetic friends. The stranger's scattered garments had been removed by Mrs. Hall and the room tidied up. And on the table under the window where the stranger had been wont to work, Cuss had hit almost at once on three big books in manuscript labelled "Diary."

"Diary!" said Cuss, putting the three books on the table. "Now, at

any rate, we shall learn something." The Vicar stood with his hands on the table.

"Diary," repeated Cuss, sitting down, putting two volumes to support the third, and opening it. "H'm--no name on the fly-leaf. Bother!--cypher. And figures."

The Vicar came round to look over his shoulder.

Cuss turned the pages over with a face suddenly disappointed. "I'm--dear me! It's all cypher, Bunting."

"There are no diagrams?" asked Mr. Bunting. "No illustrations throwing light--"

"See for yourself," said Mr. Cuss. "Some of it's mathematical and some of it's Russian or some such language (to judge by the letters), and some of it's Greek. Now the Greek I thought you--"

"Of course," said Mr. Bunting, taking out and wiping his spectacles and feeling suddenly very uncomfortable,--for he had no Greek left in his mind worth talking about; "yes--the Greek, of course, may furnish a clue."

"I'll find you a place."

"I'd rather glance through the volumes first," said Mr. Bunting, still wiping. "A general impression first, Cuss, and then, you know, we can go looking for clues."

He coughed, put on his glasses, arranged them fastidiously, coughed again, and wished something would happen to avert the seemingly inevitable exposure. Then he took the volume Cuss handed him in a leisurely manner. And then something did happen.

The door opened suddenly.

Both gentlemen started violently, looked around, and were relieved to see a sporadically rosy face beneath a furry silk hat. "Tap?" asked the face, and stood staring.

"No," said both gentlemen at once.

"Over the other side, my man," said Mr. Bunting. And "Please shut that door," said Mr. Cuss irritably.

"All right," said the intruder, as it seemed, in a low voice curiously different from the huskiness of its first enquiry. "Right you are," said the intruder in the former voice. "Stand clear!" and he vanished and closed the door.

"A sailor, I should judge," said Mr. Bunting. "Amusing fellows they are. Stand clear! indeed. A nautical term referring to his getting back out of the room, I suppose."

"I daresay so," said Cuss. "My nerves are all loose to-day. It quite made me jump--the door opening like that."

Mr. Bunting smiled as if he had not jumped. "And now," he said with a sigh, "these books."

"One minute," said Cuss, and went and locked the door. "Now I think we are safe from interruption."

Some one sniffed as he did so.

"One thing is indisputable," said Bunting, drawing up a chair next to that of Cuss. "There certainly have been very strange things happen in Iping during the last few days--very strange. I cannot of course believe in this absurd invisibility story--"

"It's incredible," said Cuss, "--incredible. But the fact remains that I saw--I certainly saw right down his sleeve--"

"But did you--are you sure? Suppose a mirror, for instance,--hallucinations are so easily produced. I don't know if you have ever seen a really good conjuror--"

"I won't argue again," said Cuss. "We've thrashed that out, Bunting. And just now there's these books--Ah! here's some of what I take to be Greek! Greek letters certainly."

He pointed to the middle of the page. Mr. Bunting flushed slightly and brought his face nearer, apparently finding some difficulty with his glasses. Suddenly he became aware of a strange feeling at the nape of his neck. He tried to raise his head, and encountered an immovable resistance. The feeling was a curious pressure, the grip of a heavy, firm hand, and it bore his chin irresistibly to the table. "Don't move, little men," whispered a voice, "or I'll brain you both!" He looked into the face of Cuss, close to his own, and each saw a horrified reflection of his own sickly astonishment.

"I'm sorry to handle you roughly," said the Voice, "but it's unavoidable.

"Since when did you learn to pry into an investigator's private memoranda?" said the Voice; and two chins struck the table simultaneously and two sets of teeth rattled.

"Since when did you learn to invade the private rooms of a man in misfortune?" and the concussion was repeated.

"Where have they put my clothes?"

"Listen," said the Voice. "The windows are fastened and I've taken

the key out of the door. I am a fairly strong man, and I have the poker handy--besides being invisible. There's not the slightest doubt that I could kill you both and get away quite easily if I wanted to--do you understand? Very well. If I let you go will you promise not to try any nonsense and do what I tell you?"

The Vicar and the Doctor looked at one another, and the Doctor pulled a face. "Yes," said Mr. Bunting, and the Doctor repeated it. Then the pressure on the necks relaxed, and the Doctor and the Vicar sat up, both very red in the face and wriggling their heads.

"Please keep sitting where you are," said the Invisible Man. "Here's the poker, you see.

"When I came into this room," continued the Invisible Man, after presenting the poker to the tip of the nose of each of his visitors, "I did not expect to find it occupied, and I expected to find, in addition to my books of memoranda, an outfit of clothing. Where is it? No,--don't rise. I can see it's gone. Now, just at present, though the days are quite warm enough for an invisible man to run about stark, the evenings are chilly. I want clothing--and other accommodation; and I must also have those three books."

Chapter 12

The Invisible Man Loses His Temper

It is unavoidable that at this point the narrative should break off again, for a certain very painful reason that will presently be

apparent. While these things were going on in the parlour, and while Mr. Huxter was watching Mr. Marvel smoking his pipe against the gate, not a dozen yards away were Mr. Hall and Teddy Henfrey discussing in a state of cloudy puzzlement the one Iping topic.

Suddenly there came a violent thud against the door of the parlour, a sharp cry, and then--silence.

"Hul--lo!" said Teddy Henfrey.

"Hul--lo!" from the Tap.

Mr. Hall took things in slowly but surely. "That ain't right," he said, and came round from behind the bar towards the parlour door.

He and Teddy approached the door together, with intent faces. Their eyes considered. "Summat wrong," said Hall, and Henfrey nodded agreement. Whiffs of an unpleasant chemical odour met them, and there was a muffled sound of conversation, very rapid and subdued.

"You all raight thur?" asked Hall, rapping.

The muttered conversation ceased abruptly, for a moment silence, then the conversation was resumed in hissing whispers, then a sharp cry of "No! no, you don't!" There came a sudden motion and the oversetting of a chair, a brief struggle. Silence again.

"What the dooce?" exclaimed Henfrey, sotto voce.

"You--all--raight--thur?" asked Mr. Hall sharply, again.

The Vicar's voice answered with a curious jerking intonation: "Quite ri--ight. Please don't--interrupt."

"Odd!" said Mr. Henfrey.

"Odd!" said Mr. Hall.

"Says, 'Don't interrupt,'" said Henfrey.

"I heerd'n," said Hall.

"And a sniff," said Henfrey.

They remained listening. The conversation was rapid and subdued. "I can't," said Mr. Bunting, his voice rising; "I tell you, sir, I will not."

"What was that?" asked Henfrey.

"Says he wi' nart," said Hall. "Warn't speakin' to us, wuz he?"

"Disgraceful!" said Mr. Bunting, within.

"Disgraceful," said Mr. Henfrey. "I heard it--distinct.

"Who's that speaking now?" asked Henfrey.

"Mr. Cuss, I s'pose," said Hall. "Can you hear--anything?"

Silence. The sounds within indistinct and perplexing.

"Sounds like throwing the table-cloth about," said Hall.

Mrs. Hall appeared behind the bar. Hall made gestures of silence and invitation. This roused Mrs. Hall's wifely opposition. "What yer listenin' there for, Hall?" she asked. "Ain't you nothin' better to do--busy day like this?"

Hall tried to convey everything by grimaces and dumb show, but Mrs.

Hall was obdurate. She raised her voice. So Hall and Henfrey, rather crestfallen, tip-toed back to the bar, gesticulating to explain to her.

At first she refused to see anything in what they had heard at all. Then she insisted on Hall keeping silence, while Henfrey told her his story. She was inclined to think the whole business nonsense --perhaps they were just moving the furniture about. "I heerd'n say 'disgraceful'; that I did," said Hall.

"I heerd that, Mis' Hall," said Henfrey.

"Like as not--" began Mrs. Hall.

"Hsh!" said Mr. Teddy Henfrey. "Didn't I hear the window?"

"What window?" asked Mrs. Hall.

"Parlour window," said Henfrey.

Every one stood listening intently. Mrs. Hall's eyes, directed straight before her, saw without seeing the brilliant oblong of the inn door, the road white and vivid, and Huxter's shop-front blistering in the June sun. Abruptly Huxter's door opened and Huxter appeared, eyes staring with excitement, arms gesticulating. "Yap!" cried Huxter. "Stop thief!" and he ran obliquely across the oblong towards the yard gates, and vanished.

Simultaneously came a tumult from the parlour, and a sound of windows being closed.

Hall, Henfrey, and the human contents of the Tap rushed out at once pell-mell into the street. They saw some one whisk round the corner towards the down road, and Mr. Huxter executing a complicated leap in the air that ended on his face and shoulder. Down the street people

were standing astonished or running towards them.

Mr. Huxter was stunned. Henfrey stopped to discover this, but Hall and the two labourers from the Tap rushed at once to the corner, shouting incoherent things, and saw Mr. Marvel vanishing by the corner of the church wall. They appear to have jumped to the impossible conclusion that this was the Invisible Man suddenly become visible, and set off at once along the lane in pursuit. But Hall had hardly run a dozen yards before he gave a loud shout of astonishment and went flying headlong sideways, clutching one of the labourers and bringing him to the ground. He had been charged just as one charges a man at football. The second labourer came round in a circle, stared, and conceiving that Hall had tumbled over of his own accord, turned to resume the pursuit, only to be tripped by the ankle just as Huxter had been. Then, as the first labourer struggled to his feet, he was kicked sideways by a blow that might have felled an ox.

As he went down, the rush from the direction of the village green came round the corner. The first to appear was the proprietor of the cocoanut shy, a burly man in a blue jersey. He was astonished to see the lane empty save for three men sprawling absurdly on the ground. And then something happened to his rear-most foot, and he went headlong and rolled sideways just in time to graze the feet of his brother and partner, following headlong. The two were then kicked, knelt on, fallen over, and cursed by quite a number of over-hasty people.

Now when Hall and Henfrey and the labourers ran out of the house, Mrs. Hall, who had been disciplined by years of experience, remained in the bar next the till. And suddenly the parlour door was opened, and Mr. Cuss appeared, and without glancing at her rushed at once down the steps towards the corner. "Hold him!" he cried. "Don't let him drop that parcel! You can see him so long as he holds the parcel." He knew nothing of the existence of Marvel. For the Invisible Man had handed over the books and bundle in the yard. The

face of Mr. Cuss was angry and resolute, but his costume was defective, a sort of limp white kilt that could only have passed muster in Greece. "Hold him!" he bawled. "He's got my trousers! And every stitch of the Vicar's clothes!

"Tend to him in a minute!" he cried to Henfrey as he passed the prostrate Huxter, and coming round the corner to join the tumult, was promptly knocked off his feet into an indecorous sprawl. Somebody in full flight trod heavily on his finger. He yelled, struggled to regain his feet, was knocked against and thrown on all fours again, and became aware that he was involved not in a capture, but a rout. Every one was running back to the village. He rose again and was hit severely behind the ear. He staggered and set off back to the Coach and Horses forthwith, leaping over the deserted Huxter, who was now sitting up, on his way.

Behind him as he was halfway up the inn steps he heard a sudden yell of rage, rising sharply out of the confusion of cries, and a sounding smack in some one's face. He recognised the voice as that of the Invisible Man, and the note was that of a man suddenly infuriated by a painful blow.

In another moment Mr. Cuss was back in the parlour. "He's coming back, Bunting!" he said, rushing in. "Save yourself! He's gone mad!"

Mr. Bunting was standing in the window engaged in an attempt to clothe himself in the hearth-rug and a West Surrey Gazette. "Who's coming?" he said, so startled that his costume narrowly escaped disintegration.

"Invisible Man," said Cuss, and rushed to the window. "We'd better clear out from here! He's fighting mad! Mad!"

In another moment he was out in the yard.

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Bunting, hesitating between two horrible alternatives. He heard a frightful struggle in the passage of the inn, and his decision was made. He clambered out of the window, adjusted his costume hastily, and fled up the village as fast as his fat little legs would carry him.

From the moment when the Invisible Man screamed with rage and Mr. Bunting made his memorable flight up the village, it became impossible to give a consecutive account of affairs in Iping. Possibly the Invisible Man's original intention was simply to cover Marvel's retreat with the clothes and books. But his temper, at no time very good, seems to have gone completely at some chance blow, and forthwith he set to smiting and overthrowing, for the mere satisfaction of hurting.

You must figure the street full of running figures, of doors slamming and fights for hiding-places. You must figure the tumult suddenly striking on the unstable equilibrium of old Fletcher's planks and two chairs,--with cataclysmal results. You must figure an appalled couple caught dismally in a swing. And then the whole tumultuous rush has passed and the Iping streets with its gauds and flags is deserted save for the still raging Unseen, and littered with cocoanuts, overthrown canvas screens, and the scattered stock in trade of a sweetstuff stall. Everywhere there is a sound of closing shutters and shoving bolts, and the only visible humanity is an occasional flitting eye under a raised eyebrow in the corner of a window pane.

The Invisible Man amused himself for a little while by breaking all the windows in the Coach and Horses, and then he thrust a street lamp through the parlour window of Mrs. Gribble. He it must have been who cut the telegraph wire to Adderdean just beyond Higgins' cottage on the Adderdean road. And after that, as his peculiar qualities allowed, he passed out of human perceptions altogether, and he was

neither heard, seen, nor felt in Iping any more. He vanished absolutely.

But it was the best part of two hours before any human being ventured out again into the desolation of Iping Street.

Chapter 13

Mr. Marvel Discusses His Resignation

When the dusk was gathering and Iping was just beginning to peep timorously forth again upon the shattered wreckage of its Bank Holiday, a short, thick-set man in a shabby silk hat was marching painfully through the twilight behind the beechwoods on the road to Bramblehurst. He carried three books bound together by some sort of ornamental elastic ligature, and a bundle wrapped in a blue tablecloth. His rubicund face expressed consternation and fatigue; he appeared to be in a spasmodic sort of hurry. He was accompanied by a Voice other than his own, and ever and again he winced under the touch of unseen hands.

"If you give me the slip again," said the Voice; "if you attempt to give me the slip again--"

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel. "That shoulder's a mass of bruises as it is."

"--on my honour," said the Voice, "I will kill you."

"I didn't try to give you the slip," said Marvel, in a voice that was not far remote from tears. "I swear I didn't. I didn't know the blessed turning, that was all! How the devil was I to know the blessed turning? As it is, I've been knocked about--"

"You'll get knocked about a great deal more if you don't mind," said the Voice, and Mr. Marvel abruptly became silent. He blew out his cheeks, and his eyes were eloquent of despair.

"It's bad enough to let these floundering yokels explode my little secret, without your cutting off with my books. It's lucky for some of them they cut and ran when they did! Here am I--No one knew I was invisible! And now what am I to do?"

"What am I to do?" asked Marvel, sotto voce.

"It's all about. It will be in the papers! Everybody will be looking for me; everyone on their guard--" The Voice broke off into vivid curses and ceased.

The despair of Mr. Marvel's face deepened, and his pace slacked.

"Go on!" said the Voice.

Mr. Marvel's face assumed a greyish tint between the ruddier patches.

"Don't drop those books, stupid," said the Voice, sharply--overtaking him.

"The fact is," said the Voice, "I shall have to make use of you. You're a poor tool, but I must."

"I'm a miserable tool," said Marvel.

"You are," said the Voice.

"I'm the worst possible tool you could have," said Marvel.

"I'm not strong," he said after a discouraging silence.

"I'm not over strong," he repeated.

"No?"

"And my heart's weak. That little business--I pulled it through, of course--but bless you! I could have dropped."

"Well?"

"I haven't the nerve and strength for the sort of thing you want."

"I'll stimulate you."

"I wish you wouldn't. I wouldn't like to mess up your plans, you know. But I might,--out of sheer funk and misery."

"You'd better not," said the Voice, with quiet emphasis.

"I wish I was dead," said Marvel.

"It ain't justice," he said; "you must admit--It seems to me I've a perfect right--"

"Get on!" said the Voice.

Mr. Marvel mended his pace, and for a time they went in silence again.

"It's devilish hard," said Mr. Marvel.

This was quite ineffectual. He tried another tack.

"What do I make by it?" he began again in a tone of unendurable wrong.

"Oh! shut up!" said the Voice, with sudden amazing vigour. "I'll see to you all right. You do what you're told. You'll do it all right. You're a fool and all that, but you'll do--"

"I tell you, sir, I'm not the man for it. Respectfully--but it is so--"

"If you don't shut up I shall twist your wrist again," said the Invisible Man. "I want to think."

Presently two oblongs of yellow light appeared through the trees, and the square tower of a church loomed through the gloaming. "I shall keep my hand on your shoulder," said the Voice, "all through the village. Go straight through and try no foolery. It will be the worse for you if you do."

"I know that," sighed Mr. Marvel, "I know all that."

The unhappy-looking figure in the obsolete silk hat passed up the street of the little village with his burdens, and vanished into the gathering darkness beyond the lights of the windows.

Chapter 14

At Port Stowe

Ten o'clock the next morning found Mr. Marvel, unshaven, dirty, and travel-stained, sitting with the books beside him and his hands deep in his pockets, looking very weary, nervous, and uncomfortable, and inflating his cheeks at frequent intervals, on the bench outside a little inn on the outskirts of Port Stowe. Beside him were the books, but now they were tied with string. The bundle had been abandoned in the pinewoods beyond Bramblehurst, in accordance with a change in the plans of the Invisible Man. Mr. Marvel sat on the bench, and although no one took the slightest notice of him, his agitation remained at fever heat. His hands would go ever and again to his various pockets with a curious nervous fumbling.

When he had been sitting for the best part of an hour, however, an elderly mariner, carrying a newspaper, came out of the inn and sat down beside him. "Pleasant day," said the mariner.

Mr. Marvel glanced about him with something very like terror. "Very," he said.

"Just seasonable weather for the time of year," said the mariner, taking no denial.

"Quite," said Mr. Marvel.

The mariner produced a toothpick, and (saving his regard) was engrossed thereby for some minutes. His eyes meanwhile were at liberty to examine Mr. Marvel's dusty figure and the books beside him. As he had approached Mr. Marvel he had heard a sound like the dropping of coins into a pocket. He was struck by the contrast of Mr. Marvel's appearance with this suggestion of opulence. Thence his mind wandered back again to a topic that had taken a curiously firm hold of his imagination.

"Books?" he said suddenly, noisily finishing with the toothpick.

Mr. Marvel started and looked at them. "Oh, yes," he said. "Yes, they're books."

"There's some extra-ordinary things in books," said the mariner.

"I believe you," said Mr. Marvel.

"And some extra-ordinary things out of 'em," said the mariner.

"True likewise," said Mr. Marvel. He eyed his interlocutor, and then glanced about him.

"There's some extra-ordinary things in newspapers, for example," said the mariner.

"There are."

"In this newspaper," said the mariner.

"Ah!" said Mr. Marvel.

"There's a story," said the mariner, fixing Mr. Marvel with an eye that was firm and deliberate; "there's a story about an Invisible Man, for instance."

Mr. Marvel pulled his mouth askew and scratched his cheek and felt his ears glowing. "What will they be writing next?" he asked faintly. "Ostria, or America?"

"Neither," said the mariner. "Here!"

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel, starting.

"When I say here," said the mariner, to Mr. Marvel's intense relief, "I don't of course mean here in this place, I mean hereabouts."

"An Invisible Man!" said Mr. Marvel. "And what's he been up to?"

"Everything," said the mariner, controlling Marvel with his eye, and then amplifying: "Every Blessed Thing."

"I ain't seen a paper these four days," said Marvel.

"Iping's the place he started at," said the mariner.

"In-deed!" said Mr. Marvel.

"He started there. And where he came from, nobody don't seem to know. Here it is: Pe Culiar Story from Iping. And it says in this paper that the evidence is extra-ordinary strong--extra-ordinary."

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel.

"But then, it's a extra-ordinary story. There is a clergyman and a medical gent witnesses,--saw 'im all right and proper--or leastways, didn't see 'im. He was staying, it says, at the Coach an' Horses, and no one don't seem to have been aware of his misfortune, it says, aware of his misfortune, until in an Alteration in the inn, it says, his bandages on his head was torn off. It was then ob-served that his head was invisible. Attempts were At Once made to secure him, but casting off his garments, it says, he succeeded in escaping, but not until after a desperate struggle, In Which he had inflicted serious injuries, it says, on our worthy and able constable, Mr. J.A. Jaffers. Pretty straight story, eigh? Names and everything."

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel, looking nervously about him, trying to count the money in his pockets by his unaided sense of touch, and full of a strange and novel idea. "It sounds most astonishing."

"Don't it? Extra-ordinary, I call it. Never heard tell of Invisible Men before, I haven't, but nowadays one hears such a lot of extra-ordinary things--that--"

"That all he did?" asked Marvel, trying to seem at his ease.

"It's enough, ain't it?" said the mariner.

"Didn't go Back by any chance?" asked Marvel. "Just escaped and that's all, eh?"

"All!" said the mariner. "Why!--ain't it enough?"

"Quite enough," said Marvel.

"I should think it was enough," said the mariner. "I should think it was enough."

"He didn't have any pals--it don't say he had any pals, does it?" asked Mr. Marvel, anxious.

"Ain't one of a sort enough for you?" asked the mariner. "No, thank Heaven, as one might say, he didn't."

He nodded his head slowly. "It makes me regular uncomfortable, the bare thought of that chap running about the country! He is at present At Large, and from certain evidence it is supposed that he has--taken--took, I suppose they mean--the road to Port Stowe. You see we're right in it! None of your American wonders, this time. And just think of the things he might do! Where'd you be, if he took a drop over and above, and had a fancy to go for you? Suppose he wants to rob--who can prevent him? He can trespass, he can burgle, he could walk through a cordon of policemen as easy as me or you could give the slip to a blind man! Easier! For these here blind

chaps hear uncommon sharp, I'm told. And wherever there was liquor he fancied--"

"He's got a tremenjous advantage, certainly," said Marvel.

"And--well."

"You're right," said the mariner. "He has."

All this time Mr. Marvel had been glancing about him intently, listening for faint footfalls, trying to detect imperceptible movements. He seemed on the point of some great resolution. He coughed behind his hand.

He looked about him again, listened, bent towards to the mariner, and lowered his voice: "The fact of it is--I happen--to know just a thing or two about this Invisible Man. From private sources."

"Oh!" said the mariner, interested. "You?"

"Yes," said Mr. Marvel. "Me."

"Indeed!" said the mariner. "And may I ask--"

"You'll be astonished," said Mr. Marvel behind his hand. "It's tremenjous."

"Indeed!" said the mariner.

"The fact is," began Mr. Marvel eagerly in a confidential undertone. Suddenly his expression changed marvellously. "Ow!" he said. He rose stiffly in his seat. His face was eloquent of physical suffering. "Wow!" he said.

"What's up?" said the mariner, concerned.

"Toothache," said Mr. Marvel, and put his hand to his ear. He caught hold of his books. "I must be getting on, I think," he said. He edged in a curious way along the seat away from his interlocutor. "But you was just agoing to tell me about this here Invisible Man!" protested the mariner. Mr. Marvel seemed to consult with himself. "Hoax," said a voice. "It's a hoax," said Mr. Marvel.

"But it's in the paper," said the mariner.

"Hoax all the same," said Marvel. "I know the chap that started the lie. There ain't no Invisible Man whatsoever--Blimey."

"But how 'bout this paper? D'you mean to say--?"

"Not a word of it," said Marvel, stoutly.

The mariner stared, paper in hand. Mr. Marvel jerkily faced about. "Wait a bit," said the mariner, rising and speaking slowly. "D'you mean to say--?"

"I do," said Mr. Marvel.

"Then why did you let me go on and tell you all this blarsted stuff, then? What d'yer mean by letting a man make a fool of himself like that for? Eigh?"

Mr. Marvel blew out his cheeks. The mariner was suddenly very red indeed; he clenched his hands. "I been talking here this ten minutes," he said; "and you, you little pot-bellied, leathery-faced son of an old boot, couldn't have the elementary manners--"

"Don't you come bandying words with me," said Mr. Marvel.

"Bandyng words! I'm a jolly good mind--"

"Come up," said a voice, and Mr. Marvel was suddenly whirled about and started marching off in a curious spasmodic manner. "You'd better move on," said the mariner. "Who's moving on?" said Mr. Marvel. He was receding obliquely with a curious hurrying gait, with occasional violent jerks forward. Some way along the road he began a muttered monologue, protests and recriminations.

"Silly devil!" said the mariner, legs wide apart, elbows akimbo, watching the receding figure. "I'll show you, you silly ass,--hoaxing me! It's here--on the paper!"

Mr. Marvel retorted incoherently and, receding, was hidden by a bend in the road, but the mariner still stood magnificent in the midst of the way, until the approach of a butcher's cart dislodged him. Then he turned himself towards Port Stowe. "Full of extra-ordinary asses," he said softly to himself. "Just to take me down a bit--that was his silly game--It's on the paper!"

And there was another extraordinary thing he was presently to hear, that had happened quite close to him. And that was a vision of a "fist full of money" (no less) travelling without visible agency, along by the wall at the corner of St. Michael's Lane. A brother mariner had seen this wonderful sight that very morning. He had snatched at the money forthwith and had been knocked headlong, and when he had got to his feet the butterfly money had vanished. Our mariner was in the mood to believe anything, he declared, but that was a bit too stiff. Afterwards, however, he began to think things over.

The story of the flying money was true. And all about that neighbourhood, even from the august London and Country Banking Company, from the tills of shops and inns--doors standing that sunny weather entirely open--money had been quietly and dexterously making off that day in handfuls and rouleaux, floating quietly along by walls and shady places, dodging quickly from the approaching eyes of

men. And it had, though no man had traced it, invariably ended its mysterious flight in the pocket of that agitated gentleman in the obsolete silk hat, sitting outside the little inn on the outskirts of Port Stowe.

Chapter 15

The Man Who Was Running

In the early evening time Doctor Kemp was sitting in his study in the belvedere on the hill overlooking Burdock. It was a pleasant little room, with three windows, north, west, and south, and bookshelves crowded with books and scientific publications, and a broad writing-table, and, under the north window, a microscope, glass slips, minute instruments, some cultures, and scattered bottles of reagents. Doctor Kemp's solar lamp was lit, albeit the sky was still bright with the sunset light, and his blinds were up because there was no offence of peering outsiders to require them pulled down. Doctor Kemp was a tall and slender young man, with flaxen hair and a moustache almost white, and the work he was upon would earn him, he hoped, the fellowship of the Royal Society, so highly did he think of it.

And his eye presently wandering from his work caught the sunset blazing at the back of the hill that is over against his own. For a minute perhaps he sat, pen in mouth, admiring the rich golden colour above the crest, and then his attention was attracted by the little figure of a man, inky black, running over the hill-brow towards him. He was a shortish little man, and he wore a high hat, and he was

running so fast that his legs verily twinkled.

"Another of those fools," said Doctor Kemp. "Like that ass who ran into me this morning round a corner, with his "Visible Man a-coming, sir!" I can't imagine what possesses people. One might think we were in the thirteenth century."

He got up, went to the window, and stared at the dusky hillside and the dark little figure tearing down it. "He seems in a confounded hurry," said Doctor Kemp, "but he doesn't seem to be getting on. If his pockets were full of lead, he couldn't run heavier.

"Spurting, sir," said Doctor Kemp.

In another moment the higher of the villas that had clambered up the hill from Burdock had occulted the running figure. He was visible again for a moment, and again, and then again, three times between the three detached houses that came next, and then the terrace hid him.

"Asses!" said Doctor Kemp, swinging round on his heel and walking back to his writing-table.

But those who saw the fugitive nearer, and perceived the abject terror on his perspiring face, being themselves in the open roadway, did not share in the doctor's contempt. By the man pounded, and as he ran he chinked like a well-filled purse that is tossed to and fro. He looked neither to the right nor the left, but his dilated eyes stared straight downhill to where the lamps were being lit, and the people were crowded in the street. And his ill-shaped mouth fell apart, and a glairy foam lay on his lips, and his breath came hoarse and noisy. All he passed stopped and began staring up the road and down, and interrogating one another with an inkling of discomfort for the reason of his haste.

And then presently, far up the hill, a dog playing in the road yelped and ran under a gate, and as they still wondered something--a wind--a pad, pad, pad,--a sound like a panting breathing,--rushed by.

People screamed. People sprang off the pavement. It passed in shouts, it passed by instinct down the hill. They were shouting in the street before Marvel was halfway there. They were bolting into houses and slamming the doors behind them, with the news. He heard it and made one last desperate spurt. Fear came striding by, rushed ahead of him, and in a moment had seized the town.

"The Invisible Man is coming! The Invisible Man."

Chapter 16

In the Jolly Cricketers

The Jolly Cricketers is just at the bottom of the hill, where the tram-lines begin. The barman leant his fat red arms on the counter and talked of horses with an anaemic cabman, while a black-bearded man in grey snapped up biscuit and cheese, drank Burton, and conversed in American with a policeman off duty.

"What's the shouting about?" said the anaemic cabman going off at a tangent, trying to see up the hill over the dirty yellow blind in the low window of the inn. Somebody ran by outside. "Fire, perhaps," said the barman.

Footsteps approached, running heavily, the door was pushed open

violently, and Marvel, weeping and dishevelled, his hat gone, the neck of his coat torn open, rushed in, made a convulsive turn, and attempted to shut the door. It was held half open by a strap.

"Coming!" he bawled, his voice shrieking with terror. "He's coming. The 'Visible Man! After me! For Gawd's sake! Elp! Elp! Elp!"

"Shut the doors," said the policeman. "Who's coming? What's the row?" He went to the door, released the strap, and it slammed. The American closed the other door.

"Lemme go inside," said Marvel, staggering and weeping, but still clutching the books. "Lemme go inside. Lock me in--somewhere. I tell you he's after me. I give him the slip. He said he'd kill me and he will."

"You're safe," said the man with the black beard. "The door's shut. What's it all about?"

"Lemme go inside," said Marvel, and shrieked aloud as a blow suddenly made the fastened door shiver and was followed by a hurried rapping and a shouting outside. "Hullo," cried the policeman, "who's there?" Mr. Marvel began to make frantic dives at panels that looked like doors. "He'll kill me--he's got a knife or something. For Gawd's sake!"

"Here you are," said the barman. "Come in here." And he held up the flap of the bar.

Mr. Marvel rushed behind the bar as the summons outside was repeated. "Don't open the door," he screamed. "Please don't open the door. Where shall I hide?"

"This, this Invisible Man, then?" asked the man with the black beard, with one hand behind him. "I guess it's about time we saw him."

The window of the inn was suddenly smashed in, and there was a screaming and running to and fro in the street. The policeman had been standing on the settee staring out, craning to see who was at the door. He got down with raised eyebrows. "It's that," he said. The barman stood in front of the bar-parlour door which was now locked on Mr. Marvel, stared at the smashed window and came round to the two other men.

Everything was suddenly quiet. "I wish I had my truncheon," said the policeman, going irresolutely to the door. "Once we open, in he comes. There's no stopping him."

"Don't you be in too much hurry about that door," said the anaemic cabman, anxiously.

"Draw the bolts," said the man with the black beard, "and if he comes--" He showed a revolver in his hand.

"That won't do," said the policeman; "that's murder."

"I know what country I'm in," said the man with the beard. "I'm going to let off at his legs. Draw the bolts."

"Not with that thing going off behind me," said the barman, craning over the blind.

"Very well," said the man with the black beard, and stooping down, revolver ready, drew them himself. Barman, cabman, and policeman faced about.

"Come in," said the bearded man in an undertone, standing back and facing the unbolted doors with his pistol behind him. No one came in, the door remained closed. Five minutes afterwards when a second cabman pushed his head in cautiously, they were still waiting, and an

anxious face peered out of the bar-parlour and supplied information. "Are all the doors of the house shut?" asked Marvel. "He's going round--prowling round. He's as artful as the devil."

"Good Lord!" said the burly barman. "There's the back! Just watch them doors! I say!--" He looked about him helplessly. The bar-parlour door slammed and they heard the key turn. "There's the yard door and the private door. The yard door--"

He rushed out of the bar.

In a minute he reappeared with a carving-knife in his hand. "The yard door was open!" he said, and his fat underlip dropped.

"He may be in the house now!" said the first cabman.

"He's not in the kitchen," said the barman. "There's two women there, and I've stabbed every inch of it with this little beef slicer. And they don't think he's come in. They haven't noticed--"

"Have you fastened it?" asked the first cabman.

"I'm out of frocks," said the barman.

The man with the beard replaced his revolver. And even as he did so the flap of the bar was shut down and the bolt clicked, and then with a tremendous thud the catch of the door snapped and the bar-parlour door burst open. They heard Marvel squeal like a caught leveret, and forthwith they were clambering over the bar to his rescue. The bearded man's revolver cracked and the looking-glass at the back of the parlour was starred brightly and came smashing and tinkling down.

As the barman entered the room he saw Marvel, curiously crumpled up and struggling against the door that led to the yard and kitchen. The door flew open while the barman hesitated, and Marvel was dragged

into the kitchen. There was a scream and a clatter of pans. Marvel, head down, and lugging back obstinately, was forced to the kitchen door, and the bolts were drawn.

Then the policeman, who had been trying to pass the barman, rushed in, followed by one of the cabmen, gripped the wrist of the invisible hand that collared Marvel, was hit in the face and went reeling back. The door opened, and Marvel made a frantic effort to obtain a lodgment behind it. Then the cabman clutched something. "I got him," said the cabman. The barman's red hands came clawing at the unseen. "Here he is!" said the barman.

Mr. Marvel, released, suddenly dropped to the ground and made an attempt to crawl behind the legs of the fighting men. The struggle blundered round the edge of the door. The voice of the Invisible Man was heard for the first time, yelling out sharply, as the policeman trod on his foot. Then he cried out passionately and his fists flew round like flails. The cabman suddenly whooped and doubled up, kicked under the diaphragm. The door into the bar-parlour from the kitchen slammed and covered Mr. Marvel's retreat. The men in the kitchen found themselves clutching at and struggling with empty air.

"Where's he gone?" cried the man with the beard. "Out?"

"This way," said the policeman, stepping into the yard and stopping.

A piece of tile whizzed by his head and smashed among the crockery on the kitchen table.

"I'll show him," shouted the man with the black beard, and suddenly a steel barrel shone over the policeman's shoulder, and five bullets had followed one another into the twilight whence the missile had come. As he fired, the man with the beard moved his hand in a horizontal curve, so that his shots radiated out into the narrow yard like spokes from a wheel.

A silence followed. "Five cartridges," said the man with the black beard. "That's the best of all. Four aces and the joker. Get a lantern, some one, and come and feel about for his body."

Chapter 17

Doctor Kemp's Visitor

Doctor Kemp had continued writing in his study until the shots aroused him. Crack, crack, crack, they came one after the other.

"Hello!" said Doctor Kemp, putting his pen into his mouth again and listening. "Who's letting off revolvers in Burdock? What are the asses at now?"

He went to the south window, threw it up, and leaning out stared down on the network of windows, beaded gas-lamps and shops with black interstices of roof and yard that made up the town at night. "Looks like a crowd down the hill," he said, "by the Cricketers," and remained watching. Thence his eyes wandered over the town to far away where the ships' lights shone, and the pier glowed, a little illuminated pavilion like a gem of yellow light. The moon in its first quarter hung over the western hill, and the stars were clear and almost tropically bright.

After five minutes, during which his mind had travelled into a remote speculation of social conditions of the future, and lost itself at last over the time dimension, Doctor Kemp roused himself with a sigh,

pulled down the window again, and returned to his writing-desk.

It must have been about an hour after this that the front-door bell rang. He had been writing slackly and with intervals of abstraction, since the shots. He sat listening. He heard the servant answer the door, and waited for her feet on the staircase, but she did not come. "Wonder what that was," said Doctor Kemp.

He tried to resume his work, failed, got up, went downstairs from his study to the landing, rang, and called over the balustrade to the housemaid as she appeared in the hall below. "Was that a letter?" he asked.

"Only a runaway ring, sir," she answered.

"I'm restless to-night," he said to himself. He went back to his study, and this time attacked his work resolutely. In a little while he was hard at work again, and the only sounds in the room were the ticking of the clock and the subdued shrillness of his quill, hurrying in the very centre of the circle of light his lamp-shade threw on his table.

It was two o'clock before Doctor Kemp had finished his work for the night. He rose, yawned, and went downstairs to bed. He had already removed his coat and vest, when he noticed that he was thirsty. He took a candle and went down to the dining-room in search of a siphon and whisky.

Doctor Kemp's scientific pursuits had made him a very observant man, and as he recrossed the hall, he noticed a dark spot on the linoleum near the mat at the foot of the stairs. He went on upstairs, and then it suddenly occurred to him to ask himself what the spot on the linoleum might be. Apparently some subconscious element was at work. At any rate, he turned with his burden, went back to the hall, put down the siphon and whisky, and bending down, touched the spot.

Without any great surprise he found it had the stickiness and colour of drying blood.

He took up his burden again, and returned upstairs, looking about him and trying to account for the blood-spot. On the landing he saw something and stopped astonished. The door-handle of his own room was blood-stained.

He looked at his own hand. It was quite clean, and then he remembered that the door of his room had been open when he came down from his study, and that consequently he had not touched the handle at all. He went straight into his room, his face quite calm--perhaps a trifle more resolute than usual. His glance, wandering inquisitively, fell on the bed. On the counterpane was a mess of blood, and the sheet had been torn. He had not noticed this before because he had walked straight to the dressing-table. On the further side the bed-clothes were depressed as if some one had been recently sitting there.

Then he had an odd impression that he had heard a loud voice say, "Good Heavens!--Kemp!" But Doctor Kemp was no believer in Voices.

He stood staring at the tumbled sheets. Was that really a voice? He looked about again, but noticed nothing further than the disordered and blood-stained bed. Then he distinctly heard a movement across the room, near the wash-hand stand. All men, however highly educated, retain some superstitious inklings. The feeling that is called "eerie" came upon him. He closed the door of the room, came forward to the dressing-table, and put down his burdens. Suddenly, with a start, he perceived a coiled and blood-stained bandage of linen rag hanging in mid-air, between him and the wash-hand stand.

He stared at this in amazement. It was an empty bandage, a bandage properly tied but quite empty. He would have advanced to grasp it, but a touch arrested him, and a voice speaking quite close to him.

"Kemp!" said the Voice.

"Eigh?" said Kemp, with his mouth open.

"Keep your nerve," said the Voice. "I'm an Invisible Man."

Kemp made no answer for a space, simply stared at the bandage. "Invisible Man," he said.

"I'm an Invisible Man," repeated the Voice.

The story he had been active to ridicule only that morning rushed through Kemp's brain. He does not appear to have been either very much frightened or very greatly surprised at the moment. Realisation came later.

"I thought it was all a lie," he said. The thought uppermost in his mind was the reiterated arguments of the morning. "Have you a bandage on?" he asked.

"Yes," said the Invisible Man.

"Oh!" said Kemp, and then roused himself. "I say!" he said. "But this is nonsense. It's some trick." He stepped forward suddenly, and his hand, extended towards the bandage, met invisible fingers.

He recoiled at the touch and his colour changed.

"Keep steady, Kemp, for God's sake! I want help badly. Stop!"

The hand gripped his arm. He struck at it.

"Kemp!" cried the Voice. "Kemp! Keep steady!" and the grip tightened.

A frantic desire to free himself took possession of Kemp. The hand of the bandaged arm gripped his shoulder, and he was suddenly tripped and flung backwards upon the bed. He opened his mouth to shout, and the corner of the sheet was thrust between his teeth. The Invisible Man had him down grimly, but his arms were free and he struck and tried to kick savagely.

"Listen to reason, will you?" said the Invisible Man, sticking to him in spite of a pounding in the ribs. "By Heaven! you'll madden me in a minute!

"Lie still, you fool!" bawled the Invisible Man in Kemp's ear.

Kemp struggled for another moment and then lay still.

"If you shout I'll smash your face," said the Invisible Man, relieving his mouth.

"I'm an Invisible Man. It's no foolishness, and no magic. I really am an Invisible Man. And I want your help. I don't want to hurt you, but if you behave like a frantic rustic, I must. Don't you remember me, Kemp?--Griffin, of University College?"

"Let me get up," said Kemp. "I'll stop where I am. And let me sit quiet for a minute."

He sat up and felt his neck.

"I am Griffin, of University College, and I have made myself invisible. I am just an ordinary man--a man you have known--made invisible."

"Griffin?" said Kemp.

"Griffin," answered the Voice--"a younger student, almost an albino, six feet high, and broad, with a pink and white face and red eyes--who won the medal for chemistry."

"I am confused," said Kemp. "My brain is rioting. What has this to do with Griffin?"

"I am Griffin."

Kempt thought. "It's horrible," he said. "But what devilry must happen to make a man invisible?"

"It's no devilry. It's a process, sane and intelligible enough--"

"It's horrible!" said Kemp. "How on earth--?"

"It's horrible enough. But I'm wounded and in pain, and tired --Great God! Kemp, you are a man. Take it steady. Give me some food and drink, and let me sit down here."

Kemp stared at the bandage as it moved across the room, then saw a basket chair dragged across the floor and come to rest near the bed. It creaked, and the seat was depressed the quarter of an inch or so. He rubbed his eyes and felt his neck again. "This beats ghosts," he said, and laughed stupidly.

"That's better. Thank Heaven, you're getting sensible!"

"Or silly," said Kemp, and knuckled his eyes.

"Give me some whisky. I'm near dead."

"It didn't feel so. Where are you? If I get up shall I run into you? There! all right. Whisky? Here. Where shall I give it you?"

The chair creaked and Kemp felt the glass drawn away from him. He let go by an effort; his instinct was all against it. It came to rest poised twenty inches above the front edge of the seat of the chair. He stared at it in infinite perplexity. "This is--this must be--hypnotism. You must have suggested you are invisible."

"Nonsense," said the Voice.

"It's frantic."

"Listen to me."

"I demonstrated conclusively this morning," began Kemp, "that invisibility--"

"Never mind what you've demonstrated!--I'm starving," said the Voice, "and the night is--chilly to a man without clothes."

"Food!" said Kemp.

The tumbler of whisky tilted itself. "Yes," said the Invisible Man, rapping it down. "Have you got a dressing gown?"

Kemp made some exclamation in an undertone. He walked to a wardrobe and produced a robe of dingy scarlet. "This do?" he asked. It was taken from him. It hung limp for a moment in mid-air, fluttered weirdly, stood full and decorous buttoning itself, and sat down in his chair. "Drawers, socks, slippers would be a comfort," said the Unseen, curtly. "And food."

"Anything. But this is the insanest thing I ever was in, in my life!"

He turned out his drawers for the articles, and then went downstairs to ransack his larder. He came back with some cold cutlets and

bread, pulled up a light table, and placed them before his guest. "Never mind knives," said his visitor, and a cutlet hung in mid-air, with a sound of gnawing.

"Invisible!" said Kemp, and sat down on a bedroom chair.

"I always like to get something about me before I eat," said the Invisible Man, with a full mouth, eating greedily. "Queer fancy!"

"I suppose that wrist is all right," said Kemp.

"Trust me," said the Invisible Man.

"Of all the strange and wonderful--"

"Exactly. But it's odd I should blunder into your house to get my bandaging. My first stroke of luck. Anyhow I meant to sleep in this house to-night. You must stand that! It's a filthy nuisance, my blood showing, isn't it? Quite a clot over there. Gets visible as it coagulates, I see. I've been in the house three hours."

"But how's it done?" began Kemp, in a tone of exasperation.

"Confound it! The whole business--it's unreasonable from beginning to end."

"Quite reasonable," said the Invisible Man. "Perfectly reasonable."

He reached over and secured the whisky bottle. Kemp stared at the devouring dressing-gown. A ray of candle-light penetrating a torn patch in the right shoulder, made a triangle of light under the left ribs. "What were the shots?" he asked. "How did the shooting begin?"

"There was a fool of a man--a sort of confederate of mine-- curse him!--who tried to steal my money. Has done so."

"Is he invisible too?"

"No."

"Well?"

"Can't I have some more to eat before I tell you all that? I'm hungry--in pain. And you want me to tell stories!"

Kemp got up. "You didn't do any shooting?" he asked.

"Not me," said his visitor. "Some fool I'd never seen fired at random. A lot of them got scared. They all got scared at me. Curse them!--I say--I want more to eat than this, Kemp."

"I'll see what there is more to eat downstairs," said Kemp. "Not much, I'm afraid."

After he had done eating, and he made a heavy meal, the Invisible Man demanded a cigar. He bit the end savagely before Kemp could find a knife, and cursed when the outer leaf loosened. It was strange to see him smoking; his mouth and throat, pharynx and nares, became visible as a sort of whirling smoke cast.

"This blessed gift of smoking!" he said, and puffed vigorously. "I'm lucky to have fallen upon you, Kemp. You must help me. Fancy tumbling on you just now! I'm in a devilish scrape. I've been mad, I think. The things I have been through! But we will do things yet. Let me tell you--"

He helped himself to more whisky and soda. Kemp got up, looked about him, and fetched himself a glass from his spare room. "It's wild--but I suppose I may drink."

"You haven't changed much, Kemp, these dozen years. You fair men don't. Cool and methodical--after the first collapse. I must tell you. We will work together!"

"But how was it all done?" said Kemp, "and how did you get like this?"

"For God's sake, let me smoke in peace for a little while! And then I will begin to tell you."

But the story was not told that night. The Invisible Man's wrist was growing painful, he was feverish, exhausted, and his mind came round to brood upon his chase down the hill and the struggle about the inn. He spoke in fragments of Marvel, he smoked faster, his voice grew angry. Kemp tried to gather what he could.

"He was afraid of me, I could see he was afraid of me," said the Invisible Man many times over. "He meant to give me the slip--he was always casting about! What a fool I was!"

"The cur!"

"I should have killed him--"

"Where did you get the money?" asked Kemp, abruptly.

The Invisible Man was silent for a space. "I can't tell you to-night," he said.

He groaned suddenly and leant forward, supporting his invisible head on invisible hands. "Kemp," he said, "I've had no sleep for near three days--except a couple of dozes of an hour or so. I must sleep soon."

"Well, have my room--have this room."

"But how can I sleep? If I sleep--he will get away. Ugh! What does it matter?"

"What's the shot-wound?" asked Kemp, abruptly.

"Nothing--scratch and blood. Oh, God! How I want sleep!"

"Why not?"

The Invisible Man appeared to be regarding Kemp. "Because I've a particular objection to being caught by my fellow-men," he said slowly.

Kemp started.

"Fool that I am!" said the Invisible Man, striking the table smartly. "I've put the idea into your head."

Chapter 18

The Invisible Man Sleeps

Exhausted and wounded as the Invisible Man was, he refused to accept Kemp's word that his freedom should be respected. He examined the two windows of the bedroom, drew up the blinds, and opened the sashes to confirm Kemp's statement that a retreat by them would be possible. Outside the night was very quiet and still, and the new moon was setting over the down. Then he examined the keys of the bedroom and

the two dressing-room doors, to satisfy himself that these also could be made an assurance of freedom. Finally he expressed himself satisfied. He stood on the hearth-rug and Kemp heard the sound of a yawn.

"I'm sorry," said the Invisible Man, "if I cannot tell you all that I have done to-night. But I am worn out. It's grotesque, no doubt. It's horrible! But believe me, Kemp, it is quite a possible thing. I have made a discovery. I meant to keep it to myself. I can't. I must have a partner. And you--We can do such things--But to-morrow. Now, Kemp, I feel as though I must sleep or perish."

Kemp stood in the middle of the room staring at the headless garment. "I suppose I must leave you," he said. "It's--incredible. Three things happening like this, overturning all my preconceptions, would make me insane. But it's real! Is there anything more that I can get you?"

"Only bid me good-night," said Griffin.

"Good-night," said Kemp, and shook an invisible hand. He walked sideways to the door. Suddenly the dressing-gown walked quickly towards him. "Understand me!" said the dressing-gown. "No attempts to hamper me, or capture me! Or--"

Kemp's face changed a little. "I thought I gave you my word," he said.

Kemp closed the door softly behind him, and the key was turned upon him forthwith. Then, as he stood with an expression of passive amazement on his face, the rapid feet came to the door of the dressing-room and that too was locked. Kemp slapped his brow with his hand. "Am I dreaming? Has the world gone mad--or have I?"

He laughed, and put his hand to the locked door. "Barred out of my

own bedroom, by a flagrant absurdity!" he said.

He walked to the head of the staircase, turned, and stared at the locked doors. "It's fact," he said. He put his fingers to his slightly bruised neck. "Undeniable fact!

"But--"

He shook his head hopelessly, turned, and went downstairs.

He lit the dining-room lamp, got out a cigar, and began pacing the room, ejaculating. Now and then he would argue with himself.

"Invisible!" he said.

"Is there such a thing as an invisible animal? In the sea, yes. Thousands! millions! All the larvae, all the little nauplii and tornarias, all the microscopic things, the jelly-fish. In the sea there are more things invisible than visible! I never thought of that before. And in the ponds too! All those little pond-life things-- specks of colourless translucent jelly! But in air? No!

"It can't be.

"But after all--why not?

"If a man was made of glass he would still be visible."

His meditation became profound. The bulk of three cigars had passed into the invisible or diffused as a white ash over the carpet before he spoke again. Then it was merely an exclamation. He turned aside, walked out of the room, and went into his little consulting-room and lit the gas there. It was a little room, because Dr. Kemp did not live by practice, and in it were the day's newspapers. The morning's paper lay carelessly opened and thrown aside. He caught it up,

turned it over, and read the account of a "Strange Story from Iping" that the Mariner at Port Stowe had spelt over so painfully to Mr. Marvel. Kemp read it swiftly.

"Wrapped up!" said Kemp. "Disguised! Hiding it! 'No one seems to have been aware of his misfortune.' What the devil is his game?"

He dropped the paper, and his eye went seeking. "Ah!" he said, and caught up the St. James' Gazette, lying folded up as it arrived.

"Now we shall get at the truth," said Dr. Kemp. He rent the paper open; a couple of columns confronted him. "An Entire Village in Sussex goes Mad" was the heading.

"Good Heavens!" said Kemp, reading eagerly an incredulous account of the events in Iping the previous afternoon, that have already been described. Over the leaf the report in the morning paper had been reprinted.

He re-read it. "Ran through the streets striking right and left. Juffers insensible. Mr. Huxter in great pain--still unable to describe what he saw. Painful humiliation--vicar. Women ill with terror! Windows smashed. This extraordinary story probably a fabrication. Too good not to print--cum grano!"

He dropped the paper and stared blankly in front of him. "Probably a fabrication!"

He caught up the paper again, and re-read the whole business. "But where does the Tramp come in? Why the deuce was he chasing a Tramp?"

He sat down abruptly on the surgical couch. "He's not only invisible," he said, "but he's mad! Homicidal!"

When dawn came to mingle its pallor with the lamp-light and cigar

smoke of the dining-room, Kemp was still pacing up and down, trying to grasp the incredible.

He was altogether too excited to sleep. His servants, descending sleepily, discovered him, and were inclined to think that overstudy had worked this ill on him. He gave them extraordinary but quite explicit instructions to lay breakfast for two in the belvedere study--and then to confine themselves to the basement and ground-floor. Then he continued to pace the dining-room until the morning's paper came. That had much to say and little to tell, beyond the confirmation of the evening before and a very baldly written account of another remarkable tale from Port Burdock. This gave Kemp the essence of the happenings at the Jolly Cricketers, and the name of Marvel. "He has made me keep with him twenty-four hours," Marvel testified. Certain minor facts were added to the Iping story, notably the cutting of the village telegraph-wire. But there was nothing to throw light on the connection between the Invisible Man and the Tramp; for Mr. Marvel had supplied no information about the three books, or the money with which he was lined. The incredulous tone had vanished and a shoal of reporters and inquirers were already at work elaborating the matter.

Kemp read every scrap of the report and sent his housemaid out to get every one of the morning papers she could. These also he devoured.

"He is invisible!" he said. "And it reads like rage growing to mania! The things he may do! The things he may do! And he's upstairs free as the air. What on earth ought I to do?"

"For instance, would it be a breach of faith if--? No."

He went to a little untidy desk in the corner, and began a note. He tore this up half written, and wrote another. He read it over and considered it. Then he took an envelope and addressed it to "Colonel Adye, Port Burdock."

The Invisible Man awoke even as Kemp was doing this. He awoke in an evil temper, and Kemp, alert for every sound, heard his pattering feet rush suddenly across the bedroom overhead. Then a chair was flung over and the wash-hand stand tumbler smashed. Kemp hurried upstairs and rapped eagerly.

Chapter 19

Certain First Principles

"What's the matter?" asked Kemp, when the Invisible Man admitted him.

"Nothing," was the answer.

"But, confound it! The smash?"

"Fit of temper," said the Invisible Man. "Forgot this arm; and it's sore."

"You're rather liable to that sort of thing."

"I am."

Kemp walked across the room and picked up the fragments of broken glass. "All the facts are out about you," said Kemp, standing up with the glass in his hand; "all that happened in Iping, and down the hill. The world has become aware of its invisible citizen. But no one knows you are here."

The Invisible Man swore.

"The secret's out. I gather it was a secret. I don't know what your plans are, but of course I'm anxious to help you."

The Invisible Man sat down on the bed.

"There's breakfast upstairs," said Kemp, speaking as easily as possible, and he was delighted to find his strange guest rose willingly. Kemp led the way up the narrow staircase to the belvedere.

"Before we can do anything else," said Kemp, "I must understand a little more about this invisibility of yours." He had sat down, after one nervous glance out of the window, with the air of a man who has talking to do. His doubts of the sanity of the entire business flashed and vanished again as he looked across to where Griffin sat at the breakfast-table,--a headless, handless dressing-gown, wiping unseen lips on a miraculously held serviette.

"It's simple enough--and credible enough," said Griffin, putting the serviette aside and leaning the invisible head on an invisible hand.

"No doubt, to you, but--" Kemp laughed.

"Well, yes; to me it seemed wonderful at first, no doubt. But now, great God!--But we will do great things yet! I came on the stuff first at Chesilstowe."

"Chesilstowe?"

"I went there after I left London. You know I dropped medicine and took up physics? No?--well, I did. Light--fascinated me."

"Ah!"

"Optical density! The whole subject is a network of riddles --a network with solutions glimmering elusively through. And being but two-and-twenty and full of enthusiasm, I said, 'I will devote my life to this. This is worth while.' You know what fools we are at two-and-twenty?"

"Fools then or fools now," said Kemp.

"As though Knowing could be any satisfaction to a man!

"But I went to work--like a nigger. And I had hardly worked and thought about the matter six months before light came through one of the meshes suddenly--blindingly! I found a general principle of pigments and refraction,--a formula, a geometrical expression involving four dimensions. Fools, common men, even common mathematicians, do not know anything of what some general expression may mean to the student of molecular physics. In the books--the books that Tramp has hidden--there are marvels, miracles! But this was not a method, it was an idea that might lead to a method by which it would be possible, without changing any other property of matter,--except, in some instances, colours,--to lower the refractive index of a substance, solid or liquid, to that of air--so far as all practical purposes are concerned."

"Phew!" said Kemp. "That's odd! But still I don't see quite --I can understand that thereby you could spoil a valuable stone, but personal invisibility is a far cry."

"Precisely," said Griffin. "But consider: Visibility depends on the action of the visible bodies on light. Either a body absorbs light, or it reflects or refracts it, or does all these things. If it neither reflects nor refracts nor absorbs light, it cannot of itself be visible. You see an opaque red box, for instance, because the

colour absorbs some of the light and reflects the rest, all the red part of the light, to you. If it did not absorb any particular part of the light, but reflected it all, then it would be a shining white box. Silver! A diamond box would neither absorb much of the light nor reflect much from the general surface, but just here and there where the surfaces were favourable the light would be reflected and refracted, so that you would get a brilliant appearance of flashing reflections and translucencies,--a sort of skeleton of light. A glass box would not be so brilliant, not so clearly visible, as a diamond box, because there would be less refraction and reflection. See that? From certain points of view you would see quite clearly through it. Some kinds of glass would be more visible than others, a box of flint glass would be brighter than a box of ordinary window glass. A box of very thin common glass would be hard to see in a bad light, because it would absorb hardly any light and refract and reflect very little. And if you put a sheet of common white glass in water, still more if you put it in some denser liquid than water, it would vanish almost altogether, because light passing from water to glass is only slightly refracted or reflected or indeed affected in any way. It is almost as invisible as a jet of coal gas or hydrogen is in air. And for precisely the same reason!"

"Yes," said Kemp, "that is pretty plain sailing."

"And here is another fact you will know to be true. If a sheet of glass is smashed, Kemp, and beaten into a powder, it becomes much more visible while it is in the air; it becomes at last an opaque white powder. This is because the powdering multiplies the surfaces of the glass at which refraction and reflection occur. In the sheet of glass there are only two surfaces; in the powder the light is reflected or refracted by each grain it passes through, and very little gets right through the powder. But if the white powdered glass is put into water, it forthwith vanishes. The powdered glass and water have much the same refractive index; that is, the light undergoes very little refraction or reflection in passing from one to

the other.

"You make the glass invisible by putting it into a liquid of nearly the same refractive index; a transparent thing becomes invisible if it is put in any medium of almost the same refractive index. And if you will consider only a second, you will see also that the powder of glass might be made to vanish in air, if its refractive index could be made the same as that of air; for then there would be no refraction or reflection as the light passed from glass to air."

"Yes, yes," said Kemp. "But a man's not powdered glass!"

"No," said Griffin. "He's more transparent!"

"Nonsense!"

"That from a doctor! How one forgets! Have you already forgotten your physics, in ten years? Just think of all the things that are transparent and seem not to be so. Paper, for instance, is made up of transparent fibres, and it is white and opaque only for the same reason that a powder of glass is white and opaque. Oil white paper, fill up the interstices between the particles with oil so that there is no longer refraction or reflection except at the surfaces, and it becomes as transparent as glass. And not only paper, but cotton fibre, linen fibre, wool fibre, woody fibre, and bone, Kemp, flesh, hair, nails and nerves, Kemp, in fact the whole fabric of a man except the red of his blood and the black pigment of hair, are all made up of transparent, colourless tissue. So little suffices to make us visible one to the other. For the most part the fibres of a living creature are no more opaque than water."

"Great Heavens!" cried Kemp. "Of course, of course! I was thinking only last night of the sea larvae and all jelly-fish!"

"Now you have me! And all that I knew and had in mind a year after I

left London--six years ago. But I kept it to myself. I had to do my work under frightful disadvantages. Oliver, my professor, was a scientific bounder, a journalist by instinct, a thief of ideas,--he was always prying! And you know the knavish system of the scientific world. I simply would not publish, and let him share my credit. I went on working. I got nearer and nearer making my formula into an experiment, a reality. I told no living soul, because I meant to flash my work upon the world with crushing effect,--to become famous at a blow. I took up the question of pigments to fill up certain gaps. And suddenly, not by design but by accident, I made a discovery in physiology."

"Yes?"

"You know the red colouring matter of blood; it can be made white--colourless--and remain with all the functions it has now!"

Kemp gave a cry of incredulous amazement.

The Invisible Man rose and began pacing the little study. "You may well exclaim. I remember that night. It was late at night, --in the daytime one was bothered with the gaping, silly students,-- and I worked then sometimes till dawn. It came suddenly, splendid and complete into my mind. I was alone; the laboratory was still, with the tall lights burning brightly and silently. In all my great moments I have been alone. 'One could make an animal--a tissue--transparent! One could make it invisible! All except the pigments. I could be invisible!' I said, suddenly realising what it meant to be an albino with such knowledge. It was overwhelming. I left the filtering I was doing, and went and stared out of the great window at the stars. 'I could be invisible!' I repeated.

"To do such a thing would be to transcend magic. And I beheld, unclouded by doubt, a magnificent vision of all that invisibility might mean to a man,--the mystery, the power, the freedom. Drawbacks

I saw none. You have only to think! And I, a shabby, poverty-struck, hemmed-in demonstrator, teaching fools in a provincial college, might suddenly become--this. I ask you, Kemp, if you--Any one, I tell you, would have flung himself upon that research. And I worked three years, and every mountain of difficulty I toiled over showed another from its summit. The infinite details! And the exasperation,--a professor, a provincial professor, always prying. 'When are you going to publish this work of yours?' was his everlasting question. And the students, the cramped means! Three years I had of it--

"And after three years of secrecy and exasperation, I found that to complete it was impossible,--impossible."

"How?" asked Kemp.

"Money," said the Invisible Man, and went again to stare out of the window.

He turned round abruptly. "I robbed the old man--robbed my father.

"The money was not his, and he shot himself."

Chapter 20

At the House in Great Portland Street

For a moment Kemp sat in silence, staring at the back of the headless figure at the window. Then he started, struck by a thought, rose,

took the Invisible Man's arm, and turned him away from the outlook.

"You are tired," he said, "and while I sit, you walk about. Have my chair."

He placed himself between Griffin and the nearest window.

For a space Griffin sat silent, and then he resumed abruptly:

"I had left the Chesilstowe cottage already," he said, "when that happened. It was last December. I had taken a room in London, a large unfurnished room in a big ill-managed lodging-house in a slum near Great Portland Street. The room was soon full of the appliances I had bought with his money; the work was going on steadily, successfully, drawing near an end. I was like a man emerging from a thicket, and suddenly coming on some unmeaning tragedy. I went to bury him. My mind was still on this research, and I did not lift a finger to save his character. I remember the funeral, the cheap hearse, the scant ceremony, the windy frost-bitten hillside, and the old college friend of his who read the service over him,--a shabby, black, bent old man with a snivelling cold.

"I remember walking back to the empty home, through the place that had once been a village and was now patched and tinkered by the jerry builders into the ugly likeness of a town. Every way the roads ran out at last into the desecrated fields and ended in rubble heaps and rank wet weeds. I remember myself as a gaunt black figure, going along the slippery, shiny pavement, and the strange sense of detachment I felt from the squalid respectability, the sordid commercialism of the place.

"I did not feel a bit sorry for my father. He seemed to me to be the victim of his own foolish sentimentality. The current cant required my attendance at his funeral, but it was really not my affair.

"But going along the High Street, my old life came back to me for a space, for I met the girl I had known ten years since. Our eyes met.

"Something moved me to turn back and talk to her. She was a very ordinary person.

"It was all like a dream, that visit to the old places. I did not feel then that I was lonely, that I had come out from the world into a desolate place. I appreciated my loss of sympathy, but I put it down to the general inanity of things. Re-entering my room seemed like the recovery of reality. There were the things I knew and loved. There stood the apparatus, the experiments arranged and waiting. And now there was scarcely a difficulty left, beyond the planning of details.

"I will tell you, Kemp, sooner or later, all the complicated processes. We need not go into that now. For the most part, saving certain gaps I chose to remember, they are written in cypher in those books that tramp has hidden. We must hunt him down. We must get those books again. But the essential phase was to place the transparent object whose refractive index was to be lowered between two radiating centres of a sort of ethereal vibration, of which I will tell you more fully later. No, not these Rntgen vibrations--I don't know that these others of mine have been described. Yet they are obvious enough. I needed two little dynamos, and these I worked with a cheap gas engine. My first experiment was with a bit of white wool fabric. I was the strangest thing in the world to see it in the flicker of the flashes soft and white, and then to watch it fade like a wreath of smoke and vanish.

"I could scarcely believe I had done it. I put my hand into the emptiness, and there was the thing as solid as ever. I felt it awkwardly, and threw it on the floor. I had a little trouble finding it again.

"And then came a curious experience. I heard a miaow behind me, and turning, saw a lean white cat, very dirty, on the cistern cover outside the window. A thought came into my head. 'Everything ready for you,' I said, and went to the window, opened it, and called softly. She came in, purring,--the poor beast was starving,--and I gave her some milk. All my food was in a cupboard in the corner of the room. After that she went smelling round the room,--evidently with the idea of making herself at home. The invisible rag upset her a bit; you should have seen her spit at it! But I made her comfortable on the pillow of my truckle-bed. And I gave her butter to get her to wash."

"And you processed her?"

"I processed her. But giving drugs to a cat is no joke, Kemp! And the process failed."

"Failed!"

"In two particulars. These were the claws and the pigment stuff--what is it?--at the back of the eye in a cat. You know?"

"Tapetum."

"Yes, the tapetum. It didn't go. After I'd given the stuff to bleach the blood and done certain other things to her, I gave the beast opium, and put her and the pillow she was sleeping on, on the apparatus. And after all the rest had faded and vanished, there remained two little ghosts of her eyes."

"Odd!"

"I can't explain it. She was bandaged and clamped, of course, --so I had her safe; but she woke while she was still misty, and miaowed dismally, and some one came knocking. It was an old woman from

downstairs, who suspected me of vivisection,--a drink-sodden old creature, with only a white cat to care for in all the world. I whipped out some chloroform, and applied it, and answered the door. 'Did I hear a cat?' she asked. 'My cat?' 'Not here,' said I, very politely. She was a little doubtful and tried to peer past me into the room; strange enough to her no doubt,--bare walls, uncurtained windows, truckle-bed, with the gas engine vibrating, and the seethe of the radiant points, and that faint ghastly stinging of chloroform in the air. She had to be satisfied at last and went away again."

"How long did it take?" asked Kemp.

"Three or four hours--the cat. The bones and sinews and the fat were the last to go, and the tips of the coloured hairs. And, as I say, the back part of the eye, tough iridescent stuff it is, wouldn't go at all.

"It was night outside long before the business was over, and nothing was to be seen but the dim eyes and the claws. I stopped the gas engine, felt for and stroked the beast, which was still insensible, and then, being tired, left it sleeping on the invisible pillow and went to bed. I found it hard to sleep. I lay awake thinking weak aimless stuff, going over the experiment over and over again, or dreaming feverishly of things growing misty and vanishing about me, until everything, the ground I stood on, vanished, and so I came to that sickly falling nightmare one gets. About two, the cat began miaowing about the room. I tried to hush it by talking to it, and then I decided to turn it out. I remember the shock I had when striking a light--there were just the round eyes shining green--and nothing round them. I would have given it milk, but I hadn't any. It wouldn't be quiet, it just sat down and miaowed at the door. I tried to catch it, with an idea of putting it out of the window, but it wouldn't be caught, it vanished. Then it began miaowing in different parts of the room. At last I opened the window and made a bustle. I suppose it went out at last. I never saw any more of it.

"Then--Heaven knows why--I fell thinking of my father's funeral again, and the dismal windy hillside, until the day had come. I found sleeping was hopeless, and, locking my door after me, wandered out into the morning streets."

"You don't mean to say there's an invisible cat at large!" said Kemp.

"If it hasn't been killed," said the Invisible Man. "Why not?"

"Why not?" said Kemp. "I didn't mean to interrupt."

"It's very probably been killed," said the Invisible Man. "It was alive four days after, I know, and down a grating in Great Titchfield Street; because I saw a crowd round the place, trying to see whence the miaowing came."

He was silent for the best part of a minute. Then he resumed abruptly:

"I remember that morning before the change very vividly. I must have gone up Great Portland Street. I remember the barracks in Albany Street, and the horse soldiers coming out, and at last I found myself sitting in the sunshine and feeling very ill and strange, on the summit of Primrose Hill. It was a sunny day in January,--one of those sunny, frosty days that came before the snow this year. My weary brain tried to formulate the position, to plot out a plan of action.

"I was surprised to find, now that my prize was within my grasp, how inconclusive its attainment seemed. As a matter of fact I was worked out; the intense stress of nearly four years' continuous work left me incapable of any strength of feeling. I was apathetic, and I tried in vain to recover the enthusiasm of my first inquiries, the passion

of discovery that had enabled me to compass even the downfall of my father's grey hairs. Nothing seemed to matter. I saw pretty clearly this was a transient mood, due to overwork and want of sleep, and that either by drugs or rest it would be possible to recover my energies.

"All I could think clearly was that the thing had to be carried through; the fixed idea still ruled me. And soon, for the money I had was almost exhausted. I looked about me at the hillside, with children playing and girls watching them, and tried to think of all the fantastic advantages an invisible man would have in the world. After a time I crawled home, took some food and a strong dose of strychnine, and went to sleep in my clothes on my unmade bed. Strychnine is a grand tonic, Kemp, to take the flabbiness out of a man."

"It's the devil," said Kemp. "It's the palaeolithic in a bottle."

"I awoke vastly invigorated and rather irritable. You know?"

"I know the stuff."

"And there was some one rapping at the door. It was my landlord with threats and inquiries, an old Polish Jew in a long grey coat and greasy slippers. I had been tormenting a cat in the night he was sure,--the old woman's tongue had been busy. He insisted on knowing all about it. The laws of this country against vivisection were very severe,--he might be liable. I denied the cat. Then the vibration of the little gas engine could be felt all over the house, he said. That was true, certainly. He edged round me into the room, peering about over his German-silver spectacles, and a sudden dread came into my mind that he might carry away something of my secret. I tried to keep between him and the concentrating apparatus I had arranged, and that only made him more curious. What was I doing? Why was I always alone and secretive? Was it legal? Was it dangerous? I paid

nothing but the usual rent. His had always been a most respectable house--in a disreputable neighbourhood. Suddenly my temper gave way. I told him to get out. He began to protest, to jabber of his right of entry. In a moment I had him by the collar; something ripped, and he went spinning out into his own passage. I slammed and locked the door and sat down quivering.

"He made a fuss outside, which I disregarded, and after a time he went away.

"But this brought matters to a crisis. I did not know what he would do, nor even what he had power to do. To move to fresh apartments would have meant delay; altogether I had barely twenty pounds left in the world,--for the most part in the bank,--and I could not afford that. Vanish! It was irresistible. Then there would be an inquiry, the sacking of my room--

"At the thought of the possibility of my work being exposed or interrupted at its very climax, I became angry and active. I hurried out with my three books of notes, my cheque-book,--the tramp has them now,--and directed them from the nearest Post Office to a house of call for letters and parcels in Great Portland Street. I tried to go out noiselessly. Coming in, I found my landlord going quietly upstairs; he had heard the door close, I suppose. You would have laughed to see him jump aside on the landing as I came tearing after him. He glared at me as I went by him, and I made the house quiver with the slamming of my door. I heard him come shuffling up to my floor, hesitate, and go down. I set to work upon my preparations forthwith.

"It was all done that evening and night. While I was still sitting under the sickly, drowsy influence of the drugs that decolourise blood, there came a repeated knocking at the door. It ceased, footsteps went away and returned, and the knocking was resumed. There was an attempt to push something under the door--a blue paper.

Then in a fit of irritation I rose and went and flung the door wide open. 'Now then?' said I.

"It was my landlord, with a notice of ejection or something. He held it out to me, saw something odd about my hands, I expect, and lifted his eyes to my face.

"For a moment he gaped. Then he gave a sort of inarticulate cry, dropped candle and writ together, and went blundering down the dark passage to the stairs. I shut the door, locked it, and went to the looking-glass. Then I understood his terror. My face was white --like white stone.

"But it was all horrible. I had not expected the suffering. A night of racking anguish, sickness and fainting. I set my teeth, though my skin was presently afire; all my body afire; but I lay there like grim death. I understood now how it was the cat had howled until I chloroformed it. Lucky it was I lived alone and untended in my room. There were times when I sobbed and groaned and talked. But I stuck to it. I became insensible and woke languid in the darkness.

"The pain had passed. I thought I was killing myself and I did not care. I shall never forget that dawn, and the strange horror of seeing that my hands had become as clouded glass, and watching them grow clearer and thinner as the day went by, until at last I could see the sickly disorder of my room through them, though I closed my transparent eyelids. My limbs became glassy, the bones and arteries faded, vanished, and the little white nerves went last. I ground my teeth and stayed there to the end. At last only the dead tips of the finger-nails remained, pallid and white, and the brown stain of some acid upon my fingers.

"I struggled up. At first I was as incapable as a swathed infant,--stepping with limbs I could not see. I was weak and very hungry. I went and stared at nothing in my shaving-glass, at nothing

save where an attenuated pigment still remained behind the retina of my eyes, fainter than mist. I had to hang on to the table and press my forehead to the glass.

"It was only by a frantic effort of will that I dragged myself back to the apparatus and completed the process.

"I slept during the forenoon, pulling the sheet over my eyes to shut out the light, and about midday I was awakened again by a knocking. My strength had returned. I sat up and listened and heard a whispering. I sprang to my feet and as noiselessly as possible began to detach the connections of my apparatus, and to distribute it about the room, so as to destroy the suggestions of its arrangement. Presently the knocking was renewed and voices called, first my landlord's, and then two others. To gain time I answered them. The invisible rag and pillow came to hand and I opened the window and pitched them out on to the cistern cover. As the window opened, a heavy crash came at the door. Some one had charged it with the idea of smashing the lock. But the stout bolts I had screwed up some days before stopped him. That startled me, made me angry. I began to tremble and do things hurriedly.

"I tossed together some loose paper, straw, packing paper and so forth, in the middle of the room, and turned on the gas. Heavy blows began to rain upon the door. I could not find the matches. I beat my hands on the wall with rage. I turned down the gas again, stepped out of the window on the cistern cover, very softly lowered the sash, and sat down, secure and invisible, but quivering with anger, to watch events. They split a panel, I saw, and in another moment they had broken away the staples of the bolts and stood in the open doorway. It was the landlord and his two step-sons, sturdy young men of three or four and twenty. Behind them fluttered the old hag of a woman from downstairs.

"You may imagine their astonishment on finding the room empty. One

of the younger men rushed to the window at once, flung it up and stared out. His staring eyes and thick-lipped bearded face came a foot from my face. I was half minded to hit his silly countenance, but I arrested my doubled fist. He stared right through me. So did the others as they joined him. The old man went and peered under the bed, and then they all made a rush for the cupboard. They had to argue about it at length in Yiddish and Cockney English. They concluded I had not answered them, that their imagination had deceived them. A feeling of extraordinary elation took the place of my anger as I sat outside the window and watched these four people--for the old lady came in, glancing suspiciously about her like a cat, trying to understand the riddle of my behaviour.

"The old man, so far as I could understand his patois, agreed with the old lady that I was a vivisectionist. The sons protested in garbled English that I was an electrician, and appealed to the dynamos and radiators. They were all nervous against my arrival, although I found subsequently that they had bolted the front door. The old lady peered into the cupboard and under the bed, and one of the young men pushed up the register and stared up the chimney. One of my fellow lodgers, a costermonger who shared the opposite room with a butcher, appeared on the landing, and he was called in and told incoherent things.

"It occurred to me that the radiators, if they fell into the hands of some acute well-educated person, would give me away too much, and watching my opportunity, I came into the room and tilted one of the little dynamos off its fellow on which it was standing, and smashed both apparatus. Then, while they were trying to explain the smash, I dodged out of the room and went softly downstairs.

"I went into one of the sitting-rooms and waited until they came down, still speculating and argumentative, all a little disappointed at finding no 'horrors,' and all a little puzzled how they stood with regard to me. Then I slipped up again with a box of matches, fired

my heap of paper and rubbish, put the chairs and bedding thereby, led the gas to the affair, by means of an india- rubber tube, and waving a farewell to the room left it for the last time."

"You fired the house!" exclaimed Kemp.

"Fired the house. It was the only way to cover my trail--and no doubt it was insured. I slipped the bolts of the front door quietly and went out into the street. I was invisible, and I was only just beginning to realise the extraordinary advantage my invisibility gave me. My head was already teeming with plans of all the wild and wonderful things I had now impunity to do."

Chapter 21

In Oxford Street

"In going downstairs the first time I found an unexpected difficulty because I could not see my feet; indeed I stumbled twice, and there was an unaccustomed clumsiness in gripping the bolt. By not looking down, however, I managed to walk on the level passably well.

"My mood, I say, was one of exaltation. I felt as a seeing man might do, with padded feet and noiseless clothes, in a city of the blind. I experienced a wild impulse to jest, to startle people, to clap men on the back, fling people's hats astray, and generally revel in my extraordinary advantage.

"But hardly had I emerged upon Great Portland Street, however (my

lodgings was close to the big draper's shop there), when I heard a clashing concussion and was hit violently behind, and turning saw a man carrying a basket of soda-water siphons, and looking in amazement at his burden. Although the blow had really hurt me, I found something so irresistible in his astonishment that I laughed aloud. 'The devil's in the basket,' I said, and suddenly twisted it out of his hand. He let go incontinently, and I swung the whole weight into the air.

"But a fool of a cabman, standing outside a public house, made a sudden rush for this, and his extending fingers took me with excruciating violence under the ear. I let the whole down with a smash on the cabman, and then, with shouts and the clatter of feet about me, people coming out of shops, vehicles pulling up, I realised what I had done for myself, and cursing my folly, backed against a shop window and prepared to dodge out of the confusion. In a moment I should be wedged into a crowd and inevitably discovered. I pushed by the butcher boy, who luckily did not turn to see the nothingness that shoved him aside, and dodged behind the cabman's four-wheeler. I do not know how they settled the business. I hurried straight across the road, which was happily clear, and hardly heeding which way I went, in the fright of detection the incident had given, plunged into the afternoon throng of Oxford Street.

"I tried to get into the stream of people, but they were too thick for me, and in a moment my heels were being trodden upon. I took to the gutter, the roughness of which I found painful to my feet, and forthwith the shaft of a crawling hansom dug me forcibly under the shoulder blade, reminding me that I was already bruised severely. I staggered out of the way of the cab, avoided a perambulator by a convulsive movement, and found myself behind the hansom. A happy thought saved me, and as this drove slowly along I followed in its immediate wake, trembling and astonished at the turn of my adventure. And not only trembling, but shivering. It was a bright day in January and I was stark naked and the thin slime of mud that covered

the road was freezing. Foolish as it seems to me now, I had not reckoned that, transparent or not, I was still amenable to the weather and all its consequences.

"Then suddenly a bright idea came into my head. I ran round and got into the cab. And so, shivering, scared, and sniffing with the first intimations of a cold, and with the bruises in the small of my back growing upon my attention. I drove slowly along Oxford Street and past Tottenham Court Road. My mood was as different from that in which I had sallied forth ten minutes ago as it is possible to imagine. This invisibility indeed! The one thought that possessed me was--how was I to get out of the scrape I was in.

"We crawled past Mudie's, and there a tall woman with five or six yellow-labelled books hailed my cab, and I sprang out just in time to escape her, shaving a railway van narrowly in my flight. I made off up the roadway to Bloomsbury Square, intending to strike north past the Museum and so get into the quiet district. I was not cruelly chilled, and the strangeness of my situation so unnerved me that I whimpered as I ran. At the northward corner of the Square a little white dog ran out of the Pharmaceutical Society's offices, and incontinently made for me, nose down.

"I had never realised it before, but the nose is to the mind of a dog what the eye is to the mind of a seeing man. Dogs perceive the scent of a man moving as men perceive his vision. This brute began barking and leaping, showing, as it seemed to me, only too plainly that he was aware of me. I crossed Great Russell Street, glancing over my shoulder as I did so, and went some way along Montague Street before I realised what I was running towards.

"Then I became aware of a blare of music, and looking along the street saw a number of people advancing out of Russell Square, red shirts, and the banner of the Salvation Army to the fore. Such a crowd, chanting in the roadway and scoffing on the pavement, I could

not hope to penetrate, and dreading to go back and farther from home again, and deciding on the spur of the moment, I ran up the white steps of a house facing the Museum railings, and stood there until the crowd should have passed. Happily the dog stopped at the noise of the band too, hesitated, and turned tail, running back to Bloomsbury Square again.

"On came the band, bawling with unconscious irony some hymn about 'When shall we see his Face?' and it seemed an interminable time to me before the tide of the crowd washed along the pavement by me. Thud, thud, thud, came the drum with a vibrating resonance, and for the moment I did not notice two urchins stopping at the railings by me. 'See 'em,' said one. 'See what?' said the other. 'Why--them footmarks--bare. Like what you makes in mud.'

"I looked down and saw the youngsters had stopped and were gaping at the muddy footmarks I had left behind me up the newly whitened steps. The passing people elbowed and jostled them, but their confounded intelligence was arrested. 'Thud, thud, thud, When, thud, shall we see, thud, his face, thud, thud.' 'There's a barefoot man gone up them steps, or I don't know nothing,' said one. 'And he ain't never come down again. And his foot was a-bleeding.'

"The thick of the crowd had already passed. 'Looky there, Ted,' quoth the younger of the detectives, with the sharpness of surprise in his voice, and pointed straight to my feet. I looked down and saw at once the dim suggestion of their outline sketched in splashes of mud. For a moment I was paralysed.

"'Why, that's rum,' said the elder. 'Dashed rum! It's just like the ghost of a foot, ain't it?' He hesitated and advanced with outstretched hand. A man pulled up short to see what he was catching, and then a girl. In another moment he would have touched me. Then I saw what to do. I made a step, the boy started back with an exclamation, and with a rapid movement I swung myself over into

the portico of the next house. But the smaller boy was sharp-eyed enough to follow the movement and before I was well down the steps and upon the pavement, he had recovered from his momentary astonishment and was shouting out that the feet had gone over the wall.

"They rushed round and saw my new footmarks flash into being on the lower step and upon the pavement. 'What's up?' asked some one. 'Feet! Look! Feet running!' Everybody in the road, except my three pursuers, was pouring along after the Salvation Army, and this not only impeded me but them. There was an eddy of surprise and interrogation. At the cost of bowling over one young fellow I got through, and in another moment I was rushing headlong round the circuit of Russell Square, with six or seven astonished people following my footmarks. There was no time for explanation, or else the whole host would have been after me.

"Twice I doubled round corners, thrice I crossed the road and came back on my tracks, and then, as my feet grew hot and dry, the damp impressions began to fade. At last I had a breathing space and rubbed my feet clean with my hands, and so got away altogether. The last I saw of the chase was a little group of a dozen people perhaps, studying with infinite perplexity a slowly drying footprint that had resulted from a puddle in Travistock Square--a footprint as isolated and incomprehensible to them as Crusoe's solitary discovery.

"This running warmed me to a certain extent, and I went on with a better courage through the maze of less frequented roads that runs hereabouts. My back had now become very stiff and sore, my tonsils were painful from the cabman's fingers, and the skin of my neck had been scratched by his nails; my feet hurt exceedingly and I was lame from a little cut on one foot. I saw in time a blind man approaching me, and fled limping, for I feared his subtle intuitions. Once or twice accidental collisions occurred and I left people amazed, with unaccountable curses ringing in their ears. Then came something

silent and quiet against my face, and across the Square fell a thin veil of slowly falling flakes of snow. I had caught a cold, and do as I would I could not avoid an occasional sneeze. And every dog that came in sight, with its pointing nose and curious sniffing, was a terror to me.

"Then came men and boys running, first one and then others, and shouting as they ran. It was a fire. They ran in the direction of my lodging, and looking back down a street I saw a mass of black smoke streaming up above the roofs and telephone wires. It was my lodging burning; my clothes, my apparatus, all my resources indeed, except my cheque-book and the three volumes of memoranda that awaited me in Great Portland Street, were there. Burning! I had burnt my boats--if ever a man did! The place was blazing."

The Invisible Man paused and thought. Kemp glanced nervously out of the window. "Yes?" he said. "Go on."

Chapter 22

In the Emporium

"So last January, with the beginning of a snowstorm in the air about me--and if it settled on me it would betray me!--weary, cold, painful, inexpressibly wretched, and still but half convinced of my invisible quality, I began this new life to which I am committed. I had no refuge, no appliances, no human being in the world in whom I could confide. To have told my secret would have given me away--made a mere show and rarity of me. Nevertheless, I was half minded to

accost some passer-by and throw myself upon his mercy. But I knew too clearly the terror and brutal cruelty my advances would evoke. I made no plans in the street. My sole object was to get shelter from the snow, to get myself covered and warm; then I might hope to plan. But even to me, an Invisible Man, the rows of London houses stood latched, barred, and bolted impregnably.

"Only one thing could I see clearly before me, the cold exposure and misery of the snowstorm and the night.

"And then I had a brilliant idea. I turned down one of the roads leading from Gower Street to Tottenham Court Road, and found myself outside Omniums, the big establishment where everything is to be bought--you know the place--meat, grocery, linen, furniture, clothing, oil paintings even--a huge meandering collection of shops rather than a shop. I had thought I should find the doors open, but they were closed, and as I stood in the wide entrance a carriage stopped outside, and a man in uniform--you know the kind of personage with 'Omnium' on his cap--flung open the door. I contrived to enter, and walking down the shop--it was a department where they were selling ribbons and gloves and stockings and that kind of thing--came to a more spacious region devoted to picnic baskets and wicker furniture.

"I did not feel safe there, however; people were going to and fro, and I prowled restlessly about until I came upon a huge section in an upper floor containing scores and hundreds of bedsteads, and beyond these I found a resting-place at last among a huge pile of folded flock mattresses. The place was already lit up and agreeably warm, and I decided to remain where I was, keeping a cautious eye on the two or three sets of shopmen and customers who were meandering through the place until closing time came. Then I should be able, I thought, to rob the place for food and clothing, and disguised, prowl through it and examine its resources, perhaps sleep on some of the bedding. That seemed an acceptable plan. My idea was to procure

clothing to make myself a muffled but acceptable figure, to get money, and then to recover my books and parcels where they awaited me, take a lodging somewhere and elaborate plans for the complete realisation of the advantages my invisibility gave me (as I still imagined) over my fellow-men.

"Closing time arrived quickly enough; it could not have been more than an hour after I took up my position on the mattresses before I noticed the blinds of the windows being drawn, and customers being marched doorward. And then a number of brisk young men began with remarkable alacrity to tidy up the goods that remained disturbed. I left my lair as the crowds diminished, and prowled cautiously out into the less desolate parts of the shop. I was really surprised to observe how rapidly the young men and women whipped away the goods displayed for sale during the day. All the boxes of goods, the hanging fabrics, the festoons of lace, the boxes of sweets in the grocery section, the displays of this and that, were being whipped down, folded up, slapped into tidy receptacles, and everything that could not be taken down and put away had sheets of some coarse stuff like sacking flung over it. Finally all the chairs were turned up on to the counters, leaving the floor clear. Directly each of these young people had done, he or she made promptly for the door with such an expression of animation as I have rarely observed in a shop assistant before. Then came a lot of youngsters scattering sawdust and carrying pails and brooms. I had to dodge to get out of the way, and as it was, my ankle got stung with the sawdust. For some time, wandering through the swathed and darkened departments, I could hear the brooms at work. And at last a good hour or more after the shop had been closed, came a noise of locking doors. Silence came upon the place, and I found myself wandering through the vast and intricate shops, galleries and showrooms of the place, alone. It was very still; in one place I remember passing near one of the Tottenham Court Road entrances and listening to the tapping of bootheels of the passers-by.

"My first visit was to the place where I had seen stockings and gloves for sale. It was dark, and I had the devil of a hunt after matches, which I found at last in the drawer of the little cash desk. Then I had to get a candle. I had to tear down wrappings and ransack a number of boxes and drawers, but at last I managed to turn out what I sought; the box label called them lambswool pants, and lambswool vests. Then socks, a thick comforter, and then I went to the clothing place and got trousers, a lounge jacket, an overcoat and a slouch hat --a clerical sort of hat with the brim turned down. I began to feel a human being again, and my next thought was food.

"Upstairs was a refreshment department, and there I got cold meat. There was coffee still in the urn, and I lit the gas and warmed it up again, and altogether I did not do badly. Afterwards, prowling through the place in search of blankets--I had to put up at last with a heap of down quilts--I came upon a grocery section with a lot of chocolate and candied fruits, more than was good for me indeed--and some white burgundy. And near that was a toy department, and I had a brilliant idea. I found some artificial noses--dummy noses, you know, and I thought of dark spectacles. But Omniums had no optical department. My nose had been a difficulty indeed--I had thought of paint. But the discovery set my mind running on wigs and masks and the like. Finally I went to sleep on a heap of down quilts, very warm and comfortable.

"My last thoughts before sleeping were the most agreeable I had had since the change. I was in a state of physical serenity, and that was reflected in my mind. I thought that I should be able to slip out unobserved in the morning with my clothes upon me, muffling my face with a white wrapper I had taken, purchase, with the money I had taken, spectacles and so forth, and so complete my disguise. I lapsed into disorderly dreams of all the fantastic things that had happened during the last few days. I saw the ugly little Jew of a landlord vociferating in his rooms; I saw his two sons marvelling, and the wrinkled old woman's gnarled face as she asked for her cat.

I experienced again the strange sensation of seeing the cloth disappear, and so I came round to the windy hillside and the sniffing old clergyman mumbling 'Dust to dust, earth to earth,' and my father's open grave.

"'You also,' said a voice, and suddenly I was being forced towards the grave. I struggled, shouted, appealed to the mourners, but they continued stonily following the service; the old clergyman, too, never faltered droning and sniffing through the ritual. I realised I was invisible and inaudible, that overwhelming forces had their grip on me. I struggled in vain, I was forced over the brink, the coffin rang hollow as I fell upon it, and the gravel came flying after me in spadefuls. Nobody heeded me, nobody was aware of me. I made convulsive struggles and awoke.

"The pale London dawn had come, the place was full of a chilly grey light that filtered round the edges of the window blinds. I sat up, and for a time I could not think where this ample apartment, with its counters, its piles of rolled stuff, its heaps of quilts and cushions, its iron pillars, might be. Then, as recollection came back to me, I heard voices in conversation.

"Then far down the place, in the brighter light of some department which had already raised its blinds, I saw two men approaching. I scrambled to my feet, looking about me for some way of escape, and even as I did so the sound of my movement made them aware of me. I suppose they saw merely a figure moving quietly and quickly away. 'Who's that?' cried one, and 'Stop there,' shouted the other. I dashed round a corner and came full tilt--a faceless figure, mind you!--on a lanky lad of fifteen. He yelled and I bowled him over, rushed past him, turned another corner, and by a happy inspiration threw myself flat behind a counter. In another moment feet went running past and I heard voices shouting, 'All hands to the doors!' asking what was 'up,' and giving one another advice how to catch me.

"Lying on the ground, I felt scared out of my wits. But--odd as it may seem--it did not occur to me at the moment to take off my clothes as I should have done. I had made up my mind, I suppose, to get away in them, and that ruled me. And then down the vista of the counters came a bawling of 'Here he is!'

"I sprang to my feet, whipped a chair off the counter, and sent it whirling at the fool who had shouted, turned, came into another round a corner, sent him spinning, and rushed up the stairs. He kept his footing, gave a view hallo! and came up the staircase hot after me. Up the staircase were piled a multitude of those bright- coloured pot things--what are they?"

"Art pots," suggested Kemp.

"That's it! Art pots. Well, I turned at the top step and swung round, plucked one out of a pile and smashed it on his silly head as he came at me. The whole pile of pots went headlong, and I heard shouting and footsteps running from all parts. I made a mad rush for the refreshment place, and there was a man in white like a man cook, who took up the chase. I made one last desperate turn and found myself among lamps and ironmongery. I went behind the counter of this, and waited for my cook, and as he bolted in at the head of the chase, I doubled him up with a lamp. Down he went, and I crouched behind the counter and began whipping off my clothes as fast as I could. Coat, jacket, trousers, shoes were all right, but a lambswool vest fits a man like a skin. I heard more men coming, my cook was lying quiet on the other side of the counter, stunned or scared speechless, and I had to make another dash for it, like a rabbit hunted out of a wood-pile.

"This way, policeman!' I heard some one shouting. I found myself in my bedstead store-room again, and at the end a wilderness of wardrobes. I rushed among them, went flat, got rid of my vest after infinite wriggling, and stood a free man again, panting and scared,

as the policeman and three of the shopmen came round the corner. They made a rush for the vest and pants, and collared the trousers. 'He's dropping his plunder,' said one of the young men. 'He must be somewhere here.'

"But they did not find me all the same.

"I stood watching them hunt for me for a time, and cursing my ill-luck in losing the clothes. Then I went into the refreshment-room, drank a little milk I found there, and sat down by the fire to consider my position.

"In a little while two assistants came and began to talk over the business very excitedly and like the fools they were. I heard a magnified account of my depredations, and other speculations as to my whereabouts. Then I fell to scheming again. The insurmountable difficulty of the place, especially now it was alarmed, was to get any plunder out of it. I went down into the warehouse to see if there was any chance of packing and addressing a parcel, but I could not understand the system of checking. About eleven o'clock, the snow having thawed as it fell, and the day being finer and a little warmer than the previous one, I decided that the Emporium was hopeless, and went out again, exasperated at my want of success, with only the vaguest plans of action in my mind."

Chapter 23

In Drury Lane

"But you begin to realise now," said the Invisible Man, "the full disadvantage of my condition. I had no shelter, no covering. To get clothing was to forego all my advantage, to make of myself a strange and terrible thing. I was fasting; for to eat, to fill myself with unassimilated matter, would be to become grotesquely visible again."

"I never thought of that," said Kemp.

"Nor had I. And the snow had warned me of other dangers. I could not go abroad in snow--it would settle on me and expose me. Rain, too, would make me a watery outline, a glistening surface of a man--a bubble. And fog--I should be like a fainter bubble in a fog, a surface, a greasy glimmer of humanity. Moreover, as I went abroad--in the London air--I gathered dirt about my ankles, floating smuts and dust upon my skin. I did not know how long it would be before I should become visible from that cause also. But I saw clearly it could not be for long.

"Not in London at any rate.

"I went into the slums towards Great Portland Street, and found myself at the end of the street in which I had lodged. I did not go that way, because of the crowd halfway down it opposite to the still smoking ruins of the house I had fired. My most immediate problem was to get clothing. What to do with my face puzzled me. Then I saw in one of those little miscellaneous shops--news, sweets, toys, stationery, belated Christmas tomfoolery, and so forth--an array of masks and noses. I realised that problem was solved. In a flash I saw my course. I turned about, no longer aimless, and went--circuitously in order to avoid the busy ways, towards the back streets north of the Strand; for I remembered, though not very distinctly where, that some theatrical costumiers had shops in that district.

"The day was cold, with a nipping wind down the northward running

streets. I walked fast to avoid being overtaken. Every crossing was a danger, every passenger a thing to watch alertly. One man as I was about to pass him at the top of Bedford Street, turned upon me abruptly and came into me, sending me into the road and almost under the wheel of a passing hansom. The verdict of the cab-rank was that he had had some sort of stroke. I was so unnerved by this encounter that I went into Covent Garden Market and sat down for some time in a quiet corner by a stall of violets, panting and trembling. I found I had caught a fresh cold, and had to turn out after a time lest my sneezes should attract attention.

"At last I reached the object of my quest, a dirty fly-blown little shop in a byway near Drury Lane, with a window full of tinsel robes, sham jewels, wigs, slippers, dominoes and theatrical photographs. The shop was old-fashioned and low and dark, and the house rose above it for four storeys, dark and dismal. I peered through the window and, seeing no one within, entered. The opening of the door set a clanking bell ringing. I left it open, and walked round a bare costume stand, into a corner behind a cheval glass. For a minute or so no one came. Then I heard heavy feet striding across a room, and a man appeared down the shop.

"My plans were now perfectly definite. I proposed to make my way into the house, secrete myself upstairs, watch my opportunity, and when everything was quiet, rummage out a wig, mask, spectacles, and costume, and go into the world, perhaps a grotesque but still a credible figure. And incidentally of course I could rob the house of any available money.

"The man who had entered the shop was a short, slight, hunched, beetle-browed man, with long arms and very short bandy legs. Apparently I had interrupted a meal. He stared about the shop with an expression of expectation. This gave way to surprise, and then anger, as he saw the shop empty. 'Damn the boys!' he said. He went to stare up and down the street. He came in again in a minute,

kicked the door to with his foot spitefully, and went muttering back to the house door.

"I came forward to follow him, and at the noise of my movement he stopped dead. I did so too, startled by his quickness of ear. He slammed the house door in my face.

"I stood hesitating. Suddenly I heard his quick footsteps returning, and the door reopened. He stood looking about the shop like one who was still not satisfied. Then, murmuring to himself, he examined the back of the counter and peered behind some fixtures. Then he stood doubtful. He had left the house door open and I slipped into the inner room.

"It was a queer little room, poorly furnished and with a number of big masks in the corner. On the table was his belated breakfast, and it was a confoundedly exasperating thing for me, Kemp, to have to sniff his coffee and stand watching while he came in and resumed his meal. And his table manners were irritating. Three doors opened into the little room, one going upstairs and one down, but they were all shut. I could not get out of the room while he was there, I could scarcely move because of his alertness, and there was draught down my back. Twice I strangled a sneeze just in time.

"The spectacular quality of my sensations was curious and novel, but for all that I was heartily tired and angry long before he had done his eating. But at last he made an end and putting his beggarly crockery on the black tin tray upon which he had had his teapot, and gathering all the crumbs up on the mustard-stained cloth, he took the whole lot of things after him. His burden prevented his shutting the door behind him--as he would have done; I never saw such a man for shutting doors--and I followed him into a very dirty underground kitchen and scullery. I had the pleasure of seeing him begin to wash up, and then, finding no good in keeping down there, and the brick floor being cold to my feet, I returned upstairs and sat in his chair

by the fire. It was burning low, and scarcely thinking, I put on a little coal. The noise of this brought him up at once, and he stood aglare. He peered about the room and was within an ace of touching me. Even after that examination, he scarcely seemed satisfied. He stopped in the doorway and took a final inspection before he went down.

"I waited in the little parlour for an age, and at last he came up and opened the upstairs door. I just managed to get by him.

"On the staircase he stopped suddenly, so that I very nearly blundered into him. He stood looking back right into my face and listening. 'I could have sworn,' he said. His long hairy hand pulled at his lower lip. His eye went up and down the staircase. Then he grunted and went on up again.

"His hand was on the handle of a door, and then he stopped again with the same puzzled anger on his face. He was becoming aware of the faint sounds of my movements about him. The man must have had diabolically acute hearing. He suddenly flashed into rage. 'If there's any one in this house,' he cried with an oath, and left the threat unfinished. He put his hand in his pocket, failed to find what he wanted, and rushing past me went blundering noisily and pugnaciously downstairs. But I did not follow him. I sat on the head of the staircase until his return.

"Presently he came up again, still muttering. He opened the door of the room, and before I could enter, slammed it in my face.

"I resolved to explore the house, and spent some time in doing so as noiselessly as possible. The house was very old and tumbledown, damp so that the paper in the attics was peeling from the walls, and rat-infested. Some of the door handles were stiff and I was afraid to turn them. Several rooms I did inspect were unfurnished, and others were littered with theatrical lumber, bought second-hand, I

judged, from its appearance. In one room next to his I found a lot of old clothes. I began routing among these, and in my eagerness forgot again the evident sharpness of his ears. I heard a stealthy footstep and, looking up just in time, saw him peering in at the tumbled heap and holding an old-fashioned revolver in his hand. I stood perfectly still while he stared about open-mouthed and suspicious. 'It must have been her,' he said slowly. 'Damn her!'

"He shut the door quietly, and immediately I heard the key turn in the lock. Then his footsteps retreated. I realised abruptly that I was locked in. For a minute I did not know what to do. I walked from door to window and back, and stood perplexed. A gust of anger came upon me. But I decided to inspect the clothes before I did anything further, and my first attempt brought down a pile from an upper shelf. This brought him back, more sinister than ever. That time he actually touched me, jumped back with amazement and stood astonished in the middle of the room.

"Presently he calmed a little. 'Rats,' he said in an undertone, fingers on lip. He was evidently a little scared. I edged quietly out of the room, but a plank creaked. Then the infernal little brute started going all over the house, revolver in hand and locking door after door and pocketing the keys. When I realised what he was up to I had a fit of rage--I could hardly control myself sufficiently to watch my opportunity. By this time I knew he was alone in the house, and so I made no more ado, but knocked him on the head."

"Knocked him on the head!" exclaimed Kemp.

"Yes--stunned him--as he was going downstairs. Hit him from behind with a stool that stood on the landing. He went downstairs like a bag of old boots."

"But--! I say! The common conventions of humanity--"

"Are all very well for common people. But the point was, Kemp, that I had to get out of that house in a disguise without his seeing me. I couldn't think of any other way of doing it. And then I gagged him with a Louis Quatorze vest and tied him up in a sheet."

"Tied him up in a sheet!"

"Made a sort of bag of it. It was rather a good idea to keep the idiot scared and quiet, and a devilish hard thing to get out of--head away from the string. My dear Kemp, it's no good your sitting and glaring as though I was a murderer. It had to be done. He had his revolver. If once he saw me he would be able to describe me--"

"But still," said Kemp, "in England--to-day. And the man was in his own house, and you were--well, robbing."

"Robbing! Confound it! You'll call me a thief next! Surely, Kemp, you're not fool enough to dance on the old strings. Can't you see my position?"

"And his too," said Kemp.

The Invisible Man stood up sharply. "What do you mean to say?"

Kemp's face grew a trifle hard. He was about to speak and checked himself. "I suppose, after all," he said with a sudden change of manner, "the thing had to be done. You were in a fix. But still--"

"Of course I was in a fix--an infernal fix. And he made me wild too--hunting me about the house, fooling about with his revolver, locking and unlocking doors. He was simply exasperating. You don't blame me, do you? You don't blame me?"

"I never blame any one," said Kemp. "It's quite out of fashion. What did you do next?"

"I was hungry. Downstairs I found a loaf and some rank cheese --more than sufficient to satisfy my hunger. I took some brandy and water, and then went up past my impromptu bag--he was lying quite still--to the room containing the old clothes. This looked out upon the street, two lace curtains brown with dirt guarding the window. I went and peered out through their interstices. Outside the day was bright--by contrast with the brown shadows of the dismal house in which I found myself, dazzlingly bright. A brisk traffic was going by, fruit carts, a hansom, a four-wheeler with a pile of boxes, a fishmonger's cart. I turned with spots of colour swimming before my eyes to the shadowy fixtures behind me. My excitement was giving place to a clear apprehension of my position again. The room was full of a faint scent of benzoline, used, I suppose, in cleaning the garments.

"I began a systematic search of the place. I should judge the hunchback had been alone in the house for some time. He was a curious person. Everything that could possibly be of service to me I collected in the clothes storeroom, and then I made a deliberate selection. I found a handbag I thought a suitable possession, and some powder, rouge, and sticking-plaster.

"I had thought of painting and powdering my face and all that there was to show of me, in order to render myself visible, but the disadvantage of this lay in the fact that I should require turpentine and other appliances and a considerable amount of time before I could vanish again. Finally I chose a mask of the better type, slightly grotesque but not more so than many human beings, dark glasses, greyish whiskers, and a wig. I could find no underclothing, but that I could buy subsequently, and for the time I swathed myself in calico dominoes and some white cashmere scarfs. I could find no socks, but the hunchback's boots were rather a loose fit and sufficed. In a desk in the shop were three sovereigns and about thirty shillings' worth of silver, and in a locked cupboard I burst in the inner room

were eight pounds in gold. I could go forth into the world again, equipped.

"Then came a curious hesitation. Was my appearance really--credible? I tried myself with a little bedroom looking-glass, inspecting myself from every point of view to discover any forgotten chink, but it all seemed sound. I was grotesque to the theatrical pitch, a stage miser, but I was certainly not a physical impossibility. Gathering confidence, I took my looking-glass down into the shop, pulled down the shop blinds, and surveyed myself from every point of view with the help of the cheval glass in the corner.

"I spent some minutes screwing up my courage and then unlocked the shop door and marched out into the street, leaving the little man to get out of his sheet again when he liked. In five minutes a dozen turnings intervened between me and the costumier's shop. No one appeared to notice me very pointedly. My last difficulty seemed overcome."

He stopped again.

"And you troubled no more about the hunchback?" said Kemp.

"No," said the Invisible Man. "Nor have I heard what became of him. I suppose he untied himself or kicked himself out. The knots were pretty tight."

He became silent, and went to the window and stared out.

"What happened when you went out into the Strand?"

"Oh!--disillusionment again. I thought my troubles were over. Practically I thought I had impunity to do whatever I chose, everything--save to give away my secret. So I thought. Whatever I did, whatever the consequences might be, was nothing to me. I had

merely to fling aside my garments and vanish. No person could hold me. I could take my money where I found it. I decided to treat myself to a sumptuous feast, and then put up at a good hotel, and accumulate a new outfit of property. I felt amazingly confident--it's not particularly pleasant recalling that I was an ass. I went into a place and was already ordering a lunch, when it occurred to me that I could not eat unless I exposed my invisible face. I finished ordering the lunch, told the man I should be back in ten minutes, and went out exasperated. I don't know if you have ever been disappointed in your appetite."

"Not quite so badly," said Kemp, "but I can imagine it."

"I could have smashed the silly devils. At last, faint with the desire for tasteful food, I went into another place and demanded a private room. 'I am disfigured,' I said. 'Badly.' They looked at me curiously, but of course it was not their affair--and so at last I got my lunch. It was not particularly well served, but it sufficed; and when I had had it, I sat over a cigar, trying to plan my line of action. And outside a snowstorm was beginning.

"The more I thought it over, Kemp, the more I realised what a helpless absurdity an Invisible Man was--in a cold and dirty climate and a crowded civilised city. Before I made this mad experiment I had dreamt of a thousand advantages. That afternoon it seemed all disappointment. I went over the heads of the things a man reckons desirable. No doubt invisibility made it possible to get them, but it made it impossible to enjoy them when they are got. Ambition--what is the good of pride of place when you cannot appear there? What is the good of the love of woman when her name must needs be Delilah? I have no taste for politics, for the blackguardisms of fame, for philanthropy, for sport. What was I to do? And for this I had become a wrapped-up mystery, a swathed and bandaged caricature of a man!"

He paused, and his attitude suggested a roving glance at the window.

"But how did you get to Iping?" said Kemp, anxious to keep his guest busy talking.

"I went there to work. I had one hope. It was a half idea! I have it still. It is a full blown idea now. A way of getting back! Of restoring what I have done. When I choose. When I have done all I mean to do invisibly. And that is what I chiefly want to talk to you about now."

"You went straight to Iping?"

"Yes. I had simply to get my three volumes of memoranda and my cheque-book, my luggage and underclothing, order a quantity of chemicals to work out this idea of mine--I will show you the calculations as soon as I get my books--and then I started. Jove! I remember the snowstorm now, and the accursed bother it was to keep the snow from damping my pasteboard nose."

"At the end," said Kemp, "the day before yesterday, when they found you out, you rather--to judge by the papers--"

"I did. Rather. Did I kill that fool of a constable?"

"No," said Kemp. "He's expected to recover."

"That's his luck, then. I clean lost my temper, the fools! Why couldn't they leave me alone? And that grocer lout?"

"There are no deaths expected," said Kemp.

"I don't know about that tramp of mine," said the Invisible Man, with an unpleasant laugh.

"By Heaven, Kemp, you don't know what rage is! To have worked for years, to have planned and plotted, and then to get some fumbling purblind idiot messing across your course! Every conceivable sort of silly creature that has ever been created has been sent to cross me.

"If I have much more of it, I shall go wild--I shall start mowing 'em.

"As it is, they've made things a thousand times more difficult."

"No doubt it's exasperating," said Kemp, dryly.

Chapter 24

The Plan That Failed

"But now," said Kemp, with a side glance out of the window, "what are we to do?"

He moved nearer his guest as he spoke in such a manner as to prevent the possibility of a glimpse of the three men who were advancing up the hill road--with an intolerable slowness, as it seemed to Kemp.

"What were you planning to do when you were heading for Port Burdock? Had you any plan?"

"I was going to clear out of the country. But I have altered that plan rather since seeing you. I thought it would be wise, now the weather is hot and invisibility possible, to make for the South.

Especially as my secret was known, and every one would be on the lookout for a masked and muffled man. You have a line of steamers from here to France. My idea was to get aboard one and run the risks of the passage. Thence I could go by train into Spain, or else get to Algiers. It would not be difficult. There a man might always be invisible--and yet live. And do things. I was using that tramp as a money box and luggage carrier, until I decided how to get my books and things sent over to meet me."

"That's clear."

"And then the filthy brute must needs try and rob me! He has hidden my books, Kemp. Hidden my books! If I can lay my hands on him!"

"Best plan to get the books out of him first."

"But where is he? Do you know?"

"He's in the town police station, locked up, by his own request, in the strongest cell in the place."

"Cur!" said the Invisible Man.

"But that hangs up your plans a little."

"We must get those books; those books are vital."

"Certainly," said Kemp, a little nervously, wondering if he heard footsteps outside. "Certainly we must get those books. But that won't be difficult, if he doesn't know they're for you."

"No," said the Invisible Man, and thought.

Kemp tried to think of something to keep the talk going, but the Invisible Man resumed of his own accord.

"Blundering into your house, Kemp," he said, "changes all my plans. For you are a man that can understand. In spite of all that has happened, in spite of this publicity, of the loss of my books, of what I have suffered, there still remain great possibilities, huge possibilities--

"You have told no one I am here?" he asked abruptly.

Kemp hesitated. "That was implied," he said.

"No one?" insisted Griffin.

"Not a soul."

"Ah! Now--" The Invisible Man stood up, and sticking his arms akimbo began to pace the study.

"I made a mistake, Kemp, a huge mistake, in carrying this thing through alone. I have wasted strength, time, opportunities. Alone--it is wonderful how little a man can do alone! To rob a little, to hurt a little, and there is the end.

"What I want, Kemp, is a goal-keeper, a helper, and a hiding- place, an arrangement whereby I can sleep and eat and rest in peace, and unsuspected. I must have a confederate. With a confederate, with food and rest--a thousand things are possible.

"Hitherto I have gone on vague lines. We have to consider all that invisibility means, all that it does not mean. It means little advantage for eavesdropping and so forth--one makes sounds. It's of little help, a little help perhaps--in housebreaking and so forth. Once you've caught me you could easily imprison me. But on the other hand I am hard to catch. This invisibility, in fact, is only good in two cases: It's useful in getting away, it's useful in approaching.

It's particularly useful, therefore, in killing. I can walk round a man, whatever weapon he has, choose my point, strike as I like. Dodge as I like. Escape as I like."

Kemp's hand went to his moustache. Was that a movement downstairs?

"And it is killing we must do, Kemp."

"It is killing we must do," repeated Kemp. "I'm listening to your plan, Griffin, but I'm not agreeing, mind. Why killing?"

"Not wanton killing but a judicious slaying. The point is they know there is an Invisible Man--as well as we know there is an Invisible Man. And that Invisible Man, Kemp, must now establish a Reign of Terror. Yes--no doubt it's startling. But I mean it. A Reign of Terror. He must take some town like your Burdock and terrify and dominate it. He must issue his orders. He can do that in a thousand ways--scraps of paper thrust under doors would suffice. And all who disobey his orders he must kill, and kill all who would defend the disobedient."

"Humph!" said Kemp, no longer listening to Griffin but to the sound of his front door opening and closing.

"It seems to me, Griffin," he said, to cover his wandering attention, "that your confederate would be in a difficult position."

"No one would know he was a confederate," said the Invisible Man, eagerly. And then suddenly, "Hush! What's that downstairs?"

"Nothing," said Kemp, and suddenly began to speak loud and fast. "I don't agree to this, Griffin," he said. "Understand me, I don't agree to this. Why dream of playing a game against the race? How can you hope to gain happiness? Don't be a lone wolf. Publish your results; take the world--take the nation at least--into your

confidence. Think what you might do with a million helpers--"

The Invisible Man interrupted Kemp. "There are footsteps coming upstairs," he said in a low voice.

"Nonsense," said Kemp.

"Let me see," said the Invisible Man, and advanced, arm extended, to the door.

Kemp hesitated for a second and then moved to intercept him. The Invisible Man started and stood still. "Traitor!" cried the Voice, and suddenly the dressing-gown opened, and sitting down the Unseen began to disrobe. Kemp made three swift steps to the door, and forthwith the Invisible Man--his legs had vanished--sprang to his feet with a shout. Kemp flung the door open.

As it opened, there came a sound of hurrying feet downstairs and voices.

With a quick movement Kemp thrust the Invisible Man back, sprang aside, and slammed the door. The key was outside and ready. In another moment Griffin would have been alone in the belvedere study, a prisoner. Save for one little thing. The key had been slipped in hastily that morning. As Kemp slammed the door it fell noisily upon the carpet.

Kemp's face became white. He tried to grip the door handle with both hands. For a moment he stood lugging. Then the door gave six inches. But he got it closed again. The second time it was jerked a foot wide, and the dressing-gown came wedging itself into the opening. His throat was gripped by invisible fingers, and he left his hold on the handle to defend himself. He was forced back, tripped and pitched heavily into the corner of the landing. The empty dressing-gown was flung on the top of him.

Halfway up the staircase was Colonel Adye, the recipient of Kemp's letter, the chief of the Burdock police. He was staring aghast at the sudden appearance of Kemp, followed by the extraordinary sight of clothing tossing empty in the air. He saw Kemp felled, and struggling to his feet. He saw him rush forward, and go down again, felled like an ox.

Then suddenly he was struck violently. By nothing! A vast weight, it seemed, leapt upon him, and he was hurled headlong down the staircase, with a grip at his throat and a knee in his groin. An invisible foot trod on his back, a ghostly patter passed downstairs, he heard the two police officers in the hall shout and run, and the front door of the house slammed violently.

He rolled over and sat up staring. He saw, staggering down the staircase, Kemp, dusty and dishevelled, one side of his face white from a blow, his lip bleeding, holding a pink dressing-gown and some underclothing in his arms.

"My God!" cried Kemp, "the game's up! He's gone!"

Chapter 25

The Hunting of the Invisible Man

For a space Kemp was too inarticulate to make Adye understand the swift things that had just happened. The two men stood on the landing, Kemp speaking swiftly, the grotesque swathings of Griffin

still on his arm. But presently Adye began to grasp something of the situation.

"He's mad," said Kemp; "inhuman. He is pure selfishness. He thinks of nothing but his own advantage, his own safety. I have listened to such a story this morning of brutal self-seeking! He has wounded men. He will kill them unless we can prevent him. He will create a panic. Nothing can stop him. He is going out now--furious!"

"He must be caught," said Adye. "That is certain."

"But how?" cried Kemp, and suddenly became full of ideas. "You must begin at once. You must set every available man to work. You must prevent his leaving this district. Once he gets away he may go through the countryside as he wills, killing and maiming. He dreams of a reign of terror! A reign of terror, I tell you. You must set a watch on trains and roads and shipping. The garrison must help. You must wire for help. The only thing that may keep him here is the thought of recovering some books of notes he counts of value. I will tell you of that! There is a man in your police station--Marvel."

"I know," said Adye, "I know. Those books--yes."

"And you must prevent him from eating or sleeping; day and night the country must be astir for him. Food must be locked up and secured, all food, so that he will have to break his way to it. The houses everywhere must be barred against him. Heaven send us cold nights and rain! The whole countryside must begin hunting and keep hunting. I tell you, Adye, he is a danger, a disaster; unless he is pinned and secured, it is frightful to think of the things that may happen."

"What else can we do?" said Adye. "I must go down at once and begin organising. But why not come? Yes--you come too! Come, and we must hold a sort of council of war,--get Hopps to help--and the railway managers. By jove! it's urgent. Come along--tell me as we go. What

else is there we can do? Put that stuff down."

In another moment Adye was leading the way downstairs. They found the front door open and the policemen standing outside staring at empty air. "He's got away, sir," said one.

"We must go to the central station at once," said Adye. "One of you go on down and get a cab to come up and meet us--quickly. And now, Kemp, what else?"

"Dogs," said Kemp. "Get dogs. They don't see him, but they wind him. Get dogs."

"Good," said Adye. "It's not generally known, but the prison officials over at Halstead know a man with bloodhounds. Dogs. What else?"

"Bear in mind," said Kemp, "his food shows. After eating, his food shows until it is assimilated. So that he has to hide after eating. You must keep on beating--every thicket, every quiet corner. And put all weapons, all implements that might be weapons, away. He can't carry such things for long. And what he can snatch up and strike men with must be hidden away."

"Good again," said Adye. "We shall have him yet!"

"And on the roads," said Kemp, and hesitated.

"Yes?" said Adye.

"Powdered glass," said Kemp. "It's cruel, I know. But think of what he may do!"

Adye drew the air in between his teeth sharply. "It's unsportsmanlike. I don't know. But I'll have powdered glass got

ready. If he goes too far--"

"The man's become inhuman, I tell you," said Kemp. "I am as sure he will establish a reign of terror--so soon as he has got over the emotions of this escape--as I am sure I am talking to you. Our only chance is to be ahead. He has cut himself off from his kind. His blood be upon his own head."

Chapter 26

The Wicksteed Murder

The Invisible Man seems to have rushed out of Kemp's house in a state of blind fury. A little child playing near Kemp's gateway was violently caught up and thrown aside, so that its ankle was broken, and thereafter for some hours the Invisible Man passed out of human perceptions. No one knows where he went nor what he did. But one can imagine him hurrying through the hot June forenoon, up the hill and on to the open downland behind Port Burdock, raging and despairing at his intolerable fate, and sheltering at last, heated and weary, amid the thickets of Hintondean, to piece together again his shattered schemes against his species. That seems the most probable refuge for him, for there it was he re-asserted himself in a grimly tragical manner about two in the afternoon.

One wonders what his state of mind may have been during that time, and what plans he devised. No doubt he was almost ecstatically exasperated by Kemp's treachery, and though we may be able to understand the motives that led to that deceit, we may still imagine

and even sympathise a little with the fury the attempted surprise must have occasioned. Perhaps something of the stunned astonishment of his Oxford Street experiences may have returned to him, for evidently he had counted on Kemp's co-operation in his brutal dream of a terrorised world. At any rate he vanished from human ken about midday, and no living witness can tell what he did until about half-past two. It was a fortunate thing, perhaps, for humanity, but for him it was a fatal inaction.

During that time a growing multitude of men scattered over the countryside were busy. In the morning he had still been simply a legend, a terror; in the afternoon, by virtue chiefly of Kemp's drily worded proclamation, he was presented as a tangible antagonist, to be wounded, captured, or overcome, and the countryside began organising itself with inconceivable rapidity. By two o'clock even he might still have removed himself out of the district by getting aboard a train, but after two that became impossible. Every passenger train along the lines on a great parallelogram between Southampton, Manchester, Brighton, and Horsham, travelled with locked doors, and the goods traffic was almost entirely suspended. And in a great circle of twenty miles round Port Burdock, men armed with guns and bludgeons were presently setting out in groups of three and four, with dogs, to beat the roads and fields.

Mounted policemen rode along the country lanes, stopping at every cottage and warning the people to lock up their houses, and keep indoors unless they were armed, and all the elementary schools had broken up by three o'clock, and the children, scared and keeping together in groups, were hurrying home. Kemp's proclamation--signed indeed by Adye--was posted over almost the whole district by four or five o'clock in the afternoon. It gave briefly but clearly all the conditions of the struggle, the necessity of keeping the Invisible Man from food and sleep, the necessity for incessant watchfulness and for a prompt attention to any evidence of his movements. And so swift and decided was the action of the authorities, so prompt and

universal was the belief in this strange being, that before nightfall an area of several hundred square miles was in a stringent state of siege. And before nightfall, too, a thrill of horror went through the whole watching nervous countryside. Going from whispering mouth to mouth, swift and certain over the length and breadth of the county, passed the story of the murder of Mr. Wicksteed.

If our supposition that the Invisible Man's refuge was the Hintondean thickets, then we must suppose that in the early afternoon he sallied out again bent upon some project that involved the use of a weapon. We cannot know what the project was, but the evidence that he had the iron rod in hand before he met Wicksteed is to me at least overwhelming.

We can know nothing of the details of the encounter. It occurred on the edge of a gravel pit, not two hundred yards from Lord Burdock's Lodge gate. Everything points to a desperate struggle,--the trampled ground, the numerous wounds Mr. Wicksteed received, his splintered walking-stick; but why the attack was made--save in a murderous frenzy--it is impossible to imagine. Indeed the theory of madness is almost unavoidable. Mr. Wicksteed was a man of forty-five or forty-six, steward to Lord Burdock, of inoffensive habits and appearance, the very last person in the world to provoke such a terrible antagonist. Against him it would seem the Invisible Man used an iron rod dragged from a broken piece of fence. He stopped this quiet man, going quietly home to his midday meal, attacked him, beat down his feeble defences, broke his arm, felled him, and smashed his head to a jelly.

He must have dragged this rod out of the fencing before he met his victim; he must have been carrying it ready in his hand. Only two details beyond what has already been stated seem to bear on the matter. One is the circumstance that the gravel pit was not in Mr. Wicksteed's direct path home, but nearly a couple of hundred yards out of his way. The other is the assertion of a little girl to the

effect that, going to her afternoon school, she saw the murdered man "trotting" in a peculiar manner across a field towards the gravel pit. Her pantomime of his action suggests a man pursuing something on the ground before him and striking at it ever and again with his walking-stick. She was the last person to see him alive. He passed out of her sight to his death, the struggle being hidden from her only by a clump of beech trees and a slight depression in the ground.

Now this, to the present writer's mind at least, lifts the murder out of the realm of the absolutely wanton. We may imagine that Griffin had taken the rod as a weapon indeed, but without any deliberate intention of using it in murder. Wicksteed may then have come by and noticed this rod inexplicably moving through the air. Without any thought of the Invisible Man--for Port Burdock is ten miles away--he may have pursued it. It is quite conceivable that he may not even have heard of the Invisible Man. One can then imagine the Invisible Man making off--quietly in order to avoid discovering his presence in the neighbourhood, and Wicksteed, excited and curious, pursuing this unaccountably locomotive object--finally striking at it.

No doubt the Invisible Man could easily have distanced his middle-aged pursuer under ordinary circumstances, but the position in which Wicksteed's body was found suggests that he had the ill luck to drive his quarry into a corner between a drift of stinging nettles and the gravel pit. To those who appreciate the extraordinary irascibility of the Invisible Man, the rest of the encounter will be easy to imagine.

But this is pure hypothesis. The only undeniable facts--for stories of children are often unreliable--are the discovery of Wicksteed's body, done to death, and of the blood-stained iron rod flung among the nettles. The abandonment of the rod by Griffin, suggests that in the emotional excitement of the affair, the purpose for which he took it--if he had a purpose--was abandoned. He was certainly an intensely egotistical and unfeeling man, but the sight of his victim,

his first victim, bloody and pitiful at his feet, may have released some long pent fountain of remorse to flood for a time whatever scheme of action he had contrived.

After the murder of Mr. Wicksteed, he would seem to have struck across the country towards the downland. There is a story of a voice heard about sunset by a couple of men in a field near Fern Bottom. It was wailing and laughing, sobbing and groaning, and ever and again it shouted. It must have been queer hearing. It drove up across the middle of a clover field and died away towards the hills.

That afternoon the Invisible Man must have learnt something of the rapid use Kemp had made of his confidences. He must have found houses locked and secured; he may have loitered about railway stations and prowled about inns, and no doubt he read the proclamations and realised something of the nature of the campaign against him. And as the evening advanced, the fields became dotted here and there with groups of three or four men, and noisy with the yelping of dogs. These men-hunters had particular instructions as to the way they should support one another in the case of an encounter. He avoided them all. We may understand something of his exasperation, and it could have been none the less because he himself had supplied the information that was being used so remorselessly against him. For that day at least he lost heart; for nearly twenty-four hours, save when he turned on Wicksteed, he was a hunted man. In the night, he must have eaten and slept; for in the morning he was himself again, active, powerful, angry, and malignant, prepared for his last great struggle against the world.

The Siege of Kemp's House

Kemp read a strange missive, written in pencil on a greasy sheet of paper.

"You have been amazingly energetic and clever," this letter ran, "though what you stand to gain by it I cannot imagine. You are against me. For a whole day you have chased me; you have tried to rob me of a night's rest. But I have had food in spite of you, I have slept in spite of you, and the game is only beginning. The game is only beginning. There is nothing for it, but to start the Terror. This announces the first day of the Terror. Port Burdock is no longer under the Queen tell your Colonel of Police, and the rest of them; it is under me--the Terror! This is day one of year one of the new epoch --the Epoch of the Invisible Man. I am Invisible Man the First. To begin with the rule will be easy. The first day there will be one execution for the sake of example--a man named Kemp. Death starts for him to-day. He may lock himself away, hide himself away, get guards about him, put on armour if he likes; Death, the unseen Death, is coming. Let him take precautions; it will impress my people. Death starts from the pillar-box by midday. The letter will fall in as the postman comes along, then off! The game begins. Death starts. Help him not, my people, lest Death fall upon you also. To-day Kemp is to die."

Kemp read this letter twice. "It's no hoax," he said. "That's his voice! And he means it."

He turned the folded sheet over and saw on the addressed side of it the postmark Hintondean, and the prosaic detail, "2d. to pay."

He got up, leaving his lunch unfinished--the letter had come by the one o'clock post--and went into his study. He rang for his

housekeeper, and told her to go round the house at once, examine all the fastenings of the windows, and close all the shutters. He closed the shutters of his study himself. From a locked drawer in his bedroom he took a little revolver, examined it carefully, and put it into the pocket of his lounge jacket. He wrote a number of brief notes, one to Colonel Adye, gave them to his servant to take, with explicit instructions as to her way of leaving the house. "There is no danger," he said, and added a mental reservation, "to you." He remained meditative for a space after doing this, and then returned to his cooling lunch.

He ate with gaps of thought. Finally he struck the table sharply. "We will have him!" he said; "and I am the bait. He will come too far."

He went up to the belvedere, carefully shutting every door after him. "It's a game," he said, "an odd game--but the chances are all for me, Mr. Griffin, in spite of your invisibility. Griffin contra mundum--with a vengeance!"

He stood at the window staring at the hot hillside. "He must get food every day--and I don't envy him. Did he really sleep last night? Out in the open somewhere--secure from collisions. I wish we could get some good cold wet weather instead of the heat.

"He may be watching me now."

He went close to the window. Something rapped smartly against the brickwork over the frame, and made him start violently.

"I'm getting nervous," said Kemp. But it was five minutes before he went to the window again. "It must have been a sparrow," he said.

Presently he heard the front-door bell ringing, and hurried downstairs. He unbolted and unlocked the door, examined the chain,

put it up, and opened cautiously without showing himself. A familiar voice hailed him. It was Adye.

"Your servant's been assaulted, Kemp," he said round the door.

"What!" exclaimed Kemp.

"Had that note of yours taken away from her. He's close about here. Let me in."

Kemp released the chain, and Adye entered through as narrow an opening as possible. He stood in the hall, looking with infinite relief at Kemp refastening the door. "Note was snatched out of her hand. Scared her horribly. She's down at the station. Hysterics. He's close here. What was it about?"

Kemp swore.

"What a fool I was," said Kemp. "I might have known. It's not an hour's walk from Hintondean. Already!"

"What's up?" said Adye.

"Look here!" said Kemp, and led the way into his study. He handed Adye the Invisible Man's letter. Adye read it and whistled softly. "And you--?" said Adye.

"Proposed a trap--like a fool," said Kemp, "and sent my proposal out by a maid servant. To him."

Adye followed Kemp's profanity.

"He'll clear out," said Adye.

"Not he," said Kemp.

A resounding smash of glass came from upstairs. Adye had a silvery glimpse of a little revolver half out of Kemp's pocket. "It's a window, upstairs!" said Kemp, and led the way up. There came a second smash while they were still on the staircase. When they reached the study they found two of the three windows smashed, half the room littered with splintered glass, and one big flint lying on the writing table. The two men stopped in the doorway, contemplating the wreckage. Kemp swore again, and as he did so the third window went with a snap like a pistol, hung starred for a moment, and collapsed in jagged, shivering triangles into the room.

"What's this for?" said Adye.

"It's a beginning," said Kemp.

"There's no way of climbing up here?"

"Not for a cat," said Kemp.

"No shutters?"

"Not here. All the downstairs rooms--Hullo!"

Smash, and then whack of boards hit hard came from downstairs.

"Confound him! said Kemp. "That must be--yes--it's one of the bedrooms. He's going to do all the house. But he's a fool. The shutters are up, and the glass will fall outside. He'll cut his feet."

Another window proclaimed its destruction. The two men stood on the landing perplexed. "I have it! said Adye. "Let me have a stick or something, and I'll go down to the station and get the bloodhounds put on. That ought to settle him! They're hard by--not ten minutes--"

Another window went the way of its fellows.

"You haven't a revolver?" asked Adye.

Kemp's hand went to his pocket. Then he hesitated. "I haven't one--at least to spare."

"I'll bring it back," said Adye, "you'll be safe here."

Kemp handed him the weapon.

"Now for the door," said Adye.

As they stood hesitating in the hall, they heard one of the first-floor bedroom windows crack and clash. Kemp went to the door and began to slip the bolts as silently as possible. His face was a little paler than usual. "You must step straight out," said Kemp. In another moment Adye was on the doorstep and the bolts were dropping back into the staples. He hesitated for a moment, feeling more comfortable with his back against the door. Then he marched, upright and square, down the steps. He crossed the lawn and approached the gate. A little breeze seemed to ripple over the grass. Something moved near him. "Stop a bit," said a Voice, and Adye stopped dead and his hand tightened on the revolver.

"Well?" said Adye, white and grim, and every nerve tense.

"Oblige me by going back to the house," said the Voice, as tense and grim as Adye's.

"Sorry," said Adye a little hoarsely, and moistened his lips with his tongue. The Voice was on his left front, he thought. Suppose he were to take his luck with a shot?

"What are you going for?" said the Voice, and there was a quick movement of the two, and a flash of sunlight from the open lip of Adye's pocket.

Adye desisted and thought. "Where I go," he said slowly, "is my own business." The words were still on his lips, when an arm came round his neck, his back felt a knee, and he was sprawling backward. He drew clumsily and fired absurdly, and in another moment he was struck in the mouth and the revolver wrested from his grip. He made a vain clutch at a slippery limb, tried to struggle up and fell back.

"Damn!" said Adye. The Voice laughed. "I'd kill you now if it wasn't the waste of a bullet," it said. He saw the revolver in mid-air, six feet off, covering him.

"Well?" said Adye, sitting up.

"Get up," said the Voice.

Adye stood up.

"Attention" said the Voice, and then fiercely, "Don't try any games. Remember I can see your face if you can't see mine. You've got to go back to the house."

"He won't let me in," said Adye.

"That's a pity," said the Invisible Man. "I've got no quarrel with you."

Adye moistened his lips again. He glanced away from the barrel of the revolver and saw the sea far off very blue and dark under the midday sun, the smooth green down, the white cliff of the Head, and the multitudinous town, and suddenly he knew that life was very sweet. His eyes came back to this little metal thing hanging between heaven and earth, six yards away. "What am I to do?" he said

sullenly.

"What am I to do?" asked the Invisible Man. "You will get help. The only thing is for you to go back."

"I will try. If he lets me in will you promise not to rush the door?"

"I've got no quarrel with you," said the Voice.

Kemp had hurried upstairs after letting Adye out, and now crouching among the broken glass and peering cautiously over the edge of the study window-sill, he saw Adye stand parleying with the Unseen. "Why doesn't he fire?" whispered Kemp to himself. Then the revolver moved a little and the glint of the sunlight flashed in Kemp's eyes. He shaded his eyes and tried to see the source of the blinding beam.

"Surely!" he said. "Adye has given up the revolver."

"Promise not to rush the door," Adye was saying. "Don't push a winning game too far. Give a man a chance."

"You go back to the house. I tell you flatly I will not promise anything."

Adye's decision seemed suddenly made. He turned towards the house, walking slowly with his hands behind him. Kemp watched him--puzzled. The revolver vanished, flashed again into sight, vanished again, and became evident on a closer scrutiny as a little dark object following Adye. Then things happened very quickly. Adye leapt backwards, swung round, clutched at this little object, missed it, threw up his hands and fell forward on his face, leaving a little puff of blue in the air. Kemp did not hear the sound of the shot. Adye writhed, raised himself on one arm, fell forward, and lay still.

For a space Kemp remained staring at the quiet carelessness of Adye's attitude. The afternoon was very hot and still, nothing seemed stirring in all the world save a couple of yellow butterflies chasing each other through the shrubbery between the house and the road gate. Adye lay on the lawn near the gate. The blinds of all the villas down the hill-road were drawn, but in one little green summer-house was a white figure, apparently an old man asleep. Kemp scrutinised the surroundings of the house for a glimpse of the revolver, but it had vanished. His eyes came back to Adye. The game was opening well.

Then came a ringing and knocking at the front door, that grew at last tumultuous, but pursuant to Kemp's instructions the servants had locked themselves into their rooms. This was followed by a silence. Kemp sat listening and then began peering cautiously out of the three windows, one after another. He went to the staircase head and stood listening uneasily. He armed himself with his bedroom poker, and went to examine the interior fastenings of the ground-floor windows again. Everything was safe and quiet. He returned to the belvedere. Adye lay motionless over the edge of the gravel just as he had fallen. Coming along the road by the villas were the housemaid and two policemen.

Everything was deadly still. The three people seemed very slow in approaching. He wondered what his antagonist was doing.

He started. There was a smash from below. He hesitated and went downstairs again. Suddenly the house resounded with heavy blows and the splintering of wood. He heard a smash and the destructive clang of the iron fastenings of the shutters. He turned the key and opened the kitchen door. As he did so, the shutters, split and splintering, came flying inward. He stood aghast. The window frame, save for one cross bar, was still intact, but only little teeth of glass remained in the frame. The shutters had been driven in with an axe, and now the axe was descending in sweeping blows upon the window frame and

the iron bars defending it. Then suddenly it leapt aside and vanished. He saw the revolver lying on the path outside, and then the little weapon sprang into the air. He dodged back. The revolver cracked just too late, and a splinter from the edge of the closing door flashed over his head. He slammed and locked the door, and as he stood outside he heard Griffin shouting and laughing. Then the blows of the axe, with their splitting and smashing accompaniments, were resumed.

Kemp stood in the passage trying to think. In a moment the Invisible Man would be in the kitchen. This door would not keep him a moment, and then--

A ringing came at the front door again. It would be the policemen. He ran into the hall, put up the chain, and drew the bolts. He made the girl speak before he dropped the chain, and the three people blundered into the house in a heap, and Kemp slammed the door again.

"The Invisible Man!" said Kemp. "He has a revolver, with two shots--left. He's killed Adye. Shot him anyhow. Didn't you see him on the lawn? He's lying there."

"Who?" said one of the policemen.

"Adye," said Kemp.

"We came round the back way," said the girl.

"What's that smashing?" asked one of the policemen.

"He's in the kitchen--or will be. He has found an axe--"

Suddenly the house was full of the Invisible Man's resounding blows on the kitchen door. The girl stared towards the kitchen, shuddered, and retreated into the dining-room. Kemp tried to explain in broken

sentences. They heard the kitchen door give.

"This way," cried Kemp, starting into activity, and bundled the policemen into the dining-room doorway.

"Poker," said Kemp, and rushed to the fender. He handed a poker to each policeman. He suddenly flung himself backward.

"Whup!" said one policeman, ducked, and caught the axe on his poker. The pistol snapped its penultimate shot and ripped a valuable Sidney Cooper. The second policeman brought his poker down on the little weapon, as one might knock down a wasp, and sent it rattling to the floor.

At the first clash the girl screamed, stood screaming for a moment by the fireplace, and then ran to open the shutters--possibly with an idea of escaping by the shattered window.

The axe receded into the passage, and fell to a position about two feet from the ground. They could hear the Invisible Man breathing. "Stand away, you two," he said. "I want that man Kemp."

"We want you," said the first policeman, making a quick step forward and wiping with his poker at the Voice. The Invisible Man must have started back. He blundered into the umbrella stand. Then, as the policeman staggered with the swing of the blow he had aimed, the Invisible Man countered with the axe, the helmet crumpled like paper, and the blow sent the man spinning to the floor at the head of the kitchen stairs. But the second policeman, aiming behind the axe with his poker, hit something soft that snapped. There was a sharp exclamation of pain and the axe fell to the ground. The policeman wiped again at vacancy and hit nothing; he put his foot on the axe, and struck again. Then he stood, poker clubbed, listening intent for the slightest movement.

He heard the dining-room window open, and a quick rush of feet within. His companion rolled over and sat up with the blood running down between his eye and ear. "Where is he?" asked the man on the floor.

"Don't know. I've hit him. He's standing somewhere in the hall. Unless he's slipped past you. Doctor Kemp--sir."

Pause.

"Doctor Kemp," cried the policeman again.

The second policeman struggled to his feet. He stood up. Suddenly the faint pad of bare feet on the kitchen stairs could be heard.

"Yap!" cried the first policeman and incontinently flung his poker. It smashed a little gas bracket.

He made as if he would pursue the Invisible Man downstairs. Then he thought better of it and stepped into the dining-room.

"Doctor Kemp," he began, and stopped short--

"Doctor Kemp's in here," he said, as his companion looked over his shoulder.

The dining-room window was wide open, and neither housemaid nor Kemp was to be seen.

The second policeman's opinion of Kemp was terse and vivid.

Chapter 28

The Hunter Hunted

Mr. Heelas, Mr. Kemp's nearest neighbour among the villa holders, was asleep in his summer house when the siege of Kemp's house began. Mr. Heelas was one of the sturdy minority who refused to believe "in all this nonsense" about an Invisible Man. His wife, however, as he was to be reminded subsequently, did. He insisted upon walking about his garden just as if nothing was the matter, and he went to sleep in the afternoon in accordance with the custom of years. He slept through the smashing of the windows, and then woke up suddenly with a curious persuasion of something wrong. He looked across at Kemp's house, rubbed his eyes and looked again. Then he put his feet to the ground, and sat listening. He said he was damned, and still the strange thing was visible. The house looked as though it had been deserted for weeks--after a violent riot. Every window was broken, and every window, save those of the belvedere study, was blinded by the internal shutters.

"I could have sworn it was all right"--he looked at his watch
--"twenty minutes ago."

He became aware of a measured concussion and the clash of glass, far away in the distance. And then, as he sat open-mouthed, came a still more wonderful thing. The shutters of the drawing-room window were flung open violently, and the housemaid in her outdoor hat and garments, appeared struggling in a frantic manner to throw up the sash. Suddenly a man appeared beside her, helping her--Dr. Kemp! In another moment the window was open, and the housemaid was struggling out; she pitched forward and vanished among the shrubs. Mr. Heelas stood up, exclaiming vaguely and vehemently at all these wonderful things. He saw Kemp stand on the sill, spring from the window, and

reappear almost instantaneously running along a path in the shrubbery and stooping as he ran, like a man who evades observation. He vanished behind a laburnum, and appeared again clambering a fence that abutted on the open down. In a second he had tumbled over and was running at a tremendous pace down the slope towards Mr. Heelas.

"Lord!" cried Mr. Heelas, struck with an idea; "it's that Invisible Man brute! It's right, after all!"

With Mr. Heelas to think things like that was to act, and his cook watching him from the top window was amazed to see him come pelting towards the house at a good nine miles an hour. "Thought he wasn't afraid," said the cook. "Mary, just come here!" There was a slamming of doors, a ringing of bells, and the voice of Mr. Heelas bellowing like a bull. "Shut the doors, shut the windows, shut everything! the Invisible Man is coming!" Instantly the house was full of screams and directions, and scurrying feet. He ran to shut the French windows himself that opened on the veranda; as he did so Kemp's head and shoulders and knee appeared over the edge of the garden fence. In another moment Kemp had ploughed through the asparagus, and was running across the tennis lawn to the house.

"You can't come in," said Mr. Heelas, shutting the bolts. "I'm very sorry if he's after you, but you can't come in!"

Kemp appeared with a face of terror close to the glass, rapping and then shaking frantically at the French window. Then, seeing his efforts were useless, he ran along the veranda, vaulted the end, and went to hammer at the side door. Then he ran round by the side gate to the front of the house, and so into the hill-road. And Mr. Heelas staring from his window--a face of horror--had scarcely witnessed Kemp vanish, ere the asparagus was being trampled this way and that by feet unseen. At that Mr. Heelas fled precipitately upstairs, and the rest of the chase is beyond his purview. But as he passed the staircase window, he heard the side gate slam.

Emerging into the hill-road, Kemp naturally took the downward direction, and so it was he came to run in his own person the very race he had watched with such a critical eye from the belvedere study only four days ago. He ran it well for a man out of training; and though his face was white and wet, his wits were cool to the last. He ran with wide strides, and wherever a patch of rough ground intervened, wherever there came a patch of raw flints, or a bit of broken glass shone dazzling, he crossed it and left the bare invisible feet that followed to take what line they would.

For the first time in his life Kemp discovered that the hill-road was indescribably vast and desolate, and that the beginnings of the town far below at the hill foot were strangely remote. Never had there been a slower or more painful method of progression than running. All the gaunt villas, sleeping in the afternoon sun, looked locked and barred; no doubt they were locked and barred--by his own orders. But at any rate they might have kept a lookout for an eventuality like this! The town was rising up now, the sea had dropped out of sight behind it, and people down below were stirring. A tram was just arriving at the hill foot. Beyond that was the police station. Was that footsteps he heard behind him? Spurt.

The people below were staring at him, one or two were running, and his breath was beginning to saw in his throat. The tram was quite near now, and the Jolly Cricketers was noisily barring its doors. Beyond the tram were posts and heaps of gravel--the drainage works. He had a transitory idea of jumping into the tram and slamming the doors, and then he resolved to go to the police station. In another moment he had passed the door of the Jolly Cricketers, and was in the blistering fag end of the street, with human beings about him. The tram driver and his helper--arrested by the sight of his furious haste --stood staring with the tram horses unhitched. Further on the astonished features of navvies appeared above the mounds of gravel.

His pace broke a little, and then he heard the swift pad of his pursuer, and leapt forward again. "The Invisible Man!" he cried to the navvies, with a vague indicative gesture, and by an inspiration leapt the excavation and placed a burly group between him and the chase. Then abandoning the idea of the police station he turned into a little side street, rushed by a greengrocer's cart, hesitated for the tenth of a second at the door of a sweetstuff shop, and then made for the mouth of an alley that ran back into the main Hill Street again. Two or three little children were playing here, and shrieked and scattered running at his apparition, and forthwith doors and windows opened and excited mothers revealed their hearts. Out he shot into Hill Street again, three hundred yards from the tramline end, and immediately he became aware of a tumultuous vociferation and running people.

He glanced up the street towards the hill. Hardly a dozen yards off ran a huge navvy, cursing in fragments and slashing viciously with a spade, and hard behind him came the tram conductor with his fists clenched. Up the street others followed these two, striking and shouting. Down towards the town, men and women were running, and he noticed clearly one man coming out of a shop-door with a stick in his hand. "Spread out! Spread out!" cried some one. Kemp suddenly grasped the altered condition of the chase. He stopped and looked round, panting. "He's close here!" he cried. "Form a line across--"

"Aha!" shouted a voice.

He was hit hard under the ear, and went reeling, trying to face round towards his unseen antagonist. He just managed to keep his feet, and he struck a vain counter in the air. Then he was hit again under the jaw, and sprawled headlong on the ground. In another moment a knee compressed his diaphragm, and a couple of eager hands gripped his throat, but the grip of one was weaker than the other; he grasped the wrists, heard a cry of pain from his assailant, and then the spade of the navvy came whirling through the air above him, and struck

something with a dull thud. He felt a drop of moisture on his face. The grip at his throat suddenly relaxed, and with a convulsive effort Kemp loosed himself, grasped a limp shoulder, and rolled uppermost. He gripped the unseen elbows near the ground. "I've got him!" screamed Kemp. "Help! Help! hold! He's down! Hold his feet!"

In another second there was a simultaneous rush upon the struggle, and a stranger coming into the road suddenly might have thought an exceptionally savage game of Rugby football was in progress. And there was no shouting after Kemp's cry--only a sound of blows and feet and a heavy breathing.

Then came a mighty effort, and the Invisible Man threw off a couple of his antagonists and rose to his knees. Kemp clung to him in front like a hound to a stag, and a dozen hands gripped, clutched, and tore at the Unseen. The tram conductor suddenly got the neck and shoulders and lugged him back.

Down went the heap of struggling men again and rolled over. There was, I am afraid, some savage kicking. Then suddenly a wild scream of "Mercy! Mercy!" that died down swiftly to a sound like choking.

"Get back, you fools!" cried the muffled voice of Kemp, and there was a vigorous shoving back of stalwart forms. "He's hurt, I tell you. Stand back!"

There was a brief struggle to clear a space, and then the circle of eager eyes saw the doctor kneeling, as it seemed, fifteen inches in the air, and holding invisible arms to the ground. Behind him a constable gripped invisible ankles.

"Don't you leave go of en," cried the big navvy, holding a bloodstained spade; "he's shamming."

"He's not shamming," said the doctor, cautiously raising his knee;

"and I'll hold him." His face was bruised and already going red; he spoke thickly because of a bleeding lip. He released one hand and seemed to be feeling at the face. "The mouth's all wet," he said. And then, "Good God!"

He stood up abruptly and then knelt down on the ground by the side of the thing unseen. There was a pushing and shuffling, a sound of heavy feet as fresh people turned up to increase the pressure of the crowd. People now were coming out of the houses. The doors of the Jolly Cricketers were suddenly wide open. Very little was said.

Kempton felt about, his hand seeming to pass through empty air. "He's not breathing," he said, and then, "I can't feel his heart. His side--ugh!"

Suddenly an old woman, peering under the arm of the big navvy, screamed sharply. "Looky there!" she said, and thrust out a wrinkled finger.

And looking where she pointed, every one saw, faint and transparent as though it was made of glass, so that veins and arteries and bones and nerves could be distinguished, the outline of a hand, a hand limp and prone. It grew clouded and opaque even as they stared.

"Hullo!" cried the constable. "Here's his feet a-showing!"

And so, slowly, beginning at his hands and feet and creeping along his limbs to the vital centres of his body, that strange change continued. It was like the slow spreading of a poison. First came the little white nerves, a hazy grey sketch of a limb, then the glassy bones and intricate arteries, then the flesh and skin, first a faint foginess and then growing rapidly dense and opaque. Presently they could see his crushed chest and his shoulders, and the dim outline of his drawn and battered features.

When at last the crowd made way for Kemp to stand erect, there lay, naked and pitiful on the ground, the bruised and broken body of a young man about thirty. His hair and beard were white--not grey with age but white with the whiteness of albinism, and his eyes were like garnets. His hands were clenched, his eyes wide open, and his expression was one of anger and dismay.

"Cover his face!" said a man. "For Gawd's sake, cover that face!" and three little children, pushing forward through the crowd, were suddenly twisted round and sent packing off again.

Some one brought a sheet from the Jolly Cricketers; and having covered him, they carried him into that house.

The Epilogue

So ends the story of the strange and evil experiment of the Invisible Man. And if you would learn more of him you must go to a little inn near Port Stowe and talk to the landlord. The sign of the inn is an empty board save for a hat and boots, and the name is the title of this story. The landlord is a short and corpulent little man with a nose of cylindrical protrusion, wiry hair, and a sporadic rosiness of visage. Drink generously, and he will tell you generously of all the things that happened to him after that time, and of how the lawyers tried to do him out of the treasure found upon him.

"When they found they couldn't prove who's money was which, I'm blessed," he says, "if they didn't try to make me out a blooming treasure trove! Do I look like a Treasure Trove? And then a

gentleman gave me a guinea a night to tell the story at the Empire Music 'all--just tell 'em in my own words--barring one."

And if you want to cut off the flow of his reminiscences abruptly, you can always do so by asking if there weren't three manuscript books in the story. He admits there were and proceeds to explain, with asseverations that everybody thinks he has 'em! But bless you! he hasn't. "The Invisible Man it was took 'em off to hide 'em when I cut and ran for Port Stowe. It's that Mr. Kemp put people on with the idea of my having 'em."

And then he subsides into a pensive state, watches you furtively, bustles nervously with glasses, and presently leaves the bar.

He is a bachelor man--his tastes were ever bachelor, and there are no women folk in the house. Outwardly he buttons--it is expected of him--but in his more vital privacies, in the matter of braces for example, he still turns to string. He conducts his house without enterprise, but with eminent decorum. His movements are slow, and he is a great thinker. But he has a reputation for wisdom and for a respectable parsimony in the village, and his knowledge of the roads of the South of England would beat Cobbett.

And on Sunday mornings, every Sunday morning all the year round, while he is closed to the outer world, and every night after ten, he goes into his bar parlour bearing a glass of gin faintly tinged with water; and having placed this down, he locks the door and examines the blinds, and even looks under the table. And then, being satisfied of his solitude, he unlocks the cupboard and a box in the cupboard and a drawer in that box, and produces three volumes bound in brown leather, and places them solemnly in the middle of the table. The covers are weather-worn and tinged with an algal green--for once they sojourned in a ditch and some of the pages have been washed blank by dirty water. The landlord sits down in an armchair, fills a long clay pipe slowly, gloating over the books the

while. Then he pulls one towards him and opens it, and begins to study it--turning over the leaves backwards and forwards.

His brows are knit and his lips move painfully. "Hex, little two up in the air, cross and a fiddle-de-dee. Lord! what a one he was for intellect!"

Presently he relaxes and leans back, and blinks through his smoke across the room at things invisible to other eyes. "Full of secrets," he says. "Wonderful secrets!"

"Once I get the haul of them--Lord!

"I wouldn't do what he did; I'd just--well!" He pulls at his pipe.

So he lapses into a dream, the undying wonderful dream of his life. And though Kemp has fished unceasingly, and Adye has questioned closely, no human being save the landlord knows those books are there, with the subtle secret of invisibility and a dozen other strange secrets written therein. And none other will know of them until he dies.

****THE END****

The War of the Worlds

by
H. G. Wells
1898

But who shall dwell in these worlds if they be inhabited? . . . Are we or they Lords of the World? . . . And how are all things made for man?--

KEPLER (quoted in The Anatomy of Melancholy)

BOOK ONE

THE COMING OF THE
MARTIANS

CHAPTER ONE

THE EVE OF THE WAR

No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinised and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter. It is possible that the infusoria under the microscope do the same. No one gave a thought to the older worlds of space as sources of human danger, or thought of them only to dismiss the idea of life upon them as impossible or improbable. It is curious to recall some of the mental habits of those departed days. At most terrestrial men fancied there might be other men upon Mars, perhaps inferior to themselves and ready to welcome a missionary enterprise. Yet across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us. And early in the twentieth century came the great disillusionment.

The planet Mars, I scarcely need remind the reader, re-

volves about the sun at a mean distance of 140,000,000 miles, and the light and heat it receives from the sun is barely half of that received by this world. It must be, if the nebular hypothesis has any truth, older than our world; and long before this earth ceased to be molten, life upon its surface must have begun its course. The fact that it is scarcely one seventh of the volume of the earth must have accelerated its cooling to the temperature at which life could begin. It has air and water and all that is necessary for the support of animated existence.

Yet so vain is man, and so blinded by his vanity, that no writer, up to the very end of the nineteenth century, expressed any idea that intelligent life might have developed there far, or indeed at all, beyond its earthly level. Nor was it generally understood that since Mars is older than our earth, with scarcely a quarter of the superficial area and remoter from the sun, it necessarily follows that it is not only more distant from time's beginning but nearer its end.

The secular cooling that must someday overtake our planet has already gone far indeed with our neighbour. Its physical condition is still largely a mystery, but we know now that even in its equatorial region the midday temperature barely approaches that of our coldest winter. Its air is much more attenuated than ours, its oceans have shrunk until they cover but a third of its surface, and as its slow seasons change huge snowcaps gather and melt about either pole and periodically inundate its temperate zones. That last stage of exhaustion, which to us is still incredibly remote, has become a present-day problem for the inhabitants of Mars. The immediate pressure of necessity has brightened their intellects, enlarged their powers, and hardened their hearts. And looking across space with instruments, and intelligences such as we have scarcely dreamed of, they see, at its nearest distance only

35,000,000 of miles sunward of them, a morning star of hope, our own warmer planet, green with vegetation and grey with water, with a cloudy atmosphere eloquent of fertility, with glimpses through its drifting cloud wisps of broad stretches of populous country and narrow, navy-crowded seas.

And we men, the creatures who inhabit this earth, must be to them at least as alien and lowly as are the monkeys and lemurs to us. The intellectual side of man already admits that life is an incessant struggle for existence, and it would seem that this too is the belief of the minds upon Mars. Their world is far gone in its cooling and this world is still crowded with life, but crowded only with what they regard as inferior animals. To carry warfare sunward is, indeed, their only escape from the destruction that, generation after generation, creeps upon them.

And before we judge of them too harshly we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought, not only upon animals, such as the vanished bison and the dodo, but upon its inferior races. The Tasmanians, in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit?

The Martians seem to have calculated their descent with amazing subtlety--their mathematical learning is evidently far in excess of ours--and to have carried out their preparations with a well-nigh perfect unanimity. Had our instruments permitted it, we might have seen the gathering trouble far back in the nineteenth century. Men like Schiaparelli watched the red planet--it is odd, by-the-bye, that for countless centuries Mars has been the star of war--but failed to

interpret the fluctuating appearances of the markings they mapped so well. All that time the Martians must have been getting ready.

During the opposition of 1894 a great light was seen on the illuminated part of the disk, first at the Lick Observatory, then by Perrotin of Nice, and then by other observers. English readers heard of it first in the issue of NATURE dated August 2. I am inclined to think that this blaze may have been the casting of the huge gun, in the vast pit sunk into their planet, from which their shots were fired at us. Peculiar markings, as yet unexplained, were seen near the site of that outbreak during the next two oppositions.

The storm burst upon us six years ago now. As Mars approached opposition, Lavelle of Java set the wires of the astronomical exchange palpitating with the amazing intelligence of a huge outbreak of incandescent gas upon the planet. It had occurred towards midnight of the twelfth; and the spectroscope, to which he had at once resorted, indicated a mass of flaming gas, chiefly hydrogen, moving with an enormous velocity towards this earth. This jet of fire had become invisible about a quarter past twelve. He compared it to a colossal puff of flame suddenly and violently squirted out of the planet, "as flaming gases rushed out of a gun."

A singularly appropriate phrase it proved. Yet the next day there was nothing of this in the papers except a little note in the DAILY TELEGRAPH, and the world went in ignorance of one of the gravest dangers that ever threatened the human race. I might not have heard of the eruption at all had I not met Ogilvy, the well-known astronomer, at Ottershaw. He was immensely excited at the news, and in the excess of his feelings invited me up to take a turn with him that night in a scrutiny of the red planet.

In spite of all that has happened since, I still remember that vigil very distinctly: the black and silent observatory, the shadowed lantern throwing a feeble glow upon the floor in the corner, the steady ticking of the clockwork of the telescope, the little slit in the roof--an oblong profundity with the stardust streaked across it. Ogilvy moved about, invisible but audible. Looking through the telescope, one saw a circle of deep blue and the little round planet swimming in the field. It seemed such a little thing, so bright and small and still, faintly marked with transverse stripes, and slightly flattened from the perfect round. But so little it was, so silvery warm--a pin's-head of light! It was as if it quivered, but really this was the telescope vibrating with the activity of the clockwork that kept the planet in view.

As I watched, the planet seemed to grow larger and smaller and to advance and recede, but that was simply that my eye was tired. Forty millions of miles it was from us--more than forty millions of miles of void. Few people realise the immensity of vacancy in which the dust of the material universe swims.

Near it in the field, I remember, were three faint points of light, three telescopic stars infinitely remote, and all around it was the unfathomable darkness of empty space. You know how that blackness looks on a frosty starlight night. In a telescope it seems far profounder. And invisible to me because it was so remote and small, flying swiftly and steadily towards me across that incredible distance, drawing nearer every minute by so many thousands of miles, came the Thing they were sending us, the Thing that was to bring so much struggle and calamity and death to the earth. I never dreamed of it then as I watched; no one on earth dreamed of that unerring missile.

That night, too, there was another jetting out of gas from the distant planet. I saw it. A reddish flash at the edge, the slightest projection of the outline just as the chronometer struck midnight; and at that I told Ogilvy and he took my place. The night was warm and I was thirsty, and I went stretching my legs clumsily and feeling my way in the darkness, to the little table where the siphon stood, while Ogilvy exclaimed at the streamer of gas that came out towards us.

That night another invisible missile started on its way to the earth from Mars, just a second or so under twenty-four hours after the first one. I remember how I sat on the table there in the blackness, with patches of green and crimson swimming before my eyes. I wished I had a light to smoke by, little suspecting the meaning of the minute gleam I had seen and all that it would presently bring me. Ogilvy watched till one, and then gave it up; and we lit the lantern and walked over to his house. Down below in the darkness were Ottershaw and Chertsey and all their hundreds of people, sleeping in peace.

He was full of speculation that night about the condition of Mars, and scoffed at the vulgar idea of its having inhabitants who were signalling us. His idea was that meteorites might be falling in a heavy shower upon the planet, or that a huge volcanic explosion was in progress. He pointed out to me how unlikely it was that organic evolution had taken the same direction in the two adjacent planets.

"The chances against anything manlike on Mars are a million to one," he said.

Hundreds of observers saw the flame that night and the night after about midnight, and again the night after; and

so for ten nights, a flame each night. Why the shots ceased after the tenth no one on earth has attempted to explain. It may be the gases of the firing caused the Martians inconvenience. Dense clouds of smoke or dust, visible through a powerful telescope on earth as little grey, fluctuating patches, spread through the clearness of the planet's atmosphere and obscured its more familiar features.

Even the daily papers woke up to the disturbances at last, and popular notes appeared here, there, and everywhere concerning the volcanoes upon Mars. The seriocomic periodical PUNCH, I remember, made a happy use of it in the political cartoon. And, all unsuspected, those missiles the Martians had fired at us drew earthward, rushing now at a pace of many miles a second through the empty gulf of space, hour by hour and day by day, nearer and nearer. It seems to me now almost incredibly wonderful that, with that swift fate hanging over us, men could go about their petty concerns as they did. I remember how jubilant Markham was at securing a new photograph of the planet for the illustrated paper he edited in those days. People in these latter times scarcely realise the abundance and enterprise of our nineteenth-century papers. For my own part, I was much occupied in learning to ride the bicycle, and busy upon a series of papers discussing the probable developments of moral ideas as civilisation progressed.

One night (the first missile then could scarcely have been 10,000,000 miles away) I went for a walk with my wife. It was starlight and I explained the Signs of the Zodiac to her, and pointed out Mars, a bright dot of light creeping zenithward, towards which so many telescopes were pointed. It was a warm night. Coming home, a party of excursionists from Chertsey or Isleworth passed us singing and playing music. There were lights in the upper windows of the houses

as the people went to bed. From the railway station in the distance came the sound of shunting trains, ringing and rumbling, softened almost into melody by the distance. My wife pointed out to me the brightness of the red, green, and yellow signal lights hanging in a framework against the sky. It seemed so safe and tranquil.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FALLING STAR

Then came the night of the first falling star. It was seen early in the morning, rushing over Winchester eastward, a line of flame high in the atmosphere. Hundreds must have seen it, and taken it for an ordinary falling star. Albin described it as leaving a greenish streak behind it that glowed for some seconds. Denning, our greatest authority on meteorites, stated that the height of its first appearance was about ninety or one hundred miles. It seemed to him that it fell to earth about one hundred miles east of him.

I was at home at that hour and writing in my study; and although my French windows face towards Ottershaw and the blind was up (for I loved in those days to look up at the night sky), I saw nothing of it. Yet this strangest of all things that ever came to earth from outer space must have fallen while I was sitting there, visible to me had I only looked up as it passed. Some of those who saw its flight say it travelled with a hissing sound. I myself heard nothing of that. Many people in Berkshire, Surrey, and Middlesex must have seen the fall of it, and, at most, have thought that another meteorite had descended. No one seems to have troubled to look for the fallen mass that night.

But very early in the morning poor Ogilvy, who had seen the shooting star and who was persuaded that a meteorite lay somewhere on the common between Horsell, Ottershaw, and Woking, rose early with the idea of finding it. Find it he did, soon after dawn, and not far from the sand pits. An enormous hole had been made by the impact of the projectile, and the

sand and gravel had been flung violently in every direction over the heath, forming heaps visible a mile and a half away. The heather was on fire eastward, and a thin blue smoke rose against the dawn.

The Thing itself lay almost entirely buried in sand, amidst the scattered splinters of a fir tree it had shivered to fragments in its descent. The uncovered part had the appearance of a huge cylinder, caked over and its outline softened by a thick scaly dun-coloured incrustation. It had a diameter of about thirty yards. He approached the mass, surprised at the size and more so at the shape, since most meteorites are rounded more or less completely. It was, however, still so hot from its flight through the air as to forbid his near approach. A stirring noise within its cylinder he ascribed to the unequal cooling of its surface; for at that time it had not occurred to him that it might be hollow.

He remained standing at the edge of the pit that the Thing had made for itself, staring at its strange appearance, astonished chiefly at its unusual shape and colour, and dimly perceiving even then some evidence of design in its arrival. The early morning was wonderfully still, and the sun, just clearing the pine trees towards Weybridge, was already warm. He did not remember hearing any birds that morning, there was certainly no breeze stirring, and the only sounds were the faint movements from within the cindery cylinder. He was all alone on the common.

Then suddenly he noticed with a start that some of the grey clinker, the ashy incrustation that covered the meteorite, was falling off the circular edge of the end. It was dropping off in flakes and raining down upon the sand. A large piece suddenly came off and fell with a sharp noise that brought his heart into his mouth.

For a minute he scarcely realised what this meant, and, although the heat was excessive, he clambered down into the pit close to the bulk to see the Thing more clearly. He fancied even then that the cooling of the body might account for this, but what disturbed that idea was the fact that the ash was falling only from the end of the cylinder.

And then he perceived that, very slowly, the circular top of the cylinder was rotating on its body. It was such a gradual movement that he discovered it only through noticing that a black mark that had been near him five minutes ago was now at the other side of the circumference. Even then he scarcely understood what this indicated, until he heard a muffled grating sound and saw the black mark jerk forward an inch or so. Then the thing came upon him in a flash. The cylinder was artificial--hollow--with an end that screwed out! Something within the cylinder was unscrewing the top!

"Good heavens!" said Ogilvy. "There's a man in it--men in it! Half roasted to death! Trying to escape!"

At once, with a quick mental leap, he linked the Thing with the flash upon Mars.

The thought of the confined creature was so dreadful to him that he forgot the heat and went forward to the cylinder to help turn. But luckily the dull radiation arrested him before he could burn his hands on the still-glowing metal. At that he stood irresolute for a moment, then turned, scrambled out of the pit, and set off running wildly into Woking. The time then must have been somewhere about six o'clock. He met a waggoner and tried to make him understand, but the tale he told and his appearance were so wild--his hat had fallen off in the pit--that the man simply drove on. He was equally

unsuccessful with the potman who was just unlocking the doors of the public-house by Horsell Bridge. The fellow thought he was a lunatic at large and made an unsuccessful attempt to shut him into the taproom. That sobered him a little; and when he saw Henderson, the London journalist, in his garden, he called over the palings and made himself understood.

"Henderson," he called, "you saw that shooting star last night?"

"Well?" said Henderson.

"It's out on Horsell Common now."

"Good Lord!" said Henderson. "Fallen meteorite! That's good."

"But it's something more than a meteorite. It's a cylinder --an artificial cylinder, man! And there's something inside."

Henderson stood up with his spade in his hand.

"What's that?" he said. He was deaf in one ear.

Ogilvy told him all that he had seen. Henderson was a minute or so taking it in. Then he dropped his spade, snatched up his jacket, and came out into the road. The two men hurried back at once to the common, and found the cylinder still lying in the same position. But now the sounds inside had ceased, and a thin circle of bright metal showed between the top and the body of the cylinder. Air was either entering or escaping at the rim with a thin, sizzling sound.

They listened, rapped on the scaly burnt metal with a

stick, and, meeting with no response, they both concluded the man or men inside must be insensible or dead.

Of course the two were quite unable to do anything. They shouted consolation and promises, and went off back to the town again to get help. One can imagine them, covered with sand, excited and disordered, running up the little street in the bright sunlight just as the shop folks were taking down their shutters and people were opening their bedroom windows. Henderson went into the railway station at once, in order to telegraph the news to London. The newspaper articles had prepared men's minds for the reception of the idea.

By eight o'clock a number of boys and unemployed men had already started for the common to see the "dead men from Mars." That was the form the story took. I heard of it first from my newspaper boy about a quarter to nine when I went out to get my DAILY CHRONICLE. I was naturally startled, and lost no time in going out and across the Ottershaw bridge to the sand pits.

CHAPTER THREE

ON HORSELL COMMON

I found a little crowd of perhaps twenty people surrounding the huge hole in which the cylinder lay. I have already described the appearance of that colossal bulk, embedded in the ground. The turf and gravel about it seemed charred as if by a sudden explosion. No doubt its impact had caused a flash of fire. Henderson and Ogilvy were not there. I think they perceived that nothing was to be done for the present, and had gone away to breakfast at Henderson's house.

There were four or five boys sitting on the edge of the Pit, with their feet dangling, and amusing themselves--until I stopped them--by throwing stones at the giant mass. After I had spoken to them about it, they began playing at "touch" in and out of the group of bystanders.

Among these were a couple of cyclists, a jobbing gardener I employed sometimes, a girl carrying a baby, Gregg the butcher and his little boy, and two or three loafers and golf caddies who were accustomed to hang about the railway station. There was very little talking. Few of the common people in England had anything but the vaguest astronomical ideas in those days. Most of them were staring quietly at the big tablelike end of the cylinder, which was still as Ogilvy and Henderson had left it. I fancy the popular expectation of a heap of charred corpses was disappointed at this inanimate bulk. Some went away while I was there, and other people came. I clambered into the pit and fancied I

heard a faint movement under my feet. The top had certainly ceased to rotate.

It was only when I got thus close to it that the strangeness of this object was at all evident to me. At the first glance it was really no more exciting than an overturned carriage or a tree blown across the road. Not so much so, indeed. It looked like a rusty gas float. It required a certain amount of scientific education to perceive that the grey scale of the Thing was no common oxide, that the yellowish-white metal that gleamed in the crack between the lid and the cylinder had an unfamiliar hue. "Extra-terrestrial" had no meaning for most of the onlookers.

At that time it was quite clear in my own mind that the Thing had come from the planet Mars, but I judged it improbable that it contained any living creature. I thought the unscrewing might be automatic. In spite of Ogilvy, I still believed that there were men in Mars. My mind ran fancifully on the possibilities of its containing manuscript, on the difficulties in translation that might arise, whether we should find coins and models in it, and so forth. Yet it was a little too large for assurance on this idea. I felt an impatience to see it opened. About eleven, as nothing seemed happening, I walked back, full of such thought, to my home in Maybury. But I found it difficult to get to work upon my abstract investigations.

In the afternoon the appearance of the common had altered very much. The early editions of the evening papers had startled London with enormous headlines:

"A MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM MARS."

"REMARKABLE STORY FROM WOKING,"

and so forth. In addition, Ogilvy's wire to the Astronomical Exchange had roused every observatory in the three kingdoms.

There were half a dozen flies or more from the Woking station standing in the road by the sand pits, a basket-chaise from Chobham, and a rather lordly carriage. Besides that, there was quite a heap of bicycles. In addition, a large number of people must have walked, in spite of the heat of the day, from Woking and Chertsey, so that there was altogether quite a considerable crowd--one or two gaily dressed ladies among the others.

It was glaringly hot, not a cloud in the sky nor a breath of wind, and the only shadow was that of the few scattered pine trees. The burning heather had been extinguished, but the level ground towards Ottershaw was blackened as far as one could see, and still giving off vertical streamers of smoke. An enterprising sweet-stuff dealer in the Chobham Road had sent up his son with a barrow-load of green apples and ginger beer.

Going to the edge of the pit, I found it occupied by a group of about half a dozen men--Henderson, Ogilvy, and a tall, fair-haired man that I afterwards learned was Stent, the Astronomer Royal, with several workmen wielding spades and pickaxes. Stent was giving directions in a clear, high-pitched voice. He was standing on the cylinder, which was now evidently much cooler; his face was crimson and streaming with perspiration, and something seemed to have irritated him.

A large portion of the cylinder had been uncovered, though its lower end was still embedded. As soon as Ogilvy saw me among the staring crowd on the edge of the pit

he called to me to come down, and asked me if I would mind going over to see Lord Hilton, the lord of the manor.

The growing crowd, he said, was becoming a serious impediment to their excavations, especially the boys. They wanted a light railing put up, and help to keep the people back. He told me that a faint stirring was occasionally still audible within the case, but that the workmen had failed to unscrew the top, as it afforded no grip to them. The case appeared to be enormously thick, and it was possible that the faint sounds we heard represented a noisy tumult in the interior.

I was very glad to do as he asked, and so become one of the privileged spectators within the contemplated enclosure. I failed to find Lord Hilton at his house, but I was told he was expected from London by the six o'clock train from Waterloo; and as it was then about a quarter past five, I went home, had some tea, and walked up to the station to waylay him.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CYLINDER OPENS

When I returned to the common the sun was setting. Scattered groups were hurrying from the direction of Woking, and one or two persons were returning. The crowd about the pit had increased, and stood out black against the lemon yellow of the sky--a couple of hundred people, perhaps. There were raised voices, and some sort of struggle appeared to be going on about the pit. Strange imaginings passed through my mind. As I drew nearer I heard Stent's voice:

"Keep back! Keep back!"

A boy came running towards me.

"It's a-movin'," he said to me as he passed; "a-screwin' and a-screwin' out. I don't like it. I'm a-goin' 'ome, I am."

I went on to the crowd. There were really, I should think, two or three hundred people elbowing and jostling one another, the one or two ladies there being by no means the least active.

"He's fallen in the pit!" cried some one.

"Keep back!" said several.

The crowd swayed a little, and I elbowed my way through. Every one seemed greatly excited. I heard a peculiar humming sound from the pit.

"I say!" said Ogilvy; "help keep these idiots back. We don't know what's in the confounded thing, you know!"

I saw a young man, a shop assistant in Woking I believe he was, standing on the cylinder and trying to scramble out of the hole again. The crowd had pushed him in.

The end of the cylinder was being screwed out from within. Nearly two feet of shining screw projected. Somebody blundered against me, and I narrowly missed being pitched onto the top of the screw. I turned, and as I did so the screw must have come out, for the lid of the cylinder fell upon the gravel with a ringing concussion. I stuck my elbow into the person behind me, and turned my head towards the Thing again. For a moment that circular cavity seemed perfectly black. I had the sunset in my eyes.

I think everyone expected to see a man emerge--possibly something a little unlike us terrestrial men, but in all essentials a man. I know I did. But, looking, I presently saw something stirring within the shadow: greyish billowy movements, one above another, and then two luminous disks--like eyes. Then something resembling a little grey snake, about the thickness of a walking stick, coiled up out of the writhing middle, and wriggled in the air towards me--and then another.

A sudden chill came over me. There was a loud shriek from a woman behind. I half turned, keeping my eyes fixed upon the cylinder still, from which other tentacles were now projecting, and began pushing my way back from the edge of the pit. I saw astonishment giving place to horror on the faces of the people about me. I heard inarticulate exclamations on all sides. There was a general movement backwards.

I saw the shopman struggling still on the edge of the pit. I found myself alone, and saw the people on the other side of the pit running off, Stent among them. I looked again at the cylinder, and ungovernable terror gripped me. I stood petrified and staring.

A big greyish rounded bulk, the size, perhaps, of a bear, was rising slowly and painfully out of the cylinder. As it bulged up and caught the light, it glistened like wet leather.

Two large dark-coloured eyes were regarding me steadfastly. The mass that framed them, the head of the thing, was rounded, and had, one might say, a face. There was a mouth under the eyes, the lipless brim of which quivered and panted, and dropped saliva. The whole creature heaved and pulsated convulsively. A lank tentacular appendage gripped the edge of the cylinder, another swayed in the air.

Those who have never seen a living Martian can scarcely imagine the strange horror of its appearance. The peculiar V-shaped mouth with its pointed upper lip, the absence of brow ridges, the absence of a chin beneath the wedgelike lower lip, the incessant quivering of this mouth, the Gorgon groups of tentacles, the tumultuous breathing of the lungs in a strange atmosphere, the evident heaviness and painfulness of movement due to the greater gravitational energy of the earth--above all, the extraordinary intensity of the immense eyes--were at once vital, intense, inhuman, crippled and monstrous. There was something fungoid in the oily brown skin, something in the clumsy deliberation of the tedious movements unspeakably nasty. Even at this first encounter, this first glimpse, I was overcome with disgust and dread.

Suddenly the monster vanished. It had toppled over the brim of the cylinder and fallen into the pit, with a thud like the fall of a great mass of leather. I heard it give a peculiar thick cry, and forthwith another of these creatures appeared darkly in the deep shadow of the aperture.

I turned and, running madly, made for the first group of trees, perhaps a hundred yards away; but I ran slantingly and stumbling, for I could not avert my face from these things.

There, among some young pine trees and furze bushes, I stopped, panting, and waited further developments. The common round the sand pits was dotted with people, standing like myself in a half-fascinated terror, staring at these creatures, or rather at the heaped gravel at the edge of the pit in which they lay. And then, with a renewed horror, I saw a round, black object bobbing up and down on the edge of the pit. It was the head of the shopman who had fallen in, but showing as a little black object against the hot western sun. Now he got his shoulder and knee up, and again he seemed to slip back until only his head was visible. Suddenly he vanished, and I could have fancied a faint shriek had reached me. I had a momentary impulse to go back and help him that my fears overruled.

Everything was then quite invisible, hidden by the deep pit and the heap of sand that the fall of the cylinder had made. Anyone coming along the road from Chobham or Working would have been amazed at the sight--a dwindling multitude of perhaps a hundred people or more standing in a great irregular circle, in ditches, behind bushes, behind gates and hedges, saying little to one another and that in short, excited shouts, and staring, staring hard at a few heaps of sand. The barrow of ginger beer stood, a queer derelict, black

against the burning sky, and in the sand pits was a row of deserted vehicles with their horses feeding out of nosebags or pawing the ground.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE HEAT-RAY

After the glimpse I had had of the Martians emerging from the cylinder in which they had come to the earth from their planet, a kind of fascination paralysed my actions. I remained standing knee-deep in the heather, staring at the mound that hid them. I was a battleground of fear and curiosity.

I did not dare to go back towards the pit, but I felt a passionate longing to peer into it. I began walking, therefore, in a big curve, seeking some point of vantage and continually looking at the sand heaps that hid these new-comers to our earth. Once a leash of thin black whips, like the arms of an octopus, flashed across the sunset and was immediately withdrawn, and afterwards a thin rod rose up, joint by joint, bearing at its apex a circular disk that spun with a wobbling motion. What could be going on there?

Most of the spectators had gathered in one or two groups--one a little crowd towards Woking, the other a knot of people in the direction of Chobham. Evidently they shared my mental conflict. There were few near me. One man I approached--he was, I perceived, a neighbour of mine, though I did not know his name--and accosted. But it was scarcely a time for articulate conversation.

"What ugly brutes!" he said. "Good God! What ugly brutes!" He repeated this over and over again.

"Did you see a man in the pit?" I said; but he made no

answer to that. We became silent, and stood watching for a time side by side, deriving, I fancy, a certain comfort in one another's company. Then I shifted my position to a little knoll that gave me the advantage of a yard or more of elevation and when I looked for him presently he was walking towards Woking.

The sunset faded to twilight before anything further happened. The crowd far away on the left, towards Woking, seemed to grow, and I heard now a faint murmur from it. The little knot of people towards Chobham dispersed. There was scarcely an intimation of movement from the pit.

It was this, as much as anything, that gave people courage, and I suppose the new arrivals from Woking also helped to restore confidence. At any rate, as the dusk came on a slow, intermittent movement upon the sand pits began, a movement that seemed to gather force as the stillness of the evening about the cylinder remained unbroken. Vertical black figures in twos and threes would advance, stop, watch, and advance again, spreading out as they did so in a thin irregular crescent that promised to enclose the pit in its attenuated horns. I, too, on my side began to move towards the pit.

Then I saw some cabmen and others had walked boldly into the sand pits, and heard the clatter of hoofs and the gride of wheels. I saw a lad trundling off the barrow of apples. And then, within thirty yards of the pit, advancing from the direction of Horsell, I noted a little black knot of men, the foremost of whom was waving a white flag.

This was the Deputation. There had been a hasty consultation, and since the Martians were evidently, in spite of their repulsive forms, intelligent creatures, it had been resolved to

show them, by approaching them with signals, that we too were intelligent.

Flutter, flutter, went the flag, first to the right, then to the left. It was too far for me to recognise anyone there, but afterwards I learned that Ogilvy, Stent, and Henderson were with others in this attempt at communication. This little group had in its advance dragged inward, so to speak, the circumference of the now almost complete circle of people, and a number of dim black figures followed it at discreet distances.

Suddenly there was a flash of light, and a quantity of luminous greenish smoke came out of the pit in three distinct puffs, which drove up, one after the other, straight into the still air.

This smoke (or flame, perhaps, would be the better word for it) was so bright that the deep blue sky overhead and the hazy stretches of brown common towards Chertsey, set with black pine trees, seemed to darken abruptly as these puffs arose, and to remain the darker after their dispersal. At the same time a faint hissing sound became audible.

Beyond the pit stood the little wedge of people with the white flag at its apex, arrested by these phenomena, a little knot of small vertical black shapes upon the black ground. As the green smoke arose, their faces flashed out pallid green, and faded again as it vanished. Then slowly the hissing passed into a humming, into a long, loud, droning noise. Slowly a humped shape rose out of the pit, and the ghost of a beam of light seemed to flicker out from it.

Forthwith flashes of actual flame, a bright glare leaping from one to another, sprang from the scattered group of men.

It was as if some invisible jet impinged upon them and flashed into white flame. It was as if each man were suddenly and momentarily turned to fire.

Then, by the light of their own destruction, I saw them staggering and falling, and their supporters turning to run.

I stood staring, not as yet realising that this was death leaping from man to man in that little distant crowd. All I felt was that it was something very strange. An almost noiseless and blinding flash of light, and a man fell headlong and lay still; and as the unseen shaft of heat passed over them, pine trees burst into fire, and every dry furze bush became with one dull thud a mass of flames. And far away towards Knaphill I saw the flashes of trees and hedges and wooden buildings suddenly set alight.

It was sweeping round swiftly and steadily, this flaming death, this invisible, inevitable sword of heat. I perceived it coming towards me by the flashing bushes it touched, and was too astounded and stupefied to stir. I heard the crackle of fire in the sand pits and the sudden squeal of a horse that was as suddenly stilled. Then it was as if an invisible yet intensely heated finger were drawn through the heather between me and the Martians, and all along a curving line beyond the sand pits the dark ground smoked and crackled. Something fell with a crash far away to the left where the road from Woking station opens out on the common. Forthwith the hissing and humming ceased, and the black, dome-like object sank slowly out of sight into the pit.

All this had happened with such swiftness that I had stood motionless, dumbfounded and dazzled by the flashes of light. Had that death swept through a full circle, it must inevitably

have slain me in my surprise. But it passed and spared me, and left the night about me suddenly dark and unfamiliar.

The undulating common seemed now dark almost to blackness, except where its roadways lay grey and pale under the deep blue sky of the early night. It was dark, and suddenly void of men. Overhead the stars were mustering, and in the west the sky was still a pale, bright, almost greenish blue. The tops of the pine trees and the roofs of Horsell came out sharp and black against the western afterglow. The Martians and their appliances were altogether invisible, save for that thin mast upon which their restless mirror wobbled. Patches of bush and isolated trees here and there smoked and glowed still, and the houses towards Woking station were sending up spires of flame into the stillness of the evening air.

Nothing was changed save for that and a terrible astonishment. The little group of black specks with the flag of white had been swept out of existence, and the stillness of the evening, so it seemed to me, had scarcely been broken.

It came to me that I was upon this dark common, helpless, unprotected, and alone. Suddenly, like a thing falling upon me from without, came--fear.

With an effort I turned and began a stumbling run through the heather.

The fear I felt was no rational fear, but a panic terror not only of the Martians, but of the dusk and stillness all about me. Such an extraordinary effect in unmanning me it had that I ran weeping silently as a child might do. Once I had turned, I did not dare to look back.

I remember I felt an extraordinary persuasion that I was being played with, that presently, when I was upon the very verge of safety, this mysterious death--as swift as the passage of light--would leap after me from the pit about the cylinder and strike me down.

CHAPTER SIX

THE HEAT-RAY IN THE CHOBHAM ROAD

It is still a matter of wonder how the Martians are able to slay men so swiftly and so silently. Many think that in some way they are able to generate an intense heat in a chamber of practically absolute non-conductivity. This intense heat they project in a parallel beam against any object they choose, by means of a polished parabolic mirror of unknown composition, much as the parabolic mirror of a lighthouse projects a beam of light. But no one has absolutely proved these details. However it is done, it is certain that a beam of heat is the essence of the matter. Heat, and invisible, instead of visible, light. Whatever is combustible flashes into flame at its touch, lead runs like water, it softens iron, cracks and melts glass, and when it falls upon water, incontinently that explodes into steam.

That night nearly forty people lay under the starlight about the pit, charred and distorted beyond recognition, and all night long the common from Horsell to Maybury was deserted and brightly ablaze.

The news of the massacre probably reached Chobham, Woking, and Ottershaw about the same time. In Woking the shops had closed when the tragedy happened, and a number of people, shop people and so forth, attracted by the stories they had heard, were walking over the Horsell Bridge and along the road between the hedges that runs out at last upon the common. You may imagine the young people brushed up after the labours of the day, and making this novelty, as they

would make any novelty, the excuse for walking together and enjoying a trivial flirtation. You may figure to yourself the hum of voices along the road in the gloaming. . . .

As yet, of course, few people in Woking even knew that the cylinder had opened, though poor Henderson had sent a messenger on a bicycle to the post office with a special wire to an evening paper.

As these folks came out by twos and threes upon the open, they found little knots of people talking excitedly and peering at the spinning mirror over the sand pits, and the new-comers were, no doubt, soon infected by the excitement of the occasion.

By half past eight, when the Deputation was destroyed, there may have been a crowd of three hundred people or more at this place, besides those who had left the road to approach the Martians nearer. There were three policemen too, one of whom was mounted, doing their best, under instructions from Stent, to keep the people back and deter them from approaching the cylinder. There was some booing from those more thoughtless and excitable souls to whom a crowd is always an occasion for noise and horse-play.

Stent and Ogilvy, anticipating some possibilities of a collision, had telegraphed from Horsell to the barracks as soon as the Martians emerged, for the help of a company of soldiers to protect these strange creatures from violence. After that they returned to lead that ill-fated advance. The description of their death, as it was seen by the crowd, tallies very closely with my own impressions: the three puffs of green smoke, the deep humming note, and the flashes of flame.

But that crowd of people had a far narrower escape than mine. Only the fact that a hummock of heathery sand intercepted the lower part of the Heat-Ray saved them. Had the elevation of the parabolic mirror been a few yards higher, none could have lived to tell the tale. They saw the flashes and the men falling and an invisible hand, as it were, lit the bushes as it hurried towards them through the twilight. Then, with a whistling note that rose above the droning of the pit, the beam swung close over their heads, lighting the tops of the beech trees that line the road, and splitting the bricks, smashing the windows, firing the window frames, and bringing down in crumbling ruin a portion of the gable of the house nearest the corner.

In the sudden thud, hiss, and glare of the igniting trees, the panic-stricken crowd seems to have swayed hesitatingly for some moments. Sparks and burning twigs began to fall into the road, and single leaves like puffs of flame. Hats and dresses caught fire. Then came a crying from the common. There were shrieks and shouts, and suddenly a mounted policeman came galloping through the confusion with his hands clasped over his head, screaming.

"They're coming!" a woman shrieked, and incontinently everyone was turning and pushing at those behind, in order to clear their way to Woking again. They must have bolted as blindly as a flock of sheep. Where the road grows narrow and black between the high banks the crowd jammed, and a desperate struggle occurred. All that crowd did not escape; three persons at least, two women and a little boy, were crushed and trampled there, and left to die amid the terror and the darkness.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOW I REACHED HOME

For my own part, I remember nothing of my flight except the stress of blundering against trees and stumbling through the heather. All about me gathered the invisible terrors of the Martians; that pitiless sword of heat seemed whirling to and fro, flourishing overhead before it descended and smote me out of life. I came into the road between the crossroads and Horsell, and ran along this to the crossroads.

At last I could go no further; I was exhausted with the violence of my emotion and of my flight, and I staggered and fell by the wayside. That was near the bridge that crosses the canal by the gasworks. I fell and lay still.

I must have remained there some time.

I sat up, strangely perplexed. For a moment, perhaps, I could not clearly understand how I came there. My terror had fallen from me like a garment. My hat had gone, and my collar had burst away from its fastener. A few minutes before, there had only been three real things before me--the immensity of the night and space and nature, my own feebleness and anguish, and the near approach of death. Now it was as if something turned over, and the point of view altered abruptly. There was no sensible transition from one state of mind to the other. I was immediately the self of every day again--a decent, ordinary citizen. The silent common, the impulse of my flight, the starting flames, were as if they had been in a dream. I asked myself had these latter things indeed happened? I could not credit it.

I rose and walked unsteadily up the steep incline of the bridge. My mind was blank wonder. My muscles and nerves seemed drained of their strength. I dare say I staggered drunkenly. A head rose over the arch, and the figure of a workman carrying a basket appeared. Beside him ran a little boy. He passed me, wishing me good night. I was minded to speak to him, but did not. I answered his greeting with a meaningless mumble and went on over the bridge.

Over the Maybury arch a train, a billowing tumult of white, firelit smoke, and a long caterpillar of lighted windows, went flying south--clatter, clatter, clap, rap, and it had gone. A dim group of people talked in the gate of one of the houses in the pretty little row of gables that was called Oriental Terrace. It was all so real and so familiar. And that behind me! It was frantic, fantastic! Such things, I told myself, could not be.

Perhaps I am a man of exceptional moods. I do not know how far my experience is common. At times I suffer from the strangest sense of detachment from myself and the world about me; I seem to watch it all from the outside, from somewhere inconceivably remote, out of time, out of space, out of the stress and tragedy of it all. This feeling was very strong upon me that night. Here was another side to my dream.

But the trouble was the blank incongruity of this serenity and the swift death flying yonder, not two miles away. There was a noise of business from the gasworks, and the electric lamps were all alight. I stopped at the group of people.

"What news from the common?" said I.

There were two men and a woman at the gate.

"Eh?" said one of the men, turning.

"What news from the common?" I said.

"Ain't yer just BEEN there?" asked the men.

"People seem fair silly about the common," said the woman over the gate. "What's it all abart?"

"Haven't you heard of the men from Mars?" said I; "the creatures from Mars?"

"Quite enough," said the woman over the gate. "Thenks"; and all three of them laughed.

I felt foolish and angry. I tried and found I could not tell them what I had seen. They laughed again at my broken sentences.

"You'll hear more yet," I said, and went on to my home.

I startled my wife at the doorway, so haggard was I. I went into the dining room, sat down, drank some wine, and so soon as I could collect myself sufficiently I told her the things I had seen. The dinner, which was a cold one, had already been served, and remained neglected on the table while I told my story.

"There is one thing," I said, to allay the fears I had aroused; "they are the most sluggish things I ever saw crawl. They may keep the pit and kill people who come near them, but they cannot get out of it. . . . But the horror of them!"

"Don't, dear!" said my wife, knitting her brows and putting her hand on mine.

"Poor Ogilvy!" I said. "To think he may be lying dead there!"

My wife at least did not find my experience incredible. When I saw how deadly white her face was, I ceased abruptly.

"They may come here," she said again and again.

I pressed her to take wine, and tried to reassure her.

"They can scarcely move," I said.

I began to comfort her and myself by repeating all that Ogilvy had told me of the impossibility of the Martians establishing themselves on the earth. In particular I laid stress on the gravitational difficulty. On the surface of the earth the force of gravity is three times what it is on the surface of Mars. A Martian, therefore, would weigh three times more than on Mars, albeit his muscular strength would be the same. His own body would be a cope of lead to him. That, indeed, was the general opinion. Both THE TIMES and the DAILY TELEGRAPH, for instance, insisted on it the next morning, and both overlooked, just as I did, two obvious modifying influences.

The atmosphere of the earth, we now know, contains far more oxygen or far less argon (whichever way one likes to put it) than does Mars. The invigorating influences of this excess of oxygen upon the Martians indisputably did much to counterbalance the increased weight of their bodies. And, in the second place, we all overlooked the fact that such mechanical intelligence as the Martian possessed was quite

able to dispense with muscular exertion at a pinch.

But I did not consider these points at the time, and so my reasoning was dead against the chances of the invaders. With wine and food, the confidence of my own table, and the necessity of reassuring my wife, I grew by insensible degrees courageous and secure.

"They have done a foolish thing," said I, fingering my wineglass. "They are dangerous because, no doubt, they are mad with terror. Perhaps they expected to find no living things--certainly no intelligent living things.

"A shell in the pit" said I, "if the worst comes to the worst will kill them all."

The intense excitement of the events had no doubt left my perceptive powers in a state of erethism. I remember that dinner table with extraordinary vividness even now. My dear wife's sweet anxious face peering at me from under the pink lamp shade, the white cloth with its silver and glass table furniture--for in those days even philosophical writers had many little luxuries--the crimson-purple wine in my glass, are photographically distinct. At the end of it I sat, tempering nuts with a cigarette, regretting Ogilvy's rashness, and denouncing the shortsighted timidity of the Martians.

So some respectable dodo in the Mauritius might have lorded it in his nest, and discussed the arrival of that shipful of pitiless sailors in want of animal food. "We will peck them to death tomorrow, my dear."

I did not know it, but that was the last civilised dinner I was to eat for very many strange and terrible days.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FRIDAY NIGHT

The most extraordinary thing to my mind, of all the strange and wonderful things that happened upon that Friday, was the dovetailing of the commonplace habits of our social order with the first beginnings of the series of events that was to topple that social order headlong. If on Friday night you had taken a pair of compasses and drawn a circle with a radius of five miles round the Woking sand pits, I doubt if you would have had one human being outside it, unless it were some relation of Stent or of the three or four cyclists or London people lying dead on the common, whose emotions or habits were at all affected by the new-comers. Many people had heard of the cylinder, of course, and talked about it in their leisure, but it certainly did not make the sensation that an ultimatum to Germany would have done.

In London that night poor Henderson's telegram describing the gradual unscrewing of the shot was judged to be a canard, and his evening paper, after wiring for authentication from him and receiving no reply--the man was killed--decided not to print a special edition.

Even within the five-mile circle the great majority of people were inert. I have already described the behaviour of the men and women to whom I spoke. All over the district people were dining and supping; working men were gardening after the labours of the day, children were being put to bed, young

people were wandering through the lanes love-making, students sat over their books.

Maybe there was a murmur in the village streets, a novel and dominant topic in the public-houses, and here and there a messenger, or even an eye-witness of the later occurrences, caused a whirl of excitement, a shouting, and a running to and fro; but for the most part the daily routine of working, eating, drinking, sleeping, went on as it had done for countless years--as though no planet Mars existed in the sky. Even at Woking station and Horsell and Chobham that was the case.

In Woking junction, until a late hour, trains were stopping and going on, others were shunting on the sidings, passengers were alighting and waiting, and everything was proceeding in the most ordinary way. A boy from the town, trenching on Smith's monopoly, was selling papers with the afternoon's news. The ringing impact of trucks, the sharp whistle of the engines from the junction, mingled with their shouts of "Men from Mars!" Excited men came into the station about nine o'clock with incredible tidings, and caused no more disturbance than drunkards might have done. People rattling Londonwards peered into the darkness outside the carriage windows, and saw only a rare, flickering, vanishing spark dance up from the direction of Horsell, a red glow and a thin veil of smoke driving across the stars, and thought that nothing more serious than a heath fire was happening. It was only round the edge of the common that any disturbance was perceptible. There were half a dozen villas burning on the Woking border. There were lights in all the houses on the common side of the three villages, and the people there kept awake till dawn.

A curious crowd lingered restlessly, people coming and

going but the crowd remaining, both on the Chobham and Horsell bridges. One or two adventurous souls, it was afterwards found, went into the darkness and crawled quite near the Martians; but they never returned, for now and again a light-ray, like the beam of a warship's searchlight swept the common, and the Heat-Ray was ready to follow. Save for such, that big area of common was silent and desolate, and the charred bodies lay about on it all night under the stars, and all the next day. A noise of hammering from the pit was heard by many people.

So you have the state of things on Friday night. In the centre, sticking into the skin of our old planet Earth like a poisoned dart, was this cylinder. But the poison was scarcely working yet. Around it was a patch of silent common, smouldering in places, and with a few dark, dimly seen objects lying in contorted attitudes here and there. Here and there was a burning bush or tree. Beyond was a fringe of excitement, and farther than that fringe the inflammation had not crept as yet. In the rest of the world the stream of life still flowed as it had flowed for immemorial years. The fever of war that would presently clog vein and artery, deaden nerve and destroy brain, had still to develop.

All night long the Martians were hammering and stirring, sleepless, indefatigable, at work upon the machines they were making ready, and ever and again a puff of greenish-white smoke whirled up to the starlit sky.

About eleven a company of soldiers came through Horsell, and deployed along the edge of the common to form a cordon. Later a second company marched through Chobham to deploy on the north side of the common. Several officers from the Inkerman barracks had been on the common earlier in the day, and one, Major Eden, was reported to be missing.

The colonel of the regiment came to the Chobham bridge and was busy questioning the crowd at midnight. The military authorities were certainly alive to the seriousness of the business. About eleven, the next morning's papers were able to say, a squadron of hussars, two Maxims, and about four hundred men of the Cardigan regiment started from Aldershot.

A few seconds after midnight the crowd in the Chertsey road, Woking, saw a star fall from heaven into the pine woods to the northwest. It had a greenish colour, and caused a silent brightness like summer lightning. This was the second cylinder.

CHAPTER NINE

THE FIGHTING BEGINS

Saturday lives in my memory as a day of suspense. It was a day of lassitude too, hot and close, with, I am told, a rapidly fluctuating barometer. I had slept but little, though my wife had succeeded in sleeping, and I rose early. I went into my garden before breakfast and stood listening, but towards the common there was nothing stirring but a lark.

The milkman came as usual. I heard the rattle of his chariot and I went round to the side gate to ask the latest news. He told me that during the night the Martians had been surrounded by troops, and that guns were expected. Then--a familiar, reassuring note--I heard a train running towards Woking.

"They aren't to be killed," said the milkman, "if that can possibly be avoided."

I saw my neighbour gardening, chatted with him for a time, and then strolled in to breakfast. It was a most unexceptional morning. My neighbour was of opinion that the troops would be able to capture or to destroy the Martians during the day.

"It's a pity they make themselves so unapproachable," he said. "It would be curious to know how they live on another planet; we might learn a thing or two."

He came up to the fence and extended a handful of strawberries, for his gardening was as generous as it was enthusi-

astic. At the same time he told me of the burning of the pine woods about the Byfleet Golf Links.

"They say," said he, "that there's another of those blessed things fallen there--number two. But one's enough, surely. This lot'll cost the insurance people a pretty penny before everything's settled." He laughed with an air of the greatest good humour as he said this. The woods, he said, were still burning, and pointed out a haze of smoke to me. "They will be hot under foot for days, on account of the thick soil of pine needles and turf," he said, and then grew serious over "poor Ogilvy."

After breakfast, instead of working, I decided to walk down towards the common. Under the railway bridge I found a group of soldiers--sappers, I think, men in small round caps, dirty red jackets unbuttoned, and showing their blue shirts, dark trousers, and boots coming to the calf. They told me no one was allowed over the canal, and, looking along the road towards the bridge, I saw one of the Cardigan men standing sentinel there. I talked with these soldiers for a time; I told them of my sight of the Martians on the previous evening. None of them had seen the Martians, and they had but the vaguest ideas of them, so that they plied me with questions. They said that they did not know who had authorised the movements of the troops; their idea was that a dispute had arisen at the Horse Guards. The ordinary sapper is a great deal better educated than the common soldier, and they discussed the peculiar conditions of the possible fight with some acuteness. I described the Heat-Ray to them, and they began to argue among themselves.

"Crawl up under cover and rush 'em, say I," said one.

"Get aht!," said another. "What's cover against this 'ere

'eat? Sticks to cook yer! What we got to do is to go as near as the ground'll let us, and then drive a trench."

"Blow yer trenches! You always want trenches; you ought to ha" been born a rabbit Snippy."

"Ain't they got any necks, then?" said a third, abruptly-- a little, contemplative, dark man, smoking a pipe.

I repeated my description.

"Octopuses," said he, "that's what I calls 'em. Talk about fishers of men--fighters of fish it is this time!"

"It ain't no murder killing beasts like that," said the first speaker.

"Why not shell the darned things strite off and finish 'em?" said the little dark man. "You carn tell what they might do."

"Where's your shells?" said the first speaker. "There ain't no time. Do it in a rush, that's my tip, and do it at once."

So they discussed it. After a while I left them, and went on to the railway station to get as many morning papers as I could.

But I will not weary the reader with a description of that long morning and of the longer afternoon. I did not succeed in getting a glimpse of the common, for even Horsell and Chobham church towers were in the hands of the military authorities. The soldiers I addressed didn't know anything; the officers were mysterious as well as busy. I found people in the town quite secure again in the presence of the military, and I heard for the first time from Marshall, the tobacconist,

that his son was among the dead on the common. The soldiers had made the people on the outskirts of Horsell lock up and leave their houses.

I got back to lunch about two, very tired for, as I have said, the day was extremely hot and dull; and in order to refresh myself I took a cold bath in the afternoon. About half past four I went up to the railway station to get an evening paper, for the morning papers had contained only a very inaccurate description of the killing of Stent, Henderson, Ogilvy, and the others. But there was little I didn't know. The Martians did not show an inch of themselves. They seemed busy in their pit, and there was a sound of hammering and an almost continuous streamer of smoke. Apparently they were busy getting ready for a struggle. "Fresh attempts have been made to signal, but without success," was the stereotyped formula of the papers. A sapper told me it was done by a man in a ditch with a flag on a long pole. The Martians took as much notice of such advances as we should of the lowing of a cow.

I must confess the sight of all this armament, all this preparation, greatly excited me. My imagination became belligerent, and defeated the invaders in a dozen striking ways; something of my schoolboy dreams of battle and heroism came back. It hardly seemed a fair fight to me at that time. They seemed very helpless in that pit of theirs.

About three o'clock there began the thud of a gun at measured intervals from Chertsey or Addlestone. I learned that the smouldering pine wood into which the second cylinder had fallen was being shelled, in the hope of destroying that object before it opened. It was only about five, however, that a field gun reached Chobham for use against the first body of Martians.

About six in the evening, as I sat at tea with my wife in the summerhouse talking vigorously about the battle that was lowering upon us, I heard a muffled detonation from the common, and immediately after a gust of firing. Close on the heels of that came a violent rattling crash, quite close to us, that shook the ground; and, starting out upon the lawn, I saw the tops of the trees about the Oriental College burst into smoky red flame, and the tower of the little church beside it slide down into ruin. The pinnacle of the mosque had vanished, and the roof line of the college itself looked as if a hundred-ton gun had been at work upon it. One of our chimneys cracked as if a shot had hit it, flew, and a piece of it came clattering down the tiles and made a heap of broken red fragments upon the flower bed by my study window.

I and my wife stood amazed. Then I realised that the crest of Maybury Hill must be within range of the Martians' Heat-Ray now that the college was cleared out of the way.

At that I gripped my wife's arm, and without ceremony ran her out into the road. Then I fetched out the servant, telling her I would go upstairs myself for the box she was clamouring for.

"We can't possibly stay here," I said; and as I spoke the firing reopened for a moment upon the common.

"But where are we to go?" said my wife in terror.

I thought perplexed. Then I remembered her cousins at Leatherhead.

"Leatherhead!" I shouted above the sudden noise.

She looked away from me downhill. The people were coming out of their houses, astonished.

"How are we to get to Leatherhead?" she said.

Down the hill I saw a bevy of hussars ride under the railway bridge; three galloped through the open gates of the Oriental College; two others dismounted, and began running from house to house. The sun, shining through the smoke that drove up from the tops of the trees, seemed blood red, and threw an unfamiliar lurid light upon everything.

"Stop here," said I; "you are safe here"; and I started off at once for the Spotted Dog, for I knew the landlord had a horse and dog cart. I ran, for I perceived that in a moment everyone upon this side of the hill would be moving. I found him in his bar, quite unaware of what was going on behind his house. A man stood with his back to me, talking to him.

"I must have a pound," said the landlord, "and I've no one to drive it."

"I'll give you two," said I, over the stranger's shoulder.

"What for?"

"And I'll bring it back by midnight," I said.

"Lord!" said the landlord; "what's the hurry? I'm selling my bit of a pig. Two pounds, and you bring it back? What's going on now?"

I explained hastily that I had to leave my home, and so secured the dog cart. At the time it did not seem to me nearly

so urgent that the landlord should leave his. I took care to have the cart there and then, drove it off down the road, and, leaving it in charge of my wife and servant, rushed into my house and packed a few valuables, such plate as we had, and so forth. The beech trees below the house were burning while I did this, and the palings up the road glowed red. While I was occupied in this way, one of the dismounted hussars came running up. He was going from house to house, warning people to leave. He was going on as I came out of my front door, lugging my treasures, done up in a tablecloth. I shouted after him:

"What news?"

He turned, stared, bawled something about "crawling out in a thing like a dish cover," and ran on to the gate of the house at the crest. A sudden whirl of black smoke driving across the road hid him for a moment. I ran to my neighbour's door and rapped to satisfy myself of what I already knew, that his wife had gone to London with him and had locked up their house. I went in again, according to my promise, to get my servant's box, lugged it out, clapped it beside her on the tail of the dog cart, and then caught the reins and jumped up into the driver's seat beside my wife. In another moment we were clear of the smoke and noise, and spanking down the opposite slope of Maybury Hill towards Old Woking.

In front was a quiet sunny landscape, a wheat field ahead on either side of the road, and the Maybury Inn with its swinging sign. I saw the doctor's cart ahead of me. At the bottom of the hill I turned my head to look at the hillside I was leaving. Thick streamers of black smoke shot with threads of red fire were driving up into the still air, and throwing dark shadows upon the green treetops eastward. The smoke already extended far away to the east and west--to the By-

fleet pine woods eastward, and to Woking on the west. The road was dotted with people running towards us. And very faint now, but very distinct through the hot, quiet air, one heard the whirr of a machine-gun that was presently stilled, and an intermittent cracking of rifles. Apparently the Martians were setting fire to everything within range of their Heat-Ray.

I am not an expert driver, and I had immediately to turn my attention to the horse. When I looked back again the second hill had hidden the black smoke. I slashed the horse with the whip, and gave him a loose rein until Woking and Send lay between us and that quivering tumult. I overtook and passed the doctor between Woking and Send.

CHAPTER TEN

IN THE STORM

Leatherhead is about twelve miles from Maybury Hill. The scent of hay was in the air through the lush meadows beyond Pyrford, and the hedges on either side were sweet and gay with multitudes of dog-roses. The heavy firing that had broken out while we were driving down Maybury Hill ceased as abruptly as it began, leaving the evening very peaceful and still. We got to Leatherhead without misadventure about nine o'clock, and the horse had an hour's rest while I took supper with my cousins and commended my wife to their care.

My wife was curiously silent throughout the drive, and seemed oppressed with forebodings of evil. I talked to her reassuringly, pointing out that the Martians were tied to the Pit by sheer heaviness, and at the utmost could but crawl a little out of it; but she answered only in monosyllables. Had it not been for my promise to the innkeeper, she would, I think, have urged me to stay in Leatherhead that night. Would that I had! Her face, I remember, was very white as we parted.

For my own part, I had been feverishly excited all day. Something very like the war fever that occasionally runs through a civilised community had got into my blood, and in my heart I was not so very sorry that I had to return to Maybury that night. I was even afraid that that last fusillade I had heard might mean the extermination of our invaders from Mars. I can best express my state of mind by saying

that I wanted to be in at the death.

It was nearly eleven when I started to return. The night was unexpectedly dark; to me, walking out of the lighted passage of my cousins' house, it seemed indeed black, and it was as hot and close as the day. Overhead the clouds were driving fast, albeit not a breath stirred the shrubs about us. My cousins' man lit both lamps. Happily, I knew the road intimately. My wife stood in the light of the doorway, and watched me until I jumped up into the dog cart. Then abruptly she turned and went in, leaving my cousins side by side wishing me good hap.

I was a little depressed at first with the contagion of my wife's fears, but very soon my thoughts reverted to the Martians. At that time I was absolutely in the dark as to the course of the evening's fighting. I did not know even the circumstances that had precipitated the conflict. As I came through Ockham (for that was the way I returned, and not through Send and Old Woking) I saw along the western horizon a blood-red glow, which as I drew nearer, crept slowly up the sky. The driving clouds of the gathering thunderstorm mingled there with masses of black and red smoke.

Ripley Street was deserted, and except for a lighted window or so the village showed not a sign of life; but I narrowly escaped an accident at the corner of the road to Pyrford, where a knot of people stood with their backs to me. They said nothing to me as I passed. I do not know what they knew of the things happening beyond the hill, nor do I know if the silent houses I passed on my way were sleeping securely, or deserted and empty, or harassed and watching against the terror of the night.

From Ripley until I came through Pyrford I was in the

valley of the Wey, and the red glare was hidden from me. As I ascended the little hill beyond Pyrford Church the glare came into view again, and the trees about me shivered with the first intimation of the storm that was upon me. Then I heard midnight pealing out from Pyrford Church behind me, and then came the silhouette of Maybury Hill, with its tree-tops and roofs black and sharp against the red.

Even as I beheld this a lurid green glare lit the road about me and showed the distant woods towards Addlestone. I felt a tug at the reins. I saw that the driving clouds had been pierced as it were by a thread of green fire, suddenly lighting their confusion and falling into the field to my left. It was the third falling star!

Close on its apparition, and blindingly violet by contrast, danced out the first lightning of the gathering storm, and the thunder burst like a rocket overhead. The horse took the bit between his teeth and bolted.

A moderate incline runs towards the foot of Maybury Hill, and down this we clattered. Once the lightning had begun, it went on in as rapid a succession of flashes as I have ever seen. The thunderclaps, treading one on the heels of another and with a strange crackling accompaniment, sounded more like the working of a gigantic electric machine than the usual detonating reverberations. The flickering light was blinding and confusing, and a thin hail smote gustily at my face as I drove down the slope.

At first I regarded little but the road before me, and then abruptly my attention was arrested by something that was moving rapidly down the opposite slope of Maybury Hill. At first I took it for the wet roof of a house, but one flash following another showed it to be in swift rolling movement.

It was an elusive vision--a moment of bewildering darkness, and then, in a flash like daylight, the red masses of the Orphanage near the crest of the hill, the green tops of the pine trees, and this problematical object came out clear and sharp and bright.

And this Thing I saw! How can I describe it? A monstrous tripod, higher than many houses, striding over the young pine trees, and smashing them aside in its career; a walking engine of glittering metal, striding now across the heather; articulate ropes of steel dangling from it, and the clattering tumult of its passage mingling with the riot of the thunder. A flash, and it came out vividly, heeling over one way with two feet in the air, to vanish and reappear almost instantly as it seemed, with the next flash, a hundred yards nearer. Can you imagine a milking stool tilted and bowled violently along the ground? That was the impression those instant flashes gave. But instead of a milking stool imagine it a great body of machinery on a tripod stand.

Then suddenly the trees in the pine wood ahead of me were parted, as brittle reeds are parted by a man thrusting through them; they were snapped off and driven headlong, and a second huge tripod appeared, rushing, as it seemed, headlong towards me. And I was galloping hard to meet it! At the sight of the second monster my nerve went altogether. Not stopping to look again, I wrenched the horse's head hard round to the right and in another moment the dog cart had heeled over upon the horse; the shafts smashed noisily, and I was flung sideways and fell heavily into a shallow pool of water.

I crawled out almost immediately, and crouched, my feet still in the water, under a clump of furze. The horse lay motionless (his neck was broken, poor brute!) and by the

lightning flashes I saw the black bulk of the overturned dog cart and the silhouette of the wheel still spinning slowly. In another moment the colossal mechanism went striding by me, and passed uphill towards Pyrford.

Seen nearer, the Thing was incredibly strange, for it was no mere insensate machine driving on its way. Machine it was, with a ringing metallic pace, and long, flexible, glittering tentacles (one of which gripped a young pine tree) swinging and rattling about its strange body. It picked its road as it went striding along, and the brazen hood that surmounted it moved to and fro with the inevitable suggestion of a head looking about. Behind the main body was a huge mass of white metal like a gigantic fisherman's basket, and puffs of green smoke squirted out from the joints of the limbs as the monster swept by me. And in an instant it was gone.

So much I saw then, all vaguely for the flickering of the lightning, in blinding highlights and dense black shadows.

As it passed it set up an exultant deafening howl that drowned the thunder--"Aloo! Aloo!"--and in another minute it was with its companion, half a mile away, stooping over something in the field. I have no doubt this Thing in the field was the third of the ten cylinders they had fired at us from Mars.

For some minutes I lay there in the rain and darkness watching, by the intermittent light, these monstrous beings of metal moving about in the distance over the hedge tops. A thin hail was now beginning, and as it came and went their figures grew misty and then flashed into clearness again. Now and then came a gap in the lightning, and the night swallowed them up.

I was soaked with hail above and puddle water below. It was some time before my blank astonishment would let me struggle up the bank to a drier position, or think at all of my imminent peril.

Not far from me was a little one-roomed squatter's hut of wood, surrounded by a patch of potato garden. I struggled to my feet at last, and, crouching and making use of every chance of cover, I made a run for this. I hammered at the door, but I could not make the people hear (if there were any people inside), and after a time I desisted, and, availing myself of a ditch for the greater part of the way, succeeded in crawling, unobserved by these monstrous machines, into the pine woods towards Maybury.

Under cover of this I pushed on, wet and shivering now, towards my own house. I walked among the trees trying to find the footpath. It was very dark indeed in the wood, for the lightning was now becoming infrequent, and the hail, which was pouring down in a torrent, fell in columns through the gaps in the heavy foliage.

If I had fully realised the meaning of all the things I had seen I should have immediately worked my way round through Byfleet to Street Cobham, and so gone back to rejoin my wife at Leatherhead. But that night the strangeness of things about me, and my physical wretchedness, prevented me, for I was bruised, weary, wet to the skin, deafened and blinded by the storm.

I had a vague idea of going on to my own house, and that was as much motive as I had. I staggered through the trees, fell into a ditch and bruised my knees against a plank, and finally splashed out into the lane that ran down from the College Arms. I say splashed, for the storm water was

sweeping the sand down the hill in a muddy torrent. There in the darkness a man blundered into me and sent me reeling back.

He gave a cry of terror, sprang sideways, and rushed on before I could gather my wits sufficiently to speak to him. So heavy was the stress of the storm just at this place that I had the hardest task to win my way up the hill. I went close up to the fence on the left and worked my way along its palings.

Near the top I stumbled upon something soft, and, by a flash of lightning, saw between my feet a heap of black broad-cloth and a pair of boots. Before I could distinguish clearly how the man lay, the flicker of light had passed. I stood over him waiting for the next flash. When it came, I saw that he was a sturdy man, cheaply but not shabbily dressed; his head was bent under his body, and he lay crumpled up close to the fence, as though he had been flung violently against it.

Overcoming the repugnance natural to one who had never before touched a dead body, I stooped and turned him over to feel for his heart. He was quite dead. Apparently his neck had been broken. The lightning flashed for a third time, and his face leaped upon me. I sprang to my feet. It was the landlord of the Spotted Dog, whose conveyance I had taken.

I stepped over him gingerly and pushed on up the hill. I made my way by the police station and the College Arms towards my own house. Nothing was burning on the hillside, though from the common there still came a red glare and a rolling tumult of ruddy smoke beating up against the drenching hail. So far as I could see by the flashes, the houses about me were mostly uninjured. By the College Arms a dark heap lay in the road.

Down the road towards Maybury Bridge there were voices and the sound of feet, but I had not the courage to shout or to go to them. I let myself in with my latchkey, closed, locked and bolted the door, staggered to the foot of the staircase, and sat down. My imagination was full of those striding metallic monsters, and of the dead body smashed against the fence.

I crouched at the foot of the staircase with my back to the wall, shivering violently.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

AT THE WINDOW

I have already said that my storms of emotion have a trick of exhausting themselves. After a time I discovered that I was cold and wet, and with little pools of water about me on the stair carpet. I got up almost mechanically, went into the dining room and drank some whiskey, and then I was moved to change my clothes.

After I had done that I went upstairs to my study, but why I did so I do not know. The window of my study looks over the trees and the railway towards Horsell Common. In the hurry of our departure this window had been left open. The passage was dark, and, by contrast with the picture the window frame enclosed, the side of the room seemed impenetrably dark. I stopped short in the doorway.

The thunderstorm had passed. The towers of the Oriental College and the pine trees about it had gone, and very far away, lit by a vivid red glare, the common about the sand pits was visible. Across the light huge black shapes, grotesque and strange, moved busily to and fro.

It seemed indeed as if the whole country in that direction was on fire--a broad hillside set with minute tongues of flame, swaying and writhing with the gusts of the dying storm, and throwing a red reflection upon the cloud scud above. Every now and then a haze of smoke from some nearer conflagration drove across the window and hid the Martian shapes. I could not see what they were doing, nor the clear form of

them, nor recognise the black objects they were busied upon. Neither could I see the nearer fire, though the reflections of it danced on the wall and ceiling of the study. A sharp, resinous tang of burning was in the air.

I closed the door noiselessly and crept towards the window. As I did so, the view opened out until, on the one hand, it reached to the houses about Woking station, and on the other to the charred and blackened pine woods of Byfleet. There was a light down below the hill, on the railway, near the arch, and several of the houses along the Maybury road and the streets near the station were glowing ruins. The light upon the railway puzzled me at first; there were a black heap and a vivid glare, and to the right of that a row of yellow oblongs. Then I perceived this was a wrecked train, the fore part smashed and on fire, the hinder carriages still upon the rails.

Between these three main centres of light--the houses, the train, and the burning country towards Chobham--stretched irregular patches of dark country, broken here and there by intervals of dimly glowing and smoking ground. It was the strangest spectacle, that black expanse set with fire. It reminded me, more than anything else, of the Potteries at night. At first I could distinguish no people at all, though I peered intently for them. Later I saw against the light of Woking station a number of black figures hurrying one after the other across the line.

And this was the little world in which I had been living securely for years, this fiery chaos! What had happened in the last seven hours I still did not know; nor did I know, though I was beginning to guess, the relation between these mechanical colossi and the sluggish lumps I had seen disgorged from the cylinder. With a queer feeling of impersonal

interest I turned my desk chair to the window, sat down, and stared at the blackened country, and particularly at the three gigantic black things that were going to and fro in the glare about the sand pits.

They seemed amazingly busy. I began to ask myself what they could be. Were they intelligent mechanisms? Such a thing I felt was impossible. Or did a Martian sit within each, ruling, directing, using, much as a man's brain sits and rules in his body? I began to compare the things to human machines, to ask myself for the first time in my life how an ironclad or a steam engine would seem to an intelligent lower animal.

The storm had left the sky clear, and over the smoke of the burning land the little fading pinpoint of Mars was dropping into the west, when a soldier came into my garden. I heard a slight scraping at the fence, and rousing myself from the lethargy that had fallen upon me, I looked down and saw him dimly, clambering over the palings. At the sight of another human being my torpor passed, and I leaned out of the window eagerly.

"Hist!" said I, in a whisper.

He stopped astride of the fence in doubt. Then he came over and across the lawn to the corner of the house. He bent down and stepped softly.

"Who's there?" he said, also whispering, standing under the window and peering up.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"God knows."

"Are you trying to hide?"

"That's it."

"Come into the house," I said.

I went down, unfastened the door, and let him in, and locked the door again. I could not see his face. He was hatless, and his coat was unbuttoned.

"My God!" he said, as I drew him in.

"What has happened?" I asked.

"What hasn't?" In the obscurity I could see he made a gesture of despair. "They wiped us out--simply wiped us out," he repeated again and again.

He followed me, almost mechanically, into the dining room.

"Take some whiskey," I said, pouring out a stiff dose.

He drank it. Then abruptly he sat down before the table, put his head on his arms, and began to sob and weep like a little boy, in a perfect passion of emotion, while I, with a curious forgetfulness of my own recent despair, stood beside him, wondering.

It was a long time before he could steady his nerves to answer my questions, and then he answered perplexingly and brokenly. He was a driver in the artillery, and had only come into action about seven. At that time firing was going on across the common, and it was said the first party of Martians

were crawling slowly towards their second cylinder under cover of a metal shield.

Later this shield staggered up on tripod legs and became the first of the fighting-machines I had seen. The gun he drove had been unlimbered near Horsell, in order to command the sand pits, and its arrival it was that had precipitated the action. As the limber gunners went to the rear, his horse trod in a rabbit hole and came down, throwing him into a depression of the ground. At the same moment the gun exploded behind him, the ammunition blew up, there was fire all about him, and he found himself lying under a heap of charred dead men and dead horses.

"I lay still," he said, "scared out of my wits, with the fore quarter of a horse atop of me. We'd been wiped out. And the smell--good God! Like burnt meat! I was hurt across the back by the fall of the horse, and there I had to lie until I felt better. Just like parade it had been a minute before--then stumble, bang, swish!"

"Wiped out!" he said.

He had hid under the dead horse for a long time, peeping out furtively across the common. The Cardigan men had tried a rush, in skirmishing order, at the pit, simply to be swept out of existence. Then the monster had risen to its feet and had begun to walk leisurely to and fro across the common among the few fugitives, with its headlike hood turning about exactly like the head of a cowed human being. A kind of arm carried a complicated metallic case, about which green flashes scintillated, and out of the funnel of this there smoked the Heat-Ray.

In a few minutes there was, so far as the soldier could see,

not a living thing left upon the common, and every bush and tree upon it that was not already a blackened skeleton was burning. The hussars had been on the road beyond the curvature of the ground, and he saw nothing of them. He heard the Martians rattle for a time and then become still. The giant saved Woking station and its cluster of houses until the last; then in a moment the Heat-Ray was brought to bear, and the town became a heap of fiery ruins. Then the Thing shut off the Heat-Ray, and turning its back upon the artilleryman, began to waddle away towards the smouldering pine woods that sheltered the second cylinder. As it did so a second glittering Titan built itself up out of the pit.

The second monster followed the first, and at that the artilleryman began to crawl very cautiously across the hot heather ash towards Horsell. He managed to get alive into the ditch by the side of the road, and so escaped to Woking. There his story became ejaculatory. The place was impassable. It seems there were a few people alive there, frantic for the most part and many burned and scalded. He was turned aside by the fire, and hid among some almost scorching heaps of broken wall as one of the Martian giants returned. He saw this one pursue a man, catch him up in one of its steely tentacles, and knock his head against the trunk of a pine tree. At last, after nightfall, the artilleryman made a rush for it and got over the railway embankment.

Since then he had been skulking along towards Maybury, in the hope of getting out of danger Londonward. People were hiding in trenches and cellars, and many of the survivors had made off towards Woking village and Send. He had been consumed with thirst until he found one of the water mains near the railway arch smashed, and the water bubbling out like a spring upon the road.

That was the story I got from him, bit by bit. He grew calmer telling me and trying to make me see the things he had seen. He had eaten no food since midday, he told me early in his narrative, and I found some mutton and bread in the pantry and brought it into the room. We lit no lamp for fear of attracting the Martians, and ever and again our hands would touch upon bread or meat. As he talked, things about us came darkly out of the darkness, and the trampled bushes and broken rose trees outside the window grew distinct. It would seem that a number of men or animals had rushed across the lawn. I began to see his face, blackened and haggard, as no doubt mine was also.

When we had finished eating we went softly upstairs to my study, and I looked again out of the open window. In one night the valley had become a valley of ashes. The fires had dwindled now. Where flames had been there were now streamers of smoke; but the countless ruins of shattered and gutted houses and blasted and blackened trees that the night had hidden stood out now gaunt and terrible in the pitiless light of dawn. Yet here and there some object had had the luck to escape--a white railway signal here, the end of a greenhouse there, white and fresh amid the wreckage. Never before in the history of warfare had destruction been so indiscriminate and so universal. And shining with the growing light of the east, three of the metallic giants stood about the pit, their cowls rotating as though they were surveying the desolation they had made.

It seemed to me that the pit had been enlarged, and ever and again puffs of vivid green vapour streamed up and out of it towards the brightening dawn--streamed up, whirled, broke, and vanished.

Beyond were the pillars of fire about Chobham. They

became pillars of bloodshot smoke at the first touch of day.

CHAPTER TWELVE

WHAT I SAW OF THE DESTRUCTION OF WEYBRIDGE AND SHEPPERTON

As the dawn grew brighter we withdrew from the window from which we had watched the Martians, and went very quietly downstairs.

The artilleryman agreed with me that the house was no place to stay in. He proposed, he said, to make his way Londonward, and thence rejoin his battery--No. 12, of the Horse Artillery. My plan was to return at once to Leatherhead; and so greatly had the strength of the Martians impressed me that I had determined to take my wife to Newhaven, and go with her out of the country forthwith. For I already perceived clearly that the country about London must inevitably be the scene of a disastrous struggle before such creatures as these could be destroyed.

Between us and Leatherhead, however, lay the third cylinder, with its guarding giants. Had I been alone, I think I should have taken my chance and struck across country. But the artilleryman dissuaded me: "It's no kindness to the right sort of wife," he said, "to make her a widow"; and in the end I agreed to go with him, under cover of the woods, northward as far as Street Cobham before I parted with him. Thence I would make a big detour by Epsom to reach Leatherhead.

I should have started at once, but my companion had been in active service and he knew better than that. He made me

ransack the house for a flask, which he filled with whiskey; and we lined every available pocket with packets of biscuits and slices of meat. Then we crept out of the house, and ran as quickly as we could down the ill-made road by which I had come overnight. The houses seemed deserted. In the road lay a group of three charred bodies close together, struck dead by the Heat-Ray; and here and there were things that people had dropped--a clock, a slipper, a silver spoon, and the like poor valuables. At the corner turning up towards the post office a little cart, filled with boxes and furniture, and horseless, heeled over on a broken wheel. A cash box had been hastily smashed open and thrown under the debris.

Except the lodge at the Orphanage, which was still on fire, none of the houses had suffered very greatly here. The Heat-Ray had shaved the chimney tops and passed. Yet, save ourselves, there did not seem to be a living soul on Maybury Hill. The majority of the inhabitants had escaped, I suppose, by way of the Old Woking road--the road I had taken when I drove to Leatherhead--or they had hidden.

We went down the lane, by the body of the man in black, sodden now from the overnight hail, and broke into the woods at the foot of the hill. We pushed through these towards the railway without meeting a soul. The woods across the line were but the scarred and blackened ruins of woods; for the most part the trees had fallen, but a certain proportion still stood, dismal grey stems, with dark brown foliage instead of green.

On our side the fire had done no more than scorch the nearer trees; it had failed to secure its footing. In one place the woodmen had been at work on Saturday; trees, felled and freshly trimmed, lay in a clearing, with heaps of sawdust by the sawing-machine and its engine. Hard by was a tem-

porary hut, deserted. There was not a breath of wind this morning, and everything was strangely still. Even the birds were hushed, and as we hurried along I and the artilleryman talked in whispers and looked now and again over our shoulders. Once or twice we stopped to listen.

After a time we drew near the road, and as we did so we heard the clatter of hoofs and saw through the tree stems three cavalry soldiers riding slowly towards Woking. We hailed them, and they halted while we hurried towards them. It was a lieutenant and a couple of privates of the 8th Hussars, with a stand like a theodolite, which the artilleryman told me was a heliograph.

"You are the first men I've seen coming this way this morning," said the lieutenant. "What's brewing?"

His voice and face were eager. The men behind him stared curiously. The artilleryman jumped down the bank into the road and saluted.

"Gun destroyed last night, sir. Have been hiding. Trying to rejoin battery, sir. You'll come in sight of the Martians, I expect, about half a mile along this road."

"What the dickens are they like?" asked the lieutenant.

"Giants in armour, sir. Hundred feet high. Three legs and a body like 'luminium, with a mighty great head in a hood, sir."

"Get out!" said the lieutenant. "What confounded nonsense!"

"You'll see, sir. They carry a kind of box, sir, that shoots

fire and strikes you dead."

"What d'ye mean--a gun?"

"No, sir," and the artilleryman began a vivid account of the Heat-Ray. Halfway through, the lieutenant interrupted him and looked up at me. I was still standing on the bank by the side of the road.

"It's perfectly true," I said.

"Well," said the lieutenant, "I suppose it's my business to see it too. Look here"--to the artilleryman--"we're detailed here clearing people out of their houses. You'd better go along and report yourself to Brigadier-General Marvin, and tell him all you know. He's at Weybridge. Know the way?"

"I do," I said; and he turned his horse southward again.

"Half a mile, you say?" said he.

"At most," I answered, and pointed over the treetops southward. He thanked me and rode on, and we saw them no more.

Farther along we came upon a group of three women and two children in the road, busy clearing out a labourer's cottage. They had got hold of a little hand truck, and were piling it up with unclean-looking bundles and shabby furniture. They were all too assiduously engaged to talk to us as we passed.

By Byfleet station we emerged from the pine trees, and found the country calm and peaceful under the morning sunlight. We were far beyond the range of the Heat-Ray there,

and had it not been for the silent desertion of some of the houses, the stirring movement of packing in others, and the knot of soldiers standing on the bridge over the railway and staring down the line towards Woking, the day would have seemed very like any other Sunday.

Several farm waggons and carts were moving creakily along the road to Addlestone, and suddenly through the gate of a field we saw, across a stretch of flat meadow, six twelve-pounders standing neatly at equal distances pointing towards Woking. The gunners stood by the guns waiting, and the ammunition waggons were at a business-like distance. The men stood almost as if under inspection.

"That's good!" said I. "They will get one fair shot, at any rate."

The artilleryman hesitated at the gate.

"I shall go on," he said.

Farther on towards Weybridge, just over the bridge, there were a number of men in white fatigue jackets throwing up a long rampart, and more guns behind.

"It's bows and arrows against the lightning, anyhow," said the artilleryman. "They 'aven't seen that fire-beam yet."

The officers who were not actively engaged stood and stared over the treetops southwestward, and the men digging would stop every now and again to stare in the same direction.

Byfleet was in a tumult; people packing, and a score of hussars, some of them dismounted, some on horseback, were

hunting them about. Three or four black government wag-gons, with crosses in white circles, and an old omnibus, among other vehicles, were being loaded in the village street. There were scores of people, most of them sufficiently sabbatical to have assumed their best clothes. The soldiers were having the greatest difficulty in making them realise the gravity of their position. We saw one shrivelled old fellow with a huge box and a score or more of flower pots containing orchids, angrily expostulating with the corporal who would leave them behind. I stopped and gripped his arm.

"Do you know what's over there?" I said, pointing at the pine tops that hid the Martians.

"Eh?" said he, turning. "I was explainin" these is vallyble."

"Death!" I shouted. "Death is coming! Death!" and leaving him to digest that if he could, I hurried on after the artilleryman. At the corner I looked back. The soldier had left him, and he was still standing by his box, with the pots of orchids on the lid of it, and staring vaguely over the trees.

No one in Weybridge could tell us where the headquarters were established; the whole place was in such confusion as I had never seen in any town before. Carts, carriages everywhere, the most astonishing miscellany of conveyances and horseflesh. The respectable inhabitants of the place, men in golf and boating costumes, wives prettily dressed, were packing, river-side loafers energetically helping, children excited, and, for the most part, highly delighted at this astonishing variation of their Sunday experiences. In the midst of it all the worthy vicar was very pluckily holding an early celebration, and his bell was jangling out above the excitement.

I and the artilleryman, seated on the step of the drinking

fountain, made a very passable meal upon what we had brought with us. Patrols of soldiers--here no longer hussars, but grenadiers in white--were warning people to move now or to take refuge in their cellars as soon as the firing began. We saw as we crossed the railway bridge that a growing crowd of people had assembled in and about the railway station, and the swarming platform was piled with boxes and packages. The ordinary traffic had been stopped, I believe, in order to allow of the passage of troops and guns to Chertsey, and I have heard since that a savage struggle occurred for places in the special trains that were put on at a later hour.

We remained at Weybridge until midday, and at that hour we found ourselves at the place near Shepperton Lock where the Wey and Thames join. Part of the time we spent helping two old women to pack a little cart. The Wey has a treble mouth, and at this point boats are to be hired, and there was a ferry across the river. On the Shepperton side was an inn with a lawn, and beyond that the tower of Shepperton Church --it has been replaced by a spire--rose above the trees.

Here we found an excited and noisy crowd of fugitives. As yet the flight had not grown to a panic, but there were already far more people than all the boats going to and fro could enable to cross. People came panting along under heavy burdens; one husband and wife were even carrying a small out-house door between them, with some of their household goods piled thereon. One man told us he meant to try to get away from Shepperton station.

There was a lot of shouting, and one man was even jesting. The idea people seemed to have here was that the Martians were simply formidable human beings, who might attack and sack the town, to be certainly destroyed in the end. Every now and then people would glance nervously across the Wey,

at the meadows towards Chertsey, but everything over there was still.

Across the Thames, except just where the boats landed, everything was quiet, in vivid contrast with the Surrey side. The people who landed there from the boats went tramping off down the lane. The big ferryboat had just made a journey. Three or four soldiers stood on the lawn of the inn, staring and jesting at the fugitives, without offering to help. The inn was closed, as it was now within prohibited hours.

"What's that?" cried a boatman, and "Shut up, you fool!" said a man near me to a yelping dog. Then the sound came again, this time from the direction of Chertsey, a muffled thud--the sound of a gun.

The fighting was beginning. Almost immediately unseen batteries across the river to our right, unseen because of the trees, took up the chorus, firing heavily one after the other. A woman screamed. Everyone stood arrested by the sudden stir of battle, near us and yet invisible to us. Nothing was to be seen save flat meadows, cows feeding unconcernedly for the most part, and silvery pollard willows motionless in the warm sunlight.

"The sojers'll stop 'em," said a woman beside me, doubtfully. A haziness rose over the treetops.

Then suddenly we saw a rush of smoke far away up the river, a puff of smoke that jerked up into the air and hung; and forthwith the ground heaved under foot and a heavy explosion shook the air, smashing two or three windows in the houses near, and leaving us astonished.

"Here they are!" shouted a man in a blue jersey. "Yonder!

D'yer see them? Yonder!"

Quickly, one after the other, one, two, three, four of the armoured Martians appeared, far away over the little trees, across the flat meadows that stretched towards Chertsey, and striding hurriedly towards the river. Little cowered figures they seemed at first, going with a rolling motion and as fast as flying birds.

Then, advancing obliquely towards us, came a fifth. Their armoured bodies glittered in the sun as they swept swiftly forward upon the guns, growing rapidly larger as they drew nearer. One on the extreme left, the remotest that is, flourished a huge case high in the air, and the ghostly, terrible Heat-Ray I had already seen on Friday night smote towards Chertsey, and struck the town.

At sight of these strange, swift, and terrible creatures the crowd near the water's edge seemed to me to be for a moment horror-struck. There was no screaming or shouting, but a silence. Then a hoarse murmur and a movement of feet--a splashing from the water. A man, too frightened to drop the portmanteau he carried on his shoulder, swung round and sent me staggering with a blow from the corner of his burden. A woman thrust at me with her hand and rushed past me. I turned with the rush of the people, but I was not too terrified for thought. The terrible Heat-Ray was in my mind. To get under water! That was it!

"Get under water!" I shouted, unheeded.

I faced about again, and rushed towards the approaching Martian, rushed right down the gravelly beach and headlong into the water. Others did the same. A boatload of people putting back came leaping out as I rushed past. The stones

under my feet were muddy and slippery, and the river was so low that I ran perhaps twenty feet scarcely waist-deep. Then, as the Martian towered overhead scarcely a couple of hundred yards away, I flung myself forward under the surface. The splashes of the people in the boats leaping into the river sounded like thunderclaps in my ears. People were landing hastily on both sides of the river.

But the Martian machine took no more notice for the moment of the people running this way and that than a man would of the confusion of ants in a nest against which his foot has kicked. When, half suffocated, I raised my head above water, the Martian's hood pointed at the batteries that were still firing across the river, and as it advanced it swung loose what must have been the generator of the Heat-Ray.

In another moment it was on the bank, and in a stride wading halfway across. The knees of its foremost legs bent at the farther bank, and in another moment it had raised itself to its full height again, close to the village of Shepperton. Forthwith the six guns which, unknown to anyone on the right bank, had been hidden behind the outskirts of that village, fired simultaneously. The sudden near concussion, the last close upon the first, made my heart jump. The monster was already raising the case generating the Heat-Ray as the first shell burst six yards above the hood.

I gave a cry of astonishment. I saw and thought nothing of the other four Martian monsters; my attention was riveted upon the nearer incident. Simultaneously two other shells burst in the air near the body as the hood twisted round in time to receive, but not in time to dodge, the fourth shell.

The shell burst clean in the face of the Thing. The hood bulged, flashed, was whirled off in a dozen tattered fragments of red flesh and glittering metal.

"Hit!" shouted I, with something between a scream and a cheer.

I heard answering shouts from the people in the water about me. I could have leaped out of the water with that momentary exultation.

The decapitated colossus reeled like a drunken giant; but it did not fall over. It recovered its balance by a miracle, and, no longer heeding its steps and with the camera that fired the Heat-Ray now rigidly upheld, it reeled swiftly upon Shepperton. The living intelligence, the Martian within the hood, was slain and splashed to the four winds of heaven, and the Thing was now but a mere intricate device of metal whirling to destruction. It drove along in a straight line, incapable of guidance. It struck the tower of Shepperton Church, smashing it down as the impact of a battering ram might have done, swerved aside, blundered on and collapsed with tremendous force into the river out of my sight.

A violent explosion shook the air, and a spout of water, steam, mud, and shattered metal shot far up into the sky. As the camera of the Heat-Ray hit the water, the latter had immediately flashed into steam. In another moment a huge wave, like a muddy tidal bore but almost scaldingly hot, came sweeping round the bend upstream. I saw people struggling shorewards, and heard their screaming and shouting faintly above the seething and roar of the Martian's collapse.

For a moment I heeded nothing of the heat, forgot the patent need of self-preservation. I splashed through the tumultuous water, pushing aside a man in black to do so, until I could see round the bend. Half a dozen deserted boats pitched aimlessly upon the confusion of the waves. The fallen

Martian came into sight downstream, lying across the river, and for the most part submerged.

Thick clouds of steam were pouring off the wreckage, and through the tumultuously whirling wisps I could see, intermittently and vaguely, the gigantic limbs churning the water and flinging a splash and spray of mud and froth into the air. The tentacles swayed and struck like living arms, and, save for the helpless purposelessness of these movements, it was as if some wounded thing were struggling for its life amid the waves. Enormous quantities of a ruddy-brown fluid were spurting up in noisy jets out of the machine.

My attention was diverted from this death flurry by a furious yelling, like that of the thing called a siren in our manufacturing towns. A man, knee-deep near the towing path, shouted inaudibly to me and pointed. Looking back, I saw the other Martians advancing with gigantic strides down the riverbank from the direction of Chertsey. The Shepperton guns spoke this time unavailingly.

At that I ducked at once under water, and, holding my breath until movement was an agony, blundered painfully ahead under the surface as long as I could. The water was in a tumult about me, and rapidly growing hotter.

When for a moment I raised my head to take breath and throw the hair and water from my eyes, the steam was rising in a whirling white fog that at first hid the Martians altogether. The noise was deafening. Then I saw them dimly, colossal figures of grey, magnified by the mist. They had passed by me, and two were stooping over the frothing, tumultuous ruins of their comrade.

The third and fourth stood beside him in the water, one

perhaps two hundred yards from me, the other towards Laleham. The generators of the Heat-Rays waved high, and the hissing beams smote down this way and that.

The air was full of sound, a deafening and confusing conflict of noises--the clangorous din of the Martians, the crash of falling houses, the thud of trees, fences, sheds flashing into flame, and the crackling and roaring of fire. Dense black smoke was leaping up to mingle with the steam from the river, and as the Heat-Ray went to and fro over Weybridge its impact was marked by flashes of incandescent white, that gave place at once to a smoky dance of lurid flames. The nearer houses still stood intact, awaiting their fate, shadowy, faint and pallid in the steam, with the fire behind them going to and fro.

For a moment perhaps I stood there, breast-high in the almost boiling water, dumbfounded at my position, hopeless of escape. Through the reek I could see the people who had been with me in the river scrambling out of the water through the reeds, like little frogs hurrying through grass from the advance of a man, or running to and fro in utter dismay on the towing path.

Then suddenly the white flashes of the Heat-Ray came leaping towards me. The houses caved in as they dissolved at its touch, and darted out flames; the trees changed to fire with a roar. The Ray flickered up and down the towing path, licking off the people who ran this way and that, and came down to the water's edge not fifty yards from where I stood. It swept across the river to Shepperton, and the water in its track rose in a boiling weal crested with steam. I turned shoreward.

In another moment the huge wave, well-nigh at the boiling-

point had rushed upon me. I screamed aloud, and scalded, half blinded, agonised, I staggered through the leaping, hissing water towards the shore. Had my foot stumbled, it would have been the end. I fell helplessly, in full sight of the Martians, upon the broad, bare gravelly spit that runs down to mark the angle of the Wey and Thames. I expected nothing but death.

I have a dim memory of the foot of a Martian coming down within a score of yards of my head, driving straight into the loose gravel, whirling it this way and that and lifting again; of a long suspense, and then of the four carrying the debris of their comrade between them, now clear and then presently faint through a veil of smoke, receding interminably, as it seemed to me, across a vast space of river and meadow. And then, very slowly, I realised that by a miracle I had escaped.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

HOW I FELL IN WITH THE CURATE

After getting this sudden lesson in the power of terrestrial weapons, the Martians retreated to their original position upon Horsell Common; and in their haste, and encumbered with the de'bris of their smashed companion, they no doubt overlooked many such a stray and negligible victim as myself. Had they left their comrade and pushed on forthwith, there was nothing at that time between them and London but batteries of twelve-pounder guns, and they would certainly have reached the capital in advance of the tidings of their approach; as sudden, dreadful, and destructive their advent would have been as the earthquake that destroyed Lisbon a century ago.

But they were in no hurry. Cylinder followed cylinder on its interplanetary flight; every twenty-four hours brought them reinforcement. And meanwhile the military and naval authorities, now fully alive to the tremendous power of their antagonists, worked with furious energy. Every minute a fresh gun came into position until, before twilight, every copse, every row of suburban villas on the hilly slopes about Kingston and Richmond, masked an expectant black muzzle. And through the charred and desolated area--perhaps twenty square miles altogether--that encircled the Martian encampment on Horsell Common, through charred and ruined villages among the green trees, through the blackened and smoking arcades that had been but a day ago pine spinneys, crawled the devoted scouts with the heliographs that were presently

to warn the gunners of the Martian approach. But the Martians now understood our command of artillery and the danger of human proximity, and not a man ventured within a mile of either cylinder, save at the price of his life.

It would seem that these giants spent the earlier part of the afternoon in going to and fro, transferring everything from the second and third cylinders--the second in Addlestone Golf Links and the third at Pyrford--to their original pit on Horsell Common. Over that, above the blackened heather and ruined buildings that stretched far and wide, stood one as sentinel, while the rest abandoned their vast fighting-machines and descended into the pit. They were hard at work there far into the night, and the towering pillar of dense green smoke that rose therefrom could be seen from the hills about Merrow, and even, it is said, from Banstead and Epsom Downs.

And while the Martians behind me were thus preparing for their next sally, and in front of me Humanity gathered for the battle, I made my way with infinite pains and labour from the fire and smoke of burning Weybridge towards London.

I saw an abandoned boat, very small and remote, drifting down-stream; and throwing off the most of my sodden clothes, I went after it, gained it, and so escaped out of that destruction. There were no oars in the boat, but I contrived to paddle, as well as my parboiled hands would allow, down the river towards Halliford and Walton, going very tediously and continually looking behind me, as you may well understand. I followed the river, because I considered that the water gave me my best chance of escape should these giants return.

The hot water from the Martian's overthrow drifted downstream with me, so that for the best part of a mile I could see little of either bank. Once, however, I made out a string of black figures hurrying across the meadows from the direction of Weybridge. Halliford, it seemed, was deserted, and several of the houses facing the river were on fire. It was strange to see the place quite tranquil, quite desolate under the hot blue sky, with the smoke and little threads of flame going straight up into the heat of the afternoon. Never before had I seen houses burning without the accompaniment of an obstructive crowd. A little farther on the dry reeds up the bank were smoking and glowing, and a line of fire inland was marching steadily across a late field of hay.

For a long time I drifted, so painful and weary was I after the violence I had been through, and so intense the heat upon the water. Then my fears got the better of me again, and I resumed my paddling. The sun scorched my bare back. At last, as the bridge at Walton was coming into sight round the bend, my fever and faintness overcame my fears, and I landed on the Middlesex bank and lay down, deadly sick, amid the long grass. I suppose the time was then about four or five o'clock. I got up presently, walked perhaps half a mile without meeting a soul, and then lay down again in the shadow of a hedge. I seem to remember talking, wanderingly, to myself during that last spurt. I was also very thirsty, and bitterly regretful I had drunk no more water. It is a curious thing that I felt angry with my wife; I cannot account for it, but my impotent desire to reach Leatherhead worried me excessively.

I do not clearly remember the arrival of the curate, so that probably I dozed. I became aware of him as a seated figure in soot-smudged shirt sleeves, and with his upturned, clean-shaven face staring at a faint flickering that danced over the

sky. The sky was what is called a mackerel sky--rows and rows of faint down-plumes of cloud, just tinted with the midsummer sunset.

I sat up, and at the rustle of my motion he looked at me quickly.

"Have you any water?" I asked abruptly.

He shook his head.

"You have been asking for water for the last hour," he said.

For a moment we were silent, taking stock of each other. I dare say he found me a strange enough figure, naked, save for my water-soaked trousers and socks, scalded, and my face and shoulders blackened by the smoke. His face was a fair weakness, his chin retreated, and his hair lay in crisp, almost flaxen curls on his low forehead; his eyes were rather large, pale blue, and blankly staring. He spoke abruptly, looking vacantly away from me.

"What does it mean?" he said. "What do these things mean?"

I stared at him and made no answer.

He extended a thin white hand and spoke in almost a complaining tone.

"Why are these things permitted? What sins have we done? The morning service was over, I was walking through the roads to clear my brain for the afternoon, and then--fire, earthquake, death! As if it were Sodom and Gomorrah! All our work undone, all the work---- What are these Mar-

tians?"

"What are we?" I answered, clearing my throat.

He gripped his knees and turned to look at me again. For half a minute, perhaps, he stared silently.

"I was walking through the roads to clear my brain," he said. "And suddenly--fire, earthquake, death!"

He relapsed into silence, with his chin now sunken almost to his knees.

Presently he began waving his hand.

"All the work--all the Sunday schools---- What have we done--what has Weybridge done? Everything gone--everything destroyed. The church! We rebuilt it only three years ago. Gone! Swept out of existence! Why?"

Another pause, and he broke out again like one demented.

"The smoke of her burning goeth up for ever and ever!" he shouted.

His eyes flamed, and he pointed a lean finger in the direction of Weybridge.

By this time I was beginning to take his measure. The tremendous tragedy in which he had been involved--it was evident he was a fugitive from Weybridge--had driven him to the very verge of his reason.

"Are we far from Sunbury?" I said, in a matter-of-fact tone.

"What are we to do?" he asked. "Are these creatures everywhere? Has the earth been given over to them?"

"Are we far from Sunbury?"

"Only this morning I officiated at early celebration----"

"Things have changed," I said, quietly. "You must keep your head. There is still hope."

"Hope!"

"Yes. Plentiful hope--for all this destruction!"

I began to explain my view of our position. He listened at first, but as I went on the interest dawning in his eyes gave place to their former stare, and his regard wandered from me.

"This must be the beginning of the end," he said, interrupting me. "The end! The great and terrible day of the Lord! When men shall call upon the mountains and the rocks to fall upon them and hide them--hide them from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne!"

I began to understand the position. I ceased my laboured reasoning, struggled to my feet, and, standing over him, laid my hand on his shoulder.

"Be a man!" said I. "You are scared out of your wits! What good is religion if it collapses under calamity? Think of what earthquakes and floods, wars and volcanoes, have done before to men! Did you think God had exempted Weybridge? He is not an insurance agent."

For a time he sat in blank silence.

"But how can we escape?" he asked, suddenly. "They are invulnerable, they are pitiless."

"Neither the one nor, perhaps, the other," I answered. "And the mightier they are the more sane and wary should we be. One of them was killed yonder not three hours ago."

"Killed!" he said, staring about him. "How can God's ministers be killed?"

"I saw it happen." I proceeded to tell him. "We have chanced to come in for the thick of it," said I, "and that is all."

"What is that flicker in the sky?" he asked abruptly.

I told him it was the heliograph signalling--that it was the sign of human help and effort in the sky.

"We are in the midst of it," I said, "quiet as it is. That flicker in the sky tells of the gathering storm. Yonder, I take it are the Martians, and Londonward, where those hills rise about Richmond and Kingston and the trees give cover, earth-works are being thrown up and guns are being placed. Presently the Martians will be coming this way again."

And even as I spoke he sprang to his feet and stopped me by a gesture.

"Listen!" he said.

From beyond the low hills across the water came the dull

resonance of distant guns and a remote weird crying. Then everything was still. A cockchafer came droning over the hedge and past us. High in the west the crescent moon hung faint and pale above the smoke of Weybridge and Shepperton and the hot, still splendour of the sunset.

"We had better follow this path," I said, "northward."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

IN LONDON

My younger brother was in London when the Martians fell at Woking. He was a medical student working for an imminent examination, and he heard nothing of the arrival until Saturday morning. The morning papers on Saturday contained, in addition to lengthy special articles on the planet Mars, on life in the planets, and so forth, a brief and vaguely worded telegram, all the more striking for its brevity.

The Martians, alarmed by the approach of a crowd, had killed a number of people with a quick-firing gun, so the story ran. The telegram concluded with the words: "Formidable as they seem to be, the Martians have not moved from the pit into which they have fallen, and, indeed, seem incapable of doing so. Probably this is due to the relative strength of the earth's gravitational energy." On that last text their leader-writer expanded very comfortingly.

Of course all the students in the crammer's biology class, to which my brother went that day, were intensely interested, but there were no signs of any unusual excitement in the streets. The afternoon papers puffed scraps of news under big headlines. They had nothing to tell beyond the movements of troops about the common, and the burning of the pine woods between Woking and Weybridge, until eight. Then the ST. JAMES'S GAZETTE, in an extra-special edition, announced

the bare fact of the interruption of telegraphic communication. This was thought to be due to the falling of burning pine trees across the line. Nothing more of the fighting was known that night, the night of my drive to Leatherhead and back.

My brother felt no anxiety about us, as he knew from the description in the papers that the cylinder was a good two miles from my house. He made up his mind to run down that night to me, in order, as he says, to see the Things before they were killed. He despatched a telegram, which never reached me, about four o'clock, and spent the evening at a music hall.

In London, also, on Saturday night there was a thunderstorm, and my brother reached Waterloo in a cab. On the platform from which the midnight train usually starts he learned, after some waiting, that an accident prevented trains from reaching Woking that night. The nature of the accident he could not ascertain; indeed, the railway authorities did not clearly know at that time. There was very little excitement in the station, as the officials, failing to realise that anything further than a breakdown between Byfleet and Woking junction had occurred, were running the theatre trains which usually passed through Woking round by Virginia Water or Guildford. They were busy making the necessary arrangements to alter the route of the Southampton and Portsmouth Sunday League excursions. A nocturnal newspaper reporter, mistaking my brother for the traffic manager, to whom he bears a slight resemblance, waylaid and tried to interview him. Few people, excepting the railway officials, connected the breakdown with the Martians.

I have read, in another account of these events, that on Sunday morning "all London was electrified by the news

from Woking." As a matter of fact, there was nothing to justify that very extravagant phrase. Plenty of Londoners did not hear of the Martians until the panic of Monday morning. Those who did took some time to realise all that the hastily worded telegrams in the Sunday papers conveyed. The majority of people in London do not read Sunday papers.

The habit of personal security, moreover, is so deeply fixed in the Londoner's mind, and startling intelligence so much a matter of course in the papers, that they could read without any personal tremors: "About seven o'clock last night the Martians came out of the cylinder, and, moving about under an armour of metallic shields, have completely wrecked Woking station with the adjacent houses, and massacred an entire battalion of the Cardigan Regiment. No details are known. Maxims have been absolutely useless against their armour; the field guns have been disabled by them. Flying hussars have been galloping into Chertsey. The Martians appear to be moving slowly towards Chertsey or Windsor. Great anxiety prevails in West Surrey, and earthworks are being thrown up to check the advance Londonward." That was how the Sunday SUN put it, and a clever and remarkably prompt "handbook" article in the REFEREE compared the affair to a menagerie suddenly let loose in a village.

No one in London knew positively of the nature of the armoured Martians, and there was still a fixed idea that these monsters must be sluggish: "crawling," "creeping painfully" --such expressions occurred in almost all the earlier reports. None of the telegrams could have been written by an eyewitness of their advance. The Sunday papers printed separate editions as further news came to hand, some even in default of it. But there was practically nothing more to tell people until late in the afternoon, when the authorities gave the

press agencies the news in their possession. It was stated that the people of Walton and Weybridge, and all the district were pouring along the roads Londonward, and that was all.

My brother went to church at the Foundling Hospital in the morning, still in ignorance of what had happened on the previous night. There he heard allusions made to the invasion, and a special prayer for peace. Coming out, he bought a REFEREE. He became alarmed at the news in this, and went again to Waterloo station to find out if communication were restored. The omnibuses, carriages, cyclists, and innumerable people walking in their best clothes seemed scarcely affected by the strange intelligence that the news venders were disseminating. People were interested, or, if alarmed, alarmed only on account of the local residents. At the station he heard for the first time that the Windsor and Chertsey lines were now interrupted. The porters told him that several remarkable telegrams had been received in the morning from Byfleet and Chertsey stations, but that these had abruptly ceased. My brother could get very little precise detail out of them.

"There's fighting going on about Weybridge" was the extent of their information.

The train service was now very much disorganised. Quite a number of people who had been expecting friends from places on the South-Western network were standing about the station. One grey-headed old gentleman came and abused the South-Western Company bitterly to my brother. "It wants showing up," he said.

One or two trains came in from Richmond, Putney, and Kingston, containing people who had gone out for a day's boating and found the locks closed and a feeling of panic in the air. A man in a blue and white blazer addressed my

brother, full of strange tidings.

"There's hosts of people driving into Kingston in traps and carts and things, with boxes of valuables and all that," he said. "They come from Molesey and Weybridge and Walton, and they say there's been guns heard at Chertsey, heavy firing, and that mounted soldiers have told them to get off at once because the Martians are coming. We heard guns firing at Hampton Court station, but we thought it was thunder. What the dickens does it all mean? The Martians can't get out of their pit, can they?"

My brother could not tell him.

Afterwards he found that the vague feeling of alarm had spread to the clients of the underground railway, and that the Sunday excursionists began to return from all over the South-Western "lung"--Barnes, Wimbledon, Richmond Park, Kew, and so forth--at unnaturally early hours; but not a soul had anything more than vague hearsay to tell of. Everyone connected with the terminus seemed ill-tempered.

About five o'clock the gathering crowd in the station was immensely excited by the opening of the line of communication, which is almost invariably closed, between the South-Eastern and the South-Western stations, and the passage of carriage trucks bearing huge guns and carriages crammed with soldiers. These were the guns that were brought up from Woolwich and Chatham to cover Kingston. There was an exchange of pleasantries: "You'll get eaten!" "We're the beast-tamers!" and so forth. A little while after that a squad of police came into the station and began to clear the public off the platforms, and my brother went out into the street again.

The church bells were ringing for evensong, and a squad of

Salvation Army lassies came singing down Waterloo Road. On the bridge a number of loafers were watching a curious brown scum that came drifting down the stream in patches. The sun was just setting, and the Clock Tower and the Houses of Parliament rose against one of the most peaceful skies it is possible to imagine, a sky of gold, barred with long transverse stripes of reddish-purple cloud. There was talk of a floating body. One of the men there, a reservist he said he was, told my brother he had seen the heliograph flickering in the west.

In Wellington Street my brother met a couple of sturdy roughs who had just been rushed out of Fleet Street with still-wet newspapers and staring placards. "Dreadful catastrophe!" they bawled one to the other down Wellington Street. "Fighting at Weybridge! Full description! Repulse of the Martians! London in Danger!" He had to give threepence for a copy of that paper.

Then it was, and then only, that he realised something of the full power and terror of these monsters. He learned that they were not merely a handful of small sluggish creatures, but that they were minds swaying vast mechanical bodies; and that they could move swiftly and smite with such power that even the mightiest guns could not stand against them.

They were described as "vast spiderlike machines, nearly a hundred feet high, capable of the speed of an express train, and able to shoot out a beam of intense heat." Masked batteries, chiefly of field guns, had been planted in the country about Horsell Common, and especially between the Woking district and London. Five of the machines had been seen moving towards the Thames, and one, by a happy chance, had been destroyed. In the other cases the shells had missed, and the batteries had been at once annihilated by the Heat-

Rays. Heavy losses of soldiers were mentioned, but the tone of the despatch was optimistic.

The Martians had been repulsed; they were not invulnerable. They had retreated to their triangle of cylinders again, in the circle about Woking. Signallers with heliographs were pushing forward upon them from all sides. Guns were in rapid transit from Windsor, Portsmouth, Aldershot, Woolwich--even from the north; among others, long wire-guns of ninety-five tons from Woolwich. Altogether one hundred and sixteen were in position or being hastily placed, chiefly covering London. Never before in England had there been such a vast or rapid concentration of military material.

Any further cylinders that fell, it was hoped, could be destroyed at once by high explosives, which were being rapidly manufactured and distributed. No doubt, ran the report, the situation was of the strangest and gravest description, but the public was exhorted to avoid and discourage panic. No doubt the Martians were strange and terrible in the extreme, but at the outside there could not be more than twenty of them against our millions.

The authorities had reason to suppose, from the size of the cylinders, that at the outside there could not be more than five in each cylinder--fifteen altogether. And one at least was disposed of--perhaps more. The public would be fairly warned of the approach of danger, and elaborate measures were being taken for the protection of the people in the threatened southwestern suburbs. And so, with reiterated assurances of the safety of London and the ability of the authorities to cope with the difficulty, this quasi-proclamation closed.

This was printed in enormous type on paper so fresh that it

was still wet, and there had been no time to add a word of comment. It was curious, my brother said, to see how ruthlessly the usual contents of the paper had been hacked and taken out to give this place.

All down Wellington Street people could be seen fluttering out the pink sheets and reading, and the Strand was suddenly noisy with the voices of an army of hawkers following these pioneers. Men came scrambling off buses to secure copies. Certainly this news excited people intensely, whatever their previous apathy. The shutters of a map shop in the Strand were being taken down, my brother said, and a man in his Sunday raiment, lemon-yellow gloves even, was visible inside the window hastily fastening maps of Surrey to the glass.

Going on along the Strand to Trafalgar Square, the paper in his hand, my brother saw some of the fugitives from West Surrey. There was a man with his wife and two boys and some articles of furniture in a cart such as greengrocers use. He was driving from the direction of Westminster Bridge; and close behind him came a hay waggon with five or six respectable-looking people in it, and some boxes and bundles. The faces of these people were haggard, and their entire appearance contrasted conspicuously with the Sabbath-best appearance of the people on the omnibuses. People in fashionable clothing peeped at them out of cabs. They stopped at the Square as if undecided which way to take, and finally turned eastward along the Strand. Some way behind these came a man in workday clothes, riding one of those old-fashioned tricycles with a small front wheel. He was dirty and white in the face.

My brother turned down towards Victoria, and met a number of such people. He had a vague idea that he might see

something of me. He noticed an unusual number of police regulating the traffic. Some of the refugees were exchanging news with the people on the omnibuses. One was professing to have seen the Martians. "Boilers on stilts, I tell you, striding along like men." Most of them were excited and animated by their strange experience.

Beyond Victoria the public-houses were doing a lively trade with these arrivals. At all the street corners groups of people were reading papers, talking excitedly, or staring at these unusual Sunday visitors. They seemed to increase as night drew on, until at last the roads, my brother said, were like Epsom High Street on a Derby Day. My brother addressed several of these fugitives and got unsatisfactory answers from most.

None of them could tell him any news of Woking except one man, who assured him that Woking had been entirely destroyed on the previous night.

"I come from Byfleet," he said; "man on a bicycle came through the place in the early morning, and ran from door to door warning us to come away. Then came soldiers. We went out to look, and there were clouds of smoke to the south--nothing but smoke, and not a soul coming that way. Then we heard the guns at Chertsey, and folks coming from Weybridge. So I've locked up my house and come on."

At the time there was a strong feeling in the streets that the authorities were to blame for their incapacity to dispose of the invaders without all this inconvenience.

About eight o'clock a noise of heavy firing was distinctly audible all over the south of London. My brother could not hear it for the traffic in the main thoroughfares, but by strik-

ing through the quiet back streets to the river he was able to distinguish it quite plainly.

He walked from Westminster to his apartments near Regent's Park, about two. He was now very anxious on my account, and disturbed at the evident magnitude of the trouble. His mind was inclined to run, even as mine had run on Saturday, on military details. He thought of all those silent, expectant guns, of the suddenly nomadic countryside; he tried to imagine "boilers on stilts" a hundred feet high.

There were one or two cartloads of refugees passing along Oxford Street, and several in the Marylebone Road, but so slowly was the news spreading that Regent Street and Portland Place were full of their usual Sunday-night promenaders, albeit they talked in groups, and along the edge of Regent's Park there were as many silent couples "walking out" together under the scattered gas lamps as ever there had been. The night was warm and still, and a little oppressive; the sound of guns continued intermittently, and after midnight there seemed to be sheet lightning in the south.

He read and re-read the paper, fearing the worst had happened to me. He was restless, and after supper prowled out again aimlessly. He returned and tried in vain to divert his attention to his examination notes. He went to bed a little after midnight, and was awakened from lurid dreams in the small hours of Monday by the sound of door knockers, feet running in the street, distant drumming, and a clamour of bells. Red reflections danced on the ceiling. For a moment he lay astonished, wondering whether day had come or the world gone mad. Then he jumped out of bed and ran to the window.

His room was an attic and as he thrust his head out, up

and down the street there were a dozen echoes to the noise of his window sash, and heads in every kind of night disarray appeared. Enquiries were being shouted. "They are coming!" bawled a policeman, hammering at the door; "the Martians are coming!" and hurried to the next door.

The sound of drumming and trumpeting came from the Albany Street Barracks, and every church within earshot was hard at work killing sleep with a vehement disorderly tocsin. There was a noise of doors opening, and window after window in the houses opposite flashed from darkness into yellow illumination.

Up the street came galloping a closed carriage, bursting abruptly into noise at the corner, rising to a clattering climax under the window, and dying away slowly in the distance. Close on the rear of this came a couple of cabs, the forerunners of a long procession of flying vehicles, going for the most part to Chalk Farm station, where the North-Western special trains were loading up, instead of coming down the gradient into Euston.

For a long time my brother stared out of the window in blank astonishment, watching the policemen hammering at door after door, and delivering their incomprehensible message. Then the door behind him opened, and the man who lodged across the landing came in, dressed only in shirt, trousers, and slippers, his braces loose about his waist, his hair disordered from his pillow.

"What the devil is it?" he asked. "A fire? What a devil of a row!"

They both craned their heads out of the window, straining to hear what the policemen were shouting. People were com-

ing out of the side streets, and standing in groups at the corners talking.

"What the devil is it all about?" said my brother's fellow lodger.

My brother answered him vaguely and began to dress, running with each garment to the window in order to miss nothing of the growing excitement. And presently men selling unnaturally early newspapers came bawling into the street:

"London in danger of suffocation! The Kingston and Richmond defences forced! Fearful massacres in the Thames Valley!"

And all about him--in the rooms below, in the houses on each side and across the road, and behind in the Park Terraces and in the hundred other streets of that part of Marylebone, and the Westbourne Park district and St. Pancras, and westward and northward in Kilburn and St. John's Wood and Hampstead, and eastward in Shoreditch and Highbury and Haggerston and Hoxton, and, indeed, through all the vastness of London from Ealing to East Ham--people were rubbing their eyes, and opening windows to stare out and ask aimless questions, dressing hastily as the first breath of the coming storm of Fear blew through the streets. It was the dawn of the great panic. London, which had gone to bed on Sunday night oblivious and inert, was awakened, in the small hours of Monday morning, to a vivid sense of danger.

Unable from his window to learn what was happening, my brother went down and out into the street, just as the sky between the parapets of the houses grew pink with the early dawn. The flying people on foot and in vehicles grew more numerous every moment. "Black Smoke!" he heard people

crying, and again "Black Smoke!" The contagion of such a unanimous fear was inevitable. As my brother hesitated on the door-step, he saw another news vender approaching, and got a paper forthwith. The man was running away with the rest, and selling his papers for a shilling each as he ran--a grotesque mingling of profit and panic.

And from this paper my brother read that catastrophic despatch of the Commander-in-Chief:

"The Martians are able to discharge enormous clouds of a black and poisonous vapour by means of rockets. They have smothered our batteries, destroyed Richmond, Kingston, and Wimbledon, and are advancing slowly towards London, destroying everything on the way. It is impossible to stop them. There is no safety from the Black Smoke but in instant flight."

That was all, but it was enough. The whole population of the great six-million city was stirring, slipping, running; presently it would be pouring EN MASSE northward.

"Black Smoke!" the voices cried. "Fire!"

The bells of the neighbouring church made a jangling tumult, a cart carelessly driven smashed, amid shrieks and curses, against the water trough up the street. Sickly yellow lights went to and fro in the houses, and some of the passing cabs flaunted unextinguished lamps. And overhead the dawn was growing brighter, clear and steady and calm.

He heard footsteps running to and fro in the rooms, and up and down stairs behind him. His landlady came to the door, loosely wrapped in dressing gown and shawl; her husband followed ejaculating.

As my brother began to realise the import of all these things, he turned hastily to his own room, put all his available money--some ten pounds altogether--into his pockets, and went out again into the streets.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN SURREY

It was while the curate had sat and talked so wildly to me under the hedge in the flat meadows near Halliford, and while my brother was watching the fugitives stream over Westminster Bridge, that the Martians had resumed the offensive. So far as one can ascertain from the conflicting accounts that have been put forth, the majority of them remained busied with preparations in the Horsell pit until nine that night, hurrying on some operation that disengaged huge volumes of green smoke.

But three certainly came out about eight o'clock and, advancing slowly and cautiously, made their way through Byfleet and Pyrford towards Ripley and Weybridge, and so came in sight of the expectant batteries against the setting sun. These Martians did not advance in a body, but in a line, each perhaps a mile and a half from his nearest fellow. They communicated with one another by means of sirenlike howls, running up and down the scale from one note to another.

It was this howling and firing of the guns at Ripley and St. George's Hill that we had heard at Upper Halliford. The Ripley gunners, unseasoned artillery volunteers who ought never to have been placed in such a position, fired one wild, premature, ineffectual volley, and bolted on horse and foot through the deserted village, while the Martian, without using

his Heat-Ray, walked serenely over their guns, stepped gingerly among them, passed in front of them, and so came unexpectedly upon the guns in Painshill Park, which he destroyed.

The St. George's Hill men, however, were better led or of a better mettle. Hidden by a pine wood as they were, they seem to have been quite unsuspected by the Martian nearest to them. They laid their guns as deliberately as if they had been on parade, and fired at about a thousand yards' range.

The shells flashed all round him, and he was seen to advance a few paces, stagger, and go down. Everybody yelled together, and the guns were reloaded in frantic haste. The overthrown Martian set up a prolonged ululation, and immediately a second glittering giant, answering him, appeared over the trees to the south. It would seem that a leg of the tripod had been smashed by one of the shells. The whole of the second volley flew wide of the Martian on the ground, and, simultaneously, both his companions brought their Heat-Rays to bear on the battery. The ammunition blew up, the pine trees all about the guns flashed into fire, and only one or two of the men who were already running over the crest of the hill escaped.

After this it would seem that the three took counsel together and halted, and the scouts who were watching them report that they remained absolutely stationary for the next half hour. The Martian who had been overthrown crawled tediously out of his hood, a small brown figure, oddly suggestive from that distance of a speck of blight, and apparently engaged in the repair of his support. About nine he had finished, for his cowl was then seen above the trees again.

It was a few minutes past nine that night when these three

sentinels were joined by four other Martians, each carrying a thick black tube. A similar tube was handed to each of the three, and the seven proceeded to distribute themselves at equal distances along a curved line between St. George's Hill, Weybridge, and the village of Send, southwest of Ripley.

A dozen rockets sprang out of the hills before them so soon as they began to move, and warned the waiting batteries about Ditton and Esher. At the same time four of their fighting machines, similarly armed with tubes, crossed the river, and two of them, black against the western sky, came into sight of myself and the curate as we hurried wearily and painfully along the road that runs northward out of Halliford. They moved, as it seemed to us, upon a cloud, for a milky mist covered the fields and rose to a third of their height.

At this sight the curate cried faintly in his throat, and began running; but I knew it was no good running from a Martian, and I turned aside and crawled through dewy nettles and brambles into the broad ditch by the side of the road. He looked back, saw what I was doing, and turned to join me.

The two halted, the nearer to us standing and facing Sunbury, the remoter being a grey indistinctness towards the evening star, away towards Staines.

The occasional howling of the Martians had ceased; they took up their positions in the huge crescent about their cylinders in absolute silence. It was a crescent with twelve miles between its horns. Never since the devising of gunpowder was the beginning of a battle so still. To us and to an observer about Ripley it would have had precisely the same effect--the Martians seemed in solitary possession of the darkling night, lit only as it was by the slender moon, the

stars, the afterglow of the daylight, and the ruddy glare from St. George's Hill and the woods of Painshill.

But facing that crescent everywhere--at Staines, Hounslow, Ditton, Esher, Ockham, behind hills and woods south of the river, and across the flat grass meadows to the north of it, wherever a cluster of trees or village houses gave sufficient cover--the guns were waiting. The signal rockets burst and rained their sparks through the night and vanished, and the spirit of all those watching batteries rose to a tense expectation. The Martians had but to advance into the line of fire, and instantly those motionless black forms of men, those guns glittering so darkly in the early night, would explode into a thunderous fury of battle.

No doubt the thought that was uppermost in a thousand of those vigilant minds, even as it was uppermost in mine, was the riddle--how much they understood of us. Did they grasp that we in our millions were organized, disciplined, working together? Or did they interpret our spurts of fire, the sudden stinging of our shells, our steady investment of their encampment, as we should the furious unanimity of onslaught in a disturbed hive of bees? Did they dream they might exterminate us? (At that time no one knew what food they needed.) A hundred such questions struggled together in my mind as I watched that vast sentinel shape. And in the back of my mind was the sense of all the huge unknown and hidden forces Londonward. Had they prepared pitfalls? Were the powder mills at Hounslow ready as a snare? Would the Londoners have the heart and courage to make a greater Moscow of their mighty province of houses?

Then, after an interminable time, as it seemed to us, crouching and peering through the hedge, came a sound like the distant concussion of a gun. Another nearer, and

then another. And then the Martian beside us raised his tube on high and discharged it, gunwise, with a heavy report that made the ground heave. The one towards Staines answered him. There was no flash, no smoke, simply that loaded detonation.

I was so excited by these heavy minute-guns following one another that I so far forgot my personal safety and my scalded hands as to clamber up into the hedge and stare towards Sunbury. As I did so a second report followed, and a big projectile hurtled overhead towards Hounslow. I expected at least to see smoke or fire, or some such evidence of its work. But all I saw was the deep blue sky above, with one solitary star, and the white mist spreading wide and low beneath. And there had been no crash, no answering explosion. The silence was restored; the minute lengthened to three.

"What has happened?" said the curate, standing up beside me.

"Heaven knows!" said I.

A bat flickered by and vanished. A distant tumult of shouting began and ceased. I looked again at the Martian, and saw he was now moving eastward along the riverbank, with a swift, rolling motion,

Every moment I expected the fire of some hidden battery to spring upon him; but the evening calm was unbroken. The figure of the Martian grew smaller as he receded, and presently the mist and the gathering night had swallowed him up. By a common impulse we clambered higher. Towards Sunbury was a dark appearance, as though a conical hill had suddenly come into being there, hiding our view of the

farther country; and then, remoter across the river, over Walton, we saw another such summit. These hill-like forms grew lower and broader even as we stared.

Moved by a sudden thought, I looked northward, and there I perceived a third of these cloudy black kopjes had risen.

Everything had suddenly become very still. Far away to the southeast, marking the quiet, we heard the Martians hooting to one another, and then the air quivered again with the distant thud of their guns. But the earthly artillery made no reply.

Now at the time we could not understand these things, but later I was to learn the meaning of these ominous kopjes that gathered in the twilight. Each of the Martians, standing in the great crescent I have described, had discharged, by means of the gunlike tube he carried, a huge canister over whatever hill, copse, cluster of houses, or other possible cover for guns, chanced to be in front of him. Some fired only one of these, some two--as in the case of the one we had seen; the one at Ripley is said to have discharged no fewer than five at that time. These canisters smashed on striking the ground--they did not explode--and incontinently disengaged an enormous volume of heavy, inky vapour, coiling and pouring upward in a huge and ebony cumulus cloud, a gaseous hill that sank and spread itself slowly over the surrounding country. And the touch of that vapour, the inhaling of its pungent wisps, was death to all that breathes.

It was heavy, this vapour, heavier than the densest smoke, so that, after the first tumultuous uprush and outflow of its impact, it sank down through the air and poured over the ground in a manner rather liquid than gaseous, abandoning

the hills, and streaming into the valleys and ditches and watercourses even as I have heard the carbonic-acid gas that pours from volcanic clefts is wont to do. And where it came upon water some chemical action occurred, and the surface would be instantly covered with a powdery scum that sank slowly and made way for more. The scum was absolutely insoluble, and it is a strange thing, seeing the instant effect of the gas, that one could drink without hurt the water from which it had been strained. The vapour did not diffuse as a true gas would do. It hung together in banks, flowing sluggishly down the slope of the land and driving reluctantly before the wind, and very slowly it combined with the mist and moisture of the air, and sank to the earth in the form of dust. Save that an unknown element giving a group of four lines in the blue of the spectrum is concerned, we are still entirely ignorant of the nature of this substance.

Once the tumultuous upheaval of its dispersion was over, the black smoke clung so closely to the ground, even before its precipitation, that fifty feet up in the air, on the roofs and upper stories of high houses and on great trees, there was a chance of escaping its poison altogether, as was proved even that night at Street Cobham and Ditton.

The man who escaped at the former place tells a wonderful story of the strangeness of its coiling flow, and how he looked down from the church spire and saw the houses of the village rising like ghosts out of its inky nothingness. For a day and a half he remained there, weary, starving and sun-scorched, the earth under the blue sky and against the prospect of the distant hills a velvet-black expanse, with red roofs, green trees, and, later, black-veiled shrubs and gates, barns, out-houses, and walls, rising here and there into the sunlight.

But that was at Street Cobham, where the black vapour

was allowed to remain until it sank of its own accord into the ground. As a rule the Martians, when it had served its purpose, cleared the air of it again by wading into it and directing a jet of steam upon it.

This they did with the vapour banks near us, as we saw in the starlight from the window of a deserted house at Upper Halliford, whither we had returned. From there we could see the searchlights on Richmond Hill and Kingston Hill going to and fro, and about eleven the windows rattled, and we heard the sound of the huge siege guns that had been put in position there. These continued intermittently for the space of a quarter of an hour, sending chance shots at the invisible Martians at Hampton and Ditton, and then the pale beams of the electric light vanished, and were replaced by a bright red glow.

Then the fourth cylinder fell--a brilliant green meteor--as I learned afterwards, in Bushey Park. Before the guns on the Richmond and Kingston line of hills began, there was a fitful cannonade far away in the southwest, due, I believe, to guns being fired haphazard before the black vapour could overwhelm the gunners.

So, setting about it as methodically as men might smoke out a wasps' nest, the Martians spread this strange stifling vapour over the Londonward country. The horns of the crescent slowly moved apart, until at last they formed a line from Hanwell to Coombe and Malden. All night through their destructive tubes advanced. Never once, after the Martian at St. George's Hill was brought down, did they give the artillery the ghost of a chance against them. Wherever there was a possibility of guns being laid for them unseen, a fresh canister of the black vapour was discharged, and where the guns were openly displayed the Heat-Ray was brought to

bear.

By midnight the blazing trees along the slopes of Richmond Park and the glare of Kingston Hill threw their light upon a network of black smoke, blotting out the whole valley of the Thames and extending as far as the eye could reach. And through this two Martians slowly waded, and turned their hissing steam jets this way and that.

They were sparing of the Heat-Ray that night, either because they had but a limited supply of material for its production or because they did not wish to destroy the country but only to crush and overawe the opposition they had aroused. In the latter aim they certainly succeeded. Sunday night was the end of the organised opposition to their movements. After that no body of men would stand against them, so hopeless was the enterprise. Even the crews of the torpedo-boats and destroyers that had brought their quick-firers up the Thames refused to stop, mutinied, and went down again. The only offensive operation men ventured upon after that night was the preparation of mines and pitfalls, and even in that their energies were frantic and spasmodic.

One has to imagine, as well as one may, the fate of those batteries towards Esher, waiting so tensely in the twilight. Survivors there were none. One may picture the orderly expectation, the officers alert and watchful, the gunners ready, the ammunition piled to hand, the limber gunners with their horses and waggons, the groups of civilian spectators standing as near as they were permitted, the evening stillness, the ambulances and hospital tents with the burned and wounded from Weybridge; then the dull resonance of the shots the Martians fired, and the clumsy projectile whirling over the trees and houses and smashing amid the neighbouring fields.

One may picture, too, the sudden shifting of the attention, the swiftly spreading coils and bellyings of that blackness advancing headlong, towering heavenward, turning the twilight to a palpable darkness, a strange and horrible antagonist of vapour striding upon its victims, men and horses near it seen dimly, running, shrieking, falling headlong, shouts of dismay, the guns suddenly abandoned, men choking and writhing on the ground, and the swift broadening-out of the opaque cone of smoke. And then night and extinction-- nothing but a silent mass of impenetrable vapour hiding its dead.

Before dawn the black vapour was pouring through the streets of Richmond, and the disintegrating organism of government was, with a last expiring effort, rousing the population of London to the necessity of flight.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE EXODUS FROM LONDON

So you understand the roaring wave of fear that swept through the greatest city in the world just as Monday was dawning--the stream of flight rising swiftly to a torrent, lashing in a foaming tumult round the railway stations, banked up into a horrible struggle about the shipping in the Thames, and hurrying by every available channel northward and eastward. By ten o'clock the police organisation, and by midday even the railway organisations, were losing coherency, losing shape and efficiency, guttering, softening, running at last in that swift liquefaction of the social body.

All the railway lines north of the Thames and the South-Eastern people at Cannon Street had been warned by midnight on Sunday, and trains were being filled. People were fighting savagely for standing-room in the carriages even at two o'clock. By three, people were being trampled and crushed even in Bishopsgate Street, a couple of hundred yards or more from Liverpool Street station; revolvers were fired, people stabbed, and the policemen who had been sent to direct the traffic, exhausted and infuriated, were breaking the heads of the people they were called out to protect.

And as the day advanced and the engine drivers and stokers refused to return to London, the pressure of the flight drove the people in an ever-thickening multitude away from the stations and along the northward-running roads. By mid-

day a Martian had been seen at Barnes, and a cloud of slowly sinking black vapour drove along the Thames and across the flats of Lambeth, cutting off all escape over the bridges in its sluggish advance. Another bank drove over Ealing, and surrounded a little island of survivors on Castle Hill, alive, but unable to escape.

After a fruitless struggle to get aboard a North-Western train at Chalk Farm--the engines of the trains that had loaded in the goods yard there PLOUGHED through shrieking people, and a dozen stalwart men fought to keep the crowd from crushing the driver against his furnace--my brother emerged upon the Chalk Farm road, dodged across through a hurrying swarm of vehicles, and had the luck to be foremost in the sack of a cycle shop. The front tire of the machine he got was punctured in dragging it through the window, but he got up and off, notwithstanding, with no further injury than a cut wrist. The steep foot of Haverstock Hill was impassable owing to several overturned horses, and my brother struck into Belsize Road.

So he got out of the fury of the panic, and, skirting the Edgware Road, reached Edgware about seven, fasting and wearied, but well ahead of the crowd. Along the road people were standing in the roadway, curious, wondering. He was passed by a number of cyclists, some horsemen, and two motor cars. A mile from Edgware the rim of the wheel broke, and the machine became unridable. He left it by the roadside and trudged through the village. There were shops half opened in the main street of the place, and people crowded on the pavement and in the doorways and windows, staring astonished at this extraordinary procession of fugitives that was beginning. He succeeded in getting some food at an inn.

For a time he remained in Edgware not knowing what next to do. The flying people increased in number. Many of them, like my brother, seemed inclined to loiter in the place. There was no fresh news of the invaders from Mars.

At that time the road was crowded, but as yet far from congested. Most of the fugitives at that hour were mounted on cycles, but there were soon motor cars, hansom cabs, and carriages hurrying along, and the dust hung in heavy clouds along the road to St. Albans.

It was perhaps a vague idea of making his way to Chelmsford, where some friends of his lived, that at last induced my brother to strike into a quiet lane running eastward. Presently he came upon a stile, and, crossing it, followed a footpath northeastward. He passed near several farmhouses and some little places whose names he did not learn. He saw few fugitives until, in a grass lane towards High Barnet, he happened upon two ladies who became his fellow travellers. He came upon them just in time to save them.

He heard their screams, and, hurrying round the corner, saw a couple of men struggling to drag them out of the little pony-chaise in which they had been driving, while a third with difficulty held the frightened pony's head. One of the ladies, a short woman dressed in white, was simply screaming; the other, a dark, slender figure, slashed at the man who gripped her arm with a whip she held in her disengaged hand.

My brother immediately grasped the situation, shouted, and hurried towards the struggle. One of the men desisted and turned towards him, and my brother, realising from his antagonist's face that a fight was unavoidable, and being an expert boxer, went into him forthwith and sent him down

against the wheel of the chaise.

It was no time for pugilistic chivalry and my brother laid him quiet with a kick, and gripped the collar of the man who pulled at the slender lady's arm. He heard the clatter of hoofs, the whip stung across his face, a third antagonist struck him between the eyes, and the man he held wrenched himself free and made off down the lane in the direction from which he had come.

Partly stunned, he found himself facing the man who had held the horse's head, and became aware of the chaise receding from him down the lane, swaying from side to side, and with the women in it looking back. The man before him, a burly rough, tried to close, and he stopped him with a blow in the face. Then, realising that he was deserted, he dodged round and made off down the lane after the chaise, with the sturdy man close behind him, and the fugitive, who had turned now, following remotely.

Suddenly he stumbled and fell; his immediate pursuer went headlong, and he rose to his feet to find himself with a couple of antagonists again. He would have had little chance against them had not the slender lady very pluckily pulled up and returned to his help. It seems she had had a revolver all this time, but it had been under the seat when she and her companion were attacked. She fired at six yards' distance, narrowly missing my brother. The less courageous of the robbers made off, and his companion followed him, cursing his cowardice. They both stopped in sight down the lane, where the third man lay insensible.

"Take this!" said the slender lady, and she gave my brother her revolver.

"Go back to the chaise," said my brother, wiping the blood from his split lip.

She turned without a word--they were both panting--and they went back to where the lady in white struggled to hold back the frightened pony.

The robbers had evidently had enough of it. When my brother looked again they were retreating.

"I'll sit here," said my brother, "if I may"; and he got upon the empty front seat. The lady looked over her shoulder.

"Give me the reins," she said, and laid the whip along the pony's side. In another moment a bend in the road hid the three men from my brother's eyes.

So, quite unexpectedly, my brother found himself, panting, with a cut mouth, a bruised jaw, and bloodstained knuckles, driving along an unknown lane with these two women.

He learned they were the wife and the younger sister of a surgeon living at Stanmore, who had come in the small hours from a dangerous case at Pinner, and heard at some railway station on his way of the Martian advance. He had hurried home, roused the women--their servant had left them two days before--packed some provisions, put his revolver under the seat--luckily for my brother--and told them to drive on to Edgware, with the idea of getting a train there. He stopped behind to tell the neighbours. He would overtake them, he said, at about half past four in the morning, and now it was nearly nine and they had seen nothing of him. They could not stop in Edgware because of the growing traffic through the place, and so they had come into this side lane.

That was the story they told my brother in fragments when presently they stopped again, nearer to New Barnet. He promised to stay with them, at least until they could determine what to do, or until the missing man arrived, and professed to be an expert shot with the revolver--a weapon strange to him--in order to give them confidence.

They made a sort of encampment by the wayside, and the pony became happy in the hedge. He told them of his own escape out of London, and all that he knew of these Martians and their ways. The sun crept higher in the sky, and after a time their talk died out and gave place to an uneasy state of anticipation. Several wayfarers came along the lane, and of these my brother gathered such news as he could. Every broken answer he had deepened his impression of the great disaster that had come on humanity, deepened his persuasion of the immediate necessity for prosecuting this flight. He urged the matter upon them.

"We have money," said the slender woman, and hesitated.

Her eyes met my brother's, and her hesitation ended.

"So have I," said my brother.

She explained that they had as much as thirty pounds in gold, besides a five-pound note, and suggested that with that they might get upon a train at St. Albans or New Barnet. My brother thought that was hopeless, seeing the fury of the Londoners to crowd upon the trains, and broached his own idea of striking across Essex towards Harwich and thence escaping from the country altogether.

Mrs. Elphinstone--that was the name of the woman in

white--would listen to no reasoning, and kept calling upon "George"; but her sister-in-law was astonishingly quiet and deliberate, and at last agreed to my brother's suggestion. So, designing to cross the Great North Road, they went on towards Barnet, my brother leading the pony to save it as much as possible.

As the sun crept up the sky the day became excessively hot, and under foot a thick, whitish sand grew burning and blinding, so that they travelled only very slowly. The hedges were grey with dust. And as they advanced towards Barnet a tumultuous murmuring grew stronger.

They began to meet more people. For the most part these were staring before them, murmuring indistinct questions, jaded, haggard, unclean. One man in evening dress passed them on foot, his eyes on the ground. They heard his voice, and, looking back at him, saw one hand clutched in his hair and the other beating invisible things. His paroxysm of rage over, he went on his way without once looking back.

As my brother's party went on towards the crossroads to the south of Barnet they saw a woman approaching the road across some fields on their left, carrying a child and with two other children; and then passed a man in dirty black, with a thick stick in one hand and a small portmanteau in the other. Then round the corner of the lane, from between the villas that guarded it at its confluence with the high road, came a little cart drawn by a sweating black pony and driven by a sallow youth in a bowler hat, grey with dust. There were three girls, East End factory girls, and a couple of little children crowded in the cart.

"This'll tike us rahnd Edgware?" asked the driver, wild-eyed, white-faced; and when my brother told him it would if he turned to the left, he whipped up at once without the

formality of thanks.

My brother noticed a pale grey smoke or haze rising among the houses in front of them, and veiling the white facade of a terrace beyond the road that appeared between the backs of the villas. Mrs. Elphinstone suddenly cried out at a number of tongues of smoky red flame leaping up above the houses in front of them against the hot, blue sky. The tumultuous noise resolved itself now into the disorderly mingling of many voices, the gride of many wheels, the creaking of waggons, and the staccato of hoofs. The lane came round sharply not fifty yards from the crossroads.

"Good heavens!" cried Mrs. Elphinstone. "What is this you are driving us into?"

My brother stopped.

For the main road was a boiling stream of people, a torrent of human beings rushing northward, one pressing on another. A great bank of dust, white and luminous in the blaze of the sun, made everything within twenty feet of the ground grey and indistinct and was perpetually renewed by the hurrying feet of a dense crowd of horses and of men and women on foot, and by the wheels of vehicles of every description.

"Way!" my brother heard voices crying. "Make way!"

It was like riding into the smoke of a fire to approach the meeting point of the lane and road; the crowd roared like a fire, and the dust was hot and pungent. And, indeed, a little way up the road a villa was burning and sending rolling masses of black smoke across the road to add to the confusion.

Two men came past them. Then a dirty woman, carrying a heavy bundle and weeping. A lost retriever dog, with hanging tongue, circled dubiously round them, scared and wretched, and fled at my brother's threat.

So much as they could see of the road Londonward between the houses to the right was a tumultuous stream of dirty, hurrying people, pent in between the villas on either side; the black heads, the crowded forms, grew into distinctness as they rushed towards the corner, hurried past, and merged their individuality again in a receding multitude that was swallowed up at last in a cloud of dust.

"Go on! Go on!" cried the voices. "Way! Way!"

One man's hands pressed on the back of another. My brother stood at the pony's head. Irresistibly attracted, he advanced slowly, pace by pace, down the lane.

Edgware had been a scene of confusion, Chalk Farm a riotous tumult, but this was a whole population in movement. It is hard to imagine that host. It had no character of its own. The figures poured out past the corner, and receded with their backs to the group in the lane. Along the margin came those who were on foot threatened by the wheels, stumbling in the ditches, blundering into one another.

The carts and carriages crowded close upon one another, making little way for those swifter and more impatient vehicles that darted forward every now and then when an opportunity showed itself of doing so, sending the people scattering against the fences and gates of the villas.

"Push on!" was the cry. "Push on! They are coming!"

In one cart stood a blind man in the uniform of the Salvation Army, gesticulating with his crooked fingers and bawling, "Eternity! Eternity!" His voice was hoarse and very loud so that my brother could hear him long after he was lost to sight in the dust. Some of the people who crowded in the carts whipped stupidly at their horses and quarrelled with other drivers; some sat motionless, staring at nothing with miserable eyes; some gnawed their hands with thirst, or lay prostrate in the bottoms of their conveyances. The horses' bits were covered with foam, their eyes bloodshot.

There were cabs, carriages, shop cars, waggons, beyond counting; a mail cart, a road-cleaner's cart marked "Vestry of St. Pancras," a huge timber waggon crowded with roughs. A brewer's dray rumbled by with its two near wheels splashed with fresh blood.

"Clear the way!" cried the voices. "Clear the way!"

"Eter-nity! Eter-nity!" came echoing down the road.

There were sad, haggard women tramping by, well dressed, with children that cried and stumbled, their dainty clothes smothered in dust, their weary faces smeared with tears. With many of these came men, sometimes helpful, sometimes lowering and savage. Fighting side by side with them pushed some weary street outcast in faded black rags, wide-eyed, loud-voiced, and foul-mouthed. There were sturdy workmen thrusting their way along, wretched, unkempt men, clothed like clerks or shopmen, struggling spasmodically; a wounded soldier my brother noticed, men dressed in the clothes of railway porters, one wretched creature in a nightshirt with a coat thrown over it.

But varied as its composition was, certain things all that host had in common. There were fear and pain on their faces, and fear behind them. A tumult up the road, a quarrel for a place in a waggon, sent the whole host of them quickening their pace; even a man so scared and broken that his knees bent under him was galvanised for a moment into renewed activity. The heat and dust had already been at work upon this multitude. Their skins were dry, their lips black and cracked. They were all thirsty, weary, and footsore. And amid the various cries one heard disputes, reproaches, groans of weariness and fatigue; the voices of most of them were hoarse and weak. Through it all ran a refrain:

"Way! Way! The Martians are coming!"

Few stopped and came aside from that flood. The lane opened slantingly into the main road with a narrow opening, and had a delusive appearance of coming from the direction of London. Yet a kind of eddy of people drove into its mouth; weaklings elbowed out of the stream, who for the most part rested but a moment before plunging into it again. A little way down the lane, with two friends bending over him, lay a man with a bare leg, wrapped about with bloody rags. He was a lucky man to have friends.

A little old man, with a grey military moustache and a filthy black frock coat, limped out and sat down beside the trap, removed his boot--his sock was blood-stained--shook out a pebble, and hobbled on again; and then a little girl of eight or nine, all alone, threw herself under the hedge close by my brother, weeping.

"I can't go on! I can't go on!"

My brother woke from his torpor of astonishment and lifted

her up, speaking gently to her, and carried her to Miss Elphinstone. So soon as my brother touched her she became quite still, as if frightened.

"Ellen!" shrieked a woman in the crowd, with tears in her voice--"Ellen!" And the child suddenly darted away from my brother, crying "Mother!"

"They are coming," said a man on horseback, riding past along the lane.

"Out of the way, there!" bawled a coachman, towering high; and my brother saw a closed carriage turning into the lane.

The people crushed back on one another to avoid the horse. My brother pushed the pony and chaise back into the hedge, and the man drove by and stopped at the turn of the way. It was a carriage, with a pole for a pair of horses, but only one was in the traces. My brother saw dimly through the dust that two men lifted out something on a white stretcher and put it gently on the grass beneath the privet hedge.

One of the men came running to my brother.

"Where is there any water?" he said. "He is dying fast, and very thirsty. It is Lord Garrick."

"Lord Garrick!" said my brother; "the Chief Justice?"

"The water?" he said.

"There may be a tap," said my brother, "in some of the houses. We have no water. I dare not leave my people."

The man pushed against the crowd towards the gate of the corner house.

"Go on!" said the people, thrusting at him. "They are coming! Go on!"

Then my brother's attention was distracted by a bearded, eagle-faced man lugging a small handbag, which split even as my brother's eyes rested on it and disgorged a mass of sovereigns that seemed to break up into separate coins as it struck the ground. They rolled hither and thither among the struggling feet of men and horses. The man stopped and looked stupidly at the heap, and the shaft of a cab struck his shoulder and sent him reeling. He gave a shriek and dodged back, and a cartwheel shaved him narrowly.

"Way!" cried the men all about him. "Make way!"

So soon as the cab had passed, he flung himself, with both hands open, upon the heap of coins, and began thrusting handfuls in his pocket. A horse rose close upon him, and in another moment, half rising, he had been borne down under the horse's hoofs.

"Stop!" screamed my brother, and pushing a woman out of his way, tried to clutch the bit of the horse.

Before he could get to it, he heard a scream under the wheels, and saw through the dust the rim passing over the poor wretch's back. The driver of the cart slashed his whip at my brother, who ran round behind the cart. The multitudinous shouting confused his ears. The man was writhing in the dust among his scattered money, unable to rise, for the wheel had broken his back, and his lower limbs lay limp

and dead. My brother stood up and yelled at the next driver, and a man on a black horse came to his assistance.

"Get him out of the road," said he; and, clutching the man's collar with his free hand, my brother lugged him sideways. But he still clutched after his money, and regarded my brother fiercely, hammering at his arm with a handful of gold. "Go on! Go on!" shouted angry voices behind.

"Way! Way!"

There was a smash as the pole of a carriage crashed into the cart that the man on horseback stopped. My brother looked up, and the man with the gold twisted his head round and bit the wrist that held his collar. There was a concussion, and the black horse came staggering sideways, and the carthorse pushed beside it. A hoof missed my brother's foot by a hair's breadth. He released his grip on the fallen man and jumped back. He saw anger change to terror on the face of the poor wretch on the ground, and in a moment he was hidden and my brother was borne backward and carried past the entrance of the lane, and had to fight hard in the torrent to recover it.

He saw Miss Elphinstone covering her eyes, and a little child, with all a child's want of sympathetic imagination, staring with dilated eyes at a dusty something that lay black and still, ground and crushed under the rolling wheels. "Let us go back!" he shouted, and began turning the pony round. "We cannot cross this--hell," he said and they went back a hundred yards the way they had come, until the fighting crowd was hidden. As they passed the bend in the lane my brother saw the face of the dying man in the ditch under the privet, deadly white and drawn, and shining with perspiration. The two women sat silent, crouching in their seat

and shivering.

Then beyond the bend my brother stopped again. Miss Elphinstone was white and pale, and her sister-in-law sat weeping, too wretched even to call upon "George." My brother was horrified and perplexed. So soon as they had retreated he realised how urgent and unavoidable it was to attempt this crossing. He turned to Miss Elphinstone, suddenly resolute.

"We must go that way," he said, and led the pony round again.

For the second time that day this girl proved her quality. To force their way into the torrent of people, my brother plunged into the traffic and held back a cab horse, while she drove the pony across its head. A waggon locked wheels for a moment and ripped a long splinter from the chaise. In another moment they were caught and swept forward by the stream. My brother, with the cabman's whip marks red across his face and hands, scrambled into the chaise and took the reins from her.

"Point the revolver at the man behind," he said, giving it to her, "if he presses us too hard. No!--point it at his horse."

Then he began to look out for a chance of edging to the right across the road. But once in the stream he seemed to lose volition, to become a part of that dusty rout. They swept through Chipping Barnet with the torrent; they were nearly a mile beyond the centre of the town before they had fought across to the opposite side of the way. It was din and confusion indescribable; but in and beyond the town the road forks repeatedly, and this to some extent relieved the stress.

They struck eastward through Hadley, and there on either side of the road, and at another place farther on they came upon a great multitude of people drinking at the stream, some fighting to come at the water. And farther on, from a lull near East Barnet, they saw two trains running slowly one after the other without signal or order--trains swarming with people, with men even among the coals behind the engines--going northward along the Great Northern Railway. My brother supposes they must have filled outside London, for at that time the furious terror of the people had rendered the central termini impossible.

Near this place they halted for the rest of the afternoon, for the violence of the day had already utterly exhausted all three of them. They began to suffer the beginnings of hunger; the night was cold, and none of them dared to sleep. And in the evening many people came hurrying along the road near-by their stopping place, fleeing from unknown dangers before them, and going in the direction from which my brother had come.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE "THUNDER CHILD"

Had the Martians aimed only at destruction, they might on Monday have annihilated the entire population of London, as it spread itself slowly through the home counties. Not only along the road through Barnet, but also through Edgware and Waltham Abbey, and along the roads eastward to South-end and Shoeburyness, and south of the Thames to Deal and Broadstairs, poured the same frantic rout. If one could have hung that June morning in a balloon in the blazing blue above London every northward and eastward road running out of the tangled maze of streets would have seemed stippled black with the streaming fugitives, each dot a human agony of terror and physical distress. I have set forth at length in the last chapter my brother's account of the road through Chipping Barnet, in order that my readers may realise how that swarming of black dots appeared to one of those concerned. Never before in the history of the world had such a mass of human beings moved and suffered together. The legendary hosts of Goths and Huns, the hugest armies Asia has ever seen, would have been but a drop in that current. And this was no disciplined march; it was a stampede--a stampede gigantic and terrible--without order and without a goal, six million people unarmed and unprovisioned, driving headlong. It was the beginning of the rout of civilisation, of the massacre of mankind.

Directly below him the balloonist would have seen the network of streets far and wide, houses, churches, squares,

crescents, gardens--already derelict--spread out like a huge map, and in the southward BLOTTED. Over Ealing, Richmond, Wimbledon, it would have seemed as if some monstrous pen had flung ink upon the chart. Steadily, incessantly, each black splash grew and spread, shooting out ramifications this way and that, now banking itself against rising ground, now pouring swiftly over a crest into a new-found valley, exactly as a gout of ink would spread itself upon blotting paper.

And beyond, over the blue hills that rise southward of the river, the glittering Martians went to and fro, calmly and methodically spreading their poison cloud over this patch of country and then over that, laying it again with their steam jets when it had served its purpose, and taking possession of the conquered country. They do not seem to have aimed at extermination so much as at complete demoralisation and the destruction of any opposition. They exploded any stores of powder they came upon, cut every telegraph, and wrecked the railways here and there. They were hamstringing mankind. They seemed in no hurry to extend the field of their operations, and did not come beyond the central part of London all that day. It is possible that a very considerable number of people in London stuck to their houses through Monday morning. Certain it is that many died at home suffocated by the Black Smoke.

Until about midday the Pool of London was an astonishing scene. Steamboats and shipping of all sorts lay there, tempted by the enormous sums of money offered by fugitives, and it is said that many who swam out to these vessels were thrust off with boathooks and drowned. About one o'clock in the afternoon the thinning remnant of a cloud of the black vapour appeared between the arches of Blackfriars Bridge. At that the Pool became a scene of mad confusion, fighting, and collision, and for some time a multitude of boats and barges

jammed in the northern arch of the Tower Bridge, and the sailors and lightermen had to fight savagely against the people who swarmed upon them from the riverfront. People were actually clambering down the piers of the bridge from above.

When, an hour later, a Martian appeared beyond the Clock Tower and waded down the river, nothing but wreckage floated above Limehouse.

Of the falling of the fifth cylinder I have presently to tell. The sixth star fell at Wimbledon. My brother, keeping watch beside the women in the chaise in a meadow, saw the green flash of it far beyond the hills. On Tuesday the little party, still set upon getting across the sea, made its way through the swarming country towards Colchester. The news that the Martians were now in possession of the whole of London was confirmed. They had been seen at Highgate, and even, it was said, at Neasden. But they did not come into my brother's view until the morrow.

That day the scattered multitudes began to realise the urgent need of provisions. As they grew hungry the rights of property ceased to be regarded. Farmers were out to defend their cattle-sheds, granaries, and ripening root crops with arms in their hands. A number of people now, like my brother, had their faces eastward, and there were some desperate souls even going back towards London to get food. These were chiefly people from the northern suburbs, whose knowledge of the Black Smoke came by hearsay. He heard that about half the members of the government had gathered at Birmingham, and that enormous quantities of high explosives were being prepared to be used in automatic mines across the Midland counties.

He was also told that the Midland Railway Company had replaced the desertions of the first day's panic, had resumed traffic, and was running northward trains from St. Albans to relieve the congestion of the home counties. There was also a placard in Chipping Ongar announcing that large stores of flour were available in the northern towns and that within twenty-four hours bread would be distributed among the starving people in the neighbourhood. But this intelligence did not deter him from the plan of escape he had formed, and the three pressed eastward all day, and heard no more of the bread distribution than this promise. Nor, as a matter of fact, did anyone else hear more of it. That night fell the seventh star, falling upon Primrose Hill. It fell while Miss Elphinstone was watching, for she took that duty alternately with my brother. She saw it.

On Wednesday the three fugitives--they had passed the night in a field of unripe wheat--reached Chelmsford, and there a body of the inhabitants, calling itself the Committee of Public Supply, seized the pony as provisions, and would give nothing in exchange for it but the promise of a share in it the next day. Here there were rumours of Martians at Epping, and news of the destruction of Waltham Abbey Powder Mills in a vain attempt to blow up one of the invaders.

People were watching for Martians here from the church towers. My brother, very luckily for him as it chanced, preferred to push on at once to the coast rather than wait for food, although all three of them were very hungry. By mid-day they passed through Tillingham, which, strangely enough, seemed to be quite silent and deserted, save for a few furtive plunderers hunting for food. Near Tillingham they suddenly came in sight of the sea, and the most amazing crowd of shipping of all sorts that it is possible to imagine.

For after the sailors could no longer come up the Thames, they came on to the Essex coast, to Harwich and Walton and Clacton, and afterwards to Foulness and Shoebury, to bring off the people. They lay in a huge sickle-shaped curve that vanished into mist at last towards the Naze. Close inshore was a multitude of fishing smacks--English, Scotch, French, Dutch, and Swedish; steam launches from the Thames, yachts, electric boats; and beyond were ships of large burden, a multitude of filthy colliers, trim merchantmen, cattle ships, passenger boats, petroleum tanks, ocean tramps, an old white transport even, neat white and grey liners from Southampton and Hamburg; and along the blue coast across the Blackwater my brother could make out dimly a dense swarm of boats chaffering with the people on the beach, a swarm which also extended up the Blackwater almost to Maldon.

About a couple of miles out lay an ironclad, very low in the water, almost, to my brother's perception, like a water-logged ship. This was the ram THUNDER CHILD. It was the only warship in sight, but far away to the right over the smooth surface of the sea--for that day there was a dead calm--lay a serpent of black smoke to mark the next iron-clads of the Channel Fleet, which hovered in an extended line, steam up and ready for action, across the Thames estuary during the course of the Martian conquest, vigilant and yet powerless to prevent it.

At the sight of the sea, Mrs. Elphinstone, in spite of the assurances of her sister-in-law, gave way to panic. She had never been out of England before, she would rather die than trust herself friendless in a foreign country, and so forth. She seemed, poor woman, to imagine that the French and the Martians might prove very similar. She had been growing increasingly hysterical, fearful, and depressed during the two days' journeyings. Her great idea was to return to Stanmore.

Things had been always well and safe at Stanmore. They would find George at Stanmore.

It was with the greatest difficulty they could get her down to the beach, where presently my brother succeeded in attracting the attention of some men on a paddle steamer from the Thames. They sent a boat and drove a bargain for thirty-six pounds for the three. The steamer was going, these men said, to Ostend.

It was about two o'clock when my brother, having paid their fares at the gangway, found himself safely aboard the steamboat with his charges. There was food aboard, albeit at exorbitant prices, and the three of them contrived to eat a meal on one of the seats forward.

There were already a couple of score of passengers aboard, some of whom had expended their last money in securing a passage, but the captain lay off the Blackwater until five in the afternoon, picking up passengers until the seated decks were even dangerously crowded. He would probably have remained longer had it not been for the sound of guns that began about that hour in the south. As if in answer, the ironclad seaward fired a small gun and hoisted a string of flags. A jet of smoke sprang out of her funnels.

Some of the passengers were of opinion that this firing came from Shoeburyness, until it was noticed that it was growing louder. At the same time, far away in the southeast the masts and upperworks of three ironclads rose one after the other out of the sea, beneath clouds of black smoke. But my brother's attention speedily reverted to the distant firing in the south. He fancied he saw a column of smoke rising out of the distant grey haze.

The little steamer was already flapping her way eastward of the big crescent of shipping, and the low Essex coast was growing blue and hazy, when a Martian appeared, small and faint in the remote distance, advancing along the muddy coast from the direction of Foulness. At that the captain on the bridge swore at the top of his voice with fear and anger at his own delay, and the paddles seemed infected with his terror. Every soul aboard stood at the bulwarks or on the seats of the steamer and stared at that distant shape, higher than the trees or church towers inland, and advancing with a leisurely parody of a human stride.

It was the first Martian my brother had seen, and he stood, more amazed than terrified, watching this Titan advancing deliberately towards the shipping, wading farther and farther into the water as the coast fell away. Then, far away beyond the Crouch, came another, striding over some stunted trees, and then yet another, still farther off, wading deeply through a shiny mudflat that seemed to hang halfway up between sea and sky. They were all stalking seaward, as if to intercept the escape of the multitudinous vessels that were crowded between Foulness and the Naze. In spite of the throbbing exertions of the engines of the little paddle-boat, and the pouring foam that her wheels flung behind her, she receded with terrifying slowness from this ominous advance.

Glancing northwestward, my brother saw the large crescent of shipping already writhing with the approaching terror; one ship passing behind another, another coming round from broadside to end on, steamships whistling and giving off volumes of steam, sails being let out, launches rushing hither and thither. He was so fascinated by this and by the creeping danger away to the left that he had no eyes for anything seaward. And then a swift movement of the steamboat (she

had suddenly come round to avoid being run down) flung him headlong from the seat upon which he was standing. There was a shouting all about him, a trampling of feet, and a cheer that seemed to be answered faintly. The steamboat lurched and rolled him over upon his hands.

He sprang to his feet and saw to starboard, and not a hundred yards from their heeling, pitching boat, a vast iron bulk like the blade of a plough tearing through the water, tossing it on either side in huge waves of foam that leaped towards the steamer, flinging her paddles helplessly in the air, and then sucking her deck down almost to the waterline.

A douche of spray blinded my brother for a moment. When his eyes were clear again he saw the monster had passed and was rushing landward. Big iron upperworks rose out of this headlong structure, and from that twin funnels projected and spat a smoking blast shot with fire. It was the torpedo ram, THUNDER CHILD, steaming headlong, coming to the rescue of the threatened shipping.

Keeping his footing on the heaving deck by clutching the bulwarks, my brother looked past this charging leviathan at the Martians again, and he saw the three of them now close together, and standing so far out to sea that their tripod supports were almost entirely submerged. Thus sunken, and seen in remote perspective, they appeared far less formidable than the huge iron bulk in whose wake the steamer was pitching so helplessly. It would seem they were regarding this new antagonist with astonishment. To their intelligence, it may be, the giant was even such another as themselves. The THUNDER CHILD fired no gun, but simply drove full speed towards them. It was probably her not firing that enabled her to get so near the enemy as she did. They did not know what to make of her. One shell, and they would have sent

her to the bottom forthwith with the Heat-Ray.

She was steaming at such a pace that in a minute she seemed halfway between the steamboat and the Martians-- a diminishing black bulk against the receding horizontal expanse of the Essex coast.

Suddenly the foremost Martian lowered his tube and discharged a canister of the black gas at the ironclad. It hit her larboard side and glanced off in an inky jet that rolled away to seaward, an unfolding torrent of Black Smoke, from which the ironclad drove clear. To the watchers from the steamer, low in the water and with the sun in their eyes, it seemed as though she were already among the Martians.

They saw the gaunt figures separating and rising out of the water as they retreated shoreward, and one of them raised the camera-like generator of the Heat-Ray. He held it pointing obliquely downward, and a bank of steam sprang from the water at its touch. It must have driven through the iron of the ship's side like a white-hot iron rod through paper.

A flicker of flame went up through the rising steam, and then the Martian reeled and staggered. In another moment he was cut down, and a great body of water and steam shot high in the air. The guns of the THUNDER CHILD sounded through the reek, going off one after the other, and one shot splashed the water high close by the steamer, ricocheted towards the other flying ships to the north, and smashed a smack to matchwood.

But no one heeded that very much. At the sight of the Martian's collapse the captain on the bridge yelled inarticulately, and all the crowding passengers on the steamer's stern shouted together. And then they yelled again. For, surging

out beyond the white tumult, drove something long and black, the flames streaming from its middle parts, its ventilators and funnels spouting fire.

She was alive still; the steering gear, it seems, was intact and her engines working. She headed straight for a second Martian, and was within a hundred yards of him when the Heat-Ray came to bear. Then with a violent thud, a blinding flash, her decks, her funnels, leaped upward. The Martian staggered with the violence of her explosion, and in another moment the flaming wreckage, still driving forward with the impetus of its pace, had struck him and crumpled him up like a thing of cardboard. My brother shouted involuntarily. A boiling tumult of steam hid everything again.

"Two!," yelled the captain.

Everyone was shouting. The whole steamer from end to end rang with frantic cheering that was taken up first by one and then by all in the crowding multitude of ships and boats that was driving out to sea.

The steam hung upon the water for many minutes, hiding the third Martian and the coast altogether. And all this time the boat was paddling steadily out to sea and away from the fight; and when at last the confusion cleared, the drifting bank of black vapour intervened, and nothing of the THUNDER CHILD could be made out, nor could the third Martian be seen. But the ironclads to seaward were now quite close and standing in towards shore past the steamboat.

The little vessel continued to beat its way seaward, and the ironclads receded slowly towards the coast, which was hidden still by a marbled bank of vapour, part steam, part black gas, eddying and combining in the strangest way. The

fleet of refugees was scattering to the northeast; several smacks were sailing between the ironclads and the steamboat. After a time, and before they reached the sinking cloud bank, the warships turned northward, and then abruptly went about and passed into the thickening haze of evening southward. The coast grew faint, and at last indistinguishable amid the low banks of clouds that were gathering about the sinking sun.

Then suddenly out of the golden haze of the sunset came the vibration of guns, and a form of black shadows moving. Everyone struggled to the rail of the steamer and peered into the blinding furnace of the west, but nothing was to be distinguished clearly. A mass of smoke rose slanting and barred the face of the sun. The steamboat throbbed on its way through an interminable suspense.

The sun sank into grey clouds, the sky flushed and darkened, the evening star trembled into sight. It was deep twilight when the captain cried out and pointed. My brother strained his eyes. Something rushed up into the sky out of the greyness--rushed slantingly upward and very swiftly into the luminous clearness above the clouds in the western sky; something flat and broad, and very large, that swept round in a vast curve, grew smaller, sank slowly, and vanished again into the grey mystery of the night. And as it flew it rained down darkness upon the land.

BOOK TWO

THE EARTH UNDER THE MARTIANS

CHAPTER ONE

UNDER FOOT

In the first book I have wandered so much from my own adventures to tell of the experiences of my brother that all through the last two chapters I and the curate have been lurking in the empty house at Halliford whither we fled to escape the Black Smoke. There I will resume. We stopped there all Sunday night and all the next day--the day of the panic--in a little island of daylight, cut off by the Black Smoke from the rest of the world. We could do nothing but wait in aching inactivity during those two weary days.

My mind was occupied by anxiety for my wife. I figured her at Leatherhead, terrified, in danger, mourning me already as a dead man. I paced the rooms and cried aloud when I thought of how I was cut off from her, of all that might happen to her in my absence. My cousin I knew was brave enough for any emergency, but he was not the sort of man to realise danger quickly, to rise promptly. What was needed now was not bravery, but circumspection. My only consolation was to believe that the Martians were moving Londonward and away from her. Such vague anxieties keep the mind sensitive and painful. I grew very weary and irritable with the curate's perpetual ejaculations; I tired of the sight of his selfish despair. After some ineffectual remonstrance I kept away from him, staying in a room--evidently a children's schoolroom--containing globes, forms, and copybooks. When he followed me thither, I went to a box room at the top of the house and, in order to be alone with my aching miseries, locked myself in.

We were hopelessly hemmed in by the Black Smoke all that day and the morning of the next. There were signs of people in the next house on Sunday evening--a face at a window and moving lights, and later the slamming of a door. But I do not know who these people were, nor what became of them. We saw nothing of them next day. The Black Smoke drifted slowly riverward all through Monday morning, creeping nearer and nearer to us, driving at last along the roadway outside the house that hid us.

A Martian came across the fields about midday, laying the stuff with a jet of superheated steam that hissed against the walls, smashed all the windows it touched, and scalded the curate's hand as he fled out of the front room. When at last we crept across the sodden rooms and looked out again, the country northward was as though a black snowstorm had passed over it. Looking towards the river, we were astonished to see an unaccountable redness mingling with the black of the scorched meadows.

For a time we did not see how this change affected our position, save that we were relieved of our fear of the Black Smoke. But later I perceived that we were no longer hemmed in, that now we might get away. So soon as I realised that the way of escape was open, my dream of action returned. But the curate was lethargic, unreasonable.

"We are safe here," he repeated; "safe here."

I resolved to leave him--would that I had! Wiser now for the artilleryman's teaching, I sought out food and drink. I had found oil and rags for my burns, and I also took a hat and a flannel shirt that I found in one of the bedrooms. When it was clear to him that I meant to go alone--had reconciled

myself to going alone--he suddenly roused himself to come. And all being quiet throughout the afternoon, we started about five o'clock, as I should judge, along the blackened road to Sunbury.

In Sunbury, and at intervals along the road, were dead bodies lying in contorted attitudes, horses as well as men, overturned carts and luggage, all covered thickly with black dust. That pall of cindery powder made me think of what I had read of the destruction of Pompeii. We got to Hampton Court without misadventure, our minds full of strange and unfamiliar appearances, and at Hampton Court our eyes were relieved to find a patch of green that had escaped the suffocating drift. We went through Bushey Park, with its deer going to and fro under the chestnuts, and some men and women hurrying in the distance towards Hampton, and so we came to Twickenham. These were the first people we saw.

Away across the road the woods beyond Ham and Peter-sham were still afire. Twickenham was uninjured by either Heat-Ray or Black Smoke, and there were more people about here, though none could give us news. For the most part they were like ourselves, taking advantage of a lull to shift their quarters. I have an impression that many of the houses here were still occupied by scared inhabitants, too frightened even for flight. Here too the evidence of a hasty rout was abundant along the road. I remember most vividly three smashed bicycles in a heap, pounded into the road by the wheels of subsequent carts. We crossed Richmond Bridge about half past eight. We hurried across the exposed bridge, of course, but I noticed floating down the stream a number of red masses, some many feet across. I did not know what these were--there was no time for scrutiny--and I put a more horrible interpretation on them than they deserved. Here again on the Surrey side were black dust that had once been smoke,

and dead bodies--a heap near the approach to the station; but we had no glimpse of the Martians until we were some way towards Barnes.

We saw in the blackened distance a group of three people running down a side street towards the river, but otherwise it seemed deserted. Up the hill Richmond town was burning briskly; outside the town of Richmond there was no trace of the Black Smoke.

Then suddenly, as we approached Kew, came a number of people running, and the upperworks of a Martian fighting-machine loomed in sight over the housetops, not a hundred yards away from us. We stood aghast at our danger, and had the Martian looked down we must immediately have perished. We were so terrified that we dared not go on, but turned aside and hid in a shed in a garden. There the curate crouched, weeping silently, and refusing to stir again.

But my fixed idea of reaching Leatherhead would not let me rest, and in the twilight I ventured out again. I went through a shrubbery, and along a passage beside a big house standing in its own grounds, and so emerged upon the road towards Kew. The curate I left in the shed, but he came hurrying after me.

That second start was the most foolhardy thing I ever did. For it was manifest the Martians were about us. No sooner had the curate overtaken me than we saw either the fighting-machine we had seen before or another, far away across the meadows in the direction of Kew Lodge. Four or five little black figures hurried before it across the green-grey of the field, and in a moment it was evident this Martian pursued them. In three strides he was among them, and they ran radiating from his feet in all directions. He used no Heat-Ray

to destroy them, but picked them up one by one. Apparently he tossed them into the great metallic carrier which projected behind him, much as a workman's basket hangs over his shoulder.

It was the first time I realised that the Martians might have any other purpose than destruction with defeated humanity. We stood for a moment petrified, then turned and fled through a gate behind us into a walled garden, fell into, rather than found, a fortunate ditch, and lay there, scarce daring to whisper to each other until the stars were out.

I suppose it was nearly eleven o'clock before we gathered courage to start again, no longer venturing into the road, but sneaking along hedgerows and through plantations, and watching keenly through the darkness, he on the right and I on the left, for the Martians, who seemed to be all about us. In one place we blundered upon a scorched and blackened area, now cooling and ashen, and a number of scattered dead bodies of men, burned horribly about the heads and trunks but with their legs and boots mostly intact; and of dead horses, fifty feet, perhaps, behind a line of four ripped guns and smashed gun carriages.

Sheen, it seemed, had escaped destruction, but the place was silent and deserted. Here we happened on no dead, though the night was too dark for us to see into the side roads of the place. In Sheen my companion suddenly complained of faintness and thirst, and we decided to try one of the houses.

The first house we entered, after a little difficulty with the window, was a small semi-detached villa, and I found nothing eatable left in the place but some mouldy cheese. There was, however, water to drink; and I took a

hatchet, which promised to be useful in our next house-breaking.

We then crossed to a place where the road turns towards Mortlake. Here there stood a white house within a walled garden, and in the pantry of this domicile we found a store of food--two loaves of bread in a pan, an uncooked steak, and the half of a ham. I give this catalogue so precisely because, as it happened, we were destined to subsist upon this store for the next fortnight. Bottled beer stood under a shelf, and there were two bags of haricot beans and some limp lettuces. This pantry opened into a kind of wash-up kitchen, and in this was firewood; there was also a cupboard, in which we found nearly a dozen of burgundy, tinned soups and salmon, and two tins of biscuits.

We sat in the adjacent kitchen in the dark--for we dared not strike a light--and ate bread and ham, and drank beer out of the same bottle. The curate, who was still timorous and restless, was now, oddly enough, for pushing on, and I was urging him to keep up his strength by eating when the thing happened that was to imprison us.

"It can't be midnight yet," I said, and then came a blinding glare of vivid green light. Everything in the kitchen leaped out, clearly visible in green and black, and vanished again. And then followed such a concussion as I have never heard before or since. So close on the heels of this as to seem instantaneous came a thud behind me, a clash of glass, a crash and rattle of falling masonry all about us, and the plaster of the ceiling came down upon us, smashing into a multitude of fragments upon our heads. I was knocked headlong across the floor against the oven handle and stunned. I was insensible for a long time, the curate told me, and when I came to we were in darkness again, and he, with a face wet, as I found

afterwards, with blood from a cut forehead, was dabbing water over me.

For some time I could not recollect what had happened. Then things came to me slowly. A bruise on my temple asserted itself.

"Are you better?" asked the curate in a whisper.

At last I answered him. I sat up.

"Don't move," he said. "The floor is covered with smashed crockery from the dresser. You can't possibly move without making a noise, and I fancy THEY are outside."

We both sat quite silent, so that we could scarcely hear each other breathing. Everything seemed deadly still, but once something near us, some plaster or broken brickwork, slid down with a rumbling sound. Outside and very near was an intermittent, metallic rattle.

"That!" said the curate, when presently it happened again.

"Yes," I said. "But what is it?"

"A Martian!" said the curate.

I listened again.

"It was not like the Heat-Ray," I said, and for a time I was inclined to think one of the great fighting-machines had stumbled against the house, as I had seen one stumble against the tower of Shepperton Church.

Our situation was so strange and incomprehensible that for three or four hours, until the dawn came, we scarcely moved. And then the light filtered in, not through the window, which remained black, but through a triangular aperture between a beam and a heap of broken bricks in the wall behind us. The interior of the kitchen we now saw greyly for the first time.

The window had been burst in by a mass of garden mould, which flowed over the table upon which we had been sitting and lay about our feet. Outside, the soil was banked high against the house. At the top of the window frame we could see an uprooted drainpipe. The floor was littered with smashed hardware; the end of the kitchen towards the house was broken into, and since the daylight shone in there, it was evident the greater part of the house had collapsed. Contrasting vividly with this ruin was the neat dresser, stained in the fashion, pale green, and with a number of copper and tin vessels below it, the wallpaper imitating blue and white tiles, and a couple of coloured supplements fluttering from the walls above the kitchen range.

As the dawn grew clearer, we saw through the gap in the wall the body of a Martian, standing sentinel, I suppose, over the still glowing cylinder. At the sight of that we crawled as circumspectly as possible out of the twilight of the kitchen into the darkness of the scullery.

Abruptly the right interpretation dawned upon my mind.

"The fifth cylinder," I whispered, "the fifth shot from Mars, has struck this house and buried us under the ruins!"

For a time the curate was silent, and then he whispered:

"God have mercy upon us!"

I heard him presently whimpering to himself.

Save for that sound we lay quite still in the scullery; I for my part scarce dared breathe, and sat with my eyes fixed on the faint light of the kitchen door. I could just see the curate's face, a dim, oval shape, and his collar and cuffs. Outside there began a metallic hammering, then a violent hooting, and then again, after a quiet interval, a hissing like the hissing of an engine. These noises, for the most part problematical, continued intermittently, and seemed if anything to increase in number as time wore on. Presently a measured thudding and a vibration that made everything about us quiver and the vessels in the pantry ring and shift, began and continued. Once the light was eclipsed, and the ghostly kitchen doorway became absolutely dark. For many hours we must have crouched there, silent and shivering, until our tired attention failed. . . .

At last I found myself awake and very hungry. I am inclined to believe we must have spent the greater portion of a day before that awakening. My hunger was at a stride so insistent that it moved me to action. I told the curate I was going to seek food, and felt my way towards the pantry. He made me no answer, but so soon as I began eating the faint noise I made stirred him up and I heard him crawling after me.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT WE SAW FROM THE RUINED HOUSE

After eating we crept back to the scullery, and there I must have dozed again, for when presently I looked round I was alone. The thudding vibration continued with wearisome persistence. I whispered for the curate several times, and at last felt my way to the door of the kitchen. It was still daylight, and I perceived him across the room, lying against the triangular hole that looked out upon the Martians. His shoulders were hunched, so that his head was hidden from me.

I could hear a number of noises almost like those in an engine shed; and the place rocked with that beating thud. Through the aperture in the wall I could see the top of a tree touched with gold and the warm blue of a tranquil evening sky. For a minute or so I remained watching the curate, and then I advanced, crouching and stepping with extreme care amid the broken crockery that littered the floor.

I touched the curate's leg, and he started so violently that a mass of plaster went sliding down outside and fell with a loud impact. I gripped his arm, fearing he might cry out, and for a long time we crouched motionless. Then I turned to see how much of our rampart remained. The detachment of the plaster had left a vertical slit open in the debris, and by raising myself cautiously across a beam I was able to see out of this gap into what had been overnight a quiet suburban roadway. Vast, indeed, was the change that we beheld.

The fifth cylinder must have fallen right into the midst

of the house we had first visited. The building had vanished, completely smashed, pulverised, and dispersed by the blow. The cylinder lay now far beneath the original foundations-- deep in a hole, already vastly larger than the pit I had looked into at Woking. The earth all round it had splashed under that tremendous impact--"splashed" is the only word --and lay in heaped piles that hid the masses of the adjacent houses. It had behaved exactly like mud under the violent blow of a hammer. Our house had collapsed backward; the front portion, even on the ground floor, had been destroyed completely; by a chance the kitchen and scullery had escaped, and stood buried now under soil and ruins, closed in by tons of earth on every side save towards the cylinder. Over that aspect we hung now on the very edge of the great circular pit the Martians were engaged in making. The heavy beating sound was evidently just behind us, and ever and again a bright green vapour drove up like a veil across our peephole.

The cylinder was already opened in the centre of the pit, and on the farther edge of the pit, amid the smashed and gravel-heaped shrubbery, one of the great fighting-machines, deserted by its occupant, stood stiff and tall against the evening sky. At first I scarcely noticed the pit and the cylinder, although it has been convenient to describe them first, on account of the extraordinary glittering mechanism I saw busy in the excavation, and on account of the strange creatures that were crawling slowly and painfully across the heaped mould near it.

The mechanism it certainly was that held my attention first. It was one of those complicated fabrics that have since been called handling-machines, and the study of which has already given such an enormous impetus to terrestrial invention. As it dawned upon me first, it presented a sort of metallic spider

with five jointed, agile legs, and with an extraordinary number of jointed levers, bars, and reaching and clutching tentacles about its body. Most of its arms were retracted, but with three long tentacles it was fishing out a number of rods, plates, and bars which lined the covering and apparently strengthened the walls of the cylinder. These, as it extracted them, were lifted out and deposited upon a level surface of earth behind it.

Its motion was so swift, complex, and perfect that at first I did not see it as a machine, in spite of its metallic glitter. The fighting-machines were co-ordinated and animated to an extraordinary pitch, but nothing to compare with this. People who have never seen these structures, and have only the ill-imagined efforts of artists or the imperfect descriptions of such eye-witnesses as myself to go upon, scarcely realise that living quality.

I recall particularly the illustration of one of the first pamphlets to give a consecutive account of the war. The artist had evidently made a hasty study of one of the fighting-machines, and there his knowledge ended. He presented them as tilted, stiff tripods, without either flexibility or subtlety, and with an altogether misleading monotony of effect. The pamphlet containing these renderings had a considerable vogue, and I mention them here simply to warn the reader against the impression they may have created. They were no more like the Martians I saw in action than a Dutch doll is like a human being. To my mind, the pamphlet would have been much better without them.

At first, I say, the handling-machine did not impress me as a machine, but as a crablike creature with a glittering integument, the controlling Martian whose delicate tentacles actuated its movements seeming to be simply the equivalent

of the crab's cerebral portion. But then I perceived the resemblance of its grey-brown, shiny, leathery integument to that of the other sprawling bodies beyond, and the true nature of this dexterous workman dawned upon me. With that realisation my interest shifted to those other creatures, the real Martians. Already I had had a transient impression of these, and the first nausea no longer obscured my observation. Moreover, I was concealed and motionless, and under no urgency of action.

They were, I now saw, the most unearthly creatures it is possible to conceive. They were huge round bodies--or, rather, heads--about four feet in diameter, each body having in front of it a face. This face had no nostrils--indeed, the Martians do not seem to have had any sense of smell, but it had a pair of very large dark-coloured eyes, and just beneath this a kind of fleshy beak. In the back of this head or body--I scarcely know how to speak of it--was the single tight tympanic surface, since known to be anatomically an ear, though it must have been almost useless in our dense air. In a group round the mouth were sixteen slender, almost whiplike tentacles, arranged in two bunches of eight each. These bunches have since been named rather aptly, by that distinguished anatomist, Professor Howes, the HANDS. Even as I saw these Martians for the first time they seemed to be endeavouring to raise themselves on these hands, but of course, with the increased weight of terrestrial conditions, this was impossible. There is reason to suppose that on Mars they may have progressed upon them with some facility.

The internal anatomy, I may remark here, as dissection has since shown, was almost equally simple. The greater part of the structure was the brain, sending enormous nerves to the eyes, ear, and tactile tentacles. Besides this were the bulky lungs, into which the mouth opened, and the heart

and its vessels. The pulmonary distress caused by the denser atmosphere and greater gravitational attraction was only too evident in the convulsive movements of the outer skin.

And this was the sum of the Martian organs. Strange as it may seem to a human being, all the complex apparatus of digestion, which makes up the bulk of our bodies, did not exist in the Martians. They were heads--merely heads. Entrails they had none. They did not eat, much less digest. Instead, they took the fresh, living blood of other creatures, and INJECTED it into their own veins. I have myself seen this being done, as I shall mention in its place. But, squeamish as I may seem, I cannot bring myself to describe what I could not endure even to continue watching. Let it suffice to say, blood obtained from a still living animal, in most cases from a human being, was run directly by means of a little pipette into the recipient canal. . . .

The bare idea of this is no doubt horribly repulsive to us, but at the same time I think that we should remember how repulsive our carnivorous habits would seem to an intelligent rabbit.

The physiological advantages of the practice of injection are undeniable, if one thinks of the tremendous waste of human time and energy occasioned by eating and the digestive process. Our bodies are half made up of glands and tubes and organs, occupied in turning heterogeneous food into blood. The digestive processes and their reaction upon the nervous system sap our strength and colour our minds. Men go happy or miserable as they have healthy or unhealthy livers, or sound gastric glands. But the Martians were lifted above all these organic fluctuations of mood and emotion.

Their undeniable preference for men as their source of nourishment is partly explained by the nature of the remains of the victims they had brought with them as provisions from Mars. These creatures, to judge from the shrivelled remains that have fallen into human hands, were bipeds with flimsy, silicious skeletons (almost like those of the silicious sponges) and feeble musculature, standing about six feet high and having round, erect heads, and large eyes in flinty sockets. Two or three of these seem to have been brought in each cylinder, and all were killed before earth was reached. It was just as well for them, for the mere attempt to stand upright upon our planet would have broken every bone in their bodies.

And while I am engaged in this description, I may add in this place certain further details which, although they were not all evident to us at the time, will enable the reader who is unacquainted with them to form a clearer picture of these offensive creatures.

In three other points their physiology differed strangely from ours. Their organisms did not sleep, any more than the heart of man sleeps. Since they had no extensive muscular mechanism to recuperate, that periodical extinction was unknown to them. They had little or no sense of fatigue, it would seem. On earth they could never have moved without effort, yet even to the last they kept in action. In twenty-four hours they did twenty-four hours of work, as even on earth is perhaps the case with the ants.

In the next place, wonderful as it seems in a sexual world, the Martians were absolutely without sex, and therefore without any of the tumultuous emotions that arise from that difference among men. A young Martian, there can now be no dispute, was really born upon earth during the war, and

it was found attached to its parent, partially BUDDED off, just as young lilybulbs bud off, or like the young animals in the fresh-water polyp.

In man, in all the higher terrestrial animals, such a method of increase has disappeared; but even on this earth it was certainly the primitive method. Among the lower animals, up even to those first cousins of the vertebrated animals, the Tunicates, the two processes occur side by side, but finally the sexual method superseded its competitor altogether. On Mars, however, just the reverse has apparently been the case.

It is worthy of remark that a certain speculative writer of quasi-scientific repute, writing long before the Martian invasion, did forecast for man a final structure not unlike the actual Martian condition. His prophecy, I remember, appeared in November or December, 1893, in a long-defunct publication, the PALL MALL BUDGET, and I recall a caricature of it in a pre-Martian periodical called PUNCH. He pointed out--writing in a foolish, facetious tone--that the perfection of mechanical appliances must ultimately supersede limbs; the perfection of chemical devices, digestion; that such organs as hair, external nose, teeth, ears, and chin were no longer essential parts of the human being, and that the tendency of natural selection would lie in the direction of their steady diminution through the coming ages. The brain alone remained a cardinal necessity. Only one other part of the body had a strong case for survival, and that was the hand, "teacher and agent of the brain." While the rest of the body dwindled, the hands would grow larger.

There is many a true word written in jest, and here in the Martians we have beyond dispute the actual accomplishment of such a suppression of the animal side of the organism by the intelligence. To me it is quite credible that the

Martians may be descended from beings not unlike ourselves, by a gradual development of brain and hands (the latter giving rise to the two bunches of delicate tentacles at last) at the expense of the rest of the body. Without the body the brain would, of course, become a mere selfish intelligence, without any of the emotional substratum of the human being.

The last salient point in which the systems of these creatures differed from ours was in what one might have thought a very trivial particular. Micro-organisms, which cause so much disease and pain on earth, have either never appeared upon Mars or Martian sanitary science eliminated them ages ago. A hundred diseases, all the fevers and contagions of human life, consumption, cancers, tumours and such morbidities, never enter the scheme of their life. And speaking of the differences between the life on Mars and terrestrial life, I may allude here to the curious suggestions of the red weed.

Apparently the vegetable kingdom in Mars, instead of having green for a dominant colour, is of a vivid blood-red tint. At any rate, the seeds which the Martians (intentionally or accidentally) brought with them gave rise in all cases to red-coloured growths. Only that known popularly as the red weed, however, gained any footing in competition with terrestrial forms. The red creeper was quite a transitory growth, and few people have seen it growing. For a time, however, the red weed grew with astonishing vigour and luxuriance. It spread up the sides of the pit by the third or fourth day of our imprisonment, and its cactus-like branches formed a carmine fringe to the edges of our triangular window. And afterwards I found it broadcast throughout the country, and especially wherever there was a stream of water.

The Martians had what appears to have been an auditory

organ, a single round drum at the back of the head-body, and eyes with a visual range not very different from ours except that, according to Philips, blue and violet were as black to them. It is commonly supposed that they communicated by sounds and tentacular gesticulations; this is asserted, for instance, in the able but hastily compiled pamphlet (written evidently by someone not an eye-witness of Martian actions) to which I have already alluded, and which, so far, has been the chief source of information concerning them. Now no surviving human being saw so much of the Martians in action as I did. I take no credit to myself for an accident, but the fact is so. And I assert that I watched them closely time after time, and that I have seen four, five, and (once) six of them sluggishly performing the most elaborately complicated operations together without either sound or gesture. Their peculiar hooting invariably preceded feeding; it had no modulation, and was, I believe, in no sense a signal, but merely the expiration of air preparatory to the suctional operation. I have a certain claim to at least an elementary knowledge of psychology, and in this matter I am convinced--as firmly as I am convinced of anything--that the Martians interchanged thoughts without any physical intermediation. And I have been convinced of this in spite of strong preconceptions. Before the Martian invasion, as an occasional reader here or there may remember, I had written with some little vehemence against the telepathic theory.

The Martians wore no clothing. Their conceptions of ornament and decorum were necessarily different from ours; and not only were they evidently much less sensible of changes of temperature than we are, but changes of pressure do not seem to have affected their health at all seriously. Yet though they wore no clothing, it was in the other artificial additions to their bodily resources that their great superiority over man lay. We men, with our bicycles and road-skates, our Lilienthal

soaring-machines, our guns and sticks and so forth, are just in the beginning of the evolution that the Martians have worked out. They have become practically mere brains, wearing different bodies according to their needs just as men wear suits of clothes and take a bicycle in a hurry or an umbrella in the wet. And of their appliances, perhaps nothing is more wonderful to a man than the curious fact that what is the dominant feature of almost all human devices in mechanism is absent--the WHEEL is absent; among all the things they brought to earth there is no trace or suggestion of their use of wheels. One would have at least expected it in locomotion. And in this connection it is curious to remark that even on this earth Nature has never hit upon the wheel, or has preferred other expedients to its development. And not only did the Martians either not know of (which is incredible), or abstain from, the wheel, but in their apparatus singularly little use is made of the fixed pivot or relatively fixed pivot, with circular motions thereabout confined to one plane. Almost all the joints of the machinery present a complicated system of sliding parts moving over small but beautifully curved friction bearings. And while upon this matter of detail, it is remarkable that the long leverages of their machines are in most cases actuated by a sort of sham musculature of the disks in an elastic sheath; these disks become polarised and drawn closely and powerfully together when traversed by a current of electricity. In this way the curious parallelism to animal motions, which was so striking and disturbing to the human beholder, was attained. Such quasi-muscles abounded in the crablike handling-machine which, on my first peeping out of the slit, I watched unpacking the cylinder. It seemed infinitely more alive than the actual Martians lying beyond it in the sunset light, panting, stirring ineffectual tentacles, and moving feebly after their vast journey across space.

While I was still watching their sluggish motions in the sunlight, and noting each strange detail of their form, the curate reminded me of his presence by pulling violently at my arm. I turned to a scowling face, and silent, eloquent lips. He wanted the slit, which permitted only one of us to peep through; and so I had to forego watching them for a time while he enjoyed that privilege.

When I looked again, the busy handling-machine had already put together several of the pieces of apparatus it had taken out of the cylinder into a shape having an unmistakable likeness to its own; and down on the left a busy little digging mechanism had come into view, emitting jets of green vapour and working its way round the pit, excavating and embanking in a methodical and discriminating manner. This it was which had caused the regular beating noise, and the rhythmic shocks that had kept our ruinous refuge quivering. It piped and whistled as it worked. So far as I could see, the thing was without a directing Martian at all.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DAYS OF IMPRISONMENT

The arrival of a second fighting-machine drove us from our peephole into the scullery, for we feared that from his elevation the Martian might see down upon us behind our barrier. At a later date we began to feel less in danger of their eyes, for to an eye in the dazzle of the sunlight outside our refuge must have been blank blackness, but at first the slightest suggestion of approach drove us into the scullery in heart-throbbing retreat. Yet terrible as was the danger we incurred, the attraction of peeping was for both of us irresistible. And I recall now with a sort of wonder that, in spite of the infinite danger in which we were between starvation and a still more terrible death, we could yet struggle bitterly for that horrible privilege of sight. We would race across the kitchen in a grotesque way between eagerness and the dread of making a noise, and strike each other, and thrust and kick, within a few inches of exposure.

The fact is that we had absolutely incompatible dispositions and habits of thought and action, and our danger and isolation only accentuated the incompatibility. At Halliford I had already come to hate the curate's trick of helpless exclamation, his stupid rigidity of mind. His endless muttering monologue vitiated every effort I made to think out a line of action, and drove me at times, thus pent up and intensified, almost to the verge of craziness. He was as lacking in restraint as a silly woman. He would weep for hours together, and I verily

believe that to the very end this spoiled child of life thought his weak tears in some way efficacious. And I would sit in the darkness unable to keep my mind off him by reason of his importunities. He ate more than I did, and it was in vain I pointed out that our only chance of life was to stop in the house until the Martians had done with their pit, that in that long patience a time might presently come when we should need food. He ate and drank impulsively in heavy meals at long intervals. He slept little.

As the days wore on, his utter carelessness of any consideration so intensified our distress and danger that I had, much as I loathed doing it, to resort to threats, and at last to blows. That brought him to reason for a time. But he was one of those weak creatures, void of pride, timorous, anaemic, hateful souls, full of shifty cunning, who face neither God nor man, who face not even themselves.

It is disagreeable for me to recall and write these things, but I set them down that my story may lack nothing. Those who have escaped the dark and terrible aspects of life will find my brutality, my flash of rage in our final tragedy, easy enough to blame; for they know what is wrong as well as any, but not what is possible to tortured men. But those who have been under the shadow, who have gone down at last to elemental things, will have a wider charity.

And while within we fought out our dark, dim contest of whispers, snatched food and drink, and gripping hands and blows, without, in the pitiless sunlight of that terrible June, was the strange wonder, the unfamiliar routine of the Martians in the pit. Let me return to those first new experiences of mine. After a long time I ventured back to the peephole, to find that the new-comers had been reinforced by the occupants of no fewer than three of the fighting-

machines. These last had brought with them certain fresh appliances that stood in an orderly manner about the cylinder. The second handling-machine was now completed, and was busied in serving one of the novel contrivances the big machine had brought. This was a body resembling a milk can in its general form, above which oscillated a pear-shaped receptacle, and from which a stream of white powder flowed into a circular basin below.

The oscillatory motion was imparted to this by one tentacle of the handling-machine. With two spatulate hands the handling-machine was digging out and flinging masses of clay into the pear-shaped receptacle above, while with another arm it periodically opened a door and removed rusty and blackened clinkers from the middle part of the machine. Another steely tentacle directed the powder from the basin along a ribbed channel towards some receiver that was hidden from me by the mound of bluish dust. From this unseen receiver a little thread of green smoke rose vertically into the quiet air. As I looked, the handling-machine, with a faint and musical clinking, extended, telescopic fashion, a tentacle that had been a moment before a mere blunt projection, until its end was hidden behind the mound of clay. In another second it had lifted a bar of white aluminium into sight, untarnished as yet, and shining dazzlingly, and deposited it in a growing stack of bars that stood at the side of the pit. Between sunset and starlight this dexterous machine must have made more than a hundred such bars out of the crude clay, and the mound of bluish dust rose steadily until it topped the side of the pit.

The contrast between the swift and complex movements of these contrivances and the inert panting clumsiness of their masters was acute, and for days I had to tell myself repeatedly that these latter were indeed the living of the two

things.

The curate had possession of the slit when the first men were brought to the pit. I was sitting below, huddled up, listening with all my ears. He made a sudden movement backward, and I, fearful that we were observed, crouched in a spasm of terror. He came sliding down the rubbish and crept beside me in the darkness, inarticulate, gesticulating, and for a moment I shared his panic. His gesture suggested a resignation of the slit, and after a little while my curiosity gave me courage, and I rose up, stepped across him, and clambered up to it. At first I could see no reason for his frantic behaviour. The twilight had now come, the stars were little and faint, but the pit was illuminated by the flickering green fire that came from the aluminium-making. The whole picture was a flickering scheme of green gleams and shifting rusty black shadows, strangely trying to the eyes. Over and through it all went the bats, heeding it not at all. The sprawling Martians were no longer to be seen, the mound of blue-green powder had risen to cover them from sight, and a fighting-machine, with its legs contracted, crumpled, and abbreviated, stood across the corner of the pit. And then, amid the clangour of the machinery, came a drifting suspicion of human voices, that I entertained at first only to dismiss.

I crouched, watching this fighting-machine closely, satisfying myself now for the first time that the hood did indeed contain a Martian. As the green flames lifted I could see the oily gleam of his integument and the brightness of his eyes. And suddenly I heard a yell, and saw a long tentacle reaching over the shoulder of the machine to the little cage that hunched upon its back. Then something--something struggling violently--was lifted high against the sky, a black, vague enigma against the starlight; and as this black object

came down again, I saw by the green brightness that it was a man. For an instant he was clearly visible. He was a stout, ruddy, middle-aged man, well dressed; three days before, he must have been walking the world, a man of considerable consequence. I could see his staring eyes and gleams of light on his studs and watch chain. He vanished behind the mound, and for a moment there was silence. And then began a shrieking and a sustained and cheerful hooting from the Martians.

I slid down the rubbish, struggled to my feet, clapped my hands over my ears, and bolted into the scullery. The curate, who had been crouching silently with his arms over his head, looked up as I passed, cried out quite loudly at my desertion of him, and came running after me.

That night, as we lurked in the scullery, balanced between our horror and the terrible fascination this peeping had, although I felt an urgent need of action I tried in vain to conceive some plan of escape; but afterwards, during the second day, I was able to consider our position with great clearness. The curate, I found, was quite incapable of discussion; this new and culminating atrocity had robbed him of all vestiges of reason or forethought. Practically he had already sunk to the level of an animal. But as the saying goes, I gripped myself with both hands. It grew upon my mind, once I could face the facts, that terrible as our position was, there was as yet no justification for absolute despair. Our chief chance lay in the possibility of the Martians making the pit nothing more than a temporary encampment. Or even if they kept it permanently, they might not consider it necessary to guard it, and a chance of escape might be afforded us. I also weighed very carefully the possibility of our digging a way out in a direction away from the pit, but the chances of our emerging within sight of some

sentinel fighting-machine seemed at first too great. And I should have had to do all the digging myself. The curate would certainly have failed me.

It was on the third day, if my memory serves me right, that I saw the lad killed. It was the only occasion on which I actually saw the Martians feed. After that experience I avoided the hole in the wall for the better part of a day. I went into the scullery, removed the door, and spent some hours digging with my hatchet as silently as possible; but when I had made a hole about a couple of feet deep the loose earth collapsed noisily, and I did not dare continue. I lost heart, and lay down on the scullery floor for a long time, having no spirit even to move. And after that I abandoned altogether the idea of escaping by excavation.

It says much for the impression the Martians had made upon me that at first I entertained little or no hope of our escape being brought about by their overthrow through any human effort. But on the fourth or fifth night I heard a sound like heavy guns.

It was very late in the night, and the moon was shining brightly. The Martians had taken away the excavating-machine, and, save for a fighting-machine that stood in the remoter bank of the pit and a handling-machine that was buried out of my sight in a corner of the pit immediately beneath my peephole, the place was deserted by them. Except for the pale glow from the handling-machine and the bars and patches of white moonlight the pit was in darkness, and, except for the clinking of the handling-machine, quite still. That night was a beautiful serenity; save for one planet, the moon seemed to have the sky to herself. I heard a dog howling, and that familiar sound it was that made me listen. Then I heard quite distinctly a booming ex-

actly like the sound of great guns. Six distinct reports I counted, and after a long interval six again. And that was all.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DEATH OF THE CURATE

It was on the sixth day of our imprisonment that I peeped for the last time, and presently found myself alone. Instead of keeping close to me and trying to oust me from the slit, the curate had gone back into the scullery. I was struck by a sudden thought. I went back quickly and quietly into the scullery. In the darkness I heard the curate drinking. I snatched in the darkness, and my fingers caught a bottle of burgundy.

For a few minutes there was a tussle. The bottle struck the floor and broke, and I desisted and rose. We stood panting and threatening each other. In the end I planted myself between him and the food, and told him of my determination to begin a discipline. I divided the food in the pantry, into rations to last us ten days. I would not let him eat any more that day. In the afternoon he made a feeble effort to get at the food. I had been dozing, but in an instant I was awake. All day and all night we sat face to face, I weary but resolute, and he weeping and complaining of his immediate hunger. It was, I know, a night and a day, but to me it seemed--it seems now--an interminable length of time.

And so our widened incompatibility ended at last in open conflict. For two vast days we struggled in undertones and wrestling contests. There were times when I beat and kicked him madly, times when I cajoled and persuaded him, and

once I tried to bribe him with the last bottle of burgundy, for there was a rain-water pump from which I could get water. But neither force nor kindness availed; he was indeed beyond reason. He would neither desist from his attacks on the food nor from his noisy babbling to himself. The rudimentary precautions to keep our imprisonment endurable he would not observe. Slowly I began to realise the complete overthrow of his intelligence, to perceive that my sole companion in this close and sickly darkness was a man insane.

From certain vague memories I am inclined to think my own mind wandered at times. I had strange and hideous dreams whenever I slept. It sounds paradoxical, but I am inclined to think that the weakness and insanity of the curate warned me, braced me, and kept me a sane man.

On the eighth day he began to talk aloud instead of whispering, and nothing I could do would moderate his speech.

"It is just, O God!" he would say, over and over again. "It is just. On me and mine be the punishment laid. We have sinned, we have fallen short. There was poverty, sorrow; the poor were trodden in the dust, and I held my peace. I preached acceptable folly--my God, what folly! --when I should have stood up, though I died for it, and called upon them to repent-repent! . . . Oppressors of the poor and needy . . . ! The wine press of God!"

Then he would suddenly revert to the matter of the food I withheld from him, praying, begging, weeping, at last threatening. He began to raise his voice--I prayed him not to. He perceived a hold on me--he threatened he would shout and bring the Martians upon us. For a time that scared me; but any concession would have shortened our chance of escape beyond estimating. I defied him, although I felt

no assurance that he might not do this thing. But that day, at any rate, he did not. He talked with his voice rising slowly, through the greater part of the eighth and ninth days-- threats, entreaties, mingled with a torrent of half-sane and always frothy repentance for his vacant sham of God's service, such as made me pity him. Then he slept awhile, and began again with renewed strength, so loudly that I must needs make him desist.

"Be still!" I implored.

He rose to his knees, for he had been sitting in the darkness near the copper.

"I have been still too long," he said, in a tone that must have reached the pit, "and now I must bear my witness. Woe unto this unfaithful city! Woe! Woe! Woe! Woe! Woe! To the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet----"

"Shut up!" I said, rising to my feet, and in a terror lest the Martians should hear us. "For God's sake----"

"Nay," shouted the curate, at the top of his voice, standing likewise and extending his arms. "Speak! The word of the Lord is upon me!"

In three strides he was at the door leading into the kitchen.

"I must bear my witness! I go! It has already been too long delayed."

I put out my hand and felt the meat chopper hanging to the wall. In a flash I was after him. I was fierce with fear. Before he was halfway across the kitchen I had overtaken

him. With one last touch of humanity I turned the blade back and struck him with the butt. He went headlong forward and lay stretched on the ground. I stumbled over him and stood panting. He lay still.

Suddenly I heard a noise without, the run and smash of slipping plaster, and the triangular aperture in the wall was darkened. I looked up and saw the lower surface of a handling-machine coming slowly across the hole. One of its gripping limbs curled amid the debris; another limb appeared, feeling its way over the fallen beams. I stood petrified, staring. Then I saw through a sort of glass plate near the edge of the body the face, as we may call it, and the large dark eyes of a Martian, peering, and then a long metallic snake of tentacle came feeling slowly through the hole.

I turned by an effort, stumbled over the curate, and stopped at the scullery door. The tentacle was now some way, two yards or more, in the room, and twisting and turning, with queer sudden movements, this way and that. For a while I stood fascinated by that slow, fitful advance. Then, with a faint, hoarse cry, I forced myself across the scullery. I trembled violently; I could scarcely stand upright. I opened the door of the coal cellar, and stood there in the darkness staring at the faintly lit doorway into the kitchen, and listening. Had the Martian seen me? What was it doing now?

Something was moving to and fro there, very quietly; every now and then it tapped against the wall, or started on its movements with a faint metallic ringing, like the movements of keys on a split-ring. Then a heavy body--I knew too well what--was dragged across the floor of the kitchen towards the opening. Irresistibly attracted, I crept to the door and peeped into the kitchen. In the triangle of

bright outer sunlight I saw the Martian, in its Briareus of a handling-machine, scrutinizing the curate's head. I thought at once that it would infer my presence from the mark of the blow I had given him.

I crept back to the coal cellar, shut the door, and began to cover myself up as much as I could, and as noiselessly as possible in the darkness, among the firewood and coal therein. Every now and then I paused, rigid, to hear if the Martian had thrust its tentacles through the opening again.

Then the faint metallic jingle returned. I traced it slowly feeling over the kitchen. Presently I heard it nearer--in the scullery, as I judged. I thought that its length might be insufficient to reach me. I prayed copiously. It passed, scraping faintly across the cellar door. An age of almost intolerable suspense intervened; then I heard it fumbling at the latch! It had found the door! The Martians understood doors!

It worried at the catch for a minute, perhaps, and then the door opened.

In the darkness I could just see the thing--like an elephant's trunk more than anything else--waving towards me and touching and examining the wall, coals, wood and ceiling. It was like a black worm swaying its blind head to and fro.

Once, even, it touched the heel of my boot. I was on the verge of screaming; I bit my hand. For a time the tentacle was silent. I could have fancied it had been withdrawn. Presently, with an abrupt click, it gripped something--I thought it had me!--and seemed to go out of the cellar again. For a minute I was not sure. Apparently it had taken a lump of coal to examine.

I seized the opportunity of slightly shifting my position, which had become cramped, and then listened. I whispered passionate prayers for safety.

Then I heard the slow, deliberate sound creeping towards me again. Slowly, slowly it drew near, scratching against the walls and tapping the furniture.

While I was still doubtful, it rapped smartly against the cellar door and closed it. I heard it go into the pantry, and the biscuit-tins rattled and a bottle smashed, and then came a heavy bump against the cellar door. Then silence that passed into an infinity of suspense.

Had it gone?

At last I decided that it had.

It came into the scullery no more; but I lay all the tenth day in the close darkness, buried among coals and firewood, not daring even to crawl out for the drink for which I craved. It was the eleventh day before I ventured so far from my security.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE STILLNESS

My first act before I went into the pantry was to fasten the door between the kitchen and the scullery. But the pantry was empty; every scrap of food had gone. Apparently, the Martian had taken it all on the previous day. At that discovery I despaired for the first time. I took no food, or no drink either, on the eleventh or the twelfth day.

At first my mouth and throat were parched, and my strength ebbed sensibly. I sat about in the darkness of the scullery, in a state of despondent wretchedness. My mind ran on eating. I thought I had become deaf, for the noises of movement I had been accustomed to hear from the pit had ceased absolutely. I did not feel strong enough to crawl noiselessly to the peephole, or I would have gone there.

On the twelfth day my throat was so painful that, taking the chance of alarming the Martians, I attacked the creaking rain-water pump that stood by the sink, and got a couple of glassfuls of blackened and tainted rain water. I was greatly refreshed by this, and emboldened by the fact that no enquiring tentacle followed the noise of my pumping.

During these days, in a rambling, inconclusive way, I thought much of the curate and of the manner of his death.

On the thirteenth day I drank some more water, and dozed and thought disjointedly of eating and of vague impossible plans of escape. Whenever I dozed I dreamt of

horrible phantasms, of the death of the curate, or of sumptuous dinners; but, asleep or awake, I felt a keen pain that urged me to drink again and again. The light that came into the scullery was no longer grey, but red. To my disordered imagination it seemed the colour of blood.

On the fourteenth day I went into the kitchen, and I was surprised to find that the fronds of the red weed had grown right across the hole in the wall, turning the half-light of the place into a crimson-coloured obscurity.

It was early on the fifteenth day that I heard a curious, familiar sequence of sounds in the kitchen, and, listening, identified it as the snuffing and scratching of a dog. Going into the kitchen, I saw a dog's nose peering in through a break among the ruddy fronds. This greatly surprised me. At the scent of me he barked shortly.

I thought if I could induce him to come into the place quietly I should be able, perhaps, to kill and eat him; and in any case, it would be advisable to kill him, lest his actions attracted the attention of the Martians.

I crept forward, saying "Good dog!" very softly; but he suddenly withdrew his head and disappeared.

I listened--I was not deaf--but certainly the pit was still. I heard a sound like the flutter of a bird's wings, and a hoarse croaking, but that was all.

For a long while I lay close to the peephole, but not daring to move aside the red plants that obscured it. Once or twice I heard a faint pitter-patter like the feet of the dog going hither and thither on the sand far below me, and there were more birdlike sounds, but that was all. At length, encouraged

by the silence, I looked out.

Except in the corner, where a multitude of crows hopped and fought over the skeletons of the dead the Martians had consumed, there was not a living thing in the pit.

I stared about me, scarcely believing my eyes. All the machinery had gone. Save for the big mound of greyish-blue powder in one corner, certain bars of aluminium in another, the black birds, and the skeletons of the killed, the place was merely an empty circular pit in the sand.

Slowly I thrust myself out through the red weed, and stood upon the mound of rubble. I could see in any direction save behind me, to the north, and neither Martians nor sign of Martians were to be seen. The pit dropped sheerly from my feet, but a little way along the rubbish afforded a practicable slope to the summit of the ruins. My chance of escape had come. I began to tremble.

I hesitated for some time, and then, in a gust of desperate resolution, and with a heart that throbbed violently, I scrambled to the top of the mound in which I had been buried so long.

I looked about again. To the northward, too, no Martian was visible.

When I had last seen this part of Sheen in the daylight it had been a straggling street of comfortable white and red houses, interspersed with abundant shady trees. Now I stood on a mound of smashed brickwork, clay, and gravel, over which spread a multitude of red cactus-shaped plants, knee-high, without a solitary terrestrial growth to dispute their footing. The trees near me were dead and brown, but

further a network of red thread scaled the still living stems.

The neighbouring houses had all been wrecked, but none had been burned; their walls stood, sometimes to the second story, with smashed windows and shattered doors. The red weed grew tumultuously in their roofless rooms. Below me was the great pit, with the crows struggling for its refuse. A number of other birds hopped about among the ruins. Far away I saw a gaunt cat slink crouchingly along a wall, but traces of men there were none.

The day seemed, by contrast with my recent confinement, dazzlingly bright, the sky a glowing blue. A gentle breeze kept the red weed that covered every scrap of unoccupied ground gently swaying. And oh! the sweetness of the air!

CHAPTER SIX

THE WORK OF FIFTEEN DAYS

For some time I stood tottering on the mound regardless of my safety. Within that noisome den from which I had emerged I had thought with a narrow intensity only of our immediate security. I had not realised what had been happening to the world, had not anticipated this startling vision of unfamiliar things. I had expected to see Sheen in ruins-- I found about me the landscape, weird and lurid, of another planet.

For that moment I touched an emotion beyond the common range of men, yet one that the poor brutes we dominate know only too well. I felt as a rabbit might feel returning to his burrow and suddenly confronted by the work of a dozen busy navvies digging the foundations of a house. I felt the first inkling of a thing that presently grew quite clear in my mind, that oppressed me for many days, a sense of dethronement, a persuasion that I was no longer a master, but an animal among the animals, under the Martian heel. With us it would be as with them, to lurk and watch, to run and hide; the fear and empire of man had passed away.

But so soon as this strangeness had been realised it passed, and my dominant motive became the hunger of my long and dismal fast. In the direction away from the pit I saw, beyond a red-covered wall, a patch of garden ground unburied. This gave me a hint, and I went knee-deep, and

sometimes neck-deep, in the red weed. The density of the weed gave me a reassuring sense of hiding. The wall was some six feet high, and when I attempted to clamber it I found I could not lift my feet to the crest. So I went along by the side of it, and came to a corner and a rockwork that enabled me to get to the top, and tumble into the garden I coveted. Here I found some young onions, a couple of gladiolus bulbs, and a quantity of immature carrots, all of which I secured, and, scrambling over a ruined wall, went on my way through scarlet and crimson trees towards Kew--it was like walking through an avenue of gigantic blood drops--possessed with two ideas: to get more food, and to limp, as soon and as far as my strength permitted, out of this accursed unearthly region of the pit.

Some way farther, in a grassy place, was a group of mushrooms which also I devoured, and then I came upon a brown sheet of flowing shallow water, where meadows used to be. These fragments of nourishment served only to whet my hunger. At first I was surprised at this flood in a hot, dry summer, but afterwards I discovered that it was caused by the tropical exuberance of the red weed. Directly this extraordinary growth encountered water it straightway became gigantic and of unparalleled fecundity. Its seeds were simply poured down into the water of the Wey and Thames, and its swiftly growing and Titanic water fronds speedily choked both those rivers.

At Putney, as I afterwards saw, the bridge was almost lost in a tangle of this weed, and at Richmond, too, the Thames water poured in a broad and shallow stream across the meadows of Hampton and Twickenham. As the water spread the weed followed them, until the ruined villas of the Thames valley were for a time lost in this red swamp, whose margin I explored, and much of the desolation the

Martians had caused was concealed.

In the end the red weed succumbed almost as quickly as it had spread. A cankering disease, due, it is believed, to the action of certain bacteria, presently seized upon it. Now by the action of natural selection, all terrestrial plants have acquired a resisting power against bacterial diseases--they never succumb without a severe struggle, but the red weed rotted like a thing already dead. The fronds became bleached, and then shrivelled and brittle. They broke off at the least touch, and the waters that had stimulated their early growth carried their last vestiges out to sea.

My first act on coming to this water was, of course, to slake my thirst. I drank a great deal of it and, moved by an impulse, gnawed some fronds of red weed; but they were watery, and had a sickly, metallic taste. I found the water was sufficiently shallow for me to wade securely, although the red weed impeded my feet a little; but the flood evidently got deeper towards the river, and I turned back to Mortlake. I managed to make out the road by means of occasional ruins of its villas and fences and lamps, and so presently I got out of this spate and made my way to the hill going up towards Roehampton and came out on Putney Common.

Here the scenery changed from the strange and unfamiliar to the wreckage of the familiar: patches of ground exhibited the devastation of a cyclone, and in a few score yards I would come upon perfectly undisturbed spaces, houses with their blinds trimly drawn and doors closed, as if they had been left for a day by the owners, or as if their inhabitants slept within. The red weed was less abundant; the tall trees along the lane were free from the red creeper. I hunted for food among the trees, finding nothing, and I also raided a couple of silent houses, but they had already been broken

into and ransacked. I rested for the remainder of the daylight in a shrubbery, being, in my enfeebled condition, too fatigued to push on.

All this time I saw no human beings, and no signs of the Martians. I encountered a couple of hungry-looking dogs, but both hurried circuitously away from the advances I made them. Near Roehampton I had seen two human skeletons--not bodies, but skeletons, picked clean--and in the wood by me I found the crushed and scattered bones of several cats and rabbits and the skull of a sheep. But though I gnawed parts of these in my mouth, there was nothing to be got from them.

After sunset I struggled on along the road towards Putney, where I think the Heat-Ray must have been used for some reason. And in the garden beyond Roehampton I got a quantity of immature potatoes, sufficient to stay my hunger. From this garden one looked down upon Putney and the river. The aspect of the place in the dusk was singularly desolate: blackened trees, blackened, desolate ruins, and down the hill the sheets of the flooded river, red-tinged with the weed. And over all--silence. It filled me with indescribable terror to think how swiftly that desolating change had come.

For a time I believed that mankind had been swept out of existence, and that I stood there alone, the last man left alive. Hard by the top of Putney Hill I came upon another skeleton, with the arms dislocated and removed several yards from the rest of the body. As I proceeded I became more and more convinced that the extermination of mankind was, save for such stragglers as myself, already accomplished in this part of the world. The Martians, I thought, had gone on and left the country desolated, seeking food elsewhere. Perhaps even now they were destroying Berlin or Paris, or

it might be they had gone northward.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MAN ON PUTNEY HILL

I spent that night in the inn that stands at the top of Putney Hill, sleeping in a made bed for the first time since my flight to Leatherhead. I will not tell the needless trouble I had breaking into that house--afterwards I found the front door was on the latch--nor how I ransacked every room for food, until just on the verge of despair, in what seemed to me to be a servant's bedroom, I found a rat-gnawed crust and two tins of pineapple. The place had been already searched and emptied. In the bar I afterwards found some biscuits and sandwiches that had been overlooked. The latter I could not eat, they were too rotten, but the former not only stayed my hunger, but filled my pockets. I lit no lamps, fearing some Martian might come beating that part of London for food in the night. Before I went to bed I had an interval of restlessness, and prowled from window to window, peering out for some sign of these monsters. I slept little. As I lay in bed I found myself thinking consecutively--a thing I do not remember to have done since my last argument with the curate. During all the intervening time my mental condition had been a hurrying succession of vague emotional states or a sort of stupid receptivity. But in the night my brain, reinforced, I suppose, by the food I had eaten, grew clear again, and I thought.

Three things struggled for possession of my mind: the killing of the curate, the whereabouts of the Martians, and the possible fate of my wife. The former gave me no sensation of horror or remorse to recall; I saw it simply as a thing

done, a memory infinitely disagreeable but quite without the quality of remorse. I saw myself then as I see myself now, driven step by step towards that hasty blow, the creature of a sequence of accidents leading inevitably to that. I felt no condemnation; yet the memory, static, unprogressive, haunted me. In the silence of the night, with that sense of the nearness of God that sometimes comes into the stillness and the darkness, I stood my trial, my only trial, for that moment of wrath and fear. I retraced every step of our conversation from the moment when I had found him crouching beside me, heedless of my thirst, and pointing to the fire and smoke that streamed up from the ruins of Weybridge. We had been incapable of co-operation--grim chance had taken no heed of that. Had I foreseen, I should have left him at Halliford. But I did not foresee; and crime is to foresee and do. And I set this down as I have set all this story down, as it was. There were no witnesses--all these things I might have concealed. But I set it down, and the reader must form his judgment as he will.

And when, by an effort, I had set aside that picture of a prostrate body, I faced the problem of the Martians and the fate of my wife. For the former I had no data; I could imagine a hundred things, and so, unhappily, I could for the latter. And suddenly that night became terrible. I found myself sitting up in bed, staring at the dark. I found myself praying that the Heat-Ray might have suddenly and painlessly struck her out of being. Since the night of my return from Leatherhead I had not prayed. I had uttered prayers, fetish prayers, had prayed as heathens mutter charms when I was in extremity; but now I prayed indeed, pleading steadfastly and sanely, face to face with the darkness of God. Strange night! Strangest in this, that so soon as dawn had come, I, who had talked with God, crept out of the house like a rat leaving its hiding place--a creature scarcely larger,

an inferior animal, a thing that for any passing whim of our masters might be hunted and killed. Perhaps they also prayed confidently to God. Surely, if we have learned nothing else, this war has taught us pity--pity for those witless souls that suffer our dominion.

The morning was bright and fine, and the eastern sky glowed pink, and was fretted with little golden clouds. In the road that runs from the top of Putney Hill to Wimbledon was a number of poor vestiges of the panic torrent that must have poured Londonward on the Sunday night after the fighting began. There was a little two-wheeled cart inscribed with the name of Thomas Lobb, Greengrocer, New Malden, with a smashed wheel and an abandoned tin trunk; there was a straw hat trampled into the now hardened mud, and at the top of West Hill a lot of blood-stained glass about the overturned water trough. My movements were languid, my plans of the vaguest. I had an idea of going to Leatherhead, though I knew that there I had the poorest chance of finding my wife. Certainly, unless death had overtaken them suddenly, my cousins and she would have fled thence; but it seemed to me I might find or learn there whither the Surrey people had fled. I knew I wanted to find my wife, that my heart ached for her and the world of men, but I had no clear idea how the finding might be done. I was also sharply aware now of my intense loneliness. From the corner I went, under cover of a thicket of trees and bushes, to the edge of Wimbledon Common, stretching wide and far.

That dark expanse was lit in patches by yellow gorse and broom; there was no red weed to be seen, and as I prowled, hesitating, on the verge of the open, the sun rose, flooding it all with light and vitality. I came upon a busy swarm of little frogs in a swampy place among the trees. I stopped to look at them, drawing a lesson from their stout resolve

to live. And presently, turning suddenly, with an odd feeling of being watched, I beheld something crouching amid a clump of bushes. I stood regarding this. I made a step towards it, and it rose up and became a man armed with a cutlass. I approached him slowly. He stood silent and motionless, regarding me.

As I drew nearer I perceived he was dressed in clothes as dusty and filthy as my own; he looked, indeed, as though he had been dragged through a culvert. Nearer, I distinguished the green slime of ditches mixing with the pale drab of dried clay and shiny, coaly patches. His black hair fell over his eyes, and his face was dark and dirty and sunken, so that at first I did not recognise him. There was a red cut across the lower part of his face.

"Stop!" he cried, when I was within ten yards of him, and I stopped. His voice was hoarse. "Where do you come from?" he said.

I thought, surveying him.

"I come from Mortlake," I said. "I was buried near the pit the Martians made about their cylinder. I have worked my way out and escaped."

"There is no food about here," he said. "This is my country. All this hill down to the river, and back to Clapham, and up to the edge of the common. There is only food for one. Which way are you going?"

I answered slowly.

"I don't know," I said. "I have been buried in the ruins of a house thirteen or fourteen days. I don't know what has

happened."

He looked at me doubtfully, then started, and looked with a changed expression.

"I've no wish to stop about here," said I. "I think I shall go to Leatherhead, for my wife was there."

He shot out a pointing finger.

"It is you," said he; "the man from Woking. And you weren't killed at Weybridge?"

I recognised him at the same moment.

"You are the artilleryman who came into my garden."

"Good luck!" he said. "We are lucky ones! Fancy YOU!" He put out a hand, and I took it. "I crawled up a drain," he said. "But they didn't kill everyone. And after they went away I got off towards Walton across the fields. But---- It's not sixteen days altogether--and your hair is grey." He looked over his shoulder suddenly. "Only a rook," he said. "One gets to know that birds have shadows these days. This is a bit open. Let us crawl under those bushes and talk."

"Have you seen any Martians?" I said. "Since I crawled out----"

"They've gone away across London," he said. "I guess they've got a bigger camp there. Of a night, all over there, Hampstead way, the sky is alive with their lights. It's like a great city, and in the glare you can just see them moving. By daylight you can't. But nearer--I haven't seen them--" (he counted on his fingers) "five days. Then I saw a couple

across Hammersmith way carrying something big. And the night before last"--he stopped and spoke impressively--"it was just a matter of lights, but it was something up in the air. I believe they've built a flying-machine, and are learning to fly."

I stopped, on hands and knees, for we had come to the bushes.

"Fly!"

"Yes," he said, "fly."

I went on into a little bower, and sat down.

"It is all over with humanity," I said. "If they can do that they will simply go round the world."

He nodded.

"They will. But---- It will relieve things over here a bit. And besides----" He looked at me. "Aren't you satisfied it IS up with humanity? I am. We're down; we're beat."

I stared. Strange as it may seem, I had not arrived at this fact--a fact perfectly obvious so soon as he spoke. I had still held a vague hope; rather, I had kept a lifelong habit of mind. He repeated his words, "We're beat." They carried absolute conviction.

"It's all over," he said. "They've lost ONE--just ONE. And they've made their footing good and crippled the greatest power in the world. They've walked over us. The death of that one at Weybridge was an accident. And these are only pioneers. They kept on coming. These green stars--I've seen

none these five or six days, but I've no doubt they're falling somewhere every night. Nothing's to be done. We're under! We're beat!"

I made him no answer. I sat staring before me, trying in vain to devise some countervailing thought.

"This isn't a war," said the artilleryman. "It never was a war, any more than there's war between man and ants."

Suddenly I recalled the night in the observatory.

"After the tenth shot they fired no more--at least, until the first cylinder came."

"How do you know?" said the artilleryman. I explained. He thought. "Something wrong with the gun," he said. "But what if there is? They'll get it right again. And even if there's a delay, how can it alter the end? It's just men and ants. There's the ants builds their cities, live their lives, have wars, revolutions, until the men want them out of the way, and then they go out of the way. That's what we are now--just ants. Only----"

"Yes," I said.

"We're eatable ants."

We sat looking at each other.

"And what will they do with us?" I said.

"That's what I've been thinking," he said; "that's what I've been thinking. After Weybridge I went south--thinking. I saw what was up. Most of the people were hard at it

squealing and exciting themselves. But I'm not so fond of squealing. I've been in sight of death once or twice; I'm not an ornamental soldier, and at the best and worst, death--it's just death. And it's the man that keeps on thinking comes through. I saw everyone tracking away south. Says I, "Food won't last this way," and I turned right back. I went for the Martians like a sparrow goes for man. All round"--he waved a hand to the horizon--"they're starving in heaps, bolting, treading on each other. . . ."

He saw my face, and halted awkwardly.

"No doubt lots who had money have gone away to France," he said. He seemed to hesitate whether to apologise, met my eyes, and went on: "There's food all about here. Canned things in shops; wines, spirits, mineral waters; and the water mains and drains are empty. Well, I was telling you what I was thinking. "Here's intelligent things," I said, "and it seems they want us for food. First, they'll smash us up--ships, machines, guns, cities, all the order and organisation. All that will go. If we were the size of ants we might pull through. But we're not. It's all too bulky to stop. That's the first certainty." Eh?"

I assented.

"It is; I've thought it out. Very well, then--next; at present we're caught as we're wanted. A Martian has only to go a few miles to get a crowd on the run. And I saw one, one day, out by Wandsworth, picking houses to pieces and routing among the wreckage. But they won't keep on doing that. So soon as they've settled all our guns and ships, and smashed our railways, and done all the things they are doing over there, they will begin catching us systematic, picking the best and storing us in cages and things. That's what

they will start doing in a bit. Lord! They haven't begun on us yet. Don't you see that?"

"Not begun!" I exclaimed.

"Not begun. All that's happened so far is through our not having the sense to keep quiet--worrying them with guns and such foolery. And losing our heads, and rushing off in crowds to where there wasn't any more safety than where we were. They don't want to bother us yet. They're making their things--making all the things they couldn't bring with them, getting things ready for the rest of their people. Very likely that's why the cylinders have stopped for a bit, for fear of hitting those who are here. And instead of our rushing about blind, on the howl, or getting dynamite on the chance of busting them up, we've got to fix ourselves up according to the new state of affairs. That's how I figure it out. It isn't quite according to what a man wants for his species, but it's about what the facts point to. And that's the principle I acted upon. Cities, nations, civilisation, progress--it's all over. That game's up. We're beat."

"But if that is so, what is there to live for?"

The artilleryman looked at me for a moment.

"There won't be any more blessed concerts for a million years or so; there won't be any Royal Academy of Arts, and no nice little feeds at restaurants. If it's amusement you're after, I reckon the game is up. If you've got any drawing-room manners or a dislike to eating peas with a knife or dropping aitches, you'd better chuck 'em away. They ain't no further use."

"You mean----"

"I mean that men like me are going on living--for the sake of the breed. I tell you, I'm grim set on living. And if I'm not mistaken, you'll show what insides YOU'VE got, too, before long. We aren't going to be exterminated. And I don't mean to be caught either, and tamed and fattened and bred like a thundering ox. Ugh! Fancy those brown creepers!"

"You don't mean to say----"

"I do. I'm going on, under their feet. I've got it planned; I've thought it out. We men are beat. We don't know enough. We've got to learn before we've got a chance. And we've got to live and keep independent while we learn. See! That's what has to be done."

I stared, astonished, and stirred profoundly by the man's resolution.

"Great God!," cried I. "But you are a man indeed!" And suddenly I gripped his hand.

"Eh!" he said, with his eyes shining. "I've thought it out, eh?"

"Go on," I said.

"Well, those who mean to escape their catching must get ready. I'm getting ready. Mind you, it isn't all of us that are made for wild beasts; and that's what it's got to be. That's why I watched you. I had my doubts. You're slender. I didn't know that it was you, you see, or just how you'd been buried. All these--the sort of people that lived in these houses, and all those damn little clerks that used to live down that way--they'd be no good. They haven't any

spirit in them--no proud dreams and no proud lusts; and a man who hasn't one or the other--Lord! What is he but funk and precautions? They just used to skedaddle off to work--I've seen hundreds of 'em, bit of breakfast in hand, running wild and shining to catch their little season-ticket train, for fear they'd get dismissed if they didn't; working at businesses they were afraid to take the trouble to understand; skedaddling back for fear they wouldn't be in time for dinner; keeping indoors after dinner for fear of the back streets, and sleeping with the wives they married, not because they wanted them, but because they had a bit of money that would make for safety in their one little miserable skedaddle through the world. Lives insured and a bit invested for fear of accidents. And on Sundays--fear of the hereafter. As if hell was built for rabbits! Well, the Martians will just be a godsend to these. Nice roomy cages, fattening food, careful breeding, no worry. After a week or so chasing about the fields and lands on empty stomachs, they'll come and be caught cheerful. They'll be quite glad after a bit. They'll wonder what people did before there were Martians to take care of them. And the bar loafers, and mashers, and singers--I can imagine them. I can imagine them," he said, with a sort of sombre gratification. "There'll be any amount of sentiment and religion loose among them. There's hundreds of things I saw with my eyes that I've only begun to see clearly these last few days. There's lots will take things as they are--fat and stupid; and lots will be worried by a sort of feeling that it's all wrong, and that they ought to be doing something. Now whenever things are so that a lot of people feel they ought to be doing something, the weak, and those who go weak with a lot of complicated thinking, always make for a sort of do-nothing religion, very pious and superior, and submit to persecution and the will of the Lord. Very likely you've seen the same thing. It's energy in a gale of funk, and turned clean inside

out. These cages will be full of psalms and hymns and piety. And those of a less simple sort will work in a bit of--what is it?--eroticism."

He paused.

"Very likely these Martians will make pets of some of them; train them to do tricks--who knows?--get sentimental over the pet boy who grew up and had to be killed. And some, maybe, they will train to hunt us."

"No," I cried, "that's impossible! No human being----"

"What's the good of going on with such lies?" said the artilleryman. "There's men who'd do it cheerful. What nonsense to pretend there isn't!"

And I succumbed to his conviction.

"If they come after me," he said; "Lord, if they come after me!" and subsided into a grim meditation.

I sat contemplating these things. I could find nothing to bring against this man's reasoning. In the days before the invasion no one would have questioned my intellectual superiority to his--I, a professed and recognised writer on philosophical themes, and he, a common soldier; and yet he had already formulated a situation that I had scarcely realised.

"What are you doing?" I said presently. "What plans have you made?"

He hesitated.

"Well, it's like this," he said. "What have we to do? We have to invent a sort of life where men can live and breed, and be sufficiently secure to bring the children up. Yes--wait a bit, and I'll make it clearer what I think ought to be done. The tame ones will go like all tame beasts; in a few generations they'll be big, beautiful, rich-blooded, stupid--rubbish! The risk is that we who keep wild will go savage--degenerate into a sort of big, savage rat. . . . You see, how I mean to live is underground. I've been thinking about the drains. Of course those who don't know drains think horrible things; but under this London are miles and miles--hundreds of miles--and a few days' rain and London empty will leave them sweet and clean. The main drains are big enough and airy enough for anyone. Then there's cellars, vaults, stores, from which bolting passages may be made to the drains. And the railway tunnels and subways. Eh? You begin to see? And we form a band--able-bodied, clean-minded men. We're not going to pick up any rubbish that drifts in. Weaklings go out again."

"As you meant me to go?"

"Well--I parleyed, didn't I?"

"We won't quarrel about that. Go on."

"Those who stop obey orders. Able-bodied, clean-minded women we want also--mothers and teachers. No lackadaisical ladies--no blasted rolling eyes. We can't have any weak or silly. Life is real again, and the useless and cumbersome and mischievous have to die. They ought to die. They ought to be willing to die. It's a sort of disloyalty, after all, to live and taint the race. And they can't be happy. Moreover, dying's none so dreadful; it's the funking makes it bad. And in all those places we shall gather. Our district will be London."

And we may even be able to keep a watch, and run about in the open when the Martians keep away. Play cricket, perhaps. That's how we shall save the race. Eh? It's a possible thing? But saving the race is nothing in itself. As I say, that's only being rats. It's saving our knowledge and adding to it is the thing. There men like you come in. There's books, there's models. We must make great safe places down deep, and get all the books we can; not novels and poetry swipes, but ideas, science books. That's where men like you come in. We must go to the British Museum and pick all those books through. Especially we must keep up our science--learn more. We must watch these Martians. Some of us must go as spies. When it's all working, perhaps I will. Get caught, I mean. And the great thing is, we must leave the Martians alone. We mustn't even steal. If we get in their way, we clear out. We must show them we mean no harm. Yes, I know. But they're intelligent things, and they won't hunt us down if they have all they want, and think we're just harmless vermin."

The artilleryman paused and laid a brown hand upon my arm.

"After all, it may not be so much we may have to learn before-- Just imagine this: four or five of their fighting machines suddenly starting off--Heat-Rays right and left, and not a Martian in 'em. Not a Martian in 'em, but men--men who have learned the way how. It may be in my time, even--those men. Fancy having one of them lovely things, with its Heat-Ray wide and free! Fancy having it in control! What would it matter if you smashed to smithereens at the end of the run, after a bust like that? I reckon the Martians'll open their beautiful eyes! Can't you see them, man? Can't you see them hurrying, hurrying--puffing and blowing and hooting to their other mechanical affairs? Something out of gear in every

case. And swish, bang, rattle, swish! Just as they are fumbling over it, SWISH comes the Heat-Ray, and, behold! man has come back to his own."

For a while the imaginative daring of the artilleryman, and the tone of assurance and courage he assumed, completely dominated my mind. I believed unhesitatingly both in his forecast of human destiny and in the practicability of his astonishing scheme, and the reader who thinks me susceptible and foolish must contrast his position, reading steadily with all his thoughts about his subject, and mine, crouching fearfully in the bushes and listening, distracted by apprehension. We talked in this manner through the early morning time, and later crept out of the bushes, and, after scanning the sky for Martians, hurried precipitately to the house on Putney Hill where he had made his lair. It was the coal cellar of the place, and when I saw the work he had spent a week upon--it was a burrow scarcely ten yards long, which he designed to reach to the main drain on Putney Hill--I had my first inkling of the gulf between his dreams and his powers. Such a hole I could have dug in a day. But I believed in him sufficiently to work with him all that morning until past midday at his digging. We had a garden barrow and shot the earth we removed against the kitchen range. We refreshed ourselves with a tin of mock-turtle soup and wine from the neighbouring pantry. I found a curious relief from the aching strangeness of the world in this steady labour. As we worked, I turned his project over in my mind, and presently objections and doubts began to arise; but I worked there all the morning, so glad was I to find myself with a purpose again. After working an hour I began to speculate on the distance one had to go before the cloaca was reached, the chances we had of missing it altogether. My immediate trouble was why we should dig this long tunnel, when it was possible to get

into the drain at once down one of the manholes, and work back to the house. It seemed to me, too, that the house was inconveniently chosen, and required a needless length of tunnel. And just as I was beginning to face these things, the artilleryman stopped digging, and looked at me.

"We're working well," he said. He put down his spade. "Let us knock off a bit" he said. "I think it's time we reconnoitred from the roof of the house."

I was for going on, and after a little hesitation he resumed his spade; and then suddenly I was struck by a thought. I stopped, and so did he at once.

"Why were you walking about the common," I said, "instead of being here?"

"Taking the air," he said. "I was coming back. It's safer by night."

"But the work?"

"Oh, one can't always work," he said, and in a flash I saw the man plain. He hesitated, holding his spade. "We ought to reconnoitre now," he said, "because if any come near they may hear the spades and drop upon us unawares."

I was no longer disposed to object. We went together to the roof and stood on a ladder peeping out of the roof door. No Martians were to be seen, and we ventured out on the tiles, and slipped down under shelter of the parapet.

From this position a shrubbery hid the greater portion of Putney, but we could see the river below, a bubbly mass of red weed, and the low parts of Lambeth flooded and red.

The red creeper swarmed up the trees about the old palace, and their branches stretched gaunt and dead, and set with shrivelled leaves, from amid its clusters. It was strange how entirely dependent both these things were upon flowing water for their propagation. About us neither had gained a footing; laburnums, pink mays, snowballs, and trees of arborvitae, rose out of laurels and hydrangeas, green and brilliant into the sunlight. Beyond Kensington dense smoke was rising, and that and a blue haze hid the northward hills.

The artilleryman began to tell me of the sort of people who still remained in London.

"One night last week," he said, "some fools got the electric light in order, and there was all Regent Street and the Circus ablaze, crowded with painted and ragged drunkards, men and women, dancing and shouting till dawn. A man who was there told me. And as the day came they became aware of a fighting-machine standing near by the Langham and looking down at them. Heaven knows how long he had been there. It must have given some of them a nasty turn. He came down the road towards them, and picked up nearly a hundred too drunk or frightened to run away."

Grotesque gleam of a time no history will ever fully describe!

From that, in answer to my questions, he came round to his grandiose plans again. He grew enthusiastic. He talked so eloquently of the possibility of capturing a fighting-machine that I more than half believed in him again. But now that I was beginning to understand something of his quality, I could divine the stress he laid on doing nothing precipitately. And I noted that now there was no question that he personally was to capture and fight the great machine.

After a time we went down to the cellar. Neither of us seemed disposed to resume digging, and when he suggested a meal, I was nothing loath. He became suddenly very generous, and when we had eaten he went away and returned with some excellent cigars. We lit these, and his optimism glowed. He was inclined to regard my coming as a great occasion.

"There's some champagne in the cellar," he said.

"We can dig better on this Thames-side burgundy," said I.

"No," said he; "I am host today. Champagne! Great God! We've a heavy enough task before us! Let us take a rest and gather strength while we may. Look at these blistered hands!"

And pursuant to this idea of a holiday, he insisted upon playing cards after we had eaten. He taught me euchre, and after dividing London between us, I taking the northern side and he the southern, we played for parish points. Grotesque and foolish as this will seem to the sober reader, it is absolutely true, and what is more remarkable, I found the card game and several others we played extremely interesting.

Strange mind of man! that, with our species upon the edge of extermination or appalling degradation, with no clear prospect before us but the chance of a horrible death, we could sit following the chance of this painted pasteboard, and playing the "joker" with vivid delight. Afterwards he taught me poker, and I beat him at three tough chess games. When dark came we decided to take the risk, and lit a lamp.

After an interminable string of games, we supped, and the artilleryman finished the champagne. We went on smoking the cigars. He was no longer the energetic regenerator of his species I had encountered in the morning. He was still optimistic, but it was a less kinetic, a more thoughtful optimism. I remember he wound up with my health, proposed in a speech of small variety and considerable intermittence. I took a cigar, and went upstairs to look at the lights of which he had spoken that blazed so greenly along the Highgate hills.

At first I stared unintelligently across the London valley. The northern hills were shrouded in darkness; the fires near Kensington glowed redly, and now and then an orange-red tongue of flame flashed up and vanished in the deep blue night. All the rest of London was black. Then, nearer, I perceived a strange light, a pale, violet-purple fluorescent glow, quivering under the night breeze. For a space I could not understand it, and then I knew that it must be the red weed from which this faint irradiation proceeded. With that realisation my dormant sense of wonder, my sense of the proportion of things, awoke again. I glanced from that to Mars, red and clear, glowing high in the west, and then gazed long and earnestly at the darkness of Hampstead and Highgate.

I remained a very long time upon the roof, wondering at the grotesque changes of the day. I recalled my mental states from the midnight prayer to the foolish card-playing. I had a violent revulsion of feeling. I remember I flung away the cigar with a certain wasteful symbolism. My folly came to me with glaring exaggeration. I seemed a traitor to my wife and to my kind; I was filled with remorse. I resolved to leave this strange undisciplined dreamer of great things to his drink and gluttony, and to go on into London. There, it seemed

to me, I had the best chance of learning what the Martians and my fellowmen were doing. I was still upon the roof when the late moon rose.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DEAD LONDON

After I had parted from the artilleryman, I went down the hill, and by the High Street across the bridge to Fulham. The red weed was tumultuous at that time, and nearly choked the bridge roadway; but its fronds were already whitened in patches by the spreading disease that presently removed it so swiftly.

At the corner of the lane that runs to Putney Bridge station I found a man lying. He was as black as a sweep with the black dust, alive, but helplessly and speechlessly drunk. I could get nothing from him but curses and furious lunges at my head. I think I should have stayed by him but for the brutal expression of his face.

There was black dust along the roadway from the bridge onwards, and it grew thicker in Fulham. The streets were horribly quiet. I got food--sour, hard, and mouldy, but quite eatable--in a baker's shop here. Some way towards Walham Green the streets became clear of powder, and I passed a white terrace of houses on fire; the noise of the burning was an absolute relief. Going on towards Brompton, the streets were quiet again.

Here I came once more upon the black powder in the streets and upon dead bodies. I saw altogether about a dozen in the length of the Fulham Road. They had been dead many

days, so that I hurried quickly past them. The black powder covered them over, and softened their outlines. One or two had been disturbed by dogs.

Where there was no black powder, it was curiously like a Sunday in the City, with the closed shops, the houses locked up and the blinds drawn, the desertion, and the stillness. In some places plunderers had been at work, but rarely at other than the provision and wine shops. A jeweller's window had been broken open in one place, but apparently the thief had been disturbed, and a number of gold chains and a watch lay scattered on the pavement. I did not trouble to touch them. Farther on was a tattered woman in a heap on a doorstep; the hand that hung over her knee was gashed and bled down her rusty brown dress, and a smashed magnum of champagne formed a pool across the pavement. She seemed asleep, but she was dead.

The farther I penetrated into London, the profounder grew the stillness. But it was not so much the stillness of death--it was the stillness of suspense, of expectation. At any time the destruction that had already singed the northwestern borders of the metropolis, and had annihilated Ealing and Kilburn, might strike among these houses and leave them smoking ruins. It was a city condemned and derelict. . . .

In South Kensington the streets were clear of dead and of black powder. It was near South Kensington that I first heard the howling. It crept almost imperceptibly upon my senses. It was a sobbing alternation of two notes, "Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla," keeping on perpetually. When I passed streets that ran northward it grew in volume, and houses and buildings seemed to deaden and cut it off again. It came in a full tide down Exhibition Road. I stopped, staring towards Kensington Gardens, wondering at this strange, remote wailing. It was as

if that mighty desert of houses had found a voice for its fear and solitude.

"Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla," wailed that superhuman note-- great waves of sound sweeping down the broad, sunlit roadway, between the tall buildings on each side. I turned northwards, marvelling, towards the iron gates of Hyde Park. I had half a mind to break into the Natural History Museum and find my way up to the summits of the towers, in order to see across the park. But I decided to keep to the ground, where quick hiding was possible, and so went on up the Exhibition Road. All the large mansions on each side of the road were empty and still, and my footsteps echoed against the sides of the houses. At the top, near the park gate, I came upon a strange sight--a bus overturned, and the skeleton of a horse picked clean. I puzzled over this for a time, and then went on to the bridge over the Serpentine. The voice grew stronger and stronger, though I could see nothing above the housetops on the north side of the park, save a haze of smoke to the northwest.

"Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla," cried the voice, coming, as it seemed to me, from the district about Regent's Park. The desolating cry worked upon my mind. The mood that had sustained me passed. The wailing took possession of me. I found I was intensely weary, footsore, and now again hungry and thirsty.

It was already past noon. Why was I wandering alone in this city of the dead? Why was I alone when all London was lying in state, and in its black shroud? I felt intolerably lonely. My mind ran on old friends that I had forgotten for years. I thought of the poisons in the chemists' shops, of the liquors the wine merchants stored; I recalled the two sodden creatures of despair, who so far as I knew, shared the city

with myself. . . .

I came into Oxford Street by the Marble Arch, and here again were black powder and several bodies, and an evil, ominous smell from the gratings of the cellars of some of the houses. I grew very thirsty after the heat of my long walk. With infinite trouble I managed to break into a public-house and get food and drink. I was weary after eating, and went into the parlour behind the bar, and slept on a black horse-hair sofa I found there.

I awoke to find that dismal howling still in my ears, "Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla." It was now dusk, and after I had routed out some biscuits and a cheese in the bar--there was a meat safe, but it contained nothing but maggots--I wandered on through the silent residential squares to Baker Street --Portman Square is the only one I can name--and so came out at last upon Regent's Park. And as I emerged from the top of Baker Street, I saw far away over the trees in the clearness of the sunset the hood of the Martian giant from which this howling proceeded. I was not terrified. I came upon him as if it were a matter of course. I watched him for some time, but he did not move. He appeared to be standing and yelling, for no reason that I could discover.

I tried to formulate a plan of action. That perpetual sound of "Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla," confused my mind. Perhaps I was too tired to be very fearful. Certainly I was more curious to know the reason of this monotonous crying than afraid. I turned back away from the park and struck into Park Road, intending to skirt the park, went along under the shelter of the terraces, and got a view of this stationary, howling Martian from the direction of St. John's Wood. A couple of hundred yards out of Baker Street I heard a yelping chorus, and saw, first a dog with a piece of putrescent red meat in

his jaws coming headlong towards me, and then a pack of starving mongrels in pursuit of him. He made a wide curve to avoid me, as though he feared I might prove a fresh competitor. As the yelping died away down the silent road, the wailing sound of "Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla," reasserted itself.

I came upon the wrecked handling-machine halfway to St. John's Wood station. At first I thought a house had fallen across the road. It was only as I clambered among the ruins that I saw, with a start, this mechanical Samson lying, with its tentacles bent and smashed and twisted, among the ruins it had made. The forepart was shattered. It seemed as if it had driven blindly straight at the house, and had been overwhelmed in its overthrow. It seemed to me then that this might have happened by a handling-machine escaping from the guidance of its Martian. I could not clamber among the ruins to see it, and the twilight was now so far advanced that the blood with which its seat was smeared, and the gnawed gristle of the Martian that the dogs had left, were invisible to me.

Wondering still more at all that I had seen, I pushed on towards Primrose Hill. Far away, through a gap in the trees, I saw a second Martian, as motionless as the first, standing in the park towards the Zoological Gardens, and silent. A little beyond the ruins about the smashed handling-machine I came upon the red weed again, and found the Regent's Canal, a spongy mass of dark-red vegetation.

As I crossed the bridge, the sound of "Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla," ceased. It was, as it were, cut off. The silence came like a thunderclap.

The dusky houses about me stood faint and tall and dim; the trees towards the park were growing black. All about

me the red weed clambered among the ruins, writhing to get above me in the dimness. Night, the mother of fear and mystery, was coming upon me. But while that voice sounded the solitude, the desolation, had been endurable; by virtue of it London had still seemed alive, and the sense of life about me had upheld me. Then suddenly a change, the passing of something--I knew not what--and then a stillness that could be felt. Nothing but this gaunt quiet.

London about me gazed at me spectrally. The windows in the white houses were like the eye sockets of skulls. About me my imagination found a thousand noiseless enemies moving. Terror seized me, a horror of my temerity. In front of me the road became pitchy black as though it was tarred, and I saw a contorted shape lying across the pathway. I could not bring myself to go on. I turned down St. John's Wood Road, and ran headlong from this unendurable stillness towards Kilburn. I hid from the night and the silence, until long after midnight, in a cabmen's shelter in Harrow Road. But before the dawn my courage returned, and while the stars were still in the sky I turned once more towards Regent's Park. I missed my way among the streets, and presently saw down a long avenue, in the half-light of the early dawn, the curve of Primrose Hill. On the summit, towering up to the fading stars, was a third Martian, erect and motionless like the others.

An insane resolve possessed me. I would die and end it. And I would save myself even the trouble of killing myself. I marched on recklessly towards this Titan, and then, as I drew nearer and the light grew, I saw that a multitude of black birds was circling and clustering about the hood. At that my heart gave a bound, and I began running along the road.

I hurried through the red weed that choked St. Edmund's Terrace (I waded breast-high across a torrent of water that was rushing down from the waterworks towards the Albert Road), and emerged upon the grass before the rising of the sun. Great mounds had been heaped about the crest of the hill, making a huge redoubt of it--it was the final and largest place the Martians had made--and from behind these heaps there rose a thin smoke against the sky. Against the sky line an eager dog ran and disappeared. The thought that had flashed into my mind grew real, grew credible. I felt no fear, only a wild, trembling exultation, as I ran up the hill towards the motionless monster. Out of the hood hung lank shreds of brown, at which the hungry birds pecked and tore.

In another moment I had scrambled up the earthen rampart and stood upon its crest, and the interior of the redoubt was below me. A mighty space it was, with gigantic machines here and there within it, huge mounds of material and strange shelter places. And scattered about it, some in their overturned war-machines, some in the now rigid handling-machines, and a dozen of them stark and silent and laid in a row, were the Martians--DEAD!--slain by the putrefactive and disease bacteria against which their systems were unprepared; slain as the red weed was being slain; slain, after all man's devices had failed, by the humblest things that God, in his wisdom, has put upon this earth.

For so it had come about, as indeed I and many men might have foreseen had not terror and disaster blinded our minds. These germs of disease have taken toll of humanity since the beginning of things--taken toll of our prehuman ancestors since life began here. But by virtue of this natural selection of our kind we have developed resisting power; to no germs do we succumb without a struggle, and to many--

those that cause putrefaction in dead matter, for instance --our living frames are altogether immune. But there are no bacteria in Mars, and directly these invaders arrived, directly they drank and fed, our microscopic allies began to work their overthrow. Already when I watched them they were irrevocably doomed, dying and rotting even as they went to and fro. It was inevitable. By the toll of a billion deaths man has bought his birthright of the earth, and it is his against all comers; it would still be his were the Martians ten times as mighty as they are. For neither do men live nor die in vain.

Here and there they were scattered, nearly fifty altogether, in that great gulf they had made, overtaken by a death that must have seemed to them as incomprehensible as any death could be. To me also at that time this death was incomprehensible. All I knew was that these things that had been alive and so terrible to men were dead. For a moment I believed that the destruction of Sennacherib had been repeated, that God had repented, that the Angel of Death had slain them in the night.

I stood staring into the pit, and my heart lightened gloriously, even as the rising sun struck the world to fire about me with his rays. The pit was still in darkness; the mighty engines, so great and wonderful in their power and complexity, so unearthly in their tortuous forms, rose weird and vague and strange out of the shadows towards the light. A multitude of dogs, I could hear, fought over the bodies that lay darkly in the depth of the pit, far below me. Across the pit on its farther lip, flat and vast and strange, lay the great flying-machine with which they had been experimenting upon our denser atmosphere when decay and death arrested them. Death had come not a day too soon. At the sound of a cawing overhead I looked up at the huge fighting-machine

that would fight no more for ever, at the tattered red shreds of flesh that dripped down upon the overturned seats on the summit of Primrose Hill.

I turned and looked down the slope of the hill to where, enhaloed now in birds, stood those other two Martians that I had seen overnight, just as death had overtaken them. The one had died, even as it had been crying to its companions; perhaps it was the last to die, and its voice had gone on perpetually until the force of its machinery was exhausted. They glittered now, harmless tripod towers of shining metal, in the brightness of the rising sun.

All about the pit, and saved as by a miracle from everlasting destruction, stretched the great Mother of Cities. Those who have only seen London veiled in her sombre robes of smoke can scarcely imagine the naked clearness and beauty of the silent wilderness of houses.

Eastward, over the blackened ruins of the Albert Terrace and the splintered spire of the church, the sun blazed dazzling in a clear sky, and here and there some facet in the great wilderness of roofs caught the light and glared with a white intensity.

Northward were Kilburn and Hampsted, blue and crowded with houses; westward the great city was dimmed; and southward, beyond the Martians, the green waves of Regent's Park, the Langham Hotel, the dome of the Albert Hall, the Imperial Institute, and the giant mansions of the Brompton Road came out clear and little in the sunrise, the jagged ruins of Westminster rising hazily beyond. Far away and blue were the Surrey hills, and the towers of the Crystal Palace glittered like two silver rods. The dome of St. Paul's was dark against the sunrise, and injured, I saw for

the first time, by a huge gaping cavity on its western side.

And as I looked at this wide expanse of houses and factories and churches, silent and abandoned; as I thought of the multitudinous hopes and efforts, the innumerable hosts of lives that had gone to build this human reef, and of the swift and ruthless destruction that had hung over it all; when I realised that the shadow had been rolled back, and that men might still live in the streets, and this dear vast dead city of mine be once more alive and powerful, I felt a wave of emotion that was near akin to tears.

The torment was over. Even that day the healing would begin. The survivors of the people scattered over the country--leaderless, lawless, foodless, like sheep without a shepherd--the thousands who had fled by sea, would begin to return; the pulse of life, growing stronger and stronger, would beat again in the empty streets and pour across the vacant squares. Whatever destruction was done, the hand of the destroyer was stayed. All the gaunt wrecks, the blackened skeletons of houses that stared so dismally at the sunlit grass of the hill, would presently be echoing with the hammers of the restorers and ringing with the tapping of their trowels. At the thought I extended my hands towards the sky and began thanking God. In a year, thought I--in a year. . .

With overwhelming force came the thought of myself, of my wife, and the old life of hope and tender helpfulness that had ceased for ever.

CHAPTER NINE

WRECKAGE

And now comes the strangest thing in my story. Yet, perhaps, it is not altogether strange. I remember, clearly and coldly and vividly, all that I did that day until the time that I stood weeping and praising God upon the summit of Primrose Hill. And then I forget.

Of the next three days I know nothing. I have learned since that, so far from my being the first discoverer of the Martian overthrow, several such wanderers as myself had already discovered this on the previous night. One man--the first--had gone to St. Martin's-le-Grand, and, while I sheltered in the cabmen's hut, had contrived to telegraph to Paris. Thence the joyful news had flashed all over the world; a thousand cities, chilled by ghastly apprehensions, suddenly flashed into frantic illuminations; they knew of it in Dublin, Edinburgh, Manchester, Birmingham, at the time when I stood upon the verge of the pit. Already men, weeping with joy, as I have heard, shouting and staying their work to shake hands and shout, were making up trains, even as near as Crewe, to descend upon London. The church bells that had ceased a fortnight since suddenly caught the news, until all England was bell-ringing. Men on cycles, lean-faced, unkempt, scorched along every country lane shouting of unhopéd deliverance, shouting to gaunt, staring figures of despair. And for the food! Across the Channel, across the Irish Sea, across the Atlantic, corn, bread, and meat were

tearing to our relief. All the shipping in the world seemed going Londonward in those days. But of all this I have no memory. I drifted--a demented man. I found myself in a house of kindly people, who had found me on the third day wandering, weeping, and raving through the streets of St. John's Wood. They have told me since that I was singing some insane doggerel about "The Last Man Left Alive! Hurrah! The Last Man Left Alive!" Troubled as they were with their own affairs, these people, whose name, much as I would like to express my gratitude to them, I may not even give here, nevertheless cumbered themselves with me, sheltered me, and protected me from myself. Apparently they had learned something of my story from me during the days of my lapse.

Very gently, when my mind was assured again, did they break to me what they had learned of the fate of Leather-head. Two days after I was imprisoned it had been destroyed, with every soul in it, by a Martian. He had swept it out of existence, as it seemed, without any provocation, as a boy might crush an ant hill, in the mere wantonness of power.

I was a lonely man, and they were very kind to me. I was a lonely man and a sad one, and they bore with me. I remained with them four days after my recovery. All that time I felt a vague, a growing craving to look once more on whatever remained of the little life that seemed so happy and bright in my past. It was a mere hopeless desire to feast upon my misery. They dissuaded me. They did all they could to divert me from this morbidity. But at last I could resist the impulse no longer, and, promising faithfully to return to them, and parting, as I will confess, from these four-day friends with tears, I went out again into the streets that had lately been so dark and strange and empty.

Already they were busy with returning people; in places even there were shops open, and I saw a drinking fountain running water.

I remember how mockingly bright the day seemed as I went back on my melancholy pilgrimage to the little house at Woking, how busy the streets and vivid the moving life about me. So many people were abroad everywhere, busied in a thousand activities, that it seemed incredible that any great proportion of the population could have been slain. But then I noticed how yellow were the skins of the people I met, how shaggy the hair of the men, how large and bright their eyes, and that every other man still wore his dirty rags. Their faces seemed all with one of two expressions--a leaping exultation and energy or a grim resolution. Save for the expression of the faces, London seemed a city of tramps. The vestries were indiscriminately distributing bread sent us by the French government. The ribs of the few horses showed dismally. Haggard special constables with white badges stood at the corners of every street. I saw little of the mischief wrought by the Martians until I reached Wellington Street, and there I saw the red weed clambering over the buttresses of Waterloo Bridge.

At the corner of the bridge, too, I saw one of the common contrasts of that grotesque time--a sheet of paper flaunting against a thicket of the red weed, transfixed by a stick that kept it in place. It was the placard of the first newspaper to resume publication--the DAILY MAIL. I bought a copy for a blackened shilling I found in my pocket. Most of it was in blank, but the solitary compositor who did the thing had amused himself by making a grotesque scheme of advertisement stereo on the back page. The matter he printed was emotional; the news organisation had not as yet found its way back. I learned nothing fresh except that already

in one week the examination of the Martian mechanisms had yielded astonishing results. Among other things, the article assured me what I did not believe at the time, that the "Secret of Flying," was discovered. At Waterloo I found the free trains that were taking people to their homes. The first rush was already over. There were few people in the train, and I was in no mood for casual conversation. I got a compartment to myself, and sat with folded arms, looking greyly at the sunlit devastation that flowed past the windows. And just outside the terminus the train jolted over temporary rails, and on either side of the railway the houses were blackened ruins. To Clapham Junction the face of London was grimy with powder of the Black Smoke, in spite of two days of thunderstorms and rain, and at Clapham Junction the line had been wrecked again; there were hundreds of out-of-work clerks and shopmen working side by side with the customary navvies, and we were jolted over a hasty relaying.

All down the line from there the aspect of the country was gaunt and unfamiliar; Wimbledon particularly had suffered. Walton, by virtue of its unburned pine woods, seemed the least hurt of any place along the line. The Wandle, the Mole, every little stream, was a heaped mass of red weed, in appearance between butcher's meat and pickled cabbage. The Surrey pine woods were too dry, however, for the festoons of the red climber. Beyond Wimbledon, within sight of the line, in certain nursery grounds, were the heaped masses of earth about the sixth cylinder. A number of people were standing about it, and some sappers were busy in the midst of it. Over it flaunted a Union Jack, flapping cheerfully in the morning breeze. The nursery grounds were everywhere crimson with the weed, a wide expanse of livid colour cut with purple shadows, and very painful to the eye. One's gaze went with infinite relief from the scorched greys and

sullen reds of the foreground to the blue-green softness of the eastward hills.

The line on the London side of Woking station was still undergoing repair, so I descended at Byfleet station and took the road to Maybury, past the place where I and the artilleryman had talked to the hussars, and on by the spot where the Martian had appeared to me in the thunderstorm. Here, moved by curiosity, I turned aside to find, among a tangle of red fronds, the warped and broken dog cart with the whitened bones of the horse scattered and gnawed. For a time I stood regarding these vestiges. . . .

Then I returned through the pine wood, neck-high with red weed here and there, to find the landlord of the Spotted Dog had already found burial, and so came home past the College Arms. A man standing at an open cottage door greeted me by name as I passed.

I looked at my house with a quick flash of hope that faded immediately. The door had been forced; it was unfast and was opening slowly as I approached.

It slammed again. The curtains of my study fluttered out of the open window from which I and the artilleryman had watched the dawn. No one had closed it since. The smashed bushes were just as I had left them nearly four weeks ago. I stumbled into the hall, and the house felt empty. The stair carpet was ruffled and discoloured where I had crouched, soaked to the skin from the thunderstorm the night of the catastrophe. Our muddy footsteps I saw still went up the stairs.

I followed them to my study, and found lying on my writing-table still, with the selenite paper weight upon it,

the sheet of work I had left on the afternoon of the opening of the cylinder. For a space I stood reading over my abandoned arguments. It was a paper on the probable development of Moral Ideas with the development of the civilising process; and the last sentence was the opening of a prophecy: "In about two hundred years," I had written, "we may expect----" The sentence ended abruptly. I remembered my inability to fix my mind that morning, scarcely a month gone by, and how I had broken off to get my DAILY CHRONICLE from the newsboy. I remembered how I went down to the garden gate as he came along, and how I had listened to his odd story of "Men from Mars."

I came down and went into the dining room. There were the mutton and the bread, both far gone now in decay, and a beer bottle overturned, just as I and the artilleryman had left them. My home was desolate. I perceived the folly of the faint hope I had cherished so long. And then a strange thing occurred. "It is no use," said a voice. "The house is deserted. No one has been here these ten days. Do not stay here to torment yourself. No one escaped but you."

I was startled. Had I spoken my thought aloud? I turned, and the French window was open behind me. I made a step to it, and stood looking out.

And there, amazed and afraid, even as I stood amazed and afraid, were my cousin and my wife--my wife white and tearless. She gave a faint cry.

"I came," she said. "I knew--knew----"

She put her hand to her throat--swayed. I made a step forward, and caught her in my arms.

CHAPTER TEN

THE EPILOGUE

I cannot but regret, now that I am concluding my story, how little I am able to contribute to the discussion of the many debatable questions which are still unsettled. In one respect I shall certainly provoke criticism. My particular province is speculative philosophy. My knowledge of comparative physiology is confined to a book or two, but it seems to me that Carver's suggestions as to the reason of the rapid death of the Martians is so probable as to be regarded almost as a proven conclusion. I have assumed that in the body of my narrative.

At any rate, in all the bodies of the Martians that were examined after the war, no bacteria except those already known as terrestrial species were found. That they did not bury any of their dead, and the reckless slaughter they perpetrated, point also to an entire ignorance of the putrefactive process. But probable as this seems, it is by no means a proven conclusion.

Neither is the composition of the Black Smoke known, which the Martians used with such deadly effect, and the generator of the Heat-Rays remains a puzzle. The terrible disasters at the Ealing and South Kensington laboratories have disinclined analysts for further investigations upon

the latter. Spectrum analysis of the black powder points unmistakably to the presence of an unknown element with a brilliant group of three lines in the green, and it is possible that it combines with argon to form a compound which acts at once with deadly effect upon some constituent in the blood. But such unproven speculations will scarcely be of interest to the general reader, to whom this story is addressed. None of the brown scum that drifted down the Thames after the destruction of Shepperton was examined at the time, and now none is forthcoming.

The results of an anatomical examination of the Martians, so far as the prowling dogs had left such an examination possible, I have already given. But everyone is familiar with the magnificent and almost complete specimen in spirits at the Natural History Museum, and the countless drawings that have been made from it; and beyond that the interest of their physiology and structure is purely scientific.

A question of graver and universal interest is the possibility of another attack from the Martians. I do not think that nearly enough attention is being given to this aspect of the matter. At present the planet Mars is in conjunction, but with every return to opposition I, for one, anticipate a renewal of their adventure. In any case, we should be prepared. It seems to me that it should be possible to define the position of the gun from which the shots are discharged, to keep a sustained watch upon this part of the planet, and to anticipate the arrival of the next attack.

In that case the cylinder might be destroyed with dynamite or artillery before it was sufficiently cool for the Martians to emerge, or they might be butchered by means of guns so soon as the screw opened. It seems to me that they have lost a vast advantage in the failure of their first

surprise. Possibly they see it in the same light.

Lessing has advanced excellent reasons for supposing that the Martians have actually succeeded in effecting a landing on the planet Venus. Seven months ago now, Venus and Mars were in alignment with the sun; that is to say, Mars was in opposition from the point of view of an observer on Venus. Subsequently a peculiar luminous and sinuous marking appeared on the unilluminated half of the inner planet, and almost simultaneously a faint dark mark of a similar sinuous character was detected upon a photograph of the Martian disk. One needs to see the drawings of these appearances in order to appreciate fully their remarkable resemblance in character.

At any rate, whether we expect another invasion or not, our views of the human future must be greatly modified by these events. We have learned now that we cannot regard this planet as being fenced in and a secure abiding place for Man; we can never anticipate the unseen good or evil that may come upon us suddenly out of space. It may be that in the larger design of the universe this invasion from Mars is not without its ultimate benefit for men; it has robbed us of that serene confidence in the future which is the most fruitful source of decadence, the gifts to human science it has brought are enormous, and it has done much to promote the conception of the commonweal of mankind. It may be that across the immensity of space the Martians have watched the fate of these pioneers of theirs and learned their lesson, and that on the planet Venus they have found a securer settlement. Be that as it may, for many years yet there will certainly be no relaxation of the eager scrutiny of the Martian disk, and those fiery darts of the sky, the shooting stars, will bring with them as they fall an unavoidable apprehension to all the sons of men.

The broadening of men's views that has resulted can scarcely be exaggerated. Before the cylinder fell there was a general persuasion that through all the deep of space no life existed beyond the petty surface of our minute sphere. Now we see further. If the Martians can reach Venus, there is no reason to suppose that the thing is impossible for men, and when the slow cooling of the sun makes this earth uninhabitable, as at last it must do, it may be that the thread of life that has begun here will have streamed out and caught our sister planet within its toils.

Dim and wonderful is the vision I have conjured up in my mind of life spreading slowly from this little seed bed of the solar system throughout the inanimate vastness of sidereal space. But that is a remote dream. It may be, on the other hand, that the destruction of the Martians is only a reprieve. To them, and not to us, perhaps, is the future ordained.

I must confess the stress and danger of the time have left an abiding sense of doubt and insecurity in my mind. I sit in my study writing by lamplight, and suddenly I see again the healing valley below set with writhing flames, and feel the house behind and about me empty and desolate. I go out into the Byfleet Road, and vehicles pass me, a butcher boy in a cart, a cabful of visitors, a workman on a bicycle, children going to school, and suddenly they become vague and unreal, and I hurry again with the artilleryman through the hot, brooding silence. Of a night I see the black powder darkening the silent streets, and the contorted bodies shrouded in that layer; they rise upon me tattered and dog-bitten. They gibber and grow fiercer, paler, uglier, mad distortions of humanity at last, and I wake, cold and wretched, in the darkness of the night.

I go to London and see the busy multitudes in Fleet Street and the Strand, and it comes across my mind that they are but the ghosts of the past, haunting the streets that I have seen silent and wretched, going to and fro, phantasms in a dead city, the mockery of life in a galvanised body. And strange, too, it is to stand on Primrose Hill, as I did but a day before writing this last chapter, to see the great province of houses, dim and blue through the haze of the smoke and mist, vanishing at last into the vague lower sky, to see the people walking to and fro among the flower beds on the hill, to see the sight-seers about the Martian machine that stands there still, to hear the tumult of playing children, and to recall the time when I saw it all bright and clear-cut, hard and silent, under the dawn of that last great day. . . .

And strangest of all is it to hold my wife's hand again, and to think that I have counted her, and that she has counted me, among the dead.

WHEN THE SLEEPER WAKES

**By
H. G. Wells
1899**

CHAPTER I

INSOMNIA

One afternoon, at low water, Mr. Isbister, a young artist lodging at Boscastle, walked from that place to the picturesque cove of Pentargen, desiring to examine the caves there. Halfway down the precipitous path to the Pentargen beach he came suddenly upon a man sitting in an attitude of profound distress beneath a projecting mass of rock. The hands of this man hung limply over his knees, his eyes were red and staring before him, and his face was wet with tears.

He glanced round at Isbister's footfall. Both men were disconcerted, Isbister the more so, and, to override the awkwardness of his involuntary pause, he remarked, with an air of mature conviction, that the weather was hot for the time of year.

"Very," answered the stranger shortly, hesitated a second, and added in a colourless tone, "I can't sleep."

Isbister stopped abruptly. "No?" was all he said, but his bearing conveyed his helpful impulse.

"It may sound incredible," said the stranger, turning weary eyes to Isbister's face and emphasizing his words with a languid hand, "but I have had no sleep --- no sleep at all for six nights."

"Had advice?"

"Yes. Bad advice for the most part. Drugs. My nervous system... . They are all very well for the run of people. It's hard to explain. I dare not take . . . sufficiently powerful drugs."

"That makes it difficult," said Isbister.

He stood helplessly in the narrow path, perplexed what to do. Clearly the man wanted to talk. An idea natural enough under the circumstances, prompted him to keep the conversation going. "I've never suffered from sleeplessness myself," he said in a tone of commonplace gossip, "but in those cases I have known, people have usually found something--"

"I dare make no experiments."

He spoke wearily. He gave a gesture of rejection, and for a space both men were silent.

"Exercise?" suggested Isbister diffidently, with a glance from his interlocutor's face of wretchedness to the touring costume he wore.

"That is what I have tried. Unwisely perhaps. I have followed the coast, day after day--from New Quay. It has only added muscular fatigue to the mental. The cause of this unrest was overwork-- trouble. There was something--"

He stopped as if from sheer fatigue. He rubbed his forehead with a lean hand. He resumed speech like one who talks to himself.

"I am a lone wolf, a solitary man, wandering through a world in which I have no part. I am wifeless--childless--who is it speaks of the childless as the dead twigs on the tree of life? I am wifeless, I childless--I could find no duty to do. No desire even in my heart. One thing at last I set myself to do.

"I said, I will do this, and to do it, to overcome the inertia of this dull body, I resorted to drugs. Great God, I've had enough of drugs! I don't know if __you__ feel the heavy inconvenience of the body, its exasperating demand of time from the mind--time--life! Live! We only live in patches. We have to eat, and then comes the dull digestive complacencies--or irritations. We have to take the air or else our thoughts grow sluggish, stupid, run into gulfs and blind alleys. A thousand distractions arise from within and without, and then comes drowsiness and sleep. Men seem to live for sleep. How little of a man's day is his own--even at the best! And then come those false friends, those Thug helpers, the alkaloids that stifle natural fatigue and kill rest--black coffee, cocaine--"

"I see," said Isbister.

"I did my work," said the sleepless man with a querulous intonation.

"And this is the price? "

"Yes."

For a little while the two remained without speaking.

"You cannot imagine the craving for rest that I feel--a hunger and thirst. For six long days, since my work was done, my mind has been a whirlpool, swift, unprogressive and incessant, a torrent of thoughts leading nowhere, spinning round swift and steady--"

He paused. "Towards the gulf."

"You must sleep," said Isbister decisively, and with an air of a remedy discovered. "Certainly you must sleep."

"My mind is perfectly lucid. It was never clearer. But I know I am drawing towards the vortex. Presently--"

"Yes?"

"You have seen things go down an eddy? Out of the light of the day, out of this sweet world of sanity--down--"

"But," expostulated Isbister.

The man threw out a hand towards him, and his eyes were wild, and his voice suddenly high. "I shall kill myself. If in no other way--at the foot of yonder dark precipice there, where the waves are green, and the white surge lifts and falls, and that little thread of water trembles down. There at any rate is . . . sleep."

"That's unreasonable," said Isbister, startled at the man's hysterical gust of emotion. "Drugs are better

than that."

"There at any rate is sleep," repeated the stranger, not heeding him.

Isbister looked at him and wondered transitorily if some complex Providence had indeed brought them together that afternoon. "It's not a cert, you know," he remarked. "There's a cliff like that at Lulworth Cove--as high, anyhow--and a little girl fell from top to bottom. And lives to-day--sound and well."

"But those rocks there? "

"One might lie on them rather dismally through a cold night, broken bones grating as one shivered, chill water splashing over you. Eh? "

Their eyes met. "Sorry to upset your ideals," said Isbister with a sense of devil-may-careish brilliance.

"But a suicide over that cliff (or any cliff for the matter of that), really, as an artist--" He laughed.

"It's so damned amateurish."

"But the other thing," said the sleepless man irritably, "the other thing. No man can keep sane if night after night--"

"Have you been walking along this coast alone? "

"Yes."

"Silly sort of thing to do. If you'll excuse my saying so. Alone! As you say; body fag is no cure

for brain fag. Who told you to? No wonder; walking! And the sun on your head, heat, fag, solitude, all the day long, and then, I suppose, you go to bed and try very hard--eh?"

Isbister stopped short and looked at the sufferer doubtfully.

"Look at these rocks!" cried the seated man with a sudden force of gesture. "Look at that sea that has shone and quivered there for ever! See the white spume rush into darkness under that great cliff. And this blue vault, with the blinding sun pouring from the dome of it. It is your world. You accept it, you rejoice in it. It warms and supports and delights you. And for me--"

He turned his head and showed a ghastly face, bloodshot pallid eyes and bloodless lips. He spoke almost in a whisper. "It is the garment of my misery. The whole world . . . is the garment of my misery."

Isbister looked at all the wild beauty of the sunlit cliffs about them and back to that face of despair. For a moment he was silent.

He started, and made a gesture of impatient rejection. "You get a night's sleep," he said, "and you won't see much misery out here. Take my word for it."

He was quite sure now that this was a providential encounter. Only half an hour ago he had been feeling horribly bored. Here was employment the bare

thought of which was righteous self-applause. He took possession forthwith. It seemed to him that the first need of this exhausted being was companionship. He flung himself down on the steeply sloping turf beside the motionless seated figure, and deployed forthwith into a skirmishing line of gossip.

His hearer seemed to have lapsed into apathy; he stared dismally seaward, and spoke only in answer to Isbister's direct questions--and not to all of those. But he made no sign of objection to this benevolent intrusion upon his despair.

In a helpless way he seemed even grateful, and when presently Isbister, feeling that his unsupported talk was losing vigour, suggested that they should reascend the steep and return towards Boscastle, alleging the view into Blackapit, he submitted quietly. Halfway up he began talking to himself, and abruptly turned a ghastly face on his helper. "What can be happening?" he asked with a gaunt illustrative hand. "What can be happening? Spin, spin, spin, spin. It goes round and round, round and round for evermore."

He stood with his hand circling

"It's all right, old chap," said Isbister with the air of an old friend. "Don't worry yourself. Trust to me."

The man dropped his hand and turned again. They went over the brow in single file and to the headland beyond Penally, with the sleepless man gesticulating ever and again, and speaking fragmentary things concerning his whirling brain. At the headland they

stood for a space by the seat that looks into the dark mysteries of Blackapit, and then he sat down. Isbister had resumed his talk whenever the path had widened sufficiently for them to walk abreast. He was enlarging upon the complex difficulty of making Boscastle Harbour in bad weather, when suddenly and quite irrelevantly his companion interrupted him again.

"My head is not like what it was," he said, gesticulating for want of expressive phrases. "It's not like what it was. There is a sort of oppression, a weight. No--not drowsiness, would God it were! It is like a shadow, a deep shadow falling suddenly and swiftly across something busy. Spin, spin into the darkness The tumult of thought, the confusion, the eddy and eddy. I can't express it. I can hardly keep my mind on it--steadily enough to tell you."

He stopped feebly.

"Don't trouble, old chap," said Isbister. "I think I can understand. At any rate, it don't matter very much just at present about telling me, you know."

The sleepless man thrust his knuckles into his eyes and rubbed them. Isbister talked for awhile while this rubbing continued, and then he had a fresh idea. "Come down to my room," he said, "and try a pipe. I can show you some sketches of this Blackapit. If you'd care? "

The other rose obediently and followed him down the steep.

Several times Isbister heard him stumble as they

came down, and his movements were slow and hesitating. "Come in with me," said Isbister, "and try some cigarettes and the blessed gift of alcohol. If you take alcohol?"

The stranger hesitated at the garden gate. He seemed no longer clearly aware of his actions. "I don't drink," he said slowly, coming up the garden path, and after a moment's interval repeated absently, "No--I don't drink. It goes round. Spin, it goes --spin--"

He stumbled at the doorstep and entered the room with the bearing of one who sees nothing.

Then he sat down abruptly and heavily in the easy chair, seemed almost to fall into it. He leant forward with his brows on his hands and became motionless.

Presently he made a faint sound in his throat. Isbister moved about the room with the nervousness of an inexperienced host, making little remarks that scarcely required answering. He crossed the room to his portfolio, placed it on the table and noticed the mantel clock.

"I don't know if you'd care to have supper with me," he said with an unlighted cigarette in his hand--his mind troubled with a design of the furtive administration of chloral. "Only cold mutton, you know, but passing sweet. Welsh. And a tart, I believe." He repeated this after momentary silence.

The seated man made no answer. Isbister stopped, match in hand, regarding him.

The stillness lengthened. The match went out, the cigarette was put down unlit. The man was certainly very still. Isbister took up the portfolio, opened it, put it down, hesitated, seemed about to speak.

"Perhaps," he whispered doubtfully. Presently he glanced at the door and back to the figure. Then he stole on tiptoe out of the room, glancing at his companion after each elaborate pace.

He closed the door noiselessly. The house door was standing open, and he went out beyond the porch, and stood where the monkshood rose at the corner of the garden bed. From this point he could see the stranger through the open window, still and dim, sitting head on hand. He had not moved.

A number of children going along the road stopped and regarded the artist curiously. A boatman exchanged civilities with him. He felt that possibly his circumspect attitude and position seemed peculiar and unaccountable. Smoking, perhaps, might seem more natural. He drew pipe and pouch from his pocket, filled the pipe slowly.

"I wonder," . . . he said, with a scarcely perceptible loss of complacency. " At any rate we must give him a chance." He struck a match in the virile way, and proceeded to light his pipe.

Presently he heard his landlady behind him, coming with his lamp lit from the kitchen. He turned, gesticulating with his pipe, and stopped her at the door of his sitting-room. He had some difficulty in explaining the situation in whispers, for she did not

know he had a visitor. She retreated again with the lamp, still a little mystified to judge from her manner, and he resumed his hovering at the corner of the porch, flushed and less at his ease.

Long after he had smoked out his pipe, and when the bats were abroad, his curiosity dominated his complex hesitations, and he stole back into his darkling sitting-room. He paused in the doorway. The stranger was still in the same attitude, dark against the window. Save for the singing of some sailors aboard one of the little slate-carrying ships in the harbour, the evening was very still. Outside, the spikes of monkshood and delphinium stood erect and motionless against the shadow of the hillside. Something flashed into Isbister's mind; he started, and leaning over the table, listened. An unpleasant suspicion grew stronger; became conviction. Astonishment seized him and became--dread!

No sound of breathing came from the seated figure!

He crept slowly and noiselessly round the table, pausing twice to listen. At last he could lay his hand on the back of the armchair. He bent down until the two heads were ear to ear.

Then he bent still lower to look up at his visitor's face. He started violently and uttered an exclamation. The eyes were void spaces of white.

He looked again and saw that they were open and with the pupils rolled under the lids. He was suddenly afraid. Overcome by the strangeness of the man's condition, he took him by the shoulder and

shook him. "Are you asleep?" he said, with his voice jumping into alto, and again, "Are you asleep?"

A conviction took possession of his mind that this man was dead. He suddenly became active and noisy, strode across the room, blundering against the table as he did so, and rang the bell.

"Please bring a light at once," he said in the passage. "There is something wrong with my friend."

Then he returned to the motionless seated figure, grasped the shoulder, shook it, and shouted. The room was flooded with yellow glare as his astonished landlady entered with the light. His face was white as he turned blinking towards her. "I must fetch a doctor at once," he said. "It is either death or a fit. Is there a doctor in the village? Where is a doctor to be found? "

THE TRANCE

The state of cataleptic rigour into which this man had fallen, lasted for an unprecedented length of time, and then he passed slowly to the flaccid state, to a lax attitude suggestive of profound repose. Then it was his eyes could be closed.

He was removed from the hotel to the Boscastle surgery, and from the surgery, after some weeks, to London. But he still resisted every attempt at reanimation. After a time, for reasons that will appear later, these attempts were discontinued. For a great space he lay in that strange condition, inert and still neither dead nor living but, as it were, suspended,

hanging midway between nothingness and existence. His was a darkness unbroken by a ray of thought or sensation, a dreamless inaction, a vast space of peace. The tumult of his mind had swelled and risen to an abrupt climax of silence. Where was the man? Where is any man when insensibility takes hold of him?

"It seems only yesterday," said Isbister. "I remember it all as though it happened yesterday--clearer perhaps, than if it had happened yesterday."

It was the Isbister of the last chapter, but he was no longer a young man. The hair that had been brown and a trifle in excess of the fashionable length, was iron grey and clipped close, and the face that had been pink and white was buff and ruddy. He had a pointed beard shot with grey. He talked to an elderly man who wore a summer suit of drill (the summer of that year was unusually hot). This was Warming, a London solicitor and next of kin to Graham, the man who had fallen into the trance. And the two men stood side by side in a room in a house in London regarding his recumbent figure.

It was a yellow figure lying lax upon a water-bed and clad in a flowing shirt, a figure with a shrunken face and a stubby beard, lean limbs and lank nails, and about it was a case of thin glass. This glass seemed to mark off the sleeper from the reality of life about him, he was a thing apart, a strange, isolated abnormality. The two men stood close to the glass, peering in.

"The thing gave me a shock," said Isbister "I

feel a queer sort of surprise even now when I think of his white eyes. They were white, you know, rolled up. Coming here again brings it all back to me.

"Have you never seen him since that time?" asked Warming.

"Often wanted to come," said Isbister; "but business nowadays is too serious a thing for much holiday keeping. I've been in America most of the time."

"If I remember rightly," said Warming, "you were an artist?"

"Was. And then I became a married man. I saw it was all up with black and white, very soon--at least for a mediocre man, and I jumped on to process. Those posters on the Cliffs at Dover are by my people."

"Good posters," admitted the solicitor, "though I | was sorry to see them there." I

"Last as long as the cliffs, if necessary," exclaimed Isbister with satisfaction. "The world changes. When he fell asleep, twenty years ago, I was down at Boscastle with a box of water-colours and a noble, old-fashioned ambition. I didn't expect that some day my pigments would glorify the whole blessed coast of England, from Land's End round again to the Lizard. Luck comes to a man very often when he's not looking."

Warming seemed to doubt the quality of the luck. "I just missed seeing you, if I recollect aright."

"You came back by the trap that took me to Camelford railway station. It was close on the Jubilee, Victoria's Jubilee, because I remember the seats and flags in Westminster, and the row with the cabman at Chelsea."

"The Diamond Jubilee, it was," said Warming; "the second one."

"Ah, yes ! At the proper Jubilee--the Fifty Year affair--I was down at Wookey--a boy. I missed all that. . . . What a fuss we had with him! My landlady wouldn't take him in, wouldn't let him stay--he looked so queer when he was rigid. We had to carry him in a chair up to the hotel. And the Boscastle doctor--it wasn't the present chap, but the G.P. before him--was at him until nearly two, with, me and the landlord holding lights and so forth."

"It was a cataleptic rigour at first, wasn't it?"

"Stiff!--wherever you bent him he stuck. You might have stood him on his head and he'd have stopped. I never saw such stiffness. Of course this"--he indicated the prostrate figure by a movement of his head--"is quite different. And, of course, the little doctor--what was his name?"

"Smithers? "

"Smithers it was--was quite wrong in trying to fetch him round too soon, according to all accounts. The things he did. Even now it makes me feel all--ugh! Mustard, snuff, pricking. And one of those

beastly little things, not dynamos--"

"Induction coils."

"Yes. You could see his muscles throb and jump, and he twisted about. There was just two flaring yellow candles, and all the shadows were shivering, and the little doctor nervous and putting on side, and him--stark and squirming in the most unnatural ways. Well, it made me dream."

Pause.

"It's a strange state," said Warming.

"It's a sort of complete absence," said Isbister.

"Here's the body, empty. Not dead a bit, and yet not alive. It's like a seat vacant and marked 'engaged.' No feeling, no digestion, no beating of the heart--not a flutter. __That__ doesn't make me feel as if there was a man present. In a sense it's more dead than death, for these doctors tell me that even the hair has stopped growing. Now with the proper dead, the hair will go on growing--"

"I know," said Warming, with a flash of pain in his expression.

They peered through the glass again. Graham was indeed in a strange state, in the flaccid phase of a trance, but a trance unprecedented in medical history. Trances had lasted for as much as a year before --but at the end of that time it had ever been waking or a death; sometimes first one and then the

other. Isbister noted the marks the physicians had made in injecting nourishment, for that device had been resorted to to postpone collapse; he pointed them out to Warming, who had been trying not to see them.

"And while he has been lying here," said Isbister, with the zest of a life freely spent, "I have changed my plans in life; married, raised a family, my eldest lad-- I hadn't begun to think of sons then--is an American citizen, and looking forward to leaving Harvard. There's a touch of grey in my hair. And this man, not a day older nor wiser (practically) than I was in my downy days. It's curious to think of."

Warming turned. "And I have grown old too. I played cricket with him when I was still only a lad. And he looks a young man still. Yellow perhaps. But that is a young man nevertheless."

"And there's been the War," said Isbister.

"From beginning to end."

"And these Martians."

"I've understood," said Isbister after a pause, "that he had some moderate property of his own?"

"That is so," said Warming. He coughed primly. "As it happens-- have charge of it."

"Ah!" Isbister thought, hesitated and spoke: "No doubt--his keep here is not expensive--no doubt it will have improved--accumulated?"

"It has. He will wake up very much better off-- if he wakes--than when he slept."

"As a business man," said Isbister, "that thought has naturally been in my mind. I have, indeed, sometimes thought that, speaking commercially, of course, this sleep may be a very good thing for him. That he knows what he is about, so to speak, in being insensible so long. If he had lived straight on--"

"I doubt if he would have premeditated as much," said Warming. "He was not a far-sighted man. In fact--"

"Yes?"

"We differed on that point. I stood to him somewhat in the relation of a guardian. You have probably seen enough of affairs to recognise that occasionally a certain friction--. But even if that was the case, there is a doubt whether he will ever wake. This sleep exhausts slowly, but it exhausts. Apparently he is sliding slowly, very slowly and tediously, down a long slope, if you can understand me? "

"It will be a pity to lose his surprise. There's been a lot of change these twenty years. It's Rip Van Winkle come real."

"It's Bellamy," said Warming. " There has been a lot of change certainly. And, among other changes, I have changed. I am an old man."

Isbister hesitated, and then feigned a belated surprise. "I shouldn't have thought it."

"I was forty-three when his bankers--you remember you wired to his bankers--sent on to me."

"I got their address from the cheque book in his pocket," said Isbister.

"Well, the addition is not difficult," said Warming.

There was another pause, and then Isbister gave way to an unavoidable curiosity. "He may go on for years yet," he said, and had a moment of hesitation. "We have to consider that. His affairs, you know, may fall some day into the hands of--someone else, you know."

"That, if you will believe me, Mr. Isbister, is one of the problems most constantly before my mind. We happen to be--as a matter of fact, there are no very trustworthy connections of ours. It is a grotesque and unprecedented position."

"It is," said Isbister. "As a matter of fact, it's a case for a public trustee, if only we had such a functionary."

"It seems to me it's a case for some public body, some practically undying guardian. If he really is going on living--as the doctors, some of them, think. As a matter of fact, I have gone to one or two public men about it. But, so far, nothing has been done."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea to hand him over to some public body--the British Museum Trustees, or the Royal College of Physicians. Sounds a bit odd,

of course, but the whole situation is odd."

"The difficulty is to induce them to take him."

"Red tape, I suppose? "

"Partly."

Pause. " It's a curious business, certainly," said Isbister. "And compound interest has a way of mounting up."

"It has," said Warming. "And now the gold supplies are running short there is a tendency towards . . . appreciation."

"I've felt that," said Isbister with a grimace. "But it makes it better for him."

"If he wakes."

"If he wakes," echoed Isbister. "Do you notice the pinched-ill look of his nose, and the way in which his eyelids sink?"

Warming looked and thought for a space. "I doubt if he will wake," he said at last.

"I never properly understood," said Isbister, "what it was brought this on. He told me something about overstudy. I've often been curious."

"He was a man of considerable gifts, but spasmodic, emotional. He had grave domestic troubles, divorced his wife, in fact, and it was as a relief from

that, I think, that he took up politics of the rabid sort. He was a fanatical Radical--a Socialist--or typical Liberal, as they used to call themselves,-of the advanced school. Energetic--flighty--undisciplined. Overwork upon a controversy did this for him. I remember the pamphlet he wrote--a curious production. Wild, whirling stuff. There were one or two prophecies. Some of them are already exploded, some of them are established facts. But for the most part to read such a thesis is to realise how full the world is of unanticipated things. He will have much to learn, much to unlearn, when he wakes. If ever a waking comes."

"I'd give anything to be there," said Isbister, "just to hear what he would say to it all."

"So would I," said Warming. "Aye! so would I," with an old man's sudden turn to self pity. "But I shall never see him wake."

He stood looking thoughtfully at the waxen figure. "He will never wake," he said at last. He sighed "He will never wake again."

CHAPTER III

THE AWAKENING

But Warming was wrong in that. An awakening came.

What a wonderfully complex thing! this simple seeming unity--the self! Who can trace its reintegration as morning after morning we awaken, the flux and confluence of its countless factors interweaving,

rebuilding, the dim first stirrings of the soul, the growth and synthesis of the unconscious to the subconscious, the sub-conscious to dawning consciousness, until at last we recognise ourselves again. And as it happens to most of us after the night's sleep, so it was with Graham at the end of his vast slumber. A dim cloud of sensation taking shape, a cloudy dreariness, and he found himself vaguely somewhere, recumbent, faint, but alive.

The pilgrimage towards a personal being seemed to traverse vast gulfs, to occupy epochs. Gigantic dreams that were terrible realities at the time, left vague perplexing memories, strange creatures, strange scenery, as if from another planet. There was a distinct impression, too, of a momentous conversation, of a name--he could not tell what name--that was subsequently to recur, of some queer long-forgotten sensation of vein and muscle, of a feeling of vast hopeless effort, the effort of a man near drowning in darkness. Then came a panorama of dazzling unstable confluent scenes.

Graham became aware his eyes were open and regarding some unfamiliar thing.

It was something white, the edge of something, a frame of wood. He moved his head slightly, following the contour of this shape. It went up beyond the top of his eyes. He tried to think where he might be. Did it matter, seeing he was so wretched? The colour of his thoughts was a dark depression. He felt the featureless misery of one who wakes towards the hour of dawn. He had an uncertain sense of whispers and footsteps hastily receding.

The movement of his head involved a perception of extreme physical weakness. He supposed he was in bed in the hotel at the place in the valley--but he could not recall that white edge. He must have slept. He remembered now that he had wanted to sleep. He recalled the cliff and waterfall again, and then recollected something about talking to a passer-by.

How long had he slept? What was that sound of pattering feet? And that rise and fall, like the murmur of breakers on pebbles? He put out a languid hand to reach his watch from the chair whereon it was his habit to place it, and touched some smooth hard surface like glass. This was so unexpected that it startled him extremely. Quite suddenly he rolled over, stared for a moment, and struggled into a sitting position. The effort was unexpectedly difficult, and it left him giddy and weak--and amazed.

He rubbed his eyes. The riddle of his surroundings was confusing but his mind was quite clear--evidently his sleep had benefited him. He was not in a bed at all as he understood the word, but lying naked on a very soft and yielding mattress, in a trough of dark glass. The mattress was partly transparent, a fact he observed with a strange sense of insecurity, and below it was a mirror reflecting him greyly. About his arm--and he saw with a shock that his skin was strangely dry and yellow--was bound a curious apparatus of rubber, bound so cunningly that it seemed to pass into his skin above and below. And this strange bed was placed in a case of greenish coloured glass (as it seemed to him), a bar in the white framework of which had first arrested his attention. In

the corner of the case was a stand of glittering and delicately made apparatus, for the most part quite strange appliances, though a maximum and minimum thermometer was recognisable.

The slightly greenish tint of the glass-like substance which surrounded him on every hand obscured what lay behind, but he perceived it was a vast apartment of splendid appearance, and with a very large and simple white archway facing him. Close to the walls of the cage were articles of furniture, a table covered with a silvery cloth, silvery like the side of a fish, a couple of graceful chairs, and on the table a number of dishes with substances piled on them, a bottle and two glasses. He realised that he was intensely hungry.

He could see no human being, and after a period of hesitation scrambled off the translucent mattress and tried to stand on the clean white floor of his little apartment. He had miscalculated his strength, however, and staggered and put his hand against the glasslike pane before him to steady himself. For a moment it resisted his hand, bending outward like a distended bladder, then it broke with a slight report and vanished--a pricked bubble. He reeled out into the general space of the hall, greatly astonished. He caught at the table to save himself, knocking one of the glasses to the floor--it rang but did not break--and sat down in one of the armchairs.

When he had a little recovered he filled the remaining glass from the bottle and drank--a colourless liquid it was, but not water, with a pleasing faint aroma and taste and a quality of immediate support and stimulus. He put down the vessel and looked

about him.

The apartment lost none of its size and magnificence now that the greenish transparency that had intervened was removed. The archway he saw led to a flight of steps, going downward without the intermediation of a door, to a spacious transverse passage. This passage ran between polished pillars of some white-veined substance of deep ultramarine, and along it came the sound of human movements and voices and a deep undeviating droning note. He sat, now fully awake, listening alertly, forgetting the viands in his attention.

Then with a shock he remembered that he was naked, and casting about him for covering, saw a long black robe thrown on one of the chairs beside him. This he wrapped about him and sat down again, trembling.

His mind was still a surging perplexity. Clearly he had slept. and had been removed in his sleep. But here? And who were those people, the distant crowd beyond the deep blue pillars? Boscastle? He poured out and partially drank another glass of the colourless fluid.

What was this place?--this place that to his senses seemed subtly quivering like a thing alive? He looked about him at the clean and beautiful form of the apartment, unstained by ornament, and saw that the roof was broken in one place by a circular shaft full of light, and, as he looked, a steady, sweeping shadow blotted it out and passed, and came again and passed. "Beat, beat," that sweeping shadow had a note of its

own in the subdued tumult that filled the air.

He would have called out, but only a little sound came into his throat. Then he stood up, and, with the uncertain steps of a drunkard, made his way towards the archway. He staggered down the steps, tripped on the corner of the black cloak he had wrapped about himself, and saved himself by catching at one of the blue pillars.

The passage ran down a cool vista of blue and purple, and ended remotely in a railed space like a balcony, brightly lit and projecting into a space of haze, a space like the interior of some gigantic building. Beyond and remote were vast and vague architectural forms. The tumult of voices rose now loud and clear, and on the balcony and with their backs to him, gesticulating and apparently in animated conversation, were three figures, richly dressed in loose and easy garments of bright soft colourings. The noise of a great multitude of people poured up over the balcony, and once it seemed the top of a banner passed, and once some brightly coloured object, a pale blue cap or garment thrown up into the air perhaps, flashed athwart the space and fell. The shouts sounded like English, there was a reiteration of "Wake!" He heard some indistinct shrill cry, and abruptly the three men began laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed one--a red-haired man in a short purple robe. "When the Sleeper wakes--
__When!__"

He turned his eyes full of merriment along the passage. His face changed, the whole man changed,

became rigid. The other two turned swiftly at his exclamation and stood motionless. Their faces assumed an expression of consternation, an expression that deepened into awe.

Suddenly Graham's knees bent beneath him, his arm against the pillar collapsed limply, he staggered forward and fell upon his face.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOUND OF A TUMULT

Graham's last impression before he fainted was of a clamorous ringing of bells. He learnt afterwards that he was insensible, hanging between life and death, for the better part of an hour. When he recovered his senses, he was back on his translucent couch, and there was a stirring warmth at heart and throat. The dark apparatus, he perceived, had been removed from his arm, which was bandaged. The white framework was still about him, but the greenish transparent substance that had filled it was altogether gone. A man in a deep violet robe, one of those who had been on the balcony, was looking keenly into his face.

Remote but insistent was a clamour of bells and confused sounds, that suggested to his mind the picture of a great number of people shouting together. Something seemed to fall across this tumult, a door suddenly closed.

Graham moved his head. "What does this all mean?" he said slowly. "Where am I?"

He saw the red-haired man who had been first to discover him. A voice seemed to be asking what he had said, and was abruptly stilled.

The man in violet answered in a soft voice, speaking English with a slightly foreign accent, or so at least it seemed to the Sleeper's ears, "You are quite safe.

You were brought hither from where you fell asleep. It is quite safe. You have been here some time-- sleeping. In a trance."

He said something further that Graham could not hear, and a little phial was handed across to him. Graham felt a cooling spray, a fragrant mist played over his forehead for a moment, and his sense of refreshment increased. He closed his eyes in satisfaction.

"Better?" asked the man in violet, as Graham's eyes reopened. He was a pleasant-faced man of thirty, perhaps, with a pointed flaxen beard, and a clasp of gold at the neck of his violet robe.

"Yes," said Graham.

"You have been asleep some time. In a cataleptic trance. You have heard? Catalepsy? It may seem strange to you at first, but I can assure you everything is well."

Graham did not answer, but these words served their reassuring purpose. His eyes went from face to face of the three people about him. They were regarding him strangely. He knew he ought to be somewhere in Cornwall, but he could not square these

things with that impression.

A matter that had been in his mind during his last waking moments at Boscastle recurred, a thing resolved upon and somehow neglected. He cleared his throat.

"Have you wired my cousin?" he asked. "E. Warming, 27, Chancery Lane? "

They were all assiduous to hear. But he had to repeat it. "What an odd __blurr__ in his accent!" whispered the red-haired man. "Wire, sir?" said the young man with the flaxen beard, evidently puzzled.

"He means send an electric telegram," volunteered the third, a pleasant-faced youth of nineteen or twenty. The flaxen-bearded man gave a cry of comprehension. "How stupid of me! You may be sure everything shall be done, sir," he said to Graham. "I am afraid it would be difficult to--wire to your cousin. He is not in London now. But don't trouble about arrangements yet; you have been asleep a very long time and the important thing is to get over that, sir." (Graham concluded the word was sir, but this man pronounced it "Sire.")

"Oh!" said Graham, and became quiet.

It was all very puzzling, but apparently these people in unfamiliar dress knew what they were about. Yet they were odd and the room was odd. It seemed he was in some newly established place. He had a sudden flash of suspicion. Surely this wasn't some hall of public exhibition! If it was he would give Warming

a piece of his mind. But it scarcely had that character. And in a place of public exhibition he would not have discovered himself naked.

Then suddenly, quite abruptly, he realised what had happened. There was no perceptible interval of suspicion, no dawn to his knowledge. Abruptly he knew that his trance had lasted for a vast interval; as if by some processes of thought reading he interpreted the awe in the faces that peered into his. He looked at them strangely, full of intense emotion. It seemed they read his eyes. He framed his lips to speak and could not. A queer impulse to hide his knowledge came into his mind almost at the moment of his discovery. He looked at his bare feet, regarding them silently. His impulse to speak passed. He was trembling exceedingly.

They gave him some pink fluid with a greenish fluorescence and a meaty taste, and the assurance of returning strength grew.

"That--that makes me feel better," he said hoarsely, and there were murmurs of respectful approval. He knew now quite clearly. He made to speak again, and again he could not.

He pressed his throat and tried a third time.

"How long? " he asked in a level voice. "How long have I been asleep? "

"Some considerable time," said the flaxen-bearded man, glancing quickly at the others.

"How long? "

"A very long time."

"Yes--yes," said Graham, suddenly testy. "But I want-- Is it--it is--some years? Many years? There was something--I forget what. I feel--confused. But you--" He sobbed. "You need not fence with me. How long--?"

He stopped, breathing irregularly. He squeezed his eyes with his knuckles and sat waiting for an answer.

They spoke in undertones.

"Five or six?" he asked faintly. "More?"

"Very much more than that."

"Morel "

"More."

He looked at them and it seemed as though imps were twitching the muscles of his face. He looked his question.

"Many years," said the man with the red beard.

Graham struggled into a sitting position. He wiped a rheumy tear from his face with a lean hand. "Many years!" he repeated. He shut his eyes tight, opened them, and sat looking about him, from one unfamiliar thing to another.

"How many years?" he asked.

"You must be prepared to be surprised."

"Well? "

"More than a gross of years."

He was irritated at the strange word." More than a __what__?"

Two of them spoke together. Some quick remarks that were made about "decimal" he did not catch.

"How long did you say? " asked Graham. "How long? Don't look like that. Tell me."

Among the remarks in an undertone, his ear caught six words: "More than a couple of centuries."

__"Whats?"__ he cried, turning on the youth who he thought had spoken. "Who says--? What was that? A couple of centuries!"

"Yes," said the man with the red beard. "Two hundred years."

Graham repeated the words. He had been prepared to hear of a vast repose, and yet these concrete centuries defeated him.

"Two hundred years," he said again, with the figure of a great gulf opening very slowly in his mind; and then, "Oh, but--!"

They said nothing.

"You--did you say--? "

"Two hundred years. Two centuries of years,"
said the man with the red beard.

There was a pause. Graham looked at their faces
and saw that what he had heard was indeed true.

"But it can't be," he said querulously. "I am
dreaming. Trances. Trances don't last. That is not
right--this is a joke you have played upon me! Tell
me--some days ago, perhaps, I was walking along
the coast of Cornwall--? "

His voice failed him.

The man with the flaxen beard hesitated. "I'm
not very strong in history, sir," he said weakly, and
glanced at the others.

"That was it, sir," said the youngster. "Boscastle,
in the old Duchy of Cornwall--it's in the southwest
country beyond the dairy meadows. There is a house
there still. I have been there."

"Boscastle!" Graham turned his eyes to the
youngster. "That was it--Boscastle. Little Boscastle.
I fell asleep--somewhere there. I don't
exactly remember. I don't exactly remember."

He pressed his brows and whispered, "More than
two hundred years!"

He began to speak quickly with a twitching face, but his heart was cold within him. "But if it is two hundred years, every soul I know, every human being that ever I saw or spoke to before I went to sleep, must be dead."

They did not answer him.

"The Queen and the Royal Family, her Ministers, of Church and State. High and low, rich and poor, one with another--"

"Is there England still?"

"That's a comfort! Is there London?"

E "This __is__ London, eh? And you are my assistant--custodian; assistant-custodian. And these--? Eh? Assistant-custodians to?"

He sat with a gaunt stare on his face. "But why am I here? No! Don't talk. Be quiet. Let me--"

He sat silent, rubbed his eyes, and, uncovering them, found another little glass of pinkish fluid held towards him. He took the dose. It was almost immediately sustaining. Directly he had taken it he began to weep naturally and refreshingly.

Presently he looked at their faces, suddenly laughed through his tears, a little foolishly. "But--two--hun--dred--years ! " he said. He grimaced hysterically and covered up his face again.

After a space he grew calm. He sat up, his hands

hanging over his knees in almost precisely the same attitude in which Isbister had found him on the cliff at Pentargen. His attention was attracted by a thick domineering voice, the footsteps of an advancing personage. "What are you doing? Why was I not warned? Surely you could tell? Someone will suffer for this. The man must be kept quiet. Are the doorways closed? All the doorways? He must be kept perfectly quiet. He must not be told. Has he been told anything?"

The man with the fair beard made some inaudible remark, and Graham looking over his shoulder saw approaching a very short, fat, and thickset beardless man, with aquiline nose and heavy neck and chin. Very thick black and slightly sloping eyebrows that almost met over his nose and overhung deep grey eyes, gave his face an oddly formidable expression. He scowled momentarily at Graham and then his regard returned to the man with the flaxen beard. "These others," he said in a voice of extreme irritation. "You had better go."

"Go?" said the red-bearded man.

"Certainly--go now. But see the doorways are closed as you go."

The two men addressed turned obediently, after one reluctant glance at Graham, and instead of going through the archway as he expected, walked straight to the dead wall of the apartment opposite the archway. And then came a strange thing; a long strip of this apparently solid wall rolled up with a snap, hung over the two retreating men and fell again, and

immediately Graham was alone with the new comer and the purple-robed man with the flaxen beard.

For a space the thickset man took not the slightest notice of Graham, but proceeded to interrogate the other--obviously his subordinate--upon the treatment of their charge. He spoke clearly, but in phrases only partially intelligible to Graham. The awakening seemed not only a matter of surprise but of consternation and annoyance to him. He was evidently profoundly excited.

"You must not confuse his mind by telling him things," he repeated again and again. "You must not confuse his mind."

His questions answered, he turned quickly and eyed the awakened sleeper with an ambiguous expression.

"Feel queer? " he asked.

"Very."

"The world, what you see of it, seems strange to you? "

"I suppose I have to live in it, strange as it seems."

"I suppose so, now."

"In the first place, hadn't I better have some clothes? "

"They--" said the thickset man and stopped, and the flaxen-bearded man met his eye and went away.

"You will very speedily have clothes," said the thickset man.

"Is it true indeed, that I have been asleep two hundred--?" asked Graham.

"They have told you that, have they? Two hundred and three, as a matter of fact."

Graham accepted the indisputable now with raised eyebrows and depressed mouth. He sat silent for a moment, and then asked a question, "Is there a mill or dynamo near here?" He did not wait for an answer. "Things have changed tremendously, I suppose?" he said.

"What is that shouting? " he asked abruptly.

"Nothing," said the thickset man impatiently.
"It's people. You'll understand better later--perhaps. As you say, things have changed." He spoke shortly, his brows were knit, and he glanced about him like a man trying to decide in an emergency.
"We must get you clothes and so forth, at any rate.

Better wait here until some can come. No one will come near you. You want shaving."

Graham rubbed his chin.

The man with the flaxen beard came back towards them, turned suddenly, listened for a moment, lifted his eyebrows at the older man, and hurried off through the archway towards the balcony. The tumult of shouting grew louder, and the thickset man turned and

listened also. He cursed suddenly under his breath, and turned his eyes upon Graham with an unfriendly expression. It was a surge of many voices, rising and falling, shouting and screaming, and once came a sound like blows and sharp cries, and then a snapping like the crackling of dry sticks. Graham strained his ears to draw some single thread of sound from the woven tumult.

Then he perceived, repeated again and again, a certain formula. For a time he doubted his ears. But surely these were the words: "how us the Sleeper! Show us the Sleeper!"

The thickset man rushed suddenly to the archway.

"Wild!" he cried, "How do they know? Do they know? Or is it guessing?"

There was perhaps an answer.

"I can't come," said the thickset man; "I have __him__ to see to. But shout from the balcony."

There was an inaudible reply.

"Say he is not awake. Anything! I leave it to you."

He came hurrying back to Graham. "You must have clothes at once," he said. "You cannot stop here--and it will be impossible to--"

He rushed away, Graham shouting unanswered questions after him. In a moment he was back.

"I can't tell you what is happening. It is too complex to explain. In a moment you shall have your clothes made. Yes--in a moment. And then I can take you away from here. You will find out our troubles soon enough."

"But those voices. They were shouting--?"

"Something about the Sleeper--that's you. They have some twisted idea. I don't know what it is. I know nothing."

A shrill bell jettted acutely across the indistinct mingling of remote noises, and this brusque person sprang to a little group of appliances in the corner of the room. He listened for a moment, regarding a ball of crystal, nodded, and said a few indistinct words; then he walked to the wall through which the two men had vanished. It rolled up again like a curtain, and he stood waiting.

Graham lifted his arm and was astonished to find what strength the restoratives had given him. He thrust one leg over the side of the couch and then the other. His head no longer swam. He could scarcely credit his rapid recovery. He sat feeling his limbs.

The man with the flaxen beard re-entered from the archway, and as he did so the cage of a lift came sliding down in front of the thickset man, and a lean, grey-bearded man, carrying a roll, and wearing a tightly-fitting costume of dark green, appeared therein.

"This is the tailor," said the thickset man with an

introductory gesture." It will never do for you to wear that black. I cannot understand how it got here. But I shall. I shall. You will be as rapid as possible? " he said to the tailor.

The man in green bowed, and, advancing, seated himself by Graham on the bed. His manner was calm, but his eyes were full of curiosity. "You will find the fashions altered, Sire," he said. He glanced from under his brows at the thickset man. ,

He opened the roller with a quick movement, and a confusion of brilliant fabrics poured out over his knees. "You lived, Sire, in a period essentially cylindrical--the Victorian. With a tendency to the hemisphere in hats. Circular curves always. Now--" He flicked out a little appliance the size and appearance of a keyless watch, whirled the knob, and behold--a little figure in white appeared kinetoscope fashion on the dial, walking and turning. The tailor caught up a pattern of bluish white satin. "That is my conception of your immediate treatment," he said.

The thickset man came and stood by the shoulder of Graham.

"We have very little time," he said.

"Trust me," said the tailor. "My machine follows. What do you think of this? "

"What is that?" asked the man from the nineteenth century.

"In your days they showed you a fashion-plate,"

said the tailor," but this is our modern development See here." The little figure repeated its evolutions, but in a different costume. "Or this," and with a click another small figure in a more voluminous type of robe marched on to the dial. The tailor was very quick in his movements, and glanced twice towards the lift as he did these things.

It rumbled again, and a crop-haired anaemic lad with features of the Chinese type, clad in coarse pale blue canvas, appeared together with a complicated machine, which he pushed noiselessly on little castors into the room. Incontinently the little kinetoscope was dropped, Graham was invited to stand in front of the machine and the tailor muttered some instructions to the crop-haired lad, who answered in guttural tones and with words Graham did not recognise. The boy then went to conduct an incomprehensible monologue in the corner, and the tailor pulled out a number of slotted arms terminating in little discs, pulling them out until the discs were flat against the body of Graham, one at each shoulder blade, one at the elbows, one at the neck and so forth, so that at last there were, perhaps, two score of them upon his body and limbs. At the same time, some other person entered the room by the lift, behind Graham. The tailor set moving a mechanism that initiated a faint-sounding rhythmic movement of parts in the machine, and in another moment he was knocking up the levers and Graham was released. The tailor replaced his cloak of black, and the man with the flaxen beard proffered him a little glass of some refreshing fluid. Graham saw over the rim of the glass a pale-faced young man regarding him with a singular fixity.

The thickset man had been pacing the room fretfully, and now turned and went through the archway towards the balcony, from which the noise of a distant crowd still came in gusts and cadences. The cropheaded lad handed the tailor a roll of the bluish satin and the two began fixing this in the mechanism in a manner reminiscent of a roll of paper in a nineteenth century printing machine. Then they ran the entire thing on its easy, noiseless bearings across the room to a remote corner where a twisted cable looped rather gracefully from the wall. They made some connexion and the machine became energetic and swift.

"What is that doing?" asked Graham, pointing with the empty glass to the busy figures and trying to ignore the scrutiny of the new comer. " Is that--some sort of force--laid on? "

"Yes," said the man with the flaxen beard.

"Who is that?" He indicated the archway behind him.

The man in purple stroked his little beard, hesitated, and answered in an undertone, "He is Howard, your chief guardian. You see, Sire,--it's a little difficult to explain. The Council appoints a guardian and assistants. This hall has under certain restrictions been public. In order that people might satisfy themselves. We have barred the doorways for the first time. But I think--if you don't mind, I will leave him to explain."

"Odd" said Graham. " Guardian? Council?"

Then turning his back on the new comer, he asked in an undertone, "Why is this man glaring at me? Is he a mesmerist? "

"Mesmerist! He is a capillotomist."

"Capillotomist!"

"Yes--one of the chief. His yearly fee is sixdoz lions."

It sounded sheer nonsense. Graham snatched at the last phrase with an unsteady mind. "Sixdoz lions?" he said.

"Didn't you have lions? I suppose not. You had the old pounds? They are our monetary units."

"But what was that you said--sixdoz? "

"Yes. Six dozen, Sire. Of course things, even these little things, have altered. You lived in the days of the decimal system, the Arab system--tens, and little hundreds and thousands. We have eleven numerals now. We have single figures for both ten and eleven, two figures for a dozen, and a dozen dozen makes a gross, a great hundred, you know, a dozen gross a dozand, and a dozand dozand a myriad. Very simple?"

"I suppose so," said Graham. "But about this cap--what was it? "

The man with the flaxen beard glanced over his shoulder.

"Here are your clothes!" he said. Graham turned round sharply and saw the tailor standing at his elbow smiling, and holding some palpably new garments over his arm. The crop-headed boy, by means of one finger, was impelling the complicated machine towards the lift by which he had arrived. Graham stared at the completed suit. "You don't mean to say--!"

"Just made," said the tailor. He dropped the garments at the feet of Graham, walked to the bed on which Graham had so recently been lying, flung out the translucent mattress, and turned up the looking glass. As he did so a furious bell summoned the thickset man to the corner. The man with the flaxen beard rushed across to him and then hurried out by the archway.

The tailor was assisting Graham into a dark purple combination garment, stockings, vest, and pants in one, as the thickset man came back from the corner to meet the man with the flaxen beard returning from the balcony. They began speaking quickly in an undertone, their bearing had an unmistakable quality of anxiety. Over the purple under-garment came a I complex but graceful garment of bluish white, and I Graham was clothed in the fashion once more and saw himself, sallow-faced, unshaven and shaggy still, but at least naked no longer, and in some indefinable unprecedented way graceful.

"I must shave," he said regarding himself in the glass.

"In a moment," said Howard.

The persistent stare ceased. The young man closed his eyes, reopened them, and with a lean hand extended, advanced on Graham. Then he stopped, with his hand slowly gesticulating, and looked about him.

"A seat," said Howard impatiently, and in a moment the flaxen-bearded man had a chair behind Graham. "Sit down, please," said Howard.

Graham hesitated, and in the other hand of the wildeyed man he saw the glint of steel.

"Don't you understand, Sire?" cried the flaxen-bearded man with hurried politeness. "He is going to cut your hair."

"Oh!" cried Graham enlightened. "But you called him--"

"A capillotomist--precisely ! He is one of the finest artists in the world."

Graham sat down abruptly. The flaxen-bearded man disappeared. The capillotomist came forward with graceful gestures, examined Graham's ears and surveyed him, felt the back of his head, and would have sat down again to regard him but for Howard's audible impatience. Forthwith with rapid movements and a succession of deftly handled implements he shaved Graham's chin, clipped his moustache, and cut and arranged his hair. All this he did without a word, with something of the rapt air of a poet inspired. And as soon as he had finished Graham was handed a pair

of shoes.

Suddenly a loud voice shouted--it seemed from a piece of machinery in the corner--"At once--at once. The people know all over the city. Work is being stopped. Work is being stopped. Wait for nothing, but come."

This shout appeared to perturb Howard exceedingly. By his gestures it seemed to Graham that he hesitated between two directions. Abruptly he went towards the corner where the apparatus stood about the little crystal ball. As he did so the undertone of tumultuous shouting from the archway that had continued during all these occurrences rose to a mighty sound, roared as if it were sweeping past, and fell again as if receding swiftly. It drew Graham after it with an irresistible attraction. He glanced at the thickset man, and then obeyed his impulse. In two strides he was down the steps and in the passage, and, in a score he was out upon the balcony upon which | the three men had been standing.

CHAPTER V

THE MOVING WAYS

He went to the railings of the balcony and stared upward. An exclamation of surprise at his appearance, and the movements of a number of people came from the spacious area below.

His first impression was of overwhelming architecture. The place into which he looked was an aisle of Titanic buildings, curving spaciously in either direction.

Overhead mighty cantilevers sprang together across the huge width of the place, and a tracery of translucent material shut out the sky. Gigantic globes of cool white light shamed the pale sunbeams that filtered down through the girders and wires.

Here and there a gossamer suspension bridge dotted with foot passengers flung across the chasm and the air was webbed with slender cables. A cliff of edifice hung above him, he perceived as he glanced upward, and the opposite facade was grey and dim and broken by great archings, circular perforations, balconies, buttresses, turret projections, myriads of vast windows, and an intricate scheme of architectural relief.

Athwart these ran inscriptions horizontally and obliquely in an unfamiliar lettering. Here and there close to the roof cables of a peculiar stoutness were fastened, and drooped in a steep curve to circular openings on the opposite side of the space, and even as Graham noted these a remote and tiny figure of a man clad in pale blue arrested his attention. This little figure was far overhead across the space beside the higher fastening of one of these festoons, hanging forward from a little ledge of masonry and handling some well-nigh invisible strings dependent from the line.

Then suddenly, with a swoop that sent Graham's heart into his mouth, this man had rushed down the curve and vanished through a round opening on the hither side of the way. Graham had been looking up as he came out upon the balcony, and the things he saw above and opposed to him had at first seized his attention to the exclusion of anything else. Then suddenly he discovered the roadway! It was not a roadway at all, as Graham understood such things, for in the nineteenth century the only roads and streets were beaten tracks of motionless earth, jostling rivulets of

vehicles between narrow footways. But this roadway was three hundred feet across, and it moved; it moved, all save the middle, the lowest part. For a moment, the motion dazzled his mind. Then he understood.

Under the balcony this extraordinary roadway ran swiftly to Graham's right, an endless flow rushing along as fast as a nineteenth century express train, an endless platform of narrow transverse overlapping slats with little interspaces that permitted it to follow the curvatures of the street. Upon it were seats, and here and there little kiosks, but they swept by too swiftly for him to see what might be therein. From this nearest and swiftest platform a series of others descended to the centre of the space. Each moved to the right, each perceptibly slower than the one above it, but the difference in pace was small enough to permit anyone to step from any platform to the one adjacent, and so walk uninterruptedly from the swiftest to the motionless middle way. Beyond this middle way was another series of endless platforms rushing with varying pace to Graham's left. And seated in crowds upon the two widest and swiftest platforms, or stepping from one to another down the steps, or swarming over the central space, was an innumerable and wonderfully diversified multitude of people.

"You must not stop here," shouted Howard suddenly at his side. "You must come away at once."

Graham made no answer. He heard without hearing. The platforms ran with a roar and the people were shouting. He perceived women and girls with flowing hair, beautifully robed, with bands crossing between the breasts. These first came out of the

confusion. Then he perceived that the dominant note in that kaleidoscope of costume was the pale blue that the tailor's boy had worn. He became aware of cries of "The Sleeper. What has happened to the Sleeper?" and it seemed as though the rushing platforms before him were suddenly spattered with the pale buff of human faces, and then still more thickly. He saw pointing fingers. He perceived that the motionless central area of this huge arcade just opposite to the balcony was densely crowded with blue-clad people. Some sort of struggle had sprung into life. People seemed to be pushed up the running platforms on either side, and carried away against their will. They would spring off so soon as they were beyond the thick of the confusion, and run back towards the conflict.

"It is the Sleeper. Verily it is the Sleeper," shouted voices. "That is never the Sleeper," shouted others. More and more faces were turned to him. At the intervals along this central area Graham noted openings, pits, apparently the heads of staircases going down with people ascending out of them and descending into them. The struggle it seemed centred about the one of these nearest to him. People were running down the moving platforms to this, leaping dexterously from platform to platform. The clustering people on the higher platforms seemed to divide their interest between this point and the balcony. A number of sturdy little figures clad in a uniform of bright red, and working methodically together, were employed it seemed in preventing access to this descending staircase. About them a crowd was rapidly accumulating. Their brilliant colour contrasted vividly with the whitish-blue of their antagonists, for the struggle was indisputable.

He saw these things with Howard shouting in his ear and shaking his arm. And then suddenly Howard was gone and he stood alone.

He perceived that the cries of "The Sleeper" grew in volume, and that the people on the nearer platform were standing up. The nearer swifter platform he perceived was empty to the right of him, and far across the space the platform running in the opposite direction was coming crowded and passing away bare. With incredible swiftness a vast crowd had gathered in the central space before his eyes; a dense swaying mass of people, and the shouts grew from a fitful crying to a voluminous incessant clamour: "The Sleeper!" "The Sleeper!" and yells and cheers, a waving of garments and cries of "Stop the ways!" They were also crying another name strange to Graham. It sounded like "Ostrog." The slower platforms were soon thick with active people, running against the movement so as to keep themselves opposite to him.

"Stop the ways," they cried. Agile figures ran up swiftly from the centre to the swift road nearest to him, were borne rapidly past him, shouting strange, unintelligible things, and ran back obliquely to the central way. One thing he distinguished: "It is indeed the Sleeper. It is indeed the Sleeper," they testified.

For a space Graham stood without a movement. Then he became vividly aware that all this concerned him. He was pleased at his wonderful popularity, he bowed, and, seeking a gesture of longer range, waved his arm. He was astonished at the violence of uproar that this provoked. The tumult about the descending

stairway rose to furious violence. He became aware of crowded balconies, of men sliding along ropes, of men in trapeze-like seats hurling athwart the space. He heard voices behind him, a number of people descending the steps through the archway; he suddenly perceived that his guardian Howard was back again and gripping his arm painfully, and shouting inaudibly in his ear.

He turned, and Howard's face was white. "Come back," he heard. "They will stop the ways. The whole city will be in confusion."

He perceived a number of men hurrying along the passage of blue pillars behind Howard, the red-haired man, the man with the flaxen beard, a tall man in vivid vermilion, a crowd of others in red carrying staves, and all these people had anxious eager faces.

"Get him away," cried Howard.

"But why?" said Graham. "I don't see--"

"You must come away!" said the man in red in a resolute voice. His face and eyes were resolute, too. Graham's glances went from face to face, and he was suddenly aware of that most disagreeable flavour in life, compulsion. Some one gripped his arm.... He was being dragged away. It seemed as though the tumult suddenly became two, as if half the shouts that had come in from this wonderful roadway had sprung into the passages of the great building behind him. Marvelling and confused, feeling an impotent desire to resist, Graham was half led, half thrust, along the passage of blue pillars, and suddenly he found himself

alone with Howard in a lift and moving swiftly upward.

CHAPTER VI

THE HALL OF THE ATLAS

From the moment when the tailor had bowed his farewell to the moment when Graham found himself in the lift, was altogether barely five minutes. And as yet the haze of his vast interval of sleep hung about him, as yet the initial strangeness of his being alive at all in this remote age touched everything with wonder, with a sense of the irrational, with something of the quality of a realistic dream. He was still detached, an astonished spectator, still but half involved in life. What he had seen, and especially the last crowded tumult, framed in the setting of the balcony, had a spectacular turn, like a thing witnessed from the box of a theatre. "I don't understand," he said. "What was the trouble? My mind is in a whirl. Why were they shouting? What is the danger?"

"We have our troubles," said Howard. His eyes avoided Graham's enquiry. "This is a time of unrest. And, in fact, your appearance, your waking just now, has a sort of connexion--"

He spoke jerkily, like a man not quite sure of his breathing. He stopped abruptly.

"I don't understand," said Graham.

"It will be clearer later," said Howard.

He glanced uneasily upward, as though he found the progress of the lift slow.

"I shall understand better, no doubt, when I have seen my way about a little," said Graham puzzled. "It will be--it is bound to be perplexing. At present it is all so strange. Anything seems possible. Anything in the details even. Your counting, I understand, is different."

The lift stopped, and they stepped out into a narrow but very long passage between high walls, along which ran an extraordinary number of tubes and big cables.

"What a huge place this is!" said Graham. "Is it all one building? What place is it?"

"This is one of the city ways for various public services. Light and so forth."

"Was it a social trouble--that--in the great roadway place? How are you governed? Have you still a police?"

"Several," said Howard.

"Several? "

"About fourteen."

"I don't understand."

"Very probably not. Our social order will probably seem very complex to you. To tell you the truth, I don't understand it myself very clearly. Nobody does."

You will, perhaps--bye and bye. We have to go to the Council."

Graham's attention was divided between the urgent necessity of his inquiries and the people in the passages and halls they were traversing. For a moment his mind would be concentrated upon Howard and the halting answers he made, and then he would lose the thread in response to some vivid unexpected impression. Along the passages, in the halls, half the people seemed to be men in the red uniform. The pale blue canvas that had been so abundant in the aisle of moving ways did not appear. Invariably these men looked at him, and saluted him and Howard as they passed.

He had a clear vision of entering a long corridor, and there were a number of girls sitting on low seats and as though in a class. He saw no teacher, but only a novel apparatus from which he fancied a voice proceeded. The girls regarded him and his conductor, he thought, with curiosity and astonishment. But he was hurried on before he could form a clear idea of the gathering. He judged they knew Howard and not himself, and that they wondered who he was. This Howard, it seemed, was a person of importance. But then he was also merely Graham's guardian. That was odd.

There came a passage in twilight, and into this passage a footway hung so that he could see the feet and ankles of people going to and fro thereon, but no more of them. Then vague impressions of galleries and of casual astonished passers-by turning round to stare after the two of them with their red-clad guard.

The stimulus of the restoratives he had taken was only temporary. He was speedily fatigued by this excessive haste. He asked Howard to slacken his speed. Presently he was in a lift that had a window upon the great street space, but this was glazed and did not open, and they were too high for him to see the moving platforms below. But he saw people going to and fro along cables and along strange, frail-looking ridges.

And thence they passed across the street and at a vast height above it. They crossed by means of a narrow bridge closed in with glass, so clear that it made him giddy even to remember it. The floor of it also was of glass. From his memory of the cliffs between New Quay and Boscastle, so remote in time, and so recent in his experience, it seemed to him that they must be near four hundred feet above the moving ways. He stopped, looked down between his legs upon the swarming blue and red multitudes, minute and fore-shortened, struggling and gesticulating still towards the little balcony far below, a little toy balcony, it seemed, where he had so recently been standing. A thin haze and the glare of the mighty globes of light obscured everything. A man seated in a little open-work cradle shot by from some point still higher than the little narrow bridge, rushing down a cable as swiftly almost as if he were falling. Graham stopped involuntarily to watch this strange passenger vanish in a great circular opening below, and then his eyes went back to the tumultuous struggle.

Along one of the swifter ways rushed a thick crowd of red spots. This broke up into individuals as it approached the balcony, and went pouring down the

slower ways towards the dense struggling crowd on the central area. These men in red appeared to be armed with sticks or truncheons; they seemed to be striking and thrusting. A great shouting, cries of wrath, screaming, burst out and came up to Graham, faint and thin. "Go on," cried Howard, laying hands on him.

Another man rushed down a cable. Graham suddenly glanced up to see whence he came, and beheld through the glassy roof and the network of cables and girders, dim rhythmically passing forms like the vans of windmills, and between them glimpses of a remote and pallid sky. Then Howard had thrust him forward across the bridge, and he was in a little narrow passage decorated with geometrical patterns.

"I want to see more of that," cried Graham, resisting.

"No, no," cried Howard, still gripping his arm.

"This way. You must go this way." And the men in red following them seemed ready to enforce his orders.

Some negroes in a curious wasp-like uniform of black and yellow appeared down the passage, and one hastened to throw up a sliding shutter that had seemed a door to Graham, and led the way through it. Graham found himself in a gallery overhanging the end of a great chamber. The attendant in black and yellow crossed this, thrust up a second shutter and stood waiting.

This place had the appearance of an ante-room. He

saw a number of people in the central space, and at the opposite end a large and imposing doorway at the top of a flight of steps, heavily curtained but giving a glimpse of some still larger hall beyond. He perceived white men in red and other negroes in black and yellow standing stiffly about those portals.

As they crossed the gallery he heard a whisper from below, "The Sleeper," and was aware of a turning of heads, a hum of observation. They entered another little passage in the wall of this ante-chamber, and then he found himself on an iron-railed gallery of metal that passed round the side of the great hall he had already seen through the curtains. He entered the place at the corner, so that he received the fullest impression of its huge proportions. The black in the wasp uniform stood aside like a well-trained servant, and closed the valve behind him.

Compared with any of the places Graham had see thus far, this second hall appeared to be decorate with extreme richness. On a pedestal at the remote end, and more brilliantly lit than any other object, was a gigantic white figure of Atlas, strong and strenuous, the globe upon his bowed shoulders. It was the first thing to strike his attention, it was so vast, so patiently and painfully real, so white and simple. Save for this figure and for a dais in the centre, the wide floor of the place was a shining vacancy. The dais was remote in the greatness of the area; it would have looked a mere slab of metal had it not been for the group of seven men who stood about a table on it, and gave an inkling of its proportions. They were all dressed in white robes, they seemed to have arisen that moment from their seats, and they were regarding Graham

steadfastly. At the end of the table he perceived the glitter of some mechanical appliances.

Howard led him along the end gallery until they were opposite this mighty labouring figure. Then he stopped. The two men in red who had followed them into the gallery came and stood on either hand of Graham.

"You must remain here," murmured Howard, "for a few moments," and, without waiting for a reply, hurried away along the gallery.

"But, __why?" __ began Graham.

He moved as if to follow Howard, and found his path obstructed by one of the men in red. "You have to wait here, Sire," said the man in red.

__"Why?" __

"Orders, Sire."

"Whose orders? "

"Our orders, Sire."

Graham looked his exasperation.

"What place is this?" he said presently. "Who are those men? "

"They are the lords of the Council, Sire."

"What Council? "

"__The__ Council."

"Oh!" said Graham, and after an equally ineffectual attempt at the other man, went to the railing and stared at the distant men in white, who stood watching him and whispering together.

The Council? He perceived there were now eight, though how the newcomer had arrived he had not observed. They made no gestures of greeting; they stood regarding him as in the nineteenth century a group of men might have stood in the street regarding a distant balloon that had suddenly floated into view. What council could it be that gathered there, that little body of men beneath the significant white Atlas, secluded from every eavesdropper in this impressive spaciousness? And why should he be brought to them, and be looked at strangely and spoken of inaudibly? Howard appeared beneath, walking quickly across the polished floor towards them. As he drew near he bowed and performed certain peculiar movements, apparently of a ceremonious nature. Then he ascended the steps of the dais, and stood by the apparatus at the end of the table.

Graham watched that visible inaudible conversation. Occasionally, one of the white-robed men would glance towards him. He strained his ears in vain. The gesticulation of two of the speakers became animated. He glanced from them to the passive faces of his attendants. . . . When he looked again Howard was extending his hands and moving his head like a man who protests. He was interrupted, it seemed, by one of the white-robed men rapping the table.

The conversation lasted an interminable time to Graham's sense. His eyes rose to the still giant at whose feet the Council sat. Thence they wandered at last to the walls of the hall. It was decorated in long painted panels of a quasi-Japanese type, many of them very beautiful. These panels were grouped in a great and elaborate framing of dark metal, which passed into the metallic caryatidae of the galleries, and the great structural lines of the interior. The facile grace of these panels enhanced the mighty white effort that laboured in the centre of the scheme. Graham's eyes came back to the Council, and Howard was descending the steps. As he drew nearer his features could be distinguished, and Graham saw that he was flushed and blowing out his cheeks. His countenance was still disturbed when presently he reappeared along the gallery.

"This way," he said concisely, and they went on in silence to a little door that opened at their approach. The two men in red stopped on either side of this door. Howard and Graham passed in, and Graham, glancing back, saw the white-robed Council still standing in a close group and looking at him. Then the door closed behind him with a heavy thud, and for the first time since his awakening he was in silence. The floor, even, was noiseless to his feet.

Howard opened another door, and they were in the first of two contiguous chambers furnished in white and green. "What Council was that?" began Graham. "What were they discussing? What have they to do with me?" Howard closed the door carefully, heaved a huge sigh, and said something in an

undertone. He walked slanting ways across the room and turned, blowing out his cheeks again. "Ugh!" he grunted, a man relieved.

Graham stood regarding him.

"You must understand," began Howard abruptly, avoiding Graham's eyes, "that our social order is very complex. A half explanation, a bare unqualified statement would give you false impressions. As a matter of fact--it is a case of compound interest partly--your small fortune, and the fortune of your cousin Warming which was left to you--and certain other beginnings--have become very considerable. And in other ways that will be hard for you to understand, you have become a person of significance--of very considerable significance--involved in the world's affairs."

He stopped.

"Yes?" said Graham.

"We have grave social troubles."

"Yes? "

"Things have come to such a pass that, in fact, is advisable to seclude you here."

"Keep me prisoner! " exclaimed Graham.

"Well--to ask you to keep in seclusion."

Graham turned on him. "This is strange!" he

said.

"No harm will be done you."

"No harm ! "

"But you must be kept here--"

"While I learn my position, I presume."

"Precisely."

"Very well then. Begin. Why __harm?__"

" Not now."

"Why not? "

"It is too long a story, Sire."

"All the more reason I should begin at once. You say I am a person of importance. What was that shouting I heard? Why is a great multitude shouting and excited because my trance is over, and who are the men in white in that huge council chamber? "

"All in good time, Sire," said Howard. "But not crudely, not crudely. This is one of those flimsy times when no man has a settled mind. Your awakening. No one expected your awakening. The Council is consulting."

"What council? "

"The Council you saw."

Graham made a petulant movement. " This is not right," he said. " I should be told what is happening.

"You must wait. Really you must wait."

Graham sat down abruptly. "I suppose since I have waited so long to resume life," he said, "that I must wait a little longer."

"That is better," said Howard. "Yes, that is much better. And I must leave you alone. For a space. While I attend the discussion in the Council. I am sorry."

He went towards the noiseless door, hesitated and vanished.

Graham walked to the door, tried it, found it securely fastened in some way he never came to understand, turned about, paced the room restlessly, made the circuit of the room, and sat down. He remained sitting for some time with folded arms and knitted brow, biting his finger nails and trying to piece together the kaleidoscopic impressions of this first hour of awakened life; the vast mechanical spaces, the endless series of chambers and passages, the great struggle that roared and splashed through these strange ways, the little group of remote unsympathetic men beneath the colossal Atlas, Howard's mysterious behaviour. There was an inkling of some vast inheritance already in his mind--a vast inheritance perhaps misapplied--of some unprecedented importance and opportunity. What had he to do? And this room's secluded silence was eloquent of imprisonment!

It came into Graham's mind with irresistible conviction that this series of magnificent impressions was a dream. He tried to shut his eyes and succeeded, but that time-honoured device led to no awakening.

Presently he began to touch and examine all the unfamiliar appointments of the two small rooms in which he found himself.

In a long oval panel of mirror he saw himself and stopped astonished. He was clad in a graceful costume of purple and bluish white, with a little greyspot beard trimmed to a point, and his hair, its blackness streaked now with bands of grey, arranged over his forehead in an unfamiliar but graceful manner. He seemed a man of five-and-forty perhaps. For a moment he did not perceive this was himself.

A flash of laughter came with the recognition. "To call on old Warming like this!" he exclaimed, "and make him take me out to lunch! "

Then he thought of meeting first one and then another of the few familiar acquaintances of his early manhood, and in the midst of his amusement realised that every soul with whom he might jest had died many score of years ago. The thought smote him abruptly and keenly; he stopped short, the expression of his face changed to a white consternation.

The tumultuous memory of the moving platforms and the huge facade of that wonderful street reasserted itself. The shouting multitudes came back clear and vivid, and those remote, inaudible, unfriendly councilors

in white. He felt himself a little figure, very small and ineffectual, pitifully conspicuous. And all about him, the world was--strange.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE SILENT ROOMS

Presently Graham resumed his examination of his apartments. Curiosity kept him moving in spite of his fatigue. The inner room, he perceived, was high, and its ceiling dome shaped', with an oblong aperture in the centre, opening into a funnel in which a wheel of broad vans seemed to be rotating, apparently driving the air up the shaft. The faint humming note of its easy motion was the only clear sound in that quiet place. As these vans sprang up one after the other, Graham could get transient glimpses of the sky. He was surprised to see a star.

This drew his attention to the fact that the bright lighting of these rooms was due to a multitude of very faint glow lamps set about the cornices. There were no windows. And he began to recall that along all the vast chambers and passages he had traversed with Howard he had observed no windows at all. Had there been windows? There were windows on the street indeed, but were they for light? Or was the whole city lit day and night for evermore, so that there was no night there?

And another thing dawned upon him. There was no fireplace in either room. Was the season summer, and were these merely summer apartments, or was the whole City uniformly heated or cooled? He became

interested in these questions, began examining the smooth texture of the walls, the simply constructed bed, the ingenious arrangements by which the labour of bedroom service was practically abolished. And over everything was a curious absence of deliberate ornament, a bare grace of form and colour, that he found very pleasing to the eye. There were several very comfortable chairs, a light table on silent runners carrying several bottles of fluids and glasses, and two plates bearing a clear substance like jelly. Then he noticed there were no books, no newspapers, no writing materials. "The world has changed indeed," he said.

He observed one entire side of the outer room was set with rows of peculiar double cylinders inscribed with green lettering on white that harmonized with the decorative scheme of the room, and in the centre of this side projected a little apparatus about a yard square and having a white smooth face to the room. A chair faced this. He had a transitory idea that these cylinders might be books, or a modern substitute for books, but at first it did not seem so.

The lettering on the cylinders puzzled him. At first sight it seemed like Russian. Then he noticed a suggestion of mutilated English about certain of the words.

"oi Man huwdbi Kin"

forced itself on him as "The Man who would be King." "Phonetic spelling," he said. He remembered reading a story with that title, then he recalled the story vividly, one of the best stories in the world. But this thing before him was not a book as he

understood it. He puzzled out the titles of two adjacent cylinders. 'The Heart of Darkness,' he had never heard of before nor 'The Madonna of the Future'--no doubt if they were indeed stories, they were by post Victorian authors.

He puzzled over this peculiar cylinder for some time and replaced it. Then he turned to the square apparatus and examined that. He opened a sort of lid and found one of the double cylinders within, and on the upper edge a little stud like the stud of an electric bell. He pressed this and a rapid clicking began and ceased. He became aware of voices and music, and noticed a play of colour on the smooth front face. He suddenly realised what this might be, and stepped back to regard it.

On the flat surface was now a little picture, very vividly coloured, and in this picture were figures that moved. Not only did they move, but they were conversing in clear small voices. It was exactly like reality viewed through an inverted opera glass and heard through a long tube. His interest was seized at once by the situation, which presented a man pacing up and down and vociferating angry things to a pretty but petulant woman. Both were in the picturesque costume that seemed so strange to Graham. "I have worked," said the man, "but what have you been doing?"

"Ah!" said Graham. He forgot everything else, and sat down in the chair. Within five minutes he heard himself named, heard "when the Sleeper wakes," used jestingly as a proverb for remote postponement, and passed himself by, a thing remote and incredible.

But in a little while he knew those two people like I . intimate friends.

At last the miniature drama came to an end, and the square face of the apparatus was blank again.

It was a strange world into which he had been permitted to see, unscrupulous, pleasure seeking, energetic, subtle, a world too of dire economic struggle; there were allusions he did not understand, incidents that conveyed strange suggestions of altered moral ideals, flashes of dubious enlightenment. The blue canvas that bulked so largely in his first impression of the city ways appeared again and again as the costume of the common people. He had no doubt the story was contemporary, and its intense realism was undeniable. And the end had been a tragedy that oppressed him. He sat staring at the blankness.

He started and rubbed his eyes. He had been so absorbed in the latter-day substitute for a novel, that he awoke to the little green and white room with more than a touch of the surprise of his first awakening.

He stood up, and abruptly he was back in his own wonderland. The clearness of the kinetoscope drama passed, and the struggle in the vast place of streets, the ambiguous Council, the swift phases of his waking hour, came back. These people had spoken of the Council with suggestions of a vague universality of power. And they had spoken of the Sleeper; it had not really struck him vividly at the time that he was the Sleeper. He had to recall precisely what they had said.

He walked into the bedroom and peered up through the quick intervals of the revolving fan. As the fan swept round, a dim turmoil like the noise of machinery came in rhythmic eddies. All else was silence. Though the perpetual day still irradiated his apartments, he perceived the little intermittent strip of sky was now deep blue--black almost, with a dust of little stars.

He resumed his examination of the rooms. He could find no way of opening the padded door, no bell nor other means of calling for attendance. His feeling of wonder was in abeyance; but he was curious, anxious for information. He wanted to know exactly how he stood to these new things. He tried to compose himself to wait until someone came to him. Presently he became restless and eager for information, for distraction, for fresh sensations.

He went back to the apparatus in the other room, and had soon puzzled out the method of replacing the cylinders by others. As he did so, it came into his mind that it must be these little appliances had fixed the language so that it was still clear and understandable after two hundred years. The haphazard cylinders he substituted displayed a musical fantasia. At first it was beautiful, and then it was sensuous. He presently recognized what appeared to him to be an altered version of the story of Tannhauser. The music was unfamiliar. But the rendering was realistic, and with a contemporary unfamiliarity. Tannhauser did not go to a Venusberg, but to a Pleasure City. What was a Pleasure City? A dream, surely, the fancy of a fantastic, voluptuous writer.

He became interested, curious. The story developed with a flavour of strangely twisted sentimentality. Suddenly he did not like it. He liked it less as it proceeded.

He had a revulsion of feeling. These were no pictures, no idealisations, but photographed realities. He wanted no more of the twenty-second century Venusberg. He forgot the part played by the model in nineteenth century art, and gave way to an archaic indignation. He rose, angry and half ashamed at himself for witnessing this thing even in solitude. He pulled forward the apparatus, and with some violence sought for a means of stopping its action. Something snapped. A violet spark stung and convulsed his arm and the thing was still. When he attempted next day to replace these Tannhauser cylinders by another pair, he found the apparatus broken....

He struck out a path oblique to the room and paced to and fro, struggling with intolerable vast impressions. The things he had derived from the cylinders and the things he had seen, conflicted, confused him. It seemed to him the most amazing thing of all that in his thirty years of life he had never tried to shape a picture of these coming times. "We were making the future," he said, "and hardly any of us troubled to think what future we were making. And here it is!"

"What have they got to, what has been done? How do I come into the midst of it all?" The vastness of street and house he was prepared for, the multitudes of people. But conflicts in the city ways! And the systematised sensuality of a class of rich men!

He thought of Bellamy, the hero of whose Socialistic Utopia had so oddly anticipated this actual experience. But here was no Utopia, no Socialistic state. He had already seen enough to realise that the ancient antithesis of luxury, waste and sensuality on the one hand and abject poverty on the other, still prevailed. He knew enough of the essential factors of life to understand that correlation. And not only were the buildings of the city gigantic and the crowds in the street gigantic, but the voices he had heard in the ways, the uneasiness of Howard, the very atmosphere spoke of gigantic discontent. What country was he in? Still England it seemed, and yet strangely "un-English." His mind glanced at the rest of the world, and saw only an enigmatical veil.

He prowled about his apartment, examining everything as a caged animal might do. He felt very tired, felt that feverish exhaustion that does not admit of rest. He listened for long spaces under the ventilator to catch some distant echo of the tumults he felt must be proceeding in the city.

He began to talk to himself. "Two hundred and three years!" he said to himself over and over again, laughing stupidly. "Then I am two hundred and thirty-three years old! The oldest inhabitant. Surely they haven't reversed the tendency of our time and gone back to the rule of the oldest. My claims are indisputable. Mumble, mumble. I remember the Bulgarian atrocities as though it was yesterday. 'Tis a great age! Ha ha!" He was surprised at first to hear himself laughing, and then laughed again deliberately and louder. Then he realised that he was behaving foolishly. "Steady," he said. "Steady!"

His pacing became more regular. "This new world," he said. "I don't understand it. __Why?__ . . . But it is all __why!__"

"I suppose they can fly and do all sorts of things
Let me try and remember just how it began."

He was surprised at first to find how vague the memories of his first thirty years had become. He remembered fragments, for the most part trivial moments, things of no great importance that he had observed. His boyhood seemed the most accessible at first, he recalled school books and certain lessons in mensuration. Then he revived the more salient features of his life, memories of the wife long since dead, her magic influence now gone beyond corruption, of his rivals and friends and betrayers, of the swift decision of this issue and that, and then of his , last years of misery, of fluctuating resolves, and at last of his strenuous studies. In a little while he perceived he had it all again; dim perhaps, like metal long laid aside, but in no way defective or injured, capable of re-polishing. And the hue of it was a deepening misery. Was it worth re-polishing? By a miracle he had been lifted out of a life that had become intolerable.

He reverted to his present condition. He wrestled with the facts in vain. It became an inextricable tangle. He saw the sky through the ventilator pink with dawn. An old persuasion came out of the dark recesses of his memory. "I must sleep," he said. It appeared as a delightful relief from this mental distress and from the growing pain and heaviness of his limbs. He went to the strange little bed, lay down and

was presently asleep.

He was destined to become very familiar indeed with these apartments before he left them, for he remained imprisoned for three days. During that time no one, except Howard, entered his prison. The marvel of his fate mingled with and in some way minimised the marvel of his survival. He had awakened to mankind it seemed only to be snatched away into this unaccountable solitude. Howard came regularly with subtly sustaining and nutritive fluids, and light and pleasant foods, quite strange to Graham. He always closed the door carefully as he entered. On matters of detail he was increasingly obliging, but the bearing of Graham on the great issues that were evidently being contested so closely beyond the soundproof walls that enclosed him, he would not elucidate. He evaded, as politely as possible, every question on the position of affairs in the outer world.

And in those three days Graham's incessant thoughts went far and wide. All that he had seen, all this elaborate contrivance to prevent him seeing, worked together in his mind. Almost every possible interpretation of his position he debated--even as it chanced, the right interpretation. Things that presently happened to him, came to him at last credible, by virtue of this seclusion. When at length the moment of his release arrived, it found him prepared.

Howard's bearing went far to deepen Graham's impression of his own strange importance; the door between its opening and closing seemed to admit with him a breath of momentous happening. His enquiries became more definite and searching. Howard

retreated through protests and difficulties. The awakening was unforeseen, he repeated; it happened to have fallen in with the trend of a social convulsion.

"To explain it I must tell you the history of a gross and a half of years," protested Howard.

"The thing is this," said Graham. "You are afraid of something I shall do. In some way I am arbitrator--I might be arbitrator."

"It is not that. But you have--I may tell you this much--the automatic increase of your property puts great possibilities of interference in your hands. And in certain other ways you have influence, with your eighteenth century notions."

"Nineteenth century," corrected Graham.

"With your old world notions, anyhow, ignorant as you are of every feature of our State."

"Am I a fool? "

"Certainly not."

"Do I seem to be the sort of man who would act rashly?"

"You were never expected to act at all. No one counted on your awakening. No one dreamt you would ever awake. The Council had surrounded you with antiseptic conditions. As a matter of fact, we thought that you were dead--a mere arrest of decay. And--but it is too complex. We dare not suddenly

--while you are still half awake."

"It won't do," said Graham. "Suppose it is as you say--why am I not being crammed night and day with facts and warnings and all the wisdom of the time to fit me for my responsibilities? Am I any wiser now than two days ago, if it is two days, when I awoke?"

Howard pulled his lip.

"I am beginning to feel--every hour I feel more clearly--a sense of complex concealment of which you are the salient point. Is this Council, or committee, or whatever they are, cooking the accounts of my estate? Is that it? "

"That note of suspicion--" said Howard.

" Ugh!" said Graham. "Now, mark my words, it will be ill for those who have put me here. It will be ill. I am alive. Make no doubt of it, I am alive. Every day my pulse is stronger and my mind clearer and more vigorous. No more quiescence. I am a man come back to life. And I want to __live---__"

" __Live!__ "

Howard's face lit with an idea. He came towards Graham and spoke in an easy confidential tone.

"The Council secludes you here for your good. You are restless. Naturally--an energetic man! You find it dull here. But we are anxious that everything you may desire--every desire--every sort of

desire . . . There may be something. Is there any sort of company? "

He paused meaningly.

" Yes," said Graham thoughtfully. " There is."

"Ah! __Now!__ We have treated you neglectfully."

"The crowds in yonder streets of yours."

"That," said Howard, "I am afraid--. But--"

Graham began pacing the room. Howard stood near the door watching him. The implication of Howard's suggestion was only half evident to Graham Company? Suppose he were to accept the proposal, demand some sort of __company__? Would there be any possibilities of gathering from the conversation of this additional person some vague inkling of the struggle that had broken out so vividly at his waking moment? He meditated again, and the suggestion took colour. He turned on Howard abruptly.

"What do you mean by company? "

Howard raised his eyes and shrugged his shoulders.

"Human beings," he said, with a curious smile on his heavy face.

"Our social ideas," he said, "have a certain increased liberality, perhaps, in comparison with your times. If a man wishes to relieve such a tedium as this--by feminine society, for instance. We think it no scandal. We have cleared our minds of formulae. There is in our city a class, a necessary class, no longer

despised--discreet--"

Graham stopped dead.

"It would pass the time," said Howard. "It is a thing I should perhaps have thought of before, but, as a matter of fact, so much is happening--"

He indicated the exterior world.

Graham hesitated. For a moment the figure of a possible woman that his imagination suddenly created dominated his mind with an intense attraction. Then he flashed into anger.

"No I" he shouted.

He began striding rapidly up and down the room.

"Everything you say, everything you do, convinces me--of some great issue in which I am concerned. I do not want to pass the time, as you call it. Yes, I know. Desire and indulgence are life in a sense--and Death! Extinction! In my life before I slept I had worked out that pitiful question. I will not begin again. There is a city, a multitude--. And meanwhile I am here like a rabbit in a bag."

His rage surged high. He choked for a moment and began to wave his clenched fists. He gave way to an anger fit, he swore archaic curses. His gestures had the quality of physical threats.

"I do not know who your party may be. I am in the dark, and you keep me in the dark. But I know

this, that I am secluded here for no good purpose. For no good purpose. I warn you, I warn you of the consequences. Once I come at my power--"

He realised that to threaten thus might be a danger to himself. He stopped. Howard stood regarding him with a curious expression.

"I take it this is a message to the Council," said Howard.

Graham had a momentary impulse to leap upon the man, fell or stun him. It must have shown upon his face; at any rate Howard's movement was quick. In a second the noiseless door had closed again, and the man from the nineteenth century was alone.

For a moment he stood rigid, with clenched hands half raised. Then he flung them down. "What a fool I have been!" he said, and gave way to his anger again, stamping about the room and shouting curses. For a long time he kept himself in a sort of frenzy, raging at his position, at his own folly, at the knaves who had imprisoned him. He did this because he did not want to look calmly at his position. He clung to his anger--because he was afraid of Fear.

Presently he found himself reasoning with himself. This imprisonment was unaccountable, but no doubt the legal forms--new legal forms--of the time permitted it. It must, of course, be legal. These people were two hundred years further on in the march of civilisation than the Victorian generation. It was not likely they would be less--humane. Yet they had cleared their minds of formulae! Was humanity a

formula as well as chastity?

His imagination set to work to suggest things that might be done to him. The attempts of his reason to dispose of these suggestions, though for the most part logically valid, were quite unavailing. "Why should anything be done to me? "

"If the worst comes to the worst," he found himself saying at last, "I can give up what they want. But what do they want? And why don't they ask me for it instead of cooping me up? "

He returned to his former preoccupation with the Council's possible intentions. He began to reconsider the details of Howard's behaviour, sinister glances, inexplicable hesitations. Then, for a time, his mind circled about the idea of escaping from these rooms; but whither could he escape into this vast, crowded world? He would be worse off than a Saxon yeoman suddenly dropped into nineteenth century London. And besides, how could anyone escape from these rooms?

"How can it benefit anyone if harm should happen to me? "

He thought of the tumult, the great social trouble of which he was so unaccountably the axis. A text, irrelevant enough and yet curiously insistent, came floating up out of the darkness of his memory. This also a Council had said:

"It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people."

CHAPTER VIII

THE ROOF SPACES

As the fans in the circular aperture of the inner room rotated and permitted glimpses of the night, dim sounds drifted in thereby. And Graham, standing underneath, wrestling darkly with the unknown powers that imprisoned him, and which he had now deliberately challenged, was startled by the sound of a voice.

He peered up and saw in the intervals of the rotation, dark and dim, the face and shoulders of a man regarding him. When a dark hand was extended, the swift van struck it, swung round and beat on with a little brownish patch on the edge of its thin blade, and something began to fall therefrom upon the floor, dripping silently.

Graham looked down, and there were spots of blood at his feet. He looked up again in a strange excitement. The figure had gone.

He remained motionless--his every sense intent upon the flickering patch of darkness, for outside it was high night. He became aware of some faint, remote, dark specks floating lightly through the outer air. They came down towards him, fitfully, eddyingly, and passed aside out of the uprush from the fan. A gleam of light flickered, the specks flashed white, and then the darkness came again. Warmed and lit as he was, he perceived that it was snowing within a few feet of him.

Graham walked across the room and came back to the ventilator again. He saw the head of a man pass near. There was a sound of whispering. Then a smart blow on some metallic substance, effort, voices, and the vans stopped. A gust of snowflakes whirled into the room, and vanished before they touched the floor. "Don't be afraid," said a voice.

Graham stood under the van. "Who are you?" he whispered.

For a moment there was nothing but a swaying of the fan, and then the head of a man was thrust cautiously into the opening. His face appeared nearly inverted to Graham; his dark hair was wet with dissolving flakes of snow upon it. His arm went up into the darkness holding something unseen. He had a youthful face and bright eyes, and the veins of his forehead were swollen. He seemed to be exerting himself to maintain his position.

For several seconds neither he nor Graham spoke.

"You were the Sleeper?" said the stranger at last.

"Yes," said Graham. "What do you want with me?"

"I come from Ostrog, Sire."

"Ostrog?"

The man in the ventilator twisted his head round so that his profile was towards Graham. He appeared to be listening. Suddenly there was a hasty exclamation,

and the intruder sprang back just in time to escape the sweep of the released fan. And when Graham peered up there was nothing visible but the slowly falling snow.

It was perhaps a quarter of an hour before anything returned to the ventilator. But at last came the same metallic interference again; the fans stopped and the face reappeared. Graham had remained all this time in the same place, alert and tremulously excited.

"Who are you? What do you want?" he said.

"We want to speak to you, Sire," said the intruder.

"We want--I can't hold the thing. We have been trying to find a way to you these three days."

"Is it rescue? " whispered Graham. " Escape?"

"Yes, Sire. If you will."

"You are my party--the party of the Sleeper?"

"Yes, Sire."

"What am I to do?" said Graham.

There was a struggle. The stranger's arm appeared, and his hand was bleeding. His knees came into view over the edge of the funnel. "Stand away from me," he said, and he dropped rather heavily on his hands and one shoulder at Graham's feet. The released ventilator whirled noisily. The stranger rolled over, sprang up nimbly and stood panting, hand to a bruised

shoulder, and with his bright eyes on Graham.

"You are indeed the Sleeper," he said. "I saw you asleep. When it was the law that anyone might see you."

"I am the man who was in the trance," said Graham. "They have imprisoned me here. I have been here since I awoke--at least three days."

The intruder seemed about to speak, heard something, glanced swiftly at the door, and suddenly left. Graham and ran towards it, shouting quick incoherent words. A bright wedge of steel flashed in his hand, and he began tap, tap, a quick succession of blows upon the hinges. "Mind!" cried a voice. "Oh!" The voice came from above.

Graham glanced up, saw the soles of two feet, ducked, was struck on the shoulder by one of them, and a heavy weight bore him to the earth. He fell on his knees and forward, and the weight went over his head. He knelt up and saw a second man from above seated before him.

"I did not see you, Sire," panted the man. He rose and assisted Graham to arise. "Are you hurt, Sire?" he panted. A succession of heavy blows on the ventilator began, something fell close to Graham's face, and a shivering edge of white metal danced, fell over, and lay flat upon the floor.

"What is this?" cried Graham, confused and looking at the ventilator. "Who are you? What are you going to do? Remember, I understand nothing."

"Stand back," said the stranger, and drew him from under the ventilator as another fragment of metal fell heavily.

" We want you to come, Sire," panted the newcomer, and Graham glancing at his face again, saw a new cut had changed from white to red on his forehead, and a couple of little trickles of blood starting therefrom. "Your people call for you."

"Come where? My people? "

"To the hall about the markets. Your life is in danger here. We have spies. We learned but just in time. The Council has decided--this very day-- either to drug or kill you. And everything is ready. The people are drilled, the wind-vane police, the engineers, and half the way-gearers are with us. We have the halls crowded--shouting. The whole city shouts against the Council. We have arms." He wiped the blood with his hand. "Your life here is not worth--" "But why arms? "

"The people have risen to protect you, Sire. What? "

He turned quickly as the man who had first come down made a hissing with his teeth. Graham saw the latter start back, gesticulate to them to conceal themselves, and move as if to hide behind the opening door.

As he did so Howard appeared, a little tray in one hand and his heavy face downcast. He started, looked

up, the door slammed behind him, the tray tilted sideways, and the steel wedge struck him behind the ear. He went down like a felled tree, and lay as he fell athwart the floor of the outer room. The man who had struck him bent hastily, studied his face for a moment, rose, and returned to his work at the door.

"Your poison!" said a voice in Graham's ear.

Then abruptly they were in darkness. The innumerable cornice lights had been extinguished. Graham saw the aperture of the ventilator with ghostly snow whirling above it and dark figures moving hastily. Three knelt on the van. Some dim thing--a ladder was being lowered through the opening, and a hand appeared holding a fitful yellow light.

He had a moment of hesitation. But the manner of these men, their swift alacrity, their words, marched so completely with his own fears of the Council, with his idea and hope of a rescue, that it lasted not a moment. And his people awaited him!

"I do not understand," he said, "I trust. Tell me what to do."

The man with the cut brow gripped Graham's arm.

"Clamber up the ladder," he whispered. "Quick. They will have heard--"

Graham felt for the ladder with extended hands, put his foot on the lower rung, and, turning his head, saw over the shoulder of the nearest man, in the yellow flicker of the light, the first-comer astride over Howard

and still working at the door. Graham turned to the ladder again, and was thrust by his conductor and helped up by those above, and then he was standing on something hard and cold and slippery outside the ventilating funnel.

He shivered. He was aware of a great difference in the temperature. Half a dozen men stood about him, and light flakes of snow touched hands and face and melted. For a moment it was dark, then for a flash a ghastly violet white, and then everything was dark again.

He saw he had come out upon the roof of the vast city structure which had replaced the miscellaneous houses, streets and open spaces of Victorian London. The place upon which he stood was level, with huge serpentine cables lying athwart it in every direction. The circular wheels of a number of windmills loomed indistinct and gigantic through the darkness and snowfall, and roared with a varying loudness as the fitful white light smote up from below, touched the snow eddies with a transient glitter, and made an evanescent spectre in the night; and here and there, low down! some vaguely outlined wind-driven mechanism flickered with livid sparks.

All this he appreciated in a fragmentary manner as his rescuers stood about him. Someone threw a thick soft cloak of fur-like texture about him, and fastened it by buckled straps at waist and shoulders. Things were said briefly, decisively. Someone thrust him forward.

Before his mind was yet clear a dark shape gripped

his arm. "This way," said this shape, urging him along, and pointed Graham across the flat roof in the direction of a dim semicircular haze of light. Graham obeyed.

"Mind!" said a voice, as Graham stumbled against a cable. "Between them and not across them," said the voice. And, "We must hurry."

"Where are the people? " said Graham. "The people you said awaited me? "

The stranger did not answer. He left Graham's arm as the path grew narrower, and led the way with rapid strides. Graham followed blindly. In a minute he found himself running. "Are the others coming?" he panted, but received no reply. His companion glanced back and ran on. They came to a sort of pathway of open metal-work, transverse to the direction they had come, and they turned aside to follow this. Graham looked back, but the snowstorm had hidden the others.

"Come on!" said his guide. Running now, they drew near a little windmill spinning high in the air. "Stoop," said Graham's guide, and they avoided an endless band running roaring up to the shaft of the vane. "This way!" and they were ankle deep in a gutter full of drifted thawing snow, between two low walls of metal that presently rose waist high. "I will go first," said the guide. Graham drew his cloak about him and followed. Then suddenly came a narrow abyss across which the gutter leapt to the snowy darkness of the further side. Graham peeped over the side once and the gulf was black. For a moment he

regretted his flight. He dared not look again, and his brain spun as he waded through the half liquid snow.

Then out of the gutter they clambered and hurried across a wide flat space damp with thawing snow, and for half its extent dimly translucent to lights that went to and fro underneath. He hesitated at this unstable looking substance, but his guide ran on unheeding, and so they came to and clambered up slippery steps to the rim of a great dome of glass. Round this they went. Far below a number of people seemed to be dancing, and music filtered through the dome. . . . Graham fancied he heard a shouting through the snowstorm, and his guide hurried him on with a new spurt of haste. They clambered panting to a space of huge windmills, one so vast that only the lower edge of its vans came rushing into sight and rushed up again and was lost in the night and the snow. They hurried for a time through the colossal metallic tracery of its supports, and came at last above a place of moving platforms like the place into which Graham had looked from the balcony. They crawled across the sloping transparency that covered this street of platforms, crawling on hands and knees because of the slipperiness of the snowfall.

For the most part the glass was bedewed, and Graham saw only hazy suggestions of the forms below, but near the pitch of the transparent roof the glass was clear, and he found himself looking sheerly down upon it all. For awhile, in spite of the urgency of his guide, he gave way to vertigo and lay spread-eagled on the glass, sick and paralysed. Far below, mere stirring specks and dots, went the people of the unsleeping city in their perpetual daylight, and the moving

platforms ran on their incessant journey. Messengers and men on unknown businesses shot along the drooping cables and the frail bridges were crowded with men. It was like peering into a gigantic glass hive, and it lay vertically below him with only a tough glass of unknown thickness to save him from a fall. The street showed warm and lit, and Graham was wet now to the skin with thawing snow, and his feet were numbed with cold. For a space he could not move.

"Come on!" cried his guide, with terror in his voice.
"Come on!"

Graham reached the pitch of the roof by an effort.

Over the ridge, following his guide's example, he turned about and slid backward down the opposite slope very swiftly, amid a little avalanche of snow. While he was sliding he thought of what would happen if some broken gap should come in his way. At the edge he stumbled to his feet ankle deep in slush thanking heaven for an opaque footing again. His guide was already clambering up a metal screen to a level expanse.

Through the spare snowflakes above this loomed another line of vast windmills, and then suddenly the amorphous tumult of the rotating wheels was pierced with a deafening sound. It was a mechanical shrilling of extraordinary intensity that seemed to come simultaneously from every point of the compass.

"They have missed us already!" cried Graham's guide in an accent of terror, and suddenly, with a blinding flash, the night became day.

Above the driving snow, from the summits of the wind-wheels, appeared vast masts carrying globes of livid light. They receded in illimitable vistas in every direction. As far as his eye could penetrate the snowfall they glared.

"Get on this," cried Graham's conductor, and thrust him forward to a long grating of snowless metal that ran like a band between two slightly sloping expanses of snow. It felt warm to Graham's benurled feet, and a faint eddy of steam rose from it.

"Come on!" shouted his guide ten yards off, and, without waiting, ran swiftly through the incandescent glare towards the iron supports of the next range of wind-wheels. Graham, recovering from his astonishment, followed as fast, convinced of his imminent capture.

In a score of seconds they were within a tracery of glare and black shadows shot with moving bars beneath the monstrous wheels. Graham's conductor ran on for some time, and suddenly darted sideways and vanished into a black shadow in the corner of the foot of a huge support. In another moment Graham was beside him.

They cowered panting and stared out.

The scene upon which Graham looked was very wild and strange. The snow had now almost ceased; only a belated flake passed now and again across the picture. But the broad stretch of level before them was a ghastly white, broken only by gigantic masses

and moving shapes and lengthy strips of impenetrable darkness, vast ungainly Titans of shadow. All about them, huge metallic structures, iron girders, inhumanly vast as it seemed to him, interlaced, and the edges of wind-wheels, scarcely moving in the lull, I passed in great shining curves steeper and steeper up into a luminous haze. Wherever the snow-spangled light struck down, beams and girders, and incessant bands running with a halting, indomitable resolution passed upward and downward into the black. And with all that mighty activity, with an omnipresent sense of motive and design, this snow-clad desolation of mechanism seemed void of all human presence save themselves, seemed as trackless and deserted and unfrequented by men as some inaccessible Alpine snowfield.

"They will be chasing us," cried the leader. "We are scarcely halfway there yet. Cold as it is we must hide here for a space--at least until it snows more thickly again."

His teeth chattered in his head.

"Where are the markets? " asked Graham staring out. "Where are all the people? "

The other made no answer.

"Look!" whispered Graham, crouched close, and became very still.

The snow had suddenly become thick again, and sliding with the whirling eddies out of the black pit

of the sky came something, vague and large and very swift. It came down in a steep curve and swept round, wide wings extended and a trail of white condensing steam behind it, rose with an easy swiftness and went gliding up the air, swept horizontally forward in a wide curve, and vanished again in the steaming specks of snow. And, through the ribs of its body, Graham saw two little men, very minute and active, searching the snowy areas about him, as it seemed to him, with field glasses. For a second they were clear, then hazy through a thick whirl of snow, then small and distant, and in a minute they were gone.

"Now!" cried his companion. "Come!"

He pulled Graham's sleeve, and incontinently the two were running headlong down the arcade of ironwork beneath the wind-wheels. Graham, running blindly, collided with his leader, who had turned back on him suddenly. He found himself within a dozen yards of a black chasm. It extended as far as he could see right and left. It seemed to cut off their progress in either direction.

"Do as I do," whispered his guide. He lay down and crawled to the edge, thrust his head over and twisted until one leg hung. He seemed to feel for something with his foot, found it, and went sliding over the edge into the gulf. His head reappeared. "It is a ledge," he whispered. "In the dark all the way along. Do as I did."

Graham hesitated, went down upon all fours, crawled to the edge, and peered into a velvety blackness. For a sickly moment he had courage neither

to go on nor retreat, then he sat and hung his leg down, felt his guide's hands pulling at him, had a horrible sensation of sliding over the edge into the unfathomable, splashed, and felt himself in a slushy gutter, impenetrably dark.

"This way," whispered the voice, and he began crawling along the gutter through the trickling thaw, pressing himself against the wall. They continued along it for some minutes. He seemed to pass through a hundred stages of misery, to pass minute after minute through a hundred degrees of cold, damp, and exhaustion. In a little while he ceased to feel his hands and feet.

The gutter sloped downwards. He observed that they were now many feet below the edge of the buildings. Rows of spectral white shapes like the ghosts of blind-drawn windows rose above them. They came to the end of a cable fastened above one of these white windows, dimly visible and dropping into impenetrable shadows. Suddenly his hand came against his guide's.

"Still!" whispered the latter very softly.

He looked up with a start and saw the huge wings of the flying machine gliding slowly and noiselessly overhead athwart the broad band of snow-flecked grey-blue sky. In a moment it was hidden again.

"Keep still; they were just turning."

For awhile both were motionless, then Graham's companion stood up, and reaching towards the fastenings of the cable fumbled with some indistinct tackle.

"What is that? " asked Graham.

The only answer was a faint cry. The man crouched motionless. Graham peered and saw his face dimly. He was staring down the long ribbon of sky, and Graham, following his eyes, saw the flying machine small and faint and remote. Then he saw that the wings spread on either side, that it headed towards them, that every moment it grew larger. It was following the edge of the chasm towards them.

The man's movements became convulsive. He thrust two cross bars into Graham's hand. Graham could not see them, he ascertained their form by feeling. They were slung by thin cords to the cable. On the cord were hand grips of some soft elastic substance. "Put the cross between your legs," whispered the guide hysterically, "and grip the holdfasts. Grip tightly, grip!"

Graham did as he was told.

"Jump," said the voice. "In heaven's name, jump!"

For one momentous second Graham could not speak. He was glad afterwards that darkness hid his face. He said nothing. He began to tremble violently. He looked sideways at the swift shadow that swallowed up the sky as it rushed upon him.

"Jump! Jump--in God's name! Or they will have us," cried Graham's guide, and in the violence of his passion thrust him forward.

Graham tottered convulsively, gave a sobbing cry, a cry in spite of himself, and then, as the flying machine swept over them, fell forward into the pit of that darkness, seated on the cross wood and holding the ropes with the clutch of death. Something cracked, something rapped smartly against a wall. He heard the pulley of the cradle hum on its rope. He heard the aeronauts shout. He felt a pair of knees digging into his back.... He was sweeping headlong through the air, falling through the air. All his strength was in his hands. He would have screamed but he had no breath.

He shot into a blinding light that made him grip the tighter. He recognised the great passage with the running ways, the hanging lights and interlacing girders. They rushed upward and by him. He had a momentary impression of a great circular aperture yawning to swallow him up.

He was in the dark again, falling, falling, gripping with aching hands, and behold! a clap of sound, a burst of light, and he was in a brightly lit hall with a roaring multitude of people beneath his feet. The people! His people! A proscenium, a stage rushed up towards him, and his cable swept down to a circular aperture to the right of this. He felt he was travelling slower, and suddenly very much slower. He distinguished shouts of "Saved! The Master. He is safe!" The stage rushed up towards him with rapidly diminishing swiftness. Then--.

He heard the man clinging behind him shout as if suddenly terrified, and this shout was echoed by a

shout from below. He felt that he was no longer gliding along the cable but falling with it. There was a tumult of yells, screams and cries. He felt something soft against his extended hand, and the impact of a broken fall quivering through his arm. . .

He wanted to be still and the people were lifting him. He believed afterwards he was carried to the platform and given some drink, but he was never sure. He did not notice what became of his guide. When his mind was clear again he was on his feet; eager hands were assisting him to stand. He was in a big alcove, occupying the position that in his previous experience had been devoted to the lower boxes. If this was indeed a theatre.

A mighty tumult was in his ears, a thunderous roar, the shouting of a countless multitude." It is the Sleeper! The Sleeper is with us!"

"The Sleeper is with us! The Master--the Owner! The Master is with us. He is safe."

Graham had a surging vision of a great hall crowded with people. He saw no individuals, he was conscious of a froth of pink faces, of waving arms and garments, he felt the occult influence of a vast crowd pouring over him, buoying him up. There were balconies, galleries, great archways giving remoter perspectives, and everywhere people, a vast arena of people, densely packed and cheering. Across the nearer space lay the collapsed cable like a huge snake. It had been cut by the men of the flying machine at its upper end, and had crumpled down into the hall. Men seemed to be hauling this out of the way. But the whole

effect was vague, the very buildings throbbed and leapt with the roar of the voices.

He stood unsteadily and looked at those about him. Someone supported him by one arm. "Let me go into a little room," he said, weeping; "a little room," and could say no more. A man in black stepped forward, took his disengaged arm. He was aware of officious men opening a door before him. Someone guided him to a seat. He staggered. He sat down heavily and covered his face with his hands; he was trembling violently, his nervous control was at an end. He was relieved of his cloak, he could not remember how; his purple hose he saw were black with wet. People were running about him, things were happening, but for some time he gave no heed to them.

He had escaped. A myriad of cries told him that. He was safe. These were the people who were on his side. For a space he sobbed for breath, and then he sat still with his face covered. The air was full of the shouting of innumerable men.

CHAPTER IX

THE PEOPLE MARCH

He became aware of someone urging a glass of clear fluid upon his attention, looked up and discovered this was a dark young man in a yellow garment. He took the dose forthwith, and in a moment he was glowing. A tall man in a black robe stood by his shoulder, and pointed to the half open door into the hall. This man was shouting close to his ear and yet what was said was indistinct because of the tremendous uproar from

the great theatre. Behind the man was a girl in a silvery grey robe, whom Graham, even in this confusion, perceived to be beautiful. Her dark eyes, full of wonder and curiosity, -were fixed on him, her lips trembled apart. A partially opened door gave a glimpse of the crowded hall, and admitted a vast uneven tumult, a hammering, clapping and shouting that died away and began again, and rose to a thunderous pitch, and so continued intermittently all the time that Graham remained in the little room. He watched the lips of the man in black and gathered that he was making some clumsy explanation.

He stared stupidly for some moments at these things and then stood up abruptly; he grasped the arm of this shouting person.

"Tell me !" he cried. " Who am I? Who am I?"

The others came nearer to hear his words. "Who am I?" His eyes searched their faces.

"They have told him nothing!" cried the girl.

"Tell me, tell me !" cried Graham.

"You are the Master of the Earth. You are owner of half the world."

He did not believe he heard aright. He resisted the persuasion. He pretended not to understand, not to hear. He lifted his voice again. "I have been awake three days--a prisoner three days. I judge there is some struggle between a number of people in this city--it is London?"

"Yes," said the younger man.

"And those who meet in the great hall with the white Atlas? How does it concern me? In some way it has to do with me. Why, I don't know. Drugs? It seems to me that while I have slept the world has gone mad. I have gone mad."

"Who are those Councillors under the Atlas? Why should they try to drug me?"

"To keep you insensible," said the man in yellow.

"To prevent your interference."

" But _why?_"

"Because __you__ are the Atlas, Sire," said the man in yellow. "The world is on your shoulders. They rule it in your name."

The sounds from the hall had died into a silence threaded by one monotonous voice. Now suddenly, trampling on these last words, came a deafening tumult, a roaring and thundering, cheer crowded on cheer, voices hoarse and shrill, beating, overlapping, and while it lasted the people in the little room could not hear each other shout.

Graham stood, his intelligence clinging helplessly to the thing he had just heard. "The Council," he repeated blankly, and then snatched at a name that had struck him. "But who is Ostrog?" he said.

"He is the organiser--the organiser of the revolt. Our Leader--in your name."

"In my name?-- And you? Why is he not here?"

"He--has deputed us. I am his brother--his half-brother, Lincoln. He wants you to show yourself to these people and then come on to him. That is why he has sent. He is at the wind-vane offices directing. The people are marching."

"In your name," shouted the younger man. "They have ruled, crushed, tyrannised. At last even--"

"In my name! My name! Master?"

The younger man suddenly became audible in a pause of the outer thunder, indignant and vociferous, a high penetrating voice under his red aquiline nose and bushy moustache. "No one expected you to wake. No one expected you to wake. They were cunning. Damned tyrants! But they were taken by surprise. They did not know whether to drug you, hypnotise you, kill you."

Again the hall dominated everything.

"Ostrog is at the wind-vane offices ready--. Even now there is a rumour of fighting beginning."

The man who had called himself Lincoln came close to him. "Ostrog has it planned. Trust him. We have our organisations ready. We shall seize the flying stages--. Even now he may be doing that.

Then--"

"This public theatre," bawled the man in yellow, "is only a contingent. We have five myriads of drilled men--"

"We have arms," cried Lincoln. "We have plans. A leader. Their police have gone from the streets and are massed in the--" (inaudible)." It is now or never. The Council is rocking-- They cannot trust even their drilled men--"

"Hear the people calling to you!"

Graham's mind was like a night of moon and swift clouds, now dark and hopeless, now clear and ghastly. He was Master of the Earth, he was a man sodden with thawing snow. Of all his fluctuating impressions the dominant ones presented an antagonism; on the one hand was the White Council, powerful, disciplined, few, the White Council from which he had just escaped; and on the other, monstrous crowds, packed masses of indistinguishable people clamouring his name, hailing him Master. The other side had imprisoned him, debated his death. These shouting thousands beyond the little doorway had rescued him. But why these things should be so he could not understand.

The door opened, Lincoln's voice was swept away and drowned, and a rush of people followed on the heels of the tumult. These intruders came towards him and Lincoln gesticulating. The voices without explained their soundless lips. "Show us the Sleeper, show us the Sleeper!" was the burden of the uproar

Men were bawling for "Order! Silence!"

Graham glanced towards the open doorway, and saw a tall, oblong picture of the hall beyond, a waving, incessant confusion of crowded, shouting faces, men and women together, waving pale blue garments, extended hands. Many were standing, one man in rags of dark brown, a gaunt figure, stood on the seat and waved a black cloth. He met the wonder and expectation of the girl's eyes. What did these people expect from him. He was dimly aware that the tumult outside had changed its character, was in some way beating, marching. His own mind, too, changed. For a space he did not recognise the influence that was transforming him. But a moment that was near to panic passed. He tried to make audible inquiries of what was required of him.

Lincoln was shouting in his ear, but Graham was deafened to that. All the others save the woman gesticulated towards the hall. He perceived what had happened to the uproar. The whole mass of people was chanting together. It was not simply a song, the voices were gathered together and upborne by a torrent of instrumental music, music like the music of an organ, a woven texture of sounds, full of trumpets, full of flaunting banners, full of the march and pageantry of opening war. And the feet of the people were beating time--tramp, tramp.

He was urged towards the door. He obeyed mechanically. The strength of that chant took hold of him, stirred him, emboldened him. The hall opened to him, a vast welter of fluttering colour swaying to the music.

"Wave your arm to them," said Lincoln. "Wave your arm to them."

"This," said a voice on the other side, "he must have this. "Arms were about his neck detaining him in the doorway, and a black subtly-folding mantle hung from his shoulders. He threw his arm free of this and followed Lincoln. He perceived the girl in grey close to him, her face lit, her gesture onward. For the instant she became to him, flushed and eager as she was, an embodiment of the song. He emerged in the alcove again. Incontinently the mounting waves of the song broke upon his appearing, and flashed up into a foam of shouting. Guided by Lincoln's hand he marched obliquely across the centre of the stage facing the people.

The hall was a vast and intricate space--galleries, balconies, broad spaces of amphitheatral steps, and great archways. Far away, high up, seemed the mouth of a huge passage full of struggling humanity. The whole multitude was swaying in congested masses. Individual figures sprang out of the tumult, impressed him momentarily, and lost definition again. Close to the platform swayed a beautiful fair woman, carried by three men, her hair across her face and brandishing a green staff. Next this group an old careworn man in blue canvas maintained his place in the crush with difficulty, and behind shouted a hairless face, a great cavity of toothless mouth. A voice called that enigmatical word "Ostrog." All his impressions were vague save the massive emotion of that trampling song. The multitude were beating time with their feet--marking time, tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp.

The green weapons waved, flashed and slanted. Then he saw those nearest to him on a level space before the stage were marching in front of him, passing towards a great archway, shouting " To the Council! " Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp. He raised his arm, and the roaring was redoubled. He remembered he had to shout " March! " His mouth shaped inaudible heroic words. He waved his arm again and pointed to the archway, shouting " Onward! " They were no longer marking time, they were marching; tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp. In that host were bearded men, old men, youths, fluttering robed bare-armed women, girls. Men and women of the new age! Rich robes, grey rags fluttered together in the whirl of their movement amidst the dominant blue. A monstrous black banner jerked its way to the right. He perceived a blue-clad negro, a shrivelled woman in yellow, then a group of tall fair-haired, white-faced, blue-clad men pushed theatrically past him. He noted two Chinamen. A tall, sallow, dark-haired, shining-eyed youth, white clad from top to toe, clambered up towards the platform shouting loyally, and sprang down again and receded, looking backward. Heads, shoulders, hands clutching weapons, all were swinging with those marching cadences.

Faces came out of the confusion to him as he stood there, eyes met his and passed and vanished. Men gesticulated to him, shouted inaudible personal things. Most of the faces were flushed, but many were ghastly white. And disease was there, and many a hand that waved to him was gaunt and lean. Men and women of the new age! Strange and incredible meeting! As the broad stream passed before him to the right, tributary gangways from the remote uplands of the hall

thrust downward in an incessant replacement of people; tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp. The unison of the song was enriched and complicated by the massive echoes of arches and passages. Men and women mingled in the ranks; tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp. The whole world seemed marching. Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp; his brain was tramping. The garments waved onward, the faces poured by more abundantly.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp; at Lincoln's pressure he turned towards the archway, walking unconsciously in that rhythm, scarcely noticing his movement for the melody and stir of it. The multitude, the gesture and song, all moved in that direction, the flow of people smote downward until the upturned faces were below the level of his feet. He was aware of a path before him, of a suite about him, of guards and dignities, and ;Lincoln on his right hand. Attendants intervened, and ever and again blotted out the sight of the multitude to the left. Before him went the backs of the guards in black--three and three and three. He was marched along a little railed way, and crossed above the archway, with the torrent dipping to flow beneath, and shouting up to him. He did not know whither he went; he did not want to know. He glanced back across a flaming spaciousness of hall. Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp.

CHAPTER X

THE BATTLE OF THE DARKNESS

He was no longer in the hall. He was marching along a gallery overhanging one of the great streets of the moving platforms that traversed the city.

Before him and behind him tramped his guards. The whole concave of the moving ways below was a congested mass of people marching, tramping to the left, shouting, waving hands and arms, pouring along a huge vista, shouting as they came into view, shouting as they passed, shouting as they receded, until the globes of electric light receding in perspective dropped down it seemed and hid the swarming bare heads. Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp.

The song roared up to Graham now, no longer upborne by music, but coarse and noisy, and the beating of the marching feet, tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp, interwove with a thunderous irregularity of footsteps from the undisciplined rabble that poured along the higher ways.

Abruptly he noted a contrast. The buildings on the opposite side of the way seemed deserted, the cables and bridges that laced across the aisle were empty and shadowy. It came into Graham's mind that these also should have swarmed with people.

He felt a curious emotion--throbbing--very fast! He stopped again. The guards before him marched on; those about him stopped as he did. He saw the direction of their faces. The throbbing had something to do with the lights. He too looked up.

At first it seemed to him a thing that affected the lights simply, an isolated phenomenon, having no bearing on the things below. Each huge globe of blinding whiteness was as it were clutched, compressed in a systole that was followed by a transitory diastole, and again a systole like a tightening grip, darkness,

light, darkness, in rapid alternation.

Graham became aware that this strange behaviour of the lights had to do with the people below. The appearance of the houses and ways, the appearance of the packed masses changed, became a confusion of vivid lights and leaping shadows. He saw a multitude of shadows had sprung into aggressive existence, seemed rushing up, broadening, widening, growing with steady swiftness--to leap suddenly back and return reinforced. The song and the tramping had ceased. The unanimous march, he discovered, was arrested, there were eddies, a flow sideways, shouts of "The lights!" Voices were crying together one thing. "The lights!" cried these voices. "The lights!" He looked down. In this dancing death of the lights the area of the street had suddenly become a monstrous struggle. The huge white globes became purple-white, purple with a reddish glow, flickered, flickered faster and faster, fluttered between light and extinction, ceased to flicker and became mere fading specks of glowing red in a vast obscurity. In ten seconds the extinction was accomplished, and there was only this roaring darkness, a black monstrosity that had suddenly swallowed up those glittering myriads of men.

He felt invisible forms about him; his arms were gripped. Something rapped sharply against his shin. A voice bawled in his ear, " It is all right--all right."

Graham shook off the paralysis of his first astonishment. He struck his forehead against Lincoln's and bawled, "What is this darkness?"

"The Council has cut the currents that light the city. We must wait--stop. The people will go on. They will--"

His voice was drowned. Voices were shouting, "Save the Sleeper. Take care of the Sleeper." A guard stumbled against Graham and hurt his hand by an inadvertent blow of his weapon. A wild tumult tossed and whirled about him, growing, as it seemed, louder, denser, more furious each moment. Fragments of recognisable sounds drove towards him, were whirled away from him as his mind reached out to grasp them. Voices seemed to be shouting conflicting orders, other voices answered. There were suddenly a succession of piercing screams close beneath them.

A voice bawled in his ear, "The red police," and receded forthwith beyond his questions.

A crackling sound grew to distinctness, and there with a leaping of faint flashes along the edge of the further ways. By their light Graham saw the heads and bodies of a number of men, armed with weapons like those of his guards, leap into an instant's dim visibility. The whole area began to crackle, to flash with little instantaneous streaks of light, and abruptly the darkness rolled back like a curtain.

A glare of light dazzled his eyes, a vast seething expanse of struggling men confused his mind. A shout, a burst of cheering, came across the ways. He looked up to see the source of the light. A man hung far overhead from the upper part of a cable, holding by a rope the blinding star that had driven the darkness back. He wore a red uniform.

Graham's eyes fell to the ways again. A wedge of red a little way along the vista caught his eye. He saw it was a dense mass of red-clad men jammed the higher further way, their backs against the pitiless cliff of building, and surrounded by a dense crowd of antagonists. They were fighting. Weapons flashed and rose and fell, heads vanished at the edge of the contest, and other heads replaced them, the little flashes from the green weapons became little jets of smoky grey while the light lasted.

Abruptly the flare was extinguished and the ways were an inky darkness once more, a tumultuous mystery.

He felt something thrusting against him. He was being pushed along the gallery. Someone was shouting--it might be at him. He was too confused to hear. He was thrust against the wall, and a number of people blundered past him. It seemed to him that his guards were struggling with one another.

Suddenly the cable-hung star-holder appeared again, and the whole scene was white and dazzling. The band of red-coats seemed broader and nearer; its apex was half-way down the ways towards the central aisle. And raising his eyes Graham saw that a number of these men had also appeared now in the darkened lower galleries of the opposite building, and were firing over the heads of their fellows below at the boiling confusion of people on the lower ways. The meaning of these things dawned upon him. The march of the people had come upon an ambush at the very outset. Thrown into confusion by the extinction of the lights

they were now being attacked by the red police. Then he became aware that he was standing alone, that his guards and Lincoln were along the gallery in the direction along which he had come before the darkness fell. He saw they were gesticulating to him wildly, running back towards him. A great shouting came from across the ways. Then it seemed as though the whole face of the darkened building opposite was lined and speckled with red-clad men. And they were pointing over to him and shouting. "The Sleeper! Save the Sleeper!" shouted a multitude of throats.

Something struck the wall above his head. He looked up at the impact and saw a star-shaped splash of silvery metal. He saw Lincoln near him. Felt his arm gripped. Then, pat, pat; he had been missed twice.

For a moment he did not understand this. The street was hidden, everything was hidden, as he looked. The second flare had burned out.

Lincoln had gripped Graham by the arm, was lugging him along the gallery. "Before the next light!" he cried. His haste was contagious. Graham's instinct of self-preservation overcame the paralysis of his incredulous astonishment. He became for a time the blind creature of the fear of death. He ran, stumbling because of the uncertainty of the darkness, blundered into his guards as they turned to run with him. Haste was his one desire, to escape this perilous gallery upon which he was exposed. A third glare came close on its predecessors. With it came a great shouting across the ways, an answering tumult from the ways. The red-coats below, he saw, had now

almost gained the central passage. Their countless faces turned towards him, and they shouted. The white facade opposite was densely stippled with red. All these wonderful things concerned him, turned upon him as a pivot. These were the guards of the Council attempting to recapture him.

Lucky it was for him that these shots were the first fired in anger for a hundred and fifty years. He heard bullets whacking over his head, felt a splash of molten metal sting his ear, and perceived without looking that the whole opposite facade, an unmasked ambush of red police, was crowded and bawling and firing at him.

Down went one of his guards before him, and Graham, unable to stop, leapt the writhing body.

In another second he had plunged, unhurt, into a black passage, and incontinently someone, coming, it may be, in a transverse direction, blundered violently into him. He was hurling down a staircase in absolute darkness. He reeled, and was struck again, and came against a wall with his hands. He was crushed by a weight of struggling bodies, whirled round, and thrust to the right. A vast pressure pinned him. He could not breathe, his ribs seemed cracking. He felt a momentary relaxation, and then the whole mass of people moving together, bore him back towards the great theatre from which he had so recently come.

There were moments when his feet did not touch the ground. Then he was staggering and shoving. He heard shouts of "They are coming!" and a muffled cry close to him. His foot blundered against something soft, he heard a hoarse scream under foot. He

heard shouts of "The Sleeper!" but he was too confused to speak. He heard the green weapons crackling. For a space he lost his individual will, became an atom in a panic, blind, unthinking, mechanical. He thrust and pressed back and writhed in the pressure, kicked presently against a step, and found himself ascending a slope. And abruptly the faces all about him leapt out of the black, visible, ghastly-white and astonished, terrified, perspiring, in a livid glare. One face, a young man's, was very near to him, not twenty inches away. At the time it was but a passing incident of no emotional value, but afterwards it came back to him in his dreams. For this young man, wedged upright in the crowd for a time, had been shot and was already dead.

A fourth white star must have been lit by the man on the cable. Its light came glaring in through vast windows and arches and showed Graham that he was now one of a dense mass of flying black figures pressed back across the lower area of the great theatre. This time the picture was livid and fragmentary slashed and barred with black shadows. He saw that quite near to him the red guards were fighting their way through the people. He could not tell whether they saw him. He looked for Lincoln and his guards. He saw Lincoln near the stage of the theatre surrounded in a crowd of black-badged revolutionaries, lifted up and staring to and fro as if seeking him. Graham perceived that he himself was near the opposite edge of the crowd, that behind him, separated by a barrier, sloped the now vacant seats of the theatre. A sudden idea came to him, and he began fighting his way towards the barrier. As he reached it the glare came to an end.

In a moment he had thrown off the great cloak that not only impeded his movements but made him conspicuous, and had slipped it from his shoulders. He heard someone trip in its folds. In another he was scaling the barrier and had dropped into the blackness on the further side. Then feeling his way he came to the lower end of an ascending gangway. In the darkness the sound of firing ceased and the roar of feet and voices lulled. Then suddenly he came to an unexpected step and tripped and fell. As he did so pools and islands amidst the darkness about him leapt to vivid light again, the uproar surged louder and the glare of the fifth white star shone through the vast fenestrations of the theatre walls.

He rolled over among some seats, heard a shouting and the whirring rattle of weapons, struggled up and was knocked back again, perceived that a number of black-badged men were all about him firing at the rebels below, leaping from seat to seat, crouching among the seats to reload. Instinctively he crouched amidst the seats, as stray shots ripped the pneumatic cushions and cut bright slashes on their soft metal frames. Instinctively he marked the direction of the gangways, the most plausible way of escape for him so soon as the veil of darkness fell again.

A young man in faded blue garments came vaulting over the seats. "Hullo!" he said, with his flying feet within six inches of the crouching Sleeper's face.

He stared without any sign of recognition, turned to fire, fired, and, shouting, "To hell with the Council!" was about to fire again. Then it seemed to Graham

that the half of this man's neck had vanished. A drop of moisture fell on Graham's cheek. The green weapon stopped half raised. For a moment the man stood still with his face suddenly expressionless, then he began to slant forward. His knees bent. Man and darkness fell together. At the sound of his fall Graham rose up and ran for his life until a step down to the gangway tripped him. He scrambled to his feet, turned up the gangway and ran on.

When the sixth star glared he was already close to the yawning throat of a passage. He ran on the swifter for the light, entered the passage and turned a corner into absolute night again. He was knocked sideways, rolled over, and recovered his feet. He found himself one of a crowd of invisible fugitives pressing in one direction. His one thought now was their thought also; to escape out of this fighting. He thrust and struck, staggered, ran, was wedged tightly, lost ground and then was clear again.

For some minutes he was running through the darkness along a winding passage, and then he crossed some wide and open space, passed down a long incline, and came at last down a flight of steps to a level place. Many people were shouting, "They are coming! The guards are coming. They are firing. Get out of the fighting. The guards are firing. It will be safe in Seventh Way. Along here to Seventh Way!" There were women and children in the crowd as well as men. Men called names to him. The crowd converged on an archway, passed through a short throat and emerged on a wider space again, lit dimly. The black figures about him spread out and ran up what seemed in the twilight to be a gigantic series of steps. He

followed. The people dispersed to the right and left. . . . He perceived that he was no longer in a crowd. He stopped near the highest step. Before him, on that level, were groups of seats and a little kiosk. He went up to this and, stopping in the shadow of its eaves, looked about him panting.

Everything was vague and gray, but he recognised that these great steps were a series of platforms of the "ways," now motionless again. The platform slanted up on either side, and the tall buildings rose beyond, vast dim ghosts, their inscriptions and advertisements indistinctly seen, and up through the girders and cables was a faint interrupted ribbon of pallid sky. A number of people hurried by. From their shouts and voices, it seemed they were hurrying to join the fighting. Other less noisy figures flitted timidly among the shadows.

From very far away down the street he could hear the sound of a struggle. But it was evident to him that this was not the street into which the theatre opened. That former fight, it seemed, had suddenly dropped out of sound and hearing. And--grotesque thought!--they were fighting for him!

For a space he was like a man who pauses in the reading of a vivid book, and suddenly doubts what he has been taking unquestioningly. At that time he had little mind for details; the whole effect was a huge astonishment. Oddly enough, while the flight from the Council prison, the great crowd in the hall, and the attack of the red police upon the swarming people were clearly present in his mind, it cost him an effort to piece in his awakening and to revive the meditative

interval of the Silent Rooms. At first his memory leapt these things and took him back to the cascade at Pentargen quivering in the wind, and all the sombre splendours of the sunlit Cornish coast. The contrast touched everything with unreality. And then the gap filled, and he began to comprehend his position.

It was no longer absolutely a riddle, as it had been in the Silent Rooms. At least he had the strange, bare outline now. He was in some way the owner of half the world, and great political parties were fighting to possess him. On the one hand was the White Council, with its red police, set resolutely, it seemed, on the usurpation of his property and perhaps his murder; on the other, the revolution that had liberated him, with this unseen "Ostrog" as its leader. And the whole of this gigantic city was convulsed by their struggle. Frantic development of his world! "I do not understand," he cried. "I do not understand!"

He had slipped out between the contending parties into this liberty of the twilight. What would happen next? What was happening? He figured the redclad men as busily hunting him, driving the blackbadged revolutionists before them.

At any rate chance had given him a breathing space. He could lurk unchallenged by the passers-by, and watch the course of things. His eye followed up the intricate dim immensity of the twilight buildings, and it came to him as a thing infinitely wonderful, that above there the sun was rising, and the world was lit and glowing with the old familiar light of day. In a little while he had recovered his breath. His clothing had already dried upon him from the snow.

He wandered for miles along these twilight ways, speaking to no one, accosted by no one--a dark figure among dark figures--the coveted man out of the past, the inestimable unintentional owner of half the world. Wherever there were lights or dense crowds, or exceptional excitement he was afraid of recognition, and watched and turned back or went up and down by the middle stairways, into some transverse system of ways at a lower or higher level. And though he came on no more fighting, the whole city stirred with battle. Once he had to run to avoid a marching multitude of men that swept the street. Everyone abroad seemed involved. For the most part they were men, and they carried what he judged were weapons. It seemed as though the struggle was concentrated mainly in the quarter of the city from which he came. Ever and again a distant roaring, the remote suggestion of that conflict, reached his ears. Then his caution and his curiosity struggled together. But his caution prevailed, and he continued wandering away from the fighting--so far as he could judge. He went unmolested, unsuspected through the dark. After a time he ceased to hear even a remote echo of the battle, fewer and fewer people passed him, until at last the Titanic streets became deserted. The frontages of the buildings grew plain and harsh; he seemed to have come to a district of vacant warehouses. Solitude crept upon him--his pace slackened.

He became aware of a growing fatigue. At times he would turn aside and seat himself on one of the numerous seats of the upper ways. But a feverish restlessness, the knowledge of his vital implication in his struggle, would not let him rest in any place for

long. Was the struggle on his behalf alone?

And then in a desolate place came the shock of an earthquake--a roaring and thundering--a mighty wind of cold air pouring through the city, the smash of glass, the slip and thud of falling masonry--a series of gigantic concussions. A mass of glass and ironwork fell from the remote roofs into the middle gallery, not a hundred yards away from him, and in the distance were shouts and running. He, too, was startled to an aimless activity, and ran first one way and then as aimlessly back.

A man came running towards him. His self-control returned. "What have they blown up?" asked the man breathlessly. "That was an explosion," and before Graham could speak he had hurried on.

The great buildings rose dimly, veiled by a perplexing twilight, albeit the rivulet of sky above was now bright with day. He noted many strange features, understanding none at the time; he even spelt out many of the inscriptions in Phonetic lettering. But what profits it to decipher a confusion of odd-looking letters resolving itself, after painful strain of eye and mind, into "Here is Eadhamite," or, "Labour Bureau--Little Side?" Grotesque thought, that in all probability some or all of these cliff-like houses were his!

The perversity of his experience came to him vividly. In actual fact he had made such a leap in time as romancers have imagined again and again. And that fact realised, he had been prepared, his mind had, as it were, seated itself for a spectacle. And no

spectacle, but a great vague danger, unsympathetic shadows and veils of darkness. Somewhere through the labyrinthine obscurity his death sought him. Would he, after all, be killed before he saw? It might be that even at the next shadowy corner his destruction ambushed. A great desire to see, a great longing to know, arose in him.

He became fearful of corners. It seemed to him that there was safety in concealment. Where could he hide to be inconspicuous when the lights returned? At last he sat down upon a seat in a recess on one of the higher ways, conceiving he was alone there.

He squeezed his knuckles into his weary eyes. Suppose when he looked again he found the dark through of parallel ways and that intolerable altitude of edifice, gone? Suppose he were to discover the whole story of these last few days, the awakening, the shouting multitudes, the darkness and the fighting, a phantasmagoria, a new and more vivid sort of dream. It must be a dream; it was so inconsecutive, so reasonless. Why were the people fighting for him? Why should this saner world regard him as Owner and Master?

So he thought, sitting blinded, and then he looked again, half hoping in spite of his ears to see some familiar aspect of the life of the nineteenth century, to see, perhaps, the little harbour of Boscastle about him, the cliffs of Pentargen, or the bedroom of his home. But fact takes no heed of human hopes. A squad of men with a black banner tramped athwart the nearer shadows, intent on conflict, and beyond rose that giddy wall of frontage, vast and dark, with the dim

incomprehensible lettering showing faintly on its face.

"It is no dream," he said, "no dream." And he bowed his face upon his hands.

CHAPTER XI

THE OLD MAN WHO KNEW EVERYTHING

He was startled by a cough close at hand.

He turned sharply, and peering, saw a small, hunched-up figure sitting a couple of yards off in the shadow of the enclosure.

"Have ye any news?" asked the high-pitched wheezy voice of a very old man.

Graham hesitated." None," he said.

"I stay here till the lights come again," said the old man." These blue scoundrels are everywhere-- everywhere."

Graham's answer was inarticulate assent. He tried to see the old man but the darkness hid his face. He wanted very much to respond, to talk, but he did not know how to begin.

"Dark and damnable," said the old man suddenly.
"Dark and damnable. Turned out of my room among all these dangers."

"That's hard," ventured Graham. "That's hard on you."

"Darkness. An old man lost in the darkness. And all the world gone mad. War and fighting. The police beaten and rogues abroad. Why don't they bring some negroes to protect us? . . . No more dark passages for me. I fell over a dead man."

"You're safer with company," said the old man, "if it's company of the right sort," and peered frankly. He rose suddenly and came towards Graham.

Apparently the scrutiny was satisfactory. The old man sat down as if relieved to be no longer alone. "Eh!" he said, "but this is a terrible time! War and fighting, and the dead lying there--men, strong men, dying in the dark. Sons! I have three sons. God knows where they are tonight."

The voice ceased. Then repeated quavering: "God knows where they are tonight."

Graham stood revolving a question that should not betray his ignorance. Again the old man's voice ended the pause.

"This Ostrog will win," he said. "He will win. And what the world will be like under him no one can tell. My sons are under the wind-vanes, all three. One of my daughters-in-law was his mistress for a while. His mistress! Were not common people. Though they've sent me to wander tonight and take my chance. . . . I knew what was going on. Before most people. But this darkness! And to fall over a dead body suddenly in the dark!"

His wheezy breathing could be heard.

"Ostrog!" said Graham.

"The greatest Boss the world has ever seen," said the voice.

Graham ransacked his mind. "The Council has few friends among the people," he hazarded.

"Few friends. And poor ones at that. They've had their time. Eh! They should have kept to the clever ones. But twice they held election. And Ostrog. And now it has burst out and nothing can stay it, nothing can stay it. Twice they rejected Ostrog--Ostrog the Boss. I heard of his rages at the time--he was terrible. Heaven save them! For nothing on earth can now, he has raised the Labour Companies upon them. No one else would have dared. All the blue canvas armed and marching! He will go through with it. He will go through."

He was silent for a little while. "This Sleeper," he said, and stopped.

"Yes," said Graham. "Well?"

The senile voice sank to a confidential whisper, the dim, pale face came close. "The real Sleeper--"

"Yes," said Graham.

"Died years ago."

"What? " said Graham, sharply.

"Years ago. Died. Years ago."

"You don't say so!" said Graham.

"I do. I do say so. He died. This Sleeper who's woke up--they changed in the night. A poor, drugged insensible creature. But I mustn't tell all I know. I mustn't tell all I know."

For a little while he muttered inaudibly. His secret was too much for him. "I don't know the ones that put him to sleep--that was before my time--but I know the man who injected the stimulants and woke him again. It was ten to one--wake or kill. Wake or kill. Ostrog's way."

Graham was so astonished at these things that he had to interrupt, to make the old man repeat his words, to re-question vaguely, before he was sure of the meaning and folly of what he heard. And his awakening had not been natural! Was that an old man's senile superstition, too, or had it any truth in it? Feeling in the dark corners of his memory, he presently came on something that might conceivably be an impression of some such stimulating effect. It dawned upon him that he had happened upon a lucky encounter, that at last he might learn something of the new age. The old man wheezed a while and spat, and then the piping, reminiscent voice resumed:

"The first time they rejected him. I've followed it all."

"Rejected whom?" said Graham. "The Sleeper?"

"Sleeper? No. Ostrog. He was terrible--terrible! And he was promised then, promised certainly the next time. Fools they were--not to be more afraid of him. Now all the city's his millstone, and such as we dust ground upon it. Dust ground upon it. Until he set to work--the workers cut each other's throats, and murdered a Chinaman or a Labour policeman at times, and left the rest of us in peace. Dead bodies! Robbing! Darkness! Such a thing hasn't been this gross of years. Eh!--but 'tis ill on small folks when the great fall out! It's ill."

"Did you say--there had not been what?--for a gross of years? "

"Eh?" said the old man.

The old man said something about clipping his words, and made him repeat this a third time. "Fighting and slaying, and weapons in hand, and fools bawling freedom and the like," said the old man. "Not in all my life has there been that. These are like the old days--for sure--when the Paris people broke out--three gross of years ago. That's what I mean hasn't been. But it's the world's way. It had to come back. I know. I know. This five years Ostrog has been working, and there has been trouble and trouble, and hunger and threats and high talk and arms. Blue canvas and murmurs. No one safe. Everything sliding and slipping. And now here we are! Revolt and fighting, and the Council come to its end."

"You are rather well-informed on these things," said Graham.

"I know what I hear. It isn't all Babble Machine with me."

"No," said Graham, wondering what Babble Machine might be. "And you are certain this Ostrog --you are certain Ostrog organised this rebellion and arranged for the waking of the Sleeper? Just to assert himself--because he was not elected to the Council?"

"Everyone knows that, I should think," said the old man. "Except--just fools. He meant to be master somehow. In the Council or not. Everyone who knows anything knows that. And here we are with dead bodies lying in the dark! Why, where have you been if you haven't heard all about the trouble between Ostrog and the Verneys? And what do you think the troubles are about? The Sleeper? Eh? You think the Sleeper's real and woke of his own accord--eh? "

"I'm a dull man, older than I look, and forgetful," said Graham. "Lots of things that have happened--especially of late years--. If I was the Sleeper, to tell you the truth, I couldn't know less about them."

"Eh!" said the voice. "Old, are you? You don't sound so very old! But its not everyone keeps his memory to my time of life--truly. But these notorious things! But you're not so old as me--not nearly so old as me. Well! I ought not to judge other men by myself, perhaps. I'm young--for so old a man. Maybe you're old for so young."

"That's it," said Graham. "And I've a queer history."

I know very little. And history! Practically I know no history. The Sleeper and Julius Caesar are all the same to me. It's interesting to hear you talk of these things."

"I know a few things," said the old man. "I know a thing or two. But--. Hark!"

The two men became silent, listening. There was heavy thud, a concussion that made their seat shiver. The passers-by stopped, shouted to one another. The old man was full of questions; he shouted to a man who passed near. Graham, emboldened by his example, got up and accosted others. None knew what had happened.

He returned to the seat and found the old man muttering vague interrogations in an undertone. For a while they said nothing to one another.

The sense of this gigantic struggle, so near and yet so remote oppressed Graham's imagination. Was this old man right, was the report of the people right, and were the revolutionaries winning? Or were they all in error, and were the red guards driving all before them? At any time the flood of warfare might pour into this silent quarter of the city and seize upon him again. It behooved him to learn all he could while there was time. He turned suddenly to the old man with a question and left it unsaid. But his motion moved the old man to speech again.

"Eh! but how things work together!" said the old man." This Sleeper that all the fools put their trust in! I've the whole history of it--I was always a good

one for histories. When I was a boy - I'm that old-- I used to read printed books. You'd hardly think it. Likely you've seen none--they rot and dust so--and the Sanitary Company burns them to make ashlarite. But they were convenient in their dirty way. Oh I learnt a lot. These new-fangled Babble Machines-- they don't seem new-fangled to you, eh?--they're easy to hear, easy to forget. But I've traced all the Sleeper business from the first."

"You will scarcely believe it," said Graham slowly, "I'm so ignorant--I've been so preoccupied in my own little affairs, my circumstances have been so odd --I know nothing of this Sleeper's history. Who was he?"

"Eh!" said the old man. "I know. I know. He was a poor nobody, and set on a playful woman, poor soul! And he fell into a trance. There's the old things they had, those brown things--silver photographs--still showing him as he lay, a gross and a half years ago--a gross and a half of years."

"Set on a playful woman, poor soul," said Graham softly to himself, and then aloud, "Yes--well! go on."

"You must know he had a cousin named Warming a solitary man without children, who made a big fortune speculating in roads--the first Eadhamite roads. But surely you've heard? No? Why? He bought all the patent rights and made a big company. In those days there were grosses of grosses of separate businesses and business companies. Grosses of grosses! His roads killed the railroads--the old things--in two dozen years; he bought up and Eadhaillited'

the tracks. And because he didn't want to break up his great property or let in shareholders, he left it all to the Sleeper, and put it under a Board of Trustees that he had picked and trained. He knew then the Sleeper wouldn't wake, that he would go on sleeping, sleeping till he died. He knew that quite well! And plump! a man in the United States, who had lost two sons in a boat accident, followed that up with another great bequest. His trustees found themselves with a dozen myriads of lions'-worth or more of property at the very beginning."

"What was his name?"

"Graham."

"No, I mean--that American's."

"Isbister."

"Isbister!" cried Graham. "Why, I don't even know the name."

"Of course not," said the old man. "Of course not. People don't learn much in the schools nowadays. But I know all about him. He was a rich American who went from England, and he left the Sleeper even more than Warming. How he made it? That I don't know. Something about pictures by machinery. But he made it and left it, and so the Council had its start. It was just a council of trustees at first."

"And how did it grow?"

"Eh!--but you're not up to things. Money

attracts money--and twelve brains are better than one. They played it cleverly. They worked politics with money, and kept on adding to the money by working currency and tariffs. They grew--they grew. And for years the twelve trustees hid the growing of the Sleeper's estate, under double names and company titles and all that. The Council spread by title deed, mortgage, share, every political party, every newspaper, they bought. If you listen to the old stories you will see the Council growing and growing Billions and billions of lions at last--the Sleeper's estate. And all growing out of a whim--out of this Warming's will, and an accident to Isbister's sons.

"Men are strange," said the old man. "The strange, thing to me is how the Council worked together so long. As many as twelve. But they worked in cliques from the first. And they've slipped back. In my young days speaking of the Council was like an ignorant man speaking of God. We didn't think they could do wrong. We didn't know of their women and all that! Or else I've got wiser.

"Men are strange," said the old man. "Here are you, young and ignorant, and me--sevendy years old, and I might reasonably be forgetting--explaining it all to you short and clear.

"Sevendy," he said, "sevendy, and I hear and see--hear better than I see. And reason clearly, and keep myself up to all the happenings of things. Sevendy!

"Life is strange. I was twaindy before Ostrog was a baby. I remember him long before he'd pushed his way to the head of the Wind Vanes Control. I've

seen many changes. Eh! I've worn the blue. And at last I've come to see this crush and darkness and tumult and dead men carried by in heaps on the ways. And all his doing! All his doing! "

His voice died away in scarcely articulate praises of Ostrog

Graham thought. "Let me see," he said, "if I have it right."

He extended a hand and ticked off points upon his fingers. "The Sleeper has been asleep--"

"Changed," said the old man.

"Perhaps. And meanwhile the Sleeper's property grew in the hands of Twelve Trustees, until it swallowed up nearly all the great ownership of the world. The Twelve Trustees--by virtue of this property have become virtually masters of the world. Because they are the paying power--just as the old English Parliament used to be--"

"Eh!" said the old man. "That's so--that's a good comparison. You're not so--"

"And now this Ostrog--has suddenly revolutionised the world by waking the Sleeper--whom no one but the superstitious, common people had ever dreamt would wake again--raising the Sleeper to claim his property from the Council, after all these years."

The old man endorsed this statement with a cough. "It's strange," he said, "to meet a man who learns

these things for the first time tonight."

"Aye," said Graham, "it's strange."

"Have you been in a Pleasure City?" said the old man. "All my life I've longed--" He laughed. "Even now," he said, "I could enjoy a little fun. Enjoy seeing things, anyhow. "He mumbled a sentence Graham did not understand.

"The Sleeper--when did he awake?" said Graham suddenly.

"Three days ago."

"Where is he? "

"Ostrog has him. He escaped from the Council not four hours ago. My dear sir, where were you at the time? He was in the hall of the markets--where the fighting has been. All the city was screaming about it. All the Babble Machines! Everywhere it was shouted. Even the fools who speak for the Council were admitting it. Everyone was rushing off to see him--everyone was getting arms. Were you drunk or asleep? And even then! But you're joking! Surely you're pretending. It was to stop the shouting of the Babble Machines and prevent the people gathering that they turned off the electricity--and put this damned darkness upon us. Do you mean to say--? "

"I had heard the Sleeper was rescued," said Graham. "But--to come back a minute. Are you sure Ostrog has him?"

"He won't let him go," said the old man.

"And the Sleeper. Are you sure he is not genuine?
I have never heard--"

"So all the fools think. So they think. As if there wasn't a thousand things that were never heard. I know Ostrog too well for that. Did I tell you? In a way I'm a sort of relation of Ostrog's. A sort of relation. Through my daughter-in-law."

"I suppose--"

"Well? "

"I suppose there's no chance of this Sleeper asserting himself. I suppose he's certain to be a puppet-- in Ostrog's hands or the Council's, as soon as the struggle is over."

"In Ostrog's hands--certainly. Why shouldn't he be a puppet? Look at his position. Everything done for him, every pleasure possible. Why should he want to assert himself? "

"What are these Pleasure Cities?" said Graham, abruptly.

The old man made him repeat the question. When at last he was assured of Graham's words, he nudged him violently. "That's too much," said he. "You're poking fun at an old man. I've been suspecting you know more than you pretend."

"Perhaps I do," said Graham. "But no! why

should I go on acting? No, I do not know what a
Pleasure City is."

The old man laughed in an intimate way.

"What is more, I do not know how to read your letters,
I do not know what money you use, I do not
know what foreign countries there are. I do not know
where I am. I cannot count. I do not know
where to get food, nor drink, nor shelter."

"Come, come," said the old man, "if you had a
glass of drink, now, would you put it in your ear or
your eye?"

"I want you to tell me all these things."

"He, he! Well, gentlemen who dress in silk must
have their fun." A withered hand caressed Graham's
arm for a moment." Silk. Well, well! But, all the
same, I wish I was the man who was put up as the
Sleeper. He'll have a fine time of it. All the pomp
and pleasure. He's a queer looking face. When they
used to let anyone go to see him, I've got tickets and
been. The image of the real one, as the photographs
show him, this substitute used to be. Yellow. But
he'll get fed up. It's a queer world. Think of the luck
of it. The luck of it. I expect he'll be sent to Capri.
It's the best fun for a greener."

His cough overtook him again. Then he began
mumbling enviously of pleasures and strange delights.
"The luck of it, the luck of it! All my life I've been in
London, hoping to get my chance."

"But you don't know that the Sleeper died," said Graham, suddenly. J

The old man made him repeat his words.

"Men don't live beyond ten dozen. It's not in the order of things," said the old man. "I'm not a fool. Fools may believe it, but not me."

Graham became angry with the old man's assurance. "Whether you are a fool or not," he said, "it happens you are wrong about the Sleeper."

"Eh? "

"You are wrong about the Sleeper. I haven't told you before, but I will tell you now. You are wrong about the Sleeper."

"How do you know? I thought you didn't know anything--not even about Pleasure Cities."

Graham paused.

"You don't know," said the old man. "How are you to know? It's very few men--"

"I __am__ the Sleeper."

He had to repeat it.

There was a brief pause. "There's a silly thing to say, sir, if you'll excuse me. It might get you into trouble in a time like this," said the old man. Graham, slightly dashed, repeated his assertion.

"I was saying I was the Sleeper. That years and years ago I did, indeed, fall asleep, in a little stonebuilt village, in the days when there were hedgerows, and villages, and inns, and all the countryside cut up into little pieces, little fields. Have you never heard of those days? And it is I--I who speak to you-- who awakened again these four days since."

"Four days since!--the Sleeper! But they've got the Sleeper. They have him and they won't let him go. Nonsense! You've been talking sensibly enough up to now. I can see it as though I was there. There will be Lincoln like a keeper just behind him; they won't let him go about alone. Trust them. You're a queer fellow. One of these fun pokers. I see now why you have been clipping your words so oddly, but--"

He stopped abruptly, and Graham could see his gesture.

"As if Ostrog would let the Sleeper run about alone! No, you're telling that to the wrong man altogether. Eh! as if I should believe. What's your game? And besides, we've been talking of the Sleeper."

Graham stood up. "Listen," he said. "I am the Sleeper."

"You're an odd man," said the old man, "to sit here in the dark, talking clipped, and telling a lie of that sort. But--"

Graham's exasperation fell to laughter. "It is

preposterous," he cried. "Preposterous. The dream must end. It gets wilder and wilder. Here am I--in this damned twilight--I never knew a dream in twilight before--an anachronism by two hundred years and trying to persuade an old fool that I am myself, and meanwhile-- Ugh! "

He moved in gusty irritation and went striding. In a moment the old man was pursuing him. "Eh! but don't go!" cried the old man. "I'm an old fool, I know. Don't go. Don't leave me in all this darkness."

Graham hesitated, stopped. Suddenly the folly of telling his secret flashed into his mind.

"I didn't mean to offend you--disbelieving you," said the old man coming near. "It's no manner of harm. Call yourself the Sleeper if it pleases you. 'Tis a foolish trick "

Graham hesitated, turned abruptly and went on his way.

For a time he heard the old man's hobbling pursuit and his wheezy cries receding. But at last the darkness swallowed him, and Graham saw him no more.

CHAPTER XII

OSTROG

Graham could now take a clearer view of his position. For a long time yet he wandered, but after the talk of the old man his discovery of this Ostrog was clear in his mind as the final inevitable decision. One

thing was evident, those who were at the headquarters of the revolt had succeeded very admirably in suppressing the fact of his disappearance. But every moment he expected to hear the report of his death or of his recapture by the Council.

Presently a man stopped before him. "Have you heard?" he said.

"No!" said Graham starting.

"Near a dozand," said the man, "a dozand men!" and hurried on.

A number of men and a girl passed in the darkness, gesticulating and shouting: "Capitulated! Given up!" "A dozand of men." "Two dozand of men." "Ostrog, Hurrah! Ostrog, Hurrah!" These cries receded, became indistinct.

Other shouting men followed. For a time his attention was absorbed in the fragments of speech he heard. He had a doubt whether all were speaking English. Scraps floated to him, scraps like Pigeon English, like 'nigger' dialect, blurred and mangled distortions. He dared accost no one with questions. The impression the people gave him jarred altogether with his preconceptions of the struggle and confirmed the old man's faith in Ostrog. It was only slowly he could bring himself to believe that all these people were rejoicing at the defeat of the Council, that the Council which had pursued him with such power and vigour was after all the weaker of the two sides in conflict. And if that was so, how did it affect him? Several times he hesitated on the verge of fundamental questions.

Once he turned and walked for a long way after a little man of rotund inviting outline, but he was unable to master confidence to address him.

It was only slowly that it came to him that he might ask for the "wind-vane offices," whatever the "wind-vane offices" might be. His first enquiry simply resulted in a direction to go on towards Westminster. His second led to the discovery of a short cut in which he was speedily lost. He was told to leave the ways to which he had hitherto confined himself knowing no other means of transit--and to plunge down one of the middle staircases into the blackness of a crossway. Thereupon came some trivial adventures; chief of these an ambiguous encounter with a gruff-voiced invisible creature speaking in a strange dialect that seemed at first a strange tongue, a thick flow of speech with the drifting corpses of English words therein, the dialect of the latter-day vile. Then another voice drew near, a girl's voice singing, "tralala tralala." She spoke to Graham, her English touched with something of the same quality. She professed to have lost her sister, she blundered needlessly into him he thought, caught hold of him and laughed. But a word of vague remonstrance sent her into the unseen again.

The sounds about him increased. Stumbling people passed him, speaking excitedly. "They have surrendered!" "The Council! Surely not the Council!" "They are saying so in the Ways." The passage seemed wider. Suddenly the wall fell away. He was in a great space and people were stirring remotely. He inquired his way of an indistinct figure. "Strike straight across," said a woman's voice. He left his

guiding wall, and in a moment had stumbled against a little table on which were utensils of glass. Graham's eyes, now attuned to darkness, made out a long vista with pallid tables on either side. He went down this. At one or two of the tables he heard a clang of glass and a sound of eating. There were people then cool enough to dine, or daring enough to steal a meal in spite of social convulsion and darkness. Far off and high up he presently saw a pallid light of a semi-circular shape. As he approached this, a black edge came up and hid it. He stumbled at steps and found himself in a gallery. He heard a sobbing, and found two scared little girls crouched by a railing. These children became silent at the near sound of feet. He tried to console them, but they were very still until he left them. Then as he receded he could hear them sobbing again.

Presently he found himself at the foot of a staircase and near a wide opening. He saw a dim twilight above this and ascended out of the blackness into a street of moving Ways again. Along this a disorderly swarm of people marched shouting. They were singing snatches of the song of the revolt, most of them out of tune. Here and there torches flared creating brief hysterical shadows. He asked his way and was twice puzzled by that same thick dialect. His third attempt won an answer he could understand. He was two miles from the wind-vane offices in Westminster, but the way was easy to follow.

When at last he did approach the district of the wind-vane offices it seemed to him, from the cheering processions that came marching along the Ways, from the tumult of rejoicing, and finally from the restoration

of the lighting of the city, that the overthrow of the Council must already be accomplished. And still no news of his absence came to his ears.

The re-illumination of the city came with startling abruptness. Suddenly he stood blinking, all about him men halted dazzled, and the world was incandescent. The light found him already upon the outskirts of the excited crowds that choked the Ways near the wind-vane offices, and the sense of visibility and exposure that came with it turned his colourless intention of joining Ostrog to a keen anxiety.

For a time he was jostled, obstructed, and endangered by men hoarse and weary with cheering his name, some of them bandaged and bloody in his cause. The frontage of the wind-vane offices was illuminated by some moving picture, but what it was he could not see, because in spite of his strenuous attempts the density of the crowd prevented his approaching it. From the fragments of speech he caught, he judged it conveyed news of the fighting about the Council House. Ignorance and indecision made him slow and ineffective in his movements. For a time he could not conceive how he was to get within the unbroken facade of this place. He made his way slowly into the midst of this mass of people, until he realised that the descending staircase of the central Way led to the interior of the buildings. This gave him a goal, but the crowding in the central path was so dense that it was long before he could reach it. And even then he encountered intricate obstruction, and had an hour of vivid argument first in this guard room and then in that before he could get a note taken to the one man of all men who was most eager to see him. His

story was laughed to scorn at one place, and wiser for that, when at last he reached a second stairway he professed simply to have news of extraordinary importance for Ostrog. What it was he would not say.

They sent his note reluctantly. For a long time he waited in a little room at the foot of the lift shaft, and thither at last came Lincoln, eager, apologetic, astonished. He stopped in the doorway scrutinising Graham, then rushed forward effusively.

"Yes," he cried. "It is you. And you are not dead!"

Graham made a brief explanation.

"My brother is waiting," explained Lincoln. "He is alone in the wind-vane offices. We feared you had been killed in the theatre. He doubted--and things are very urgent still in spite of what we are telling them __there__--or he would have come to you."

They ascended a lift, passed along a narrow passage, crossed a great hall, empty save for two hurrying messengers, and entered a comparatively little room, whose only furniture was a long settee and a large oval disc of cloudy, shifting grey, hung by cables from the wall. There Lincoln left Graham for a space, and he remained alone without understanding the shifting smoky shapes that drove slowly across this disc.

His attention was arrested by a sound that began abruptly. It was cheering, the frantic cheering of a vast but very remote crowd, a roaring exultation. This ended as sharply as it had begun, like a sound heard between the opening and shutting of a door.

In the outer room was a noise of hurrying steps and a melodious clinking as if a loose chain was running over the teeth of a wheel.

Then he heard the voice of a woman, the rustle of unseen garments. "It is Ostrog!" he heard her say. A little bell rang fitfully, and then everything was still again.

Presently came voices, footsteps and movement without. The footsteps of some one person detached itself from the other sounds and drew near, firm, evenly measured steps. The curtain lifted slowly. A tall, white-haired man, clad in garments of cream coloured silk, appeared, regarding Graham from under his raised arm.

For a moment the white form remained holding the curtain, then dropped it and stood before it. Graham's first impression was of a very broad forehead, very pale blue eyes deep sunken under white brows, an aquiline nose, and a heavily-lined resolute mouth. The folds of flesh over the eyes, the drooping of the corners of the mouth contradicted the upright bearing, and said the man was old. Graham rose to his feet instinctively, and for a moment the two men stood in silence, regarding each other.

"You are Ostrog?" said Graham.

"I am Ostrog."

"The Boss?"

"So I am called."

Graham felt the inconvenience of the silence. "I have to thank you chiefly, I understand, for my safety," he said presently.

"We were afraid you were killed," said Ostrog.

"Or sent to sleep again--for ever. We have been doing everything to keep our secret--the secret of your disappearance. Where have you been? How did you get here? "

Graham told him briefly.

Ostrog listened in silence.

He smiled faintly. "Do you know what I was doing when they came to tell me you had come? "

"How can I guess?"

"Preparing your double."

"My double?"

"A man as like you as we could find. We were going to hypnotise him, to save him the difficulty of acting. It was imperative. The whole of this revolt depends on the idea that you are awake, alive, and with us. Even now a great multitude of people has gathered in the theatre clamouring to see you. They do not trust . . . You know, of course--something of your position? "

"Very little," said Graham.

"It is like this." Ostrog walked a pace or two into the room and turned. "You are absolute owner," he said, "of more than half the world. As a result of that you are practically King. Your powers are limited in many intricate ways, but you are the figure head, the popular symbol of government. This White Council, the Council of Trustees as it is called "

"I have heard the vague outline of these things."

"I wondered."

"I came upon a garrulous old man."

"I see . . . Our masses--the word comes from your days--you know of course, that we still have masses--regard you as our actual ruler. Just as a great number of people in your days regarded the Crown as the ruler. They are discontented--the masses all over the earth--with the rule of your Trustees. For the most part it is the old discontent, the old quarrel of the common man with his commonness--the misery of work and discipline and unfitness. But your Trustees have ruled ill. In certain matters, in the administration of the Labour Companies, for example, they have been unwise. They have given endless opportunities. Already we of the popular party were agitating for reforms--when your waking came. Came! If it had been contrived it could not have come more opportunity." He smiled. "The public mind, making no allowance for your years of quiescence, had already hit on the thought of waking you and appealing to you, and--Flash!"

He indicated the outbreak by a gesture, and Graham moved his head to show that he understood.

"The Council muddled--quarreled. They always do. They could not decide what to do with you. You know how they imprisoned you?"

"I see. I see. And now--we win?"

"We win. Indeed we win. Tonight, in five swift hours. Suddenly we struck everywhere. The windvane people, the Labour Company and its millions, burst the bonds. We got the pull of the aeropiles."

He paused. "Yes," said Graham, guessing that aeropile meant flying machine.

"That was, of course, essential. Or they could have got away. All the city rose, every third man almost was in it! All the blue, all the public services, save only just a few aeronauts and about half the red police. You were rescued, and their own police of the Ways--not half of them could be massed at the Council House--have been broken up, disarmed or killed. All London is ours--now. Only the Council House remains.

"Half of those who remain to them of the red police were lost in that foolish attempt to recapture you. They lost their heads when they lost you. They flung all they had at the theatre. We cut them off from the Council House there. Truly tonight has been a night of victory. Everywhere your star has blazed. A day ago--the White Council ruled as it has ruled for a gross of years, for a century and a half

of years, and then, with only a little whispering, a covert arming here and there, suddenly--So!"

"I am very ignorant," said Graham. "I suppose--. I do not clearly understand the conditions of this fighting. If you could explain. Where is the Council? Where is the fight? "

Ostrog stepped across the room, something clicked, and suddenly, save for an oval glow, they were in darkness. For a moment Graham was puzzled.

Then he saw that the cloudy grey disc had taken depth and colour, had assumed the appearance of an oval window looking out upon a strange unfamiliar scene.

At the first glance he was unable to guess what this scene might be. It was a daylight scene, the daylight of a wintry day, grey and clear. Across the picture and halfway as it seemed between him and the remoter view, a stout cable of twisted white wire stretched vertically. Then he perceived that the rows of great windwheels he saw, the wide intervals, the occasional gulfs of darkness, were akin to those through which he had fled from the Council House. He distinguished an orderly file of red figures marching across an open space between files of men in black, and realised before Ostrog spoke that he was looking down on the upper surface of latter-day London. The overnight snows had gone. He judged that this mirror was some modern replacement of the camera obscura, but that matter was not explained to him. He saw that though the file of red figures was trotting from left to right, yet they were passing out of the picture to the left.

He wondered momentarily, and then saw that the picture was passing slowly, panorama fashion, across the oval.

"In a moment you will see the fighting," said Ostrog at his elbow. "Those fellows in red you notice are prisoners. This is the roof space of London--all the houses are practically continuous now. The streets and public squares are covered in. The gaps and chasms of your time have disappeared."

Something out of focus obliterated half the picture. Its form suggested a man. There was a gleam of metal, a flash, something that swept across the oval, as the eyelid of a bird sweeps across its eye, and the picture was clear again. And now Graham beheld men running down among the wind-wheels, pointing weapons from which jetted out little smoky flashes. They swarmed thicker and thicker to the right, gesticulating--it might be they were shouting, but of that the picture told nothing. They and the windwheels passed slowly and steadily across the field of the mirror.

"Now," said Ostrog, "comes the Council House," and slowly a black edge crept into view and gathered Graham's attention. Soon it was no longer an edge but a cavity, a huge blackened space amidst the clustering edifices, and from it thin spires of smoke rose into the pallid winter sky. Gaunt ruinous masses of the building, mighty truncated piers and girders, rose dismally out of this cavernous darkness. And over these vestiges of some splendid place, countless minute men were clambering, leaping, swarming.

"This is the Council House," said Ostrog. "Their last stronghold. And the fools wasted enough ammunition to hold out for a month in blowing up the buildings all about them--to stop our attack. You heard the smash? It shattered half the brittle glass in the city."

And while he spoke, Graham saw that beyond this sea of ruins, overhanging it and rising to a great height, was a ragged mass of white building. This mass had been isolated by the ruthless destruction of its surroundings. Black gaps marked the passages the disaster had torn apart; big halls had been slashed open and the decoration of their interiors showed dismally in the wintry dawn, and down the jagged wall hung festoons of divided cables and twisted ends of lines and metallic rods. And amidst all the vast details moved little red specks, the red-clothed defenders of the Council. Every now and then faint flashes illuminated the bleak shadows. At the first sight it seemed to Graham that an attack upon this isolated white building was in progress, but then he perceived that the party of the revolt was not advancing, but sheltered amidst the colossal wreckage that encircled this last ragged stronghold of the red-garbed men, was keeping up a fitful firing.

And not ten hours ago he had stood beneath the ventilating fans in a little chamber within that remote building wondering what was happening in the world!

Looking more attentively as this warlike episode moved silently across the centre of the mirror, Graham saw that the white building was surrounded on every side by ruins, and Ostrog proceeded to describe

in concise phrases how its defenders had sought by such destruction to isolate themselves from a storm. He spoke of the loss of men that huge downfall had entailed in an indifferent tone. He indicated an improvised mortuary among the wreckage showed ambulances swarming like cheese-mites along a ruinous groove that had once been a street of moving ways. He was more interested in pointing out the parts of the Council House, the distribution of the besiegers. In a little while the civil contest that had convulsed London was no longer a mystery to Graham. It was no tumultuous revolt had occurred that night, no equal warfare, but a splendidly organised __coup d'etat__. Ostrog's grasp of details was astonishing; he seemed to know the business of even the smallest knot of black and red specks that crawled amidst these places.

He stretched a huge black arm across the luminous picture, and showed the room whence Graham had escaped, and across the chasm of ruins the course of his flight. Graham recognised the gulf across which the gutter ran, and the wind-wheels where he had crouched from the flying machine. The rest of his path had succumbed to the explosion. He looked again at the Council House, and it was already half hidden, and on the right a hillside with a cluster of domes and pinnacles, hazy, dim and distant, was gliding into view.

"And the Council is really overthrown?" he said.

"Overthrown," said Ostrog.

"And I--. Is it indeed true that I?"

"You are Master of the World."

"But that white flag--"

"That is the flag of the Council--the flag of the Rule of the World. It will fall. The fight is over. Their attack on the theatre was their last frantic struggle. They have only a thousand men or so, and some of these men will be disloyal. They have little ammunition. And we are reviving the ancient arts. We are casting guns."

"But--help. Is this city the world?"

" Practically this is all they have left to them of their empire. Abroad the cities have either revolted with us or wait the issue. Your awakening has perplexed them, paralysed them."

"But haven't the Council flying machines? Why is there no fighting with them? "

"They had. But the greater part of the aeronauts were in the revolt with us. They wouldn't take the risk of fighting on our side, but they would not stir against us. We had to get a pull with the aeronauts. Quite half were with us, and the others knew it. Directly they knew you had got away, those looking for you dropped. We killed the man who shot at you--an hour ago. And we occupied the flying stages at the outset in every city we could, and so stopped and captured the airplanes, and as for the little flying machines that turned out--for some did--we kept up too straight and steady a fire for them to get near the Council House. If they dropped they

couldn't rise again, because there's no clear space about there for them to get up. Several we have smashed, several others have dropped and surrendered, the rest have gone off to the Continent to find a friendly city if they can before their fuel runs out. Most of these men were only too glad to be taken prisoner and kept out of harm's way. Upsetting in a flying machine isn't a very attractive prospect. There's no chance for the Council that way. Its days are done."

He laughed and turned to the oval reflection again to show Graham what he meant by flying stages. Even the four nearer ones were remote and obscured by a thin morning haze. But Graham could perceive they were very vast structures, judged even by the standard of the things about them.

And then as these dim shapes passed to the left there came again the sight of the expanse across which the disarmed men in red had been marching. And then the black ruins, and then again the beleaguered white fastness of the Council. It appeared no longer a ghostly pile, but glowing amber in the sunlight, for a cloud shadow had passed. About it the pigmy struggle still hung in suspense, but now the red defenders were no longer firing.

So, in a dusky stillness, the man from the nineteenth century saw the closing scene of the great revolt, the forcible establishment of his rule. With a quality of startling discovery it came to him that this was his world, and not that other he had left behind; that this was no spectacle to culminate and cease; that in this world lay whatever life was still before him, lay

all his duties and dangers and responsibilities. He turned with fresh questions. Ostrog began to answer them, and then broke off abruptly. "But these things I must explain more fully later. At present there are --duties. The people are coming by the moving ways towards this ward from every part of the city--the markets and theatres are densely crowded. You are just in time for them. They are clamouring to see you. And abroad they want to see you. Paris, New York, Chicago, Denver, Capri--thousands of cities are up and in a tumult, undecided, and clamouring to see you. They have clamoured that you should be awakened for years, and now it is done they will scarcely believe--"

But surely--I can't go . . ."

Ostrog answered from the other side of the room, "1. and the picture on the oval disc paled and vanished ' as the light jerked back again." There are kinetotele-photographs," he said. "As you bow to the people here--all over the world myriads of myriads of people, packed and still in darkened halls, will see you also. In black and white, of course--not like this. And you will hear their shouts reinforcing the shouting in the hall.

"And there is an optical contrivance we shall use," said Ostrog, "used by some of the posturers and women dancers. It may be novel to you. You stand in a very bright light, and they see not you but a magnified image of you thrown on a screen--so that even the furthest man in the remotest gallery can, if he chooses, count your eyelashes."

Graham clutched desperately at one of the questions in his mind. "What is the population of London?"

"Eight and twaindy myriads."

"Eight and what? "

"More than thirty-three millions."

These figures went beyond Graham's imagination "You will be expected to say something," said Ostrog. "Not what you used to call a Speech, but what our people call a Word--just one sentence, six or seven words. Something formal. If I might suggest--' I have awakened and my heart is with you.' That is the sort of thing they want."

" What was that? " asked Graham.

"'I am awakened and my heart is with you.' And bow--bow royally. But first we must get you black robes--for black is your colour. Do you mind? And then they will disperse to their homes."

Graham hesitated. "I am in your hands," he said.

Ostrog was clearly of that opinion. He thought for a moment, turned to the curtain and called brief directions to some unseen attendants. Almost immediately a black robe, the very fellow of the black robe Graham had worn in the theatre, was brought. And as he threw it about his shoulders there came from the room without the shrilling of a high-pitched bell. Ostrog turned in interrogation to the attendant, then suddenly seemed to change his mind, pulled the

curtain aside and disappeared.

For a moment Graham stood with the deferential attendant listening to Ostrog's retreating steps. There was a sound of quick question and answer and of men running. The curtain was snatched back and Ostrog reappeared, his massive face glowing with excitement. He crossed the room in a stride, clicked the room into darkness, gripped Graham's arm and pointed to the mirror.

"Even as we turned away," he said.

Graham saw his index finger, black and colossal, above the mirrored Council House. For a moment he did not understand. And then he perceived that the flagstaff that had carried the white banner was bare.

"Do you mean--?" he began.

"The Council has surrendered. Its rule is at an end for evermore."

"Look!" and Ostrog pointed to a coil of black that crept in little jerks up the vacant flagstaff, unfolding as it rose.

The oval picture paled as Lincoln pulled the curtain aside and entered.

"They are clamorous," he said.

Ostrog kept his grip of Graham's arm.

"We have raised the people," he said. "We have given them arms. For today at least their wishes must be law."

Lincoln held the Curtain open for Graham and Ostrog to pass through.

On his way to the markets Graham had a transitory glance of a long narrow white-walled room in which men in the universal blue canvas were carrying covered things like biers, and about which men in medical purple hurried to and fro. From this room came groans and wailing. He had an impression of an empty blood-stained couch, of men on other couches, bandaged and blood-stained. It was just a glimpse from a railed footway and then a buttress hid the place and they were going on towards the markets.

The roar of the multitude was near now: it leapt to thunder. And, arresting his attention, a fluttering of black banners, the waving of blue canvas and brown rags, and the swarming vastness of the theatre near the public markets came into view down a long passage. The picture opened out. He perceived they were entering the great theatre of his first appearance, the Freat theatre he had last seen as a chequer-work of glare and blackness in his flight from the red police. This time he entered it along a gallery at a level high above the stage. The place was now brilliantly lit again. He sought the gangway up which he had fled, but he could not tell it from among its dozens of fellows; nor could he see anything of the smashed seats, deflated cushions, and such like traces of the fight because of the density of the people. Except the stage the whole place was closely packed. Looking

down the effect was a vast area of stippled pink, each dot a still upturned face regarding him. At his appearance with Ostrog the cheering died away, the singing died away, a common interest stilled and unified the disorder. It seemed as though every individual of those myriads was watching him.

CHAPTER XIII

THE END OF THE OLD ORDER

So far as Graham was able to judge, it was near midday when the white banner of the Council fell. But some hours had to elapse before it was possible to effect the formal capitulation, and so after he had spoken his "Word" he retired to his new apartments in the wind-vane offices. The continuous excitement of the last twelve hours had left him inordinately fatigued, even his curiosity was exhausted; for a space he sat inert and passive with open eyes, and for a space he slept. He was roused by two medical attendants, come prepared with stimulants to sustain him through the next occasion. After he had taken their drugs and bathed by their advice in cold water, he felt a rapid return of interest and energy, and was presently able and willing to accompany Ostrog through several miles (as it seemed) of passages, lifts, and slides to the closing scene of the White Council's rule.

The way ran deviously through a maze of buildings. They came at last to a passage that curved about, and showed broadening before him an oblong opening, clouds hot with sunset, and the ragged skyline of the ruinous Council House. A tumult of shouts came drifting up to him. In another moment they had come

out high up on the brow of the cliff of torn buildings that overhung the wreckage. The vast area opened to Graham's eyes, none the less strange and wonderful for the remote view he had had of it in the oval mirror.

This rudely amphitheatral space seemed now the better part of a mile to its outer edge. It was gold lit on the left hand, catching the sunlight, and below and to the right clear and cold in the shadow. Above the shadowy grey Council House that stood in the midst of it, the great black banner of the surrender still hung in sluggish folds against the blazing sunset. Severed rooms, halls and passages gaped strangely, broken masses of metal projected dismally from the complex wreckage, vast masses of twisted cable dropped like tangled seaweed, and from its base came a tumult of innumerable voices, violent concussions, and the sound of trumpets. All about this great white pile was a ring of desolation; the smashed and blackened masses, the gaunt foundations and ruinous lumber of the fabric that had been destroyed by the Council's orders, skeletons of girders, Titanic masses of wall, forests of stout pillars. Amongst the sombre wreckage beneath, running water flashed and glistened, and far away across the space, out of the midst of a vague vast mass of buildings, there thrust the twisted end of a water-main, two hundred feet in the air, thunderously spouting a shining cascade. And everywhere great multitudes of people.

Wherever there was space and foothold, people swarmed, little people, small and minutely clear, except where the sunset touched them to indistinguishable gold. They clambered up the tottering walls, they clung in wreaths and groups about the high-standing

pillars. They swarmed along the edges of the circle of ruins. The air was full of their shouting, and were pressing and swaying towards the central space.

The upper storeys of the Council House seemed deserted, not a human being was visible. Only the drooping banner of the surrender hung heavily against the light. The dead were within the Council House, or hidden by the swarming people, or carried away. Graham could see only a few neglected bodies in gaps and corners of the ruins, and amidst the flowing water.

"Will you let them see you, Sire?" said Ostrog.
"They are very anxious to see you."

Graham hesitated, and then walked forward to where the broken verge of wall dropped sheer. He stood looking down, a lonely, tall, black figure against the sky.

Very slowly the swarming ruins became aware of him. And as they did so little bands of black-uniformed men appeared remotely, thrusting through the crowds towards the Council House. He saw little black heads become pink, looking at him, saw by that means a wave of recognition sweep across the space. It occurred to him that he should accord them some recognition. He held up his arm, then pointed to the Council House and dropped his hand. The voices below became unanimous, gathered volume, came up to him as multitudinous wavelets of cheering.

The western sky was a pallid bluish green, and Jupiter shone high in the south, before the capitulation was accomplished. Above was a slow insensible

change, the advance of night serene and beautiful; below was hurry, excitement, conflicting orders, pauses, spasmodic developments of organisation, a vast ascending clamour and confusion. Before the Council came out, toiling perspiring men, directed by a conflict of shouts, carried forth hundreds of those who had perished in the hand-to-hand conflict within those long passages and chambers.

Guards in black lined the way that the Council would come, and as far as the eye could reach into the hazy blue twilight of the ruins, and swarming now at every possible point in the captured Council House and along the shattered cliff of its circumadjacent buildings, were innumerable people, and their voices even when they were not cheering, were as the southing of the sea upon a pebble beach. Ostrog had chosen a huge commanding pile of crushed and overthrown masonry, and on this a stage of timbers and metal girders was being hastily constructed. Its essential parts were complete, but humming and clangorous machinery still glared fitfully in the shadows beneath this temporary edifice.

The stage had a small higher portion on which Graham stood with Ostrog and Lincoln close beside him, a little in advance of a group of minor officers. A broader lower stage surrounded this quarter deck, and on this were the black-uniformed guards of the revolt armed with the little green weapons whose very names Graham still did not know. Those standing about him perceived that his eyes wandered perpetually from the swarming people in the twilight ruins about him to the darkling mass of the White Council House, whence the Trustees would presently come, and to

the gaunt cliffs of ruin that encircled him, and so back to the people. The voices of the crowd swelled to a deafening tumult.

He saw the Councillors first afar off in the glare of one of the temporary lights that marked their path, a little group of white figures blinking in a black archway. In the Council House they had been in darkness. He watched them approaching, drawing nearer past first this blazing electric star and then that; the minatory roar of the crowd over whom their power had lasted for a hundred and fifty years marched along beside them. As they drew still nearer their faces came out weary, white and anxious. He saw them blinking up through the glare about him and Ostrog. He contrasted their strange cold looks in the Hall of Atlas.. .. Presently he could recognise several of them; the man who had rapped the table at Howard, a burly man with a red beard, and one delicate-featured, short, dark man with a peculiarly long skull. He noted that two were whispering together and looking behind him at Ostrog. Next there came a tall, dark and handsome man, walking downcast. Abruptly he glanced up, his eyes touched Graham for a moment, and passed beyond him to Ostrog. The way that had been made for them was so contrived that they had to march past and curve about before they came to the sloping path of planks that ascended to the stage where their surrender was to be made.

"The Master, the Master! God and the Master," shouted the people." To hell with the Council!" Graham looked at their multitudes, receding beyond counting into a shouting haze, and then at Ostrog beside him, white and steadfast and still. His eye

went again to the little group of White Councillors. And then he looked up at the familiar quiet stars overhead. The marvellous element in his fate was suddenly vivid. Could that be his indeed, that little life in his memory two hundred years gone by--and this as well?

CHAPTER XIV

FROM THE CROW S NEST

And so after strange delays and through an avenue of doubt and battle, this man from the nineteenth century came at last to his position at the head of that complex world.

At first when he rose from the long deep sleep that followed his rescue and the surrender of the Council, he did not recognise his surroundings. By an effort he gained a clue in his mind, and all that had happened came back to him, at first with a quality of insincerity like a story heard, like something read out of a book. And even before his memories were clear, the exultation of his escape, the wonder of his prominence were back in his mind. He was owner of half the world; Master of the Earth. This new great age was in the completest sense his. He no longer hoped to discover his experiences a dream; he became anxious now to convince himself that they were real.

An obsequious valet assisted him to dress under the direction of a dignified chief attendant, a little man whose face proclaimed him Japanese, albeit he spoke English like an Englishman. From the latter he learnt something of the state of affairs. Already the

revolution was an accepted fact; already business was being resumed throughout the city. Abroad the downfall of the Council had been received for the most part with delight. Nowhere was the Council popular, and the thousand cities of Western America, after two hundred years still jealous of New York, London, and the East, had risen almost unanimously two days before at the news of Graham's imprisonment. Paris was fighting within itself. The rest of the world hung in suspense.

While he was breaking his fast, the sound of a telephone bell jetted from a corner, and his chief attendant called his attention to the voice of Ostrog making polite enquiries. Graham interrupted his refreshment to reply. Very shortly Lincoln arrived, and Graham at once expressed a strong desire to talk to people and to be shown more of the new life that was opening before him. Lincoln informed him that in three hours' time a representative gathering of officials and their wives would be held in the state apartments of the wind-vane Chief. Graham's desire to traverse the ways of the city was, however, at present impossible, because of the enormous excitement of the people. It was, however, quite possible for him to take a bird's eye view of the city from the crow's nest of the windvane keeper. To this accordingly Graham was conducted by his attendant. Lincoln, with a graceful compliment to the attendant, apologised for not accompanying them, on account of the present pressure of administrative work.

Higher even than the most gigantic wind-wheels hung this crow's nest, a clear thousand feet above the roofs, a little disc-shaped speck on a spear of metallic

filigree, cable stayed. To its summit Graham was drawn in a little wire-hung cradle. Halfway down the frail-seeming stem was a light gallery about which hung a cluster of tubes--minute they looked from above--rotating slowly on the ring of its outer rail. These were the specula, en rapport with the wind-vane keeper's mirrors, in one of which Ostrog had shown him the coming of his rule. His Japanese attendant ascended before him and they spent nearly an hour asking and answering questions.

It was a day full of the promise and quality of spring. The touch of the wind warmed. The sky was an intense blue and the vast expanse of London shone dazzling under the morning sun. The air was clear of smoke and haze, sweet as the air of a mountain glen.

Save for the irregular oval of ruins about the House of the Council and the black flag of the surrender that fluttered there, the mighty city seen from above showed few signs of the swift revolution that had, to his imagination, in one night and one day, changed the destinies of the world. A multitude of people still swarmed over these ruins, and the huge openwork stagings in the distance from which started in times of peace the service of aeroplanes to the various great cities of Europe and America, were also black with the victors. Across a narrow way of planking raised on trestles that crossed the ruins a crowd of workmen were busy restoring the connection between the cables and wires of the Council House and the rest of the city, preparatory to the transfer thither of Ostrog's headquarters from the Wind-Vane buildings.

For the rest the luminous expanse was undisturbed. So vast was its serenity in comparison with the areas of disturbance, that presently Graham, looking beyond them, could almost forget the thousands of men lying out of sight in the artificial glare within the quasi-subterranean labyrinth, dead or dying of the overnight wounds, forget the improvised wards with the hosts of surgeons, nurses, and bearers feverishly busy, forget, indeed, all the wonder, consternation and novelty under the electric lights. Down there in the hidden ways of the anthill he knew that the revolution triumphed, that black everywhere carried the day, black favours, black banners, black festoons across the streets. And out here, under the fresh sunlight, beyond the crater of the fight, as if nothing had happened to the earth, the forest of Wind Vanes that had grown from one or two while the Council had ruled, roared peacefully upon their incessant duty.

Far away, spiked, jagged and indented by the wind vanes, the Surrey Hills rose blue and faint; to the north and nearer, the sharp contours of Highgate and Muswell Hill were similarly jagged. And all over the countryside, he knew, on every crest and hill, where once the hedges had interlaced, and cottages, churches, inns, and farmhouses had nestled among their trees, wind wheels similar to those he saw and bearing like vast advertisements, gaunt and distinctive symbols of the new age, cast their whirling shadows and stored incessantly the energy that flowed away incessantly through all the arteries of the city. And underneath these wandered the countless flocks and herds of the British Food Trust with their lonely guards and keepers.

Not a familiar outline anywhere broke the cluster of gigantic shapes below. St. Paul's he knew survived, and many of the old buildings in Westminster, embedded out of sight, arched over and covered in among the giant growths of this great age. The Thames, too, made no fall and gleam of silver to break the wilderness of the city; the thirsty water mains drank up every drop of its waters before they reached the walls. Its bed and estuary scoured and sunken, was now a canal of sea water and a race of grimy bargemen brought the heavy materials of trade from the Pool thereby beneath the very feet of the workers. Faint and dim in the eastward between earth and sky hung the clustering masts of the colossal shipping in the Pool. For all the heavy traffic, for which there was no need of haste, came in gigantic sailing ships from the ends of the earth, and the heavy goods for which there was urgency in mechanical ships of a smaller swifter sort.

And to the south over the hills, came vast aqueducts with sea water for the sewers and in three separate directions, ran pallid lines--the roads, stippled with moving grey specks. On the first occasion that offered he was determined to go out and see these roads. That would come after the flying ship he was presently to try. His attendant officer described them as a pair of gently curving surfaces a hundred yards wide, each one for the traffic going in one direction, and made of a substance called Eadhamite--an artificial substance, so far as he could gather, resembling toughened glass. Along this shot a strange traffic of narrow rubber-shod vehicles, great single wheels, two and four wheeled vehicles, sweeping along at velocities of from one to six miles a minute. Railroads had vanished; a few

embankments remained as rust-crowned trenches here and there. Some few formed the cores of Eadhamite ways.

Among the first things to strike his attention had been the great fleets of advertisement balloons and kites that receded in irregular vistas northward and southward along the lines of the aeroplane journeys. No aeroplanes were to be seen. Their passages had ceased, and only one little-seeming aeropile circled high in the blue distance above the Surrey Hills, an unimpressive soaring speck.

A thing Graham had already learnt, and which he found very hard to imagine, was that nearly all the towns in the country, and almost all the villages, had disappeared. Here and there only, he understood, some gigantic hotel-like edifice stood amid square miles of some single cultivation and preserved the name of a town--as Bournemouth, Wareham, or Swanage. Yet the officer had speedily convinced him how inevitable such a change had been. The old order had dotted the country with farmhouses, and every two or three miles was the ruling landlord's estate, and the place of the inn and cobbler, the grocer's shop and church--the village. Every eight miles or so was the country town, where lawyer, corn merchant, wool-stapler, saddler, veterinary surgeon, doctor, draper, milliner and so forth lived. Every eight miles--simply because that eight mile marketing journey, four there and back, was as much as was comfortable for the farmer. But directly the railways came into play, and after them the light railways, and all the swift new motor cars that had replaced waggons and horses, and so soon as the high roads began to

be made of wood, and rubber, and Eadhamite, and all sorts of elastic durable substances--the necessity of having such frequent market towns disappeared. And the big towns grew. They drew the worker with the gravitational force of seemingly endless work, the employer with their suggestions of an infinite ocean of labour.

And as the standard of comfort rose, as the complexity of the mechanism of living increased life in the country had become more and more costly, or narrow and impossible. The disappearance of vicar and squire, the extinction of the general practitioner by the city specialist, had robbed the village of its last touch of culture. After telephone, kinematograph and phonograph had replaced newspaper, book, schoolmaster, and letter, to live outside the range of the electric cables was to live an isolated savage. In the country were neither means of being clothed nor fed (according to the refined conceptions of the time), no efficient doctors for an emergency, no company and no pursuits.

Moreover, mechanical appliances in agriculture made one engineer the equivalent of thirty labourers. So, inverting the condition of the city clerk in the days when London was scarce inhabitable because of the coaly foulness of its air, the labourers now came hurrying by road or air to the city and its life and delights at night to leave it again in the morning. The city had swallowed up humanity; man had entered upon a new stage in his development. First had come the nomad, the hunter, then had followed the agriculturist of the agricultural state, whose towns and cities and ports were but the headquarters and markets of

the countryside. And now, logical consequence of an epoch of invention, was this huge new aggregation of men. Save London, there were only four other cities in Britain -- Edinburgh, Portsmouth, Manchester and Shrewsbury. Such things as these, simple statements of fact though they were to contemporary men, strained Graham's imagination to picture. And when he glanced "over beyond there" at the strange things that existed on the Continent, it failed him altogether.

He had a vision of city beyond city, cities on great plains, cities beside great rivers, vast cities along the sea margin, cities girdled by snowy mountains. Over a great part of the earth the English tongue was spoken; taken together with its Spanish American and Hindoo and Negro and "Pidgin" dialects, it was the everyday language of two-thirds of the people of the earth. On the Continent, save as remote and curious survivals, three other languages alone held sway-- German, which reached to Antioch and Genoa and jostled Spanish-English at Gdiz, a Gallicised Russian which met the Indian English in Persia and Kurdistan and the "Pidgin" English in Pekin, and French still clear and brilliant, the language of lucidity, which shared the Mediterranean with the Indian English and German and reached through a negro dialect to the Congo.

And everywhere now, through the city-set earth, save in the administered "black belt" territories of the tropics, the same cosmopolitan social organisation prevailed, and everywhere from Pole to Equator his property and his responsibilities extended. The whole world was civilised; the whole world dwelt in cities;

the whole world was property. Over the British Empire and throughout America his ownership was scarcely disguised, Congress and Parliament were usually regarded as antique, curious gatherings. And even in the two Empires of Russia and Germany, the influence of his wealth was conceivably of enormous weight. There, of course, came problems--possibilities, but, uplifted as he was, even Russia and Germany seemed sufficiently remote. And of the quality of the black belt administration, and of what that might mean for him he thought, after the fashion of his former days, not at all. That it should hang like a threat over the spacious vision before him could not enter his nineteenth century mind. But his mind turned at once from the scenery to the thought of a vanished dread. "What of the yellow peril?" he asked and Asano made him explain. The Chinese spectre had vanished. Chinaman and European were at peace. The twentieth century had discovered with reluctant certainty that the average Chinaman was as civilised, more moral, and far more intelligent than the average European serf, and had repeated on a gigantic scale the fraternisation of Scot and Englishman that happened in the seventeenth century. As Asano put it; "They thought it over. They found we were white men after all." Graham turned again to the view and his thoughts took a new direction.

Out of the dim south-west, glittering and strange, voluptuous, and in some way terrible, shone those Pleasure Cities, of which the kinematograph-phonograph and the old man in the street had spoken. Strange places reminiscent of the legendary Sybaris, cities of art and beauty, mercenary art and mercenary beauty, sterile wonderful cities of motion and music,

whither repaired all who profited by the fierce, inglorious, economic struggle that went on in the glaring labyrinth below.

Fierce he knew it was. How fierce he could judge from the fact that these latter-day people referred back to the England of the nineteenth century as the figure of an idyllic easy-going life. He turned his eyes to the scene immediately before him again, trying to conceive the big factories of that intricate maze.

Northward he knew were the potters, makers not only of earthenware and china, but of the kindred pastes and compounds a subtler mineralogical chemistry had devised; there were the makers of statuettes and wall ornaments and much intricate furniture; there too were the factories where feverishly competitive authors devised their phonograph discourses and advertisements and arranged the groupings and developments for their perpetually startling and novel cinematographic dramatic works. Thence, too, flashed the world-wide messages, the world-wide falsehoods of the news-tellers, the chargers of the telephonic machines that had replaced the newspapers of the past.

To the westward beyond the smashed Council House were the voluminous offices of municipal control and government; and to the eastward, towards the port, the trading quarters, the huge public markets, the theatres, houses of resort, betting palaces, miles of billiard saloons, baseball and football circuses, wild beast rings and the innumerable temples of the Christian and quasi-Christian sects, the Mahomedans, Buddhists, Gnostics, Spook Worshippers, the Incubus Worshippers, the Furniture Worshippers, and so

forth; and to the south again a vast manufacture of textiles, pickles, wines and condiments. And from point to point tore the countless multitudes along the roaring mechanical ways. A gigantic hive, of which the winds were tireless servants, and the ceaseless wind-vanes an appropriate crown and symbol.

He thought of the unprecedented population that had been sucked up by this sponge of halls and galleries--the thirty-three million lives that were playing out each its own brief ineffectual drama below him, and the complacency that the brightness of the day and the space and splendour of the view, and above all the sense of his own importance had begotten, dwindled and perished. Looking down from this height over the city it became at last possible to conceive this overwhelming multitude of thirty-three millions, the reality of the responsibility he would take upon himself, the vastness of the human Maelstrom over which his slender kingship hung.

He tried to figure the individual life. It astonished him to realise how little the common man had changed in spite of the visible change in his conditions. Life and property, indeed, were secure from violence almost all over the world, zymotic diseases, bacterial diseases of all sorts had practically vanished, everyone had a sufficiency of food and clothing, was warmed in the city ways and sheltered from the weather--so much the almost mechanical progress of science and the physical organisation of society had accomplished. But the crowd, he was already beginning to discover, was a crowd still, helpless in the hands of demagogue and organiser, individually cowardly, individually swayed by appetite, collectively incalculable. The

memory of countless figures in pale blue canvas came before his mind. Millions of such men and women below him, he knew, had never been out of the city, had never seen beyond the little round of unintelligent grudging participation in the world's business, and unintelligent dissatisfied sharing in its tawdrier pleasures. He thought of the hopes of his vanished contemporaries, and for a moment the dream of London in Morris's quaint old __News from Nowhere__, and the perfect land of Hudson's beautiful __Crystal Age_ - appeared before him in an atmosphere of infinite loss. He thought of his own hopes.

For in the latter days of that passionate life that lay now so far behind him, the conception of a free and equal manhood had become a very real thing to him. He had hoped, as indeed his age had hoped, rashly taking it for granted, that the sacrifice of the many to the few would some day cease, that a day was near when every child born of woman should have a fair and assured chance of happiness. And here, after two hundred years, the same hope, still unfulfilled, cried passionately through the city. After two hundred years, he knew, greater than ever, grown with the city to gigantic proportions, were poverty and helpless labour and all the sorrows of his time.

Already he knew something of the history of the intervening years. He had heard now of the moral decay that had followed the collapse of supernatural religion in the minds of ignoble man, the decline of public honour, the ascendancy of wealth. For men who had lost their belief in God had still kept their faith in property, and wealth ruled a venial world.

His Japanese attendant, Asano, in expounding the political history of the intervening two centuries, drew an apt image from a seed eaten by insect parasites. First there is the original seed, ripening vigorously enough. And then comes some insect and lays an egg under the skin, and behold! in a little while the seed is a hollow shape with an active grub inside that has eaten out its substance. And then comes some secondary parasite, some ichneumon fly, and lays an egg within this grub, and behold! that, too, is a hollow shape, and the new living thing is inside its predecessor's skin which itself is snug within the seed coat. And the seed coat still keeps its shape, most people think it a seed still, and for all one knows it may still think itself a seed, vigorous and alive. "Your Victorian kingdom," said Asano, "was like that--kingship with the heart eaten out. "The landowners--the barons and gentry--began ages ago with King John; there were lapses, but they beheaded King Charles, and ended practically with King George mere husk of a king . . . the real power in the hands of their parliament. But the Parliament--the organ of the land-holding tenant-ruling gentry--did not keep its power long. The change had already come in the nineteenth century. The franchises had been broadened until it included masses of ignorant men, "urban myriads," who went in their featureless thousands to vote together. And the natural consequence of a swarming constituency is the rule of the party organisation. Power was passing even in the Victorian time to the party machinery, secret, complex, and corrupt. Very speedily power was in the hands of great men of business who financed the machines. A time came when the real power and interest of the Empire rested visibly between the two

party councils, ruling by newspapers and electoral organisations--two small groups of rich and able men, working at first in opposition, then presently together.

There was a reaction of a genteel ineffectual sort. There were numberless books in existence, Asano said, to prove that--the publication of some of them was as early as Graham's sleep--a whole literature of reaction in fact. The party of the reaction seems to have locked itself into its study and rebelled with unflinching determination--on paper. The urgent necessity of either capturing or depriving the party councils of power is a common suggestion underlying all the thoughtful work of the early twentieth century, both in America and England. In most of these things America was a little earlier than England, though both countries drove the same way.

That counter-revolution never came. It could never organise and keep pure. There was not enough of the old sentimentality, the old faith in righteousness, left among men. Any organisation that became big enough to influence the polls became complex enough to be undermined, broken up, or bought outright by capable rich men. Socialistic and Popular, Reactionary and Purity Parties were all at last mere Stock Exchange counters, selling their principles to pay for their electioneering. And the great concern of the rich was naturally to keep property intact, the board clear for the game of trade. Just as the feudal concern had been to keep the board clear for hunting and war. The whole world was exploited, a battle field of businesses; and financial convulsions, the scourge of currency manipulation, tariff wars, made

more human misery during the twentieth century-- because the wretchedness was dreary life instead of speedy death--than had war, pestilence and famine, in the darkest hours of earlier history.

His own part in the development of this time he now knew clearly enough. Through the successive phases in the development of this mechanical civilisation, aiding and presently directing its development, there had grown a new power, the Council, the board of his trustees. At first it had been a mere chance union of the millions of Isbister and Warming, a mere property holding company, the creation of two childless testators' whims, but the collective talent of its first constitution had speedily guided it to a vast influence, until by title deed, loan and share, under a hundred disguises and pseudonyms it had ramified through the fabric of the American and English States.

Wielding an enormous influence and patronage, the Council had early assumed a political aspect; and in its development it had continually used its wealth to tip the beam of political decisions and its political advantages to grasp yet more and more wealth. At last the party organisations of two hemispheres were in its hands; it became an inner council of political control. Its last struggle was with the tacit alliance of the great Jewish families. But these families were linked only by a feeble sentiment, at any time inheritance might fling a huge fragment of their resources to a minor, a woman or a fool, marriages and legacies alienated hundreds of thousands at one blow. The Council had no such breach in its continuity. Steadily, steadfastly it grew.

The original Council was not simply twelve men of exceptional ability; they fused, it was a council of genius. It struck boldly for riches, for political influence, and the two subserved each other. With amazing foresight it spent great sums of money on the art of flying, holding that invention back against an hour foreseen. It used the patent laws, and a thousand half-legal expedients, to hamper all investigators who refused to work with it. In the old days it never missed a capable man. It paid his price. Its policy in those days was vigorous--unerring, and against it as it grew steadily and incessantly was only the chaotic selfish rule of the casually rich. In a hundred years Graham had become almost exclusive owner of Africa, of South America, of France, of London, of England and all its influence--for all practical purposes, that is--a power in North America--then the dominant power in America. The Council bought and organised China, drilled Asia, crippled the Old World empires, undermined them financially, fought and defeated them.

And this spreading usurpation of the world was so dexterously performed--a proteus--hundreds of banks, companies, syndicates, masked the Council's operations--that it was already far advanced before common men suspected the tyranny that had come. The Council never hesitated, never faltered. Means of communication, land, buildings, governments, municipalities, the territorial companies of the tropics, every human enterprise, it gathered greedily. And it drilled and marshalled its men, its railway police, its roadway police, its house guards, and drain and cable guards, its hosts of land-workers. Their unions it did not

fight, but it undermined and betrayed and bought them. It bought the world at last. And, finally, its culminating stroke was the introduction of flying.

When the Council, in conflict with the workers in some of its huge monopolies, did something flagrantly illegal and that without even the ordinary civility of bribery, the old Law, alarmed for the profits of its complaisance, looked about it for weapons. But there were no more armies, no fighting navies; the age of Peace had' come. The only possible war ships were the great steam vessels of the Council's Navigation Trust. The police forces they controlled; the police of the railways, of the ships, of their agricultural estates, their time-keepers and order-keepers, outnumbered the neglected little forces of the old country and municipal organisations ten to one. And they produced flying machines. There were men alive still who could remember the last great debate in the London House of Commons--the legal party, the party against the Council was in a minority, but it made a desperate fight--and how the members came crowding out upon the terrace to see these great unfamiliar winged shapes circling quietly overhead. The Council had soared to its power. The last sham of a democracy that had permitted unlimited irresponsible property was at an end.

Within one hundred and fifty years of Graham's falling asleep, his Council had thrown off its disguises and ruled openly, supreme in his name. Elections had become a cheerful formality, a septennial folly, an ancient unmeaning custom; a social Parliament as ineffectual as the convocation of the Established Church in Victorian times assembled now and then;

and a legitimate King of England, disinherited, drunken and witless, played foolishly in a second-rate music-hall. So the magnificent dream of the nineteenth century, the noble project of universal individual liberty and universal happiness, touched by a disease of honour, crippled by a superstition of absolute property, crippled by the religious feuds that had robbed the common citizens of education, robbed men of standards of conduct, and brought the sanctions of morality to utter contempt, had worked itself out in the face of invention and ignoble enterprise, first to a warring plutocracy, and finally to the rule of a supreme plutocrat. His Council at last had ceased even to trouble to have its decrees endorsed by the constitutional authorities, and he a motionless, sunken, yellow-skinned figure had lain, neither dead nor living, recognisably and immediately Master of the Earth. And awoke at last to find himself--Master of that inheritance! Awoke to stand under the cloudless empty sky and gaze down upon the greatness of his dominion.

To what end had he awakened? Was this city, this hive of hopeless toilers, the final refutation of his ancient hopes? Or was the fire of liberty, the fire that had blazed and waned in the years of his past life, still smouldering below there? He thought of the stir and impulse of the song of the revolution. Was that song merely the trick of a demagogue, to be forgotten when its purpose was served? Was the hope that still stirred within him only the memory of abandoned things, the vestige of a creed outworn? Or had it a wider meaning, an import interwoven with the destiny of man? To what end had he awakened, what was there for him to do? Humanity was spread below him like a map.

He thought of the millions and millions of humanity following each other unceasingly for ever out of the darkness of non-existence into the darkness of death. To what end? Aim there must be, but it transcended his power of thought. He saw for the first time clearly his own infinite littleness, saw stark and terrible the tragic contrast of human strength and the craving of the human heart. For that little while he knew himself for the petty accident he was, and knew therewith the greatness of his desire. And suddenly his littleness was intolerable, his aspiration was intolerable, and there came to him an irresistible impulse to pray. And he prayed. He prayed vague, incoherent, contradictory things, his soul strained up through time and space and all the fleeting multitudinous confusion of being, towards something--he scarcely knew what--towards something that could comprehend his striving and endure.

A man and a woman were far below on a roof space to the southward enjoying the freshness of the morning air. The man had brought out a perspective glass to spy upon the Council House and he was showing her how to use it. Presently their curiosity was satisfied, they could see no traces of bloodshed from their position, and after a survey of the empty sky she came round to the crow's nest. And there she saw two little black figures, so small it was hard to believe they were men, one who watched and one who gesticulated with hands outstretched to the silent emptiness of Heaven.

She handed the glass to the man. He looked and exclaimed:

"I believe it is the Master. Yes. I am sure. It is

the Master!"

He lowered the glass and looked at her. "Waving his hands about almost as if he was praying. I wonder what he is up to. Worshipping the sun? There weren't Parses in this country in his time, were there?"

He looked again. "He's stopped it now. It was a chance attitude, I suppose." He put down the glass and became meditative. "He won't have anything to do but enjoy himself--just enjoy himself. Ostrog will boss the show of course. Ostrog will have to, because of leeping all these Labourer fools in bounds. Them and their song! And got it all by sleeping, dear eyes --just sleeping. It's a wonderful world."

CHAPTER XV

PROMINENT PEOPLE

The state apartments of the Wind Vane Keeper would have seemed astonishingly intricate to Graham had he entered them fresh from his nineteenth century life, but already he was growing accustomed to the scale of the new time. They can scarcely be described as halls and rooms, seeing that a complicated system of arches, bridges, passages and galleries divided and united every part of the great space. He came out through one of the now familiar sliding panels upon a plateau of landing at the head of a flight of very broad and gentle steps, with men and women far more brilliantly dressed than any he had hitherto seen ascending and descending. From this position he looked down a vista of intricate ornament in lustreless

white and mauve and purple, spanned by bridges that seemed wrought of porcelain and filigree, and terminating far off in a cloudy mystery of perforated screens.

Glancing upward, he saw tier above tier of ascending galleries with faces looking down upon him. The air was full of the babble of innumerable voices and of a music that descended from above, a gay and exhilarating music whose source he never discovered.

The central aisle was thick with people, but by no means uncomfortably crowded; altogether that assembly must have numbered many thousands. They were brilliantly, even fantastically dressed, the men as fancifully as the women, for the sobering influence of the Puritan conception of dignity upon masculine dress had long since passed away. The hair of the men, too, though it was rarely worn long, was commonly curled in a manner that suggested the barber, and baldness had vanished from the earth. Frizzy straight-cut masses that would have charmed Rossetti abounded, and one gentleman, who was pointed out to Graham under the mysterious title of an "amorist", wore his hair in two becoming plaits a la Marguerite. The pigtail was in evidence; it would seem that citizens of Chinese extraction were no longer ashamed of their race. There was little uniformity of fashion apparent in the forms of clothing worn. The more shapely men displayed their symmetry in trunk hose, and here were puffs and slashes, and there a cloak and there a robe. The fashions of the days of Leo the Tenth were perhaps the prevailing influence, but the aesthetic conceptions of the far east were also patent. Masculine embonpoint, which, in Victorian times, would have been subjected to the

tightly buttoned perils, the ruthless exaggeration of tight-legged tight-armed evening dress, now formed but the basis of a wealth of dignity and drooping folds. Graceful slenderness abounded' also. To Graham, a typically stiff man from a typically stiff period, not only did these men seem altogether too graceful in person, but altogether too expressive in their vividly expressive faces. They gesticulated, they expressed surprise, interest, amusement, above all, they expressed the emotions excited in their minds by the ladies about them with astonishing frankness. Even at the first glance it was evident that women were in a great majority.

The ladies in the company of these gentlemen displayed in dress, bearing and manner alike, less emphasis and more intricacy. Some affected a classical simplicity of robing and subtlety of fold, after the fashion of the First French Empire, and flashed conquering arms and shoulders as Graham passed. Others had closely-fitting dresses without seam or belt at the waist, sometimes with long folds falling from the shoulders. The delightful confidences of evening dress had not been diminished by the passage of two centuries.

Everyone's movements seemed graceful. Graham remarked to Lincoln that he saw men as Raphael's cartoons walking, and Lincoln told him that the attainment of an appropriate set of gestures was part of every rich person's education. The Master's entry was greeted with a sort of tittering applause, but these people showed their distinguished manners by not crowding upon him nor annoying him by any persistent scrutiny, as he descended the steps towards the floor of

the aisle.

He had already learnt from Lincoln that these were the leaders of existing London society; almost every person there that night was either a powerful official or the immediate connexion of a powerful official. Many had returned from the European Pleasure Cities expressly to welcome him. The aeronautic authorities, whose defection had played a part in the overthrow of the Council only second to Graham's were very prominent, and so, too, was the Wind Vane Control. Amongst others there were several of the more prominent officers of the Food Trust; the controller of the European Piggeries had a particularly melancholy and interesting countenance and a daintily cynical manner. A bishop in full canonicals passed athwart Graham's vision, conversing with a gentleman dressed exactly like the traditional Chaucer, including even the laurel wreath.

"Who is that?" he asked almost involuntarily

"The Bishop of London," said Lincoln.

"No--the other, I mean."

"Poet Laureate."

"You still?"

"He doesn't make poetry, of course. He's a cousin of Wotton--one of the Councillors. But he's one of the Red Rose Royalists--a delightful club--and they keep up the tradition of these things."

"Asano told me there was a King."

"The King doesn't belong. They had to expel him. It's the Stuart blood, I suppose; but really--"

"Too much?"

"Far too much."

Graham did not quite follow all this, but it seemed part of the general inversion of the new age. He bowed condescendingly to his first introduction. It was evident that subtle distinctions of class prevailed even in this assembly, that only to a small proportion of the guests, to an inner group, did Lincoln consider it appropriate to introduce him. This first introduction was the Master Aeronaut, a man whose suntanned face contrasted oddly with the delicate complexions about him. Just at present his critical defection from the Council made him a very important person indeed.

His manner contrasted very favourably, according to Graham's ideas, with the general bearing. He made a few commonplace remarks, assurances of loyalty and frank inquiries about the Master's health. His manner was breezy, his accent lacked the easy staccato of latter-day English. He made it admirably clear to Graham that he was a bluff "aerial dog" ---he used that phrase--that there was no nonsense about him, that he was a thoroughly manly fellow and old-fashioned at that, that he didn't profess to know much, and that what he did not know was not worth knowing. He made a manly bow, ostentatiously free from obsequiousness and passed.

"I am glad to see that type endures," said Graham

"Phonographs and kinematographs," said Lincoln, a little spitefully. "He has studied from the life." Graham glanced at the burly form again. It was oddly reminiscent.

"As a matter of fact we bought him," said Lincoln. "Partly. And partly he was afraid of Ostrog Everything rested with him."

He turned sharply to introduce the Surveyor-General of the Public School Trust. This person was a willowy figure in a blue-grey academic gown, he beamed down upon Graham through __pince-nez__ of a Victorian pattern, and illustrated his remarks by gestures of a beautifully manicured hand. Graham was immediately interested in this gentleman's functions, and asked him a number of singularly direct questions. The Surveyor-General seemed quietly amused at the Master's fundamental bluntness. He was a little vague as to the monopoly of education his Company possessed; it was done by contract with the syndicate that ran the numerous London Municipalities, but he waxed enthusiastic over educational progress since the Victorian times. "We have conquered Cram," he said, "completely conquered Cram--there is not an examination left in the world. Aren't you glad?"

"How do you get the work done?" asked Graham.

"We make it attractive--as attractive as possible. And if it does not attract then--we let it go. We cover an immense field."

He proceeded to details, and they had a lengthy conversation. The Surveyor-General mentioned the names of Pestalozzi and Froebel with profound respect, although he displayed no intimacy with their epoch-making works. Graham learnt that University Extension still existed in a modified form. "There is a certain type of girl, for example," said the Surveyor-General, dilating with a sense of his usefulness, "with a perfect passion for severe studies--when they are not too difficult you know. We cater for them by the thousand. At this moment," he said with a Napoleonic touch, "nearly five hundred phonographs are lecturing in different parts of London on the influence exercised by Plato and Swift on the love affairs of Shelley, Hazlitt, and Burns. And afterwards they write essays on the lectures, and the names in order of merit are put in conspicuous places. You see how your little germ has grown? The illiterate middle-class of your days has quite passed away."

"About the public elementary schools," said Graham. "Do you control them?"

The Surveyor-General did, "entirely." Now, Graham, in his later democratic days, had taken a keen interest in these and his questioning quickened. Certain casual phrases that had fallen from the old man with whom he had talked in the darkness recurred to him. The Surveyor-General, in effect, endorsed the old man's words. "We have abolished Cram," he said, a phrase Graham was beginning to interpret as the abolition of all sustained work. The Surveyor-General became sentimental. "We try and make the elementary schools very pleasant for the little children. They will have to work so soon. Just a few

simple principles--obedience--industry."

"You teach them very little?"

"Why should we? It only leads to trouble and discontent. We amuse them. Even as it is--there are troubles--agitations. Where the labourers get the ideas, one cannot tell. They tell one another. There are socialistic dreams--anarchy even! Agitators will get to work among them. I take it--I have always taken it--that my foremost duty is to fight against popular discontent. Why should people be made unhappy?"

"I wonder," said Graham thoughtfully. "But there are a great many things I want to know."

Lincoln, who had stood watching Graham's face throughout the conversation, intervened. "There are others," he said in an undertone.

The Surveyor-General of schools gesticulated himself away. "Perhaps," said Lincoln, intercepting a casual glance, "you would like to know some of these ladies?"

The daughter of the Manager of the Piggeries of the European Food Trust was a particularly charming little person with red hair and animated blue eyes. Lincoln left him awhile to converse with her, and she displayed herself as quite an enthusiast for the "dear old times," as she called them, that had seen the beginning of his trance. As she talked she smiled, and her eyes smiled in a manner that demanded reciprocity.

"I have tried," she said, "countless times--to imagine those old romantic days. And to you they are memories. How strange and crowded the world must seem to you! I have seen photographs and pictures of the old times, the little isolated houses built of bricks made out of burnt mud and all black with soot from your fires, the railway bridges, the simple advertisements, the solemn savage Puritanical men in strange black coats and those tall hats of theirs, iron railway trains on iron bridges overhead, horses and cattle, and even dogs running half wild about the streets. And suddenly, you have come into this!"

"Into this," said Graham.

"Out of your life--out of all that was familiar."

"The old life was not a happy one," said Graham.

"I do not regret that."

She looked at him quickly. There was a brief pause. She sighed encouragingly. "No? "

"No," said Graham. "It was a little life--and unmeaning. But this--. We thought the world complex and crowded and civilised enough. Yet I see --although in this world I am barely four days old-- looking back on my own time, that it was a queer, barbaric time--the mere beginning of this new order. The mere beginning of this new order. You will find it hard to understand how little I know."

" You may ask me what you like," she said, smiling at him.

"Then tell me who these people are. I'm still very much in the dark about them. It's puzzling. Are there any Generals? "

"Men in hats and feathers?"

"Of course not. No. I suppose they are the men who control the great public businesses. Who is that distinguished looking man?"

"That? He's a most important officer. That is Morden. He is managing director of the Antibilious Pill Company. I have heard that his workers sometimes turn out a myriad myriad pills a day in the twenty-four hours. Fancy a myriad myriad!"

"A myriad myriad. No wonder he looks proud," said Graham. "Pills! What a wonderful time it is! That man in purple?"

"He is not quite one of the inner circle, you know. But we like him. He is really clever and very amusing. He is one of the heads of the Medical Faculty of our London University. All medical men, you know, are shareholders in the Medical Faculty Company, and wear that purple. You have to be--to be qualified. But of course, people who are paid' by fees for doing something--" She smiled away the social pretensions of all such people.

"Are any of your great artists or authors here?"

"No authors. They are mostly such queer people-- and so preoccupied about themselves. And they quarrel so dreadfully! They will fight, some of them, for

precedence on staircases! Dreadful isn't it? But I think Wraysbury, the fashionable capillotomist, is here. From Capri."

"Capillotomist," said Graham. "Ah! I remember. An artist! Why not?"

"We have to cultivate him," she said apologetically. "Our heads are in his hands." She smiled.

Graham hesitated at the invited compliment, but his glance was expressive. "Have the arts grown with the rest of civilised things?" he said. "Who are your great painters?"

She looked at him doubtfully. Then laughed. "For a moment," she said, "I thought you meant--" She laughed again. "You mean, of course, those good men you used to think so much of because they could cover great spaces of canvas with oil-colours? Great oblongs. And people used to put the things in gilt frames and hang them up in rows in their square rooms. We haven't any. People grew tired of that sort of thing."

"But what did you think I meant?"

She put a finger significantly on a cheek whose glow was above suspicion, and smiled and looked very arch and pretty and inviting. "And here," and she indicated her eyelid.

Graham had an adventurous moment. Then a grotesque memory of a picture he had somewhere seen of Uncle Toby and the Widow flashed across his

mind. An archaic shame came upon him. He became acutely aware that he was visible to a great number of interested people. "I see," he remarked inadequately. He turned awkwardly away from her, fascinating facility. He looked about him to meet a number of eyes that immediately occupied themselves with other things. Possibly he coloured a little. "Who is that talking with the lady in saffron?" he asked, avoiding her eyes.

The person in question he learnt was one of the great organisers of the American theatres just fresh from a gigantic production at Mexico. His face reminded Graham of a bust of Caligula. Another striking looking man was the Black Labour Master. The phrase at the time made no deep impression, but afterwards it recurred;--the Black Labour Master? The little lady, in no degree embarrassed, pointed out to him a charming little woman as one of the subsidiary wives of the Anglican Bishop of London. She added encomiums on the episcopal courage--hitherto there had been a rule of clerical monogamy--"neither a natural nor an expedient condition of things. Why should the natural development of the affections be dwarfed and restricted because a man is a priest?"

"And, bye the bye," she added, "are you an Anglican?" Graham was on the verge of hesitating inquiries about the status of a "subsidiary wife," apparently an euphemistic phrase, when Lincoln's return broke off this very suggestive and interesting conversation. They crossed the aisle to where a tall man in crimson, and two charming persons in Burmese costume (as it seemed to him) awaited him diffidently. From their civilities he passed to other presentations.

In a little while his multitudinous impressions began to organise themselves into a general effect. At first the glitter of the gathering had raised all the democrat in Graham; he had felt hostile and satirical. But it is not in human nature to resist an atmosphere of courteous regard. Soon the music, the light, the play of colours, the shining arms and shoulders about him, the touch of hands, the transient interest of smiling faces, the frothing sound of skillfully modulated voices, the atmosphere of compliment, interest and respect, had woven together into a fabric of indisputable pleasure. Graham for a time forgot his spacious resolutions. He gave way insensibly to the intoxication of the position that was conceded him, his manner became less conscious, more convincingly regal, his feet walked assuredly, the black robe fell with a bolder fold and pride ennobled his voice. After all this was a brilliant interesting world.

His glance went approvingly over the shifting colours of the people, it rested here and there in kindly criticism upon a face. Presently it occurred to him that he owed some apology to the charming little person with the red hair and blue eyes. He felt guilty of a clumsy snub. It was not princely to ignore her advances, even if his policy necessitated their rejection. He wondered if he should see her again. And suddenly a little thing touched all the glamour of this brilliant gathering and changed its quality.

He looked up and saw passing across a bridge of porcelain and looking down upon him, a face that was almost immediately hidden, the face of the girl he had seen overnight in the little room beyond the theatre

after his escape from the Council. And she was looking with much the same expression of curious expectation, of uncertain intentness, upon his proceedings. For the moment he did not remember when he had seen her, and then with recognition came a vague memory of the stirring emotions of their first encounter. But the dancing web of melody about him kept the air of that great marching song from his memory.

The lady to whom he was talking repeated her remark, and Graham recalled himself to the quasisiregal flirtation upon which he was engaged.

But from that moment a vague restlessness, a feeling that grew to dissatisfaction, came into his mind. He was troubled as if by some half forgotten duty, by the sense of things important slipping from him amidst this light and brilliance. The attraction that these bright ladies who crowded about him were beginning to exercise ceased. He no longer made vague and clumsy responses to the subtly amorous advances that he was now assured were being made to him, and his eyes wandered for another sight of that face that had appealed so strongly to his sense of beauty. But he did not see her again until he was awaiting Lincoln's return to leave this assembly. In answer to his request Lincoln had promised that an attempt should be made to fly that afternoon, if the weather permitted. He had gone to make certain necessary arrangements.

Graham was in one of the upper galleries in conversation with a bright-eyed lady on the subject of Eadhamite--the subject was his choice and not hers. He had interrupted her warm assurances of personal devotion with a matter-of-fact inquiry. He found her,

as he had already found several other latter-day women that night, less well informed than charming. Suddenly, struggling against the eddy drift of nearer melody, the song of the Revolt, the great song he had heard in the Hall, hoarse and massive, came beating down to him.

He glanced up startled, and perceived above him an __oeil de boeuf__ through which this song had come, and beyond, the upper courses of cable, the blue haze, and the pendant fabric of the lights of the public ways. He heard the song break into a tumult of voices and cease. But now he perceived quite clearly the drone and tumult of the moving platforms and a murmur of many people. He had a vague persuasion that he could not account for, a sort of instinctive feeling that outside in the ways a huge crowd' must be watching this place in which their Master amused himself. He wondered what they might be thinking.

Though the song had stopped so abruptly, though the special music of this gathering reasserted itself, the motif of the marching song, once it had begun, lingered in his mind.

The bright-eyed lady was still struggling with the mysteries of Eadhamite when he perceived the girl he had seen in the theatre again. She was coming now along the gallery towards him; he saw her first before she saw him. She was dressed in a faintly luminous grey, her dark hair about her brows was like a cloud, and as he saw her the cold light from the circular opening into the ways fell upon her downcast face.

The lady in trouble about the Eadhamite saw the

change in his expression, and grasped her opportunity to escape. Would you care to know that girl, Sire?" she asked boldly. "She is Helen Wotton--a niece of Ostrog's. She knows a great many serious things. She is one of the most serious persons alive. I am sure you will like her."

In another moment Graham was talking to the girl, and the bright-eyed lady had fluttered away.

"I remember you quite well," said Graham. "You were in that little room. When all the people were singing and beating time with their feet. Before I walked across the Hall."

Her momentary embarrassment passed. She looked up at him, and her face was steady. "It was wonderful," she said, hesitated, and spoke with a sudden effort. "All those people would have died for you, Sire. Countless people did die for you that night."

Her face glowed. She glanced swiftly aside to see that no other heard her words.

Lincoln appeared some way off along the gallery, making his way through the press towards them. She saw him and turned to Graham strangely eager, with a swift change to confidence and intimacy. "Sire," she said quickly, "I cannot tell you now and here. But the common people are very unhappy; they are oppressed--they are misgoverned. Do not forget the people, who faced death--death that you might live."

"I know nothing--" began Graham.

"I cannot tell you now."

Lincoln's face appeared close to them. He bowed an apology to the girl.

"You find the new world pleasant, Sire?" asked Lincoln, with smiling deference, and indicating the space and splendour of the gathering by one comprehensive gesture. "At any rate, you find it changed."

"Yes," said Graham, "changed. And yet, after all, not so greatly changed."

"Wait till you are in the air," said Lincoln. "The wind has fallen; even now an aeropile awaits you."

The girl's attitude awaited dismissal.

Graham glanced at her face, was on the verge of a question, found a warning in her expression, bowed to her and turned to accompany Lincoln.

CHAPTER XVI

THE AEROPHILE

For a while, as Graham went through the passages of the Wind-Vane offices with Lincoln, he was preoccupied. But, by an effort, he attended to the things which Lincoln was saying. Soon his preoccupation vanished. Lincoln was talking of flying. Graham had a strong desire to know more of this new human attainment. He began to ply Lincoln with questions. He had followed the crude beginnings of aerial

navigation very keenly in his previous life; he was delighted to find the familiar names of Maxim and Pilcher, Langley and Chanute, and, above all, of the aerial proto-martyr Lillienthal, still honoured by men.

Even during his previous life two lines of investigation had pointed clearly to two distinct types of contrivance as possible, and both of these had been realised. On the one hand was the great engine-driven aeroplane, a double row of horizontal floats with a big aerial screw behind, and on the other the nimbler aeropile. The aeroplanes flew safely only in a calm or moderate wind, and sudden storms, occurrences that were now accurately predictable, rendered them for all practical purposes useless. They were built of enormous size--the usual stretch of wing being six hundred feet or more, and the length of the fabric a thousand feet. They were for passenger traffic alone. The lightly swung car they carried was from a hundred to a hundred and fifty feet in length. It was hung in a peculiar manner in order to minimise the complex vibration that even a moderate wind produced, and for the same reason the little seats within the car--each passenger remained seated during the voyage--were slung with great freedom of movement. The starting of the mechanism was only possible from a gigantic car on the rail of a specially constructed stage. Graham had seen these vast stages, the flying stages, from the crow's nest very well. Six huge blank areas they were, with a giant "carrier" stage on each.

The choice of descent was equally circumscribed, an accurately plane surface being needed for safe grounding. Apart from the destruction that would have been

caused by the descent of this great expanse of sail and metal, and the impossibility of its rising again, the concussion of an irregular surface, a tree-set hillside, for instance, or an embankment, would be sufficient to pierce or damage the framework, to smash the ribs of the body, and perhaps kill those aboard.

At first Graham felt disappointed with these cumbersome contrivances, but he speedily grasped the fact that smaller machines would have been unremunerative, for the simple reason that their carrying power would be disproportionately diminished with diminished size. Moreover, the huge size of these things enabled them--and it was a consideration of primary importance--to traverse the air at enormous speeds, and so run no risks of unanticipated weather. The briefest journey performed, that from London to Paris, took about three-quarters of an hour, but the velocity attained was not high; the leap to New York occupied about two hours, and by timing oneself carefully at the intermediate stations it was possible in quiet weather to go around the world in a day.

The little aeropiles (as for no particular reason they were distinctively called) were of an altogether different type. Several of these were going to and fro in the air. They were designed to carry only one or two persons, and their manufacture and maintenance was so costly as to render them the monopoly of the richer sort of people. Their sails, which were brilliantly coloured, consisted only of two pairs of lateral air floats in the same plane, and of a screw behind. Their small size rendered a descent in any open space neither difficult nor disagreeable, and it was possible to attach pneumatic wheels or even the ordinary motors for terrestrial

tragic to them, and so carry them to a convenient starting place. They required a special sort of swift car to throw them into the air, but such a car was efficient in any open place clear of high buildings or trees. Human aeronautics, Graham perceived, were evidently still a long way behind the instinctive gift of the albatross or the fly-catcher. One great influence that might have brought the aeropile to a more rapid perfection had been withheld; these inventions had never been used in warfare. The last great international struggle had occurred before the usurpation of the Council.

The Flying Stages of London were collected together in an irregular crescent on the southern side of the river. They formed three groups of two each and retained the names of ancient suburban hills or villages. They were named in order, Roehampton, Wimbledon Park, Streatham, Norwood, Blackheath, and Shooter's Hill. They were uniform structures rising high above the general roof surfaces. Each was about four thousand yards long and a thousand broad, and constructed of the compound of aluminium and iron that had replaced iron in architecture. Their higher tiers formed an openwork of girders through which lifts and staircases ascended. The upper surface was a uniform expanse, with portions--the starting carriers--that could be raised and were then able to run on very slightly inclined rails to the end of the fabric. Save for any aeropiles or aeroplanes that were in port these open surfaces were kept clear for arrivals.

During the adjustment of the aeroplanes it was the custom for passengers to wait in the system of theatres, restaurants, news-rooms, and places of pleasure

and indulgence of various sorts that interwove with the prosperous shops below. This portion of London was in consequence commonly the gayest of all its districts, with something of the meretricious gaiety of a seaport or city of hotels. And for those who took a more serious view of aeronautics, the religious quarters had flung out an attractive colony of devotional chapels, while a host of brilliant medical establishments competed to supply physical preparatives for the journey. At various levels through the mass of chambers and passages beneath these, ran, in addition to the main moving ways of the city which laced and gathered here, a complex system of special passages and lifts and slides, for the convenient interchange of people and luggage between stage and stage. And a distinctive feature of the architecture of this section was the ostentatious massiveness of the metal piers and girders that everywhere broke the vistas and spanned the halls and passages, crowding and twining up to meet the weight of the stages and the weighty impact of the aeroplanes overhead.

Graham went to the flying stages by the public ways. He was accompanied by Asano, his Japanese attendant. Lincoln was called away by Ostrog, who was busy with his administrative concerns. A strong guard of the Wind-Vane police awaited the Master outside the Wind-Vane offices, and they cleared a space for him on the upper moving platform. His passage to the flying stages was unexpected, nevertheless a considerable crowd gathered and followed him to his destination. As he went along, he could hear the people shouting his name, and saw numberless men and women and children in blue come swarming up the staircases in the central path, gesticulating

and shouting. He could not hear what they shouted. He was struck again by the evident existence of a vulgar dialect among the poor of the city. When at last he descended, his guards were immediately surrounded by a dense excited crowd. Afterwards it occurred to him that some had attempted to reach him with petitions. His guards cleared a passage for him with difficulty.

He found an aeropile in charge of an aeronaut awaiting him on the westward stage. Seen close this mechanism was no longer small. As it lay on its launching carrier upon the wide expanse of the flying stage, its aluminium body skeleton was as big as the hull of a twenty-ton yacht. Its lateral supporting sails braced and stayed with metal nerves almost like the nerves of a bee's wing, and made of some sort of glassy artificial membrane, cast their shadow over many hundreds of square yards. The chairs for the engineer and his passenger hung free to swing by a complex tackle, within the protecting ribs of the frame and well abaft the middle. The passenger's chair was protected by a wind-guard and guarded about with metallic rods carrying air cushions. It could, if desired, be completely closed in, but Graham was anxious for novel experiences, and desired that it should be left open. The aeronaut sat behind a glass that sheltered his face. The passenger could secure himself firmly in his seat, and this was almost unavoidable on landing, or he could move along by means of a little rail and rod to a locker at the stem of the machine, where his personal luggage, his wraps and restoratives were placed, and which also with the seats, served as a makeweight to the parts of the central engine that projected to the propeller at the stern.

The engine was very simple in appearance. Asano, pointing out the parts of this apparatus to him, told him that, like the gas-engine of Victorian days, it was of the explosive type, burning a small drop of a substance called "fomile" at each stroke. It consisted simply of reservoir and piston about the long fluted crank of the propeller shaft. So much Graham saw of the machine.

The flying stage about him was empty save for Asano and their suite of attendants. Directed by the aeronaut he placed himself in his seat. He then drank a mixture containing ergot--a dose, he learnt, invariably administered to those about to fly, and designed to counteract the possible effect of diminished air pressure upon the system. Having done so, he declared himself ready for the journey. Asano took the empty glass from him, stepped through the bars of the hull, and stood below on the stage waving his hand. Suddenly he seemed to slide along the stage to the right and vanish.

The engine was beating, the propeller spinning, and for a second the stage and the buildings beyond were gliding swiftly and horizontally past Graham's eye; then these things seemed to tilt up abruptly. He gripped the little rods on either side of him instinctively. He felt himself moving upward, heard the air whistle over the top of the wind screen. The propeller screw moved round with powerful rhythmic impulses--one, two, three, pause; one, two, three--which the engineer controlled very delicately. The machine began a quivering vibration that continued throughout the flight, and the roof areas seemed

running away to starboard very quickly and growing rapidly smaller. He looked from the face of the engineer through the ribs of the machine. Looking sideways, there was nothing very startling in what he saw --a rapid funicular railway might have given the same sensations. He recognised the Council House and the Highgate Ridge. And then he looked straight down between his feet.

For a moment physical terror possessed him, a passionate sense of insecurity. He held tight. For a second or so he could not lift his eyes. Some hundred feet or more sheer below him was one of the big windvanes of south-west London, and beyond it the southernmost flying stage crowded with little black dots. These things seemed to be falling away from him. For a second he had an impulse to pursue the earth. He set his teeth, he lifted his eyes by a muscular effort, and the moment of panic passed.

He remained for a space with his teeth set hard, his eyes staring into the sky. Throb, throb, throb--beat, went the engine; throb, throb, throb,--beat. He gripped his bars tightly, glanced at the aeronaut, and saw a smile upon his sun-tanned face. He smiled in return--perhaps a little artificially. "A little strange at first," he shouted before he recalled his dignity. But he dared not look down again for some time. He stared over the aeronaut's head to where a rim of vague blue horizon crept up the sky. For a little while he could not banish the thought of possible accidents from his mind. Throb, throb, throb--beat; suppose some trivial screw went wrong in that supporting engine! Suppose--! He made a grim effort to dismiss all such suppositions. After a while

they did at least abandon the foreground of his thoughts. And up he went steadily, higher and higher into the clear air.

Once the mental shock of moving unsupported through the air was over, his sensations ceased to be unpleasant, became very speedily pleasurable. He had been warned of air sickness. But he found the pulsating movement of the aeropile as it drove up the faint south-west breeze was very little in excess of the pitching of a boat head on to broad rollers in a moderate gale, and he was constitutionally a good sailor. And the keenness of the more rarefied air into which they ascended produced a sense of lightness and exhilaration. He looked up and saw the blue sky above fretted with cirrus clouds. His eye came cautiously down through the ribs and bars to a shining flight of white birds that hung in the lower sky. For a space he watched these. Then going lower and less apprehensively, he saw the slender figure of the Wind-Vane keeper's crow's nest shining golden in the sunlight and growing smaller every moment. As his eye fell with more confidence now, there came a blue line of hills, and then London, already to leeward, an intricate space of roofing. Its near edge came sharp and clear, and banished his last apprehensions in a shock of surprise. For the boundary of London was like a wall, like a cliff, a steep fall of three or four hundred feet, a frontage broken only by terraces here and there, a complex decorative facade.

That gradual passage of town into country through an extensive sponge of suburbs, which was so characteristic a feature of the great cities of the nineteenth century, existed no longer. Nothing remained of it

but a waste of ruins here, variegated and dense with thickets of the heterogeneous growths that had once adorned the gardens of the belt, interspersed among levelled brown patches of sown ground, and verdant stretches of winter greens. The latter even spread among the vestiges of houses. But for the most part the reefs and skerries of ruins, the wreckage of suburban villas, stood among their streets and roads, queer islands amidst the levelled expanses of green and brown, abandoned indeed by the inhabitants years since, but too substantial, it seemed', to be cleared out of the way of the wholesale horticultural mechanisms of the time.

The vegetation of this waste undulated and frothed amidst the countless cells of crumbling house walls, and broke along the foot of the city wall in a surf of bramble and holly and ivy and teasle and tall grasses. Here and there gaudy pleasure palaces towered amidst the puny remains of Victorian times, and cable ways slanted to them from the city. That winter day they seemed deserted. Deserted, too, were the artificial gardens among the ruins. The city limits were indeed as sharply defined as in the ancient days when the gates were shut at nightfall and the robber foreman prowled to the very walls. A huge semi-circular throat poured out a vigorous traffic upon the Eadhamite Bath Road. So the first prospect of the world beyond the city flashed on Graham, and dwindled. And when at last he could look vertically downward again, he saw below him the vegetable fields of the Thames valley -- innumerable minute oblongs of ruddy brown, intersected by shining threads, the sewage ditches.

His exhilaration increased rapidly, became a sort of

intoxication. He found himself drawing deep breaths of air, laughing aloud, desiring to shout. After a time that desire became too strong for him, and he shouted.

The machine had now risen as high as was customary with aeropiles, and they began to curve about towards the south. Steering, Graham perceived, was effected by the opening or closing of one or two thin strips of membrane in one or other of the otherwise rigid wings, and by the movement of the whole engine backward or forward along its supports. The aeronaut set the engine gliding slowly forward along its rail and opened the valve of the leeward wing until the stem of the aeropile was horizontal and pointing southward. And in that direction they drove with a slight list to leeward, and with a slow alternation of movement, first a short, sharp ascent and then a long downward glide that was very swift and pleasing. During these downward glides the propellor was inactive altogether. These ascents gave Graham a glorious sense of successful effort; the descents through the rarefied air were beyond all experience. He wanted never to leave the upper air again.

For a time he was intent upon the minute details of the landscape that ran swiftly northward beneath him. Its minute, clear detail pleased him exceedingly. He was impressed by the ruin of the houses that had once dotted the country, by the vast treeless expanse of country from which all farms and villages had gone, save for crumbling ruins. He had known the thing was so, but seeing it so was an altogether different matter. He tried to make out places he had known within the hollow basin of the world below, but at first he could distinguish no data now that the Thames valley

was left behind. Soon, however, they were driving over a sharp chalk hill that he recognised as the Guildford Hog's Back, because of the familiar outline of the gorge at its eastward end, and because of the ruins of the town that rose steeply on either lip of this gorge. And from that he made out other points, Leith Hill, the sandy wastes of Aldershot, and so forth. The Downs escarpment was set with gigantic slow-moving wind-wheels. Save where the broad Eadhamite Portsmouth Road, thickly dotted with rushing shapes, followed the course of the old railway, the gorge of the Wey was choked with thickets.

The whole expanse of the Downs escarpment, so far as the grey haze permitted him to see, was set with wind-wheels to which the largest of the city was but a younger brother. They stirred with a stately motion before the south-west wind. And here and there were patches dotted with the sheep of the British Food Trust, and here and there a mounted shepherd made a spot of black. Then rushing under the stern of the aeropile came the Wealden Heights, the line of Hindhead, Pitch Hill, and Leith Hill, with a second row of wind-wheels that seemed striving to rob the downland whirlers of their share of breeze. The purple heather was speckled with yellow gorse, and on the further side a drove of black oxen stampeded before a couple of mounted men. Swiftly these swept behind, and dwindled and lost colour, and became scarce moving specks that were swallowed up in haze.

And when these had vanished in the distance Graham heard a peewit wailing close at hand. He perceived he was now above the South Downs, and staring over his shoulder saw the battlements

of Portsmouth Landing Stage towering over the ridge of Portsdown Hill. In another moment there came into sight a spread of shipping like floating cities, the little white cliffs of the Needles dwarfed and sunlit, and the grey and glittering waters of the narrow sea. They seemed to leap the Solent in a moment, and in a few seconds the Isle of Wight was running past, and then beneath him spread a wider and wide extent of sea, here purple with the shadow of a cloud, here grey, here a burnished mirror, and here a spread of cloudy greenish blue. The Isle of Wight grew smaller and smaller. In a few more minutes a strip of grey haze detached itself from other strips that were clouds, descended out of the sky and became a coast-line--sunlit and pleasant--the coast of northern France. It rose, it took colour, became definite and detailed, and the counterpart of the Downland of England was speeding by below.

In a little time, as it seemed, Paris came above the horizon, and hung there for a space, and sank out of sight again as the aeropile circled about to the north again. But he perceived the Eiffel Tower still standing, and beside it a huge dome surmounted by a pinpoint Colossus. And he perceived, too, though he did not understand it at the time, a slanting drift of smoke. The aeronaut said something about "trouble in the underways," that Graham did not heed at the time. But he marked the minarets and towers and slender masses that streamed skyward above the city windvanes, and knew that in the matter of grace at least Paris still kept in front of her larger rival. And even as he looked a pale blue shape ascended very swiftly from the city like a dead leaf driving up before a gale. It curved round and soared towards them growing

rapidly larger and larger. The aeronaut was saying something. "What?" said Graham, loath to take his eyes from this. "Aeroplane, Sire," bawled the aeronaut pointing.

They rose and curved about northward as it drew nearer. Nearer it came and nearer, larger and larger. The throb, throb, throb--beat, of the aeropile's flight, that had seemed so potent and so swift, suddenly appeared slow by comparison with this tremendous rush. How great the monster seemed, how swift and steady! It passed quite closely beneath them, driving along silently, a vast spread of wirenetted translucent wings, a thing alive. Graham had a momentary glimpse of the rows and rows of wrapped-up passengers, slung in their little cradles behind wind-screens, of a white-clothed engineer crawling against the gale along a ladder way, of spouting engines beating together, of the whirling wind screw, and of a wide waste of wing. He exulted in the sight. And in an instant the thing had passed.

It rose slightly and their own little wings swayed in the rush of its flight. It fell and grew smaller. Scarcely had they moved, as it seemed, before it was again only a flat blue thing that dwindled in the sky. This was the aeroplane that went to and fro between London and Paris. In fair weather and in peaceful times it came and went four times a day.

They beat across the Channel, slowly as it seemed now, to Graham's enlarged ideas, and Beachy Head rose greyly to the left of them.

"Land," called the aeronaut, his voice small against

the whistling of the air over the wind-screen.

"Not yet," bawled Graham, laughing. "Not land yet. I want to learn more of this machine."

"I meant--" said the aeronaut.

"I want to learn more of this machine," repeated Graham.

"I'm coming to you," he said, and had flung himself free of his chair and taken a step along the guarded rail between them. He stopped for a moment, and his colour changed and his hands tightened. Another step and he was clinging close to the aeronaut. He felt a weight on his shoulder, the pressure of the air. His hat was a whirling speck behind. The wind came in gusts over his wind-screen and blew his hair in streamers past his cheek. The aeronaut made some hasty adjustments for the shifting of the centres of gravity and pressure.

"I want to have these things explained," said Graham. "What do you do when you move that engine forward?"

The aeronaut hesitated. Then he answered, "They are complex, Sire."

"I don't mind," shouted Graham. "I don't mind."

There was a moment's pause. "Aeronautics is the secret--the privilege--"

"I know. But I'm the Master, and I mean to

know." He laughed, full of this novel realisation of power that was his gift from the upper air.

The aeropile curved about, and the keen fresh wind cut across Graham's face and his garment lugged at his body as the stem pointed round to the west. The two men looked into each other's eyes.

"Sire, there are rules--"

"Not where I am concerned," said Graham. "You seem to forget."

The aeronaut scrutinised his face. "No," he said. "I do not forget, Sire. But in all the earth--no man who is not a sworn aeronaut--has ever a chance. They come as passengers--"

"I have heard something of the sort. But I'm not going to argue these points. Do you know why I have slept two hundred years? To fly!"

"Sire," said the aeronaut, "the rules--if I break the rules--"

Graham waved the penalties aside.

"Then if you will watch me--"

"No," said Graham, swaying and gripping tight as the machine lifted its nose again for an ascent.

"That's not my game. I want to do it myself. Do it myself if I smash for it! No! I will. See. I am going to clamber by this to come and share your seat. Steady! I mean to fly of my own accord if

I smash at the end of it. I will have something to pay for my sleep. Of all other things--. In my past it was my dream to fly. Now--keep your balance."

" A dozen spies are watching me, Sire!"

Graham's temper was at end. Perhaps he chose it should be. He swore. He swung himself round the intervening mass of levers and the aeropile swayed.

"Am I Master of the earth?" he said. "Or is your Society? Now. Take your hands off those levers, and hold my wrists. Yes--so. And now, how do we turn her nose down to the glide? "

"Sire," said the aeronaut.

"What is it? "

"You will protect me? "

"Lord! Yes! If I have to burn London. Now!"

And with that promise Graham bought his first lesson in aerial navigation. "It's clearly to your advantage, this journey," he said with a loud laugh--for the air was like strong wine-- "to teach me quickly and well. Do I pull this? Ah! So! Hullo!"

"Back, Sire! Back! "

"Back--right. One--two--three--good
God! Ah! Up she goes! But this is living!"

And now the machine began to dance the strangest

figures in the air. Now it would sweep round a spiral of scarcely a hundred yards diameter, now it would rush up into the air and swoop down again, steeply, swiftly, falling like a hawk, to recover in a rushing loop that swept it high again. In one of these descents it seemed driving straight at the drifting park of balloons in the southeast, and only curved about and cleared them by a sudden recovery of dexterity. The extraordinary swiftness and smoothness of the motion, the extraordinary effect of the rarefied air upon his constitution, threw Graham into a careless fury.

But at last a queer incident came to sober him, to send him flying down once more to the crowded life below with all its dark insoluble riddles. As he swooped, came a tap and something flying past, and a drop like a drop of rain. Then as he went on down he saw something like a white rag whirling down in his wake. "What was that?" he asked. "I did not see."

The aeronaut glanced, and then clutched at the lever to recover, for they were sweeping down. When the aeropile was rising again he drew a deep breath and replied. "That," and he indicated the white thing still fluttering down, "was a swan."

"I never saw it," said Graham.

The aeronaut made no answer, and Graham saw little drops upon his forehead.

They drove horizontally while Graham clambered back to the passenger's place out of the lash of the wind. And then came a swift rush down, with the

wind-screw whirling to check their fall, and the flying stage growing broad and dark before them. The sun, sinking over the chalk hills in the west, fell with them, and left the sky a blaze of gold.

Soon men could be seen as little specks. He heard a noise coming up to meet him, a noise like the sound of waves upon a pebbly beach, and saw that the roofs about the flying stage were dark with his people rejoicing over his safe return. A dark mass was crushed together under the stage, a darkness stippled with innumerable faces, and quivering with the minute oscillation of waved white handkerchiefs and waving hands.

CHAPTER XVII

THREE DAYS

Lincoln awaited Graham in an apartment beneath the flying stages. He seemed curious to learn all that had happened, pleased to hear of the extraordinary delight and interest which Graham took in flying. Graham was in a mood of enthusiasm. "I must learn to fly," he cried. "I must master that. I pity all poor souls who have died without this opportunity. The sweet swift air! It is the most wonderful experience in the world."

"You will find our new times full of wonderful experiences," said Lincoln. "I do not know what you will care to do now. We have music that may seem

novel."

"For the present," said Graham, "flying holds me. Let me learn more of that. Your aeronaut was saying there is some trades union objection to one's learning."

"There is, I believe," said Lincoln. "But for you--! If you would' like to occupy yourself with that, we can make you a sworn aeronaut tomorrow."

Graham expressed his wishes vividly and talked of his sensations for a while. "And as for affairs," he asked abruptly. "How are things going on? "

Lincoln waved affairs aside. "Ostrog will tell you that tomorrow," he said. "Everything is settling down. The Revolution accomplishes itself all over the world. Friction is inevitable here and there, of course; but your rule is assured. You may rest secure with things in Ostrog's hands."

"Would it be possible for me to be made a sworn aeronaut, as you call it, forthwith--before I sleep?" said Graham, pacing. "Then I could be at it the very first thing tomorrow again."

"It would be possible," said Lincoln thoughtfully. "Quite possible. Indeed, it shall be done." He laughed. "I came prepared to suggest amusements, but you have found one for yourself. I will telephone to the aeronautical offices from here and we will return to your apartments in the Wind-Vane Control. By the time you have dined the aeronauts will be able to come. You don't think that after you have dined, you might prefer--?" He paused.

"Yes," said Graham.

"We had prepared a show of dancers -- they have been brought from the Capri theatre."

"I hate ballets," said Graham, shortly. "Always did. That other--. That's not what I want to see. We had dancers in the old days. For the matter of that, they had them in ancient Egypt. But flying--"

" True," said Lincoln. "Though our dancers--"

"They can afford to wait," said Graham; "they can afford to wait. I know. I'm not a Latin. There's questions I want to ask some expert--about your machinery. I'm keen. I want no distractions."

"You have the world to choose from," said Lincoln; " whatever you want is yours."

Asano appeared, and under the escort of a strong guard they returned through the city streets to Graham's apartments. Far larger crowds had assembled to witness his return than his departure had gathered, and the shouts and cheering of these masses of people sometimes drowned Lincoln's answers to the endless questions Graham's aerial journey had suggested. At first Graham had acknowledged the cheering and cries of the crowd by bows and gestures, but Lincoln warned him that such a recognition would be considered incorrect behaviour. Graham, already a little wearied by rhythmic civilities, ignored his subjects for the remainder of his public progress.

Directly they arrived at his apartments Asano departed in search of kinematographic renderings of machinery in motion, and Lincoln despatched Graham's commands for models of machines and small machines to illustrate the various mechanical advances of the last two centuries. The little group of appliances for telegraphic communication attracted the Master so strongly that his delightfully prepared dinner, served by a number of charmingly dexterous girls, waited for a space. The habit of smoking had almost ceased from the face of the earth, but when he expressed a wish for that indulgence, inquiries were made and some excellent cigars were discovered in Florida, and sent to him by pneumatic dispatch while the dinner was still in progress. Afterwards came the aeronauts, and a feast of ingenious wonders in the hands of a latter-day engineer. For the time, at any rate, the neat dexterity of counting and numbering machines, building machines, spinning engines, patent doorways, explosive motors, grain and water elevators, slaughter-house machines and harvesting appliances, was more fascinating to Graham than any bayadere. "We were savages," was his refrain, "we were savages. We were in the stone age--compared with this. . . . And what else have you? "

There came also practical psychologists with some very interesting developments in the art of hypnotism. The names of Milne Bramwell, Fechner, Liebault, William James, Myers and Gurney, he found, bore a value now that would have astonished their contemporaries. Several practical applications of psychology were now in general use; it had largely superseded drugs, antiseptics and anaesthetics in medicine; was employed by almost all who had any need of

mental concentration. A real enlargement of human faculty seemed to have been effected in this direction. The feats of "calculating boys," the wonders, as Graham had been wont to regard them, of mesmerisers, were now within the range of anyone who could afford the services of a skilled hypnotist. Long ago the old examination methods in education had been destroyed by these expedients. Instead of years of study, candidates had substituted a few weeks of trances, and during the trances expert coaches had simply to repeat all the points necessary for adequate answering, adding a suggestion of the post hypnotic recollection of these points. In process mathematics particularly, this aid had been of singular service, and it was now invariably invoked by such players of chess and games of manual dexterity as were still to be found. In fact, all operations conducted under finite rules, of a quasi-mechanical sort that is, were now systematically relieved from the wanderings of imagination and emotion, and brought to an unexampled pitch of accuracy. Little children of the labouring classes, so soon as they were of sufficient age to be hypnotised, were thus converted into beautifully punctual and trustworthy machine minders, and released forthwith from the long, long thoughts of youth. Aeronautical pupils, who gave way to giddiness, could be relieved from their imaginary terrors. In every street were hypnotists ready to print permanent memories upon the mind. If anyone desired to remember a name, a series of numbers, a song or a speech, it could be done by this method, and conversely memories could be effaced, habits removed, and desires eradicated--a sort of psychic surgery was, in fact, in general use. Indignities, humbling experiences, were thus forgotten, amorous widows would obliterate their previous

husbands, angry lovers release themselves from their slavery. To graft desires, however, was still impossible, and the facts of thought transference were yet unsystematised. The psychologists illustrated their expositions with some astounding experiments in mnemonics made through the agency of a troupe of pale-faced children in blue.

Graham, like most of the people of his former time, distrusted the hypnotist, or he might then and there have eased his mind of many painful preoccupations. But in spite of Lincoln's assurances he held to the old theory that to be hypnotised was in some way the surrender of his personality, the abdication of his will. At the banquet of wonderful experiences that was beginning, he wanted very keenly to remain absolutely himself.

The next day, and another day, and yet another day passed in such interests as these. Each day Graham spent many hours in the glorious entertainment of flying. On the third day he soared across middle France, and within sight of the snow-clad Alps. These vigorous exercises gave him restful sleep, and each day saw a great stride in his health from the spiritless anaemia of his first awakening. And whenever he was not in the air, and awake, Lincoln was assiduous in the cause of his amusement; all that was novel and curious in contemporary invention was brought to him, until at last his appetite for novelty was well-nigh glutted. One might fill a dozen inconsecutive volumes with the strange things they exhibited. Each afternoon he held his court for an hour or so. He speedily found his interest in his contemporaries becoming personal and intimate. At first he had been alert chiefly for

unfamiliarity and peculiarity; any foppishness in their dress, any discordance with his preconceptions of nobility in their status and manners had jarred upon him, and it was remarkable to him how soon that strangeness and the faint hostility that arose from it, disappeared; how soon he came to appreciate the true perspective of his position, and see the old Victorian days remote and quaint. He found himself particularly amused by the red-haired daughter of the Manager of the European Piggeries. On the second day after dinner he made the acquaintance of a latter-day dancing girl, and found her an astonishing artist. And after that, more hypnotic wonders. On the third day Lincoln was moved to suggest that the Master should repair to a Pleasure City, but this Graham declined, nor would he accept the services of the hypnotists in his aeronautical experiments. The link of locality held him to London; he found a perpetual wonder in topographical identifications that he would have missed abroad. "Here--or a hundred feet below here," he could say, "I used to eat my midday cutlets during my London University days. Underneath here was Waterloo and the perpetual hunt for confusing trains. Often have I stood waiting down there, bag in hand, and stared up into the sky above the forest of signals, little thinking I should walk some day a hundred yards in the air. And now in that very sky that was once a grey smoke canopy, I circle in an aeropile."

During those three days Graham was so occupied with such distractions that the vast political movements in progress outside his quarters had but a small share of his attention. Those about him told him little. Daily came Ostrog, the Boss, his Grand Vizier, his mayor of the palace, to report in vague terms the

steady establishment of his rule; "a little trouble" soon to be settled in this city, "a slight disturbance" in that. The song of the social revolt came to him no more; he never learned that it had been forbidden in the municipal limits; and all the great emotions of the crow's nest slumbered in his mind.

But on the second and third of the three days he found himself, in spite of his interest in the daughter of the Pig Manager, or it may be by, reason of the thoughts her conversation suggested, remembering the girl Helen Wotton, who had spoken to him so oddly at the Wind-Vane Keeper's gathering. The impression she had made was a deep one, albeit the incessant surprise of novel circumstances had kept him from brooding upon it for a space. But now her memory was coming to its own. He wondered what she had meant by those broken half-forgotten sentences; the picture of her eyes and the earnest passion of her face became more vivid as his mechanical interests faded. Her beauty came compellingly between him and certain immediate temptations of ignoble passion. But he did not see her again until three full days were past.

CHAPTER XVIII

GRAHAM REMEMBERS

She came upon him at last in a little gallery that ran from the Wind Vane Offices toward his state apartments. The gallery was long and narrow, with a series of recesses, each with an arched fenestration that looked upon a court of palms. He came upon her suddenly in one of these recesses. She was seated.

She turned her head at the sound of his footsteps and started at the sight of him. Every touch of colour vanished from her face. She rose instantly, made a step toward him as if to address him, and hesitated. He stopped and stood still, expectant. Then he perceived that a nervous tumult silenced her, perceived too, that she must have sought speech with him to be waiting for him in this place.

He felt a regal impulse to assist her. "I have wanted to see you," he said. "A few days ago you wanted to tell me something--you wanted to tell me of the people. What was it you had to tell me?"

She looked at him with troubled eyes.

"You said the people were unhappy?"

For a moment she was silent still.

"It must have seemed strange to you," she said abruptly.

"It did. And yet--"

"It was an impulse."

"Well?"

"That is all."

She looked at him with a face of hesitation. She spoke with an effort. "You forget," she said, drawing a deep breath.

"What?"

"The people--"

"Do you mean--?"

"You forget the people."

He looked interrogative.

"Yes. I know you are surprised. For you do not understand what you are. You do not know the things that are happening."

"Well? "

"You do not understand."

"Not clearly, perhaps. But--tell me."

She turned to him with sudden resolution." It is so hard to explain. I have meant to, I have wanted to. And now--I cannot. I am not ready with words. But about you--there is something. It is Wonder. Your sleep--your awakening. These things are miracles. To me at least--and to all the common people. You who lived and suffered and died, you who were a common citizen, wake again, live again, to find yourself Master almost of the earth."

"Master of the earth," he said. "So they tell me. But try and imagine how little I know of it."

"Cities--Trusts--the Labour Company--"

"Principalities, powers, dominions--the power and the glory. Yes, I have heard them shout. I know. I am Master. King, if you wish. With Ostrog, the Boss--"

He paused.

She turned upon him and surveyed his face with a curious scrutiny. "Well?"

He smiled. "To take the responsibility."

"That is what we have begun to fear." For a moment she said no more. "No," she said slowly. "You will take the responsibility. You will take the responsibility. The people look to you."

She spoke softly." Listen! For at least half the years of your sleep--in every generation--multitudes of people, in every generation greater multitudes of people, have prayed that you might awake--prayed."

Graham moved to speak and did not.

She hesitated, and a faint colour crept back to her cheek. "Do you know that you have been to myriads --King Arthur, Barbarossa--the King who would come in his own good time and put the world right for them?"

"I suppose the imagination of the people--"

"Have you not heard our proverb, 'When the Sleeper wakes?' While you lay insensible and motionless

there--thousands came. Thousands. Every first of the month you lay in state with a white robe upon you and the people filed by you. When I was a little girl I saw you like that, with your face white and calm."

She turned her face from him and looked steadfastly at the painted wall before her. Her voice fell. "When I was a little girl I used to look at your face. . . .it seemed to me fixed and waiting, like the patience of God."

"That is what we thought of you," she said. "That is how you seemed to us."

She turned shining eyes to him, her voice was clear and strong." In the city, in the earth, a myriad myriad men and women are waiting to see what you will do, full of strange incredible expectations."

"Yes? "

"Ostrog--no one--can take that responsibility."

Graham looked at her in surprise, at her face lit with emotion. She seemed at first to have spoken with an effort, and to have fired herself by speaking.

"Do you think," she said, "that you who have lived that little life so far away in the past, you who have fallen into and risen out of this miracle of sleep -- do you think that the wonder and reverence and hope of half the world has gathered about you only that you may live another little life? . . . That you may shift the responsibility to any other man?"

"I know how great this kingship of mine is," he said haltingly. "I know how great it seems. But is it real? It is incredible--dreamlike. Is it real, or is it only a great delusion?"

"It is real," she said; "if you dare."

"After all, like all kingship, my kingship is Belief. It is an illusion in the minds of men."

"If you dare!" she said.

"But--"

"Countless men," she said, "and while it is in their minds--they will obey."

"But I know nothing. That is what I had in mind. I know nothing. And these others--the Councillors, Ostrog. They are wiser, cooler, they know so much, every detail. And, indeed, what are these miseries of which you speak? What am I to know? Do you mean--"

He stopped blankly.

"I am still hardly more than a girl," she said. "But to me the world seems full of wretchedness. The world has altered since your day, altered very strangely. I have prayed that I might see you and tell you these things. The world has changed. As if a canker had seized it--and robbed life of--everything worth having."

She turned a flushed face upon him, moving suddenly.
"Your days were the days of freedom. Yes--
I have thought. I have been made to think, for my
life--has not been happy. Men are no longer free--
no greater, no better than the men of your time. That
is not all. This city--is a prison. Every city now is
a prison. Mammon grips the key in his hand.
Myriads, countless myriads, toil from the cradle to
the grave. Is that right? Is that to be--for ever?
Yes, far worse than in your time. All about us, beneath
us, sorrow and pain. All the shallow delight of
such life as you find about you, is separated by just a
little from a life of wretchedness beyond any telling
Yes, the poor know it--they know they suffer. These
countless multitudes who faced death for you two
nights since--! You owe your life to them."

"Yes," said Graham, slowly. "Yes. I owe my
life to them."

"You come," she said, "from the days when this
new tyranny of the cities was scarcely beginning.
It is a tyranny--a tyranny. In your days the
feudal war lords had gone, and the new lordship of
wealth had still to come. Half the men in the world
still lived out upon the free countryside. The cities
had still to devour them. I have heard the stories
out of the old books--there was nobility! Common
men led lives of love and faithfulness then--they
did a thousand things. And you--you come from
that time."

"It was not--. But never mind. How is it
now--? "

"Gain and the Pleasure Cities! Or slavery--unthanked, unhonoured, slavery."

"Slavery!" he said.

"Slavery."

"You don't mean to say that human beings are chattels."

"Worse. That is what I want you to know, what I want you to see. I know you do not know. They will keep things from you, they will take you presently to a Pleasure City. But you have noticed men and women and children in pale blue canvas, with thin yellow faces and dull eyes? "

"Everywhere."

"Speaking a horrible dialect, coarse and weak."

"I have heard it."

"They are the slaves--your slaves. They are the slaves of the Labour Company you own."

"The Labour Company! In some way--that is familiar. Ah! now I remember. I saw it when I was wandering about the city, after the lights returned, great fronts of buildings coloured pale blue. Do you really mean--?"

"Yes. How can I explain it to you? Of course the blue uniform struck you. Nearly a third of our people wear it--more assume it now every day. This

Labour Company has grown imperceptibly."

"What is this Labour Company?" asked Graham.

"In the old times, how did you manage with staning people?"

"There was the workhouse--which the parishes maintained."

"Workhouse! Yes--there was something. In our history lessons. I remember now. The Labour Company ousted the workhouse. It grew--partly--out of something--you, perhaps, may remember it--an emotional religious organisation called the Salvation Army--that became a business company. In the first place it was almost a charity. To save people from workhouse rigours. Now I come to think of it, it was one of the earliest properties your Trustees acquired. They bought the Salvation Army and reconstructed it as this. The idea in the first place was to give work to starving homeless people."

"Yes."

"Nowadays there are no workhouses, no refuges and charities, nothing but that Company. Its offices are everywhere. That blue is its colour. And any man, woman or child who comes to be hungry and weary and with neither home nor friend nor resort, must go to the Company in the end--or seek some way of death. The Euthanasy is beyond their means --for the poor there is no easy death. And at any hour in the day or night there is food, shelter and a blue uniform for all comers--that is the first

condition of the Company's incorporation--and in return for a day's shelter the Company extracts a day's work, and then returns the visitor's proper clothing and sends him or her out again."

"Yes?"

"Perhaps that does not seem so terrible to you. In your days men starved in your streets. That was bad. But they died--men. These people in blue--. The proverb runs: 'Blue canvas once and ever.' The Company trades in their labour, and it has taken care to assure itself of the supply. People come to it starving and helpless--they eat and sleep for a night and day, they -work for a day, and at the end of the day they go out again. If they have worked well they have a penny or so--enough for a theatre or a cheap dancing place, or a kinematograph story, or a dinner or a bet. They wander about after that is spent. Begging is prevented by the police of the ways. Besides, no one gives. They come back again the next day or the day after--brought back by the same incapacity that brought them first. At last their proper clothing wears out, or their rags get so shabby that they are ashamed. Then they must work for months to get fresh. If they want fresh. A great number of children are born under the Company's care. The mother owes them a month thereafter--the children they cherish and educate until they are fourteen, and they pay two years' service. You may be sure these children are educated for the blue canvas. And so it is the Company works."

"And none are destitute in the city? "

"None. They are either in blue canvas or in prison."

"If they will not work? "

" Most people will work at that pitch, and the Company has powers. There are stages of unpleasantness in the work--stoppage of food--and a man or woman who has refused to work once is known by a thumb-marking system in the Company's offices all over the world. Besides, who can leave the city poor? To go to Paris costs two Lions. And for insubordination there are the prisons--dark and miserable--out of sight below. There are prisons now for many things."

"And a third of the people wear this blue canvas? "

"More than a third. Toilers, living without pride or delight or hope, with the stories of Pleasure Cities ringing in their ears, mocking their shameful lives, their privations and hardships. Too poor even for the Euthanasia, the rich man's refuge from life. Dumb, crippled millions, countless millions, all the world about, ignorant of anything but limitations and unsatisfied desires. They are born, they are thwarted and they die. That is the state to which we have come."

For a space Graham sat downcast.

"But there has been a revolution," he said. "All these things will be changed." Ostrog--"

"That is our hope. That is the hope of the world. But Ostrog will not do it. He is a politician. To him

it seems things must be like this. He does not mind. He takes it for granted. All the rich, all the influential, all who are happy, come at last to take these miseries for granted. They use the people in their politics, they live in ease by their degradation. But you --you who come from a happier age--it is to you the people look. To you."

He looked at her face. Her eyes were bright with unshed tears. He felt a rush of emotion. For a moment he forgot this city, he forgot the race, and all those vague remote voices, in the immediate humanity of her beauty.

"But what am I to do? " he said with his eyes upon her.

"Rule," she answered, bending towards him and speaking in a low tone. "Rule the world as it has never been ruled, for the good and happiness of men. For you might rule it--you could rule it.

"The people are stirring. All over the world the people are stirring. It wants but a word--but a word from you--to bring them all together. Even the middle sort of people are restless unhappy.

"They are not telling you the things that are happening. The people will not go back to their drudgery--they refuse to be disarmed. Ostrog has awakened something greater than he dreamt of--he has awakened hopes."

His heart was beating fast. He tried to seem judicial, to weigh considerations.

"They only want their leader," she said.

"And then? "

"You could do what you would;--the world is yours."

He sat, no longer regarding her. Presently he spoke." The old dreams, and the thing I have dreamt, liberty, happiness. Are they dreams? Could one man--one man--? " His voice sank and ceased.

"Not one man, but all men--give them only a leader to speak the desire of their hearts."

He shook his head, and for a time there was silence.

He looked up suddenly, and their eyes met. "I have not your faith," he said." I have not your youth. I am here with power that mocks me. No--let me speak. I want to do--not right--I have not the strength for that--but something rather right than wrong. It will bring no millenium, but I am resolved now that I will rule. What you have said has awakened me. . . . You are right. Ostrog must know his place. And I will learn--. . . . One thing I promise you. This Labour slavery shall end."

"And you will rule?"

"Yes. Provided--. There is one thing."

"

Yes? "

"

That you will help me."

"I!--a girl!"

"Yes. Does it not occur to you I am absolutely alone? "

She started and for an instant her eyes had pity.
"Need you ask whether I will help you?" she said.

She stood before him, beautiful, worshipful, and her enthusiasm and the greatness of their theme was like a great gulf fixed between them. To touch her, to clasp her hand, was a thing beyond hope. "Then I will rule indeed," he said slowly. "I will rule-"
He paused. "With you."

There came a tense silence, and then the beating a clock striking the hour. She made him no answer. Graham rose.

Even now," he said, "Ostrog will be waiting. "He hesitated, facing her. "When I have asked him certain questions--. There is much I do not know. It may be, that I will go to see with my own eyes the things of which you have spoken. And when I return--?"

"I shall know of your going and coming. I will wait for you here again."

He stood for a moment regarding her.

"I knew," she said, and stopped.

He waited, but she said no more. They regarded one another steadfastly, questioningly, and then he turned from her towards the Wind Vane office.

CHAPTER XIX

OSTROG S POINT OF VIEW

Graham found Ostrog waiting to give a formal account of his day's stewardship. On previous occasions he had passed over this ceremony as speedily as possible, in order to resume his aerial experiences, but now he began to ask quick short questions. He was very anxious to take up his empire forthwith. Ostrog brought flattering reports of the development of affairs abroad. In Paris and Berlin, Graham perceived that he was saying, there had been trouble, not organised resistance indeed, but insubordinate proceedings. "After all these years," said Ostrog, when Graham pressed enquiries; "the Commune has lifted its head again. That is the real nature of the struggle, to be explicit." But order had been restored in these cities. Graham, the more deliberately judicial for the stirring emotions he felt, asked if there had been any fighting. "A little," said Ostrog. "In one quarter only. But the Senegalese division of our African agricultural police--the Consolidated African Companies have a very well drilled police--was ready, and so were the aeroplanes. We expected a little trouble in the continental cities, and in America. But things are very quiet in America. They are satisfied with the overthrow of the Council For the time."

" Why should you expect trouble?" asked Graham abruptly.

"There is a lot of discontent--social discontent."

"The Labour Company?"

"You are learning," said Ostrog with a touch of surprise. "Yes. It is chiefly the discontent with the Labour Company. It was that discontent supplied the motive force of this overthrow--that and your awakening."

"Yes? "

Ostrog smiled. He became explicit. "We had to stir up their discontent, we had to revive the old ideals of universal happiness--all men equal--all men happy--no luxury that everyone may not share--ideas that have slumbered for two hundred years. You know that? We had to revive these ideals, impossible as they are--in order to overthrow the Council. And now--"

"Well? "

"Our revolution is accomplished, and the Council is overthrown, and people whom we have stirred up remain surging. There was scarcely enough fighting . . . We made promises, of course. It is extraordinary how violently and rapidly this vague out-of-date humanitarianism has revived and spread. We who sowed the seed even, have been astonished. In Paris, as I say--we have had to call in a little

external help."

"And here? "

"There is trouble. Multitudes will not go back to work. There is a general strike. Half the factories are empty and the people are swarming in the Ways. They are talking of a Commune. Men in silk and satin have been insulted in the streets. The blue canvas is expecting all sorts of things from you.... Of course there is no need for you to trouble. We are setting the Babble Machines to work with counter suggestions in the cause of law and order. We must keep the grip tight; that is all."

Graham thought. He perceived a way of asserting himself. But he spoke with restraint.

"Even to the pitch of bringing a negro police," he said.

"They are useful," said Ostrog. "They are fine loyal brutes, with no wash of ideas in their heads--such as our rabble has. The Council should have had them as police of the Ways, and things might have been different. Of course, there is nothing to fear except rioting and wreckage. You can manage your own wings now, and you can soar away to Capri if there is any smoke or fuss. We have the pull of all the great things; the aeronauts are privileged and rich, the closest trades union in the world, and so are the engineers of the wind vanes. We have the air, and the mastery of the air is the mastery of the earth. No one of any ability is organising against us. They have no leaders--only the sectional leaders of the secret

society we organised before your very opportune awakening. Mere busy bodies and sentimentalists they are and bitterly jealous of each other. None of them is man enough for a central figure. The only trouble will be a disorganised upheaval. To be frank--that may happen. But it won't interrupt your aeronautics. The days when the People could make revolutions are past."

"I suppose they are," said Graham. "I suppose they are." He mused. "This world of yours has been full of surprises to me. In the old days we dreamt of a wonderful democratic life, of a time when all men would be equal and happy."

Ostrog looked at him steadfastly. "The day of democracy is past," he said. "Past for ever. That day began with the bowmen of Crecy, it ended when marching infantry, when common men in masses ceased to win the battles of the world, when costly cannon, great ironclads, and strategic railways became the means of power. To-day is the day of wealth. Wealth now is power as it never was power before--it commands earth and sea and sky. All power is for those who can handle wealth.... You must accept facts, and these are facts. The world for the Crowd! The Crowd as Ruler! Even in your days that creed had been tried and condemned. To-day it has only one believer--a multiplex, silly one--the mall in the Crowd."

Graham did not answer immediately. He stood lost in sombre preoccupations.

"No," said Ostrog." The day of the common man

is past. On the open countryside one man is as good as another, or nearly as good. The earlier aristocracy had a precarious tenure of strength and audacity. They were tempered--tempered. There were insurrections, duels, riots. The first real aristocracy, the first permanent aristocracy, came in with castles and armour, and vanished before the musket and bow. But this is the second aristocracy. The real one. Those days of gunpowder and democracy were only an eddy in the stream. The common man now is a helpless unit. In these days we have this great machine of the city, and an organisation complex beyond his understanding."

"Yet," said Graham, "there is something resists, something you are holding down--something that stirs and presses."

"You will see," said Ostrog, with a forced smile that would brush these difficult questions aside. "I have not roused the force to destroy myself--trust me."

"I wonder," said Graham.

Ostrog stared.

"Must the world go this way?" said Graham, with his emotions at the speaking point. "Must it indeed go in this way? Have all our hopes been vain? "

"What do you mean? " said Ostrog. " Hopes?"

"I came from a democratic age. And I find an aristocratic tyranny!"

"Well,--but you are the chief tyrant."

Graham shook his head.

"Well," said Ostrog, "take the general question. It is the way that change has always travelled. Aristocracy, the prevalence of the best--the suffering and extinction of the unfit, and so to better things."

"But aristocracy! those people I met--"

"Oh! not those!" said Ostrog. "But for the most part they go to their death. Vice and pleasure! They have no children. That sort of stuff will die out. If the world keeps to one road, that is, if there is no turning back. An easy road to excess, convenient Euthanasia for the pleasure seekers singed in the flame, that is the way to improve the race!"

"Pleasant extinction," said Graham. "Yet--." He thought for an instant. "There is that other thing --the Crowd, the great mass of poor men. Will that die out? That will not die out. And it suffers, its suffering is a force that even you--"

Ostrog moved impatiently, and when he spoke, he spoke rather less evenly than before.

"Don't you trouble about these things," he said. "Everything will be settled in a few days now. The Crowd is a huge foolish beast. What if it does not die out? Even if it does not die, it can still be tamed and driven. I have no sympathy with servile men. You heard those people shouting and singing two nights ago. They were taught that song. If you

had taken any man there in cold blood and asked why he shouted, he could not have told you. They think they are shouting for you, that they are loyal and devoted to you. Just then they were ready to slaughter the Council. To-day--they are already murmuring against those who have overthrown the Council."

"No, no," said Graham. "They shouted because their lives were dreary, without joy or pride, and because in me--in me--they hoped."

"And what was their hope? What is their hope? What right have they to hope? They work ill and they want the reward of those who work well. The hope of mankind--what is it? That some day the Over-man may come, that some day the inferior, the weak and the bestial may be subdued or eliminated. Subdued if not eliminated. The world is no place for the bad, the stupid, the enervated. Their duty--it's a fine duty too!--is to die. The death of the failure! That is the path by which the beast rose to manhood, by which man goes on to higher things."

Ostrog took a pace, seemed to think, and turned on Graham. "I can imagine how this great world state of ours seems to a Victorian Englishman. You regret all the old forms of representative government--their spectres still haunt the world, the voting councils and parliaments and all that eighteenth century tomfoolery. You feel moved against our Pleasure Cities. I might have thought of that,--had I not been busy. But you will learn better. The people are mad with envy--they would be in sympathy with you. Even in the streets now, they clamour to destroy the Pleasure Cities.

But the Pleasure Cities are the excretory organs of the State, attractive places that year after year draw together all that is weak and vicious, all that is lascivious and lazy, all the easy roguery of the world, to a graceful destruction. They go there, they have their time, they die childless, all the pretty silly lascivious women die childless, and mankind is the better. If the people were sane they would not envy the rich their way of death. And you would emancipate the silly brainless workers that we have enslaved, and try to make their lives easy and pleasant again. Just as they have sunk to what they are fit for. "He smiled a smile that irritated Graham oddly. "You will learn better. I know those ideas; in my boyhood I read your Shelley and dreamt of Liberty. There is no liberty, save wisdom and self control. Liberty is within--not without. It is each man's own affair. Suppose--which is impossible--that these swarming yelping fools in blue get the upper hand of us, what then? They will only fall to other masters. So long as there are sheep Nature will insist on beasts of prey. It would mean but a few hundred years' delay. The coming of the aristocrat is fatal and assured. The end will be the Over-man--for all the mad protests of humanity. Let them revolt, let them win and kill me and my like. Others will arise--other masters. The end will be the same."

"I wonder," said Graham doggedly.

For a moment he stood downcast.

"But I must see these things for myself," he said, suddenly assuming a tone of confident mastery.

"Only by seeing can I understand. I must learn.

That is what I want to tell you, Ostrog. I do not want to be King in a Pleasure City; that is not my, pleasure. I have spent enough time with aeronautics --and those other things. I must learn how people live now, how the common life has developed. Then I shall understand these things better. I must learn how common people live--the labour people more especially--how they work, marry, bear children, die--"

"You get that from our realistic novelists," suggested Ostrog, suddenly preoccupied.

"I want reality," said Graham, "not realism."

"There are difficulties," said Ostrog, and thought.

"On the whole perhaps--"

"I did not expect--."

"I had thought--. And yet, perhaps--. You say you want to go through the Ways of the city and see the common people."

Suddenly he came to some conclusion. "You would need to go disguised," he said. "The city is intensely excited, and the discovery of your presence among them might create a fearful tumult. Still this wish of yours to go into this city--this idea of yours--. Yes, now I think the thing over it seems to me not altogether--. It can be contrived. If you would really find an interest in that! You are, of course, Master. You can go soon if you like. A disguise for this excursion Asano will be able to manage.

He would go with you. After all it is not a bad idea of yours."

"You will not want to consult me in any matter?" asked Graham suddenly, struck by an odd suspicion.

"Oh, dear no! No! I think you may trust affairs to me for a time, at any rate," said Ostrog, smiling. "Even if we differ--"

Graham glanced; at him sharply.

"There is no fighting likely to happen soon?" he asked abruptly.

"Certainly not."

"I have been thinking about these negroes. I don't believe the people intend any hostility to me, and, after all, I am the Master. I do not want any negroes brought to London. It is an archaic prejudice perhaps, but I have peculiar feelings about Europeans and the subject races. Even about Paris---"

Ostrog stood watching him from under his drooping brows." I am not bringing negroes to London," he said slowly." But if--"

"You are not to bring armed negroes to London, whatever happens," said Graham. "In that matter I am quite decided."

Ostrog, after a pause, decided not to speak, and bowed deferentially.

CHAPTER XX

IN THE CITY WAYS

And that night, unknown and unsuspected, Graham, dressed in the costume of an inferior wind-vane official keeping holiday, and accompanied by Asano in Labour Company canvas, surveyed the city through which he had wandered when it was veiled in darkness. But now he saw it lit and waking, a whirlpool of life. In spite of the surging and swaying of the forces of revolution, in spite of the unusual discontent, the mutterings of the greater struggle of which the first revolt was but the prelude, the myriad streams of commerce still flowed wide and strong. He knew now something of the dimensions and quality of the new age, but he was not prepared for the infinite surprise of the detailed view, for the torrent of colour and vivid impressions that poured past him.

This was his first real contact with the people of these latter days. He realised that all that had gone before, saving his glimpses of the public theatres and markets, had had its element of seclusion, had been a movement within the comparatively narrow political quarter, that all his previous experiences had revolved immediately about the question of his own position. But here was the city at the busiest hours of night, the people to a large extent returned to their own immediate interests, the resumption of the real informal life, the common habits of the new time.

They emerged at first into a street whose opposite ways were crowded with the blue canvas liveries. This swarm Graham saw was a portion of a procession--

it was odd to see a procession parading the city seated
They carried banners of coarse red stuff with red
letters. "No disarmament," said the banners, for the
most part in crudely daubed letters and with variant
spelling, and "Why should we disarm?" "No disarming."
"No disarming." Banner after banner
went by, a stream of banners flowing past, and at last
at the end, the song of the revolt and a noisy band of
strange instruments." They all ought to be at work,"
said Asano. "They have had no food these two days,
or they have stolen it."

Presently Asano made a detour to avoid the congested
crowd that gaped upon the occasional passage
of dead bodies from hospital to a mortuary, the
gleanings after death's harvest of the first revolt.

That night few people were sleeping, everyone was
abroad. A vast excitement, perpetual crowds perpetually
changing, surrounded Graham; his mind was confused
and darkened by an incessant tumult, by the
cries and enigmatical fragments of the social struggle
that was as yet only beginning. Everywhere festoons
and banners of black and strange decorations,
intensified the quality of his popularity.

Everywhere he caught snatches of that crude thick
dialect that served the illiterate class, the class, that is,
beyond the reach of phonograph culture, in their
common-place intercourse. Everywhere this trouble of
disarmament was in the air, with a quality of
immediate stress of which he had no inkling during his
seclusion in the Wind-Vane quarter. He perceived
that as soon as he returned he must discuss this with
Ostrog, this and the greater issues of which it was the
expression, in a far more conclusive way than he had

so far done. Perpetually that night, even in the earlier hours of their wanderings about the city, the spirit of unrest and revolt swamped his attention, to the exclusion of countless strange things he might otherwise have observed.

This preoccupation made his impressions fragmeary. Yet amidst so much that was strange and vivid, no subject, however personal and insistent, could exert undivided sway. There were spaces when the revolutionary movement passed clean out of his mind, was drawn aside like a curtain from before some startling new aspect of the time. Helen had swayed his mind to this intense earnestness of enquiry, but there came times when she, even, receded beyond his conscious thoughts. At one moment, for example, he found they were traversing the religious quarter, for the easy transit about the city afforded by the moving ways rendered sporadic churches and chapels no longer necessary--and his attention was vividly arrested by the facade of one of the Christian sects.

They were travelling seated on one of the swift upper ways, the place leapt upon them at a bend and advanced rapidly towards them. It was covered with inscriptions from top to base, in vivid white and blue, save where a vast and glaring kinematograph transparency presented a realistic New Testament scene, and where a vast festoon of black to show that the popular religion followed the popular politics, hung across the lettering Graham had already become familiar with the phonotype writing and these inscriptions arrested him, being to his sense for the most part almost incredible blasphemy. Among the less offensive were "Salvation on the First Floor and turn to the Right." "Put your

Money on your Maker." "The Sharpest Conversion in London, Expert Operators! Look Slippy!" "What Christ would say to the Sleeper;--Join the Up-to-date Saints!" "Be a Christian--without hindrance to your present Occupation." "All the Brightest Bishops on the Bench to-night and Prices as Usual." "Brisk Blessings for Busy Business Men."

"But this is appalling!" said Graham, as that deafening scream of mercantile piety towered above them.

"What is appalling?" asked his little officer, apparently seeking vainly for anything unusual in this shrieking enamel.

"__This!__ Surely the essence of religion is reverence."

"Oh __that!__" Asano looked at Graham. "Does it shock you?" he said in the tone of one who makes a discovery. "I suppose it would, of course. I had forgotten. Nowadays the competition for attention is so keen. and people simply haven't the leisure to attend to their souls, you know, as they used to do." He smiled. "In the old days you had quiet Sabbaths and the countryside. Though somewhere I've read of Sunday afternoons that--"

"But, __that__, " said Graham, glancing back at the receding blue and white. "That is surely not the only--"

"There are hundreds of different ways. But, of course, if a sect doesn't tell it doesn't pay. Worship has moved with the times. There are high class sects with quieter ways--costly incense and personal

attentions and all that. These people are extremely popular and prosperous. They pay several dozen lions for those apartments to the Council--to you, I should say."

Graham still felt a difficulty with the coinage, and this mention of a dozen lions brought him abruptly to that matter. In a moment the screaming temples and their swarming touts were forgotten in this new interest. A turn of a phrase suggested, and an answer confirmed the idea that gold and silver were both demonetised, that stamped gold which had begun its reign amidst the merchants of Phoenicia was at last dethroned. The change had been graduated but swift, brought about by an extension of the system of cheques that had even in his previous life already practically superseded gold in all the larger business transactions. The common traffic of the city, the common currency indeed of all the world, was conducted by means of the little brown, green and pink council cheques for small amounts, printed with a blank payee. Asano had several with him, and at the first opportunity he supplied the gaps in his set. They were printed not on tearable paper, but on a semi-transparent fabric of silken, flexibility, interwoven with silk. Across them all sprawled a facsimile of Graham's signature, his first encounter with the curves and turns of that familiar autograph for two hundred and three years.

Some intermediary experiences made no impression sufficiently vivid to prevent the matter of the disarmament claiming his thoughts again; a blurred picture of a Theosophist temple that promised MIRACLES in enormous letters of unsteady fire was least

submerged perhaps, but then came the view of the dining hall in Northumberland Avenue. That interested him very greatly.

By the energy and thought of Asano he was able to view this place from a little screened gallery reserved for the attendants of the tables. The building was pervaded by a distant muffled hooting, piping and bawling, of which he did not at first understand the import, but which recalled a certain mysterious leathery voice he had heard after the resumption of the lights on the night of his solitary wandering.

He had grown accustomed now to vastness and great numbers of people, nevertheless this spectacle held him for a long time. It was as he watched the table service more immediately beneath, and interspersed with many questions and answers concerning details, that the realisation of the full significance of the feast of several thousand people came to him.

It was his constant surprise to find that points that one might have expected to strike vividly at the very outset never occurred to him until some trivial detail suddenly shaped as a riddle and pointed to the obvious thing he had overlooked. In this matter, for instance, it had not occurred to him that this continuity of the city, this exclusion of weather, these vast halls and ways, involved the disappearance of the household; that the typical Victorian "home," the little brick cell containing kitchen and scullery, living rooms and bedrooms, had, save for the ruins that diversified the countryside, vanished as surely as the wattle hut. But now he saw what had indeed been manifest from the first, that London, regarded as a living place, was no

longer an aggregation of houses but a prodigious hotel, an hotel with a thousand classes of accommodation, thousands of dining halls, chapels, theatres, markets and places of assembly, a synthesis of enterprises, of which he chiefly was the owner. People had their sleeping rooms, with, it might be, antechambers, rooms that were always sanitary at least whatever the degree of comfort and privacy, and for the rest they lived much as many people had lived in the new-made giant hotels of the Victorian days, eating, reading, thinking, playing, conversing, all in places of public resort, going to their work in the industrial quarters of the city or doing business in their offices in the trading section.

He perceived at once how necessarily this state of affairs had developed from the Victorian city. The fundamental reason for the modern city had ever been the economy of co-operation. The chief thing to prevent the merging of the separate households in his own generation was simply the still imperfect civilisation of the people, the strong barbaric pride, passions, and prejudices, the jealousies, rivalries, and violence of the middle and lower classes, which had necessitated the entire separation of contiguous households. But the change, the taming of the people, had been in rapid progress even then. In his brief thirty years of previous life he had seen an enormous extension of the habit of consuming meals from home, the casually patronised horse-box coffee-house had given place to the open and crowded Aerated Bread Shop for instance, women's clubs had had their beginning, and an immense development of reading rooms, lounges and libraries had witnessed to the growth of social confidence. These promises had by this time attained

to their complete fulfillment. The locked and barred household had passed away.

These people below him belonged, he learnt, to the lower middle class, the class just above the blue labourers, a class so accustomed in the Victorian period to feed with every precaution of privacy that its members, when occasion confronted them with a public meal, would usually hide their embarrassment under horseplay or a markedly militant demeanour. But these gaily, if lightly dressed people below, albeit vivacious, hurried and uncommunicative, were dexterously mannered and certainly quite at their ease with regard to one another.

He noted a slight significant thing; the table, as far as he could see, was and remained delightfully neat, there was nothing to parallel the confusion, the broadcast crumbs, the splashes of viand and condiment, the overturned drink and displaced ornaments, which would have marked the stormy progress of the Victorian meal. The table furniture was very different. There were no ornaments, no flowers, and the table was without a cloth, being made, he learnt, of a solid substance having the texture and appearance of damask. He discerned that this damask substance was patterned with gracefully designed trade advertisements.

In a sort of recess before each diner was a complete apparatus of porcelain and metal. There was one plate of white porcelain, and by means of taps for hot and cold volatile fluids the diner washed this himself between the courses; he also washed his elegant white metal knife and fork and spoon as occasion required.

Soup and the chemical wine that was the common drink were delivered by similar taps, and the remaining covers travelled automatically in tastefully arranged dishes down the table along silver rails. The diner stopped these and helped himself at his discretion. They appeared at a little door at one end of the table, and vanished at the other. That turn of democratic sentiment in decay, that ugly pride of menial souls, which renders equals loth to wait on one another, was very strong he found among these people. He was so preoccupied with these details that it was only just as he was leaving the place that he remarked the huge advertisement dioramas that marched majestically along the upper walls and proclaimed the most remarkable commodities.

Beyond this place they came into a crowded hall, and he discovered the cause of the noise that had perplexed him. They paused at a turnstile at which a payment was made.

Graham's attention was immediately arrested by a violent, loud hoot, followed by a vast leathery voice. "The Master is sleeping peacefully," it vociferately. "He is in excellent health. He is going to devote the rest of his life to aeronautics. He says women are more beautiful than ever. Galloop! Wow! Our wonderful civilisation astonishes him beyond measure. Beyond all measure. Galloop. He puts great trust in Boss Ostrog, absolute confidence in Boss Ostrog. Ostrog is to be his chief minister; is authorised to remove or reinstate public officers--all patronage will be in his hands. All patronage in the hands of Boss Ostrog! The Councillors have been sent back to their own prison above the Council House."

Graham stopped at the first sentence, and, looking up, beheld a foolish trumpet face from which this was brayed. This was the General Intelligence Machine. For a space it seemed to be gathering breath, and a regular throbbing from its cylindrical body was audible. Then it trumpeted "Galloop, Galloop," and broke out again.

"Paris is now pacified. All resistance is over. Galloop! The black police hold every position of importance in the city. They fought with great bravery, singing songs written in praise of their ancestors by the poet Kipling. Once or twice they got out of hand, and tortured and mutilated wounded and captured insurgents, men and women. Moral--don't go rebelling. Haha! Galloop, Galloop! They are lively fellows. Lively brave fellows. Let this be a lesson to the disorderly banderlog of this city. Yah! Banderlog! Filth of the earth! Galloop, Galloop!"

The voice ceased. There was a confused murmur of disapproval among the crowd. "Damned niggers." A man began to harangue near them. "Is this the Master's doing, brothers? Is this the Master's doing?"

"Black police!" said Graham. "What is that? You don't mean--"

Asano touched his arm and gave him a warning look, and forthwith another of these mechanisms I screamed deafeningly and gave tongue in a shrill voice. "Yahaha, Yahah, Yap! Hear a live paper yelp! Live paper. Yaha! Shocking outrage in Paris.

Yahahah! The Parisians exasperated by the black police to the pitch of assassination. Dreadful reprisals. Savage times come again. Blood! Blood! Yaha!" The nearer Babble Machine hooted stupendously, "Galloop, Galloop," drowned the end of the sentence, and proceeded in a rather flatter note than before with novel comments on the horrors of disorder. "Law and order must be maintained," said the nearer Babble Machine.

"But," began Graham.

"Don't ask questions here," said Asano, "or you will be involved in an argument."

"Then let us go on," said Graham, "for I want to know more of this."

As he and his companion pushed their way through the excited crowd that swarmed beneath these voices, towards the exit, Graham conceived more clearly the proportion and features of this room. Altogether, great and small, there must have been nearly a thousand of these erections, piping, hooting, bawling and gabbling in that great space, each with its crowd of excited listeners, the majority of them men dressed in blue canvas. There were all sizes of machines, from the little gossiping mechanisms that chuckled out mechanical sarcasm in odd corners, through a number of grades to such fifty-foot giants as that which had first hooted over Graham.

This place was unusually crowded, because of the intense public interest in the course of affairs in Paris. Evidently the struggle had been much more savage

than Ostrog had represented it. All the mechanisms were discoursing upon that topic, and the repetition of the people made the huge hive buzz with such phrases as "Lynched policemen," "Women burnt alive," "Fuzzy Wuzzy." "But does the Master allow such things?" asked a man near him. "Is this the beginning of the Master's rule?"

Is __this__ the beginning of the Master's rule? For a long time after he had left the place, the hooting, whistling and braying of the machines pursued him; "Galloop, Galloop," "Yahahah, Yaha, Yap! Yaha!" Is this the beginning of the Master's rule?

Directly they were out upon the ways he began to question Asano closely on the nature of the Parisian struggle. "This disarmament! What was their trouble? What does it all mean?" Asano seemed chiefly anxious to reassure him that it was "all right." "But these outrages!" "You cannot have an omelette," said Asano, "without breaking eggs. It is only the rough people. Only in one part of the city. All the rest is all right. The Parisian labourers are the wildest in the world, except ours."

"What! the Londoners? "

"No, the Japanese. They have to be kept in order."
" But burning women alive! "

"A Commune!" said Asano. "They would rob you of your property. They would do away with property and give the world over to mob rule. You are Master, the world is yours. But there will be no Commune here. There is no need for black police

here.

"And every consideration has been shown. It is their own negroes--French speaking negroes. Senegal regiments, and Niger and Timbuctoo."

"Regiments?" said Graham, "I thought there was only one--."

"No," said Asano, and glanced at him. "There is more than one."

Graham felt unpleasantly helpless.

"I did not think," he began and stopped abruptly. He went off at a tangent to ask for information about these Babble Machines. For the most part, the crowd present had been shabbily or even raggedly dressed, and Graham learnt that so far as the more prosperous classes were concerned, in all the more comfortable private apartments of the city were fixed Babble Machines that would speak directly a lever was pulled. The tenant of the apartment could connect this with the cables of any of the great News Syndicates that he preferred. When he learnt this presently, he demanded the reason of their absence from his own suite of apartments. Asano stared. "I never thought," he said. "Ostrog must have had them removed."

Graham stared. "How was I to know?" he exclaimed.

"Perhaps he thought they would annoy you," said Asano.

"They must be replaced directly I return," said Graham after an interval.

He found a difficulty in understanding that this news room and the dining hall were not great central places, that such establishments were repeated almost beyond counting all over the city. But ever and again during the night's expedition his ears, in some new quarter would pick out from the tumult of the ways the peculiar hooting of the organ of Boss Ostrog, "Galloop, Galloop!" or the shrill "Yahaha, Yaha, Yap!--Hear a live paper yelp!" of its chief rival.

Repeated, too, everywhere, were such __creches__ as the one he now entered. It was reached by a lift, and by a glass bridge that flung across the dining hall and traversed the ways at a slight upward angle. To enter the first section of the place necessitated the use of his solvent signature under Asano's direction. They were immediately attended to by a man in a violet robe and gold clasp, the insignia of practising medical men. He perceived from this man's manner that his identity was known, and proceeded to ask questions on the strange arrangements of the place without reserve.

On either side of the passage, which was silent and padded, as if to deaden the footfall, were narrow little doors, their size and arrangement suggestive of the cells of a Victorian prison. But the upper portion of each door was of the same greenish transparent stuff that had enclosed him at his awakening, and within, dimly seen, lay, in every case, a very young baby in a little nest of wadding. Elaborate

apparatus watched the atmosphere and rang a bell far away in the central office at the slightest departure from the optimum of temperature and moisture. A system of such __creches__ had almost entirely replaced the hazardous adventures of the old-world nursing. The attendant presently called Graham's attention to the wet nurses, a vista of mechanical figures, with arms, shoulders and breasts of astonishingly realistic modelling, articulation, and texture, but mere brass tripods below, and having in the place of features a flat disc bearing advertisements likely to be of interest to mothers.

Of all the strange things that Graham came upon that night, none jarred more upon his habits of thought than this place. The spectacle of the little pink creatures, their feeble limbs swaying uncertainly in vague first movements, left alone, without embrace or endearment, was wholly repugnant to him. The attendant doctor was of a different opinion. His statistical evidence showed beyond dispute that in the Victorian times the most dangerous passage of life was the arms of the mother, that there human mortality had ever been most terrible. On the other hand this __creche__ company, the International Creche Syndicate, lost not one-half per cent of the million babies or so that formed its peculiar care. But Graham's prejudice was too strong even for those figures.

Along one of the many passages of the place they presently came upon a young couple in the usual blue canvas peering through the transparency and laughing hysterically at the bald head of their first-born. Graham's face must have showed his estimate of them, for their merriment ceased and they looked abashed.

But this little incident accentuated his sudden realisation of the gulf between his habits of thought and the ways of the new age. He passed on to the crawling rooms and the Kindergarten, perplexed and distressed. He found the endless long playrooms were empty! the latter-day children at least still spent their nights in sleep. As they went through these, the little officer pointed out the nature of the toys, developments of those devised by that inspired sentimentalist Froebel. There were nurses here, but much was done by machines that sang and danced and dandled.

Graham was still not clear upon many points. "But so many orphans," he said perplexed, reverting to a first misconception, and learnt again that they were not orphans.

So soon as they had left the __creche__ he began to speak of the horror the babies in their incubating cases had caused him. "Is motherhood gone?" he said. "Was it a cant? Surely it was an instinct. This seems so unnatural--abominable almost."

"Along here we shall come to the dancing place," said Asano by way of reply. "It is sure to be crowded. In spite of all the political unrest it will be crowded. The women take no great interest in politics--except a few here and there. You will see the mothers--most young women in London are mothers. In that class it is considered a creditable thing to have one child--a proof of animation. Few middle class people have more than one. With the Labour Company it is different. As for motherhood They still take an immense pride in the children. They come here to look at them quite often."

"Then do you mean that the population of the world--?"

"Is falling? Yes. Except among the people under the Labour Company. They are reckless--."

The air was suddenly dancing with music, and down a way they approached obliquely, set with gorgeous pillars as it seemed of clear amethyst, flowed a concourse of gay people and a tumult of merry cries and laughter. He saw curled heads, wreathed brows, and a happy intricate flutter of gamboge pass triumphant across the picture.

"You will see," said Asano with a faint smile
"The world has changed. In a moment you will see the mothers of the new age. Come this way. We shall see those yonder again very soon."

They ascended a certain height in a swift lift, and changed to a slower one. As they went on the music grew upon them, until it was near and full and splendid, and, moving with its glorious intricacies they could distinguish the beat of innumerable dancing feet. They made a payment at a turnstile, and emerged upon the wide gallery that overlooked the dancing place, and upon the full enchantment of sound and sight.

"Here," said Asano, "are the fathers and mothers of the little ones you saw."

The hall was not so richly decorated as that of the Atlas, but saving that, it was, for its size, the most

splendid Graham had seen. The beautiful whitelimbbed figures that supported the galleries reminded him once more of the restored magnificence of sculpture; they seemed to writhe in engaging attitudes, their faces laughed. The source of the music that filled the place was hidden, and the whole vast shining floor was thick with dancing couples. "Look at them," said the little officer, "see how much they show of motherhood."

The gallery they stood upon ran along the upper edge of a huge screen that cut the dancing hall on one side from a sort of outer hall that showed through broad arches the incessant onward rush of the city ways. In this outer hall was a great crowd of less brilliantly dressed people, as numerous almost as those who danced within, the great majority wearing the blue uniform of the Labour Company that was now so familiar to Graham. Too poor to pass the turnstiles to the festival, they were yet unable to keep away from the sound of its seductions. Some of them even had cleared spaces, and were dancing also, fluttering their rags in the air. Some shouted as they danced, jests and odd allusions Graham did not understand. Once someone began whistling the refrain of the revolutionary song, but it seemed as though that beginning was promptly suppressed. The corner was dark and Graham could not see. He turned to the hall again. Above the caryatidae were marble busts of men whom that age esteemed great moral emancipators and pioneers; for the most part their names were strange to Graham, though he recognised Grant Allen, Le Gallienne, Nietzsche, Shelley and Goodwin. Great black festoons and eloquent sentiments reinforced the huge inscription that partially defaced the

upper end of the dancing place, and asserted that "The Festival of the Awakening" was in progress.

"Myriads are taking holiday or staying from work because of that, quite apart from the labourers who refuse to go back," said Asano. "These people are always ready for holidays."

Graham walked to the parapet and stood leaning over, looking down at the dancers. Save for two or three remote whispering couples, who had stolen apart, he and his guide had the gallery to themselves. A warm breath of scent and vitality came up to him. Both men and women below were lightly clad, bare-armed, open-necked, as the universal warmth of the city permitted. The hair of the men was often a mass of effeminate curls, their chins were always shaven, and many of them had flushed or coloured cheeks. Many of the women were very pretty, and all were dressed with elaborate coquetry. As they swept by beneath, he saw ecstatic faces with eyes half closed in pleasure.

"What sort of people are these? " he asked abruptly.

"Workers--prosperous workers. What you would have called the middle class. Independent tradesmen with little separate businesses have vanished long ago, but there are store servers, managers, engineers of a hundred sorts. Tonight is a holiday of course, and every dancing place in the city will be crowded, and every place of worship."

"But--the women? "

"The same. There's a thousand forms of work for women now. But you had the beginning of the independent working-woman in your days. Most women are independent now. Most of these are married more or less--there are a number of methods of contract--and that gives them more money, and enables them to enjoy themselves."

"I see," said Graham looking at the flushed faces, the flash and swirl of movement, and still thinking of that nightmare of pink helpless limbs." And these are--mothers."

"Most of them."

"The more I see of these things the more complex I find your problems. This, for instance, is a surprise. That news from Paris was a surprise."

In a little while he spoke again:

"These are mothers. Presently, I suppose, I shall get into the modern way of seeing things. I have old habits of mind clinging about me--habits based, I suppose, on needs that are over and done with. Of course, in our time, a woman was supposed not only to bear children, but to cherish them, to devote herself to them, to educate them--all the essentials of moral and mental education a child owed its mother. Or went without. Quite a number, I admit, went without. Nowadays, clearly, there is no more need for such care than if they were butterflies. I see that! Only there was an ideal--that figure of a grave, patient woman, silently and serenely mistress of a

home, mother and maker of men--to love her was a sort of worship--"

He stopped and repeated, "A sort of worship."

"Ideals change," said the little man, "as needs change."

Graham awoke from an instant reverie and Asano repeated his words. Graham's mind returned to the thing at hand.

"Of course I see the perfect reasonableness of this Restraint, soberness, the matured thought, the unselfish a act, they are necessities of the barbarous state, the life of dangers. Dourness is man's tribute to unconquered nature. But man has conquered nature now for all practical purposes--his political affairs are managed by Bosses with a black police--and life is joyous."

He looked at the dancers again. "Joyous," he said.

"There are weary moments," said the little officer, reflectively.

"They all look young. Down there I should be visibly the oldest man. And in my own time I should have passed as middle-aged."

"They are young. There are few old people in this class in the work cities."

"How is that? "

"Old people's lives are not so pleasant as they used to be, unless they are rich to hire lovers and helpers. And we have an institution called Euthanasy."

"Ah! that Euthanasy!" said Graham. "The easy death? "

"The easy death. It is the last pleasure. The Euthanasy Company does it well. People will pay the sum--it is a costly thing--long beforehand, go off to some pleasure city and return impoverished and weary, very weary."

"There is a lot left for me to understand," said Graham after a pause. "Yet I see the logic of it all. Our array of angry virtues and sour restraints was the consequence of danger and insecurity. The Stoic, the Puritan, even in my time, were vanishing types. In the old days man was armed against Pain, now he is eager for Pleasure. There lies the difference. Civilisation has driven pain and danger so far off--for well-to-do people. And only well-to-do people matter now. I have been asleep two hundred years."

For a minute they leant on the balustrading, following the intricate evolution of the dance. Indeed the scene was very beautiful.

"Before God," said Graham, suddenly, "I would rather be a wounded sentinel freezing in the snow than one of these painted fools! "

"In the snow," said Asano, "one might think differently."

" I am uncivilised," said Graham, not heeding him.
"That is the trouble. I am primitive--Palaeolithic.
Their fountain of rage and fear and anger is sealed
and closed, the habits of a lifetime make them cheerful
and easy and delightful. You must bear with my
nineteenth century shocks and disgusts. These
people, you say, are skilled workers and so forth. And
while these dance, men are fighting--men are dying
in Paris to keep the world--that they may dance."

Asano smiled faintly. "For that matter, men are
dying in London," he said.

There was a moment's silence.

"Where do these sleep?" asked Graham.

"Above and below--an intricate warren."

"And where do they work? This is--the domestic
life."

"You will see little work to-night. Half the workers
are out or under arms. Half these people are keeping
holiday. But we will go to the work places if you
wish it."

For a time Graham watched the dancers, then
suddenly turned away. "I want to see the workers.
I have seen enough of these," he said.

Asano led the way along the gallery across the
dancing hall. Presently they came to a transverse
passage that brought a breath of fresher, colder air.

Asano glanced at this passage as they went past, stopped, went back to it, and turned to Graham with a smile. "Here, Sire," he said, "is something--will be familiar to you at least--and yet--. But I will not tell you. Come! "

He led the way along a closed passage that presently became cold. The reverberation of their feet told that this passage was a bridge. They came into a circular gallery that was glazed in from the outer weather, and so reached a circular chamber which seemed familiar, though Graham could not recall distinctly when he had entered it before. In this was a ladder--the first ladder he had seen since his awakening--up which they went, and came into a high, dark, cold place in which was another almost vertical ladder. This they ascended, Graham still perplexed.

But at the top he understood, and recognized the metallic bars to which he clung. He was in the cage under the ball of St. Paul's. The dome rose but a little way above the general contour of the city, into the still twilight, and sloped away, shining greasily under a few distant lights, into a circumambient ditch of darkness.

Out between the bars he looked upon the wind-clear northern sky and saw the starry constellations all unchanged. Capella hung in the west, Vega was rising, and the seven glittering points of the Great Bear swept overhead in their stately circle about the Pole.

He saw these stars in a clear gap of sky. To the east and south the great circular shapes of complaining wind-wheels blotted out the heavens, so that the glare about the Council House was hidden. To the south-west hung Orion, showing like a pallid ghost through a tracery of iron-work and interlacing shapes above a dazzling coruscation of lights. A bellowing and siren screaming that came from the flying stages warned the world that one of the aeroplanes was ready to start. He remained for a space gazing towards the glaring stage. Then his eyes went back to the northward constellations.

For a long time he was silent. "This," he said at last, smiling in the shadow, "seems the strangest thing of all. To stand in the dome of Saint Paul's and look once more upon these familiar, silent stars!"

Thence Graham was taken by Asano along devious ways to the great gambling and business quarters where the bulk of the fortunes in the city were lost and made. It impressed him as a well-nigh interminable series of very high halls, surrounded by tiers upon tiers of galleries into which opened thousands of offices, and traversed by a complicated multitude of bridges, footways, aerial motor rails, and trapeze and cable leaps. And here more than anywhere the note of vehement vitality, of uncontrollable, hasty activity, rose high. Everywhere was violent advertisement, until his brain swam at the tumult of light and colour. And Babble Machines of a peculiarly rancid tone were abundant and filled the air with strenuous squealing and an idiotic slang. "Skin your eyes and slide," "Gewhoop, Bonanza," "Gollipers come and hark!"

The place seemed to him to be dense with people either profoundly agitated or swelling with obscure cunning, yet he learnt that the place was comparatively empty, that the great political convulsion of the last few days had reduced transactions to an unprecedented minimum. In one huge place were long avenues of roulette tables, each with an excited, undignified crowd about it; in another a yelping Babel of white-faced women and red-necked leathery-lunged men bought and sold the shares of an absolutely fictitious business undertaking which, every five minutes, paid a dividend of ten per cent and cancelled a certain proportion of its shares by means of a lottery wheel.

These business activities were prosecuted with an energy that readily passed into violence, and Graham approaching a dense crowd found at its centre a couple of prominent merchants in violent controversy with teeth and nails on some delicate point of business etiquette. Something still remained in life to be fought for. Further he had a shock at a vehement announcement in phonetic letters of scarlet flame, each twice the height of a man, that " WE ASSURE THE PROPRAIET'R. WE ASSURE THE PROPRAIET'R."

"Who's the proprietor?" he asked.

"You."

" But what do they assure me?" he asked. "What do they assure me?"

"Didn't you have assurance?"

Graham thought. "Insurance? "

"Yes--Insurance. I remember that was the older word. They are insuring your life. Dozands of people are taking out policies, myriads of lions are being put on you. And further on other people are buying annuities. They do that on everybody who is at all prominent. Look there!"

A crowd of people surged and roared, and Graham saw a vast black screen suddenly illuminated in still larger letters of burning purple. "Anuetes on the Propraiet'r---x 5 pr. G." The people began to boo and shout at this, a number of hard breathing, wildeyed men came running past, clawing with hooked fingers at the air. There was a furious crush about a little doorway.

Asano did a brief calculation. "Seventeen per cent per annum is their annuity on you. They would not pay so much per cent if they could see you now, Sire. But they do not know. Your own annuities used to be a very safe investment, but now you are sheer gambling, of course. This is probably a desperate bid. I doubt if people will get their money."

The crowd of would-be annuitants grew so thick about them that for some time they could move neither forward no backward. Graham noticed what appeared to him to be a high proportion of women among the speculators, and was reminded again of the economical independence of their sex. They seemed remarkably well able to take care of themselves in the crowd, using their elbows with particular skill, as he learnt to his cost. One curly-headed person caught in the

pressure for a space, looked steadfastly at him several times, almost as if she recognized him, and then, edging deliberately towards him, touched his hand with her arm in a scarcely accidental manner, and made it plain by a look as ancient as Chaldea that he had found favour in her eyes. And then a lank, grey-bearded man, perspiring copiously in a noble passion of self-help, blind to all earthly things save that glaring, bait, thrust between them in a cataclysmal rush towards that alluring " x 5 pr. G."

"I want to get out of this," said Graham to Asano.
"This is not what I came to see. Show me the workers. I want to see the people in blue. These parasitic lunatics--"

He found himself wedged in a struggling mass of people, and this hopeful sentence went unfinished.

CHAPTER XXI

THE UNDER SIDE

From the Business Quarter they presently passed by the running ways into a remote quarter of the city, where the bulk of the manufactures was done. On their way the platforms crossed the Thames twice, and passed in a broad viaduct across one of the great roads that entered the city from the North. In both cases his impression was swift and in both very vivid. The river was a broad wrinkled glitter of black sea water, overarched by buildings, and vanishing either way into a blackness starred with receding lights. A string of black barges passed seaward, manned by blue-clad men. The road was a long and very broad and high

tunnel, along which big-wheeled machines drove noiselessly and swiftly. Here, too, the distinctive blue of the Labour Company was in abundance. The smoothness of the double tracks, the largeness and the lightness of the big pneumatic wheels in proportion to the vehicular body, struck Graham most vividly. One lank and very high carriage with longitudinal metallic rods hung with the dripping carcasses of many hundred sheep arrested his attention unduly. Abruptly the edge of the archway cut and blotted out the picture.

Presently they left the way and descended by a lift and traversed a passage that sloped downward, and so came to a descending lift again. The appearance of things changed. Even the pretence of architectural ornament disappeared, the lights diminished in number and size, the architecture became more and more massive in proportion to the spaces as the factory quarters were reached. And in the dusty biscuit-making place of the potters, among the felspar mills in the furnace rooms of the metal workers, among the incandescent lakes of crude Eadhamite, the blue canvas clothing was on man, woman and child.

Many of these great and dusty galleries were silent avenues of machinery, endless raked out ashen furnaces testified to the revolutionary dislocation, but wherever there was work it was being done by slow-moving workers in blue canvas. The only people not in blue canvas were the overlookers of the work-places and the orange-clad Labour Police. And fresh from the flushed faces of the dancing halls, the voluntary vigours of the business quarter, Graham could note the pinched faces, the feeble muscles, and weary eyes

of many of the latter-day workers. Such as he saw at work were noticeably inferior in physique to the few gaily dressed managers and forewomen who were directing their labours. The burly labourers of the Victorian times had followed the dray horse and all such living force producers, to extinction; the place of his costly muscles was taken by some dexterous machine. The latter-day labourer, male as well as female, was essentially a machine-minder and feeder, a servant and attendant, or an artist under direction.

The women, in comparison with those Graham remembered, were as a class distinctly plain and flat-chested. Two hundred years of emancipation from the moral restraints of Puritanical religion, two hundred years of city life, had done their work in eliminating the strain of feminine beauty and vigour from the blue canvas myriads. To be brilliant physically or mentally, to be in any way attractive or exceptional, had been and was still a certain way of emancipation to the drudge, a line of escape to the Pleasure City and its splendours and delights, and at last to the Euthanasia and peace. To be steadfast against such inducements was scarcely to be expected of meanly nourished souls. In the young cities of Graham's former life, the newly aggregated labouring mass had been a diverse multitude, still stirred by the tradition of personal honour and a high morality; now it was differentiating into a distinct class, with a moral and physical difference of its own--even with a dialect of its own.

They penetrated downward, ever downward, towards the working places. Presently they passed underneath one of the streets of the moving ways, and saw its

platforms running on their rails far overhead, and chinks of white lights between the transverse slits. The factories that were not working were sparsely lighted; to Graham they and their shrouded aisles of giant machines seemed plunged in gloom, and even where work was going on the illumination was far less brilliant than upon the public ways.

Beyond the blazing lakes of Eadhamite he came to the warren of the jewellers, and, with some difficulty and by using his signature, obtained admission to these galleries. They were high and dark, and rather cold. In the first a few men were making ornaments of gold filigree, each man at a little bench by himself, and with a little shaded light. The long vista of light patches, with the nimble fingers brightly lit and moving among the gleaming yellow coils, and the intent face like the face of a ghost, in each shadow had the oddest effect.

The work was beautifully executed, but without any strength of modelling or drawing, for the most part intricate grotesques or the ringing of the changes on a geometrical motif. These workers wore a peculiar white uniform without pockets or sleeves. They assumed this on coming to work, but at night they were stripped and examined before they left the premises of the Company. In spite of every precaution, the Labour policeman told them in a depressed tone, the Company was not infrequently robbed.

Beyond was a gallery of women busied in cutting and setting slabs of artificial ruby, and next these were men and women busied together upon the slabs of copper net that formed the basis of cloisonne tiles.

Many of these workers had lips and nostrils a livid white, due to a disease caused by a peculiar purple enamel that chanced to be much in fashion. Asano apologised to Graham for the offence of their faces, but excused himself on the score of the convenience of this route. "This is what I wanted to see," said Graham; "this is what I wanted to see," trying to avoid a start at a particularly striking disfigurement that suddenly stared him in the face.

"She might have done better with herself than that," said Asano.

Graham made some indignant comments.

"But, Sire, we simply could not stand that stuff without the purple," said Asano. "In your days people could stand such crudities, they were nearer the barbaric by two hundred years."

They continued along one of the lower galleries of this cloisonne factory, and came to a little bridge that spanned a vault. Looking over the parapet, Graham saw that beneath was a wharf under yet more tremendous archings than any he had seen. Three barges, smothered in floury dust, were being unloaded of their cargoes of powdered felspar by a multitude of coughing men, each guiding a little truck; the dust filled the place with a choking mist, and turned the electric glare yellow. The vague shadows of these workers gesticulated about their feet, and rushed to and fro against a long stretch of white-washed wall. Every now and then one would stop to cough.

A shadowy, huge mass of masonry rising out of the

inky water, brought to Graham's mind the thought of the multitude of ways and galleries and lifts, that rose floor above floor overhead between him and the sky. The men worked in silence under the supervision of two of the Labour Police; their feet made a hollow thunder on the planks along which they went to and fro. And as he looked at this scene, some hidden voice in the darkness began to sing.

"Stop that!" shouted one of the policemen, but the order was disobeyed, and first one and then all the white-stained men who were working there had taken up the beating refrain, singing it defiantly, the Song of the Revolt. The feet upon the planks thundered now to the rhythm of the song, tramp, tramp, tramp. The policeman who had shouted glanced at his fellow, and Graham saw him shrug his shoulders. He made no further effort to stop the singing.

And so they went through these factories and places of toil, seeing many painful and grim things. But why should the gentle reader be depressed? Surely to a refined nature our present world is distressing enough without bothering ourselves about these miseries to come. We shall not suffer anyhow. Our children may, but what is that to us? That walk left on Graham's mind a maze of memories, fluctuating pictures of swathed halls, and crowded vaults seen through clouds of dust, of intricate machines, the racing threads of looms, the heavy beat of stamping machinery, the roar and rattle of belt and armature, of ill-lit subterranean aisles of sleeping places, illimitable vistas of pin-point lights. And here the smell of tanning, and here the reek of a brewery and here, unprecedented reeks. And everywhere were pillars and cross archings

of such a massiveness as Graham had never before seen, thick Titans of greasy, shining brickwork crushed beneath the vast weight of that complex city world, even as these anemic millions were crushed by its complexity. And everywhere were pale features, lean limbs, disfigurement and degradation.

Once and again, and again a third time, Graham heard the song of the revolt during his long, unpleasant research in these places, and once he saw a confused struggle down a passage, and learnt that a number of these serfs had seized their bread before their work was done. Graham was ascending towards the ways again when he saw a number of blue-clad children running down a transverse passage, and presently perceived the reason of their panic in a company of the Labour Police armed with clubs, trotting towards some unknown disturbance. And then came a remote disorder. But for the most part this remnant that worked, worked hopelessly. All the spirit that was left in fallen humanity was above in the streets that night, calling for the Master, and valiantly and noisily keeping its arms.

They emerged from these wanderings and stood blinking in the bright light of the middle passage of the platforms again. They became aware of the remote hooting and yelping of the machines of one of the General Intelligence Offices, and suddenly came men running, and along the platforms and about the ways everywhere was a shouting and crying. Then a woman with a face of mute white terror, and another who gasped and shrieked as she ran.

"What has happened now?" said Graham, puzzled,

for he could not understand their thick speech. Then he heard it in English and perceived that the thing that everyone was shouting, that men yelled to one another, that women took up screaming, that was passing like the first breeze of a thunderstorm, chill and sudden through the city, was this: "Ostrog has ordered the Black Police to London. The Black Police are coming from South Africa. . . . The Black Police. The Black Police."

Asano's face was white and astonished; he hesitated, looked at Graham's face, and told him the thing he already knew. "But how can they know?" asked Asano.

Graham heard someone shouting. "Stop all work. Stop all work," and a swarthy hunchback, ridiculously gay in green and gold, came leaping down the platforms toward him, bawling again and again in good English, "This is Ostrog's doing, Ostrog, the Knave! The Master is betrayed." His voice was hoarse and a thin foam dropped from his ugly shouting mouth. He yelled an unspeakable horror that the Black Police had done in Paris, and so passed shrieking, "Ostrog the Knave!"

For a moment Graham stood still, for it had come upon him again that these things were a dream. He looked up at the great cliff of buildings on either side, vanishing into blue haze at last above the lights, and down to the roaring tiers of platforms, and the shouting, running people who were gesticulating past. "The Master is betrayed!" they cried. "The Master is betrayed!"

Suddenly the situation shaped itself in his mind real and urgent. His heart began to beat fast and strong.

"It has come," he said. "I might have known. The hour has come."

He thought swiftly. "What am I to do? "

"Go back to the Council House," said Asano.

"Why should I not appeal--? The people are here.

"You will lose time. They will doubt if it is you. But they will mass about the Council House. There you will find their leaders. Your strength is there with them."

"Suppose this is only a rumour?"

"It sounds true," said Asano.

"Let us have the facts," said Graham.

Asano shrugged his shoulders. "We had better get towards the Council House," he cried. "That is where they will swarm. Even now the ruins may be impassable."

Graham regarded him doubtfully and followed him.

They went up the stepped platforms to the swiftest one, and there Asano accosted a labourer. The answers to his questions were in the thick, vulgar speech.

"What did he say? " asked Graham.

"He knows little, but he told me that the Black Police would have arrived here before the people knew--had not someone in the Wind-Vane Offices Learnt. He said a girl."

"A girl? Not?"

" He said a girl--he did not know who she was. Who came out from the Council House crying aloud, and told the men at work among the ruins."

And then another thing was shouted, something that turned an aimless tumult into determinate movements, it came like a wind along the street. "To your Wards, to your Wards. Every man get arms. Every man to his Ward!"

CHAPTER XXII

THE: STRUGGLE IN THE COUNCIL HOUSE

As Asano and Graham hurried along to the ruins about the Council House, they saw everywhere the excitement of the people rising. "To your Wards To your Wards!" Everywhere men and women in blue were hurrying from unknown subterranean employments, up the staircases of the middle path- at one place Graham saw an arsenal of the revolutionary committee besieged by a crowd of shouting men, at another a couple of men in the hated yellow uniform of the Labour Police, pursued by a gathering crowd,

fled precipitately along the swift way that went in the opposite direction.

The cries of "To your Wards!" became at last a continuous shouting as they drew near the Government quarter. Many of the shouts were unintelligible. "Ostrog has betrayed us," one man bawled in a hoarse voice, again and again, dinning that refrain into Graham's ear until it haunted him. This person stayed close beside Graham and Asano on the swift way, shouting to the people who swarmed on the lower platforms as he rushed past them. His cry about Ostrog alternated with some incomprehensible orders. Presently he went leaping down and disappeared.

Graham's mind was filled with the din. His plans were vague and unformed. He had one picture of some commanding position from which he could address the multitudes, another of meeting Ostrog face to face. He was full of rage, of tense muscular excitement, his hands gripped, his lips were pressed together.

The way to the Council House across the ruins was impassable, but Asano met that difficulty and took Graham into the premises of the central post-office. The post-office was nominally at work, but the blue-clothed porters moved sluggishly or had stopped to stare through the arches of their galleries at the shouting men who were going by outside. "Every man to his Ward! Every man to his Ward!" Here, by Asano's advice, Graham revealed his identity.

They crossed to the Council House by a cable cradle. Already in the brief interval since the capitulation of the Councillors a great change had been

wrought in the appearance of the ruins. The spurting cascades of the ruptured sea water-mains had been captured and tamed, and huge temporary pipes ran overhead along a flimsy looking fabric of girders. The sky was laced with restored cables and wires that served the Council House, and a mass of new fabric with cranes and other building machines going to and fro upon it, projected to the left of the white pile.

The moving ways that ran across this area had been restored, albeit for once running under the open sky. These were the ways that Graham had seen from the little balcony in the hour of his awakening, not nine days since, and the hall of his Trance had been on the further side, where now shapeless piles of smashed and shattered masonry were heaped together.

It was already high day and the sun was shining brightly. Out of their tall caverns of blue electric light came the swift ways crowded with multitudes of people, who poured off them and gathered ever denser over the wreckage and confusion of the ruins. The air was full of their shouting, and they were pressing and swaying towards the central building. For the most part that shouting mass consisted of shapeless swarms, but here and there Graham could see that a rude discipline struggled to establish itself. And every voice clamoured for order in the chaos. "To your Wards! Every man to his Ward!"

The cable carried them into a hall which Graham recognised as the ante-chamber to the Hall of the Atlas, about the gallery of which he had walked days ago with Howard to show himself to the vanished Council, an hour from his awakening. Now the place

was empty except for two cable attendants. These men seemed hugely astonished to recognise the Sleeper in the man who swung down from the cross seat.

"Where is Helen Wotton?" he demanded. "Where is Helen Wotton?"

They did not know.

"Then where is Ostrog? I must see Ostrog forthwith. He has disobeyed me. I have come back to take things out of his hands." Without waiting for Asano, he went straight across the place, ascended the steps at the further end, and, pulling the curtain aside, found himself facing the perpetually labouring Titan.

The hall was empty. Its appearance had changed very greatly since his first sight of it. It had suffered serious injury in the violent struggle of the first outbreak. On the right hand side of the great figure the upper half of the wall had been torn away for nearly two hundred feet of its length, and a sheet of the same glassy film that had enclosed Graham at his awakening had been drawn across the gap. This deadened, but did not altogether exclude the roar of the people outside. "Wards! Wards! Wards!" they seemed to be saying. Through it there were visible the beams and supports of metal scaffoldings that rose and fell according to the requirements of a great crowd of workmen. An idle building machine, with lank arms of red painted metal that caught the still plastic blocks of mineral paste and swung them neatly into position, stretched gauntly across this green tinted picture. On it were still a number of workmen staring at the crowd

below. For a moment he stood regarding these things, and Asano overtook him.

"Ostrog," said Asano, "will be in the small offices beyond there." The little man looked livid now and his eyes searched Graham's face.

They had scarcely advanced ten paces from the curtain before a little panel to the left of the Atlas rolled up, and Ostrog, accompanied by Lincoln and followed by two black and yellow clad negroes, appeared crossing the remote corner of the hall, towards a second panel that was raised and open. "Ostrog," shouted Graham, and at the sound of his voice the little party turned astonished.

Ostrog said something to Lincoln and advanced alone.

Graham was the first to speak. His voice was loud and dictatorial. "What is this I hear?" he asked. "Are you bringing negroes here--to keep the people down?"

"It is none too soon," said Ostrog. "They have been getting out of hand more and more, since the revolt. I under-estimated--"

"Do you mean that these infernal negroes are on the way?"

"On the way. As it is, you have seen the people--outside? "

"No wonder! But--after what was said. You

have taken too much on yourself, Ostrog."

Ostrog said nothing, but drew nearer.

"These negroes must not come to London," said Graham. "I am Master and they shall not come."

Ostrog glanced at Lincoln, who at once came towards them with his two attendants close behind him. "Why not?" asked Ostrog.

"White men must be mastered by white men. Besides--"

"The negroes are only an instrument."

"But that is not the question. I am the Master. I mean to be the Master. And I tell you these negroes shall not come."

"The people--"

"I believe in the people."

"Because you are an anachronism. You are a man out of the Past--an accident. You are Owner perhaps of half the property in the world. But you are not Master. You do not know enough to be Master."

He glanced at Lincoln again. "I know now what you think--I can guess something of what you mean to do. Even now it is not too late to warn you. You

dream of human equality--of a socialistic order--you have all those worn-out dreams of the nineteenth

century fresh and vivid in your mind, and you would rule this age that you do not understand."

"Listen! " said Graham. "You can hear it--a sound like the sea. Not voices--but a voice. Do you altogether understand?"

"We taught them that," said Ostrog.

" Perhaps. Can you teach them to forget it? But enough of this! These negroes must not come."

There was a pause and Ostrog looked him in the eyes.

"They will," he said.

"I forbid it," said Graham.

"They have started."

"I will not have it."

"No," said Ostrog. "Sorry as I am to follow the method of the Council--. For your own good-- you must not side with disorder. And now that you are here--. It was kind of you to come here."

Lincoln laid his hand on Graham's shoulder.

Abruptly Graham realized the enormity of his blunder in coming to the Council House. He turned towards the curtains that separated the hall from the antechamber.

The clutching hand of Asano intervened.

In another moment Lincoln had grasped Graham's cloak.

He turned and struck at Lincoln's face, and incontinently a negro had him by collar and arm. He wrenched himself away, his sleeve tore noisily, and he stumbled back, to be tripped by the other attendant. Then he struck the ground heavily and he was staring at the distant ceiling of the hall.

He shouted, rolled over, struggling fiercely, clutched an attendant's leg and threw him headlong, and struggled to his feet.

Lincoln appeared before him, went down heavily again with a blow under the point of the jaw and lay still. Graham made two strides, stumbled. And then Ostrog's arm was round his neck, he was pulled over backward, fell heavily, and his arms were pinned to the ground. After a few violent efforts he ceased to struggle and lay staring at Ostrog's heaving throat.

"You--are--a prisoner," panted Ostrog, exulting.
"You--were rather a fool--to come back."

Graham turned his head about and perceived through the irregular green window in the walls of the hall the men who had been working the building cranes gesticulating excitedly to the people below them. They had seen!

Ostrog followed his eyes and started. He shouted something to Lincoln, but Lincoln did not move. A bullet smashed among the mouldings above the Atlas. The two sheets of transparent matter that had been stretched across this gap were rent, the edges of the torn aperture darkened, curved, ran rapidly towards

the framework, and in a moment the Council chamber stood open to the air. A chilly gust blew in by the gap, bringing with it a war of voices from the ruinous spaces without, an elvish babblement, "Save the Master!" "What are they doing to the Master?" "The Master is betrayed! "

And then he realised that Ostrog's attention was distracted, that Ostrog's grip had relaxed, and, wrenching his arms free, he struggled to his knees. In another moment he had thrust Ostrog back, and he was on one foot, his hand gripping Ostrog's throat, and Ostrog's hands clutching the silk about his neck. But now men were coming towards them from the dais--men whose intentions he misunderstood. He had a glimpse of someone running in the distance towards the curtains of the antechamber, and then Ostrog had slipped from him and these newcomers were upon him. To his infinite astonishment, they seized him. They obeyed the shouts of Ostrog.

He was lugged a dozen yards before he realised that they were not friends--that they were dragging him towards the open panel. When he saw this he pulled back, he tried to fling himself down, he shouted for help with all his strength. And this time there were answering cries.

The grip upon his neck relaxed, and behold! in the lower corner of the rent upon the wall, first one and then a number of little black figures appeared shouting and waving arms. They came leaping down from the gap into the light gallery that had led to the Silent Rooms. They ran along it, so near were they that Graham could see the weapons in their hands, Then

Ostrog was shouting in his ear to the men who held him, and once more he was struggling with all his strength against their endeavours to thrust him towards the opening that yawned to receive him. "They can't come down," panted Ostrog. "They daren't fire. It's all right." "We'll save him from them yet."

For long minutes as it seemed to Graham that inglorious struggle continued. His clothes were rent in a dozen places, he was covered in dust, one hand had been trodden upon. He could hear the shouts of his supporters, and once he heard shots. He could feel his strength giving way, feel his efforts wild and aimless. But no help came, and surely, irresistibly, that black, yawning opening came nearer.

The pressure upon him relaxed and he struggled up. He saw Ostrog's grey head receding and perceived that he was no longer held. He turned about and came full into a man in black. One of the green weapons cracked close to him, a drift of pungent smoke came into his face, and a steel blade flashed. The huge chamber span about him.

He saw a man in pale blue stabbing one of the black and yellow attendants not three yards from his face. Then hands were upon him again.

He was being pulled in two, directions now. It seemed as though people were shouting to him. He wanted to understand and could not. Someone was clutching about his thighs, he was being hoisted in spite of his vigorous efforts. He understood suddenly, he ceased to struggle. He was lifted up on men's shoulders and carried away from that devouring panel.

Ten thousand throats were cheering.

He saw men in blue and black hurrying after the retreating Ostrogites and firing. Lifted up, he saw now across the whole expanse of the hall beneath the Atlas image, saw that he was being carried towards the raised platform in the centre of the place. The far end of the hall was already full of people running towards him. They were looking at him and cheering.

He became aware that a sort of body-guard surrounded him. Active men about him shouted vague orders. He saw close at hand the black moustached man in yellow who had been among those who had greeted him in the public theatre, shouting directions. The hall was already densely packed with swaying people, the little metal gallery sagged with a shouting load, the curtains at the end had been torn away, and the ante-chamber was revealed densely crowded. He could scarcely make the man near him hear for the tumult about them. "Where has Ostrog gone?" he asked.

The man he questioned pointed over the heads towards the lower panels about the hall on the side opposite the gap. They stood open and armed men, blue clad with black sashes, were running through them and vanishing into the chambers and passages beyond. It seemed to Graham that a sound of firing drifted through the riot. He was carried in a staggering curve across the great hall towards an opening beneath the gap.

He perceived men working with a sort of rude discipline to keep the crowd off him, to make a space clear

about him. He passed out of the hall, and saw a crude, new wall rising blankly before him topped by blue sky. He was swung down to his feet; someone gripped his arm and guided him. He found the man in yellow close at hand. They were taking him up a narrow stairway of brick, and close at hand rose the great red painted masses, the cranes and levers and the still engines of the big building machine.

He was at the top of the steps. He was hurried across a narrow railed footway, and suddenly with a vast shouting the amphitheatre of ruins opened again before him. "The Master is with us! The Master! The Master!" The shout swept athwart the lake of faces like a wave, broke against the distant cliff of ruins, and came back in a welter of cries. "The Master is on our side! "

Graham perceived that he was no longer encompassed by people, that he was standing upon a little temporary platform of white metal, part of a flimsy seeming scaffolding that laced about the great mass of the Council House. Over all the huge expanse of the ruins, swayed and eddied the shouting people; and here and there the black banners of the revolutionary societies ducked and swayed and formed rare nuclei of organisation in the chaos. Up the steep stairs of wall and scaffolding by which his rescuers had reached the opening in the Atlas Chamber, clung a solid crowd, and little energetic black figures clinging to pillars and projections were strenuous to induce these congested masses to stir. Behind him, at a higher point on the scaffolding, a number of men struggled upwards with the flapping folds of a huge black standard. Through the yawning gap in the

walls below him he could look down upon the packed attentive multitudes in the Hall of the Atlas. The distant flying stages to the south came out bright and vivid, brought nearer as it seemed by an unusual translucency of the air. A solitary aeropile beat up from the central stage as if to meet the coming aeroplanes.

"What had become of Ostrog?" asked Graham, and even as he spoke he saw that all eyes were turned from him towards the crest of the Council House building. He looked also in this direction of universal attention. For a moment he saw nothing but the jagged corner of a wall, hard and clear against the sky. Then in the shadow he perceived the interior of a room and recognised with a start the green and white decorations of his former prison. And coming quickly across this opened room and up to the very verge of the cliff of the ruins came a little white clad figure followed by two other smaller seeming figures in black and yellow. He heard the man beside him exclaim "Ostrog," and turned to ask a question. But he never did, because of the startled exclamation of another of those who were with him and a lank finger suddenly pointing. He looked, and behold the aeropile that had been rising from the flying stage when last he had looked in that direction, was driving towards them. The swift steady flight was still novel enough to hold his attention.

Nearer it came, growing rapidly larger and larger, until it had swept over the further edge of the ruins and into view of the dense multitudes below. It drooped across the space and rose and passed overhead, rising to clear the mass of the Council House,

a filmy translucent shape with the solitary aeronaut peering down through its ribs. It vanished beyond the skyline of the ruins.

Graham transferred his attention to Ostrog. He was signalling with his hands, and his attendants busy breaking down the wall beside him. In another moment the aeropile came into view again, a little thing far away, coming round in a wide curve and going slower.

Then suddenly the man in yellow shouted: "What are they doing? What are the people doing? Why is Ostrog left there? Why is he not captured? They will lift him--the aeropile will lift him! Ah!"

The exclamation was echoed by a shout from the ruins. The rattling sound of the green weapons drifted across the intervening gulf to Graham, and, looking down, he saw a number of black and yellow uniforms running along one of the galleries that lay open to the air below the promontory upon which Ostrog stood. They fired as they ran at men unseen, and then emerged a number of pale blue figures in pursuit. These minute fighting figures had the oddest effect; they seemed as they ran like little model soldiers in a toy. This queer appearance of a house cut open gave that struggle amidst furniture and passages a quality of unreality. It was perhaps two hundred yards away from him, and very nearly fifty above the heads in the ruins below. The black and yellow men ran into an open archway, and turned and fired a volley. One of the blue pursuers striding forward close to the edge, flung up his arms, staggered sideways, seemed to Graham's sense to hang

over the edge for several seconds, and fell headlong down. Graham saw him strike a projecting corner, fly out, head over heels, head over heels, and vanish behind the red arm of the building machine.

And then a shadow came between Graham and the sun. He looked up and the sky was clear, but he knew the aeropile had passed. Ostrog had vanished. The man in yellow thrust before him, zealous and perspiring, pointing and blatant.

"They are grounding!" cried the man in yellow.
"They are grounding. Tell the people to fire at him. Tell them to fire at him!"

Graham could not understand. He heard loud voices repeating these enigmatical orders.

Suddenly over the edge of the ruins he saw the prow of the aeropile come gliding and stop with a jerk. In a moment Graham understood that the thing had grounded in order that Ostrog might escape by it. He saw a blue haze climbing out of the gulf, perceived that the people below him were now firing up at the projecting stem.

A man beside him cheered hoarsely, and he saw that the blue rebels had gained the archway that had been contested by the men in black and yellow a moment before, and were running in a continual stream along the open passage.

And suddenly the aeropile slipped over the edge of the Council House and fell. It dropped, tilting at an angle of forty-five degrees, and dropping so steeply

that it seemed to Graham, it seemed perhaps to most of these below, that it could not possibly rise again.

It fell so closely past him that he could see Ostrog clutching the guides of the seat, with his grey hair streaming; see the white-faced aeronaut wrenching over the lever that drove the engine along its guides. He heard the apprehensive vague cry of innumerable men below.

Graham clutched the railing before him and gasped. The second seemed an age. The lower van of the aeropile passed within an ace of touching the people, who yelled and screamed and trampled one another below.

And then it rose.

For a moment it looked as if it could not possibly clear the opposite cliff, and then that it could not possibly clear the wind-wheel that rotated beyond.

And behold! it was clear and soaring, still heeling sideways, upward, upward into the wind-swept sky.

The suspense of the moment gave place to a fury of exasperation as the swarming people realised that Ostrog had escaped them. With belated activity they renewed their fire, until the rattling wove into a roar, until the whole area became dim and blue and the air pungent with the thin smoke of their weapons.

Too late! The aeropile dwindled smaller and smaller, and curved about and swept gracefully downward to the flying stage from which it had so lately

risen. Ostrog had escaped.

For a while a confused babblement arose from the ruins, and then the universal attention came back to Graham, perched high among the scaffolding. He saw the faces of the people turned towards him, heard their shouts at his rescue. From the throat of the ways came the song of the revolt spreading like a breeze across that swaying sea of men.

The little group of men about him shouted congratulations on his escape. The man in yellow was close to him, with a set face and shining eyes. And the song was rising, louder and louder; tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp.

Slowly the realisation came of the full meaning of these things to him, the perception of the swift change in his position. Ostrog, who had stood beside him whenever he had faced that shouting multitude before, was beyond there--the antagonist. There was no one to rule for him any longer. Even the people about him, the leaders and organisers of the multitude, looked to see what he would do, looked to him to act, awaited his orders. He was King indeed. His puppet reign was at an end.

He was very intent to do the thing that was expected of him. His nerves and muscles were quivering, his mind was perhaps a little confused, but he felt neither fear nor anger. His hand that had been trodden upon throbbed and was hot. He was a little nervous about his bearing. He knew he was not afraid, but he was anxious not to seem afraid. In his former life he had often been more excited in playing

games of skill. He was desirous of immediate action, he knew he must not think too much in detail of the huge complexity of the struggle about him lest he should be paralysed by the sense of its intricacy. Over there those square blue shapes, the flying stages, meant Ostrog; against Ostrog he was fighting for the world.

CHAPTER XXIII

WHILE THE AEROLANES WERE COMING

For a time the Master of the Earth was not even master of his own mind. Even his will seemed a will not his own, his own acts surprised him and were but a part of the confusion of strange experiences that poured across his being. These things were definite, the aeroplanes were coming, Helen Wotton had warned the people of their coming, and he was Master of the Earth. Each of these facts seemed struggling for complete possession of his thoughts. They protruded from a background of swarming halls, elevated passages, rooms jammed with ward leaders in council kinematograph and telephone rooms, and windows looking out on a seething sea of marching men. The man in yellow, and men whom he fancied were called Ward Leaders, were either propelling him forward or following him obediently; it was hard to tell. Perhaps they were doing a little of both. Perhaps some power unseen and unsuspected, propelled them all. He was aware that he was going to make a proclamation to the People of the Earth, aware of certain grandiose phrases floating in his mind as the thing he meant to say. Many little things happened, and then he found himself with the man in yellow entering

a little room where this proclamation of his was to be made.

This room was grotesquely latter-day in its appointments. In the centre was a bright oval lit by shaded electric lights from above. The rest was in shadow, and the double finely fitting doors through which he came from the swarming Hall of the Atlas made the place very still. The dead thud of these as they closed behind him, the sudden cessation of the tumult in which he had been living for hours, the quivering circle of light, the whispers and quick noiseless movements of vaguely visible attendants in the shadows, had a strange effect upon Graham. The huge ears of a phonographic mechanism gaped in a battery for his words, the black eyes of great photographic cameras awaited his beginning, beyond metal rods and coils glittered dimly, and something whirled about with a droning hum. He walked into the centre of the light, and his shadow drew together black and sharp to a little blot at his feet.

The vague shape of the thing he meant to say was already in his mind. But this silence, this isolation, the sudden withdrawal from that contagious crowd, this silent audience of gaping, glaring machines had not been in his anticipation. All his supports seemed withdrawn together; he seemed to have dropped into this suddenly, suddenly to have discovered himself. In a moment he was changed. He found that he now feared to be inadequate, he feared to be theatrical, he feared the quality of his voice, the quality of his wit, astonished, he turned to the man in yellow with a propitiatory gesture. "For a moment," he said, "I must wait. I did not think it would be like this. I must

think of the thing I have to say.

While he was still hesitating there came an agitated messenger with news that the foremost aeroplanes were passing over Arawan.

"Arawan?" he said. "Where is that? But anyhow, they are coming. They will be here. When?"

"By twilight."

"Great God! In only a few hours. What news of the flying stages?" he asked.

"The people of the south-west wards are ready."

"Ready! "

He turned impatiently to the blank circles of the lenses again.

"I suppose it must be a sort of speech. Would to God I knew certainly the thing that should be said! Aeroplanes at Arawan! They must have started before the main fleet. And the people only ready! Surely . . ."

"Oh! what does it matter whether I speak well or ill?" he said, and felt the light grow brighter.

He had framed some vague sentence of democratic sentiment when suddenly doubts overwhelmed him. His belief in his heroic quality and calling he found had altogether lost its assured conviction. The picture of a little strutting futility in a windy waste of

incomprehensible destinies replaced it. Abruptly it was perfectly clear to him that this revolt against Ostrog was premature, foredoomed to failure, the impulse of passionate inadequacy against inevitable things. He thought of that swift flight of aeroplanes like the swoop of Fate towards him. He was astonished that he could have seen things in any other light. In that final emergency he debated, thrust debate resolutely aside, determined at all costs to go through with the thing he had undertaken. And he could find no word to begin. Even as he stood, awkward, hesitating, with an indiscrete apology for his inability trembling on his lips, came the noise of many people crying out, the running to and fro of feet. "Wait," cried someone, and a door opened. "She is coming," said the voices. Graham turned, and the watching lights waned.

Through the open doorway he saw a slight grey figure advancing across a spacious hall. His heart leapt. It was Helen Wotton. Behind and about her marched a riot of applause. The man in yellow came out of the nearer shadows into the circle of light.

"This is the girl who told us what Ostrog had done," he said.

Her face was aflame, and the heavy coils of her black hair fell about her shoulders. The folds of the soft silk robe she wore streamed from her and floated in the rhythm of her advance. She drew nearer and nearer, and his heart was beating fast. All his doubts were gone. The shadow of the doorway fell athwart her face and she was near him. "You have not betrayed us?" she cried. "You are with us?"

"Where have you been? " said Graham.

"At the office of the south-west wards. Until ten minutes since I did not know you had returned. I went to the office of the south-west wards to find the Ward Leaders in order that they might tell the people."

"I came back so soon as I heard--."

"I knew," she cried, " knew you would be with us. And it was I--it was I that told them. They have risen. All the world is rising. The people have awakened. Thank God that I did not act in vain! You are Master still."

"You told them " he said slowly, and he saw that in spite of her steady eyes her lips trembled and her throat rose and fell.

"I told them. I knew of the order. I was here. I heard that the negroes were to come to London to guard you and to keep the people down--to keep you a prisoner. And I stopped it. I came out and told the people. And you are Master still."

Graham glanced at the black lenses of the cameras, the vast listening ears, and back to her face. "I am Master still," he said slowly, and the swift rush of a fleet of aeroplanes passed across his thoughts.

"And you did this? You, who are the niece of Ostrog."

"For you," she cried. "For you! That you for whom the world has waited should not be cheated of

your power."

Graham stood for a space, wordless, regarding her. His doubts and questionings had fled before her presence. He remembered the things that he had meant to say. He faced the cameras again and the light about him grew brighter. He turned again towards her.

"You have saved me," he said; "you have saved my power. And the battle is beginning. God knows. what this night will see--but not dishonour."

He paused. He addressed himself to the unseen multitudes who stared upon him through those grotesque black eyes. At first he spoke slowly. "Men and women of the new age," he said; "You have arisen to do battle for the race. . . There is no easy victory before us."

He stopped to gather words. The thoughts that had been in his mind before she came returned, but transfigured, no longer touched with the shadow of a possible irrelevance. "This night is a beginning," he cried. "This battle that is coming, this battle that rushes upon us to-night, is only a beginning. All your lives, it may be, you must fight. Take no thought though I am beaten, though I am utterly overthrown."

He found the thing in his mind too vague for words. He paused momentarily, and broke into vague exhortations, and then a rush of speech came upon him. Much that he said was but the humanitarian commonplace of a vanished age, but the conviction of his voice touched it to vitality. He stated the case of the old

days to the people of the new age, to the woman at his side. "I come out of the past to you," he said, "with the memory of an age that hoped. My age was an age of dreams--of beginnings, an age of noble hopes; throughout the world we had made an end of slavery; throughout the world we had spread the desire and anticipation that wars might cease, that all men and women might live nobly, in freedom and peace. . . . So we hoped in the days that are past. And what of those hopes? How is it with man after two hundred years?

"Great cities, vast powers, a collective greatness beyond our dreams. For that we did not work, and that has come. But how is it with the little lives that make up this greater life? How is it with the common lives? As it has ever been--sorrow and labour, lives cramped and unfulfilled, lives tempted by power, tempted by wealth, and gone to waste and folly. The old faiths have faded and changed, the new faith--. Is there a new faith? "

Things that he had long wished to believe, he found that he believed. He plunged at belief and seized it, and clung for a time at her level. He spoke gustily, in broken incomplete sentences, but with all his heart and strength, of this new faith within him. He spoke of the greatness of self-abnegation, of his belief in an immortal life of Humanity in which we live and move and have our being. His voice rose and fell, and the recording appliances hummed their hurried applause, dim attendants watched him out of the shadow. Through all those doubtful places his sense of that silent spectator beside him sustained his sincerity. For a few glorious moments he was carried away; he

felt no doubt of his heroic quality, no doubt of his heroic words, he had it all straight and plain. His eloquence limped no longer. And at last he made an end to speaking. "Here and now," he cried, "I make my will. All that is mine in the world I give to the people of the world. All that is mine in the world I give to the people of the world. I give it to you, and myself I give to you. And as God wills, I will live for you, or I will die."

He ended with a florid gesture and turned about. He found the light of his present exaltation reflected in the face of the girl. Their eyes met; her eyes were swimming with tears of enthusiasm. They seemed to be urged towards each other. They clasped hands and stood gripped, facing one another, in an eloquent silence. She whispered. "I knew," she whispered. "I knew." He could not speak, he crushed her hand in his. His mind was the theatre of gigantic passions.

The man in yellow was beside them. Neither had noted his coming. He was saying that the south-west wards were marching. "I never expected it so soon," he cried. "They have done wonders. You must send them a word to help them on their way."

Graham dropped Helen's hand and stared at him absent-mindedly. Then with a start he returned to his previous preoccupation about the flying stages.

"Yes," he said. "That is good, that is good." He weighed a message. "Tell them;--well done South West."

He turned his eyes to Helen Wotton again. His

face expressed his struggle between conflicting ideas. "We must capture the flying stages," he explained. "Unless we can do that they will land negroes. At all costs we must prevent that."

He felt even as he spoke that this was not what had been in his mind before the interruption. He saw a touch of surprise in her eyes. She seemed about to speak and a shrill bell drowned her voice.

It occurred to Graham that she expected him to lead these marching people, that that was the thing he had to do. He made the offer abruptly. He addressed the man in yellow, but he spoke to her. He saw her face respond. "Here I am doing nothing," he said.

"It is impossible," protested the man in yellow.

"It is a fight in a warren. Your place is here."

He explained elaborately. He motioned towards the room where Graham must wait, he insisted no other course was possible. "We must know where you are," he said. "At any moment a crisis may arise needing your presence and decision. "The room was a luxurious little apartment with news machines and a broken mirror that had once been en __rapport__ with the crow's nest specula. It seemed a matter of course to Graham that Helen should stop with him.

A picture had drifted through his mind of such a vast dramatic struggle as the masses in the ruins had suggested. But here was no spectacular battle-field such as he imagined. Instead was seclusion--and suspense. It was only as the afternoon wore on that

he pieced together a truer picture of the fight that was raging, inaudibly and invisibly, within four miles of him, beneath the Roehampton stage. A strange and unprecedented contest it was, a battle that was a hundred thousand little battles, a battle in a sponge of ways and channels, fought out of sight of sky or sun under the electric glare, fought out in a vast confusion by multitudes untrained in arms, led chiefly by acclamation, multitudes dulled by mindless labour and enervated by the tradition of two hundred years of servile security against multitudes demolished by lives of venial privilege and sensual indulgence. They had no artillery, no differentiation into this force or that; the only weapon on either side was the little green metal carbine, whose secret manufacture and sudden distribution in enormous quantities had been one of Ostrog's culminating moves against the Council. Few had had any experience with this weapon, many had never discharged one, many who carried it came unprovided with ammunition; never was wilder firing in the history of warfare. It was a battle of amateurs, a hideous experimental warfare, armed rioters fighting armed rioters, armed rioters swept forward by the words and fury of a song, by the tramping sympathy of their numbers, pouring in countless myriads towards the smaller ways, the disabled lifts, the galleries slippery with blood, the halls and passages choked with smoke, beneath the flying stages, to learn there when retreat was hopeless the ancient mysteries of warfare. And overhead save for a few sharpshooters upon the roof spaces and for a few bands and threads of vapour that multiplied and darkened towards the evening, the day was a clear serenity. Ostrog it seems had no bombs at command and in all the earlier

phases of the battle the aeroplanes played no part. Not the smallest cloud was there to break the empty brilliance of the sky. It seemed as though it held itself vacant until the aeroplanes should come.

Ever and again there was news of these, drawing nearer, from this Mediterranean port and then that, and presently from the south of France. But of the new guns that Ostrog had made and which were known to be in the city came no news in spite of Graham's urgency, nor any report of successes from the dense felt of fighting strands about the flying stages. Section after section of the Labour Societies reported itself assembled, reported itself marching, and vanished from knowledge into the labyrinth of that warfare. What was happening there? Even the busy ward leaders did not know. In spite of the opening and closing of doors, the hasty messengers, the ringing of bells and the perpetual clitter-clack of recording implements, Graham felt isolated, strangely inactive, inoperative.

Their isolation seemed at times the strangest, the most unexpected of all the things that had happened since his awakening. It had something of the quality of that inactivity that comes in dreams. A tumult, the stupendous realisation of a world struggle between Ostrog and himself, and then this confined quiet little room with its mouthpieces and bells and broken mirror!

Now the door would be closed and they were alone together; they seemed sharply marked off then from all the unprecedented world storm that rushed together without, vividly aware of one another, only concerned with one another. Then the door would open again,

messengers would enter, or a sharp bell would stab their quiet privacy, and it was like a window in a well built brightly lit house flung open suddenly to a hurricane. The dark hurry and tumult, the stress and vehemence of the battle rushed in and overwhelmed them. They were no longer persons but mere spectators, mere impressions of a tremendous convulsion. They became unreal even to themselves, miniatures of personality, indescribably small, and the two antagonistic realities, the only realities in being were first the city, that throbbed and roared yonder in a belated frenzy of defence and secondly the aeroplanes hurling inexorably towards them over the round shoulder of the world.

At first their mood had been one of exalted confidence, a great pride had possessed them, a pride in one another for the greatness of the issues they had challenged. At first he had walked the room eloquent with a transitory persuasion of his tremendous destiny. But slowly uneasy intimations of their coming defeat touched his spirit. There came a long period in which they were alone. He changed his theme, became egotistical, spoke of the wonder of his sleep, of the little life of his memories, remote yet minute and clear, like something seen through an inverted opera-glass, and all the brief play of desires and errors that had made his former life. She said little, but the emotion in her face followed the tones in his voice, and it seemed to him he had at last a perfect understanding. He reverted from pure reminiscence to that sense of greatness she imposed upon him. "And through it all, this destiny was before me," he said; "this vast inheritance of which I did not dream."

Insensibly their heroic preoccupation with the revolutionary struggle passed to the question of their relationship. He began to question her. She told him of the days before his awakening, spoke with a brief vividness of the girlish dreams that had given a bias to her life, of the incredulous emotions his awakening had aroused. She told him too of a tragic circumstance of her girlhood that had darkened her life, quickened her sense of injustice and opened her heart prematurely to the wider sorrows of the world. For a little time, so far as he was concerned, the great war about them was but the vast ennobling background to these personal things.

In an instant these personal relations were submerged. There came messengers to tell that a great fleet of aeroplanes was rushing between the sky and Avignon. He went to the crystal dial in the corner and assured himself that the thing was so. He went to the chart room and consulted a map to measure the distances of Avignon, New Arawan, and London. He made swift calculations. He went to the room of the Ward Leaders to ask for news of the fight for the stages--and there was no one there. After a time he came back to her.

His face had changed. It had dawned upon him that the struggle was perhaps more than half over, that Ostrog was holding his own, that the arrival of the aeroplanes would mean a panic that might leave him helpless. A chance phrase in the message had given him a glimpse of the reality that came. Each of these soaring giants bore its thousand half savage negroes to the death grapple of the city. Suddenly his humanitarian enthusiasm showed flimsy. Only

two of the Ward Leaders were in their room, when presently he repaired thither, the Hall of the Atlas seemed empty. He fancied a change in the bearing of the attendants in the outer rooms. A sombre disillusionment darkened his mind. She looked at him anxiously when he returned to her.

"No news," he said with an assumed carelessness in answer to her eyes.

Then he was moved to frankness. "Or rather--bad news. We are losing. We are gaining no ground and the aeroplanes draw nearer and nearer."

He walked the length of the room and turned.

"Unless we can capture those flying stages in the next hour--there will be horrible things. We shall be beaten.

"No!" she said. "We have justice--we have the people. We have God on our side."

"Ostrog has discipline--he has plans. Do you know, out there just now I felt--. When I heard that these aeroplanes were a stage nearer. I felt as if I were fighting the machinery of fate."

She made no answer for a while. "We have done right," she said at last.

He looked at her doubtfully. "We have done what we could. But does this depend upon us? Is it not an older sin, a wider sin?"

"What do you mean? " she asked.

"These blacks are savages, ruled by force, used as force. And they have been under the rule of the whites two hundred years. Is it not a race quarrel? The race sinned--the race pays."

"But these labourers, these poor people of London--! "

"Vicarious atonement. To stand wrong is to share the guilt."

She looked keenly at him, astonished at the new aspect he presented.

Without came the shrill ringing of a bell, the sound of feet and the gabble of a phonographic message. The man in yellow appeared. "Yes?" said Graham.

"They are at Vichy."

"Where are the attendants who were in the great Hall of the Atlas? " asked Graham abruptly.

Presently the Babble Machine rang again. "We may win yet," said the man in yellow, going out to it. "If only we can find where Ostrog has hidden his guns. Everything hangs on that now. Perhaps this--"

Graham followed him. But the only news was of the aeroplanes. They had reached Orleans.

Graham returned to Helen. "No news," he said

"No news."

"And we can do nothing?"

" Nothing."

He paced impatiently. Suddenly the swift anger that was his nature swept upon him. "Curse this complex world!" he cried, "and all the inventions of men! That a man must die like a rat in a snare and never see his foe! Oh, for one blow! . . ."

He turned with an abrupt change in his manner. "That's nonsense," he said. "I am a savage."

He paced and stopped. "After all London and Paris are only two cities. All the temperate zone has risen. What if London is doomed and Paris destroyed? These are but accidents. "Again came the mockery of news to call him to fresh enquiries. He returned with a graver face and sat down beside her.

"The end must be near," he said. "The people it seems have fought and died in tens of thousands, the ways about Roehampton must be like a smoked beehive. And they have died in vain. They are still only at the sub stage. The aeroplanes are near Paris. Even were a gleam of success to come now, there would be nothing to do, there would be no time to do anything before they were upon us. The guns that might have saved us are mislaid. Mislaid! Think of the disorder of things! Think of this foolish tumult, that cannot even find its weapons! Oh, for one aeropile--just one! For the want of that I am beaten. Humanity is beaten and our cause is lost! My

kingship, my headlong foolish kingship will not last a night. And I have egged on the people to fight--."

"They would have fought anyhow."

"I doubt it. I have come among them--"

"No," she cried, "not that. If defeat comes--if you die--. But even that cannot be, it cannot be, after all these years."

"Ah! We have meant well. But--do you indeed believe--?"

"If they defeat you," she cried, "you have spoken. Your word has gone like a great wind through the world, fanning liberty into a flame. What if the flame sputters a little! Nothing can change the spoken word. Your message will have gone forth. . . ."

"To what end? It may be. It may be. You know I said, when you told me of these things dear God! but that was scarcely a score of hours ago!--I said that I had not your faith. Well--at any rate there is nothing to do now. . . ."

"You have not my faith! Do you mean--? You are sorry?"

"No," he said hurriedly, "no! Before God--no!" His voice changed. "But--. I think--I have been indiscreet. I knew little--I grasped too hastily.. .."

He paused. He was ashamed of this avowal.

"There is one thing that makes up for all. I have

known you. Across this gulf of time I have come to you. The rest is done. It is done. With you, too, it has been something more--or something less--"

He paused with his face searching hers, and without clamoured the unheeded message that the aeroplanes were rising into the sky of Amiens.

She put her hand to her throat, and her lips were white. She stared before her as if she saw some horrible possibility. Suddenly her features changed. "Oh, but I have been honest!" she cried, and then, "Have I been honest? I loved the world and freedom, I hated cruelty and oppression. Surely it was that."

"Yes," he said, "yes. And we have done what it lay in us to do. We have given our message, our message! We have started Armageddon! But now--. Now that we have, it may be our last hour, together, now that all these greater things are done. . . ."

He stopped. She sat in silence. Her face was a white riddle.

For a moment they heeded nothing of a sudden stir outside, a running to and fro, and cries. Then Helen started to an attitude of tense attention. "It is--," she cried and stood up, speechless, incredulous, triumphant. And Graham, too, heard. Metallic voices were shouting "Victory!" Yes it was "Victory!" He stood up also with the light of a desperate hope in his eyes.

Bursting through the curtains appeared the man in yellow, startled and dishevelled with excitement. "Victory," he cried, "victory! The people are winning. Ostrog's people have collapsed."

She rose." Victory? " And her voice was hoarse and faint.

"What do you mean? " asked Graham. "Tell me! What?"

"We have driven them out of the under galleries at Norwood, Streatham is afire and burning wildly, and Roehampton is ours. Ours!--and we have taken the aeropile that lay thereon."

For an instant Graham and Helen stood in silence, their hearts were beating fast, they looked at one another. For one last moment there gleamed in Graham his dream of empire, of kingship, with Helen by his side. It gleamed, and passed.

A shrill bell rang. An agitated grey-headed man appeared from the room of the Ward Leaders." It is all over," he cried.

"What matters it now that we have Roehampton? The aeroplanes have been sighted at Boulogne!"

"The Channel! " said the man in yellow. He calculated swiftly." Half an hour."

"They still have three of the flying stages," said the old man.

"Those guns?" cried Graham.

" We cannot mount them--in half an hour."

" Do you mean they are found?"

"Too late," said the old man.

"If we could stop them another hour! " cried the man in yellow.

"Nothing can stop them now," said the old man. they have near a hundred aeroplanes in the first fleet."

"Another hour? " asked Graham.

"To be so near!" said the Ward Leader. "Now that we have found those guns. To be so near--. If once we could get them out upon the roof spaces."

"How long would that take? " asked Graham suddenly.

" An hour--certainly."

"Too late," cried the Ward Leader, " too late."

"Is it too late?" said Graham. "Even now--. An hour! "

He had suddenly perceived a possibility. He tried to speak calmly, but his face was white. "There is one chance. You said there was an aeropile--? "

"On the Roehampton stage, Sire."

"Smashed? "

"No. It is lying crossways to the carrier. It might be got upon the guides--easily. But there is no aeronaut--."

Graham glanced at the two men and then at Helen. He spoke after a long pause. "We have no aeronauts? "

"None."

"The aeroplanes are clumsy," he said thoughtfully, "compared with the aeropiles."

He turned suddenly to Helen. His decision was made. "I must do it."

"Do what? "

"Go to this flying stage--to this aeropile."

"What do you mean?"

"I am an aeronaut. After all--. Those days for which you reproached me were wasted."

He turned to the old man in yellow. put the aeropile upon the guides."

The man in yellow hesitated.

"What do you mean to do?" cried Helen.

"This aeropile--it is a chance--."

"You don't mean--?"

"To fight--yes. To fight in the air. I have thought before--. An aeroplane is a clumsy thing. A resolute man--!"

"But--never since flying began--" cried the man in yellow.

"There has been no need. But now the time has come. Tell them now--send them my message--to put it upon the guides."

The old man dumbly interrogated the man in yellow, nodded, and hurried out.

Helen made a step towards Graham. Her face was white." But--How can one fight? You will be killed."

"Perhaps. Yet, not to do it--or to let someone else attempt it--."

He stopped, he could speak no more, he swept the alternative aside by a gesture, and they stood looking at one another.

"You are right," she said at last in a low tone.
"You are right. If it can be done. . .
must go."

Those days for
not altogether

He moved a step towards her, and she stepped back, her white face struggled against him and resisted him. "No," she gasped. "I cannot bear--. Go now."

He extended his hands stupidly. She clenched her fists. "Go now," she cried. "Go now."

He hesitated and understood. He threw his hands up in a queer half-theatrical gesture. He had no word to say. He turned from her.

The man in yellow moved towards the door with clumsy belated tact. But Graham stepped past him. He went striding through the room where the Ward Leader bawled at a telephone directing that the aeropile should be put upon the guides.

The man in yellow glanced at Helen's still figure, hesitated and hurried after him. Graham did not once look back, he did not speak until the curtain of the ante-chamber of the great hall fell behind him. Then he turned his head with curt swift directions upon his bloodless lips.

CHAPTER XIV

THE COMING OF THE AEROPLANES

Two men in pale blue were lying in the irregular line that stretched along the edge of the captured Roehampton stage from end to end, grasping their carbines and peering into the shadows of the stage called

Wimbledon Park. Now and then they spoke to one another. They spoke the mutilated English of their class and period. The fire of the Ostrogites had dwindled and ceased, and few of the enemy had been seen for some time. But the echoes of the fight that was going on now far below in the lower galleries of that stage, came every now and then between the staccato of shots from the popular side. One of these men was describing to the other how he had seen a man down below there dodge behind a girder, and had aimed at a guess and hit him cleanly as he dodged too far "He's down there still," said the marksman.

"See that little patch. Yes. Between those bars."

A few yards behind them lay a dead stranger, face upward to the sky, with the blue canvas of his jacket smoldering in a circle about the neat bullet hole on his chest. Close beside him a wounded man, with a leg swathed about, sat with an expressionless face and watched the progress of that burning. Gigantic behind them, athwart the carrier lay the captured aeropile.

"I can't see him now," said the second man in a tone of provocation.

The marksman became foul-mouthed and high-voiced in his earnest endeavour to make things plain. And suddenly, interrupting him, came a noisy shouting from the substage.

"What's going on now," he said, and raised himself on one arm to stare at the stairheads in the central groove of the stage. A number of blue figures were coming up these, and swarming across the stage to the aeropile.

"We don't want all these fools," said his friend.
"They only crowd up and spoil shots. What are they after? "

"Ssh!--they're shouting something."

The two men listened. The swarming new-comers had crowded densely about the aeropile. Three Ward Leaders, conspicuous by their black mantles and badges, clambered into the body and appeared above it. The rank and file flung themselves upon the vans, gripping hold of the edges, until the entire outline of the thing was manned, in some places three deep. One of the marksmen knelt up. "They're putting it on the carrier--that's what they're after."

He rose to his feet, his friend rose also. "What's the good? " said his friend. "We've got no aeronauts."

"That's what they're doing anyhow." He looked at his rifle, looked at the struggling crowd, and suddenly turning to the wounded man. "Mind these, mate," he said, handing his carbine and cartridge belt; and in a moment he was running towards the aeropile. For a quarter of an hour he was a perspiring Titan, lugging, thrusting, shouting and heeding shouts, and then the thing was done, and he stood with a multitude of others cheering their own achievement. By this time he knew, what indeed everyone in the city knew, that the Master, raw learner though he was, intended to fly this machine himself, was coming even now to take control of it, would let no other man attempt it. "He who takes the greatest danger, he who bears the heaviest burden, that man is King," so the Master was reported to have spoken. And even as this

man cheered, and while the beads of sweat still chased one another from the disorder of his hair, he heard the thunder of a greater tumult, and in fitful snatches the beat and impulse of the revolutionary song. He saw through a gap in the people that a thick stream of heads still poured up the stairway. "The Master is coming," shouted voices, "the Master is coming," and the crowd about him grew denser and denser. He began to thrust himself towards the central groove. "The Master is coming!" "The Sleeper, the Master!" "God and the Master!" roared the Voices.

And suddenly quite close to him were the black uniforms of the revolutionary guard, and for the first and last time in his life he saw Graham, saw him quite nearly. A tall, dark man in a flowing black robe, with a white, resolute face and eyes fixed steadfastly before him; a man who for all the little things about him held neither ears nor eyes nor thoughts. . . . For all his days that man remembered the passing of Graham's bloodless face. In a moment it had gone and he was fighting in the swaying crowd. A lad weeping with terror thrust against him, pressing towards the stairways, yelling "Clear for the aeropile!" The bell that clears the flying stage became a loud unmelodious clanging.

With that clanging in his ears Graham drew near the aeropile, marched into the shadow of its tilting wing. He became aware that a number of people about him were offering to accompany him, and waved their offers aside. He wanted to think how one started the engine. The bell clanged faster and faster, and the feet of the retreating people roared faster and

louder. The man in yellow was assisting him to mount through the ribs of the body. He clambered into the aeronaut's place, fixing himself very carefully and deliberately. What was it? The man in yellow was pointing to two aeropiles driving upward in the southern sky. No doubt they were looking for the coming aeroplanes. That--presently--the thing to do now was to start. Things were being shouted at him, questions, warnings. They bothered him. He wanted to think about the aeropile, to recall every item of his previous experience. He waved the people from him, saw the man in yellow dropping off through the ribs, saw the crowd cleft down the line of the girders by his gesture.

For a moment he was motionless, staring at the levers, the wheel by which the engine shifted, and all the delicate appliances of which he knew so little. His eye caught a spirit level with the bubble towards him, and he remembered something, spent a dozen seconds in swinging the engine forward until the bubble floated in the centre of the tube. He noted that the people were not shouting, knew they watched his deliberation. A bullet smashed on the bar above his head. Who fired? Was the line clear of people? He stood up to see and sat down again.

In another second the propeller was spinning, and he was rushing down the guides. He gripped the wheel and swung the engine back to lift the stem. Then it was the people shouted. In a moment he was throbbing with the quiver of the engine, and the shouts dwindled swiftly behind, rushed down to silence. The wind whistled over the edges of the screen, and the world sank away from him very swiftly.

Throb, throb, throb--throb, throb, throb; up he drove. He fancied himself free of all excitement, felt cool and deliberate. He lifted the stem still more, opened one valve on his left wing and swept round and up. He looked down with a steady head, and up. One of the Ostrogite aeroplanes was driving across his course, so that he drove obliquely towards it and would pass below it at a steep angle. Its little aeronauts were peering down at him. What did they mean to do? His mind became active. One, he saw held a weapon pointing, seemed prepared to fire. What did they think he meant to do? In a moment he understood their tactics, and his resolution was taken. His momentary lethargy was past. He opened two more valves to his left, swung round, end on to this hostile machine, closed his valves, and shot straight at it, stem and wind-screen shielding him from the shot. They tilted a little as if to clear him. He flung up his stem.

Throb, throb, throb--pause--throb, throb--
he set his teeth, his face into an involuntary grimace, and crash! He struck it! He struck upward beneath the nearer wing.

Very slowly the wing of his antagonist seemed to broaden as the impetus of his blow turned it up. He saw the full breadth of it and then it slid downward out of his sight.

He felt his stem going down, his hands tightened on the levers, whirled and rammed the engine back. He felt the jerk of a clearance, the nose of the machine jerked upward steeply, and for a moment he seemed to be lying on his back. The machine was reeling and

staggering, it seemed to be dancing on its screw. He made a huge effort, hung for a moment on the levers, and slowly the engine came forward again. He was driving upward but no longer so steeply. He gasped for a moment and flung himself at the levers again. The wind whistled about him. One further effort and he was almost level. He could breathe. He turned his head for the first time to see what had become of his antagonists. Turned back to the levers for a moment and looked again. For a moment he could have believed they were annihilated. And then he saw between the two stages to the east was a chasm, and down this something, a slender edge, fell swiftly and vanished, as a sixpence falls down a crack.

At first he did not understand, and then a wild joy possessed him. He shouted at the top of his voice, an inarticulate shout, and drove higher and higher up the sky. Throb, throb, throb, pause, throb, throb, throb. "Where was the other aeropile?" he thought. "They too--." As he looked round the empty heavens he had a momentary fear that this machine had risen above him, and then he saw it alighting on the Norwood stage. They had meant shooting. To risk being rammed headlong two thousand feet in the air was beyond their latter-day courage. The combat was declined.

For a little while he circled, then swooped in a steep descent towards the westward stage. Throb throb throb, throb throb throb. The twilight was creeping on apace, the smoke from the Streatham stage that had been so dense and dark, was now a pillar of fire, and all the laced curves of the moving ways and the

translucent roofs and domes and the chasms between the buildings were glowing softly now, lit by the tempered radiance of the electric light that the glare of the way overpowered. The three efficient stages that the Ostrogites held--for Wimbledon Park was useless because of the fire from Roehampton, and Streatham was a furnace--were glowing with guide lights for the coming aeroplanes. As he swept over the Roehampton stage he saw the dark masses of the people thereon. He heard a clap of frantic cheering, heard a bullet from the Wimbledon Park stage tweet through the air, and went beating up above the Surrey wastes. He felt a breath of wind from the south-west, and lifted his westward wing as he had learnt to do, and so drove upward heeling into the rare swift upper air. Throb throb throb--throb throb throb.

Up he drove and up, to that pulsating rhythm, until the country beneath was blue and indistinct, and London spread like a little map traced in light, like the mere model of a city near the brim of the horizon. The south-west was a sky of sapphire over the shadowy rim of the world, and ever as he drove upward the multitude of stars increased.

And behold! In the southward, low down and glittering swiftly nearer, were two little patches of nebulous light. And then two more, and then a nebulous glow of swiftly driving shapes. Presently he could count them. There were four and twenty. The first fleet of aeroplanes had come! Beyond appeared a yet greater glow.

He swept round in a half circle, staring at this advancing fleet. It flew in a wedge-like shape, a triangular flight

of gigantic phosphorescent shapes sweeping nearer through the lower air. He made a swift calculation of their pace, and spun the little wheel that brought the engine forward. He touched a lever and the throbbing effort of the engine ceased. He began to fall, fell swifter and swifter. He aimed at the apex of the wedge. He dropped like a stone through the whistling air. It seemed scarce a second from that soaring moment before he struck the foremost aeroplane.

No man of all that black multitude saw the coming of his fate, no man among them dreamt of the hawk that struck downward upon him out of the sky. Those who were not limp in the agonies of air-sickness, were craning their black necks and staring to see the filmy city that was rising out of the haze, the rich and splendid city to which "Massa Boss" had brought their obedient muscles. Bright teeth gleamed and the glossy faces shone. They had heard of Paris. They knew they were to have lordly times among the "poor white" trash. And suddenly Graham struck them.

He had aimed at the body of the aeroplane, but at the very last instant a better idea had flashed into his mind. He twisted about and struck near the edge of the starboard wing with all his accumulated weight. He was jerked back as he struck. His prow went gliding across its smooth expanse towards the rim. He felt the forward rush of the huge fabric sweeping him and his aeropile along with it, and for a moment that seemed an age he could not tell what was happening. He heard a thousand throats yelling, and perceived that his machine was balanced on the edge of the gigantic float, and driving down, down; glanced

over his shoulder and saw the backbone of the aeroplane and the opposite float swaying up. He had a vision through the ribs of sliding chairs, staring faces, and hands clutching at the tilting guide bars. The fenestrations in the further float flashed open as the aeronaut tried to right her. Beyond, he saw a second aeroplane leaping steeply to escape the whirl of its heeling fellow. The broad area of swaying wings seemed to jerk upward. He felt his aeropile had dropped clear, that the monstrous fabric, clean overturned, hung like a sloping wall above him.

He did not clearly understand that he had struck the side float of the aeroplane and slipped off, but he perceived that he was flying free on the down glide and rapidly nearing earth. What had he done? His heart throbbed like a noisy engine in his throat and for a perilous instant he could not move his levers because of the paralysis of his hands. He wrenched the levers to throw his engine back, fought for two seconds against the weight of it, felt himself righting driving horizontally, set the engine beating again.

He looked upward and saw two aeroplanes glide shouting far overhead, looked back, and saw the main body of the fleet opening out and rushing upward and . . . outward; saw the one he had struck fall edgewise on and strike like a gigantic knife-blade along the wind-wheels below it.

He put down his stern and looked again. He drove up heedless of his direction as he watched. He saw the wind-vanes give, saw the huge fabric strike the earth, saw its downward vans crumple with the weight of its descent, and then the whole mass turned over

and smashed, upside down, upon the sloping wheels. Throb, throb, throb, pause. Suddenly from the heaving wreckage a thin tongue of white fire licked up towards the zenith. And then he was aware of a huge mass flying through the air towards him, and turned upwards just in time to escape the charge--if it was a charge--of a second aeroplane. It whirled by below, sucked him down a fathom, and nearly turned him over in the gust of its close passage.

He became aware of three others rushing towards him, aware of the urgent necessity of beating above them. Aeroplanes were all about him, circling wildly to avoid him, as it seemed. They drove past him, above, below, eastward and westward. Far away to the westward was the sound of a collision, and two falling flares. Far away to the southward a second squadron was coming. Steadily he beat upward. Presently all the aeroplanes were below him, but for a moment he doubted the height he had of them, and did not swoop again. And then he came down upon a second victim and all its load of soldiers saw him coming. The big machine heeled and swayed as the fear maddened men scrambled to the stern for their weapons. A score of bullets sung through the air, and there flashed a star in the thick glass wind-screen that protected him. The aeroplane slowed and dropped to foil his stroke, and dropped too low. Just in time he saw the wind-wheels of Bromley hill rushing up towards him, and spun about and up as the aeroplane he had chased crashed among them. All its voices wove into a felt of yelling. The great fabric seemed to be standing on end for a second among the heeling and splintering vans, and then it flew to pieces. Huge splinters came flying through the air, its engines

burst like shells. A hot rush of flame shot overhead into the darkling sky.

"__Two!__" he cried, with a bomb from overhead bursting as it fell, and forthwith he was beating up again.

A glorious exhilaration possessed him now, a giant activity. His troubles about humanity, about his inadaquacy, were gone for ever. He was a man in battle rejoicing in his power. Aeroplanes seemed radiating from him in every direction, intent only upon avoiding him, the yelling of their packed passengers came in short gusts as they swept by. He chose his third quarry, struck hastily and did but turn it on edge. It escaped him, to smash against the tall cliff of London wall. Flying from that impact he skimmed the darkling ground so nearly he could see a frightened rabbit bolting up a slope. He jerked up steeply, and found himself driving over south London with the air about him vacant. To the right of him a wild riot of signal rockets from the Ostrogites banged tumultuously in the sky. To the south the wreckage of half a dozen air ships flamed, and east and west and north the air ships fled before him. They drove away to the east and north, and went about in the south, for they could not pause in the air. In their present confusion any attempt at evolution would have meant disastrous collisions. He could scarcely realize the thing he had done. In every quarter aeroplanes were receding. They were receding. They dwindled smaller and smaller. They were in flight!

He passed two hundred feet or so above the Roehampton stage. It was black with people and noisy with their frantic shouting. But why was the Wimbledon Park stage black and cheering, too? The

smoke and flame of Streatham now hid the three further stages. He curved about and rose to see them and the northern quarters. First came the square masses of Shooter's Hill into sight from behind the smoke, lit and orderly with the aeroplane that had landed and its disembarking negroes. Then came Blackheath, and then under the corner of the reek the Norwood stage. On Blackheath no aeroplane had landed but an aeropile lay upon the guides. Norwood was covered by a swarm of little figures running to and fro in a passionate confusion. Why? Abruptly he understood. The stubborn defence of the flying stages was over, the people were pouring into the under-ways of these last strongholds of Ostrog's usurpation. And then, from far away on the northern border of the city, full of glorious import to him, came a sound, a signal, a note of triumph, the leaden thud of a gun. His lips fell apart, his face was disturbed with emotion.

He drew an immense breath. "They win," he shouted to the empty air; "the people win!" The sound of a second gun came like an answer. And then he saw the aeropile on Blackheath was running down its guides to launch. It lifted clean and rose. It shot up into the air, driving straight southward and away from him.

In an instant it came to him what this meant. It must needs be Ostrog in flight. He shouted and dropped towards it. He had the momentum of his elevation and fell slanting down the air and very swiftly. It rose steeply at his approach. He allowed for its velocity and drove straight upon it.

It suddenly became a mere flat edge, and behold! he was past it, and driving headlong down with all the force of his futile blow.

He was furiously angry. He reeled the engine back along its shaft and went circling up. He saw Ostrog's machine beating up a spiral before him. He rose straight towards it, won above it by virtue of the impetus of his swoop and by the advantage and weight of a man. He dropped headlong--dropped and missed again! As he rushed past he saw the face of Ostrog's aeronaut confident and cool and in Ostrog's attitude a wincing resolution. Ostrog was looking steadfastly away from him--to the south. He realized with a gleam of wrath how bungling his flight must be. Below he saw the Croyden hills. He jerked upward and once more he gained on his enemy.

He glanced over his shoulder and his attention was arrested by a strange thing. The eastward stage, the one on Shooter's Hill, appeared to lift; a flash changing to a tall grey shape, a cowled figure of smoke and duct, jerked into the air. For a moment this cowled figure stood motionless, dropping huge masses of metal from its shoulders, and then it began to uncoil a dense head of smoke. The people had blown it up, aeroplane and all! As suddenly a second flash and grey shape sprang up from the Norwood stage. And even as he stared at this came a dead report, and the air wave of the first explosion struck him. He was flung up and sideways.

For a moment the aeropile fell nearly edgewise with her nose down, and seemed to hesitate whether to overset altogether. He stood on his wind-shield

wrenching the wheel that swayed up over his head. And then the shock of the second explosion took his machine sideways.

He found himself clinging to one of the ribs of his machine, and the air was blowing past him and upward. He seemed to be hanging quite still in the air, with the wind blowing up past him. It occurred to him that he was falling. Then he was sure that he was falling. He could not look down.

He found himself recapitulating with incredible swiftness all that had happened since his awakening, the days of doubt the days of Empire, and at last the tumultuous discovery of Ostrog's calculated treachery. he was beaten but London was saved. London was saved!

The thought had a quality of utter unreality. Who was he? Why was he holding so tightly with his hands? Why could he not leave go? In such a fall as this countless dreams have ended. But in a moment he would wake....

His thoughts ran swifter and swifter. He wondered if he should see Helen again. It seemed so unreasonable that he should not see her again. It __must__ be a dream! Yet surely he would meet her. She at least was real. She was real. He would wake and meet her.

Although he could not look at it, he was suddenly aware that the earth was very near.

THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON

by
H.G. Wells
1901

Chapter 1

Mr. Bedford Meets Mr. Cavor at Lympne

As I sit down to write here amidst the shadows of vine-leaves under the blue sky of southern Italy, it comes to me with a certain quality of astonishment that my participation in these amazing adventures of Mr. Cavor was, after all, the outcome of the purest accident. It might have been any one. I fell into these things at a time when I thought myself removed from the slightest possibility of disturbing experiences. I had gone to Lympne because I had imagined it the most uneventful place in the world. "Here, at any rate," said I, "I shall find peace and a chance to work!"

And this book is the sequel. So utterly at variance is destiny with all the little plans of men. I may perhaps mention here that very recently I had come an ugly cropper in certain business enterprises. Sitting now surrounded by all the circumstances of wealth, there is a luxury in admitting my extremity. I can admit, even, that to a certain extent my disasters were conceivably of my own making. It may be there are directions in which I have some capacity, but the conduct of business operations is not among these. But in those days I was young, and my youth among other objectionable forms took that of a pride in my capacity for affairs. I am young still in years, but the things that have happened to me have rubbed something of the youth from my mind. Whether they have brought any wisdom to light below it is a more doubtful matter.

It is scarcely necessary to go into the details of the speculations that landed me at Lympne, in Kent. Nowadays even about business transactions there is a strong spice of adventure. I took risks. In these things there is invariably a certain amount of give and take, and it fell to me finally to do the giving. Reluctantly enough. Even when I had got out of everything, one cantankerous creditor saw fit to be malignant. Perhaps you have met that flaming sense of outraged virtue, or perhaps you have only felt it. He ran me hard. It seemed to me, at last, that there was nothing

for it but to write a play, unless I wanted to drudge for my living as a clerk. I have a certain imagination, and luxurious tastes, and I meant to make a vigorous fight for it before that fate overtook me. In addition to my belief in my powers as a business man, I had always in those days had an idea that I was equal to writing a very good play. It is not, I believe, a very uncommon persuasion. I knew there is nothing a man can do outside legitimate business transactions that has such opulent possibilities, and very probably that biased my opinion. I had, indeed, got into the habit of regarding this unwritten drama as a convenient little reserve put by for a rainy day. That rainy day had come, and I set to work.

I soon discovered that writing a play was a longer business than I had supposed; at first I had reckoned ten days for it, and it was to have a pied-a-terre while it was in hand that I came to Lympne. I reckoned myself lucky in getting that little bungalow. I got it on a three years' agreement. I put in a few sticks of furniture, and while the play was in hand I did my own cooking. My cooking would have shocked Mrs. Bond. And

yet, you know, it had flavour. I had a coffee-pot, a sauce-pan for eggs, and one for potatoes, and a frying-pan for sausages and bacon - such was the simple apparatus of my comfort. One cannot always be magnificent, but simplicity is always a possible alternative. For the rest I laid in an eighteen-gallon cask of beer on credit, and a trustful baker came each day. It was not, perhaps, in the style of Sybaris, but I have had worse times. I was a little sorry for the baker, who was a very decent man indeed, but even for him I hoped.

Certainly if any one wants solitude, the place is Lympne. It is in the clay part of Kent, and my bungalow stood on the edge of an old sea cliff and stared across the flats of Romney Marsh at the sea. In very wet weather the place is almost inaccessible, and I have heard that at times the postman used to traverse the more succulent portions of his route with boards upon his feet. I never saw him doing so, but I can quite imagine it. Outside the doors of the few cottages and houses that make up the

present village big birch besoms are stuck, to wipe off the worst of the clay, which will give some idea of the texture of the district. I doubt if the place would be there at all, if it were not a fading memory of things gone for ever. It was the big port of England in Roman times, Portus Lemanus, and now the sea is four miles away. All down the steep hill are boulders and masses of Roman brickwork, and from it old Watling Street, still paved in places, starts like an arrow to the north. I used to stand on the hill and think of it all, the galleys and legions, the captives and officials, the women and traders, the speculators like myself, all the swarm and tumult that came clanking in and out of the harbour. And now just a few lumps of rubble on a grassy slope, and a sheep or two - and me. And where the port had been were the levels of the marsh, sweeping round in a broad curve to distant Jungeness, and dotted here and there with tree clumps and the church towers of old medieval towns that are following Lemanus now towards extinction.

That outlook on the marsh was, indeed, one of the finest views I have ever seen. I suppose Jungeness was fifteen miles away; it lay like a raft on the sea, and farther westward were the hills by Hastings under the setting sun. Sometimes they hung close and clear, sometimes they were faded and low, and often the drift of the weather took them clean out of sight. And all the nearer parts of the marsh were laced and lit by ditches and canals.

The window at which I worked looked over the skyline of this crest, and it was from this window that I first set eyes on Cavor. It was just as I was struggling with my scenario, holding down my mind to the sheer hard work of it, and naturally enough he arrested my attention.

The sun had set, the sky was a vivid tranquillity of green and yellow, and against that he came out black - the oddest little figure.

He was a short, round-bodied, thin-legged little man, with a jerky quality in his motions; he had seen fit to clothe his extraordinary mind in a cricket cap, an overcoat, and cycling knickerbockers and stockings. Why he

did so I do not know, for he never cycled and he never played cricket. It was a fortuitous concurrence of garments, arising I know not how. He gesticulated with his hands and arms, and jerked his head about and buzzed. He buzzed like something electric. You never heard such buzzing. And ever and again he cleared his throat with a most extraordinary noise.

There had been rain, and that spasmodic walk of his was enhanced by the extreme slipperiness of the footpath. Exactly as he came against the sun he stopped, pulled out a watch, hesitated. Then with a sort of convulsive gesture he turned and retreated with every manifestation of haste, no longer gesticulating, but going with ample strides that showed the relatively large size of his feet - they were, I remember, grotesquely exaggerated in size by adhesive clay - to the best possible advantage.

This occurred on the first day of my sojourn, when my play-writing energy was at its height and I regarded the incident simply as an annoying distraction - the waste of five minutes. I returned to my scenario. But when next evening the apparition was repeated with remarkable precision, and again the next evening, and indeed every evening when rain was not falling, concentration upon the scenario became a considerable effort. "Confound the man," I said, "one would think he was learning to be a marionette!" and for several evenings I cursed him pretty heartily. Then my annoyance gave way to amazement and curiosity. Why on earth should a man do this thing? On the fourteenth evening I could stand it no longer, and so soon as he appeared I opened the french window, crossed the verandah, and directed myself to the point where he invariably stopped.

He had his watch out as I came up to him. He had a chubby, rubicund face with reddish brown eyes - previously I had seen him only against the light. "One moment, sir," said I as he turned. He stared. "One moment," he said, "certainly. Or if you wish to speak to me for longer, and it is not asking too much - your moment is up - would it trouble you to accompany me? "

"Not in the least," said I, placing myself beside him.

"My habits are regular. My time for intercourse - limited."

"This, I presume, is your time for exercise? "

"It is. I come here to enjoy the sunset."

"You don't."

"Sir? "

"You never look at it."

"Never look at it? "

"No. I've watched you thirteen nights, and not once have you looked at the sunset - not once."

He knitted his brows like one who encounters a problem.

"Well, I enjoy the sunlight - the atmosphere - I go along this path, through that gate " - he jerked his head over his shoulder - " and round -"

"You don't. You never have been. It's all nonsense. There isn't a way. To-night for instance"

"Oh! to-night! Let me see. Ah! I just glanced at my watch, saw that I had already been out just three minutes over the precise half-hour, decided there was not time to go round, turned -"

"You always do."

He looked at me - reflected. "Perhaps I do, now I come to think of it. But what was it you wanted to speak to me about? "

"Why, this! "

"This? "

"Yes. Why do you do it? Every night you come making a noise"

"Making a noise? "

"Like this " - I imitated his buzzing noise. He looked at me, and it was evident the buzzing awakened distaste. " Do I do that? " he asked.

"Every blessed evening."

"I had no idea."

He stopped dead. He regarded me gravely. " Can it be," he said, " that I have formed a Habit ? "

"Well, it looks like it. Doesn't it? "

He pulled down his lower lip between finger and thumb. He regarded a puddle at his feet.

"My mind is much occupied," he said. "And you want to know why! Well, sir, I can assure you that not only do I not know why I do these things, but I did not even know I did them. Come to think, it is just as you say; I never have been beyond that field. ... And these things annoy you? "

For some reason I was beginning to relent towards him. "Not annoy, I said. "But - imagine yourself writing a play!"

"I couldn't."

"Well, anything that needs concentration."

"Ah!" he said, "of course," and meditated. His expression became so eloquent of distress, that I relented still more. After all, there is a touch of aggression in demanding of a man you don't know why he hums on a public footpath.

"You see," he said weakly, " it's a habit."

"Oh, I recognise that."

"I must stop it."

"But not if it puts you out. After all, I had no business - it's something of a liberty."

"Not at all, sir," he said, "not at all. I am greatly indebted to you. I should guard myself against these things. In future I will. Could I trouble you - once again? That noise? "

"Something like this," I said. " Zuzzoo, zuzzoo. But really, you know -"

"I am greatly obliged to you. In fact, I know I am getting absurdly absent-minded. You are quite justified, sir - perfectly justified. Indeed, I am indebted to you. The thing shall end. And now, sir, I have already brought you farther than I should have done."

"I do hope my impertinence -"

"Not at all, sir, not at all."

We regarded each other for a moment. I raised my hat and wished him a good evening. He responded convulsively, and so we went our ways.

At the stile I looked back at his receding figure. His bearing had changed remarkably, he seemed limp, shrunken. The contrast with his former

gesticulating, zuzzoing self took me in some absurd way as pathetic. I watched him out of sight. Then wishing very heartily I had kept to my own business, I returned to my bungalow and my play.

The next evening I saw nothing of him, nor the next. But he was very much in my mind, and it had occurred to me that as a sentimental comic character he might serve a useful purpose in the development of my plot. The third day he called upon me.

For a time I was puzzled to think what had brought him. He made indifferent conversation in the most formal way, then abruptly he came to business. He wanted to buy me out of my bungalow.

"You see," he said, "I don't blame you in the least, but you've destroyed a habit, and it disorganises my day. I've walked past here for years - years. No doubt I've hummed. ... You've made all that impossible! "

I suggested he might try some other direction.

" No. There is no other direction. This is the only one. I've inquired. And now - every afternoon at four - I come to a dead wall."

"But, my dear sir, if the thing is so important to you.."

"It's vital. You see, I'm - I'm an investigator - I am engaged in a scientific research. I live -" he paused and seemed to think. "Just over there," he said, and pointed suddenly dangerously near my eye. "The house with white chimneys you see just over the trees. And my circumstances are abnormal - abnormal. I am on the point of completing one of the most important - demonstrations - I can assure you one of the most important demonstrations that have ever been made. It requires constant thought, constant mental ease and activity. And the afternoon was my brightest time! - effervescing with new ideas - new points of view."

"But why not come by still?"

"It would be all different. I should be self-conscious. I should think of you at your play - watching me irritated - instead of thinking of my work. Oh! I must have the bungalow."

I meditated. Naturally, I wanted to think the matter over thoroughly before anything decisive was said. I was generally ready enough for business in those days, and selling always attracted me; but in the first place it was not my bungalow, and even if I sold it to him at a good price I might get inconvenienced in the delivery of goods if the current owner got wind of the transaction, and in the second I was, well - un - discharged. It was clearly a business that required delicate handling. Moreover, the possibility of his being in pursuit of some valuable invention also interested me. It occurred to me that I would like to know more of this research, not with any dishonest intention, but simply with an idea that to know what it was would be a relief from play-writing. I threw out feelers.

He was quite willing to supply information. Indeed, once he was fairly under way the conversation became a monologue. He talked like a man long pent up, who has had it over with himself again and again. He talked for nearly an hour, and I must confess I found it a pretty stiff bit of listening. But through it all there was the undertone of satisfaction one feels when one is neglecting work one has set oneself. During that first interview I gathered very little of the drift of his work. Half his words were technicalities entirely strange to me, and he illustrated one or two points with what he was pleased to call elementary mathematics, computing on an envelope with a copying-ink pencil, in a manner that made it hard even to seem to understand. "Yes," I said, "yes. Go on!" Nevertheless I made out enough to convince me that he was no mere crank playing at discoveries. In spite of his crank-like appearance there was a force about him that made that impossible. Whatever it was, it was a thing with mechanical possibilities. He told me of a work-shed he had, and of three assistants - originally jobbing carpenters - whom he had trained. Now, from the work-shed to the patent office is clearly only one step. He

invited me to see those things. I accepted readily, and took care, by a remark or so, to underline that. The proposed transfer of the bungalow remained very conveniently in suspense.

At last he rose to depart, with an apology for the length of his call. Talking over his work was, he said, a pleasure enjoyed only too rarely. It was not often he found such an intelligent listener as myself, he mingled very little with professional scientific men.

"So much pettiness," he explained; "so much intrigue! And really, when one has an idea - a novel, fertilising idea - I don't want to be uncharitable, but -"

I am a man who believes in impulses. I made what was perhaps a rash proposition. But you must remember, that I had been alone, play-writing in Lympne, for fourteen days, and my compunction for his ruined walk still hung about me. "Why not," said I, "make this your new habit? In the place of the one I spoilt? At least, until we can settle about the bungalow. What you want is to turn over your work in your mind. That you have always done during your afternoon walk. Unfortunately that's over - you can't get things back as they were. But why not come and talk about your work to me; use me as a sort of wall against which you may throw your thoughts and catch them again? It's certain I don't know enough to steal your ideas myself - and I know no scientific men -".

I stopped. He was considering. Evidently the thing, attracted him. "But I'm afraid I should bore you," he said.

"You think I'm too dull? "

" Oh, no; but technicalities "

"Anyhow, you've interested me immensely this afternoon."

" Of course it would be a great help to me. Nothing clears up one's ideas

so much as explaining them. Hitherto - "

" My dear sir, say no more."

" But really can you spare the time? "

" There is no rest like change of occupation," I said, with profound conviction.

The affair was over. On my verandah steps he turned. "I am already greatly indebted to you," he said.

I made an interrogative noise.

" You have completely cured me of that ridiculous habit of humming," he explained.

I think I said I was glad to be of any service to him, and he turned away.

Immediately the train of thought that our conversation had suggested must have resumed its sway. His arms began to wave in their former fashion. The faint echo of "zuzzoo" came back to me on the breeze. ...

Well, after all, that was not my affair. ...

He came the next day, and again the next day after that, and delivered two lectures on physics to our mutual satisfaction. He talked with an air of being extremely lucid about the "ether" and "tubes of force," and "gravitational potential," and things like that, and I sat in my other folding-chair and said, " Yes," " Go on," " I follow you," to keep him going. It was tremendously difficult stuff, but I do not think he ever suspected how much I did not understand him. There were moments when I doubted whether I was well employed, but at any rate I was resting from that confounded play. Now and then things gleamed on me clearly for a space, only to vanish just when I thought I had hold of them. Sometimes my

attention failed altogether, and I would give it up and sit and stare at him, wondering whether, after all, it would not be better to use him as a central figure in a good farce and let all this other stuff slide. And then, perhaps, I would catch on again for a bit.

At the earliest opportunity I went to see his house. It was large and carelessly furnished; there were no servants other than his three assistants, and his dietary and private life were characterised by a philosophical simplicity. He was a water-drinker, a vegetarian, and all those logical disciplinary things. But the sight of his equipment settled many doubts. It looked like business from cellar to attic - an amazing little place to find in an out-of-the-way village. The ground-floor rooms contained benches and apparatus, the bakehouse and scullery boiler had developed into respectable furnaces, dynamos occupied the cellar, and there was a gasometer in the garden. He showed it to me with all the confiding zest of a man who has been living too much alone. His seclusion was overflowing now in an excess of confidence, and I had the good luck to be the recipient.

The three assistants were creditable specimens of the class of "handy-men" from which they came. Conscientious if unintelligent, strong, civil, and willing. One, Spargus, who did the cooking and all the metal work, had been a sailor; a second, Gibbs, was a joiner; and the third was an ex-jobbing gardener, and now general assistant. They were the merest labourers. All the intelligent work was done by Cavor. Theirs was the darkest ignorance compared even with my muddled impression.

And now, as to the nature of these inquiries. Here, unhappily, comes a grave difficulty. I am no scientific expert, and if I were to attempt to set forth in the highly scientific language of Mr. Cavor the aim to which his experiments tended, I am afraid I should confuse not only the reader but myself, and almost certainly I should make some blunder that would bring upon me the mockery of every up-to-date student of mathematical physics in the country. The best thing I can do therefore is, I think to give my impressions in my own inexact language, without any attempt to

wear a garment of knowledge to which I have no claim.

The object of Mr. Cavor's search was a substance that should be "opaque" - he used some other word I have forgotten, but "opaque" conveys the idea - to "all forms of radiant energy." "Radiant energy," he made me understand, was anything like light or heat, or those Rontgen Rays there was so much talk about a year or so ago, or the electric waves of Marconi, or gravitation. All these things, he said, radiate out from centres, and act on bodies at a distance, whence comes the term "radiant energy." Now almost all substances are opaque to some form or other of radiant energy. Glass, for example, is transparent to light, but much less so to heat, so that it is useful as a fire-screen; and alum is transparent to light, but blocks heat completely. A solution of iodine in carbon bisulphide, on the other hand, completely blocks light, but is quite transparent to heat. It will hide a fire from you, but permit all its warmth to reach you. Metals are not only opaque to light and heat, but also to electrical energy, which passes through both iodine solution and glass almost as though they were not interposed. And so on.

Now all known substances are "transparent" to gravitation. You can use screens of various sorts to cut off the light or heat, or electrical influence of the sun, or the warmth of the earth from anything; you can screen things by sheets of metal from Marconi's rays, but nothing will cut off the gravitational attraction of the sun or the gravitational attraction of the earth. Yet why there should be nothing is hard to say. Cavor did not see why such a substance should not exist, and certainly I could not tell him. I had never thought of such a possibility before. He showed me by calculations on paper, which Lord Kelvin, no doubt, or Professor Lodge, or Professor Karl Pearson, or any of those great scientific people might have understood, but which simply reduced me to a hopeless muddle, that not only was such a substance possible, but that it must satisfy certain conditions. It was an amazing piece of reasoning. Much as it amazed and exercised me at the time, it would be impossible to reproduce it here. "Yes," I said to it all, "yes; go on!" Suffice it for this story that he believed he might be able to manufacture this possible

substance opaque to gravitation out of a complicated alloy of metals and something new - a new element, I fancy - called, I believe, helium, which was sent to him from London in sealed stone jars. Doubt has been thrown upon this detail, but I am almost certain it was helium he had sent him in sealed stone jars. It was certainly something very gaseous and thin. If only I had taken notes...

But then, how was I to foresee the necessity of taking notes ?

Any one with the merest germ of an imagination will understand the extraordinary possibilities of such a substance, and will sympathise a little with the emotion I felt as this understanding emerged from the haze of abstruse phrases in which Cavor expressed himself. Comic relief in a play indeed! It was some time before I would believe that I had interpreted him aright, and I was very careful not to ask questions that would have enabled him to gauge the profundity of misunderstanding into which he dropped his daily exposition. But no one reading the story of it here will sympathise fully, because from my barren narrative it will be impossible to gather the strength of my conviction that this astonishing substance was positively going to be made.

I do not recall that I gave my play an hour's consecutive work at any time after my visit to his house. My imagination had other things to do. There seemed no limit to the possibilities of the stuff; whichever way I tried I came on miracles and revolutions. For example, if one wanted to lift a weight, however enormous, one had only to get a sheet of this substance beneath it, and one might lift it with a straw. My first natural impulse was to apply this principle to guns and ironclads, and all the material and methods of war, and from that to shipping, locomotion, building, every conceivable form of human industry. The chance that had brought me into the very birth-chamber of this new time - it was an epoch, no less - was one of those chances that come once in a thousand years. The thing unrolled, it expanded and expanded. Among other things I saw in it my redemption as a business man. I saw a parent company, and daughter companies, applications to right of us, applications to left, rings and

trusts, privileges, and concessions spreading and spreading, until one vast, stupendous Cavorite company ran and ruled the world.

And I was in it!

I took my line straight away. I knew I was staking everything, but I jumped there and then.

"We're on absolutely the biggest thing that has ever been invented," I said, and put the accent on "we." "If you want to keep me out of this, you'll have to do it with a gun. I'm coming down to be your fourth labourer to-morrow."

He seemed surprised at my enthusiasm, but not a bit suspicious or hostile. Rather, he was self-depreciatory. He looked at me doubtfully. "But do you really think - ?" he said. "And your play! How about that play? "

"It's vanished!" I cried. "My dear sir, don't you see what you've got? Don't you see what you're going to do?"

That was merely a rhetorical turn, but positively, he didn't. At first I could not believe it. He had not had the beginning of the inkling of an idea. This astonishing little man had been working on purely theoretical grounds the whole time; When he said it was "the most important" research the world had ever seen, he simply meant it squared up so many theories, settled so much that was in doubt; he had troubled no more about the application of the stuff he was going to turn out than if he had been a machine that makes guns. This was a possible substance, and he was going to make it! V'la tout, as the Frenchman says.

Beyond that, he was childish; If he made it, it would go down to posterity as Cavorite or Cavorine, and he would be made an F.R.S., and his portrait given away as a scientific worthy with Nature, and things like that. And that was all he saw! He would have dropped this bombshell into the world as though he had discovered a new species of gnat, if it had not happened

that I had come along. And there it would have lain and fizzled, like one or two other little things these scientific people have lit and dropped about us.

When I realised this, it was I did the talking, and Cavor who said, "Go on!" I jumped up. I paced the room, gesticulating like a boy of twenty. I tried to make him understand his duties and responsibilities in the matter - our duties and responsibilities in the matter. I assured him we might make wealth enough to work any sort of social revolution we fancied, we might own and order the whole world. I told him of companies and patents, and the case for secret processes. All these things seemed to take him much as his mathematics had taken me. A look of perplexity came into his ruddy little face. He stammered something about indifference to wealth, but I brushed all that aside. He had got to be rich, and it was no good his stammering. I gave him to understand the sort of man I was, and that I had had very considerable business experience. I did not tell him I was an undischarged bankrupt at the time, because that was temporary, but I think I reconciled my evident poverty with my financial claims. And quite insensibly, in the way such projects grow, the understanding of a Cavorite monopoly grew up between us. He was to make the stuff, and I was to make the boom.

I stuck like a leech to the "we" - "you" and "I" didn't exist for me.

His idea was that the profits I spoke of might go to endow research, but that, of course, was a matter we had to settle later. "That's all right," I shouted, " that's all right." The great point, as I insisted, was to get the thing done.

"Here is a substance," I cried, "no home, no factory, no fortress, no ship can dare to be without - more universally applicable even than a patent medicine. There isn't a solitary aspect of it, not one of its ten thousand possible uses that will not make us rich, Cavor, beyond the dreams of avarice! "

"No!" he said. "I begin to see. It's extraordinary how one gets new points of view by talking over things!"

"And as it happens you have just talked to the right man! "

" I suppose no one," he said, "is absolutely averse to enormous wealth. Of course there is one thing - "

He paused. I stood still.

" It is just possible, you know, that we may not be able to make it after all! It may be one of those things that are a theoretical possibility, but a practical absurdity. Or when we make it, there may be some little hitch!"

"We'll tackle the hitch when it comes." said I.

Chapter 2

The First Making of Cavorite

But Cavor's fears were groundless, so far as the actual making was concerned. On the 14th of October, 1899, this incredible substance was made!

Oddly enough, it was made at last by accident, when Mr. Cavor least expected it. He had fused together a number of metals and certain other things - I wish I knew the particulars now ! - and he intended to leave the mixture a week and then allow it to cool slowly. Unless he had miscalculated, the last stage in the combination would occur when the stuff sank to a temperature of 60 Fahr. But it chanced that, unknown to Cavor, dissension had arisen about the furnace tending. Gibbs, who had previously seen to this, had suddenly attempted to shift it to the man who had been a gardener, on the score that coal was soil, being dug, and

therefore could not possibly fall within the province of a joiner; the man who had been a jobbing gardener alleged, however, that coal was a metallic or ore-like substance, let alone that he was cook. But Spargus insisted on Gibbs doing the coaling, seeing that he was a joiner and that coal is notoriously fossil wood. Consequently Gibbs ceased to replenish the furnace, and no one else did so, and Cavor was too much immersed in certain interesting problems concerning a Cavorite flying machine (neglecting the resistance of the air and one or two other points) to perceive that anything was wrong. And the premature birth of his invention took place just as he was coming across the field to my bungalow for our afternoon talk and tea.

I remember the occasion with extreme vividness. The water was boiling, and everything was prepared, and the sound of his "zuzzoo" had brought me out upon the verandah. His active little figure was black against the autumnal sunset, and to the right the chimneys of his house just rose above a gloriously tinted group of trees. Remoter rose the Wealden Hills, faint and blue, while to the left the hazy marsh spread out spacious and serene. And then -

The chimneys jerked heavenward, smashing into a string of bricks as they rose, and the roof and a miscellany of furniture followed. Then overtaking them came a huge white flame. The trees about the building swayed and whirled and tore themselves to pieces, that sprang towards the flare. My ears were smitten with a clap of thunder that left me deaf on one side for life, and all about me windows smashed, unheeded.

I took three steps from the verandah towards Cavor's house, and even as I did so came the wind.

Instantly my coat tails were over my head, and I was progressing in great leaps and bounds, and quite against my will, towards him. In the same moment the discoverer was seized, whirled about, and flew through the screaming air. I saw one of my chimney pots hit the ground within six yards of me, leap a score of feet, and so hurry in great strides towards

the focus of the disturbance. Cavor, kicking and flapping, came down again, rolled over and over on the ground for a space, struggled up and was lifted and borne forward at an enormous velocity, vanishing at last among the labouring, lashing trees that writhed about his house.

A mass of smoke and ashes, and a square of bluish shining substance rushed up towards the zenith. A large fragment of fencing came sailing past me, dropped edgeways, hit the ground and fell flat, and then the worst was over. The aerial commotion fell swiftly until it was a mere strong gale, and I became once more aware that I had breath and feet. By leaning back against the wind I managed to stop, and could collect such wits as still remained to me.

In that instant the whole face of the world had changed. The tranquil sunset had vanished, the sky was dark with scurrying clouds, everything was flattened and swaying with the gale. I glanced back to see if my bungalow was still in a general way standing, then staggered forwards towards the trees amongst which Cavor had vanished, and through whose tall and leaf-denuded branches shone the flames of his burning house.

I entered the copse, dashing from one tree to another and clinging to them, and for a space I sought him in vain. Then amidst a heap of smashed branches and fencing that had banked itself against a portion of his garden wall I perceived something stir. I made a run for this, but before I reached it a brown object separated itself, rose on two muddy legs, and protruded two drooping, bleeding hands. Some tattered ends of garment fluttered out from its middle portion and streamed before the wind.

For a moment I did not recognise this earthy lump, and then I saw that it was Cavor, caked in the mud in which he had rolled. He leant forward against the wind, rubbing the dirt from his eyes and mouth.

He extended a muddy lump of hand, and staggered a pace towards me. His face worked with emotion, little lumps of mud kept falling from it. He looked as damaged and pitiful as any living creature I have ever seen, and

his remark therefore amazed me exceedingly.

"Gratulate me," he gasped; "gratulate me!"

"Congratulate you! said I. "Good heavens! What for?"

"I've done it."

"You have. What on earth caused that explosion? "

A gust of wind blew his words away. I understood him to say that it wasn't an explosion at all. The wind hurled me into collision with him, and we stood clinging to one another.

"Try and get back - to my bungalow," I bawled in his ear. He did not hear me, and shouted something about "three martyrs - science," and also something about "not much good." At the time he laboured under the impression that his three attendants had perished in the whirlwind. Happily this was incorrect. Directly he had left for my bungalow they had gone. Off to the public-house in Lympe to discuss the question of the furnaces over some trivial refreshment.

I repeated my suggestion of getting back to my bungalow, and this time he understood. We clung arm-in-arm and started, and managed at last to reach the shelter of as much roof as was left to me. For a space we sat in arm-chairs and panted. All the windows were broken, and the lighter articles of furniture were in great disorder, but no irrevocable damage was done. Happily the kitchen door had stood the pressure upon it, so that all my crockery and cooking materials had survived. The oil stove was still burning, and I put on the water to boil again for tea. And that prepared, I could turn on Cavor for his explanation.

"Quite correct," he insisted; "quite correct. I've done it, and it's all right."

"But", I protested. "All right! Why, there can't be a rick standing, or a fence or a thatched roof undamaged for twenty miles round."

"It's all right - really. I didn't, of course, foresee this little upset. My mind was preoccupied with another problem, and I'm apt to disregard these practical side issues. But it's all right "

"My dear sir," I cried, " don't you see you've done thousands of pounds' worth of damage?"

"There, I throw myself on your discretion. I'm not a practical man, of course, but don't you think they will regard it as a cyclone? "

"But the explosion "

"It was not an explosion. It's perfectly simple. Only, as I say, I'm apt to overlook these little things. Its that zuzzoo business on a larger scale. Inadvertently I made this substance of mine, this Cavorite, in a thin, wide sheet. ..."

He paused. "You are quite clear that the stuff is opaque to gravitation, that it cuts off things from gravitating towards each other? "

"Yes," said I. "Yes."

"Well, so soon as it reached a temperature of 60 Fahr, and the process of its manufacture was complete, the air above it, the portions of roof and ceiling and floor above it ceased to have weight. I suppose you know - everybody knows nowadays - that, as a usual thing, the air has weight, that it presses on everything at the surface of the earth, presses in all directions, with a pressure of fourteen and a half pounds to the square inch? "

"I know that," said I. " Go on."

"I know that too," he remarked. " Only this shows you how useless knowledge is unless you apply it. You see, over our Cavorite this ceased to be the case, the air there ceased to exert any pressure, and the air round it and not over the Cavorite was exercising a pressure of fourteen pounds and a half to the square in upon this suddenly weightless air. Ah! you begin to see! The air all about the Cavorite crushed in upon the air above it with irresistible force. The air above the Cavorite was forced upward violently, the air that rushed in to replace it immediately lost weight, ceased to exert any pressure, followed suit, blew the ceiling through and the roof off. ...

"You perceive," he said, "it formed a sort of atmospheric fountain, a kind of chimney in the atmosphere. And if the Cavorite itself hadn't been loose and so got sucked up the chimney, does it occur to you what would have happened?"

I thought. "I suppose," I said, "the air would be rushing up and up over that infernal piece of stuff now."

"Precisely," he said. "A huge fountain "

"Spouting into space! Good heavens! Why, it would have squirted all the atmosphere of the earth away! It would have robbed the world of air! It would have been the death of all mankind! That little lump of stuff! "

"Not exactly into space," said Cavor, "but as bad - practically. It would have whipped the air off the world as one peels a banana, and flung it thousands of miles. It would have dropped back again, of course - but on an asphyxiated world! From our point of view very little better than if it never came back!"

I stared. As yet I was too amazed to realise how all my expectations had been upset. "What do you mean to do now? " I asked.

"In the first place if I may borrow a garden trowel I will remove some of

this earth with which I am encased, and then if I may avail myself of your domestic conveniences I will have a bath. This done, we will converse more at leisure. It will be wise, I think " - he laid a muddy hand on my arm" if nothing were said of this affair beyond ourselves. I know I have caused great damage - probably even dwelling-houses may be ruined here and there upon the country-side. But on the other hand, I cannot possibly pay for the damage I have done, and if the real cause of this is published, it will lead only to heartburning and the obstruction of my work. One cannot foresee everything, you know, and I cannot consent for one moment to add the burthen of practical considerations to my theorising. Later on, when you have come in with your practical mind, and Cavorite is floated - floated is the word, isn't it? - and it has realised all you anticipate for it, we may set matters right with these persons. But not now - not now. If no other explanation is offered, people, in the present unsatisfactory state of meteorological science, will ascribe all this to a cyclone; there might be a public subscription, and as my house has collapsed and been burnt, I should in that case receive a considerable share in the compensation, which would be extremely helpful to the prosecution of our researches. But if it is known that I caused this, there will be no public subscription, and everybody will be put out. Practically I should never get a chance of working in peace again. My three assistants may or may not have perished. That is a detail. If they have, it is no great loss; they were more zealous than able, and this premature event must be largely due to their joint neglect of the furnace. If they have not perished, I doubt if they have the intelligence to explain the affair. They will accept the cyclone story. And if during the temporary unfitness of my house for occupation, I may lodge in one of the untenanted rooms of this bungalow of yours - "

He paused and regarded me.

A man of such possibilities, I reflected, is no ordinary guest to entertain.

"Perhaps," said I, rising to my feet, " we had better begin by looking for

a trowel," and I led the way to the scattered vestiges of the greenhouse.

And while he was having his bath I considered the entire question alone. It was clear there were drawbacks to Mr. Cavor's society I had not foreseen. The absentmindedness that had just escaped depopulating the terrestrial globe, might at any moment result in some other grave inconvenience. On the other hand I was young, my affairs were in a mess, and I was in just the mood for reckless adventure - with a chance of something good at the end of it. I had quite settled in my mind that I was to have half at least in that aspect of the affair. Fortunately I held my bungalow, as I have already explained, on a three-year agreement, without being responsible for repairs; and my furniture, such as there was of it, had been hastily purchased, was unpaid for, insured, and altogether devoid of associations. In the end I decided to keep on with him, and see the business through.

Certainly the aspect of things had changed very greatly. I no longer doubted at all the enormous possibilities of the substance, but I began to have doubts about the gun-carriage and the patent boots. We set to work at once to reconstruct his laboratory and proceed with our experiments. Cavor talked more on my level than he had ever done before, when it came to the question of how we should make the stuff next.

"Of course we must make it again," he said, with a sort of glee I had not expected in him, "of course we must make it again. We have caught a Tartar, perhaps, but we have left the theoretical behind us for good and all. If we can possibly avoid wrecking this little planet of ours, we will. But - there must be risks! There must be. In experimental work there always are. And here, as a practical man, you must come in. For my own part it seems to me we might make it edgeways, perhaps, and very thin. Yet I don't know. I have a certain dim perception of another method. I can hardly explain it yet. But curiously enough it came into my mind, while I was rolling over and over in the mud before the wind, and very doubtful how I the whole adventure was to end, as being absolutely the thing I ought to have done.

Even with my aid we found some little difficulty, and meanwhile we kept at work restoring the laboratory. There was plenty to do before it became absolutely necessary to decide upon the precise form and method of our second attempt. Our only hitch was the strike of the three labourers, who objected to my activity as a foreman. But that matter we compromised after two days' delay.

Chapter 3

The Building of the sphere

I REMEMBER the occasion very distinctly when Cavor told me of his idea of the sphere. He had had intimations of it before, but at the time it seemed to come to him in a rush. We were returning to the bungalow for tea, and on the way he fell humming. Suddenly he shouted, "That's it! That finishes it! A sort of roller blind!"

"Finishes what?" I asked.

"Space - anywhere! The moon."

"What do you mean? "

"Mean? Why - it must be a sphere! That's what I mean!"

I saw I was out of it, and for a time I let him talk in his own fashion. I hadn't the ghost of an idea then of his drift. But after he had taken tea he made it clear to me.

"It's like this," he said. "Last time I ran this stuff that cuts things off from gravitation into a flat tank with an overlap that held it down. And directly it had cooled and the manufacture was completed all that uproar happened, nothing above it weighed anything, the air went squirting

up, the house squirted up, and if the stuff itself hadn't squirted up too, I don't know what would have happened! But suppose the substance is loose, and quite free to go up? "

"It will go up at once!"

"Exactly. With no more disturbance than firing a big gun."

"But what good will that do? "

"I'm going up with it! "

I put down my teacup and stared at him.

"Imagine a sphere," he explained, "large enough to hold two people and their luggage. It will be made of steel lined with thick glass; it will contain a proper store of solidified air, concentrated food, water distilling apparatus, and so forth. And enamelled, as it were, on the outer steel - "

"Favorite? "

"Yes."

"But how will you get inside? "

"There was a similar problem about a dumpling."

"Yes, I know. But how?"

"That's perfectly easy. An air-tight manhole is all that is needed. That, of course, will have to be a little complicated; there will have to be a valve, so that things may be thrown out, if necessary, without much loss of air."

"Like Jules Verne's thing in A Trip to the Moon."

But Cavor was not a reader of fiction.

"I begin to see," I said slowly. "And you could get in and screw yourself up while the Cavorite was warm, and as soon as it cooled it would become impervious to gravitation, and off you would fly -"

"At a tangent."

"You would go off in a straight line - " I stopped abruptly. "What is to prevent the thing travelling in a straight line into space for ever?" I asked. "You're not safe to get anywhere, and if you do - how will you get back? "

"I've just thought of that," said Cavor. "That's what I meant when I said the thing is finished. The inner glass sphere can be air-tight, and, except for the manhole, continuous, and the steel sphere can be made in sections, each section capable of rolling up after the fashion of a roller blind. These can easily be worked by springs, and released and checked by electricity conveyed by platinum wires fused through the glass. All that is merely a question of detail. So you see, that except for the thickness of the blind rollers, the Cavorite exterior of the sphere will consist of windows or blinds, whichever you like to call them. Well, when all these windows or blinds are shut, no light, no heat, no gravitation, no radiant energy of any sort will get at the inside of the sphere, it will fly on through space in a straight line, as you say. But open a window, imagine one of the windows open. Then at once any heavy body that chances to be in that direction will attract us "

I sat taking it in.

"You see?" he said.

"Oh, I see."

"Practically we shall be able to tuck about in space just as we wish. Get attracted by this and that."

"Oh, yes. That's clear enough. Only - "

" Well? "

"I don't quite see what we shall do it for! It's really only jumping off the world and back again."

"Surely! For example, one might go to the moon."

"And when one got there? What would you find? "

"We should see - Oh! consider the new knowledge."

"Is there air there? "

"There may be."

"It's a fine idea," I said, "but it strikes me as a large order all the same. The moon! I'd much rather try some smaller things first."

"They're out of the question, because of the air difficulty."

"Why not apply that idea of spring blinds - Cavorite blinds in strong steel cases - to lifting weights?"

"It wouldn't work," he insisted. "After all, to go into outer space is not so much worse, if at all, than a polar expedition. Men go on polar expeditions."

"Not business men. And besides, they get paid for polar expeditions. And if anything goes wrong there are relief parties. But this - it's just

firing ourselves off the world for nothing."

"Call it prospecting."

"You'll have to call it that. ... One might make a book of it perhaps," I said.

"I have no doubt there will be minerals," said Cavor.

"For example? "

"Oh! sulphur, ores, gold perhaps, possibly new elements."

"Cost of carriage," I said. "You know you're not a practical man. The moon's a quarter of a million miles away."

"It seems to me it wouldn't cost much to cart any weight anywhere if you packed it in a Cavorite case."

I had not thought of that. "Delivered free on head of purchaser, eh? "

"It isn't as though we were confined to the moon."

"You mean? "

"There's Mars - clear atmosphere, novel surroundings, exhilarating sense of lightness. It might be pleasant to go there."

"Is there air on Mars? "

"Oh, yes! "

"Seems as though you might run it as a sanatorium. By the way, how far is Mars? "

"Two hundred million miles at present," said Cavor airily; "and you go close by the sun."

My imagination was picking itself up again. "After all," I said, there's something in these things. There's travel -"

An extraordinary possibility came rushing into my mind. Suddenly I saw, as in a vision, the whole solar system threaded with Cavorite liners and spheres deluxe. "Rights of pre-emption," came floating into my head - planetary rights of pre-emption. I recalled the old Spanish monopoly in American gold. It wasn't as though it was just this planet or that - it was all of them. I stared at Cavor's rubicund face, and suddenly my imagination was leaping and dancing. I stood up, I walked up and down; my tongue was unloosened.

"I'm beginning to take it in," I said; "I'm beginning to take it in." The transition from doubt to enthusiasm seemed to take scarcely any time at all. "But this is tremendous!" I cried. "This is Imperial! I haven't been dreaming of this sort of thing."

Once the chill of my opposition was removed, his own pent-up excitement had play. He too got up and paced. He too gesticulated and shouted. We behaved like men inspired. We were men inspired.

"We'll settle all that!" he said in answer to some incidental difficulty that had pulled me up. "We'll soon settle that! We'll start the drawings for mouldings this very night."

"We'll start them now," I responded, and we hurried off to the laboratory to begin upon this work forthwith.

I was like a child in Wonderland all that night. The dawn found us both still at work - we kept our electric light going heedless of the day. I remember now exactly how these drawings looked. I shaded and tinted while

Cavor drew - smudged and haste-marked they were in every line, but wonderfully correct. We got out the orders for the steel blinds and frames we needed from that night's work, and the glass sphere was designed within a week. We gave up our afternoon conversations and our old routine altogether. We worked, and we slept and ate when we could work no longer for hunger and fatigue. Our enthusiasm infected even our three men, though they had no idea what the sphere was for. Through those days the man Gibbs gave up walking, and went everywhere, even across the room, at a sort of fussy run.

And it grew - the sphere. December passed, January - I spent a day with a broom sweeping a path through the snow from bungalow to laboratory - February, March. By the end of March the completion was in sight. In January had come a team of horses, a huge packing-case; we had our thick glass sphere now ready, and in position under the crane we had rigged to sling it into the steel shell. All the bars and blinds of the steel shell - it was not really a spherical shell, but polyhedral, with a roller blind to each facet - had arrived by February, and the lower half was bolted together. The Cavorite was half made by March, the metallic paste had gone through two of the stages in its manufacture, and we had plastered quite half of it on to the steel bars and blinds. It was astonishing how closely we kept to the lines of Cavor's first inspiration in working out the scheme. When the bolting together of the sphere was finished, he proposed to remove the rough roof of the temporary laboratory in which the work was done, and build a furnace about it. So the last stage of Cavorite making, in which the paste is heated to a dull red glow in a stream of helium, would be accomplished then it was already on the sphere.

And then we had to discuss and decide what provisions we were to take - compressed foods, concentrated essences, steel cylinders containing reserve oxygen, an arrangement for removing carbonic acid and waste from the air and restoring oxygen by means of sodium peroxide, water condensers, and so forth. I remember the little heap they made in the corner - tins, and rolls, and boxes - convincingly matter-of-fact.

It was a strenuous time, with little chance of thinking. But one day, when we were drawing near the end, an odd mood came over me. I had been bricking up the furnace all the morning, and I sat down by these possessions dead beat. Everything seemed dull and incredible.

"But look here, Cavor," I said. "After all! What's it all for?"

He smiled. "The thing now is to go."

"The moon," I reflected. But what do you expect? I thought the moon was a dead world."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"We're going to see."

"Are we?" I said, and stared before me.

"You are tired," he remarked. "You'd better take a walk this afternoon."

"No," I said obstinately; "I'm going to finish this brickwork."

And I did, and insured myself a night of insomnia. I don't think I have ever had such a night. I had some bad times before my business collapse, but the very worst of those was sweet slumber compared to this infinity of aching wakefulness. I was suddenly in the most enormous funk at the thing we were going to do.

I do not remember before that night thinking at all of the risks we were running. Now they came like that array of spectres that once beleaguered Prague, and camped around me. The strangeness of what we were about to do, the unearthliness of it, overwhelmed me. I was like a man awakened out of pleasant dreams to the most horrible surroundings. I lay, eyes wide open, and the sphere seemed to get more flimsy and feeble, and Cavor more unreal and fantastic, and the whole enterprise madder and madder every moment.

I got out of bed and wandered about. I sat at the window and stared at the immensity of space. Between the stars was the void, the unfathomable darkness! I tried to recall the fragmentary knowledge of astronomy I had gained in my irregular reading, but it was all too vague to furnish any idea of the things we might expect. At last I got back to bed and snatched some moments of sleep - moments of nightmare rather - in which I fell and fell and fell for evermore into the abyss of the sky.

I astonished Cavor at breakfast. I told him shortly, "I'm not coming with you in the sphere."

I met all his protests with a sullen persistence. "The thing's too mad," I said, "and I won't come. The thing's too mad."

I would not go with him to the laboratory. I fretted about my bungalow for a time, and then took hat and stick and set out alone, I knew not whither. It chanced to be a glorious morning: a warm wind and deep blue sky, the first green of spring abroad, and multitudes of birds singing. I lunched on beef and beer in a little public-house near Elham, and startled the landlord by remarking apropos of the weather, "A man who leaves the world when days of this sort are about is a fool!"

"That's what I say when I heard on it!" said the landlord, and I found that for one poor soul at least this world had proved excessive, and there had been a throat-cutting. I went on with a new twist to my thoughts.

In the afternoon I had a pleasant sleep in a sunny place, and went on my way refreshed. I came to a comfortable-looking inn near Canterbury. It was bright with creepers, and the landlady was a clean old woman and took my eye. I found I had just enough money to pay for my lodging with her. I decided to stop the night there. She was a talkative body, and among many other particulars learnt she had never been to London. "Canterbury's as far as ever I been," she said. "I'm not one of your gad-about sort."

"How would you like a trip to the moon?" I cried.

"I never did hold with them ballooneys," she said evidently under the impression that this was a common excursion enough. "I wouldn't go up in one - not for ever so."

This struck me as being funny. After I had supped I sat on a bench by the door of the inn and gossiped with two labourers about brickmaking, and motor cars, and the cricket of last year. And in the sky a faint new crescent, blue and vague as a distant Alp, sank westward over the sun.

The next day I returned to Cavor. "I am coming," I said. "I've been a little out of order, that's all."

That was the only time I felt any serious doubt our enterprise. Nerves purely! After that I worked a little more carefully, and took a trudge for an hour every day. And at last, save for the heating in the furnace, our labours were at an end.

Chapter 4

Inside the Sphere

"GO ON," said Cavor, as I sat across the edge of the manhole, and looked down into the black interior of the sphere. We two were alone. It was evening, the sun had set, and the stillness of the twilight was upon everything.

I drew my other leg inside and slid down the smooth glass to the bottom of the sphere, then turned to take the cans of food and other impedimenta from Cavor. The interior was warm, the thermometer stood at eighty, and as we should lose little or none of this by radiation, we were dressed in shoes and thin flannels. We had, however, a bundle of thick woollen clothing and several thick blankets to guard against mischance.

By Cavor's direction I placed the packages, the cylinders of oxygen, and so forth, loosely about my feet, and soon we had everything in. He walked about the roofless shed for a time seeking anything we had overlooked, and then crawled in after me. I noted something in his hand.

"What have you got there? " I asked.

"Haven't you brought anything to read? "

"Good Lord! No."

"I forgot to tell you. There are uncertainties - The voyage may last - We may be weeks! "

"But - "

" We shall be floating in this sphere with absolutely no occupation."

"I wish I'd known"

He peered out of the manhole. " Look! " he said. " There's something there!"

"Is there time? "

"We shall be an hour."

I looked out. It was an old number of Tit-Bits that one of the men must have brought. Farther away in the corner I saw a torn Lloyd's News. I scrambled back into the sphere with these things. "What have you got? " I said.

I took the book from his hand and read, "The Works of William Shakespeare".

He coloured slightly. "My education has been so purely scientific -" he said apologetically.

"Never read him? "

"Never."

"He knew a little, you know - in an irregular sort of way."

"Precisely what I am told," said Cavor.

I assisted him to screw in the glass cover of the manhole, and then he pressed a stud to close the corresponding blind in the outer case. The little oblong of twilight vanished. We were in darkness. For a time neither of us spoke. Although our case would not be impervious to sound, everything was very still. I perceived there was nothing to grip when the shock of our start should come, and I realised that I should be uncomfortable for want of a chair.

"Why have we no chairs? " I asked.

"I've settled all that," said Cavor. "We won't need them."

"Why not?"

"You will see," he said, in the tone of a man who refuses to talk.

I became silent. Suddenly it had come to me clear and vivid that I was a fool to be inside that sphere. Even now, I asked myself, is it too late to withdraw? The world outside the sphere, I knew, would be cold and inhospitable enough for me - for weeks I had been living on subsidies from Cavor - but after all, would it be as cold as the infinite zero, as inhospitable as empty space? If it had not been for the appearance of cowardice, I believe that even then I should have made him let me out. But

I hesitated on that score, and hesitated, and grew fretful and angry, and the time passed.

There came a little jerk, a noise like champagne being uncorked in another room, and a faint whistling sound. For just one instant I had a sense of enormous tension, a transient conviction that my feet were pressing downward with a force of countless tons. It lasted for an infinitesimal time.

But it stirred me to action. "Cavor!" I said into the darkness, "my nerve's in rags. I don't think - "

I stopped. He made no answer.

"Confound it!" I cried; "I'm a fool! What business have I here? I'm not coming, Cavor. The thing's too risky. I'm getting out."

"You can't," he said.

"Can't! We'll soon see about that!"

He made no answer for ten seconds. "It's too late for us to quarrel now, Bedford," he said. "That little jerk was the start. Already we are flying as swiftly as a bullet up into the gulf of space."

"I -" I said, and then it didn't seem to matter what happened. For a time I was, as it were, stunned; I had nothing to say. It was just as if I had never heard of this idea of leaving the world before. Then I perceived an unaccountable change in my bodily sensations. It was a feeling of lightness, of unreality. Coupled with that was a queer sensation in the head, an apoplectic effect almost, and a thumping of blood vessels at the ears. Neither of these feelings diminished as time went on, but at last I got so used to them that I experienced no inconvenience.

I heard a click, and a little glow lamp came, into being.

I saw Cavor's face, as white as I felt my own to be. We regarded one another in silence. The transparent blackness of the glass behind him made him seem as though he floated in a void.

"Well, we're committed," I said at last.

"Yes," he said, " we're committed."

"Don't move," he exclaimed, at some suggestion of a gesture. "Let your muscles keep quite lax - as if you were in bed. We are in a little universe of our own. Look at those things!"

He pointed to the loose cases and bundles that had been lying on the blankets in the bottom of the sphere. I was astonished to see that they were floating now nearly a foot from the spherical wall. Then I saw from his shadow that Cavor was no longer leaning against the glass. I thrust out my hand behind me, and found that I too was suspended in space, clear of the glass.

I did not cry out nor gesticulate, but fear came upon me. It was like being held and lilted by something - you know not what. The mere touch of my hand against the glass moved me rapidly. I understood what had happened, but that did not prevent my being afraid. We were cut off from all exterior gravitation, only the attraction of objects within our sphere had effect. Consequently everything that was not fixed to the glass was falling - slowly because of the slightness of our masses - towards the centre of gravity of our little world, which seemed to be somewhere about the middle of the sphere, but rather nearer to myself than Cavor, on account of my greater weight.

"We must turn round," said Cavor, "and float back to back, with the things between us."

It was the strangest sensation conceivable, floating thus loosely in

space, at first indeed horribly strange, and when the horror passed, not disagreeable at all, exceeding restful; indeed, the nearest thing in earthly experience to it that I know is lying on a very thick, soft feather bed. But the quality of utter detachment and independence! I had not reckoned on things like this. I had expected a violent jerk at starting, a giddy sense of speed. Instead I felt - as if I were disembodied. It was not like the beginning of a journey; it was like the beginning of a dream.

Chapter 5

The Journey to the Moon

PRESENTLY Cavor extinguished the light. He said we had not overmuch energy stored, and that what we had we must economise for reading. For a time, whether it was long or short I do not know, there was nothing but blank darkness.

A question floated up out of the void. "How are we pointing?" I said. "What is our direction?"

"We are flying away from the earth at a tangent, and as the moon is near her third quarter we are going somewhere towards her. I will open a blind -"

Came a click, and then a window in the outer case yawned open. The sky outside was as black as the darkness within the sphere, but the shape of the open window was marked by an infinite number of stars.

Those who have only seen the starry sky from the earth cannot imagine its appearance when the vague, half luminous veil of our air has been withdrawn. The stars we see on earth are the mere scattered survivors that penetrate our misty atmosphere. But now at last I could realise the meaning of the hosts of heaven!

Stranger things we were presently to see, but that airless, star-dusted sky! Of all things, I think that will be one of the last I shall forget.

The little window vanished with a click, another beside it snapped open and instantly closed, and then a third, and for a moment I had to close my eyes because of the blinding splendour of the waning moon.

For a space I had to stare at Cavor and the white-lit things about me to season my eyes to light again, before I could turn them towards that pallid glare.

Four windows were open in order that the gravitation of the moon might act upon all the substances in our sphere. I found I was no longer floating freely in space, but that my feet were resting on the glass in the direction of the moon. The blankets and cases of provisions were also creeping slowly down the glass, and presently came to rest so as to block out a portion of the view. It seemed to me, of course, that I looked "down" when I looked at the moon. On earth "down" means earthward, the way things fall, and "up" the reverse direction. Now the pull of gravitation was towards the moon, and for all I knew to the contrary our earth was overhead. And, of course, when all the Cavorite blinds were closed, "down" was towards the centre of our sphere, and " up " towards its outer wall.

It was curiously unlike earthly experience, too, to have the light coming up to one. On earth light falls from above, or comes slanting down sideways, but here it came from beneath our feet, and to see our shadows we had to look up.

At first it gave me a sort of vertigo to stand only on thick glass and look down upon the moon through hundreds of thousands of miles of vacant space; but this sickness passed very speedily. And then - the splendour of the sight!

The reader may imagine it best if he will lie on the ground some warm summer's night and look between his upraised feet at the moon, but for some reason, probably because the absence of air made it so much more luminous, the moon seemed already considerably larger than it does from earth. The minutest details of its surface were acutely clear. And since we did not see it through air, its outline was bright and sharp, there was no glow or halo about it, and the star-dust that covered the sky came right to its very margin, and marked the outline of its unilluminated part. And as I stood and stared at the moon between my feet, that perception of the impossible that had been with me off and on ever since our start, returned again with tenfold conviction.

"Cavor," I said, "this takes me queerly. Those companies we were going to run, and all that about minerals? "

"Well?"

"I don't see 'em here."

"No," said Cavor; "but you'll get over all that."

"I suppose I'm made to turn right side up again. Still, this - For a moment I could half believe there never was a world."

"That copy of Lloyd's News might help you."

I stared at the paper for a moment, then held it above the level of my face, and found I could read it quite easily. I struck a column of mean little advertisements. "A gentleman of private means is willing to lend money," I read. I knew that gentleman. Then somebody eccentric wanted to sell a Cutaway bicycle, "quite new and cost 15 pounds," for five pounds; and a lady in distress wished to dispose of some fish knives and forks, "a wedding present," at a great sacrifice. No doubt some simple soul was sagely examining these knives and forks, and another triumphantly riding off on that bicycle, and a third trustfully consulting that benevolent

gentleman of means even as I read. I laughed, and let the paper drift from my hand.

"Are we visible from the earth?" I asked.

"Why?"

"I knew some one who was rather interested in astronomy. It occurred to me that it would be rather odd if - my friend - chanced to be looking through come telescope."

"It would need the most powerful telescope on earth even now to see us as the minutest speck."

For a time I stared in silence at the moon.

"It's a world," I said; "one feels that infinitely more than one ever did on earth. People perhaps - "

"People!" he exclaimed. "No! Banish all that! Think yourself a sort of ultra-arctic voyager exploring the desolate places of space. Look at it!"

He waved his hand at the shining whiteness below. "It's dead - dead! Vast extinct volcanoes, lava wildernesses, tumbled wastes of snow, or frozen carbonic acid, or frozen air, and everywhere landslip seams and cracks and gulfs. Nothing happens. Men have watched this planet systematically with telescopes for over two hundred years. How much change do you think they have seen? "

"None."

"They have traced two indisputable landslips, a doubtful crack, and one slight periodic change of colour, and that's all."

"I didn't know they'd traced even that."

"Oh, yes. But as for people!"

"By the way," I asked, how small a thing will the biggest telescopes show upon the moon?"

"One could see a fair-sized church. One could certainly see any towns or buildings, or anything like the handiwork of men. There might perhaps be insects, something in the way of ants, for example, so that they could hide in deep burrows from the lunar light, or some new sort of creatures having no earthly parallel. That is the most probable thing, if we are to find life there at all. Think of the difference in conditions! Life must fit itself to a day as long as fourteen earthly days, a cloudless sun-blaze of fourteen days, and then a night of equal length, growing ever colder and colder under these, cold, sharp stars. In that night there must be cold, the ultimate cold, absolute zero, 273 C. below the earthly freezing point. Whatever life there is must hibernate through that, and rise again each day."

He mused. "One can imagine something worm - like," he said, "taking its air solid as an earth-worm swallows earth, or thick-skinned monsters -"

"By the bye," I said, "why didn't we bring a gun?"

He did not answer that question. "No," he concluded, "we just have to go. We shall see when we get there."

I remembered something. "Of course, there's my minerals, anyhow," I said; "whatever the conditions may be."

Presently he told me he wished to alter our course a little by letting the earth tug at us for a moment. He was going to open one earthward blind for thirty seconds. He warned me that it would make my head swim, and advised me to extend my hands against the glass to break my fall. I did as he directed, and thrust my feet against the bales of food cases and air

cylinders to prevent their falling upon me. Then with a click the window flew open. I fell clumsily upon hands and face, and saw for a moment between my black extended fingers our mother earth - a planet in a downward sky.

We were still very near - Cavor told me the distance was perhaps eight hundred miles and the huge terrestrial disc filled all heaven. But already it was plain to see that the world was a globe. The land below us was in twilight and vague, but westward the vast gray stretches of the Atlantic shone like molten silver under the receding day. I think I recognised the cloud-dimmed coast-lines of France and Spain and the south of England, and then, with a click, the shutter closed again, and I found myself in a state of extraordinary confusion sliding slowly over the smooth glass.

When at last things settled themselves in my mind again, it seemed quite beyond question that the moon was "down" and under my feet, and that the earth was somewhere away on the level of the horizon - the earth that had been "down" to me and my kindred since the beginning of things.

So slight were the exertions required of us, so easy did the practical annihilation of our weight make all we had to do, that the necessity for taking refreshment did not occur to us for nearly six hours (by Cavor's chronometer) after our start. I was amazed at that lapse of time. Even then I was satisfied with very little. Cavor examined the apparatus for absorbing carbonic acid and water, and pronounced it to be in satisfactory order, our consumption of oxygen having been extraordinarily slight. And our talk 'being exhausted for the time, and there being nothing further for us to do, we gave way to a curious drowsiness that had come upon us, and spreading our blankets on the bottom of the sphere in such a manner as to shut out most of the moonlight, wished each other good-night, and almost immediately fell asleep.

And so, sleeping, and sometimes talking and reading a little, and at times eating, although without any keenness of appetite,³ but for the most part in a sort of quiescence that was neither waking nor slumber, we fell

through a space of time that had neither night nor day in it, silently, softly, and swiftly down towards the moon.

It is a curious thing, that while we were in the sphere we felt not the slightest desire for food, nor did we feel the want of it when we abstained. At first we forced our appetites, but afterwards we fasted completely. Altogether we did not consume one-hundredth part of the compressed provisions we had brought with us. The amount of carbonic acid we breathed was also unnaturally low, but why this was, I am quite unable to explain.

Chapter 6

The Landing on the Moon

I REMEMBER how one day Cavor suddenly opened six of our shutters and blinded me so that I cried aloud at him. The whole area was moon, a stupendous scimitar of white dawn with its edge hacked out by notches of darkness, the crescent shore of an ebbing tide of darkness, out of which peaks and pinnacles came glittering into the blaze of the sun. I take it reader has seen pictures or photographs of the moon and that I need not describe the broader features of that landscape, those spacious ringlike ranges vaster than any terrestrial mountains, their summits shining in the day, their shadows harsh and deep, the gray disordered plains, the ridges, hills, and craterlets, all passing at last from a blazing illumination into a common mystery of black. Athwart this world we were flying scarcely a hundred miles above its crests and pinnacles. And now we could see, what no eye on earth will ever see, that under the blaze of the day the harsh outlines of the rocks and ravines of the plains and crater floor grew gray and indistinct under a thickening haze, that the white of their lit surfaces broke into lumps and patches, and broke again and shrank and vanished, and that here and there strange tints of brown and olive grew and spread.

But little time we had for watching then. For now we had come to the real danger of our journey. We had to drop ever closer to the moon as we spun about it, to slacken our pace and watch our chance, until at last we could dare to drop upon its surface.

For Cavor that was a time of intense exertion; for me it was an anxious inactivity. I seemed perpetually to be getting out of his way. He leapt about the sphere from point to point with an agility that would have been impossible on earth. He was perpetually opening and closing the Cavorite windows, making calculations, consulting his chronometer by means of the glow lamp during those last eventful hours. For a long time we had all our windows closed and hung silently in darkness hurling through space.

Then he was feeling for the shutter studs, and suddenly four windows were open. I staggered and covered my eyes, drenched and scorched and blinded by the unaccustomed splendour of the sun beneath my feet. Then again the shutters snapped, leaving my brain spinning in a darkness that pressed against the eyes. And after that I floated in another vast, black silence.

Then Cavor switched on the electric light, and told me he proposed to bind all our luggage together with the blankets about it, against the concussion of our descent. We did this with our windows closed, because in that way our goods arranged themselves naturally at the centre of the sphere. That too was a strange business; we two men floating loose in that spherical space, and packing and pulling ropes. Imagine it if you can! No up nor down, and every effort resulting in unexpected movements. Now I would be pressed against the glass with the full force of Cavor's thrust, now I would be kicking helplessly in a void. Now the star of the electric light would be overhead, now under foot. Now Cavor's feet would float up before my eyes, and now we would be crossways to each other. But at last our goods were safely bound together in a big soft bale, all except two blankets with head holes that we were to wrap about ourselves.

Then for a flash Cavor opened a window moonward, and we saw that we were dropping towards a huge central crater with a number of minor craters

grouped in a sort of cross about it. And then again Cavor flung our little sphere open to the scorching, blinding sun. I think he was using the sun's attraction as a brake. "Cover yourself with a blanket," he - cried, thrusting himself from me, and for a moment I did not understand.

Then I hauled the blanket from beneath my feet and got it about me and over my head and eyes. Abruptly he closed the shutters again, snapped one open again and closed it, then suddenly began snapping them all open, each safely into its steel roller. There came a jar, and then we were rolling over and over, bumping against the glass and against the big bale of our luggage, and clutching at each other, and outside some white substance splashed as if we were rolling down a slope of snow....

Over, clutch, bump, clutch, bump, over....

Came a thud, and I was half buried under the bale of our possessions, and for a space everything was still. Then I could hear Cavor puffing and grunting, and the snapping of a shutter in its sash. I made an effort, thrust back our blanket-wrapped luggage, and emerged from beneath it. Our open windows were just visible as a deeper black set with stars.

We were still alive, and we were lying in the darkness of the shadow of the wall of the great crater into which we had fallen.

We sat getting our breath again, and feeling the bruises on our limbs. I don't think either of us had had a very clear expectation of such rough handling as we had received. I struggled painfully to my feet. "And now," said I, "to look at the landscape of the moon But It's tremendously dark, Cavor!"

The glass was dewy, and as I spoke I wiped at it with my blanket. "We're half an hour or so beyond the day," he said. "We must wait."

It was impossible to distinguish anything. We might have been in a sphere of steel for all that we could see. My rubbing with the blanket simply

smear the glass, and as fast as I wiped it, it became opaque again with freshly condensed moisture mixed with an increasing quantity of blanket hairs. Of course I ought not to have used the blanket. In my efforts to clear the glass I slipped upon the damp surface, and hurt my shin against one of the oxygen cylinders that protruded from our bale.

The thing was exasperating - it was absurd. Here we were just arrived upon the moon, amidst we knew not what wonders, and all we could see was the gray and streaming wall of the bubble in which we had come.

"Confound it!" I said, "but at this rate we might have stopped at home;" and I squatted on the bale and shivered, and drew my blanket closer about me.

Abruptly the moisture turned to spangles and fronds of frost. "Can you reach the electric heater," said Cavor. "Yes - that black knob. Or we shall freeze."

I did not wait to be told twice. "And now," said I, what are we to do?"

"Wait," he said.

"Wait?"

"Of course. We shall have to wait until our air gets warm again, and then this glass will clear. We can't do anything till then. It's night here yet; we must wait for the day to overtake us. Meanwhile, don't you feel hungry?"

For a space I did not answer him, but sat fretting. I turned reluctantly from the smeared puzzle of the glass and stared at his face. "Yes," I said, "I am hungry. I feel somehow enormously disappointed. I had expected - I don't know what I had expected, but not this."

I summoned my philosophy, and rearranging my blanket about me sat down on the bale again and began my first meal on the moon. I don't think I finished it - I forget. Presently, first in patches, then running rapidly together into wider spaces, came the clearing of the glass, came the drawing of the misty veil that hid the moon world from our eyes.

We peered out upon the landscape of the moon.

Chapter 7

Sunrise on the Moon

As we saw it first it was the wildest and most desolate of scenes. We were in an enormous amphitheatre, a vast circular plain. the floor of the giant crater. Its cliff-like walls closed us in on every side. From the westward the light of the unseen sun fell upon them, reaching to the very foot of the cliff, and showed a disordered escarpment of drab and grayish rock, lined here and there with banks and crevices of snow. This was perhaps a dozen miles away, but at first no intervening atmosphere diminished in the slightest the minutely detailed brilliancy with which these things glared at us. They stood out clear and dazzling against a background of starry blackness that seemed to our earthly eyes rather a gloriously spangled velvet curtain than the spaciousness of the sky.

The eastward cliff was at first merely a starless selvedge to the starry dome. No rosy flush, no creeping pallor, announced the commencing day. Only the Corona, the Zodiacal light, a huge cone-shaped, luminous haze, pointing up towards the splendour of the morning star, warned us of the imminent nearness of the sun.

Whatever light was about us was reflected by the westward cliffs. It showed a huge undulating plain, cold and gray, a gray that deepened eastward into the absolute raven darkness of the cliff shadow. Innumerable

rounded gray summits, ghostly hummocks, billows of snowy substance, stretching crest beyond crest into the remote obscurity, gave us our first inkling of the distance of the crater wall. These hummocks looked like snow. At the time I thought they were snow. But they were not - they were mounds and masses of frozen air?

So it was at first, and then, sudden, swift, and amazing, came the lunar day.

The sunlight had crept down the cliff, it touched the drifted masses at its base and incontinently came striding with seven-leagued boots towards us. The distant cliff seemed to shift and quiver, and at the touch of the dawn a reek of gray vapour poured upward from the crater floor, whirls and puffs and drifting wraiths of gray, thicker and broader and denser, until at last the whole westward plain was steaming like a wet handkerchief held before the fire, and the westward cliffs were no more than refracted glare beyond.

"It is air," said Cavor. "It must be air - or it - would not rise like this - at the mere touch of a sun-beam. And at this pace. ..."

He peered upwards. "Look! " he said.

"What? " I asked.

"In the sky. Already. On the blackness - a little touch of blue. See! The stars seem larger. And the little ones and all those dim nebulosities we saw in empty space - they are hidden! "

Swiftly, steadily, the day approached us. Gray summit after gray summit was overtaken by the blaze, and turned to a smoking white intensity. At last there was nothing to the west of us but a bank of surging fog, the tumultuous advance and ascent of cloudy haze. The distant cliff had receded farther and farther, had loomed and changed through the whirl, and foundered and vanished at last in its confusion.

Nearer came that steaming advance, nearer and nearer, coming as fast as the shadow of a cloud before the south-west wind. About us rose a thin anticipatory haze.

Cavor gripped my arm. "What?" I said.

"Look! The sunrise! The sun!"

He turned me about and pointed to the brow of the eastward cliff, looming above the haze about us, scarce lighter than the darkness of the sky. But now its line was marked by strange reddish shapes, tongues of vermilion flame that writhed and danced. I fancied it must be spirals of vapour that had caught the light and made this crest of fiery tongues against the sky, but indeed it was the solar prominences I saw, a crown of fire about the sun that is forever hidden from earthly eyes by our atmospheric veil.

And then - the sun!

Steadily, inevitably came a brilliant line, came a thin edge of intolerable effulgence that took a circular shape, became a bow, became a blazing sceptre, and hurled a shaft of heat at us as though it was a spear.

It seemed verily to stab my eyes! I cried aloud and turned about blinded, groping for my blanket beneath the bale.

And with that incandescence came a sound, the first sound that had reached us from without since we left the earth, a hissing and rustling, the stormy trailing of the aerial garment of the advancing day. And with the coming of the sound and the light the sphere lurched, and blinded and dazzled we staggered helplessly against each other. It lurched again, and the hissing grew louder. I had shut my eyes perforce, I was making clumsy efforts to cover my head with my blanket, and this second lurch sent me helplessly off my feet. I fell against the bale, and opening my eyes had a

momentary glimpse of the air just outside our glass. It was running - it was boiling - like snow into which a white-hot rod is thrust. What had been solid air had suddenly at the touch of the 'sun become a paste, a mud, a slushy liquefaction, that hissed and bubbled into gas.

There came a still more violent whirl of the sphere and we had clutched one another. In another moment we were spun about again. Pound we went and over, and then I was on all fours. The lunar dawn had hold of us. It meant to show us little men what the moon could do with us.

I caught a second glimpse of things without, puffs of vapour, half liquid slush, excavated, sliding, falling, sliding. We dropped into darkness. I went down with Cavor's knees in my chest. Then he seemed to fly away from me, and for a moment I lay with all the breath out of my body staring upward. A toppling crag of the melting stuff had splashed over us, buried us, and now it thinned and boiled off us. I saw the bubbles dancing on the glass above. I heard Cavor exclaiming feebly.

Then some huge landslip in the thawing air had caught us, and spluttering expostulation, we began to roll down a slope, rolling faster and faster, leaping crevasses and rebounding from banks, faster and faster, westward into the white-hot boiling tumult of the lunar day.

Clutching at one another we spun about, pitched this way and that, our bale of packages leaping at us, pounding at us. We collided, we gripped, we were torn asunder - our heads met, and the whole universe burst into fiery darts and stars! On the earth we should have smashed one another a dozen times, but on the moon, luckily for us, our weight was only one-sixth of what it is terrestrially, and we fell very mercifully. I recall a sensation of utter sickness, a feeling as if my brain were upside down within my skull, and then -

Something was at work upon my face, some thin feelers worried my ears. Then I discovered the brilliance of the landscape around was mitigated by

blue spectacles. Cavor bent over me, and I saw his face upside down, his eyes also protected by tinted goggles. His breath came irregularly, and his lip was bleeding from a bruise. "Better?" he said, wiping the blood with the back of his hand.

Everything seemed swaying for a space, but that was simply my giddiness. I perceived that he had closed some of the shutters in the outer sphere to save me - from the direct blaze of the sun. I was aware that everything about us was very brilliant.

"Lord! I gasped. "But this -"

I craned my neck to see. I perceived there was a blinding glare outside, an utter change from the gloomy darkness of our first impressions. "Have I been insensible long?" I asked.

"I don't know - the chronometer is broken. Some little time. ... My dear chap! I have been afraid..."

I lay for a space taking this in. I saw his face still bore evidences of emotion. For a while I said nothing. I passed an inquisitive hand over my contusions, and surveyed [his face for similar damages. The back of my right hand had suffered most, and was skinless and raw. My forehead was bruised and had bled. He handed me a little measure with some of the restorative - I forget the name of it - he had brought with us. After a time I felt a little better. I began to stretch my limbs carefully. Soon I could talk.

"It wouldn't have done," I said, as though there had been no interval.

"No! it wouldn't."

He thought, his hands hanging over his knees. He peered through the glass and then stared at me.

"Good Lord! " he said. "No!"

"What has happened?" I asked after a pause. "Have we jumped to the tropics? "

"It was as I expected. This air has evaporated - if it is air. At any rate, it has evaporated, and the surface of the moon is showing. We are lying on a bank of earthy rock. Here and there bare soil is exposed. A queer sort of soil!"

It occurred to him that it was unnecessary to explain. He assisted me into a sitting position, and I could see with my own eyes.

Chapter 8

A Lunar Morning

The harsh emphasis, the pitiless black and white of scenery had altogether disappeared. The glare of the sun had taken upon itself a faint tinge of amber; the shadows upon the cliff of the crater wall were deeply purple. To the eastward a dark bank of fog still crouched and sheltered from the sunrise, but to the westward the sky was blue and clear. I began to realise the length of my insensibility.

We were no longer in a void. An atmosphere had arisen about us. The outline of things had gained in character, had grown acute and varied; save for a shadowed space of white substance here and there, white substance that was no longer air but snow, the arctic appearance had gone altogether. Everywhere broad rusty brown spaces of bare and tumbled earth spread to the blaze of the sun. Here and there at the edge of the snowdrifts were transient little pools and eddies of water, the only things stirring in that expanse of barrenness. The sunlight inundated the upper two thirds of our sphere and turned our climate to high summer, but our feet were still in shadow, and the sphere was lying upon a drift of

snow.

And scattered here and there upon the slope, and emphasised by little white threads of unthawed snow upon their shady sides, were shapes like sticks, dry twisted sticks of the same rusty hue as the rock upon which they lay. That caught one's thoughts sharply. Sticks! On a lifeless world? Then as my eye grew more accustomed to the texture of their substance, I perceived that almost all this surface had a fibrous texture, like the carpet of brown needles one finds beneath the shade of pine trees.

"Cavor! " I said.

"Yes."

"It may be a dead world now - but once -"

Something arrested my attention. I had discovered among these needles a number of little round objects. And it seemed to me that one of these had moved. "Cavor," I whispered.

"What?"

But I did not answer at once. I stared incredulous. For an instant I could not believe my eyes. I gave an inarticulate cry. I gripped his arm. I pointed. "Look!" I cried, finding my tongue. "There! Yes! And there!"

His eyes followed my pointing finger. "Eh?" he said.

How can I describe the thing I saw? It is so petty a thing to state, and yet it seemed so wonderful, so pregnant with emotion. I have said that amidst the stick-like litter were these rounded bodies, these little oval bodies that might have passed as very small pebbles. And now first one and then another had stirred, had rolled over and cracked, and down the crack of each of them showed a minute line of yellowish green, thrusting outward

to meet the hot encouragement of the newly-risen sun. For a moment that was all, and then there stirred, and burst a third!

"It is a seed," said Cavor. And then I heard him whisper very softly, "Life!"

"Life!" And immediately it poured upon us that our vast journey had not been made in vain, that we had come to no arid waste of minerals, but to a world that lived and moved! We watched intensely. I remember I kept rubbing the glass before me with my sleeve, jealous of the faintest suspicion of mist.

The picture was clear and vivid only in the middle of the field. All about that centre the dead fibres and seeds were magnified and distorted by the curvature of the glass. But we could see enough! One after another all down the sunlit slope these miraculous little brown bodies burst and gaped apart, like seed-pods, like the husks of fruits; opened eager mouths. that drank in the heat and light pouring in a cascade from the newly-risen sun.

Every moment more of these seed coats ruptured, and even as they did so the swelling pioneers overflowed their rent-distended seed-cases, and passed into the second stage of growth. With a steady assurance, a swift deliberation, these amazing seeds thrust a rootlet downward to the earth and a queer little bundle-like bud into the air. In a little while the whole slope was dotted with minute plantlets standing at attention in the blaze of the sun.

They did not stand for long. The bundle-like buds swelled and strained and opened with a jerk, thrusting out a coronet of little sharp tips, spreading a whorl of tiny, spiky, brownish leaves, that lengthened rapidly, lengthened visibly even as we watched. The movement was slower than any animal's, swifter than any plant's I have ever seen before. How can I suggest it to you - the way that growth went on? The leaf tips grew so that they moved onward even while we looked at them. The brown

seed-case shrivelled and was absorbed with an equal rapidity. Have you ever on a cold day taken a thermometer into your warm hand and watched the little thread of mercury creep up the tube? These moon plants grew like that.

In a few minutes, as it seemed, the buds of the more forward of these plants had lengthened into a stem and were even putting forth a second whorl of leaves, and all the slope that had seemed so recently a lifeless stretch of litter was now dark with the stunted olive-green herbage of bristling spikes that swayed with the vigour of their growing.

I turned about, and behold! along the upper edge of a rock to the eastward a similar fringe in a scarcely less forward condition swayed and bent, dark against the blinding glare of the sun. And beyond this fringe was the silhouette of a plant mass, branching clumsily like a cactus, and swelling visibly, swelling like a bladder that fills with air.

Then to the westward also I discovered that another such distended form was rising over the scrub. But here the light fell upon its sleek sides, and I could see that its colour was a vivid orange hue. It rose as one watched it; if one looked away from it for a minute and then back, its outline had changed; it thrust out blunt congested branches until in a little time it rose a coralline shape of many feet in height. Compared with such a growth the terrestrial puff-ball, which will sometimes swell a foot in diameter in a single night, would be a hopeless laggard. But then the puff-ball grows against a gravitational pull six times that of the moon. Beyond, out of gullies and flats that had been hidden from us, but not from the quickening sun, over reefs and banks of shining rock, a bristling beard of spiky and fleshy vegetation was straining into view, hurrying tumultuously to take advantage of the brief day in which it must flower and fruit and seed again and die. It was like a miracle, that growth. So, one must imagine, the trees and plants arose at the Creation and covered the desolation of the new-made earth.

Imagine it; Imagine that dawn! The resurrection of the frozen air, the

stirring and quickening of the soil, and then this silent uprising of vegetation, this unearthly ascent of fleshiness and spikes. Conceive it all lit by a blaze that would make the intensest sunlight of earth seem watery and weak. And still around this stirring jungle, wherever there was shadow, lingered banks of bluish snow. And to have the picture of our impression complete, you must bear in mind that we saw it all through a thick bent glass, distorting it as things are distorted by a lens, acute only in the centre of the picture, and very bright there, and towards the edges magnified and unreal.

Chapter 9

Prospecting Begins

WE ceased to gaze. We turned to each other, the same thought, the same question in our eyes. For these plants to grow, there must be some air, however attenuated, air that we also should be able to breathe.

"The manhole?" I said.

"Yes!" said Cavor, "if it is air we see!"

"In a little while," I said, "these plants will be as high as we are. Suppose - suppose after all - Is it certain? How do you know that stuff is air? It may be nitrogen - it may be carbonic acid even!"

"That's easy," he said, and set about proving it. He produced a big piece of crumpled paper from the bale, lit it, and thrust it hastily through the man-hole valve. I bent forward and peered down through the thick glass for its appearance outside, that little flame on whose evidence depended so much!

I saw the paper drop out and lie lightly upon the snow. The pink flame of its burning vanished. For an instant it seemed to be extinguished. And

then I saw a little blue tongue upon the edge of it that trembled, and crept, and spread!

Quietly the whole sheet, save where it lay in Immediate contact with the snow, charred and shrivelled and sent up a quivering thread of smoke. There was no doubt left to me; the atmosphere of the moon was either pure oxygen or air, and capable therefore - unless its tenuity was excessive - of supporting our alien life. We might emerge - and live!

I sat down with my legs on either side of the manhole and prepared to unscrew it, but Cavor stopped me. "There is first a little precaution," he said. He pointed out that although it was certainly an oxygenated atmosphere outside, it might still be so rarefied as to cause us grave injury. He reminded me of mountain sickness, and of the bleeding that often afflicts aeronauts who have ascended too swiftly, and he spent some time in the preparation of a sickly-tasting drink which he insisted on my sharing. It made me feel a little numb, but otherwise had no effect on me. Then he permitted me to begin unscrewing.

Presently the glass stopper of the manhole was so far undone that the denser air within our sphere began to escape along the thread of the screw, singing as a kettle sings before it boils. Thereupon he made me desist. It speedily became evident that the pressure outside was very much less than it was within. How much less it was we had no means of telling.

I sat grasping the stopper with both hands, ready to close it again if, in spite of our intense hope, the lunar atmosphere should after all prove too rarefied for us, and Cavor sat with a cylinder of compressed oxygen at hand to restore our pressure. We looked at one another in silence, and then at the fantastic vegetation that swayed and grew visibly and noiselessly without. And ever that shrill piping continued.

My blood-vessels began to throb in my ears, and the sound of Cavor's movements diminished. I noted how still everything had become, because of the thinning of the air.

As our air sizzled out from the screw the moisture of it condensed in little puffs.

Presently I experienced a peculiar shortness of breath that lasted indeed during the whole of the time of our exposure to the moon's exterior atmosphere, and a rather unpleasant sensation about the ears and finger-nails and the back of the throat grew upon my attention, and presently passed off again.

But then came vertigo and nausea that abruptly changed the quality of my courage. I gave the lid of the manhole half a turn and made a hasty explanation to Cavor; but now he was the more sanguine. He answered me in a voice that seemed extraordinarily small and remote, because of the thinness of the air that carried the sound. He recommended a nip of brandy, and set me the example, and presently I felt better. I turned the manhole stopper back again. The throbbing in my ears grew louder, and then I remarked that the piping note of the outrush had ceased. For a time I could not be sure that it had ceased.

"Well?" said Cavor, in the ghost of a voice.

"Well?" said I.

"Shall we go on?"

I thought. "Is this all?"

"If you can stand it."

By way of answer I went on unscrewing. I lifted the circular operculum from its place and laid it carefully on the bale. A flake or so of snow whirled and vanished as that thin and unfamiliar air took possession of our sphere. I knelt, and then seated myself at the edge of the manhole, peering over it. Beneath, within a yard of my face, lay the untrodden snow

of the moon.

There came a little pause. Our eyes met.

"It doesn't distress your lungs too much?" said Cavor.

"No," I said. "I can stand this."

He stretched out his hand for his blanket, thrust his head through its central hole, and wrapped it about him. He sat down on the edge of the manhole, he let his feet drop until they were within six inches of the lunar ground. He hesitated for a moment, then thrust himself forward, dropped these intervening inches, and stood upon the untrodden soil of the moon.

As he stepped forward he was refracted grotesquely by the edge of the glass. He stood for a moment looking this way and that. Then he drew himself together and leapt.

The glass distorted everything, but it seemed to me even then to be an extremely big leap. He had at one bound become remote. He seemed twenty or thirty feet off. He was standing high upon a rocky mass and gesticulating back to me. Perhaps he was shouting - but the sound did not reach me. But how the deuce had he done this? I felt like a man who has just seen a new conjuring trick.

In a puzzled state of mind I too dropped through the manhole. I stood up. Just in front of me the snowdrift had fallen away and made a sort of ditch. I made a step and jumped.

I found myself flying through the air, saw the rock on which he stood coming to meet me, clutched it and clung in a state of infinite amazement.

I gasped a painful laugh. I was tremendously confused. Cavor bent down

arid shouted in piping tones for me to be careful.

I had forgotten that on the moon, with only an eighth part of the earth's mass and a quarter of its diameter, my weight was barely a sixth what it was on earth. But now that fact insisted on being remembered.

"We are out of Mother Earth's leading - strings now," he said.

With a guarded effort I raised myself to the top, and moving as cautiously as a rheumatic patient, stood up beside him under the blaze of the sun. The sphere lay behind us on its dwindling snowdrift thirty feet away.

As far as the eye could see over the enormous disorder of rocks that formed the crater floor, the same bristling scrub that surrounded us was starting into life, diversified here and there by bulging masses of a cactus form, and scarlet and purple lichens that grew so fast they seemed to crawl over the rocks. The whole area of the crater seemed to me then to be one similar wilderness up to the very foot of the surrounding cliff.

This cliff was apparently bare of vegetation save at its base, and with buttresses and terraces and platforms that did not very greatly attract our attention at the time. It was many miles away from us in every direction, we seemed to be almost at the centre of the crater, and we saw it through a certain haziness that drove before the wind. For there was even a wind now in the thin air, a swift yet weak wind that chilled exceedingly but exerted little pressure. It was blowing I round the crater, as it seemed, to the hot illuminated side from the foggy darkness under the sunward wall. It was difficult to look into this eastward fog; we had to peer with half-closed eyes beneath the shade of our hands, because of the fierce intensity of the motionless sun.

"It seems to be deserted," said Cavor, "absolutely desolate."

I looked about me again. I retained even then a clinging hope of some quasi-human evidence, some pinnacle of building, some house or engine, but

everywhere one looked spread the tumbled rocks in peaks and crests, and the darting scrub and those bulging cacti that swelled and swelled, a flat negation as it seemed of all such hope.

"It looks as though these plants had it to themselves," I said. " I see no trace of any other creature."

"No insects - no birds, no! Not a trace, not a scrap nor particle of animal life. If there was - what would they do in the night? ... No; there's just these plants alone."

I shaded my eyes with my hand. "It's like the landscape of a dream. These things are less like earthly land plants than the things one imagines among the rocks at the bottom of the sea. Look at that yonder! One might imagine it a lizard changed into a plant. And the glare! "

"This is only the fresh morning," said Cavor.

He sighed and looked about him. "This is no world for men," he said. "And yet in a way - it appeals."

He became silent for a time, then commenced his meditative humming.

I started at a gentle touch, and found a thin sheet of livid lichen lapping over my shoe. I kicked at it and it fell to powder, and each speck began to grow.

I heard Cavor exclaim sharply, and perceived that one of the fixed bayonets of the scrub had pricked him. He hesitated, his eyes sought among the rocks about us. A sudden blaze of pink had crept up a ragged pillar of crag. It was a most extraordinary pink, a livid magenta.

"Look!" said I, turning, and behold Cavor had vanished.

For an instant I stood transfixed. Then I made a hasty step to look over

the verge of the rock. But in my surprise at his disappearance I forgot once more that we were on the moon. The thrust of my foot that I made in striding would have carried me a yard on earth; on the moon it carried me six - a good five yards over the edge. For the moment the thing had something of the effect of those nightmares when one falls and falls. For while one falls sixteen feet in the first second of a fall on earth, on the moon one falls two, and with only a sixth of one's weight. I fell, or rather I jumped down, about ten yards I suppose. It seemed to take quite a long time, five or six seconds, I should think. I floated through the air and fell like a feather, knee-deep in a snow-drift in the bottom of a gully of blue-gray, white-veined rock.

I looked about me. "Cavor!" I cried; but no Cavor was visible.

"Cavor!" I cried louder, and the rocks echoed me.

I turned fiercely to the rocks and clambered to the summit of them.

"Cavor!" I cried. My voice sounded like the voice of a lost lamb.

The sphere, too, was not in sight, and for a moment a horrible feeling of desolation pinched my heart.

Then I saw him. He was laughing and gesticulating to attract my attention. He was on a bare patch of rock twenty or thirty yards away. I could not hear his voice, but "jump" said his gestures. I hesitated, the distance seemed enormous. Yet I reflected that surely I must be able to clear a greater distance than Cavor.

I made a step back, gathered myself together, and leapt with all my might. I seemed to shoot right up in the air as though I should never come down.

It was horrible and delightful, and as wild as a nightmare, to go flying off in this fashion. I realised my leap had been altogether too violent. I flew clean over Cavor's head and beheld a spiky confusion in a gully spreading to meet my fall. I gave a yelp of alarm. I put out my hands and

straightened my legs.

I hit a huge fungoid bulk that burst all about me, scattering a mass of orange spores in every direction, and covering me with orange powder. I rolled over spluttering, and came to rest convulsed with breathless laughter.

I became aware of Cavor's little round face peering over a bristling hedge. He shouted some faded inquiry. "Eh?" I tried to shout, but could not do so for want of breath. He made his way towards me, coming gingerly among the bushes.

"We've got to be careful," he said. "This moon has no discipline. She'll let us smash ourselves."

He helped me to my feet. "You exerted yourself too much," he said, dabbing at the yellow stuff with his hand to remove it from my garments.

I stood passive and panting, allowing him to beat off the jelly from my knees and elbows and lecture me upon my misfortunes. "We don't quite allow for the gravitation. Our muscles are scarcely educated yet. We must practise a little, when you have got your breath."

I pulled two or three little thorns out of my hand, and sat for a time on a boulder of rock. My muscles were quivering, and I had that feeling of personal disillusionment that comes at the first fall to the learner of cycling on earth.

It suddenly occurred to Cavor that the cold air in the gully, after the brightness of the sun, might give me a fever. So we clambered back into the sunlight. We found that beyond a few abrasions I had received no serious injuries from my tumble, and at Cavor's suggestion we were presently looking round for some safe and easy landing-place for my next leap. We chose a rocky slab some ten yards off, separated from us by a little thicket of olive-green spikes.

"Imagine it there!" said Cavor, who was assuming the airs of a trainer, and he pointed to a spot about four feet from my toes. This leap I managed without difficulty, and I must confess I found a certain satisfaction in Cavor's falling short by a foot or so and tasting the spikes of the scrub. "One has to be careful you see," he said, pulling out his thorns, and with that he ceased to be my Mentor and became my fellow-learner in the art of lunar locomotion.

We chose a still easier jump and did it without difficulty, and then leapt back again, and to and fro several times, accustoming our muscles to the new standard. I could never have believed had I not experienced it, how rapid that adaptation would be. In a very little time indeed, certainly after fewer than thirty leaps, we could judge the effort necessary for a distance with almost terrestrial assurance.

And all this time the lunar plants were growing around us, higher and denser and more entangled, every moment thicker and taller, spiked plants, green cactus masses, fungi, fleshy and lichenous things, strangest radiate and sinuous shapes. But we were so intent upon our leaping, that for a time we gave no heed to their unfaltering expansion.

An extraordinary elation had taken possession of us. Partly, I think, it was our sense of release from the confinement of the sphere. Mainly, however, the thin sweetness of the air, which I am certain contained a much larger proportion of oxygen than our terrestrial atmosphere. In spite of the strange quality of all about us, I felt as adventurous and experimental as a cockney would do placed for the first time among mountains and I do not think it occurred to either of us, face to face though we were with the unknown, to be very greatly afraid.

We were bitten by a spirit of enterprise. We selected a lichenous kopje perhaps fifteen yards away, and landed neatly on its summit one after the other. "Good!" we cried to each other; "good!" and Cavor made three steps and went off to a tempting slope of snow a good twenty yards and more

beyond. I stood for a moment struck by the grotesque effect of his soaring figure - his dirty cricket cap, and spiky hair, his little round body, his arms and his knicker-bockered legs tucked up tightly - against the weird spaciousness of the lunar scene. A gust of laughter seized me, and then I stepped off to follow. Plump! I dropped beside him.

We made a few gargantuan strides, leapt three or four times more, and sat down at last in a lichenous hollow. Our lungs were painful. We sat holding our sides and recovering our breath, looking appreciation to one another. Cavor panted something about "amazing sensations." And then came a thought into my head. For the moment it did not seem a particularly appalling thought, simply a natural question arising out of the situation.

"By the way," I said, "where exactly is the sphere?"

Cavor looked at me. "Eh?"

The full meaning of what we were saying struck me sharply.

"Cavor!" I cried, laying a hand on his arm, "where is the sphere?"

Chapter 10

Lost Men in the Moon

HIS face caught something of my dismay. He stood up and stared about him at the scrub that fenced us in and rose about us, straining upward in a passion of growth. He put a dubious hand to his lips. He spoke with a sudden lack of assurance. "I think," he said slowly, "we left it ... somewhere ... about there."

He pointed a hesitating finger that wavered in an arc.

"I'm not sure." His look of consternation deepened. "Anyhow," he said, with his eyes on me, "it can't be far."

We had both stood up. We made unmeaning ejaculations, our eyes sought in the twining, thickening jungle round about us.

All about us on the sunlit slopes frothed and swayed the darting shrubs, the swelling cactus, the creeping lichens, and wherever the shade remained the snow-drifts lingered. North, south, east, and west spread an identical monotony of unfamiliar forms. And somewhere, buried already among this tangled confusion, was our sphere, our home, our only provision, our only hope of escape from this fantastic wilderness of ephemeral growths into which we had come.

"I think after all," he said, pointing suddenly, "it might be over there."

"No," I said. "We have turned in a curve. See! here is the mark of my heels. It's clear the thing must be more to the eastward, much more. No - the sphere must be over there."

"I think," said Cavor, "I kept the sun upon my right all the time."

"Every leap, it seems to me," I said, "my shadow flew before me."

We stared into one another's eyes. The area of the crater had become enormously vast to our imaginations, the growing thickets already impenetrably dense.

"Good heavens! What fools we have been!"

"It's evident that we must find it again," said Cavor, "and that soon. The sun grows stronger. We should be fainting with the heat already if it wasn't so dry. And ... I'm hungry."

I stared at him. I had not suspected this aspect of the matter before. But

it came to me at once - a positive craving. "Yes," I said with emphasis. "I am hungry too."

He stood up with a look of active resolution. "Certainly we must find the sphere."

As calmly as possible we surveyed the interminable reefs and thickets that formed the floor of the crater, each of us weighing in silence the chances of our finding the sphere before we were overtaken by heat and hunger.

"It can't be fifty yards from here," said Cavor, with indecisive gestures. "The only thing is to beat round about until we come upon it."

"That is all we can do," I said, without any alacrity to begin our hunt. "I wish this confounded spike bush did not grow so fast!"

"That's just it," said Cavor. "But it was lying on a bank of snow."

I stared about me in the vain hope of recognising some knoll or shrub that had been near the sphere. But everywhere was a confusing sameness, everywhere the aspiring bushes, the distending fungi, the dwindling snow banks, steadily and inevitably changed. The sun scorched and stung, the faintness of an unaccountable hunger mingled with our infinite perplexity. And even as we stood there, confused and lost amidst unprecedented things, we became aware for the first time of a sound upon the moon other than the air of the growing plants, the faint sighing of the wind, or those that we ourselves had made.

Boom. ... Boom. ... Boom.

It came from beneath our feet, a sound in the earth. We seemed to hear it with our feet as much as with our ears. Its dull resonance was muffled by distance, thick with the quality of intervening substance. No sound that I can imagine could have astonished us more, or have changed more completely the quality of things about us. For this sound, rich, slow, and

deliberate, seemed to us as though it could be nothing but the striking of some gigantic buried clock.

Boom. ... Boom. ... Boom.

Sound suggestive of still cloisters, of sleepless nights in crowded cities, of vigils and the awaited hour, of all that is orderly and methodical in life, booming out pregnant and mysterious in this fantastic desert! To the eye everything was unchanged: the desolation of bushes and cacti waving silently in the wind, stretched unbroken to the distant cliffs, the still dark sky was empty overhead, and the hot sun hung and burned. And through it all, a warning, a threat, throbbed this enigma of sound.

Boom. ... Boom. ... Boom. ...

We questioned one another in faint and faded voices.

"A clock?"

"Like a clock!"

"What is it?"

"What can it be?"

"Count," was Cavor's belated suggestion, and at that word the striking ceased.

The silence, the rhythmic disappointment of the silence, came as a fresh shock. For a moment one could doubt whether one had ever heard a sound. Or whether it might not still be going on. Had I indeed heard a sound?

I felt the pressure of Cavor's hand upon my arm. He spoke in an undertone, as though he feared to wake some sleeping thing. "Let us keep

together," he whispered, "and look for the sphere. We must get back to the sphere. This is beyond our understanding."

"Which way shall we go?"

He hesitated. An intense persuasion of presences, of unseen things about us and near us, dominated our minds. What could they be? Where could they be? Was this arid desolation, alternately frozen and scorched, only the outer rind and mask of some subterranean world? And if so, what sort of world? What sort of inhabitants might it not presently disgorge upon us?

And then, stabbing the aching stillness as vivid and sudden as an unexpected thunderclap, came a clang and rattle as though great gates of metal had suddenly been flung apart.

It arrested our steps. We stood gaping helplessly. Then Cavor stole towards me.

"I do not understand!" he whispered close to my face. He waved his hand vaguely skyward, the vague suggestion of still vaguer thoughts.

"A hiding-place! If anything came..."

I looked about us. I nodded my head in assent to him.

We started off, moving stealthily with the most exaggerated precautions against noise. We went towards a thicket of scrub. A clangour like hammers flung about a boiler hastened our steps. "We must crawl," whispered Cavor.

The lower leaves of the bayonet plants, already overshadowed by the newer ones above, were beginning to wilt and shrivel so that we could thrust our way in among the thickening stems without serious injury. A stab in the face or arm we did not heed. At the heart of the thicket I stopped, and stared panting into Cavor's face.

"Subterranean," he whispered. "Below."

"They may come out."

"We must find the sphere!"

"Yes," I said; "but how?"

"Crawl till we come to it."

"But if we don't?"

"Keep hidden. See what they are like."

"We will keep together," said I.

He thought. "Which way shall we go?"

"We must take our chance."

We peered this way and that. Then very circumspectly, we began to crawl through the lower jungle, making, so far as we could judge, a circuit, halting now at every waving fungus, at every sound, intent only on the sphere from which we had so foolishly emerged. Ever and again from out of the earth beneath us came concussions, beatings, strange, inexplicable, mechanical sounds; and once, and then again, we thought we heard something, a faint rattle and tumult, borne to us through the air. But fearful as we were we dared essay no vantage-point to survey the crater. For long we saw nothing of the beings whose sounds were so abundant and insistent. But for the faintness of our hunger and the drying of our throats that crawling would have had the quality of a very vivid dream. It was so absolutely unreal. The only element with any touch of reality was these sounds.

Figure it to yourself! About us the dream-like jungle, with the silent

bayonet leaves darting overhead, and the silent, vivid, sun-splashed lichens under our hands and knees, waving with the vigour of their growth as a carpet waves when the wind gets beneath it. Ever and again one of the bladder fungi, bulging and distending under the sun, loomed upon us. Ever and again some novel shape in vivid colour obtruded. The very cells that built up these plants were as large as my thumb, like beads of coloured glass. And all these things were saturated in the unmitigated glare of the sun, were seen against a sky that was bluish black and spangled still, in spite of the sunlight, with a few surviving stars. Strange! the very forms and texture of the stones were strange. It was all strange, the feeling of one's body was unprecedented, every other movement ended in a surprise. The breath sucked thin in one's throat, the blood flowed through one's ears in a throbbing tide - thud, thud, thud, thud....

And ever and again came gusts of turmoil, hammering, the clanging and throb of machinery, and presently - the bellowing of great beasts!

Chapter 11

The Mooncalf Pastures

SO we two poor terrestrial castaways, lost in that wild-growing moon jungle, crawled in terror before the sounds that had come upon us. We crawled, as it seemed, a long time before we saw either Selenite or mooncalf, though we heard the bellowing and gruntulous noises of these latter continually drawing nearer to us. We crawled through stony ravines, over snow slopes, amidst fungi that ripped like thin bladders at our thrust, emitting a watery humour, over a perfect pavement of things like puff-balls, and beneath interminable thickets of scrub. And ever more helplessly our eyes sought for our abandoned sphere. The noise of the mooncalves would at times be a vast flat calf-like sound, at times it rose to an amazed and wrathful bellowing, and again it would become a clogged bestial sound, as though these unseen creatures had sought to eat and bellow at the same time.

Our first view was but an inadequate transitory glimpse, yet none the less disturbing because it was incomplete. Cavor was crawling in front at the time, and he first was aware of their proximity. He stopped dead, arresting me with a single gesture.

A crackling and smashing of the scrub appeared to be advancing directly upon us, and then, as we squatted close and endeavoured to judge of the nearness and direction of this noise, there came a terrific bellow behind us, so close and vehement that the tops of the bayonet scrub bent before it, and one felt the breath of it hot and moist. And, turning about, we saw indistinctly through a crowd of swaying stems the mooncalf's shining sides, and the long line of its back loomed out against the sky.

Of course it is hard for me now to say how much I saw at that time, because my impressions were corrected by subsequent observation. First of all impressions was its enormous size; the girth of its body was some fourscore feet, its length perhaps two hundred. Its sides rose and fell with its laboured breathing. I perceived that its gigantic, flabby body lay along the ground, and that its skin was of a corrugated white, dappling into blackness along the backbone. But of its feet we saw nothing. I think also that we saw then the profile at least of the almost brainless head, with its fat-encumbered neck, its slobbering omnivorous mouth, its little nostrils, and tight shut eyes. (For the mooncalf invariably shuts its eyes in the presence of the sun.) We had a glimpse of a vast red pit as it opened its mouth to bleat and bellow again; we had a breath from the pit, and then the monster heeled over like a ship, dragged forward along the ground, creasing all its leathery skin, rolled again, and so wallowed past us, smashing a path amidst the scrub, and was speedily hidden from our eyes by the dense interlacings beyond. Another appeared more distantly, and then another, and then, as though he was guiding these animated lumps of provender to their pasture, a Selenite came momentarily into ken. My grip upon Cavor's foot became convulsive at the sight of him, and we remained motionless and peering long after he had passed out of our range.

By contrast with the mooncalves he seemed a trivial being, a mere ant, scarcely five feet high. He was, wearing garments of some leathery substance, so that no portion of his actual body appeared, but of this, of course, we were entirely ignorant. He presented himself, therefore, as a compact, bristling creature, having much of the quality of a complicated insect, with whip-like tentacles and a clanging arm projecting from his shining cylindrical body case. The form of his head was hidden by his enormous many-spiked helmet - we discovered afterwards that he used the spikes for prodding refractory mooncalves - and a pair of goggles of darkened glass, set very much at the side, gave a bird-like quality to the metallic apparatus that covered his face. His arms did not project beyond his body case, and he carried himself upon short legs that, wrapped though they were in warm coverings, seemed to our terrestrial eyes inordinately flimsy. They had very short thighs, very long shanks, and little feet.

In spite of his heavy-looking clothing, he was progressing with what would be, from the terrestrial point of view, very considerable strides, and his clanging arm was busy. The quality of his motion during the instant of his passing suggested haste and a certain anger, and soon after we had lost sight of him we heard the bellow of a mooncalf change abruptly into a short, sharp squeal followed by the scuffle of its acceleration. And gradually that bellowing receded, and then came to an end, as if the pastures sought had been attained.

We listened. For a space the moon world was still. But it was some time before we resumed our crawling search for the vanished sphere.

When next we saw mooncalves they were some little distance away from us in a place of tumbled rocks. The less vertical surfaces of the rocks were thick with a speckled green plant growing in dense mossy clumps, upon which these creatures were browsing. We stopped at the edge of the reeds amidst which we were crawling at the sight of them, peering out at them and looking round for a second glimpse of a Selenite. They lay against their food like stupendous slugs, huge, greasy hulls, eating greedily and

noisily, with a sort of sobbing avidity. They seemed monsters of mere fatness, clumsy and overwhelmed to a degree that would make a Smithfield ox seem a model of agility. Their busy, writhing, chewing mouths, and eyes closed, together with the appetising sound of their munching, made up an effect of animal enjoyment that was singularly stimulating to our empty frames.

"Hogs!" said Cavor, with unusual passion. "Dis- gusting hogs!" and after one glare of angry envy crawled off through the bushes to our right. I stayed long enough to see that the speckled plant was quite hopeless for human nourishment, then crawled after him, nibbling a quill of it between my teeth.

Presently we were arrested again by the proximity of a Selenite, and this time we were able to observe him more exactly. Now we could see that the Selenite covering was indeed clothing, and not a sort of crustacean integument. He was quite similar in his costume to the former one we had glimpsed, except that ends of something like wadding were protruding front his neck, and he stood on a promontory of rock and moved his head this way and that, as though he was surveying the crater. We lay quite still, fearing to attract his attention if we moved, and after a time he turned about and disappeared.

We came upon another drove of mooncalves bellowing up a ravine, and then we passed over a place of sounds, sounds of beating machinery as if some huge hall of industry came near the surface there. And while these sounds were still about us we came to the edge of a great open space, perhaps two hundred yards in diameter, and perfectly level. Save for a few lichens that advanced from its margin this space was bare, and presented a powdery surface of a dusty yellow colour. We were afraid to strike out across this space, but as it presented less obstruction to our crawling than the scrub, we went down upon it and began very circumspectly to skirt its edge.

For a little while the noises from below ceased and everything, save for

the faint stir of the growing vegetation, was very still. Then abruptly there began an uproar, louder, more vehement, and nearer than any we had so far heard. Of a certainty it came from below. Instinctively we crouched as flat as we could, ready for a prompt plunge into the thicket beside us. Each knock and throb seemed to vibrate through our bodies. Louder grew this throbbing and beating, and that irregular vibration increased until the whole moon world seemed to be jerking and pulsing.

"Cover," whispered Cavor, and I turned towards the bushes.

At that instant came a thud like the thud of a gun, and then a thing happened - it still haunts me in my dreams. I had turned my head to look at Cavor's face, and thrust out my hand in front of me as I so. And my hand met nothing! Plunged suddenly into a bottomless hole!

My chest hit something hard, and I found myself with my chin on the edge of an unfathomable abyss that had suddenly opened beneath me, my hand extended stiffly into the void. The whole of that flat circular area was no more than a gigantic lid, that was now sliding sideways from off the pit it had covered into a slot prepared for it.

Had it not been for Cavor I think I should have remained rigid, hanging over this margin and staring into the enormous gulf below, until at last the edges of the slot scraped me off and hurled me into its depths. But Cavor had not received the shock that had paralysed me. He had been a little distance from the edge when the lid had first opened, and perceiving the peril that held me helpless, gripped my legs and pulled me backward. I came into a sitting position, crawled away from the edge for a space on all fours, then staggered up and ran after him across the thundering, quivering sheet of metal. It seemed to be swinging open with a steadily accelerated velocity, and the bushes in front of me shifted sideways as I ran.

I was none too soon. Cavor's back vanished amidst the bristling thicket, and as I scrambled up after him, the monstrous valve came into its

position with a clang. For a long time we lay panting, not daring to approach the pit.

But at last very cautiously and bit by bit we crept into a position from which we could peer down. The bushes about us creaked and waved with the force of a breeze that was blowing down the shaft. We could see nothing at first except smooth vertical walls descending at last into an impenetrable black. And then very gradually we became aware of a number of very faint and little lights going to and fro.

For a time that stupendous gulf of mystery held us so that we forgot even our sphere. In time, as we grew more accustomed to the darkness, we could make out very small, dim, elusive shapes moving about among those needle-point illuminations. We peered amazed and incredulous, understanding so little that we could find no words to say. We could distinguish nothing that would give us a clue to the meaning of the faint shapes we saw.

"What can it be?" I asked; "what can it be?"

"The engineering!... They must live in these caverns during the night, and come out during the day."

"Cavor! " I said. "Can they be - that - it was something like -, men?"

"That was not a man."

"We dare risk nothing"

"We dare do nothing until we find the sphere!"

"We can do nothing until we find the sphere."

He assented with a groan and stirred himself to move. He stared about him for a space, sighed, and indicated a direction. We struck out through the

jungle. For a time we crawled resolutely, then with diminishing vigour. Presently among great shapes of flabby purple there came a noise of trampling and cries about us. We lay close, and for a long time the sounds went to and fro and very near. But this time we saw nothing. I tried to whisper to Cavor that I could hardly go without food much longer, but my mouth had become too dry for whispering.

"Cavor," I said, "I must have food."

He turned a face full of dismay towards me. "It's a case for holding out," he said.

"But I must," I said, "and look at my lips!"

"I've been thirsty some time."

"If only some of that snow had remained!"

"It's clean gone! We're driving from arctic to tropical at the rate of a degree a minute. ..."

I gnawed my hand.

"The sphere!" he said. "There is nothing for it but the sphere."

We roused ourselves to another spurt of crawling. My mind ran entirely on edible things, on the hissing profundity of summer drinks, more particularly I craved for beer. I was haunted by the memory of a sixteen gallon cask that had swaggered in my Lympne cellar. I thought of the adjacent larder, and especially of steak and kidney pie - tender steak and plenty of kidney, and rich, thick gravy between. Ever and again I was seized with fits of hungry yawning. We came to flat places overgrown with fleshy red things, monstrous coralline growths; as we pushed against them they snapped and broke. I noted the quality of the broken surfaces. The confounded stuff certainly looked of a biteable texture. Then it seemed to

me that it smelt rather well.

I picked up a fragment and sniffed at it.

"Cavor," I said in a hoarse undertone.

He glanced at me with his face screwed up. "Don't,"

he said. I put down the fragment, and we crawled on through this tempting fleshiness for a space.

"Cavor," I asked, "why not?"

"Poison," I heard him say, but he did not look round.

We crawled some way before I decided.

"I'll chance it," said I.

He made a belated gesture to prevent me. I stuffed my mouth full. He crouched watching my face, his own twisted into the oddest expression.

"It's good," I said.

"O Lord!" he cried.

He watched me munch, his face wrinkled between desire and disapproval, then suddenly succumbed to appetite and began to tear off huge mouthfuls. For a time we did nothing but eat.

The stuff was not unlike a terrestrial mushroom, only it was much laxer in texture, and, as one swallowed it, it warmed the throat. At first we experienced a mere mechanical satisfaction in eating; then our blood began to run warmer, and we tingled at the lips and fingers, and then new and slightly irrelevant ideas came bubbling up in our minds.

"Its good," said I. "Infernally good! What a home for our surplus population! Our poor surplus population," and I broke off another large portion. It filled me with a curiously benevolent satisfaction that there was such good food in the moon. The depression of my hunger gave way to an irrational exhilaration. The dread and discomfort in which I had been living vanished entirely. I perceived the moon no longer as a planet from which I most earnestly desired the means of escape, but as a possible refuge from human destitution. I think I forgot the Selenites, the mooncalves, the lid, and the noises completely so soon as I had eaten that fungus.

Cavor replied to my third repetition of my "surplus population" remark with similar words of approval. I felt that my head swam, but I put this down to the stimulating effect of food after a long fast. "Ess'lent discov'ry yours, Cavor," said I. "Se'nd on'y to the 'tato."

"Whajer mean?" asked Cavor. "'Scovery of the moon - se'nd on'y to the 'tato? "

I looked at him, shocked at his suddenly hoarse voice, and by the badness of his articulation. It occurred to me in a flash that he was intoxicated, possibly by the fungus. It also occurred to me that he erred in imaging that he had discovered the moon; he had not discovered it, he had only reached it. I tried to lay my hand on his arm and explain this to him, but the issue was too subtle for his brain. It was also unexpectedly difficult to express. After a momentary attempt to understand me - I remember wondering if the fungus had made my eyes as fishy as his - he set off upon some observations on his own account.

"We are," he announced with a solemn hiccup, "the creashurs o' Mat we eat and drink."

He repeated this, and as I was now in one of my subtle moods, I determined to dispute it. Possibly I wandered a little from the point. But Cavor certainly did not attend at all properly. He stood up as well as he could,

putting a hand on my head to steady I himself, which was disrespectful, and stood staring about him, quite devoid now of any fear of the moon beings.

I tried to point out that this was dangerous for some reason that was not perfectly clear to me, but the word "dangerous" had somehow got mixed with "indiscreet," and came out rather more like "injurious" than either; and after an attempt to disentangle them, I resumed my argument, addressing myself principally to the unfamiliar but attentive coralline growths on either side. I felt that it was necessary to clear up this confusion between the moon and a potato at once - I wandered into a long parenthesis on the importance of precision of definition in argument. I did my best to ignore the fact that my bodily sensations were no longer agreeable.

In some way that I have now forgotten, my mind was led back to projects of colonisation. "We must annex this moon," I said. " There must be no shilly-shally. This is part of the White Man's Burthen. Cavor - we are - hic - Satap - mean Satraps! Nempire Ceasar never dreamt. B'in all the newspapers. Cavorecia. Bedfordecia. Bedfordecia - hic - Limited. Mean - unlimited! Practically."

Certainly I was intoxicated.

I embarked upon an argument to show the infinite benefits our arrival would confer on the moon. I involved myself in a rather difficult proof that the arrival of Columbus was, on the whole, beneficial to America. I found I had forgotten the line of argument I had intended to pursue, and continued to repeat "Similar to C'lumbus," to fill up time.

From that joint my memory of the action of that abominable fungus becomes confused. I remember vaguely that we declared our intention of standing no nonsense from any confounded insects, that we decided it ill became men to hide shamefully upon a mere satellite, that we equipped ourselves with huge armfuls of the fungus - whether for missile purposes or not I do not know - and, heedless of the stabs of the bayonet scrub, we started forth

into the sunshine.

Almost immediately we must have come upon the Selenites. There were six of them, and they were marching in single file over a rocky place, making the most remarkable piping and whining sounds. They all seemed to become aware of us at once, all instantly became silent and motionless, like animals, with their faces turned towards us.

For a moment I was sobered.

"Insects," murmured Cavor, "insects! And they think I'm going to crawl about on my stomach - on my vertebrated stomach!"

"Stomach," he repeated slowly, as though he chewed the indignity.

Then suddenly, with a shout of fury, he made three vast strides and leapt towards them. He leapt badly; he made a series of somersaults in the air, whirled right over them, and vanished with an enormous splash amidst the cactus bladders. What the Selenites made of this amazing, and to my mind undignified irruption from another planet, I have no means of guessing. I seem to remember the sight of their backs as they ran in all directions, but I am not sure. All these last incidents before oblivion came are vague and faint in my mind. I know I made a step to follow Cavor, and tripped and fell headlong among the rocks. I was, I am certain, suddenly and vehemently ill. I seem to remember, a violent struggle and being gripped by metallic clasps. ...

My next clear recollection is that we were prisoners at we knew not what depths beneath the moon's surface; we were in darkness amidst strange distracting noises; our bodies were covered with scratches and bruises, and our heads racked with pain.

Chapter 12

The Selenite's Face

I FOUND myself sitting crouched together in a tumultuous darkness. For a long time I could not understand where I was, nor how I had come to this perplexity. I thought of the cupboard into which I had been thrust at times when I was a child, and then of a very dark and noisy bedroom in which I had slept during an illness. But these sounds about me were not the noises I had known, and there was a thin flavour in the air like the wind of a stable. Then I supposed we must still be at work upon the sphere, and that somehow I had got into the cellar of Cavor's house. I remembered we had finished the sphere, and fancied I must still be in it and travelling through space.

"Cavor," I said, "cannot we have some light?"

There came no answer.

"Cavor!" I insisted.

I was answered by a groan. "My head!" I heard him say; "my head!"

I attempted to press my hands to my brow, which ached, and discovered they were tied together. This startled me very much. I brought them up to my mouth and felt the cold smoothness of metal. They were chained together. I tried to separate my legs and made out they were similarly fastened, and also that I was fastened to the ground by a much thicker chain about the middle of my body.

I was more frightened that I had yet been by anything in all our strange experiences. For a time I tugged silently at my bonds. "Cavor!" I cried out sharply. "Why am I tied? Why have you tied me hand and foot?"

"I haven't tied you," he answered. "It's the Selenites."

The Selenites! My mind hung on that for a space. Then my memories came back to me: the snowy desolation, the thawing of the air, the growth of the plants, our strange hopping and crawling among the rocks and vegetation of the crater. All the distress of our frantic search for the sphere returned to me. ... Finally the opening of the great lid that covered the pit!

Then as I strained to trace our later movements down to our present plight, the pain in my head became intolerable. I came to an insurmountable barrier, an obstinate blank.

"Cavor!"

"Yes?"

"Where are we?"

"How should I know?"

"Are we dead?"

"What nonsense!"

"They've got us, then!"

He made no answer but a grunt. The lingering traces of the poison seemed to make him oddly irritable.

"What do you mean to do?"

"How should I know what to do?"

"Oh, very well!" said I, and became silent. Presently, I was roused from a stupor. "O Lord!" I cried; "I wish you'd stop that buzzing!"

We lapsed into silence again, listening to the dull confusion of noises like the muffled sounds of a street or factory that filled our ears. I could make nothing of it, my mind pursued first one rhythm and then another, and questioned it in vain. But after a long time I became aware of a new and sharper element, not mingling with the rest but standing out, as it were, against that cloudy background of sound. It was a series of relatively very little definite sounds, tappings and rubbings, like a loose spray of ivy against a window or a bird moving about upon a box. We listened and peered about us, but the darkness was a velvet pall. There followed a noise like the subtle movement of the wards of a well-oiled lock. And then there appeared before me, hanging as it seemed in an immensity of black, a thin bright line.

"Look!" whispered Cavor very softly.

"What is it?"

"I don't know."

We stared.

The thin bright line became a band, and broader and paler. It took upon itself the quality of a bluish light falling upon a white-washed wall. It ceased to be parallel-sided; it developed a deep indentation on one side. I turned to remark this to Cavor, and was amazed to see his ear in a brilliant illumination - all the rest of him in shadow. I twisted my head round as well as my bonds would permit. "Cavor," I said, "it's behind!"

His ear vanished - gave place to an eye!

Suddenly the crack that had been admitting the light broadened out, and revealed itself as the space of an opening door. Beyond was a sapphire vista, and in the doorway stood a grotesque outline silhouetted against the glare.

We both made convulsive efforts to turn, and failing, sat staring over our shoulders at this. My first impression was of some clumsy quadruped with lowered head. Then I perceived it was the slender pinched body and short and extremely attenuated bandy legs of a Selenite, with his head depressed between his shoulders. He was without the helmet and body covering they wear upon the exterior.

He was a blank, black figure to us, but instinctively our imaginations supplied features to his very human outline. I, at least, took it instantly that he was somewhat hunchbacked, with a high forehead and long features.

He came forward three steps and paused for a time. His movements seemed absolutely noiseless. Then he came forward again. He walked like a bird, his feet fell one in front of the other. He stepped out of the ray of light that came through the doorway, and it seemed as though he vanished altogether in the shadow.

For a moment my eyes sought him in the wrong place, and then I perceived him standing facing us both in the full light. Only the human features I had attributed to him were not there at all!

Of course I ought to have expected that, only I didn't. It came to me as an absolute, for a moment an overwhelming shock. It seemed as though it wasn't a face, as though it must needs be a mask, a horror, a deformity, that would presently be disavowed or explained. There was no nose, and the thing had dull bulging eyes at the side - in the silhouette I had supposed they were ears. There were no ears. ... I have tried to draw one of these heads, but I cannot. There was a mouth, downwardly curved, like a human mouth in a face that stares ferociously. ...

The neck on which the head was poised was jointed in three places, almost like the short joints in the leg of a crab. The joints of the limbs I could not see, because of the puttee-like straps in which they were swathed, and which formed the only clothing the being wore.

There the thing was, looking at us!

At the time my mind was taken up by the mad impossibility of the creature. I suppose he also was amazed, and with more reason, perhaps, for amazement than we. Only, confound him! he did not show it. We did at least know what had brought about this meeting of incompatible creatures. But conceive how it would seem to decent Londoners, for example, to come upon a couple of living things, as big as men and absolutely unlike any other earthly animals, careering about among the sheep in Hyde Park! It must have taken him like that.

Figure us! We were bound hand and foot, fagged and filthy; our beards two inches long, our faces scratched and bloody. Cavor you must imagine in his knickerbockers (torn in several places by the bayonet scrub) his Jaegar shirt and old cricket cap, his wiry hair wildly disordered, a tail to every quarter of the heavens. In that blue light his face did not look red but very dark, his lips and the drying blood upon my hands seemed black. If possible I was in a worse plight than he, on account of the yellow fungus into which I had jumped. Our jackets were unbuttoned, and our shoes had been taken off and lay at our feet. And we were sitting with our backs to this queer bluish light, peering at such a monster as Durer might have invented.

Cavor broke the silence; started to speak, went hoarse, and cleared his throat. Outside began a terrific bellowing, as if a mooncalf were in trouble. It ended in a shriek, and everything was still again.

Presently the Selenite turned about, flickered into the shadow, stood for a moment retrospective at the door, and then closed it on us; and once more we were in that murmurous mystery of darkness into which we had awakened.

Chapter 13

Mr. Cavor Makes Some Sugestions

FOR a time neither of us spoke. To focus together all the things we had brought upon ourselves, seemed beyond my mental powers.

"They've got us," I said at last.

"It was that fungus."

"Well - if I hadn't taken it we should have fainted and starved."

"We might have found the sphere."

I lost my temper at his persistence, and swore to myself. For a time we hated one another in silence. I drummed with my fingers on the floor between my knees, and gritted the links of my fetters together. Presently I was forced to talk again.

"What do you make of it, anyhow?" I asked humbly.

"They are reasonable creatures - they can make things and do things. Those lights we saw..."

He stopped. It was clear he could make nothing of it.

When he spoke again it was to confess, "After all, they are more human than we had a right to expect. I suppose -"

He stopped irritatingly.

"Yes?"

"I suppose, anyhow - on any planet where there is an intelligent animal - it will carry its brain case upward, and have hands, and walk erect."

Presently he broke away in another direction.

"We are some way in," he said. "I mean - perhaps a couple of thousand feet or more."

"Why?"

"It's cooler. And our voices are so much louder. That faded quality - it has altogether gone. And the feeling in one's ears and throat."

I had not noted that, but I did now.

"The air is denser. We must be some depths - a mile even, we may be - inside the moon."

"We never thought of a world inside the moon."

"No."

"How could we?"

"We might have done. Only one gets into habits of mind."

He thought for a time.

"Now," he said, "it seems such an obvious thing."

"Of course! The moon must be enormously cavernous, with an atmosphere within, and at the centre of its caverns a sea.

"One knew that the moon had a lower specific gravity than the earth, one knew that it had little air or water outside, one knew, too, that it was sister planet to the earth, and that it was unaccountable that it should be different in composition. The inference that it was hollowed out was as

clear as day. And yet one never saw it as a fact. Kepler, of course -"

His voice had the interest now of a man who has discerned a pretty sequence of reasoning.

"Yes," he said, "Kepler with his sub-volvani was right after all."

"I wish you had taken the trouble to find that out before we came," I said.

He answered nothing, buzzing to himself softly, as he pursued his thoughts. My temper was going.

"What do you think has become of the sphere, anyhow?" I asked.

"Lost," he said, like a man who answers an uninteresting question.

"Among those plants?"

"Unless they find it."

"And then?"

"How can I tell?"

"Cavor," I said, with a sort of hysterical bitterness, "things look bright for my Company..."

He made no answer.

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed. "Just think of all the trouble we took to get into this pickle! What did we come for? What are we after? What was the moon to us or we to the moon? We wanted too much, we tried too much. We ought to have started the little things first. It was you proposed the moon! Those Cavorite spring blinds! I am certain we could have worked them

for terrestrial purposes. Certain! Did you really understand what I proposed? A steel cylinder - "

"Rubbish!" said Cavor.

We ceased to converse.

For a time Cavor kept up a broken monologue without much help from me.

"If they find it," he began, "if they find it ... what will they do with it? Well, that's a question. It may be that's the question. They won't understand it, anyhow. If they understood that sort of thing they would have come long since to the earth. Would they? Why shouldn't they? But they would have sent something - they couldn't keep their hands off such a possibility. No! But they will examine it. Clearly they are intelligent and inquisitive. They will examine it - get inside it - trifle with the studs. Off! .. That would mean the moon for us for all the rest of our lives. Strange creatures, strange knowledge ..."

"As for strange knowledge - " said I, and language failed me.

"Look here, Bedford," said Cavor, "you came on this expedition of your own free will."

"You said to me, 'Call it prospecting'."

"There's always risks in prospecting."

"Especially when you do it unarmed and without thinking out every possibility."

"I was so taken up with the sphere. The thing rushed on us, and carried us away."

"Rushed on me, you mean."

"Rushed on me just as much. How was I to know when I set to work on molecular physics that the business would bring me here - of all places?"

"It's this accursed science," I cried. "It's the very Devil. The medieval priests and persecutors were right and the Moderns are all wrong. You tamper with it - and it offers you gifts. And directly you take them it knocks you to pieces in some unexpected way. Old passions and new weapons

- now it upsets your religion, now it upsets your social ideas, now it whirls you off to desolation and misery!"

"Anyhow, it's no use your quarrelling with me now. These creatures - these Selenites, or whatever we choose to call them - have got us tied hand and foot. Whatever temper you choose to go through with it in, you will have to go through with it. ... We have experiences before us that will need all our coolness."

He paused as if he required my assent. But I sat sulking. "Confound your science!" I said.

"The problem is communication. Gestures, I fear, will be different. Pointing, for example. No creatures but men and monkeys point."

That was too obviously wrong for me. "Pretty nearly every animal," I cried, "points with its eyes or nose."

Cavor meditated over that. "Yes," he said at last, "and we don't. There's such differences - such differences!"

"One might. ... But how can I tell? There is speech. The sounds they make, a sort of fluting and piping. I don't see how we are to imitate that. Is it their speech, that sort of thing? They may have different senses, different means of communication. Of course they are minds and we are

minds; there must be something in common. Who knows how far we may not get to an understanding?"

"The things are outside us," I said. "They're more different from us than the strangest animals on earth. They are a different clay. What is the good of talking like this?"

Cavor thought. "I don't see that. Where there are minds they will have something similar - even though they have been evolved on different planets. Of course if it was a question of instincts, if we or they are no more than animals "

"Well, are they? They're much more like ants on their hind legs than human beings, and who ever got to any sort of understanding with ants?"

"But these machines and clothing! No, I don't hold with you, Bedford. The difference is wide - "

"It's insurmountable."

"The resemblance must bridge it. I remember reading once a paper by the late Professor Galton on the possibility of communication between the planets. Unhappily, at that time it did not seem probable that that would be of any material benefit to me, and I fear I did not give it the attention I should have done - in view of this state of affairs. Yet. ... Now, let me see!

"His idea was to begin with those broad truths that must underlie all conceivable mental existences and establish a basis on those. The great principles of geometry, to begin with. He proposed to take some leading proposition of Euclid's, and show by construction that its truth was known to us, to demonstrate, for example, that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, and that if the equal sides be produced the angles on the other side of the base are equal also, or that the square on

the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the two other sides. By demonstrating our knowledge of these things we should demonstrate our possession of a reasonable intelligence... Now, suppose I ... I might draw the geometrical figure with a wet finger, or even trace it in the air ..."

He fell silent. I sat meditating his words. For a time his wild hope of communication, of interpretation, with these weird beings held me. Then that angry despair that was a part of my exhaustion and physical misery resumed its sway. I perceived with a sudden novel vividness the extraordinary folly of everything I had ever done. "Ass!" I said; "oh, ass, unutterable ass. ... I seem to exist only to go about doing preposterous things. Why did we ever leave the thing? ... Hopping about looking for patents and concessions in the craters of the moon!... If only we had had the sense to fasten a handkerchief to a stick to show where we had left the sphere!

I subsided, fuming.

"It is clear," meditated Cavor, "they are intelligent. One can hypotheticate certain things. As they have not killed us at once, they must have ideas of mercy. Mercy! at any rate of restraint. Possibly of intercourse. They may meet us. And this apartment and the glimpses we had of its guardian. These fetters! A high degree of intelligence..."

"I wish to heaven," cried I, "I'd thought even twice! Plunge after plunge. First one fluky start and then another. It was my confidence in you! Why didn't I stick to my play? That was what I was equal to. That was my world and the life I was made for. I could have finished that play. I'm certain ... it was a good play. I had the scenario as good as done. Then. ... Conceive it! leaping to the moon! Practically I've thrown my life away! That old woman in the inn near Canterbury had better sense."

I looked up, and stopped in mid-sentence. The darkness had given place to that bluish light again. The door was opening, and several noiseless

Selenites were coming into the chamber. I became quite still, staring at their grotesque faces.

Then suddenly my sense of disagreeable strangeness changed to interest. I perceived that the foremost and second carried bowls. One elemental need at least our minds could understand in common. They were bowls of some metal that, like our fetters, looked dark in that bluish light; and each contained a number of whitish fragments. All the cloudy pain and misery that oppressed me rushed together and took the shape of hunger. I eyed these bowls wolfishly, and, though it returned to me in dreams, at that time it seemed a small matter that at the end of the arms that lowered one towards me were not hands, but a sort of flap and thumb, like the end of an elephant's trunk. The stuff in the bowl was loose in texture, and whitish brown in colour - rather like lumps of some cold souffle, and it smelt faintly like mushrooms. From a partially divided carcass of a mooncalf that we presently saw, I am inclined to believe it must have been mooncalf flesh.

My hands were so tightly chained that I could barely contrive to reach the bowl; but when they saw the effort I made, two of them dexterously released one of the turns about my wrist. Their tentacle hands were soft and cold to my skin. I immediately seized a mouthful of the food. It had the same laxness in texture that all organic structures seem to have upon the moon; it tasted rather like a gauffre or a damp meringue, but in no way was it disagreeable. I took two other mouthfuls. "I wanted - foo!" said I, tearing off a still larger piece. ...

For a time we ate with an utter absence of selfconsciousness. We ate and presently drank like tramps in a soup kitchen. Never before nor since have I been hungry to the ravenous pitch, and save that I have had this very experience I could never have believed that, a quarter of a million of miles out of our proper world, in utter perplexity of soul, surrounded, watched, touched by beings more grotesque and inhuman than the worst creations of a nightmare, it would be possible for me to eat in utter forgetfulness of all these things. They stood about us watching us, and

ever and again making a slight elusive twittering that stood the suppose, in the stead of speech. I did not even shiver at their touch. And when the first zeal of my feeding was over, I could note that Cavor, too, had been eating with the same shameless abandon.

Chapter 14

Experiments in intercourse

WHEN at last we had made an end of eating, the Selenites linked our hands closely together again, and then untwisted the chains about our feet and rebound them, so as to give us a limited freedom of movement. Then they unfastened the chains about our waists. To do all this they had to handle us freely, and ever and again one of their queer heads came down close to my face, or a soft tentacle-hand touched my head or neck. I don't remember that I was afraid then or repelled by their proximity. I think that our incurable anthropomorphism made us imagine there were human heads inside their masks. The skin, like everything else, looked bluish, but that was on account of the light; and it was hard and shiny, quite in the beetle-wing fashion, not soft, or moist, or hairy, as a vertebrated animal's would be. Along the crest of the head was a low ridge of whitish spines running from back to front, and a much larger ridge curved on either side over the eyes. The Selenite who untied me used his mouth to help his hands.

"They seem to be releasing us," said Cavor. "Remember we are on the moon! Make no sudden movements!"

"Are you going to try that geometry?"

"If I get a chance. But, of course, they may make an advance first."

We remained passive, and the Selenites, having finished their arrangements, stood back from us, and seemed to be looking at us. I say

seemed to be, because as their eyes were at the side and not in front, one had the same difficulty in determining the direction in which they were looking as one has in the case of a hen or a fish. They conversed with one another in their reedy tones, that seemed to me impossible to imitate or define. The door behind us opened wider, and, glancing over my shoulder, I saw a vague large space beyond, in which quite a little crowd of Selenites were standing. They seemed a curiously miscellaneous rabble.

"Do they want us to imitate those sounds? " I asked Cavor.

"I don't think so," he said.

"It seems to me that they are trying to make us understand something."

"I can't make anything of their gestures. Do you notice this one, who is worrying with his head like a man with an uncomfortable collar? "

"Let us shake our heads at him."

We did that, and finding it ineffectual, attempted an imitation of the Selenites' movements. That seemed to interest them. At any rate they all set up the same movement. But as that seemed to lead to nothing, we desisted at last and so did they, and fell into a piping argument among themselves. Then one of them, shorter and very much thicker than the others, and with a particularly wide mouth, squatted down suddenly beside Cavor, and put his hands and feet in the same posture as Cavor's were bound, and then by a dexterous movement stood up.

"Cavor," I shouted, "they want us to get up!"

He stared open-mouthed. "That's it!" he said.

And with much heaving and grunting, because our hands were tied together, we contrived to struggle to our feet. The Selenites made way for our elephantine heavings, and seemed to twitter more volubly. As soon as we

were on our feet the thick-set Selenite came and patted each of our faces with his tentacles, and walked towards the open doorway. That also was plain enough, and we followed him. We saw that four of the Selenites standing in the doorway were much taller than the others, and clothed in the same manner as those we had seen in the crater, namely, with spiked round helmets and cylindrical body-cases, and that each of the four carried a goad with spike and guard made of that same dull-looking metal as the bowls. These four closed about us, one on either side of each of us, as we emerged from our chamber into the cavern from which the light had come.

We did not get our impression of that cavern all at once. Our attention was taken up by the movements and attitudes of the Selenites immediately about us, and by the necessity of controlling our motion, lest we should startle and alarm them and ourselves by some excessive stride. In front of us was the short, thick-set being who had solved the problem of asking us to get up, moving with gestures that seemed, almost all of them, intelligible to us, inviting us to follow him. His spout-like face turned from one of us to the other with a quickness that was clearly interrogative. For a time, I say, we were taken up with these things.

But at last the great place that formed a background to our movements asserted itself. It became apparent that the source of much, at least, of the tumult of sounds which had filled our ears ever since we had recovered from the stupefaction of the fungus was a vast mass of machinery in active movement, whose flying and whirling parts were visible indistinctly over the heads and between the bodies of the Selenites who walked about us. And not only did the web of sounds that filled the air proceed from this mechanism, but also the peculiar blue light that irradiated the whole place. We had taken it as a natural thing that a subterranean cavern should be artificially lit, and even now, though the fact was patent to my eyes, I did not really grasp its import until presently the darkness came. The meaning and structure of this huge apparatus we saw I cannot explain, because we neither of us learnt what it was for or how it worked. One after another, big shafts of metal flung out and up from its centre, their

heads travelling in what seemed to me to be a parabolic path; each dropped a sort of dangling arm as it rose towards the apex of its flight and plunged down into a vertical cylinder, forcing this down before it. About it moved the shapes of tenders, little figures that seemed vaguely different from the beings about us. As each of the three dangling arms of the machine plunged down, there was a clank and then a roaring, and out of the top of the vertical cylinder came pouring this incandescent substance that lit the place, and ran over as milk runs over a boiling pot, and dripped luminously into a tank of light below. It was a cold blue light, a sort of phosphorescent glow but infinitely brighter, and from the tanks into which it fell it ran in conduits athwart the cavern.

Thud, thud, thud, thud, came the sweeping arms of this unintelligible apparatus, and the light substance hissed and poured. At first the thing seemed only reasonably large and near to us, and then I saw how exceedingly little the Selenites upon it seemed, and I realised the full immensity of cavern and machine. I looked from this tremendous affair to the faces of the Selenites with a new respect. I stopped, and Cavor stopped, and stared at this thunderous engine.

"But this is stupendous!" I said. "What can it be for?"

Cavor's blue-lit face was full of an intelligent respect. "I can't dream! Surely these beings - Men could not make a thing like that! Look at those arms, are they on connecting rods?"

The thick-set Selenite had gone some paces unheeded. He came back and stood between us and the great machine. I avoided seeing him, because I guessed somehow that his idea was to beckon us onward. He walked away in the direction he wished us to go, and turned and came back, and flicked our faces to attract our attention.

Cavor and I looked at one another.

"Cannot we show him we are interested in the machine?" I said.

"Yes," said Cavor. " We'll try that." He turned to our guide and smiled, and pointed to the machine, and pointed again, and then to his head, and then to the machine. By some defect of reasoning he seemed to imagine that broken English might help these gestures. "Me look 'im," he said, "me think 'im very much. Yes."

His behaviour seemed to check the Selenites in their desire for our progress for a moment. They faced one another, their queer heads moved, the twittering voices came quick and liquid. Then one of them, a lean, tall creature, with a sort of mantle added to the puttee in which the others were dressed, twisted his elephant trunk of a hand about Cavor's waist, and pulled him gently to follow our guide, who again went on ahead. Cavor resisted. "We may just as well begin explaining ourselves now. They may think we are new animals, a new sort of mooncalf perhaps! It is most important that we should show an intelligent interest from the outset."

He began to shake his head violently. "No, no," he said, "me not come on one minute. Me look at 'im."

" Isn't there some geometrical point you might bring in apropos of that affair? " I suggested, as the Selenites conferred again.

"Possibly a parabolic -" he began.

He yelled loudly, and leaped six feet or more!

One of the four armed moon-men had pricked him with a goad!

I turned on the goad-bearer behind me with a swift threatening gesture, and he started back. This and Cavor's sudden shout and leap clearly astonished all the Selenites. They receded hastily, facing us. For one of those moments that seem to last for ever, we stood in angry protest, with a scattered semicircle of these inhuman beings about us.

"He pricked me!" said Cavor, with a catching of the voice.

"I saw him," I answered.

"Confound it!" I said to the Selenites; "We're not going to stand that! What on earth do you take us for?"

I glanced quickly right and left. Far away across the blue wilderness of cavern I saw a number of other Selenites running towards us; broad and slender they were, and one with a larger head than the others. The cavern spread wide and low, and receded in every direction into darkness. Its roof, I remember, seemed to bulge down as if with the weight of the vast thickness of rocks that prisoned us. There was no way out of it - no way out of it. Above, below, in every direction, was the unknown, and these inhuman creatures, with goads and gestures, confronting us, and we two unsupported men!

Chapter 15

The Giddy Bridge

JUST for a moment that hostile pause endured. I suppose that both we and the Selenites did some very rapid thinking. My clearest impression was that there was nothing to put my back against, and that we were bound to be surrounded and killed. The overwhelming folly of our presence there loomed over me in black, enormous reproach. Why had I ever launched myself on this mad, inhuman expedition?

Cavor came to my side and laid his hand on my arm. His pale and terrified face was ghastly in the blue light.

"We can't do anything," he said. "It's a mistake. They don't understand. We must go. As they want us to go."

I looked down at him, and then at the fresh Selenites who were coming to help their fellows. "If I had my hands free - "

"It's no use," he panted.

"No."

"We'll go."

And he turned about and led the way in the direction that had been indicated for us.

I followed, trying to look as subdued as possible, and feeling at the chains about my wrists. My blood was boiling. I noted nothing more of that cavern, though it seemed to take a long time before we had marched across it, or if I noted anything I forgot it as I saw it. My thoughts were concentrated, I think, upon my chains and the Selenites, and particularly upon the helmeted ones with the goads. At first they marched parallel with us, and at a respectful distance, but presently they were overtaken by three others, and then they drew nearer, until they were within arms length again. I winced like a beaten horse as they came near to us. The shorter, thicker Selenite marched at first on our right flank, but presently came in front of us again.

How well the picture of that grouping has bitten into my brain; the back of Cavor's downcast head just in front of me, and the dejected droop of his shoulders, and our guide's gaping visage, perpetually jerking about him, and the goad-bearers on either side, watchful, yet open-mouthed - a blue monochrome. And after all, I do remember one other thing besides the purely personal affair, which is, that a sort of gutter came presently across the floor of the cavern, and then ran along by the side of the path of rock we followed. And it was full of that same bright blue luminous stuff that flowed out of the great machine. I walked close beside it, and I can testify it radiated not a particle of heat. It was brightly shining,

and yet it was neither warmer nor colder than anything else in the cavern.

Clang, clang, clang, we passed right under the thumping levers of another vast machine, and so came at last to a wide tunnel, in which we could even hear the pad, pad, of our shoeless feet, and which, save for the trickling thread of blue to the right of us, was quite unlit. The shadows made gigantic travesties of our shapes and those of the Selenites on the irregular wall and roof of the tunnel. Ever and again crystals in the walls of the tunnel scintillated like gems, ever and again the tunnel expanded into a stalactitic cavern, or gave off branches that vanished into darkness.

We seemed to be marching down that tunnel for a long time. "Trickle, trickle," went the flowing light very softly, and our footfalls and their echoes made an irregular paddle, paddle. My mind settled down to the question of my chains. If I were to slip off one turn so, and then to twist it so ...

If I tried to do it very gradually, would they see I was slipping my wrist out of the looser turn? If they did, what would they do?

"Bedford," said Cavor, "it goes down. It keeps on going down."

His remark roused me from my sullen pre-occupation.

"If they wanted to kill us," he said, dropping back to come level with me, "there is no reason why they should not have done it."

"No," I admitted, "that's true."

"They don't understand us," he said, "they think we are merely strange animals, some wild sort of mooncalf birth, perhaps. It will be only when they have observed us better that they will begin to think we have minds"

"When you trace those geometrical problems," said I.

"It may be that."

We tramped on for a space.

"You see," said Cavor, "these may be Selenites of a lower class."

"The infernal fools!" said I viciously, glancing at their exasperating faces.

"If we endure what they do to us"

"We've got to endure it," said I.

"There may be others less stupid. This is the mere outer fringe of their world. It must go down and down, cavern, passage, tunnel, down at last to the sea - hundreds of miles below."

His words made me think of the mile or so of rock and tunnel that might be over our heads already. It was like a weight dropping, on my shoulders.

"Away from the sun and air," I said. "Even a mine half a mile deep is stuffy." remarked.

"This is not, anyhow. It's probable - Ventilation! The air would blow from the dark side of the moon to the sunlit, and all the carbonic acid would well out there and feed those plants. Up this tunnel, for example, there is quite a breeze. And what a world it must be. The earnest we have in that shaft, and those machines"

"And the goad," I said. "Don't forget the goad!"

He walked a little in front of me for a time.

"Even that goad - " he said.

"Well?"

"I was angry at the time. But it was perhaps necessary we should get on. They have different skins, and probably different nerves. They may not understand our objection - Just as a being from Mars might not like our earthly habit of nudging"

"They'd better be careful how they nudge me."

"And about that geometry. After all, their way is a way of understanding, too. They begin with the elements of life and not of thought. Food. Compulsion. Pain. They strike at fundamentals."

"There's no doubt about that," I said.

He went on to talk of the enormous and wonderful world into which we were being taken. I realised slowly from his tone, that even now he was not absolutely in despair at the prospect of going ever deeper into this inhuman planet-burrow. His mind ran on machines and invention, to the exclusion of a thousand dark things that beset me. It wasn't that he intended to make any use of these things, he simply wanted to know them.

"After all," he said, " this is a tremendous occasion. It is the meeting of two worlds! What are we going to see? Think of what is below us here."

"We shan't see much if the light isn't better," I remarked.

"This is only the outer crust. Down below - On this scale - There will be everything. Do you notice how different they seem one from another? The story we shall take back!"

"Some rare sort of animal," I said, "might comfort himself in that way while they were bringing him to the Zoo. ... It doesn't follow that we are going to be shown all these things."

"When they find we have reasonable minds," said Cavor, "they will want to learn about the earth. Even if they have no generous emotions, they will teach in order to learn. ... And the things they must know! The unanticipated things!"

He went on to speculate on the possibility of their knowing things he had never hoped to learn on earth, speculating in that way, with a raw wound from that goad already in his skin! Much that he said I forget, for my attention was drawn to the fact that the tunnel along which we had been marching was opening out wider and wider. We seemed, from the feeling of the air, to be going out into a huge space. But how big the space might really be we could not tell, because it was unlit. Our little stream of light ran in a dwindling thread and vanished far ahead. Presently the rocky walls had vanished altogether on either hand. There was nothing to be seen but the path in front of us and the trickling hurrying rivulet of blue phosphorescence. The figures of Cavor and the guiding Selenite marched before me, the sides of their legs and heads that were towards the rivulet were clear and bright blue, their darkened sides, now that the reflection of the tunnel wall no longer lit them, merged indistinguishably in the darkness beyond.

And soon I perceived that we were approaching a declivity of some sort, because the little blue stream dipped suddenly out of sight.

In another moment, as it seemed, we had reached the edge. The shining stream gave one meander of hesitation and then rushed over. It fell to a depth at which the sound of its descent was absolutely lost to us. Far below was a bluish glow, a sort of blue mist - at an infinite distance below. And the darkness the stream dropped out of became utterly void and black, save that a thing like a plank projected from the edge of the cliff and stretched out and faded and vanished altogether. There was a warm air blowing up out of the gulf.

For a moment I and Cavor stood as near the edge as we dared, peering into

a blue-tinged profundity. And then our guide was pulling at my arm.

Then he left me, and walked to the end of that plank and stepped upon it, looking back. Then when he perceived we watched him, he turned about and went on along it, walking as surely as though he was on firm earth. For a moment his form was distinct, then he became a blue blur, and then vanished into the obscurity. I became aware of some vague shape looming darkly out of the black.

There was a pause. "Surely! -" said Cavor.

One of the other Selenites walked a few paces out upon the plank, and turned and looked back at us unconcernedly. The others stood ready to follow after us. Our guide's expectant figure reappeared. He was returning to see why we had not advanced.

"What is that beyond there?" I asked.

"I can't see."

"We can't cross this at any price," said I.

"I could not go three steps on it," said Cavor, "even with my hands free."

We looked at each other's drawn faces in blank consternation.

"They can't know what it is to be giddy!" said Cavor.

"It's quite impossible for us to walk that plank."

"I don't believe they see as we do. I've been watching them. I wonder if they know this is simply blackness for us. How can we make them understand?"

"Anyhow, we must make them understand."

I think we said these things with a vague half hope the Selenites might somehow understand. I knew quite clearly that all that was needed was an explanation. Then as I saw their faces, I realised that an explanation was impossible. Just here it was that our resemblances were not going to bridge our differences. Well, I wasn't going to walk the plank, anyhow. I slipped my wrist very quickly out of the coil of chain that was loose, and then began to twist my wrists in opposite directions. I was standing nearest to the bridge, and as I did this two of the Selenites laid hold of me, and pulled me gently towards it.

I shook my head violently. "No go," I said, "no use. You don't understand."

Another Selenite added his compulsion. I was forced to step forward.

"I've got an idea," said Cavor; but I knew his ideas.

"Look here!" I exclaimed to the Selenites. "Steady on! It's all very well for you - "

I sprang round upon my heel. I burst out into curses. For one of the armed Selenites had stabbed me behind with his goad.

I wrenched my wrists free from the little tentacles that held them. I turned on the goad-bearer. "Confound you! " I cried. "I've warned you of that. What on earth do you think I'm made of, to stick that into me? If you touch me again - "

By way of answer he pricked me forthwith.

I heard Cavor's voice in alarm and entreaty. Even then I think he wanted to compromise with these creatures. "I say, Bedford," he cried, "I know a way! " But the sting of that second stab seemed to set free some pent-up reserve of energy in my being. Instantly the link of the wrist-chain

snapped, and with it snapped all considerations that had held us unresisting in the hands of these moon creatures. For that second, at least, I was mad with fear and anger. I took no thought of consequences. I hit straight out at the face of the thing with the goad. The chain was twisted round my fist.

There came another of these beastly surprises of which the moon world is full.

My mailed hand seemed to go clean through him. He smashed like - like some softish sort of sweet with liquid in it! He broke right in! He squelched and splashed. It was like hitting a damp toadstool. The flimsy body went spinning a dozen yards, and fell with a flabby impact. I was astonished. I was incredulous that any living thing could be so flimsy. For an instant I could have believed the whole thing a dream.

Then it had become real and imminent again. Neither Cavor nor the other Selenites seemed to have done anything from the time when I had turned about to the time when the dead Selenite hit the ground. Every one stood back from us two, every one alert. That arrest seemed to last at least a second after the Selenite was down. Every one must have been taking the thing in. I seem to remember myself standing with my arm half retracted, trying also to take it in. "What next?" clamoured my brain; "what next?" Then in a moment every one was moving!

I perceived we must get our chains loose, and that before we could do this these Selenites had to be beaten off. I faced towards the group of the three goad-bearers. Instantly one threw his goad at me. It swished over my head, and I suppose went flying into the abyss behind.

I leaped right at him with all my might as the goad flew over me. He turned to run as I jumped, and I bore him to the ground, came down right upon him, and slipped upon his smashed body and fell. He seemed to wriggle under my foot.

I came into a sitting position, and on every hand the blue backs of the Selenites were receding into the darkness. I bent a link by main force and untwisted the chain that had hampered me about the ankles, and sprang to my feet, with the chain in my hand. Another goad, flung javelin-wise, whistled by me, and I made a rush towards the darkness out of which it had come. Then I turned back towards Cavor, who was still standing in the light of the rivulet near the gulf convulsively busy with his wrists, and at the same time jabbering nonsense about his idea.

"Come on! " I cried.

"My hands! " he answered.

Then, realising that I dared not run back to him, because my ill-calculated steps might carry me over the edge, he came shuffling towards me, with his hands held out before him.

I gripped his chains at once to unfasten them.

"Where are they? " he panted.

"Run away. They'll come back. They're throwing things! Which way shall we go?"

"By the light. To that tunnel. Eh?"

"Yes," said I, and his hands were free.

I dropped on my knees and fell to work on his ankle bonds. Whack came something - I know not what - and splashed the livid streamlet into drops about us. Far away on our right a piping and whistling began.

I whipped the chain off his feet, and put it in his hand. "Hit with that!" I said, and without waiting for an answer, set off in big bounds along the path by which we had come. I had a nasty sort of feeling that these

things could jump out of the darkness on to my back. I heard the impact of his leaps come following after me.

We ran in vast strides. But that running, you must understand, was an altogether different thing from any running on earth. On earth one leaps and almost instantly hits the ground again, but on the moon, because of its weaker pull, one shot through the air for several seconds before one came to earth. In spite of our violent hurry this gave an effect of long pauses, pauses in which one might have counted seven or eight. "Step," and one soared off! All sorts of questions ran through my mind: "Where are the Selenites? What will they do? Shall we ever get to that tunnel? Is Cavor far behind? Are they likely to cut him off?" Then whack, stride, and off again for another step.

I saw a Selenite running in front of me, his legs going exactly as a man's would go on earth, saw him glance over his shoulder, and heard him shriek as he ran aside out of my way into the darkness. He was, I I think, our guide, but I am not sure. Then in another vast stride the walls of rock had come into view on either hand, and in two more strides I was in the tunnel, and tempering my pace to its low roof. I went on to a bend, then stopped and turned back, and plug, plug, plug, Cavor came into view, splashing into the stream of blue light at every stride, and grew larger and blundered into me. We stood clutching each other. For a moment, at least, we had shaken off our captors and were alone.

We were both very much out of breath. We spoke in panting, broken sentences.

"You've spoilt it all!" panted Cavor. "Nonsense," I cried. "It was that or death!"

"What are we to do?"

"Hide."

"How can we?"

"It's dark enough."

"But where?"

"Up one of these side caverns."

"And then?"

"Think."

"Right - come on."

We strode on, and presently came to a radiating dark cavern. Cavor was in front. He hesitated, and chose a black mouth that seemed to promise good hiding. He went towards it and turned.

"Its dark," he said.

"Your legs and feet will light us. You're wet with that luminous stuff."

"But - "

A tumult of sounds, and in particular a sound like a clanging gong, advancing up the main tunnel, became audible. It was horribly suggestive of a tumultuous pursuit. We made a bolt for the unlit side cavern forthwith. As we ran along it our way was lit by the irradiation of Cavor's legs. "It's lucky," I panted, "they took off our boots, or we should fill this place with clatter." On we rushed, taking as small steps as we could to avoid striking the roof of the cavern. After a time we seemed to be gaining on the uproar. It became muffled, it dwindled, it died away.

I stopped and looked back, and I heard the pad, pad of Cavor's feet

receding. Then he stopped also. "Bedford," he whispered; " there's a sort of light in front of us."

I looked, and at first could see nothing. Then I perceived his head and shoulders dimly outlined against a fainter darkness. I saw, also, that this mitigation of the darkness was not blue, as all the other light within the moon had been, but a pallid gray, a very vague, faint white, the daylight colour. Cavor noted this difference as soon, or sooner, than I did, and I think, too, that it filled him with much the same wild hope.

"Bedford," he whispered, and his voice trembled. "That light - it is possible -"

He did not dare to say the thing he hoped. Then came a pause. Suddenly I knew by the sound of his feet that he was striding towards that pallor. I followed him with a beating heart.

Chapter 16

Points of View

THE light grew stronger as we advanced. In a little time it was nearly as strong as the phosphorescence on Cavor's legs. Our tunnel was expanding into a cavern, and this new light was at the farther end of it. I perceived something that set my hopes leaping and bounding.

"Cavor," I said, "it comes from above! I am certain it comes from above!"

He made no answer, but hurried on.

Indisputably it was a gray light, a silvery light.

In another moment we were beneath it. It filtered down through a chink in

the walls of the cavern, and as I stared up, drip, came a drop of water upon my face. I started and stood aside - drip, fell another drop quite audibly on the rocky floor.

"Cavor," I said, "if one of us lifts the other, he can reach that crack!"

"I'll lift you," he said, and incontinently hoisted me as though I was a baby.

I thrust an arm into the crack, and just at my finger tips found a little ledge by which I could hold. I could see the white light was very much brighter now. I pulled myself up by two fingers with scarcely an effort, though on earth I weigh twelve stone, reached to a still higher corner of rock, and so got my feet on the narrow ledge. I stood up and searched up the rocks with my fingers; the cleft broadened out upwardly. "It's climbable," I said to Cavor. "Can you jump up to my hand if I hold it down to you?"

I wedged myself between the sides of the cleft, rested knee and foot on the ledge, and extended a hand. I could not see Cavor, but I could hear the rustle of his movements as he crouched to spring. Then whack and he was hanging to my arm - and no heavier than a kitten! I lugged him up until he had a hand on my ledge, and could release me.

"Confound it!" I said, "any one could be a mountaineer on the moon;" and so set myself in earnest to the climbing. For a few minutes I clambered steadily, and then I looked up again. The cleft opened out steadily, and the light was brighter. Only -

It was not daylight after all.

In another moment I could see what it was, and at the sight I could have beaten my head against the rocks with disappointment. For I beheld simply an irregularly sloping open space, and all over its slanting floor stood a forest of little club-shaped fungi, each shining gloriously with that

pinkish silvery light. For a moment I stared at their soft radiance, then sprang forward and upward among them. I plucked up half a dozen and flung them against the rocks, and then sat down, laughing bitterly, as Cavor's ruddy face came into view.

"It's phosphorescence again!" I said. "No need to hurry. Sit down and make yourself at home." And as he spluttered over our disappointment, I began to lob more of these growths into the cleft.

"I thought it was daylight," he said.

"Daylight!" cried I. "Daybreak, sunset, clouds, and windy skies! Shall we ever see such things again?"

As I spoke, a little picture of our world seemed to rise before me, bright and little and clear, like the background of some old Italian picture.

"The sky that changes, and the sea that changes, and the hills and the green trees and the towns and cities shining in the sun. Think of a wet roof at sunset, Cavor! Think of the windows of a westward house!" He made no answer.

"Here we are burrowing in this beastly world that isn't a world, with its inky ocean hidden in some abominable blackness below, and outside that torrid day and that death stillness of night. And all these things that are chasing us now, beastly men of leather - insect men, that come out of a nightmare! After all, they're right! What business have we here smashing them and disturbing their world! For all we know the whole planet is up and after us already. In a minute we may hear them whimpering, and their gongs going. What are we to do? Where are we to go? Here we are as comfortable as snakes from Jamrach's loose in a Surbiton villa!"

"It was your fault," said Cavor.

"My fault! " I shouted. "Good Lord!"

"I had an idea!"

"Curse your ideas!"

"If we had refused to budge"

"Under those goads?"

"Yes. They would have carried us!"

"Over that bridge?"

"Yes. They must have carried us from outside."

"I'd rather be carried by a fly across a ceiling."

"Good Heavens!"

I resumed my destruction of the fungi. Then suddenly I saw something that struck me even then. "Cavor," I said, "these chains are of gold!"

He was thinking intently, with his hands gripping his cheeks. He turned his head slowly and stared at me, and when I had repeated my words, at the twisted chain about his right hand. "So they are," he said, "so they are." His face lost its transitory interest even as he looked. He hesitated for a moment, then went on with his interrupted meditation. I sat for a space puzzling over the fact that I had only just observed this, until I considered the blue light in which we had been, and which had taken all the colour out of the metal. And from that discovery I also started upon a train of thought that carried me wide and far. I forgot that I had just been asking what business we had in the moon. Gold -

It was Cavor who spoke first. "It seems to me that there are two courses open to us."

"Well"

"Either we can attempt to make our way - fight our way if necessary - out to the exterior again, and then hunt for our sphere until we find it, or the cold of the night comes to kill us, or else -"

He paused. "Yes?" I said, though I knew what was coming.

"We might attempt once more to establish some sort of understanding with the minds of the people in the moon."

"So far as I'm concerned - it's the first."

"I doubt."

"I don't."

"You see," said Cavor, "I do not think we can judge the Selenites by what we have seen of them. Their central world, their civilised world will be far below in the profounder caverns about their sea. This region of the crust in which we are is an outlying district, a pastoral region. At any rate, that is my interpretation. These Selenites we have seen may be only the equivalent of cowboys and engine-tenders. Their use of goads - in all probability mooncalf goads - the lack of imagination they show in expecting us to be able to do just what they can do, their indisputable brutality, all seem to point to something of that sort. But if we endured -"

"Neither of us could endure a six-inch plank across the bottomless pit for very long."

"No," said Cavor; "but then -"

"I won't," I said.

He discovered a new line of possibilities. "Well, suppose we got ourselves into some corner, where we could defend ourselves against these hinds and labourers. If, for example, we could hold out for a week or so, it is probable that the news of our appearance would filter down to the more intelligent and populous parts -"

"If they exist."

"They must exist, or whence came those tremendous machines?"

"That's possible, but it's the worst of the two chances."

"We might write up inscriptions on walls"

"How do we know their eyes would see the sort of marks we made?"

"If we cut them - "

"That's possible, of course."

I took up a new thread of thought. "After all," - I said, " I suppose you don't think these Selenites so infinitely wiser than men."

"They must know a lot more - or at least a lot of different things."

"Yes, but -" I hesitated.

"I think you'll quite admit, Cavor, that you're rather an exceptional man."

"How?"

"Well, you - you're a rather lonely man - have been, that is. You haven't married."

"Never wanted to. But why - "

"And you never grew richer than you happened to be? "

"Never wanted that either."

"You've just rooted after knowledge?"

"Well, a certain curiosity is natural - "

"You think so. That's just it. You think every other mind wants to know. I remember once, when I asked you why you conducted all these researches, you said you wanted your F.R.S., and to have the stuff called Cavorite, and things like that. You know perfectly well you didn't do it for that; but at the time my question took you by surprise, and you felt you ought to have something to look like a motive. Really you conducted researches because you had to. It's your twist."

"Perhaps it is -"

"It isn't one man in a million has that twist. Most men want - well, various things, but very few want knowledge for its own sake. I don't, I know perfectly well. Now, these Selenites seem to be a driving, busy sort of being, but how do you know that even the most intelligent will take an interest in us or our world? I don't believe they'll even know we have a world. They never come out at night - they'd freeze if they did. They've probably never seen any heavenly body at all except the blazing sun. How are they to know there is another world? What does it matter to them if they do? Well, even if they have had a glimpse of a few stars, or even of the earth crescent, what of that? Why should people living inside a planet trouble to observe that sort of thing? Men wouldn't have done it except for the seasons and sailing; why should the moon people?..."

"Well, suppose there are a few philosophers like yourself. They are just the very Selenites who'll never have heard of our existence. Suppose a

Selenite had I dropped on the earth when you were at Lymphne, you'd have been the last man in the world to hear he had come. You never read a newspaper! You see the chances against you. Well, it's for these chances we're sitting here doing nothing while precious time is flying. I tell you we've got into a fix. We've come unarmed, we've lost our sphere, we've got no food, we've shown ourselves to the Selenites, and made them think we're strange, strong, dangerous animals; and unless these Selenites are perfect fools, they'll set about now and hunt us till they find us, and when they find us they'll try to take us if they can, and kill us if they can't, and that's the end of the matter. If they take us, they'll probably kill us, through some misunderstanding. After we're done for, they may discuss us perhaps, but we shan't get much fun out of that."

"Go on."

"On the other hand, here's gold knocking about like cast iron at home. If only we can get some of it back, if only we can find our sphere again before they do, and get back, then -"

"Yes?"

"We might put the thing on a sounder footing. Come back in a bigger sphere with guns."

"Good Lord!" cried Cavor, as though that was horrible.

I shied another luminous fungus down the cleft.

"Look here, Cavor," I said, "I've half the voting power anyhow in this affair, and this is a case for a practical man. I'm a practical man, and you are not. I'm not going to trust to Selenites and geometrical diagrams if I can help it. That's all. Get back. Drop all this secrecy - or most of it. And come again."

He reflected. "When I came to the moon," he said, "I ought to have come

alone."

"The question before the meeting," I said, "is how to get back to the sphere."

For a time we nursed our knees in silence. Then he seemed to decide for my reasons.

"I think," he said, "one can get data. It is clear that while the sun is on this side of the moon the air will be blowing through this planet sponge from the dark side hither. On this side, at any rate, the air will be expanding and flowing out of the moon caverns into the craters. ... Very well, there's a draught here."

"So there is."

"And that means that this is not a dead end; somewhere behind us this cleft goes on and up. The draught is blowing up, and that is the way we have to go. If we try to get up any sort of chimney or gully there is, we shall not only get out of these passages where they are hunting for us - "

"But suppose the gully is too narrow?"

"We'll come down again."

"Ssh!" I said suddenly; "what's that?"

We listened. At first it was an indistinct murmur, and then one picked out the clang of a gong. "They must think we are mooncalves," said I, "to be frightened at that."

"They're coming along that passage, said Cavor.

"They must be."

"They'll not think of the cleft. They'll go past."

I listened again for a space. "This time," I whispered, "they're likely to have some sort of weapon."

Then suddenly I sprang to my feet. "Good heavens, Cavor! " I cried. "But they will! They'll see the fungi I have been pitching down. They'll - "

I didn't finish my sentence. I turned about and made a leap over the fungus tops towards the upper end of the cavity. I saw that the space turned upward and became a draughty cleft again, ascending to impenetrable darkness. I was about to clamber up into this, and then with a happy inspiration turned back.

"What are you doing? " asked Cavor.

"Go on! said I, and went back and got two of the shining fungi, and putting one into the breast pocket of my flannel jacket, so that it stuck out to light our climbing, went back with the other for Cavor. The noise of the Selenites was now so loud that it seemed they must be already beneath the cleft. But it might be they would have difficulty in clambering in to it, or might hesitate to ascend it against our possible resistance. At any rate, we had now the comforting knowledge of the enormous muscular superiority our birth in another planet gave us. In other minute I was clambering with gigantic vigour after Cavor's blue-lit heels.

Chapter 17

The Fight in the Cave of the Moon Butchers

I DO not know how far we clambered before we came to the grating. It may be we ascended only a few hundred feet, but at the time it seemed to me we might have hauled and jammed and hopped and wedged ourselves through a

mile or more of vertical ascent. Whenever I recall that time, there comes into my head the heavy clank of our golden chains that followed every movement. Very soon my knuckles and knees were raw, and I had a bruise on one cheek. After a time the first violence of our efforts diminished, and our movements became more deliberate and less painful. The noise of the pursuing Selenites had died away altogether. It seemed almost as though they had not traced us up the crack after all, in spite of the tell-tale heap of broken fungi that must have lain beneath it. At times the cleft narrowed so much that we could scarce squeeze up it; at others it expanded into great drusy cavities, studded with prickly crystals or thickly beset with dull, shining fungoid pimples. Sometimes it twisted spirally, and at other times slanted down nearly to the horizontal direction. Ever and again there was the intermittent drip and trickle of water by us. Once or twice it seemed to us that small living things had rustled out of our reach, but what they were we never saw. They may have been venomous beasts

for all I know, but they did us no harm, and we were now tuned to a pitch when a weird creeping thing more or less mattered little. And at last, far above, came the familiar bluish light again, and then we saw that it filtered through a grating that barred our way.

We whispered as we pointed this out to one another, and became more and more cautious in our ascent. Presently we were close under the grating, and by pressing my face against its bars I could see a limited portion of the cavern beyond. It was clearly a large space, and lit no doubt by some rivulet of the same blue light that we had seen flow from the beating machinery. An intermittent trickle of water dropped ever and again between the bars near my face.

My first endeavour was naturally to see what might be upon the floor of the cavern, but our grating lay in a depression whose rim hid all this from our eyes. Our foiled attention then fell back upon the suggestion of the various sounds we heard, and presently my eye caught a number of faint shadows that played across the dim roof far overhead.

Indisputably there were several Selenites, perhaps a considerable number, in this space, for we could hear the noises of their intercourse, and faint sounds that I identified as their footfalls. There was also a succession of regularly repeated sounds - chid, chid, chid - which began and ceased, suggestive of a knife or spade hacking at some soft substance. Then came a clank as if of chains, a whistle and a rumble as of a truck running over a hollowed place, and then again that chid, chid, chid resumed. The shadows told of shapes that moved quickly and rhythmically, in agreement with that regular sound, and rested when it ceased.

We put our heads close together, and began to discuss these things in noiseless whispers.

"They are occupied," I said, "they are occupied in some way."

"Yes."

"They're not seeking us, or thinking of us."

"Perhaps they have not heard of us."

"Those others are hunting about below. If suddenly we appeared here - "

We looked at one another.

"There might be a chance to parley," said Cavor.

"No," I said. "Not as we are."

For a space we remained, each occupied by his own thoughts.

Chid, chid, chid went the chopping, and the shadows moved to and fro.

I looked at the grating. "It's flimsy," I said. "We might bend two of the bars and crawl through."

We wasted a little time in vague discussion. Then I took one of the bars in both hands, and got my feet up against the rock until they were almost on a level with my head, and so thrust against the bar. It bent so suddenly that I almost slipped. I clambered about and bent the adjacent bar in the opposite direction, and then took the luminous fungus from my pocket and dropped it down the fissure.

"Don't do anything hastily," whispered Cavor, as I twisted myself up through the opening I had enlarged. I had a glimpse of busy figures as I came through the grating, and immediately bent down, so that the rim of the depression in which the grating lay hid me from their eyes, and so lay flat, signalling advice to Cavor as he also prepared to come through. Presently we were side by side in the depression, peering over the edge at the cavern and its occupants.

It was a much larger cavern than we had supposed from our first glimpse of it, and we looked up from the lowest portion of its sloping floor. It widened out as it receded from us, and its roof came down and hid the remoter portion altogether. And lying in a line along its length, vanishing at last far away in that tremendous perspective, were a number of huge shapes, huge pallid hulls, upon which the Selenites were busy. At first they seemed big white cylinders of vague import. Then I noted the heads upon them lying towards us, eyeless and skinless like the heads of sheep at a butcher's, and perceived they were the carcasses of mooncalves being cut up, much as the crew of a whaler might cut up a moored whale. They were cutting off the flesh in strips, and on some of the farther trunks the white ribs were showing. It was the sound of their hatchets that made that chid, chid. Some way away a thing like a trolley cable, drawn and loaded with chunks of lax meat, was running up the slope of the cavern floor. This enormous long avenue of hulls that were destined to be food, gave us a sense of the vast populousness of the moon world second only to the effect of our first glimpse down the shaft.

It seemed to me at first that the Selenites must be standing on

trestle-supported planks, and then I saw that the planks and supports and their hatchets were really of the same leaden hue as my fetters had seemed - before white light came to bear on them. A number of very thick-looking crowbars lay about the floor, and had apparently assisted to turn the dead mooncalf over on its side. They were perhaps six feet long, with shaped handles, very tempting-looking weapons. The whole place was lit by three transverse streams of the blue fluid.

[I do not remember seeing any wooden things on the moon; doors tables, everything corresponding to our terrestrial joinery was made of metal, and I believe for the most part of gold, which as a metal would, of course, naturally recommend itself - other things being equal - on account of the ease in working it, and its toughness and durability.]

We lay for a long time noting all these things in silence. "Well?" said Cavor at last.

I crouched over and turned to him. I had come upon a brilliant idea. "Unless they lowered those bodies by a crane," I said, "we must be nearer the surface than I thought."

"Why?"

"The mooncalf doesn't hop, and it hasn't got wings."

He peered over the edge of the hollow again. "I wonder now ..." he began. "After all, we have never gone far from the surface - "

I stopped him by a grip on his arm. I had heard a noise from the cleft below us!

We twisted ourselves about, and lay as still as death, with every sense alert. In a little while I did not doubt that something was quietly ascending the cleft. Very slowly and quite noiselessly I assured myself of a good grip on my chain, and waited for that something to appear.

"Just look at those chaps with the hatchets again," I said.

"They're all right," said Cavor.

I took a sort of provisional aim at the gap in the grating. I could hear now quite distinctly the soft twittering of the ascending Selenites, the dab of their hands against the rock, and the falling of dust from their grips as they clambered.

Then I could see that there was something moving dimly in the blackness below the grating, but what it might be I could not distinguish. The whole thing I seemed to hang fire just for a moment - then smash! I had sprung to my feet, struck savagely at something that had flashed out at me. It was the keen point of a spear. I have thought since that its length in the narrowness of the cleft must have prevented its being sloped to reach me. Anyhow, it shot out from the grating like the tongue of a snake, and missed and flew back and flashed again. But the second time I snatched and caught it, and wrenched it away, but not before another had darted ineffectually at me.

I shouted with triumph as I felt the hold of the Selenite resist my pull for a moment and give, and then I was jabbing down through the bars, amidst squeals from the darkness, and Cavor had snapped off the other spear, and was leaping and flourishing it beside me, and making inefficient jabs. Clang, clang, came up through the grating, and then an axe hurtled through the air and whacked against the rocks beyond, to remind me of the fleshers at the carcasses up the cavern.

I turned, and they were all coming towards us in open order waving their axes. They were short, thick, little beggars, with long arms, strikingly different from the ones we had seen before. If they had not heard of us before, they must have realised the situation with incredible swiftness. I stared at them for a moment, spear in hand. "Guard that grating, Cavor," I cried, howled to intimidate them, and rushed to meet them. Two of them

missed with their hatchets, and the rest fled incontinently. Then the two also were sprinting away up the cavern, with hands clenched and heads down. I never saw men run like them!

I knew the spear I had was no good for me. It was thin and flimsy, only effectual for a thrust, and too long for a quick recover. So I only chased the Selenites as far as the first carcass, and stopped there and picked up one of the crowbars that were lying about. It felt comfortingly heavy, and equal to smashing any number of Selenites. I threw away my spear, and picked up a second crowbar for the other hand. I felt five times better than I had with the spear. I shook the two threateningly at the Selenites, who had come to a halt in a little crowd far away up the cavern, and then turned about to look at Cavor.

He was leaping from side to side of the grating, making threatening jabs with his broken spear. That was all right. It would keep the Selenites down - for a time at any rate. I looked up the cavern again. What on earth were we going to do now?

We were cornered in a sort of way already. But these butchers up the cavern had been surprised, they were probably scared, and they had no special weapons, only those little hatchets of theirs. And that way lay escape. Their sturdy little forms - ever so much shorter and thicker than the mooncalf herds - were scattered up the slope in a way that was eloquent of indecision. I had the moral advantage of a mad bull in a street. But for all that, there seemed a tremendous crowd of them. Very probably there was. Those Selenites down the cleft had certainly some infernally long spears. It might be they had other surprises for us. ... But, confound it! if we charged up the cave we should let them up behind us, and if we didn't those little brutes up the cave would probably get reinforced. Heaven alone knew what tremendous engines of warfare - guns, bombs, terrestrial torpedoes - this unknown world below our feet, this vaster world of which we had only pricked the outer cuticle, might not presently send up to our destruction. It became clear the only thing to do was to charge! It became clearer as the legs of a number of fresh

Selenites appeared running down the cavern towards us.

"Bedford! " cried Cavor, and behold! he was halfway between me and the grating.

"Go back!" I cried. "What are you doing -"

"They've got - it's like a gun!"

And struggling in the grating between those defensive spears appeared the head and shoulders of a singularly lean and angular Selenite, bearing some complicated apparatus.

I realised Cavor's utter incapacity for the fight we had in hand. For a moment I hesitated. Then I rushed past him whirling my crowbars, and shouting to confound the aim of the Selenite. He was aiming in the queerest way with the thing against his stomach. "Chuzz!" The thing wasn't a gun; it went off like cross-bow more, and dropped me in the middle of a leap.

I didn't fall down, I simply came down a little shorter than I should have done if I hadn't been hit, and from the feel of my shoulder the thing might have tapped me and glanced off. Then my left hand hit again the shaft, and I perceived there was a sort of spear sticking half through my shoulder. The moment after I got home with the crowbar in my right hand, and hit the Selenite fair and square. He collapsed - he crushed and crumpled - his head smashed like an egg.

I dropped a crowbar, pulled the spear out of my shoulder, and began to jab it down the grating into the darkness. At each jab came a shriek and twitter. Finally I hurled the spear down upon them with all my strength, leapt up, picked up the crowbar again, and started for the multitude up the cavern.

"Bedford!" cried Cavor. "Bedford!" as I flew past him.

I seem to remember his footsteps coming on behind me.

Step, leap ... whack, step, leap. ... Each leap seemed to last ages. With each, the cave opened out and the number of Selenites visible increased. At first they seemed all running about like ants in a disturbed ant-hill, one or two waving hatchets and coming to meet me, more running away, some bolting sideways into the avenue of carcasses, then presently others came in sight carrying spears, and then others. I saw a most extraordinary thing, all hands and feet, bolting for cover. The cavern grew darker farther up.

Flick! something flew over my head. Flick! As I soared in mid-stride I saw a spear hit and quiver in one of the carcasses to my left. Then, as I came down, one hit the ground before me, and I heard the remote chuzz! with which their things were fired. Flick, flick! for a moment it was a shower. They were volleying!

I stopped dead.

I don't think I thought clearly then. I seem to remember a kind of stereotyped phrase running through my mind: "Zone of fire, seek cover!" I know I made a dash for the space between two ~ the carcasses, and stood there panting and feeling very wicked.

I looked round for Cavor, and for a moment it seemed as if he had vanished from the world. Then he came out of the darkness between the row of the carcasses and the rocky wall of the cavern. I saw his little face, dark and blue, and shining with perspiration and emotion.

He was saying something, but what it was I did not heed. I had realised that we might work from mooncalf to mooncalf up the cave until we were near enough to charge home. It was charge or nothing. "Come on! " I said, and led the way.

"Bedford! " he cried unavailingly.

My mind was busy as we went up that narrow alley between the dead bodies and the wall of the cavern. The rocks curved about - they could not enfilade us. Though in that narrow space we could not leap, yet with our earth-born strength we were still able to go very much faster than the Selenites. I reckoned we should presently come right among them. Once we were on them, they would be nearly as formidable as black beetles. Only - there would first of all be a volley. I thought of a stratagem. I whipped off my flannel jacket as I ran.

"Bedford!" panted Cavor behind me.

I glanced back. "What?" said I.

He was pointing upward over the carcasses. "White light!" he said. "White light again!"

I looked, and it was even so, a faint white ghost of light in the remoter cavern roof. That seemed to give me double strength.

"Keep close," I said. A flat, long Selenite dashed out of the darkness, and squealed and fled. I halted, and stopped Cavor with my hand. I hung my jacket over my crowbar, ducked round the next carcass, dropped jacket and crowbar, showed myself, and darted back.

"Chuzz-flick," just one arrow came. We were close on the Selenites, and they were standing in a crowd, broad, short, and tall together, with a little battery of their shooting implements pointing down the cave. Three or four other arrows followed the first, then their fire ceased.

I stuck out my head, and escaped by a hair's-breadth. This time I drew a dozen shots or more, and heard the Selenites shouting and twittering as if with excitement as they shot. I picked up jacket and crowbar again.

"Now! " said I, and thrust out the jacket.

"Chuzz-zz-zz-zz! Chuzz!" In an instant my jacket had grown a thick beard of arrows, and they were quivering all over the carcass behind us. Instantly I slipped the crowbar out of the jacket, dropped the jacket - for all I know to the contrary it is lying up there in the moon now - and rushed out upon them.

For a minute perhaps it was massacre. I was too fierce to discriminate, and the Selenites were probably too scared to fight. At any rate they made no sort of fight against me. I saw scarlet, as the saying is. I remember I seemed to be wading among those leathery, thin things as a man wades through tall grass, mowing and hitting, first right, then left; smash. Little drops of moisture flew about. I trod on things that crushed and piped and went slippery. The crowd seemed to open and close and flow like water. They seemed to have no combined plan whatever. There were spears flew about me, I was grazed over the ear by one. I was stabbed once in the arm and once in the cheek, but I only found that out afterwards, when the blood had had time to run and cool and feel wet.

What Cavor did I do not know. For a space it seemed that this fighting had lasted for an age, and must needs go on for ever. Then suddenly it was all over, and there was nothing to be seen but the backs of heads bobbing up and down as their owners ran in all directions. ... I seemed altogether unhurt. I ran forward some paces, shouting, then turned about. I was amazed.

I had come right through them in vast flying strides, they were all behind me, and running hither and thither to hide.

I felt an enormous astonishment at the evaporation of the great fight into which I had hurled myself, and not a little exultation. It did not seem to me that I had discovered the Selenites were unexpectedly flimsy, but that I was unexpectedly strong. I laughed stupidly. This fantastic moon!

I glanced for a moment at the smashed and writhing bodies that were scattered over the cavern floor, with a vague idea of further violence, then hurried on after Cavor.

Chapter 18

In the Sunlight

PRESENTLY we saw that the cavern before us opened upon a hazy void. In another moment we had emerged upon a sort of slanting gallery, that projected into a vast circular space, a huge cylindrical pit running vertically up and down. Round this pit the slanting gallery ran without any parapet or protection for a turn and a half, and then plunged high above into the rock again. Somehow it reminded me then one of those spiral turns of the railway through the Saint Gothard. It was all tremendously huge. I can scarcely hope to convey to you the Titanic proportion of all that place, the Titanic effect of it. Our eyes followed up the vast declivity of the pit wall, and overhead and far above we beheld a round opening set with faint stars, and half of the lip about it well nigh blinding with the white light of the sun. At that we cried aloud simultaneously.

"Come on!" I said, leading the way.

"But there?" said Cavor, and very carefully stepped nearer the edge of the gallery. I followed his example, and craned forward and looked down, but I was dazzled by that gleam of light above, and I could see only a bottomless darkness with spectral patches of crimson and purple floating therein. Yet if I could not see, I could hear. Out of this darkness came a sound, a sound like the angry hum one can hear if one puts one's ear outside a hive of bees, a sound out of that enormous hollow, it may be, four miles beneath our feet...

For a moment I listened, then tightened my grip on my crowbar, and led the way up the gallery.

"This must be the shaft we looked down upon," said Cavor. "Under that lid."

"And below there, is where we saw the lights."

"The lights!" said he. "Yes - the lights of the world that now we shall never see."

"We'll come back," I said, for now we had escaped so much I was rashly sanguine that we should recover the sphere.

His answer I did not catch.

"Eh?" I asked.

"It doesn't matter," he answered, and we hurried on in silence.

I suppose that slanting lateral way was four or five miles long, allowing for its curvature, and it ascended at a slope that would have made it almost impossibly steep on earth, but which one strode up easily under lunar conditions. We saw only two Selenites during all that portion of our flight, and directly they became aware of us they ran headlong. It was clear that the knowledge of our strength and violence had reached them. Our way to the exterior was unexpectedly plain. The spiral gallery straightened into a steeply ascendent tunnel, its floor bearing abundant traces of the mooncalves, and so straight and short in proportion to its vast arch, that no part of it was absolutely dark. Almost immediately it began to lighten, and then far off and high up, and quite blindingly brilliant, appeared its opening on the exterior, a slope of Alpine steepness surmounted by a crest of bayonet shrub, tall and broken down now, and dry and dead, in spiky silhouette against the sun.

And it is strange that we men, to whom this very vegetation had seemed so weird and horrible a little time ago, should now behold it with the emotion a home-coming exile might feel at sight of his native land. We welcomed even the rareness of the air that made us pant as we ran, and which rendered speaking no longer the easy thing that it had been, but an effort to make oneself heard. Larger grew the sunlit circle above us, and larger, and all the nearer tunnel sank into a rim of indistinguishable black. We saw the dead bayonet shrub no longer with any touch of green in it, but brown and dry and thick, arid the M shadow of its upper branches high out of sight made a densely interlaced pattern upon the tumbled rocks. And at the immediate mouth of the tunnel was a wide trampled space where the mooncalves had come and gone.

We came out upon this space at last into a light and heat that hit and pressed upon us. We traversed the exposed area painfully, and clambered up a slope among the scrub stems, and sat down at last panting in a high place beneath the shadow of a mass of twisted lava. Even in the shade the rock felt hot.

The air was intensely hot, and we were in great physical discomfort, but for all that we were no longer in a nightmare. We seemed to have come to our own province again, beneath the stars. All the fear and stress of our flight through the dim passages and fissures below had fallen from us. That last fight had filled us with an enormous confidence in ourselves so far as the Selenites were concerned. We looked back almost incredulously at the black opening from which we had just emerged. Down there it was, in a blue glow that now in our memories seemed the next thing to absolute darkness, we had met with things like mad mockeries of men, helmet-headed creatures, and had walked in fear before them, and had submitted to them until we could submit no longer. And behold, they had smashed like wax and scattered like chaff, and fled and vanished like the creatures of a dream!

I rubbed my eyes, doubting whether we had not slept and dreamt these things by reason of the fungus we had eaten, and suddenly discovered the

blood upon my face, and then that my shirt was sticking painfully to my shoulder and arm.

"Confound it!" I said, gauging my injuries with an investigatory hand, and suddenly that distant tunnel mouth became, as it were, a watching eye.

"Cavor!" I said; "what are they going to do now? And what are we going to do?"

He shook his head, with his eyes fixed upon the tunnel. "How can one tell what they will do?"

"It depends on what they think of us, and I don't see how we can begin to guess that. And it depends upon what they have in reserve. It's as you say, Cavor, we have touched the merest outside of this world. They may have all sorts of things inside here. Even with those shooting things they might make it bad for us....

"Yet after all," I said, "even if we don't find the sphere at once, there is a chance for us. We might hold out. Even through the night. We might go down there again and make a fight for it."

I stared about me with speculative eyes. The character of the scenery had altered altogether by reason of the enormous growth and subsequent drying of the scrub. The crest on which we sat was high, and commanded a wide prospect of the crater landscape, and we saw it now all sere and dry in the late autumn of the lunar afternoon. Rising one behind the other were long slopes and fields of trampled brown where the mooncalves had pastured, and far away in the full blaze of the sun a drove of them basked slumberously, scattered shapes, each with a blot of shadow against it like sheep on the side of a down. But never a sign of a Selenite was to be seen. Whether they had fled on our emergence from the interior passages, or whether they were accustomed to retire after driving out the mooncalves, I cannot guess. At the time I believed the former was the case.

"If we were to set fire to all this stuff, I said, "we might find the sphere among the ashes."

Cavor did not seem to hear me. He was peering under his hand at the stars, that still, in spite of the intense sunlight, were abundantly visible in the sky. "How long do you think we've have been here?" he asked at last.

"Been where? "

"On the moon."

"Two earthly days, perhaps."

"More nearly ten. Do you know, the sun is past its zenith, and sinking in the west. In four days' time or less it will be night."

"But - we've only eaten once!"

"I know that. And - But there are the stars! "

"But why should time seem different because we are on a smaller planet? "

"I don't know. There it is!"

"How does one tell time?"

"Hunger - fatigue - all those things are different. Everything is different - everything. To me it seems that since first we came out of the sphere has been only a question of hours - long hours - at most."

"Ten days," I said; "that leaves -" I looked up at the sun for a moment, and then saw that it was halfway from the zenith to the western edge of things. "Four days! ... Cavor, we musn't sit here and dream. How do you think we may begin?"

I stood up. "We must get a fixed point we can recognise - we might hoist a flag, or a handkerchief, or something - and quarter the ground, and work round that."

He stood up beside me.

"Yes," he said, "there is nothing for it but to hunt the sphere. Nothing. We may find it - certainly we may find it. And if not -"

"We must keep on looking."

He look this way and that, glanced up at the sky and down at the tunnel, and astonished me by a sudden gesture of impatience. "Oh! but we have done foolishly! To have come to this pass! Think how it might have been, and the things we might have done!"

"We might do something yet."

"Never the thing we might have done. here below our feet is a world. Think of what that world must be! Think of that machine we saw, and the lid and the shaft! They were just remote outlying things, and those creatures we have seen and fought with no more than ignorant peasants, dwellers in the outskirts, yokels and labourers half akin to brutes. Down below! Caverns beneath caverns, tunnels, structures, ways... It must open out, and be greater and wider and more populous as one descends. Assuredly. Right down at the last the central sea that washes round the core of the moon. Think of its inky waters under the spare lights - if, indeed, their eyes need lights! Think of the cascading tributaries pouring down their channels to feed it! Think of the tides upon its surface, and the rush and swirl of its ebb and flow! perhaps they have ships that go upon it, perhaps down there are mighty cities and swarming ways, and wisdom and order passing the wit of man. And we may die here upon it, and never see the masters who must be - ruling over these things! We may freeze and die here, and the air will freeze and thaw upon us, and

then - ! Then they will come upon us, come on our stiff and silent bodies, and find the sphere we cannot find, and they will understand at last too late all the thought and effort that ended here in vain!"

His voice for all that speech sounded like the voice of someone heard in a telephone, weak and far away.

"But the darkness," I said.

"One might get over that."

"How?"

"I don't know. How am I to know? One might carry a torch, one might have a lamp - The others - might understand."

He stood for a moment with his hands held down and a rueful face, staring out over the waste that defied him. Then with a gesture of renunciation he turned towards me with proposals for the systematic hunting of the sphere.

"We can return," I said.

He looked about him. "First of all we shall have to get to earth."

"We could bring back lamps to carry and climbing irons, and a hundred necessary things."

"Yes," he said.

"We can take back an earnest of success in this gold."

He looked at my golden crowbars, and said nothing for a space. He stood with his hands clasped behind his back, staring across the crater. At last he signed and spoke. "It was I found the way here, but to find a way

isn't always to be master of a way. If I take my secret back to earth, what will happen? I do not see how I can keep my secret for a year, for even a part of a year. Sooner or later it must come out, even if other men rediscover it. And then ... Governments and powers will struggle to get hither, they will fight against one another, and against these moon people; it will only spread warfare and multiply the occasions of war. In a little while, in a very little while, if I tell my secret, this planet to its deepest galleries will be strewn with human dead. Other things are doubtful, but that is certain. It is not as though man had any use for the moon. What good would the moon be to men? Even of their own planet what have they made but a battle-ground and theatre of infinite folly? Small as his world is, and short as his time, he has still in his little life down there far more than he can do. No! Science has toiled too long forging weapons for fools to use. It is time she held her hand. Let him find it out for himself again - in a thousand years' time."

"There are methods of secrecy," I said.

He looked up at me and smiled. "After all," he said, "why should one worry? There is little chance of our finding the sphere, and down below things are brewing. It's simply the human habit of hoping till we die that makes us think of return. Our troubles are only beginning. We have shown these moon folk violence, we have given them a taste of our quality, and our chances are about as good as a tiger's that has got loose and killed a man in Hyde Park. The news of us must be running down from gallery to gallery, down towards the central parts. ... No sane beings will ever let us take that sphere back to earth after so much as they have seen of us."

"We aren't improving our chances," said I, "by sitting here."

We stood up side by side.

"After all," he said, we must separate. We must stick up a handkerchief on these tall spikes here and fasten it firmly, and from this as a centre we must work over the crater. You must go westward, moving out in semicircles

to and fro towards the setting sun. You must move first with your shadow on your right until it is at right angles with the direction of your handkerchief, and then with your shadow on your left. And I will do the same to the east. We will look into every gully, examine every skerry of rocks; we will do all we can to find my sphere. If we see the Selenites we will hide from them as well as we can. For drink we must take snow, and if we feel the need of food, we must kill a mooncalf if we can, and eat such flesh as it has - raw - and so each will go his own way."

"And if one of us comes upon the sphere?"

"He must come back to the white handkerchief, and stand by it and signal to the other."

"And if neither?"

Cavor glanced up at the sun. "We go on seeking until the night and cold overtake us."

"Suppose the Selenites have found the sphere and hidden it?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Or if presently they come hunting us?"

He made no answer.

"You had better take a club," I said.

He shook his head, and stared away from me across the waste.

But for a moment he did not start. He looked round at me shyly, hesitated. "Au revoir," he said.

I felt an odd stab of emotion. A sense of how we had galled each other,

and particularly how I must have galled him, came to me. "Confound it," thought I, "we might have done better!" I was on the point of asking him to shake hands - for that, somehow, was how I felt just then - when he put his feet together and leapt away from me towards the north. He seemed to drift through the air as a dead leaf would do, fell lightly, and leapt again. I stood for a moment watching him, then faced westward reluctantly, pulled myself together, and with something of the feeling of a man who leaps into icy water, selected a leaping point, and plunged forward to explore my solitary half of the moon world. I dropped rather clumsily among rocks, stood up and looked about me, clambered on to a rocky slab, and leapt again. ...

When presently I looked for Cavor he was hidden from my eyes, but the handkerchief showed out bravely on its headland, white in the blaze of the sun.

I determined not to lose sight of that handkerchief whatever might betide.

Chapter 19

Mr. Bedford Alone

IN a little while it seemed to me as though I had always been alone on the moon. I hunted for a time with a certain intentness, but the heat was still very great, and the thinness of the air felt like a hoop about one's chest. I came presently into a hollow basin bristling with tall, brown, dry fronds about its edge, and I sat down under these to rest and cool. I intended to rest for only a little while. I put down my clubs beside me, and sat resting my chin on my hands. I saw with a sort of colourless interest that the rocks of the basin, where here and there the crackling dry lichens had shrunk away to show them, were all veined and splattered with gold, that here and there bosses of rounded and wrinkled gold projected from among the litter. What did that matter now? A sort of

languor had possession of my limbs and mind, I did not believe for a moment that we should ever find the sphere in that vast desiccated wilderness. I seemed to lack a motive for effort until the Selenites should come. Then I supposed I should exert myself, obeying that unreasonable imperative that urges a man before all things to preserve and defend his life, albeit he may preserve it only to die more painfully in a little while.

Why had we come to the moon?

The thing presented itself to me as a perplexing problem. What is this spirit in man that urges him for ever to depart from happiness and security, to toil, to place himself in danger, to risk even a reasonable certainty of death? It dawned upon me up there in the moon as a thing I ought always to have known, that man is not made simply to go about being safe and comfortable and well fed and amused. Almost any man, if you put the thing to him, not in words, but in the shape of opportunities, will show that he knob as much. Against his interest, against his happiness, he is constantly being driven to do unreasonable things. Some force not himself impels him, and go he must. But why? Why? Sitting there in the midst of that useless moon gold, amidst the things of another world, I took count of all my life. Assuming I was to die a castaway upon the moon, I failed altogether to see what purpose I had served. I got no light on that point, but at any rate it was clearer to me than it had ever been in my life before that I was not serving my own purpose, that all my life I had in truth never served the purposes of my private life. Whose purposes, what purposes, was I serving? ... I ceased to speculate on why we had come to the moon, and took a wider sweep. Why had I come to the earth? Why had I a private life at all? ... I lost myself at last in bottomless speculations. ...

My thoughts became vague and cloudy, no longer leading in definite directions. I had not felt heavy or weary - I cannot imagine one doing so upon the moon - but I suppose I was greatly fatigued. At any rate I slept.

Slumbering there rested me greatly, I think, and the sun was setting and

the violence of the heat abating, through all the time I slumbered. When at last I was roused from my slumbers by a remote clamour, I felt active and capable again. I rubbed my eyes and stretched my arms. I rose to my feet - I was a little stiff - and at once prepared to resume my search. I shouldered my golden clubs, one on each shoulder, and went on out of the ravine of the gold-veined rocks.

The sun was certainly lower, much lower than it had been; the air was very much cooler. I perceived I must have slept some time. It seemed to me that a faint touch of misty blueness hung about the western cliff I leapt to a little boss of rock and surveyed the crater. I could see no signs of mooncalves or Selenites, nor could I see Cavor, but I could see my handkerchief far off, spread out on its thicket of thorns. I looked about me, and then leapt forward to the next convenient view-point.

I beat my round in a semicircle, and back again in a still remoter crescent. It was very fatiguing and hopeless. The air was really very much cooler, and it seemed to me that the shadow under the westward cliff was growing broad. Ever and again I stopped and reconnoitred, but there was no sign of Cavor, no sign of Selenites; and it seemed to me the mooncalves must have been driven into the interior again - I could see none of them. I became more and more desirous of being Cavor. The winged outline of the sun had sunk now, until it was scarcely the distance of its diameter from the rim of the sky. I was oppressed by the idea that the Selenites would presently close their lids and valves, and shut us out under the inexorable onrush of the lunar night. It seemed to me high time that he abandoned his search, and that we took counsel together. I felt how urgent it was that we should decide soon upon our course. We had failed to find the sphere, we no longer had time to seek it, and once these valves were closed with us outside, we were lost men. The great night of space would descend upon us - that blackness of the void which is the only absolute death. All my being shrank from that approach. We must get into the moon again, though we were slain in doing it. I was haunted by a vision of our freezing to death, of our hammering with our last strength on the valve of the great pit.

I took no thought any more of the sphere. I thought only of finding Cavor again I was half inclined to go back into the moon without him, rather than seek him until it was too late. I was already half-way back towards our handkerchief, when suddenly -

I saw the sphere!

I did not find it so much as it found me. It was lying much farther to the westward than I had gone, and the sloping rays of the sinking sun reflected from its glass had suddenly proclaimed its presence in a dazzling beam. For an instant I thought this was some new device of the Selenites against us, and then I understood.

I threw up my arms, shouted a ghostly shout, and set off in vast leaps towards it. I missed one of my leaps and dropped into a deep ravine and twisted my ankle, and after that I stumbled at almost every leap. I was in a state of hysterical agitation, trembling violently, and quite breathless long before I got to it. Three times at least I had to stop with my hands resting on my side and spite of the thin dryness of the air, the perspiration was wet upon my face.

I thought of nothing but the sphere until I reached it, I forgot even my trouble of Cavor's whereabouts. My last leap flung me with my hands hard against its glass; then I lay against it panting, and trying vainly to shout, "Cavor! here is the sphere!" When I had recovered a little I peered through the thick glass, and the things inside seemed tumbled. I stooped to peer closer. Then I attempted to get in. I had to hoist it over a little to get my head through the manhole. The screw stopper was inside, and I could see now that nothing had been touched, nothing had suffered. It lay there as we had left it when we had dropped out amidst the snow. For a time I was wholly occupied in making and remaking this inventory. I found I was trembling violently. It was good to see that familiar dark interior again! I cannot tell you how good. Presently I crept inside and sat down among the things. I looked through the glass at the moon world

and shivered. I placed my gold clubs upon the table, and sought out and took a little food; not so much because I wanted it, but because it was there. Then it occurred to me that it was time to go out and signal for Cavor. But I did not go out and signal for Cavor forthwith. Something held me to the sphere.

After all, everything was coming right. There would be still time for us to get more of the magic stone that gives one mastery over men. Away there, close handy, was gold for the picking up; and the sphere would travel as well half full of gold as though it were empty. We could go back now, masters of ourselves and our world, and then -

I roused myself at last, and with an effort got myself out of the sphere. I shivered as I emerged, for the evening air was growing very cold. I stood in the hollow staring about me. I scrutinised the bushes round me very carefully before I leapt to the rocky shelf hard by, and took once more what had been my first leap in the moon. But now I made it with no effort whatever.

The growth and decay of the vegetation had gone on apace, and the whole aspect of the rocks had changed, but still it was possible to make out the slope on which the seeds had germinated, and the rocky mass from which we had taken our first view of the crater. But the spiky shrub on the slope stood brown and sere now, and thirty feet high, and cast long shadows that stretched out of sight, and the little seeds that clustered in its upper branches were brown and ripe. Its work was done, and it was brittle and ready to fall and crumple under the freezing air, so soon as the nightfall came. And the huge cacti, that had swollen as we watched them, had long since burst and scattered their spores to the four quarters of the moon. Amazing little corner in the universe - the landing place of men!

Some day, thought I, I will have an inscription standing there right in the midst of the hollow. It came to me, if only this teeming world within knew of the full import of the moment, how furious its tumult would become!

But as yet it could scarcely be dreaming of the significance of our coming. For if it did, the crater would surely be an uproar of pursuit, instead of as still as death! I looked about for some place from which I might signal Cavor, and saw that same patch of rock to which he had leapt from my present standpoint, still bare and barren in the sun. For a moment I hesitated at going so far from the sphere. Then with a pang of shame at that hesitation, I leapt. ...

From this vantage point I surveyed the crater again. Far away at the top of the enormous shadow I cast was the little white handkerchief fluttering on the bushes. It was very little and very far, and Cavor was not in sight. It seemed to me that by this time he ought to be looking for me. That was the agreement. But he was nowhere to be seen.

I stood waiting and watching, hands shading my eyes, expecting every moment to distinguish him. Very probably I stood there for quite a long time. I tried to shout, and was reminded of the thinness of the air. I made an undecided step back towards the sphere. But a lurking dread of the Selenites made me hesitate to signal my whereabouts by hoisting one of our sleeping-blankets on to the adjacent scrub. I searched the crater again.

It had an effect of emptiness that chilled me. And it was still; Any sound from the Selenites in the world beneath, even had died away. It was as still as death. Save for the faint stir of the shrub about me in the little breeze that was rising, there was no sound nor shadow of a sound. And the breeze blew chill.

Confound Cavor!

I took a deep breath. I put my hands to the sides of my mouth. "Cavor!" I bawled, and the sound was like some manikin shouting far away.

I looked at the handkerchief, I looked behind me at the broadening shadow

of the westward cliff I looked under my hand at the sun. It seemed to me that almost visibly it was creeping down the sky. I felt I must act instantly if I was to save Cavor. I whipped off my vest and flung it as a mark on the sere bayonets of the shrubs behind me, and then set off in a straight line towards the handkerchief. Perhaps it was a couple of miles away - a matter of a few hundred leaps and strides. I have already told how one seemed to hang through those lunar leaps. In each suspense I sought Cavor, and marvelled why he should be hidden. In each leap I could feel the sun setting behind me. Each time I touched the ground I was tempted to go back.

A last leap and I was in the depression below our handkerchief, a stride, and I stood on our former vantage point within arms' reach of it. I stood up straight and scanned the world about me, between its lengthening bars of shadow. Far away, down a long declivity, was the opening of the tunnel up which we had fled, and my shadow reached towards it, stretched towards it, and touched it, like a finger of the night.

Not a sign of Cavor, not a sound in all the stillness, only the stir and waving of the scrub and of the shadows increased. And suddenly and violently I shivered. "Cav-" I began, and realised once more the uselessness of the human voice in that thin air. Silence. The silence of death.

Then it was my eye caught something - a little thing lying, perhaps fifty yards away down the slope, amidst a litter of bent and broken branches. What was it? I knew, and yet for some reason I would not know. I went nearer to it. It was the little cricket-cap Cavor had worn. I did not touch it, I stood looking at it.

I saw then that the scattered branches about it had been forcibly smashed and trampled. I hesitated, stepped forward, and picked it up.

I stood with Cavor's cap in my hand, staring at the trampled reeds and thorns about me. On some, of them were little smears of something dark,

something that I dared not touch. A dozen yards away, perhaps, the rising breeze dragged something into view, something small and vividly white.

It was a little piece of paper crumpled tightly, as though it had been clutched tightly. I picked it up, and on it were smears of red. My eye caught faint pencil marks. I smoothed it out, and saw uneven and broken writing ending at last in a crooked streak up on the paper.

I set myself to decipher this.

"I have been injured about the knee, I think my kneecap is hurt, and I cannot run or crawl," it began - pretty distinctly written.

Then less legibly: "They have been chasing me for some time, and it is only a question of" - the word "time" seemed to have been written here and erased in favour of something illegible - "before they get me. They are beating all about me."

Then the writing became convulsive. "I can hear them," I guessed the tracing meant, and then it was quite unreadable for a space. Then came a little string of words that were quite distinct: "a different sort of Selenite altogether, who appears to be directing the" The writing became a mere hasty confusion again.

"They have larger brain cases - much larger, and slenderer bodies, and very short legs. They make gentle noises, and move with organized deliberation...

"And though I am wounded and helpless here, their appearance still gives me hope " That was like Cavor. "They have not shot at me or attempted... injury. I intend -"

Then came the sudden streak of the pencil across the paper, and on the back and edges - blood!

And as I stood there stupid, and perplexed, with this dumbfounding relic in my hand, something very soft and light and chill touched my hand for a moment and ceased to be, and then a thing, a little white speck, drifted athwart a shadow. It was a tiny snowflake, the first snowflake, the herald of the night.

I looked up with a start, and the sky had darkened almost to blackness, and was thick with a gathering multitude of coldly watchful stars. I looked eastward, and the light of that shrivelled world was touched with sombre bronze; westward, and the sun robbed now by a thickening white mist of half its heat and splendour, was touching the crater rim, was sinking out of sight, and all the shrubs and jagged and tumbled rocks stood out against it in a bristling disorder of black shapes. Into the great lake of darkness westward, a vast wreath of mist was sinking. A cold wind set all the crater shivering. Suddenly, for a moment, I was in a puff of falling snow, and all the world about me gray and dim.

And then it was I heard, not loud and penetrating as at first, but faint and dim like a dying voice, that tolling, that same tolling that had welcomed the coming of the day: Boom!... Boom!... Boom!...

It echoed about the crater, it seemed to throb with the throbbing of the greater stars, the blood-red crescent of the sun's disc sank as it tolled out: Boom!... Boom!... Boom! ...

What had happened to Cavor? All through that tolling I stood there stupidly, and at last the tolling ceased.

And suddenly the open mouth of the tunnel down below there, shut like an eye and vanished out of sight.

Then indeed was I alone.

Over me, around me, closing in on me, embracing me ever nearer, was the Eternal; that which was before the beginning, and that which triumphs over

the end; that enormous void in which all light and life and being is but the thin and vanishing splendour of a falling star, the cold, the stillness, the silence - the infinite and final Night of space.

The sense of solitude and desolation became the sense of an overwhelming presence that stooped towards me, that almost touched me.

"No," I cried. "No! Not yet! not yet! Wait! Wait! Oh, wait!" My voice went up to a shriek. I flung the crumpled paper from me, scrambled back to the crest to take my bearings, and then, with all the will that was in me, leapt out towards the mark I had left, dim and distant now in the very margin of the shadow.

Leap, leap, leap, and each leap was seven ages.

Before me the pale serpent-girdled section of the sun sank and sank, and the advancing shadow swept to seize the sphere before I could reach it. I was two miles away, a hundred leaps or more, and the air about me was thinning out as it thins under an air-pump, and the cold was gripping at my joints. But had I died, I should have died leaping. Once, and then again my foot slipped on the gathering snow as I leapt and shortened my leap; once I fell short into bushes that crashed and smashed into dusty chips and nothingness, and once I stumbled as I dropped and rolled head over heels into a gully, and rose bruised and bleeding and confused as to my direction.

But such incidents were as nothing to the intervals, those awful pauses when one drifted through the air towards that pouring tide of night. My breathing made a piping noise, and it was as though knives were whirling in my lungs. My heart seemed to beat against the top of my brain. "Shall I reach it? O Heaven! Shall I reach it?"

My whole being became anguish.

"Lie down!" screamed my pain and despair; "lie down!"

The near I struggled, the more awfully remote it seemed. I was numb, I stumbled, I bruised and cut myself and did not bleed.

It was in sight.

I fell on all fours, and my lungs whooped.

I crawled. The frost gathered on my lips, icicles hung from my moustache, I was white with the freezing atmosphere.

I was a dozen yards from it. My eyes had become dim. "Lie down!" screamed despair; "lie down!"

I touched it, and halted. "Too late!" screamed despair; "lie down!"

I fought stiffly with it. I was on the manhole lip, a stupefied, half-dead being. The snow was all about me. I pulled myself in. There lurked within a little warmer air.

The snowflakes - the airflakes - danced in about me, as I tried with chilling hands to thrust the valve in and spun it tight and hard. I sobbed. "I will," I chattered in my teeth. And then, with fingers that quivered and felt brittle, I turned to the shutter studs.

As I fumbled with the switches - for I had never controlled them before - I could see dimly through the steaming glass the blazing red streamers of the sinking sun, dancing and flickering through the snowstorm, and the black forms of the scrub thickening and bending and breaking beneath the accumulating snow. Thicker whirled the snow and thicker, black against the light. What if even now the switches overcame me? Then something clicked under my hands, and in an instant that last vision of the moon world was hidden from my eyes. I was in the silence and darkness the inter-planetary sphere.

Chapter 20

Mr. Bedford in Infinite Space

IT was almost as though I had been killed. Indeed, I could imagine a man suddenly and violently killed would feel very much as I did. One moment, a passion of agonising existence and fear; the next darkness and stillness, neither light nor life nor sun, moon nor stars, the blank infinite.

Although the thing was done by my own act, although I had already tasted this very of effect in Cavor's company, I felt astonished, dumbfounded, and overwhelmed. I seemed to be borne upward into an enormous darkness.

My

fingers floated off the studs, I hung as if I were annihilated, and at last very softly and gently I came against the bale and the golden chain, and the crowbars that had drifted to the middle of the sphere.

I do not know how long that drifting took. In the sphere of course, even more than on the moon, one's earthly time sense was ineffectual. At the touch of the bale it was as if I had awakened from a dreamless sleep. I immediately perceived that if I wanted to keep awake and alive I must get a light or open a window, so as to get a grip of something with my eyes. And besides, I was cold. I kicked off from the bale, therefore, clawed on to the thin cords within the glass, crawled along until I got to the manhole rim, and so got my bearings for the light and blind studs, took a shove off, and flying once round the bale, and getting a scare from something big and flimsy that was drifting loose, I got my hand on the cord quite close to the studs, and reached them. I lit the little lamp first of all to see what it was I had collided with, and discovered that old copy of Lloyd's News had slipped its moorings, and was adrift in the void. That brought me out of the infinite to my own proper dimensions again. It made me laugh and pant for a time, and suggested the idea of a little oxygen from one of the cylinders. After that I lit the heater until I felt warm, and then I took food. Then I set to work in a very gingerly

fashion on the Cavorite blinds, to see if I could guess by any means how the sphere was travelling.

The first blind I opened I shut at once, and hung for a time flattened and blinded by the sunlight that had hit me. After thinking a little I started upon the windows at right angles to this one, and got the huge crescent moon and the little crescent earth behind it, the second time. I was amazed to find how far I was from the moon. I had reckoned that not only should I have little or none of the "kick-off" that the earth's atmosphere had given us at our start, but that the tangential "fly off" of the moon's spin would be at least twenty-eight times less than the earth's. I had expected to discover myself hanging over our crater, and on the edge of the night, but all that was now only a part of the outline of the white crescent that filled the sky. And Cavor - ?

He was already infinite.

I tried to imagine what could have happened to him. But at that time I could think of nothing but death. I seemed to see him, bent and smashed at the foot of some interminably high cascade of blue. And all about him the stupid insects stared...

Under the inspiring touch of the drifting newspaper I became practical again for a while. It was quite clear to me that what I had to do was to get back to earth, but as far as I could see I was drifting away from it. Whatever had happened to Cavor, even if he was still alive, which seemed to me incredible after that blood-stained scrap, I was powerless to help him. There he was, living or dead behind the mantle of that rayless night, and there he must remain at least until I could summon our fellow men to his assistance. Should I do that? Something of the sort I had in my mind; to come back to earth if it were possible, and then as maturer consideration might determine, either to show and explain the sphere to a few discreet persons, and act with them, or else to keep my secret, sell my gold,, obtain weapons, provisions, and an assistant, and return with these advantages to deal on equal terms with the flimsy people of the

moon, to rescue Cavor, if that were still possible, and at any rate to procure a sufficient supply of gold to place my subsequent proceedings on a firmer basis. But that was hoping far; I had first to get back.

I set myself to decide just exactly how the return to earth could be contrived. As I struggled with that problem I ceased to worry about what I should do when I got there. At last my only care was to get back.

I puzzled out at last that my best chance would be to drop back towards the moon as near as I dared in order to gather velocity, then to shut my windows, and fly behind it, and when I was past to open my earthward windows, and so get off at a good pace homeward. But whether I should ever reach the earth by that device, or whether I might not simply find myself spinning about it in some hyperbolic or parabolic curve or other, I could not tell. Later I had a happy inspiration, and by opening certain windows to the moon, which had appeared in the sky in front of the earth, I turned my course aside so as to head off the earth, which it had become evident to me I must pass behind without some such expedient. I did a very great deal of complicated thinking over these, problems - for I am no mathematician - and in the end I am certain it was much more my good luck than my reasoning that enabled me to hit the earth. Had I known then, as I know now, the mathematical chances there were against me, I doubt if I should have troubled even to touch the studs to make any attempt. And having puzzled out what I considered to be the thing to do, I opened all my moonward windows, and squatted down - the effort lifted me for a time some feet or so into the air, and I hung there in the oddest way - and waited for the crescent to get bigger and bigger until I felt I was near enough for safety. Then I would shut the windows, fly past the moon with the velocity I had got from it - if I did not smash upon it - and so go on towards the earth.

And that is what I did.

At last I felt my moonward start was sufficient. I shut out the sight of the moon from my eyes, and in a state of mind that was, I now recall,

incredibly free from anxiety or any distressful quality, I sat down to begin a vigil in that little speck of matter in infinite space that would last until I should strike the earth. The heater had made the sphere tolerably warm, the air had been refreshed by the oxygen, and except for that faint congestion of the head that was always with me while I was away from earth, I felt entire physical comfort. I had extinguished the light again, lest it should fail me in the end; I was in darkness, save for the earthshine and the glitter of the stars below me. Everything was so absolutely silent and still that I might indeed have been the only being in the universe, and yet, strangely enough, I had no more feeling of loneliness or fear than if I had been lying in bed on earth. Now, this seems all the stranger to me, since during my last hours in that crater of the moon, the sense of my utter loneliness had been an agony. ...

Incredible as it will seem, this interval of time that I spent in space has no sort of proportion to any other interval of time in my life. Sometimes it seemed as though I sat through immeasurable eternities like some god upon a lotus leaf, and again as though there was a momentary pause as I leapt from moon to earth. In truth, it was altogether some weeks of earthly time. But I had done with care and anxiety, hunger or fear, for that space. I floated, thinking with a strange breadth and freedom of all that we had undergone, and of all my life and motives, and the secret issues of my being. I seemed to myself to have grown greater and greater, to have lost all sense of movement; to be floating amidst the stars, and always the sense of earth's littleness and the infinite littleness of my life upon it, was implicit in my thoughts.

I can't profess to explain the things that happened in my mind. No doubt they could all be traced directly or indirectly to the curious physical conditions under which I was living. I set them down here just for what they are worth, and without any comment. The most prominent quality of it was a pervading doubt of my own identity. I became, if I may so express it, dissociate from Bedford; I looked down on Bedford as a trivial, incidental thing with which I chanced to be connected. I saw Bedford in many relations - as an ass or as a poor beast, where I had hitherto been

inclined to regard him with a quiet pride as a very spirited or rather forcible person. I saw him not only as an ass, but as the son of many generations of asses. I reviewed his school-days and his early manhood, and his first encounter with love, very much as one might review the proceedings of an ant in the sand. Something of that period of lucidity I regret still hangs about me, and I doubt if I shall ever recover the full-bodied self satisfaction of my early days. But at the time the thing was not in the least painful, because I had that extraordinary persuasion that, as a matter of fact, I was no more Bedford than I was any one else, but only a mind floating in the still serenity of space. Who should I be disturbed about this Bedford's shortcomings? I was not responsible for him or them.

For a time I struggled against this really very grotesque delusion. I tried to summon the memory of vivid moments, of tender or intense emotions to my assistance; I felt that if I could recall one genuine twinge of feeling the growing severance would be stopped. But I could not do it. I saw Bedford rushing down Chancery Lane, hat on the back of his head, coat tails flying out, en route for his public examination. I saw him dodging and bumping against, and even saluting, other similar little creatures in that swarming gutter of people. Me? I saw Bedford that same evening in the sitting-room of a certain lady, and his hat was on the table beside him, and it wanted brushing badly, and he was in tears. Me? I saw him with that lady in various attitudes and emotions - I never felt so detached before. ... I saw him hurrying off to Lympne to write a play, and accosting Cavor, and in his shirt sleeves working at the sphere, and walking out to Canterbury because he was afraid to come! Me? I did not believe it.

I still reasoned that all this was hallucination due to my solitude, and the fact that I had lost all weight and sense of resistance. I endeavoured to recover that sense by banging myself about the sphere, by pinching my hands and clasping them together. Among other things, I lit the light, captured that torn copy of Lloyd's, and read those convincingly realistic advertisements about the Cutaway bicycle, and the gentleman of private means, and the lady in distress who was selling those "forks and spoons."

There was no doubt they existed surely enough, and, said I, "This is your world, and you are Bedford, and you are going back to live among things like that for all the rest of your life." But the doubts within me could still argue: "It is not you that is reading, it is Bedford, but you are not Bedford, you know. That's just where the mistake comes in."

"Confound it!" I cried; "and if I am not Bedford, what am I?"

But in that direction no light was forthcoming, though the strangest fancies came drifting into my brain, queer remote suspicions, like shadows seen from away. Do you know, I had a sort of idea that really I was something quite outside not only the world, but all worlds, and out of space and time, and that this poor Bedford was just a peephole through which I looked at life? ...

Bedford! However I disavowed him, there I was most certainly bound up with him, and I knew that wherever or whatever I might be, I must needs feel the stress of his desires, and sympathise with all his joys and sorrows until his life should end. And with the dying of Bedford - what then? ...

Enough of this remarkable phase of my experiences! I tell it here simply to show how one's isolation and departure from this planet touched not only the functions and feeling of every organ of the body, but indeed also the very fabric of the mind, with strange and unanticipated disturbances. All through the major portion of that vast space journey I hung thinking of such immaterial things as these, hung dissociated and apathetic, a cloudy megalomaniac, as it were, amidst the stars and planets in the void of space; and not only the world to which I was returning, but the blue-lit caverns of the Selenites, their helmet faces, their gigantic and wonderful machines, and the fate of Cavor, dragged helpless into that world, seemed infinitely minute and altogether trivial things to me.

Until at last I began to feel the pull of the earth upon my being, drawing me back again to the life that is real for men. And then, indeed, it grew clearer and clearer to me that I was quite certainly Bedford after all,

and returning after amazing adventures to this world of ours, and with a life that I was very likely to lose in this return. I set myself to puzzle out the conditions under which I must fall to earth.

Chapter 21

Mr. Bedford at Littlestone

My line of flight was about parallel with the surface as I came into the upper air. The temperature of sphere began to rise forthwith. I knew it behoved me to drop at once. Far below me, in a darkling twilight, stretched a great expanse of sea. I opened every window I could, and fell - out of sunshine into evening, and out of evening into night. Vaster grew the earth and vaster, swallowing up the stars, and the silvery translucent starlit veil of cloud it wore spread out to catch me. At last the world seemed no longer a sphere but flat, and then concave. It was no longer a planet in the sky, but the world of Man. I shut all but an inch or so of earthward window, and dropped with a slackening velocity. The broadening water, now so near that I could see the dark glitter of the waves, rushed up to meet me. The sphere became very hot. I snapped the last strip of window, and sat scowling and biting my knuckles, waiting for the impact.

...

The sphere hit the water with a huge splash: it must have sent it fathoms high. At the splash I flung the Cavorite shutters open. Down I went, but slower and slower, and then I felt the sphere pressing against my feet, and so drove up again as a bubble drives. And at the last I was floating and rocking upon the surface of the sea, and my journey in space was at an end.

The night was dark and overcast. Two yellow pinpoints far away showed the passing of a ship, and nearer was a red glare that came and went. Had not the electricity of my glow-lamp exhausted itself, I could have got picked up that night. In spite of the inordinate fatigue I was beginning to feel,

I was excited now, and for a time hopeful, in a feverish, impatient way, that so my travelling might end.

But at last I ceased to move about, and sat, wrists on knees, staring at a distant red light. It swayed up and down, rocking, rocking. My excitement passed. I realised I had yet to spend another night at least in the sphere. I perceived myself infinitely heavy and fatigued. And so I fell asleep.

A change in my rhythmic motion awakened me. I peered through the refracting glass, and saw that I had come aground upon a huge shallow of sand. Far away I seemed to see houses and trees, and seaward a curve, vague distortion of a ship hung between sea and sky.

I stood up and staggered. My one desire was to emerge. The manhole was upward, and I wrestled with the screw. Slowly I opened the manhole. At last the air was singing in again as once it had sung out. But this time I did not wait until the pressure was adjusted. In another moment I had the weight of the window on my hands, and I was open, wide open, to the old familiar sky of earth.

The air hit me on the chest so that I gasped. I dropped the glass screw. I cried out, put my hands to my chest, and sat down. For a time I was in pain. Then I took deep breaths. At last I could rise and move about again.

I tried to thrust my head through the manhole, and the sphere rolled over. It was as though something had lugged my head down directly it emerged. I ducked back sharply, or I should have been pinned face under water. After some wriggling and shoving I managed to crawl out upon sand, over which the retreating waves still came and went.

I did not attempt to stand up. It seemed to me that my body must be suddenly changed to lead. Mother Earth had her grip on me now - no Cavorite intervening. I sat down heedless of the water that came over my

feet.

It was dawn, a gray dawn, rather overcast but showing here and there a long patch of greenish gray. Some way out a ship was lying at anchor, a pale silhouette of a ship with one yellow light. The water came rippling in in long shallow waves. Away to the right curved the land, a shingle bank with little hovels, and at last a lighthouse, a sailing mark and a point. Inland stretched a space of level sand, broken here and there by pools of water, and ending a mile away perhaps in a low shore of scrub. To the north-east some isolated watering-place was visible, a row of gaunt lodging-houses, the tallest things that I could see on earth, dull dabs against the brightening sky. What strange men can have reared these vertical piles in such an amplitude of space I do not know. There they are, like pieces of Brighton lost in the waste.

For a long time I sat there, yawning and rubbing my face. At last I struggled to rise. It made me feel that I was lifting a weight. I stood up.

I stared at the distant houses. For the first time since our starvation in the crater I thought of earthly food. "Bacon," I whispered, "eggs. Good toast and good coffee. ... And how the devil am I going to all this stuff to Lympne?" I wondered where I was. It was an east shore anyhow, and I had seen Europe before I dropped.

I heard footsteps scrunching in the sand, and a little round-faced, friendly-looking man in flannels, with a bathing towel wrapped about his shoulders, and his bathing dress over his arm, appeared up the beach. I knew instantly that I must be in England. He was staring most intently at the sphere and me. He advanced staring. I dare say I looked a ferocious savage enough - dirty, unkempt, to an indescribable degree; but it did not occur to me at the time. He stopped at a distance of twenty yards. "Hul-lo, my man! " he said doubtfully.

"Hullo yourself!" said I.

He advanced, reassured by that. "What on earth is that thing? " he asked.

"Can you tell me where I am?" I asked.

"That's Littlestone," he said, pointing to the houses; "and that's Dungeness! Have you just landed? What's that thing you've got? Some sort of machine?"

"Yes."

"Have you floated ashore? Have you been wrecked or something? What is it?"

I meditated swiftly. I made an estimate of the little man's appearance as he drew nearer. "By Jove! " he said, "you've had a time of it! I thought you - Well - Where were you cast away? Is that thing a sort of floating thing for saving life?"

I decided to take that line for the present. I made a few vague affirmatives. "I want help," I said hoarsely. " I want to get some stuff up the beach - stuff I can't very well leave about." I became aware of three other pleasant-looking young men with towels, blazers, and straw hats, coming down the sands towards me. Evidently the early bathing section of this Littlestone.

"Help!" said the young man: "rather!" He became vaguely active. "What particularly do you want done? " He turned round and gesticulated. The three young men accelerated their pace. In a minute they were about me, plying me with questions I was indisposed to answer. "I'll tell all that later," I said. "I'm dead beat. I'm a rag."

"Come up to the hotel," said the foremost little man. "We'll look after that thing there."

I hesitated. "I can't," I said. "In that sphere there's two big bars of

gold."

They looked incredulously at one another, then at me with a new inquiry. I went to the sphere, stooped, crept in, and presently they had the Selenites' crowbars and the broken chain before them. If I had not been so horribly fagged I could have laughed at them. It was like kittens round a beetle. They didn't know what to do with the stuff. The fat little man stooped and lifted the end of one of the bars, and then dropped it with a grunt. Then they all did.

"It's lead, or gold!" said one.

"Oh, it's gold!" said another.

"Gold, right enough," said the third.

Then they all stared at me, and then they all stared at the ship lying at anchor.

"I say!" cried the little man. "But where did you get that?"

I was too tired to keep up a lie. "I got it in the moon."

I saw them stare at one another.

"Look here!" said I, "I'm not going to argue now. Help me carry these lumps of gold up to the hotel - I guess, with rests, two of you can manage one, and I'll trail this chain thing - and I'll tell you more when I've had some food."

"And how about that thing?"

"It won't hurt there," I said. "Anyhow - confound it! - it must stop there now. If the tide comes up, it will float all right."

And in a state of enormous wonderment, these young men most obediently hoisted my treasures on their shoulders, and with limbs that felt like lead I headed a sort of procession towards that distant fragment of "sea-front." Half-way there we were reinforced by two awe-stricken little girls with spades, and later a lean little boy, with a penetrating sniff, appeared. He was, I remember, wheeling a bicycle, and he accompanied us at a distance of about a hundred yards on our right flank, and then I suppose, gave us up as uninteresting, mounted his bicycle and rode off over the level sands in the direction of the sphere.

I glanced back after him.

"He won't touch it," said the stout young man reassuringly, and I was only too willing to be reassured.

At first something of the gray of the morning was in my mind, but presently the sun disengaged itself from the level clouds of the horizon and lit the world, and turned the leaden sea to glittering waters. My spirits rose. A sense of the vast importance of the things I had done and had yet to do came with the sunlight into my mind. I laughed aloud as the foremost man staggered under my gold. When indeed I took my place in the world, how amazed the world would be!

If it had not been for my inordinate fatigue, the landlord of the Littlestone hotel would have been amusing, as he hesitated between my gold and my respectable company on the one and my filthy appearance on the other. But at last I found myself in a terrestrial bathroom once more with warm water to wash myself with, and a change of raiment, preposterously small indeed, but anyhow clean, that the genial little man had lent me. He lent me a razor too, but I could not screw up my resolution to attack even the outposts of the bristling beard that covered my face.

I sat down to an English breakfast and ate with a sort of languid appetite - an appetite many weeks old and very decrepit - and stirred myself to answer the questions of the four young men. And I told them the truth.

"Well," said I, "as you press me - I got it in the moon."

"The moon?"

"Yes, the moon in the sky."

"But how do you mean?"

"What I say, confound it!"

"Then you have just come from the moon?"

"Exactly! through space - in that ball." And I took a delicious mouthful of egg. I made a private note that when I went back to the moon I would take a box of eggs.

I could see clearly that they did not believe one word what I told them, but evidently they considered me the most respectable liar they had ever met. They glanced at one another, and then concentrated the fire of their eyes on me. I fancy they expected a clue to me in the way I helped myself to salt. They seemed to find something significant in my peppering my egg. These strangely shaped masses of gold they had staggered under held their minds. There the lumps lay in front of me, each worth thousands of pounds, and as impossible for any one to steal as a house or a piece of land. As I looked at their curious faces over my coffee-cup, I realised something of the enormous wilderness of explanations into which I should have to wander to render myself comprehensible again.

"You don't really mean -" began the youngest young man, in the tone of one who speaks to an obstinate child.

"Just pass me that toast-rack," I said, and shut him up completely.

"But look here, I say," began one of the others. "We're not going to

believe that, you know."

"Ah, well," said I, and shrugged my shoulders.

"He doesn't want to tell us," said the youngest young man in a stage aside; and then, with an appearance of great sang-froid, " You don't mind if I take a cigarette?"

I waved him a cordial assent, and proceeded with my breakfast. Two of the others went and looked out of the farther window and talked inaudibly. I was struck by a thought. "The tide," I said, "is running out?"

There was a pause, a doubt who should answer me.

"It's near the ebb," said the fat little man.

"Well, anyhow," I said, "it won't float far."

I decapitated my third egg, and began a little speech. "Look here," I said. " Please don't imagine I'm surly or telling you uncivil lies, or anything of that sort. I'm forced almost, to be a little short and mysterious. I can quite understand this is as queer as it can be, and that your imaginations must be going it. I can assure you, you're in at a memorable time. But I can't make it clear to you now - it's impossible. I give you my word of honour I've come from the moon, and that's all I can tell you. ... All the same, I'm tremendously obliged to you, you know, tremendously. I hope that my manner hasn't in any way given you offence."

"Oh, not in the least!" said the youngest young man affably. "We can quite understand," and staring hard at me all the time, he heeled his chair back until it very nearly upset, and recovered with some exertion. "Not a bit of it," said the fat young man.

"Don't you imagine that!" and they all got up and dispersed, and walked about and lit cigarettes, and generally tried to show they were perfectly

amiable and disengaged, and entirely free from the slightest curiosity about me and the sphere. "I'm going to keep an eye on that ship out there all the same," I heard one of them remarking in an undertone. If only they could have forced themselves to it, they would, I believe, even have gone out and left me. I went on with my third egg.

"The weather," the fat little man remarked presently, "has been immense, has it not? I don't know when we have had such a summer."

Phoo-whizz! Like a tremendous rocket!

And somewhere a window was broken. ...

"What's that?" said I.

"It isn't - ?" cried the little man, and rushed to the corner window.

All the others rushed to the window likewise. I sat staring at them.

Suddenly I leapt up, knocked over my third egg, rushed for the window also. I had just thought of something. "Nothing to be seen there," cried the little man, rushing for the door.

"It's that boy!" I cried, bawling in hoarse fury; "it's that accursed boy!" and turning about I pushed the waiter aside - he was just bring me some more toast - and rushed violently out of the room and down and out upon the queer little esplanade in front of the hotel.

The sea, which had been smooth, was rough now with hurrying cat's-paws, and all about where the sphere had been was tumbled water like the wake of a ship. Above, a little puff of cloud whirled like dispersing smoke, and the three or four people on the beach were bring up with interrogative faces towards the point of that unexpected report. And that was all! Boots and waiter and the four young men in blazers came rushing out behind me. Shouts came from windows and doors, and all sorts of worrying people came

into sight - agape.

For a time I stood there, too overwhelmed by this new development to think of the people.

At first I was too stunned to see the thing as any definite disaster - I was just stunned, as a man is by some accidental violent blow. It is only afterwards he begins to appreciate his specific injury.

"Good Lord!"

I felt as though somebody was pouring funk out of a can down the back of my neck. My legs became feeble. I had got the first intimation of what the disaster meant for me. There was that confounded boy - sky high! I was utterly left. There was the gold in the coffee-room - my only possession on earth. How would it all work out? The general effect was of a gigantic unmanageable confusion.

"I say," said the voice of the little man behind. "I say, you know."

I wheeled about, and there were twenty or thirty people, a sort of irregular investment of people, all bombarding me with dumb interrogation, with infinite doubt and suspicion. I felt the compulsion of their eyes intolerably. I groaned aloud.

"I can't! " I shouted. "I tell you I can't! I'm not equal to it! You must puzzle and - and be damned to you!"

I gesticulated convulsively. He receded a step as though I had threatened him. I made a bolt through them into the hotel. I charged back into the coffee-room, rang the bell furiously. I gripped the waiter as he entered. "D'ye hear?" I shouted. "Get help and carry these bars up to my room right away."

He failed to understand me, and I shouted and raved at him. A

scared-looking little old man in a green apron appeared, and further two of the young men in flannels. I made a dash at them and commandeered their services. As soon as the gold was in my room I felt free to quarrel. "Now get out," I shouted; "all of you get out if you don't want to see a man go mad before your eyes!" And I helped the waiter by the shoulder as he hesitated in the doorway. And then, as soon as I had the door locked on them all, I tore off the little man's clothes again, shied them right and left, and got into bed forthwith. And there I lay swearing and panting and cooling for a very long time.

At last I was calm enough to get out of bed and ring up the round-eyed waiter for a flannel nightshirt, a soda and whisky, and some good cigars. And these things being procured me, after an exasperating delay that drove me several times to the bell, I locked the door again and proceeded very deliberately to look entire situation in the face.

The net result of the great experiment presented itself as an absolute failure. It was a rout, and I was the sole survivor. It was an absolute collapse, and this was the final disaster. There was nothing for it but to save myself, and as much as I could in the way of prospects from our debacle. At one fatal crowning blow all my vague resolutions of return and recovery had vanished. My intention of going back to the moon, of getting a sphereful of gold, and afterwards of having a fragment of Cavorite analysed and so recovering the great secret - perhaps, finally, even of recovering Cavor's body - all these ideas vanished altogether.

I was the sole survivor, and that was all.

I think that going to bed was one of the luckiest ideas I have ever had in an emergency. I really believe I should either have got loose-headed or done some indiscreet thing. But there, locked in and secure from all interruptions, I could think out the position in all its bearings and make my arrangements at leisure.

Of course, it was quite clear to me what had happened to the boy. He had

crawled into the sphere, meddled with the studs, shut the Cavorite windows, and gone up. It was highly improbable he had screwed the manhole stopper, and, even if he had, the chances were a thousand to one against his getting back. It was fairly evident that he would gravitate with my bales to somewhere near the middle of the sphere and remain there, and so cease to be a legitimate terrestrial interest, however remarkable he might seem to the inhabitants of some remote quarter of space. I very speedily convinced myself on that point. And as for any responsibility I might have in the matter, the more I reflected upon that, the clearer it became that if only I kept quiet about things, I need not trouble myself about that. If I was faced by sorrowing parents demanding their lost boy, I had merely to demand my lost sphere - or ask them what they meant. At first I had had a vision of weeping parents and guardians, and all sorts of complications; but now I saw that I simply had to keep my mouth shut, and nothing in that way could arise. And, indeed, the more I lay and smoked and thought, the more evident became the wisdom of impenetrability.

It is within the right of every British citizen, provided he does not commit damage nor indecorum, to appear suddenly wherever he pleases, and as ragged and filthy as he pleases, and with whatever amount of virgin gold he sees fit to encumber himself, and no one has any right at all to hinder and detain him in this procedure. I formulated that at last to myself, and repeated it over as a sort of private Magna Charta of my liberty.

Once I had put that issue on one side, I could take up and consider in an equable manner certain considerations I had scarcely dared to think of before, namely, those arising out of the circumstances of my bankruptcy. But now, looking at this matter calmly and at leisure, I could see that if only I suppressed my identity by a temporary assumption of some less well-known name, and if I retained the two months' beard that had grown upon me, the risks of any annoyance from the spiteful creditor to whom I have already alluded became very small indeed. From that to a definite course of rational worldly action was plain sailing. It was all amazingly petty, no doubt, but what was there remaining for me to do?

Whatever I did I was resolved that I would keep myself level and right side up.

I ordered up writing materials, and addressed a letter to the New Romney Bank - the nearest, the waiter informed me - telling the manager I wished to open an account with him, and requesting him to send two trustworthy persons properly authenticated in a cab with a good horse to fetch some hundredweight of gold with which I happened to be encumbered. I signed the letter "Blake," which seemed to me to be a thoroughly respectable sort of name. This done, I got a Folkstone Blue Book, picked out an outfitter, and asked him to send a cutter to measure me for a dark tweed suit, ordering at the same time a valise, dressing bag, brown boots, shirts, hat (to fit), and so forth; and from a watchmaker I also ordered a watch. And these letters being despatched, I had up as good a lunch as the hotel could give, and then lay smoking a cigar, as calm and ordinary as possible, until in accordance with my instructions two duly authenticated clerks came from the bank and weighed and took away my gold. After which I pulled the clothes over my ears in order to drown any knocking, and went very comfortably to sleep.

I went to sleep. No doubt it was a prosaic thing for the first man back from the moon to do, and I can imagine that the young and imaginative reader will find my behaviour disappointing. But I was horribly fatigued and bothered, and, confound it! what else was there to do? There certainly was not the remotest chance of my being believed, if I had told my story then, and it would certainly have subjected me to intolerable annoyances. I went to sleep. When at last I woke up again I was ready to face the world as I have always been accustomed to face it since I came to years of discretion. And so I got away to Italy, and there it is I am writing this story. If the world will not have it as fact, then the world may take it as fiction. It is no concern of mine.

And now that the account is finished, I am amazed to think how completely this adventure is gone and done with. Everybody believes that Cavor was a

not very brilliant scientific experimenter who blew up his house and himself at Lympne, and they explain the bang that followed my arrival at Littlestone by a reference to the experiments with explosives that are going on continually at the government establishment of Lydd, two miles away. I must confess that hitherto I have not acknowledged my share in the disappearance of Master Tommy Simmons, which was that little boy's name. That, perhaps, may prove a difficult item of corroboration to explain away. They account for my appearance in rags with two bars of indisputable gold upon the Littlestone beach in various ingenious ways - it doesn't worry me what they think of me. They say I have strung all these things together to avoid being questioned too closely as to the source of my wealth. I would like to see the man who could invent a story that would hold together like this one. Well, they must take it as fiction - there it is.

I have told my story - and now, I suppose, I have to take up the worries of this terrestrial life again. Even if one has been to the moon, one has still to earn a living. So I am working here at Amalfi, on the scenario of that play I sketched before Cavor came walking into my world, and I am trying to piece my life together as it was before ever I saw him. I must confess that I find it hard to keep my mind on the play when the moonshine comes into my room. It is full moon here, and last night I was out on the pergola for hours, staring away at the shining blankness that hides so much. Imagine it! tables and chairs, and trestles and bars of gold! Confound it! - if only one could hit on that Cavorite again! But a thing like that doesn't come twice in a life. Here I am, a little better off than I was at Lympne, and that is all. And Cavor has committed suicide in a more elaborate way than any human being ever did before. So the story closes as, finally and completely as a dream. It fits in so little with all the other things of life, so much of it is so utterly remote from all human experience, the leaping, the eating, the breathing, and these weightless times, that indeed there are moments when, in spite of my moon gold, I do more than half believe myself that the whole thing was a dream.

...

Chapter 22

The Astonishing Communication of Mr. Julius Wendigee

WHEN I had finished my account of my return to the earth at Littlestone, I wrote, "The End," made a flourish, and threw my pen aside, fully believing that the whole story of the First Men in the Moon was done. Not only had I done this, but I had placed my manuscript in the hands of a literary agent, had permitted it to be sold, had seen the greater portion of it appear in the Strand Magazine, and was setting to work again upon the scenario of the play I had commenced at Lympne before I realised that the end was not yet. And then, following me from Amalfi to Algiers, there reached me (it is now about six months ago) one of the most astounding communications I have ever been fated to receive. Briefly, it informed me that Mr. Julius Wendigee, a Dutch electrician, who has been experimenting with certain apparatus akin to the apparatus used by Mr. Tesla in America, in the hope of discovering some method of communication with Mars, was receiving day by day a curiously fragmentary message in English, which was indisputably emanating from Mr. Cavor in the moon.

At first I thought the thing was an elaborate practical by some one who had seen the manuscript of my narrative. I answered Mr. Wendigee jestingly, but he replied in a manner that put such suspicion altogether aside, and in a state of inconceivable excitement I hurried from Algiers to the little observatory upon the St. Gothard in which he was working. In the presence of his record and his appliances - and above all of the messages from Cavor that were coming to hand - my lingering doubts vanished. I decided at once to accept a proposal he made to me to remain with him, assisting him to take down the record from day to day, and endeavouring with him to send a message back to the moon. Cavor, we learnt, was not only alive, but free, in the midst of an almost inconceivable community of these ant-like beings, these ant-men, in the blue darkness of the lunar caves. He was lamed, it seemed, but otherwise

in quite good health - in better health, he distinctly said, than he usually enjoyed on earth. He had had a fever, but it had left no bad effects. But curiously enough he seemed to be labouring under a conviction that I was either dead in the moon crater or lost in the deep of space.

His message began to be received by Mr. Wendigee when that gentleman was engaged in quite a different investigation. The reader will no doubt recall the little excitement that began the century, arising out an announcement by Mr. Nikola Tesla, the American electrical celebrity, that he had received a message from Mars. His announcement renewed attention to fact that had long been familiar to scientific people, namely: that from some unknown source in space, waves of electromagnetic disturbance, entirely similar those used by Signor Marconi for his wireless telegraphy, are constantly reaching the earth. Besides Tesla quite a number of other observers have been engaged in perfecting apparatus for receiving and recording these vibrations, though few would go so far to consider them actual messages from some extraterrestrial sender. Among that few, however, we must certainly count Mr. Wendigee. Ever since 1898 he had devoted himself almost entirely to this subject, and being a man of ample means he had erected an observatory on the flanks of Monte Rosa, in a position singularly adapted in every way for such observations.

My scientific attainments, I must admit, are not great, but so far as they enable me to judge, Mr. Wendigee's contrivances for detecting and recording any disturbances in the electromagnetic conditions of space are singularly original and ingenious. And by a happy combination of circumstances they were set up and in operation about two months before Cavor made his first attempt to call up the earth. Consequently we have fragments of his communication even from the beginning. Unhappily, they are only fragments, and the most momentous of all the things that he had to tell humanity - the instructions, that is, for the making of Cavorite, if, indeed, he ever transmitted them - have throbbed themselves away unrecorded into space. We never succeeded in getting a response back to Cavor. He was unable to tell, therefore, what we had received or what we had missed; nor, indeed, did he certainly know that any one on earth was

really aware of his efforts to reach us. And the persistence he displayed in sending eighteen long descriptions of lunar affairs - as they would be if we had them complete - shows how much his mind must have turned back towards his native planet since he left it two years ago.

You can imagine how amazed Mr. Wendigee must have been when he discovered his record of electromagnetic disturbances interlaced by Cavor's straightforward English. Mr. Wendigee knew nothing of our wild journey moonward, and suddenly - this English out of the void!

It is well the reader should understand the conditions under which it would seem these messages were sent. Somewhere within the moon Cavor certainly had access for a time to a considerable amount of electrical apparatus, and it would seem he rigged up - perhaps furtively - a transmitting arrangement of the Marconi type. This he was able to operate at irregular intervals: sometimes for only half an hour or so, sometimes for three or four hours at a stretch. At these times he transmitted his earthward message, regardless of the fact that the relative position of the moon and points upon the earth's surface is constantly altering. As a consequence of this and of the necessary imperfections of our recording instruments his communication comes and goes in our records in an extremely fitful manner; it becomes blurred; it "fades out" in a mysterious and altogether exasperating way. And added to this is the fact that he was not an expert operator; he had partly forgotten, or never completely mastered, the code in general use, and as he became fatigued he dropped words and misspelt in a curious manner.

Altogether we have probably lost quite half of the communications he made, and much we have is damaged, broken, and partly effaced. In the abstract that follows the reader must be prepared therefore for a considerable amount of break, hiatus, and change of topic. Mr. Wendigee and I are collaborating in a complete and annotated edition of the Cavor record, which we hope to publish, together with a detailed account of the instruments employed, beginning with the first volume in January next.

That will be the full and scientific report, of which this is only the popular transcript. But here we give at least sufficient to complete the story I have told, and to give the broad outlines of the state of that other world so near, so akin, and yet so dissimilar to our own.

Chapter 23

An Abstract of the Six Messages First Received from Mr. Cavor

THE two earlier messages of Mr. Cavor may very well be reserved for that larger volume. They simply tell, with greater brevity and with a difference in several details that is interesting, but not of any vital importance, the bare facts of the making of the sphere and our departure from the world. Throughout, Cavor speaks of me as a man who is dead, but with a curious change of temper as he approaches our landing on the moon. "Poor Bedford," he says of me, and "this poor young man "; and he blames himself for inducing a young man, "by no means well equipped for such adventures," to leave a planet "on which he was indisputably fitted to succeed" on so precarious a mission. I think he underrates the part my energy and practical capacity played in bringing about the realisation of his theoretical sphere. "We arrived," he says, with no more account of our passage through space than if we had made a journey of common occurrence in a railway train.

And then he becomes increasingly unfair to me. Unfair, indeed, to an extent I should not have expected in a man trained in the search for truth. Looking back over my previously written account of these things, I must insist that I have been altogether juster to Cavor than he has been to me. I have extenuated little and suppressed nothing. But his account is:-

"It speedily became apparent that the entire strangeness of our circumstances and surroundings - great loss of weight, attenuated but

highly oxygenated air, consequent exaggeration of the results of muscular effort, rapid development of weird plants from obscure spores, lurid sky - was exciting my companion unduly. On the moon his character seemed to deteriorate. He became impulsive, rash, and quarrelsome. In a little while his folly in devouring some gigantic vesicles and his consequent intoxication led to our capture by the Selenites - before we had had the slightest opportunity of properly observing their ways. ..."

(He says, you observe, nothing of his own concession to these same "vesicles.")

And he goes on from that point to say that "We came to a difficult passage with them, and Bedford mistaking certain gestures of theirs" - pretty gestures they were! - "gave way to a panic violence. He ran amuck, killed three, and perforce I had to flee with him after the outrage. Subsequently we fought with a number who endeavoured to bar our way, and slew seven or eight more. It says much for the tolerance of these beings that on my recapture I was not instantly slain. We made our way to the exterior and separated in the crater of our arrival, to increase our chances of recovering our sphere. But presently I came upon a body of Selenites, led by two who were curiously different, even in form, from any of these we had seen hitherto, with larger heads and smaller bodies, and much more elaborately wrapped about. And after evading them for some time I fell into a crevasse, cut my head rather badly, and displaced my patella, and, finding crawling very painful, decided to surrender - if they would still permit me to do so. This they did, and, perceiving my helpless condition, carried me with them again into the moon. And of Bedford I have heard or seen nothing more, nor, so far as I can gather, any Selenite. Either the night overtook him in the crater, or else, which is more probable, he found the sphere, and, desiring to steal a march upon me, made off with it - only, I fear, to find it uncontrollable, and to meet a more lingering fate in outer space."

And with that Cavor dismisses me and goes on to more interesting topics. I dislike the idea of seeming to use my position as his editor to deflect

his story in my own interest, but I am obliged to protest here against the turn he gives these occurrences. He said nothing about that gasping message on the blood-stained paper in which he told, or attempted to tell, a very different story. The dignified self-surrender is an altogether new view of the affair that has come to him, I must insist, since he began to feel secure among the lunar people; and as for the "stealing a march" conception, I am quite willing to let the reader decide between us on what he has before him. I know I am not a model man - I have made no pretence to be. But am I that?

However, that is the sum of my wrongs. From this point I can edit Cavor with an untroubled mind, for he mentions me no more.

It would seem the Selenites who had come upon him carried him to some point in the interior down "a great shaft" by means of what he describes as "a sort of balloon." We gather from the rather confused passage in which he describes this, and from a number of chance allusions and hints in other and subsequent messages, that this "great shaft" is one of an enormous system of artificial shafts that run, each from what is called a lunar "crater," downwards for very nearly a hundred miles towards the central portion of our satellite. These shafts communicate by transverse tunnels, they throw out abysmal caverns and expand into great globular places; the whole of the moon's substance for a hundred miles inward, indeed, is a mere sponge of rock. "Partly," says Cavor, "this sponginess is natural, but very largely it is due to the enormous industry of the Selenites in the past. The enormous circular mounds of the excavated rock and earth it is that form these great circles about the tunnels known to earthly astronomers (misled by a false analogy) as volcanoes."

It was down this shaft they took him, in this "sort of balloon" he speaks of, at first into an inky blackness and then into a region of continually increasing phosphorescence. Cavor's despatches show him to be curiously regardless of detail for a scientific man, but we gather that this light was due to the streams and cascades of water - "no doubt containing some phosphorescent organism" - that flowed ever more abundantly downward

towards the Central Sea. And as he descended, he says, "The Selenites also became luminous." And at last far below him he saw, as it were, a lake of heatless fire, the waters of the Central Sea, glowing and eddying in strange perturbation, "like luminous blue milk that is just on the boil."

"This Lunar Sea," says Cavor, in a later passage "is not a stagnant ocean; a solar tide sends it in a perpetual flow around the lunar axis, and strange storms and boilings and rushings of its waters occur, and at times cold winds and thunderings that ascend out of it into the busy ways of the great ant-hill above. It is only when the water is in motion that it gives out light; in its rare seasons of calm it is black. Commonly, when one sees it, its waters rise and fall in an oily swell, and flakes and big rafts of shining, bubbly foam drift with the sluggish, faintly glowing current. The Selenites navigate its cavernous straits and lagoons in little shallow boats of a canoe-like shape; and even before my journey to the galleries about the Grand Lunar, who is Master of the Moon, I was permitted to make a brief excursion on its waters.

"The caverns and passages are naturally very tortuous. A large proportion of these ways are known only to expert pilots among the fishermen, and not infrequently Selenites are lost for ever in their labyrinths. In their remoter recesses, I am told, strange creatures lurk, some of them terrible and dangerous creatures that all the science of the moon has been unable to exterminate. There is particularly the Rapha, an inextricable mass of clutching tentacles that one hacks to pieces only to multiply; and the Tzee, a darting creature that is never seen, so subtly and suddenly does it slay..."

He gives us a gleam of description.

"I was reminded on this excursion of what I have read of the Mammoth Caves; if only I had had a yellow flambeau instead of the pervading blue light, and a solid-looking boatman with an oar instead of a scuttle-faced Selenite working an engine at the back of the canoe, I could have imagined I had suddenly got back to earth. The rocks about us were very various,

sometimes black, sometimes pale blue and veined, and once they flashed and glittered as though we had come into a mine of sapphires. And below one saw the ghostly phosphorescent fishes flash and vanish in the hardly less phosphorescent deep. Then, presently, a long ultra-marine vista down the turgid stream of one of the channels of traffic, and a landing stage, and then, perhaps, a glimpse up the enormous crowded shaft of one of the vertical ways.

"In one great place heavy with glistening stalactites a number of boats were fishing. We went alongside one of these and watched the long-armed Selenites winding in a net. They were little, hunchbacked insects, with very strong arms, short, bandy legs, and crinkled face-masks. As they pulled at it that net seemed the heaviest thing I had come upon in the moon; it was loaded with weights - no doubt of gold - and it took a long time to draw, for in those waters the larger and more edible fish lurk deep. The fish in the net came up like a blue moonrise - a blaze of darting, tossing blue.

"Among their catch was a many-tentaculate, evil-eyed black thing, ferociously active, whose appearance they greeted with shrieks and twitters, and which with quick, nervous movements they hacked to pieces by means of little hatchets. All its dissevered limbs continued to lash and writhe in a vicious manner. Afterwards, when fever had hold of me, I dreamt again and again of that bitter, furious creature rising so vigorous and active out of the unknown sea. It was the most active and malignant thing of all the living creatures I have yet seen in this world inside the moon. ...

"The surface of this sea must be very nearly two hundred miles (if not more) below the level of the moon's exterior; all the cities of the moon lie, I learnt, immediately above this Central Sea, in such cavernous spaces and artificial galleries as I have described, and they communicate with the exterior by enormous vertical shafts which open invariably in what are called by earthly astronomers the 'craters' of the moon. The lid covering one such aperture I had already seen during the wanderings that

had preceded my capture.

"Upon the condition of the less central portion of the moon I have not yet arrived at very precise knowledge. There is an enormous system of caverns in which the mooncalves shelter during the night; and there are abattoirs and the like - in one of these it was that I and Bedford fought with the Selenite butchers - and I have since seen balloons laden with meat descending out of the upper dark. I have as yet scarcely learnt as much of these things as a Zulu in London would learn about the British corn supplies in the same time. It is clear, however, that these vertical shafts and the vegetation of the surface must play an essential role in ventilating and keeping fresh the atmosphere of the moon. At one time, and particularly on my first emergence from my prison, there was certainly a cold wind blowing down the shaft, and later there was a kind of sirocco upward that corresponded with my fever. For at the end of about three weeks I fell ill of an indefinable sort of fever, and in spite of sleep and the quinine tabloids that very fortunately I had brought in my pocket, I remained ill and fretting miserably, almost to the time when I was taken into the presence of the Grand Lunar, who is Master of the Moon.

"I will not dilate on the wretchedness of my condition," he remarks, "during those days of ill-health." And he goes on with great amplitude with details I omit here. "My temperature," he concludes, "kept abnormally high for a long time, and I lost all desire for food. I had stagnant waking intervals, and sleep tormented by dreams, and at one phase I was, I remember, so weak as to be earth-sick and almost hysterical. I longed almost intolerably for colour to break the everlasting blue..."

He reverts again presently to the topic of this sponge caught lunar atmosphere. I am told by astronomers and physicists that all he tells is in absolute accord with what was already known of the moon's condition. Had earthly astronomers had the courage and imagination to push home a bold induction, says Mr. Wendigee, they might have foretold almost everything that Cavor has to say of the general structure of the moon. They know now pretty certainly that moon and earth are not so much

satellite and primary as smaller and greater sisters, made out of one mass, and consequently made of the same material. And since the density of the moon is only three-fifths that of the earth, there can be nothing for it but that she is hollowed out by a great system of caverns. There was no necessity, said Sir Jabez Flap, F.R.S., that most entertaining exponent of the facetious side of the stars, that we should ever have gone to the moon to find out such easy inferences, and points the pun with an allusion to Gruyere, but he certainly might have announced his knowledge of the hollowness of the moon before. And if the moon is hollow, then the apparent absence of air and water is, of course, quite easily explained. The sea lies within at the bottom of the caverns, and the air travels through the great sponge of galleries, in accordance with simple physical laws. The caverns of the moon, on the whole, are very windy places. As the sunlight comes round the moon the air in the outer galleries on that side is heated, its pressure increases, some flows out on the exterior and mingles with the evaporating air of the craters (where the plants remove its carbonic acid), while the greater portion flows round through the galleries to replace the shrinking air of the cooling side that the sunlight has left. There is, therefore, a constant eastward breeze in the air of the outer galleries, and an upflow during the lunar day up the shafts, complicated, of course, very greatly by the varying shape of the galleries, and the ingenious contrivances of the Selenite mind. ...

Chapter 24

The Natural History of the Selenites

THE messages of Cavor from the sixth up to the sixteenth are for the most part so much broken, and they abound so in repetitions, that they scarcely form a consecutive narrative. They will be given in full, of course, in the scientific report, but here it will be far more convenient to continue simply to abstract and quote as in the former chapter. We have subjected every word to a keen critical scrutiny, and my own brief memories and

impressions of lunar things have been of inestimable help in interpreting what would otherwise have been impenetrably dark. And, naturally, as living beings, our interest centres far more upon the strange community of lunar insects in which he was living, it would seem, as an honoured guest than upon the mere physical condition of their world.

I have already made it clear, I think, that the Selenites I saw resembled man in maintaining the erect attitude, and in having four limbs, and I have compared the general appearance of their heads and the jointing of their limbs to that of insects. I have mentioned, too, the peculiar consequence of the smaller gravitation of the moon on their fragile slightness. Cavor confirms me upon all these points. He calls them "animals," though of course they fall under no division of the classification of earthly creatures, and he points out "the insect type of anatomy had, fortunately for men, never exceeded a relatively very small size on earth." The largest terrestrial insects, living or extinct, do not, as a matter of fact, measure 6 in. in length; "but here, against the lesser gravitation of the moon, a creature certainly as much an insect as vertebrate seems to have been able to attain to human and ultra-human dimensions."

He does not mention the ant, but throughout his allusions the ant is continually being brought before my mind, in its sleepless activity, in its intelligence and social organisation, in its structure, and more particularly in the fact that it displays, in addition to the two forms, the male and the female form, that almost all other animals possess, a number of other sexless creatures, workers, soldiers, and the like, differing from one another in structure, character, power, and use, and yet all members of the same species. For these Selenites, also, have a great variety of forms. Of course, they are not only colossally greater in size than ants, but also, in Cavor's opinion at least, in intelligence, morality, and social wisdom are they colossally greater than men. And instead of the four or five different forms of ant that are found, there are almost innumerable different forms of Selenite. I had endeavoured to indicate the very considerable difference observable in such Selenites of

the outer crust as I happened to encounter; the differences in size and proportions were certainly as wide as the differences between the most widely separated races of men. But such differences as I saw fade absolutely to nothing in comparison with the huge distinctions of which Cavor tells. It would seem the exterior Selenites I saw were, indeed, mostly engaged in kindred occupations - mooncalf herds, butchers, fleshers, and the like. But within the moon, practically unsuspected by me, there are, it seems, a number of other sorts of Selenite, differing in size, differing in the relative size of part to part, differing in power and appearance, and yet not different species of creatures, but only different forms of one species, and retaining through all their variations a certain common likeness that marks their specific unity. The moon is, indeed, a sort of vast ant-hill, only, instead of there being only four or five sorts of ant, there are many hundred different sorts of Selenite, and almost every gradation between one sort and another.

It would seem the discovery came upon Cavor very speedily. I infer rather than learn from his narrative that he was captured by the mooncalf herds under the direction of these other Selenites who "have larger brain cases (heads?) and very much shorter legs." Finding he would not walk even under the goad, they carried him into darkness, crossed a narrow, plank-like bridge that may have been the identical bridge I had refused, and put him down in something that must have seemed at first to be some sort of lift. This was the balloon - it had certainly been absolutely invisible to us in the darkness - and what had seemed to me a mere plank-walking into the void was really, no doubt, the passage of the gangway. In this he descended towards constantly more luminous caverns of the moon. At first they descended in silence - save for the twitterings of the Selenites - and then into a stir of windy movement. In a little while the profound blackness had made his eyes so sensitive that he began to see more and more of the things about him, and at last the vague took shape.

"Conceive an enormous cylindrical space," says Cavor, in his seventh message, "a quarter of a mile across, perhaps; very dimly lit at first and then brighter, with big platforms twisting down its sides in a spiral

that vanishes at last below in a blue profundity; and lit even more brightly - one could not tell how or why. Think of the well of the very largest spiral staircase or lift-shaft that you have ever looked down, and magnify that by a hundred. Imagine it at twilight seen through blue glass. Imagine yourself looking down that; only imagine also that you feel extraordinarily light, and have got rid of any giddy feeling you might have on earth, and you will have the first conditions of my impression. Round this enormous shaft imagine a broad gallery running in a much steeper spiral than would be credible on earth, and forming a steep road protected from the gulf only by a little parapet that vanishes at last in perspective a couple of miles below.

"Looking up, I saw the very fellow of the downward vision; it had, of course, the effect of looking into a very steep cone. A wind was blowing down the shaft, and far above I fancy I heard, growing fainter and fainter, the bellowing of the mooncalves that were being driven down again from their evening pasturage on the exterior. And up and down the spiral galleries were scattered numerous moon people, pallid, faintly luminous beings, regarding our appearance or busied on unknown errands.

"Either I fancied it or a flake of snow came drifting down on the icy breeze. And then, falling like a snowflake, a little figure, a little man-insect, clinging to a parachute, drove down very swiftly towards the central places of the moon.

"The big-headed Selenite sitting beside me, seeing me move my head with the gesture of one who saw, pointed with his trunk-like 'hand' and indicated a sort of jetty coming into sight very far below: a little landing-stage, as it were, hanging into the void. As it swept up towards us our pace diminished very rapidly, and in a few moments, as it seemed, we were abreast of it, and at rest. A mooring-rope was flung and grasped, and I found myself pulled down to a level with a great crowd of Selenites, who jostled to see me.

"It was an incredible crowd. Suddenly and violently there was forced upon

my attention the vast amount of difference there is amongst these beings of the moon.

"Indeed, there seemed not two alike in all that jostling multitude. They differed in shape, they differed in size, they rang all the horrible changes on the theme of Selenite form! Some bulged and overhung, some ran about among the feet of their fellows. All of them had a grotesque and disquieting suggestion of an insect that has somehow contrived to mock humanity; but all seemed to present an incredible exaggeration of some particular feature: one had a vast right fore-limb, an enormous antennal arm, as it were; one seemed all leg, poised, as it were, on stilts; another protruded the edge of his face mask into a nose-like organ that made him startlingly human until one saw his expressionless gaping mouth. The strange and (except for the want of mandibles and palps) most insect-like head of the mooncalf-minders underwent, indeed, the most incredible transformations: here it was broad and low, here high and narrow; here its leathery brow was drawn out into horns and strange features; here it was whiskered and divided, and there with a grotesquely human profile. One distortion was particularly conspicuous. There were several brain cases distended like bladders to a huge size, with the face mask reduced to quite small proportions. There were several amazing forms, with heads reduced to microscopic proportions and blobby bodies; and fantastic, flimsy things that existed, it would seem, only as a basis for vast, trumpet-like protrusions of the lower part of the mask. And oddest of all, as it seemed to me for the moment, two or three of these weird inhabitants of a subterranean world, a world sheltered by innumerable miles of rock from sun or rain, carried umbrellas in their tentaculate hands - real terrestrial looking umbrellas! And then I thought of the parachutist I had watched descend.

"These moon people behaved exactly as a human crowd might have done in similar circumstances: they jostled and thrust one another, they shoved one another aside, they even clambered upon one another to get a glimpse of me. Every moment they increased in numbers, and pressed more urgently upon the discs of my ushers" - Cavor does not explain what he means by

this - "every moment fresh shapes emerged from the shadows and forced themselves upon my astounded attention. And presently I was signed and helped into a sort of litter, and lifted up on the shoulders of strong-armed bearers, and so borne through the twilight over this seething multitude towards the apartments that were provided for me in the moon. All about me were eyes, faces, masks, a leathery noise like the rustling of beetle wings, and a great bleating and cricket-like twittering of Selenite voices.

We gather he was taken to a "hexagonal apartment," and there for a space he was confined. Afterwards he was given a much more considerable liberty; indeed, almost as much freedom as one has in a civilised town on earth. And it would appear that the mysterious being who is the ruler and master of the moon appointed two Selenites "with large heads" to guard and study him, and to establish whatever mental communications were possible with him. And, amazing and incredible as it may seem, these two creatures, these fantastic men insects, these beings of other world, were presently communicating with Cavor by means of terrestrial speech.

Cavor speaks of them as Phi-oo and Tsi-puff. Phi-oo, he says, was about 5 ft. high; he had small slender legs about 18 in. long, and slight feet of the common lunar pattern. On these balanced a little body, throbbing with the pulsations of his heart. He had long, soft, many-jointed arms ending in a tentacled grip, and his neck was many-jointed in the usual way, but exceptionally short and thick. His head, says Cavor - apparently alluding to some previous description that has gone astray in space - "is of the common lunar type, but strangely modified. The mouth has the usual expressionless gape, but it is unusually small and pointing downward, and the mask is reduced to the size of a large flat nose-flap. On either side are the little eyes.

"The rest of the head is distended into a huge globe and the chitinous leathery cuticle of the mooncalf herds thins out to a mere membrane, through which the pulsating brain movements are distinctly visible. He in is a creature, indeed, with a tremendously hypertrophied brain, and with

the rest of his organism both relatively and absolutely dwarfed."

In another passage Cavor compares the back view of him to Atlas supporting the world. Tsi-puff it seems was a very similar insect, but his "face" was drawn out to a considerable length, and the brain hypertrophy being in different regions, his head was not round but pear-shaped, with the stalk downward. There were also litter-carriers, lopsided beings, with enormous shoulders, very spidery ushers, and a squat foot attendant in Cavor's retinue.

The manner in which Phi-oo and Tsi-puff attacked the problem of speech was fairly obvious. They came into this " hexagonal cell" in which Cavor was confined, and began imitating every sound he made, beginning with a cough. He seems to have grasped their intention with great quickness, and to have begun repeating words to them and pointing to indicate the application. The procedure was probably always the same. Phi-oo would attend to Cavor for a space, then point also and say the word he had heard.

The first word he mastered was "man," and the second "Mooney" - which Cavor on the spur of the moment seems to have used instead of "Selenite" for the moon race. As soon as Phi-oo was assured of the meaning of a word he repeated it to Tsi-puff, who remembered it infallibly. They mastered over one hundred English nouns at their first session.

Subsequently it seems they brought an artist with them to assist the work of explanation with sketches and diagrams - Cavor's drawings being rather crude. he was, says Cavor, "a being with an active arm and an arresting eye," and he seemed to draw with incredible swiftness.

The eleventh message is undoubtedly only a fragment of a longer communication. After some broken sentences, the record of which is unintelligible, it goes on:-

"But it will interest only linguists, and delay me too long, to give the details of the series of intent parleys of which these were the beginning,

and, indeed, I very much doubt if I could give in anything like the proper order all the twistings and turnings that we made in our pursuit of mutual comprehension. Verbs were soon plain sailing - at least, such active verbs as I could express by drawings; some adjectives were easy, but when it came to abstract nouns, to prepositions, and the sort of hackneyed figures of speech, by means of which so much is expressed on earth, it was like diving in cork-jackets. Indeed, these difficulties were insurmountable until to the sixth lesson came a fourth assistant, a being with a huge football-shaped head, whose forte was clearly the pursuit of intricate analogy. He entered in a preoccupied manner, stumbling against a stool, and the difficulties that arose had to be presented to him with a certain amount of clamour and hitting and pricking before they reached his apprehension. But once he was involved his penetration was amazing. Whenever there came a need of thinking beyond Phi-oo's by no means limited scope, this prolate-headed person was in request, but he invariably told the conclusion to Tsi-puff, in order that it might be remembered; Tsi-puff was ever the arsenal for facts. And so we advanced again.

"It seemed long and yet brief - a matter of days - before I was positively talking with these insects of the moon. Of course, at first it was an intercourse infinitely tedious and exasperating, but imperceptibly it has grown to comprehension. And my patience has grown to meet its limitations, Phi-oo it is who does all the talking. He does it with a vast amount of meditative provisional 'M'm-M'm' and has caught up one or two phrases, 'If I may say,' 'If you understand,' and beads all his speech with them.

"Thus he would discourse. Imagine him explaining his artist.

"'M'm-M'm - he - if I may say - draw. Eat little - drink little - draw. Love draw. No other thing. Hate all who not draw like him. Angry. Hate all who draw like him better. Hate most people. Hate all who not think all world for to draw. Angry. M'm. All things mean nothing to him - only draw. He like you ... if you understand. ... New thing to draw. Ugly - striking. Eh?

"'He' - turning to Tsi-puff - 'love remember words. Remember wonderful more than any. Think no, draw no - remember. Say' - here he referred to his gifted assistant for a word - 'histories - all things. He hear once - say ever.'

"It is more wonderful to me than I dreamt that anything ever could be again, to hear, in this perpetual obscurity, these extraordinary creatures - for even familiarity fails to weaken the inhuman effect of their appearance - continually piping a nearer approach to coherent earthly speech - asking questions, giving answers. I feel that I am casting back to the fable-hearing period of childhood again, when the ant and the grasshopper talked together and the bee judged between them..."

And while these linguistic exercises were going on Cavor seems to have experienced a considerable relaxation of his confinement. "The first dread and distrust our unfortunate conflict aroused is being," he said, "continually effaced by the deliberate rationality of all I do." ... "I am now able to come and go as I please, or I am restricted only for my own good. So it is I have been able to get at this apparatus, and, assisted by a happy find among the material that is littered in this enormous store-cave, I have contrived to despatch these messages. So far not the slightest attempt has been made to interfere with me in this, though I have made it quite clear to Phi-oo that I am signalling to the earth.

"'You talk to other?' he asked, watching me.

"'Others,' said I.

"'Others,' he said. 'Oh yes, Men?'

"And I went on transmitting."

Cavor was continually making corrections in his previous accounts of the Selenites as fresh facts flowed upon him to modify his conclusions, and accordingly one gives the quotations that follow with a certain amount of

reservation. They are quoted from the ninth, thirteenth, and sixteenth messages, and, altogether vague and fragmentary as they are, they probably give as complete a picture of the social life of this strange community as mankind can now hope to have for many generations.

"In the moon," says Cavor, "every citizen knows his place. He is born to that place, and the elaborate discipline of training and education and surgery he undergoes fits him at last so completely to it that he has neither ideas nor organs for any purpose beyond it. 'Why should he?' Phi-oo would ask. If, for example, a Selenite is destined to be a mathematician, his teachers and trainers set out at once to that end. They check any incipient disposition to other pursuits, they encourage his mathematical bias with a perfect psychological skill. His brain grows, or at least the mathematical faculties of his brain grow, and the rest of him only so much as is necessary to sustain this essential part of him. At last, save for rest and food, his one delight lies in the exercise and display of his facility, his one interest in its application, his sole society with other specialists in his own line. His brain glows continually larger, at least so far as the portions engaging in mathematics are concerned; they bulge ever larger and seem to suck all life and vigour from the rest of his frame. His limbs shrivel, his heart and digestive organs diminish, his insect face is hidden under its bulging contours. His voice becomes a mere stridulation for the stating of formula; he seems deaf to all but properly enunciated problems. The faculty of laughter, save for the sudden discovery of some paradox, is lost to him; his deepest emotion is the evolution of a novel computation. And so he attains his end.

"Or, again, a Selenite appointed to be a minder of mooncalves is from his earliest years induced to think and live mooncalf, to find his pleasure in mooncalf lore, his exercise in their tending and pursuit. He is trained to become wiry and active, his eye is indurated to the tight wrappings, the angular contours that constitute a 'smart mooncalfishness.' He takes at last no interest in the deeper part of the moon; he regards all Selenites not equally versed in mooncalves with indifference, derision, or

hostility. His thoughts are of mooncalf pastures, and his dialect an accomplished mooncalf technique. So also he loves his work, and discharges in perfect happiness the duty that justifies his being. And so it is with all sorts and conditions of Selenites - each is a perfect unit in a world machine....

"These beings with big heads, on whom the intellectual labours fall, form a sort of aristocracy in this strange society, and at the head of them, quintessential of the moon, is that marvellous gigantic ganglion the Grand Lunar, into whose presence I am finally to come. The unlimited development of the minds of the intellectual class is rendered possible by the absence of any body skull in the lunar anatomy, that strange box of bone that clamps about the developing brain of man, imperiously insisting 'thus far and no farther' to all his possibilities. They fall into three main classes differing greatly in influence and respect. There are administrators, of whom Phi-oo is one, Selenites of considerable initiative and versatility, responsible each for a certain cubic content of the moon's bulk; the experts like the football-headed thinker, who are trained to perform certain special operations; and the erudite, who are the repositories of all knowledge. To the latter class belongs Tsi-puff, the first lunar professor of terrestrial languages. With regard to these latter, it is a curious little thing to note that the unlimited growth of the lunar brain has rendered unnecessary the invention of all those mechanical aids to brain work which have distinguished the career of man. There are no books, no records of any sort, no libraries or inscriptions. All knowledge is stored in distended brains much as the honey-ants of Texas store honey in their distended abdomens. The lunar Somerset House and the lunar British Museum Library are collections of living brains...

"The less specialised administrators, I note, do for the most part take a very lively interest in me whenever they encounter me. They will come out of the way and stare at me and ask questions to which Phi-oo will reply. I see them going hither and thither with a retinue of bearers, attendants, shouters, parachute-carriers, and so forth - queer groups to see. The experts for the most part ignore me completely, even as they ignore each

other, or notice me only to begin a clamorous exhibition of their distinctive skill. The erudite for the most part are rapt in an impervious and apoplectic complacency, from which only a denial of their erudition can rouse them. Usually they are led about by little watchers and attendants, and often there are small and active-looking creatures, small females usually, that I am inclined to think are a sort of wife to them; but some of the profounder scholars are altogether too great for locomotion, and are carried from place to place in a sort of sedan tub, wabbling jellies of knowledge that enlist my respectful astonishment. I have just passed one in coming to this place where I am permitted to amuse myself with these electrical toys, a vast, shaven, shaky head, bald and thin-skinned, carried on his grotesque stretcher. In front and behind came his bearers, and curious, almost trumpet-faced, news disseminators shrieked his fame.

"I have already mentioned the retinues that accompany most of the intellectuals: ushers, bearers, valets, extraneous tentacles and muscles, as it were, to replace the abortive physical powers of these hypertrophied minds. Porters almost invariably accompany them. There are also extremely swift messengers with spider-like legs and 'hands' for grasping parachutes, and attendants with vocal organs that could well nigh wake the dead. Apart from their controlling intelligence these subordinates are as inert and helpless as umbrellas in a stand. They exist only in relation to the orders they have to obey, the duties they have to perform.

"The bulk of these insects, however, who go to and fro upon the spiral ways, who fill the ascending balloons and drop past me clinging to flimsy parachutes are, I gather, of the operative class. 'Machine hands,' indeed, some of these are in actual nature - it is not figure of speech, the single tentacle of the mooncalf herd is profoundly modified for clawing, lifting, guiding, the rest of them no more than necessary subordinate appendages to these important mechanisms, have enormously developed auditory organs; some whose work lies in delicate chemical operations project a vast olfactory organ; others again have flat feet for treadles with ankylosed joints; and others - who I have been told are glassblowers

- seem mere lung-bellows. but every one of these common Selenites I have seen at work is exquisitely adapted to the social need it meets. Fine work is done by fined-down workers, amazingly dwarfed and neat. Some I could hold on the palm of my hand. There is even a sort of turnspit Selenite, very common, whose duty and only delight it is to apply the motive power for various small appliances. And to rule over these things and order any erring tendency there might be in some aberrant natures are the most muscular beings I have seen in the moon, a sort of lunar police, who must have been trained from their earliest years to give a perfect respect and obedience to the swollen heads.

"The making of these various sorts of operative must be a very curious and interesting process. I am very much in the dark about it, but quite recently I came upon a number of young Selenites confined in jars from which only the fore-limbs protruded, who were being compressed to become machine-minders of a special sort. The extended 'hand' in this highly developed system of technical education is stimulated by irritants and nourished by injection, while the rest of the body is starved. Phi-oo, unless I misunderstood him, explained that in the earlier stages these queer little creatures are apt to display signs of suffering in their various cramped situations, but they easily become indurated to their lot; and he took me on to where a number of flexible-minded messengers were being drawn out and broken in. It is quite unreasonable, I know, but such glimpses of the educational methods of these beings affect me disagreeably. I hope, however, that may pass off, and I may be able to see more of this aspect of their wonderful social order. That wretched-looking hand-tentacle sticking out of its jar seemed to have a sort of limp appeal for lost possibilities; it haunts me still, although, of course it is really in the end a far more humane proceeding than our earthly method of leaving children to grow into human beings, and then making machines of them.

"Quite recently, too - I think it was on the eleventh or twelfth visit I made to this apparatus - I had a curious light upon the lives of these operatives. I was being guided through a short cut hither, instead of

going down the spiral, and by the quays to the Central Sea. From the devious windings of a long, dark gallery, we emerged into a vast, low cavern, pervaded by an earthy smell, and as things go in this darkness, rather brightly lit. The light came from a tumultuous growth of livid fungoid shapes - some indeed singularly like our terrestrial mushrooms, but standing as high or higher than a man.

"Mooneys eat these?' said I to Phi-oo.

"Yes, food.'

"Goodness me!' I cried; 'what's that?'

"My eye had just caught the figure of an exceptionally big and ungainly Selenite lying motionless among the stems, face downward. We stopped.

"Dead?' I asked. (For as yet I have seen no dead the moon, and I have grown curious.)

"No!' exclaimed Phi-oo. 'Him - worker - no work to do. Get little drink then - make sleep - till we him want. What good him wake, eh? No want him walking about.'

"There's another!' cried I.

"And indeed all that huge extent of mushroom ground was, I found, peppered with these prostrate figures sleeping under an opiate until the moon had need of them. There were scores of them of all sorts, and we were able to turn over some of them, and examine them more precisely than I had been able to previously. They breathed noisily at my doing so, but did not wake. One, I remember very distinctly: he left a strong impression, I think, because some trick the light and of his attitude was strongly suggestive a drawn-up human figure. His fore-limbs were long, delicate tentacles - he was some kind of refined manipulator - and the pose of his slumber suggested a submissive suffering. No doubt it was a mistake for to

interpret his expression in that way, but I did. And as Phi-oo rolled him over into the darkness among the livid fleshiness again I felt a distinctly unpleasant sensation, although as he rolled the insect in him was confessed.

"It simply illustrates the unthinking way in which one acquires habits of feeling. To drug the worker one does not want and toss him aside is surely far better than to expel him from his factory to wander starving in the streets. In every complicated social community there is necessarily a certain intermittency of employment for all specialised labour, and in this way the trouble of an 'unemployed' problem is altogether anticipated. And yet, so unreasonable are even scientifically trained minds, I still do not like the memory of those prostrate forms amidst those quiet, luminous arcades of fleshy growth, and I avoid that short cut in spite of the inconveniences of the longer, more noisy, and more crowded alternative.

"My alternative route takes me round by a huge, shadowy cavern, very crowded and clamorous, and here it is I see peering out of the hexagonal openings of a sort of honeycomb wall, or parading a large open space behind, 01 selecting the toys and amulets made to please them by the dainty-tentacled jewellers who work in kennels below, the mothers of the moon world - the queen bees, as it were, of the hive. They are noble-looking beings, fantastically and sometimes quite beautifully adorned, with a proud carriage, and, save for their mouths, almost microscopic heads.

"Of the condition of the moon sexes, marrying and giving in marriage, and of birth and so forth among the Selenites, I have as yet been able to learn very little. With the steady progress of Phi-oo in English, however, my ignorance will no doubt as steadily disappear. I am of opinion that, as with the ants and bees, there is a large majority of the members in this community of the neuter sex. Of course on earth in our cities there are now many who never live that life of parentage which is the natural life of man. Here, as with the ants, this thing has become a normal condition of the race, and the whole of such eplacement as is necessary falls upon

this special and by no means numerous class of matrons, the mothers of the moon-world, large and stately beings beautifully fitted to bear the larval Selenite. Unless I misunderstand an explanation of Phi-oo's, they are absolutely incapable of cherishing the young they bring into the moon; periods of foolish indulgence alternate with moods of aggressive violence, and as soon as possible the little creatures, who are quite soft and flabby and pale coloured, are transferred to the charge of celibate females, women 'workers' as it were, who in some cases possess brains of almost masculine dimensions."

Just at this point, unhappily, this message broke off. Fragmentary and tantalising as the matter constituting this chapter is, it does nevertheless give a vague, broad impression of an altogether strange and wonderful world - a world with which our own may have to reckon we know not how speedily. This intermittent trickle of messages, this whispering of a record needle in the stillness of the mountain slopes, is the first warning of such a change in human conditions as mankind has scarcely imagined heretofore. In that satellite of ours there are new elements, new appliances, traditions, an overwhelming avalanche of new ideas, a strange race with whom we must inevitably struggle for mastery - gold as common as iron or wood...

Chapter 25

The Grand Lunar

THE penultimate message describes, with occasionally elaborate detail, the encounter between Cavor and the Grand Lunar, who is the ruler or master of the moon. Cavor seems to have sent most of it without interference, but to have been interrupted in the concluding portion. The second came after an interval of a week.

The first message begins: "At last I am able to resume this" it then

becomes illegible for a space, and after a time resumed in mid-sentence.

The missing words of the following sentence are probably "the crowd."
There follows quite clearly: "grew ever denser as we drew near the palace of the Grand Lunar - if I may call a series of excavations a palace.

Everywhere faces stared at me - blank, chitinous gapes and masks, eyes peering over tremendous olfactory developments, eyes beneath monstrous forehead plates; and undergrowth of smaller creatures dodged and yelped, and helmet faces poised on sinuous, long-jointed necks appeared craning over shoulders and beneath armpits. Keeping a welcome space about me marched a cordon of stolid, scuttle-headed guards, who had joined us on our leaving the boat in which we had come along the channels of the Central Sea. The quick-eyed artist with the little brain joined us also, and a thick bunch of lean porter-insects swayed and struggled under the multitude of conveniences that were considered essential to my state. I was carried in a litter during the final stage of our journey. This litter was made of some very ductile metal that looked dark to me, meshed and woven, and with bars of paler metal, and about me as I advanced there grouped itself a long and complicated procession.

"In front, after the manner of heralds, marched four trumpet-faced creatures making a devastating bray; and then came squat, resolute-moving ushers before and behind, and on either hand a galaxy of learned heads, a sort of animated encyclopedia, who were, Phi-oo explained, to stand about the Grand Lunar for purposes of reference. (Not a thing in lunar science, not a point of view or method of thinking, that these wonderful beings did not carry in their heads!) Followed guards and porters, and then Phi-oo's shivering brain borne also on a litter. Then came Tsi-puff in a slightly less important litter; then myself on a litter of greater elegance than any other, and surrounded by my food and drink attendants. More trumpeters came next, splitting the ear with vehement outcries, and then several big brains, special correspondents one might well call them, or historiographers, charged with the task of observing and remembering every detail of this epoch-making interview. A company of attendants, bearing and dragging banners and masses of scented fungus and curious symbols,

vanished in the darkness behind. The way was lined by ushers and officers in caparisons that gleamed like steel, and beyond their line, so far as my eyes could pierce the gloom, the heads of that enormous crowd extended.

"I will own that I am still by no means indurated. to the peculiar effect of the Selenite appearance, and to find myself, as it were, adrift on this broad sea of excited entomology was by no means agreeable. Just for a space I had something very like what I should imagine people mean when they speak of the 'horrors.' It had come to me before in these lunar caverns, when on occasion I have found myself weaponless and with an undefended back, amidst a crowd of these Selenites, but never quite so vividly. It is, of course, as absolutely irrational a feeling as one could well have, and I hope gradually to subdue it. But just for a moment, as I swept forward into the welter of the vast crowd, it was only by gripping my litter tightly and summoning all my will-power that I succeeded in avoiding an outcry or some such manifestation. It lasted perhaps three I minutes; then I had myself in hand again.

"We ascended the spiral of a vertical way for some time, and then passed through a series of huge halls dome-roofed and elaborately decorated. The approach to the Grand Lunar was certainly contrived to give one a vivid impression of his greatness. Each cavern one entered seemed greater and more boldly arched than its predecessor. This effect of progressive size was enhanced by a thin haze of faintly phosphorescent blue incense that thickened as one advanced, and robbed even the nearer figures of clearness. I seemed to advance continually to something larger, dimmer, and less material.

"I must confess that all this multitude made me feel extremely shabby and unworthy. I was unshaven and unkempt; I had brought no razor; I had a coarse beard over my mouth. On earth I have always been inclined to despise any attention to my person beyond a proper care for cleanliness; but under the exceptional circumstances in which I found myself, representing, as I did, my planet and my kind, and depending very largely upon the attractiveness of my appearance for a proper reception, I could

have given much for something a little more artistic and dignified than the husks I wore. I had been so serene in the belief that the moon was uninhabited as to overlook such precautions altogether. As it was I was dressed in a flannel jacket, knickerbockers, and golfing stockings, stained with every sort of dirt the moon offered, slippers (of which the left heel was wanting), and a blanket, through a hole in which I thrust my head. (These clothes, indeed, I still wear.) Sharp bristles are anything but an improvement to my cast of features, and there was an unmended tear at the knee of my knickerbockers that showed conspicuously as I squatted in my litter; my right stocking, too persisted in getting about my ankle. I am fully alive to the injustice my appearance did humanity, and if by any expedient I could have improvised something a little out of the way and imposing I would have done so. But I could hit upon nothing. I did what I could with my blanket - folding it somewhat after the fashion of a toga, and for the rest I sat as upright as the swaying of my litter permitted.

"Imagine the largest hall you have ever been in, imperfectly lit with blue light and obscured by a gray-blue fog, surging with metallic or livid-gray creatures of such a mad diversity as I have hinted. Imagine this hall to end in an open archway beyond which is a still larger hall, and beyond this yet another and still larger one, and so on. At the end of the vista, dimly seen, a flight of steps, like the steps of Ara Coeli at Rome, ascend out of sight. Higher and higher these steps appear to go as one draws nearer their base. But at last I came under a huge archway and beheld the summit of these steps, and upon it the Grand Lunar exalted on his throne.

" He was seated in what was relatively a blaze of incandescent blue. This, and the darkness about him gave him an effect of floating in a blue-black void. He seemed a small, self-luminous cloud at first, brooding on his sombre throne; his brain case must have measured many yards in diameter. For some reason that I cannot fathom a number of blue search-lights radiated from behind the throne on which he sat, and immediately encircling him was a halo. About him, and little and indistinct in this glow, a number of body-servants sustained and supported him, and

overshadowed and standing in a huge semicircle beneath him were his intellectual subordinates, his remembrancers and computators and searchers and servants, and all the distinguished insects of the court of the moon. Still lower stood ushers and messengers, and then all down the countless steps of the throne were guards, and at the base, enormous, various, indistinct, vanishing at last into an absolute black, a vast swaying multitude of the minor dignitaries of the moon. Their feet made a perpetual scraping whisper on the rocky floor, as their limbs moved with a rustling murmur.

"As I entered the penultimate hall the music rose and expanded into an imperial magnificence of sound, and the shrieks of the news-bearers died away. ...

"I entered the last and greatest hall....

"My procession opened out like a fan. My ushers and guards went right and left, and the three litters bearing myself and Phi-oo and Tsi-puff marched across a shiny darkness of floor to the foot of the giant stairs. Then began a vast throbbing hum, that mingled with the music. The two Selenites dismounted, but I was bidden remain seated - I imagine as a special honour. The music ceased, but not that humming, and by a simultaneous movement of ten thousand respectful heads my attention was directed to the enhaloed supreme intelligence that hovered above me.

"At first as I peered into the radiating glow this quintessential brain looked very much like an opaque, featureless bladder with dim, undulating ghosts of convolutions writhing visibly within. Then beneath its enormity and just above the edge of the throne one saw with a start minute elfin eyes peering out of the glow. No face, but eyes, as if they peered through holes. At first I could see no more than these two staring little eyes, and then below I distinguished the little dwarfed body and its insect-jointed limbs shrivelled and white. The eyes stared down at me with a strange intensity, and the lower part of the swollen globe was wrinkled. Ineffectual-looking little hand-tentacles steadied this shape on the

throne. ...

"It was great. It was pitiful. One forgot the hall and the crowd.

"I ascended the staircase by jerks. It seemed to me that this darkly glowing brain case above us spread over me, and took more and more of the whole effect into itself as I drew nearer. The tiers of attendants and helpers grouped about their master seemed to dwindle and fade into the night. I saw that shadowy attendants were busy spraying that great brain with a cooling spray, and patting and sustaining it. For my own part, I sat gripping my swaying litter and staring at the Grand Lunar, unable to turn my gaze aside. And at last, as I reached a little landing that was separated only by ten steps or so from the supreme seat, the woven splendour of the music reached a climax and ceased, and I was left naked, as it were, in that vastness, beneath the still scrutiny of the Grand Lunar's eyes.

"He was scrutinising the first man he had ever seen. ...

"My eyes dropped at last from his greatness to the ant figures in the blue mist about him, and then down the steps to the massed Selenites, still and expectant in their thousands, packed on the floor below. Once again an unreasonable horror reached out towards me. ... And passed.

"After the pause came the salutation. I was assisted from my litter, and stood awkwardly while a number of curious and no doubt deeply symbolical gestures were vicariously performed for me by two slender officials. The encyclopaedic galaxy of the learned that had accompanied me to the entrance of the last hall appeared two steps above me and left and right of me, in readiness for the Grand Lunar's need, and Phi-oo's pale brain placed itself about half-way up to the throne in such a position as to communicate easily between us without turning his back on either the Grand Lunar or myself. Tsi-puff took up position behind him. Dexterous ushers sidled sideways towards me, keeping a full face to the Presence. I seated myself Turkish fashion, and Phi-oo and Tsi-puff also knelt down above me.

There came a pause. The eyes of the nearer court went from me to the Grand Lunar and came back to me, and a hissing and piping of expectation passed across the hidden multitudes below and ceased.

"That humming ceased.

"For the first and last time in my experience the moon was silent.

"I became aware of a faint wheezy noise. The Grand Lunar was addressing me. It was like the rubbing of a finger upon a pane of glass.

"I watched him attentively for a time, and then glanced at the alert Phi-oo. I felt amidst these slender beings ridiculously thick and fleshy and solid; my head all jaw and black hair. My eyes went back to the Grand Lunar. He had ceased; his attendants were busy, and his shining superficies was glistening and running with cooling spray.

"Phi-oo meditated through an interval. He consulted Tsi-puff. Then he began piping his recognisable English - at first a little nervously, so that he was not very clear.

"'M'm - the Grand Lunar - wishes to say - wishes to say - he gathers you are - m'm - men - that you are a man from the planet earth. He wishes to say that he welcomes you - welcomes you - and wishes to learn - learn, if I may use the word - the state of your world, and the reason why you came to this.'

"He paused. I was about to reply when he resumed. He proceeded to remarks of which the drift was not very clear, though I am inclined to think they were intended to be complimentary. He told me that the earth was to the moon what the sun is to the earth, and that the Selenites desired very greatly to learn about the earth and men. He then told me no doubt in compliment also, the relative magnitude and diameter of earth and moon, and the perpetual wonder and speculation with which the Selenites had regarded our planet. I meditated with downcast eyes, and decided to reply

that men too had wondered what might lie in the moon, and had judged it dead, little recking of such magnificence as I had seen that day. The Grand Lunar, in token of recognition, caused his long blue rays to rotate in a very confusing manner, and all about the great hall ran the pipings and whisperings and rustlings of the report of what I had said. He then proceeded to put to Phi-oo a number of inquiries which were easier to answer.

"He understood, he explained, that we lived on the surface of the earth, that our air and sea were outside the globe; the latter part, indeed, he already knew from his astronomical specialists. He was very anxious to have more detailed information of what he called this extraordinary state of affairs, for from the solidity of the earth there had always been a disposition regard it as uninhabitable. He endeavoured first to ascertain the extremes of temperature to which we earth beings were exposed, and he was deeply interested by my descriptive treatment of clouds and rain. His imagination was assisted by the fact that the lunar atmosphere in the outer galleries of the night side is not infrequently very foggy. He seemed inclined to marvel that we did not find the sunlight too intense for our eyes, and was interested in my attempt to explain that the sky was tempered to a bluish colour through the refraction of the air, though I doubt if he clearly understood that. I explained how the iris of the human eyes can contract the pupil and save the delicate internal structure from the excess of sunlight, and was allowed to approach within a few feet of the Presence in order that this structure might be seen. This led to a comparison of the lunar and terrestrial eyes. The former is not only excessively sensitive to such light as men can see, but it can also see heat, and every difference in temperature within the moon renders objects visible to it.

"The iris was quite a new organ to the Grand Lunar. For a time he amused himself by flashing his rays into my face and watching my pupils contract. As a consequence, I was dazzled and blinded for some little time. ...

"But in spite of that discomfort I found something reassuring by

insensible degrees in the rationality of this business of question and answer. I could shut my eyes, think of my answer, and almost forget that the the Grand Lunar has no face. ...

"When I had descended again to my proper place the Grand Lunar asked how we sheltered ourselves from heat and storms, and I expounded to him the arts of building and furnishing. Here we wandered into misunderstandings and cross-purposes, due largely, I must admit, to the looseness of my expressions. For a long time I had great difficulty in making him understand the nature of a house. To him and his attendant Selenites it seemed, no doubt, the most whimsical thing in the world that men should build houses when they might descend into excavations, and an additional complication was introduced by the attempt I made to explain that men had originally begun their homes in caves, and that they were now taking their railways and many establishments beneath the surface. Here I think a desire for intellectual completeness betrayed me. There was also a considerable tangle due to an equally unwise attempt on my part to explain about mines. Dismissing this topic at last in an incomplete state, the Grand Lunar inquired what we did with the interior of our globe.

"A tide of twittering and piping swept into the remotest corners of that great assembly then it was last made clear that we men know absolutely nothing of the contents of the world upon which the immemorial generations of our ancestors had been evolved. Three times had I to repeat that of all the 4000 miles of distance between the earth and its centre men knew only to the depth of a mile, and that very vaguely. I understood the Grand Lunar to ask why had I come to the moon seeing we had scarcely touched our own planet yet, but he did not trouble me at that time to proceed to an explanation, being too anxious to pursue the details of this mad inversion of all his ideas.

"He reverted to the question of weather, and I tried to describe the perpetually changing sky, and snow, and frost and hurricanes. 'But when the night comes,' he ed, 'is it not cold?'

"I told him it was colder than by day. "'And does not your atmosphere freeze?'

"I told him not; that it was never cold enough for that, because our nights were so short.

"'Not even liquefy?'

"I was about to say 'No,' but then it occurred to me that one part at least of our atmosphere, the water vapour of it, does sometimes liquefy and form dew, and sometimes freeze and form frost - a process perfectly analogous to the freezing of all the external atmosphere of the moon during its longer night. I made myself clear on this point, and from that the Grand Lunar went on to speak with me of sleep. For the need of sleep that comes so regularly every twenty-four hours to all things is part also of our earthly inheritance. On the moon they rest only at rare intervals, and after exceptional exertions. Then I tried to describe to him the soft splendours of a summer night, and from that I passed to a description of those animals that prowl by night and sleep by day. I told him of lions and tigers, and here it seemed as though we had come to a deadlock. For, save in their waters, there are no creatures in the moon not absolutely domestic and subject to his will, and so it has been for immemorial years. They have monstrous water creatures, but no evil beasts, and the idea of anything strong and large existing 'outside' in the night is very difficult for them. ...

The record is here too broken to transcribe for the space of perhaps twenty words or more.

"He talked with his attendants, as I suppose, upon the strange superficiality and unreasonableness of (man) who lives on the mere surface of a world, a creature of waves and winds, and all the chances of space, who cannot even unite to overcome the beasts that prey upon his kind, and yet who dares to invade another planet. During this aside I sat thinking, and then at his desire I told him of the different sorts of men. He

searched me with questions. "And for all sorts of work you have the same sort of men. But who thinks? Who governs?"

"I gave him an outline of the democratic method.

"When I had done he ordered cooling sprays upon his brow, and then requested me to repeat my explanation conceiving something had miscarried.

"Do they not do different things, then?' said Phi-oo.

"Some, I admitted, were thinkers and some officials; some hunted, some were mechanics, some artists, some toilers. 'But all rule,' I said.

"And have they not different shapes to fit them to their different duties?"

"None that you can see,' I said, 'except perhaps, for clothes. Their minds perhaps differ a little,' I reflected.

"Their minds must differ a great deal,' said the Grand Lunar, 'or they would all want to do the same things.'

"In order to bring myself into a closer harmony with his preconceptions, I said that his surmise was right 'It was all hidden in the brain,' I said; 'but the difference was there. Perhaps if one could see the minds and souls of men they would be as varied and unequal as the Selenites. There were great men and small men, men who could reach out far and wide, men who could go swiftly; noisy, trumpet-minded men, and men who could remember without thinking. ... The record is indistinct for three words.

He interrupted me to recall me to my previous statements. 'But you said all men rule?' he pressed.

"To a certain extent," I said, and made, I fear, a denser fog with my explanation.

"He reached out to a salient fact. "Do you mean," asked, 'that there is no Grand Earthly?'

I thought of several people, but assured him finally there was none. I explained that such autocrats and emperors as we had tried upon earth had usually ended in drink, or vice, or violence, and that the large and influential section of the people of the earth to which I belonged, the Anglo-Saxons, did not mean to try that sort of thing again. At which the Grand Lunar was even more amazed.

"But how do you keep even such wisdom as you have?" he asked; and I explained to him the way we helped our limited [a word omitted here, probably "brains"] with libraries of books. I explained to him how our science was growing by the united labours of innumerable little men, and on that he made no comment save that it was evident we had mastered much in spite of our social savagery, or we could not have come to the moon. Yet the contrast was very marked. With knowledge the Selenites grew and changed; mankind stored their knowledge about them and remained brutes - equipped. He said this... [Here there is a short piece of the record indistinct.]

"He then caused me to describe how we went about this earth of ours, and I described to him our railways and ships. For a time he could not understand that we had had the use of steam only one hundred years, but when he did he was clearly amazed. (I may mention as a singular thing, that the Selenites use years to count by, just as we do on earth, though I can make nothing of their numeral system. That, however, does not matter, because Phi-oo understands ours.) From that I went on to tell him that mankind had dwelt in cities only for nine or ten thousand years, and that we were still not united in one brotherhood, but under many different forms of government. This astonished the Grand Lunar very much, when it was made clear to him. At first he thought we referred merely to administrative areas.

"Our States and Empires are still the rawest sketches of what order will some day be,' I said, and so I came to tell him. ... [At this point a length of record that probably represents thirty or forty words is totally illegible.]

"The Grand Lunar was greatly impressed by the folly of men in clinging to the inconvenience of diverse tongues. 'They want to communicate, and yet not to communicate,' he said, and then for a long time he questioned me closely concerning war.

"He was at first perplexed and incredulous. 'You mean to say,' he asked, seeking confirmation, 'that you run about over the surface of your world - this world, whose riches you have scarcely begun to scrape - killing one another for beasts to eat?'

"I told him that was perfectly correct.

"He asked for particulars to assist his imagination.

"But do not ships and your poor little cities get injured?' he asked, and I found the waste of property and conveniences seemed to impress him almost as much as the killing. 'Tell me more,' said the Grand Lunar; 'make me see pictures. I cannot conceive these things.'

"And so, for a space, though something loath, I told him the story of earthly War.

"I told him of the first orders and ceremonies of war, of warnings and ultimatums, and the marshalling and marching of troops. I gave him an idea of manoeuvres and positions and battle joined. I told him of sieges and assaults, of starvation and hardship in trenches, and of sentinels freezing in the snow. I told him of routs and surprises, and desperate last stands and faint hopes, and the pitiless pursuit of fugitives and the dead upon the field. I told, too, of the past, of invasions and massacres, of the Huns and Tartars, and the wars of Mahomet and the Caliphs, and of

the Crusades. And as I went on, and Phi-oo translated, and the Selenites cooed and murmured in a steadily intensified emotion.

"I told them an ironclad could fire a shot of a ton twelve miles, and go through 20 ft. of iron - and how we could steer torpedoes under water. I went on to describe a Maxim gun in action, and what I could imagine of the Battle of Colenso. The Grand Lunar was so incredulous that he interrupted the translation of what I had said in order to have my verification of my account. They particularly doubted my description of the men cheering and rejoicing as they went into (? battle).

"But surely they do not like it!" translated Phi-oo.

"I assured them men of my race considered battle the most glorious experience of life, at which the whole assembly was stricken with amazement.

"But what good is this war?" asked the Grand Lunar, sticking to his theme.

"Oh! as for good!" said I; 'it thins the population!'

"But why should there be a need - ?' ..

"There came a pause, the cooling sprays impinged upon his brow, and then he spoke again."

[At this point a series of undulations that have been apparent as a perplexing complication as far back as Cavor's description of the silence that fell before the first speaking of the Grand Lunar become confusingly predominant in the record. These undulations are evidently the result of radiations proceeding from a lunar source, and their persistent approximation to the alternating signals of Cavor is curiously suggestive of some operator deliberately seeking to mix them in with his message and render it illegible. At first they are small and regular, so that with a

little care and the loss of very few words we have been able to disentangle Cavor's message; then they become broad and larger, then suddenly they are irregular, with an irregularity that gives the effect at last of some one scribbling through a line of writing. For a long time nothing can be made of this madly zigzagging trace; then quite abruptly the interruption ceases, leaves a few words clear, and then resumes and continues for the rest of the message, completely obliterating whatever Cavor was attempting to transmit. Why, if this is indeed a deliberate intervention, the Selenites should have preferred to let Cavor go on transmitting his message in happy ignorance of their obliteration of its record, when it was clearly quite in their power and much more easy and convenient for them to stop his proceedings at any time, is a problem to which I can contribute nothing. The thing seems to have happened so, and that is all I can say. This last rag of his description of the Grand Lunar begins in mid-sentence.]

"...interrogated me very closely upon my secret. I was able in a little while to get to an understanding with them, and at last to elucidate what has been a puzzle to me ever since I realised the vastness of their science, namely, how it is they themselves have never discovered 'Cavorite.' I find they know of it as a theoretical substance, but they have always regarded it as a practical impossibility, because for some reason there is no helium in the moon, and helium..."

[Across the last letters of helium slashes the resumption of that obliterating trace. Note that word "secret," for that, and that alone, I base my interpretation of the message that follows, the last message, as both Mr. Wendigee and myself now believe it to be, that he is ever likely to send us.]

Chapter 26

The Last Message Cavor sent to the Earth

ON this unsatisfactory manner the penultimate message of Cavor dies out. One seems to see him away there in the blue obscurity amidst his apparatus intently signalling us to the last, all unaware of the curtain of confusion that drops between us; all unaware, too, of the final dangers that even then must have been creeping upon him. His disastrous want of vulgar common sense had utterly betrayed him. He had talked of war, he had talked of all the strength and irrational violence of men, of their insatiable aggressions, their tireless futility of conflict. He had filled the whole moon world with this impression of our race, and then I think it is plain that he made the most fatal admission that upon himself alone hung the possibility - at least for a long time - of any further men reaching the moon. The line the cold, inhuman reason of the moon would take seems plain enough to me, and a suspicion of it, and then perhaps some sudden sharp realisation of it, must have come to him. One imagines him about the moon with the remorse of this fatal indiscretion growing in his mind. During a certain time I am inclined to guess the Grand Lunar was deliberating the new situation, and for all that time Cavor may have gone as free as ever he had gone. But obstacles of some sort prevented his getting to his electromagnetic apparatus again after that message I have just given. For some days we received nothing. Perhaps he was having fresh audiences, and trying to evade his previous admissions. Who can hope to guess?

And then suddenly, like a cry in the night, like a cry that is followed by a stillness, came the last message. It is the briefest fragment, the broken beginnings of two sentences.

The first was: "I was mad to let the Grand Lunar know."

There was an interval of perhaps a minute. One imagines some interruption from without. A departure from the instrument - a dreadful hesitation among the looming masses of apparatus in that dim, blue-lit cavern - a sudden rush back to it, full of a resolve that came too late. Then, as if it were hastily transmitted came: "Cavorite made as follows: take-"

There followed one word, a quite unmeaning word as it stands: "uless."

And that is all.

It may be he made a hasty attempt to spell "useless" when his fate was close upon him. Whatever it was that was happening about that apparatus we cannot tell. Whatever it was we shall never, I know, receive another message from the moon. For my own part a vivid dream has come to my help, and I see, almost as plainly as though I had seen it in actual fact, a blue-lit shadowy dishevelled Cavor struggling in the grip of these insect Selenites, struggling ever more desperately and hopelessly as they press upon him, shouting, expostulating, perhaps even at last fighting, and being forced backwards step by step out of all speech or sign of his fellows, for evermore into the Unknown - into the dark, into that silence that has no end. ...

TWELVE STORIES AND A DREAM

BY
H. G. WELLS

1903

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1. FILMER

In truth the mastery of flying was the work of thousands of men--this man a suggestion and that an experiment, until at last only one vigorous intellectual effort was needed to finish the work. But the inexorable injustice of the popular mind has decided that of all these thousands, one man, and that a man who never flew, should be chosen as the discoverer, just as it has chosen to honour Watt as the discoverer of steam and Stephenson of the steam-engine. And surely of all honoured names none is so grotesquely and tragically honoured as poor Filmer's, the timid, intellectual creature who solved the problem over which the world had hung perplexed and a little fearful for so many generations, the man who pressed the button that has changed peace and warfare and well-nigh every condition of human life and happiness. Never has that recurring wonder of the littleness of the scientific man in the face of the greatness of his science found such an amazing exemplification. Much concerning Filmer is, and must remain, profoundly obscure--Filmers attract no Boswells--but the essential facts and the concluding scene are clear enough, and there are letters, and notes, and casual allusions to piece the whole together. And this is the story one makes, putting this thing with that, of Filmer's life and death.

The first authentic trace of Filmer on the page of history is a document in which he applies for admission as a paid student in physics to the Government laboratories at South Kensington, and therein he describes himself as the son of a "military bootmaker" ("cobbler" in the vulgar tongue) of Dover, and lists his various examination proofs of a high proficiency in chemistry and mathematics. With a certain want of dignity he seeks to enhance these attainments by a profession of poverty and disadvantages, and he writes of the laboratory as the "gaol" of his ambitions,

a slip which reinforces his claim to have devoted himself exclusively to the exact sciences. The document is endorsed in a manner that shows Filmer was admitted to this coveted opportunity; but until quite recently no traces of his success in the Government institution could be found.

It has now, however, been shown that in spite of his professed zeal for research, Filmer, before he had held this scholarship a year, was tempted, by the possibility of a small increase in his immediate income, to abandon it in order to become one of the nine-pence-an-hour computers employed by a well-known Professor in his vicarious conduct of those extensive researches of his in solar physics--researches which are still a matter of perplexity to astronomers. Afterwards, for the space of seven years, save for the pass lists of the London University, in which he is seen to climb slowly to a double first class B.Sc., in mathematics and chemistry, there is no evidence of how Filmer passed his life. No one knows how or where he lived, though it seems highly probable that he continued to support himself by teaching while he prosecuted the studies necessary for this distinction. And then, oddly enough, one finds him mentioned in the correspondence of Arthur Hicks, the poet.

"You remember Filmer," Hicks writes to his friend Vance; "well, HE hasn't altered a bit, the same hostile mumble and the nasty chin--how CAN a man contrive to be always three days from shaving? -- and a sort of furtive air of being engaged in sneaking in front of one; even his coat and that frayed collar of his show no further signs of the passing years. He was writing in the library and I sat down beside him in the name of God's charity, whereupon he deliberately insulted me by covering up his memoranda. It seems he has some brilliant research on hand that he suspects me of all people--with a Bodley Booklet a-printing!--of stealing. He has taken remarkable honours at the University--he went through them with a sort of hasty slobber, as though he feared I might interrupt him before he had told me all--and he spoke of taking his D.Sc. as one

might speak of taking a cab. And he asked what I was doing--with a sort of comparative accent, and his arm was spread nervously, positively a protecting arm, over the paper that hid the precious idea--his one hopeful idea.

"'Poetry,' he said, 'Poetry. And what do you profess to teach in it, Hicks?'

"The thing's a Provincial professorling in the very act of budding, and I thank the Lord devoutly that but for the precious gift of indolence I also might have gone this way to D.Sc. and destruction . . ."

A curious little vignette that I am inclined to think caught Filmer in or near the very birth of his discovery. Hicks was wrong in anticipating a provincial professorship for Filmer. Our next glimpse of him is lecturing on "rubber and rubber substitutes," to the Society of Arts--he had become manager to a great plastic-substance manufactory--and at that time, it is now known, he was a member of the Aeronautical Society, albeit he contributed nothing to the discussions of that body, preferring no doubt to mature his great conception without external assistance. And within two years of that paper before the Society of Arts he was hastily taking out a number of patents and proclaiming in various undignified ways the completion of the divergent inquiries which made his flying machine possible. The first definite statement to that effect appeared in a halfpenny evening paper through the agency of a man who lodged in the same house with Filmer. His final haste after his long laborious secret patience seems to have been due to a needless panic, Bootle, the notorious American scientific quack, having made an announcement that Filmer interpreted wrongly as an anticipation of his idea.

Now what precisely was Filmer's idea? Really a very simple one. Before his time the pursuit of aeronautics had taken two divergent

lines, and had developed on the one hand balloons--large apparatus lighter than air, easy in ascent, and comparatively safe in descent, but floating helplessly before any breeze that took them; and on the other, flying machines that flew only in theory--vast flat structures heavier than air, propelled and kept up by heavy engines and for the most part smashing at the first descent. But, neglecting the fact that the inevitable final collapse rendered them impossible, the weight of the flying machines gave them this theoretical advantage, that they could go through the air against a wind, a necessary condition if aerial navigation was to have any practical value. It is Filmer's particular merit that he perceived the way in which the contrasted and hitherto incompatible merits of balloon and heavy flying machine might be combined in one apparatus, which should be at choice either heavier or lighter than air. He took hints from the contractile bladders of fish and the pneumatic cavities of birds. He devised an arrangement of contractile and absolutely closed balloons which when expanded could lift the actual flying apparatus with ease, and when retracted by the complicated "musculature" he wove about them, were withdrawn almost completely into the frame; and he built the large framework which these balloons sustained, of hollow, rigid tubes, the air in which, by an ingenious contrivance, was automatically pumped out as the apparatus fell, and which then remained exhausted so long as the aeronaut desired. There were no wings or propellers to his machine, such as there had been to all previous aeroplanes, and the only engine required was the compact and powerful little appliance needed to contract the balloons. He perceived that such an apparatus as he had devised might rise with frame exhausted and balloons expanded to a considerable height, might then contract its balloons and let the air into its frame, and by an adjustment of its weights slide down the air in any desired direction. As it fell it would accumulate velocity and at the same time lose weight, and the momentum accumulated by its down-rush could be utilised by means of a shifting of its weights to drive it up in the air again as the balloons expanded. This conception, which is still the

structural conception of all successful flying machines, needed, however, a vast amount of toil upon its details before it could actually be realised, and such toil Filmer--as he was accustomed to tell the numerous interviewers who crowded upon him in the heyday of his fame--"ungrudgingly and unsparingly gave." His particular difficulty was the elastic lining of the contractile balloon. He found he needed a new substance, and in the discovery and manufacture of that new substance he had, as he never failed to impress upon the interviewers, "performed a far more arduous work than even in the actual achievement of my seemingly greater discovery."

But it must not be imagined that these interviews followed hard upon Filmer's proclamation of his invention. An interval of nearly five years elapsed during which he timidly remained at his rubber factory--he seems to have been entirely dependent on his small income from this source--making misdirected attempts to assure a quite indifferent public that he really HAD invented what he had invented. He occupied the greater part of his leisure in the composition of letters to the scientific and daily press, and so forth, stating precisely the net result of his contrivances, and demanding financial aid. That alone would have sufficed for the suppression of his letters. He spent such holidays as he could arrange in unsatisfactory interviews with the door-keepers of leading London papers--he was singularly not adapted for inspiring hall-porters with confidence--and he positively attempted to induce the War Office to take up his work with him. There remains a confidential letter from Major-General Volleyfire to the Earl of Frogs. "The man's a crank and a bounder to boot," says the Major-General in his bluff, sensible, army way, and so left it open for the Japanese to secure, as they subsequently did, the priority in this side of warfare--a priority they still to our great discomfort retain.

And then by a stroke of luck the membrane Filmer had invented for his contractile balloon was discovered to be useful for the valves

of a new oil-engine, and he obtained the means for making a trial model of his invention. He threw up his rubber factory appointment, desisted from all further writing, and, with a certain secrecy that seems to have been an inseparable characteristic of all his proceedings, set to work upon the apparatus. He seems to have directed the making of its parts and collected most of it in a room in Shoreditch, but its final putting together was done at Dymchurch, in Kent. He did not make the affair large enough to carry a man, but he made an extremely ingenious use of what were then called the Marconi rays to control its flight. The first flight of this first practicable flying machine took place over some fields near Burford Bridge, near Hythe, in Kent, and Filmer followed and controlled its flight upon a specially constructed motor tricycle.

The flight was, considering all things, an amazing success. The apparatus was brought in a cart from Dymchurch to Burford Bridge, ascended there to a height of nearly three hundred feet, swooped thence very nearly back to Dymchurch, came about in its sweep, rose again, circled, and finally sank uninjured in a field behind the Burford Bridge Inn. At its descent a curious thing happened. Filmer got off his tricycle, scrambled over the intervening dyke, advanced perhaps twenty yards towards his triumph, threw out his arms in a strange gesticulation, and fell down in a dead faint. Every one could then recall the ghastliness of his features and all the evidences of extreme excitement they had observed throughout the trial, things they might otherwise have forgotten. Afterwards in the inn he had an unaccountable gust of hysterical weeping.

Altogether there were not twenty witnesses of this affair, and those for the most part uneducated men. The New Romney doctor saw the ascent but not the descent, his horse being frightened by the electrical apparatus on Filmer's tricycle and giving him a nasty spill. Two members of the Kent constabulary watched the affair from a cart in an unofficial spirit, and a grocer calling round the Marsh for orders and two lady cyclists seem almost

to complete the list of educated people. There were two reporters present, one representing a Folkestone paper and the other being a fourth-class interviewer and "symposium" journalist, whose expenses down, Filmer, anxious as ever for adequate advertisement --and now quite realising the way in which adequate advertisement may be obtained--had paid. The latter was one of those writers who can throw a convincing air of unreality over the most credible events, and his half-facetious account of the affair appeared in the magazine page of a popular journal. But, happily for Filmer, this person's colloquial methods were more convincing. He went to offer some further screed upon the subject to Banghurst, the proprietor of the New Paper, and one of the ablest and most unscrupulous men in London journalism, and Banghurst instantly seized upon the situation. The interviewer vanishes from the narrative, no doubt very doubtfully remunerated, and Banghurst, Banghurst himself, double chin, grey twill suit, abdomen, voice, gestures and all, appears at Dymchurch, following his large, unrivalled journalistic nose. He had seen the whole thing at a glance, just what it was and what it might be.

At his touch, as it were, Filmer's long-pent investigations exploded into fame. He instantly and most magnificently was a Boom. One turns over the files of the journals of the year 1907 with a quite incredulous recognition of how swift and flaming the boom of those days could be. The July papers know nothing of flying, see nothing in flying, state by a most effective silence that men never would, could or should fly. In August flying and Filmer and flying and parachutes and aerial tactics and the Japanese Government and Filmer and again flying, shouldered the war in Yunnan and the gold mines of Upper Greenland off the leading page. And Banghurst had given ten thousand pounds, and, further, Banghurst was giving five thousand pounds, and Banghurst had devoted his well-known, magnificent (but hitherto sterile) private laboratories and several acres of land near his private residence on the Surrey hills to the strenuous and violent completion--Banghurst fashion--of the life-size

practicable flying machine. Meanwhile, in the sight of privileged multitudes in the walled-garden of the Banghurst town residence in Fulham, Filmer was exhibited at weekly garden parties putting the working model through its paces. At enormous initial cost, but with a final profit, the New Paper presented its readers with a beautiful photographic souvenir of the first of these occasions.

Here again the correspondence of Arthur Hicks and his friend Vance comes to our aid.

"I saw Filmer in his glory," he writes, with just the touch of envy natural to his position as a poet passe. "The man is brushed and shaved, dressed in the fashion of a Royal-Institution-Afternoon Lecturer, the very newest shape in frock-coats and long patent shoes, and altogether in a state of extraordinary streakiness between an owlish great man and a scared abashed self-conscious boulder cruelly exposed. He hasn't a touch of colour in the skin of his face, his head juts forward, and those queer little dark amber eyes of his watch furtively round him for his fame. His clothes fit perfectly and yet sit upon him as though he had bought them ready-made. He speaks in a mumble still, but he says, you perceive indistinctly, enormous self-assertive things, he backs into the rear of groups by instinct if Banghurst drops the line for a minute, and when he walks across Banghurst's lawn one perceives him a little out of breath and going jerky, and that his weak white hands are clenched. His is a state of tension--horrible tension. And he is the Greatest Discoverer of This or Any Age--the Greatest Discoverer of This or Any Age! What strikes one so forcibly about him is that he didn't somehow quite expect it ever, at any rate, not at all like this. Banghurst is about everywhere, the energetic M.C. of his great little catch, and I swear he will have every one down on his lawn there before he has finished with the engine; he had bagged the prime minister yesterday, and he, bless his heart! didn't look particularly outsize, on the very first occasion. Conceive it! Filmer! Our obscure unwashed Filmer, the Glory of British science!

Duchesses crowd upon him, beautiful, bold peeresses say in their beautiful, clear loud voices--have you noticed how penetrating the great lady is becoming nowadays?--'Oh, Mr. Filmer, how DID you do it?'

"Common men on the edge of things are too remote for the answer. One imagines something in the way of that interview, 'toil ungrudgingly and unsparingly given, Madam, and, perhaps--I don't know--but perhaps a little special aptitude.'"

So far Hicks, and the photographic supplement to the New Paper is in sufficient harmony with the description. In one picture the machine swings down towards the river, and the tower of Fulham church appears below it through a gap in the elms, and in another, Filmer sits at his guiding batteries, and the great and beautiful of the earth stand around him, with Banghurst massed modestly but resolutely in the rear. The grouping is oddly apposite. Occluding much of Banghurst, and looking with a pensive, speculative expression at Filmer, stands the Lady Mary Elkinghorn, still beautiful, in spite of the breath of scandal and her eight-and-thirty years, the only person whose face does not admit a perception of the camera that was in the act of snapping them all.

So much for the exterior facts of the story, but, after all, they are very exterior facts. About the real interest of the business one is necessarily very much in the dark. How was Filmer feeling at the time? How much was a certain unpleasant anticipation present inside that very new and fashionable frock-coat? He was in the halfpenny, penny, six-penny, and more expensive papers alike, and acknowledged by the whole world as "the Greatest Discoverer of This or Any Age." He had invented a practicable flying machine, and every day down among the Surrey hills the life-sized model was getting ready. And when it was ready, it followed as a clear inevitable consequence of his having invented and made it--everybody in the world, indeed, seemed to take it for granted; there wasn't

a gap anywhere in that serried front of anticipation--that he would proudly and cheerfully get aboard it, ascend with it, and fly.

But we know now pretty clearly that simple pride and cheerfulness in such an act were singularly out of harmony with Filmer's private constitution. It occurred to no one at the time, but there the fact is. We can guess with some confidence now that it must have been drifting about in his mind a great deal during the day, and, from a little note to his physician complaining of persistent insomnia, we have the soundest reason for supposing it dominated his nights, --the idea that it would be after all, in spite of his theoretical security, an abominably sickening, uncomfortable, and dangerous thing for him to flap about in nothingness a thousand feet or so in the air. It must have dawned upon him quite early in the period of being the Greatest Discoverer of This or Any Age, the vision of doing this and that with an extensive void below. Perhaps somewhen in his youth he had looked down a great height or fallen down in some excessively uncomfortable way; perhaps some habit of sleeping on the wrong side had resulted in that disagreeable falling nightmare one knows, and given him his horror; of the strength of that horror there remains now not a particle of doubt.

Apparently he had never weighed this duty of flying in his earlier days of research; the machine had been his end, but now things were opening out beyond his end, and particularly this giddy whirl up above there. He was a Discoverer and he had Discovered. But he was not a Flying Man, and it was only now that he was beginning to perceive clearly that he was expected to fly. Yet, however much the thing was present in his mind he gave no expression to it until the very end, and meanwhile he went to and fro from Banghurst's magnificent laboratories, and was interviewed and lionised, and wore good clothes, and ate good food, and lived in an elegant flat, enjoying a very abundant feast of such good, coarse, wholesome Fame and Success as a man, starved for all his years as he had been starved, might be reasonably expected to enjoy.

After a time, the weekly gatherings in Fulham ceased. The model had failed one day just for a moment to respond to Filmer's guidance, or he had been distracted by the compliments of an archbishop. At any rate, it suddenly dug its nose into the air just a little too steeply as the archbishop was sailing through a Latin quotation for all the world like an archbishop in a book, and it came down in the Fulham Road within three yards of a 'bus horse. It stood for a second perhaps, astonishing and in its attitude astonished, then it crumpled, shivered into pieces, and the 'bus horse was incidentally killed.

Filmer lost the end of the archiepiscopal compliment. He stood up and stared as his invention swooped out of sight and reach of him. His long, white hands still gripped his useless apparatus. The archbishop followed his skyward stare with an apprehension unbecoming in an archbishop.

Then came the crash and the shouts and uproar from the road to relieve Filmer's tension. "My God!" he whispered, and sat down.

Every one else almost was staring to see where the machine had vanished, or rushing into the house.

The making of the big machine progressed all the more rapidly for this. Over its making presided Filmer, always a little slow and very careful in his manner, always with a growing preoccupation in his mind. His care over the strength and soundness of the apparatus was prodigious. The slightest doubt, and he delayed everything until the doubtful part could be replaced. Wilkinson, his senior assistant, fumed at some of these delays, which, he insisted, were for the most part unnecessary. Banghurst magnified the patient certitude of Filmer in the New Paper, and reviled it bitterly to his wife, and MacAndrew, the second assistant, approved Filmer's wisdom. "We're not wanting a fiasco, man," said MacAndrew. "He's

perfectly well advised."

And whenever an opportunity arose Filmer would expound to Wilkinson and MacAndrew just exactly how every part of the flying machine was to be controlled and worked, so that in effect they would be just as capable, and even more capable, when at last the time came, of guiding it through the skies.

Now I should imagine that if Filmer had seen fit at this stage to define just what he was feeling, and to take a definite line in the matter of his ascent, he might have escaped that painful ordeal quite easily. If he had had it clearly in his mind he could have done endless things. He would surely have found no difficulty with a specialist to demonstrate a weak heart, or something gastric or pulmonary, to stand in his way--that is the line I am astonished he did not take,--or he might, had he been man enough, have declared simply and finally that he did not intend to do the thing. But the fact is, though the dread was hugely present in his mind, the thing was by no means sharp and clear. I fancy that all through this period he kept telling himself that when the occasion came he would find himself equal to it. He was like a man just gripped by a great illness, who says he feels a little out of sorts, and expects to be better presently. Meanwhile he delayed the completion of the machine, and let the assumption that he was going to fly it take root and flourish exceedingly about him. He even accepted anticipatory compliments on his courage. And, barring this secret squeamishness, there can be no doubt he found all the praise and distinction and fuss he got a delightful and even intoxicating draught.

The Lady Mary Elkinghorn made things a little more complicated for him.

How THAT began was a subject of inexhaustible speculation to Hicks. Probably in the beginning she was just a little "nice" to him with that impartial partiality of hers, and it may be that to her eyes,

standing out conspicuously as he did ruling his monster in the upper air, he had a distinction that Hicks was not disposed to find. And somehow they must have had a moment of sufficient isolation, and the great Discoverer a moment of sufficient courage for something just a little personal to be mumbled or blurted. However it began, there is no doubt that it did begin, and presently became quite perceptible to a world accustomed to find in the proceedings of the Lady Mary Elkinghorn a matter of entertainment. It complicated things, because the state of love in such a virgin mind as Filmer's would brace his resolution, if not sufficiently, at any rate considerably towards facing a danger he feared, and hampered him in such attempts at evasion as would otherwise be natural and congenial.

It remains a matter for speculation just how the Lady Mary felt for Filmer and just what she thought of him. At thirty-eight one may have gathered much wisdom and still be not altogether wise, and the imagination still functions actively enough in creating glammers and effecting the impossible. He came before her eyes as a very central man, and that always counts, and he had powers, unique powers as it seemed, at any rate in the air. The performance with the model had just a touch of the quality of a potent incantation, and women have ever displayed an unreasonable disposition to imagine that when a man has powers he must necessarily have Power. Given so much, and what was not good in Filmer's manner and appearance became an added merit. He was modest, he hated display, but given an occasion where TRUE qualities are needed, then--then one would see!

The late Mrs. Bampton thought it wise to convey to Lady Mary her opinion that Filmer, all things considered, was rather a "grub." "He's certainly not a sort of man I have ever met before," said the Lady Mary, with a quite unruffled serenity. And Mrs. Bampton, after a swift, imperceptible glance at that serenity, decided that so far as saying anything to Lady Mary went, she had done as much as could be expected of her. But she said a great deal to other people.

And at last, without any undue haste or unseemliness, the day dawned, the great day, when Banghurst had promised his public--the world in fact--that flying should be finally attained and overcome. Filmer saw it dawn, watched even in the darkness before it dawned, watched its stars fade and the grey and pearly pinks give place at last to the clear blue sky of a sunny, cloudless day. He watched it from the window of his bedroom in the new-built wing of Banghurst's Tudor house. And as the stars were overwhelmed and the shapes and substances of things grew into being out of the amorphous dark, he must have seen more and more distinctly the festive preparations beyond the beech clumps near the green pavilion in the outer park, the three stands for the privileged spectators, the raw, new fencing of the enclosure, the sheds and workshops, the Venetian masts and fluttering flags that Banghurst had considered essential, black and limp in the breezeless dawn, and amidst all these things a great shape covered with tarpauling. A strange and terrible portent for humanity was that shape, a beginning that must surely spread and widen and change and dominate all the affairs of men, but to Filmer it is very doubtful whether it appeared in anything but a narrow and personal light. Several people heard him pacing in the small hours--for the vast place was packed with guests by a proprietor editor who, before all understood compression. And about five o'clock, if not before, Filmer left his room and wandered out of the sleeping house into the park, alive by that time with sunlight and birds and squirrels and the fallow deer. MacAndrew, who was also an early riser, met him near the machine, and they went and had a look at it together.

It is doubtful if Filmer took any breakfast, in spite of the urgency of Banghurst. So soon as the guests began to be about in some number he seems to have retreated to his room. Thence about ten he went into the shrubbery, very probably because he had seen the Lady Mary Elkinghorn there. She was walking up and down, engaged in conversation with her old school friend, Mrs. Brewis-Craven, and although Filmer

had never met the latter lady before, he joined them and walked beside them for some time. There were several silences in spite of the Lady Mary's brilliance. The situation was a difficult one, and Mrs. Brewis-Craven did not master its difficulty. "He struck me," she said afterwards with a luminous self-contradiction, "as a very unhappy person who had something to say, and wanted before all things to be helped to say it. But how was one to help him when one didn't know what it was?"

At half-past eleven the enclosures for the public in the outer park were crammed, there was an intermittent stream of equipages along the belt which circles the outer park, and the house party was dotted over the lawn and shrubbery and the corner of the inner park, in a series of brilliantly attired knots, all making for the flying machine. Filmer walked in a group of three with Banghurst, who was supremely and conspicuously happy, and Sir Theodore Hickle, the president of the Aeronautical Society. Mrs. Banghurst was close behind with the Lady Mary Elkinghorn, Georgina Hickle, and the Dean of Stays. Banghurst was large and copious in speech, and such interstices as he left were filled in by Hickle with complimentary remarks to Filmer. And Filmer walked between them saying not a word except by way of unavoidable reply. Behind, Mrs. Banghurst listened to the admirably suitable and shapely conversation of the Dean with that fluttered attention to the ampler clergy ten years of social ascent and ascendancy had not cured in her; and the Lady Mary watched, no doubt with an entire confidence in the world's disillusionment, the drooping shoulders of the sort of man she had never met before.

There was some cheering as the central party came into view of the enclosures, but it was not very unanimous nor invigorating cheering. They were within fifty yards of the apparatus when Filmer took a hasty glance over his shoulder to measure the distance of the ladies behind them, and decided to make the first remark he had initiated since the house had been left. His voice was just a little hoarse,

and he cut in on Banghurst in mid-sentence on Progress.

"I say, Banghurst," he said, and stopped.

"Yes," said Banghurst.

"I wish--" He moistened his lips. "I'm not feeling well."

Banghurst stopped dead. "Eh?" he shouted.

"A queer feeling." Filmer made to move on, but Banghurst was immovable.

"I don't know. I may be better in a minute. If not--perhaps . . . MacAndrew--"

"You're not feeling WELL?" said Banghurst, and stared at his white face.

"My dear!" he said, as Mrs. Banghurst came up with them, "Filmer says he isn't feeling WELL."

"A little queer," exclaimed Filmer, avoiding the Lady Mary's eyes. "It may pass off--"

There was a pause.

It came to Filmer that he was the most isolated person in the world.

"In any case," said Banghurst, "the ascent must be made. Perhaps if you were to sit down somewhere for a moment--"

"It's the crowd, I think," said Filmer.

There was a second pause. Banghurst's eye rested in scrutiny on Filmer, and then swept the sample of public in the enclosure.

"It's unfortunate," said Sir Theodore Hickle; but still--I suppose--
Your assistants--Of course, if you feel out of condition and disinclined--"

"I don't think Mr. Filmer would permit THAT for a moment," said Lady Mary.

"But if Mr. Filmer's nerve is run--It might even be dangerous for him to attempt--" Hickle coughed.

"It's just because it's dangerous," began the Lady Mary, and felt she had made her point of view and Filmer's plain enough.

Conflicting motives struggled for Filmer.

"I feel I ought to go up," he said, regarding the ground. He looked up and met the Lady Mary's eyes. "I want to go up," he said, and smiled whitely at her. He turned towards Banghurst. "If I could just sit down somewhere for a moment out of the crowd and sun--"

Banghurst, at least, was beginning to understand the case. "Come into my little room in the green pavilion," he said. "It's quite cool there." He took Filmer by the arm.

Filmer turned his face to the Lady Mary Elkinghorn again. "I shall be all right in five minutes," he said. "I'm tremendously sorry--"

The Lady Mary Elkinghorn smiled at him. "I couldn't think--" he said to Hickle, and obeyed the compulsion of Banghurst's pull.

The rest remained watching the two recede.

"He is so fragile," said the Lady Mary.

"He's certainly a highly nervous type," said the Dean, whose weakness it was to regard the whole world, except married clergymen with

enormous families, as "neurotic."

"Of course," said Hickle, "it isn't absolutely necessary for him to go up because he has invented--"

"How COULD he avoid it?" asked the Lady Mary, with the faintest shadow of scorn.

"It's certainly most unfortunate if he's going to be ill now," said Mrs. Banghurst a little severely.

"He's not going to be ill," said the Lady Mary, and certainly she had met Filmer's eye.

"YOU'LL be all right," said Banghurst, as they went towards the pavilion. "All you want is a nip of brandy. It ought to be you, you know. You'll be--you'd get it rough, you know, if you let another man--"

"Oh, I want to go," said Filmer. "I shall be all right. As a matter of fact I'm almost inclined NOW--. No! I think I'll have that nip of brandy first."

Banghurst took him into the little room and routed out an empty decanter. He departed in search of a supply. He was gone perhaps five minutes.

The history of those five minutes cannot be written. At intervals Filmer's face could be seen by the people on the easternmost of the stands erected for spectators, against the window pane peering out, and then it would recede and fade. Banghurst vanished shouting behind the grand stand, and presently the butler appeared going pavilionward with a tray.

The apartment in which Filmer came to his last solution was a pleasant little room very simply furnished with green furniture and an old

bureau--for Banghurst was simple in all his private ways. It was hung with little engravings after Morland and it had a shelf of books. But as it happened, Banghurst had left a rook rifle he sometimes played with on the top of the desk, and on the corner of the mantelshelf was a tin with three or four cartridges remaining in it. As Filmer went up and down that room wrestling with his intolerable dilemma he went first towards the neat little rifle athwart the blotting-pad and then towards the neat little red label

".22 LONG."

The thing must have jumped into his mind in a moment.

Nobody seems to have connected the report with him, though the gun, being fired in a confined space, must have sounded loud, and there were several people in the billiard-room, separated from him only by a lath-and-plaster partition. But directly Banghurst's butler opened the door and smelt the sour smell of the smoke, he knew, he says, what had happened. For the servants at least of Banghurst's household had guessed something of what was going on in Filmer's mind.

All through that trying afternoon Banghurst behaved as he held a man should behave in the presence of hopeless disaster, and his guests for the most part succeeded in not insisting upon the fact--though to conceal their perception of it altogether was impossible--that Banghurst had been pretty elaborately and completely swindled by the deceased. The public in the enclosure, Hicks told me, dispersed "like a party that has been ducking a welsher," and there wasn't a soul in the train to London, it seems, who hadn't known all along that flying was a quite impossible thing for man. "But he might have tried it," said many, "after carrying the thing so far."

In the evening, when he was comparatively alone, Banghurst broke down and went on like a man of clay. I have been told he wept, which must have made an imposing scene, and he certainly said

Filmer had ruined his life, and offered and sold the whole apparatus to MacAndrew for half-a-crown. "I've been thinking--" said MacAndrew at the conclusion of the bargain, and stopped.

The next morning the name of Filmer was, for the first time, less conspicuous in the New Paper than in any other daily paper in the world. The rest of the world's instructors, with varying emphasis, according to their dignity and the degree of competition between themselves and the New Paper, proclaimed the "Entire Failure of the New Flying Machine," and "Suicide of the Impostor." But in the district of North Surrey the reception of the news was tempered by a perception of unusual aerial phenomena.

Overnight Wilkinson and MacAndrew had fallen into violent argument on the exact motives of their principal's rash act.

"The man was certainly a poor, cowardly body, but so far as his science went he was NO impostor," said MacAndrew, "and I'm prepared to give that proposition a very practical demonstration, Mr. Wilkinson, so soon as we've got the place a little more to ourselves. For I've no faith in all this publicity for experimental trials."

And to that end, while all the world was reading of the certain failure of the new flying machine, MacAndrew was soaring and curvetting with great amplitude and dignity over the Epsom and Wimbledon divisions;

and Banghurst, restored once more to hope and energy, and regardless of public security and the Board of Trade, was pursuing his gyrations and trying to attract his attention, on a motor car and in his pyjamas-- he had caught sight of the ascent when pulling up the blind of his bedroom window--equipped, among other things, with a film camera that was subsequently discovered to be jammed. And Filmer was lying on the billiard table in the green pavilion with a sheet about his body.

2. THE MAGIC SHOP

I had seen the Magic Shop from afar several times; I had passed it once or twice, a shop window of alluring little objects, magic balls, magic hens, wonderful cones, ventriloquist dolls, the material of the basket trick, packs of cards that LOOKED all right, and all that sort of thing, but never had I thought of going in until one day, almost without warning, Gip hauled me by my finger right up to the window, and so conducted himself that there was nothing for it but to take him in. I had not thought the place was there, to tell the truth--a modest-sized frontage in Regent Street, between the picture shop and the place where the chicks run about just out of patent incubators, but there it was sure enough. I had fancied it was down nearer the Circus, or round the corner in Oxford Street, or even in Holborn; always over the way and a little inaccessible it had been, with something of the mirage in its position; but here it was now quite indisputably, and the fat end of Gip's pointing finger made a noise upon the glass.

"If I was rich," said Gip, dabbing a finger at the Disappearing Egg, "I'd buy myself that. And that"--which was The Crying Baby, Very Human--and that," which was a mystery, and called, so a neat card asserted, "Buy One and Astonish Your Friends."

"Anything," said Gip, "will disappear under one of those cones. I have read about it in a book.

"And there, dad, is the Vanishing Halfpenny--, only they've put it this way up so's we can't see how it's done."

Gip, dear boy, inherits his mother's breeding, and he did not propose to enter the shop or worry in any way; only, you know, quite unconsciously

he lugged my finger doorward, and he made his interest clear.

"That," he said, and pointed to the Magic Bottle.

"If you had that?" I said; at which promising inquiry he looked up with a sudden radiance.

"I could show it to Jessie," he said, thoughtful as ever of others.

"It's less than a hundred days to your birthday, Gibbles," I said, and laid my hand on the door-handle.

Gip made no answer, but his grip tightened on my finger, and so we came into the shop.

It was no common shop this; it was a magic shop, and all the prancing precedence Gip would have taken in the matter of mere toys was wanting. He left the burthen of the conversation to me.

It was a little, narrow shop, not very well lit, and the door-bell pinged again with a plaintive note as we closed it behind us. For a moment or so we were alone and could glance about us. There was a tiger in papier-mache on the glass case that covered the low counter--a grave, kind-eyed tiger that waggled his head in a methodical manner; there were several crystal spheres, a china hand holding magic cards, a stock of magic fish-bowls in various sizes, and an immodest magic hat that shamelessly displayed its springs. On the floor were magic mirrors; one to draw you out long and thin, one to swell your head and vanish your legs, and one to make you short and fat like a draught; and while we were laughing at these the shopman, as I suppose, came in.

At any rate, there he was behind the counter--a curious, sallow, dark man, with one ear larger than the other and a chin like the toe-cap of a boot.

"What can we have the pleasure?" he said, spreading his long, magic fingers on the glass case; and so with a start we were aware of him.

"I want," I said, "to buy my little boy a few simple tricks."

"Legerdemain?" he asked. "Mechanical? Domestic?"

"Anything amusing?" said I.

"Um!" said the shopman, and scratched his head for a moment as if thinking. Then, quite distinctly, he drew from his head a glass ball. "Something in this way?" he said, and held it out.

The action was unexpected. I had seen the trick done at entertainments endless times before--it's part of the common stock of conjurers--but I had not expected it here.

"That's good," I said, with a laugh.

"Isn't it?" said the shopman.

Gip stretched out his disengaged hand to take this object and found merely a blank palm.

"It's in your pocket," said the shopman, and there it was!

"How much will that be?" I asked.

"We make no charge for glass balls," said the shopman politely. "We get them,"--he picked one out of his elbow as he spoke--"free." He produced another from the back of his neck, and laid it beside its predecessor on the counter. Gip regarded his glass ball sagely, then directed a look of inquiry at the two on the counter, and finally

brought his round-eyed scrutiny to the shopman, who smiled.

"You may have those too," said the shopman, "and, if you DON'T mind, one from my mouth. SO!"

Gip counselled me mutely for a moment, and then in a profound silence put away the four balls, resumed my reassuring finger, and nerved himself for the next event.

"We get all our smaller tricks in that way," the shopman remarked.

I laughed in the manner of one who subscribes to a jest. "Instead of going to the wholesale shop," I said. "Of course, it's cheaper."

"In a way," the shopman said. "Though we pay in the end. But not so heavily--as people suppose. . . . Our larger tricks, and our daily provisions and all the other things we want, we get out of that hat. . . . And you know, sir, if you'll excuse my saying it, there ISN'T a wholesale shop, not for Genuine Magic goods, sir. I don't know if you noticed our inscription--the Genuine Magic shop." He drew a business-card from his cheek and handed it to me. "Genuine," he said, with his finger on the word, and added, "There is absolutely no deception, sir."

He seemed to be carrying out the joke pretty thoroughly, I thought.

He turned to Gip with a smile of remarkable affability. "You, you know, are the Right Sort of Boy."

I was surprised at his knowing that, because, in the interests of discipline, we keep it rather a secret even at home; but Gip received it in unflinching silence, keeping a steadfast eye on him.

"It's only the Right Sort of Boy gets through that doorway."

And, as if by way of illustration, there came a rattling at the door, and a squeaking little voice could be faintly heard. "Nyar! I WARN 'a go in there, dad-da, I WARN 'a go in there. Ny-a-a-ah!" and then the accents of a down-trodden parent, urging consolations and propitiations. "It's locked, Edward," he said.

"But it isn't," said I.

"It is, sir," said the shopman, "always--for that sort of child," and as he spoke we had a glimpse of the other youngster, a little, white face, pallid from sweet-eating and over-sapid food, and distorted by evil passions, a ruthless little egotist, pawing at the enchanted pane. "It's no good, sir," said the shopman, as I moved, with my natural helpfulness, doorward, and presently the spoilt child was carried off howling.

"How do you manage that?" I said, breathing a little more freely.

"Magic!" said the shopman, with a careless wave of the hand, and behold! sparks of coloured fire flew out of his fingers and vanished into the shadows of the shop.

"You were saying," he said, addressing himself to Gip, "before you came in, that you would like one of our 'Buy One and Astonish your Friends' boxes?"

Gip, after a gallant effort, said "Yes."

"It's in your pocket."

And leaning over the counter--he really had an extraordinarily long body--this amazing person produced the article in the customary conjurer's manner. "Paper," he said, and took a sheet out of the empty hat with the springs; "string," and behold his mouth was a string-box, from which he drew an unending thread, which when

he had tied his parcel he bit off--and, it seemed to me, swallowed the ball of string. And then he lit a candle at the nose of one of the ventriloquist's dummies, stuck one of his fingers (which had become sealing-wax red) into the flame, and so sealed the parcel. "Then there was the Disappearing Egg," he remarked, and produced one from within my coat-breast and packed it, and also The Crying Baby, Very Human. I handed each parcel to Gip as it was ready, and he clasped them to his chest.

He said very little, but his eyes were eloquent; the clutch of his arms was eloquent. He was the playground of unspeakable emotions. These, you know, were REAL Magics. Then, with a start, I discovered something moving about in my hat--something soft and jumpy. I whipped it off, and a ruffled pigeon--no doubt a confederate--dropped out and ran on the counter, and went, I fancy, into a cardboard box behind the papier-mache tiger.

"Tut, tut!" said the shopman, dexterously relieving me of my headdress; "careless bird, and--as I live--nesting!"

He shook my hat, and shook out into his extended hand two or three eggs, a large marble, a watch, about half-a-dozen of the inevitable glass balls, and then crumpled, crinkled paper, more and more and more, talking all the time of the way in which people neglect to brush their hats INSIDE as well as out, politely, of course, but with a certain personal application. "All sorts of things accumulate, sir. . . . Not YOU, of course, in particular. . . . Nearly every customer. . . . Astonishing what they carry about with them. . . ." The crumpled paper rose and billowed on the counter more and more and more, until he was nearly hidden from us, until he was altogether hidden, and still his voice went on and on. "We none of us know what the fair semblance of a human being may conceal, sir. Are we all then no better than brushed exteriors, whited sepulchres--"

His voice stopped--exactly like when you hit a neighbour's gramophone

with a well-aimed brick, the same instant silence, and the rustle of the paper stopped, and everything was still. . . .

"Have you done with my hat?" I said, after an interval.

There was no answer.

I stared at Gip, and Gip stared at me, and there were our distortions in the magic mirrors, looking very rum, and grave, and quiet. . . .

"I think we'll go now," I said. "Will you tell me how much all this comes to?

"I say," I said, on a rather louder note, "I want the bill; and my hat, please."

It might have been a sniff from behind the paper pile. . . .

"Let's look behind the counter, Gip," I said. "He's making fun of us."

I led Gip round the head-wagging tiger, and what do you think there was behind the counter? No one at all! Only my hat on the floor, and a common conjurer's lop-eared white rabbit lost in meditation, and looking as stupid and crumpled as only a conjurer's rabbit can do. I resumed my hat, and the rabbit lolloped a lollop or so out of my way.

"Dadda!" said Gip, in a guilty whisper.

"What is it, Gip?" said I.

"I DO like this shop, dadda."

"So should I," I said to myself, "if the counter wouldn't suddenly extend itself to shut one off from the door." But I didn't call

Gip's attention to that. "Pussy!" he said, with a hand out to the rabbit as it came lolloping past us; "Pussy, do Gip a magic!" and his eyes followed it as it squeezed through a door I had certainly not remarked a moment before. Then this door opened wider, and the man with one ear larger than the other appeared again. He was smiling still, but his eye met mine with something between amusement and defiance. "You'd like to see our show-room, sir," he said, with an innocent suavity. Gip tugged my finger forward. I glanced at the counter and met the shopman's eye again. I was beginning to think the magic just a little too genuine. "We haven't VERY much time," I said. But somehow we were inside the show-room before I could finish that.

"All goods of the same quality," said the shopman, rubbing his flexible hands together, "and that is the Best. Nothing in the place that isn't genuine Magic, and warranted thoroughly rum. Excuse me, sir!"

I felt him pull at something that clung to my coat-sleeve, and then I saw he held a little, wriggling red demon by the tail--the little creature bit and fought and tried to get at his hand--and in a moment he tossed it carelessly behind a counter. No doubt the thing was only an image of twisted indiarubber, but for the moment--! And his gesture was exactly that of a man who handles some petty biting bit of vermin. I glanced at Gip, but Gip was looking at a magic rocking-horse. I was glad he hadn't seen the thing. "I say," I said, in an undertone, and indicating Gip and the red demon with my eyes, "you haven't many things like THAT about, have you?"

"None of ours! Probably brought it with you," said the shopman--also in an undertone, and with a more dazzling smile than ever. "Astonishing what people WILL carry about with them unawares!" And then to Gip, "Do you see anything you fancy here?"

There were many things that Gip fancied there.

He turned to this astonishing tradesman with mingled confidence and respect. "Is that a Magic Sword?" he said.

"A Magic Toy Sword. It neither bends, breaks, nor cuts the fingers. It renders the bearer invincible in battle against any one under eighteen. Half-a-crown to seven and sixpence, according to size. These panoplies on cards are for juvenile knights-errant and very useful-- shield of safety, sandals of swiftness, helmet of invisibility."

"Oh, daddy!" gasped Gip.

I tried to find out what they cost, but the shopman did not heed me. He had got Gip now; he had got him away from my finger; he had embarked upon the exposition of all his confounded stock, and nothing was going to stop him. Presently I saw with a qualm of distrust and something very like jealousy that Gip had hold of this person's finger as usually he has hold of mine. No doubt the fellow was interesting, I thought, and had an interestingly faked lot of stuff, really GOOD faked stuff, still--

I wandered after them, saying very little, but keeping an eye on this prestidigital fellow. After all, Gip was enjoying it. And no doubt when the time came to go we should be able to go quite easily.

It was a long, rambling place, that show-room, a gallery broken up by stands and stalls and pillars, with archways leading off to other departments, in which the queerest-looking assistants loafed and stared at one, and with perplexing mirrors and curtains. So perplexing, indeed, were these that I was presently unable to make out the door by which we had come.

The shopman showed Gip magic trains that ran without steam or clockwork, just as you set the signals, and then some very, very valuable boxes

of soldiers that all came alive directly you took off the lid and said--. I myself haven't a very quick ear and it was a tongue-twisting sound, but Gip--he has his mother's ear--got it in no time. "Bravo!" said the shopman, putting the men back into the box unceremoniously and handing it to Gip. "Now," said the shopman, and in a moment Gip had made them all alive again.

"You'll take that box?" asked the shopman.

"We'll take that box," said I, "unless you charge its full value. In which case it would need a Trust Magnate--"

"Dear heart! NO!" and the shopman swept the little men back again, shut the lid, waved the box in the air, and there it was, in brown paper, tied up and--WITH GIP'S FULL NAME AND ADDRESS ON THE PAPER!

The shopman laughed at my amazement.

"This is the genuine magic," he said. "The real thing."

"It's a little too genuine for my taste," I said again.

After that he fell to showing Gip tricks, odd tricks, and still odder the way they were done. He explained them, he turned them inside out, and there was the dear little chap nodding his busy bit of a head in the sagest manner.

I did not attend as well as I might. "Hey, presto!" said the Magic Shopman, and then would come the clear, small "Hey, presto!" of the boy. But I was distracted by other things. It was being borne in upon me just how tremendously rum this place was; it was, so to speak, inundated by a sense of rumness. There was something a little rum about the fixtures even, about the ceiling, about the floor, about the casually distributed chairs. I had a queer feeling

that whenever I wasn't looking at them straight they went askew, and moved about, and played a noiseless puss-in-the-corner behind my back. And the cornice had a serpentine design with masks--masks altogether too expressive for proper plaster.

Then abruptly my attention was caught by one of the odd-looking assistants. He was some way off and evidently unaware of my presence-- I saw a sort of three-quarter length of him over a pile of toys and through an arch--and, you know, he was leaning against a pillar in an idle sort of way doing the most horrid things with his features! The particular horrid thing he did was with his nose. He did it just as though he was idle and wanted to amuse himself. First of all it was a short, blobby nose, and then suddenly he shot it out like a telescope, and then out it flew and became thinner and thinner until it was like a long, red, flexible whip. Like a thing in a nightmare it was! He flourished it about and flung it forth as a fly-fisher flings his line.

My instant thought was that Gip mustn't see him. I turned about, and there was Gip quite preoccupied with the shopman, and thinking no evil. They were whispering together and looking at me. Gip was standing on a little stool, and the shopman was holding a sort of big drum in his hand.

"Hide and seek, dad-da!" cried Gip. "You're He!"

And before I could do anything to prevent it, the shopman had clapped the big drum over him. I saw what was up directly. "Take that off," I cried, "this instant! You'll frighten the boy. Take it off!"

The shopman with the unequal ears did so without a word, and held the big cylinder towards me to show its emptiness. And the little stool was vacant! In that instant my boy had utterly disappeared? . . .

You know, perhaps, that sinister something that comes like a hand

out of the unseen and grips your heart about. You know it takes your common self away and leaves you tense and deliberate, neither slow nor hasty, neither angry nor afraid. So it was with me.

I came up to this grinning shopman and kicked his stool aside.

"Stop this folly!" I said. "Where is my boy?"

"You see," he said, still displaying the drum's interior, "there is no deception---"

I put out my hand to grip him, and he eluded me by a dexterous movement. I snatched again, and he turned from me and pushed open a door to escape. "Stop!" I said, and he laughed, receding. I leapt after him--into utter darkness.

THUD!

"Lor' bless my 'eart! I didn't see you coming, sir!"

I was in Regent Street, and I had collided with a decent-looking working man; and a yard away, perhaps, and looking a little perplexed with himself, was Gip. There was some sort of apology, and then Gip had turned and come to me with a bright little smile, as though for a moment he had missed me.

And he was carrying four parcels in his arm!

He secured immediate possession of my finger.

For the second I was rather at a loss. I stared round to see the door of the magic shop, and, behold, it was not there! There was no door, no shop, nothing, only the common pilaster between the shop where they sell pictures and the window with the chicks! . . .

I did the only thing possible in that mental tumult; I walked straight to the kerbstone and held up my umbrella for a cab.

"Ansoms," said Gip, in a note of culminating exultation.

I helped him in, recalled my address with an effort, and got in also. Something unusual proclaimed itself in my tail-coat pocket, and I felt and discovered a glass ball. With a petulant expression I flung it into the street.

Gip said nothing.

For a space neither of us spoke.

"Dada!" said Gip, at last, "that WAS a proper shop!"

I came round with that to the problem of just how the whole thing had seemed to him. He looked completely undamaged--so far, good; he was neither scared nor unhinged, he was simply tremendously satisfied with the afternoon's entertainment, and there in his arms were the four parcels.

Confound it! what could be in them?

"Um!" I said. "Little boys can't go to shops like that every day."

He received this with his usual stoicism, and for a moment I was sorry I was his father and not his mother, and so couldn't suddenly there, coram publico, in our hansom, kiss him. After all, I thought, the thing wasn't so very bad.

But it was only when we opened the parcels that I really began to be reassured. Three of them contained boxes of soldiers, quite ordinary lead soldiers, but of so good a quality as to make Gip altogether

forget that originally these parcels had been Magic Tricks of the only genuine sort, and the fourth contained a kitten, a little living white kitten, in excellent health and appetite and temper.

I saw this unpacking with a sort of provisional relief. I hung about in the nursery for quite an unconscionable time. . . .

That happened six months ago. And now I am beginning to believe it is all right. The kitten had only the magic natural to all kittens, and the soldiers seem as steady a company as any colonel could desire. And Gip--?

The intelligent parent will understand that I have to go cautiously with Gip.

But I went so far as this one day. I said, "How would you like your soldiers to come alive, Gip, and march about by themselves?"

"Mine do," said Gip. "I just have to say a word I know before I open the lid."

"Then they march about alone?"

"Oh, QUITE, dadda. I shouldn't like them if they didn't do that."

I displayed no unbecoming surprise, and since then I have taken occasion to drop in upon him once or twice, unannounced, when the soldiers were about, but so far I have never discovered them performing in anything like a magical manner.

It's so difficult to tell.

There's also a question of finance. I have an incurable habit of paying bills. I have been up and down Regent Street several times, looking for that shop. I am inclined to think, indeed, that in that

matter honour is satisfied, and that, since Gip's name and address are known to them, I may very well leave it to these people, whoever they may be, to send in their bill in their own time.

3. THE VALLEY OF SPIDERS

Towards mid-day the three pursuers came abruptly round a bend in the torrent bed upon the sight of a very broad and spacious valley. The difficult and winding trench of pebbles along which they had tracked the fugitives for so long, expanded to a broad slope, and with a common impulse the three men left the trail, and rode to a little eminence set with olive-dun trees, and there halted, the two others, as became them, a little behind the man with the silver-studded bridle.

For a space they scanned the great expanse below them with eager eyes. It spread remoter and remoter, with only a few clusters of sere thorn bushes here and there, and the dim suggestions of some now waterless ravine, to break its desolation of yellow grass. Its purple distances melted at last into the bluish slopes of the further hills--hills it might be of a greener kind--and above them invisibly supported, and seeming indeed to hang in the blue, were the snowclad summits of mountains that grew larger and bolder to the north-westward as the sides of the valley drew together. And westward the valley opened until a distant darkness under the sky told where the forests began. But the three men looked neither east nor west, but only steadfastly across the valley.

The gaunt man with the scarred lip was the first to speak. "Nowhere," he said, with a sigh of disappointment in his voice. "But after all, they had a full day's start."

"They don't know we are after them," said the little man on the white horse.

"SHE would know," said the leader bitterly, as if speaking to himself.

"Even then they can't go fast. They've got no beast but the mule, and all to-day the girl's foot has been bleeding---"

The man with the silver bridle flashed a quick intensity of rage on him. "Do you think I haven't seen that?" he snarled.

"It helps, anyhow," whispered the little man to himself.

The gaunt man with the scarred lip stared impassively. "They can't be over the valley," he said. "If we ride hard--"

He glanced at the white horse and paused.

"Curse all white horses!" said the man with the silver bridle, and turned to scan the beast his curse included.

The little man looked down between the melancholy ears of his steed.

"I did my best," he said.

The two others stared again across the valley for a space. The gaunt man passed the back of his hand across the scarred lip.

"Come up!" said the man who owned the silver bridle, suddenly. The little man started and jerked his rein, and the horse hoofs of the three made a multitudinous faint pattering upon the withered grass as they turned back towards the trail. . . .

They rode cautiously down the long slope before them, and so came through a waste of prickly, twisted bushes and strange dry shapes of horny branches that grew amongst the rocks, into the levels below. And there the trail grew faint, for the soil was scanty, and the only herbage was this scorched dead straw that lay upon the ground. Still, by hard scanning, by leaning beside the horses' necks and pausing ever and again, even these white men could contrive to follow after their prey.

There were trodden places, bent and broken blades of the coarse grass, and ever and again the sufficient intimation of a footmark. And once the leader saw a brown smear of blood where the half-caste girl may have trod. And at that under his breath he cursed her for a fool.

The gaunt man checked his leader's tracking, and the little man on the white horse rode behind, a man lost in a dream. They rode one after another, the man with the silver bridle led the way, and they spoke never a word. After a time it came to the little man on the white horse that the world was very still. He started out of his dream. Besides the little noises of their horses and equipment, the whole great valley kept the brooding quiet of a painted scene.

Before him went his master and his fellow, each intently leaning forward to the left, each impassively moving with the paces of his horse; their shadows went before them--still, noiseless, tapering attendants; and nearer a crouched cool shape was his own. He looked about him. What was it had gone? Then he remembered the reverberation from the banks of the gorge and the perpetual accompaniment of shifting, jostling pebbles. And, moreover--? There was no breeze. That was it! What a vast, still place it was, a monotonous afternoon slumber. And the sky open and blank, except for a sombre veil of haze that had gathered in the upper valley.

He straightened his back, fretted with his bridle, puckered his lips to whistle, and simply sighed. He turned in his saddle for a time, and stared at the throat of the mountain gorge out of which they had come. Blank! Blank slopes on either side, with never a sign of a decent beast or tree--much less a man. What a land it was! What a wilderness! He dropped again into his former pose.

It filled him with a momentary pleasure to see a wry stick of purple black flash out into the form of a snake, and vanish amidst the brown. After all, the infernal valley WAS alive. And then, to rejoice him

still more, came a little breath across his face, a whisper that came and went, the faintest inclination of a stiff black-antlered bush upon a little crest, the first intimations of a possible breeze. Idly he wetted his finger, and held it up.

He pulled up sharply to avoid a collision with the gaunt man, who had stopped at fault upon the trail. Just at that guilty moment he caught his master's eye looking towards him.

For a time he forced an interest in the tracking. Then, as they rode on again, he studied his master's shadow and hat and shoulder, appearing and disappearing behind the gaunt man's nearer contours. They had ridden four days out of the very limits of the world into this desolate place, short of water, with nothing but a strip of dried meat under their saddles, over rocks and mountains, where surely none but these fugitives had ever been before--for THAT!

And all this was for a girl, a mere wilful child! And the man had whole cityfuls of people to do his basest bidding--girls, women! Why in the name of passionate folly THIS one in particular? asked the little man, and scowled at the world, and licked his parched lips with a blackened tongue. It was the way of the master, and that was all he knew. Just because she sought to evade him. . . .

His eye caught a whole row of high plumed canes bending in unison, and then the tails of silk that hung before his neck flapped and fell. The breeze was growing stronger. Somehow it took the stiff stillness out of things--and that was well.

"Hullo!" said the gaunt man.

All three stopped abruptly.

"What?" asked the master. "What?"

"Over there," said the gaunt man, pointing up the valley.

"What?"

"Something coming towards us."

And as he spoke a yellow animal crested a rise and came bearing down upon them. It was a big wild dog, coming before the wind, tongue out, at a steady pace, and running with such an intensity of purpose that he did not seem to see the horsemen he approached. He ran with his nose up, following, it was plain, neither scent nor quarry. As he drew nearer the little man felt for his sword. "He's mad," said the gaunt rider.

"Shout!" said the little man, and shouted.

The dog came on. Then when the little man's blade was already out, it swerved aside and went panting by them and past. The eyes of the little man followed its flight. "There was no foam," he said. For a space the man with the silver-studded bridle stared up the valley. "Oh, come on!" he cried at last. "What does it matter?" and jerked his horse into movement again.

The little man left the insoluble mystery of a dog that fled from nothing but the wind, and lapsed into profound musings on human character. "Come on!" he whispered to himself. "Why should it be given to one man to say 'Come on!' with that stupendous violence of effect. Always, all his life, the man with the silver bridle has been saying that. If I said it--!" thought the little man. But people marvelled when the master was disobeyed even in the wildest things. This half-caste girl seemed to him, seemed to every one, mad--blasphemous almost. The little man, by way of comparison, reflected on the gaunt rider with the scarred lip, as stalwart as his master, as brave and, indeed, perhaps braver, and yet for him there was obedience, nothing but to give obedience duly and stoutly. . .

Certain sensations of the hands and knees called the little man back to more immediate things. He became aware of something. He rode up beside his gaunt fellow. "Do you notice the horses?" he said in an undertone.

The gaunt face looked interrogation.

"They don't like this wind," said the little man, and dropped behind as the man with the silver bridle turned upon him.

"It's all right," said the gaunt-faced man.

They rode on again for a space in silence. The foremost two rode downcast upon the trail, the hindmost man watched the haze that crept down the vastness of the valley, nearer and nearer, and noted how the wind grew in strength moment by moment. Far away on the left he saw a line of dark bulks--wild hog perhaps, galloping down the valley, but of that he said nothing, nor did he remark again upon the uneasiness of the horses.

And then he saw first one and then a second great white ball, a great shining white ball like a gigantic head of thistle-down, that drove before the wind athwart the path. These balls soared high in the air, and dropped and rose again and caught for a moment, and hurried on and passed, but at the sight of them the restlessness of the horses increased.

Then presently he saw that more of these drifting globes--and then soon very many more--were hurrying towards him down the valley.

They became aware of a squealing. Athwart the path a huge boar rushed, turning his head but for one instant to glance at them, and then hurling on down the valley again. And at that, all three stopped and sat in their saddles, staring into the thickening haze that

was coming upon them.

"If it were not for this thistle-down--" began the leader.

But now a big globe came drifting past within a score of yards of them. It was really not an even sphere at all, but a vast, soft, ragged, filmy thing, a sheet gathered by the corners, an aerial jelly-fish, as it were, but rolling over and over as it advanced, and trailing long, cobwebby threads and streamers that floated in its wake.

"It isn't thistle-down," said the little man.

"I don't like the stuff," said the gaunt man.

And they looked at one another.

"Curse it!" cried the leader. "The air's full of it up there. If it keeps on at this pace long, it will stop us altogether."

An instinctive feeling, such as lines out a herd of deer at the approach of some ambiguous thing, prompted them to turn their horses to the wind, ride forward for a few paces, and stare at that advancing multitude of floating masses. They came on before the wind with a sort of smooth swiftness, rising and falling noiselessly, sinking to earth, rebounding high, soaring--all with a perfect unanimity, with a still, deliberate assurance.

Right and left of the horsemen the pioneers of this strange army passed. At one that rolled along the ground, breaking shapelessly and trailing out reluctantly into long grappling ribbons and bands, all three horses began to shy and dance. The master was seized with a sudden unreasonable impatience. He cursed the drifting globes roundly. "Get on!" he cried; "get on! What do these things matter? How CAN they matter? Back to the trail!" He fell swearing at his horse

and sawed the bit across its mouth.

He shouted aloud with rage. "I will follow that trail, I tell you!" he cried. "Where is the trail?"

He gripped the bridle of his prancing horse and searched amidst the grass. A long and clinging thread fell across his face, a grey streamer dropped about his bridle-arm, some big, active thing with many legs ran down the back of his head. He looked up to discover one of those grey masses anchored as it were above him by these things and flapping out ends as a sail flaps when a boat comes, about-- but noiselessly.

He had an impression of many eyes, of a dense crew of squat bodies, of long, many-jointed limbs hauling at their mooring ropes to bring the thing down upon him. For a space he stared up, reining in his prancing horse with the instinct born of years of horsemanship. Then the flat of a sword smote his back, and a blade flashed overhead and cut the drifting balloon of spider-web free, and the whole mass lifted softly and drove clear and away.

"Spiders!" cried the voice of the gaunt man. "The things are full of big spiders! Look, my lord!"

The man with the silver bridle still followed the mass that drove away.

"Look, my lord!"

The master found himself staring down at a red, smashed thing on the ground that, in spite of partial obliteration, could still wriggle unavailing legs. Then when the gaunt man pointed to another mass that bore down upon them, he drew his sword hastily. Up the valley now it was like a fog bank torn to rags. He tried to grasp the situation.

"Ride for it!" the little man was shouting. "Ride for it down the valley."

What happened then was like the confusion of a battle. The man with the silver bridle saw the little man go past him slashing furiously at imaginary cobwebs, saw him cannon into the horse of the gaunt man and hurl it and its rider to earth. His own horse went a dozen paces before he could rein it in. Then he looked up to avoid imaginary dangers, and then back again to see a horse rolling on the ground, the gaunt man standing and slashing over it at a rent and fluttering mass of grey that streamed and wrapped about them both. And thick and fast as thistle-down on waste land on a windy day in July, the cobweb masses were coming on.

The little man had dismounted, but he dared not release his horse. He was endeavouring to lug the struggling brute back with the strength of one arm, while with the other he slashed aimlessly. The tentacles of a second grey mass had entangled themselves with the struggle, and this second grey mass came to its moorings, and slowly sank.

The master set his teeth, gripped his bridle, lowered his head, and spurred his horse forward. The horse on the ground rolled over, there were blood and moving shapes upon the flanks, and the gaunt man, suddenly leaving it, ran forward towards his master, perhaps ten paces. His legs were swathed and encumbered with grey; he made ineffectual movements with his sword. Grey streamers waved from him; there was a thin veil of grey across his face. With his left hand he beat at something on his body, and suddenly he stumbled and fell. He struggled to rise, and fell again, and suddenly, horribly, began to howl, "Oh--ohoo, ohoo!"

The master could see the great spiders upon him, and others upon the ground.

As he strove to force his horse nearer to this gesticulating,

screaming grey object that struggled up and down, there came a clatter of hoofs, and the little man, in act of mounting, swordless, balanced on his belly athwart the white horse, and clutching its mane, whirled past. And again a clinging thread of grey gossamer swept across the master's face. All about him, and over him, it seemed this drifting, noiseless cobweb circled and drew nearer him. . . .

To the day of his death he never knew just how the event of that moment happened. Did he, indeed, turn his horse, or did it really of its own accord stampede after its fellow? Suffice it that in another second he was galloping full tilt down the valley with his sword whirling furiously overhead. And all about him on the quickening breeze, the spiders' airships, their air bundles and air sheets, seemed to him to hurry in a conscious pursuit.

Clatter, clatter, thud, thud--the man with the silver bridle rode, heedless of his direction, with his fearful face looking up now right, now left, and his sword arm ready to slash. And a few hundred yards ahead of him, with a tail of torn cobweb trailing behind him, rode the little man on the white horse, still but imperfectly in the saddle. The reeds bent before them, the wind blew fresh and strong, over his shoulder the master could see the webs hurrying to overtake. . . .

He was so intent to escape the spiders' webs that only as his horse gathered together for a leap did he realise the ravine ahead. And then he realised it only to misunderstand and interfere. He was leaning forward on his horse's neck and sat up and back all too late.

But if in his excitement he had failed to leap, at any rate he had not forgotten how to fall. He was horseman again in mid-air. He came off clear with a mere bruise upon his shoulder, and his horse rolled, kicking spasmodic legs, and lay still. But the master's sword drove its point into the hard soil, and snapped clean across, as though Chance refused him any longer as her Knight, and the splintered end missed his face by an inch or so.

He was on his feet in a moment, breathlessly scanning the onrushing spider-webs. For a moment he was minded to run, and then thought of the ravine, and turned back. He ran aside once to dodge one drifting terror, and then he was swiftly clambering down the precipitous sides, and out of the touch of the gale.

There under the lee of the dry torrent's steeper banks he might crouch, and watch these strange, grey masses pass and pass in safety till the wind fell, and it became possible to escape. And there for a long time he crouched, watching the strange, grey, ragged masses trail their streamers across his narrowed sky.

Once a stray spider fell into the ravine close beside him--a full foot it measured from leg to leg, and its body was half a man's hand--and after he had watched its monstrous alacrity of search and escape for a little while, and tempted it to bite his broken sword, he lifted up his iron-heeled boot and smashed it into a pulp. He swore as he did so, and for a time sought up and down for another.

Then presently, when he was surer these spider swarms could not drop into the ravine, he found a place where he could sit down, and sat and fell into deep thought and began after his manner to gnaw his knuckles and bite his nails. And from this he was moved by the coming of the man with the white horse.

He heard him long before he saw him, as a clattering of hoofs, stumbling footsteps, and a reassuring voice. Then the little man appeared, a rueful figure, still with a tail of white cobweb trailing behind him. They approached each other without speaking, without a salutation. The little man was fatigued and shamed to the pitch of hopeless bitterness, and came to a stop at last, face to face with his seated master. The latter winced a little under his dependant's eye. "Well?" he said at last, with no pretence of authority.

"You left him?"

"My horse bolted."

"I know. So did mine."

He laughed at his master mirthlessly.

"I say my horse bolted," said the man who once had a silver-studded bridle.

"Cowards both," said the little man.

The other gnawed his knuckle through some meditative moments, with his eye on his inferior.

"Don't call me a coward," he said at length.

"You are a coward like myself."

"A coward possibly. There is a limit beyond which every man must fear. That I have learnt at last. But not like yourself. That is where the difference comes in."

"I never could have dreamt you would have left him. He saved your life two minutes before. . . . Why are you our lord?"

The master gnawed his knuckles again, and his countenance was dark.

"No man calls me a coward," he said. "No. A broken sword is better than none. . . . One spavined white horse cannot be expected to carry two men a four days' journey. I hate white horses, but this time it cannot be helped. You begin to understand me? . . . I perceive that you are minded, on the strength of what you have seen and fancy, to taint my reputation. It is men of your sort who unmake kings.

Besides which--I never liked you."

"My lord!" said the little man.

"No," said the master. "NO!"

He stood up sharply as the little man moved. For a minute perhaps they faced one another. Overhead the spiders' balls went driving. There was a quick movement among the pebbles; a running of feet, a cry of despair, a gasp and a blow. . . .

Towards nightfall the wind fell. The sun set in a calm serenity, and the man who had once possessed the silver bridle came at last very cautiously and by an easy slope out of the ravine again; but now he led the white horse that once belonged to the little man. He would have gone back to his horse to get his silver-mounted bridle again, but he feared night and a quickening breeze might still find him in the valley, and besides he disliked greatly to think he might discover his horse all swathed in cobwebs and perhaps unpleasantly eaten.

And as he thought of those cobwebs and of all the dangers he had been through, and the manner in which he had been preserved that day, his hand sought a little reliquary that hung about his neck, and he clasped it for a moment with heartfelt gratitude. As he did so his eyes went across the valley.

"I was hot with passion," he said, "and now she has met her reward. They also, no doubt--"

And behold! Far away out of the wooded slopes across the valley, but in the clearness of the sunset distinct and unmistakable, he saw a little spire of smoke.

At that his expression of serene resignation changed to an amazed

anger. Smoke? He turned the head of the white horse about, and hesitated. And as he did so a little rustle of air went through the grass about him. Far away upon some reeds swayed a tattered sheet of grey. He looked at the cobwebs; he looked at the smoke.

"Perhaps, after all, it is not them," he said at last.

But he knew better.

After he had stared at the smoke for some time, he mounted the white horse.

As he rode, he picked his way amidst stranded masses of web. For some reason there were many dead spiders on the ground, and those that lived feasted guiltily on their fellows. At the sound of his horse's hoofs they fled.

Their time had passed. From the ground without either a wind to carry them or a winding sheet ready, these things, for all their poison, could do him little evil. He flicked with his belt at those he fancied came too near. Once, where a number ran together over a bare place, he was minded to dismount and trample them with his boots, but this impulse he overcame. Ever and again he turned in his saddle, and looked back at the smoke.

"Spiders," he muttered over and over again. "Spiders! Well, well. . . . The next time I must spin a web."

4. THE TRUTH ABOUT PYECRAFT

He sits not a dozen yards away. If I glance over my shoulder I can see him. And if I catch his eye--and usually I catch his eye--it meets me with an expression.

It is mainly an imploring look--and yet with suspicion in it.

Confound his suspicion! If I wanted to tell on him I should have told long ago. I don't tell and I don't tell, and he ought to feel at his ease. As if anything so gross and fat as he could feel at ease! Who would believe me if I did tell?

Poor old Pyecraft! Great, uneasy jelly of substance! The fattest clubman in London.

He sits at one of the little club tables in the huge bay by the fire, stuffing. What is he stuffing? I glance judiciously and catch him biting at a round of hot buttered tea-cake, with his eyes on me. Confound him!--with his eyes on me!

That settles it, Pyecraft! Since you WILL be abject, since you WILL behave as though I was not a man of honour, here, right under your embedded eyes, I write the thing down--the plain truth about Pyecraft. The man I helped, the man I shielded, and who has requited me by making my club unendurable, absolutely unendurable, with his liquid appeal, with the perpetual "don't tell" of his looks.

And, besides, why does he keep on eternally eating?

Well, here goes for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!

Pyecraft--. I made the acquaintance of Pyecraft in this very smoking-room. I was a young, nervous new member, and he saw it. I was sitting

all alone, wishing I knew more of the members, and suddenly he came, a great rolling front of chins and abdomina, towards me, and grunted and sat down in a chair close by me and wheezed for a space, and scraped for a space with a match and lit a cigar, and then addressed me. I forget what he said--something about the matches not lighting properly, and afterwards as he talked he kept stopping the waiters one by one as they went by, and telling them about the matches in that thin, fluty voice he has. But, anyhow, it was in some such way we began our talking.

He talked about various things and came round to games. And thence to my figure and complexion. "YOU ought to be a good cricketer," he said. I suppose I am slender, slender to what some people would call lean, and I suppose I am rather dark, still--I am not ashamed of having a Hindu great-grandmother, but, for all that, I don't want casual strangers to see through me at a glance to HER. So that I was set against Pyecraft from the beginning.

But he only talked about me in order to get to himself.

"I expect," he said, "you take no more exercise than I do, and probably you eat no less." (Like all excessively obese people he fancied he ate nothing.) "Yet,"--and he smiled an oblique smile--"we differ."

And then he began to talk about his fatness and his fatness; all he did for his fatness and all he was going to do for his fatness; what people had advised him to do for his fatness and what he had heard of people doing for fatness similar to his. "A priori," he said, "one would think a question of nutrition could be answered by dietary and a question of assimilation by drugs." It was stifling. It was dumpling talk. It made me feel swelled to hear him.

One stands that sort of thing once in a way at a club, but a time came when I fancied I was standing too much. He took to me altogether

too conspicuously. I could never go into the smoking-room but he would come wallowing towards me, and sometimes he came and gormandised round and about me while I had my lunch. He seemed at times almost to be clinging to me. He was a bore, but not so fearful a bore as to be limited to me; and from the first there was something in his manner--almost as though he knew, almost as though he penetrated to the fact that I MIGHT--that there was a remote, exceptional chance in me that no one else presented.

"I'd give anything to get it down," he would say--"anything," and peer at me over his vast cheeks and pant.

Poor old Pyecraft! He has just gonged, no doubt to order another buttered tea-cake!

He came to the actual thing one day. "Our Pharmacopoeia," he said, "our Western Pharmacopoeia, is anything but the last word of medical science. In the East, I've been told--"

He stopped and stared at me. It was like being at an aquarium.

I was quite suddenly angry with him. "Look here," I said, "who told you about my great-grandmother's recipes?"

"Well," he fenced.

"Every time we've met for a week," I said, "and we've met pretty often--you've given me a broad hint or so about that little secret of mine."

"Well," he said, "now the cat's out of the bag, I'll admit, yes, it is so. I had it--"

"From Pattison?"

"Indirectly," he said, which I believe was lying, "yes."

"Pattison," I said, "took that stuff at his own risk."

He pursed his mouth and bowed.

"My great-grandmother's recipes," I said, "are queer things to handle. My father was near making me promise--"

"He didn't?"

"No. But he warned me. He himself used one--once."

"Ah! . . . But do you think--? Suppose--suppose there did happen to be one--"

"The things are curious documents," I said.

"Even the smell of 'em. . . . No!"

But after going so far Pyecraft was resolved I should go farther. I was always a little afraid if I tried his patience too much he would fall on me suddenly and smother me. I own I was weak. But I was also annoyed with Pyecraft. I had got to that state of feeling for him that disposed me to say, "Well, TAKE the risk!" The little affair of Pattison to which I have alluded was a different matter altogether. What it was doesn't concern us now, but I knew, anyhow, that the particular recipe I used then was safe. The rest I didn't know so much about, and, on the whole, I was inclined to doubt their safety pretty completely.

Yet even if Pyecraft got poisoned--

I must confess the poisoning of Pyecraft struck me as an immense undertaking.

That evening I took that queer, odd-scented sandalwood box out of my safe and turned the rustling skins over. The gentleman who wrote the recipes for my great-grandmother evidently had a weakness for skins of a miscellaneous origin, and his handwriting was cramped to the last degree. Some of the things are quite unreadable to me--though my family, with its Indian Civil Service associations, has kept up a knowledge of Hindustani from generation to generation--and none are absolutely plain sailing. But I found the one that I knew was there soon enough, and sat on the floor by my safe for some time looking at it.

"Look here," said I to Pyecraft next day, and snatched the slip away from his eager grasp.

"So far as I--can make it out, this is a recipe for Loss of Weight. ("Ah!" said Pyecraft.) I'm not absolutely sure, but I think it's that. And if you take my advice you'll leave it alone. Because, you know--I blacken my blood in your interest, Pyecraft--my ancestors on that side were, so far as I can gather, a jolly queer lot. See?"

"Let me try it," said Pyecraft.

I leant back in my chair. My imagination made one mighty effort and fell flat within me. "What in Heaven's name, Pyecraft," I asked, "do you think you'll look like when you get thin?"

He was impervious to reason. I made him promise never to say a word to me about his disgusting fatness again whatever happened--never, and then I handed him that little piece of skin.

"It's nasty stuff," I said.

"No matter," he said, and took it.

He goggled at it. "But--but--" he said.

He had just discovered that it wasn't English.

"To the best of my ability," I said, "I will do you a translation."

I did my best. After that we didn't speak for a fortnight. Whenever he approached me I frowned and motioned him away, and he respected our compact, but at the end of a fortnight he was as fat as ever. And then he got a word in.

"I must speak," he said. "It isn't fair. There's something wrong. It's done me no good. You're not doing your great-grandmother justice."

"Where's the recipe?"

He produced it gingerly from his pocket-book.

I ran my eye over the items. "Was the egg addled?" I asked.

"No. Ought it to have been?"

"That," I said, "goes without saying in all my poor dear great-grandmother's recipes. When condition or quality is not specified you must get the worst. She was drastic or nothing. . . . And there's one or two possible alternatives to some of these other things. You got FRESH rattlesnake venom."

"I got a rattlesnake from Jamrach's. It cost--it cost--"

"That's your affair, anyhow. This last item--"

"I know a man who--"

"Yes. H'm. Well, I'll write the alternatives down. So far as I know

the language, the spelling of this recipe is particularly atrocious. By-the-bye, dog here probably means pariah dog."

For a month after that I saw Pyecraft constantly at the club and as fat and anxious as ever. He kept our treaty, but at times he broke the spirit of it by shaking his head despondently. Then one day in the cloakroom he said, "Your great-grandmother--"

"Not a word against her," I said; and he held his peace.

I could have fancied he had desisted, and I saw him one day talking to three new members about his fatness as though he was in search of other recipes. And then, quite unexpectedly, his telegram came.

"Mr. Formalyn!" bawled a page-boy under my nose, and I took the telegram and opened it at once.

"For Heaven's sake come.--Pyecraft."

"H'm," said I, and to tell the truth I was so pleased at the rehabilitation of my great grandmother's reputation this evidently promised that I made a most excellent lunch.

I got Pyecraft's address from the hall porter. Pyecraft inhabited the upper half of a house in Bloomsbury, and I went there so soon as I had done my coffee and Trappistine. I did not wait to finish my cigar.

"Mr. Pyecraft?" said I, at the front door.

They believed he was ill; he hadn't been out for two days.

"He expects me," said I, and they sent me up.

I rang the bell at the lattice-door upon the landing.

"He shouldn't have tried it, anyhow," I said to myself. "A man who eats like a pig ought to look like a pig."

An obviously worthy woman, with an anxious face and a carelessly placed cap, came and surveyed me through the lattice.

I gave my name and she let me in in a dubious fashion.

"Well?" said I, as we stood together inside Pyecraft's piece of the landing.

"'E said you was to come in if you came," she said, and regarded me, making no motion to show me anywhere. And then, confidentially, "'E's locked in, sir."

"Locked in?"

"Locked himself in yesterday morning and 'asn't let any one in since, sir. And ever and again SWEARING. Oh, my!"

I stared at the door she indicated by her glances.

"In there?" I said.

"Yes, sir."

"What's up?"

She shook her head sadly, "'E keeps on calling for vittles, sir. 'EAVY vittles 'e wants. I get 'im what I can. Pork 'e's 'ad, sooit puddin', sossiges, noo bread. Everythink like that. Left outside, if you please, and me go away. 'E's eatin', sir, somethink AWFUL."

There came a piping bawl from inside the door: "That Formalyn?"

"That you, Pyecraft?" I shouted, and went and banged the door.

"Tell her to go away."

I did.

Then I could hear a curious pattering upon the door, almost like some one feeling for the handle in the dark, and Pyecraft's familiar grunts.

"It's all right," I said, "she's gone."

But for a long time the door didn't open.

I heard the key turn. Then Pyecraft's voice said, "Come in."

I turned the handle and opened the door. Naturally I expected to see Pyecraft.

Well, you know, he wasn't there!

I never had such a shock in my life. There was his sitting-room in a state of untidy disorder, plates and dishes among the books and writing things, and several chairs overturned, but Pyecraft--

"It's all right, o' man; shut the door," he said, and then I discovered him.

There he was right up close to the cornice in the corner by the door, as though some one had glued him to the ceiling. His face was anxious and angry. He panted and gesticulated. "Shut the door," he said. "If that woman gets hold of it--"

I shut the door, and went and stood away from him and stared.

"If anything gives way and you tumble down," I said, "you'll break your neck, Pyecraft."

"I wish I could," he wheezed.

"A man of your age and weight getting up to kiddish gymnastics--"

"Don't," he said, and looked agonised.

"I'll tell you," he said, and gesticulated.

"How the deuce," said I, "are you holding on up there?"

And then abruptly I realised that he was not holding on at all, that he was floating up there--just as a gas-filled bladder might have floated in the same position. He began a struggle to thrust himself away from the ceiling and to clamber down the wall to me. "It's that prescription," he panted, as he did so. "Your great-gran--"

He took hold of a framed engraving rather carelessly as he spoke and it gave way, and he flew back to the ceiling again, while the picture smashed onto the sofa. Bump he went against the ceiling, and I knew then why he was all over white on the more salient curves and angles of his person. He tried again more carefully, coming down by way of the mantel.

It was really a most extraordinary spectacle, that great, fat, apoplectic-looking man upside down and trying to get from the ceiling to the floor. "That prescription," he said. "Too successful."

"How?"

"Loss of weight--almost complete."

And then, of course, I understood.

"By Jove, Pyecraft," said I, "what you wanted was a cure for fatness! But you always called it weight. You would call it weight."

Somehow I was extremely delighted. I quite liked Pyecraft for the time. "Let me help you!" I said, and took his hand and pulled him down. He kicked about, trying to get a foothold somewhere. It was very like holding a flag on a windy day.

"That table," he said, pointing, "is solid mahogany and very heavy. If you can put me under that---"

I did, and there he wallowed about like a captive balloon, while I stood on his hearthrug and talked to him.

I lit a cigar. "Tell me," I said, "what happened?"

"I took it," he said.

"How did it taste?"

"Oh, BEASTLY!"

I should fancy they all did. Whether one regards the ingredients or the probable compound or the possible results, almost all of my great-grandmother's remedies appear to me at least to be extraordinarily uninviting. For my own part--

"I took a little sip first."

"Yes?"

"And as I felt lighter and better after an hour, I decided to take the draught."

"My dear Pyecraft!"

"I held my nose," he explained. "And then I kept on getting lighter and lighter--and helpless, you know."

He gave way to a sudden burst of passion. "What the goodness am I to DO?" he said.

"There's one thing pretty evident," I said, "that you mustn't do. If you go out of doors, you'll go up and up." I waved an arm upward. "They'd have to send Santos-Dumont after you to bring you down again."

"I suppose it will wear off?"

I shook my head. "I don't think you can count on that," I said.

And then there was another burst of passion, and he kicked out at adjacent chairs and banged the floor. He behaved just as I should have expected a great, fat, self-indulgent man to behave under trying circumstances--that is to say, very badly. He spoke of me and my great-grandmother with an utter want of discretion.

"I never asked you to take the stuff," I said.

And generously disregarding the insults he was putting upon me, I sat down in his armchair and began to talk to him in a sober, friendly fashion.

I pointed out to him that this was a trouble he had brought upon himself, and that it had almost an air of poetical justice. He had eaten too much. This he disputed, and for a time we argued the point.

He became noisy and violent, so I desisted from this aspect of his lesson. "And then," said I, "you committed the sin of euphuism."

You called it not Fat, which is just and inglorious, but Weight. You--"

He interrupted to say he recognised all that. What was he to DO?

I suggested he should adapt himself to his new conditions. So we came to the really sensible part of the business. I suggested that it would not be difficult for him to learn to walk about on the ceiling with his hands--

"I can't sleep," he said.

But that was no great difficulty. It was quite possible, I pointed out, to make a shake-up under a wire mattress, fasten the under things on with tapes, and have a blanket, sheet, and coverlet to button at the side. He would have to confide in his housekeeper, I said; and after some squabbling he agreed to that. (Afterwards it was quite delightful to see the beautifully matter-of-fact way with which the good lady took all these amazing inversions.) He could have a library ladder in his room, and all his meals could be laid on the top of his bookcase. We also hit on an ingenious device by which he could get to the floor whenever he wanted, which was simply to put the British Encyclopaedia (tenth edition) on the top of his open shelves. He just pulled out a couple of volumes and held on, and down he came. And we agreed there must be iron staples along the skirting, so that he could cling to those whenever he wanted to get about the room on the lower level.

As we got on with the thing I found myself almost keenly interested. It was I who called in the housekeeper and broke matters to her, and it was I chiefly who fixed up the inverted bed. In fact, I spent two whole days at his flat. I am a handy, interfering sort of man with a screw-driver, and I made all sorts of ingenious adaptations for him--ran a wire to bring his bells within reach, turned all his electric lights up instead of down, and so on. The whole affair was extremely curious and interesting to me, and it was delightful

to think of Pyecraft like some great, fat blow-fly, crawling about on his ceiling and clambering round the lintels of his doors from one room to another, and never, never, never coming to the club any more. . . .

Then, you know, my fatal ingenuity got the better of me. I was sitting by his fire drinking his whisky, and he was up in his favourite corner by the cornice, tacking a Turkey carpet to the ceiling, when the idea struck me. "By Jove, Pyecraft!" I said, "all this is totally unnecessary."

And before I could calculate the complete consequences of my notion I blurted it out. "Lead underclothing," said I, and the mischief was done.

Pyecraft received the thing almost in tears. "To be right ways up again--" he said. I gave him the whole secret before I saw where it would take me. "Buy sheet lead," I said, "stamp it into discs. Sew 'em all over your underclothes until you have enough. Have lead-soled boots, carry a bag of solid lead, and the thing is done! Instead of being a prisoner here you may go abroad again, Pyecraft; you may travel--"

A still happier idea came to me. "You need never fear a shipwreck. All you need do is just slip off some or all of your clothes, take the necessary amount of luggage in your hand, and float up in the air--"

In his emotion he dropped the tack-hammer within an ace of my head. "By Jove!" he said, "I shall be able to come back to the club again."

The thing pulled me up short. "By Jove!" I said faintly. "Yes. Of course--you will."

He did. He does. There he sits behind me now, stuffing--as I live!--a third go of buttered tea-cake. And no one in the whole world knows--

except his housekeeper and me--that he weighs practically nothing; that he is a mere boring mass of assimilatory matter, mere clouds in clothing, niente, nefas, the most inconsiderable of men. There he sits watching until I have done this writing. Then, if he can, he will waylay me. He will come billowing up to me. . . .

He will tell me over again all about it, how it feels, how it doesn't feel, how he sometimes hopes it is passing off a little. And always somewhere in that fat, abundant discourse he will say, "The secret's keeping, eh? If any one knew of it--I should be so ashamed. . . . Makes a fellow look such a fool, you know. Crawling about on a ceiling and all that. . . ."

And now to elude Pyecraft, occupying, as he does, an admirable strategic position between me and the door.

5. MR. SKELMERSDALE IN FAIRYLAND

"There's a man in that shop," said the Doctor, "who has been in Fairyland."

"Nonsense!" I said, and stared back at the shop. It was the usual village shop, post-office, telegraph wire on its brow, zinc pans and brushes outside, boots, shirtings, and potted meats in the window. "Tell me about it," I said, after a pause.

"_I_ don't know," said the Doctor. "He's an ordinary sort of lout-- Skelmersdale is his name. But everybody about here believes it like Bible truth."

I reverted presently to the topic.

"I know nothing about it," said the Doctor, "and I don't WANT to know. I attended him for a broken finger--Married and Single cricket match--and that's when I struck the nonsense. That's all. But it shows you the sort of stuff I have to deal with, anyhow, eh? Nice to get modern sanitary ideas into a people like this!"

"Very," I said in a mildly sympathetic tone, and he went on to tell me about that business of the Bonham drain. Things of that kind, I observe, are apt to weigh on the minds of Medical Officers of Health. I was as sympathetic as I knew how, and when he called the Bonham people "asses," I said they were "thundering asses," but even that did not allay him.

Afterwards, later in the summer, an urgent desire to seclude myself, while finishing my chapter on Spiritual Pathology--it was really, I believe, stiffer to write than it is to read--took me to Bignor. I lodged at a farmhouse, and presently found myself outside that little general shop again, in search of tobacco. "Skelmersdale," said I to myself at the sight of it, and went in.

I was served by a short, but shapely, young man, with a fair downy complexion, good, small teeth, blue eyes, and a languid manner. I scrutinised him curiously. Except for a touch of melancholy in his expression, he was nothing out of the common. He was in the shirt-sleeves and tucked-up apron of his trade, and a pencil was thrust behind his inoffensive ear. Athwart his black waistcoat was a gold chain, from which dangled a bent guinea.

"Nothing more to-day, sir?" he inquired. He leant forward over my bill as he spoke.

"Are you Mr. Skelmersdale?" said I.

"I am, sir," he said, without looking up.

"Is it true that you have been in Fairyland?"

He looked up at me for a moment with wrinkled brows, with an aggrieved, exasperated face. "O SHUT it!" he said, and, after a moment of hostility, eye to eye, he went on adding up my bill. "Four, six and a half," he said, after a pause. "Thank you, Sir."

So, unpropitiously, my acquaintance with Mr. Skelmersdale began.

Well, I got from that to confidence--through a series of toilsome efforts. I picked him up again in the Village Room, where of a night I went to play billiards after my supper, and mitigate the extreme seclusion from my kind that was so helpful to work during the day. I contrived to play with him and afterwards to talk with him. I found the one subject to avoid was Fairyland. On everything else he was open and amiable in a commonplace sort of way, but on that he had been worried--it was a manifest taboo. Only once in the room did I hear the slightest allusion to his experience in his presence, and that was by a cross-grained farm hand who was losing to him.

Skelmersdale had run a break into double figures, which, by the Bignor standards, was uncommonly good play. "Steady on!" said his adversary. "None of your fairy flukes!"

Skelmersdale stared at him for a moment, cue in hand, then flung it down and walked out of the room.

"Why can't you leave 'im alone?" said a respectable elder who had been enjoying the game, and in the general murmur of disapproval the grin of satisfied wit faded from the ploughboy's face.

I scented my opportunity. "What's this joke," said I, "about Fairyland?"

"Tain't no joke about Fairyland, not to young Skelmersdale," said the respectable elder, drinking. A little man with rosy cheeks was more communicative. "They DO say, sir," he said, "that they took him into Aldington Knoll an' kep' him there a matter of three weeks."

And with that the gathering was well under weigh. Once one sheep had started, others were ready enough to follow, and in a little time I had at least the exterior aspect of the Skelmersdale affair. Formerly, before he came to Bignor, he had been in that very similar little shop at Aldington Corner, and there whatever it was did happen had taken place. The story was clear that he had stayed out late one night on the Knoll and vanished for three weeks from the sight of men, and had returned with "his cuffs as clean as when he started," and his pockets full of dust and ashes. He returned in a state of moody wretchedness that only slowly passed away, and for many days he would give no account of where it was he had been. The girl he was engaged to at Clapton Hill tried to get it out of him, and threw him over partly because he refused, and partly because, as she said, he fairly gave her the "ump." And then when, some time after, he let out to some one carelessly that he had been in Fairyland and wanted to go back, and when the thing spread and the simple badinage of the countryside came into play, he threw up his situation abruptly, and

came to Bignor to get out of the fuss. But as to what had happened in Fairyland none of these people knew. There the gathering in the Village Room went to pieces like a pack at fault. One said this, and another said that.

Their air in dealing with this marvel was ostensibly critical and sceptical, but I could see a considerable amount of belief showing through their guarded qualifications. I took a line of intelligent interest, tinged with a reasonable doubt of the whole story.

"If Fairyland's inside Aldington Knoll," I said, "why don't you dig it out?"

"That's what I says," said the young ploughboy.

"There's a-many have tried to dig on Aldington Knoll," said the respectable elder, solemnly, "one time and another. But there's none as goes about to-day to tell what they got by digging."

The unanimity of vague belief that surrounded me was rather impressive; I felt there must surely be SOMETHING at the root of so much conviction, and the already pretty keen curiosity I felt about the real facts of the case was distinctly whetted. If these real facts were to be got from any one, they were to be got from Skelmersdale himself; and I set myself, therefore, still more assiduously to efface the first bad impression I had made and win his confidence to the pitch of voluntary speech. In that endeavour I had a social advantage. Being a person of affability and no apparent employment, and wearing tweeds and knickerbockers, I was naturally classed as an artist in Bignor, and in the remarkable code of social precedence prevalent in Bignor an artist ranks considerably higher than a grocer's assistant. Skelmersdale, like too many of his class, is something of a snob; he had told me to "shut it," only under sudden, excessive provocation, and with, I am certain, a subsequent repentance; he was, I knew,

quite glad to be seen walking about the village with me. In due course, he accepted the proposal of a pipe and whisky in my rooms readily enough, and there, scenting by some happy instinct that there was trouble of the heart in this, and knowing that confidences beget confidences, I plied him with much of interest and suggestion from my real and fictitious past. And it was after the third whisky of the third visit of that sort, if I remember rightly, that a propos of some artless expansion of a little affair that had touched and left me in my teens, that he did at last, of his own free will and motion, break the ice. "It was like that with me," he said, "over there at Aldington. It's just that that's so rum. First I didn't care a bit and it was all her, and afterwards, when it was too late, it was, in a manner of speaking, all me."

I forbore to jump upon this allusion, and so he presently threw out another, and in a little while he was making it as plain as daylight that the one thing he wanted to talk about now was this Fairyland adventure he had sat tight upon for so long. You see, I'd done the trick with him, and from being just another half-incredulous, would-be facetious stranger, I had, by all my wealth of shameless self-exposure, become the possible confidant. He had been bitten by the desire to show that he, too, had lived and felt many things, and the fever was upon him.

He was certainly confoundedly allusive at first, and my eagerness to clear him up with a few precise questions was only equalled and controlled by my anxiety not to get to this sort of thing too soon. But in another meeting or so the basis of confidence was complete; and from first to last I think I got most of the items and aspects--indeed, I got quite a number of times over almost everything that Mr. Skelmersdale, with his very limited powers of narration, will ever be able to tell. And so I come to the story of his adventure, and I piece it all together again. Whether it really happened, whether he imagined it or dreamt it, or fell upon it in some strange hallucinatory trance, I do not profess to say. But that he invented

it I will not for one moment entertain. The man simply and honestly believes the thing happened as he says it happened; he is transparently incapable of any lie so elaborate and sustained, and in the belief of the simple, yet often keenly penetrating, rustic minds about him I find a very strong confirmation of his sincerity. He believes-- and nobody can produce any positive fact to falsify his belief. As for me, with this much of endorsement, I transmit his story-- I am a little old now to justify or explain.

He says he went to sleep on Aldington Knoll about ten o'clock one night--it was quite possibly Midsummer night, though he has never thought of the date, and he cannot be sure within a week or so-- and it was a fine night and windless, with a rising moon. I have been at the pains to visit this Knoll thrice since his story grew up under my persuasions, and once I went there in the twilight summer moonrise on what was, perhaps, a similar night to that of his adventure. Jupiter was great and splendid above the moon, and in the north and northwest the sky was green and vividly bright over the sunken sun. The Knoll stands out bare and bleak under the sky, but surrounded at a little distance by dark thickets, and as I went up towards it there was a mighty starting and scampering of ghostly or quite invisible rabbits. Just over the crown of the Knoll, but nowhere else, was a multitudinous thin trumpeting of midges. The Knoll is, I believe, an artificial mound, the tumulus of some great prehistoric chieftain, and surely no man ever chose a more spacious prospect for a sepulchre. Eastward one sees along the hills to Hythe, and thence across the Channel to where, thirty miles and more perhaps, away, the great white lights by Gris Nez and Boulogne wink and pass and shine. Westward lies the whole tumbled valley of the Weald, visible as far as Hindhead and Leith Hill, and the valley of the Stour opens the Downs in the north to interminable hills beyond Wye. All Romney Marsh lies southward at one's feet, Dymchurch and Romney and Lydd, Hastings and its hill are in the middle distance, and the hills multiply vaguely far beyond where Eastbourne rolls up to Beachy Head.

And out upon all this it was that Skelmersdale wandered, being troubled in his earlier love affair, and as he says, "not caring WHERE he went." And there he sat down to think it over, and so, sulking and grieving, was overtaken by sleep. And so he fell into the fairies' power.

The quarrel that had upset him was some trivial matter enough between himself and the girl at Clapton Hill to whom he was engaged. She was a farmer's daughter, said Skelmersdale, and "very respectable," and no doubt an excellent match for him; but both girl and lover were very young and with just that mutual jealousy, that intolerantly keen edge of criticism, that irrational hunger for a beautiful perfection, that life and wisdom do presently and most mercifully dull. What the precise matter of quarrel was I have no idea. She may have said she liked men in gaiters when he hadn't any gaiters on, or he may have said he liked her better in a different sort of hat, but however it began, it got by a series of clumsy stages to bitterness and tears. She no doubt got tearful and smeary, and he grew dusty and drooping, and she parted with invidious comparisons, grave doubts whether she ever had REALLY cared for him, and a clear certainty she would never care again. And with this sort of thing upon his mind he came out upon Aldington Knoll grieving, and presently, after a long interval, perhaps, quite inexplicably, fell asleep.

He woke to find himself on a softer turf than ever he had slept on before, and under the shade of very dark trees that completely hid the sky. Always, indeed, in Fairyland the sky is hidden, it seems. Except for one night when the fairies were dancing, Mr. Skelmersdale, during all his time with them, never saw a star. And of that night I am in doubt whether he was in Fairyland proper or out where the rings and rushes are, in those low meadows near the railway line at Smeeth.

But it was light under these trees for all that, and on the leaves and amidst the turf shone a multitude of glow-worms, very bright and fine. Mr. Skelmersdale's first impression was that he was SMALL,

and the next that quite a number of people still smaller were standing all about him. For some reason, he says, he was neither surprised nor frightened, but sat up quite deliberately and rubbed the sleep out of his eyes. And there all about him stood the smiling elves who had caught him sleeping under their privileges and had brought him into Fairyland.

What these elves were like I have failed to gather, so vague and imperfect is his vocabulary, and so unobservant of all minor detail does he seem to have been. They were clothed in something very light and beautiful, that was neither wool, nor silk, nor leaves, nor the petals of flowers. They stood all about him as he sat and waked, and down the glade towards him, down a glow-worm avenue and fronted by a star, came at once that Fairy Lady who is the chief personage of his memory and tale. Of her I gathered more. She was clothed in filmy green, and about her little waist was a broad silver girdle. Her hair waved back from her forehead on either side; there were curls not too wayward and yet astray, and on her brow was a little tiara, set with a single star. Her sleeves were some sort of open sleeves that gave little glimpses of her arms; her throat, I think, was a little displayed, because he speaks of the beauty of her neck and chin. There was a necklace of coral about her white throat, and in her breast a coral-coloured flower. She had the soft lines of a little child in her chin and cheeks and throat. And her eyes, I gather, were of a kindled brown, very soft and straight and sweet under her level brows. You see by these particulars how greatly this lady must have loomed in Mr. Skelmersdale's picture. Certain things he tried to express and could not express; "the way she moved," he said several times; and I fancy a sort of demure joyousness radiated from this Lady.

And it was in the company of this delightful person, as the guest and chosen companion of this delightful person, that Mr. Skelmersdale set out to be taken into the intimacies of Fairyland. She welcomed him gladly and a little warmly--I suspect a pressure of his hand

in both of hers and a lit face to his. After all, ten years ago young Skelmersdale may have been a very comely youth. And once she took his arm, and once, I think, she led him by the hand adown the glade that the glow-worms lit.

Just how things chanced and happened there is no telling from Mr. Skelmersdale's disarticulated skeleton of description. He gives little unsatisfactory glimpses of strange corners and doings, of places where there were many fairies together, of "toadstool things that shone pink," of fairy food, of which he could only say "you should have tasted it!" and of fairy music, "like a little musical box," that came out of nodding flowers. There was a great open place where fairies rode and raced on "things," but what Mr. Skelmersdale meant by "these here things they rode," there is no telling. Larvae, perhaps, or crickets, or the little beetles that elude us so abundantly. There was a place where water splashed and gigantic king-cups grew, and there in the hotter times the fairies bathed together. There were games being played and dancing and much elvish love-making, too, I think, among the moss-branch thickets. There can be no doubt that the Fairy Lady made love to Mr. Skelmersdale, and no doubt either that this young man set himself to resist her. A time came, indeed, when she sat on a bank beside him, in a quiet, secluded place "all smelling of vi'lets," and talked to him of love.

"When her voice went low and she whispered," said Mr. Skelmersdale, "and laid 'er 'and on my 'and, you know, and came close with a soft, warm friendly way she 'ad, it was as much as I could do to keep my 'ead."

It seems he kept his head to a certain limited unfortunate extent. He saw "'ow the wind was blowing," he says, and so, sitting there in a place all smelling of violets, with the touch of this lovely Fairy Lady about him, Mr. Skelmersdale broke it to her gently-- that he was engaged!

She had told him she loved him dearly, that he was a sweet human lad for her, and whatever he would ask of her he should have--even his heart's desire.

And Mr. Skelmersdale, who, I fancy, tried hard to avoid looking at her little lips as they just dropped apart and came together, led up to the more intimate question by saying he would like enough capital to start a little shop. He'd just like to feel, he said, he had money enough to do that. I imagine a little surprise in those brown eyes he talked about, but she seemed sympathetic for all that, and she asked him many questions about the little shop, "laughing like" all the time. So he got to the complete statement of his affianced position, and told her all about Millie.

"All?" said I.

"Everything," said Mr. Skelmersdale, "just who she was, and where she lived, and everything about her. I sort of felt I 'ad to all the time, I did."

"'Whatever you want you shall have,' said the Fairy Lady. 'That's as good as done. You **SHALL** feel you have the money just as you wish. And now, you know--**YOU MUST KISS ME.**'"

And Mr. Skelmersdale pretended not to hear the latter part of her remark, and said she was very kind. That he really didn't deserve she should be so kind. And--

The Fairy Lady suddenly came quite close to him and whispered, "Kiss me!"

"And," said Mr. Skelmersdale, "like a fool, I did."

There are kisses and kisses, I am told, and this must have been quite the other sort from Millie's resonant signals of regard. There was

something magic in that kiss; assuredly it marked a turning point. At any rate, this is one of the passages that he thought sufficiently important to describe most at length. I have tried to get it right, I have tried to disentangle it from the hints and gestures through which it came to me, but I have no doubt that it was all different from my telling and far finer and sweeter, in the soft filtered light and the subtly stirring silences of the fairy glades. The Fairy Lady asked him more about Millie, and was she very lovely, and so on-- a great many times. As to Millie's loveliness, I conceive him answering that she was "all right." And then, or on some such occasion, the Fairy Lady told him she had fallen in love with him as he slept in the moonlight, and so he had been brought into Fairyland, and she had thought, not knowing of Millie, that perhaps he might chance to love her. "But now you know you can't," she said, "so you must stop with me just a little while, and then you must go back to Millie." She told him that, and you know Skelmersdale was already in love with her, but the pure inertia of his mind kept him in the way he was going. I imagine him sitting in a sort of stupefaction amidst all these glowing beautiful things, answering about his Millie and the little shop he projected and the need of a horse and cart. . . . And that absurd state of affairs must have gone on for days and days. I see this little lady, hovering about him and trying to amuse him, too dainty to understand his complexity and too tender to let him go. And he, you know, hypnotised as it were by his earthly position, went his way with her hither and thither, blind to everything in Fairyland but this wonderful intimacy that had come to him. It is hard, it is impossible, to give in print the effect of her radiant sweetness shining through the jungle of poor Skelmersdale's rough and broken sentences. To me, at least, she shone clear amidst the muddle of his story like a glow-worm in a tangle of weeds.

There must have been many days of things while all this was happening-- and once, I say, they danced under the moonlight in the fairy rings that stud the meadows near Smeeth--but at last it all came to an end.

She led him into a great cavernous place, lit by a red nightlight sort of thing, where there were coffers piled on coffers, and cups and golden boxes, and a great heap of what certainly seemed to all Mr. Skelmersdale's senses--coined gold. There were little gnomes amidst this wealth, who saluted her at her coming, and stood aside. And suddenly she turned on him there with brightly shining eyes.

"And now," she said, "you have been kind to stay with me so long, and it is time I let you go. You must go back to your Millie. You must go back to your Millie, and here--just as I promised you--they will give you gold."

"She choked like," said Mr. Skelmersdale. "At that, I had a sort of feeling--" (he touched his breastbone) "as though I was fainting here. I felt pale, you know, and shivering, and even then--I 'adn't a thing to say."

He paused. "Yes," I said.

The scene was beyond his describing. But I know that she kissed him good-bye.

"And you said nothing?"

"Nothing," he said. "I stood like a stuffed calf. She just looked back once, you know, and stood smiling like and crying--I could see the shine of her eyes--and then she was gone, and there was all these little fellows bustling about me, stuffing my 'ands and my pockets and the back of my collar and everywhere with gold."

And then it was, when the Fairy Lady had vanished, that Mr. Skelmersdale really understood and knew. He suddenly began plucking out the gold they were thrusting upon him, and shouting out at them to prevent their giving him more. "I don't WANT yer gold,' I said. 'I 'aven't done yet. I'm not going. I want to speak to that Fairy Lady again.'

I started off to go after her and they held me back. Yes, stuck their little 'ands against my middle and shoved me back. They kept giving me more and more gold until it was running all down my trouser legs and dropping out of my 'ands. 'I don't WANT yer gold,' I says to them, 'I want just to speak to the Fairy Lady again.'"

"And did you?"

"It came to a tussle."

"Before you saw her?"

"I didn't see her. When I got out from them she wasn't anywhere to be seen."

So he ran in search of her out of this red-lit cave, down a long grotto, seeking her, and thence he came out in a great and desolate place athwart which a swarm of will-o'-the-wisps were flying to and fro. And about him elves were dancing in derision, and the little gnomes came out of the cave after him, carrying gold in handfuls and casting it after him, shouting, "Fairy love and fairy gold! Fairy love and fairy gold!"

And when he heard these words, came a great fear that it was all over, and he lifted up his voice and called to her by her name, and suddenly set himself to run down the slope from the mouth of the cavern, through a place of thorns and briers, calling after her very loudly and often. The elves danced about him unheeded, pinching him and pricking him, and the will-o'-the-wisps circled round him and dashed into his face, and the gnomes pursued him shouting and pelting him with fairy gold. As he ran with all this strange rout about him and distracting him, suddenly he was knee-deep in a swamp, and suddenly he was amidst thick twisted roots, and he caught his foot in one and stumbled and fell. . . .

He fell and he rolled over, and in that instant he found himself sprawling upon Aldington Knoll, all lonely under the stars.

He sat up sharply at once, he says, and found he was very stiff and cold, and his clothes were damp with dew. The first pallor of dawn and a chilly wind were coming up together. He could have believed the whole thing a strangely vivid dream until he thrust his hand into his side pocket and found it stuffed with ashes. Then he knew for certain it was fairy gold they had given him. He could feel all their pinches and pricks still, though there was never a bruise upon him. And in that manner, and so suddenly, Mr. Skelmersdale came out of Fairyland back into this world of men. Even then he fancied the thing was but the matter of a night until he returned to the shop at Aldington Corner and discovered amidst their astonishment that he had been away three weeks.

"Lor'! the trouble I 'ad!" said Mr. Skelmersdale.

"How?"

"Explaining. I suppose you've never had anything like that to explain."

"Never," I said, and he expatiated for a time on the behaviour of this person and that. One name he avoided for a space.

"And Millie?" said I at last.

"I didn't seem to care a bit for seeing Millie," he said.

"I expect she seemed changed?"

"Every one was changed. Changed for good. Every one seemed big, you know, and coarse. And their voices seemed loud. Why, the sun, when it rose in the morning, fair hit me in the eye!"

"And Millie?"

"I didn't want to see Millie."

"And when you did?"

"I came up against her Sunday, coming out of church. 'Where you been?' she said, and I saw there was a row. I didn't care if there was. I seemed to forget about her even while she was there a-talking to me. She was just nothing. I couldn't make out whatever I 'ad seen in 'er ever, or what there could 'ave been. Sometimes when she wasn't about, I did get back a little, but never when she was there. Then it was always the other came up and blotted her out. . . . Anyow, it didn't break her heart."

"Married?" I asked.

"Married 'er cousin," said Mr. Skelmersdale, and reflected on the pattern of the tablecloth for a space.

When he spoke again it was clear that his former sweetheart had clean vanished from his mind, and that the talk had brought back the Fairy Lady triumphant in his heart. He talked of her--soon he was letting out the oddest things, queer love secrets it would be treachery to repeat. I think, indeed, that was the queerest thing in the whole affair, to hear that neat little grocer man after his story was done, with a glass of whisky beside him and a cigar between his fingers, witnessing, with sorrow still, though now, indeed, with a time-blunted anguish, of the inappeasable hunger of the heart that presently came upon him. "I couldn't eat," he said, "I couldn't sleep. I made mistakes in orders and got mixed with change. There she was day and night, drawing me and drawing me. Oh, I wanted her. Lord! how I wanted her! I was up there, most evenings I was up there on the Knoll, often even when it rained. I used to walk over the Knoll and round it and round it, calling for them to let me in. Shouting. Near blubbering

I was at times. Daft I was and miserable. I kept on saying it was all a mistake. And every Sunday afternoon I went up there, wet and fine, though I knew as well as you do it wasn't no good by day. And I've tried to go to sleep there."

He stopped sharply and decided to drink some whisky.

"I've tried to go to sleep there," he said, and I could swear his lips trembled. "I've tried to go to sleep there, often and often. And, you know, I couldn't, sir--never. I've thought if I could go to sleep there, there might be something. But I've sat up there and laid up there, and I couldn't--not for thinking and longing. It's the longing. . . . I've tried--"

He blew, drank up the rest of his whisky spasmodically, stood up suddenly and buttoned his jacket, staring closely and critically at the cheap oleographs beside the mantel meanwhile. The little black notebook in which he recorded the orders of his daily round projected stiffly from his breast pocket. When all the buttons were quite done, he patted his chest and turned on me suddenly. "Well," he said, "I must be going."

There was something in his eyes and manner that was too difficult for him to express in words. "One gets talking," he said at last at the door, and smiled wanly, and so vanished from my eyes. And that is the tale of Mr. Skelmersdale in Fairyland just as he told it to me.

6. THE STORY OF THE INEXPERIENCED GHOST

The scene amidst which Clayton told his last story comes back very vividly to my mind. There he sat, for the greater part of the time, in the corner of the authentic settle by the spacious open fire, and Sanderson sat beside him smoking the Broseley clay that bore his name. There was Evans, and that marvel among actors, Wish, who is also a modest man. We had all come down to the Mermaid Club that Saturday morning, except Clayton, who had slept there overnight--which indeed gave him the opening of his story. We had golfed until golfing was invisible; we had dined, and we were in that mood of tranquil kindness when men will suffer a story. When Clayton began to tell one, we naturally supposed he was lying. It may be that indeed he was lying--of that the reader will speedily be able to judge as well as I. He began, it is true, with an air of matter-of-fact anecdote, but that we thought was only the incurable artifice of the man.

"I say!" he remarked, after a long consideration of the upward rain of sparks from the log that Sanderson had thumped, "you know I was alone here last night?"

"Except for the domestics," said Wish.

"Who sleep in the other wing," said Clayton. "Yes. Well--" He pulled at his cigar for some little time as though he still hesitated about his confidence. Then he said, quite quietly, "I caught a ghost!"

"Caught a ghost, did you?" said Sanderson. "Where is it?"

And Evans, who admires Clayton immensely and has been four weeks in America, shouted, "CAUGHT a ghost, did you, Clayton? I'm glad of it! Tell us all about it right now."

Clayton said he would in a minute, and asked him to shut the door.

He looked apologetically at me. "There's no eavesdropping of course, but we don't want to upset our very excellent service with any rumours of ghosts in the place. There's too much shadow and oak panelling to trifle with that. And this, you know, wasn't a regular ghost. I don't think it will come again--ever."

"You mean to say you didn't keep it?" said Sanderson.

"I hadn't the heart to," said Clayton.

And Sanderson said he was surprised.

We laughed, and Clayton looked aggrieved. "I know," he said, with the flicker of a smile, "but the fact is it really WAS a ghost, and I'm as sure of it as I am that I am talking to you now. I'm not joking. I mean what I say."

Sanderson drew deeply at his pipe, with one reddish eye on Clayton, and then emitted a thin jet of smoke more eloquent than many words.

Clayton ignored the comment. "It is the strangest thing that has ever happened in my life. You know, I never believed in ghosts or anything of the sort, before, ever; and then, you know, I bag one in a corner; and the whole business is in my hands."

He meditated still more profoundly, and produced and began to pierce a second cigar with a curious little stabber he affected.

"You talked to it?" asked Wish.

"For the space, probably, of an hour."

"Chatty?" I said, joining the party of the sceptics.

"The poor devil was in trouble," said Clayton, bowed over his cigar-end

and with the very faintest note of reproof.

"Sobbing?" some one asked.

Clayton heaved a realistic sigh at the memory. "Good Lord!" he said; "yes." And then, "Poor fellow! yes."

"Where did you strike it?" asked Evans, in his best American accent.

"I never realised," said Clayton, ignoring him, "the poor sort of thing a ghost might be," and he hung us up again for a time, while he sought for matches in his pocket and lit and warmed to his cigar.

"I took an advantage," he reflected at last.

We were none of us in a hurry. "A character," he said, "remains just the same character for all that it's been disembodied. That's a thing we too often forget. People with a certain strength or fixity of purpose may have ghosts of a certain strength and fixity of purpose--most haunting ghosts, you know, must be as one-idea'd as monomaniacs and as obstinate as mules to come back again and again. This poor creature wasn't." He suddenly looked up rather queerly, and his eye went round the room. "I say it," he said, "in all kindness, but that is the plain truth of the case. Even at the first glance he struck me as weak."

He punctuated with the help of his cigar.

"I came upon him, you know, in the long passage. His back was towards me and I saw him first. Right off I knew him for a ghost. He was transparent and whitish; clean through his chest I could see the glimmer of the little window at the end. And not only his physique but his attitude struck me as being weak. He looked, you know, as though he didn't know in the slightest whatever he meant to do. One hand was on the panelling and the other fluttered to his mouth. Like--SO!"

"What sort of physique?" said Sanderson.

"Lean. You know that sort of young man's neck that has two great flutings down the back, here and here--so! And a little, meanish head with scrubby hair--And rather bad ears. Shoulders bad, narrower than the hips; turn-down collar, ready-made short jacket, trousers baggy and a little frayed at the heels. That's how he took me.

I came very quietly up the staircase. I did not carry a light, you know--the candles are on the landing table and there is that lamp--and I was in my list slippers, and I saw him as I came up. I stopped dead at that--taking him in. I wasn't a bit afraid. I think that in most of these affairs one is never nearly so afraid or excited as one imagines one would be. I was surprised and interested. I thought, 'Good Lord! Here's a ghost at last! And I haven't believed for a moment in ghosts during the last five-and-twenty years.'"

"Um," said Wish.

"I suppose I wasn't on the landing a moment before he found out I was there. He turned on me sharply, and I saw the face of an immature young man, a weak nose, a scrubby little moustache, a feeble chin. So for an instant we stood--he looking over his shoulder at me and regarded one another. Then he seemed to remember his high calling. He turned round, drew himself up, projected his face, raised his arms, spread his hands in approved ghost fashion--came towards me. As he did so his little jaw dropped, and he emitted a faint, drawn-out 'Boo.' No, it wasn't--not a bit dreadful. I'd dined. I'd had a bottle of champagne, and being all alone, perhaps two or three--perhaps even four or five--whiskies, so I was as solid as rocks and no more frightened than if I'd been assailed by a frog. 'Boo!' I said. 'Nonsense. You don't belong to THIS place. What are you doing here?'

"I could see him wince. 'Boo-oo,' he said.

"'Boo--be hanged! Are you a member?' I said; and just to show I didn't care a pin for him I stepped through a corner of him and made to light my candle. 'Are you a member?' I repeated, looking at him sideways.

"He moved a little so as to stand clear of me, and his bearing became crestfallen. 'No,' he said, in answer to the persistent interrogation of my eye; 'I'm not a member--I'm a ghost.'

"'Well, that doesn't give you the run of the Mermaid Club. Is there any one you want to see, or anything of that sort?' and doing it as steadily as possible for fear that he should mistake the carelessness of whisky for the distraction of fear, I got my candle alight. I turned on him, holding it. 'What are you doing here?' I said.

"He had dropped his hands and stopped his booing, and there he stood, abashed and awkward, the ghost of a weak, silly, aimless young man. 'I'm haunting,' he said.

"'You haven't any business to,' I said in a quiet voice.

"'I'm a ghost,' he said, as if in defence.

"'That may be, but you haven't any business to haunt here. This is a respectable private club; people often stop here with nursemaids and children, and, going about in the careless way you do, some poor little mite could easily come upon you and be scared out of her wits. I suppose you didn't think of that?'

"'No, sir,' he said, 'I didn't.'

"'You should have done. You haven't any claim on the place, have you? Weren't murdered here, or anything of that sort?'

"'None, sir; but I thought as it was old and oak-panelled--'

"That's NO excuse.' I regarded him firmly. 'Your coming here is a mistake,' I said, in a tone of friendly superiority. I feigned to see if I had my matches, and then looked up at him frankly. 'If I were you I wouldn't wait for cock-crow--I'd vanish right away.'

"He looked embarrassed. 'The fact IS, sir--' he began.

"I'd vanish,' I said, driving it home.

"The fact is, sir, that--somehow--I can't.'

"You CAN'T?'

"No, sir. There's something I've forgotten. I've been hanging about here since midnight last night, hiding in the cupboards of the empty bedrooms and things like that. I'm flurried. I've never come haunting before, and it seems to put me out.'

"Put you out?'

"Yes, sir. I've tried to do it several times, and it doesn't come off. There's some little thing has slipped me, and I can't get back.'

"That, you know, rather bowled me over. He looked at me in such an abject way that for the life of me I couldn't keep up quite the high, hectoring vein I had adopted. 'That's queer,' I said, and as I spoke I fancied I heard some one moving about down below. 'Come into my room and tell me more about it,' I said. 'I didn't, of course, understand this,' and I tried to take him by the arm. But, of course, you might as well have tried to take hold of a puff of smoke! I had forgotten my number, I think; anyhow, I remember going into several bedrooms--it was lucky I was the only soul in that wing--until I saw my traps. 'Here we are,' I said, and sat down in the arm-chair; 'sit down and tell me all about it. It seems

to me you have got yourself into a jolly awkward position, old chap.'

"Well, he said he wouldn't sit down! he'd prefer to flit up and down the room if it was all the same to me. And so he did, and in a little while we were deep in a long and serious talk. And presently, you know, something of those whiskies and sodas evaporated out of me, and I began to realise just a little what a thundering rum and weird business it was that I was in. There he was, semi-transparent--the proper conventional phantom, and noiseless except for his ghost of a voice--flitting to and fro in that nice, clean, chintz-hung old bedroom. You could see the gleam of the copper candlesticks through him, and the lights on the brass fender, and the corners of the framed engravings on the wall,--and there he was telling me all about this wretched little life of his that had recently ended on earth. He hadn't a particularly honest face, you know, but being transparent, of course, he couldn't avoid telling the truth."

"Eh?" said Wish, suddenly sitting up in his chair.

"What?" said Clayton.

"Being transparent--couldn't avoid telling the truth--I don't see it," said Wish.

"_I_ don't see it," said Clayton, with inimitable assurance. "But it IS so, I can assure you nevertheless. I don't believe he got once a nail's breadth off the Bible truth. He told me how he had been killed--he went down into a London basement with a candle to look for a leakage of gas--and described himself as a senior English master in a London private school when that release occurred."

"Poor wretch!" said I.

"That's what I thought, and the more he talked the more I thought it. There he was, purposeless in life and purposeless out of it. He talked

of his father and mother and his schoolmaster, and all who had ever been anything to him in the world, meanly. He had been too sensitive, too nervous; none of them had ever valued him properly or understood him, he said. He had never had a real friend in the world, I think; he had never had a success. He had shirked games and failed examinations. 'It's like that with some people,' he said; 'whenever I got into the examination-room or anywhere everything seemed to go.' Engaged to be married of course--to another over-sensitive person, I suppose--when the indiscretion with the gas escape ended his affairs. 'And where are you now?' I asked. 'Not in--?'

"He wasn't clear on that point at all. The impression he gave me was of a sort of vague, intermediate state, a special reserve for souls too non-existent for anything so positive as either sin or virtue. I don't know. He was much too egotistical and unobservant to give me any clear idea of the kind of place, kind of country, there is on the Other Side of Things. Wherever he was, he seems to have fallen in with a set of kindred spirits: ghosts of weak Cockney young men, who were on a footing of Christian names, and among these there was certainly a lot of talk about 'going haunting' and things like that. Yes--going haunting! They seemed to think 'haunting' a tremendous adventure, and most of them funked it all the time. And so primed, you know, he had come."

"But really!" said Wish to the fire.

"These are the impressions he gave me, anyhow," said Clayton, modestly. "I may, of course, have been in a rather uncritical state, but that was the sort of background he gave to himself. He kept flitting up and down, with his thin voice going talking, talking about his wretched self, and never a word of clear, firm statement from first to last. He was thinner and sillier and more pointless than if he had been real and alive. Only then, you know, he would not have been in my bedroom here--if he HAD been alive. I should have kicked him out."

"Of course," said Evans, "there ARE poor mortals like that."

"And there's just as much chance of their having ghosts as the rest of us," I admitted.

"What gave a sort of point to him, you know, was the fact that he did seem within limits to have found himself out. The mess he had made of haunting had depressed him terribly. He had been told it would be a 'lark'; he had come expecting it to be a 'lark,' and here it was, nothing but another failure added to his record! He proclaimed himself an utter out-and-out failure. He said, and I can quite believe it, that he had never tried to do anything all his life that he hadn't made a perfect mess of--and through all the wastes of eternity he never would. If he had had sympathy, perhaps--. He paused at that, and stood regarding me. He remarked that, strange as it might seem to me, nobody, not any one, ever, had given him the amount of sympathy I was doing now. I could see what he wanted straight away, and I determined to head him off at once. I may be a brute, you know, but being the Only Real Friend, the recipient of the confidences of one of these egotistical weaklings, ghost or body, is beyond my physical endurance. I got up briskly. 'Don't you brood on these things too much,' I said. 'The thing you've got to do is to get out of this get out of this--sharp. You pull yourself together and TRY.' 'I can't,' he said. 'You try,' I said, and try he did."

"Try!" said Sanderson. "HOW?"

"Passes," said Clayton.

"Passes?"

"Complicated series of gestures and passes with the hands. That's how he had come in and that's how he had to get out again. Lord! what a business I had!"

"But how could ANY series of passes--?" I began.

"My dear man," said Clayton, turning on me and putting a great emphasis on certain words, "you want EVERYTHING clear. I don't know HOW. All I know is that you DO--that HE did, anyhow, at least. After a fearful time, you know, he got his passes right and suddenly disappeared."

"Did you," said Sanderson, slowly, "observe the passes?"

"Yes," said Clayton, and seemed to think. "It was tremendously queer," he said. "There we were, I and this thin vague ghost, in that silent room, in this silent, empty inn, in this silent little Friday-night town. Not a sound except our voices and a faint panting he made when he swung. There was the bedroom candle, and one candle on the dressing-table alight, that was all--sometimes one or other would flare up into a tall, lean, astonished flame for a space. And queer things happened. 'I can't,' he said; 'I shall never--!' And suddenly he sat down on a little chair at the foot of the bed and began to sob and sob. Lord! what a harrowing, whimpering thing he seemed!

"'You pull yourself together,' I said, and tried to pat him on the back, and . . . my confounded hand went through him! By that time, you know, I wasn't nearly so--massive as I had been on the landing. I got the queerness of it full. I remember snatching back my hand out of him, as it were, with a little thrill, and walking over to the dressing-table. 'You pull yourself together,' I said to him, 'and try.' And in order to encourage and help him I began to try as well."

"What!" said Sanderson, "the passes?"

"Yes, the passes."

"But--" I said, moved by an idea that eluded me for a space.

"This is interesting," said Sanderson, with his finger in his pipe-bowl. "You mean to say this ghost of yours gave away--"

"Did his level best to give away the whole confounded barrier? YES."

"He didn't," said Wish; "he couldn't. Or you'd have gone there too."

"That's precisely it," I said, finding my elusive idea put into words for me.

"That IS precisely it," said Clayton, with thoughtful eyes upon the fire.

For just a little while there was silence.

"And at last he did it?" said Sanderson.

"At last he did it. I had to keep him up to it hard, but he did it at last--rather suddenly. He despaired, we had a scene, and then he got up abruptly and asked me to go through the whole performance, slowly, so that he might see. 'I believe,' he said, 'if I could SEE I should spot what was wrong at once.' And he did. 'I know,' he said. 'What do you know?' said I. 'I know,' he repeated. Then he said, peevishly, 'I CAN'T do it if you look at me--I really CAN'T; it's been that, partly, all along. I'm such a nervous fellow that you put me out.' Well, we had a bit of an argument. Naturally I wanted to see; but he was as obstinate as a mule, and suddenly I had come over as tired as a dog--he tired me out. 'All right,' I said, 'I won't look at you,' and turned towards the mirror, on the wardrobe, by the bed.

He started off very fast. I tried to follow him by looking in the looking-glass, to see just what it was had hung. Round went his arms and his hands, so, and so, and so, and then with a rush came to the last gesture of all--you stand erect and open out your

arms--and so, don't you know, he stood. And then he didn't! He didn't! He wasn't! I wheeled round from the looking-glass to him. There was nothing! I was alone, with the flaring candles and a staggering mind. What had happened? Had anything happened? Had I been dreaming? . . . And then, with an absurd note of finality about it, the clock upon the landing discovered the moment was ripe for striking ONE. So!--Ping! And I was as grave and sober as a judge, with all my champagne and whisky gone into the vast serene. Feeling queer, you know--confoundedly QUEER! Queer! Good Lord!"

He regarded his cigar-ash for a moment. "That's all that happened," he said.

"And then you went to bed?" asked Evans.

"What else was there to do?"

I looked Wish in the eye. We wanted to scoff, and there was something, something perhaps in Clayton's voice and manner, that hampered our desire.

"And about these passes?" said Sanderson.

"I believe I could do them now."

"Oh!" said Sanderson, and produced a penknife and set himself to grub the dottel out of the bowl of his clay.

"Why don't you do them now?" said Sanderson, shutting his pen-knife with a click.

"That's what I'm going to do," said Clayton.

"They won't work," said Evans.

"If they do--" I suggested.

"You know, I'd rather you didn't," said Wish, stretching out his legs.

"Why?" asked Evans.

"I'd rather he didn't," said Wish.

"But he hasn't got 'em right," said Sanderson, plugging too much tobacco in his pipe.

"All the same, I'd rather he didn't," said Wish.

We argued with Wish. He said that for Clayton to go through those gestures was like mocking a serious matter. "But you don't believe--?" I said. Wish glanced at Clayton, who was staring into the fire, weighing something in his mind. "I do--more than half, anyhow, I do," said Wish.

"Clayton," said I, "you're too good a liar for us. Most of it was all right. But that disappearance . . . happened to be convincing. Tell us, it's a tale of cock and bull."

He stood up without heeding me, took the middle of the hearthrug, and faced me. For a moment he regarded his feet thoughtfully, and then for all the rest of the time his eyes were on the opposite wall, with an intent expression. He raised his two hands slowly to the level of his eyes and so began. . . .

Now, Sanderson is a Freemason, a member of the lodge of the Four Kings, which devotes itself so ably to the study and elucidation of all the mysteries of Masonry past and present, and among the students of this lodge Sanderson is by no means the least. He followed Clayton's motions with a singular interest in his reddish eye. "That's not bad," he said, when it was done. "You really do, you know, put things together, Clayton, in a most amazing fashion. But there's one little detail out."

"I know," said Clayton. "I believe I could tell you which."

"Well?"

"This," said Clayton, and did a queer little twist and writhing and thrust of the hands.

"Yes."

"That, you know, was what HE couldn't get right," said Clayton. "But how do YOU--?"

"Most of this business, and particularly how you invented it, I don't understand at all," said Sanderson, "but just that phase--I do." He reflected. "These happen to be a series of gestures--connected with a certain branch of esoteric Masonry. Probably you know. Or else--HOW?" He reflected still further. "I do not see I can do any harm in telling you just the proper twist. After all, if you know, you know; if you don't, you don't."

"I know nothing," said Clayton, "except what the poor devil let out last night."

"Well, anyhow," said Sanderson, and placed his churchwarden very carefully upon the shelf over the fireplace. Then very rapidly he gesticulated with his hands.

"So?" said Clayton, repeating.

"So," said Sanderson, and took his pipe in hand again.

"Ah, NOW," said Clayton, "I can do the whole thing--right."

He stood up before the waning fire and smiled at us all. But I think

there was just a little hesitation in his smile. "If I begin--"
he said.

"I wouldn't begin," said Wish.

"It's all right!" said Evans. "Matter is indestructible. You don't think any jiggery-pokery of this sort is going to snatch Clayton into the world of shades. Not it! You may try, Clayton, so far as I'm concerned, until your arms drop off at the wrists."

"I don't believe that," said Wish, and stood up and put his arm on Clayton's shoulder. "You've made me half believe in that story somehow, and I don't want to see the thing done!"

"Goodness!" said I, "here's Wish frightened!"

"I am," said Wish, with real or admirably feigned intensity. "I believe that if he goes through these motions right he'll GO."

"He'll not do anything of the sort," I cried. "There's only one way out of this world for men, and Clayton is thirty years from that. Besides . . . And such a ghost! Do you think--?"

Wish interrupted me by moving. He walked out from among our chairs and stopped beside the tole and stood there. "Clayton," he said, "you're a fool."

Clayton, with a humorous light in his eyes, smiled back at him. "Wish," he said, "is right and all you others are wrong. I shall go. I shall get to the end of these passes, and as the last swish whistles through the air, Presto!--this hearthrug will be vacant, the room will be blank amazement, and a respectably dressed gentleman of fifteen stone will plump into the world of shades. I'm certain. So will you be. I decline to argue further. Let the thing be tried."

"NO," said Wish, and made a step and ceased, and Clayton raised his hands once more to repeat the spirit's passing.

By that time, you know, we were all in a state of tension--largely because of the behaviour of Wish. We sat all of us with our eyes on Clayton--I, at least, with a sort of tight, stiff feeling about me as though from the back of my skull to the middle of my thighs my body had been changed to steel. And there, with a gravity that was imperturbably serene, Clayton bowed and swayed and waved his hands and arms before us. As he drew towards the end one piled up, one tingled in one's teeth. The last gesture, I have said, was to swing the arms out wide open, with the face held up. And when at last he swung out to this closing gesture I ceased even to breathe. It was ridiculous, of course, but you know that ghost-story feeling. It was after dinner, in a queer, old shadowy house. Would he, after all--?

There he stood for one stupendous moment, with his arms open and his upturned face, assured and bright, in the glare of the hanging lamp. We hung through that moment as if it were an age, and then came from all of us something that was half a sigh of infinite relief and half a reassuring "NO!" For visibly--he wasn't going. It was all nonsense. He had told an idle story, and carried it almost to conviction, that was all! . . . And then in that moment the face of Clayton, changed.

It changed. It changed as a lit house changes when its lights are suddenly extinguished. His eyes were suddenly eyes that were fixed, his smile was frozen on his lips, and he stood there still. He stood there, very gently swaying.

That moment, too, was an age. And then, you know, chairs were scraping, things were falling, and we were all moving. His knees seemed to give, and he fell forward, and Evans rose and caught him in his arms. . . .

It stunned us all. For a minute I suppose no one said a coherent thing. We believed it, yet could not believe it. . . . I came out

of a muddled stupefaction to find myself kneeling beside him, and his vest and shirt were torn open, and Sanderson's hand lay on his heart. . . .

Well--the simple fact before us could very well wait our convenience; there was no hurry for us to comprehend. It lay there for an hour; it lies athwart my memory, black and amazing still, to this day. Clayton had, indeed, passed into the world that lies so near to and so far from our own, and he had gone thither by the only road that mortal man may take. But whether he did indeed pass there by that poor ghost's incantation, or whether he was stricken suddenly by apoplexy in the midst of an idle tale--as the coroner's jury would have us believe--is no matter for my judging; it is just one of those inexplicable riddles that must remain unsolved until the final solution of all things shall come. All I certainly know is that, in the very moment, in the very instant, of concluding those passes, he changed, and staggered, and fell down before us--dead!

7. JIMMY GOGGLES THE GOD

"It isn't every one who's been a god," said the sunburnt man. "But it's happened to me. Among other things."

I intimated my sense of his condescension.

"It don't leave much for ambition, does it?" said the sunburnt man.

"I was one of those men who were saved from the Ocean Pioneer. Gummy! how time flies! It's twenty years ago. I doubt if you'll remember anything of the Ocean Pioneer?"

The name was familiar, and I tried to recall when and where I had read it. The Ocean Pioneer? "Something about gold dust," I said vaguely, "but the precise--"

"That's it," he said. "In a beastly little channel she hadn't no business in--dodging pirates. It was before they'd put the kybosh on that business. And there'd been volcanoes or something and all the rocks was wrong. There's places about by Soona where you fair have to follow the rocks about to see where they're going next. Down she went in twenty fathoms before you could have dealt for whist, with fifty thousand pounds worth of gold aboard, it was said, in one form or another."

"Survivors?"

"Three."

"I remember the case now," I said. "There was something about salvage--"

But at the word salvage the sunburnt man exploded into language so extraordinarily horrible that I stopped aghast. He came down to more ordinary swearing, and pulled himself up abruptly. "Excuse me,"

he said, "but--salvage!"

He leant over towards me. "I was in that job," he said. "Tried to make myself a rich man, and got made a god instead. I've got my feelings--

"It ain't all jam being a god," said the sunburnt man, and for some time conversed by means of such pithy but unprogressive axioms. At last he took up his tale again.

"There was me," said the sunburnt man, "and a seaman named Jacobs, and Always, the mate of the Ocean Pioneer. And him it was that set the whole thing going. I remember him now, when we was in the jolly-boat, suggesting it all to our minds just by one sentence. He was a wonderful hand at suggesting things. 'There was forty thousand pounds,' he said, 'on that ship, and it's for me to say just where she went down.' It didn't need much brains to tumble to that. And he was the leader from the first to the last. He got hold of the Sanderses and their brig; they were brothers, and the brig was the Pride of Banya, and he it was bought the diving-dress-- a second-hand one with a compressed air apparatus instead of pumping. He'd have done the diving too, if it hadn't made him sick going down. And the salvage people were mucking about with a chart he'd cooked up, as solemn as could be, at Starr Race, a hundred and twenty miles away.

"I can tell you we was a happy lot aboard that brig, jokes and drink and bright hopes all the time. It all seemed so neat and clean and straightforward, and what rough chaps call a 'cert.' And we used to speculate how the other blessed lot, the proper salvagers, who'd started two days before us, were getting on, until our sides fairly ached. We all messed together in the Sanderses' cabin--it was a curious crew, all officers and no men--and there stood the diving-dress waiting its turn. Young Sanders was a humorous sort of chap, and there certainly was something funny in the confounded thing's great fat head and its stare, and he made us see it too. 'Jimmie Goggles,' he used to call it, and talk to it like a Christian.

Asked if he was married, and how Mrs. Goggles was, and all the little Goggleses. Fit to make you split. And every blessed day all of us used to drink the health of Jimmy Goggles in rum, and unscrew his eye and pour a glass of rum in him, until, instead of that nasty mackintoshiness, he smelt as nice in his inside as a cask of rum. It was jolly times we had in those days, I can tell you--little suspecting, poor chaps! what was a-coming.

"We weren't going to throw away our chances by any blessed hurry, you know, and we spent a whole day sounding our way towards where the Ocean Pioneer had gone down, right between two chunks of ropy grey rock--lava rocks that rose nearly out of the water. We had to lay off about half a mile to get a safe anchorage, and there was a thundering row who should stop on board. And there she lay just as she had gone down, so that you could see the top of the masts that was still standing perfectly distinctly. The row ending in all coming in the boat. I went down in the diving-dress on Friday morning directly it was light.

"What a surprise it was! I can see it all now quite distinctly. It was a queer-looking place, and the light was just coming. People over here think every blessed place in the tropics is a flat shore and palm trees and surf, bless 'em! This place, for instance, wasn't a bit that way. Not common rocks they were, undermined by waves; but great curved banks like ironwork cinder heaps, with green slime below, and thorny shrubs and things just waving upon them here and there, and the water glassy calm and clear, and showing you a kind of dirty grey-black shine, with huge flaring red-brown weeds spreading motionless, and crawling and darting things going through it. And far away beyond the ditches and pools and the heaps was a forest on the mountain flank, growing again after the fires and cinder showers of the last eruption. And the other way forest, too, and a kind of broken--what is it?--ambytheatre of black and rusty cinders rising out of it all, and the sea in a kind of bay in the middle.

"The dawn, I say, was just coming, and there wasn't much colour about things, and not a human being but ourselves anywhere in sight up or down the channel. Except the Pride of Banya, lying out beyond a lump of rocks towards the line of the sea.

"Not a human being in sight," he repeated, and paused.

"I don't know where they came from, not a bit. And we were feeling so safe that we were all alone that poor young Sanders was a-singing. I was in Jimmy Goggles, all except the helmet. 'Easy,' says Always, 'there's her mast.' And after I'd had just one squint over the gunwale, I caught up the bogey and almost tipped out as old Sanders brought the boat round. When the windows were screwed and everything was all right, I shut the valve from the air belt in order to help my sinking, and jumped overboard, feet foremost--for we hadn't a ladder. I left the boat pitching, and all of them staring down into the water after me, as my head sank down into the weeds and blackness that lay about the mast. I suppose nobody, not the most cautious chap in the world, would have bothered about a lookout at such a desolate place. It stunk of solitude.

"Of course you must understand that I was a greenhorn at diving. None of us were divers. We'd had to muck about with the thing to get the way of it, and this was the first time I'd been deep. It feels damnable. Your ears hurt beastly. I don't know if you've ever hurt yourself yawning or sneezing, but it takes you like that, only ten times worse. And a pain over the eyebrows here--splitting--and a feeling like influenza in the head. And it isn't all heaven in your lungs and things. And going down feels like the beginning of a lift, only it keeps on. And you can't turn your head to see what's above you, and you can't get a fair squint at what's happening to your feet without bending down something painful. And being deep it was dark, let alone the blackness of the ashes and mud that formed the bottom. It was like going down out of the dawn back into the night, so to speak.

"The mast came up like a ghost out of the black, and then a lot of fishes, and then a lot of flapping red seaweed, and then whack I came with a kind of dull bang on the deck of the Ocean Pioneer, and the fishes that had been feeding on the dead rose about me like a swarm of flies from road stuff in summer time. I turned on the compressed air again--for the suit was a bit thick and mackintoshery after all, in spite of the rum--and stood recovering myself. It struck coolish down there, and that helped take off the stuffiness a bit.

"When I began to feel easier, I started looking about me. It was an extraordinary sight. Even the light was extraordinary, a kind of reddy-coloured twilight, on account of the streamers of seaweed that floated up on either side of the ship. And far overhead just a moony, deep green-blue. The deck of the ship, except for a slight list to starboard, was level, and lay all dark and long between the weeds, clear except where the masts had snapped when she rolled, and vanishing into black night towards the forecastle. There wasn't any dead on the decks, most were in the weeds alongside, I suppose; but afterwards I found two skeletons lying in the passengers' cabins, where death had come to them. It was curious to stand on that deck and recognise it all, bit by bit; a place against the rail where I'd been fond of smoking by starlight, and the corner where an old chap from Sydney used to flirt with a widow we had aboard. A comfortable couple they'd been, only a month ago, and now you couldn't have got a meal for a baby crab off either of them.

"I've always had a bit of a philosophical turn, and I dare say I spent the best part of five minutes in such thoughts before I went below to find where the blessed dust was stored. It was slow work hunting, feeling it was for the most part, pitchy dark, with confusing blue gleams down the companion. And there were things moving about, a dab at my glass once, and once a pinch at my leg. Crabs, I expect. I kicked a lot of loose stuff that puzzled me, and stooped and picked up something all knobs and spikes. What do you think?

Backbone! But I never had any particular feeling for bones. We had talked the affair over pretty thoroughly, and Always knew just where the stuff was stowed. I found it that trip. I lifted a box one end an inch or more."

He broke off in his story. "I've lifted it," he said, "as near as that! Forty thousand pounds worth of pure gold! Gold! I shouted inside my helmet as a kind of cheer and hurt my ears. I was getting confounded stuffy and tired by this time--I must have been down twenty-five minutes or more--and I thought this was good enough. I went up the companion again, and as my eyes came up flush with the deck, a thundering great crab gave a kind of hysterical jump and went scuttling off sideways. Quite a start it gave me. I stood up clear on deck and shut the valve behind the helmet to let the air accumulate to carry me up again--I noticed a kind of whacking from above, as though they were hitting the water with an oar, but I didn't look up. I fancied they were signalling me to come up.

"And then something shot down by me--something heavy, and stood a-quiver in the planks. I looked, and there was a long knife I'd seen young Sanders handling. Thinks I, he's dropped it, and I was still calling him this kind of fool and that--for it might have hurt me serious--when I began to lift and drive up towards the daylight. Just about the level of the top spars of the Ocean Pioneer, whack! I came against something sinking down, and a boot knocked in front of my helmet. Then something else, struggling frightful. It was a big weight atop of me, whatever it was, and moving and twisting about. I'd have thought it a big octopus, or some such thing, if it hadn't been for the boot. But octopuses don't wear boots. It was all in a moment, of course. I felt myself sinking down again, and I threw my arms about to keep steady, and the whole lot rolled free of me and shot down as I went up--"

He paused.

"I saw young Sanders's face, over a naked black shoulder, and a spear driven clean through his neck, and out of his mouth and neck what looked like spirts of pink smoke in the water. And down they went clutching one another, and turning over, and both too far gone to leave go. And in another second my helmet came a whack, fit to split, against the niggers' canoe. It was niggers! Two canoes full.

"It was lively times, I tell you! Overboard came Always with three spears in him. There was the legs of three or four black chaps kicking about me in the water. I couldn't see much, but I saw the game was up at a glance, gave my valve a tremendous twist, and went bubbling down again after poor Always, in as awful a state of scare and astonishment as you can well imagine. I passed young Sanders and the nigger going up again and struggling still a bit, and in another moment I was standing in the dim again on the deck of the Ocean Pioneer.

"'Gummy,' thinks I, 'here's a fix!' Niggers? At first I couldn't see anything for it but Stifle below or Stabs above. I didn't properly understand how much air there was to last me, but I didn't feel like standing very much more of it down below. I was hot and frightfully heady--quite apart from the blue funk I was in. We'd never repined with these beastly natives, filthy Papuan beasts. It wasn't any good, coming up where I was, but I had to do something. On the spur of the moment, I clambered over the side of the brig and landed among the weeds, and set off through the darkness as fast as I could. I just stopped once and knelt, and twisted back my head in the helmet and had a look up. It was a most extraordinary bright green-blue above, and the two canoes and the boat floating there very small and distant like a kind of twisted H. And it made me feel sick to squint up at it, and think what the pitching and swaying of the three meant.

"It was just about the most horrible ten minutes I ever had, blundering about in that darkness, pressure something awful, like being buried in sand, pain across the chest, sick with funk, and breathing nothing

as it seemed but the smell of rum and mackintosh. Gummy! After a bit, I found myself going up a steepish sort of slope. I had another squint to see if anything was visible of the canoes and boats, and then kept on. I stopped with my head a foot from the surface, and tried to see where I was going, but, of course, nothing was to be seen but the reflection of the bottom. Then out I dashed like knocking my head through a mirror. Directly I got my eyes out of the water, I saw I'd come up a kind of beach near the forest. I had a look round, but the natives and the brig were both hidden by a big, hummucky heap of twisted lava, the born fool in me suggested a run for the woods. I didn't take the helmet off, but eased open one of the windows, and, after a bit of a pant, went on out of the water. You'd hardly imagine how clean and light the air tasted.

"Of course, with four inches of lead in your boot soles, and your head in a copper knob the size of a football, and been thirty-five minutes under water, you don't break any records running. I ran like a ploughboy going to work. And half way to the trees I saw a dozen niggers or more, coming out in a gaping, astonished sort of way to meet me.

"I just stopped dead, and cursed myself for all the fools out of London. I had about as much chance of cutting back to the water as a turned turtle. I just screwed up my window again to leave my hands free, and waited for them. There wasn't anything else for me to do.

"But they didn't come on very much. I began to suspect why. 'Jimmy Goggles,' I says, 'it's your beauty does it.' I was inclined to be a little light-headed, I think, with all these dangers about and the change in the pressure of the blessed air. 'Who're ye staring at?' I said, as if the savages could hear me. 'What d'ye take me for? I'm hanged if I don't give you something to stare at,' I said, and with that I screwed up the escape valve and turned on the compressed air from the belt, until I was swelled out like a blown frog. Regular imposing it must have been. I'm blessed if they'd come on a step;

and presently one and then another went down on their hands and knees. They didn't know what to make of me, and they was doing the extra polite, which was very wise and reasonable of them. I had half a mind to edge back seaward and cut and run, but it seemed too hopeless. A step back and they'd have been after me. And out of sheer desperation I began to march towards them up the beach, with slow, heavy steps, and waving my blown-out arms about, in a dignified manner. And inside of me I was singing as small as a tomtit.

"But there's nothing like a striking appearance to help a man over a difficulty,--I've found that before and since. People like ourselves, who're up to diving-dresses by the time we're seven, can scarcely imagine the effect of one on a simple-minded savage. One or two of these niggers cut and run, the others started in a great hurry trying to knock their brains out on the ground. And on I went as slow and solemn and silly-looking and artful as a jobbing plumber. It was evident they took me for something immense.

"Then up jumped one and began pointing, making extraordinary gestures to me as he did so, and all the others began sharing their attention between me and something out at sea. 'What's the matter now?' I said. I turned slowly on account of my dignity, and there I saw, coming round a point, the poor old *Pride of Banya* towed by a couple of canoes. The sight fairly made me sick. But they evidently expected some recognition, so I waved my arms in a striking sort of non-committal manner. And then I turned and stalked on towards the trees again. At that time I was praying like mad, I remember, over and over again: 'Lord help me through with it! Lord help me through with it!' It's only fools who know nothing of dangers can afford to laugh at praying.

"But these niggers weren't going to let me walk through and away like that. They started a kind of bowing dance about me, and sort of pressed me to take a pathway that lay through the trees. It was clear to me they didn't take me for a British citizen, whatever else they thought of me, and for my own part I was never less anxious

to own up to the old country.

"You'd hardly believe it, perhaps, unless you're familiar with savages, but these poor misguided, ignorant creatures took me straight to their kind of joss place to present me to the blessed old black stone there. By this time I was beginning to sort of realise the depth of their ignorance, and directly I set eyes on this deity I took my cue. I started a baritone howl, 'wow-wow,' very long on one note, and began waving my arms about a lot, and then very slowly and ceremoniously turned their image over on its side and sat down on it. I wanted to sit down badly, for diving-dresses ain't much wear in the tropics. Or, to put it different like, they're a sight too much. It took away their breath, I could see, my sitting on their joss, but in less time than a minute they made up their minds and were hard at work worshipping me. And I can tell you I felt a bit relieved to see things turning out so well, in spite of the weight on my shoulders and feet.

"But what made me anxious was what the chaps in the canoes might think when they came back. If they'd seen me in the boat before I went down, and without the helmet on--for they might have been spying and hiding since over night--they would very likely take a different view from the others. I was in a deuce of a stew about that for hours, as it seemed, until the shindy of the arrival began.

"But they took it down--the whole blessed village took it down. At the cost of sitting up stiff and stern, as much like those sitting Egyptian images one sees as I could manage, for pretty nearly twelve hours, I should guess at least, on end, I got over it. You'd hardly think what it meant in that heat and stink. I don't think any of them dreamt of the man inside. I was just a wonderful leathery great joss that had come up with luck out of the water. But the fatigue! the heat! the beastly closeness! the mackintoshiness and the rum! and the fuss! They lit a stinking fire on a kind of lava slab there was before me, and brought in a lot of gory muck--the worst parts

of what they were feasting on outside, the Beasts--and burnt it all in my honour. I was getting a bit hungry, but I understand now how gods manage to do without eating, what with the smell of burnt offerings about them. And they brought in a lot of the stuff they'd got off the brig and, among other stuff, what I was a bit relieved to see, the kind of pneumatic pump that was used for the compressed air affair, and then a lot of chaps and girls came in and danced about me something disgraceful. It's extraordinary the different ways different people have of showing respect. If I'd had a hatchet handy I'd have gone for the lot of them--they made me feel that wild. All this time I sat as stiff as company, not knowing anything better to do. And at last, when nightfall came, and the wattle joss-house place got a bit too shadowy for their taste--all these here savages are afraid of the dark, you know--and I started a sort of 'Moo' noise, they built big bonfires outside and left me alone in peace in the darkness of my hut, free to unscrew my windows a bit and think things over, and feel just as bad as I liked. And, Lord! I was sick.

"I was weak and hungry, and my mind kept on behaving like a beetle on a pin, tremendous activity and nothing done at the end of it. Come round just where it was before. There was sorrowing for the other chaps, beastly drunkards certainly, but not deserving such a fate, and young Sanders with the spear through his neck wouldn't go out of my mind. There was the treasure down there in the Ocean Pioneer, and how one might get it and hide it somewhere safer, and get away and come back for it. And there was the puzzle where to get anything to eat. I tell you I was fair rambling. I was afraid to ask by signs for food, for fear of behaving too human, and so there I sat and hungered until very near the dawn. Then the village got a bit quiet, and I couldn't stand it any longer, and I went out and got some stuff like artichokes in a bowl and some sour milk. What was left of these I put away among the other offerings, just to give them a hint of my tastes. And in the morning they came to worship, and found me sitting up stiff and respectable on their previous god, just as they'd left me overnight. I'd got my back against the central pillar

of the hut, and, practically, I was asleep. And that's how I became a god among the heathen--a false god no doubt, and blasphemous, but one can't always pick and choose.

"Now, I don't want to crack myself up as a god beyond my merits, but I must confess that while I was god to these people they was extraordinary successful. I don't say there's anything in it, mind you. They won a battle with another tribe--I got a lot of offerings I didn't want through it--they had wonderful fishing, and their crop of pourra was exceptional fine. And they counted the capture of the brig among the benefits I brought 'em. I must say I don't think that was a poor record for a perfectly new hand. And, though perhaps you'd scarcely credit it, I was the tribal god of those beastly savages for pretty nearly four months. . . .

"What else could I do, man? But I didn't wear that diving-dress all the time. I made 'em rig me up a sort of holy of holies, and a deuce of a time I had too, making them understand what it was I wanted them to do. That indeed was the great difficulty--making them understand my wishes. I couldn't let myself down by talking their lingo badly--even if I'd been able to speak at all--and I couldn't go flapping a lot of gestures at them. So I drew pictures in sand and sat down beside them and hooted like one o'clock. Sometimes they did the things I wanted all right, and sometimes they did them all wrong. They was always very willing, certainly. All the while I was puzzling how I was to get the confounded business settled. Every night before the dawn I used to march out in full rig and go off to a place where I could see the channel in which the Ocean Pioneer lay sunk, and once even, one moonlight night, I tried to walk out to her, but the weeds and rocks and dark clean beat me. I didn't get back till full day, and then I found all those silly niggers out on the beach praying their sea-god to return to them. I was that vexed and tired, messing and tumbling about, and coming up and going down again, I could have punched their silly heads all round when they started rejoicing. I'm hanged if I like so much ceremony.

"And then came the missionary. That missionary! It was in the afternoon, and I was sitting in state in my outer temple place, sitting on that old black stone of theirs when he came. I heard a row outside and jabbering, and then his voice speaking to an interpreter.

'They worship stocks and stones,' he said, and I knew what was up, in a flash. I had one of my windows out for comfort, and I sang out straight away on the spur of the moment. 'Stocks and stones!' I says.

'You come inside,' I says, 'and I'll punch your blooming head.'

There was a kind of silence and more jabbering, and in he came, Bible in hand, after the manner of them--a little sandy chap in specks and a pith helmet. I flatter myself that me sitting there in the shadows, with my copper head and my big goggles, struck him a bit of a heap at first. 'Well,' I says, 'how's the trade in calico?' for I don't hold with missionaries.

"I had a lark with that missionary. He was a raw hand, and quite outclassed with a man like me. He gasped out who was I, and I told him to read the inscription at my feet if he wanted to know. Down he goes to read, and his interpreter, being of course as superstitious as any of them, took it as an act of worship and plumped down like a shot. All my people gave a howl of triumph, and there wasn't any more business to be done in my village after that journey, not by the likes of him.

"But, of course, I was a fool to choke him off like that. If I'd had any sense I should have told him straight away of the treasure and taken him into Co. I've no doubt he'd have come into Co. A child, with a few hours to think it over, could have seen the connection between my diving-dress and the loss of the Ocean Pioneer. A week after he left I went out one morning and saw the Motherhood, the salver's ship from Starr Race, towing up the channel and sounding. The whole blessed game was up, and all my trouble thrown away.

Gummy!

How wild I felt! And guying it in that stinking silly dress! Four

months!"

The sunburnt man's story degenerated again. "Think of it," he said, when he emerged to linguistic purity once more. "Forty thousand pounds worth of gold."

"Did the little missionary come back?" I asked.

"Oh, yes! Bless him! And he pledged his reputation there was a man inside the god, and started out to see as much with tremendous ceremony. But there wasn't--he got sold again. I always did hate scenes and explanations, and long before he came I was out of it all--going home to Banya along the coast, hiding in bushes by day, and thieving food from the villages by night. Only weapon, a spear. No clothes, no money. Nothing. My face was my fortune, as the saying is. And just a squeak of eight thousand pounds of gold--fifth share. But the natives cut up rusty, thank goodness, because they thought it was him had driven their luck away."

8. THE NEW ACCELERATOR

Certainly, if ever a man found a guinea when he was looking for a pin it is my good friend Professor Gibberne. I have heard before of investigators overshooting the mark, but never quite to the extent that he has done. He has really, this time at any rate, without any touch of exaggeration in the phrase, found something to revolutionise human life. And that when he was simply seeking an all-round nervous stimulant to bring languid people up to the stresses of these pushful days. I have tasted the stuff now several times, and I cannot do better than describe the effect the thing had on me. That there are astonishing experiences in store for all in search of new sensations will become apparent enough.

Professor Gibberne, as many people know, is my neighbour in Folkestone. Unless my memory plays me a trick, his portrait at various ages has already appeared in *The Strand Magazine*--I think late in 1899; but I am unable to look it up because I have lent that volume to some one who has never sent it back. The reader may, perhaps, recall the high forehead and the singularly long black eyebrows that give such a Mephistophelian touch to his face. He occupies one of those pleasant little detached houses in the mixed style that make the western end of the Upper Sandgate Road so interesting. His is the one with the Flemish gables and the Moorish portico, and it is in the little room with the mullioned bay window that he works when he is down here, and in which of an evening we have so often smoked and talked together. He is a mighty jester, but, besides, he likes to talk to me about his work; he is one of those men who find a help and stimulus in talking, and so I have been able to follow the conception of the New Accelerator right up from a very early stage. Of course, the greater portion of his experimental work is not done in Folkestone, but in Gower Street, in the fine new laboratory next to the hospital that he has been the first to use.

As every one knows, or at least as all intelligent people know,

the special department in which Gibberne has gained so great and deserved a reputation among physiologists is the action of drugs upon the nervous system. Upon soporifics, sedatives, and anaesthetics he is, I am told, unequalled. He is also a chemist of considerable eminence, and I suppose in the subtle and complex jungle of riddles that centres about the ganglion cell and the axis fibre there are little cleared places of his making, little glades of illumination, that, until he sees fit to publish his results, are still inaccessible to every other living man. And in the last few years he has been particularly assiduous upon this question of nervous stimulants, and already, before the discovery of the New Accelerator, very successful with them. Medical science has to thank him for at least three distinct and absolutely safe invigorators of unrivalled value to practising men. In cases of exhaustion the preparation known as Gibberne's B Syrup has, I suppose, saved more lives already than any lifeboat round the coast.

"But none of these little things begin to satisfy me yet," he told me nearly a year ago. "Either they increase the central energy without affecting the nerves or they simply increase the available energy by lowering the nervous conductivity; and all of them are unequal and local in their operation. One wakes up the heart and viscera and leaves the brain stupefied, one gets at the brain champagne fashion and does nothing good for the solar plexus, and what I want--and what, if it's an earthly possibility, I mean to have--is a stimulant that stimulates all round, that wakes you up for a time from the crown of your head to the tip of your great toe, and makes you go two--or even three--to everybody else's one. Eh? That's the thing I'm after."

"It would tire a man," I said.

"Not a doubt of it. And you'd eat double or treble--and all that. But just think what the thing would mean. Imagine yourself with a little phial like this"--he held up a little bottle of green glass

and marked his points with it--"and in this precious phial is the power to think twice as fast, move twice as quickly, do twice as much work in a given time as you could otherwise do."

"But is such a thing possible?"

"I believe so. If it isn't, I've wasted my time for a year. These various preparations of the hypophosphites, for example, seem to show that something of the sort . . . Even if it was only one and a half times as fast it would do."

"It WOULD do," I said.

"If you were a statesman in a corner, for example, time rushing up against you, something urgent to be done, eh?"

"He could dose his private secretary," I said.

"And gain--double time. And think if YOU, for example, wanted to finish a book."

"Usually," I said, "I wish I'd never begun 'em."

"Or a doctor, driven to death, wants to sit down and think out a case. Or a barrister--or a man cramming for an examination."

"Worth a guinea a drop," said I, "and more to men like that."

"And in a duel, again," said Gibberne, "where it all depends on your quickness in pulling the trigger."

"Or in fencing," I echoed.

"You see," said Gibberne, "if I get it as an all-round thing it will really do you no harm at all--except perhaps to an infinitesimal

degree it brings you nearer old age. You will just have lived twice to other people's once--"

"I suppose," I meditated, "in a duel--it would be fair?"

"That's a question for the seconds," said Gibberne.

I harked back further. "And you really think such a thing IS possible?" I said.

"As possible," said Gibberne, and glanced at something that went throbbing by the window, "as a motor-bus. As a matter of fact--"

He paused and smiled at me deeply, and tapped slowly on the edge of his desk with the green phial. "I think I know the stuff. . . .

Already I've got something coming." The nervous smile upon his face betrayed the gravity of his revelation. He rarely talked of his actual experimental work unless things were very near the end. "And it may be, it may be--I shouldn't be surprised--it may even do the thing at a greater rate than twice."

"It will be rather a big thing," I hazarded.

"It will be, I think, rather a big thing."

But I don't think he quite knew what a big thing it was to be, for all that.

I remember we had several talks about the stuff after that. "The New Accelerator" he called it, and his tone about it grew more confident on each occasion. Sometimes he talked nervously of unexpected physiological results its use might have, and then he would get a little unhappy; at others he was frankly mercenary, and we debated long and anxiously how the preparation might be turned to commercial account. "It's a good thing," said Gibberne, "a tremendous thing.

I know I'm giving the world something, and I think it only reasonable we should expect the world to pay. The dignity of science is all very well, but I think somehow I must have the monopoly of the stuff for, say, ten years. I don't see why ALL the fun in life should go to the dealers in ham."

My own interest in the coming drug certainly did not wane in the time. I have always had a queer little twist towards metaphysics in my mind. I have always been given to paradoxes about space and time, and it seemed to me that Gibberne was really preparing no less than the absolute acceleration of life. Suppose a man repeatedly dosed with such a preparation: he would live an active and record life indeed, but he would be an adult at eleven, middle-aged at twenty-five, and by thirty well on the road to senile decay. It seemed to me that so far Gibberne was only going to do for any one who took his drug exactly what Nature has done for the Jews and Orientals, who are men in their teens and aged by fifty, and quicker in thought and act than we are all the time. The marvel of drugs has always been great to my mind; you can madden a man, calm a man, make him incredibly strong and alert or a helpless log, quicken this passion and allay that, all by means of drugs, and here was a new miracle to be added to this strange armoury of phials the doctors use! But Gibberne was far too eager upon his technical points to enter very keenly into my aspect of the question.

It was the 7th or 8th of August when he told me the distillation that would decide his failure or success for a time was going forward as we talked, and it was on the 10th that he told me the thing was done and the New Accelerator a tangible reality in the world. I met him as I was going up the Sandgate Hill towards Folkestone--I think I was going to get my hair cut, and he came hurrying down to meet me--I suppose he was coming to my house to tell me at once of his success. I remember that his eyes were unusually bright and his face flushed, and I noted even then the swift alacrity of his step.

"It's done," he cried, and gripped my hand, speaking very fast; "it's more than done. Come up to my house and see."

"Really?"

"Really!" he shouted. "Incredibly! Come up and see."

"And it does--twice?"

"It does more, much more. It scares me. Come up and see the stuff. Taste it! Try it! It's the most amazing stuff on earth." He gripped my arm and, walking at such a pace that he forced me into a trot, went shouting with me up the hill. A whole char-a-banc-ful of people turned and stared at us in unison after the manner of people in chars-a-banc. It was one of those hot, clear days that Folkestone sees so much of, every colour incredibly bright and every outline hard. There was a breeze, of course, but not so much breeze as sufficed under these conditions to keep me cool and dry. I panted for mercy.

"I'm not walking fast, am I?" cried Gibberne, and slackened his pace to a quick march.

"You've been taking some of this stuff," I puffed.

"No," he said. "At the utmost a drop of water that stood in a beaker from which I had washed out the last traces of the stuff. I took some last night, you know. But that is ancient history, now."

"And it goes twice?" I said, nearing his doorway in a grateful perspiration.

"It goes a thousand times, many thousand times!" cried Gibberne, with a dramatic gesture, flinging open his Early English carved oak gate.

"Phew!" said I, and followed him to the door.

"I don't know how many times it goes," he said, with his latch-key in his hand.

"And you--"

"It throws all sorts of light on nervous physiology, it kicks the theory of vision into a perfectly new shape! . . . Heaven knows how many thousand times. We'll try all that after--The thing is to try the stuff now."

"Try the stuff?" I said, as we went along the passage.

"Rather," said Gibberne, turning on me in his study. "There it is in that little green phial there! Unless you happen to be afraid?"

I am a careful man by nature, and only theoretically adventurous. I WAS afraid. But on the other hand there is pride.

"Well," I haggled. "You say you've tried it?"

"I've tried it," he said, "and I don't look hurt by it, do I? I don't even look livery and I FEEL--"

I sat down. "Give me the potion," I said. "If the worst comes to the worst it will save having my hair cut, and that I think is one of the most hateful duties of a civilised man. How do you take the mixture?"

"With water," said Gibberne, whacking down a carafe.

He stood up in front of his desk and regarded me in his easy chair; his manner was suddenly affected by a touch of the Harley Street specialist. "It's rum stuff, you know," he said.

I made a gesture with my hand.

"I must warn you in the first place as soon as you've got it down to shut your eyes, and open them very cautiously in a minute or so's time. One still sees. The sense of vision is a question of length of vibration, and not of multitude of impacts; but there's a kind of shock to the retina, a nasty giddy confusion just at the time, if the eyes are open. Keep 'em shut."

"Shut," I said. "Good!"

"And the next thing is, keep still. Don't begin to whack about. You may fetch something a nasty rap if you do. Remember you will be going several thousand times faster than you ever did before, heart, lungs, muscles, brain--everything--and you will hit hard without knowing it. You won't know it, you know. You'll feel just as you do now. Only everything in the world will seem to be going ever so many thousand times slower than it ever went before. That's what makes it so deuced queer."

"Lor'," I said. "And you mean--"

"You'll see," said he, and took up a little measure. He glanced at the material on his desk. "Glasses," he said, "water. All here. Mustn't take too much for the first attempt."

The little phial glucked out its precious contents.

"Don't forget what I told you," he said, turning the contents of the measure into a glass in the manner of an Italian waiter measuring whisky. "Sit with the eyes tightly shut and in absolute stillness for two minutes," he said. "Then you will hear me speak."

He added an inch or so of water to the little dose in each glass.

"By-the-by," he said, "don't put your glass down. Keep it in your hand and rest your hand on your knee. Yes--so. And now--"

He raised his glass.

"The New Accelerator," I said.

"The New Accelerator," he answered, and we touched glasses and drank, and instantly I closed my eyes.

You know that blank non-existence into which one drops when one has taken "gas." For an indefinite interval it was like that. Then I heard Gibberne telling me to wake up, and I stirred and opened my eyes. There he stood as he had been standing, glass still in hand. It was empty, that was all the difference.

"Well?" said I.

"Nothing out of the way?"

"Nothing. A slight feeling of exhilaration, perhaps. Nothing more."

"Sounds?"

"Things are still," I said. "By Jove! yes! They ARE still. Except the sort of faint pat, patter, like rain falling on different things. What is it?"

"Analysed sounds," I think he said, but I am not sure. He glanced at the window. "Have you ever seen a curtain before a window fixed in that way before?"

I followed his eyes, and there was the end of the curtain, frozen, as it were, corner high, in the act of flapping briskly in the breeze.

"No," said I; "that's odd."

"And here," he said, and opened the hand that held the glass. Naturally I winced, expecting the glass to smash. But so far from smashing it did not even seem to stir; it hung in mid-air--motionless.

"Roughly speaking," said Gibberne, "an object in these latitudes falls 16 feet in the first second. This glass is falling 16 feet in a second now. Only, you see, it hasn't been falling yet for the hundredth part of a second. That gives you some idea of the pace of my Accelerator." And he waved his hand round and round, over and under the slowly sinking glass. Finally, he took it by the bottom, pulled it down, and placed it very carefully on the table. "Eh?" he said to me, and laughed.

"That seems all right," I said, and began very gingerly to raise myself from my chair. I felt perfectly well, very light and comfortable, and quite confident in my mind. I was going fast all over. My heart, for example, was beating a thousand times a second, but that caused me no discomfort at all. I looked out of the window. An immovable cyclist, head down and with a frozen puff of dust behind his driving-wheel, scorched to overtake a galloping char-a-banc that did not stir. I gaped in amazement at this incredible spectacle. "Gibberne," I cried, "how long will this confounded stuff last?"

"Heaven knows!" he answered. "Last time I took it I went to bed and slept it off. I tell you, I was frightened. It must have lasted some minutes, I think--it seemed like hours. But after a bit it slows down rather suddenly, I believe."

I was proud to observe that I did not feel frightened--I suppose because there were two of us. "Why shouldn't we go out?" I asked.

"Why not?"

"They'll see us."

"Not they. Goodness, no! Why, we shall be going a thousand times faster than the quickest conjuring trick that was ever done. Come along! Which way shall we go? Window, or door?"

And out by the window we went.

Assuredly of all the strange experiences that I have ever had, or imagined, or read of other people having or imagining, that little raid I made with Gibberne on the Folkestone Leas, under the influence of the New Accelerator, was the strangest and maddest of all. We went out by his gate into the road, and there we made a minute examination of the statuesque passing traffic. The tops of the wheels and some of the legs of the horses of this char-a-banc, the end of the whip-lash and the lower jaw of the conductor--who was just beginning to yawn--were perceptibly in motion, but all the rest of the lumbering conveyance seemed still. And quite noiseless except for a faint rattling that came from one man's throat! And as parts of this frozen edifice there were a driver, you know, and a conductor, and eleven people! The effect as we walked about the thing began by being madly queer, and ended by being disagreeable. There they were, people like ourselves and yet not like ourselves, frozen in careless attitudes, caught in mid-gesture. A girl and a man smiled at one another, a leering smile that threatened to last for evermore; a woman in a floppy capel Tw rested her arm on the rail and stared at Gibberne's house with the unwinking stare of eternity; a man stroked his moustache like a figure of wax, and another stretched a tiresome stiff hand with extended fingers towards his loosened hat. We stared at them, we laughed at them, we made faces at them, and then a sort of disgust of them came upon us, and we turned away and walked round in front of the cyclist towards the Leas.

"Goodness!" cried Gibberne, suddenly; "look there!"

He pointed, and there at the tip of his finger and sliding down the air with wings flapping slowly and at the speed of an exceptionally languid snail--was a bee.

And so we came out upon the Leas. There the thing seemed madder than ever. The band was playing in the upper stand, though all the sound it made for us was a low-pitched, wheezy rattle, a sort of prolonged last sigh that passed at times into a sound like the slow, muffled ticking of some monstrous clock. Frozen people stood erect, strange, silent, self-conscious-looking dummies hung unstably in mid-stride, promenading upon the grass. I passed close to a little poodle dog suspended in the act of leaping, and watched the slow movement of his legs as he sank to earth. "Lord, look here!" cried Gibberne, and we halted for a moment before a magnificent person in white faint-striped flannels, white shoes, and a Panama hat, who turned back to wink at two gaily dressed ladies he had passed. A wink, studied with such leisurely deliberation as we could afford, is an unattractive thing. It loses any quality of alert gaiety, and one remarks that the winking eye does not completely close, that under its drooping lid appears the lower edge of an eyeball and a little line of white. "Heaven give me memory," said I, "and I will never wink again."

"Or smile," said Gibberne, with his eye on the lady's answering teeth.

"It's infernally hot, somehow," said I. "Let's go slower."

"Oh, come along!" said Gibberne.

We picked our way among the bath-chairs in the path. Many of the people sitting in the chairs seemed almost natural in their passive poses, but the contorted scarlet of the bandsmen was not a restful thing to see. A purple-faced little gentleman was frozen

in the midst of a violent struggle to refold his newspaper against the wind; there were many evidences that all these people in their sluggish way were exposed to a considerable breeze, a breeze that had no existence so far as our sensations went. We came out and walked a little way from the crowd, and turned and regarded it. To see all that multitude changed, to a picture, smitten rigid, as it were, into the semblance of realistic wax, was impossibly wonderful. It was absurd, of course; but it filled me with an irrational, an exultant sense of superior advantage. Consider the wonder of it! All that I had said, and thought, and done since the stuff had begun to work in my veins had happened, so far as those people, so far as the world in general went, in the twinkling of an eye. "The New Accelerator--" I began, but Gibberne interrupted me.

"There's that infernal old woman!" he said.

"What old woman?"

"Lives next door to me," said Gibberne. "Has a lapdog that yaps. Gods! The temptation is strong!"

There is something very boyish and impulsive about Gibberne at times. Before I could expostulate with him he had dashed forward, snatched the unfortunate animal out of visible existence, and was running violently with it towards the cliff of the Leas. It was most extraordinary. The little brute, you know, didn't bark or wriggle or make the slightest sign of vitality. It kept quite stiffly in an attitude of somnolent repose, and Gibberne held it by the neck. It was like running about with a dog of wood. "Gibberne," I cried, "put it down!" Then I said something else. "If you run like that, Gibberne," I cried, "you'll set your clothes on fire. Your linen trousers are going brown as it is!"

He clapped his hand on his thigh and stood hesitating on the verge. "Gibberne," I cried, coming up, "put it down. This heat is too much!

It's our running so! Two or three miles a second! Friction of the air!"

"What?" he said, glancing at the dog.

"Friction of the air," I shouted. "Friction of the air. Going too fast. Like meteorites and things. Too hot. And, Gibberne! Gibberne! I'm all over pricking and a sort of perspiration. You can see people stirring slightly. I believe the stuff's working off! Put that dog down."

"Eh?" he said.

"It's working off," I repeated. "We're too hot and the stuff's working off! I'm wet through."

He stared at me. Then at the band, the wheezy rattle of whose performance was certainly going faster. Then with a tremendous sweep of the arm he hurled the dog away from him and it went spinning upward, still inanimate, and hung at last over the grouped parasols of a knot of chattering people. Gibberne was gripping my elbow. "By Jove!" he cried. "I believe--it is! A sort of hot pricking and--yes. That man's moving his pocket-handkerchief! Perceptibly. We must get out of this sharp."

But we could not get out of it sharply enough. Luckily, perhaps! For we might have run, and if we had run we should, I believe, have burst into flames. Almost certainly we should have burst into flames! You know we had neither of us thought of that. . . . But before we could even begin to run the action of the drug had ceased. It was the business of a minute fraction of a second. The effect of the New Accelerator passed like the drawing of a curtain, vanished in the movement of a hand. I heard Gibberne's voice in infinite alarm. "Sit down," he said, and flop, down upon the turf at the edge of the Leas I sat--scorching as I sat. There is a patch of burnt grass there still where I sat down. The whole stagnation seemed to wake

up as I did so, the disarticulated vibration of the band rushed together into a blast of music, the promenaders put their feet down and walked their ways, the papers and flags began flapping, smiles passed into words, the winker finished his wink and went on his way complacently, and all the seated people moved and spoke.

The whole world had come alive again, was going as fast as we were, or rather we were going no faster than the rest of the world. It was like slowing down as one comes into a railway station. Everything seemed to spin round for a second or two, I had the most transient feeling of nausea, and that was all. And the little dog which had seemed to hang for a moment when the force of Gibberne's arm was expended fell with a swift acceleration clean through a lady's parasol!

That was the saving of us. Unless it was for one corpulent old gentleman in a bath-chair, who certainly did start at the sight of us and afterwards regarded us at intervals with a darkly suspicious eye, and, finally, I believe, said something to his nurse about us, I doubt if a solitary person remarked our sudden appearance among them. Plop! We must have appeared abruptly. We ceased to smoulder almost at once, though the turf beneath me was uncomfortably hot. The attention of every one--including even the Amusements' Association band, which on this occasion, for the only time in its history, got out of tune--was arrested by the amazing fact, and the still more amazing yapping and uproar caused by the fact that a respectable, over-fed lap-dog sleeping quietly to the east of the bandstand should suddenly fall through the parasol of a lady on the west--in a slightly singed condition due to the extreme velocity of its movements through the air. In these absurd days, too, when we are all trying to be as psychic, and silly, and superstitious as possible! People got up and trod on other people, chairs were overturned, the Leas policeman ran. How the matter settled itself I do not know--we were much too anxious to disentangle ourselves from the affair and get out of range of the eye of the old gentleman in the bath-chair to make minute inquiries. As soon as we were

sufficiently cool and sufficiently recovered from our giddiness and nausea and confusion of mind to do so we stood up and, skirting the crowd, directed our steps back along the road below the Metropole towards Gibberne's house. But amidst the din I heard very distinctly the gentleman who had been sitting beside the lady of the ruptured sunshade using quite unjustifiable threats and language to one of those chair-attendants who have "Inspector" written on their caps. "If you didn't throw the dog," he said, "who DID?"

The sudden return of movement and familiar noises, and our natural anxiety about ourselves (our clothes were still dreadfully hot, and the fronts of the thighs of Gibberne's white trousers were scorched a drabish brown), prevented the minute observations I should have liked to make on all these things. Indeed, I really made no observations of any scientific value on that return. The bee, of course, had gone. I looked for that cyclist, but he was already out of sight as we came into the Upper Sandgate Road or hidden from us by traffic; the char-a-banc, however, with its people now all alive and stirring, was clattering along at a spanking pace almost abreast of the nearer church.

We noted, however, that the window-sill on which we had stepped in getting out of the house was slightly singed, and that the impressions of our feet on the gravel of the path were unusually deep.

So it was I had my first experience of the New Accelerator. Practically we had been running about and saying and doing all sorts of things in the space of a second or so of time. We had lived half an hour while the band had played, perhaps, two bars. But the effect it had upon us was that the whole world had stopped for our convenient inspection. Considering all things, and particularly considering our rashness in venturing out of the house, the experience might certainly have been much more disagreeable than it was. It showed, no doubt, that Gibberne has still much to learn before his preparation is a manageable convenience, but its practicability it certainly

demonstrated beyond all cavil.

Since that adventure he has been steadily bringing its use under control, and I have several times, and without the slightest bad result, taken measured doses under his direction; though I must confess I have not yet ventured abroad again while under its influence. I may mention, for example, that this story has been written at one sitting and without interruption, except for the nibbling of some chocolate, by its means. I began at 6.25, and my watch is now very nearly at the minute past the half-hour. The convenience of securing a long, uninterrupted spell of work in the midst of a day full of engagements cannot be exaggerated. Gibberne is now working at the quantitative handling of his preparation, with especial reference to its distinctive effects upon different types of constitution. He then hopes to find a Retarder with which to dilute its present rather excessive potency. The Retarder will, of course, have the reverse effect to the Accelerator; used alone it should enable the patient to spread a few seconds over many hours of ordinary time,--and so to maintain an apathetic inaction, a glacier-like absence of alacrity, amidst the most animated or irritating surroundings. The two things together must necessarily work an entire revolution in civilised existence. It is the beginning of our escape from that Time Garment of which Carlyle speaks. While this Accelerator will enable us to concentrate ourselves with tremendous impact upon any moment or occasion that demands our utmost sense and vigour, the Retarder will enable us to pass in passive tranquillity through infinite hardship and tedium. Perhaps I am a little optimistic about the Retarder, which has indeed still to be discovered, but about the Accelerator there is no possible sort of doubt whatever. Its appearance upon the market in a convenient, controllable, and assimilable form is a matter of the next few months. It will be obtainable of all chemists and druggists, in small green bottles, at a high but, considering its extraordinary qualities, by no means excessive price. Gibberne's Nervous Accelerator it will be called, and he hopes to be able to supply it in three strengths: one in 200,

one in 900, and one in 2000, distinguished by yellow, pink, and white labels respectively.

No doubt its use renders a great number of very extraordinary things possible; for, of course, the most remarkable and, possibly, even criminal proceedings may be effected with impunity by thus dodging, as it were, into the interstices of time. Like all potent preparations it will be liable to abuse. We have, however, discussed this aspect of the question very thoroughly, and we have decided that this is purely a matter of medical jurisprudence and altogether outside our province. We shall manufacture and sell the Accelerator, and, as for the consequences--we shall see.

9. MR. LEDBETTER'S VACATION

My friend, Mr. Ledbetter, is a round-faced little man, whose natural mildness of eye is gigantically exaggerated when you catch the beam through his glasses, and whose deep, deliberate voice irritates irritable people. A certain elaborate clearness of enunciation has come with him to his present vicarage from his scholastic days, an elaborate clearness of enunciation and a certain nervous determination to be firm and correct upon all issues, important and unimportant alike. He is a sacerdotalist and a chess player, and suspected by many of the secret practice of the higher mathematics--credible rather than interesting things. His conversation is copious and given much to needless detail. By many, indeed, his intercourse is condemned, to put it plainly, as "boring," and such have even done me the compliment to wonder why I countenance him. But, on the other hand, there is a large faction who marvel at his countenancing such a dishevelled, discreditable acquaintance as myself. Few appear to regard our friendship with equanimity. But that is because they do not know of the link that binds us, of my amiable connection via Jamaica with Mr. Ledbetter's past.

About that past he displays an anxious modesty. "I do not KNOW what I should do if it became known," he says; and repeats, impressively, "I do not know WHAT I should do." As a matter of fact, I doubt if he would do anything except get very red about the ears. But that will appear later; nor will I tell here of our first encounter, since, as a general rule--though I am prone to break it--the end of a story should come after, rather than before, the beginning. And the beginning of the story goes a long way back; indeed, it is now nearly twenty years since Fate, by a series of complicated and startling manoeuvres, brought Mr. Ledbetter, so to speak, into my hands.

In those days I was living in Jamaica, and Mr. Ledbetter was a schoolmaster in England. He was in orders, and already recognisably

the same man that he is to-day: the same rotundity of visage, the same or similar glasses, and the same faint shadow of surprise in his resting expression. He was, of course, dishevelled when I saw him, and his collar less of a collar than a wet bandage, and that may have helped to bridge the natural gulf between us--but of that, as I say, later.

The business began at Hithergate-on-Sea, and simultaneously with Mr. Ledbetter's summer vacation. Thither he came for a greatly needed rest, with a bright brown portmanteau marked "F. W. L.", a new white-and-black straw hat, and two pairs of white flannel trousers. He was naturally exhilarated at his release from school--for he was not very fond of the boys he taught. After dinner he fell into a discussion with a talkative person established in the boarding-house to which, acting on the advice of his aunt, he had resorted. This talkative person was the only other man in the house. Their discussion concerned the melancholy disappearance of wonder and adventure in these latter days, the prevalence of globe-trotting, the abolition of distance by steam and electricity, the vulgarity of advertisement, the degradation of men by civilisation, and many such things. Particularly was the talkative person eloquent on the decay of human courage through security, a security Mr. Ledbetter rather thoughtlessly joined him in deploring. Mr. Ledbetter, in the first delight of emancipation from "duty," and being anxious, perhaps, to establish a reputation for manly conviviality, partook, rather more freely than was advisable, of the excellent whisky the talkative person produced. But he did not become intoxicated, he insists.

He was simply eloquent beyond his sober wont, and with the finer edge gone from his judgment. And after that long talk of the brave old days that were past forever, he went out into moonlit Hithergate--alone and up the cliff road where the villas cluster together.

He had bewailed, and now as he walked up the silent road he still bewailed, the fate that had called him to such an uneventful life

as a pedagogue's. What a prosaic existence he led, so stagnant, so colourless! Secure, methodical, year in year out, what call was there for bravery? He thought enviously of those roving, mediaeval days, so near and so remote, of quests and spies and condottieri and many a risky blade-drawing business. And suddenly came a doubt, a strange doubt, springing out of some chance thought of tortures, and destructive altogether of the position he had assumed that evening.

Was he--Mr. Ledbetter--really, after all, so brave as he assumed? Would he really be so pleased to have railways, policemen, and security vanish suddenly from the earth?

The talkative man had spoken enviously of crime. "The burglar," he said, "is the only true adventurer left on earth. Think of his single-handed fight against the whole civilised world!" And Mr. Ledbetter had echoed his envy. "They DO have some fun out of life," Mr. Ledbetter had said. "And about the only people who do. Just think how it must feel to wire a lawn!" And he had laughed wickedly. Now, in this franker intimacy of self-communion he found himself instituting a comparison between his own brand of courage and that of the habitual criminal. He tried to meet these insidious questionings with blank assertion. "I could do all that," said Mr. Ledbetter. "I long to do all that. Only I do not give way to my criminal impulses. My moral courage restrains me." But he doubted even while he told himself these things.

"Mr. Ledbetter passed a large villa standing by itself. Conveniently situated above a quiet, practicable balcony was a window, gaping black, wide open. At the time he scarcely marked it, but the picture of it came with him, wove into his thoughts. He figured himself climbing up that balcony, crouching--plunging into that dark, mysterious interior. "Bah! You would not dare," said the Spirit of Doubt. "My duty to my fellow-men forbids," said Mr. Ledbetter's self-respect.

It was nearly eleven, and the little seaside town was already very still. The whole world slumbered under the moonlight. Only one warm oblong of window-blind far down the road spoke of waking life. He turned and came back slowly towards the villa of the open window. He stood for a time outside the gate, a battlefield of motives.

"Let us put things to the test," said Doubt. "For the satisfaction of these intolerable doubts, show that you dare go into that house. Commit a burglary in blank. That, at any rate, is no crime." Very softly he opened and shut the gate and slipped into the shadow of the shrubbery. "This is foolish," said Mr. Ledbetter's caution. "I expected that," said Doubt. His heart was beating fast, but he was certainly not afraid. He was NOT afraid. He remained in that shadow for some considerable time.

The ascent of the balcony, it was evident, would have to be done in a rush, for it was all in clear moonlight, and visible from the gate into the avenue. A trellis thinly set with young, ambitious climbing roses made the ascent ridiculously easy. There, in that black shadow by the stone vase of flowers, one might crouch and take a closer view of this gaping breach in the domestic defences, the open window. For a while Mr. Ledbetter was as still as the night, and then that insidious whisky tipped the balance. He dashed forward. He went up the trellis with quick, convulsive movements, swung his legs over the parapet of the balcony, and dropped panting in the shadow even as he had designed. He was trembling violently, short of breath, and his heart pumped noisily, but his mood was exultation. He could have shouted to find he was so little afraid.

A happy line that he had learnt from Wills's "Mephistopheles" came into his mind as he crouched there. "I feel like a cat on the tiles," he whispered to himself. It was far better than he had expected-- this adventurous exhilaration. He was sorry for all poor men to whom burglary was unknown. Nothing happened. He was quite safe. And he was acting in the bravest manner!

And now for the window, to make the burglary complete! Must he dare do that? Its position above the front door defined it as a landing or passage, and there were no looking-glasses or any bedroom signs about it, or any other window on the first floor, to suggest the possibility of a sleeper within. For a time he listened under the ledge, then raised his eyes above the sill and peered in. Close at hand, on a pedestal, and a little startling at first, was a nearly life-size gesticulating bronze. He ducked, and after some time he peered again. Beyond was a broad landing, faintly gleaming; a flimsy fabric of bead curtain, very black and sharp, against a further window; a broad staircase, plunging into a gulf of darkness below; and another ascending to the second floor. He glanced behind him, but the stillness of the night was unbroken. "Crime," he whispered, "crime," and scrambled softly and swiftly over the sill into the house. His feet fell noiselessly on a mat of skin. He was a burglar indeed!

He crouched for a time, all ears and peering eyes. Outside was a scampering and rustling, and for a moment he repented of his enterprise. A short "miaow," a spitting, and a rush into silence, spoke reassuringly of cats. His courage grew. He stood up. Every one was abed, it seemed. So easy is it to commit a burglary, if one is so minded. He was glad he had put it to the test. He determined to take some petty trophy, just to prove his freedom from any abject fear of the law, and depart the way he had come.

He peered about him, and suddenly the critical spirit arose again. Burglars did far more than such mere elementary entrance as this: they went into rooms, they forced safes. Well--he was not afraid. He could not force safes, because that would be a stupid want of consideration for his hosts. But he would go into rooms--he would go upstairs. More: he told himself that he was perfectly secure; an empty house could not be more reassuringly still. He had to clench his hands, nevertheless, and summon all his resolution before he began very softly to ascend the dim staircase, pausing for several seconds between each step. Above was a square landing with one

open and several closed doors; and all the house was still. For a moment he stood wondering what would happen if some sleeper woke suddenly and emerged. The open door showed a moonlit bedroom, the coverlet white and undisturbed. Into this room he crept in three interminable minutes and took a piece of soap for his plunder--his trophy. He turned to descend even more softly than he had ascended. It was as easy as--

Hist! . . .

Footsteps! On the gravel outside the house--and then the noise of a latchkey, the yawn and bang of a door, and the spitting of a match in the hall below. Mr. Ledbetter stood petrified by the sudden discovery of the folly upon which he had come. "How on earth am I to get out of this?" said Mr. Ledbetter.

The hall grew bright with a candle flame, some heavy object bumped against the umbrella-stand, and feet were ascending the staircase. In a flash Mr. Ledbetter realised that his retreat was closed. He stood for a moment, a pitiful figure of penitent confusion. "My goodness! What a FOOL I have been!" he whispered, and then darted swiftly across the shadowy landing into the empty bedroom from which he had just come. He stood listening--quivering. The footsteps reached the first-floor landing.

Horrible thought! This was possibly the latecomer's room! Not a moment was to be lost! Mr. Ledbetter stooped beside the bed, thanked Heaven for a valance, and crawled within its protection not ten seconds too soon. He became motionless on hands and knees. The advancing candle-light appeared through the thinner stitches of the fabric, the shadows ran wildly about, and became rigid as the candle was put down.

"Lord, what a day!" said the newcomer, blowing noisily, and it seemed he deposited some heavy burthen on what Mr. Ledbetter, judging by the feet, decided to be a writing-table. The unseen then went

to the door and locked it, examined the fastenings of the windows carefully and pulled down the blinds, and returning sat down upon the bed with startling ponderosity.

"WHAT a day!" he said. "Good Lord!" and blew again, and Mr. Ledbetter inclined to believe that the person was mopping his face. His boots were good stout boots; the shadows of his legs upon the valance suggested a formidable stoutness of aspect. After a time he removed some upper garments--a coat and waistcoat, Mr. Ledbetter inferred--and casting them over the rail of the bed remained breathing less noisily, and as it seemed cooling from a considerable temperature. At intervals he muttered to himself, and once he laughed softly. And Mr. Ledbetter muttered to himself, but he did not laugh. "Of all the foolish things," said Mr. Ledbetter. "What on earth am I to do now?"

His outlook was necessarily limited. The minute apertures between the stitches of the fabric of the valance admitted a certain amount of light, but permitted no peeping. The shadows upon this curtain, save for those sharply defined legs, were enigmatical, and intermingled confusingly with the florid patterning of the chintz. Beneath the edge of the valance a strip of carpet was visible, and, by cautiously depressing his eye, Mr. Ledbetter found that this strip broadened until the whole area of the floor came into view. The carpet was a luxurious one, the room spacious, and, to judge by the castors and so forth of the furniture, well equipped.

What he should do he found it difficult to imagine. To wait until this person had gone to bed, and then, when he seemed to be sleeping, to creep to the door, unlock it, and bolt headlong for that balcony seemed the only possible thing to do. Would it be possible to jump from the balcony? The danger of it! When he thought of the chances against him, Mr. Ledbetter despaired. He was within an ace of thrusting forth his head beside the gentleman's legs, coughing if necessary to attract his attention, and then, smiling, apologising and explaining his unfortunate intrusion by a few well-chosen sentences. But he

found these sentences hard to choose. "No doubt, sir, my appearance is peculiar," or, "I trust, sir, you will pardon my somewhat ambiguous appearance from beneath you," was about as much as he could get.

Grave possibilities forced themselves on his attention. Suppose they did not believe him, what would they do to him? Would his unblemished high character count for nothing? Technically he was a burglar, beyond dispute. Following out this train of thought, he was composing a lucid apology for "this technical crime I have committed," to be delivered before sentence in the dock, when the stout gentleman got up and began walking about the room. He locked and unlocked drawers, and Mr. Ledbetter had a transient hope that he might be undressing. But, no! He seated himself at the writing-table, and began to write and then tear up documents. Presently the smell of burning cream-laid paper mingled with the odour of cigars in Mr. Ledbetter's nostrils.

"The position I had assumed," said Mr. Ledbetter when he told me of these things, "was in many respects an ill-advised one. A transverse bar beneath the bed depressed my head unduly, and threw a disproportionate share of my weight upon my hands. After a time, I experienced what is called, I believe, a crick in the neck. The pressure of my hands on the coarsely-stitched carpet speedily became painful. My knees, too, were painful, my trousers being drawn tightly over them. At that time I wore rather higher collars than I do now--two and a half inches, in fact--and I discovered what I had not remarked before, that the edge of the one I wore was frayed slightly under the chin. But much worse than these things was an itching of my face, which I could only relieve by violent grimacing--I tried to raise my hand, but the rustle of the sleeve alarmed me. After a time I had to desist from this relief also, because--happily in time--I discovered that my facial contortions were shifting my glasses down my nose. Their fall would, of course, have exposed me, and as it was they came to rest in an oblique position of by no means stable equilibrium. In addition I had a slight cold, and an intermittent

desire to sneeze or sniff caused me inconvenience. In fact, quite apart from the extreme anxiety of my position, my physical discomfort became in a short time very considerable indeed. But I had to stay there motionless, nevertheless."

After an interminable time, there began a chinking sound. This deepened into a rhythm: chink, chink, chink--twenty-five chinks--a rap on the writing-table, and a grunt from the owner of the stout legs. It dawned upon Mr. Ledbetter that this chinking was the chinking of gold. He became incredulously curious as it went on. His curiosity grew. Already, if that was the case, this extraordinary man must have counted some hundreds of pounds. At last Mr. Ledbetter could resist it no longer, and he began very cautiously to fold his arms and lower his head to the level of the floor, in the hope of peeping under the valance. He moved his feet, and one made a slight scraping on the floor. Suddenly the chinking ceased. Mr. Ledbetter became rigid. After a while the chinking was resumed. Then it ceased again, and everything was still, except Mr. Ledbetter's heart--that organ seemed to him to be beating like a drum.

The stillness continued. Mr. Ledbetter's head was now on the floor, and he could see the stout legs as far as the shins. They were quite still. The feet were resting on the toes and drawn back, as it seemed, under the chair of the owner. Everything was quite still, everything continued still. A wild hope came to Mr. Ledbetter that the unknown was in a fit or suddenly dead, with his head upon the writing-table. . . .

The stillness continued. What had happened? The desire to peep became irresistible. Very cautiously Mr. Ledbetter shifted his hand forward, projected a pioneer finger, and began to lift the valance immediately next his eye. Nothing broke the stillness. He saw now the stranger's knees, saw the back of the writing-table, and then--he was staring at the barrel of a heavy revolver pointed over the writing-table at his head.

"Come out of that, you scoundrel!" said the voice of the stout gentleman in a tone of quiet concentration. "Come out. This side, and now. None of your hanky-panky--come right out, now."

Mr. Ledbetter came right out, a little reluctantly perhaps, but without any hanky-panky, and at once, even as he was told.

"Kneel," said the stout gentleman. "and hold up your hands."

The valance dropped again behind Mr. Ledbetter, and he rose from all-fours and held up his hands. "Dressed like a parson," said the stout gentleman. "I'm blest if he isn't! A little chap, too! You SCOUNDREL! What the deuce possessed you to come here to-night? What the deuce possessed you to get under my bed?"

He did not appear to require an answer, but proceeded at once to several very objectionable remarks upon Mr. Ledbetter's personal appearance. He was not a very big man, but he looked strong to Mr. Ledbetter: he was as stout as his legs had promised, he had rather delicately-chiselled small features distributed over a considerable area of whitish face, and quite a number of chins. And the note of his voice had a sort of whispering undertone.

"What the deuce, I say, possessed you to get under my bed?"

Mr. Ledbetter, by an effort, smiled a wan propitiatory smile. He coughed. "I can quite understand--" he said.

"Why! What on earth? It's SOAP! No!--you scoundrel. Don't you move that hand."

"It's soap," said Mr. Ledbetter. "From your washstand. No doubt it--"

"Don't talk," said the stout man. "I see it's soap. Of all incredible

things."

"If I might explain--"

"Don't explain. It's sure to be a lie, and there's no time for explanations. What was I going to ask you? Ah! Have you any mates?"

"In a few minutes, if you--"

"Have you any mates? Curse you. If you start any soapy palaver I'll shoot. Have you any mates?"

"No," said Mr. Ledbetter.

"I suppose it's a lie," said the stout man. "But you'll pay for it if it is. Why the deuce didn't you floor me when I came upstairs? You won't get a chance to now, anyhow. Fancy getting under the bed! I reckon it's a fair cop, anyhow, so far as you are concerned."

"I don't see how I could prove an alibi," remarked Mr. Ledbetter, trying to show by his conversation that he was an educated man. There was a pause. Mr. Ledbetter perceived that on a chair beside his captor was a large black bag on a heap of crumpled papers, and that there were torn and burnt papers on the table. And in front of these, and arranged methodically along the edge were rows and rows of little yellow rouleaux--a hundred times more gold than Mr. Ledbetter had seen in all his life before. The light of two candles, in silver candlesticks, fell upon these. The pause continued. "It is rather fatiguing holding up my hands like this," said Mr. Ledbetter, with a deprecatory smile.

"That's all right," said the fat man. "But what to do with you I don't exactly know."

"I know my position is ambiguous."

"Lord!" said the fat man, "ambiguous! And goes about with his own soap, and wears a thundering great clerical collar. You ARE a blooming burglar, you are--if ever there was one!"

"To be strictly accurate," said Mr. Ledbetter, and suddenly his glasses slipped off and clattered against his vest buttons.

The fat man changed countenance, a flash of savage resolution crossed his face, and something in the revolver clicked. He put his other hand to the weapon. And then he looked at Mr. Ledbetter, and his eye went down to the dropped pince-nez.

"Full-cock now, anyhow," said the fat man, after a pause, and his breath seemed to catch. "But I'll tell you, you've never been so near death before. Lord! I'M almost glad. If it hadn't been that the revolver wasn't cocked you'd be lying dead there now."

Mr. Ledbetter said nothing, but he felt that the room was swaying.

"A miss is as good as a mile. It's lucky for both of us it wasn't. Lord!" He blew noisily. "There's no need for you to go pale-green for a little thing like that."

"If I can assure you, sir--" said Mr. Ledbetter, with an effort.

"There's only one thing to do. If I call in the police, I'm bust-- a little game I've got on is bust. That won't do. If I tie you up and leave you again, the thing may be out to-morrow. Tomorrow's Sunday, and Monday's Bank Holiday--I've counted on three clear days. Shooting you's murder--and hanging; and besides, it will bust the whole blooming kernooze. I'm hanged if I can think what to do-- I'm hanged if I can."

"Will you permit me--"

"You gas as much as if you were a real parson, I'm blessed if you don't. Of all the burglars you are the--Well! No!--I WON'T permit you. There isn't time. If you start off jawing again, I'll shoot right in your stomach. See? But I know now-I know now! What we're going to do first, my man, is an examination for concealed arms--an examination for concealed arms. And look here! When I tell you to do a thing, don't start off at a gabble--do it brisk."

And with many elaborate precautions, and always pointing the pistol at Mr. Ledbetter's head, the stout man stood him up and searched him for weapons. "Why, you ARE a burglar!" he said "You're a perfect amateur. You haven't even a pistol-pocket in the back of your breeches. No, you don't! Shut up, now."

So soon as the issue was decided, the stout man made Mr. Ledbetter take off his coat and roll up his shirt-sleeves, and, with the revolver at one ear, proceed with the packing his appearance had interrupted. From the stout man's point of view that was evidently the only possible arrangement, for if he had packed, he would have had to put down the revolver. So that even the gold on the table was handled by Mr. Ledbetter. This nocturnal packing was peculiar. The stout man's idea was evidently to distribute the weight of the gold as unostentatiously as possible through his luggage. It was by no means an inconsiderable weight. There was, Mr. Ledbetter says, altogether nearly L18,000 in gold in the black bag and on the table. There were also many little rolls of L5 bank-notes. Each rouleau of L25 was wrapped by Mr. Ledbetter in paper. These rouleaux were then put neatly in cigar boxes and distributed between a travelling trunk, a Gladstone bag, and a hatbox. About L600 went in a tobacco tin in a dressing-bag. L10 in gold and a number of L5 notes the stout man pocketed. Occasionally he objurgated Mr. Ledbetter's clumsiness, and urged him to hurry, and several times he appealed to Mr. Ledbetter's watch for information.

Mr. Ledbetter strapped the trunk and bag, and returned the stout man the keys. It was then ten minutes to twelve, and until the stroke of midnight the stout man made him sit on the Gladstone bag, while he sat at a reasonably safe distance on the trunk and held the revolver handy and waited. He appeared to be now in a less aggressive mood, and having watched Mr. Ledbetter for some time, he offered a few remarks.

"From your accent I judge you are a man of some education," he said, lighting a cigar. "No--DON'T begin that explanation of yours. I know it will be long-winded from your face, and I am much too old a liar to be interested in other men's lying. You are, I say, a person of education. You do well to dress as a curate. Even among educated people you might pass as a curate."

"I AM a curate," said Mr. Ledbetter, "or, at least--"

"You are trying to be. I know. But you didn't ought to burgle. You are not the man to burgle. You are, if I may say it--the thing will have been pointed out to you before--a coward."

"Do you know," said Mr. Ledbetter, trying to get a final opening, "it was that very question--"

The stout man waved him into silence.

"You waste your education in burglary. You should do one of two things. Either you should forge or you should embezzle. For my own part, I embezzle. Yes; I embezzle. What do you think a man could be doing with all this gold but that? Ah! Listen! Midnight! . . . Ten. Eleven. Twelve. There is something very impressive to me in that slow beating of the hours. Time--space; what mysteries they are! What mysteries. . . . It's time for us to be moving. Stand up!"

And then kindly, but firmly, he induced Mr. Ledbetter to sling the dressing bag over his back by a string across his chest, to shoulder the trunk, and, overruling a gasping protest, to take the Gladstone bag in his disengaged hand. So encumbered, Mr. Ledbetter struggled perilously downstairs. The stout gentleman followed with an overcoat, the hatbox, and the revolver, making derogatory remarks about Mr. Ledbetter's strength, and assisting him at the turnings of the stairs.

"The back door," he directed, and Mr. Ledbetter staggered through a conservatory, leaving a wake of smashed flower-pots behind him. "Never mind the crockery," said the stout man; "it's good for trade. We wait here until a quarter past. You can put those things down. You have!"

Mr. Ledbetter collapsed panting on the trunk. "Last night," he gasped, "I was asleep in my little room, and I no more dreamt--"

"There's no need for you to incriminate yourself," said the stout gentleman, looking at the lock of the revolver. He began to hum. Mr. Ledbetter made to speak, and thought better of it.

There presently came the sound of a bell, and Mr. Ledbetter was taken to the back door and instructed to open it. A fair-haired man in yachting costume entered. At the sight of Mr. Ledbetter he started violently and clapped his hand behind him. Then he saw the stout man. "Bingham!" he cried, "who's this?"

"Only a little philanthropic do of mine--burglar I'm trying to reform. Caught him under my bed just now. He's all right. He's a frightful ass. He'll be useful to carry some of our things."

The newcomer seemed inclined to resent Mr. Ledbetter's presence at first, but the stout man reassured him.

"He's quite alone. There's not a gang in the world would own him.

No!--don't start talking, for goodness' sake."

They went out into the darkness of the garden with the trunk still bowing Mr. Ledbetter's shoulders. The man in the yachting costume walked in front with the Gladstone bag and a pistol; then came Mr. Ledbetter like Atlas; Mr. Bingham followed with the hat-box, coat, and revolver as before. The house was one of those that have their gardens right up to the cliff. At the cliff was a steep wooden stairway, descending to a bathing tent dimly visible on the beach. Below was a boat pulled up, and a silent little man with a black face stood beside it. "A few moments' explanation," said Mr. Ledbetter; "I can assure you--" Somebody kicked him, and he said no more.

They made him wade to the boat, carrying the trunk, they pulled him aboard by the shoulders and hair, they called him no better name than "scoundrel" and "burglar" all that night. But they spoke in undertones so that the general public was happily unaware of his ignominy. They hauled him aboard a yacht manned by strange, unsympathetic Orientals, and partly they thrust him and partly he fell down a gangway into a noisome, dark place, where he was to remain many days--how many he does not know, because he lost count among other things when he was seasick. They fed him on biscuits and incomprehensible words; they gave him water to drink mixed with unwished-for rum. And there were cockroaches where they put him, night and day there were cockroaches, and in the night-time there were rats. The Orientals emptied his pockets and took his watch--but Mr. Bingham, being appealed to, took that himself. And five or six times the five Lascars--if they were Lascars--and the Chinaman and the negro who constituted the crew, fished him out and took him aft to Bingham and his friend to play cribbage and euchre and three-anded whist, and to listen to their stories and boastings in an interested manner.

Then these principals would talk to him as men talk to those who have lived a life of crime. Explanations they would never permit,

though they made it abundantly clear to him that he was the rummiest burglar they had ever set eyes on. They said as much again and again. The fair man was of a taciturn disposition and irascible at play; but Mr. Bingham, now that the evident anxiety of his departure from England was assuaged, displayed a vein of genial philosophy. He enlarged upon the mystery of space and time, and quoted Kant and Hegel--or, at least, he said he did. Several times Mr. Ledbetter got as far as: "My position under your bed, you know--," but then he always had to cut, or pass the whisky, or do some such intervening thing. After his third failure, the fair man got quite to look for this opening, and whenever Mr. Ledbetter began after that, he would roar with laughter and hit him violently on the back. "Same old start, same old story; good old burglar!" the fair-haired man would say.

So Mr. Ledbetter suffered for many days, twenty perhaps; and one evening he was taken, together with some tinned provisions, over the side and put ashore on a rocky little island with a spring. Mr. Bingham came in the boat with him, giving him good advice all the way, and waving his last attempts at an explanation aside.

"I am really NOT a burglar," said Mr. Ledbetter.

"You never will be," said Mr. Bingham. "You'll never make a burglar. I'm glad you are beginning to see it. In choosing a profession a man must study his temperament. If you don't, sooner or later you will fail. Compare myself, for example. All my life I have been in banks--I have got on in banks. I have even been a bank manager. But was I happy? No. Why wasn't I happy? Because it did not suit my temperament. I am too adventurous--too versatile. Practically I have thrown it over. I do not suppose I shall ever manage a bank again. They would be glad to get me, no doubt; but I have learnt the lesson of my temperament--at last. . . . No! I shall never manage a bank again.

"Now, your temperament unfits you for crime--just as mine unfits

me for respectability. I know you better than I did, and now I do not even recommend forgery. Go back to respectable courses, my man. YOUR lay is the philanthropic lay--that is your lay. With that voice--the Association for the Promotion of Snivelling among the Young--something in that line. You think it over.

"The island we are approaching has no name apparently--at least, there is none on the chart. You might think out a name for it while you are there--while you are thinking about all these things. It has quite drinkable water, I understand. It is one of the Grenadines--one of the Windward Islands. Yonder, dim and blue, are others of the Grenadines. There are quantities of Grenadines, but the majority are out of sight. I have often wondered what these islands are for--now, you see, I am wiser. This one at least is for you. Sooner or later some simple native will come along and take you off. Say what you like about us then--abuse us, if you like--we shan't care a solitary Grenadine! And here--here is half a sovereign's worth of silver. Do not waste that in foolish dissipation when you return to civilisation. Properly used, it may give you a fresh start in life. And do not--Don't beach her, you beggars, he can wade!--Do not waste the precious solitude before you in foolish thoughts. Properly used, it may be a turning-point in your career. Waste neither money nor time. You will die rich. I'm sorry, but I must ask you to carry your tucker to land in your arms. No; it's not deep. Curse that explanation of yours! There's not time. No, no, no! I won't listen. Overboard you go!"

And the falling night found Mr. Ledbetter--the Mr. Ledbetter who had complained that adventure was dead--sitting beside his cans of food, his chin resting upon his drawn-up knees, staring through his glasses in dismal mildness over the shining, vacant sea.

He was picked up in the course of three days by a negro fisherman and taken to St. Vincent's, and from St. Vincent's he got, by the expenditure of his last coins, to Kingston, in Jamaica. And there

he might have foundered. Even nowadays he is not a man of affairs, and then he was a singularly helpless person. He had not the remotest idea what he ought to do. The only thing he seems to have done was to visit all the ministers of religion he could find in the place to borrow a passage home. But he was much too dirty and incoherent--and his story far too incredible for them. I met him quite by chance. It was close upon sunset, and I was walking out after my siesta on the road to Dunn's Battery, when I met him--I was rather bored, and with a whole evening on my hands--luckily for him. He was trudging dismally towards the town. His woebegone face and the quasi-clerical cut of his dust-stained, filthy costume caught my humour. Our eyes met. He hesitated. "Sir," he said, with a catching of the breath, "could you spare a few minutes for what I fear will seem an incredible story?"

"Incredible!" I said.

"Quite," he answered eagerly. "No one will believe it, alter it though I may. Yet I can assure you, sir--"

He stopped hopelessly. The man's tone tickled me. He seemed an odd character. "I am," he said, "one of the most unfortunate beings alive."

"Among other things, you haven't dined?" I said, struck with an idea.

"I have not," he said solemnly, "for many days."

"You'll tell it better after that," I said; and without more ado led the way to a low place I knew, where such a costume as his was unlikely to give offence. And there--with certain omissions which he subsequently supplied--I got his story. At first I was incredulous, but as the wine warmed him, and the faint suggestion of cringing which his misfortunes had added to his manner disappeared, I began to believe. At last, I was so far convinced of his sincerity that I got him a bed for the night, and next day verified the banker's reference he gave me through my Jamaica banker. And that done, I took

him shopping for underwear and such like equipments of a gentleman at large. Presently came the verified reference. His astonishing story was true. I will not amplify our subsequent proceedings. He started for England in three days' time.

"I do not know how I can possibly thank you enough," began the letter he wrote me from England, "for all your kindness to a total stranger," and proceeded for some time in a similar strain. "Had it not been for your generous assistance, I could certainly never have returned in time for the resumption of my scholastic duties, and my few minutes of reckless folly would, perhaps, have proved my ruin. As it is, I am entangled in a tissue of lies and evasions, of the most complicated sort, to account for my sunburnt appearance and my whereabouts. I have rather carelessly told two or three different stories, not realising the trouble this would mean for me in the end. The truth I dare not tell. I have consulted a number of law-books in the British Museum, and there is not the slightest doubt that I have connived at and abetted and aided a felony. That scoundrel Bingham was the Hithergate bank manager, I find, and guilty of the most flagrant embezzlement. Please, please burn this letter when read--I trust you implicitly. The worst of it is, neither my aunt nor her friend who kept the boarding-house at which I was staying seem altogether to believe a guarded statement I have made them practically of what actually happened. They suspect me of some discreditable adventure, but what sort of discreditable adventure they suspect me of, I do not know. My aunt says she would forgive me if I told her everything. I have--I have told her MORE than everything, and still she is not satisfied. It would never do to let them know the truth of the case, of course, and so I represent myself as having been waylaid and gagged upon the beach. My aunt wants to know WHY they waylaid and gagged me, why they took me away in their yacht. I do not know. Can you suggest any reason? I can think of nothing. If, when you wrote, you could write on TWO sheets so that I could show her one, and on that one if you could show clearly that I really WAS in Jamaica this summer, and had come there by being removed

from a ship, it would be of great service to me. It would certainly add to the load of my obligation to you--a load that I fear I can never fully repay. Although if gratitude . . ." And so forth. At the end he repeated his request for me to burn the letter.

So the remarkable story of Mr. Ledbetter's Vacation ends. That breach with his aunt was not of long duration. The old lady had forgiven him before she died.

10. THE STOLEN BODY

Mr. Bessel was the senior partner in the firm of Bessel, Hart, and Brown, of St. Paul's Churchyard, and for many years he was well known among those interested in psychical research as a liberal-minded and conscientious investigator. He was an unmarried man, and instead of living in the suburbs, after the fashion of his class, he occupied rooms in the Albany, near Piccadilly. He was particularly interested in the questions of thought transference and of apparitions of the living, and in November, 1896, he commenced a series of experiments in conjunction with Mr. Vincey, of Staple Inn, in order to test the alleged possibility of projecting an apparition of one's self by force of will through space.

Their experiments were conducted in the following manner: At a pre-arranged hour Mr. Bessel shut himself in one of his rooms in the Albany and Mr. Vincey in his sitting-room in Staple Inn, and each then fixed his mind as resolutely as possible on the other. Mr. Bessel had acquired the art of self-hypnotism, and, so far as he could, he attempted first to hypnotise himself and then to project himself as a "phantom of the living" across the intervening space of nearly two miles into Mr. Vincey's apartment. On several evenings this was tried without any satisfactory result, but on the fifth or sixth occasion Mr. Vincey did actually see or imagine he saw an apparition of Mr. Bessel standing in his room. He states that the appearance, although brief, was very vivid and real. He noticed that Mr. Bessel's face was white and his expression anxious, and, moreover, that his hair was disordered. For a moment Mr. Vincey, in spite of his state of expectation, was too surprised to speak or move, and in that moment it seemed to him as though the figure glanced over its shoulder and incontinently vanished.

It had been arranged that an attempt should be made to photograph any phantasm seen, but Mr. Vincey had not the instant presence of mind to snap the camera that lay ready on the table beside him,

and when he did so he was too late. Greatly elated, however, even by this partial success, he made a note of the exact time, and at once took a cab to the Albany to inform Mr. Bessel of this result.

He was surprised to find Mr. Bessel's outer door standing open to the night, and the inner apartments lit and in an extraordinary disorder. An empty champagne magnum lay smashed upon the floor; its neck had been broken off against the inkpot on the bureau and lay beside it. An octagonal occasional table, which carried a bronze statuette and a number of choice books, had been rudely overturned, and down the primrose paper of the wall inky fingers had been drawn, as it seemed for the mere pleasure of defilement. One of the delicate chintz curtains had been violently torn from its rings and thrust upon the fire, so that the smell of its smouldering filled the room. Indeed the whole place was disarranged in the strangest fashion. For a few minutes Mr. Vincey, who had entered sure of finding Mr. Bessel in his easy chair awaiting him, could scarcely believe his eyes, and stood staring helplessly at these unanticipated things.

Then, full of a vague sense of calamity, he sought the porter at the entrance lodge. "Where is Mr. Bessel?" he asked. "Do you know that all the furniture is broken in Mr. Bessel's room?" The porter said nothing, but, obeying his gestures, came at once to Mr. Bessel's apartment to see the state of affairs. "This settles it," he said, surveying the lunatic confusion. "I didn't know of this. Mr. Bessel's gone off. He's mad!"

He then proceeded to tell Mr. Vincey that about half an hour previously, that is to say, at about the time of Mr. Bessel's apparition in Mr. Vincey's rooms, the missing gentleman had rushed out of the gates of the Albany into Vigo Street, hatless and with disordered hair, and had vanished into the direction of Bond Street. "And as he went past me," said the porter, "he laughed--a sort of gasping laugh, with his mouth open and his eyes glaring--I tell you,

sir, he fair scared me!--like this."

According to his imitation it was anything but a pleasant laugh. "He waved his hand, with all his fingers crooked and clawing--like that. And he said, in a sort of fierce whisper, 'LIFE!' Just that one word, 'LIFE!'"

"Dear me," said Mr. Vincey. "Tut, tut," and "Dear me!" He could think of nothing else to say. He was naturally very much surprised. He turned from the room to the porter and from the porter to the room in the gravest perplexity. Beyond his suggestion that probably Mr. Bessel would come back presently and explain what had happened, their conversation was unable to proceed. "It might be a sudden toothache," said the porter, "a very sudden and violent toothache, jumping on him suddenly-like and driving him wild. I've broken things myself before now in such a case . . ." He thought. "If it was, why should he say 'LIFE' to me as he went past?"

Mr. Vincey did not know. Mr. Bessel did not return, and at last Mr. Vincey, having done some more helpless staring, and having addressed a note of brief inquiry and left it in a conspicuous position on the bureau, returned in a very perplexed frame of mind to his own premises in Staple Inn. This affair had given him a shock. He was at a loss to account for Mr. Bessel's conduct on any sane hypothesis. He tried to read, but he could not do so; he went for a short walk, and was so preoccupied that he narrowly escaped a cab at the top of Chancery Lane; and at last--a full hour before his usual time--he went to bed. For a considerable time he could not sleep because of his memory of the silent confusion of Mr. Bessel's apartment, and when at length he did attain an uneasy slumber it was at once disturbed by a very vivid and distressing dream of Mr. Bessel.

He saw Mr. Bessel gesticulating wildly, and with his face white and contorted. And, inexplicably mingled with his appearance, suggested perhaps by his gestures, was an intense fear, an urgency

to act. He even believes that he heard the voice of his fellow experimenter calling distressfully to him, though at the time he considered this to be an illusion. The vivid impression remained though Mr. Vincey awoke. For a space he lay awake and trembling in the darkness, possessed with that vague, unaccountable terror of unknown possibilities that comes out of dreams upon even the bravest men. But at last he roused himself, and turned over and went to sleep again, only for the dream to return with enhanced vividness.

He awoke with such a strong conviction that Mr. Bessel was in overwhelming distress and need of help that sleep was no longer possible. He was persuaded that his friend had rushed out to some dire calamity. For a time he lay reasoning vainly against this belief, but at last he gave way to it. He arose, against all reason, lit his gas, and dressed, and set out through the deserted streets--deserted, save for a noiseless policeman or so and the early news carts--towards Vigo Street to inquire if Mr. Bessel had returned.

But he never got there. As he was going down Long Acre some unaccountable impulse turned him aside out of that street towards Covent Garden, which was just waking to its nocturnal activities. He saw the market in front of him--a queer effect of glowing yellow lights and busy black figures. He became aware of a shouting, and perceived a figure turn the corner by the hotel and run swiftly towards him. He knew at once that it was Mr. Bessel. But it was Mr. Bessel transfigured. He was hatless and dishevelled, his collar was torn open, he grasped a bone-handled walking-cane near the ferrule end, and his mouth was pulled awry. And he ran, with agile strides, very rapidly. Their encounter was the affair of an instant. "Bessel!" cried Vincey.

The running man gave no sign of recognition either of Mr. Vincey or of his own name. Instead, he cut at his friend savagely with the stick, hitting him in the face within an inch of the eye. Mr. Vincey, stunned and astonished, staggered back, lost his footing, and fell heavily on the pavement. It seemed to him that Mr. Bessel

leapt over him as he fell. When he looked again Mr. Bessel had vanished, and a policeman and a number of garden porters and salesmen were rushing past towards Long Acre in hot pursuit.

With the assistance of several passers-by--for the whole street was speedily alive with running people--Mr. Vincey struggled to his feet. He at once became the centre of a crowd greedy to see his injury. A multitude of voices competed to reassure him of his safety, and then to tell him of the behaviour of the madman, as they regarded Mr. Bessel. He had suddenly appeared in the middle of the market screaming "LIFE! LIFE!" striking left and right with a blood-stained walking-stick, and dancing and shouting with laughter at each successful blow. A lad and two women had broken heads, and he had smashed a man's wrist; a little child had been knocked insensible, and for a time he had driven every one before him, so furious and resolute had his behaviour been. Then he made a raid upon a coffee stall, hurled its paraffin flare through the window of the post office, and fled laughing, after stunning the foremost of the two policemen who had the pluck to charge him.

Mr. Vincey's first impulse was naturally to join in the pursuit of his friend, in order if possible to save him from the violence of the indignant people. But his action was slow, the blow had half stunned him, and while this was still no more than a resolution came the news, shouted through the crowd, that Mr. Bessel had eluded his pursuers. At first Mr. Vincey could scarcely credit this, but the universality of the report, and presently the dignified return of two futile policemen, convinced him. After some aimless inquiries he returned towards Staple Inn, padding a handkerchief to a now very painful nose.

He was angry and astonished and perplexed. It appeared to him indisputable that Mr. Bessel must have gone violently mad in the midst of his experiment in thought transference, but why that should make him appear with a sad white face in Mr. Vincey's dreams seemed

a problem beyond solution. He racked his brains in vain to explain this. It seemed to him at last that not simply Mr. Bessel, but the order of things must be insane. But he could think of nothing to do. He shut himself carefully into his room, lit his fire--it was a gas fire with asbestos bricks--and, fearing fresh dreams if he went to bed, remained bathing his injured face, or holding up books in a vain attempt to read, until dawn. Throughout that vigil he had a curious persuasion that Mr. Bessel was endeavouring to speak to him, but he would not let himself attend to any such belief.

About dawn, his physical fatigue asserted itself, and he went to bed and slept at last in spite of dreaming. He rose late, unrested and anxious, and in considerable facial pain. The morning papers had no news of Mr. Bessel's aberration--it had come too late for them. Mr. Vincey's perplexities, to which the fever of his bruise added fresh irritation, became at last intolerable, and, after a fruitless visit to the Albany, he went down to St. Paul's Churchyard to Mr. Hart, Mr. Bessel's partner, and, so far as Mr. Vincey knew, his nearest friend.

He was surprised to learn that Mr. Hart, although he knew nothing of the outbreak, had also been disturbed by a vision, the very vision that Mr. Vincey had seen--Mr. Bessel, white and dishevelled, pleading earnestly by his gestures for help. That was his impression of the import of his signs. "I was just going to look him up in the Albany when you arrived," said Mr. Hart. "I was so sure of something being wrong with him."

As the outcome of their consultation the two gentlemen decided to inquire at Scotland Yard for news of their missing friend. "He is bound to be laid by the heels," said Mr. Hart. "He can't go on at that pace for long." But the police authorities had not laid Mr. Bessel by the heels. They confirmed Mr. Vincey's overnight experiences and added fresh circumstances, some of an even graver character than those he knew--a list of smashed glass along the upper

half of Tottenham Court Road, an attack upon a policeman in Hampstead Road, and an atrocious assault upon a woman. All these outrages were committed between half-past twelve and a quarter to two in the morning, and between those hours--and, indeed, from the very moment of Mr. Bessel's first rush from his rooms at half-past nine in the evening--they could trace the deepening violence of his fantastic career. For the last hour, at least from before one, that is, until a quarter to two, he had run amuck through London, eluding with amazing agility every effort to stop or capture him.

But after a quarter to two he had vanished. Up to that hour witnesses were multitudinous. Dozens of people had seen him, fled from him or pursued him, and then things suddenly came to an end. At a quarter to two he had been seen running down the Euston Road towards Baker Street,

flourishing a can of burning colza oil and jerking splashes of flame therefrom at the windows of the houses he passed. But none of the policemen on Euston Road beyond the Waxwork Exhibition, nor any of those in the side streets down which he must have passed had he left the Euston Road, had seen anything of him. Abruptly he disappeared. Nothing of his subsequent doings came to light in spite of the keenest inquiry.

Here was a fresh astonishment for Mr. Vincey. He had found considerable comfort in Mr. Hart's conviction: "He is bound to be laid by the heels before long," and in that assurance he had been able to suspend his mental perplexities. But any fresh development seemed destined to add new impossibilities to a pile already heaped beyond the powers of his acceptance. He found himself doubting whether his memory might not have played him some grotesque trick, debating whether any of these things could possibly have happened; and in the afternoon he hunted up Mr. Hart again to share the intolerable weight on his mind. He found Mr. Hart engaged with a well-known private detective, but as that gentleman accomplished nothing in this case, we need not enlarge upon his proceedings.

All that day Mr. Bessel's whereabouts eluded an unceasingly active inquiry, and all that night. And all that day there was a persuasion in the back of Vincey's mind that Mr. Bessel sought his attention, and all through the night Mr. Bessel with a tear-stained face of anguish pursued him through his dreams. And whenever he saw Mr. Bessel in his dreams he also saw a number of other faces, vague but malignant, that seemed to be pursuing Mr. Bessel.

It was on the following day, Sunday, that Mr. Vincey recalled certain remarkable stories of Mrs. Bullock, the medium, who was then attracting attention for the first time in London. He determined to consult her. She was staying at the house of that well-known inquirer, Dr. Wilson Paget, and Mr. Vincey, although he had never met that gentleman before, repaired to him forthwith with the intention of invoking her help. But scarcely had he mentioned the name of Bessel when Doctor Paget interrupted him. "Last night--just at the end," he said, "we had a communication."

He left the room, and returned with a slate on which were certain words written in a handwriting, shaky indeed, but indisputably the handwriting of Mr. Bessel!

"How did you get this?" said Mr. Vincey. "Do you mean--?"

"We got it last night," said Doctor Paget. With numerous interruptions from Mr. Vincey, he proceeded to explain how the writing had been obtained. It appears that in her seances, Mrs. Bullock passes into a condition of trance, her eyes rolling up in a strange way under her eyelids, and her body becoming rigid. She then begins to talk very rapidly, usually in voices other than her own. At the same time one or both of her hands may become active, and if slates and pencils are provided they will then write messages simultaneously with and quite independently of the flow of words from her mouth. By many she is considered an even more remarkable medium than the celebrated

Mrs. Piper. It was one of these messages, the one written by her left hand, that Mr. Vincey now had before him. It consisted of eight words written disconnectedly: "George Bessel . . . trial excavn. . . . Baker Street . . . help . . . starvation." Curiously enough, neither Doctor Paget nor the two other inquirers who were present had heard of the disappearance of Mr. Bessel--the news of it appeared only in the evening papers of Saturday--and they had put the message aside with many others of a vague and enigmatical sort that Mrs. Bullock has from time to time delivered.

When Doctor Paget heard Mr. Vincey's story, he gave himself at once with great energy to the pursuit of this clue to the discovery of Mr. Bessel. It would serve no useful purpose here to describe the inquiries of Mr. Vincey and himself; suffice it that the clue was a genuine one, and that Mr. Bessel was actually discovered by its aid.

He was found at the bottom of a detached shaft which had been sunk and abandoned at the commencement of the work for the new electric railway near Baker Street Station. His arm and leg and two ribs were broken. The shaft is protected by a hoarding nearly 20 feet high, and over this, incredible as it seems, Mr. Bessel, a stout, middle-aged gentleman, must have scrambled in order to fall down the shaft. He was saturated in colza oil, and the smashed tin lay beside him, but luckily the flame had been extinguished by his fall. And his madness had passed from him altogether. But he was, of course, terribly enfeebled, and at the sight of his rescuers he gave way to hysterical weeping.

In view of the deplorable state of his flat, he was taken to the house of Dr. Hatton in Upper Baker Street. Here he was subjected to a sedative treatment, and anything that might recall the violent crisis through which he had passed was carefully avoided. But on the second day he volunteered a statement.

Since that occasion Mr. Bessel has several times repeated this

statement--to myself among other people--varying the details as the narrator of real experiences always does, but never by any chance contradicting himself in any particular. And the statement he makes is in substance as follows.

In order to understand it clearly it is necessary to go back to his experiments with Mr. Vincey before his remarkable attack. Mr. Bessel's first attempts at self-projection, in his experiments with Mr. Vincey, were, as the reader will remember, unsuccessful. But through all of them he was concentrating all his power and will upon getting out of the body--"willing it with all my might," he says. At last, almost against expectation, came success. And Mr. Bessel asserts that he, being alive, did actually, by an effort of will, leave his body and pass into some place or state outside this world.

The release was, he asserts, instantaneous. "At one moment I was seated in my chair, with my eyes tightly shut, my hands gripping the arms of the chair, doing all I could to concentrate my mind on Vincey, and then I perceived myself outside my body--saw my body near me, but certainly not containing me, with the hands relaxing and the head drooping forward on the breast."

Nothing shakes him in his assurance of that release. He describes in a quiet, matter-of-fact way the new sensation he experienced. He felt he had become impalpable--so much he had expected, but he had not expected to find himself enormously large. So, however, it would seem he became. "I was a great cloud--if I may express it that way--anchored to my body. It appeared to me, at first, as if I had discovered a greater self of which the conscious being in my brain was only a little part. I saw the Albany and Piccadilly and Regent Street and all the rooms and places in the houses, very minute and very bright and distinct, spread out below me like a little city seen from a balloon. Every now and then vague shapes like drifting wreaths of smoke made the vision a little indistinct, but at first I paid little heed to them. The thing that astonished me

most, and which astonishes me still, is that I saw quite distinctly the insides of the houses as well as the streets, saw little people dining and talking in the private houses, men and women dining, playing billiards, and drinking in restaurants and hotels, and several places of entertainment crammed with people. It was like watching the affairs of a glass hive."

Such were Mr. Bessel's exact words as I took them down when he told me the story. Quite forgetful of Mr. Vincey, he remained for a space observing these things. Impelled by curiosity, he says, he stooped down, and, with the shadowy arm he found himself possessed of, attempted to touch a man walking along Vigo Street. But he could not do so, though his finger seemed to pass through the man. Something prevented his doing this, but what it was he finds it hard to describe. He compares the obstacle to a sheet of glass.

"I felt as a kitten may feel," he said, "when it goes for the first time to pat its reflection in a mirror." Again and again, on the occasion when I heard him tell this story, Mr. Bessel returned to that comparison of the sheet of glass. Yet it was not altogether a precise comparison, because, as the reader will speedily see, there were interruptions of this generally impermeable resistance, means of getting through the barrier to the material world again. But, naturally, there is a very great difficulty in expressing these unprecedented impressions in the language of everyday experience.

A thing that impressed him instantly, and which weighed upon him throughout all this experience, was the stillness of this place--he was in a world without sound.

At first Mr. Bessel's mental state was an unemotional wonder. His thought chiefly concerned itself with where he might be. He was out of the body--out of his material body, at any rate--but that was not all. He believes, and I for one believe also, that he was somewhere out of space, as we understand it, altogether. By a strenuous

effort of will he had passed out of his body into a world beyond this world, a world undreamt of, yet lying so close to it and so strangely situated with regard to it that all things on this earth are clearly visible both from without and from within in this other world about us. For a long time, as it seemed to him, this realisation occupied his mind to the exclusion of all other matters, and then he recalled the engagement with Mr. Vincey, to which this astonishing experience was, after all, but a prelude.

He turned his mind to locomotion in this new body in which he found himself. For a time he was unable to shift himself from his attachment to his earthly carcass. For a time this new strange cloud body of his simply swayed, contracted, expanded, coiled, and writhed with his efforts to free himself, and then quite suddenly the link that bound him snapped. For a moment everything was hidden by what appeared to be whirling spheres of dark vapour, and then through a momentary gap he saw his drooping body collapse limply, saw his lifeless head drop sideways, and found he was driving along like a huge cloud in a strange place of shadowy clouds that had the luminous intricacy of London spread like a model below.

But now he was aware that the fluctuating vapour about him was something more than vapour, and the temerarious excitement of his first essay was shot with fear. For he perceived, at first indistinctly, and then suddenly very clearly, that he was surrounded by **FACES!** that each roll and coil of the seeming cloud-stuff was a face. And such faces! Faces of thin shadow, faces of gaseous tenuity. Faces like those faces that glare with intolerable strangeness upon the sleeper in the evil hours of his dreams. Evil, greedy eyes that were full of a covetous curiosity, faces with knit brows and snarling, smiling lips; their vague hands clutched at Mr. Bessel as he passed, and the rest of their bodies was but an elusive streak of trailing darkness. Never a word they said, never a sound from the mouths that seemed to gibber. All about him they pressed in that dreamy silence, passing freely through the dim mistiness that was

his body, gathering ever more numerous about him. And the shadowy Mr. Bessel, now suddenly fear-stricken, drove through the silent, active multitude of eyes and clutching hands.

So inhuman were these faces, so malignant their staring eyes, and shadowy, clawing gestures, that it did not occur to Mr. Bessel to attempt intercourse with these drifting creatures. Idiot phantoms, they seemed, children of vain desire, beings unborn and forbidden the boon of being, whose only expressions and gestures told of the envy and craving for life that was their one link with existence.

It says much for his resolution that, amidst the swarming cloud of these noiseless spirits of evil, he could still think of Mr. Vincey. He made a violent effort of will and found himself, he knew not how, stooping towards Staple Inn, saw Vincey sitting attentive and alert in his arm-chair by the fire.

And clustering also about him, as they clustered ever about all that lives and breathes, was another multitude of these vain voiceless shadows, longing, desiring, seeking some loophole into life.

For a space Mr. Bessel sought ineffectually to attract his friend's attention. He tried to get in front of his eyes, to move the objects in his room, to touch him. But Mr. Vincey remained unaffected, ignorant of the being that was so close to his own. The strange something that Mr. Bessel has compared to a sheet of glass separated them impermeably.

And at last Mr. Bessel did a desperate thing. I have told how that in some strange way he could see not only the outside of a man as we see him, but within. He extended his shadowy hand and thrust his vague black fingers, as it seemed, through the heedless brain.

Then, suddenly, Mr. Vincey started like a man who recalls his attention from wandering thoughts, and it seemed to Mr. Bessel that a little

dark-red body situated in the middle of Mr. Vincey's brain swelled and glowed as he did so. Since that experience he has been shown anatomical figures of the brain, and he knows now that this is that useless structure, as doctors call it, the pineal eye. For, strange as it will seem to many, we have, deep in our brains--where it cannot possibly see any earthly light--an eye! At the time this, with the rest of the internal anatomy of the brain, was quite new to him. At the sight of its changed appearance, however, he thrust forth his finger, and, rather fearful still of the consequences, touched this little spot. And instantly Mr. Vincey started, and Mr. Bessel knew that he was seen.

And at that instant it came to Mr. Bessel that evil had happened to his body, and behold! a great wind blew through all that world of shadows and tore him away. So strong was this persuasion that he thought no more of Mr. Vincey, but turned about forthwith, and all the countless faces drove back with him like leaves before a gale. But he returned too late. In an instant he saw the body that he had left inert and collapsed--lying, indeed, like the body of a man just dead--had arisen, had arisen by virtue of some strength and will beyond his own. It stood with staring eyes, stretching its limbs in dubious fashion.

For a moment he watched it in wild dismay, and then he stooped towards it. But the pane of glass had closed against him again, and he was foiled. He beat himself passionately against this, and all about him the spirits of evil grinned and pointed and mocked. He gave way to furious anger. He compares himself to a bird that has fluttered heedlessly into a room and is beating at the window-pane that holds it back from freedom.

And behold! the little body that had once been his was now dancing with delight. He saw it shouting, though he could not hear its shouts; he saw the violence of its movements grow. He watched it fling his cherished furniture about in the mad delight of existence,

rend his books apart, smash bottles, drink heedlessly from the jagged fragments, leap and smite in a passionate acceptance of living. He watched these actions in paralysed astonishment. Then once more he hurled himself against the impassable barrier, and then with all that crew of mocking ghosts about him, hurried back in dire confusion to Vincey to tell him of the outrage that had come upon him.

But the brain of Vincey was now closed against apparitions, and the disembodied Mr. Bessel pursued him in vain as he hurried out into Holborn to call a cab. Foiled and terror-stricken, Mr. Bessel swept back again, to find his desecrated body whooping in a glorious frenzy down the Burlington Arcade. . . .

And now the attentive reader begins to understand Mr. Bessel's interpretation of the first part of this strange story. The being whose frantic rush through London had inflicted so much injury and disaster had indeed Mr. Bessel's body, but it was not Mr. Bessel. It was an evil spirit out of that strange world beyond existence, into which Mr. Bessel had so rashly ventured. For twenty hours it held possession of him, and for all those twenty hours the dispossessed spirit-body of Mr. Bessel was going to and fro in that unheard-of middle world of shadows seeking help in vain. He spent many hours beating at the minds of Mr. Vincey and of his friend Mr. Hart. Each, as we know, he roused by his efforts. But the language that might convey his situation to these helpers across the gulf he did not know; his feeble fingers groped vainly and powerlessly in their brains. Once, indeed, as we have already told, he was able to turn Mr. Vincey aside from his path so that he encountered the stolen body in its career, but he could not make him understand the thing that had happened: he was unable to draw any help from that encounter. . . .

All through those hours the persuasion was overwhelming in Mr. Bessel's mind that presently his body would be killed by its furious tenant, and he would have to remain in this shadow-land for evermore.

So that those long hours were a growing agony of fear. And ever as he hurried to and fro in his ineffectual excitement, innumerable spirits of that world about him mobbed him and confused his mind. And ever an envious applauding multitude poured after their successful fellow as he went upon his glorious career.

For that, it would seem, must be the life of these bodiless things of this world that is the shadow of our world. Ever they watch, coveting a way into a mortal body, in order that they may descend, as furies and frenzies, as violent lusts and mad, strange impulses, rejoicing in the body they have won. For Mr. Bessel was not the only human soul in that place. Witness the fact that he met first one, and afterwards several shadows of men, men like himself, it seemed, who had lost their bodies even it may be as he had lost his, and wandered, despairingly, in that lost world that is neither life nor death. They could not speak because that world is silent, yet he knew them for men because of their dim human bodies, and because of the sadness of their faces.

But how they had come into that world he could not tell, nor where the bodies they had lost might be, whether they still raved about the earth, or whether they were closed forever in death against return. That they were the spirits of the dead neither he nor I believe. But Doctor Wilson Paget thinks they are the rational souls of men who are lost in madness on the earth.

At last Mr. Bessel chanced upon a place where a little crowd of such disembodied silent creatures was gathered, and thrusting through them he saw below a brightly-lit room, and four or five quiet gentlemen and a woman, a stoutish woman dressed in black bombazine and sitting awkwardly in a chair with her head thrown back. He knew her from her portraits to be Mrs. Bullock, the medium. And he perceived that tracts and structures in her brain glowed and stirred as he had seen the pineal eye in the brain of Mr. Vincey glow. The light was very fitful; sometimes it was a broad illumination, and sometimes

merely a faint twilight spot, and it shifted slowly about her brain. She kept on talking and writing with one hand. And Mr. Bessel saw that the crowding shadows of men about him, and a great multitude of the shadow spirits of that shadowland, were all striving and thrusting to touch the lighted regions of her brain. As one gained her brain or another was thrust away, her voice and the writing of her hand changed. So that what she said was disorderly and confused for the most part; now a fragment of one soul's message, and now a fragment of another's, and now she babbled the insane fancies of the spirits of vain desire. Then Mr. Bessel understood that she spoke for the spirit that had touch of her, and he began to struggle very furiously towards her. But he was on the outside of the crowd and at that time he could not reach her, and at last, growing anxious, he went away to find what had happened meanwhile to his body. For a long time he went to and fro seeking it in vain and fearing that it must have been killed, and then he found it at the bottom of the shaft in Baker Street, writhing furiously and cursing with pain. Its leg and an arm and two ribs had been broken by its fall. Moreover, the evil spirit was angry because his time had been so short and because of the painmaking violent movements and casting his body about.

And at that Mr. Bessel returned with redoubled earnestness to the room where the seance was going on, and so soon as he had thrust himself within sight of the place he saw one of the men who stood about the medium looking at his watch as if he meant that the seance should presently end. At that a great number of the shadows who had been striving turned away with gestures of despair. But the thought that the seance was almost over only made Mr. Bessel the more earnest, and he struggled so stoutly with his will against the others that presently he gained the woman's brain. It chanced that just at that moment it glowed very brightly, and in that instant she wrote the message that Doctor Wilson Paget preserved. And then the other shadows and the cloud of evil spirits about him had thrust Mr. Bessel away from her, and for all the rest of the seance he could regain her no more.

So he went back and watched through the long hours at the bottom of the shaft where the evil spirit lay in the stolen body it had maimed, writhing and cursing, and weeping and groaning, and learning the lesson of pain. And towards dawn the thing he had waited for happened, the brain glowed brightly and the evil spirit came out, and Mr. Bessel entered the body he had feared he should never enter again. As he did so, the silence--the brooding silence--ended; he heard the tumult of traffic and the voices of people overhead, and that strange world that is the shadow of our world--the dark and silent shadows of ineffectual desire and the shadows of lost men--vanished clean away.

He lay there for the space of about three hours before he was found. And in spite of the pain and suffering of his wounds, and of the dim damp place in which he lay; in spite of the tears--wring from him by his physical distress--his heart was full of gladness to know that he was nevertheless back once more in the kindly world of men.

11. MR. BRISHER'S TREASURE

"You can't be TOO careful WHO you marry," said Mr. Brisher, and pulled thoughtfully with a fat-wristed hand at the lank moustache that hides his want of chin.

"That's why--" I ventured.

"Yes," said Mr. Brisher, with a solemn light in his bleary, blue-grey eyes, moving his head expressively and breathing alcohol INTIMATELY at me. "There's lots as 'ave 'ad a try at me--many as I could name in this town--but none 'ave done it--none."

I surveyed the flushed countenance, the equatorial expansion, the masterly carelessness of his attire, and heaved a sigh to think that by reason of the unworthiness of women he must needs be the last of his race.

"I was a smart young chap when I was younger," said Mr. Brisher. "I 'ad my work cut out. But I was very careful--very. And I got through . . ."

He leant over the taproom table and thought visibly on the subject of my trustworthiness. I was relieved at last by his confidence.

"I was engaged once," he said at last, with a reminiscent eye on the shuv-a'penny board.

"So near as that?"

He looked at me. "So near as that. Fact is--" He looked about him, brought his face close to mine, lowered his voice, and fenced off an unsympathetic world with a grimy hand. "If she ain't dead or married to some one else or anything--I'm engaged still. Now." He confirmed this statement with nods and facial contortions. "STILL," he said,

ending the pantomime, and broke into a reckless smile at my surprise.
"ME!"

"Run away," he explained further, with coruscating eyebrows.
"Come 'ome.

"That ain't all.

"You'd 'ardly believe it," he said, "but I found a treasure. Found a regular treasure."

I fancied this was irony, and did not, perhaps, greet it with proper surprise. "Yes," he said, "I found a treasure. And come 'ome. I tell you I could surprise you with things that has happened to me." And for some time he was content to repeat that he had found a treasure--and left it.

I made no vulgar clamour for a story, but I became attentive to Mr. Brisher's bodily needs, and presently I led him back to the deserted lady.

"She was a nice girl," he said--a little sadly, I thought. "AND respectable."

He raised his eyebrows and tightened his mouth to express extreme respectability--beyond the likes of us elderly men.

"It was a long way from 'ere. Essex, in fact. Near Colchester. It was when I was up in London--in the buildin' trade. I was a smart young chap then, I can tell you. Slim. 'Ad best clo'es 's good as anybody. 'At--SILK 'at, mind you." Mr. Brisher's hand shot above his head towards the infinite to indicate it silk hat of the highest. "Umbrella--nice umbrella with a 'orn 'andle. Savin's. Very careful I was. . . ."

He was pensive for a little while, thinking, as we must all come to think sooner or later, of the vanished brightness of youth. But he refrained, as one may do in taprooms, from the obvious moral.

"I got to know 'er through a chap what was engaged to 'er sister. She was stopping in London for a bit with an aunt that 'ad a 'am an' beef shop. This aunt was very particular--they was all very particular people, all 'er people was--and wouldn't let 'er sister go out with this feller except 'er other sister, MY girl that is, went with them. So 'e brought me into it, sort of to ease the crowding. We used to go walks in Battersea Park of a Sunday afternoon. Me in my topper, and 'im in 'is; and the girl's--well--stylish. There wasn't many in Battersea Park 'ad the larf of us. She wasn't what you'd call pretty, but a nicer girl I never met. I liked 'er from the start, and, well--though I say it who shouldn't--she liked me. You know 'ow it is, I dessay?"

I pretended I did.

"And when this chap married 'er sister--'im and me was great friends--what must 'e do but arst me down to Colchester, close by where She lived. Naturally I was introjuced to 'er people, and well, very soon, her and me was engaged."

He repeated "engaged."

"She lived at 'ome with 'er father and mother, quite the lady, in a very nice little 'ouse with a garden--and remarkable respectable people they was. Rich you might call 'em a'most. They owned their own 'ouse--got it out of the Building Society, and cheap because the chap who had it before was a burglar and in prison--and they 'ad a bit of free'old land, and some cottages and money 'nvested--all nice and tight: they was what you'd call snug and warm. I tell you, I was On. Furniture too. Why! They 'ad a pianner. Jane--'er name was Jane--used to play it Sundays, and very nice she played too.

There wasn't 'ardly a 'im toon in the book she COULDN'T play . . .

"Many's the evenin' we've met and sung 'ims there, me and 'er and the family.

"'Er father was quite a leadin' man in chapel. You should ha' seen him Sundays, interruptin' the minister and givin' out 'ims. He had gold spectacles, I remember, and used to look over 'em at you while he sang hearty--he was always great on singing 'earty to the Lord--and when HE got out o' toon 'arf the people went after 'im--always. 'E was that sort of man. And to walk be'ind 'im in 'is nice black clo'es--'is 'at was a brimmer--made one regular proud to be engaged to such a father-in-law. And when the summer came I went down there and stopped a fortnight.

"Now, you know there was a sort of Itch," said Mr. Brisher. "We wanted to marry, me and Jane did, and get things settled. But 'E said I 'ad to get a proper position first. Consequently there was a Itch. Consequently, when I went down there, I was anxious to show that I was a good useful sort of chap like. Show I could do pretty nearly everything like. See?"

I made a sympathetic noise.

"And down at the bottom of their garden was a bit of wild part like. So I says to 'im, 'Why don't you 'ave a rockery 'ere?' I says. 'It 'ud look nice.'

"'Too much expense,' he says.

"'Not a penny,' says I. 'I'm a dab at rockeries. Lemme make you one.' You see, I'd 'elped my brother make a rockery in the beer garden be'ind 'is tap, so I knew 'ow to do it to rights. 'Lemme make you one,' I says. 'It's 'olidays, but I'm that sort of chap, I 'ate doing nothing,' I says. 'I'll make you one to rights.' And the long and

the short of it was, he said I might.

"And that's 'ow I come on the treasure."

"What treasure?" I asked.

"Why!" said Mr. Brisher, "the treasure I'm telling you about, what's the reason why I never married."

"What!--a treasure--dug up?"

"Yes--buried wealth--treasure trove. Come out of the ground. What I kept on saying--regular treasure. . . ." He looked at me with unusual disrespect.

"It wasn't more than a foot deep, not the top of it," he said.
"I'd 'ardly got thirsty like, before I come on the corner."

"Go on," I said. "I didn't understand."

"Why! Directly I 'it the box I knew it was treasure. A sort of instinct told me. Something seemed to shout inside of me--'Now's your chance--lie low.' It's lucky I knew the laws of treasure trove or I'd 'ave been shoutin' there and then. I daresay you know--"

"Crown bags it," I said, "all but one per cent. Go on. It's a shame. What did you do?"

"Uncovered the top of the box. There wasn't anybody in the garden or about like. Jane was 'elping 'er mother do the 'ouse. I WAS excited--I tell you. I tried the lock and then gave a whack at the hinges. Open it came. Silver coins--full! Shining. It made me tremble to see 'em. And jest then--I'm blessed if the dustman didn't come round the back of the 'ouse. It pretty nearly gave me 'eart disease to think what a fool I was to 'ave that money showing. And

directly after I 'eard the chap next door--'e was 'olidaying, too--
I 'eard him watering 'is beans. If only 'e'd looked over the fence!"

"What did you do?"

"Kicked the lid on again and covered it up like a shot, and went on digging about a yard away from it--like mad. And my face, so to speak, was laughing on its own account till I had it hid. I tell you I was regular scared like at my luck. I jest thought that it 'ad to be kep' close and that was all. 'Treasure,' I kep' whisperin' to myself, 'Treasure' and 'undreds of pounds, 'undreds, 'undreds of pounds.' Whispering to myself like, and digging like blazes. It seemed to me the box was regular sticking out and showing, like your legs do under the sheets in bed, and I went and put all the earth I'd got out of my 'ole for the rockery slap on top of it. I WAS in a sweat. And in the midst of it all out toddles 'er father. He didn't say anything to me, jest stood behind me and stared, but Jane tole me afterwards when he went indoors, 'e says, 'That there jackanapes of yours, Jane'--he always called me a jackanapes some'ow--'knows 'ow to put 'is back into it after all.' Seemed quite impressed by it, 'e did."

"How long was the box?" I asked, suddenly.

"'Ow long?" said Mr. Brisher.

"Yes--in length?"

"Oh! 'bout so-by-so." Mr. Brisher indicated a moderate-sized trunk.

"FULL?" said I.

"Full up of silver coins--'arf-crowns, I believe."

"Why!" I cried, "that would mean--hundreds of pounds."

"Thousands," said Mr. Brisher, in a sort of sad calm. "I calc'lated it out."

"But how did they get there?"

"All I know is what I found. What I thought at the time was this. The chap who'd owned the 'ouse before 'er father 'd been a regular slap-up burglar. What you'd call a 'igh-class criminal. Used to drive 'is trap--like Peace did." Mr. Brisher meditated on the difficulties of narration and embarked on a complicated parenthesis. "I don't know if I told you it'd been a burglar's 'ouse before it was my girl's father's, and I knew 'e'd robbed a mail train once, I did know that. It seemed to me--"

"That's very likely," I said. "But what did you do?"

"Sweated," said Mr. Brisher. "Regular run orf me. All that morning," said Mr. Brisher, "I was at it, pretending to make that rockery and wondering what I should do. I'd 'ave told 'er father p'r'aps, only I was doubtful of 'is honesty--I was afraid he might rob me of it like, and give it up to the authorities--and besides, considering I was marrying into the family, I thought it would be nicer like if it came through me. Put me on a better footing, so to speak. Well, I 'ad three days before me left of my 'olidays, so there wasn't no hurry, so I covered it up and went on digging, and tried to puzzle out 'ow I was to make sure of it. Only I couldn't.

"I thought," said Mr. Brisher, "AND I thought. Once I got regular doubtful whether I'd seen it or not, and went down to it and 'ad it uncovered again, just as her ma came out to 'ang up a bit of washin' she'd done. Jumps again! Afterwards I was just thinking I'd 'ave another go at it, when Jane comes to tell me dinner was ready. 'You'll want it,' she said, 'seeing all the 'ole you've dug.'

"I was in a regular daze all dinner, wondering whether that chap next door wasn't over the fence and filling 'is pockets. But in the afternoon I got easier in my mind--it seemed to me it must 'ave been there so long it was pretty sure to stop a bit longer--and I tried to get up a bit of a discussion to dror out the old man and see what 'E thought of treasure trove."

Mr. Brisher paused, and affected amusement at the memory.

"The old man was a scorcher," he said; "a regular scorcher."

"What!" said I; "did he--?"

"It was like this," explained Mr. Brisher, laying a friendly hand on my arm and breathing into my face to calm me. "Just to dror 'im out, I told a story of a chap I said I knew--pretendin', you know--who'd found a sovring in a novercoat 'e'd borrowed. I said 'e stuck to it, but I said I wasn't sure whether that was right or not. And then the old man began. Lor'! 'e DID let me 'ave it!" Mr. Brisher affected an insincere amusement. "'E was, well--what you might call a rare 'and at Snacks. Said that was the sort of friend 'e'd naturally expect me to 'ave. Said 'e'd naturally expect that from the friend of a out-of-work loafer who took up with daughters who didn't belong to 'im. There! I couldn't tell you 'ARF 'e said. 'E went on most outrageous. I stood up to 'im about it, just to dror 'im out. 'Wouldn't you stick to a 'arf-sov', not if you found it in the street?' I says. 'Certainly not,' 'e says; 'certainly I wouldn't.' 'What! not if you found it as a sort of treasure?' 'Young man,' 'e says, 'there's 'i'er 'thority than mine--Render unto Caesar'--what is it? Yes. Well, he fetched up that. A rare 'and at 'itting you over the 'ed with the Bible, was the old man. And so he went on. 'E got to such Snacks about me at last I couldn't stand it. I'd promised Jane not to answer 'im back, but it got a bit TOO thick. I--I give it 'im . . ."

Mr. Brisher, by means of enigmatical facework, tried to make me think he had had the best of that argument, but I knew better.

"I went out in a 'uff at last. But not before I was pretty sure I 'ad to lift that treasure by myself. The only thing that kep' me up was thinking 'ow I'd take it out of 'im when I 'ad the cash."

There was a lengthy pause.

"Now, you'd 'ardly believe it, but all them three days I never 'ad a chance at the blessed treasure, never got out not even a 'arf-crown. There was always a Somethink--always.

"'Stonishing thing it isn't thought of more," said Mr. Brisher. "Finding treasure's no great shakes. It's gettin' it. I don't suppose I slep' a wink any of those nights, thinking where I was to take it, what I was to do with it, 'ow I was to explain it. It made me regular ill. And days I was that dull, it made Jane regular 'uffy. 'You ain't the same chap you was in London,' she says, several times. I tried to lay it on 'er father and 'is Snacks, but bless you, she knew better. What must she 'ave but that I'd got another girl on my mind! Said I wasn't True. Well, we had a bit of a row. But I was that set on the Treasure, I didn't seem to mind a bit Anything she said.

"Well, at last I got a sort of plan. I was always a bit good at planning, though carrying out isn't so much in my line. I thought it all out and settled on a plan. First, I was going to take all my pockets full of these 'ere 'arf-crowns--see?--and afterwards as I shall tell.

"Well, I got to that state I couldn't think of getting at the Treasure again in the daytime, so I waited until the night before I had to go, and then, when everything was still, up I gets and slips down to the back door, meaning to get my pockets full. What must I do

in the scullery but fall over a pail! Up gets 'er father with a gun--'e was a light sleeper was 'er father, and very suspicious and there was me: 'ad to explain I'd come down to the pump for a drink because my water-bottle was bad. 'E didn't let me off a Snack or two over that bit, you lay a bob."

"And you mean to say--" I began.

"Wait a bit," said Mr. Brisher. "I say, I'd made my plan. That put the kybosh on one bit, but it didn't 'urt the general scheme not a bit. I went and I finished that rockery next day, as though there wasn't a Snack in the world; cemented over the stones, I did, dabbed it green and everythink. I put a dab of green just to show where the box was. They all came and looked at it, and sai 'ow nice it was--even 'e was a bit softer like to see it, and all he said was, "It's a pity you can't always work like that, then you might get something definite to do," he says.

"'Yes,' I says--I couldn't 'elp it--'I put a lot in that rockery,' I says, like that. See? 'I put a lot in that rockery'--meaning--"

"I see," said I--for Mr. Brisher is apt to overelaborate his jokes.

"_E_ didn't," said Mr. Brisher. "Not then, anyhow.

"Ar'ever--after all that was over, off I set for London. . . .
Orf I set for London."

Pause.

"On'y I wasn't going to no London," said Mr. Brisher, with sudden animation, and thrusting his face into mine. "No fear! What do YOU think?"

"I didn't go no further than Colchester--not a yard.

"I'd left the spade just where I could find it. I'd got everything planned and right. I 'ired a little trap in Colchester, and pretended I wanted to go to Ipswich and stop the night, and come back next day, and the chap I 'ired it from made me leave two sovrings on it right away, and off I set.

"I didn't go to no Ipswich neither.

"Midnight the 'orse and trap was 'itched by the little road that ran by the cottage where 'e lived--not sixty yards off, it wasn't--and I was at it like a good 'un. It was jest the night for such games--overcast--but a trifle too 'ot, and all round the sky there was summer lightning and presently a thunderstorm. Down it came. First big drops in a sort of fizzle, then 'ail. I kep'on. I whacked at it--I didn't dream the old man would 'ear. I didn't even trouble to go quiet with the spade, and the thunder and lightning and 'ail seemed to excite me like. I shouldn't wonder if I was singing. I got so 'ard at it I clean forgot the thunder and the 'orse and trap. I precious soon got the box showing, and started to lift it"

"Heavy?" I said.

"I couldn't no more lift it than fly. I WAS sick. I'd never thought of that I got regular wild--I tell you, I cursed. I got sort of outrageous. I didn't think of dividing it like for the minute, and even then I couldn't 'ave took money about loose in a trap. I hoisted one end sort of wild like, and over the whole show went with a tremenjous noise. Perfek smash of silver. And then right on the heels of that, Flash! Lightning like the day! and there was the back door open and the old man coming down the garden with 'is blooming old gun. He wasn't not a 'undred yards away!

"I tell you I was that upset--I didn't think what I was doing. I never stopped--not even to fill my pockets. I went over the fence

like a shot, and ran like one o'clock for the trap, cussing and swearing as I went. I WAS in a state. . . .

"And will you believe me, when I got to the place where I'd left the 'orse and trap, they'd gone. Orf! When I saw that I 'adn't a cuss left for it. I jest danced on the grass, and when I'd danced enough I started off to London. . . . I was done."

Mr. Brisher was pensive for an interval. "I was done," he repeated, very bitterly.

"Well?" I said.

"That's all," said Mr. Brisher.

"You didn't go back?"

"No fear. I'd 'ad enough of THAT blooming treasure, any'ow for a bit. Besides, I didn't know what was done to chaps who tried to collar a treasure trove. I started off for London there and then. . . ."

"And you never went back?"

"Never."

"But about Jane? Did you write?"

"Three times, fishing like. And no answer. We'd parted in a bit of a 'uff on account of 'er being jealous. So that I couldn't make out for certain what it meant.

"I didn't know what to do. I didn't even know whether the old man knew it was me. I sort of kep' an eye open on papers to see when he'd give up that treasure to the Crown, as I hadn't a doubt 'e would, considering 'ow respectable he'd always been."

"And did he?"

Mr. Brisher pursed his mouth and moved his head slowly from side to side. "Not 'IM," he said.

"Jane was a nice girl," he said, "a thorough nice girl mind you, if jealous, and there's no knowing I mightn't 'ave gone back to 'er after a bit. I thought if he didn't give up the treasure I might 'ave a sort of 'old on 'im. . . . Well, one day I looks as usual under Colchester--and there I saw 'is name. What for, d'yer think?"

I could not guess.

Mr. Brisher's voice sank to a whisper, and once more he spoke behind his hand. His manner was suddenly suffused with a positive joy. "Issuing counterfeit coins," he said. "Counterfeit coins!"

"You don't mean to say--?"

"Yes-It. Bad. Quite a long case they made of it. But they got 'im, though he dodged tremenjous. Traced 'is 'aving passed, oh!--nearly a dozen bad 'arf-crowns."

"And you didn't--?"

"No fear. And it didn't do 'IM much good to say it was treasure trove."

12. MISS WINCHELSEA'S HEART

Miss Winchelsea was going to Rome. The matter had filled her mind for a month or more, and had overflowed so abundantly into her conversation that quite a number of people who were not going to Rome, and who were not likely to go to Rome, had made it a personal grievance against her. Some indeed had attempted quite unavailingly to convince her that Rome was not nearly such a desirable place as it was reported to be, and others had gone so far as to suggest behind her back that she was dreadfully "stuck up" about "that Rome of hers." And little Lily Hardhurst had told her friend Mr. Binns that so far as she was concerned Miss Winchelsea might "go to her old Rome and stop there; SHE (Miss Lily Hardhurst) wouldn't grieve." And the way in which Miss Winchelsea put herself upon terms of personal tenderness with Horace and Benvenuto Cellini and Raphael and Shelley and Keats--if she had been Shelley's widow she could not have professed a keener interest in his grave--was a matter of universal astonishment. Her dress was a triumph of tactful discretion, sensible, but not too "touristy"--Miss Winchelsea, had a great dread of being "touristy"--and her Baedeker was carried in a cover of grey to hide its glaring red. She made a prim and pleasant little figure on the Charing Cross platform, in spite of her swelling pride, when at last the great day dawned, and she could start for Rome. The day was bright, the Channel passage would be pleasant, and all the omens promised well. There was the gayest sense of adventure in this unprecedented departure.

She was going with two friends who had been fellow-students with her at the training college, nice honest girls both, though not so good at history and literature as Miss Winchelsea. They both looked up to her immensely, though physically they had to look down, and she anticipated some pleasant times to be spent in "stirring them up" to her own pitch of aesthetic and historical enthusiasm. They had secured seats already, and welcomed her effusively at the carriage door. In the instant criticism of the encounter she noted that Fanny

had a slightly "touristy" leather strap, and that Helen had succumbed to a serge jacket with side pockets, into which her hands were thrust. But they were much too happy with themselves and the expedition for their friend to attempt any hint at the moment about these things. As soon as the first ecstasies were over--Fanny's enthusiasm was a little noisy and crude, and consisted mainly in emphatic repetitions of "Just FANCY! we're going to Rome, my dear!--Rome!"--they gave their attention to their fellow-travellers. Helen was anxious to secure a compartment to themselves, and, in order to discourage intruders, got out and planted herself firmly on the step. Miss Winchelsea peeped out over her shoulder, and made sly little remarks about the accumulating people on the platform, at which Fanny laughed gleefully.

They were travelling with one of Mr. Thomas Gunn's parties--fourteen days in Rome for fourteen pounds. They did not belong to the personally conducted party of course--Miss Winchelsea had seen to that--but they travelled with it because of the convenience of that arrangement. The people were the oddest mixture, and wonderfully amusing. There was a vociferous red-faced polyglot personal conductor in a pepper-and-salt suit, very long in the arms and legs and very active. He shouted proclamations. When he wanted to speak to people he stretched out an arm and held them until his purpose was accomplished. One hand was full of papers, tickets, counterfoils of tourists. The people of the personally conducted party were, it seemed, of two sorts; people the conductor wanted and could not find, and people he did not want and who followed him in a steadily growing tail up and down the platform. These people seemed, indeed, to think that their one chance of reaching Rome lay in keeping close to him. Three little old ladies were particularly energetic in his pursuit, and at last maddened him to the pitch of clapping them into a carriage and daring them to emerge again. For the rest of the time, one, two, or three of their heads protruded from the window wailing enquiries about "a little wickerwork box" whenever he drew near. There was a very stout man with a very stout

wife in shiny black; there was a little old man like an aged hostler.

"What CAN such people want in Rome?" asked Miss Winchelsea. "What can it mean to them?" There was a very tall curate in a very small straw hat, and a very short curate encumbered by a long camera stand. The contrast amused Fanny very much. Once they heard some one calling for "Snooks." "I always thought that name was invented by novelists," said Miss Winchelsea. "Fancy! Snooks. I wonder which IS Mr. Snooks." Finally they picked out a very stout and resolute little man in a large check suit. "If he isn't Snooks, he ought to be," said Miss Winchelsea.

Presently the conductor discovered Helen's attempt at a corner in carriages. "Room for five," he bawled with a parallel translation on his fingers. A party of four together--mother, father, and two daughters--blundered in, all greatly excited. "It's all right, Ma, you let me," said one of the daughters, hitting her mother's bonnet with a handbag she struggled to put in the rack. Miss Winchelsea detested people who banged about and called their mother "Ma." A young man travelling alone followed. He was not at all "touristy" in his costume, Miss Winchelsea observed; his Gladstone bag was of good pleasant leather with labels reminiscent of Luxembourg and Ostend, and his boots, though brown, were not vulgar. He carried an overcoat on his arm. Before these people had properly settled in their places, came an inspection of tickets and a slamming of doors, and behold! they were gliding out of Charing Cross station on their way to Rome.

"Fancy!" cried Fanny, "we are going to Rome, my dear! Rome! I don't seem to believe it, even now."

Miss Winchelsea suppressed Fanny's emotions with a little smile, and the lady who was called "Ma" explained to people in general why they had "cut it so close" at the station. The two daughters called her "Ma" several times, toned her down in a tactless effective

way, and drove her at last to the muttered inventory of a basket of travelling requisites. Presently she looked up. "Lor'!" she said, "I didn't bring THEM!" Both the daughters said "Oh, Ma!" but what "them" was did not appear. Presently Fanny produced Hare's Walks in Rome, a sort of mitigated guide-book very popular among Roman visitors; and the father of the two daughters began to examine his books of tickets minutely, apparently in a search after English words. When he had looked at the tickets for a long time right way up, he turned them upside down. Then he produced a fountain pen and dated them with considerable care. The young man, having completed an unostentatious survey of his fellow travellers, produced a book and fell to reading. When Helen and Fanny were looking out of the window at Chiselhurst--the place interested Fanny because the poor dear Empress of the French used to live there--Miss Winchelsea took the opportunity to observe the book the young man held. It was not a guide-book, but a little thin volume of poetry--BOUND. She glanced at his face--it seemed a refined pleasant face to her hasty glance. He wore a little gilt pince-nez. "Do you think she lives there now?" said Fanny, and Miss Winchelsea's inspection came to an end.

For the rest of the journey Miss Winchelsea talked little, and what she said was as pleasant and as stamped with refinement as she could make it. Her voice was always low and clear and pleasant, and she took care that on this occasion it was particularly low and clear and pleasant. As they came under the white cliffs the young man put his book of poetry away, and when at last the train stopped beside the boat, he displayed a graceful alacrity with the impedimenta of Miss Winchelsea and her friends. Miss Winchelsea hated nonsense, but she was pleased to see the young man perceived at once that they were ladies, and helped them without any violent geniality; and how nicely he showed that his civilities were to be no excuse for further intrusions. None of her little party had been out of England before, and they were all excited and a little nervous at the Channel passage. They stood in a little group in a good place near the middle of the boat--the young man had taken Miss Winchelsea's

carry-all there and had told her it was a good place--and they watched the white shores of Albion recede and quoted Shakespeare and made quiet fun of their fellow travellers in the English way.

They were particularly amused at the precautions the bigger-sized people had taken against the little waves--cut lemons and flasks prevailed, one lady lay full-length in a deck chair with a handkerchief over her face, and a very broad resolute man in a bright brown "touristy" suit walked all the way from England to France along the deck, with his legs as widely apart as Providence permitted. These were all excellent precautions, and, nobody was ill. The personally conducted party pursued the conductor about the deck with enquiries in a manner that suggested to Helen's mind the rather vulgar image of hens with a piece of bacon peel, until at last he went into hiding below. And the young man with the thin volume of poetry stood at the stern watching England receding, looking rather lonely and sad to Miss Winchelsea's eye.

And then came Calais and tumultuous novelties, and the young man had not forgotten Miss Winchelsea's hold-all and the other little things. All three girls, though they had passed government examinations in French to any extent, were stricken with a dumb shame of their accents, and the young man was very useful. And he did not intrude. He put them in a comfortable carriage and raised his hat and went away. Miss Winchelsea thanked him in her best manner--a pleasing, cultivated manner--and Fanny said he was "nice" almost before he was out of earshot. "I wonder what he can be," said Helen. "He's going to Italy, because I noticed green tickets in his book."

Miss Winchelsea almost told them of the poetry, and decided not to do so. And presently the carriage windows seized hold upon them and the young man was forgotten. It made them feel that they were doing an educated sort of thing to travel through a country whose commonest advertisements were in idiomatic French, and Miss Winchelsea

made unpatriotic comparisons because there were weedy little sign-board

advertisements by the rail side instead of the broad hoardings that deface the landscape in our land. But the north of France is really uninteresting country, and after a time Fanny reverted to Hare's Walks and Helen initiated lunch. Miss Winchelsea awoke out of a happy reverie; she had been trying to realise, she said, that she was actually going to Rome, but she perceived at Helen's suggestion that she was hungry, and they lunched out of their baskets very cheerfully. In the afternoon they were tired and silent until Helen made tea. Miss Winchelsea might have dozed, only she knew Fanny slept with her mouth open; and as their fellow passengers were two rather nice critical-looking ladies of uncertain age--who knew French well enough to talk it--she employed herself in keeping Fanny awake. The rhythm of the train became insistent, and the streaming landscape outside became at last quite painful to the eye. They were already dreadfully tired of travelling before their night's stoppage came.

The stoppage for the night was brightened by the appearance of the young man, and his manners were all that could be desired and his French quite serviceable. His coupons availed for the same hotel as theirs, and by chance as it seemed he sat next Miss Winchelsea at the table d'hote. In spite of her enthusiasm for Rome, she had thought out some such possibility very thoroughly, and when he ventured to make a remark upon the tediousness of travelling--he let the soup and fish go by before he did this--she did not simply assent to his proposition, but responded with another. They were soon comparing their journeys, and Helen and Fanny were cruelly overlooked in the conversation. It was to be the same journey, they found; one day for the galleries at Florence--"from what I hear," said the young man, "it is barely enough,"--and the rest at Rome. He talked of Rome very pleasantly; he was evidently quite well read, and he quoted Horace about Soracte. Miss Winchelsea had "done" that book of Horace for her matriculation, and was delighted to cap his quotation. It gave a sort of tone to things, this incident--a touch of refinement to mere chatting. Fanny expressed

a few emotions, and Helen interpolated a few sensible remarks, but the bulk of the talk on the girls' side naturally fell to Miss Winchelsea.

Before they reached Rome this young man was tacitly of their party. They did not know his name nor what he was, but it seemed he taught, and Miss Winchelsea had a shrewd idea he was an extension lecturer. At any rate he was something of that sort, something gentlemanly and refined without being opulent and impossible. She tried once or twice to ascertain whether he came from Oxford or Cambridge, but he missed her timid importunities. She tried to get him to make remarks about those places to see if he would say "come up" to them instead of "go down"--she knew that was how you told a 'Varsity man. He used the word "'Varsity"--not university--in quite the proper way.

They saw as much of Mr. Ruskin's Florence as the brief time permitted; he met them in the Pitti Gallery and went round with them, chatting brightly, and evidently very grateful for their recognition. He knew a great deal about art, and all four enjoyed the morning immensely. It was fine to go round recognising old favourites and finding new beauties, especially while so many people fumbled helplessly with Baedeker. Nor was he a bit of a prig, Miss Winchelsea said, and indeed she detested prigs. He had a distinct undertone of humour, and was funny, for example, without being vulgar, at the expense of the quaint work of Beato Angelico. He had a grave seriousness beneath it all, and was quick to seize the moral lessons of the pictures. Fanny went softly among these masterpieces; she admitted "she knew so little about them," and she confessed that to her they were "all beautiful." Fanny's "beautiful" inclined to be a little monotonous, Miss Winchelsea thought. She had been quite glad when the last sunny Alp had vanished, because of the staccato of Fanny's admiration. Helen said little, but Miss Winchelsea had found her a little wanting on the aesthetic side in the old days and was not surprised; sometimes she laughed at the young man's hesitating delicate little jests and sometimes she didn't, and sometimes she seemed quite lost to the art

about them in the contemplation of the dresses of the other visitors.

At Rome the young man was with them intermittently. A rather "touristy" friend of his took him away at times. He complained comically to Miss Winchelsea. "I have only two short weeks in Rome," he said, "and my friend Leonard wants to spend a whole day at Tivoli, looking at a waterfall."

"What is your friend Leonard?" asked Miss Winchelsea abruptly.

"He's the most enthusiastic pedestrian I ever met," the young man replied, amusingly, but a little unsatisfactorily, Miss Winchelsea thought. They had some glorious times, and Fanny could not think what they would have done without him. Miss Winchelsea's interest and Fanny's enormous capacity for admiration were insatiable. They never flagged--through pictures and sculpture galleries, immense crowded churches, ruins and museums, Judas trees and prickly pears, wine carts and palaces, they admired their way unflinchingly. They never saw a stone pine or a eucalyptus but they named and admired it; they never glimpsed Soracte but they exclaimed. Their common ways were made wonderful by imaginative play. "Here Caesar may have walked," they would say. "Raphael may have seen Soracte from this very point." They happened on the tomb of Bibulus. "Old Bibulus," said the young man. "The oldest monument of Republican Rome!" said Miss Winchelsea.

"I'm dreadfully stupid," said Fanny, "but who WAS Bibulus?"

There was a curious little pause.

"Wasn't he the person who built the wall?" said Helen.

The young man glanced quickly at her and laughed. "That was Balbus," he said. Helen reddened, but neither he nor Miss Winchelsea threw any light upon Fanny's ignorance about Bibulus.

Helen was more taciturn than the other three, but then she was always taciturn, and usually she took care of the tram tickets and things like that, or kept her eye on them if the young man took them, and told him where they were when he wanted them. Glorious times they had, these young people, in that pale brown cleanly city of memories that was once the world. Their only sorrow was the shortness of the time. They said indeed that the electric trams and the '70 buildings, and that criminal advertisement that glares upon the Forum, outraged their aesthetic feelings unspeakably; but that was only part of the fun. And indeed Rome is such a wonderful place that it made Miss Winchelsea forget some of her most carefully prepared enthusiasms at times, and Helen, taken unawares, would suddenly admit the beauty of unexpected things. Yet Fanny and Helen would have liked a shop window or so in the English quarter if Miss Winchelsea's uncompromising hostility to all other English visitors had not rendered that district impossible.

The intellectual and aesthetic fellowship of Miss Winchelsea and the scholarly young man passed insensibly towards a deeper feeling. The exuberant Fanny did her best to keep pace with their recondite admiration by playing her "beautiful," with vigour, and saying "Oh! LET'S go," with enormous appetite whenever a new place of interest was mentioned. But Helen developed a certain want of sympathy towards the end, that disappointed Miss Winchelsea a little. She refused to "see anything" in the face of Beatrice Cenci--Shelley's Beatrice Cenci!--in the Barberini gallery; and one day, when they were deploring the electric trams, she said rather snappishly that "people must get about somehow, and it's better than torturing horses up these horrid little hills." She spoke of the Seven Hills of Rome as "horrid little hills!"

And the day they went on the Palatine--though Miss Winchelsea did not know of this--she remarked suddenly to Fanny, "Don't hurry like that, my dear; THEY don't want us to overtake them. And we

don't say the right things for them when we DO get near."

"I wasn't trying to overtake them," said Fanny, slackening her excessive pace; "I wasn't indeed." And for a minute she was short of breath.

But Miss Winchelsea had come upon happiness. It was only when she came to look back across an intervening tragedy that she quite realised how happy she had been, pacing among the cypress-shadowed ruins, and exchanging the very highest class of information the human mind can possess, the most refined impressions it is possible to convey. Insensibly emotion crept into their intercourse, sunning itself openly and pleasantly at last when Helen's modernity was not too near. Insensibly their interest drifted from the wonderful associations about them to their more intimate and personal feelings. In a tentative way information was supplied; she spoke allusively of her school, of her examination successes, of her gladness that the days of "Cram" were over. He made it quite clear that he also was a teacher. They spoke of the greatness of their calling, of the necessity of sympathy to face its irksome details, of a certain loneliness they sometimes felt.

That was in the Colosseum, and it was as far as they got that day, because Helen returned with Fanny--she had taken her into the upper galleries. Yet the private dreams of Miss Winchelsea, already vivid and concrete enough, became now realistic in the highest degree. She figured that pleasant young man, lecturing in the most edifying way to his students, herself modestly prominent as his intellectual mate and helper; she figured a refined little home, with two bureaus, with white shelves of high-class books, and autotypes of the pictures of Rossetti and Burne-Jones, with Morris's wall papers and flowers in pots of beaten copper. Indeed she figured many things. On the Pincio the two had a few precious moments together, while Helen marched Fanny off to see the muro Torto, and he spoke at once plainly. He said he hoped their friendship was only beginning, that he already

found her company very precious to him, that indeed it was more than that.

He became nervous, thrusting at his glasses with trembling fingers as though he fancied his emotions made them unstable. "I should of course," he said, "tell you things about myself. I know it is rather unusual my speaking to you like this. Only our meeting has been so accidental--or providential--and I am snatching at things. I came to Rome expecting a lonely tour . . . and I have been so very happy, so very happy. Quite recently I found myself in a position-- I have dared to think--. And--"

He glanced over his shoulder and stopped. He said "Damn!" quite distinctly--and she did not condemn him for that manly lapse into profanity. She looked and saw his friend Leonard advancing. He drew nearer; he raised his hat to Miss Winchelsea, and his smile was almost a grin. "I've been looking for you everywhere, Snooks," he said. "You promised to be on the Piazza steps half an hour ago."

Snooks! The name struck Miss Winchelsea like a blow in the face. She did not hear his reply. She thought afterwards that Leonard must have considered her the vaguest-minded person. To this day she is not sure whether she was introduced to Leonard or not, nor what she said to him. A sort of mental paralysis was upon her. Of all offensive surnames--Snooks!

Helen and Fanny were returning, there were civilities, and the young men were receding. By a great effort she controlled herself to face the enquiring eyes of her friends. All that afternoon she lived the life of a heroine under the indescribable outrage of that name, chatting, observing, with "Snooks" gnawing at her heart. From the moment that it first rang upon her ears, the dream of her happiness was prostrate in the dust. All the refinement she had figured was ruined and defaced by that cognomen's unavoidable vulgarity.

What was that refined little home to her now, spite of autotypes, Morris papers, and bureaus? Athwart it in letters of fire ran an incredible inscription: "Mrs. Snooks." That may seem a little thing to the reader, but consider the delicate refinement of Miss Winchelsea's mind. Be as refined as you can and then think of writing yourself down:--"Snooks." She conceived herself being addressed as Mrs. Snooks by all the people she liked least, conceived the patronymic touched with a vague quality of insult. She figured a card of grey and silver bearing "Winchelsea," triumphantly effaced by an arrow, Cupid's arrow, in favour of "Snooks." Degrading confession of feminine weakness! She imagined the terrible rejoicings of certain girl friends, of certain grocer cousins from whom her growing refinement had long since estranged her. How they would make it sprawl across the envelope that would bring their sarcastic congratulations. Would even his pleasant company compensate her for that? "It is impossible," she muttered; "impossible! SNOOKS!"

She was sorry for him, but not so sorry as she was for herself. For him she had a touch of indignation. To be so nice, so refined, while all the time he was "Snooks," to hide under a pretentious gentility of demeanour the badge sinister of his surname seemed a sort of treachery. To put it in the language of sentimental science she felt he had "led her on."

There were of course moments of terrible vacillation, a period even when something almost like passion bid her throw refinement to the winds. And there was something in her, an unexpurgated vestige of vulgarity, that made a strenuous attempt at proving that Snooks was not so very bad a name after all. Any hovering hesitation flew before Fanny's manner, when Fanny came with an air of catastrophe to tell that she also knew the horror. Fanny's voice fell to a whisper when she said SNOOKS. Miss Winchelsea would not give him any answer

when at last, in the Borghese, she could have a minute with him; but she promised him a note.

She handed him that note in the little book of poetry he had lent her, the little book that had first drawn them together. Her refusal was ambiguous, allusive. She could no more tell him why she rejected him than she could have told a cripple of his hump. He too must feel something of the unspeakable quality of his name. Indeed he had avoided a dozen chances of telling it, she now perceived. So she spoke of "obstacles she could not reveal"--"reasons why the thing he spoke of was impossible." She addressed the note with a shiver, "E. K. Snooks."

Things were worse than she had dreaded; he asked her to explain. How COULD she explain? Those last two days in Rome were dreadful. She was haunted by his air of astonished perplexity. She knew she had given him intimate hopes, she had not the courage to examine her mind thoroughly for the extent of her encouragement. She knew he must think her the most changeable of beings. Now that she was in full retreat, she would not even perceive his hints of a possible correspondence. But in that matter he did a thing that seemed to her at once delicate and romantic. He made a go-between of Fanny. Fanny could not keep the secret, and came and told her that night under a transparent pretext of needed advice. "Mr. Snooks," said Fanny, "wants to write to me. Fancy! I had no idea. But should I let him?" They talked it over long and earnestly, and Miss Winchelsea was careful to keep the veil over her heart. She was already repenting his disregarded hints. Why should she not hear of him sometimes--painful though his name must be to her? Miss Winchelsea decided it might be permitted, and Fanny kissed her good-night with unusual emotion. After she had gone Miss Winchelsea sat for a long time at the window of her little room. It was moonlight, and down the street a man sang "Santa Lucia" with almost heart-dissolving tenderness. . . . She sat very still.

She breathed a word very softly to herself. The word was "SNOOKS." Then she got up with a profound sigh, and went to bed. The next morning

he said to her meaningly, "I shall hear of you through your friend."

Mr. Snooks saw them off from Rome with that pathetic interrogative perplexity still on his face, and if it had not been for Helen he would have retained Miss Winchelsea's hold-all in his hand as a sort of encyclopaedic keepsake. On their way back to England Miss Winchelsea on six separate occasions made Fanny promise to write to her the longest of long letters. Fanny, it seemed, would be quite near Mr. Snooks. Her new school--she was always going to new schools--would be only five miles from Steely Bank, and it was in the Steely Bank Polytechnic, and one or two first-class schools, that Mr. Snooks did his teaching. He might even see her at times. They could not talk much of him--she and Fanny always spoke of "him," never of Mr. Snooks,--because Helen was apt to say unsympathetic things about him. Her nature had coarsened very much, Miss Winchelsea perceived, since the old Training College days; she had become hard and cynical. She thought he had a weak face, mistaking refinement for weakness as people of her stamp are apt to do, and when she heard his name was Snooks, she said she had expected something of the sort. Miss Winchelsea was careful to spare her own feelings after that, but Fanny was less circumspect.

The girls parted in London, and Miss Winchelsea returned, with a new interest in life, to the Girls' High School in which she had been an increasingly valuable assistant for the last three years. Her new interest in life was Fanny as a correspondent, and to give her a lead she wrote her a lengthy descriptive letter within a fortnight of her return. Fanny answered, very disappointingly. Fanny indeed had no literary gift, but it was new to Miss Winchelsea to find herself deploring the want of gifts in a friend. That letter was even criticised aloud in the safe solitude of Miss Winchelsea's study, and her criticism, spoken with great bitterness, was "Twaddle!" It was full of just the things Miss Winchelsea's letter had been full of, particulars of the school. And of Mr. Snooks, only this much: "I have had a letter from Mr. Snooks, and he has been over

to see me on two Saturday afternoons running. He talked about Rome and you; we both talked about you. Your ears must have burnt, my dear. . . ."

Miss Winchelsea repressed a desire to demand more explicit information, and wrote the sweetest long letter again. "Tell me all about yourself, dear. That journey has quite refreshed our ancient friendship, and I do so want to keep in touch with you." About Mr. Snooks she simply wrote on the fifth page that she was glad Fanny had seen him, and that if he SHOULD ask after her, she was to be remembered to him VERY KINDLY (underlined). And Fanny replied most obtusely in the key of that "ancient friendship," reminding Miss Winchelsea of a dozen foolish things of those old schoolgirl days at the training college, and saying not a word about Mr. Snooks!

For nearly a week Miss Winchelsea was so angry at the failure of Fanny as a go-between that she could not write to her. And then she wrote less effusively, and in her letter she asked point-blank, "Have you seen Mr. Snooks?" Fanny's letter was unexpectedly satisfactory. "I HAVE seen Mr. Snooks," she wrote, and having once named him she kept on about him; it was all Snooks--Snooks this and Snooks that. He was to give a public lecture, said Fanny, among other things. Yet Miss Winchelsea, after the first glow of gratification, still found this letter a little unsatisfactory. Fanny did not report Mr. Snooks as saying anything about Miss Winchelsea, nor as looking a little white and worn, as he ought to have been doing. And behold! before she had replied, came a second letter from Fanny on the same theme, quite a gushing letter, and covering six sheets with her loose feminine hand.

And about this second letter was a rather odd little thing that Miss Winchelsea only noticed as she re-read it the third time. Fanny's natural femininity had prevailed even against the round and clear traditions of the training college; she was one of those she-creatures born to make all her m's and n's and u's and r's and e's

alike, and to leave her o's and a's open and her i's undotted. So that it was only after an elaborate comparison of word with word that Miss Winchelsea felt assured Mr. Snooks was not really "Mr. Snooks" at all! In Fanny's first letter of gush he was Mr. "Snooks," in her second the spelling was changed to Mr. "Senoks." Miss Winchelsea's hand positively trembled as she turned the sheet over--it meant so much to her. For it had already begun to seem to her that even the name of Mrs. Snooks might be avoided at too great a price, and suddenly--this possibility! She turned over the six sheets, all dappled with that critical name, and everywhere the first letter had the form of an E! For a time she walked the room with a hand pressed upon her heart.

She spent a whole day pondering this change, weighing a letter of inquiry that should be at once discreet and effectual, weighing too what action she should take after the answer came. She was resolved that if this altered spelling was anything more than a quaint fancy of Fanny's, she would write forthwith to Mr. Snooks. She had now reached a stage when the minor refinements of behaviour disappear. Her excuse remained uninvented, but she had the subject of her letter clear in her mind, even to the hint that "circumstances in my life have changed very greatly since we talked together." But she never gave that hint. There came a third letter from that fitful correspondent Fanny. The first line proclaimed her "the happiest girl alive."

Miss Winchelsea crushed the letter in her hand--the rest unread--and sat with her face suddenly very still. She had received it just before morning school, and had opened it when the junior mathematicians were well under way. Presently she resumed reading with an appearance of great calm. But after the first sheet she went on reading the third without discovering the error:--"told him frankly I did not like his name," the third sheet began. "He told me he did not like it himself --you know that sort of sudden frank way he has"--Miss Winchelsea did know. "So I said 'Couldn't you change it?' He didn't see it

at first. Well, you know, dear, he had told me what it really meant; it means Sevenoaks, only it has got down to Snooks--both Snooks and Noaks, dreadfully vulgar surnames though they be, are really worn forms of Sevenoaks. So I said--even I have my bright ideas at times--'if it got down from Sevenoaks to Snooks, why not get it back from Snooks to Sevenoaks?' And the long and the short of it is, dear, he couldn't refuse me, and he changed his spelling there and then to Senoks for the bills of the new lecture. And afterwards, when we are married, we shall put in the apostrophe and make it Se'noks. Wasn't it kind of him to mind that fancy of mine, when many men would have taken offence? But it is just like him all over; he is as kind as he is clever. Because he knew as well as I did that I would have had him in spite of it, had he been ten times Snooks. But he did it all the same."

The class was startled by the sound of paper being viciously torn, and looked up to see Miss Winchelsea white in the face, and with some very small pieces of paper clenched in one hand. For a few seconds they stared at her stare, and then her expression changed back to a more familiar one. "Has any one finished number three?" she asked in an even tone. She remained calm after that. But impositions ruled high that day. And she spent two laborious evenings writing letters of various sorts to Fanny, before she found a decent congratulatory vein. Her reason struggled hopelessly against the persuasion that Fanny had behaved in an exceedingly treacherous manner.

One may be extremely refined and still capable of a very sore heart. Certainly Miss Winchelsea's heart was very sore. She had moods of sexual hostility, in which she generalised uncharitably about mankind. "He forgot himself with me," she said. "But Fanny is pink and pretty and soft and a fool--a very excellent match for a Man." And by way of a wedding present she sent Fanny a gracefully bound volume of poetry by George Meredith, and Fanny wrote back a grossly happy letter to say that it was "ALL beautiful." Miss Winchelsea hoped that some day Mr. Senoks might take up that slim book and

think for a moment of the donor. Fanny wrote several times before and about her marriage, pursuing that fond legend of their "ancient friendship," and giving her happiness in the fullest detail. And Miss Winchelsea wrote to Helen for the first time after the Roman journey, saying nothing about the marriage, but expressing very cordial feelings.

They had been in Rome at Easter, and Fanny was married in the August vacation. She wrote a garrulous letter to Miss Winchelsea, describing her home-coming, and the astonishing arrangements of their "teeny weeny" little house. Mr. Sen'oks was now beginning to assume a refinement in Miss Winchelsea's memory out of all proportion to the facts of the case, and she tried in vain to imagine his cultured greatness in a "teeny weeny" little house. "Am busy enamelling a cosey corner," said Fanny, sprawling to the end of her third sheet, "so excuse more." Miss Winchelsea answered in her best style, gently poking fun at Fanny's arrangements and hoping intensely that Mr. Sen'oks might see the letter. Only this hope enabled her to write at all, answering not only that letter but one in November and one at Christmas.

The two latter communications contained urgent invitations for her to come to Steely Bank on a Visit during the Christmas holidays. She tried to think that HE had told her to ask that, but it was too much like Fanny's opulent good-nature. She could not but believe that he must be sick of his blunder by this time; and she had more than a hope that he would presently write her a letter beginning "Dear Friend." Something subtly tragic in the separation was a great support to her, a sad misunderstanding. To have been jilted would have been intolerable. But he never wrote that letter beginning "Dear Friend."

For two years Miss Winchelsea could not go to see her friends, in spite of the reiterated invitations of Mrs. Sevenoaks--it became full Sevenoaks in the second year. Then one day near the Easter

rest she felt lonely and without a soul to understand her in the world, and her mind ran once more on what is called Platonic friendship. Fanny was clearly happy and busy in her new sphere of domesticity, but no doubt HE had his lonely hours. Did he ever think of those days in Rome--gone now beyond recalling? No one had understood her as he had done; no one in all the world. It would be a sort of melancholy pleasure to talk to him again, and what harm could it do? Why should she deny herself? That night she wrote a sonnet, all but the last two lines of the octave--which would not come, and the next day she composed a graceful little note to tell Fanny she was coming down.

And so she saw him again.

Even at the first encounter it was evident he had changed; he seemed stouter and less nervous, and it speedily appeared that his conversation had already lost much of its old delicacy. There even seemed a justification for Helen's description of weakness in his face--in certain lights it WAS weak. He seemed busy and preoccupied about his affairs, and almost under the impression that Miss Winchelsea had come for the sake of Fanny. He discussed his dinner with Fanny in an intelligent way. They only had one good long talk together, and that came to nothing. He did not refer to Rome, and spent some time abusing a man who had stolen an idea he had had for a text-book. It did not seem a very wonderful idea to Miss Winchelsea. She discovered he had forgotten the names of more than half the painters whose work they had rejoiced over in Florence.

It was a sadly disappointing week, and Miss Winchelsea was glad when it came to an end. Under various excuses she avoided visiting them again. After a time the visitor's room was occupied by their two little boys, and Fanny's invitations ceased. The intimacy of her letters had long since faded away.

13. A DREAM OF ARMAGEDDON

The man with the white face entered the carriage at Rugby. He moved slowly in spite of the urgency of his porter, and even while he was still on the platform I noted how ill he seemed. He dropped into the corner over against me with a sigh, made an incomplete attempt to arrange his travelling shawl, and became motionless, with his eyes staring vacantly. Presently he was moved by a sense of my observation, looked up at me, and put out a spiritless hand for his newspaper. Then he glanced again in my direction.

I feigned to read. I feared I had unwittingly embarrassed him, and in a moment I was surprised to find him speaking.

"I beg your pardon?" said I.

"That book," he repeated, pointing a lean finger, "is about dreams."

"Obviously," I answered, for it was Fortnum-Roscoe's *Dream States*, and the title was on the cover. He hung silent for a space as if he sought words. "Yes," he said at last, "but they tell you nothing." I did not catch his meaning for a second.

"They don't know," he added.

I looked a little more attentively at his face.

"There are dreams," he said, "and dreams."

That sort of proposition I never dispute.

"I suppose--" he hesitated. "Do you ever dream? I mean vividly."

"I dream very little," I answered. "I doubt if I have three vivid dreams in a year."

"Ah!" he said, and seemed for a moment to collect his thoughts.

"Your dreams don't mix with your memories?" he asked abruptly.

"You don't find yourself in doubt; did this happen or did it not?"

"Hardly ever. Except just for a momentary hesitation now and then. I suppose few people do."

"Does HE say--" he indicated the book.

"Says it happens at times and gives the usual explanation about intensity of impression and the like to account for its not happening as a rule. I suppose you know something of these theories--"

"Very little--except that they are wrong."

His emaciated hand played with the strap of the window for a time. I prepared to resume reading, and that seemed to precipitate his next remark. He leant forward almost as though he would touch me.

"Isn't there something called consecutive dreaming--that goes on night after night?"

"I believe there is. There are cases given in most books on mental trouble."

"Mental trouble! Yes. I dare say there are. It's the right place for them. But what I mean--" He looked at his bony knuckles.

"Is that sort of thing always dreaming? IS it dreaming? Or is it something else? Mightn't it be something else?"

I should have snubbed his persistent conversation but for the drawn anxiety of his face. I remember now the look of his faded eyes and the lids red-stained--perhaps you know that look.

"I'm not just arguing about a matter of opinion," he said. "The thing's killing me."

"Dreams?"

"If you call them dreams. Night after night. Vivid!--so vivid . . . this--" (he indicated the landscape that went streaming by the window) "seems unreal in comparison! I can scarcely remember who I am, what business I am on. . . ."

He paused. "Even now--"

"The dream is always the same--do you mean?" I asked.

"It's over."

"You mean?"

"I died."

"Died?"

"Smashed and killed, and now, so much of me as that dream was, is dead. Dead for ever. I dreamt I was another man, you know, living in a different part of the world and in a different time. I dreamt that night after night. Night after night I woke into that other life. Fresh scenes and fresh happenings--until I came upon the last--"

"When you died?"

"When I died."

"And since then--"

"No," he said. "Thank God! That was the end of the dream. . . ."

It was clear I was in for this dream. And after all, I had an hour before me, the light was fading fast, and Fortnum-Roscoe has a dreary way with him. "Living in a different time," I said: "do you mean in some different age?"

"Yes."

"Past?"

"No, to come--to come."

"The year three thousand, for example?"

"I don't know what year it was. I did when I was asleep, when I was dreaming, that is, but not now--not now that I am awake. There's a lot of things I have forgotten since I woke out of these dreams, though I knew them at the time when I was--I suppose it was dreaming. They called the year differently from our way of calling the year. . . . What DID they call it?" He put his hand to his forehead. "No," said he, "I forget."

He sat smiling weakly. For a moment I feared he did not mean to tell me his dream. As a rule I hate people who tell their dreams, but this struck me differently. I proffered assistance even. "It began--" I suggested.

"It was vivid from the first. I seemed to wake up in it suddenly. And it's curious that in these dreams I am speaking of I never remembered this life I am living now. It seemed as if the dream life was enough while it lasted. Perhaps--But I will tell you how I find myself when I do my best to recall it all. I don't remember anything dearly until I found myself sitting in a sort of loggia

looking out over the sea. I had been dozing, and suddenly I woke up--fresh and vivid--not a bit dream-like--because the girl had stopped fanning me."

"The girl?"

"Yes, the girl. You must not interrupt or you will put me out."

He stopped abruptly. "You won't think I'm mad?" he said.

"No," I answered; "you've been dreaming. Tell me your dream."

"I woke up, I say, because the girl had stopped fanning me. I was not surprised to find myself there or anything of that sort, you understand. I did not feel I had fallen into it suddenly. I simply took it up at that point. Whatever memory I had of THIS life, this nineteenth-century life, faded as I woke, vanished like a dream. I knew all about myself, knew that my name was no longer Cooper but Hedon, and all about my position in the world. I've forgotten a lot since I woke--there's a want of connection--but it was all quite clear and matter of fact then."

He hesitated again, gripping the window strap, putting his face forward and looking up at me appealingly.

"This seems bosh to you?"

"No, no!" I cried. "Go on. Tell me what this loggia was like."

"It was not really a loggia--I don't know what to call it. It faced south. It was small. It was all in shadow except the semicircle above the balcony that showed the sky and sea and the corner where the girl stood. I was on a couch--it was a metal couch with light striped cushions--and the girl was leaning over the balcony with her back to me. The light of the sunrise fell on her ear and cheek.

Her pretty white neck and the little curls that nestled there, and her white shoulder were in the sun, and all the grace of her body was in the cool blue shadow. She was dressed--how can I describe it? It was easy and flowing. And altogether there she stood, so that it came to me how beautiful and desirable she was, as though I had never seen her before. And when at last I sighed and raised myself upon my arm she turned her face to me--"

He stopped.

"I have lived three-and-fifty years in this world. I have had mother, sisters, friends, wife, and daughters--all their faces, the play of their faces, I know. But the face of this girl--it is much more real to me. I can bring it back into memory so that I see it again--I could draw it or paint it. And after all--"

He stopped--but I said nothing.

"The face of a dream--the face of a dream. She was beautiful. Not that beauty which is terrible, cold, and worshipful, like the beauty of a saint; nor that beauty that stirs fierce passions; but a sort of radiation, sweet lips that softened into smiles, and grave grey eyes. And she moved gracefully, she seemed to have part with all pleasant and gracious things--"

He stopped, and his face was downcast and hidden. Then he looked up at me and went on, making no further attempt to disguise his absolute belief in the reality of his story.

"You see, I had thrown up my plans and ambitions, thrown up all I had ever worked for or desired for her sake. I had been a master man away there in the north, with influence and property and a great reputation, but none of it had seemed worth having beside her. I had come to the place, this city of sunny pleasures, with her, and left all those things to wreck and ruin just to save a remnant

at least of my life. While I had been in love with her before I knew that she had any care for me, before I had imagined that she would dare--that we should dare, all my life had seemed vain and hollow, dust and ashes. It WAS dust and ashes. Night after night and through the long days I had longed and desired--my soul had beaten against the thing forbidden!

"But it is impossible for one man to tell another just these things. It's emotion, it's a tint, a light that comes and goes. Only while it's there, everything changes, everything. The thing is I came away and left them in their Crisis to do what they could."

"Left whom?" I asked, puzzled.

"The people up in the north there. You see--in this dream, anyhow-- I had been a big man, the sort of man men come to trust in, to group themselves about. Millions of men who had never seen me were ready to do things and risk things because of their confidence in me. I had been playing that game for years, that big laborious game, that vague, monstrous political game amidst intrigues and betrayals, speech and agitation. It was a vast weltering world, and at last I had a sort of leadership against the Gang--you know it was called the Gang--a sort of compromise of scoundrelly projects and base ambitions and vast public emotional stupidities and catchwords--the Gang that kept the world noisy and blind year by year, and all the while that it was drifting, drifting towards infinite disaster. But I can't expect you to understand the shades and complications of the year--the year something or other ahead. I had it all down to the smallest details--in my dream. I suppose I had been dreaming of it before I awoke, and the fading outline of some queer new development I had imagined still hung about me as I rubbed my eyes. It was some grubby affair that made me thank God for the sunlight. I sat up on the couch and remained looking at the woman and rejoicing--rejoicing that I had come away out of all that tumult and folly and violence before it was too late. After all, I thought, this

is life--love and beauty, desire and delight, are they not worth all those dismal struggles for vague, gigantic ends? And I blamed myself for having ever sought to be a leader when I might have given my days to love. But then, thought I, if I had not spent my early days sternly and austere, I might have wasted myself upon vain and worthless women, and at the thought all my being went out in love and tenderness to my dear mistress, my dear lady, who had come at last and compelled me--compelled me by her invincible charm for me--to lay that life aside.

"You are worth it,' I said, speaking without intending her to hear; 'you are worth it, my dearest one; worth pride and praise and all things. Love! to have YOU is worth them all together.' And at the murmur of my voice she turned about.

"Come and see,' she cried--I can hear her now--'come and see the sunrise upon Monte Solaro.'

"I remember how I sprang to my feet and joined her at the balcony. She put a white hand upon my shoulder and pointed towards great masses of limestone, flushing, as it were, into life. I looked. But first I noted the sunlight on her face caressing the lines of her cheeks and neck. How can I describe to you the scene we had before us? We were at Capri--"

"I have been there," I said. "I have clambered up Monte Solaro and drunk vero Capri--muddy stuff like cider--at the summit."

"Ah!" said the man with the white face; "then perhaps you can tell me--you will know if this was indeed Capri. For in this life I have never been there. Let me describe it. We were in a little room, one of a vast multitude of little rooms, very cool and sunny, hollowed out of the limestone of a sort of cape, very high above the sea. The whole island, you know, was one enormous hotel, complex beyond explaining, and on the other side there were miles of floating hotels,

and huge floating stages to which the flying machines came. They called it a pleasure city. Of course, there was none of that in your time rather, I should say, IS none of that NOW. Of course. Now!--yes.

"Well, this room of ours was at the extremity of the cape, so that one could see east and west. Eastward was a great cliff--a thousand feet high perhaps--coldly grey except for one bright edge of gold, and beyond it the Isle of the Sirens, and a falling coast that faded and passed into the hot sunrise. And when one turned to the west, distinct and near was a little bay, a little beach still in shadow. And out of that shadow rose Solaro straight and tall, flushed and golden crested, like a beauty throned, and the white moon was floating behind her in the sky. And before us from east to west stretched the many-tinted sea all dotted with little sailing boats.

"To the eastward, of course, these little boats were grey and very minute and clear, but to the westward they were little boats of gold--shining gold--almost like little flames. And just below us was a rock with an arch worn through it. The blue sea-water broke to green and foam all round the rock, and a galley came gliding out of the arch."

"I know that rock," I said. "I was nearly drowned there. It is called the Faraglioni."

"I Faraglioni? Yes, she called it that," answered the man with the white face. "There was some story--but that--"

He put his hand to his forehead again. "No," he said, "I forget that story."

"Well, that is the first thing I remember, the first dream I had, that little shaded room and the beautiful air and sky and that dear lady of mine, with her shining arms and her graceful robe,

and how we sat and talked in half whispers to one another. We talked in whispers not because there was any one to hear, but because there was still such a freshness of mind between us that our thoughts were a little frightened, I think, to find themselves at last in words. And so they went softly.

"Presently we were hungry and we went from our apartment, going by a strange passage with a moving floor, until we came to the great breakfast room--there was a fountain and music. A pleasant and joyful place it was, with its sunlight and splashing, and the murmur of plucked strings. And we sat and ate and smiled at one another, and I would not heed a man who was watching me from a table near by.

"And afterwards we went on to the dancing-hall. But I cannot describe that hall. The place was enormous--larger than any building you have ever seen--and in one place there was the old gate of Capri, caught into the wall of a gallery high overhead. Light girders, stems and threads of gold, burst from the pillars like fountains, streamed like an Aurora across the roof and interlaced, like--like conjuring tricks. All about the great circle for the dancers there were beautiful figures, strange dragons, and intricate and wonderful grotesques bearing lights. The place was inundated with artificial light that shamed the newborn day. And as we went through the throng the people turned about and looked at us, for all through the world my name and face were known, and how I had suddenly thrown up pride and struggle to come to this place. And they looked also at the lady beside me, though half the story of how at last she had come to me was unknown or mistold. And few of the men who were there, I know, but judged me a happy man, in spite of all the shame and dishonour that had come upon my name.

"The air was full of music, full of harmonious scents, full of the rhythm of beautiful motions. Thousands of beautiful people swarmed about the hall, crowded the galleries, sat in a myriad recesses; they were dressed in splendid colours and crowned

with flowers; thousands danced about the great circle beneath the white images of the ancient gods, and glorious processions of youths and maidens came and went. We two danced, not the dreary monotonies of your days--of this time, I mean--but dances that were beautiful, intoxicating. And even now I can see my lady dancing--dancing joyously. She danced, you know, with a serious face; she danced with a serious dignity, and yet she was smiling at me and caressing me--smiling and caressing with her eyes.

"The music was different," he murmured. "It went--I cannot describe it; but it was infinitely richer and more varied than any music that has ever come to me awake.

"And then--it was when we had done dancing--a man came to speak to me. He was a lean, resolute man, very soberly clad for that place, and already I had marked his face watching me in the breakfasting hall, and afterwards as we went along the passage I had avoided his eye. But now, as we sat in a little alcove, smiling at the pleasure of all the people who went to and fro across the shining floor, he came and touched me, and spoke to me so that I was forced to listen. And he asked that he might speak to me for a little time apart.

"'No,' I said. 'I have no secrets from this lady. What do you want to tell me?'

"He said it was a trivial matter, or at least a dry matter, for a lady to hear.

"'Perhaps for me to hear,' said I.

"He glanced at her, as though almost he would appeal to her. Then he asked me suddenly if I had heard of a great and avenging declaration that Evesham had made. Now, Evesham had always before been the man next to myself in the leadership of that great party in the north. He was a forcible, hard and tactless man, and only I had been able

to control and soften him. It was on his account even more than my own, I think, that the others had been so dismayed at my retreat. So this question about what he had done reawakened my old interest in the life I had put aside just for a moment.

"I have taken no heed of any news for many days,' I said. 'What has Evesham been saying?'

"And with that the man began, nothing loath, and I must confess even I was struck by Evesham's reckless folly in the wild and threatening words he had used. And this messenger they had sent to me not only told me of Evesham's speech, but went on to ask counsel and to point out what need they had of me. While he talked, my lady sat a little forward and watched his face and mine.

"My old habits of scheming and organising reasserted themselves. I could even see myself suddenly returning to the north, and all the dramatic effect of it. All that this man said witnessed to the disorder of the party indeed, but not to its damage. I should go back stronger than I had come. And then I thought of my lady. You see--how can I tell you? There were certain peculiarities of our relationship--as things are I need not tell you about that--which would render her presence with me impossible. I should have had to leave her; indeed, I should have had to renounce her clearly and openly, if I was to do all that I could do in the north. And the man knew THAT, even as he talked to her and me, knew it as well as she did, that my steps to duty were--first, separation, then abandonment. At the touch of that thought my dream of a return was shattered. I turned on the man suddenly, as he was imagining his eloquence was gaining ground with me.

"What have I to do with these things now?' I said. 'I have done with them. Do you think I am coquetting with your people in coming here?'

"No,' he said; 'but--'

"Why cannot you leave me alone? I have done with these things. I have ceased to be anything but a private man.'

"Yes,' he answered. 'But have you thought?--this talk of war, these reckless challenges, these wild aggressions--'

"I stood up.

"No,' I cried. 'I won't hear you. I took count of all those things, I weighed them--and I have come away.'

"He seemed to consider the possibility of persistence. He looked from me to where the lady sat regarding us.

"War,' he said, as if he were speaking to himself, and then turned slowly from me and walked away. I stood, caught in the whirl of thoughts his appeal had set going.

"I heard my lady's voice.

"Dear,' she said; 'but if they have need of you--'

"She did not finish her sentence, she let it rest there. I turned to her sweet face, and the balance of my mood swayed and reeled.

"They want me only to do the thing they dare not do themselves,' I said. 'If they distrust Evesham they must settle with him themselves.'

"She looked at me doubtfully.

"But war--' she said.

"I saw a doubt on her face that I had seen before, a doubt of herself

and me, the first shadow of the discovery that, seen strongly and completely, must drive us apart for ever.

"Now, I was an older mind than hers, and I could sway her to this belief or that.

"My dear one,' I said, 'you must not trouble over these things. There will be no war. Certainly there will be no war. The age of wars is past. Trust me to know the justice of this case. They have no right upon me, dearest, and no one has a right upon me. I have been free to choose my life, and I have chosen this.'

"But WAR--' she said.

"I sat down beside her. I put an arm behind her and took her hand in mine. I set myself to drive that doubt away--I set myself to fill her mind with pleasant things again. I lied to her, and in lying to her I lied also to myself. And she was only too ready to believe me, only too ready to forget.

"Very soon the shadow had gone again, and we were hastening to our bathing-place in the Grotta del Bovo Marino, where it was our custom to bathe every day. We swam and splashed one another, and in that buoyant water I seemed to become something lighter and stronger than a man. And at last we came out dripping and rejoicing and raced among the rocks. And then I put on a dry bathing-dress, and we sat to bask in the sun, and presently I nodded, resting my head against her knee, and she put her hand upon my hair and stroked it softly and I dozed. And behold! as it were with the snapping of the string of a violin, I was awakening, and I was in my own bed in Liverpool, in the life of to-day.

"Only for a time I could not believe that all these vivid moments had been no more than the substance of a dream.

"In truth, I could not believe it a dream for all the sobering reality of things about me. I bathed and dressed as it were by habit, and as I shaved I argued why I of all men should leave the woman I loved to go back to fantastic politics in the hard and strenuous north. Even if Evesham did force the world back to war, what was that to me? I was a man, with the heart of a man, and why should I feel the responsibility of a deity for the way the world might go?"

"You know that is not quite the way I think about affairs, about my real affairs. I am a solicitor, you know, with a point of view."

"The vision was so real, you must understand, so utterly unlike a dream that I kept perpetually recalling little irrelevant details; even the ornament of a book-cover that lay on my wife's sewing-machine in the breakfast-room recalled with the utmost vividness the gilt line that ran about the seat in the alcove where I had talked with the messenger from my deserted party. Have you ever heard of a dream that had a quality like that?"

"Like--?"

"So that afterwards you remembered little details you had forgotten."

I thought. I had never noticed the point before, but he was right.

"Never," I said. "That is what you never seem to do with dreams."

"No," he answered. "But that is just what I did. I am a solicitor, you must understand, in Liverpool, and I could not help wondering what the clients and business people I found myself talking to in my office would think if I told them suddenly I was in love with a girl who would be born a couple of hundred years or so hence, and worried about the politics of my great-great-great-grandchildren. I was chiefly busy that day negotiating a ninety-nine-year building lease. It was a private builder in a hurry, and we wanted to tie him

in every possible way. I had an interview with him, and he showed a certain want of temper that sent me to bed still irritated. That night I had no dream. Nor did I dream the next night, at least, to remember.

"Something of that intense reality of conviction vanished. I began to feel sure it WAS a dream. And then it came again.

"When the dream came again, nearly four days later, it was very different. I think it certain that four days had also elapsed in the dream. Many things had happened in the north, and the shadow of them was back again between us, and this time it was not so easily dispelled. I began, I know, with moody musings. Why, in spite of all, should I go back, go back for all the rest of my days to toil and stress, insults and perpetual dissatisfaction, simply to save hundreds of millions of common people, whom I did not love, whom too often I could do no other than despise, from the stress and anguish of war and infinite misrule? And after all I might fail. THEY all sought their own narrow ends, and why should not I--why should not I also live as a man? And out of such thoughts her voice summoned me, and I lifted my eyes.

"I found myself awake and walking. We had come out above the Pleasure City, we were near the summit of Monte Solaro and looking towards the bay. It was the late afternoon and very clear. Far away to the left Ischia hung in a golden haze between sea and sky, and Naples was coldly white against the hills, and before us was Vesuvius with a tall and slender streamer feathering at last towards the south, and the ruins of Torre dell' Annunziata and Castellamare glittering and near."

I interrupted suddenly: "You have been to Capri, of course?"

"Only in this dream," he said, "only in this dream. All across the bay beyond Sorrento were the floating palaces of the Pleasure City moored and chained. And northward were the broad floating stages

that received the aeroplanes. Aeroplanes fell out of the sky every afternoon, each bringing its thousands of pleasure-seekers from the uttermost parts of the earth to Capri and its delights. All these things, I say, stretched below.

"But we noticed them only incidentally because of an unusual sight that evening had to show. Five war aeroplanes that had long slumbered useless in the distant arsenals of the Rhinemouth were manoeuvring now in the eastward sky. Evesham had astonished the world by producing them and others, and sending them to circle here and there. It was the threat material in the great game of bluff he was playing, and it had taken even me by surprise. He was one of those incredibly stupid energetic people who seem sent by Heaven to create disasters. His energy to the first glance seemed so wonderfully like capacity! But he had no imagination, no invention, only a stupid, vast, driving force of will, and a mad faith in his stupid idiot 'luck' to pull him through. I remember how we stood out upon the headland watching the squadron circling far away, and how I weighed the full meaning of the sight, seeing clearly the way things must go. And then even it was not too late. I might have gone back, I think, and saved the world. The people of the north would follow me, I knew, granted only that in one thing I respected their moral standards. The east and south would trust me as they would trust no other northern man. And I knew I had only to put it to her and she would have let me go. . . . Not because she did not love me!

"Only I did not want to go; my will was all the other way about. I had so newly thrown off the incubus of responsibility: I was still so fresh a renegade from duty that the daylight clearness of what I OUGHT to do had no power at all to touch my will. My will was to live, to gather pleasures and make my dear lady happy. But though this sense of vast neglected duties had no power to draw me, it could make me silent and preoccupied, it robbed the days I had spent of half their brightness and roused me into dark meditations in the silence of the night. And as I stood and watched Evesham's

aeroplanes sweep to and fro--those birds of infinite ill omen--she stood beside me watching me, perceiving the trouble indeed, but not perceiving it clearly her eyes questioning my face, her expression shaded with perplexity. Her face was grey because the sunset was fading out of the sky. It was no fault of hers that she held me. She had asked me to go from her, and again in the night time and with tears she had asked me to go.

"At last it was the sense of her that roused me from my mood. I turned upon her suddenly and challenged her to race down the mountain slopes. 'No,' she said, as if I jarred with her gravity, but I was resolved to end that gravity, and made her run--no one can be very grey and sad who is out of breath--and when she stumbled I ran with my hand beneath her arm. We ran down past a couple of men, who turned back staring in astonishment at my behaviour--they must have recognised my face. And halfway down the slope came a tumult in the air, clang-clank, clang-clank, and we stopped, and presently over the hill-crest those war things came flying one behind the other."

The man seemed hesitating on the verge of a description.

"What were they like?" I asked.

"They had never fought," he said. "They were just like our ironclads are nowadays; they had never fought. No one knew what they might do, with excited men inside them; few even cared to speculate. They were great driving things shaped like spearheads without a shaft, with a propeller in the place of the shaft."

"Steel?"

"Not steel."

"Aluminium?"

"No, no, nothing of that sort. An alloy that was very common--as common as brass, for example. It was called--let me see--." He squeezed his forehead with the fingers of one hand. "I am forgetting everything," he said.

"And they carried guns?"

"Little guns, firing high explosive shells. They fired the guns backwards, out of the base of the leaf, so to speak, and rammed with the beak. That was the theory, you know, but they had never been fought. No one could tell exactly what was going to happen. And meanwhile I suppose it was very fine to go whirling through the air like a flight of young swallows, swift and easy. I guess the captains tried not to think too clearly what the real thing would be like. And these flying war machines, you know, were only one sort of the endless war contrivances that had been invented and had fallen into abeyance during the long peace. There were all sorts of these things that people were routing out and furbishing up; infernal things, silly things; things that had never been tried; big engines, terrible explosives, great guns. You know the silly way of these ingenious sort of men who make these things; they turn 'em out as beavers build dams, and with no more sense of the rivers they're going to divert and the lands they're going to flood!

"As we went down the winding stepway to our hotel again, in the twilight, I foresaw it all: I saw how clearly and inevitably things were driving for war in Evesham's silly, violent hands, and I had some inkling of what war was bound to be under these new conditions. And even then, though I knew it was drawing near the limit of my opportunity, I could find no will to go back."

He sighed.

"That was my last chance.

"We didn't go into the city until the sky was full of stars, so we walked out upon the high terrace, to and fro, and--she counselled me to go back.

"My dearest,' she said, and her sweet face looked up to me, 'this is Death. This life you lead is Death. Go back to them, go back to your duty--.'

"She began to weep, saying, between her sobs, and clinging to my arm as she said it, 'Go back--Go back.'

"Then suddenly she fell mute, and, glancing down at her face, I read in an instant the thing she had thought to do. It was one of those moments when one SEES.

"No!' I said.

"No?' she asked, in surprise, and I think a little fearful at the answer to her thought.

"Nothing,' I said, 'shall send me back. Nothing! I have chosen. Love, I have chosen, and the world must go. Whatever happens I will live this life--I will live for YOU! It--nothing shall turn me aside; nothing, my dear one. Even if you died--even if you died--'

"Yes,' she murmured, softly.

"Then--I also would die.'

"And before she could speak again I began to talk, talking eloquently--as I COULD do in that life--talking to exalt love, to make the life we were living seem heroic and glorious; and the thing I was deserting something hard and enormously ignoble that it was a fine thing to set aside. I bent all my mind to throw that glamour upon it, seeking not only to convert her but myself to that. We talked, and

she clung to me, torn too between all that she deemed noble and all that she knew was sweet. And at last I did make it heroic, made all the thickening disaster of the world only a sort of glorious setting to our unparalleled love, and we two poor foolish souls strutted there at last, clad in that splendid delusion, drunken rather with that glorious delusion, under the still stars.

"And so my moment passed.

"It was my last chance. Even as we went to and fro there, the leaders of the south and east were gathering their resolve, and the hot answer that shattered Evesham's bluffing for ever, took shape and waited. And all over Asia, and the ocean, and the south, the air and the wires were throbbing with their warnings to prepare--prepare.

"No one living, you know, knew what war was; no one could imagine, with all these new inventions, what horror war might bring. I believe most people still believed it would be a matter of bright uniforms and shouting charges and triumphs and flags and bands--in a time when half the world drew its food supply from regions ten thousand miles away--."

The man with the white face paused. I glanced at him, and his face was intent on the floor of the carriage. A little railway station, a string of loaded trucks, a signal-box, and the back of a cottage, shot by the carriage window, and a bridge passed with a clap of noise, echoing the tumult of the train.

"After that," he said, "I dreamt often. For three weeks of nights that dream was my life. And the worst of it was there were nights when I could not dream, when I lay tossing on a bed in THIS accursed life; and THERE--somewhere lost to me--things were happening--momentous, terrible things. . . . I lived at nights--my days, my waking days, this life I am living now, became a faded, far-away dream, a drab setting, the cover of the book."

He thought.

"I could tell you all, tell you every little thing in the dream, but as to what I did in the daytime--no. I could not tell--I do not remember. My memory--my memory has gone. The business of life slips from me--"

He leant forward, and pressed his hands upon his eyes. For a long time he said nothing.

"And then?" said I.

"The war burst like a hurricane."

He stared before him at unspeakable things.

"And then?" I urged again.

"One touch of unreality," he said, in the low tone of a man who speaks to himself, "and they would have been nightmares. But they were not nightmares--they were not nightmares. NO!"

He was silent for so long that it dawned upon me that there was a danger of losing the rest of the story. But he went on talking again in the same tone of questioning self-communion.

"What was there to do but flight? I had not thought the war would touch Capri--I had seemed to see Capri as being out of it all, as the contrast to it all; but two nights after the whole place was shouting and bawling, every woman almost and every other man wore a badge--Evesham's badge--and there was no music but a jangling war-song over and over again, and everywhere men enlisting, and in the dancing halls they were drilling. The whole island was awl with rumours; it was said, again and again, that fighting had begun.

I had not expected this. I had seen so little of the life of pleasure that I had failed to reckon with this violence of the amateurs. And as for me, I was out of it. I was like a man who might have prevented the firing of a magazine. The time had gone. I was no one; the vainest stripling with a badge counted for more than I. The crowd jostled us and bawled in our ears; that accursed song deafened us; a woman shrieked at my lady because no badge was on her, and we two went back to our own place again, ruffled and insulted--my lady white and silent, and I aquiver with rage. So furious was I, I could have quarrelled with her if I could have found one shade of accusation in her eyes.

"All my magnificence had gone from me. I walked up and down our rock cell, and outside was the darkling sea and a light to the southward that flared and passed and came again.

"'We must get out of this place,' I said over and over. 'I have made my choice, and I will have no hand in these troubles. I will have nothing of this war. We have taken our lives out of all these things. This is no refuge for us. Let us go.'

"And the next day we were already in flight from the war that covered the world.

"And all the rest was Flight--all the rest was Flight."

He mused darkly.

"How much was there of it?"

He made no answer.

"How many days?"

His face was white and drawn and his hands were clenched. He took

no heed of my curiosity.

I tried to draw him back to his story with questions.

"Where did you go?" I said.

"When?"

"When you left Capri."

"Southwest," he said, and glanced at me for a second. "We went in a boat."

"But I should have thought an aeroplane?"

"They had been seized."

I questioned him no more. Presently I thought he was beginning again. He broke out in an argumentative monotone:

"But why should it be? If, indeed, this battle, this slaughter and stress IS life, why have we this craving for pleasure and beauty? If there IS no refuge, if there is no place of peace, and if all our dreams of quiet places are a folly and a snare, why have we such dreams? Surely it was no ignoble cravings, no base intentions, had brought us to this; it was Love had isolated us. Love had come to me with her eyes and robed in her beauty, more glorious than all else in life, in the very shape and colour of life, and summoned me away. I had silenced all the voices, I had answered all the questions-- I had come to her. And suddenly there was nothing but War and Death!"

I had an inspiration. "After all," I said, "it could have been only a dream."

"A dream!" he cried, flaming upon me, "a dream--when even now--"

For the first time he became animated. A faint flush crept into his cheek. He raised his open hand and clenched it, and dropped it to his knee. He spoke, looking away from me, and for all the rest of the time he looked away. "We are but phantoms," he said, "and the phantoms of phantoms, desires like cloud shadows and wills of straw that eddy in the wind; the days pass, use and wont carry us through as a train carries the shadow of its lights, so be it! But one thing is real and certain, one thing is no dreamstuff, but eternal and enduring. It is the centre of my life, and all other things about it are subordinate or altogether vain. I loved her, that woman of a dream. And she and I are dead together!

"A dream! How can it be a dream, when it drenched a living life with unappeasable sorrow, when it makes all that I have lived for and cared for, worthless and unmeaning?

"Until that very moment when she was killed I believed we had still a chance of getting away," he said. "All through the night and morning that we sailed across the sea from Capri to Salerno, we talked of escape. We were full of hope, and it clung about us to the end, hope for the life together we should lead, out of it all, out of the battle and struggle, the wild and empty passions, the empty arbitrary 'thou shalt' and 'thou shalt not' of the world. We were uplifted, as though our quest was a holy thing, as though love for one another was a mission. . . .

"Even when from our boat we saw the fair face of that great rock Capri--already scarred and gashed by the gun emplacements and hiding-places that were to make it a fastness--we reckoned nothing of the imminent slaughter, though the fury of preparation hung about in puffs and clouds of dust at a hundred points amidst the grey; but, indeed, I made a text of that and talked. There, you know, was the rock, still beautiful, for all its scars, with its countless windows and arches and ways, tier upon tier, for a thousand feet,

a vast carving of grey, broken by vine-clad terraces, and lemon and orange groves, and masses of agave and prickly pear, and puffs of almond blossom. And out under the archway that is built over the Piccola Marina other boats were coming; and as we came round the cape and within sight of the mainland, another little string of boats came into view, driving before the wind towards the southwest. In a little while a multitude had come out, the remoter just little specks of ultramarine in the shadow of the eastward cliff.

"It is love and reason,' I said, 'fleeing from all this madness, of war.'

"And though we presently saw a squadron of aeroplanes flying across the southern sky we did not heed it. There it was--a line of little dots in the sky--and then more, dotting the southeastern horizon, and then still more, until all that quarter of the sky was stippled with blue specks. Now they were all thin little strokes of blue, and now one and now a multitude would heel and catch the sun and become short flashes of light. They came rising and falling and growing larger, like some huge flight of gulls or rooks, or such-like birds moving with a marvellous uniformity, and ever as they drew nearer they spread over a greater width of sky. The southward wing flung itself in an arrow-headed cloud athwart the sun. And then suddenly they swept round to the eastward and streamed eastward, growing smaller and smaller and clearer and clearer again until they vanished from the sky. And after that we noted to the northward and very high Evesham's fighting machines hanging high over Naples like an evening swarm of gnats.

"It seemed to have no more to do with us than a flight of birds.

"Even the mutter of guns far away in the southeast seemed to us to signify nothing. . . .

"Each day, each dream after that, we were still exalted, still

seeking that refuge where we might live and love. Fatigue had come upon us, pain and many distresses. For though we were dusty and stained by our toilsome tramping, and half starved and with the horror of the dead men we had seen and the flight of the peasants--for very soon a gust of fighting swept up the peninsula--with these things haunting our minds it still resulted only in a deepening resolution to escape. O, but she was brave and patient! She who had never faced hardship and exposure had courage for herself--and me. We went to and fro seeking an outlet, over a country all commandeered and ransacked by the gathering hosts of war. Always we went on foot. At first there were other fugitives, but we did not mingle with them. Some escaped northward, some were caught in the torrent of peasantry that swept along the main roads; many gave themselves into the hands of the soldiery and were sent northward. Many of the men were impressed. But we kept away from these things; we had brought no money to bribe a passage north, and I feared for my lady at the hands of these conscript crowds. We had landed at Salerno, and we had been turned back from Cava, and we had tried to cross towards Taranto by a pass over Mount Alburno, but we had been driven back for want of food, and so we had come down among the marshes by Paestum, where those great temples stand alone. I had some vague idea that by Paestum it might be possible to find a boat or something, and take once more to sea. And there it was the battle overtook us.

"A sort of soul-blindness had me. Plainly I could see that we were being hemmed in; that the great net of that giant Warfare had us in its toils. Many times we had seen the levies that had come down from the north going to and fro, and had come upon them in the distance amidst the mountains making ways for the ammunition and preparing the mounting of the guns. Once we fancied they had fired at us, taking us for spies--at any rate a shot had gone shuddering over us. Several times we had hidden in woods from hovering aeroplanes.

"But all these things do not matter now, these nights of flight

and pain. . . . We were in an open place near those great temples at Paestum, at last, on a blank stony place dotted with spiky bushes, empty and desolate and so flat that a grove of eucalyptus far away showed to the feet of its stems. How I can see it! My lady was sitting down under a bush, resting a little, for she was very weak and weary, and I was standing up watching to see if I could tell the distance of the firing that came and went. They were still, you know, fighting far from each other, with those terrible new weapons that had never before been used: guns that would carry beyond sight, and aeroplanes that would do--What THEY would do no man could foretell.

"I knew that we were between the two armies, and that they drew together. I knew we were in danger, and that we could not stop there and rest!

"Though all these things were in my mind, they were in the background. They seemed to be affairs beyond our concern. Chiefly, I was thinking of my lady. An aching distress filled me. For the first time she had owned herself beaten and had fallen a-weeping. Behind me I could hear her sobbing, but I would not turn round to her because I knew she had need of weeping, and had held herself so far and so long for me. It was well, I thought, that she would weep and rest and then we would toil on again, for I had no inkling of the thing that hung so near. Even now I can see her as she sat there, her lovely hair upon her shoulder, can mark again the deepening hollow of her cheek.

"'If we had parted,' she said, 'if I had let you go.'

"'No,' said I. 'Even now, I do not repent. I will not repent; I made my choice, and I will hold on to the end.'"

"And then--

"Overhead in the sky something flashed and burst, and all about us I heard the bullets making a noise like a handful of peas suddenly thrown. They chipped the stones about us, and whirled fragments from the bricks and passed. . . ."

He put his hand to his mouth, and then moistened his lips.

"At the flash I had turned about. . . ."

"You know--she stood up--"

"She stood up; you know, and moved a step towards me--"

"As though she wanted to reach me--"

"And she had been shot through the heart."

He stopped and stared at me. I felt all that foolish incapacity an Englishman feels on such occasions. I met his eyes for a moment, and then stared out of the window. For a long space we kept silence. When at last I looked at him he was sitting back in his corner, his arms folded, and his teeth gnawing at his knuckles.

He bit his nail suddenly, and stared at it.

"I carried her," he said, "towards the temples, in my arms--as though it mattered. I don't know why. They seemed a sort of sanctuary, you know, they had lasted so long, I suppose."

"She must have died almost instantly. Only--I talked to her--all the way."

Silence again.

"I have seen those temples," I said abruptly, and indeed he had brought

those still, sunlit arcades of worn sandstone very vividly before me.

"It was the brown one, the big brown one. I sat down on a fallen pillar and held her in my arms. . . . Silent after the first babble was over. And after a little while the lizards came out and ran about again, as though nothing unusual was going on, as though nothing had changed. . . . It was tremendously still there, the sun high, and the shadows still; even the shadows of the weeds upon the entablature were still--in spite of the thudding and banging that went all about the sky.

"I seem to remember that the aeroplanes came up out of the south, and that the battle went away to the west. One aeroplane was struck, and upset and fell. I remember that--though it didn't interest me in the least. It didn't seem to signify. It was like a wounded gull, you know--flapping for a time in the water. I could see it down the aisle of the temple--a black thing in the bright blue water.

"Three or four times shells burst about the beach, and then that ceased. Each time that happened all the lizards scuttled in and hid for a space. That was all the mischief done, except that once a stray bullet gashed the stone hard by--made just a fresh bright surface.

"As the shadows grew longer, the stillness seemed greater.

"The curious thing," he remarked, with the manner of a man who makes a trivial conversation, "is that I didn't THINK--I didn't think at all. I sat with her in my arms amidst the stones--in a sort of lethargy--stagnant.

"And I don't remember waking up. I don't remember dressing that day. I know I found myself in my office, with my letters all slit open in front of me, and how I was struck by the absurdity of being there, seeing that in reality I was sitting, stunned, in that Paestum temple with a dead woman in my arms. I read my letters like a machine. I have forgotten what they were about."

He stopped, and there was a long silence.

Suddenly I perceived that we were running down the incline from Chalk Farm to Euston. I started at this passing of time. I turned on him with a brutal question, with the tone of Now or never.

"And did you dream again?"

"Yes."

He seemed to force himself to finish. His voice was very low.

"Once more, and as it were only for a few instants. I seemed to have suddenly awakened out of a great apathy, to have risen into a sitting position, and the body lay there on the stones beside me. A gaunt body. Not her, you know. So soon--it was not her. . . .

"I may have heard voices. I do not know. Only I knew clearly that men were coming into the solitude and that that was a last outrage.

"I stood up and walked through the temple, and then there came into sight--first one man with a yellow face, dressed in a uniform of dirty white, trimmed with blue, and then several, climbing to the crest of the old wall of the vanished city, and crouching there. They were little bright figures in the sunlight, and there they hung, weapon in hand, peering cautiously before them.

"And further away I saw others and then more at another point in the wall. It was a long lax line of men in open order.

"Presently the man I had first seen stood up and shouted a command, and his men came tumbling down the wall and into the high weeds towards the temple. He scrambled down with them and led them. He came facing towards me, and when he saw me he stopped.

"At first I had watched these men with a mere curiosity, but when I had seen they meant to come to the temple I was moved to forbid them. I shouted to the officer.

"'You must not come here,' I cried, '_I_ am here. I am here with my dead.'

"He stared, and then shouted a question back to me in some unknown tongue.

"I repeated what I had said.

"He shouted again, and I folded my arms and stood still. Presently he spoke to his men and came forward. He carried a drawn sword.

"I signed to him to keep away, but he continued to advance. I told him again very patiently and clearly: 'You must not come here. These are old temples and I am here with my dead.'

"Presently he was so close I could see his face clearly. It was a narrow face, with dull grey eyes, and a black moustache. He had a scar on his upper lip, and he was dirty and unshaven. He kept shouting unintelligible things, questions perhaps, at me.

"I know now that he was afraid of me, but at the time that did not occur to me. As I tried to explain to him he interrupted me in imperious tones, bidding me, I suppose, stand aside.

"He made to go past me, And I caught hold of him.

"I saw his face change at my grip.

"'You fool,' I cried. 'Don't you know? She is dead!'

"He started back. He looked at me with cruel eyes. I saw a sort of exultant resolve leap into them--delight. Then, suddenly, with a scowl, he swept his sword back--SO--and thrust."

He stopped abruptly. I became aware of a change in the rhythm of the train. The brakes lifted their voices and the carriage jarred and jerked. This present world insisted upon itself, became clamorous. I saw through the steamy window huge electric lights glaring down from tall masts upon a fog, saw rows of stationary empty carriages passing by, and then a signal-box, hoisting its constellation of green and red into the murky London twilight marched after them. I looked again at his drawn features.

"He ran me through the heart. It was with a sort of astonishment--no fear, no pain--but just amazement, that I felt it pierce me, felt the sword drive home into my body. It didn't hurt, you know. It didn't hurt at all."

The yellow platform lights came into the field of view, passing first rapidly, then slowly, and at last stopping with a jerk. Dim shapes of men passed to and fro without.

"Euston!" cried a voice.

"Do you mean--?"

"There was no pain, no sting or smart. Amazement and then darkness sweeping over everything. The hot, brutal face before me, the face of the man who had killed me, seemed to recede. It swept out of existence--"

"Euston!" clamoured the voices outside; "Euston!"

The carriage door opened, admitting a flood of sound, and a porter stood regarding us. The sounds of doors slamming, and the hoof-clatter

of cab-horses, and behind these things the featureless remote roar of the London cobble-stones, came to my ears. A truckload of lighted lamps blazed along the platform.

"A darkness, a flood of darkness that opened and spread and blotted out all things."

"Any luggage, sir?" said the porter.

"And that was the end?" I asked.

He seemed to hesitate. Then, almost inaudibly, he answered, "No."

"You mean?"

"I couldn't get to her. She was there on the other side of the Temple--
And then--"

"Yes," I insisted. "Yes?"

"Nightmares," he cried; "nightmares indeed! My God! Great birds that fought and tore."

TONO-BUNGAY

by
H.G Wells
1908

BOOK THE FIRST

THE DAYS BEFORE TONO-BUNGAY WAS INVENTED

CHAPTER THE FIRST

OF BLADESOVER HOUSE, AND MY MOTHER; AND THE CONSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

I

Most people in this world seem to live "in character"; they have a beginning, a middle and an end, and the three are congruous one with another and true to the rules of their type. You can speak of them as being of this sort of people or that. They are, as theatrical people say, no more (and no less) than "character actors." They have a class, they have a place, they know what is becoming in them and what is due to them, and their proper size of tombstone tells at last how properly they have played the part. But there is also another kind of life that is not so much living as a miscellaneous tasting of life. One gets hit by some unusual transverse force, one is jerked out of one's stratum and lives crosswise for the rest of the time, and, as it were, in a succession of samples. That has been my lot, and that is what has set me at last writing something in the nature of a novel. I have got an unusual series of impressions that I want very urgently to tell. I have seen life at very different levels, and at all these levels I have seen it with a sort of intimacy and in good faith. I have been a native in many social countries. I

have been the unwelcome guest of a working baker, my cousin, who has since died in the Chatham infirmary; I have eaten illegal snacks--the unjustifiable gifts of footmen--in pantries, and been despised for my want of style (and subsequently married and divorced) by the daughter of a gasworks clerk; and--to go to my other extreme--I was once--oh, glittering days!--an item in the house-party of a countess. She was, I admit, a countess with a financial aspect, but still, you know, a countess. I've seen these people at various angles. At the dinner-table I've met not simply the titled but the great. On one occasion--it is my brightest memory--I upset my champagne over the trousers of the greatest statesman in the empire--Heaven forbid I should be so invidious as to name him!--in the warmth of our mutual admiration.

And once (though it is the most incidental thing in my life) I murdered a man....

Yes, I've seen a curious variety of people and ways of living altogether. Odd people they all are great and small, very much alike at bottom and curiously different on their surfaces. I wish I had ranged just a little further both up and down, seeing I have ranged so far. Royalty must be worth knowing and very great fun. But my contacts with princes have been limited to quite public occasions, nor at the other end of the scale have I had what I should call an inside acquaintance with that dusty but attractive class of people who go about on the high-roads drunk but enfamille (so redeeming the minor lapse), in the summertime, with a perambulator, lavender to sell, sun-brown children, a smell, and ambiguous bundles that fire the imagination. Navvies, farm-labourers, sailormen and stokers, all such as sit in 1834 beer-houses, are beyond me also, and I suppose must remain so now for ever. My intercourse with the ducal rank too has been negligible; I once went shooting with a duke, and in an outburst of what was no doubt snobbishness, did my best to get him in the

legs. But that failed.

I'm sorry I haven't done the whole lot though....

You will ask by what merit I achieved this remarkable social range, this extensive cross-section of the British social organism. It was the Accident of Birth. It always is in England.

Indeed, if I may make the remark so cosmic, everything is. But that is by the way. I was my uncle's nephew, and my uncle was no less a person than Edward Ponderevo, whose comet-like transit of the financial heavens happened--it is now ten years ago! Do you remember the days of Ponderevo, the great days, I mean, of Ponderevo? Perhaps you had a trifle in some world-shaking enterprise! Then you know him only too well. Astraddle on Tono-Bungay, he flashed athwart the empty heavens--like a comet--rather, like a stupendous rocket!--and overawed investors spoke of his star. At his zenith he burst into a cloud of the most magnificent promotions. What a time that was! The Napoleon of domestic conveniences!

I was his nephew, his peculiar and intimate nephew. I was hanging on to his coat-tails all the way through. I made pills with him in the chemist's shop at Wimblesbury before he began. I was, you might say, the stick of his rocket; and after our tremendous soar, after he had played with millions, a golden rain in the sky, after my bird's-eye view of the modern world, I fell again, a little scarred and blistered perhaps, two and twenty years older, with my youth gone, my manhood eaten in upon, but greatly edified, into this Thames-side yard, into these white heats and hammerings, amidst the fine realities of steel--to think it all over in my leisure and jot down the notes and inconsecutive observations that make this book. It was more, you know, than a figurative soar. The zenith of that career was surely our flight

across the channel in the Lord Roberts B....

I warn you this book is going to be something of an agglomeration. I want to trace my social trajectory (and my uncle's) as the main line of my story, but as this is my first novel and almost certainly my last, I want to get in, too, all sorts of things that struck me, things that amused me and impressions I got--even although they don't minister directly to my narrative at all. I want to set out my own queer love experiences too, such as they are, for they troubled and distressed and swayed me hugely, and they still seem to me to contain all sorts of irrational and debatable elements that I shall be the clearer-headed for getting on paper. And possibly I may even flow into descriptions of people who are really no more than people seen in transit, just because it amuses me to recall what they said and did to us, and more particularly how they behaved in the brief but splendid glare of Tono-Bungay and its still more glaring offspring. It lit some of them up, I can assure you! Indeed, I want to get in all sorts of things. My ideas of a novel all through are comprehensive rather than austere....

Tono-Bungay still figures on the hoardings, it stands in rows in every chemist's storeroom, it still assuages the coughs of age and brightens the elderly eye and loosens the elderly tongue; but its social glory, its financial illumination, have faded from the world for ever. And I, sole scorched survivor from the blaze, sit writing of it here in an air that is never still for the clang and thunder of machines, on a table littered with working drawings, and amid fragments of models and notes about velocities and air and water pressures and trajectories--of an altogether different sort from that of Tono-Bungay.

II

I write that much and look at it, and wonder whether, after all, this is any fair statement of what I am attempting in this book. I've given, I see, an impression that I want to make simply a hotch-potch of anecdotes and experiences with my uncle swimming in the middle as the largest lump of victual. I'll own that here, with the pen already started, I realise what a fermenting mass of things learnt and emotions experienced and theories formed I've got to deal with, and how, in a sense, hopeless my book must be from the very outset. I suppose what I'm really trying to render is nothing more nor less than Life--as one man has found it. I want to tell--MYSELF, and my impressions of the thing as a whole, to say things I have come to feel intensely of the laws, traditions, usages, and ideas we call society, and how we poor individuals get driven and lured and stranded among these windy, perplexing shoals and channels. I've got, I suppose, to a time of life when things begin to take on shapes that have an air of reality, and become no longer material for dreaming, but interesting in themselves. I've reached the criticising, novel-writing age, and here I am writing mine--my one novel--without having any of the discipline to refrain and omit that I suppose the regular novel-writer acquires.

I've read an average share of novels and made some starts before this beginning, and I've found the restraints and rules of the art (as I made them out) impossible for me. I like to write, I am keenly interested in writing, but it is not my technique. I'm an engineer with a patent or two and a set of ideas; most of whatever artist there is in me has been given to turbine machines and boat building and the problem of flying, and do what I will I fail to see how I can be other than a lax, undisciplined story-teller. I must sprawl and flounder, comment and theorise, if I am to get the thing out I have in mind. And it isn't a constructed tale I have to tell, but unmanageable realities. My love-story--and if only I can keep up the spirit of truth-telling all through as strongly as I have now, you shall have it

all--falls into no sort of neat scheme of telling. It involves three separate feminine persons. It's all mixed up with the other things....

But I've said enough, I hope, to excuse myself for the method or want of method in what follows, and I think I had better tell without further delay of my boyhood and my early impressions in the shadow of Bladesover House.

III

There came a time when I realised that Bladesover House was not all it seemed, but when I was a little boy I took the place with the entirest faith as a complete authentic microcosm. I believed that the Bladesover system was a little working-model--and not so very little either--of the whole world.

Let me try and give you the effect of it.

Bladesover lies up on the Kentish Downs, eight miles perhaps from Ashborough; and its old pavilion, a little wooden parody of the temple of Vesta at Tibur, upon the hill crest behind the house, commands in theory at least a view of either sea, of the Channel southward and the Thames to the northeast. The park is the second largest in Kent, finely wooded with well-placed beeches, many elms and some sweet chestnuts, abounding in little valleys and hollows of bracken, with springs and a stream and three fine ponds and multitudes of fallow deer. The house was built in the eighteenth century, it is of pale red brick in the style of a French chateau, and save for one pass among the crests which opens to blue distances, to minute, remote, oast-set farm-houses and copses and wheat fields and the occasional gleam of water, its hundred and seventeen windows look on nothing but its own wide and handsome territories. A semi-circular screen of great beeches masks the church and village, which cluster picturesquely

about the high road along the skirts of the great park.

Northward, at the remotest corner of that enclosure, is a second dependent village, Ropedean, less fortunate in its greater distance and also on account of a rector. This divine was indeed rich, but he was vindictively economical because of some shrinkage of his tithes; and by reason of his use of the word Eucharist for the Lord's Supper he had become altogether estranged from the great ladies of Bladesover. So that Ropedean was in the shadows through all that youthful time.

Now the unavoidable suggestion of that wide park and that fair large house, dominating church, village and the country side, was that they represented the thing that mattered supremely in the world, and that all other things had significance only in relation to them. They represented the Gentry, the Quality, by and through and for whom the rest of the world, the farming folk and the labouring folk, the trades-people of Ashborough, and the upper servants and the lower servants and the servants of the estate, breathed and lived and were permitted. And the Quality did it so quietly and thoroughly, the great house mingled so solidly and effectually earth and sky, the contrast of its spacious hall and saloon and galleries, its airy housekeeper's room and warren of offices with the meagre dignities of the vicar, and the pinched and stuffy rooms of even the post-office people and the grocer, so enforced these suggestions, that it was only when I was a boy of thirteen or fourteen and some queer inherited strain of scepticism had set me doubting whether Mr. Bartlett, the vicar, did really know with certainty all about God, that as a further and deeper step in doubting I began to question the final rightness of the gentlefolks, their primary necessity in the scheme of things. But once that scepticism had awakened it took me fast and far. By fourteen I had achieved terrible blasphemies and sacrilege; I had resolved to marry a viscount's daughter, and I had blacked the left eye--I think it was the left--of her half-brother, in open and declared

rebellion.

But of that in its place.

The great house, the church, the village, and the labourers and the servants in their stations and degrees, seemed to me, I say, to be a closed and complete social system. About us were other villages and great estates, and from house to house, interlacing, correlated, the Gentry, the fine Olympians, came and went. The country towns seemed mere collections of shops, marketing places for the tenantry, centres for such education as they needed, as entirely dependent on the gentry as the village and scarcely less directly so. I thought this was the order of the whole world. I thought London was only a greater country town where the gentle-folk kept town-houses and did their greater shopping under the magnificent shadow of the greatest of all fine gentlewomen, the Queen. It seemed to be in the divine order. That all this fine appearance was already sapped, that there were forces at work that might presently carry all this elaborate social system in which my mother instructed me so carefully that I might understand my "place," to Limbo, had scarcely dawned upon me even by the time that Tono-Bungay was fairly launched upon the world.

There are many people in England to-day upon whom it has not yet dawned. There are times when I doubt whether any but a very inconsiderable minority of English people realise how extensively this ostensible order has even now passed away. The great houses stand in the parks still, the cottages cluster respectfully on their borders, touching their eaves with their creepers, the English countryside--you can range through Kent from Bladeston northward and see persists obstinately in looking what it was. It is like an early day in a fine October. The hand of change rests on it all, unfelt, unseen; resting for awhile, as it were half reluctantly, before it grips and ends the thing for ever. One frost and the whole face of things will be bare, links snap,

patience end, our fine foliage of pretences lie glowing in the mire.

For that we have still to wait a little while. The new order may have gone far towards shaping itself, but just as in that sort of lantern show that used to be known in the village as the "Dissolving Views," the scene that is going remains upon the mind, traceable and evident, and the newer picture is yet enigmatical long after the lines that are to replace those former ones have grown bright and strong, so that the new England of our children's children is still a riddle to me. The ideas of democracy, of equality, and above all of promiscuous fraternity have certainly never really entered into the English mind. But what IS coming into it? All this book, I hope, will bear a little on that. Our people never formulates; it keeps words for jests and ironies. In the meanwhile the old shapes, the old attitudes remain, subtly changed and changing still, sheltering strange tenants. Bladesover House is now let furnished to Sir Reuben Lichtenstein, and has been since old Lady Drew died; it was my odd experience to visit there, in the house of which my mother had been housekeeper, when my uncle was at the climax of Tono-Bungay. It was curious to notice then the little differences that had come to things with this substitution. To borrow an image from my mineralogical days, these Jews were not so much a new British gentry as "pseudomorphous" after the gentry. They are a very clever people, the Jews, but not clever enough to suppress their cleverness. I wished I could have gone downstairs to savour the tone of the pantry. It would have been very different I know. Hawksnest, over beyond, I noted, had its pseudomorph too; a newspaper proprietor of the type that hustles along with stolen ideas from one loud sink-or-swim enterprise to another, had bought the place outright; Redgrave was in the hands of brewers.

But the people in the villages, so far as I could detect, saw no

difference in their world. Two little girls bobbed and an old labourer touched his hat convulsively as I walked through the village. He still thought he knew his place--and mine. I did not know him, but I would have liked dearly to have asked him if he remembered my mother, if either my uncle or old Lichtenstein had been man enough to stand being given away like that.

In that English countryside of my boyhood every human being had a "place." It belonged to you from your birth like the colour of your eyes, it was inextricably your destiny. Above you were your betters, below you were your inferiors, and there were even an unstable questionable few, cases so disputable that you might for the rough purposes of every day at least, regard them as your equals. Head and centre of our system was Lady Drew, her "leddyship," shrivelled, garrulous, with a wonderful memory for genealogies and very, very old, and beside her and nearly as old, Miss Somerville, her cousin and companion. These two old souls lived like dried-up kernels in the great shell of Bladesover House, the shell that had once been gaily full of fops, of fine ladies in powder and patches and courtly gentlemen with swords; and when there was no company they spent whole days in the corner parlour just over the housekeeper's room, between reading and slumber and caressing their two pet dogs. When I was a boy I used always to think of these two poor old creatures as superior beings living, like God, somewhere through the ceiling. Occasionally they bumped about a bit and one even heard them overhead, which gave them a greater effect of reality without mitigating their vertical predominance. Sometimes too I saw them. Of course if I came upon them in the park or in the shrubbery (where I was a trespasser) I hid or fled in pious horror, but I was upon due occasion taken into the Presence by request. I remember her "leddyship" then as a thing of black silks and a golden chain, a quavering injunction to me to be a good boy, a very shrunken loose-skinned face and neck, and a rosy hand that trembled a halfcrown into mine. Miss Somerville

hovered behind, a paler thing of broken lavender and white and black, with screwed up, sandy-lashed eyes. Her hair was yellow and her colour bright, and when we sat in the housekeeper's room of a winter's night warming our toes and sipping elder wine, her maid would tell us the simple secrets of that belated flush.... After my fight with young Garvell I was of course banished, and I never saw those poor old painted goddesses again.

Then there came and went on these floors over our respectful heads, the Company; people I rarely saw, but whose tricks and manners were imitated and discussed by their maids and valets in the housekeeper's room and the steward's room--so that I had them through a medium at second hand. I gathered that none of the company were really Lady Drew's equals, they were greater and lesser after the manner of all things in our world. Once I remember there was a Prince, with a real live gentleman in attendance, and that was a little above our customary levels and excited us all, and perhaps raised our expectations unduly. Afterwards, Rabbits, the butler, came into my mother's room downstairs, red with indignation and with tears in his eyes. "Look at that!" gasped Rabbits. My mother was speechless with horror. That was a sovereign, a mere sovereign, such as you might get from any commoner!

After Company, I remember, came anxious days, for the poor old women upstairs were left tired and cross and vindictive, and in a state of physical and emotional indigestion after their social efforts....

On the lowest fringe of these real Olympians hung the vicarage people, and next to them came those ambiguous beings who are neither quality nor subjects. The vicarage people certainly hold a place by themselves in the typical English scheme; nothing is more remarkable than the progress the Church has made--socially--in the last two hundred years. In the early

eighteenth century the vicar was rather under than over the house-steward, and was deemed a fitting match for the housekeeper or any not too morally discredited discard. The eighteenth century literature is full of his complaints that he might not remain at table to share the pie. He rose above these indignities because of the abundance of younger sons. When I meet the large assumptions of the contemporary cleric, I am apt to think of these things. It is curious to note that to-day that down-trodden, organ-playing creature, the Church of England village Schoolmaster, holds much the same position as the seventeenth century parson. The doctor in Bladesover ranked below the vicar but above the "vet," artists and summer visitors squeezed in above or below this point according to their appearance and expenditure, and then in a carefully arranged scale came the tenantry, the butler and housekeeper, the village shopkeeper, the head keeper, the cook, the publican, the second keeper, the blacksmith (whose status was complicated by his daughter keeping the post-office--and a fine hash she used to make of telegrams too!) the village shopkeeper's eldest son, the first footman, younger sons of the village shopkeeper, his first assistant, and so forth.

All these conceptions and applications of a universal precedence and much else I drank in at Bladesover, as I listened to the talk of valets, ladies'-maids, Rabbits the butler and my mother in the much-cupboarded, white-painted, chintz-brightened housekeeper's room where the upper servants assembled, or of footmen and Rabbits and estate men of all sorts among the green baize and Windsor chairs of the pantry--where Rabbits, being above the law, sold beer without a license or any compunction--or of housemaids and still-room maids in the bleak, matting-carpeted still-room or of the cook and her kitchen maids and casual friends among the bright copper and hot glow of the kitchens.

Of course their own ranks and places came by implication to

these people, and it was with the ranks and places of the Olympians that the talk mainly concerned itself. There was an old peerage and a Crockford together with the books of recipes, the Whitaker's Almanack, the Old Moore's Almanack, and the eighteenth century dictionary, on the little dresser that broke the cupboards on one side of my mother's room; there was another peerage, with the covers off, in the pantry; there was a new peerage in the billiard-room, and I seem to remember another in the anomalous apartment that held the upper servants' bagatelle board and in which, after the Hall dinner, they partook of the luxury of sweets. And if you had asked any of those upper servants how such and such a Prince of Battenberg was related to, let us say, Mr. Cunninghame Graham or the Duke of Argyle, you would have been told upon the nail. As a boy, I heard a great deal of that sort of thing, and if to this day I am still a little vague about courtesy titles and the exact application of honorifics, it is, I can assure you, because I hardened my heart, and not from any lack of adequate opportunity of mastering these succulent particulars.

Dominating all these memories is the figure of my mother--my mother who did not love me because I grew liker my father every day--and who knew with inflexible decision her place and the place of every one in the world--except the place that concealed my father--and in some details mine. Subtle points were put to her. I can see and hear her saying now, "No, Miss Fison, peers of England go in before peers of the United Kingdom, and he is merely a peer of the United Kingdom." She had much exercise in placing people's servants about her tea-table, where the etiquette was very strict. I wonder sometimes if the etiquette of housekeepers' rooms is as strict to-day, and what my mother would have made of a chauffeur....

On the whole I am glad that I saw so much as I did of Bladesover--if for no other reason than because seeing it when I

did, quite naively, believing in it thoroughly, and then coming to analyse it, has enabled me to understand much that would be absolutely incomprehensible in the structure of English society. Bladesover is, I am convinced, the clue to almost all that is distinctively British and perplexing to the foreign inquirer in England and the English-speaking peoples. Grasp firmly that England was all Bladesover two hundred years ago; that it has had Reform Acts indeed, and such--like changes of formula, but no essential revolution since then; that all that is modern and different has come in as a thing intruded or as a gloss upon this predominant formula, either impertinently or apologetically; and you will perceive at once the reasonableness, the necessity, of that snobbishness which is the distinctive quality of English thought. Everybody who is not actually in the shadow of a Bladesover is as it were perpetually seeking after lost orientations. We have never broken with our tradition, never even symbolically hewed it to pieces, as the French did in quivering fact in the Terror. But all the organizing ideas have slackened, the old habitual bonds have relaxed or altogether come undone. And America too, is, as it were, a detached, outlying part of that estate which has expanded in queer ways. George Washington, Esquire, was of the gentlefolk, and he came near being a King. It was Plutarch, you know, and nothing intrinsically American that prevented George Washington being a King....

IV

I hated teatime in the housekeeper's room more than anything else at Bladesover. And more particularly I hated it when Mrs. Mackridge and Mrs. Booch and Mrs. Latude-Fernay were staying in the house. They were, all three of them, pensioned-off servants.

Old friends of Lady Drew's had rewarded them posthumously for a prolonged devotion to their minor comforts, and Mrs. Booch was

also trustee for a favourite Skye terrier. Every year Lady Drew gave them an invitation--a reward and encouragement of virtue with especial reference to my mother and Miss Fison, the maid. They sat about in black and shiny and flouncey clothing adorned with gimp and beads, eating great quantities of cake, drinking much tea in a stately manner and reverberating remarks.

I remember these women as immense. No doubt they were of negotiable size, but I was only a very little chap and they have assumed nightmare proportions in my mind. They loomed, they bulged, they impended. Mrs. Mackridge was large and dark; there was a marvel about her head, inasmuch as she was bald. She wore a dignified cap, and in front of that upon her brow, hair was PAINTED. I have never seen the like since. She had been maid to the widow of Sir Roderick Blenderhasset Impey, some sort of governor or such-like portent in the East Indies, and from her remains--in Mrs. Mackridge--I judge Lady Impey was a very stupendous and crushing creature indeed. Lady Impey had been of the Juno type, haughty, unapproachable, given to irony and a caustic wit. Mrs. Mackridge had no wit, but she had acquired the caustic voice and gestures along with the old satins and trimmings of the great lady. When she told you it was a fine morning, she seemed also to be telling you you were a fool and a low fool to boot; when she was spoken to, she had a way of acknowledging your poor tinkle of utterance with a voluminous, scornful "Haw!" that made you want to burn her alive. She also had a way of saying "Indade!" with a droop of the eyelids.

Mrs. Booch was a smaller woman, brown haired, with queer little curls on either side of her face, large blue eyes and a small set of stereotyped remarks that constituted her entire mental range. Mrs. Latude-Fernay has left, oddly enough, no memory at all except her name and the effect of a green-grey silk dress, all set with gold and blue buttons. I fancy she was a large blonde. Then there was Miss Fison, the maid who served both Lady Drew and

Miss Somerville, and at the end of the table opposite my mother, sat Rabbits the butler. Rabbits, for a butler, was an unassuming man, and at tea he was not as you know butlers, but in a morning coat and a black tie with blue spots. Still, he was large, with side whiskers, even if his clean-shaven mouth was weak and little. I sat among these people on a high, hard, early Gregorian chair, trying to exist, like a feeble seedling amidst great rocks, and my mother sat with an eye upon me, resolute to suppress the slightest manifestation of vitality. It was hard on me, but perhaps it was also hard upon these rather over-fed, ageing, pretending people, that my youthful restlessness and rebellious unbelieving eyes should be thrust in among their dignities.

Tea lasted for nearly three-quarters of an hour, and I sat it out perforce; and day after day the talk was exactly the same.

"Sugar, Mrs. Mackridge?" my mother used to ask.

"Sugar, Mrs. Latude-Fernay?"

The word sugar would stir the mind of Mrs. Mackridge. "They say," she would begin, issuing her proclamation--at least half her sentences began "they say"--"sugar is fatt-an-ing, nowadays. Many of the best people do not take it at all."

"Not with their tea, ma'am," said Rabbits intelligently.

"Not with anything," said Mrs. Mackridge, with an air of crushing repartee, and drank.

"What won't they say next?" said Miss Fison.

"They do say such things!" said Mrs. Booch.

"They say," said Mrs. Mackridge, inflexibly, "the doctors are not recomm-an-ding it now."

My Mother: "No, ma'am?"

Mrs. Mackridge: "No, ma'am."

Then, to the table at large: "Poor Sir Roderick, before he died, consumed great quan-ta-ties of sugar. I have sometimes fancied it may have hastened his end."

This ended the first skirmish. A certain gloom of manner and a pause was considered due to the sacred memory of Sir Roderick.

"George," said my mother, "don't kick the chair!"

Then, perhaps, Mrs. Booch would produce a favourite piece from her repertoire. "The evenings are drawing out nicely," she would say, or if the season was decadent, "How the evenings draw in!" It was an invaluable remark to her; I do not know how she would have got along without it.

My mother, who sat with her back to the window, would always consider it due to Mrs. Booch to turn about and regard the evening in the act of elongation or contraction, whichever phase it might be.

A brisk discussion of how long we were to the longest or shortest day would ensue, and die away at last exhausted.

Mrs. Mackridge, perhaps, would reopen. She had many intelligent habits; among others she read the paper--The Morning Post. The other ladies would at times tackle that sheet, but only to read the births, marriages, and deaths on the front page. It was, of course, the old Morning Post that cost threepence, not the brisk

coruscating young thing of to-day. "They say," she would open, "that Lord Tweedums is to go to Canada."

"Ah!" said Mr. Rabbits; "dew they?"

"Isn't he," said my mother, "the Earl of Slumgold's cousin?" She knew he was; it was an entirely irrelevant and unnecessary remark, but still, something to say.

"The same, ma'am," said Mrs. Mackridge. "They say he was extremelay popular in New South Wales. They looked up to him greatlay. I knew him, ma'am, as a young man. A very nice pleasant young fella."

Interlude of respect.

"'Is predecessor," said Rabbits, who had acquired from some clerical model a precise emphatic articulation without acquiring at the same time the aspirates that would have graced it, "got into trouble at Sydney."

"Haw!" said Mrs. Mackridge, scornfully, "so am tawled."

"'E came to Templemorton after 'e came back, and I remember them talking 'im over after 'e'd gone again."

"Haw?" said Mrs. Mackridge, interrogatively.

"'Is fuss was quotin' poetry, ma'am. 'E said--what was it 'e said--'They lef' their country for their country's good,'--which in some way was took to remind them of their being originally convic's, though now reformed. Every one I 'eard speak, agreed it was takless of 'im."

"Sir Roderick used to say," said Mrs. Mackridge, "that the First

Thing,"--here Mrs. Mackridge paused and looked dreadfully at me--"and the Second Thing"--here she fixed me again--"and the Third Thing"--now I was released--"needed in a colonial governor is Tact." She became aware of my doubts again, and added predominantly, "It has always struck me that that was a Singularly True Remark."

I resolved that if ever I found this polypus of Tact growing up in my soul, I would tear it out by the roots, throw it forth and stamp on it.

"They're queer people--colonials," said Rabbits, "very queer. When I was at Templemorton I see something of 'em. Queer fellows, some of 'em. Very respectful of course, free with their money in a spasammy sort of way, but-- Some of 'em, I must confess, make me nervous. They have an eye on you. They watch you--as you wait. They let themselves appear to be lookin' at you..."

My mother said nothing in that discussion. The word colonies always upset her. She was afraid, I think, that if she turned her mind in that direction my errant father might suddenly and shockingly be discovered, no doubt conspicuously bigamic and altogether offensive and revolutionary. She did not want to rediscover my father at all.

It is curious that when I was a little listening boy I had such an idea of our colonies that I jeered in my heart at Mrs. Mackridge's colonial ascendancy. These brave emancipated sunburnt English of the open, I thought, suffer these aristocratic invaders as a quaint anachronism, but as for being gratified--!

I don't jeer now. I'm not so sure.

V

It is a little difficult to explain why I did not come to do what was the natural thing for any one in my circumstances to do, and take my world for granted. A certain innate scepticism, I think, explains it and a certain inaptitude for sympathetic assimilation. My father, I believe, was a sceptic; my mother was certainly a hard woman.

I was an only child, and to this day I do not know whether my father is living or dead. He fled my mother's virtues before my distincter memories began. He left no traces in his flight, and she, in her indignation, destroyed every vestige that she could of him. Never a photograph nor a scrap of his handwriting have I seen; and it was, I know, only the accepted code of virtue and discretion that prevented her destroying her marriage certificate and me, and so making a clean sweep of her matrimonial humiliation. I suppose I must inherit something of the moral stupidity that would enable her to make a holocaust of every little personal thing she had of him. There must have been presents made by him as a lover, for example--books with kindly inscriptions, letters perhaps, a flattened flower, a ring, or such-like gage. She kept her wedding-ring, of course, but all the others she destroyed. She never told me his christian name or indeed spoke a word to me of him; though at times I came near daring to ask her: add what I have of him--it isn't much--I got from his brother, my hero, my uncle Ponderevo. She wore her ring; her marriage certificate she kept in a sealed envelope in the very bottom of her largest trunk, and me she sustained at a private school among the Kentish hills. You must not think I was always at Bladesover--even in my holidays. If at the time these came round, Lady Drew was vexed by recent Company, or for any other reason wished to take it out of my mother, then she used to ignore the customary reminder my mother gave her, and I "stayed on" at the school.

But such occasions were rare, and I suppose that between ten and fourteen I averaged fifty days a year at Bladesover.

Don't imagine I deny that was a fine thing for me. Bladesover, in absorbing the whole countryside, had not altogether missed greatness. The Bladesover system has at least done one good thing for England, it has abolished the peasant habit of mind. If many of us still live and breathe pantry and housekeeper's room, we are quit of the dream of living by economising parasitically on hens and pigs.... About that park there were some elements of a liberal education; there was a great space of greensward not given over to manure and food grubbing; there was mystery, there was matter for the imagination. It was still a park of deer. I saw something of the life of these dappled creatures, heard the belling of stags, came upon young fawns among the bracken, found bones, skulls, and antlers in lonely places. There were corners that gave a gleam of meaning to the word forest, glimpses of unstudied natural splendour. There was a slope of bluebells in the broken sunlight under the newly green beeches in the west wood that is now precious sapphire in my memory; it was the first time that I knowingly met Beauty.

And in the house there were books. The rubbish old Lady Drew read I never saw; stuff of the Maria Monk type, I have since gathered, had a fascination for her; but back in the past there had been a Drew of intellectual enterprise, Sir Cuthbert, the son of Sir Matthew who built the house; and thrust away, neglected and despised, in an old room upstairs, were books and treasures of his that my mother let me rout among during a spell of wintry wet. Sitting under a dormer window on a shelf above great stores of tea and spices, I became familiar with much of Hogarth in a big portfolio, with Raphael, there was a great book of engravings from the stanzas of Raphael in the Vatican--and with most of the capitals of Europe as they had looked about 1780, by

means of several pig iron-moulded books of views. There was also a broad eighteenth century atlas with huge wandering maps that instructed me mightily. It had splendid adornments about each map title; Holland showed a fisherman and his boat; Russia a Cossack; Japan, remarkable people attired in pagodas--I say it deliberately, "pagodas." There were Terrae Incognitae in every continent then, Poland, Sarmatia, lands since lost; and many a voyage I made with a blunted pin about that large, incorrect and dignified world. The books in that little old closet had been banished, I suppose, from the saloon during the Victorian revival of good taste and emasculated orthodoxy, but my mother had no suspicion of their character. So I read and understood the good sound rhetoric of Tom Paine's "Rights of Man," and his "Common Sense," excellent books, once praised by bishops and since sedulously lied about. Gulliver was there unexpurgated, strong meat for a boy perhaps but not too strong I hold--I have never regretted that I escaped niceness in these affairs. The satire of Traldragdubh made my blood boil as it was meant to do, but I hated Swift for the Houyhnhnms and never quite liked a horse afterwards. Then I remember also a translation of Voltaire's "Candide," and "Rasselas;" and, vast book though it was, I really believe I read, in a muzzy sort of way of course, from end to end, and even with some reference now and then to the Atlas, Gibbon--in twelve volumes.

These readings whetted my taste for more, and surreptitiously I raided the bookcases in the big saloon. I got through quite a number of books before my sacrilegious temerity was discovered by Ann, the old head-housemaid. I remember that among others I tried a translation of Plato's "Republic" then, and found extraordinarily little interest in it; I was much too young for that; but "Vathek"--"Vathek" was glorious stuff. That kicking affair! When everybody HAD to kick!

The thought of "Vathek" always brings back with it my boyish

memory of the big saloon at Bladesover.

It was a huge long room with many windows opening upon the park, and each window--there were a dozen or more reaching from the floor up--had its elaborate silk or satin curtains, heavily fringed, a canopy (is it?) above, its completely white shutters folding into the deep thickness of the wall. At either end of that great still place was an immense marble chimney-piece; the end by the bookcase showed the wolf and Romulus and Remus, with Homer and Virgil for supporters; the design of the other end I have forgotten. Frederick, Prince of Wales, swaggered flatly over the one, twice life-size, but mellowed by the surface gleam of oil; and over the other was an equally colossal group of departed Dews as sylvan deities, scantily clad, against a storm-rent sky. Down the centre of the elaborate ceiling were three chandeliers, each bearing some hundreds of dangling glass lustres, and over the interminable carpet--it impressed me as about as big as Sarmatia in the store-room Atlas--were islands and archipelagoes of chintz-covered chairs and couches, tables, great Sevres vases on pedestals, a bronze man and horse. Somewhere in this wilderness one came, I remember, upon--a big harp beside a lyre-shaped music stand, and a grand piano....

The book-borrowing raid was one of extraordinary dash and danger.

One came down the main service stairs--that was legal, and illegality began in a little landing when, very cautiously, one went through a red baize door. A little passage led to the hall, and here one reconnoitered for Ann, the old head-housemaid--the younger housemaids were friendly and did not count. Ann located, came a dash across the open space at the foot of that great staircase that has never been properly descended since powder went out of fashion, and so to the saloon door. A beast of an oscillating Chinaman in china, as large as life, grimaced and quivered to one's lightest steps. That door was the perilous

place; it was double with the thickness of the wall between, so that one could not listen beforehand for the whisk of the feather-brush on the other side. Oddly rat-like, is it not, this darting into enormous places in pursuit of the abandoned crumbs of thought?

And I found Langhorne's "Plutarch" too, I remember, on those shelves. It seems queer to me now to think that I acquired pride and self-respect, the idea of a state and the germ of public spirit, in such a furtive fashion; queer, too, that it should rest with an old Greek, dead these eighteen hundred years to teach that.

VI

The school I went to was the sort of school the Bladesover system permitted. The public schools that add comic into existence in the brief glow of the Renaissance had been taken possession of by the ruling class; the lower classes were not supposed to stand in need of schools, and our middle stratum got the schools it deserved, private schools, schools any unqualified pretender was free to establish. Mine was kept by a man who had had the energy to get himself a College of Preceptors diploma, and considering how cheap his charges were, I will readily admit the place might have been worse. The building was a dingy yellow-brick residence outside the village, with the schoolroom as an outbuilding of lath and plaster.

I do not remember that my school-days were unhappy--indeed I recall a good lot of fine mixed fun in them--but I cannot without grave risk of misinterpretation declare that we were at all nice and refined. We fought much, not sound formal fighting, but "scrapping" of a sincere and murderous kind, into which one might bring one's boots--it made us tough at any rate--and several of us were the sons of London publicans, who distinguished "scraps"

where one meant to hurt from ordered pugilism, practising both arts, and having, moreover, precocious linguistic gifts. Our cricket-field was bald about the wickets, and we played without style and disputed with the umpire; and the teaching was chiefly in the hands of a lout of nineteen, who wore ready-made clothes and taught despicably. The head-master and proprietor taught us arithmetic, algebra, and Euclid, and to the older boys even trigonometry, himself; he had a strong mathematical bias, and I think now that by the standard of a British public school he did rather well by us.

We had one inestimable privilege at that school, and that was spiritual neglect. We dealt with one another with the forcible simplicity of natural boys, we "cheeked," and "punched" and "clouted"; we thought ourselves Red Indians and cowboys and such-like honourable things, and not young English gentlemen; we never felt the strain of "Onward Christian soldiers," nor were swayed by any premature piety in the cold oak pew of our Sunday devotions. All that was good. We spent our rare pennies in the uncensored reading matter of the village dame's shop, on the Boys of England, and honest penny dreadfuls--ripping stuff, stuff that anticipated Haggard and Stevenson, badly printed and queerly illustrated, and very very good for us. On our half-holidays we were allowed the unusual freedom of rambling in twos and threes wide and far about the land, talking experimentally, dreaming wildly. There was much in those walks! To this day the landscape of the Kentish world, with its low broad distances, its hop gardens and golden stretches of wheat, its oasts and square church towers, its background of downland and hangers, has for me a faint sense of adventure added to the pleasure of its beauty. We smoked on occasion, but nobody put us up to the proper "boyish" things to do; we never "robbed an orchard" for example, though there were orchards all about us, we thought stealing was sinful, we stole incidental apples and turnips and strawberries from the fields indeed, but in a criminal inglorious fashion, and

afterwards we were ashamed. We had our days of adventure, but they were natural accidents, our own adventures. There was one hot day when several of us, walking out towards Maidstone, were incited by the devil to despise ginger beer, and we fuddled ourselves dreadfully with ale; and a time when our young minds were infected to the pitch of buying pistols, by the legend of the Wild West. Young Roots from Highbury came back with a revolver and cartridges, and we went off six strong to live a free wild life one holiday afternoon. We fired our first shot deep in the old flint mine at Chiselstead, and nearly burst our ear drums; then we fired in a primrose studded wood by Pickthorn Green, and I gave a false alarm of "keeper," and we fled in disorder for a mile. After which Roots suddenly shot at a pheasant in the high road by Chiselstead, and then young Barker told lies about the severity of the game laws and made Roots sore afraid, and we hid the pistol in a dry ditch outside the school field. A day or so after we got in again, and ignoring a certain fouling and rusting of the barrel, tried for a rabbit at three hundred yards. Young Roots blew a molehill at twenty paces into a dust cloud, burnt his fingers, and scorched his face; and the weapon having once displayed this strange disposition to flame back upon the shooter, was not subsequently fired.

One main source of excitement for us was "cheeking" people in vans and carts upon the Goudhurst road; and getting myself into a monstrous white mess in the chalk pits beyond the village, and catching yellow jaundice as a sequel to bathing stark naked with three other Adamites, old Ewart leading that function, in the rivulet across Hickson's meadows, are among my memorabilia. Those free imaginative afternoons! how much they were for us! how much they did for us! All streams came from the then undiscovered "sources of the Nile" in those days, all thickets were Indian jungles, and our best game, I say it with pride, I invented. I got it out of the Bladesover saloon. We found a wood where "Trespassing" was forbidden, and did the "Retreat of

the Ten Thousand" through it from end to end, cutting our way bravely through a host of nettle beds that barred our path, and not forgetting to weep and kneel when at last we emerged within sight of the High Road Sea. So we have burst at times, weeping and rejoicing, upon startled wayfarers. Usually I took the part of that distinguished general Xenophen--and please note the quantity of the o. I have all my classical names like that,--Socrates rhymes with Bates for me, and except when the bleak eye of some scholar warns me of his standards of judgment, I use those dear old mispronunciations still. The little splash into Latin made during my days as a chemist washed off nothing of the habit. Well,--if I met those great gentlemen of the past with their accents carelessly adjusted I did at least meet them alive, as an equal, and in a living tongue. Altogether my school might easily have been worse for me, and among other good things it gave me a friend who has lasted my life out.

This was Ewart, who is now a monumental artist at Woking, after many vicissitudes. Dear chap, how he did stick out of his clothes to be sure! He was a longlimbed lout, ridiculously tall beside my more youth full compactness, and, except that there was no black moustache under his nose blob, he had the same round knobby face as he has to-day, the same bright and active hazel brown eyes, the stare, the meditative moment, the insinuating reply. Surely no boy ever played the fool as Bob Ewart used to play it, no boy had a readier knack of mantling the world with wonder. Commonness vanished before Ewart, at his expository touch all things became memorable and rare. From him I first heard tell of love, but only after its barbs were already sticking in my heart. He was, I know now the bastard of that great improvident artist, Rickmann Ewart; he brought the light of a lax world that at least had not turned its back upon beauty, into the growing fermentation of my mind.

I won his heart by a version of Vathek, and after that we were

inseparable yarning friends. We merged our intellectual stock so completely that I wonder sometimes how much I did not become Ewart, how much Ewart is not vicariously and derivatively me.

VII

And then when I had newly passed my fourteenth birthday, came my tragic disgrace.

It was in my midsummer holidays that the thing happened, and it was through the Honourable Beatrice Normandy. She had "come into my life," as they say, before I was twelve.

She descended unexpectedly into a peaceful interlude that followed the annual going of those Three Great Women. She came into the old nursery upstairs, and every day she had tea with us in the housekeeper's room. She was eight, and she came with a nurse called Nannie; and to begin with, I did not like her at all.

Nobody liked this irruption into the downstairs rooms; the two "gave trouble,"--a dire offence; Nannie's sense of duty to her charge led to requests and demands that took my mother's breath away. Eggs at unusual times, the reboiling of milk, the rejection of an excellent milk pudding--not negotiated respectfully but dictated as of right. Nannie was a dark, longfeatured, taciturn woman in a grey dress; she had a furtive inflexibility of manner that finally dismayed and crushed and overcame. She conveyed she was "under orders"--like a Greek tragedy. She was that strange product of the old time, a devoted, trusted servant; she had, as it were, banked all her pride and will with the greater, more powerful people who employed her, in return for a life-long security of servitude--the bargain was nonetheless binding for being implicit. Finally they were to pension her, and she would die

the hated treasure of a boarding-house. She had built up in herself an enormous habit of reference to these upstairs people, she had curbed down all discordant murmurings of her soul, her very instincts were perverted or surrendered. She was sexless, her personal pride was all transferred, she mothered another woman's child with a hard, joyless devotion that was at least entirely compatible with a stoical separation. She treated us all as things that counted for nothing save to fetch and carry for her charge. But the Honourable Beatrice could condescend.

The queer chances of later years come between me and a distinctly separated memory of that childish face. When I think of Beatrice, I think of her as I came to know her at a later time, when at last I came to know her so well that indeed now I could draw her, and show a hundred little delicate things you would miss in looking at her. But even then I remember how I noted the infinite delicacy of her childish skin and the fine eyebrow, finer than the finest feather that ever one felt on the breast of a bird. She was one of those elfin, rather precocious little girls, quick coloured, with dark hair, naturally curling dusky hair that was sometimes astray over her eyes, and eyes that were sometimes impishly dark, and sometimes a clear brown yellow. And from the very outset, after a most cursory attention to Rabbits, she decided that the only really interesting thing at the tea-table was myself.

The elders talked in their formal dull way--telling Nannie the trite old things about the park and the village that they told every one, and Beatrice watched me across the table with a pitiless little curiosity that made me uncomfortable.

"Nannie," she said, pointing, and Nannie left a question of my mother's disregarded to attend to her; "is he a servant boy? "

"S-s-sh," said Nannie. "He's Master Ponderevo."

"Is he a servant boy?" repeated Beatrice.

"He's a schoolboy," said my mother.

"Then may I talk to him, Nannie?"

Nannie surveyed me with brutal inhumanity. "You mustn't talk too much," she said to her charge, and cut cake into fingers for her.

"No," she added decisively, as Beatrice made to speak.

Beatrice became malignant. Her eyes explored me with unjustifiable hostility. "He's got dirty hands," she said, stabbing at the forbidden fruit. "And there's a fray to his collar."

Then she gave herself up to cake with an appearance of entire forgetfulness of me that filled me with hate and a passionate desire to compel her to admire me.... And the next day before tea, I did for the first time in my life, freely, without command or any compulsion, wash my hands.

So our acquaintance began, and presently was deepened by a whim of hers. She had a cold and was kept indoors, and confronted Nannie suddenly with the alternative of being hopelessly naughty, which in her case involved a generous amount of screaming unsuitable for the ears of an elderly, shaky, rich aunt, or having me up to the nursery to play with her all the afternoon. Nannie came downstairs and borrowed me in a careworn manner; and I was handed over to the little creature as if I was some large variety of kitten. I had never had anything to do with a little girl before, I thought she was more beautiful and wonderful and bright than anything else could possibly be in life, and she found me the gentlest of slaves--though at the same time, as I

made evident, fairly strong. And Nannie was amazed to find the afternoon slip cheerfully and rapidly away. She praised my manners to Lady Drew and to my mother, who said she was glad to hear well of me, and after that I played with Beatrice several times. The toys she had remain in my memory still as great splendid things, gigantic to all my previous experience of toys, and we even went to the great doll's house on the nursery landing to play discreetly with that, the great doll's house that the Prince Regent had given Sir Harry Drew's first-born (who died at five, that was a not ineffectual model of Bladesover itself, and contained eighty-five dolls and had cost hundreds of pounds. I played under imperious direction with that toy of glory.

I went back to school when that holiday was over, dreaming of beautiful things, and got Ewart to talk to me of love; and I made a great story out of the doll's house, a story that, taken over into Ewart's hands, speedily grew to an island doll's city all our own.

One of the dolls, I privately decided, was like Beatrice.

One other holiday there was when I saw something of her--oddly enough my memory of that second holiday in which she played a part is vague--and then came a gap of a year, and then my disgrace.

VIII

Now I sit down to write my story and tell over again things in their order, I find for the first time how inconsecutive and irrational a thing the memory can be. One recalls acts and cannot recall motives; one recalls quite vividly moments that stand out inexplicably-- things adrift, joining on to nothing, leading nowhere. I think I must have seen Beatrice and her half-brother quite a number of times in my last holiday at Bladesover, but I

really cannot recall more than a little of the quality of the circumstances. That great crisis of my boyhood stands out very vividly as an effect, as a sort of cardinal thing for me, but when I look for details, particularly details that led up to the crisis--I cannot find them in any developing order at all. This halfbrother, Archie Garvell, was a new factor in the affair. I remember him clearly as a fair-haired, supercilious looking, weedily-lank boy, much taller than I, but I should imagine very little heavier, and that we hated each other by a sort of instinct from the beginning; and yet I cannot remember my first meeting with him at all.

Looking back into these past things--it is like rummaging in a neglected attic that has experienced the attentions of some whimsical robber--I cannot even account for the presence of these children at Bladesover. They were, I know, among the innumerable cousins of Lady Drew, and according to the theories of downstairs candidates for the ultimate possession of Bladesover. If they were, their candidature was unsuccessful. But that great place, with all its faded splendour, its fine furniture, its large traditions, was entirely at the old lady's disposition; and I am inclined to think it is true that she used this fact to torment and dominate a number of eligible people. Lord Osprey was among the number of these, and she showed these hospitalities to his motherless child and step-child, partly, no doubt, because he was poor, but quite as much, I nowadays imagine, in the dim hope of finding some affectionate or imaginative outcome of contact with them. Nannie had dropped out of the world this second time, and Beatrice was in the charge of an extremely amiable and ineffectual poor army-class young woman whose name I never knew. They were, I think, two remarkably illmanaged and enterprising children. I seem to remember too, that it was understood that I was not a fit companion for them, and that our meetings had to be as unostentatious as possible. It was Beatrice who insisted upon our meeting.

I am certain I knew quite a lot about love at fourteen and that I was quite as much in love with Beatrice then as any impassioned adult could be, and that Beatrice was, in her way, in love with me. It is part of the decent and useful pretences of our world that children of the age at which we were, think nothing, feel nothing, know nothing of love. It is wonderful what people the English are for keeping up pretences. But indeed I cannot avoid telling that Beatrice and I talked of love and kissed and embraced one another.

I recall something of one talk under the overhanging bushes of the shrubbery--I on the park side of the stone wall, and the lady of my worship a little inelegantly astride thereon. Inelegantly do I say? you should have seen the sweet imp as I remember her. Just her poise on the wall comes suddenly clear before me, and behind her the light various branches of the bushes of the shrubbery that my feet might not profane, and far away and high behind her, dim and stately, the cornice of the great facade of Bladesover rose against the dappled sky. Our talk must have been serious and business-like, for we were discussing my social position.

"I don't love Archie," she had said, apropos of nothing; and then in a whisper, leaning forward with the hair about her face, "I love YOU!"

But she had been a little pressing to have it clear that I was not and could not be a servant.

"You'll never be a servant--ever!"

I swore that very readily, and it is a vow I have kept by nature.

"What will you be?" said she.

I ran my mind hastily over the professions.

"Will you be a soldier?" she asked.

"And be bawled at by duffers? No fear!" said I. "Leave that to the plough-boys."

"But an officer? "

"I don't know," I said, evading a shameful difficulty.

"I'd rather go into the navy."

"Wouldn't you like to fight?"

"I'd like to fight," I said. "But a common soldier it's no honour to have to be told to fight and to be looked down upon while you do it, and how could I be an officer?"

"Couldn't you be?" she said, and looked at me doubtfully; and the spaces of the social system opened between us.

Then, as became a male of spirit, I took upon myself to brag and lie my way through this trouble. I said I was a poor man, and poor men went into the navy; that I "knew" mathematics, which no army officer did; and I claimed Nelson for an exemplar, and spoke very highly of my outlook upon blue water. "He loved Lady Hamilton," I said, "although she was a lady--and I will love you."

We were somewhere near that when the egregious governess became audible, calling "Beeee-atrice! Beeee-e-atrice!"

"Snifty beast!" said my lady, and tried to get on with the

conversation; but that governess made things impossible.

"Come here!" said my lady suddenly, holding out a grubby hand; and I went very close to her, and she put her little head down upon the wall until her black fog of hair tickled my cheek.

"You are my humble, faithful lover," she demanded in a whisper, her warm flushed face near touching mine, and her eyes very dark and lustrous.

"I am your humble, faithful lover," I whispered back.

And she put her arm about my head and put out her lips and we kissed, and boy though I was, I was all atremble. So we two kissed for the first time.

"Beeee-e-e-a-trice!" fearfully close.

My lady had vanished, with one wild kick of her black-stocking leg. A moment after, I heard her sustaining the reproaches of her governess, and explaining her failure to answer with an admirable lucidity and disingenuousness.

I felt it was unnecessary for me to be seen just then, and I vanished guiltily round the corner into the West Wood, and so to love-dreams and single-handed play, wandering along one of those meandering bracken valleys that varied Bladesover park. And that day and for many days that kiss upon my lips was a seal, and by night the seed of dreams.

Then I remember an expedition we made--she, I, and her half-brother--into those West Woods--they two were supposed to be playing in the shrubbery--and how we were Indians there, and made a wigwam out of a pile of beech logs, and how we stalked deer, crept near and watched rabbits feeding in a glade, and almost got

a squirrel. It was play seasoned with plentiful disputing between me and young Garvell, for each firmly insisted upon the leading roles, and only my wider reading--I had read ten stories to his one--gave me the ascendancy over him. Also I scored over him by knowing how to find the eagle in a bracken stem. And somehow--I don't remember what led to it at all--I and Beatrice, two hot and ruffled creatures, crept in among the tall bracken and hid from him. The great fronds rose above us, five feet or more, and as I had learnt how to wriggle through that undergrowth with the minimum of betrayal by tossing greenery above, I led the way. The ground under bracken is beautifully clear and faintly scented in warm weather; the stems come up black and then green; if you crawl flat, it is a tropical forest in miniature. I led the way and Beatrice crawled behind, and then as the green of the further glade opened before us, stopped. She crawled up to me, her hot little face came close to mine; once more she looked and breathed close to me, and suddenly she flung her arm about my neck and dragged me to earth beside her, and kissed me and kissed me again. We kissed, we embraced and kissed again, all without a word; we desisted, we stared and hesitated--then in a suddenly damped mood and a little perplexed at ourselves, crawled out, to be presently run down and caught in the tamest way by Archie.

That comes back very clearly to me, and other vague memories--I know old Hall and his gun, out shooting at jackdaws, came into our common experiences, but I don't remember how; and then at last, abruptly, our fight in the Warren stands out. The Warren, like most places in England that have that name, was not particularly a warren, it was a long slope of thorns and beeches through which a path ran, and made an alternative route to the downhill carriage road between Bladesover and Ropedean. I don't know how we three got there, but I have an uncertain fancy it was connected with a visit paid by the governess to the Ropedean vicarage people. But suddenly Archie and I, in discussing a game, fell into a dispute for Beatrice. I had made him the

fairest offer: I was to be a Spanish nobleman, she was to be my wife, and he was to be a tribe of Indians trying to carry her off. It seems to me a fairly attractive offer to a boy to be a whole tribe of Indians with a chance of such a booty. But Archie suddenly took offence.

"No," he said; "we can't have that!"

"Can't have what?"

"You can't be a gentleman, because you aren't. And you can't play Beatrice is your wife. It's--it's impertinent."

"But" I said, and looked at her.

Some earlier grudge in the day's affairs must have been in Archie's mind. "We let you play with us," said Archie; "but we can't have things like that."

"What rot!" said Beatrice. "He can if he likes."

But he carried his point. I let him carry it, and only began to grow angry three or four minutes later. Then we were still discussing play and disputing about another game. Nothing seemed right for all of us.

"We don't want you to play with us at all," said Archie.

"Yes, we do," said Beatrice.

"He drops his aitches like anything."

"No, 'e doesn't," said I, in the heat of the moment.

"There you go!" he cried. "E, he says. E! E! E!"

He pointed a finger at me. He had struck to the heart of my shame. I made the only possible reply by a rush at him. "Hello!" he cried, at my blackavised attack. He dropped back into an attitude that had some style in it, parried my blow, got back at my cheek, and laughed with surprise and relief at his own success. Whereupon I became a thing of murderous rage. He could box as well or better than I--he had yet to realise I knew anything of that at all--but I had fought once or twice to a finish with bare fists. I was used to inflicting and enduring savage hurting, and I doubt if he had ever fought. I hadn't fought ten seconds before I felt this softness in him, realised all that quality of modern upper-class England that never goes to the quick, that hedges about rules and those petty points of honour that are the ultimate comminution of honour, that claims credit for things demonstrably half done. He seemed to think that first hit of his and one or two others were going to matter, that I ought to give in when presently my lip bled and dripped blood upon my clothes. So before we had been at it a minute he had ceased to be aggressive except in momentary spurts, and I was knocking him about almost as I wanted to do; and demanding breathlessly and fiercely, after our school manner, whether he had had enough, not knowing that by his high code and his soft training it was equally impossible for him to either buck-up and beat me, or give in.

I have a very distinct impression of Beatrice dancing about us during the affair in a state of unladylike appreciation, but I was too preoccupied to hear much of what she was saying. But she certainly backed us both, and I am inclined to think now--it may be the disillusionment of my ripened years--whichever she thought was winning.

Then young Garvell, giving way before my slogging, stumbled and fell over a big flint, and I, still following the tradition of my

class and school, promptly flung myself on him to finish him. We were busy with each other on the ground when we became aware of a dreadful interruption.

"Shut up, you FOOL!" said Archie.

"Oh, Lady Drew!" I heard Beatrice cry. "They're fighting! They're fighting something awful!"

I looked over my shoulder. Archie's wish to get up became irresistible, and my resolve to go on with him vanished altogether.

I became aware of the two old ladies, presences of black and purple silk and fur and shining dark things; they had walked up through the Warren, while the horses took the hill easily, and so had come upon us. Beatrice had gone to them at once with an air of taking refuge, and stood beside and a little behind them. We both rose dejectedly. The two old ladies were evidently quite dreadfully shocked, and peering at us with their poor old eyes; and never had I seen such a tremblement in Lady Drew's lorgnettes.

"You've never been fighting?" said Lady Drew.

"You have been fighting."

"It wasn't proper fighting," snapped Archie, with accusing eyes on me.

"It's Mrs. Ponderevo's George!" said Miss Somerville, so adding a conviction for ingratitude to my evident sacrilege.

"How could he DARE?" cried Lady Drew, becoming very awful.

"He broke the rules" said Archie, sobbing for breath. "I slipped, and--he hit me while I was down. He knelt on me."

"How could you DARE?" said Lady Drew.

I produced an experienced handkerchief rolled up into a tight ball, and wiped the blood from my chin, but I offered no explanation of my daring. Among other things that prevented that, I was too short of breath.

"He didn't fight fair," sobbed Archie.

Beatrice, from behind the old ladies, regarded me intently and without hostility. I am inclined to think the modification of my face through the damage to my lip interested her. It became dimly apparent to my confused intelligence that I must not say these two had been playing with me. That would not be after the rules of their game. I resolved in this difficult situation upon a sulky silence, and to take whatever consequences might follow.

IX

The powers of justice in Bladesover made an extraordinary mess of my case.

I have regretfully to admit that the Honourable Beatrice Normandy did, at the age of ten, betray me, abandon me, and lie most abominably about me. She was, as a matter of fact, panic-stricken about me, conscience stricken too; she bolted from the very thought of my being her affianced lover and so forth, from the faintest memory of kissing; she was indeed altogether disgraceful and human in her betrayal. She and her half-brother lied in perfect concord, and I was presented as a wanton assailant of my social betters. They were waiting about in the Warren, when I came up and spoke to them, etc.

On the whole, I now perceive Lady Drew's decisions were, in the light of the evidence, reasonable and merciful.

They were conveyed to me by my mother, who was, I really believe, even more shocked by the grossness of my social insubordination than Lady Drew. She dilated on her ladyship's kindnesses to me, on the effrontery and wickedness of my procedure, and so came at last to the terms of my penance. "You must go up to young Mr. Garvell, and beg his pardon."

"I won't beg his pardon," I said, speaking for the first time.

My mother paused, incredulous.

I folded my arms on her table-cloth, and delivered my wicked little ultimatum. "I won't beg his pardon nohow," I said. "See?"

"Then you will have to go off to your uncle Frapp at Chatham."

"I don't care where I have to go or what I have to do, I won't beg his pardon," I said.

And I didn't.

After that I was one against the world. Perhaps in my mother's heart there lurked some pity for me, but she did not show it. She took the side of the young gentleman; she tried hard, she tried very hard, to make me say I was sorry I had struck him. Sorry!

I couldn't explain.

So I went into exile in the dog-cart to Redwood station, with

Jukes the coachman, coldly silent, driving me, and all my personal belongings in a small American cloth portmanteau behind.

I felt I had much to embitter me; the game had and the beginnings of fairness by any standards I knew.... But the thing that embittered me most was that the Honourable Beatrice Normandy should have repudiated and fled from me as though I was some sort of leper, and not even have taken a chance or so, to give me a good-bye. She might have done that anyhow! Supposing I had told on her! But the son of a servant counts as a servant. She had forgotten and now remembered.

I solaced myself with some extraordinary dream of coming back to Bladesover, stern, powerful, after the fashion of Coriolanus. I do not recall the details, but I have no doubt I displayed great magnanimity...

Well, anyhow I never said I was sorry for pounding young Garvell, and I am not sorry to this day.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

OF MY LAUNCH INTO THE WORLD AND THE LAST I SAW OF BLADESOVER

I

When I was thus banished from Bladesover House, as it was then thought for good and all, I was sent by my mother in a vindictive spirit, first to her cousin Nicodemus Frapp, and then, as a fully indentured apprentice, to my uncle Ponderevo.

I ran away from the care of my cousin Nicodemus back to Bladesover House.

My cousin Nicodemus Frapp was a baker in a back street--a slum rather--just off that miserable narrow mean high road that threads those exquisite beads, Rochester and Chatham. He was, I must admit, a shock to me, much dominated by a young, plump, prolific, malingering wife; a bent, slow-moving, unwilling dark man with flour in his hair and eyelashes, in the lines of his face and the seams of his coat. I've never had a chance to correct my early impression of him, and he still remains an almost dreadful memory, a sort of caricature of incompetent simplicity. As I remember him, indeed, he presented the servile tradition perfected. He had no pride in his person; fine clothes and dressing up wasn't "for the likes of" him, so that he got his wife, who was no artist at it, to cut his black hair at irregular intervals, and let his nails become disagreeable to the fastidious eye; he had no pride in his business nor any initiative; his only virtues were not doing certain things and hard work. "Your uncle," said my mother--all grown-up cousins were uncles by courtesy among the Victorian middle-class-- "isn't much to look at or talk to, but he's a Good Hard-Working Man." There was a sort of base honourableness about toil, however needless, in that system of inversion. Another point of honour was to rise at or before dawn, and then laboriously muddle about.

It was very distinctly impressed on my mind that the Good Hard-Working Man would have thought it "fal-lalish" to own a pocket handkerchief. Poor old Frapp--dirty and crushed by, product of, Bladesover's magnificence! He made no fight against the world at all, he was floundering in small debts that were not so small but that finally they overwhelmed him, whenever there was occasion for any exertion his wife fell back upon pains and her "condition," and God sent them many children, most of whom died, and so, by their coming and going, gave a double exercise in the virtues of submission.

Resignation to God's will was the common device of these people in the face of every duty and every emergency. There were no books in the house; I doubt if either of them had retained the capacity for reading consecutively for more than a minute or so, and it was with amazement that day after day, over and above stale bread, one beheld food and again more food amidst the litter that held permanent session on the living-room table.

One might have doubted if either of them felt discomfort in this dusty darkness of existence, if it was not that they did visibly seek consolation. They sought this and found it of a Sunday, not in strong drink and raving, but in imaginary draughts of blood. They met with twenty or thirty other darkened and unclean people, all dressed in dingy colours that would not show the dirt, in a little brick-built chapel equipped with a spavined roarer of a harmonium, and there solaced their minds on the thought that all that was fair and free in life, all that struggled, all that planned and made, all pride and beauty and honour, all fine and enjoyable things, were irrevocably damned to everlasting torments. They were the self-appointed confidants of God's mockery of his own creation. So at any rate they stick in my mind. Vaguer, and yet hardly less agreeable than this cosmic jest, this coming "Yah, clever!" and general serving out and "showing up" of the lucky, the bold, and the cheerful, was their own predestination to Glory.

"There is a Fountain, filled with Blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's Veins,"

so they sang. I hear the drone and wheeze of that hymn now. I hated them with the bitter uncharitable condemnation of boyhood, and a twinge of that hate comes back to me. As I write the words, the sounds and then the scene return, these obscure, undignified people, a fat woman with asthma, an old Welsh milk-seller with a tumour on his bald head, who was the

intellectual leader of the sect, a huge-voiced haberdasher with a big black beard, a white-faced, extraordinarily pregnant woman, his wife, a spectacled rate collector with a bent back.... I hear the talk about souls, the strange battered old phrases that were coined ages ago in the seaports of the sun-dry Levant, of balm of Gilead and manna in the desert, of gourds that give shade and water in a thirsty land; I recall again the way in which at the conclusion of the service the talk remained pious in form but became medical in substance, and how the women got together for obstetric whisperings. I, as a boy, did not matter, and might overhear.

If Bladesover is my key for the explanation of England, I think my invincible persuasion that I understand Russia was engendered by the circle of Uncle Frapp.

I slept in a dingy sheeted bed with the two elder survivors of Frapp fecundity, and spent my week days in helping in the laborious disorder of the shop and bakehouse, in incidental deliveries of bread and so forth, and in parrying the probings of my uncle into my relations with the Blood, and his confidential explanations that ten shillings a week--which was what my mother paid him--was not enough to cover my accommodation. He was very anxious to keep that, but also he wanted more. There were neither books nor any seat nor corner in that house where reading was possible, no newspaper ever brought the clash of worldly things into its heavenward seclusion; horror of it all grew in me daily, and whenever I could I escaped into the streets and tramped about Chatham. The news shops appealed to me particularly. One saw there smudgy illustrated sheets, the Police News in particular, in which vilely drawn pictures brought home to the dullest intelligence an interminable succession of squalid crimes, women murdered and put into boxes, buried under floors, old men bludgeoned at midnight by robbers, people thrust suddenly out of trains, happy lovers shot, vitrioled and so forth

by rivals. I got my first glimpse of the life of pleasure in foully drawn pictures of "police raids" on this and that. Interspersed with these sheets were others in which Sloper, the urban John Bull, had his fling with gin bottle and obese umbrella, or the kindly empty faces of the Royal Family appeared and reappeared, visiting this, opening that, getting married, getting offspring, lying in state, doing everything but anything, a wonderful, good-meaning, impenetrable race apart.

I have never revisited Chatham; the impression it has left on my mind is one of squalid compression, unlit by any gleam of a maturer charity. All its effects arranged themselves as antithetical to the Bladesover effects. They confirmed and intensified all that Bladesover suggested. Bladesover declared itself to be the land, to be essentially England; I have already told how its airy spaciousness, its wide dignity, seemed to thrust village, church, and vicarage into corners, into a secondary and conditional significance. Here one gathered the corollary of that. Since the whole wide country of Kent was made up of contiguous Bladesovers and for the gentlefolk, the surplus of population, all who were not good tenants nor good labourers, Church of England, submissive and respectful, were necessarily thrust together, jostled out of sight, to fester as they might in this place that had the colours and even the smells of a well-packed dustbin. They should be grateful even for that; that, one felt, was the theory of it all.

And I loafed about this wilderness of crowded dinginess, with young, receptive, wide-open eyes, and through the blessing (or curse) of some fairy godmother of mine, asking and asking again: "But after all, WHY--"

I wandered up through Rochester once, and had a glimpse of the Stour valley above the town, all horrible with cement works and foully smoking chimneys and rows of workmen's cottages, minute,

ugly, uncomfortable, and grimy. So I had my first intimation of how industrialism must live in a landlord's land. I spent some hours, too, in the streets that give upon the river, drawn by the spell of the sea. But I saw barges and ships stripped of magic and mostly devoted to cement, ice, timber, and coal. The sailors looked to me gross and slovenly men, and the shipping struck me as clumsy, ugly, old, and dirty. I discovered that most sails don't fit the ships that hoist them, and that there may be as pitiful and squalid a display of poverty with a vessel as with a man. When I saw colliers unloading, watched the workers in the hold filling up silly little sacks and the succession of blackened, half-naked men that ran to and fro with these along a plank over a thirty-foot drop into filth and mud, I was first seized with admiration of their courage and toughness and then, "But after all, WHY--?" and the stupid ugliness of all this waste of muscle and endurance came home to me. Among other things it obviously wasted and deteriorated the coal.... And I had imagined great things of the sea!

Well, anyhow, for a time that vocation was stilled.

But such impressions came into my leisure, and of that I had no excess. Most of my time was spent doing things for Uncle Frapp, and my evenings and nights perforce in the company of the two eldest of my cousins. He was errand boy at an oil shop and fervently pious, and of him I saw nothing until the evening except at meals; the other was enjoying the midsummer holidays without any great elation; a singularly thin and abject, stunted creature he was, whose chief liveliness was to pretend to be a monkey, and who I am now convinced had some secret disease that drained his vitality away. If I met him now I should think him a pitiful little creature and be extremely sorry for him. Then I felt only a wondering aversion. He sniffed horribly, he was tired out by a couple of miles of loafing, he never started any conversation, and he seemed to prefer his own company to mine.

His mother, poor woman, said he was the "thoughtful one."

Serious trouble came suddenly out of a conversation we held in bed one night. Some particularly pious phrase of my elder cousin's irritated me extremely, and I avowed outright my entire disbelief in the whole scheme of revealed religion. I had never said a word about my doubts to any one before, except to Ewart who had first evolved them. I had never settled my doubts until at this moment when I spoke. But it came to me then that the whole scheme of salvation of the Frappes was not simply doubtful, but impossible. I fired this discovery out into the darkness with the greatest promptitude.

My abrupt denials certainly scared my cousin amazingly.

At first they could not understand what I was saying, and when they did I fully believe they expected an instant answer in thunderbolts and flames. They gave me more room in the bed forthwith, and then the elder sat up and expressed his sense of my awfulness. I was already a little frightened at my temerity, but when he asked me categorically to unsay what I had said, what could I do but confirm my repudiation?

"There's no hell," I said, "and no eternal punishment. No God would be such a fool as that."

My elder cousin cried aloud in horror, and the younger lay scared, but listening. "Then you mean," said my elder cousin, when at last he could bring himself to argue, "you might do just as you liked?"

"If you were cad enough," said I.

Our little voices went on interminably, and at one stage my cousin got out of bed and made his brother do likewise, and knelt

in the night dimness and prayed at me. That I found trying, but I held out valiantly. "Forgive him," said my cousin, "he knows not what he sayeth."

"You can pray if you like," I said, "but if you're going to cheek me in your prayers I draw the line."

The last I remember of that great discussion was my cousin deploring the fact that he "should ever sleep in the same bed with an Infidel!"

The next day he astonished me by telling the whole business to his father. This was quite outside all my codes. Uncle Nicodemus sprang it upon me at the midday meal.

"You been sayin' queer things, George," he said abruptly. "You better mind what you're saying."

"What did he say, father?" said Mrs. Frapp.

"Things I couldn't repeat," said he.

"What things?" I asked hotly.

"Ask 'IM," said my uncle, pointing with his knife to his informant, and making me realise the nature of my offence. My aunt looked at the witness. "Not--?" she framed a question.

"Wuss," said my uncle. "Blarsphemy."

My aunt couldn't touch another mouthful. I was already a little troubled in my conscience by my daring, and now I began to feel the black enormity of the course upon which I had embarked.

"I was only talking sense," I said.

I had a still more dreadful moment when presently I met my cousin in the brick alley behind the yard, that led back to his grocer's shop.

"You sneak!" I said, and smacked his face hard forthwith. "Now then," said I.

He started back, astonished and alarmed. His eyes met mine, and I saw a sudden gleam of resolution. He turned his other cheek to me.

"It 'it," he said. "It 'it. I'LL forgive you."

I felt I had never encountered a more detestable way of evading a licking. I shoved him against the wall and left him there, forgiving me, and went back into the house.

"You better not speak to your cousins, George," said my aunt, "till you're in a better state of mind."

I became an outcast forthwith. At supper that night a gloomy silence was broken by my cousin saying

"E 'it me for telling you, and I turned the other cheek, muvver."

"E's got the evil one be'ind 'im now, a ridin' on 'is back," said my aunt, to the grave discomfort of the eldest girl, who sat beside me.

After supper my uncle, in a few ill-chosen words, prayed me to repent before I slept.

"Suppose you was took in your sleep, George," he said; "where'd

you be then? You jest think of that me boy." By this time I was thoroughly miserable and frightened, and this suggestion unnerved me dreadfully but I kept up an impenitent front. "To wake in 'ell," said Uncle Nicodemus, in gentle tones. "You don't want to wake in 'ell, George, burnin' and screamin' for ever, do you? You wouldn't like that?"

He tried very hard to get me to "jest 'ave a look at the bake'ouse fire" before I retired. "It might move you," he said.

I was awake longest that night. My cousins slept, the sleep of faith on either side of me. I decided I would whisper my prayers, and stopped midway because I was ashamed, and perhaps also because I had an idea one didn't square God like that.

"No," I said, with a sudden confidence, "damn me if you're coward enough.... But you're not. No! You couldn't be!"

I woke my cousins up with emphatic digs, and told them as much, triumphantly, and went very peacefully to sleep with my act of faith accomplished.

I slept not only through that night, but for all my nights since then. So far as any fear of Divine injustice goes, I sleep soundly, and shall, I know, to the end of things. That declaration was an epoch in my spiritual life.

II

But I didn't expect to have the whole meeting on Sunday turned on to me.

It was. It all comes back to me, that convergence of attention, even the faint leathery smell of its atmosphere returns, and the coarse feel of my aunt's black dress beside me in contact with my

hand. I see again the old Welsh milkman "wrestling" with me, they all wrestled with me, by prayer or exhortation. And I was holding out stoutly, though convinced now by the contagion of their universal conviction that by doing so I was certainly and hopelessly damned. I felt that they were right, that God was probably like them, and that on the whole it didn't matter. And to simplify the business thoroughly I had declared I didn't believe anything at all. They confuted me by texts from Scripture which I now perceive was an illegitimate method of reply. When I got home, still impenitent and eternally lost and secretly very lonely and miserable and alarmed, Uncle Nicodemus docked my Sunday pudding.

One person only spoke to me like a human being on that day of wrath, and that was the younger Frapp. He came up to me in the afternoon while I was confined upstairs with a Bible and my own thoughts.

"Ello," he said, and fretted about.

"D'you mean to say there isn't--no one," he said, funkng the word.

"No one?"

"No one watching yer--always."

"Why should there be?" I asked.

"You can't 'elp thoughts," said my cousin, "anyhow. You mean--" He stopped hovering. "I s'pose I oughtn't to be talking to you."

He hesitated and flitted away with a guilty back glance over his shoulder....

The following week made life quite intolerable for me; these people forced me at last into an Atheism that terrified me. When I learnt that next Sunday the wrestling was to be resumed, my courage failed me altogether.

I happened upon a map of Kent in a stationer's window on Saturday, and that set me thinking of one form of release. I studied it intently for half an hour perhaps, on Saturday night, got a route list of villages well fixed in my memory, and got up and started for Bladesover about five on Sunday morning while my two bed mates were still fast asleep.

III

I remember something, but not so much of it as I should like to recall, of my long tramp to Bladesover House. The distance from Chatham is almost exactly seventeen miles, and it took me until nearly one. It was very interesting and I do not think I was very fatigued, though I got rather pinched by one boot.

The morning must have been very clear, because I remember that near Itchinstow Hall I looked back and saw the estuary of the Thames, that river that has since played so large a part in my life. But at the time I did not know it was the Thames, I thought this great expanse of mud flats and water was the sea, which I had never yet seen nearly. And out upon it stood ships, sailing ships and a steamer or so, going up to London or down out into the great seas of the world. I stood for a long time watching these and thinking whether after all I should not have done better to have run away to sea.

The nearer I drew to Bladesover, the more doubtful I grew of the duality of my reception, and the more I regretted that alternative. I suppose it was the dirty clumsiness of the shipping I had seen nearly, that put me out of mind of that. I

took a short cut through the Warren across the corner of the main park to intercept the people from the church. I wanted to avoid meeting any one before I met my mother, and so I went to a place where the path passed between banks, and without exactly hiding, stood up among the bushes. This place among other advantages eliminated any chance of seeing Lady Drew, who would drive round by the carriage road.

Standing up to waylay in this fashion I had a queer feeling of brigandage, as though I was some intrusive sort of bandit among these orderly things. It is the first time I remember having that outlaw feeling distinctly, a feeling that has played a large part in my subsequent life. I felt there existed no place for me that I had to drive myself in.

Presently, down the hill, the servants appeared, straggling by twos and threes, first some of the garden people and the butler's wife with them, then the two laundry maids, odd inseparable old creatures, then the first footman talking to the butler's little girl, and at last, walking grave and breathless beside old Ann and Miss Fison, the black figure of my mother.

My boyish mind suggested the adoption of a playful form of appearance. "Coo-ee, mother" said I, coming out against the sky, "Coo-ee!"

My mother looked up, went very white, and put her hand to her bosom.

I suppose there was a fearful fuss about me. And of course I was quite unable to explain my reappearance. But I held out stoutly, "I won't go back to Chatham; I'll drown myself first." The next day my mother carried me off to Wimblehurst, took me fiercely and aggressively to an uncle I had never heard of before, near though the place was to us. She gave me no word

as to what was to happen, and I was too subdued by her manifest wrath and humiliation at my last misdemeanour to demand information. I don't for one moment think Lady Drew was "nice" about me. The finality of my banishment was endorsed and underlined and stamped home. I wished very much now that I had run away to sea, in spite of the coal dust and squalour Rochester had revealed to me. Perhaps over seas one came to different lands.

IV

I do not remember much of my journey to Wimblesbury with my mother except the image of her as sitting bolt upright, as rather disdainful of the third-class carriage in which we traveled, and how she looked away from me out of the window when she spoke of my uncle. "I have not seen your uncle," she said, "since he was a boy...." She added grudgingly, "Then he was supposed to be clever."

She took little interest in such qualities as cleverness.

"He married about three years ago, and set up for himself in Wimblesbury.... So I suppose she had some money."

She mused on scenes she had long dismissed from her mind. "Teddy," she said at last in the tone of one who has been feeling in the dark and finds. "He was called Teddy... about your age.... Now he must be twenty-six or seven."

I thought of my uncle as Teddy directly I saw him; there was something in his personal appearance that in the light of that memory phrased itself at once as Teddiness--a certain Teddidity. To describe it in and other terms is more difficult. It is nimbleness without grace, and alertness without intelligence. He

whisked out of his shop upon the pavement, a short figure in grey and wearing grey carpet slippers; one had a sense of a young fattish face behind gilt glasses, wiry hair that stuck up and forward over the forehead, an irregular nose that had its aquiline moments, and that the body betrayed an equatorial laxity, an incipient "bow window" as the image goes. He jerked out of the shop, came to a stand on the pavement outside, regarded something in the window with infinite appreciation, stroked his chin, and, as abruptly, shot sideways into the door again, charging through it as it were behind an extended hand.

"That must be him," said my mother, catching at her breath.

We came past the window whose contents I was presently to know by heart, a very ordinary chemist's window except that there was a frictional electrical machine, an air pump and two or three tripods and retorts replacing the customary blue, yellow, and red bottles above. There was a plaster of Paris horse to indicate veterinary medicines among these breakables, and below were scent packets and diffusers and sponges and soda-water syphons and such-like things. Only in the middle there was a rubricated card, very neatly painted by hand, with these words--

Buy Ponderevo's Cough Linctus NOW.

NOW!

WHY?

Twopence Cheaper than in Winter.

You Store apples! why not the Medicine

You are Bound to Need?

in which appeal I was to recognise presently my uncle's distinctive note.

My uncle's face appeared above a card of infant's comforters in the glass pane of the door. I perceived his eyes were brown, and

that his glasses creased his nose. It was manifest he did not know us from Adam. A stare of scrutiny allowed an expression of commercial deference to appear in front of it, and my uncle flung open the door.

"You don't know me?" panted my mother.

My uncle would not own he did not, but his curiosity was manifest. My mother sat down on one of the little chairs before the soap and patent medicine-piled counter, and her lips opened and closed.

"A glass of water, madam," said my uncle, waved his hand in a sort of curve and shot away.

My mother drank the water and spoke. "That boy," she said, "takes after his father. He grows more like him every day.... And so I have brought him to you."

"His father, madam?"

"George."

For a moment the chemist was still at a loss. He stood behind the counter with the glass my mother had returned to him in his hand. Then comprehension grew.

"By Gosh!" he said. "Lord!" he cried. His glasses fell off. He disappeared replacing them, behind a pile of boxed-up bottles of blood mixture. "Eleven thousand virgins!" I heard him cry. The glass was banged down. "O-ri-ental Gums!"

He shot away out of the shop through some masked door. One heard his voice. "Susan! Susan!"

Then he reappeared with an extended hand. "Well, how are you?" he said. "I was never so surprised in my life. Fancy!... You!"

He shook my mother's impassive hand and then mine very warmly holding his glasses on with his left forefinger.

"Come right in!" he cried--"come right in! Better late than never!" and led the way into the parlour behind the shop.

After Bladesover that apartment struck me as stuffy and petty, but it was very comfortable in comparison with the Frapp living-room. It had a faint, disintegrating smell of meals about it, and my most immediate impression was of the remarkable fact that something was hung about or wrapped round or draped over everything. There was bright-patterned muslin round the gas-bracket in the middle of the room, round the mirror over the mantel, stuff with ball-fringe along the mantel and casing in the fireplace,--I first saw ball-fringe here--and even the lamp on the little bureau wore a shade like a large muslin hat. The table-cloth had ball-fringe and so had the window curtains, and the carpet was a bed of roses. There were little cupboards on either side of the fireplace, and in the recesses, ill-made shelves packed with books, and enriched with pinked American cloth. There was a dictionary lying face downward on the table, and the open bureau was littered with foolscap paper and the evidences of recently abandoned toil. My eye caught "The Ponderevo Patent Flat, a Machine you can Live in," written in large firm letters. My uncle opened a little door like a cupboard door in the corner of this room, and revealed the narrowest twist of staircase I had ever set eyes upon. "Susan!" he bawled again. "Wantje. Some one to see you. Surprisin'."

There came an inaudible reply, and a sudden loud bump over our heads as of some article of domestic utility pettishly flung aside, then the cautious steps of someone descending the twist,

and then my aunt appeared in the doorway with her hand upon the jamb.

"It's Aunt Ponderevo," cried my uncle. "George's wife--and she's brought over her son!" His eye roamed about the room. He darted to the bureau with a sudden impulse, and turned the sheet about the patent flat face down. Then he waved his glasses at us, "You know, Susan, my elder brother George. I told you about 'im lots of times."

He fretted across to the hearthrug and took up a position there, replaced his glasses and coughed.

My aunt Susan seemed to be taking it in. She was then rather a pretty slender woman of twenty-three or four, I suppose, and I remember being struck by the blueness of her eyes and the clear freshness of her complexion. She had little features, a button nose, a pretty chin and a long graceful neck that stuck out of her pale blue cotton morning dress. There was a look of half-assumed perplexity on her face, a little quizzical wrinkle of the brow that suggested a faintly amused attempt to follow my uncle's mental operations, a vain attempt and a certain hopelessness that had in succession become habitual. She seemed to be saying, "Oh Lord! What's he giving me THIS time?" And as came to know her better I detected, as a complication of her effort of apprehension, a subsidiary riddle to "What's he giving me?" and that was--to borrow a phrase from my schoolboy language "Is it keeps?" She looked at my mother and me, and back to her husband again.

"You know," he said. "George."

"Well," she said to my mother, descending the last three steps of the staircase and holding out her hand! "you're welcome. Though it's a surprise.... I can't ask you to HAVE anything, I'm

afraid, for there isn't anything in the house." She smiled, and looked at her husband banteringly. "Unless he makes up something with his old chemicals, which he's quite equal to doing."

My mother shook hands stiffly, and told me to kiss my aunt....

"Well, let's all sit down," said my uncle, suddenly whistling through his clenched teeth, and briskly rubbing his hands together. He put up a chair for my mother, raised the blind of the little window, lowered it again, and returned to his hearthrug. "I'm sure," he said, as one who decides, "I'm very glad to see you."

V

As they talked I gave my attention pretty exclusively to my uncle.

I noted him in great detail. I remember now his partially unbuttoned waistcoat, as though something had occurred to distract him as he did it up, and a little cut upon his chin. I liked a certain humour in his eyes. I watched, too, with the fascination that things have for an observant boy, the play of his lips--they were a little oblique, and there was something "slipshod," if one may strain a word so far, about his mouth, so that he lisped and sibilated ever and again and the coming and going of a curious expression, triumphant in quality it was, upon his face as he talked. He fingered his glasses, which did not seem to fit his nose, fretted with things in his waistcoat pockets or put his hands behind him, looked over our heads, and ever and again rose to his toes and dropped back on his heels. He had a way of drawing air in at times through his teeth that gave a whispering zest to his speech. It's a sound I can only represent as a soft *Zzzz*.

He did most of the talking. My mother repeated what she had already said in the shop, "I have brought George over to you," and then desisted for a time from the real business in hand. "You find this a comfortable house?" she asked; and this being affirmed: "It looks--very convenient.... Not too big to be a trouble--no. You like Wimblehurst, I suppose?"

My uncle retorted with some inquiries about the great people of Bladesover, and my mother answered in the character of a personal friend of Lady Drew's. The talk hung for a time, and then my uncle embarked upon a dissertation upon Wimblehurst.

"This place," he began, "isn't of course quite the place I ought to be in."

My mother nodded as though she had expected that.

"It gives me no Scope," he went on. "It's dead-and-alive. Nothing happens."

"He's always wanting something to happen," said my aunt Susan. "Some day he'll get a shower of things and they'll be too much for him."

"Not they," said my uncle, buoyantly.

"Do you find business--slack?" asked my mother.

"Oh! one rubs along. But there's no Development--no growth. They just come along here and buy pills when they want 'em--and a horseball or such. They've got to be ill before there's a prescription. That sort they are. You can't get 'em to launch out, you can't get 'em to take up anything new. For instance, I've been trying lately--induce them to buy their medicines in advance, and in larger quantities. But they won't look for it!

Then I tried to float a little notion of mine, sort of an insurance scheme for colds; you pay so much a week, and when you've got a cold you get a bottle of Cough Linctus so long as you can produce a substantial sniff. See? But Lord! they've no capacity for ideas, they don't catch on; no Jump about the place, no Life. Live!--they trickle, and what one has to do here is to trickle too-- Zzzz."

"Ah!" said my mother.

"It doesn't suit me," said my uncle. "I'm the cascading sort."

"George was that," said my mother after a pondering moment.

My aunt Susan took up the parable with an affectionate glance at her husband.

"He's always trying to make his old business jump," she said.

"Always putting fresh cards in the window, or getting up to something. You'd hardly believe. It makes ME jump sometimes."

"But it does no good," said my uncle.

"It does no good," said his wife. "It's not his miloo..."

Presently they came upon a wide pause.

From the beginning of their conversation there had been the promise of this pause, and I pricked my ears. I knew perfectly what was bound to come; they were going to talk of my father. I was enormously strengthened in my persuasion when I found my mother's eyes resting thoughtfully upon me in the silence, and then my uncle looked at me and then my aunt. I struggled unavailingly to produce an expression of meek stupidity.

"I think," said my uncle, "that George will find it more amusing to have a turn in the market-place than to sit here talking with us. There's a pair of stocks there, George--very interesting. Old-fashioned stocks."

"I don't mind sitting here," I said.

My uncle rose and in the most friendly way led me through the shop. He stood on his doorstep and jerked amiable directions to me.

"Ain't it sleepy, George, eh? There's the butcher's dog over there, asleep in the road-half an hour from midday! If the last Trump sounded I don't believe it would wake. Nobody would wake! The chaps up there in the churchyard--they'd just turn over and say: 'Naar--you don't catch us, you don't! See?'.... Well, you'll find the stocks just round that corner."

He watched me out of sight.

So I never heard what they said about my father after all.

VI

When I returned, my uncle had in some remarkable way become larger and central. "Tha'chu, George?" he cried, when the shop-door bell sounded. "Come right through"; and I found him, as it were, in the chairman's place before the draped grate.

The three of them regarded me.

"We have been talking of making you a chemist, George," said my uncle.

My mother looked at me. "I had hoped," she said, "that Lady Drew

would have done something for him--" She stopped.

"In what way?" said my uncle.

"She might have spoken to some one, got him into something perhaps...." She had the servant's invincible persuasion that all good things are done by patronage.

"He is not the sort of boy for whom things are done," she added, dismissing these dreams. "He doesn't accommodate himself. When he thinks Lady Drew wishes a thing, he seems not to wish it. Towards Mr. Redgrave, too, he has been--disrespectful--he is like his father."

"Who's Mr. Redgrave?"

"The Vicar."

"A bit independent?" said my uncle, briskly.

"Disobedient," said my mother. "He has no idea of his place. He seems to think he can get on by slighting people and flouting them. He'll learn perhaps before it is too late."

My uncle stroked his cut chin and me. "Have you learnt any Latin?" he asked abruptly.

I said I had not.

"He'll have to learn a little Latin," he explained to my mother, "to qualify. H'm. He could go down to the chap at the grammar school here--it's just been routed into existence again by the Charity Commissioners and have lessons."

"What, me learn Latin!" I cried, with emotion.

"A little," he said.

"I've always wanted" I said and; "LATIN!"

I had long been obsessed by the idea that having no Latin was a disadvantage in the world, and Archie Garvell had driven the point of this pretty earnestly home. The literature I had read at Bladesover had all tended that way. Latin had had a quality of emancipation for me that I find it difficult to convey. And suddenly, when I had supposed all learning was at an end for me, I heard this!

"It's no good to you, of course," said my uncle, "except to pass exams with, but there you are!"

"You'll have to learn Latin because you have to learn Latin," said my mother, "not because you want to. And afterwards you will have to learn all sorts of other things...."

The idea that I was to go on learning, that to read and master the contents of books was still to be justifiable as a duty, overwhelmed all other facts. I had had it rather clear in my mind for some weeks that all that kind of opportunity might close to me for ever. I began to take a lively interest in this new project.

"Then shall I live here?" I asked, "with you, and study... as well as work in the shop?"

"That's the way of it," said my uncle.

I parted from my mother that day in a dream, so sudden and important was this new aspect of things to me. I was to learn Latin! Now that the humiliation of my failure at Bladesover was

past for her, now that she had a little got over her first intense repugnance at this resort to my uncle and contrived something that seemed like a possible provision for my future, the tenderness natural to a parting far more significant than any of our previous partings crept into her manner.

She sat in the train to return, I remember, and I stood at the open door of her compartment, and neither of us knew how soon we should cease for ever to be a trouble to one another.

"You must be a good boy, George," she said. "You must learn.... And you mustn't set yourself up against those who are above you and better than you.... Or envy them."

"No, mother," I said.

I promised carelessly. Her eyes were fixed upon me. I was wondering whether I could by any means begin Latin that night.

Something touched her heart then, some thought, some memory; perhaps some premonition.... The solitary porter began slamming carriage doors.

"George" she said hastily, almost shamefully, "kiss me!"

I stepped up into her compartment as she bent downward.

She caught me in her arms quite eagerly, she pressed me to her--a strange thing for her to do. I perceived her eyes were extraordinarily bright, and then this brightness burst along the lower lids and rolled down her cheeks.

For the first and last time in my life I saw my mother's tears. Then she had gone, leaving me discomfited and perplexed, forgetting for a time even that I was to learn Latin, thinking of

my mother as of something new and strange.

The thing recurred though I sought to dismiss it, it stuck itself into my memory against the day of fuller understanding. Poor, proud, habitual, sternly narrow soul! poor difficult and misunderstanding son! it was the first time that ever it dawned upon me that my mother also might perhaps feel.

VII

My mother died suddenly and, it was thought by Lady Drew, inconsiderately, the following spring. Her ladyship instantly fled to Folkestone with Miss Somerville and Fison, until the funeral should be over and my mother's successor installed.

My uncle took me over to the funeral. I remember there was a sort of prolonged crisis in the days preceding this because, directly he heard of my loss, he had sent a pair of check trousers to the Judkins people in London to be dyed black, and they did not come back in time. He became very excited on the third day, and sent a number of increasingly fiery telegrams without any result whatever, and succumbed next morning with a very ill grace to my aunt Susan's insistence upon the resources of his dress-suit. In my memory those black legs of his, in a particularly thin and shiny black cloth--for evidently his dress-suit dated from adolescent and slenderer days--straddle like the Colossus of Rhodes over my approach to my mother's funeral. Moreover, I was inconvenienced and distracted by a silk hat he had bought me, my first silk hat, much ennobled, as his was also, by a deep mourning band.

I remember, but rather indistinctly, my mother's white paneled housekeeper's room and the touch of oddness about it that she was not there, and the various familiar faces made strange by black, and I seem to recall the exaggerated self-consciousness that

arose out of their focussed attention. No doubt the sense of the new silk hat came and went and came again in my emotional chaos. Then something comes out clear and sorrowful, rises out clear and sheer from among all these rather base and inconsequent things, and once again I walk before all the other mourners close behind her coffin as it is carried along the churchyard path to her grave, with the old vicar's slow voice saying regretfully and unconvincingly above me, triumphant solemn things.

"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Never die! The day was a high and glorious morning in spring, and all the trees were budding and bursting into green. Everywhere there were blossoms and flowers; the pear trees and cherry trees in the sexton's garden were sunlit snow, there were nodding daffodils and early tulips in the graveyard beds, great multitudes of daisies, and everywhere the birds seemed singing. And in the middle was the brown coffin end, tilting on men's shoulders and half occluded by the vicar's Oxford hood.

And so we came to my mother's waiting grave.

For a time I was very observant, watching the coffin lowered, hearing the words of the ritual. It seemed a very curious business altogether.

Suddenly as the service drew to its end, I felt something had still to be said which had not been said, realised that she had withdrawn in silence, neither forgiving me nor hearing from me--those now lost assurances. Suddenly I knew I had not understood. Suddenly I saw her tenderly; remembered not so much tender or kindly things of her as her crossed wishes and the ways in which I had thwarted her. Surprisingly I realised that

behind all her hardness and severity she had loved me, that I was the only thing she had ever loved and that until this moment I had never loved her. And now she was there and deaf and blind to me, pitifully defeated in her designs for me, covered from me so that she could not know....

I dug my nails into the palms of my hands, I set my teeth, but tears blinded me, sobs would have choked me had speech been required of me. The old vicar read on, there came a mumbled response--and so on to the end. I wept as it were internally, and only when we had come out of the churchyard could I think and speak calmly again.

Stamped across this memory are the little black figures of my uncle and Rabbits, telling Avebury, the sexton and undertaker, that "it had all passed off very well--very well indeed."

VIII

That is the last I shall tell of Bladesover. The dropscene falls on that, and it comes no more as an actual presence into this novel. I did indeed go back there once again, but under circumstances quite immaterial to my story. But in a sense Bladesover has never left me; it is, as I said at the outset, one of those dominant explanatory impressions that make the framework of my mind. Bladesover illuminates England; it has become all that is spacious, dignified pretentious, and truly conservative in English life. It is my social datum. That is why I have drawn it here on so large a scale.

When I came back at last to the real Bladesover on an inconsequent visit, everything was far smaller than I could have supposed possible. It was as though everything had shivered and shrivelled a little at the Lichtenstein touch. The harp was still in the saloon, but there was a different grand piano with a

painted lid and a metrostyle pianola, and an extraordinary quantity of artistic litter and bric-a-brac scattered about. There was the trail of the Bond Street showroom over it all. The furniture was still under chintz, but it wasn't the same sort of chintz although it pretended to be, and the lustre-dangling chandeliers had passed away. Lady Lichtenstein's books replaced the brown volumes I had browsed among--they were mostly presentation copies of contemporary novels and the National Review and the Empire Review, and the Nineteenth Century and after jostled current books on the tables--English new books in gaudy catchpenny "artistic" covers, French and Italian novels in yellow, German art handbooks of almost incredible ugliness. There were abundant evidences that her ladyship was playing with the Keltic renaissance, and a great number of ugly cats made of china--she "collected" china and stoneware cats--stood about everywhere--in all colours, in all kinds of deliberately comic, highly glazed distortion.

It is nonsense to pretend that finance makes any better aristocrats than rent. Nothing can make an aristocrat but pride, knowledge, training, and the sword. These people were no improvement on the Drews, none whatever. There was no effect of a beneficial replacement of passive unintelligent people by active intelligent ones. One felt that a smaller but more enterprising and intensely undignified variety of stupidity had replaced the large dullness of the old gentry, and that was all. Bladesover, I thought, had undergone just the same change between the seventies and the new century that had overtaken the dear old Times, and heaven knows how much more of the decorous British fabric. These Lichtensteins and their like seem to have no promise in them at all of any fresh vitality for the kingdom. I do not believe in their intelligence or their power--they have nothing new about them at all, nothing creative nor rejuvenescent, no more than a disorderly instinct of acquisition; and the prevalence of them and their kind is but a phase in the

broad slow decay of the great social organism of England. They could not have made Bladesover they cannot replace it; they just happen to break out over it--saprophytically.

Well--that was my last impression of Bladesover.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

THE WIMBLEHURST APPRENTICESHIP

I

So far as I can remember now, except for that one emotional phase by the graveside, I passed through all these experiences rather callously. I had already, with the facility of youth, changed my world, ceased to think at all of the old school routine and put Bladesover aside for digestion at a latter stage. I took up my new world in Wimblehurst with the chemist's shop as its hub, set to work at Latin and materia medica, and concentrated upon the present with all my heart. Wimblehurst is an exceptionally quiet and grey Sussex town rare among south of England towns in being largely built of stone. I found something very agreeable and picturesque in its clean cobbled streets, its odd turnings and abrupt corners; and in the pleasant park that crowds up one side of the town. The whole place is under the Eastry dominion and it was the Eastry influence and dignity that kept its railway station a mile and three-quarters away. Eastry House is so close that it dominates the whole; one goes across the marketplace (with its old lock-up and stocks), past the great pre-reformation church, a fine grey shell, like some empty skull from which the life has fled, and there at once are the huge wrought-iron gates, and one peeps through them to see the facade of this place, very white and large and fine, down a long avenue of yews. Eastry was far greater than Bladesover and an

altogether completer example of the eighteenth century system. It ruled not two villages, but a borough, that had sent its sons and cousins to parliament almost as a matter of right so long as its franchise endured. Every one was in the system, every one--except my uncle. He stood out and complained.

My uncle was the first real breach I found in the great front of Bladesover the world had presented me, for Chatham was not so much a breach as a confirmation. But my uncle had no respect for Bladesover and Eastry--none whatever. He did not believe in them. He was blind even to what they were. He propounded strange phrases about them, he exfoliated and wagged about novel and incredible ideas.

"This place," said my uncle, surveying it from his open doorway in the dignified stillness of a summer afternoon, "wants Waking Up!"

I was sorting up patent medicines in the corner.

"I'd like to let a dozen young Americans loose into it," said my uncle. "Then we'd see."

I made a tick against Mother Shipton's Sleeping Syrup. We had cleared our forward stock.

"Things must be happening SOMEWHERE, George," he broke out in a querulously rising note as he came back into the little shop. He fiddled with the piled dummy boxes of fancy soap and scent and so forth that adorned the end of the counter, then turned about petulantly, stuck his hands deeply into his pockets and withdrew one to scratch his head. "I must do SOMETHING," he said. "I can't stand it.

"I must invent something. And shove it.... I could.

"Or a play. There's a deal of money in a play, George. What would you think of me writing a play eh?... There's all sorts of things to be done.

"Or the stog-igschange."

He fell into that meditative whistling of his.

"Sac-ramental wine!" he swore, "this isn't the world--it's Cold Mutton Fat! That's what Wimblerhurst is! Cold Mutton Fat!--dead and stiff! And I'm buried in it up to the arm pits. Nothing ever happens, nobody wants things to happen 'scept me! Up in London, George, things happen. America! I wish to Heaven, George, I'd been born American--where things hum.

"What can one do here? How can one grow? While we're sleepin' here with our Capital oozing away into Lord Eastry's pockets for rent-men are up there...." He indicated London as remotely over the top of the dispensing counter, and then as a scene of great activity by a whirl of the hand and a wink and a meaning smile at me.

"What sort of things do they do?" I asked.

"Rush about," he said. "Do things! Somethin' glorious. There's cover gambling. Ever heard of that, George?" He drew the air in through his teeth. "You put down a hundred say, and buy ten thousand pounds worth. See? That's a cover of one per cent. Things go up one, you sell, realise cent per cent; down, whiff, it's gone! Try again! Cent per cent, George, every day. Men are made or done for in an hour. And the shoutin'! Zzzz.... Well, that's one way, George. Then another way--there's Corners!"

"They're rather big things, aren't they?" I ventured.

"Oh, if you go in for wheat or steel--yes. But suppose you tackled a little thing, George. Just some little thing that only needed a few thousands. Drugs for example. Shoved all you had into it--staked your liver on it, so to speak. Take a drug--take ipecac, for example. Take a lot of ipecac. Take all there is! See? There you are! There aren't unlimited supplies of ipecacuanha--can't be!--and it's a thing people must have. Then quinine again! You watch your chance, wait for a tropical war breaking out, let's say, and collar all the quinine. Where ARE they? Must have quinine, you know. Eh? Zzzz.

"Lord! there's no end of things--no end of little things. Dill-water--all the suffering babes yowling for it. Eucalyptus again--cascara--witch hazel--menthol--all the toothache things. Then there's antiseptics, and curare, cocaine...."

"Rather a nuisance to the doctors," I reflected.

"They got to look out for themselves. By Jove, yes. They'll do you if they can, and you do them. Like brigands. That makes it romantic. That's the Romance of Commerce, George. You're in the mountains there! Think of having all the quinine in the world, and some millionaire's pampered wife gone ill with malaria, eh? That's a squeeze, George, eh? Eh? Millionaire on his motor car outside, offering you any price you liked. That 'ud wake up Wimblehurst.... Lord! You haven't an Idea down here. Not an idea. Zzzz."

He passed into a rapt dream, from which escaped such fragments as: "Fifty per cent. advance sir; security--to-morrow. Zzzz."

The idea of cornering a drug struck upon my mind then as a sort of irresponsible monkey trick that no one would ever be permitted to do in reality. It was the sort of nonsense one

would talk to make Ewart laugh and set him going on to still odder possibilities. I thought it was part of my uncle's way of talking. But I've learnt differently since. The whole trend of modern money-making is to foresee something that will presently be needed and put it out of reach, and then to haggle yourself wealthy. You buy up land upon which people will presently want to build houses, you secure rights that will bar vitally important developments, and so on, and so on. Of course the naive intelligence of a boy does not grasp the subtler developments of human inadequacy. He begins life with a disposition to believe in the wisdom of grown-up people, he does not realise how casual and disingenuous has been the development of law and custom, and he thinks that somewhere in the state there is a power as irresistible as a head master's to check mischievous and foolish enterprises of every sort. I will confess that when my uncle talked of cornering quinine, I had a clear impression that any one who contrived to do that would pretty certainly go to jail. Now I know that any one who could really bring it off would be much more likely to go to the House of Lords!

My uncle ranged over the gilt labels of his bottles and drawers for a while, dreaming of corners in this and that. But at last he reverted to Wimblehurst again.

"You got to be in London when these things are in hand. Down here--!"

"Jee-rusalem!" he cried. "Why did I plant myself here? Everything's done. The game's over. Here's Lord Eastry, and he's got everything, except what his lawyers get, and before you get any more change this way you'll have to dynamite him--and them. HE doesn't want anything more to happen. Why should he? Any chance 'ud be a loss to him. He wants everything to burble along and burble along and go on as it's going for the next ten

thousand years, Eastry after Eastry, one parson down another come, one grocer dead, get another! Any one with any ideas better go away. They HAVE gone away! Look at all these blessed people in this place! Look at 'em! All fast asleep, doing their business out of habit--in a sort of dream, Stuffed men would do just as well--just. They've all shook down into their places. THEY don't want anything to happen either. They're all broken in. There you are! Only what are they all alive for?...

"Why can't they get a clockwork chemist?"

He concluded as he often concluded these talks. "I must invent something,--that's about what I must do. Zzzz. Some convenience.

Something people want.... Strike out.... You can't think, George, of anything everybody wants and hasn't got? I mean something you could turn out retail under a shilling, say? Well, YOU think, whenever you haven't got anything better to do. See?"

II

So I remember my uncle in that first phase, young, but already a little fat, restless, fretful, garrulous, putting in my fermenting head all sorts of discrepant ideas. Certainly he was educational....

For me the years at Wimblehurst were years of pretty active growth. Most of my leisure and much of my time in the shop I spent in study. I speedily mastered the modicum of Latin necessary for my qualifying examinations, and--a little assisted by the Government Science and Art Department classes that were held in the Grammar School--went on with my mathematics. There were classes in physics, in chemistry, in mathematics and machine drawing, and I took up these subjects with considerable avidity. Exercise I got chiefly in the form of walks. There was

some cricket in the summer and football in the winter sustained by young men's clubs that levied a parasitic blackmail of the big people and the sitting member, but I was never very keen at these games. I didn't find any very close companions among the youths of Wimbleshurst. They struck me, after my cockney schoolmates, as loutish and slow, servile and furtive, spiteful and mean. WE used to swagger, but these countrymen dragged their feet and hated an equal who didn't; we talked loud, but you only got the real thoughts of Wimbleshurst in a knowing undertone behind its hand. And even then they weren't much in the way of thoughts.

No, I didn't like those young countrymen, and I'm no believer in the English countryside under the Bladesover system as a breeding ground for honourable men. One hears a frightful lot of nonsense about the Rural Exodus and the degeneration wrought by town life upon our population. To my mind, the English townsman, even in the slums, is infinitely better spiritually, more courageous, more imaginative and cleaner, than his agricultural cousin. I've seen them both when they didn't think they were being observed, and I know. There was something about my Wimbleshurst companions that disgusted me. It's hard to define. Heaven knows that at that cockney boarding-school at Goudhurst we were coarse enough; the Wimbleshurst youngsters had neither words nor courage for the sort of thing we used to do--for our bad language, for example; but, on the other hand, they displayed a sort of sluggish, real lewdness, lewdness is the word--a baseness of attitude. Whatever we exiled urbans did at Goudhurst was touched with something, however coarse, of romantic imagination. We had read the Boys of England, and told each other stories. In the English countryside there are no books at all, no songs, no drama, no valiant sin even; all these things have never come or they were taken away and hidden generations ago, and the imagination aborts and bestialises. That, I think, is where the real difference against the English rural man lies. It is because I know this that I do not share in the common repinings

because our countryside is being depopulated, because our population is passing through the furnace of the towns. They starve, they suffer, no doubt, but they come out of it hardened, they come out of it with souls.

Of an evening the Wimblehurst blade, shiny-faced from a wash and with some loud finery, a coloured waistcoat or a vivid tie, would betake himself to the Eastry Arms billiard-room, or to the bar parlour of some minor pub where nap could be played. One soon sickened of his slow knowingness, the cunning observation of his deadened eyes, his idea of a "good story," always, always told in undertones, poor dirty worm! his shrewd, elaborate maneuvers for some petty advantage, a drink to the good or such-like deal. There rises before my eyes as I write, young Hopley Dodd, the son of the Wimblehurst auctioneer, the pride of Wimblehurst, its finest flower, with his fur waistcoat and his bulldog pipe, his riding breeches--he had no horse--and his gaiters, as he used to sit, leaning forward and watching the billiard-table from under the brim of his artfully tilted hat. A half-dozen phrases constituted his conversation: "hard lines!" he used to say, and "Good baazness," in a bass bleat. Moreover, he had a long slow whistle that was esteemed the very cream of humorous comment. Night after night he was there.

Also you knew he would not understand that I could play billiards, and regarded every stroke I made as a fluke. For a beginner I didn't play so badly, I thought. I'm not so sure now; that was my opinion at the time. But young Dodd's scepticism and the "good baazness" finally cured me of my disposition to frequent the Eastry Arms, and so these noises had their value in my world.

I made no friends among the young men of the place at all, and though I was entering upon adolescence I have no love-affair to tell of here. Not that I was not waking up to that aspect of

life in my middle teens I did, indeed, in various slightly informal ways scrape acquaintance with casual Wimblehurst girls; with a little dressmaker's apprentice I got upon shyly speaking terms, and a pupil teacher in the National School went further and was "talked about" in connection with me but I was not by any means touched by any reality of passion for either of these young people; love--love as yet came to me only in my dreams. I only kissed these girls once or twice. They rather disconcerted than developed those dreams. They were so clearly not "it." I shall have much to say of love in this story, but I may break it to the reader now that it is my role to be a rather ineffectual lover. Desire I knew well enough--indeed, too well; but love I have been shy of. In all my early enterprises in the war of the sexes, I was torn between the urgency of the body and a habit of romantic fantasy that wanted every phase of the adventure to be generous and beautiful. And I had a curiously haunting memory of Beatrice, of her kisses in the bracken and her kiss upon the wall, that somehow pitched the standard too high for Wimblehurst's opportunities. I will not deny I did in a boyish way attempt a shy, rude adventure or so in love-making at Wimblehurst; but through these various influences, I didn't bring things off to any extent at all. I left behind me no devastating memories, no splendid reputation. I came away at last, still inexperienced and a little thwarted, with only a natural growth of interest and desire in sexual things.

If I fell in love with any one in Wimblehurst it was with my aunt. She treated me with a kindliness that was only half maternal--she petted my books, she knew about my certificates, she made fun of me in a way that stirred my heart to her. Quite unconsciously I grew fond of her....

My adolescent years at Wimblehurst were on the whole laborious, uneventful years that began in short jackets and left me in many ways nearly a man, years so uneventful that the Calculus of

Variations is associated with one winter, and an examination in Physics for Science and Art department Honours marks an epoch. Many divergent impulses stirred within me, but the master impulse was a grave young disposition to work and learn and thereby in some not very clearly defined way get out of the Wimblehurst world into which I had fallen. I wrote with some frequency to Ewart, self-conscious, but, as I remember them, not intelligent letters, dated in Latin and with lapses into Latin quotation that roused Ewart to parody. There was something about me in those days more than a little priggish. But it was, to do myself justice, something more than the petty pride of learning. I had a very grave sense of discipline and preparation that I am not ashamed at all to remember. I was serious. More serious than I am at the present time. More serious, indeed, than any adult seems to be. I was capable then of efforts--of nobilities.... They are beyond me now. I don't see why, at forty, I shouldn't confess I respect my own youth. I had dropped being a boy quite abruptly. I thought I was presently to go out into a larger and quite important world and do significant things there. I thought I was destined to do something definite to a world that had a definite purpose. I did not understand then, as I do now, that life was to consist largely in the world's doing things to me. Young people never do seem to understand that aspect of things. And, as I say, among my educational influences my uncle, all unsuspected, played a leading part, and perhaps among other things gave my discontent with Wimblehurst, my desire to get away from that clean and picturesque emptiness, a form and expression that helped to emphasise it. In a way that definition made me patient. "Presently I shall get to London," I said, echoing him.

I remember him now as talking, always talking, in those days. He talked to me of theology, he talked of politics, of the wonders of science and the marvels of art, of the passions and the affections, of the immortality of the soul and the peculiar actions of drugs; but predominantly and constantly he talked of

getting on, of enterprises, of inventions and great fortunes, of Rothschilds, silver kings, Vanderbilts, Goulds, flotations, realisations and the marvelous ways of Chance with men--in all localities, that is to say, that are not absolutely sunken to the level of Cold Mutton Fat.

When I think of those early talks, I figure him always in one of three positions. Either we were in the dispensing lair behind a high barrier, he pounding up things in a mortar perhaps, and I rolling pill-stuff into long rolls and cutting it up with a sort of broad, fluted knife, or he stood looking out of the shop door against the case of sponges and spray-diffusers, while I surveyed him from behind the counter, or he leant against the little drawers behind the counter, and I hovered dusting in front. The thought of those early days brings back to my nostrils the faint smell of scent that was always in the air, marbled now with streaks of this drug and now of that, and to my eyes the rows of jejune glass bottles with gold labels, mirror-reflected, that stood behind him. My aunt, I remember, used sometimes to come into the shop in a state of aggressive sprightliness, a sort of connubial ragging expedition, and get much fun over the abbreviated Latinity of those gilt inscriptions. "Ol Amjig, George," she would read derisively, "and he pretends it's almond oil! Snap!--and that's mustard. Did you ever, George?"

"Look at him, George, looking dignified. I'd like to put an old label on to him round the middle like his bottles are, with Ol Pondo on it. That's Latin for Impostor, George MUST be. He'd look lovely with a stopper."

"YOU want a stopper," said my uncle, projecting his face....

My aunt, dear soul, was in those days quite thin and slender, with a delicate rosebud completion and a disposition to connubial badinage, to a sort of gentle skylarking. There was a silvery

ghost of lisping in her speech. She was a great humourist, and as the constraint of my presence at meals wore off, I became more and more aware of a filmy but extensive net of nonsense she had woven about her domestic relations until it had become the reality of her life. She affected a derisive attitude to the world at large and applied the epithet "old" to more things than I have ever heard linked to it before or since. "Here's the old news-paper," she used to say--to my uncle. "Now don't go and get it in the butter, you silly old Sardine!"

"What's the day of the week, Susan?" my uncle would ask.

"Old Monday, Sossidge," she would say, and add, "I got all my Old Washing to do. Don't I KNOW it!"...

She had evidently been the wit and joy of a large circle of schoolfellows, and this style had become a second nature with her. It made her very delightful to me in that quiet place. Her customary walk even had a sort of hello! in it. Her chief preoccupation in life was, I believe, to make my uncle laugh, and when by some new nickname, some new quaintness or absurdity, she achieved that end, she was, behind a mask of sober amazement, the happiest woman on earth. My uncle's laugh when it did come, I must admit was, as Baedeker says, "rewarding." It began with gusty blowings and snortings, and opened into a clear "Ha ha!" but in fullest development it included, in those youthful days, falling about anyhow and doubling up tightly, and whackings of the stomach, and tears and cries of anguish. I never in my life heard my uncle laugh to his maximum except at her; he was commonly too much in earnest for that, and he didn't laugh much at all, to my knowledge, after those early years. Also she threw things at him to an enormous extent in her resolve to keep things lively in spite of Wimbleshurst; sponges out of stock she threw, cushions, balls of paper, clean washing, bread; and once up the yard when they thought that I and the errand boy and the

diminutive maid of all work were safely out of the way, she smashed a boxful of eight-ounce bottles I had left to drain, assaulting my uncle with a new soft broom. Sometimes she would shy things at me--but not often. There seemed always laughter round and about her--all three of us would share hysterics at times--and on one occasion the two of them came home from church shockingly ashamed of themselves, because of a storm of mirth during the sermon. The vicar, it seems, had tried to blow his nose with a black glove as well as the customary pocket-handkerchief. And afterwards she had picked up her own glove by the finger, and looking innocently but intently sideways, had suddenly by this simple expedient exploded my uncle altogether. We had it all over again at dinner.

"But it shows you," cried my uncle, suddenly becoming grave, "what Wimblehurst is, to have us all laughing at a little thing like that! We weren't the only ones that giggled. Not by any means! And, Lord! it was funny!"

Socially, my uncle and aunt were almost completely isolated. In places like Wimblehurst the tradesmen's lives always are isolated socially, all of them, unless they have a sister or a bosom friend among the other wives, but the husbands met in various bar-parlours or in the billiard-room of the Eastry Arms. But my uncle, for the most part, spent his evenings at home. When first he arrived in Wimblehurst I think he had spread his effect of abounding ideas and enterprise rather too aggressively; and Wimblehurst, after a temporary subjugation, had rebelled and done its best to make a butt of him. His appearance in a public-house led to a pause in any conversation that was going on.

"Come to tell us about everything, Mr. Pond'revo?" some one would say politely.

"You wait," my uncle used to answer, disconcerted, and sulk for the rest of his visit.

Or some one with an immense air of innocence would remark to the world generally, "They're talkin' of rebuildin' Wemblehurst all over again, I'm told. Anybody heard anything of it? Going to make it a reg'lar smartgoin', enterprisin' place--kind of Crystal Pallas."

"Earthquake and a pestilence before you get that," my uncle would mutter, to the infinite delight of every one, and add something inaudible about "Cold Mutton Fat."...

III

We were torn apart by a financial accident to my uncle of which I did not at first grasp the full bearings. He had developed what I regarded as an innocent intellectual recreation which he called stock-market meteorology. I think he got the idea from one use of curves in the graphic presentation of associated variations that he saw me plotting. He secured some of my squared paper and, having cast about for a time, decided to trace the rise and fall of certain lines and railways. "There's something in this, George," he said, and I little dreamt that among other things that were in it, was the whole of his spare money and most of what my mother had left to him in trust for me.

"It's as plain as can be," he said. "See, here's one system of waves and here's another! These are prices for Union Pacifics--extending over a month. Now next week, mark my words, they'll be down one whole point. We're getting near the steep part of the curve again. See? It's absolutely scientific. It's verifiable. Well, and apply it! You buy in the hollow and sell on the crest, and there you are!"

I was so convinced of the triviality of this amusement that to find at last that he had taken it in the most disastrous earnest overwhelmed me.

He took me for a long walk to break it to me, over the hills towards Yare and across the great gorse commons by Hazelbrow.

"There are ups and downs in life, George," he said--halfway across that great open space, and paused against the sky.... "I left out one factor in the Union Pacific analysis."

"DID you?" I said, struck by the sudden chance in his voice. "But you don't mean?"

I stopped and turned on him in the narrow sandy rut of pathway and he stopped likewise.

"I do, George. I DO mean. It's bust me! I'm a bankrupt here and now."

"Then--?"

"The shop's bust too. I shall have to get out of that."

"And me?"

"Oh, you!--YOU'RE all right. You can transfer your apprenticeship, and--er--well, I'm not the sort of man to be careless with trust funds, you can be sure. I kept that aspect in mind. There's some of it left George--trust me!--quite a decent little sum."

"But you and aunt?"

"It isn't QUITE the way we meant to leave Wimblehurst, George;

but we shall have to go. Sale; all the things shoved about and ticketed--lot a hundred and one. Ugh!... It's been a larky little house in some ways. The first we had. Furnishing--a spree in its way.... Very happy..." His face winced at some memory. "Let's go on, George," he said shortly, near choking, I could see.

I turned my back on him, and did not look round again for a little while.

"That's how it is, you see, George." I heard him after a time.

When we were back in the high road again he came alongside, and for a time we walked in silence.

"Don't say anything home yet," he said presently. "Fortunes of War. I got to pick the proper time with Susan--else she'll get depressed. Not that she isn't a first-rate brick whatever comes along."

"All right," I said, "I'll be careful"; and it seemed to me for the time altogether too selfish to bother him with any further inquiries about his responsibility as my trustee. He gave a little sigh of relief at my note of assent, and was presently talking quite cheerfully of his plans.... But he had, I remember, one lapse into moodiness that came and went suddenly. "Those others!" he said, as though the thought had stung him for the first time.

"What others?" I asked.

"Damn them!" said he.

"But what others?"

"All those damned stick-in-the-mud-and-die-slowly tradespeople: Ruck, the butcher, Marbel, the grocer. Snape! Gord! George, HOW they'll grin!"

I thought him over in the next few weeks, and I remember now in great detail the last talk we had together before he handed over the shop and me to his successor. For he had the good luck to sell his business, "lock, stock, and barrel"--in which expression I found myself and my indentures included. The horrors of a sale by auction of the furniture even were avoided.

I remember that either coming or going on that occasion, Ruck, the butcher, stood in his doorway and regarded us with a grin that showed his long teeth.

"You half-witted hog!" said my uncle. "You grinning hyaena"; and then, "Pleasant day, Mr. Ruck."

"Goin' to make your fortun' in London, then?" said Mr. Ruck, with slow enjoyment.

That last excursion took us along the causeway to Beeching, and so up the downs and round almost as far as Steadhurst, home. My moods, as we went, made a mingled web. By this time I had really grasped the fact that my uncle had, in plain English, robbed me; the little accumulations of my mother, six hundred pounds and more, that would have educated me and started me in business, had been eaten into and was mostly gone into the unexpected hollow that ought to have been a crest of the Union Pacific curve, and of the remainder he still gave no account. I was too young and inexperienced to insist on this or know how to get it, but the thought of it all made streaks of decidedly black anger in that scheme of interwoven feelings. And you know, I was also acutely sorry for him--almost as sorry as I was for my aunt Susan. Even then I had quite found him out. I knew him to be weaker than

myself; his incurable, irresponsible childishness was as clear to me then as it was on his deathbed, his redeeming and excusing imaginative silliness. Through some odd mental twist perhaps I was disposed to exonerate him even at the cost of blaming my poor old mother who had left things in his untrustworthy hands.

I should have forgiven him altogether, I believe, if he had been in any manner apologetic to me; but he wasn't that. He kept reassuring me in a way I found irritating. Mostly, however, his solicitude was for Aunt Susan and himself.

"It's these Crises, George," he said, "try Character. Your aunt's come out well, my boy."

He made meditative noises for a space.

"Had her cry of course,"--the thing had been only too painfully evident to me in her eyes and swollen face--"who wouldn't? But now--buoyant again!... She's a Corker.

"We'll be sorry to leave the little house of course. It's a bit like Adam and Eve, you know. Lord! what a chap old Milton was!

"The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.'

It sounds, George.... Providence their guide!... Well--thank goodness there's no imedgit prospect of either Cain or Abel!

"After all, it won't be so bad up there. Not the scenery, perhaps, or the air we get here, but--LIFE! We've got very comfortable little rooms, very comfortable considering, and I shall rise. We're not done yet, we're not beaten; don't think that, George. I shall pay twenty shillings in the pound before I've done--you mark my words, George,--twenty--five to you.... I

got this situation within twenty-four hours--others offered. It's an important firm--one of the best in London. I looked to that. I might have got four or five shillings a week more--elsewhere. Quarters I could name. But I said to them plainly, wages to go on with, but opportunity's my game--development. We understood each other."

He threw out his chest, and the little round eyes behind his glasses rested valiantly on imaginary employers.

We would go on in silence for a space while he revised and restated that encounter. Then he would break out abruptly with some banal phrase.

"The Battle of Life, George, my boy," he would cry, or "Ups and Downs!"

He ignored or waived the poor little attempts I made to ascertain my own position. "That's all right," he would say; or, "Leave all that to me. I'LL look after them." And he would drift away towards the philosophy and moral of the situation. What was I to do?

"Never put all your resources into one chance, George; that's the lesson I draw from this. Have forces in reserve. It was a hundred to one, George, that I was right--a hundred to one. I worked it out afterwards. And here we are spiked on the off-chance. If I'd have only kept back a little, I'd have had it on U.P. next day, like a shot, and come out on the rise. There you are!"

His thoughts took a graver turn.

"It's where you'll bump up against Chance like this, George, that you feel the need of religion. Your hard-and-fast scientific

men--your Spencers and Huxleys--they don't understand that. I do. I've thought of it a lot lately--in bed and about. I was thinking of it this morning while I shaved. It's not irreverent for me to say it, I hope--but God comes in on the off-chance, George. See? Don't you be too cocksure of anything, good or bad. That's what I make out of it. I could have sworn. Well, do you think I--particular as I am--would have touched those Union Pacifics with trust money at all, if I hadn't thought it a thoroughly good thing--good without spot or blemish?... And it was bad!

"It's a lesson to me. You start in to get a hundred percent. and you come out with that. It means, in a way, a reproof for Pride. I've thought of that, George--in the Night Watches. I was thinking this morning when I was shaving, that that's where the good of it all comes in. At the bottom I'm a mystic in these affairs. You calculate you're going to do this or that, but at bottom who knows at all WHAT he's doing? When you most think you're doing things, they're being done right over your head. YOU'RE being done--in a sense. Take a hundred-to one chance, or one to a hundred--what does it matter? You're being Led."

It's odd that I heard this at the time with unutterable contempt, and now that I recall it--well, I ask myself, what have I got better?

"I wish," said I, becoming for a moment outrageous, "YOU were being Led to give me some account of my money, uncle."

"Not without a bit of paper to figure on, George, I can't. But you trust me about that never fear. You trust me."

And in the end I had to.

I think the bankruptcy hit my aunt pretty hard. There was, so

far as I can remember now, a complete cessation of all those cheerful outbreaks of elasticity, no more skylarking in the shop nor scampering about the house. But there was no fuss that I saw, and only little signs in her complexion of the fits of weeping that must have taken her. She didn't cry at the end, though to me her face with its strain of self-possession was more pathetic than any weeping. "Well" she said to me as she came through the shop to the cab, "Here's old orf, George! Orf to Mome number two! Good-bye!" And she took me in her arms and kissed me and pressed me to her. Then she dived straight for the cab before I could answer her.

My uncle followed, and he seemed to me a trifle too valiant and confident in his bearing for reality. He was unusually white in the face. He spoke to his successor at the counter. "Here we go!" he said. "One down, the other up. You'll find it a quiet little business so long as you run it on quiet lines--a nice quiet little business. There's nothing more? No? Well, if you want to know anything write to me. I'll always explain fully. Anything--business, place or people. You'll find Pil Antibil. a little overstocked by-the-by, I found it soothed my mind the day before yesterday making 'em, and I made 'em all day. Thousands! And where's George? Ah! there you are! I'll write to you, George, FULLY, about all that affair. Fully!"

It became clear to me as if for the first time, that I was really parting from my aunt Susan. I went out on to the pavement and saw her head craned forward, her wide-open blue eyes and her little face intent on the shop that had combined for her all the charms of a big doll's house and a little home of her very own. "Good-bye!" she said to it and to me. Our eyes met for a moment--perplexed. My uncle bustled out and gave a few totally unnecessary directions to the cabman and got in beside her. "All right?" asked the driver. "Right," said I; and he woke up the horse with a flick of his whip. My aunt's eyes surveyed me

again. "Stick to your old science and things, George, and write and tell me when they make you a Professor," she said cheerfully.

She stared at me for a second longer with eyes growing wider and brighter and a smile that had become fixed, glanced again at the bright little shop still saying "Ponderevo" with all the emphasis of its fascia, and then flopped back hastily out of sight of me into the recesses of the cab. Then it had gone from before me and I beheld Mr. Snape, the hairdresser, inside his store regarding its departure with a quiet satisfaction and exchanging smiles and significant headshakes with Mr. Marbel.

IV

I was left, I say, as part of the lock, stock, and barrel, at Wimbleshurst with my new master, a Mr. Mantell; who plays no part in the progress of this story except in so far as he effaced my uncle's traces. So soon as the freshness of this new personality faded, I began to find Wimbleshurst not only a dull but a lonely place, and to miss my aunt Susan immensely. The advertisements of the summer terms for Cough Linctus were removed; the bottles of coloured water--red, green, and yellow--restored to their places; the horse announcing veterinary medicine, which my uncle, sizzling all the while, had coloured in careful portraiture of a Goodwood favourite, rewhitened; and I turned myself even more resolutely than before to Latin (until the passing of my preliminary examination enabled me to drop that), and then to mathematics and science.

There were classes in Electricity and Magnetism at the Grammar School. I took a little "elementary" prize in that in my first year and a medal in my third; and in Chemistry and Human Physiology and Sound, Light and Heat, I did well. There was also a lighter, more discursive subject called Physiography, in which one ranged among the sciences and encountered Geology as a

process of evolution from Eozoon to Eastry House, and Astronomy as a record of celestial movements of the most austere and invariable integrity. I learnt out of badly-written, condensed little text-books, and with the minimum of experiment, but still I learnt. Only thirty years ago it was, and I remember I learnt of the electric light as an expensive, impracticable toy, the telephone as a curiosity, electric traction as a practical absurdity. There was no argon, no radium, no phagocytes--at least to my knowledge, and aluminium was a dear, infrequent metal. The fastest ships in the world went then at nineteen knots, and no one but a lunatic here and there ever thought it possible that men might fly.

Many things have happened since then, but the last glance I had of Wimblesbury two years ago remarked no change whatever in its pleasant tranquillity. They had not even built any fresh houses--at least not actually in the town, though about the station there had been some building. But it was a good place to do work in, for all its quiescence. I was soon beyond the small requirements of the Pharmaceutical Society's examination, and as they do not permit candidates to sit for that until one and twenty, I was presently filling up my time and preventing my studies becoming too desultory by making an attack upon the London University degree of Bachelor of Science, which impressed me then as a very splendid but almost impossible achievement. The degree in mathematics and chemistry appealed to me as particularly congenial--albeit giddily inaccessible. I set to work. I had presently to arrange a holiday and go to London to matriculate, and so it was I came upon my aunt and uncle again. In many ways that visit marked an epoch. It was my first impression of London at all. I was then nineteen, and by a conspiracy of chances my nearest approach to that human wilderness had been my brief visit to Chatham. Chatham too had been my largest town. So that I got London at last with an exceptional freshness of effect, as the sudden revelation of a

whole unsuspected other side to life.

I came to it on a dull and smoky day by the South Eastern Railway, and our train was half an hour late, stopping and going on and stopping again. I marked beyond Chiselhurst the growing multitude of villas, and so came stage by stage through multiplying houses and diminishing interspaces of market garden and dingy grass to regions of interlacing railway lines, big factories, gasometers and wide reeking swamps of dingy little homes, more of them and more and more. The number of these and their dinginess and poverty increased, and here rose a great public house and here a Board School and there a gaunt factory; and away to the east there loomed for a time a queer, incongruous forest of masts and spars. The congestion of houses intensified and piled up presently into tenements; I marveled more and more at this boundless world of dingy people; whiffs of industrial smell, of leather, of brewing, drifted into the carriage; the sky darkened, I rumbled thunderously over bridges, van-crowded streets, peered down on and crossed the Thames with an abrupt eclat of sound. I got an effect of tall warehouses, of grey water, barge crowded, of broad banks of indescribable mud, and then I was in Cannon Street Station--a monstrous dirty cavern with trains packed across its vast floor and more porters standing along the platform than I had ever been in my life before. I alighted with my portmanteau and struggled along, realising for the first time just how small and weak I could still upon occasion feel. In this world, I felt, an Honours medal in Electricity and magnetism counted for nothing at all.

Afterwards I drove in a cab down a canon of rushing street between high warehouses, and peeped up astonished at the blackened greys of Saint Paul's. The traffic of Cheapside--it was mostly in horse omnibuses in those days--seemed stupendous, its roar was stupendous; I wondered where the money came from to employ so many cabs, what industry could support the endless

jostling stream of silk-hatted, frock-coated, hurrying men. Down a turning I found the Temperance Hotel Mr. Mantell had recommended to me. The porter in a green uniform who took over my portmanteau, seemed, I thought, to despise me a good deal.

V

Matriculation kept me for four full days and then came an afternoon to spare, and I sought out Tottenham Court Road through a perplexing network of various and crowded streets. But this London was vast! it was endless! it seemed the whole world had changed into packed frontages and hoardings and street spaces. I got there at last and made inquiries, and I found my uncle behind the counter of the pharmacy he managed, an establishment that did not impress me as doing a particularly high-class trade. "Lord!" he said at the sight of me, "I was wanting something to happen!"

He greeted me warmly. I had grown taller, and he, I thought, had grown shorter and smaller and rounder but otherwise he was unchanged. He struck me as being rather shabby, and the silk hat he produced and put on, when, after mysterious negotiations in the back premises he achieved his freedom to accompany me, was past its first youth; but he was as buoyant and confident as ever.

"Come to ask me about all THAT," he cried. "I've never written yet."

"Oh, among other things," said I, with a sudden regrettable politeness, and waived the topic of his trusteeship to ask after my aunt Susan.

"We'll have her out of it," he said suddenly; "we'll go somewhere. We don't get you in London every day."

"It's my first visit," I said, "I've never seen London before"; and that made him ask me what I thought of it, and the rest of the talk was London, London, to the exclusion of all smaller topics. He took me up the Hampstead Road almost to the Cobden statue, plunged into some back streets to the left, and came at last to a blistered front door that responded to his latch-key, one of a long series of blistered front doors with fanlights and apartment cards above. We found ourselves in a drab-coloured passage that was not only narrow and dirty but desolatingly empty, and then he opened a door and revealed my aunt sitting at the window with a little sewing-machine on a bamboo occasional table before her, and "work"--a plum-coloured walking dress I judged at its most analytical stage--scattered over the rest of the apartment.

At the first glance I judged my aunt was plumper than she had been, but her complexion was just as fresh and her China blue eye as bright as in the old days.

"London," she said, didn't "get blacks" on her.

She still "cheeked" my uncle, I was pleased to find. "What are you old Poking in for at THIS time--Gubbitt?," she said when he appeared, and she still looked with a practised eye for the facetious side of things. When she saw me behind him, she gave a little cry and stood up radiant. Then she became grave.

I was surprised at my own emotion in seeing her. She held me at arm's length for a moment, a hand on each shoulder, and looked at me with a sort of glad scrutiny. She seemed to hesitate, and then pecked little kiss off my cheek.

"You're a man, George," she said, as she released me, and continued to look at me for a while.

Their menage was one of a very common type in London. They occupied what is called the dining-room floor of a small house, and they had the use of a little inconvenient kitchen in the basement that had once been scullery. The two rooms, bedroom behind and living room in front, were separated by folding-doors that were never now thrown back, and indeed, in the presence of a visitor, not used at all. There was of course no bathroom or anything of that sort available, and there was no water supply except to the kitchen below. My aunt did all the domestic work, though she could have afforded to pay for help if the build of the place had not rendered that inconvenient to the pitch of impossibility. There was no sort of help available except that of indoor servants, for whom she had no accommodation. The furniture was their own; it was partly secondhand, but on the whole it seemed cheerful to my eye, and my aunt's bias for cheap, gay-figured muslin had found ample score. In many ways I should think it must have been an extremely inconvenient and cramped sort of home, but at the time I took it, as I was taking everything, as being there and in the nature of things. I did not see the oddness of solvent decent people living in a habitation so clearly neither designed nor adapted for their needs, so wasteful of labour and so devoid of beauty as this was, and it is only now as I describe this that I find myself thinking of the essential absurdity of an intelligent community living in such makeshift homes. It strikes me now as the next thing to wearing second-hand clothes.

You see it was a natural growth, part of that system to which Bladesover, I hold, is the key. There are wide regions of London, miles of streets of houses, that appear to have been originally designed for prosperous-middle-class homes of the early Victorian type. There must have been a perfect fury of such building in the thirties, forties, and fifties. Street after street must have been rushed into being, Campden Town way,

Pentonville way, Brompton way, West Kensington way in the Victoria region and all over the minor suburbs of the south side.

I am doubtful if many of these houses had any long use as the residences of single families if from the very first almost their tenants did not makeshift and take lodgers and sublet. They were built with basements, in which their servants worked and lived--servants of a more submissive and troglodytic generation who did not mind stairs. The dining-room (with folding doors) was a little above the ground level, and in that the wholesome boiled and roast with damp boiled potatoes and then pie to follow, was consumed and the numerous family read and worked in the evening, and above was the drawing-room (also with folding doors), where the infrequent callers were received. That was the vision at which those industrious builders aimed. Even while these houses were being run up, the threads upon the loom of fate were shaping to abolish altogether the type of household that would have fitted them. Means of transit were developing to carry the moderately prosperous middle-class families out of London, education and factory employment were whittling away at the supply of rough, hardworking, obedient girls who would stand the subterranean drudgery of these places, new classes of hard-up middle-class people such as my uncle, employees of various types, were coming into existence, for whom no homes were provided. None of these classes have ideas of what they ought to be, or fit in any legitimate way into the Bladesover theory that dominates our minds. It was nobody's concern to see them housed under civilised conditions, and the beautiful laws of supply and demand had free play. They had to squeeze in. The landlords came out financially intact from their blundering enterprise. More and more these houses fell into the hands of married artisans, or struggling widows or old servants with savings, who became responsible for the quarterly rent and tried to sweat a living by sub-letting furnished or unfurnished apartments.

I remember now that a poor grey-haired old woman who had an air of having been roused from a nap in the dust bin, came out into the area and looked up at us as we three went out from the front door to "see London" under my uncle's direction. She was the sub-letting occupier; she squeezed out a precarious living by taking the house whole and sub-letting it in detail and she made her food and got the shelter of an attic above and a basement below by the transaction. And if she didn't chance to "let" steadily, out she went to pauperdom and some other poor, sordid old adventurer tried in her place....

It is a foolish community that can house whole classes, useful and helpful, honest and loyal classes, in such squalidly unsuitable dwellings. It is by no means the social economy it seems, to use up old women, savings and inexperience in order to meet the landlord's demands. But any one who doubts this thing is going on right up to to-day need only spend an afternoon in hunting for lodgings in any of the regions of London I have named.

But where has my story got to? My uncle, I say, decided I must be shown London, and out we three went as soon as my aunt had got her hat on, to catch all that was left of the day.

VI

It pleased my uncle extremely to find I had never seen London before. He took possession of the metropolis forthwith. "London, George," he said, "takes a lot of understanding. It's a great place. Immense. The richest town in the world, the biggest port, the greatest manufacturing town, the Imperial city--the centre of civilisation, the heart of the world! See those sandwich men down there! That third one's hat! Fair treat! You don't see poverty like that in Wimblehurst George! And many of them high Oxford honour men too. Brought down by drink! It's a

wonderful place, George--a whirlpool, a maelstrom! whirls you up and whirls you down."

I have a very confused memory of that afternoon's inspection of London. My uncle took us to and fro showing us over his London, talking erratically, following a route of his own. Sometimes we were walking, sometimes we were on the tops of great staggering horse omnibuses in a heaving jumble of traffic, and at one point we had tea in an Aerated Bread Shop. But I remember very distinctly how we passed down Park Lane under an overcast sky, and how my uncle pointed out the house of this child of good fortune and that with succulent appreciation.

I remember, too, that as he talked I would find my aunt watching my face as if to check the soundness of his talk by my expression.

"Been in love yet, George?" she asked suddenly, over a bun in the tea-shop.

"Too busy, aunt," I told her.

She bit her bun extensively, and gesticulated with the remnant to indicate that she had more to say.

"How are YOU going to make your fortune?" she said so soon as she could speak again. "You haven't told us that."

"Lectricity," said my uncle, taking breath after a deep draught of tea.

"If I make it at all," I said. "For my part I think shall be satisfied with something less than a fortune."

"We're going to make ours--suddenly," she said.

"So HE old says." She jerked her head at my uncle.

"He won't tell me when--so I can't get anything ready. But it's coming. Going to ride in our carriage and have a garden. Garden--like a bishop's."

She finished her bun and twiddled crumbs from her fingers. "I shall be glad of the garden," she said. "It's going to be a real big one with rosaries and things. Fountains in it. Pampas grass. Hothouses."

"You'll get it all right," said my uncle, who had reddened a little.

"Grey horses in the carriage, George," she said. "It's nice to think about when one's dull. And dinners in restaurants often and often. And theatres--in the stalls. And money and money and money."

"You may joke," said my uncle, and hummed for a moment.

"Just as though an old Porpoise like him would ever make money," she said, turning her eyes upon his profile with a sudden lapse to affection. "He'll just porpoise about."

"I'll do something," said my uncle, "you bet! Zzzz!" and rapped with a shilling on the marble table.

"When you do you'll have to buy me a new pair of gloves," she said, "anyhow. That finger's past mending. Look! you Cabbage--you." And she held the split under his nose, and pulled a face of comical fierceness.

My uncle smiled at these sallies at the time, but afterwards,

when I went back with him to the Pharmacy--the low-class business grew brisker in the evening and they kept open late--he reverted to it in a low expository tone. "Your aunt's a bit impatient, George. She gets at me. It's only natural.... A woman doesn't understand how long it takes to build up a position. No.... In certain directions now--I am--quietly--building up a position. Now here.... I get this room. I have my three assistants. Zzzz. It's a position that, judged by the criterion of imedjit income, isn't perhaps so good as I deserve, but strategically--yes. It's what I want. I make my plans. I rally my attack."

"What plans," I said, "are you making?"

"Well, George, there's one thing you can rely upon, I'm doing nothing in a hurry. I turn over this one and that, and I don't talk--indiscreetly. There's-- No! I don't think I can tell you that. And yet, why NOT?"

He got up and closed the door into the shop. "I've told no one," he remarked, as he sat down again. "I owe you something."

His face flushed slightly, he leant forward over the little table towards me.

"Listen!" he said.

I listened.

"Tono-Bungay," said my uncle very slowly and distinctly.

I thought he was asking me to hear some remote, strange noise. "I don't hear anything," I said reluctantly to his expectant face. He smiled undefeated. "Try again," he said, and repeated, "Tono-Bungay."

"Oh, THAT!" I said.

"Eh?" said he.

"But what is it?"

"Ah!" said my uncle, rejoicing and expanding. "What IS it? That's what you got to ask? What won't it be?" He dug me violently in what he supposed to be my ribs. "George," he cried--"George, watch this place! There's more to follow."

And that was all I could get from him.

That, I believe, was the very first time that the words Tono-Bungay ever heard on earth--unless my uncle indulged in monologues in his chamber--a highly probable thing. Its utterance certainly did not seem to me at the time to mark any sort of epoch, and had I been told this word was the Open Sesame to whatever pride and pleasure the grimy front of London hid from us that evening, I should have laughed aloud.

"Coming now to business," I said after a pause, and with a chill sense of effort; and I opened the question of his trust.

My uncle sighed, and leant back in his chair. "I wish I could make all this business as clear to you as it is to me," he said. "However--Go on! Say what you have to say."

VII

After I left my uncle that evening I gave way to a feeling of profound depression. My uncle and aunt seemed to me to be leading--I have already used the word too often, but I must use it again--DINGY lives. They seemed to be adrift in a limitless

crowd of dingy people, wearing shabby clothes, living uncomfortably in shabby second-hand houses, going to and fro on pavements that had always a thin veneer of greasy, slippery mud, under grey skies that showed no gleam of hope of anything for them but dinginess until they died. It seemed absolutely clear to me that my mother's little savings had been swallowed up and that my own prospect was all too certainly to drop into and be swallowed up myself sooner or later by this dingy London ocean. The London that was to be an adventurous escape from the slumber of Wimblehurst, had vanished from my dreams. I saw my uncle pointing to the houses in Park Lane and showing a frayed shirt-cuff as he did so. I heard my aunt: "I'm to ride in my carriage then. So he old says."

My feelings towards my uncle were extraordinarily mixed. I was intensely sorry not only for my aunt Susan but for him--for it seemed indisputable that as they were living then so they must go on--and at the same time I was angry with the garrulous vanity and illness that had elipped all my chance of independent study, and imprisoned her in those grey apartments. When I got back to Wimblehurst I allowed myself to write him a boyishly sarcastic and sincerely bitter letter. He never replied. Then, believing it to be the only way of escape for me, I set myself far more grimly and resolutely to my studies than I had ever done before. After a time I wrote to him in more moderate terms, and he answered me evasively. And then I tried to dismiss him from my mind and went on working.

Yes, that first raid upon London under the moist and chilly depression of January had an immense effect upon me. It was for me an epoch-making disappointment. I had thought of London as a large, free, welcoming, adventurous place, and I saw it slovenly and harsh and irresponsible.

I did not realise at all what human things might be found behind

those grey frontages, what weakness that whole forbidding facade might presently confess. It is the constant error of youth to over-estimate the Will in things. I did not see that the dirt, the discouragement, the discomfort of London could be due simply to the fact that London was a witless old giantess of a town, too slack and stupid to keep herself clean and maintain a brave face to the word. No! I suffered from the sort of illusion that burnt witches in the seventeenth century. I endued her grubby disorder with a sinister and magnificent quality of intention.

And my uncle's gestures and promises filled me with doubt and a sort of fear for him. He seemed to me a lost little creature, too silly to be silent, in a vast implacable condemnation. I was full of pity and a sort of tenderness for my aunt Susan, who was doomed to follow his erratic fortunes mocked by his grandiloquent promises.

I was to learn better. But I worked with the terror of the grim underside of London in my soul during all my last year at Wemblehurst.

BOOK THE SECOND

THE RISE OF TONO-BUNGAY

CHAPTER THE FIRST

HOW I BECAME A LONDON STUDENT AND WENT ASTRAY

I came to live in London, as I shall tell you, when I was nearly twenty-two. Wemblehurst dwindles in perspective, is now in this book a little place far off, Bladesover no more than a small pinkish speck of frontage among the distant Kentish hills; the

scene broadens out, becomes multitudinous and limitless, full of the sense of vast irrelevant movement. I do not remember my second coming to London as I do my first, for my early impressions, save that an October memory of softened amber sunshine stands out, amber sunshine falling on grey house fronts I know not where. That, and a sense of a large tranquillity.

I could fill a book, I think, with a more or less imaginary account of how I came to apprehend London, how first in one aspect and then in another it grew in my mind. Each day my accumulating impressions were added to and qualified and brought into relationship with new ones; they fused inseparably with others that were purely personal and accidental. I find myself with a certain comprehensive perception of London, complete indeed, incurably indistinct in places and yet in some way a whole that began with my first visit and is still being mellowed and enriched.

London!

At first, no doubt, it was a chaos of streets and people and buildings and reasonless going to and fro. I do not remember that I ever struggled very steadily to understand it, or explored it with any but a personal and adventurous intention. Yet in time there has grown up in me a kind of theory of London; I do think I see lines of an ordered structure out of which it has grown, detected a process that is something more than a confusion of casual accidents though indeed it may be no more than a process of disease.

I said at the outset of my first book that I find in Bladesover the clue to all England. Well, I certainly imagine it is the clue to the structure of London. There have been no revolutions no deliberate restatements or abandonments of opinion in England since the days of the fine gentry, since 1688 or thereabouts, the

days when Bladesover was built; there have been changes, dissolving forest replacing forest, if you will; but then it was that the broad lines of the English system set firmly. And as I have gone to and fro in London in certain regions constantly the thought has recurred this is Bladesover House, this answers to Bladesover House. The fine gentry may have gone; they have indeed largely gone, I think; rich merchants may have replaced them, financial adventurers or what not. That does not matter; the shape is still Bladesover.

I am most reminded of Bladesover and Eastry by all those regions round about the West End parks; for example, estate parks, each more or less in relation to a palace or group of great houses. The roads and back ways of Mayfair and all about St. James's again, albeit perhaps of a later growth in point of time, were of the very spirit and architectural texture of the Bladesover passages and yards; they had the same smells, the space, the large cleanest and always going to and fro where one met unmistakable Olympians and even more unmistakable valets, butlers, footmen in mufti. There were moments when I seemed to glimpse down areas the white panelling, the very chintz of my mother's room again.

I could trace out now on a map what I would call the Great-House region; passing south-westward into Belgravia, becoming diffused and sporadic westward, finding its last systematic outbreak round and about Regent's Park. The Duke of Devonshire's place in Piccadilly, in all its insolent ugliness, pleases me particularly; it is the quintessence of the thing; Apsley House is all in the manner of my theory, Park Lane has its quite typical mansions, and they run along the border of the Green Park and St. James's. And I struck out a truth one day in Cromwell Road quite suddenly, as I looked over the Natural History Museum "By Jove," said I "but this is the little assemblage of cases of stuffed birds and animals upon the Bladesover staircase grown

enormous, and yonder as the corresponding thing to the Bladesover curios and porcelain is the Art Museum and there in the little observatories in Exhibition Road is old Sir Cuthbert's Gregorian telescope that I hunted out in the storeroom and put together." And diving into the Art Museum under this inspiration, I came to a little reading-room and found as I had inferred, old brown books!

It was really a good piece of social comparative anatomy I did that day; all these museums and libraries that are dotted over London between Piccadilly and West Kensington, and indeed the museum and library movement throughout the world, sprang from the elegant leisure of the gentlemen of taste. Theirs were the first libraries, the first houses of culture; by my rat-like raids into the Bladesover saloon I became, as it were, the last dwindled representative of such a man of letters as Swift. But now these things have escaped out of the Great House altogether, and taken on a strange independent life of their own.

It is this idea of escaping parts from the seventeenth century system of Bladesover, of proliferating and overgrowing elements from the Estates, that to this day seems to me the best explanation, not simply of London, but of all England. England is a country of great Renaissance landed gentlefolk who have been unconsciously outgrown and overgrown. The proper shops for Bladesover custom were still to be found in Regent Street and Bond Street in my early London days in those days they had been but lightly touched by the American's profaning hand--and in Piccadilly. I found the doctor's house of the country village or country town up and down Harley Street, multiplied but not otherwise different, and the family solicitor (by the hundred) further eastward in the abandoned houses of a previous generation of gentlepeople, and down in Westminster, behind Palladian fronts, the public offices sheltered in large Bladesoverish rooms and looked out on St. James's Park. The Parliament Houses of

lords and gentlemen, the parliament house that was horrified when merchants and brewers came thrusting into it a hundred years ago, stood out upon its terrace gathering the whole system together into a head.

And the more I have paralleled these things with my Bladesover-Eastry model, the more evident it has become to me that the balance is not the same, and the more evident is the presence of great new forces, blind forces of invasion, of growth. The railway termini on the north side of London have been kept as remote as Eastry had kept the railway-station from Wimblesbury, they stop on the very outskirts of the estates, but from the south, the South Eastern railway had butted its great stupid rusty iron head of Charing Cross station, that great head that came smashing down in 1905--clean across the river, between Somerset House and Whitehall. The south side had no protecting estate. Factory chimneys smoke right over against Westminster with an air of carelessly not having permission, and the whole effect of industrial London and of all London east of Temple Bar and of the huge dingy immensity of London port is to me of something disproportionately large, something morbidly expanded, without plan or intention, dark and sinister toward the clean clear social assurance of the West End. And south of this central London, south-east, south-west, far west, north-west, all round the northern hills, are similar disproportionate growths, endless streets of undistinguished houses, undistinguished industries, shabby families, second-rate shops, inexplicable people who in a once fashionable phrase do not "exist." All these aspects have suggested to my mind at times, do suggest to this day, the unorganised, abundant substance of some tumorous growth-process, a process which indeed bursts all the outlines of the affected carcass and protrudes such masses as ignoble comfortable Croydon, as tragic impoverished West Ham. To this day I ask myself will those masses ever become structural, will they indeed shape into anything new whatever, or is that

cancerous image their true and ultimate diagnosis?...

Moreover, together with this hypertrophy there is an immigration of elements that have never understood and never will understand the great tradition, wedges of foreign settlement embedded in the heart of this yeasty English expansion. One day I remember wandering eastward out of pure curiosity--it must have been in my early student days--and discovering a shabbily bright foreign quarter, shops displaying Hebrew placards and weird, unfamiliar commodities and a concourse of bright-eyed, eagle-nosed people talking some incomprehensible gibberish between the shops and the barrows. And soon I became quite familiar with the devious, vicious, dirtily-pleasant eroticism of Soho. I found those crowded streets a vast relief from the dull grey exterior of Brompton where I lodged and lived my daily life. In Soho, indeed, I got my first inkling of the factor of replacement that is so important in both the English and the American process.

Even in the West End, in Mayfair and the square, about Pall Mall, Ewart was presently to remind me the face of the old aristocratic dignity was fairer than its substance; here were actors and actresses, here money lenders and Jews, here bold financial adventurers, and I thought of my uncle's frayed cuff as he pointed out this house in Park Lane and that. That was so and so's who made a corner in borax, and that palace belonged to that hero among modern adventurers, Barmetrude, who used to be an I.D.B.,--an illicit diamond buyer that is to say. A city of Bladesovers, the capital of a kingdom of Bladesovers, all much shaken and many altogether in decay, parasitically occupied, insidiously replaced by alien, unsympathetic and irresponsible elements; and with a ruling an adventitious and miscellaneous empire of a quarter of this daedal earth complex laws, intricate social necessities, disturbing insatiable suggestions, followed from this. Such was the world into which I had come, into which I had in some way to thrust myself and fit my problem,

my temptations, my efforts, my patriotic instinct, all my moral instincts, my physical appetites, my dreams and my sanity.

London! I came up to it, young and without advisers, rather priggish, rather dangerously open-minded and very open-eyed, and with something--it is, I think, the common gift of imaginative youth, and I claim it unblushingly--fine in me, finer than the world and seeking fine responses. I did not want simply to live or simply to live happily or well; I wanted to serve and do and make--with some nobility. It was in me. It is in half the youth of the world.

II

I had come to London as a scholar. I had taken the Vincent Bradley scholarship of the Pharmaceutical Society, but I threw this up when I found that my work of the Science and Art Department in mathematics, physics and chemistry had given me one of the minor Technical Board Scholarships at the Consolidated Technical Schools at South Kensington. This latter was in mechanics and metallurgy; and I hesitated between the two. The Vincent Bradley gave me L70 a year and quite the best start-off a pharmaceutical chemist could have; the South Kensington thing was worth about twenty-two shillings a week, and the prospects it opened were vague. But it meant far more scientific work than the former, and I was still under the impulse of that great intellectual appetite that is part of the adolescence of men of my type. Moreover it seemed to lead towards engineering, in which I imagined--I imagine to this day--my particular use is to be found. I took its greater uncertainty as a fair risk. I came up very keen, not doubting that the really hard and steady industry that had carried me through Wemblehurst would go on still in the new surroundings.

Only from the very first it didn't....

When I look back now at my Wimblehurst days, I still find myself surprised at the amount of steady grinding study, of strenuous self-discipline that I maintained throughout my apprenticeship. In many ways I think that time was the most honourable period in my life. I wish I could say with a certain mind that my motives in working so well were large and honourable too. To a certain extent they were so; there was a fine sincere curiosity, a desire for the strength and power of scientific knowledge and a passion for intellectual exercise; but I do not think those forces alone would have kept me at it so grimly and closely if Wimblehurst had not been so dull, so limited and so observant. Directly I came into the London atmosphere, tasting freedom, tasting irresponsibility and the pull of new forces altogether, my discipline fell from me like a garment. Wimblehurst to a youngster in my position offered no temptations worth counting, no interests to conflict with study, no vices--such vices as it offered were coarsely stripped of any imaginative glamourfull drunkenness, clumsy leering shameful lust, no social intercourse even to waste one's time, and on the other hand it would minister greatly to the self-esteem of a conspicuously industrious student. One was marked as "clever," one played up to the part, and one's little accomplishment stood out finely in one's private reckoning against the sunlit small ignorance of that agreeable place. One went with an intent rush across the market square, one took one's exercise with as dramatic a sense of an ordered day as an Oxford don, one burnt the midnight oil quite consciously at the rare respectful, benighted passer-by. And one stood out finely in the local paper with one's unapproachable yearly harvest of certificates. Thus I was not only a genuinely keen student, but also a little of a prig and poseur in those days--and the latter kept the former at it, as London made clear.

Moreover Wimblehurst had given me no outlet in any other direction.

But I did not realise all this when I came to London, did not perceive how the change of atmosphere began at once to warp and distribute my energies. In the first place I became invisible. If I idled for a day, no one except my fellow-students (who evidently had no awe for me) remarked it. No one saw my midnight taper; no one pointed me out as I crossed the street as an astonishing intellectual phenomenon. In the next place I became inconsiderable. In Wimblesbury I felt I stood for Science; nobody there seemed to have so much as I and to have it so fully and completely. In London I walked ignorant in an immensity, and it was clear that among my fellow-students from the midlands and the north I was ill-equipped and under-trained. With the utmost exertion I should only take a secondary position among them. And finally, in the third place, I was distracted by voluminous new interests; London took hold of me, and Science, which had been the universe, shrank back to the dimensions of tiresome little formulae compacted in a book. I came to London in late September, and it was a very different London from that great greyly-overcast, smoke-stained house-wilderness of my first impressions. I reached it by Victoria and not by Cannon Street, and its centre was now in Exhibition Road. It shone, pale amber, blue-grey and tenderly spacious and fine under clear autumnal skies. a London of hugely handsome buildings and vistas and distances, a London of gardens and labyrinthine tall museums, of old trees and remote palaces and artificial waters. I lodged near by in West Brompton at a house in a little square.

So London faced me the second time, making me forget altogether for a while the grey, drizzling city visage that had first looked upon me. I settled down and went to and fro to my lectures and laboratory; in the beginning I worked hard, and only slowly did the curiosity that presently possessed me to know more of this huge urban province arise, the desire to find something beyond mechanism that I could serve, some use other than learning. With

this was a growing sense of loneliness, a desire for adventure and intercourse. I found myself in the evenings poring over a map of London I had bought, instead of copying out lecture notes--and on Sundays I made explorations, taking omnibus rides east and west and north and south, and to enlarging and broadening the sense of great swarming hinterlands of humanity with whom I had no dealings, of whom I knew nothing....

The whole illimitable place teemed with suggestions of indefinite and sometimes outrageous possibility, of hidden but magnificent meanings.

It wasn't simply that I received a vast impression of space and multitude and opportunity; intimate things also were suddenly dragged from neglected, veiled and darkened corners into an acute vividness of perception. Close at hand in the big art museum I came for the first time upon the beauty of nudity, which I had hitherto held to be a shameful secret, flaunted and gloried in; I was made aware of beauty as not only permissible, but desirable and frequent and of a thousand hitherto unsuspected rich aspects of life. One night in a real rapture, I walked round the upper gallery of the Albert Hall and listened for the first time to great music; I believe now that it was a rendering of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony....

My apprehension of spaces and places was reinforced by a quickened apprehension of persons. A constant stream of people passed by me, eyes met and challenged mine and passed--more and more I wanted then to stay--if I went eastward towards Piccadilly, women who seemed then to my boyish inexperience softly splendid and alluring, murmured to me as they passed. Extraordinarily life unveiled. The very hoardings clamoured strangely at one's senses and curiosities. One bought pamphlets and papers full of strange and daring ideas transcending one's boldest; in the parks one heard men discussing the very existence

of God, denying the rights of property, debating a hundred things that one dared not think about in Wimblehurst. And after the ordinary overcast day, after dull mornings, came twilight, and London lit up and became a thing of white and yellow and red jewels of light and wonderful floods of golden illumination and stupendous and unfathomable shadows--and there were no longer any mean or shabby people--but a great mysterious movement of unaccountable beings....

Always I was coming on the queerest new aspects. Late one Saturday night I found myself one of a great slow-moving crowd between the blazing shops and the flaring barrows in the Harrow Road; I got into conversation with two bold-eyed girls, bought them boxes of chocolate, made the acquaintance of father and mother and various younger brothers and sisters, sat in a public-house hilariously with them all, standing and being stood drinks, and left them in the small hours at the door of "home," never to see them again. And once I was accosted on the outskirts of a Salvation Army meeting in one of the parks by a silk-hatted young man of eager and serious discourse, who argued against scepticism with me, invited me home to tea into a clean and cheerful family of brothers and sisters and friends, and there I spent the evening singing hymns to the harmonium (which reminded me of half-forgotten Chatham), and wishing all the sisters were not so obviously engaged....

Then on the remote hill of this boundless city-world I found Ewart.

III

How well I remember the first morning, a bright Sunday morning in early October, when I raided in upon Ewart! I found my old schoolfellow in bed in a room over an oil-shop in a back street at the foot of Highgate Hill. His landlady, a pleasant, dirty

young woman with soft-brown eyes, brought down his message for me to come up; and up I went. The room presented itself as ample and interesting in detail and shabby with a quite commendable shabbiness. I had an impression of brown walls--they were papered with brown paper-- of a long shelf along one side of the room, with dusty plaster casts and a small cheap lay figure of a horse, of a table and something of grey wax partially covered with a cloth, and of scattered drawings. There was a gas stove in one corner, and some enameled ware that had been used for overnight cooking. The oilcloth on the floor was streaked with a peculiar white dust. Ewart himself was not in the first instance visible, but only a fourfold canvas screen at the end of the room from which shouts proceeded of "Come on!" then his wiry black hair, very much ruffled, and a staring red-brown eye and his stump of a nose came round the edge of this at a height of about three feet from the ground "It's old Ponderevo!" he said, "the Early bird! And he's caught the worm! By Jove, but it's cold this morning! Come round here and sit on the bed!"

I walked round, wrung his hand, and we surveyed one another.

He was lying on a small wooden fold-up bed, the scanty covering of which was supplemented by an overcoat and an elderly but still cheerful pair of check trousers, and he was wearing pajamas of a virulent pink and green. His neck seemed longer and more stringy than it had been even in our schooldays, and his upper lip had a wiry black moustache. The rest of his ruddy, knobby countenance, his erratic hair and his general hairy leanness had not even--to my perceptions grown.

"By Jove!" he said, "you've got quite decent-looking, Ponderevo! What do you think of me?"

"You're all right. What are you doing here?"

"Art, my son--sculpture! And incidentally--" He hesitated. "I ply a trade. Will you hand me that pipe and those smoking things? So! You can't make coffee, eh? Well, try your hand. Cast down this screen--no--fold it up and so we'll go into the other room. I'll keep in bed all the same. The fire's a gas stove. Yes. Don't make it bang too loud as you light it--I can't stand it this morning. You won't smoke ?... Well, it does me good to see you again, Ponderevo. Tell me what you're doing, and how you're getting on."

He directed me in the service of his simple hospitality, and presently I came back to his bed and sat down and smiled at him there, smoking comfortably, with his hands under his head, surveying me.

"How's Life's Morning, Ponderevo? By Jove, it must be nearly six years since we met! They've got moustaches. We've fleshed ourselves a bit, eh? And you?"

I felt a pipe was becoming after all, and that lit, I gave him a favourable sketch of my career.

"Science! And you've worked like that! While I've been potting round doing odd jobs for stone-masons and people, and trying to get to sculpture. I've a sort of feeling that the chisel--I began with painting, Ponderevo, and found I was colour-blind, colour-blind enough to stop it. I've drawn about and thought about--thought more particularly. I give myself three days a week as an art student, and the rest of the time I've a sort of trade that keeps me. And we're still in the beginning of things, young men starting. Do you remember the old times at Goudhurst, our doll's-house island, the Retreat of the Ten Thousand Young Holmes and the rabbits, eh? It's surprising, if you think of it, to find we are still young. And we used to talk of what we would be, and we used to talk of love! I suppose you know all about

that now, Ponderevo?"

I finished and hesitated on some vague foolish lie, "No," I said, a little ashamed of the truth. "Do you? I've been too busy."

"I'm just beginning--just as we were then. Things happen."

He sucked at his pipe for a space and stared at the plaster cast of a flayed hand that hung on the wall.

"The fact is, Ponderevo, I'm beginning to find life a most extraordinary queer set-out; the things that pull one, the things that don't. The wants--This business of sex. It's a net. No end to it, no way out of it, no sense in it. There are times when women take possession of me, when my mind is like a painted ceiling at Hampton Court with the pride of the flesh sprawling all over it. WHY?... And then again sometimes when I have to encounter a woman, I am overwhelmed by a terror of tantalising boredom--I fly, I hide, I do anything. You've got your scientific explanations perhaps; what's Nature and the universe up to in that matter?"

"It's her way, I gather, of securing the continuity of the species."

"But it doesn't," said Ewart. "That's just it! No. I have succumbed to--dissipation--down the hill there. Euston Road way.

And it was damned ugly and mean, and I hate having done it. And the continuity of the species--Lord!... And why does Nature make a man so infernally ready for drinks? There's no sense in that anyhow." He sat up in bed, to put this question with the greater earnestness. "And why has she given me a most violent desire towards sculpture and an equally violent desire to leave off work directly I begin it, eh?... Let's have some more coffee. I put

it to you, these things puzzle me, Ponderevo. They dishearten me. They keep me in bed."

He had an air of having saved up these difficulties for me for some time. He sat with his chin almost touching his knees, sucking at his pipe.

"That's what I mean," he went on, "when I say life is getting on to me as extraordinarily queer, I don't see my game, nor why I was invited. And I don't make anything of the world outside either. What do you make of it?"

"London," I began. "It's--so enormous!"

"Isn't it! And it's all up to nothing. You find chaps keeping grocers' shops--why the DEVIL, Ponderevo, do they keep grocers' shops? They all do it very carefully, very steadily, very meanly. You find people running about and doing the most remarkable things being policemen, for example, and burglars. They go about these businesses quite gravely and earnestly. I somehow--can't go about mine. Is there any sense in it at all--anywhere?"

"There must be sense in it," I said. "We're young."

"We're young--yes. But one must inquire. The grocer's a grocer because, I suppose, he sees he comes in there. Feels that on the whole it amounts to a call.... But the bother is I don't see where I come in at all. Do you?"

"Where you come in?"

"No, where you come in."

"Not exactly, yet," I said. "I want to do some good in the

world--something--something effectual, before I die. I have a sort of idea my scientific work-- I don't know."

"Yes," he mused." And I've got a sort of idea my sculpture,--but now it is to come in and WHY,--I've no idea at all." He hugged his knees for a space. "That's what puzzles me, Ponderevo, no end."

He became animated. "If you will look in that cupboard," he said, "you will find an old respectable looking roll on a plate and a knife somewhere and a gallipot containing butter. You give them me and I'll make my breakfast, and then if you don't mind watching me paddle about at my simple toilet I'll get up. Then we'll go for a walk and talk about this affair of life further. And about Art and Literature and anything else that crops up on the way.... Yes, that's the gallipot. Cockroach got in it? Chuck him out--damned interloper...."

So in the first five minutes of our talk, as I seem to remember it now, old Ewart struck the note that ran through all that morning's intercourse....

To me it was a most memorable talk because it opened out quite new horizons of thought. I'd been working rather close and out of touch with Ewart's free gesticulating way. He was pessimistic that day and sceptical to the very root of things. He made me feel clearly, what I had not felt at all before, the general adventurousness of life, particularly of life at the stage we had reached, and also the absence of definite objects, of any concerted purpose in the lives that were going on all round us. He made me feel, too, how ready I was to take up commonplace assumptions. Just as I had always imagined that somewhere in social arrangements there was certainly a Head-Master who would intervene if one went too far, so I had always had a sort of implicit belief that in our England there

were somewhere people who understood what we were all, as a nation, about. That crumpled into his pit of doubt and vanished.

He brought out, sharply cut and certain, the immense effect of purposelessness in London that I was already indistinctly feeling. We found ourselves at last returning through Highgate Cemetery and Waterlow Park--and Ewart was talking.

"Look at it there," he said, stopping and pointing to the great vale of London spreading wide and far. "It's like a sea--and we swim in it. And at last down we go, and then up we come--washed up here." He swung his arms to the long slopes about us, tombs and headstones in long perspectives, in limitless rows.

"We're young, Ponderevo, but sooner or later our whitened memories will wash up on one of these beaches, on some such beach as this. George Ponderevo, F.R.S., Sidney Ewart, R.I.P. Look at the rows of 'em!"

He paused. "Do you see that hand? The hand, I mean, pointing upward, on the top of a blunted obelisk. Yes. Well, that's what I do for a living--when I'm not thinking, or drinking, or prowling, or making love, or pretending I'm trying to be a sculptor without either the money or the morals for a model. See? And I do those hearts afire and those pensive angel guardians with the palm of peace. Damned well I do 'em and damned cheap! I'm a sweated victim, Ponderevo..."

That was the way of it, anyhow. I drank deep of talk that day; we went into theology, into philosophy; I had my first glimpse of socialism. I felt as though I had been silent in a silence since I and he had parted. At the thought of socialism Ewart's moods changed for a time to a sort of energy. "After all, all this confounded vagueness might be altered. If you could get men to work together..."

It was a good talk that rambled through all the universe. I thought I was giving my mind refreshment, but indeed it was dissipation. All sorts of ideas, even now, carry me back as it were to a fountain-head, to Waterlow Park and my resuscitated Ewart. There stretches away south of us long garden slopes and white gravestones and the wide expanse of London, and somewhere in the picture is a red old wall, sun-warmed, and a great blaze of Michaelmas daisies set off with late golden sunflowers and a drift of mottled, blood-red, fallen leaves. It was with me that day as though I had lifted my head suddenly out of dull and immediate things and looked at life altogether.... But it played the very devil with the copying up of my arrears of notes to which I had vowed the latter half of that day.

After that reunion Ewart and I met much and talked much, and in our subsequent encounters his monologue was interrupted and I took my share. He had exercised me so greatly that I lay awake at nights thinking him over, and discoursed and answered him in my head as I went in the morning to the College. I am by nature a doer and only by the way a critic; his philosophical assertion of the incalculable vagueness of life which fitted his natural indolence roused my more irritable and energetic nature to active protests. "It's all so pointless," I said, "because people are slack and because it's in the ebb of an age. But you're a socialist. Well, let's bring that about! And there's a purpose. There you are!"

Ewart gave me all my first conceptions of socialism; in a little while I was an enthusiastic socialist and he was a passive resister to the practical exposition of the theories he had taught me. "We must join some organisation," I said. "We ought to do things.... We ought to go and speak at street corners. People don't know."

You must figure me a rather ill-dressed young man in a state of great earnestness, standing up in that shabby studio of his and saying these things, perhaps with some gesticulations, and Ewart with a clay-smudged face, dressed perhaps in a flannel shirt and trousers, with a pipe in his mouth, squatting philosophically at a table, working at some chunk of clay that never got beyond suggestion.

"I wonder why one doesn't want to," he said.

It was only very slowly I came to gauge Ewart's real position in the scheme of things, to understand how deliberate and complete was this detachment of his from the moral condemnation and responsibilities that played so fine a part in his talk. His was essentially the nature of an artistic appreciator; he could find interest and beauty in endless aspects of things that I marked as evil, or at least as not negotiable; and the impulse I had towards self-deception, to sustained and consistent self-devotion, disturbed and detached and pointless as it was at that time, he had indeed a sort of admiration for but no sympathy. Like many fantastic and ample talkers he was at bottom secretive, and he gave me a series of little shocks of discovery throughout our intercourse.

The first of these came in the realisation that he quite seriously meant to do nothing in the world at all towards reforming the evils he laid bare in so easy and dexterous a manner. The next came in the sudden appearance of a person called "Milly"--I've forgotten her surname--whom I found in his room one evening, simply attired in a blue wrap--the rest of her costume behind the screen--smoking cigarettes and sharing a flagon of an amazingly cheap and self-assertive grocer's wine Ewart affected, called "Canary Sack." "Hullo!" said Ewart, as I came in. "This is Milly, you know. She's been being a model--she IS a model really.... (keep calm, Ponderevo!) Have

some sack?"

Milly was a woman of thirty, perhaps, with a broad, rather pretty face, a placid disposition, a bad accent and delightful blond hair that waved off her head with an irrepressible variety of charm; and whenever Ewart spoke she beamed at him. Ewart was always sketching this hair of hers and embarking upon clay statuettes of her that were never finished. She was, I know now, a woman of the streets, whom Ewart had picked up in the most casual manner, and who had fallen in love with him, but my inexperience in those days was too great for me to place her then, and Ewart offered no elucidations. She came to him, he went to her, they took holidays together in the country when certainly she sustained her fair share of their expenditure. I suspect him now even of taking money from her. Odd old Ewart! It was a relationship so alien to my orderly conceptions of honour, to what I could imagine any friend of mine doing, that I really hardly saw it with it there under my nose. But I see it and I think I understand it now....

Before I fully grasped the discursive manner in which Ewart was committed to his particular way in life, I did, I say, as the broad constructive ideas of socialism took hold of me, try to get him to work with me in some definite fashion as a socialist.

"We ought to join on to other socialists," I said.

"They've got something."

"Let's go and look at some first."

After some pains we discovered the office of the Fabian Society, lurking in a cellar in Clement's Inn; and we went and interviewed a rather discouraging secretary who stood astraddle in front of a fire and questioned us severely and seemed to doubt the integrity

of our intentions profoundly. He advised us to attend the next open meeting in Clifford's Inn and gave us the necessary data. We both contrived to get to the affair, and heard a discursive gritty paper on Trusts and one of the most inconclusive discussions you can imagine. Three-quarters of the speakers seemed under some jocular obsession which took the form of pretending to be conceited. It was a sort of family joke, and as strangers to the family we did not like it.... As we came out through the narrow passage from Clifford's Inn to the Strand, Ewart suddenly pitched upon a wizened, spectacled little man in a vast felt hat and a large orange tie.

"How many members are there in this Fabian Society of yours?" he asked.

The little man became at once defensive in his manner.

"About seven hundred," he said; "perhaps eight."

"Like--like the ones here?"

The little man gave a nervous self-satisfied laugh. "I suppose they're up to sample," he said.

The little man dropped out of existence and we emerged upon the Strand. Ewart twisted his arm into a queerly eloquent gesture that gathered up all the tall facades of the banks, the business places, the projecting clock and towers of the Law Courts, the advertisements, the luminous signs, into one social immensity, into a capitalistic system gigantic and invincible.

"These socialists have no sense of proportion," he said. "What can you expect of them?"

Ewart, as the embodiment of talk, was certainly a leading factor in my conspicuous failure to go on studying. Social theory in its first crude form of Democratic Socialism gripped my intelligence more and more powerfully. I argued in the laboratory with the man who shared my bench until we quarreled and did not speak and also I fell in love.

The ferment of sex had been creeping into my being like a slowly advancing tide through all my Wimblehurst days, the stimulus of London was like the rising of a wind out of the sea that brings the waves in fast and high. Ewart had his share in that. More and more acutely and unmistakably did my perception of beauty, form and sound, my desire for adventure, my desire for intercourse, converge on this central and commanding business of the individual life. I had to get me a mate.

I began to fall in love faintly with girls I passed in the street, with women who sat before me in trains, with girl fellow-students, with ladies in passing carriages, with loiterers at the corners, with neat-handed waitresses in shops and tea-rooms, with pictures even of girls and women. On my rare visits to the theatre I always became exalted, and found the actresses and even the spectators about me mysterious, attractive, creatures of deep interest and desire. I had a stronger and stronger sense that among these glancing, passing multitudes there was somewhere one who was for me. And in spite of every antagonistic force in the world, there was something in my very marrow that insisted: "Stop! Look at this one! Think of her! Won't she do? This signifies--this before all things signifies! Stop! Why are you hurrying by? This may be the predestined person--before all others."

It is odd that I can't remember when first I saw Marion, who became my wife--whom I was to make wretched, who was to make me

wretched, who was to pluck that fine generalised possibility of love out of my early manhood and make it a personal conflict. I became aware of her as one of a number of interesting attractive figures that moved about in my world, that glanced back at my eyes, that flitted by with a kind of averted watchfulness. I would meet her coming through the Art Museum, which was my short cut to the Brompton Road, or see her sitting, reading as I thought, in one of the bays of the Education Library. But really, as I found out afterwards, she never read. She used to come there to eat a bun in quiet. She was a very gracefully-moving figure of a girl then, very plainly dressed, with dark brown hair I remember, in a knot low on her neck behind that confessed the pretty roundness of her head and harmonised with the admirable lines of ears and cheek, the grave serenity of mouth and brow.

She stood out among the other girls very distinctly because they dressed more than she did, struck emphatic notes of colour, startled one by novelties in hats and bows and things. I've always hated the rustle, the disconcerting colour boundaries, the smart unnatural angles of women's clothes. Her plain black dress gave her a starkness....

I do remember, though, how one afternoon I discovered the peculiar appeal of her form for me. I had been restless with my work and had finally slipped out of the Laboratory and come over to the Art Museum to lounge among the pictures. I came upon her in an odd corner of the Sheepshanks gallery, intently copying something from a picture that hung high. I had just been in the gallery of casts from the antique, my mind was all alive with my newly awakened sense of line, and there she stood with face upturned, her body drooping forward from the hips just a little--memorably graceful--feminine.

After that I know I sought to see her, felt a distinctive

emotion at her presence, began to imagine things about her. I no longer thought of generalised womanhood or of this casual person or that. I thought of her.

An accident brought us together. I found myself one Monday morning in an omnibus staggering westward from Victoria--I was returning from a Sunday I'd spent at Wimblehurst in response to a unique freak of hospitality on the part of Mr. Mantell. She was the sole other inside passenger. And when the time came to pay her fare, she became an extremely scared, disconcerted and fumbling young woman; she had left her purse at home.

Luckily I had some money.

She looked at me with startled, troubled brown eyes; she permitted my proffered payment to the conductor with a certain ungraciousness that seemed a part of her shyness, and then as she rose to go, she thanked me with an obvious affectation of ease.

"Thank you so much," she said in a pleasant soft voice; and then less gracefully, "Awfully kind of you, you know."

I fancy I made polite noises. But just then I wasn't disposed to be critical. I was full of the sense of her presence; her arm was stretched out over me as she moved past me, the gracious slenderness of her body was near me. The words we used didn't seem very greatly to matter. I had vague ideas of getting out with her--and I didn't.

That encounter, I have no doubt, exercised me enormously. I lay awake at night rehearsing it, and wondering about the next phase of our relationship. That took the form of the return of my twopence. I was in the Science Library, digging something out of the Encyclopedia Britannica, when she appeared beside me and placed on the open page an evidently premeditated thin envelope,

bulgingly confessing the coins within.

"It was so very kind of you," she said, "the other day. I don't know what I should have done, Mr.--"

I supplied my name. "I knew," I said, "you were a student here."

"Not exactly a student. I--"

"Well, anyhow, I knew you were here frequently. And I'm a student myself at the Consolidated Technical Schools."

I plunged into autobiography and questionings, and so entangled her in a conversation that got a quality of intimacy through the fact that, out of deference to our fellow-readers, we were obliged to speak in undertones. And I have no doubt that in substance it was singularly banal. Indeed I have an impression that all our early conversations were incredibly banal. We met several times in a manner half-accidental, half furtive and wholly awkward. Mentally I didn't take hold of her. I never did take hold of her mentally. Her talk, I now know all too clearly, was shallow, pretentious, evasive. Only--even to this day--I don't remember it as in any way vulgar. She was, I could see quite clearly, anxious to overstate or conceal her real social status, a little desirous to be taken for a student in the art school and a little ashamed that she wasn't. She came to the museum to "copy things," and this, I gathered, had something to do with some way of partially earning her living that I wasn't to inquire into. I told her things about myself, vain things that I felt might appeal to her, but that I learnt long afterwards made her think me "conceited." We talked of books, but there she was very much on her guard and secretive, and rather more freely of pictures. She "liked" pictures. I think from the outset I appreciated and did not for a moment resent that hers was a commonplace mind, that she was the unconscious custodian of

something that had gripped my most intimate instinct, that she embodied the hope of a possibility, was the careless proprietor of a physical quality that had turned my head like strong wine. I felt I had to stick to our acquaintance, flat as it was. Presently we should get through these irrelevant exterior things, and come to the reality of love beneath.

I saw her in dreams released, as it were, from herself, beautiful, worshipful, glowing. And sometimes when we were together, we would come on silences through sheer lack of matter, and then my eyes would feast on her, and the silence seemed like the drawing back of a curtain--her superficial self. Odd, I confess. Odd, particularly, the enormous hold of certain things about her upon me, a certain slight rounded duskiness of skin, a certain perfection of modelling in her lips, her brow, a certain fine flow about the shoulders. She wasn't indeed beautiful to many people--these things are beyond explaining. She had manifest defects of form and feature, and they didn't matter at all. Her complexion was bad, but I don't think it would have mattered if it had been positively unwholesome. I had extraordinarily limited, extraordinarily painful, desires. I longed intolerably to kiss her lips.

V

The affair was immensely serious and commanding to me. I don't remember that in these earlier phases I had any thought of turning back at all. It was clear to me that she regarded me with an eye entirely more critical than I had for her, that she didn't like my scholarly untidiness, my want of even the most commonplace style. "Why do you wear collars like that?" she said, and sent me in pursuit of gentlemanly neckwear. I remember when she invited me a little abruptly one day to come to tea at her home on the following Sunday and meet her father and mother and aunt, that I immediately doubted whether my hitherto

unsuspected best clothes would create the impression she desired me to make on her belongings. I put off the encounter until the Sunday after, to get myself in order. I had a morning coat made and I bought a silk hat, and had my reward in the first glance of admiration she ever gave me. I wonder how many of my sex are as preposterous. I was, you see, abandoning all my beliefs, my conventions unasked. I was forgetting myself immensely. And there was a conscious shame in it all. Never a word--did I breathe to Ewart--to any living soul of what was going on.

Her father and mother and aunt struck me as the dismalest of people, and her home in Walham Green was chiefly notable for its black and amber tapestry carpets and curtains and table-cloths, and the age and irrelevance of its books, mostly books with faded gilt on the covers. The windows were fortified against the intrusive eye by cheap lace curtains and an "art pot" upon an unstable octagonal table. Several framed Art School drawings of Marion's, bearing official South Kensington marks of approval, adorned the room, and there was a black and gilt piano with a hymn-book on the top of it. There were draped mirrors over all the mantels, and above the sideboard in the dining-room in which we sat at tea was a portrait of her father, villainously truthful after the manner of such works. I couldn't see a trace of the beauty I found in her in either parent, yet she somehow contrived to be like them both.

These people pretended in a way that reminded me of the Three Great Women in my mother's room, but they had not nearly so much social knowledge and did not do it nearly so well. Also, I remarked, they did it with an eye on Marion. They had wanted to thank me, they said, for the kindness to their daughter in the matter of the 'bus fare, and so accounted for anything unusual in their invitation. They posed as simple gentlefolk, a little hostile to the rush and gadding-about of London, preferring a secluded and unpretentious quiet.

When Marion got out the white table-cloth from the sideboard-drawer for tea, a card bearing the word "APARTMENTS" fell to the floor. I picked it up and gave it to her before I realised from her quickened colour that I should not have seen it; that probably had been removed from the window in honour of my coming.

Her father spoke once in a large remote way of his claims of business engagements, and it was only long afterwards I realised that he was a supernumerary clerk in the Walham Green Gas Works and otherwise a useful man at home. He was a large, loose, fattish man with unintelligent brown eyes magnified by spectacles; he wore an ill-fitting frock-coat and a paper collar, and he showed me, as his great treasure and interest, a large Bible which he had grangerised with photographs of pictures. Also he cultivated the little garden-yard behind the house, and he had a small greenhouse with tomatoes. "I wish I 'ad 'eat," he said. "One can do such a lot with 'eat. But I suppose you can't 'ave everything you want in this world."

Both he and Marion's mother treated her with a deference that struck me as the most natural thing in the world. Her own manner changed, became more authoritative and watchful, her shyness disappeared. She had taken a line of her own I gathered, draped the mirror, got the second-hand piano, and broken her parents in.

Her mother must once have been a pretty woman; she had regular features and Marion's hair without its lustre, but she was thin and careworn. The aunt, Miss Ramboat, was a large, abnormally shy person very like her brother, and I don't recall anything she said on this occasion.

To begin with there was a good deal of tension, Marion was frightfully nervous and every one was under the necessity of

behaving in a mysteriously unreal fashion until I plunged, became talkative and made a certain ease and interest. I told them of the schools, of my lodgings, of Wimblehurst and my apprenticeship days. "There's a lot of this Science about nowadays," Mr. Ramboat reflected; "but I sometimes wonder a bit what good it is?"

I was young enough to be led into what he called "a bit of a discussion," which Marion truncated before our voices became unduly raised. "I dare say," she said, "there's much to be said on both sides."

I remember Marion's mother asked me what church I attended, and that I replied evasively. After tea there was music and we sang hymns. I doubted if I had a voice when this was proposed, but that was held to be a trivial objection, and I found sitting close beside the sweep of hair from Marion's brow had many compensations. I discovered her mother sitting in the horsehair armchair and regarding us sentimentally. I went for a walk with Marion towards Putney Bridge, and then there was more singing and a supper of cold bacon and pie, after which Mr. Ramboat and I smoked. During that walk, I remember, she told me the import of her sketchings and copyings in the museum. A cousin of a friend of hers whom she spoke of as Smithie, had developed an original business in a sort of tea-gown garment which she called a Persian Robe, a plain sort of wrap with a gaily embroidered yoke, and Marion went there and worked in the busy times. In the times that weren't busy she designed novelties in yokes by an assiduous use of eyes and note-book in the museum, and went home and traced out the captured forms on the foundation material. "I don't get much," said Marion, "but it's interesting, and in the busy times we work all day. Of course the workgirls are dreadfully common, but we don't say much to them. And Smithie talks enough for ten."

I quite understood the workgirls were dreadfully common.

I don't remember that the Walham Green menage and the quality of these people, nor the light they threw on Marion, detracted in the slightest degree at that time from the intent resolve that held me to make her mine. I didn't like them. But I took them as part of the affair. Indeed, on the whole, I think they threw her up by an effect of contrast; she was so obviously controlling them, so consciously superior to them.

More and more of my time did I give to this passion that possessed me. I began to think chiefly of ways of pleasing Marion, of acts of devotion, of treats, of sumptuous presents for her, of appeals she would understand. If at times she was manifestly unintelligent, in her ignorance became indisputable, I told myself her simple instincts were worth all the education and intelligence in the world. And to this day I think I wasn't really wrong about her. There was something extraordinarily fine about her, something simple and high, that flickered in and out of her ignorance and commonness and limitations like the tongue from the mouth of a snake....

One night I was privileged to meet her and bring her home from an entertainment at the Birkbeck Institute. We came back on the underground railway and we travelled first-class--that being the highest class available. We were alone in the carriage, and for the first time I ventured to put my arm about her.

"You mustn't," she said feebly.

"I love you," I whispered suddenly with my heart beating wildly, drew her to me, drew all her beauty to me and kissed her cool and unresisting lips.

"Love me?" she said, struggling away from me, "Don't!" and then,

as the train ran into a station, "You must tell no one.... I don't know.... You shouldn't have done that...."

Then two other people got in with us and terminated my wooing for a time.

When we found ourselves alone together, walking towards Battersea, she had decided to be offended. I parted from her unforgiven and terribly distressed.

When we met again, she told me I must never say "that" again.

I had dreamt that to kiss her lips was ultimate satisfaction. But it was indeed only the beginning of desires. I told her my one ambition was to marry her.

"But," she said, "you're not in a position-- What's the good of talking like that?"

I stared at her. "I mean to," I said.

"You can't," she answered. "It will be years"

"But I love you," I insisted.

I stood not a yard from the sweet lips I had kissed; I stood within arm's length of the inanimate beauty I desired to quicken, and I saw opening between us a gulf of years, toil, waiting, disappointments and an immense uncertainty.

"I love you," I said. "Don't you love me?"

She looked me in the face with grave irresponsible eyes.

"I don't know," she said. "I LIKE you, of course.... One has to

be sensibl..."

I can remember now my sense of frustration by her unresilient reply. I should have perceived then that for her my ardour had no quickening fire. But how was I to know? I had let myself come to want her, my imagination endowed her with infinite possibilities. I wanted her and wanted her, stupidly and instinctively....

"But," I said "Love--!"

"One has to be sensible," she replied. "I like going about with you. Can't we keep as we are?"

VI

Well, you begin to understand my breakdown now, I have been copious enough with these apologia. My work got more and more spiritless, my behaviour degenerated, my punctuality declined; I was more and more outclassed in the steady grind by my fellow-students. Such supplies of moral energy as I still had at command shaped now in the direction of serving Marion rather than science.

I fell away dreadfully, more and more I shirked and skulked; the humped men from the north, the pale men with thin, clenched minds, the intent, hard-breathing students I found against me, fell at last from keen rivalry to moral contempt. Even a girl got above me upon one of the lists. Then indeed I made it a point of honour to show by my public disregard of every rule that I really did not even pretend to try.

So one day I found myself sitting in a mood of considerable astonishment in Kensington Gardens, reacting on a recent heated interview with the school Registrar in which I had displayed more

spirit than sense. I was astonished chiefly at my stupendous falling away from all the militant ideals of unflinching study I had brought up from Wimblehurst. I had displayed myself, as the Registrar put it, "an unmitigated rotter." My failure to get marks in the written examination had only been equalled by the insufficiency of my practical work.

"I ask you," the Registrar had said, "what will become of you when your scholarship runs out?"

It certainly was an interesting question. What was going to become of me?

It was clear there would be nothing for me in the schools as I had once dared to hope; there seemed, indeed, scarcely anything in the world except an illpaid assistantship in some provincial organized Science School or grammar school. I knew that for that sort of work, without a degree or any qualification, one earned hardly a bare living and had little leisure to struggle up to anything better. If only I had even as little as fifty pounds I might hold out in London and take my B.Sc. degree, and quadruple my chances! My bitterness against my uncle returned at the thought. After all, he had some of my money still, or ought to have. Why shouldn't I act within my rights, threaten to 'take proceedings'? I meditated for a space on the idea, and then returned to the Science Library and wrote him a very considerable and occasionally pungent letter.

That letter to my uncle was the nadir of my failure. Its remarkable consequences, which ended my student days altogether, I will tell in the next chapter.

I say "my failure." Yet there are times when I can even doubt whether that period was a failure at all, when I become defensively critical of those exacting courses I did not follow,

the encyclopaedic process of scientific exhaustion from which I was distracted. My mind was not inactive, even if it fed on forbidden food. I did not learn what my professors and demonstrators had resolved I should learn, but I learnt many things. My mind learnt to swing wide and to swing by itself.

After all, those other fellows who took high places in the College examinations and were the professor's model boys haven't done so amazingly. Some are professors themselves, some technical experts; not one can show things done such as I, following my own interest, have achieved. For I have built boats that smack across the water like whiplashes; no one ever dreamt of such boats until I built them; and I have surprised three secrets that are more than technical discoveries, in the unexpected hiding-places of Nature. I have come nearer flying than any man has done. Could I have done as much if I had had a turn for obeying those rather mediocre professors at the college who proposed to train my mind? If I had been trained in research--that ridiculous contradiction in terms--should I have done more than produce additions to the existing store of little papers with blunted conclusions, of which there are already too many? I see no sense in mock modesty upon this matter. Even by the standards of worldly success I am, by the side of my fellow-students, no failure. I had my F.R.S. by the time I was thirty-seven, and if I am not very wealthy poverty is as far from me as the Spanish Inquisition. Suppose I had stamped down on the head of my wandering curiosity, locked my imagination in a box just when it wanted to grow out to things, worked by so-and-so's excellent method and so-and-so's indications, where should I be now?

I may be all wrong in this. It may be I should be a far more efficient man than I am if I had cut off all those divergent expenditures of energy, plugged up my curiosity about society with more currently acceptable rubbish or other, abandoned

Ewart, evaded Marion instead of pursuing her, concentrated. But I don't believe it!

However, I certainly believed it completely and was filled with remorse on that afternoon when I sat dejectedly in Kensington Gardens and reviewed, in the light of the Registrar's pertinent questions my first two years in London.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

THE DAWN COMES, AND MY UNCLE APPEARS IN A NEW SILK HAT

I

Throughout my student days I had not seen my uncle. I refrained from going to him in spite of an occasional regret that in this way I estranged myself from my aunt Susan, and I maintained a sulky attitude of mind towards him. And I don't think that once in all that time I gave a thought to that mystic word of his that was to alter all the world for us. Yet I had not altogether forgotten it. It was with a touch of memory, dim transient perplexity if no more--why did this thing seem in some way personal?--that I read a new inscription upon the hoardings:

THE SECRET OF VIGOUR, TONO-BUNGAY.

That was all. It was simple and yet in some way arresting. I found myself repeating the word after I had passed; it roused one's attention like the sound of distant guns. "Tono"--what's that? and deep, rich, unhurrying;--"BUN--gay!"

Then came my uncle's amazing telegram, his answer to my hostile

note: "Come to me at once you are wanted three hundred a year certain tono-bungay."

"By Jove!" I cried, "of course!"

"It's something--. A patent-medicine! I wonder what he wants with me."

In his Napoleonic way my uncle had omitted to give an address. His telegram had been handed in at Farringdon Road, and after complex meditations I replied to Ponderevo, Farringdon Road, trusting to the rarity of our surname to reach him.

"Where are you?" I asked.

His reply came promptly:

"192A, Raggett Street, E.C."

The next day I took an unsanctioned holiday after the morning's lecture. I discovered my uncle in a wonderfully new silk hat--oh, a splendid hat! with a rolling brim that went beyond the common fashion. It was decidedly too big for him--that was its only fault. It was stuck on the back of his head, and he was in a white waistcoat and shirt sleeves. He welcomed me with a forgetfulness of my bitter satire and my hostile abstinence that was almost divine. His glasses fell off at the sight of me. His round inexpressive eyes shone brightly. He held out his plump short hand.

"Here we are, George! What did I tell you? Needn't whisper it now, my boy. Shout it--LOUD! spread it about! Tell every one! Tono--TONO--, TONO-BUNGAY!"

Raggett Street, you must understand, was a thoroughfare over

which some one had distributed large quantities of cabbage stumps and leaves. It opened out of the upper end of Farringdon Street, and 192A was a shop with the plate-glass front coloured chocolate, on which several of the same bills I had read upon the hoardings had been stuck. The floor was covered by street mud that had been brought in on dirty boots, and three energetic young men of the hooligan type, in neck-wraps and caps, were packing wooden cases with papered-up bottles, amidst much straw and confusion. The counter was littered with these same swathed bottles, of a pattern then novel but now amazingly familiar in the world, the blue paper with the coruscating figure of a genially nude giant, and the printed directions of how under practically all circumstances to take Tono-Bungay. Beyond the counter on one side opened a staircase down which I seem to remember a girl descending with a further consignment of bottles, and the rest of the background was a high partition, also chocolate, with "Temporary Laboratory" inscribed upon it in white letters, and over a door that pierced it, "Office." Here I rapped, inaudible amid much hammering, and then entered unanswered to find my uncle, dressed as I have described, one hand gripping a sheath of letters, and the other scratching his head as he dictated to one of three toiling typewriter girls. Behind him was a further partition and a door inscribed "ABSOLUTELY PRIVATE--NO ADMISSION," thereon. This partition was of wood painted the universal chocolate, up to about eight feet from the ground, and then of glass. Through the glass I saw dimly a crowded suggestion of crucibles and glass retorts, and--by Jove!--yes!--the dear old Wimblehurst air-pump still! It gave me quite a little thrill--that air-pump! And beside it was the electrical machine--but something--some serious trouble--had happened to that. All these were evidently placed on a shelf just at the level to show.

"Come right into the sanctum," said my uncle, after he had

finished something about "esteemed consideration," and whisked me through the door into a room that quite amazingly failed to verify the promise of that apparatus. It was papered with dingy wall-paper that had peeled in places; it contained a fireplace, an easy-chair with a cushion, a table on which stood two or three big bottles, a number of cigar-boxes on the mantel, whisky Tantalus and a row of soda syphons. He shut the door after me carefully.

"Well, here we are!" he said. "Going strong! Have a whisky, George? No!--Wise man! Neither will I! You see me at it! At it--hard!"

"Hard at what?"

"Read it," and he thrust into my hand a label--that label that has now become one of the most familiar objects of the chemist's shop, the greenish-blue rather old-fashioned bordering, the legend, the name in good black type, very clear, and the strong man all set about with lightning flashes above the double column of skilful lies in red--the label of Tono-Bungay. "It's afloat," he said, as I stood puzzling at this. "It's afloat. I'm afloat!" And suddenly he burst out singing in that throaty tenor of his--

"I'm afloat, I'm afloat on the fierce flowing tide,
The ocean's my home and my bark is my bride!

"Ripping song that is, George. Not so much a bark as a solution, but still--it does! Here we are at it! By-the-by! Half a mo'! I've thought of a thing." He whisked out, leaving me to examine this nuclear spot at leisure while his voice became dictatorial without. The den struck me as in its large grey dirty way quite unprecedented and extraordinary. The bottles were all labelled simply A, B, C, and so forth, and that dear old apparatus above,

seen from this side, was even more patiently "on the shelf" than when it had been used to impress Wimblehurst. I saw nothing for it but to sit down in the chair and await my uncle's explanations. I remarked a frock-coat with satin lapels behind the door; there was a dignified umbrella in the corner and a clothes-brush and a hat-brush stood on a side-table. My uncle returned in five minutes looking at his watch--a gold watch-- "Gettin' lunch-time, George," he said. "You'd better come and have lunch with me!"

"How's Aunt Susan?" I asked.

"Exuberant. Never saw her so larky. This has bucked her up something wonderful--all this."

"All what?"

"Tono-Bungay."

"What is Tono-Bungay?" I asked.

My uncle hesitated. "Tell you after lunch, George," he said. "Come along!" and having locked up the sanctum after himself, led the way along a narrow dirty pavement, lined with barrows and swept at times by avalanche-like porters bearing burthens to vans, to Farringdon Street. He hailed a passing cab superbly, and the cabman was infinitely respectful. "Schafer's," he said, and off we went side by side--and with me more and more amazed at all these things--to Schafer's Hotel, the second of the two big places with huge lace curtain-covered windows, near the corner of Blackfriars Bridge.

I will confess I felt a magic charm in our relative proportions as the two colossal, pale-blue-and-red liveried porters of Schafers' held open the inner doors for us with a respectful

salutation that in some manner they seemed to confine wholly to my uncle. Instead of being about four inches taller, I felt at least the same size as he, and very much slenderer. Still more respectful--waiters relieved him of the new hat and the dignified umbrella, and took his orders for our lunch. He gave them with a fine assurance.

He nodded to several of the waiters.

"They know me, George, already," he said. "Point me out. Live place! Eye for coming men!"

The detailed business of the lunch engaged our attention for a while, and then I leant across my plate. "And NOW?" said I.

"It's the secret of vigour. Didn't you read that label?"

"Yes, but--"

"It's selling like hot cakes."

"And what is it?" I pressed.

"Well," said my uncle, and then leant forward and spoke softly under cover of his hand, "It's nothing more or less than..."

(But here an unfortunate scruple intervenes. After all, Tono-Bungay is still a marketable commodity and in the hands of purchasers, who bought it from--among other vendors--me. No! I am afraid I cannot give it away--)

"You see," said my uncle in a slow confidential whisper, with eyes very wide and a creased forehead, "it's nice because of the" (here he mentioned a flavouring matter and an aromatic spirit), "it's stimulating because of" (here he mentioned two very vivid

tonics, one with a marked action on the kidney.) "And the" (here he mentioned two other ingredients) "makes it pretty intoxicating. Cocks their tails. Then there's" (but I touch on the essential secret.) "And there you are. I got it out of an old book of recipes--all except the" (here he mentioned the more virulent substance, the one that assails the kidneys), "which is my idea! Modern touch! There you are!"

He reverted to the direction of our lunch.

Presently he was leading the way to the lounge--sumptuous piece in red morocco and yellow glazed crockery, with incredible vistas of settees and sofas and things, and there I found myself grouped with him in two excessively upholstered chairs with an earthenware Moorish table between us bearing coffee and Benedictine, and I was tasting the delights of a tenpenny cigar. My uncle smoked a similar cigar in an habituated manner, and he looked energetic and knowing and luxurious and most unexpectedly a little boulder, round the end of it. It was just a trivial flaw upon our swagger, perhaps that we both were clear our cigars had to be "mild." He got obliquely across the spaces of his great armchair so as to incline confidentially to my ear, he curled up his little legs, and I, in my longer way, adopted a corresponding receptive obliquity. I felt that we should strike an unbiased observer as a couple of very deep and wily and developing and repulsive persons.

"I want to let you into this"--puff--"George," said my uncle round the end of his cigar. "For many reasons."

His voice grew lower and more cunning. He made explanations that to my inexperience did not completely explain. I retain an impression of a long credit and a share with a firm of wholesale chemists, of a credit and a prospective share with some pirate printers, of a third share for a leading magazine and newspaper

proprietor.

"I played 'em off one against the other," said my uncle. I took his point in an instant. He had gone to each of them in turn and said the others had come in.

"I put up four hundred pounds," said my uncle, "myself and my all. And you know--"

He assumed a brisk confidence. "I hadn't five hundred pence. At least--"

For a moment he really was just a little embarrassed. "I DID" he said, "produce capital. You see, there was that trust affair of yours--I ought, I suppose--in strict legality--to have put that straight first. Zzzz....

"It was a bold thing to do," said my uncle, shifting the venue from the region of honour to the region of courage. And then with a characteristic outburst of piety, "Thank God it's all come right!

"And now, I suppose, you ask where do YOU come in? Well, fact is I've always believed in you, George. You've got--it's a sort of dismal grit. Bark your shins, rouse you, and you'll go! You'd rush any position you had a mind to rush. I know a bit about character, George--trust me. You've got--" He clenched his hands and thrust them out suddenly, and at the same time said, with explosive violence, "Wooosh! Yes. You have! The way you put away that Latin at Wimblerhurst; I've never forgotten it.

Wo-oo-oo-osh! Your science and all that! Wo-oo-oo-osh! I know my limitations. There's things I can do, and" (he spoke in a whisper, as though this was the first hint of his life's secret) "there's things I can't. Well, I can create this business, but I

can't make it go. I'm too voluminous--I'm a boiler-over, not a simmering stick-at-it. You keep on HOTTING UP AND HOTTING UP. Papin's digester. That's you, steady and long and piling up,--then, wo-oo-oo-oo-osh. Come in and stiffen these niggers. Teach them that wo-oo-oo-oo-osh. There you are! That's what I'm after. You! Nobody else believes you're more than a boy. Come right in with me and be a man. Eh, George? Think of the fun of it--a thing on the go--a Real Live Thing! Wooshing it up! Making it buzz and spin! Whoo-oo-oo." --He made alluring expanding circles in the air with his hand. "Eh?"

His proposal, sinking to confidential undertones again, took more definite shape. I was to give all my time and energy to developing and organising. "You shan't write a single advertisement, or give a single assurance" he declared. "I can do all that." And the telegram was no flourish; I was to have three hundred a year. Three hundred a year. ("That's nothing," said my uncle, "the thing to freeze on to, when the time comes, is your tenth of the vendor's share.")

Three hundred a year certain, anyhow! It was an enormous income to me. For a moment I was altogether staggered. Could there be that much money in the whole concern? I looked about me at the sumptuous furniture of Schafer's Hotel. No doubt there were many such incomes.

My head was spinning with unwonted Benedictine and Burgundy.

"Let me go back and look at the game again," I said. "Let me see upstairs and round about."

I did.

"What do you think of it all?" my uncle asked at last.

"Well, for one thing," I said, "why don't you have those girls working in a decently ventilated room? Apart from any other consideration, they'd work twice as briskly. And they ought to cover the corks before labelling round the bottle"

"Why?" said my uncle.

"Because--they sometimes make a mucker of the cork job, and then the label's wasted."

"Come and change it, George," said my uncle, with sudden fervour "Come here and make a machine of it. You can. Make it all slick, and then make it woosh. I know you can. Oh! I know you can."

II

I seem to remember very quick changes of mind after that lunch. The muzzy exaltation of the unaccustomed stimulants gave way very rapidly to a model of pellucid and impartial clairvoyance which is one of my habitual mental states. It is intermittent; it leaves me for weeks together, I know, but back it comes at last like justice on circuit, and calls up all my impression, all my illusions, all my willful and passionate proceedings. We came downstairs again into that inner room which pretended to be a scientific laboratory through its high glass lights, and indeed was a lurking place. My uncle pressed a cigarette on me, and I took it and stood before the empty fireplace while he propped his umbrella in the corner, deposited the new silk hat that was a little too big for him on the table, blew copiously and produced a second cigar.

It came into my head that he had shrunken very much in size since the Wimblehurst days, that the cannon ball he had swallowed was rather more evident and shameless than it had been, his skin less

fresh and the nose between his glasses, which still didn't quite fit, much redder. And just then he seemed much laxer in his muscles and not quite as alertly quick in his movements. But he evidently wasn't aware of the degenerative nature of his changes as he sat there, looking suddenly quite little under my eyes.

"Well, George!" he said, quite happily unconscious of my silent criticism, "what do you think of it all?"

"Well," I said, "in the first place--it's a damned swindle!"

"Tut! tut!" said my uncle. "It's as straight as-- It's fair trading!"

"So much the worse for trading," I said.

"It's the sort of thing everybody does. After all, there's no harm in the stuff--and it may do good. It might do a lot of good--giving people confidence, for instance, against an epidemic.

See? Why not? don't see where your swindle comes in."

"H'm," I said. "It's a thing you either see or don't see."

"I'd like to know what sort of trading isn't a swindle in its way. Everybody who does a large advertised trade is selling something common on the strength of saying it's uncommon. Look at Chickson--they made him a baronet. Look at Lord Radmore, who did it on lying about the alkali in soap! Rippin' ads those were of his too!"

"You don't mean to say you think doing this stuff up in bottles and swearing it's the quintessence of strength and making poor devils buy it at that, is straight?"

"Why not, George? How do we know it mayn't be the quintessence to them so far as they're concerned?"

"Oh!" I said, and shrugged my shoulders.

"There's Faith. You put Faith in 'em.... I grant our labels are a bit emphatic. Christian Science, really. No good setting people against the medicine. Tell me a solitary trade nowadays that hasn't to be--emphatic. It's the modern way! Everybody understands it--everybody allows for it."

"But the world would be no worse and rather better, if all this stuff of yours was run down a conduit into the Thames."

"Don't see that, George, at all. 'Mong other things, all our people would be out of work. Unemployed! I grant you Tono-Bungay MAY be--not QUITE so good a find for the world as Peruvian bark, but the point is, George--it MAKES TRADE! And the world lives on trade. Commerce! A romantic exchange of commodities and property. Romance. 'Magination. See? You must look at these things in a broad light. Look at the wood--and forget the trees! And hang it, George! we got to do these things! There's no way unless you do. What do YOU mean to do--anyhow?"

"There's ways of living," I said, "Without either fraud or lying."

"You're a bit stiff, George. There's no fraud in this affair, I'll bet my hat. But what do you propose to do? Go as chemist to some one who IS running a business, and draw a salary without a share like I offer you. Much sense in that! It comes out of the swindle as you call it--just the same."

"Some businesses are straight and quiet, anyhow; supply a sound

article that is really needed, don't shout advertisements."

"No, George. There you're behind the times. The last of that sort was sold up 'bout five years ago."

"Well, there's scientific research."

"And who pays for that? Who put up that big City and Guilds place at South Kensington? Enterprising business men! They fancy they'll have a bit of science going on, they want a handy Expert ever and again, and there you are! And what do you get for research when you've done it? Just a bare living and no outlook. They just keep you to make discoveries, and if they fancy they'll use 'em they do."

"One can teach."

"How much a year, George? How much a year? I suppose you must respect Carlyle! Well, you take Carlyle's test--solvency. (Lord! what a book that French Revolution of his is!) See what the world pays teachers and discoverers and what it pays business men! That shows the ones it really wants. There's a justice in these big things, George, over and above the apparent injustice. I tell you it wants trade. It's Trade that makes the world go round! Argosies! Venice! Empire!"

My uncle suddenly rose to his feet.

"You think it over, George. You think it over! And come up on Sunday to the new place--we got rooms in Gower Street now--and see your aunt. She's often asked for you, George often and often, and thrown it up at me about that bit of property--though I've always said and always will, that twenty-five shillings in the pound is what I'll pay you and interest up to the nail. And think it over. It isn't me I ask you to help. It's yourself.

It's your aunt Susan. It's the whole concern. It's the commerce of your country. And we want you badly. I tell you straight, I know my limitations. You could take this place, you could make it go! I can see you at it--looking rather sour. Woosh is the word, George."

And he smiled endearingly.

"I got to dictate a letter," he said, ending the smile, and vanished into the outer room.

III

I didn't succumb without a struggle to my uncle's allurements. Indeed, I held out for a week while I contemplated life and my prospects. It was a crowded and muddled contemplation. It invaded even my sleep.

My interview with the Registrar, my talk with my uncle, my abrupt discovery of the hopeless futility of my passion for Marion, had combined to bring me to sense of crisis. What was I going to do with life?

I remember certain phases of my indecisions very well.

I remember going home from our talk. I went down Farringdon Street to the Embankment because I thought to go home by Holborn and Oxford Street would be too crowded for thinking.... That piece of Embankment from Blackfriars to Westminster still reminds me of that momentous hesitation.

You know, from first to last, I saw the business with my eyes open, I saw its ethical and moral values quite clearly. Never for a moment do I remember myself faltering from my persuasion that the sale of Tono-Bungay was a thoroughly dishonest

proceeding. The stuff was, I perceived, a mischievous trash, slightly stimulating, aromatic and attractive, likely to become a bad habit and train people in the habitual use of stronger tonics and insidiously dangerous to people with defective kidneys. It would cost about sevenpence the large bottle to make, including bottling, and we were to sell it at half a crown plus the cost of the patent medicine stamp. A thing that I will confess deterred me from the outset far more than the sense of dishonesty in this affair, was the supreme silliness of the whole concern. I still clung to the idea that the world of men was or should be a sane and just organisation, and the idea that I should set myself gravely, just at the fine springtime of my life, to developing a monstrous bottling and packing warehouse, bottling rubbish for the consumption of foolish, credulous and depressed people, had in it a touch of insanity. My early beliefs still clung to me. I felt assured that somewhere there must be a hitch in the fine prospect of ease and wealth under such conditions; that somewhere, a little overgrown, perhaps, but still traceable, lay a neglected, wasted path of use and honour for me.

My inclination to refuse the whole thing increased rather than diminished at first as I went along the Embankment. In my uncle's presence there had been a sort of glamour that had prevented an outright refusal. It was a revival of affection for him I felt in his presence, I think, in part, and in part an instinctive feeling that I must consider him as my host. But much more was it a curious persuasion he had the knack of inspiring--a persuasion not so much of his integrity and capacity as of the reciprocal and yielding foolishness of the world. One felt that he was silly and wild, but in some way silly and wild after the fashion of the universe. After all, one must live somehow. I astonished him and myself by temporising.

"No," said I, "I'll think it over!"

And as I went along the embankment the first effect was all against my uncle. He shrank--for a little while he continued to shrink--in perspective until he was only a very small shabby little man in a dirty back street, sending off a few hundred bottles of rubbish to foolish buyers. The great buildings on the right of us, the Inns and the School Board place--as it was then--Somerset House, the big hotels, the great bridges, Westminster's outlines ahead, had an effect of grey largeness that reduced him to the proportions of a busy black beetle in a crack in the floor.

And then my eye caught the advertisements on the south side of "Sorber's Food," of "Cracknell's Ferric Wine," very bright and prosperous signs, illuminated at night, and I realised how astonishingly they looked at home there, how evidently part they were in the whole thing.

I saw a man come charging out of Palace Yard--the policeman touched his helmet to him--with a hat and a bearing astonishingly like my uncle's. After all,--didn't Cracknell himself sit in the House?

Tono-Bungay shouted at me from a hoarding near Adelphi Terrace; I saw it afar off near Carfax Street; it cried out again upon me in Kensington High Street, and burst into a perfect clamour; six or seven times I saw it as I drew near my diggings. It certainly had an air of being something more than a dream.

Yes, I thought it over--thoroughly enough.... Trade rules the world. Wealth rather than trade! The thing was true, and true too was my uncle's proposition that the quickest way to get wealth is to sell the cheapest thing possible in the dearest bottle. He was frightfully right after all. Pecunia non olet,--a Roman emperor said that. Perhaps my great heroes in Plutarch were no more than such men, fine now only because they

are distant; perhaps after all this Socialism to which I had been drawn was only a foolish dream, only the more foolish because all its promises were conditionally true. Morris and these others played with it wittingly; it gave a zest, a touch of substance, to their aesthetic pleasures. Never would there be good faith enough to bring such things about. They knew it; every one, except a few young fools, knew it. As I crossed the corner of St. James's Park wrapped in thought, I dodged back just in time to escape a prancing pair of greys. A stout, common-looking woman, very magnificently dressed, regarded me from the carriage with a scornful eye. "No doubt," thought I, "a pill-vendor's wife...."

Running through all my thoughts, surging out like a refrain, was my uncle's master-stroke, his admirable touch of praise: "Make it all slick--and then make it go Woosh. I know you can! Oh! I KNOW you can!"

IV

Ewart as a moral influence was unsatisfactory. I had made up my mind to put the whole thing before him, partly to see how he took it, and partly to hear how it sounded when it was said. I asked him to come and eat with me in an Italian place near Panton Street where one could get a curious, interesting, glutting sort of dinner for eighteen-pence. He came with a disconcerting black-eye that he wouldn't explain. "Not so much a black-eye," he said, "as the aftermath of a purple patch.... What's your difficulty?"

"I'll tell you with the salad," I said.

But as a matter of fact I didn't tell him. I threw out that I was doubtful whether I ought to go into trade, or stick to teaching in view of my deepening socialist proclivities; and he,

warming with the unaccustomed generosity of a sixteen-penny Chianti, ran on from that without any further inquiry as to my trouble.

His utterances roved wide and loose.

"The reality of life, my dear Ponderevo," I remember him saying very impressively and punctuating with the nut-crackers as he spoke, "is Chromatic Conflict ... and Form. Get hold of that and let all these other questions go. The Socialist will tell you one sort of colour and shape is right, the Individualist another. What does it all amount to? What DOES it all amount to? NOTHING! I have no advice to give anyone,--except to avoid regrets. Be yourself, seek after such beautiful things as your own sense determines to be beautiful. And don't mind the headache in the morning.... For what, after all, is a morning, Ponderevo? It isn't like the upper part of a day!"

He paused impressively.

"What Rot!" I cried, after a confused attempt to apprehend him.

"Isn't it! And it's my bedrock wisdom in the matter! Take it or leave it, my dear George; take it or leave it."... He put down the nut-crackers out of my reach and lugged a greasy-looking note-book from his pocket. "I'm going to steal this mustard pot," he said.

I made noises of remonstrance.

"Only as a matter of design. I've got to do an old beast's tomb.

Wholesale grocer. I'll put it on his corners,--four mustard pots. I dare say he'd be glad of a mustard plaster now to cool him, poor devil, where he is. But anyhow,--here goes!"

V

It came to me in the small hours that the real moral touchstone for this great doubting of mind was Marion. I lay composing statements of my problem and imagined myself delivering them to her--and she, goddess-like and beautiful; giving her fine, simply-worded judgment.

"You see, it's just to give one's self over to the Capitalistic System," I imagined myself saying in good Socialist jargon; "it's surrendering all one's beliefs. We MAY succeed, we MAY grow rich, but where would the satisfaction be?"

Then she would say, "No! That wouldn't be right."

"But the alternative is to wait!"

Then suddenly she would become a goddess. She would turn upon me frankly and nobly, with shining eyes, with arms held out. "No," she would say, "we love one another. Nothing ignoble shall ever touch us. We love one another. Why wait to tell each other that, dear? What does it matter that we are poor and may keep poor?"

But indeed the conversation didn't go at all in that direction. At the sight of her my nocturnal eloquence became preposterous and all the moral values altered altogether. I had waited for her outside the door of the Parsian-robe establishment in Kensington High Street and walked home with her thence. I remember how she emerged into the warm evening light and that she wore a brown straw hat that made her, for once not only beautiful but pretty.

"I like that hat," I said by way of opening; and she smiled her

rare delightful smile at me.

"I love you," I said in an undertone, as we jostled closer on the pavement.

She shook her head forbiddingly, but she still smiled. Then--
"Be sensible!"

The High Street pavement is too narrow and crowded for conversation and we were some way westward before we spoke again.

"Look here," I said; "I want you, Marion. Don't you understand? I want you."

"Now!" she cried warningly.

I do not know if the reader will understand how a passionate lover, an immense admiration and desire, can be shot with a gleam of positive hatred. Such a gleam there was in me at the serene self-complacency of that "NOW!" It vanished almost before I felt it. I found no warning in it of the antagonisms latent between us.

"Marion," I said, "this isn't a trifling matter to me. I love you; I would die to get you.... Don't you care?"

"But what is the good?"

"You don't care," I cried. "You don't care a rap!"

"You know I care," she answered. "If I didn't-- If I didn't like you very much, should I let you come and meet me-- go about with you?"

"Well then," I said, "promise to marry me!"

"If I do, what difference will it make?"

We were separated by two men carrying a ladder who drove between us unawares.

"Marion," I asked when we got together again, "I tell you I want you to marry me."

"We can't."

"Why not?"

"We can't marry--in the street."

"We could take our chance!"

"I wish you wouldn't go on talking like this. What is the good?"

She suddenly gave way to gloom. "It's no good marrying" she said. "One's only miserable. I've seen other girls. When one's alone one has a little pocket-money anyhow, one can go about a little. But think of being married and no money, and perhaps children--you can't be sure...."

She poured out this concentrated philosophy of her class and type in jerky uncompleted sentences, with knitted brows, with discontented eyes towards the westward glow--forgetful, it seemed, for a moment even of me.

"Look here, Marion," I said abruptly, "what would you marry on?"

"What IS the good?" she began.

"Would you marry on three hundred a year?"

She looked at me for a moment. "That's six pounds a week," she said. "One could manage on that, easily. Smithie's brother--No, he only gets two hundred and fifty. He married a typewriting girl."

"Will you marry me if I get three hundred a year?"

She looked at me again, with a curious gleam of hope.

"IF!" she said.

I held out my hand and looked her in the eyes. "It's a bargain," I said.

She hesitated and touched my hand for an instant. "It's silly," she remarked as she did so. "It means really we're--" She paused.

"Yes?" said I.

"Engaged. You'll have to wait years. What good can it do you?"

"Not so many years." I answered.

For a moment she brooded.

Then she glanced at me with a smile, half-sweet, half-wistful, that has stuck in my memory for ever.

"I like you!" she said. "I shall like to be engaged to you."

And, faint on the threshold of hearing, I caught her ventured "dear!" It's odd that in writing this down my memory passed over

all that intervened and I feel it all again, and once again I'm Marion's boyish lover taking great joy in such rare and little things.

VI

At last I went to the address my uncle had given me in Gower Street, and found my aunt Susan waiting tea for him.

Directly I came into the room I appreciated the change in outlook that the achievement of Tono-Bungay had made almost as vividly as when I saw my uncle's new hat. The furniture of the room struck upon my eye as almost stately. The chairs and sofa were covered with chintz which gave it a dim, remote flavour of Bladesover; the mantel, the cornice, the gas pendant were larger and finer than the sort of thing I had grown accustomed to in London. And I was shown in by a real housemaid with real tails to her cap, and great quantities of reddish hair. There was my aunt too looking bright and pretty, in a blue-patterned tea-wrap with bows that seemed to me the quintessence of fashion. She was sitting in a chair by the open window with quite a pile of yellow-labelled books on the occasional table beside her. Before the large, paper-decorated fireplace stood a three-tiered cake-stand displaying assorted cakes, and a tray with all the tea equipage except the teapot, was on the large centre-table. The carpet was thick, and a spice of adventure was given it by a number of dyed sheep-skin mats.

"Hello!" said my aunt as I appeared. "It's George!"

"Shall I serve the tea now, Mem?" said the real housemaid, surveying our greeting coldly.

"Not till Mr. Ponderevo comes, Meggie," said my aunt, and grimaced with extraordinary swiftness and virulence as the

housemaid turned her back.

"Meggie she calls herself," said my aunt as the door closed, and left me to infer a certain want of sympathy.

"You're looking very jolly, aunt," said I.

"What do you think of all this old Business he's got?" asked my aunt.

"Seems a promising thing," I said.

"I suppose there is a business somewhere?"

"Haven't you seen it ?"

"Fraid I'd say something AT it George, if I did. So he won't let me. It came on quite suddenly. Brooding he was and writing letters and sizzling something awful--like a chestnut going to pop. Then he came home one day saying Tono-Bungay till I thought he was clean off his onion, and singing--what was it?"

"I'm afloat, I'm afloat," I guessed.

"The very thing. You've heard him. And saying our fortunes were made. Took me out to the Ho'burn Restaurant, George,--dinner, and we had champagne, stuff that blows up the back of your nose and makes you go SO, and he said at last he'd got things worthy of me--and we moved here next day. It's a swell house, George. Three pounds a week for the rooms. And he says the Business'll stand it."

She looked at me doubtfully.

"Either do that or smash," I said profoundly.

We discussed the question for a moment mutely with our eyes. My aunt slapped the pile of books from Mudie's.

"I've been having such a Go of reading, George. You never did!"

"What do you think of the business?" I asked.

"Well, they've let him have money," she said, and thought and raised her eyebrows.

"It's been a time," she went on. "The flapping about! Me sitting doing nothing and him on the go like a rocket. He's done wonders. But he wants you, George--he wants you. Sometimes he's full of hope--talks of when we're going to have a carriage and be in society--makes it seem so natural and topsy-turvy, I hardly know whether my old heels aren't up here listening to him, and my old head on the floor.... Then he gets depressed. Says he wants restraint. Says he can make a splash but can't keep on. Says if you don't come in everything will smash--But you are coming in?"

She paused and looked at me.

"Well--"

"You don't say you won't come in!"

"But look here, aunt," I said, "do you understand quite?... It's a quack medicine. It's trash."

"There's no law against selling quack medicine that I know of," said my aunt. She thought for a minute and became unusually grave. "It's our only chance, George," she said. "If it doesn't go..."

There came the slamming of a door, and a loud bellowing from the next apartment through the folding doors. "Here-er Shee Rulk lies Poo Tom Bo--oling."

"Silly old Concertina! Hark at him, George!" She raised her voice. "Don't sing that, you old Walrus, you! Sing 'I'm afloat!'"

One leaf of the folding doors opened and my uncle appeared.

"Hullo, George! Come along at last? Gossome tea-cake, Susan?"

"Thought it over George?" he said abruptly.

"Yes," said I.

"Coming in?"

I paused for a last moment and nodded yes.

"Ah!" he cried. "Why couldn't you say that a week ago?"

"I've had false ideas about the world," I said. "Oh! they don't matter now! Yes, I'll come, I'll take my chance with you, I won't hesitate again."

And I didn't. I stuck to that resolution for seven long years.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

HOW WE MADE TONO-BUNGAY HUM

I

So I made my peace with my uncle, and we set out upon this bright enterprise of selling slightly injurious rubbish at one-and-three-halfpence and two-and-nine a bottle, including the Government stamp. We made Tono-Bungay hum! It brought us wealth, influence, respect, the confidence of endless people. All that my uncle promised me proved truth and understatement; Tono-Bungay carried me to freedoms and powers that no life of scientific research, no passionate service of humanity could ever have given me....

It was my uncle's genius that did it. No doubt he needed me,--I was, I will admit, his indispensable right hand; but his was the brain to conceive. He wrote every advertisement; some of them even he sketched. You must remember that his were the days before the Time took to enterprise and the vociferous hawking of that antiquated Encyclopedia. That alluring, button-holing, let-me-just-tell-you-quite-soberly-something-you-ought-to-know style of newspaper advertisement, with every now and then a convulsive jump of some attractive phrase into capitals, was then almost a novelty. "Many people who are MODERATELY well think they are QUITE well," was one of his early efforts. The jerks in capitals were, "DO NOT NEED DRUGS OR MEDICINE," and "SIMPLY A PROPER REGIMEN TO GET YOU IN TONE." One was warned against the chemist or druggist who pushed "much-advertised nostrums" on one's attention. That trash did more harm than good. The thing needed was regimen--and Tono-Bungay!

Very early, too, was that bright little quarter column, at least it was usually a quarter column in the evening papers: "HILARITY--Tono-Bungay. Like Mountain Air in the Veins." The penetrating trio of questions: "Are you bored with your Business? Are you bored with your Dinner. Are you bored with your Wife?"

--that, too, was in our Gower Street days. Both these we had in our first campaign when we worked London south central, and west; and then, too, we had our first poster--the HEALTH, BEAUTY, AND STRENGTH one. That was his design; I happen still to have got by me the first sketch he made for it. I have reproduced it here with one or two others to enable the reader to understand the mental quality that initiated these familiar ornaments of London.

(The second one is about eighteen months later, the germ of the well-known "Fog" poster; the third was designed for an influenza epidemic, but never issued.)

These things were only incidental in my department.

I had to polish them up for the artist and arrange the business of printing and distribution, and after my uncle had had a violent and needless quarrel with the advertising manager of the Daily Regulator about the amount of display given to one of his happy thoughts, I also took up the negotiations of advertisements for the press.

We discussed and worked out distribution together first in the drawing-room floor in Gower Street with my aunt sometimes helping very shrewdly, and then, with a steadily improving type of cigar and older and older whisky, in his smuggery at their first house, the one in Beckenham. Often we worked far into the night sometimes until dawn.

We really worked infernally hard, and, I recall, we worked with a very decided enthusiasm, not simply on my uncle's part but mine, It was a game, an absurd but absurdly interesting game, and the points were scored in cases of bottles. People think a happy notion is enough to make a man rich, that fortunes can be made without toil. It's a dream, as every millionaire (except one or two lucky gamblers) can testify; I doubt if J.D. Rockefeller in

the early days of Standard Oil, worked harder than we did. We worked far into the night--and we also worked all day. We made a rule to be always dropping in at the factory unannounced to keep things right--for at first we could afford no properly responsible underlings--and we traveled London, pretending to be our own representatives and making all sorts of special arrangements.

But none of this was my special work, and as soon as we could get other men in, I dropped the traveling, though my uncle found it particularly interesting and kept it up for years. "Does me good, George, to see the chaps behind their counters like I was once," he explained. My special and distinctive duty was to give Tono-Bungay substance and an outward and visible bottle, to translate my uncle's great imaginings into the creation of case after case of labelled bottles of nonsense, and the punctual discharge of them by railway, road and steamer towards their ultimate goal in the Great Stomach of the People. By all modern standards the business was, as my uncle would say, "absolutely bona fide." We sold our stuff and got the money, and spent the money honestly in lies and clamour to sell more stuff. Section by section we spread it over the whole of the British Isles; first working the middle-class London suburbs, then the outer suburbs, then the home counties, then going (with new bills and a more pious style of "ad") into Wales, a great field always for a new patent-medicine, and then into Lancashire.

My uncle had in his inner office a big map of England, and as we took up fresh sections of the local press and our consignments invaded new areas, flags for advertisements and pink underlines for orders showed our progress.

"The romance of modern commerce, George!" my uncle would say, rubbing his hands together and drawing in air through his teeth. "The romance of modern commerce, eh? Conquest. Province

by province. Like sogers."

We subjugated England and Wales; we rolled over the Cheviots with a special adaptation containing eleven per cent. of absolute alcohol; "Tono-Bungay: Thistle Brand." We also had the Fog poster adapted to a kilted Briton in a misty Highland scene.

Under the shadow of our great leading line we were presently taking subsidiary specialties into action; "Tono-Bungay Hair Stimulant" was our first supplement. Then came "Concentrated Tono-Bungay" for the eyes. That didn't go, but we had a considerable success with the Hair Stimulant. We broached the subject, I remember, in a little catechism beginning: "Why does the hair fall out? Because the follicles are fagged. What are the follicles?..." So it went on to the climax that the Hair Stimulant contained all "The essential principles of that most reviving tonic, Tono-Bungay, together with an emollient and nutritious oil derived from crude Neat's Foot Oil by a process of refinement, separation and deodorization.... It will be manifest to any one of scientific attainments that in Neat's Foot Oil derived from the hoofs and horns of beasts, we must necessarily have a natural skin and hair lubricant."

And we also did admirable things with our next subsidiaries, "Tono-Bungay Lozenges," and "Tono-Bungay Chocolate." These we urged upon the public for their extraordinary nutritive and recuperative value in cases of fatigue and strain. We gave them posters and illustrated advertisements showing climbers hanging from marvelously vertical cliffs, cyclist champions upon the track, mounted messengers engaged in Aix-to-Ghent rides, soldiers lying out in action under a hot sun. "You can GO for twenty-four hours," we declared, "on Tono-Bungay Chocolate." We didn't say whether you could return on the same commodity. We also showed a dreadfully barristerish barrister, wig, side-whiskers, teeth, a horribly life-like portrait of all existing barristers, talking

at a table, and beneath, this legend: "A Four Hours' Speech on Tono-Bungay Lozenges, and as fresh as when he began." Then brought in regiments of school-teachers, revivalist ministers, politicians and the like. I really do believe there was an element of "kick" in the strychnine in these lozenges, especially in those made according to our earlier formula. For we altered all our formulae--invariably weakening them enormously as sales got ahead.

In a little while--so it seems to me now--we were employing travelers and opening up Great Britain at the rate of a hundred square miles a day. All the organisation throughout was sketched in a crude, entangled, half-inspired fashion by my uncle, and all of it had to be worked out into a practicable scheme of quantities and expenditure by me. We had a lot of trouble finding our travelers; in the end at least half of them were Irish-Americans, a wonderful breed for selling medicine. We had still more trouble over our factory manager, because of the secrets of the inner room, and in the end we got a very capable woman, Mrs. Hampton Diggs, who had formerly managed a large millinery workroom, whom we could trust to keep everything in good working order without finding out anything that wasn't put exactly under her loyal and energetic nose. She conceived a high opinion of Tono-Bungay and took it in all forms and large quantities so long as I knew her. It didn't seem to do her any harm. And she kept the girls going quite wonderfully.

My uncle's last addition to the Tono-Bungay group was the Tono-Bungay Mouthwash. The reader has probably read a hundred times that inspiring inquiry of his, "You are Young Yet, but are you Sure Nothing has Aged your Gums?"

And after that we took over the agency for three or four good American lines that worked in with our own, and could be handled with it; Texan Embrocation, and "23--to clear the system" were

the chief....

I set down these bare facts. To me they are all linked with the figure of my uncle. In some of the old seventeenth and early eighteenth century prayerbooks at Bladesover there used to be illustrations with long scrolls coming out of the mouths of the wood-cut figures. I wish I could write all this last chapter on a scroll coming out of the head of my uncle, show it all the time as unfolding and pouring out from a short, fattening, small-legged man with stiff cropped hair, disobedient glasses on a perky little nose, and a round stare behind them. I wish I could show you him breathing hard and a little through his nose as his pen scrabbled out some absurd inspiration for a poster or a picture page, and make you hear his voice, charged with solemn import like the voice of a squeaky prophet, saying, "George! list'n! I got an ideer. I got a notion! George!"

I should put myself into the same picture. Best setting for us, I think, would be the Beckenham snugery, because there we worked hardest. It would be the lamplit room of the early nineties, and the clock upon the mantel would indicate midnight or later. We would be sitting on either side of the fire, I with a pipe, my uncle with a cigar or cigarette. There would be glasses standing inside the brass fender. Our expressions would be very grave. My uncle used to sit right back in his armchair; his toes always turned in when he was sitting down and his legs had a way of looking curved, as though they hadn't bones or joints but were stuffed with sawdust.

"George, whad'yer think of T.B. for sea-sickness?" he would say.

"No good that I can imagine."

"Oom! No harm TRYING, George. We can but try."

I would suck my pipe. "Hard to get at. Unless we sold our stuff specially at the docks. Might do a special at Cook's office, or in the Continental Bradshaw."

"It 'ud give 'em confidence, George."

He would Zzzz, with his glasses reflecting the red of the glowing coals.

"No good hiding our light under a Bushel," he would remark.

I never really determined whether my uncle regarded Tono-Bungay as a fraud, or whether he didn't come to believe in it in a kind of way by the mere reiteration of his own assertions. I think that his average attitude was one of kindly, almost parental, toleration. I remember saying on one occasion, "But you don't suppose this stuff ever did a human being the slightest good all?" and how his face assumed a look of protest, as of one reproving harshness and dogmatism.

"You've a hard nature, George," he said. "You're too ready to run things down. How can one TELL? How can one venture to TELL!..."

I suppose any creative and developing game would have interested me in those years. At any rate, I know I put as much zeal into this Tono-Bungay as any young lieutenant could have done who suddenly found himself in command of a ship. It was extraordinarily interesting to me to figure out the advantage accruing from this shortening of the process or that, and to weigh it against the capital cost of the alteration. I made a sort of machine for sticking on the labels, that I patented; to this day there is a little trickle of royalties to me from that. I also contrived to have our mixture made concentrated, got the

bottles, which all came sliding down a guarded slant-way, nearly filled with distilled water at one tap, and dripped our magic ingredients in at the next. This was an immense economy of space for the inner sanctum. For the bottling we needed special taps, and these, too, I invented and patented.

We had a sort of endless band of bottles sliding along an inclined glass trough made slippery with running water. At one end a girl held them up to the light, put aside any that were imperfect and placed the others in the trough; the filling was automatic; at the other end a girl slipped in the cork and drove it home with a little mallet. Each tank, the little one for the vivifying ingredients and the big one for distilled water, had a level indicator, and inside I had a float arrangement that stopped the slide whenever either had sunk too low. Another girl stood ready with my machine to label the corked bottles and hand them to the three packers, who slipped them into their outer papers and put them, with a pad of corrugated paper between each pair, into a little groove from which they could be made to slide neatly into position in our standard packing-case. It sounds wild, I know, but I believe I was the first man in the city of London to pack patent medicines through the side of the packing-case, to discover there was a better way in than by the lid. Our cases packed themselves, practically; had only to be put into position on a little wheeled tray and when full pulled to the lift that dropped them to the men downstairs, who padded up the free space and nailed on top and side. Our girls, moreover, packed with corrugated paper and matchbook-wood box partitions when everybody else was using expensive young men to pack through the top of the box with straw, many breakages and much waste and confusion.

II

As I look back at them now, those energetic years seem all

compacted to a year or so; from the days of our first hazardous beginning in Farringdon Street with barely a thousand pounds' worth of stuff or credit all told--and that got by something perilously like snatching--to the days when my uncle went to the public on behalf of himself and me (one-tenth share) and our silent partners, the drug wholesalers and the printing people and the owner of that group of magazines and newspapers, to ask with honest confidence for L150,000. Those silent partners were remarkably sorry, I know, that they had not taken larger shares and given us longer credit when the subscriptions came pouring in. My uncle had a clear half to play with (including the one-tenth understood to be mine).

L150,000--think of it!--for the goodwill in a string of lies and a trade in bottles of mitigated water! Do you realise the madness of the world that sanctions such a thing? Perhaps you don't. At times use and wont certainly blinded me. If it had not been for Ewart, I don't think I should have had an inkling of the wonderfulness of this development of my fortunes; I should have grown accustomed to it, fallen in with all its delusions as completely as my uncle presently did. He was immensely proud of the flotation. "They've never been given such value," he said, "for a dozen years." But Ewart, with his gesticulating hairy hands and bony wrists, his single-handed chorus to all this as it played itself over again in my memory, and he kept my fundamental absurdity illuminated for me during all this astonishing time.

"It's just on all fours with the rest of things," he remarked; "only more so. You needn't think you're anything out of the way."

I remember one disquisition very distinctly. It was just after Ewart had been to Paris on a mysterious expedition to "rough in" some work for a rising American sculptor. This young man had a commission for an allegorical figure of Truth (draped, of

course) for his State Capitol, and he needed help. Ewart had returned with his hair cut en brosse and with his costume completely translated into French. He wore, I remember, a bicycling suit of purplish-brown, baggy beyond ageing--the only creditable thing about it was that it had evidently not been made for him--a voluminous black tie, a decadent soft felt hat and several French expletives of a sinister description. "Silly clothes, aren't they?" he said at the sight of my startled eye. "I don't know why I got'm. They seemed all right over there."

He had come down to our Raggett Street place to discuss a benevolent project of mine for a poster by him, and he scattered remarkable discourse over the heads (I hope it was over the heads) of our bottlers.

"What I like about it all, Ponderevo, is its poetry.... That's where we get the pull of the animals. No animal would ever run a factory like this. Think!... One remembers the Beaver, of course. He might very possibly bottle things, but would he stick a label round 'em and sell 'em? The Beaver is a dreamy fool, I'll admit, him and his dams, but after all there's a sort of protection about 'em, a kind of muddy practicality! They prevent things getting at him. And it's not your poetry only. It's the poetry of the customer too. Poet answering to poet--soul to soul. Health, Strength and Beauty--in a bottle--the magic philtre! Like a fairy tale....

"Think of the people to whom your bottles of footle go! (I'm calling it footle, Ponderevo, out of praise," he said in parenthesis.)

"Think of the little clerks and jaded women and overworked people. People overstrained with wanting to do, people overstrained with wanting to be.... People, in fact, overstrained.... The real trouble of life, Ponderevo, isn't that

we exist--that's a vulgar error; the real trouble is that we DON'T really exist and we want to. That's what this--in the highest sense--just stands for! The hunger to be--for once--really alive--to the finger tips!...

"Nobody wants to do and be the things people are--nobody. YOU don't want to preside over this--this bottling; I don't want to wear these beastly clothes and be led about by you; nobody wants to keep on sticking labels on silly bottles at so many farthings a gross. That isn't existing! That's--sus--substratum. None of us want to be what we are, or to do what we do. Except as a sort of basis. What do we want? You know. I know. Nobody confesses. What we all want to be is something perpetually young and beautiful--young Joves--young Joves, Ponderevo" --his voice became loud, harsh and declamatory--"pursuing coy half-willing nymphs through everlasting forests."...

There was a just-perceptible listening hang in the work about us.

"Come downstairs," I interrupted, "we can talk better there."

"I can talk better here," he answered.

He was just going on, but fortunately the implacable face of Mrs. Hampton Diggs appeared down the aisle of bottling machines.

"All right," he said, "I'll come."

In the little sanctum below, my uncle was taking a digestive pause after his lunch and by no means alert. His presence sent Ewart back to the theme of modern commerce, over the excellent cigar my uncle gave him. He behaved with the elaborate deference due to a business magnate from an unknown man.

"What I was pointing out to your nephew, sir," said Ewart,

putting both elbows on the table, "was the poetry of commerce. He doesn't, you know, seem to see it at all."

My uncle nodded brightly. "Whad I tell 'im," he said round his cigar.

"We are artists. You and I, sir, can talk, if you will permit me, as one artist to another. It's advertisement has--done it. Advertisement has revolutionised trade and industry; it is going to revolutionise the world. The old merchant used to tote about commodities; the new one creates values. Doesn't need to tote. He takes something that isn't worth anything--or something that isn't particularly worth anything--and he makes it worth something. He takes mustard that is just like anybody else's mustard, and he goes about saying, shouting, singing, chalking on walls, writing inside people's books, putting it everywhere, 'Smith's Mustard is the Best.' And behold it is the best!"

"True," said my uncle, chubbily and with a dreamy sense of mysticism; "true!"

"It's just like an artist; he takes a lump of white marble on the verge of a lime-kiln, he chips it about, he makes--he makes a monument to himself--and others--a monument the world will not willingly let die. Talking of mustard, sir, I was at Clapham Junction the other day, and all the banks are overgrown with horse radish that's got loose from a garden somewhere. You know what horseradish is--grows like wildfire--spreads --spreads. I stood at the end of the platform looking at the stuff and thinking about it. 'Like fame,' I thought, 'rank and wild where it isn't wanted. Why don't the really good things in life grow like horseradish?' I thought. My mind went off in a peculiar way it does from that to the idea that mustard costs a penny a tin--I bought some the other day for a ham I had. It came into my head that it would be ripping good business to use horseradish to

adulterate mustard. I had a sort of idea that I could plunge into business on that, get rich and come back to my own proper monumental art again. And then I said, 'But why adulterate? I don't like the idea of adulteration.'

"Shabby," said my uncle, nodding his head. "Bound to get found out!"

"And totally unnecessary, too! Why not do up a mixture--three-quarters pounded horseradish and a quarter mustard--give it a fancy name--and sell it at twice the mustard price. See? I very nearly started the business straight away, only something happened. My train came along."

"Jolly good ideer," said my uncle. He looked at me. "That really is an ideer, George," he said.

"Take shavin's, again! You know that poem of Longfellow's, sir, that sounds exactly like the first declension. What is it?--'Marr's a maker, men say!'"

My uncle nodded and gurgled some quotation that died away.

'Jolly good poem, George," he said in an aside to me.

"Well, it's about a carpenter and a poetic Victorian child, you know, and some shavin's. The child made no end out of the shavin's. So might you. Powder 'em. They might be anything. Soak 'em in jipper,--Xylo-tobacco! Powder'em and get a little tar and turpentinous smell in,--wood-packing for hot baths--a Certain Cure for the scourge of Influenza! There's all these patent grain foods,--what Americans call cereals. I believe I'm right, sir, in saying they're sawdust."

"No!" said my uncle, removing his cigar; "as far as I can find

out it's really grain,--spoilt grain.... I've been going into that."

"Well, there you are!" said Ewart. "Say it's spoilt grain. It carried out my case just as well. Your modern commerce is no more buying and selling than sculpture. It's mercy--it's salvation. It's rescue work! It takes all sorts of fallen commodities by the hand and raises them. Cana isn't in it. You turn water--into Tono-Bungay."

"Tono-Bungay's all right," said my uncle, suddenly grave. "We aren't talking of Tono-Bungay."

"Your nephew, sir, is hard; he wants everything to go to a sort of predestinated end; he's a Calvinist of Commerce. Offer him a dustbin full of stuff; he calls it refuse--passes by on the other side. Now YOU, sir you'd make cinders respect themselves."

My uncle regarded him dubiously for a moment. But there was a touch of appreciation in his eye.

"Might make 'em into a sort of sanitary brick," he reflected over his cigar end.

"Or a friable biscuit. Why NOT? You might advertise: 'Why are Birds so Bright? Because they digest their food perfectly! Why do they digest their food so perfectly? Because they have a gizzard! Why hasn't man a gizzard? Because he can buy Ponderevo's Asphalt Triturating, Friable Biscuit--Which is Better.'"

He delivered the last words in a shout, with his hairy hand flourished in the air....

"Damn clever fellow," said my uncle, after he had one. "I know a

man when I see one. He'd do. But drunk, I should say. But that only makes some chap brighter . If he WANTS to do that poster, he can. Zzzz. That ideer of his about the horseradish. There's something in that, George. I'm going to think over that...."

I may say at once that my poster project came to nothing in the end, though Ewart devoted an interesting week to the matter. He let his unfortunate disposition to irony run away with him. He produced a picture of two beavers with a subtle likeness, he said, to myself and my uncle--the likeness to my uncle certainly wasn't half bad--and they were bottling rows and rows of Tono-Bungay, with the legend "Modern commerce." It certainly wouldn't have sold a case, though he urged it on me one cheerful evening on the ground that it would "arouse curiosity." In addition he produced a quite shocking study of my uncle, excessively and needlessly nude, but, so far as I was able to judge, an admirable likeness, engaged in feats of strength of a Gargantuan type before an audience of deboshed and shattered ladies. The legend, "Health, Beauty, Strength," below, gave a needed point to his parody. This he hung up in the studio over the oil shop, with a flap of brown paper; by way of a curtain over it to accentuate its libellous offence.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

MARION I

As I look back on those days in which we built up the great Tono-Bungay property out of human hope and credit for bottles and rent and printing, I see my life as it were arranged in two parallel columns of unequal width, a wider, more diffused, eventful and various one which continually broadens out, the business side of my life, and a narrow, darker and darkling one shot ever and again with a gleam of happiness, my home-life with

Marion. For, of course, I married Marion.

I didn't, as a matter of fact, marry her until a year after Tono-Bungay was thoroughly afloat, and then only after conflicts and discussions of a quite strenuous sort. By that time I was twenty-four. It seems the next thing to childhood now. We were both in certain directions unusually ignorant and simple; we were temperamentally antagonistic, and we hadn't--I don't think we were capable of--an idea in common. She was young and extraordinarily conventional--she seemed never to have an idea of her own but always the idea of her class--and I was young and sceptical, enterprising and passionate; the two links that held us together were the intense appeal her physical beauty had for me, and her appreciation of her importance in my thoughts. There can be no doubt of my passion for her. In her I had discovered woman desired. The nights I have lain awake on account of her, writhing, biting my wrists in a fever of longing!

...

I have told how I got myself a silk hat and black coat to please her on Sunday--to the derision of some of my fellow-students who charged to meet me, and how we became engaged. But that was only the beginning of our difference. To her that meant the beginning of a not unpleasant little secrecy, an occasional use of verbal endearments, perhaps even kisses. It was something to go on indefinitely, interfering in no way with her gossiping spells of work at Smithie's. To me it was a pledge to come together into the utmost intimacy of soul and body so soon as we could contrive it....

I don't know if it will strike the reader that I am setting out to discuss the queer, unwise love relationship and my bungle of a marriage with excessive solemnity. But to me it seems to reach out to vastly wider issues than our little personal affair. I've thought over my life. In these last few years I've tried to get

at least a little wisdom out of it. And in particular I've thought over this part of my life. I'm enormously impressed by the ignorant, unguided way in which we two entangled ourselves with each other. It seems to me the queerest thing in all this network of misunderstandings and misstatements and faulty and ramshackle conventions which makes up our social order as the individual meets it, that we should have come together so accidentally and so blindly. Because we were no more than samples of the common fate. Love is not only the cardinal fact in the individual life, but the most important concern of the community; after all, the way in which the young people of this generation pair off determines the fate of the nation; all the other affairs of the State are subsidiary to that. And we leave it to flushed and blundering youth to stumble on its own significance, with nothing to guide in but shocked looks and sentimental twaddle and base whisperings and cant-smearred examples.

I have tried to indicate something of my own sexual development in the preceding chapter. Nobody was ever frank and decent with me in this relation; nobody, no book, ever came and said to me thus and thus is the world made, and so and so is necessary. Everything came obscurely, indefinitely, perplexingly; and all I knew of law or convention in the matter had the form of threatenings and prohibitions. Except through the furtive, shameful talk of my coevals at Goudhurst and Wimblehurst, I was not even warned against quite horrible dangers. My ideas were made partly of instinct, partly of a romantic imagination, partly woven out of a medley of scraps of suggestion that came to me haphazard. I had read widely and confusedly "Vathek," Shelley, Tom Paine, Plutarch, Carlyle, Haeckel, William Morris, the Bible, the Freethinker, the Clarion, "The Woman Who Did,"--I mention the ingredients that come first to mind. All sorts of ideas were jumbled up in me and never a lucid explanation. But it was evident to me that the world regarded Shelley, for

example, as a very heroic as well as beautiful person; and that to defy convention and succumb magnificently to passion was the proper thing to do to gain the respect and affection of all decent people.

And the make-up of Marion's mind in the matter was an equally irrational affair. Her training had been one, not simply of silences, but suppressions. An enormous force of suggestion had so shaped her that the intense natural fastidiousness of girlhood had developed into an absolute perversion of instinct. For all that is cardinal in this essential business of life she had one inseparable epithet--"horrid." Without any such training she would have been a shy lover, but now she was an impossible one. For the rest she had derived, I suppose, partly from the sort of fiction she got from the Public Library, and partly from the workroom talk at Smithie's. So far as the former origin went, she had an idea of love as a state of worship and service on the part of the man and of condescension on the part of the woman. There was nothing "horrid" about it in any fiction she had read. The man gave presents, did services, sought to be in every way delightful. The woman "went out" with him, smiled at him, was kissed by him in decorous secrecy, and if he chanced to offend, denied her countenance and presence. Usually she did something "for his good" to him, made him go to church, made him give up smoking or gambling, smartened him up. Quite at the end of the story came a marriage, and after that the interest ceased.

That was the tenor of Marion's fiction; but I think the work-table conversation at Smithie's did something to modify that. At Smithie's it was recognised, I think, that a "fellow" was a possession to be desired; that it was better to be engaged to a fellow than not; that fellows had to be kept--they might be mislaid, they might even be stolen. There was a case of stealing at Smithie's, and many tears.

Smithie I met before we were married, and afterwards she became a frequent visitor to our house at Ealing. She was a thin, bright-eyed, hawk-nosed girl of thirtyodd, with prominent teeth, a high-pitched, eager voice and a disposition to be urgently smart in her dress. Her hats were startling and various, but invariably disconcerting, and she talked in a rapid, nervous flow that was hilarious rather than witty, and broken by little screams of "Oh, my dear!" and "you never did!" She was the first woman I ever met who used scent. Poor old Smithie! What a harmless, kindly soul she really was, and how heartily I detested her! Out of the profits on the Persian robes she supported a sister's family of three children, she "helped" a worthless brother, and overflowed in help even to her workgirls, but that didn't weigh with me in those youthfully-narrow times. It was one of the intense minor irritations of my married life that Smithie's whirlwind chatter seemed to me to have far more influence with Marion than anything I had to say. Before all things I coveted her grip upon Marion's inaccessible mind.

In the workroom at Smithie's, I gathered, they always spoke of me demurely as "A Certain Person." I was rumoured to be dreadfully "clever," and there were doubts--not altogether without justification--of the sweetness of my temper.

II

Well, these general explanations will enable the reader to understand the distressful times we two had together when presently I began to feel on a footing with Marion and to fumble conversationally for the mind and the wonderful passion I felt, obstinately and stupidity, must be in her. I think she thought me the maddest of sane men; "clever," in fact, which at Smithie's was, I suppose, the next thing to insanity, a word intimating incomprehensible and incalculable motives.... She could be shocked at anything, she misunderstood everything, and her weapon

was a sulky silence that knitted her brows, spoilt her mouth and robbed her face of beauty. "Well, if we can't agree, I don't see why you should go on talking," she used to say. That would always enrage me beyond measure. Or, "I'm afraid I'm not clever enough to understand that."

Silly little people! I see it all now, but then I was no older than she and I couldn't see anything but that Marion, for some inexplicable reason, wouldn't come alive.

We would contrive semi-surreptitious walks on Sunday, and part speechless with the anger of indefinable offences. Poor Marion! The things I tried to put before her, my fermenting ideas about theology, about Socialism, about aesthetics--the very words appalled her, gave her the faint chill of approaching impropriety, the terror of a very present intellectual impossibility. Then by an enormous effort I would suppress myself for a time and continue a talk that made her happy, about Smithie's brother, about the new girl who had come to the workroom, about the house we would presently live in. But there we differed a little. I wanted to be accessible to St. Paul's or Cannon Street Station, and she had set her mind quite resolutely upon Eating.... It wasn't by any means quarreling all the time, you understand. She liked me to play the lover "nicely"; she liked the effect of going about--we had lunches, we went to Earl's Court, to Kew, to theatres and concerts, but not often to concerts, because, though Marion "liked" music, she didn't like "too much of it," to picture shows--and there was a nonsensical sort of babytalk I picked up--I forget where now--that became a mighty peacemaker.

Her worst offence for me was an occasional excursion into the Smithie style of dressing, debased West Kensington. For she had no sense at all of her own beauty. She had no comprehension whatever of beauty of the body, and she could slash her beautiful

lines to rags with hat-brims and trimmings. Thank Heaven! a natural refinement, a natural timidity, and her extremely slender purse kept her from the real Smithie efflorescence! Poor, simple, beautiful, kindly limited Marion! Now that I am forty-five, I can look back at her with all my old admiration and none of my old bitterness with a new affection and not a scrap of passion, and take her part against the equally stupid, drivingly-energetic, sensuous, intellectual sprawl I used to be. I was a young beast for her to have married--a hound beast. With her it was my business to understand and control--and I exacted fellowship, passion....

We became engaged, as I have told; we broke it off and joined again. We went through a succession of such phases. We had no sort of idea what was wrong with us. Presently we were formally engaged. I had a wonderful interview with her father, in which he was stupendously grave and H--less, wanted to know about my origins and was tolerant (exasperatingly tolerant) because my mother was a servant, and afterwards her mother took to kissing me, and I bought a ring. But the speechless aunt, I gathered, didn't approve--having doubts of my religiosity. Whenever we were estranged we could keep apart for days; and to begin with, every such separation was a relief. And then I would want her; a restless longing would come upon me. I would think of the flow of her arms, of the soft, gracious bend of her body. I would lie awake or dream of a transfigured Marion of light and fire. It was indeed Dame Nature driving me on to womankind in her stupid, inexorable way; but I thought it was the need of Marion that troubled me. So I always went back to Marion at last and made it up and more or less conceded or ignored whatever thing had parted us, and more and more I urged her to marry me....

In the long run that became a fixed idea. It entangled my will and my pride; I told myself I was not going to be beaten. I hardened to the business. I think, as a matter of fact, my real

passion for Marion had waned enormously long before we were married, that she had lived it down by sheer irresponsiveness. When I felt sure of my three hundred a year she stipulated for delay, twelve months' delay, "to see how things would turn out." There were times when she seemed simply an antagonist holding out irritatingly against something I had to settle. Moreover, I began to be greatly distracted by the interest and excitement of Tono-Bungay's success, by the change and movement in things, the going to and fro. I would forget her for days together, and then desire her with an irritating intensity at last, one Saturday afternoon, after a brooding morning, I determined almost savagely that these delays must end.

I went off to the little home at Walham Green, and made Marion come with me to Putney Common. Marion wasn't at home when I got there and I had to fret for a time and talk to her father, who was just back from his office, he explained, and enjoying himself in his own way in the greenhouse.

"I'm going to ask your daughter to marry me!" I said. "I think we've been waiting long enough."

"I don't approve of long engagements either," said her father. "But Marion will have her own way about it, anyhow. Seen this new powdered fertiliser?"

I went in to talk to Mrs. Ramboat. "She'll want time to get her things," said Mrs. Ramboat....

I and Marion sat down together on a little seat under some trees at the top of Putney Hill, and I came to my point abruptly.

"Look here, Marion," I said, "are you going to marry me or are you not?"

She smiled at me. "Well," she said, "we're engaged--aren't we?"

"That can't go on for ever. Will you marry me next week?"

She looked me in the face. "We can't," she said.

"You promised to marry me when I had three hundred a year."

She was silent for a space. "Can't we go on for a time as we are? We COULD marry on three hundred a year. But it means a very little house. There's Smithie's brother. They manage on two hundred and fifty, but that's very little. She says they have a semi-detached house almost on the road, and hardly a bit of garden. And the wall to next-door is so thin they hear everything. When her baby cries--they rap. And people stand against the railings and talk.... Can't we wait? You're doing so well."

An extraordinary bitterness possessed me at this invasion of the stupendous beautiful business of love by sordid necessity. I answered her with immense restraint.

"If," I said, "we could have a double-fronted, detached house--at Ealing, say--with a square patch of lawn in front and a garden behind--and--and a tiled bathroom"

"That would be sixty pounds a year at least."

"Which means five hundred a year.... Yes, well, you see, I told my uncle I wanted that, and I've got it."

"Got what?"

"Five hundred pounds a year."

"Five hundred pounds!"

I burst into laughter that had more than a taste of bitterness.

"Yes," I said, "really! and NOW what do you think?"

"Yes," she said, a little flushed; "but be sensible! Do you really mean you've got a Rise, all at once, of two hundred a year?"

"To marry on--yes."

She scrutinised me a moment. "You've done this as a surprise!" she said, and laughed at my laughter. She had become radiant, and that made me radiant, too.

"Yes," I said, "yes," and laughed no longer bitterly.

She clasped her hands and looked me in the eyes.

She was so pleased that I forgot absolutely my disgust of a moment before. I forgot that she had raised her price two hundred pounds a year and that I had bought her at that.

"Come!" I said, standing up; "let's go towards the sunset, dear, and talk about it all. Do you know--this is a most beautiful world, an amazingly beautiful world, and when the sunset falls upon you it makes you into shining gold. No, not gold--into golden glass.... Into something better than either glass or gold."...

And for all that evening I wooed her and kept her glad. She made me repeat my assurances over again and still doubted a little.

We furnished that double-fronted house from attic--it ran to an

attic--to cellar, and created a garden.

"Do you know Pampas Grass?" said Marion. "I love Pampas Grass... if there is room."

"You shall have Pampas Grass," I declared. And there were moments as we went in imagination about that house together, when my whole being cried out to take her in my arms--now. But I refrained. On that aspect of life I touched very lightly in that talk, very lightly because I had had my lessons. She promised to marry me within two months' time. Shyly, reluctantly, she named a day, and next afternoon, in heat and wrath, we "broke it off" again for the last time. We split upon procedure. I refused flatly to have a normal wedding with wedding cake, in white favours, carriages and the rest of it. It dawned upon me suddenly in conversation with her and her mother, that this was implied. I blurted out my objection forthwith, and this time it wasn't any ordinary difference of opinion; it was a "row." I don't remember a quarter of the things we flung out in that dispute. I remember her mother reiterating in tones of gentle remonstrance: "But, George dear, you must have a cake--to send home." I think we all reiterated things. I seem to remember a refrain of my own: "A marriage is too sacred a thing, too private a thing, for this display. Her father came in and stood behind me against the wall, and her aunt appeared beside the sideboard and stood with arms, looking from speaker to speaker, a sternly gratified prophetess. It didn't occur to me then! How painful it was to Marion for these people to witness my rebellion.

"But, George," said her father, "what sort of marriage do you want? You don't want to go to one of those there registry offices?"

"That's exactly what I'd like to do. Marriage is too private a thing--"

"I shouldn't feel married," said Mrs. Ramboat.

"Look here, Marion," I said; "we are going to be married at a registry office. I don't believe in all these fripperies and superstitions, and I won't submit to them. I've agreed to all sorts of things to please you."

"What's he agreed to?" said her father--unheeded.

"I can't marry at a registry office," said Marion, sallow-white.

"Very well," I said. "I'll marry nowhere else."

"I can't marry at a registry office."

"Very well," I said, standing up, white and tense and it amazed me, but I was also exultant; "then we won't marry at all."

She leant forward over the table, staring blankly. But presently her half-averted face began to haunt me as she had sat at the table, and her arm and the long droop of her shoulder.

III

The next day I did an unexampled thing. I sent a telegram to my uncle, "Bad temper not coming to business," and set off for Highgate and Ewart. He was actually at work--on a bust of Millie, and seemed very glad for any interruption.

"Ewart, you old Fool," I said, "knock off and come for a day's gossip. I'm rotten. There's a sympathetic sort of lunacy about you. Let's go to Staines and paddle up to Windsor."

"Girl?" said Ewart, putting down a chisel.

"Yes."

That was all I told him of my affair.

"I've got no money," he remarked, to clear up ambiguity in my invitation.

We got a jar of shandy-gaff, some food, and, on Ewart's suggestion, two Japanese sunshades in Staines; we demanded extra cushions at the boathouse and we spent an enormously soothing day in discourse and meditation, our boat moored in a shady place this side of Windsor. I seem to remember Ewart with a cushion forward, only his heels and sunshade and some black ends of hair showing, a voice and no more, against the shining, smoothly-streaming mirror of the trees and bushes.

"It's not worth it," was the burthen of the voice. "You'd better get yourself a Millie, Ponderevo, and then you wouldn't feel so upset."

"No," I said decidedly, "that's not my way."

A thread of smoke ascended from Ewart for a while, like smoke from an altar.

"Everything's a muddle, and you think it isn't. Nobody knows where we are--because, as a matter of fact we aren't anywhere. Are women property--or are they fellow-creatures? Or a sort of proprietary goddesses? They're so obviously fellow-creatures. You believe in the goddess?"

"No," I said, "that's not my idea."

"What is your idea?"

"Well"

"H'm," said Ewart, in my pause.

"My idea," I said, "is to meet one person who will belong to me--to whom I shall belong--body and soul. No half-gods! Wait till she comes. If she comes at all.... We must come to each other young and pure."

"There's no such thing as a pure person or an impure person.... Mixed to begin with."

This was so manifestly true that it silenced me altogether.

"And if you belong to her and she to you, Ponderevo--which end's the head?"

I made no answer except an impatient "oh!"

For a time we smoked in silence....

"Did I tell you, Ponderevo, of a wonderful discovery I've made?" Ewart began presently.

"No," I said, "what is it?"

"There's no Mrs. Grundy."

"No?"

"No! Practically not. I've just thought all that business out. She's merely an instrument, Ponderevo. She's borne the blame. Grundy's a man. Grundy unmasked. Rather lean and out of sorts. Early middle age. With bunchy black whiskers and a worried eye.

Been good so far, and it's fretting him! Moods! There's Grundy in a state of sexual panic, for example,--'For God's sake cover it up! They get together--they get together! It's too exciting! The most dreadful things are happening!' Rushing about--long arms going like a windmill. 'They must be kept apart!' Starts out for an absolute obliteration of everything absolute separations. One side of the road for men, and the other for women, and a hoarding--without posters between them. Every boy and girl to be sewed up in a sack and sealed, just the head and hands and feet out until twenty-one. Music abolished, calico garments for the lower animals! Sparrows to be suppressed--ab-so-lutely."

I laughed abruptly.

"Well, that's Mr. Grundy in one mood--and it puts Mrs. Grundy--She's a much-maligned person, Ponderevo--a rake at heart--and it puts her in a most painful state of fluster--most painful! She's an amenable creature. When Grundy tells her things are shocking, she's shocked--pink and breathless. She goes about trying to conceal her profound sense of guilt behind a haughty expression....

"Grundy, meanwhile, is in a state of complete whirlabout. Long lean knuckly hands pointing and gesticulating! 'They're still thinking of things--thinking of things! It's dreadful. They get it out of books. I can't imagine where they get it! I must watch! There're people over there whispering! Nobody ought to whisper!--There's something suggestive in the mere act! Then, pictures! In the museum--things too dreadful for words. Why can't we have pure art--with the anatomy all wrong and pure and nice--and pure fiction pure poetry, instead of all this stuff with allusions--allusions?... Excuse me! There's something up behind that locked door! The keyhole! In the interests of public morality--yes, Sir, as a pure good man--I insist--I'LL

look--it won't hurt me--I insist on looking my duty--M'm'm--the keyhole!"

He kicked his legs about extravagantly, and I laughed again.

"That's Grundy in one mood, Ponderevo. It isn't Mrs. Grundy. That's one of the lies we tell about women. They're too simple. Simple! Woman ARE simple! They take on just what men tell 'em."

Ewart meditated for a space. "Just exactly as it's put to them," he said, and resumed the moods of Mr. Grundy.

"Then you get old Grundy in another mood. Ever caught him nosing, Ponderevo? Mad with the idea of mysterious, unknown, wicked, delicious things. Things that aren't respectable. Wow! Things he mustn't do!... Any one who knows about these things, knows there's just as much mystery and deliciousness about Grundy's forbidden things as there is about eating ham. Jolly nice if it's a bright morning and you're well and hungry and having breakfast in the open air. Jolly unattractive if you're off colour. But Grundy's covered it all up and hidden it and put mucky shades and covers over it until he's forgotten it. Begins to fester round it in his mind. Has dreadful struggles--with himself about impure thoughts.... Then you set Grundy with hot ears,--curious in undertones. Grundy on the loose, Grundy in a hoarse whisper and with furtive eyes and convulsive movements--making things indecent. Evolving--in dense vapours--indecenty!

"Grundy sins. Oh, yes, he's a hypocrite. Sneaks round a corner and sins ugly. It's Grundy and his dark corners that make vice, vice! We artists--we have no vices.

"And then he's frantic with repentance. And wants to be cruel to fallen women and decent harmless sculptors of the simple

nude--like me--and so back to his panic again."

"Mrs. Grundy, I suppose, doesn't know he sins," I remarked.

"No? I'm not so sure.... But, bless her heart she's a woman.... She's a woman. Then again you get Grundy with a large greasy smile--like an accident to a butter tub--all over his face, being Liberal Minded--Grundy in his Anti-Puritan moments, 'trying not to see Harm in it'--Grundy the friend of innocent pleasure. He makes you sick with the Harm he's trying not to see in it...

"And that's why everything's wrong, Ponderevo. Grundy, damn him! stands in the light, and we young people can't see. His moods affect us. We catch his gusts of panic, his disease of nosing, his greasiness. We don't know what we may think, what we may say, he does his silly utmost to prevent our reading and seeing the one thing, the one sort of discussion we find--quite naturally and properly--supremely interesting. So we don't adolescence; we blunder up to sex. Dare--dare to look--and he may dirt you for ever! The girls are terror-stricken to silence by his significant whiskers, by the bleary something in his eyes."

Suddenly Ewart, with an almost Jack-in-the-box effect, sat up.

"He's about us everywhere, Ponderevo," he said, very solemnly. "Sometimes--sometimes I think he is--in our blood. In MINE."

He regarded me for my opinion very earnestly, with his pipe in the corner of his mouth.

"You're the remotest cousin he ever had," I said.

I reflected. "Look here, Ewart," I asked, "how would you have things different?"

He wrinkled up his queer face, regarded the wait and made his pipe gurgle for a space, thinking deeply.

"There are complications, I admit. We've grown up under the terror of Grundy and that innocent but docile and--yes--formidable lady, his wife. I don't know how far the complications aren't a disease, a sort of bleaching under the Grundy shadow.... It is possible there are things I have still to learn about women.... Man has eaten of the Tree of Knowledge. His innocence is gone. You can't have your cake and eat it. We're in for knowledge; let's have it plain and straight. I should begin, I think, by abolishing the ideas of decency and indecency...."

"Grundy would have fits!" I injected.

"Grundy, Ponderevo, would have cold douches--publicly--if the sight was not too painful--three times a day.... But I don't think, mind you, that I should let the sexes run about together. No. The fact behind the sexes--is sex. It's no good humbugging. It trails about--even in the best mixed company. Tugs at your ankle. The men get showing off and quarrelling--and the women. Or they're bored. I suppose the ancestral males have competed for the ancestral females ever since they were both some sort of grubby little reptile. You aren't going to alter that in a thousand years or so.... Never should you have a mixed company, never--except with only one man or only one woman. How would that be?...

"Or duets only?..."

"How to manage it? Some rule of etiquette, perhaps." ... He became portentously grave.

Then his long hand went out in weird gestures.

"I seem to see--I seem to see--a sort of City of Women, Ponderevo. Yes.... A walled enclosure--good stone-mason's work--a city wall, high as the walls of Rome, going about a garden. Dozens of square miles of garden--trees--fountains--arbours--lakes. Lawns on which the women play, avenues in which they gossip, boats.... Women like that sort of thing. Any woman who's been to a good eventful girls' school lives on the memory of it for the rest of her life. It's one of the pathetic things about women--the superiority of school and college--to anything they get afterwards. And this city-garden of women will have beautiful places for music, places for beautiful dresses, places for beautiful work. Everything a woman can want. Nurseries. Kindergartens. Schools. And no man--except to do rough work, perhaps--ever comes in. The men live in a world where they can hunt and engineer, invent and mine and manufacture, sail ships, drink deep and practice the arts, and fight--"

"Yes," I said, "but--"

He stilled me with a gesture.

"I'm coming to that. The homes of the women, Ponderevo, will be set in the wall of their city; each woman will have her own particular house and home, furnished after her own heart in her own manner--with a little balcony on the outside wall. Built into the wall--and a little balcony. And there she will go and look out, when the mood takes her, and all round the city there will be a broad road and seats and great shady trees. And men will stroll up and down there when they feel the need of feminine company; when, for instance, they want to talk about their souls or their characters or any of the things that only women will stand.... The women will lean over and look at the men and smile and talk to them as they fancy. And each woman will have this;

she will have a little silken ladder she can let down if she chooses--if she "wants to talk closer..."

"The men would still be competing."

"There perhaps--yes. But they'd have to abide by the women's decisions."

I raised one or two difficulties, and for a while we played with this idea.

"Ewart," I said, "this is like Doll's Island.

"Suppose," I reflected, "an unsuccessful man laid siege to a balcony and wouldn't let his rival come near it?"

"Move him on," said Ewart, "by a special regulation. As one does organ-grinders. No difficulty about that. And you could forbid it--make it against the etiquette. No life is decent without etiquette.... And people obey etiquette sooner than laws..."

"H'm," I said, and was struck by an idea that is remote in the world of a young man. "How about children?" I asked; "in the City? Girls are all very well. But boys, for example--grow up."

"Ah!" said Ewart. "Yes. I forgot. They mustn't grow up inside.... They'd turn out the boys when they were seven. The father must come with a little pony and a little gun and manly wear, and take the boy away. Then one could come afterwards to one's mother's balcony.... It must be fine to have a mother. The father and the son..."

"This is all very pretty in its way," I said at last, "but it's a dream. Let's come back to reality. What I want to know is, what are you going to do in Brompton, let us say, or Walham Green

NOW?"

"Oh! damn it!" he remarked, "Walham Green! What a chap you are, Ponderevo!" and he made an abrupt end to his discourse. He wouldn't even reply to my tentatives for a time.

"While I was talking just now," he remarked presently,

"I had a quite different idea."

"What?"

"For a masterpiece. A series. Like the busts of the Caesars. Only not heads, you know. We don't see the people who do things to us nowadays..."

"How will you do it, then?"

"Hands--a series of hands! The hands of the Twentieth Century. I'll do it. Some day some one will discover it--go there--see what I have done, and what is meant by it."

"See it where?"

"On the tombs. Why not? The Unknown Master of the Highgate Slope! All the little, soft feminine hands, the nervous ugly males, the hands of the flops, and the hands of the snatchers! And Grundy's loose, lean, knuckly affair--Grundy the terror!--the little wrinkles and the thumb! Only it ought to hold all the others together--in a slightly disturbing squeeze....Like Rodin's great Hand--you know the thing!"

IV

I forget how many days intervened between that last breaking off

of our engagement and Marion's surrender. But I recall now the sharpness of my emotion, the concentrated spirit of tears and laughter in my throat as I read the words of her unexpected letter--"I have thought over everything, and I was selfish...." I rushed off to Walham Green that evening to give back all she had given me, to beat her altogether at giving. She was extraordinarily gentle and generous that time, I remember, and when at last I left her, she kissed me very sweetly.

So we were married.

We were married with all the customary incongruity. I gave--perhaps after a while not altogether ungrudgingly--and what I gave, Marion took, with a manifest satisfaction. After all, I was being sensible. So that we had three livery carriages to the church (one of the pairs of horses matched) and coachmen--with improvised flavour and very shabby silk hats--bearing white favours on their whips, and my uncle intervened with splendour and insisted upon having a wedding breakfast sent in from a caterer's in Hammersmith. The table had a great display of chrysanthemums, and there was orange blossom in the significant place and a wonderful cake. We also circulated upwards of a score of wedges of that accompanied by silver-printed cards in which Marion's name of Ramboat was stricken out by an arrow in favour of Ponderevo. We had a little rally of Marion's relations, and several friends and friends' friends from Smithie's appeared in the church and drifted vestry-ward. I produced my aunt and uncle a select group of two. The effect in that shabby little house was one of exhilarating congestion. The side-board, in which lived the table-cloth and the "Apartments" card, was used for a display of the presents, eked out by the unused balance of the silver-printed cards.

Marion wore the white raiment of a bride, white silk and satin,

that did not suit her, that made her seem large and strange to me; she obtruded bows and unfamiliar contours. She went through all this strange ritual of an English wedding with a sacramental gravity that I was altogether too young and egotistical to comprehend. It was all extraordinarily central and important to her; it was no more than an offensive, complicated, and disconcerting intrusion of a world I was already beginning to criticise very bitterly, to me. What was all this fuss for? The mere indecent advertisement that I had been passionately in love with Marion! I think, however, that Marion was only very remotely aware of my smouldering exasperation at having in the end behaved "nicely." I had played--up to the extent of dressing my part; I had an admirably cut frock--coat, a new silk hat, trousers as light as I could endure them--lighter, in fact--a white waistcoat, night tie, light gloves. Marion, seeing me despondent had the unusual enterprise to whisper to me that I looked lovely; I knew too well I didn't look myself. I looked like a special coloured supplement to Men's Wear, or The Tailor and Cutter, Full Dress For Ceremonial Occasions. I had even the disconcerting sensations of an unfamiliar collar. I felt lost--in a strange body, and when I glanced down myself for reassurance, the straight white abdomen, the alien legs confirmed that impression.

My uncle was my best man, and looked like a banker--a little banker--in flower. He wore a white rose in his buttonhole. He wasn't, I think, particularly talkative. At least I recall very little from him.

"George" he said once or twice, "this is a great occasion for you--a very great occasion." He spoke a little doubtfully.

You see I had told him nothing about Marion until about a week before the wedding; both he and my aunt had been taken altogether by surprise. They couldn't, as people say, "make it out." My

aunt was intensely interested, much more than my uncle; it was then, I think, for the first time that I really saw that she cared for me. She got me alone, I remember, after I had made my announcement. "Now, George," she said, "tell me everything about her. Why didn't you tell--ME at least--before?"

I was surprised to find how difficult it was to tell her about Marion. I perplexed her.

"Then is she beautiful?" she asked at last.

"I don't know what you'll think of her," I parried. "I think--"

"Yes?"

"I think she might be the most beautiful person in the world."

"And isn't she? To you?"

"Of course," I said, nodding my head. "Yes. She IS..."

And while I don't remember anything my uncle said or did at the wedding, I do remember very distinctly certain little things, scrutiny, solicitude, a curious rare flash of intimacy in my aunt's eyes. It dawned on me that I wasn't hiding anything from her at all. She was dressed very smartly, wearing a big-plumed hat that made her neck seem longer and slenderer than ever, and when she walked up the aisle with that rolling stride of hers and her eye all on Marion, perplexed into self-forgetfulness, it wasn't somehow funny. She was, I do believe, giving my marriage more thought than I had done, she was concerned beyond measure at my black rage and Marion's blindness, she was looking with eyes that knew what loving is--for love.

In the vestry she turned away as we signed, and I verily believe

she was crying, though to this day I can't say why she should have cried, and she was near crying too when she squeezed my hand at parting--and she never said a word or looked at me, but just squeezed my hand....

If I had not been so grim in spirit, I think I should have found much of my wedding amusing. I remember a lot of ridiculous detail that still declines to be funny in my memory. The officiating clergyman had a cold, and turned his "n's" to "d's," and he made the most mechanical compliment conceivable about the bride's age when the register was signed. Every bride he had ever married had had it, one knew. And two middle-aged spinsters, cousins of Marion's and dressmakers at Barking, stand out. They wore marvellously bright and gay blouses and dim old skirts, and had an immense respect for Mr. Ramboat. They threw rice; they brought a whole bag with them and gave handfuls away to unknown little boys at the church door and so created a Lilliputian riot; and one had meant to throw a slipper. It was a very warm old silk slipper, I know, because she dropped it out of a pocket in the aisle--there was a sort of jumble in the aisle--and I picked it up for her. I don't think she actually threw it, for as we drove away from the church I saw her in a dreadful, and, it seemed to me, hopeless, struggle with her pocket; and afterwards my eye caught the missile of good fortune lying, it or its fellow, most obviously mislaid, behind the umbrella-stand in the hall....

The whole business was much more absurd, more incoherent, more human than I had anticipated, but I was far too young and serious to let the latter quality atone for its shortcomings. I am so remote from this phase of my youth that I can look back at it all as dispassionately as one looks at a picture--at some wonderful, perfect sort of picture that is inexhaustible; but at the time these things filled me with unspeakable resentment. Now I go round it all, look into its details, generalise about its

aspects. I'm interested, for example, to square it with my Bladesover theory of the British social scheme. Under stress of tradition we were all of us trying in the fermenting chaos of London to carry out the marriage ceremonies of a Bladesover tenant or one of the chubby middling sort of people in some dependent country town. There a marriage is a public function with a public significance. There the church is to a large extent the gathering-place of the community, and your going to be married a thing of importance to every one you pass on the road. It is a change of status that quite legitimately interests the whole neighbourhood. But in London there are no neighbours, nobody knows, nobody cares. An absolute stranger in an office took my notice, and our banns were proclaimed to ears that had never previously heard our names. The clergyman, even, who married us had never seen us before, and didn't in any degree intimate that he wanted to see us again.

Neighbours in London! The Ramboats did not know the names of the people on either side of them. As I waited for Marion before we started off upon our honeymoon flight, Mr. Ramboat, I remember, came and stood beside me and stared out of the window.

"There was a funeral over there yesterday," he said, by way of making conversation, and moved his head at the house opposite. "Quite a smart affair it was with a glass 'earse...."

And our little procession of three carriages with white-favour-adorned horses and drivers, went through all the huge, noisy, indifferent traffic like a lost china image in the coal-chute of an ironclad. Nobody made way for us, nobody cared for us; the driver of an omnibus jeered; for a long time we crawled behind an unamiable dust-cart. The irrelevant clatter and tumult gave a queer flavour of indecency to this public coming together of lovers. We seemed to have obtruded ourselves

shamelessly. The crowd that gathered outside the church would have gathered in the same spirit and with greater alacrity for a street accident....

At Charing Cross--we were going to Hastings--the experienced eye of the guard detected the significance of our unusual costume and he secured us a compartment.

"Well," said I, as the train moved out of the station, "That's all over!" And I turned to Marion--a little unfamiliar still, in her unfamiliar clothes--and smiled.

She regarded me gravely, timidly.

"You're not cross?" she asked.

"Cross! Why?"

"At having it all proper."

"My dear Marion!" said I, and by way of answer took and kissed her white-gloved, leather-scented hand....

I don't remember much else about the journey, an hour or so it was of undistinguished time--for we were both confused and a little fatigued and Marion had a slight headache and did not want caresses. I fell into a reverie about my aunt, and realised as if it were a new discovery, that I cared for her very greatly. I was acutely sorry I had not told her earlier of my marriage.

But you will not want to hear the history of my honeymoon. I have told all that was needed to serve my present purpose. Thus and thus it was the Will in things had its way with me. Driven by forces I did not understand, diverted altogether from the science, the curiosities and work to which I had once given

myself, I fought my way through a tangle of traditions, customs, obstacles and absurdities, enraged myself, limited myself, gave myself to occupations I saw with the clearest vision were dishonourable and vain, and at last achieved the end of purblind Nature, the relentless immediacy of her desire, and held, far short of happiness, Marion weeping and reluctant in my arms.

V

Who can tell the story of the slow estrangement of two married people, the weakening of first this bond and then that of that complex contact? Least of all can one of the two participants. Even now, with an interval of fifteen years to clear it up for me, I still find a mass of impressions of Marion as confused, as discordant, as unsystematic and self-contradictory as life. I think of this thing and love her, of that and hate her--of a hundred aspects in which I can now see her with an unimpassioned sympathy. As I sit here trying to render some vision of this infinitely confused process, I recall moments of hard and fierce estrangement, moments of clouded intimacy, the passage of transition all forgotten. We talked a little language together whence were "friends," and I was "Mutney" and she was "Ming," and we kept up such an outward show that till the very end Smithie thought our household the most amiable in the world.

I cannot tell to the full how Marion thwarted me and failed in that life of intimate emotions which is the kernel of love. That life of intimate emotions is made up of little things. A beautiful face differs from an ugly one by a difference of surfaces and proportions that are sometimes almost infinitesimally small. I find myself setting down little things and little things; none of them do more than demonstrate those essential temperamental discords I have already sought to make clear. Some readers will understand--to others I shall seem no more than an unfeeling brute who couldn't make allowances....

It's easy to make allowances now; but to be young and ardent and to make allowances, to see one's married life open before one, the life that seemed in its dawn a glory, a garden of roses, a place of deep sweet mysteries and heart throbs and wonderful silences, and to see it a vista of tolerations and baby-talk; a compromise, the least effectual thing in all one's life.

Every love romance I read seemed to mock our dull intercourse, every poem, every beautiful picture reflected upon the uneventful succession of grey hours we had together. I think our real difference was one of aesthetic sensibility.

I do still recall as the worst and most disastrous aspect of all that time, her absolute disregard of her own beauty. It's the pettiest thing to record, I know, but she could wear curl-papers in my presence. It was her idea, too, to "wear out" her old clothes and her failures at home when "no one was likely to see her"--"no one" being myself. She allowed me to accumulate a store of ungracious and slovenly memories....

All our conceptions of life differed. I remember how we differed about furniture. We spent three or four days in Tottenham Court Road, and she chose the things she fancied with an inexorable resolution,--sweeping aside my suggestions with--"Oh, YOU want such queer things." She pursued some limited, clearly seen and experienced ideal--that excluded all other possibilities. Over every mantel was a mirror that was draped, our sideboard was wonderfully good and splendid with beveled glass, we had lamps on long metal stalks and cozy corners and plants in grog-tubs. Smithie approved it all. There wasn't a place where one could sit and read in the whole house. My books went upon shelves in the dining-room recess. And we had a piano though Marion's playing was at an elementary level.

You know, it was the cruelest luck for Marion that I, with my

restlessness, my scepticism, my constantly developing ideas, had insisted on marriage with her. She had no faculty of growth or change; she had taken her mould, she had set in the limited ideas of her peculiar class. She preserved her conception of what was right in drawing-room chairs and in marriage ceremonial and in every relation of life with a simple and luminous honesty and conviction, with an immense unimaginative inflexibility--as a tailor-bird builds its nest or a beaver makes its dam.

Let me hasten over this history of disappointments and separation. I might tell of waxings and waning of love between us, but the whole was waning. Sometimes she would do things for me, make me a tie or a pair of slippers, and fill me with none the less gratitude because the things were absurd. She ran our home and our one servant with a hard, bright efficiency. She was inordinately proud of house and garden. Always, by her lights, she did her duty by me.

Presently the rapid development of Tono-Bungay began to take me into the provinces, and I would be away sometimes for a week together. This she did not like; it left her "dull," she said, but after a time she began to go to Smithie's again and to develop an independence of me. At Smithie's she was now a woman with a position; she had money to spend. She would take Smithie to theatres and out to lunch and talk interminably of the business, and Smithie became a sort of permanent weekender with us. Also Marion got a spaniel and began to dabble with the minor arts, with poker-work and a Kodak and hyacinths in glasses. She called once on a neighbour. Her parents left Walham Green--her father severed his connection with the gas-works--and came to live in a small house I took for them near us, and they were much with us.

Odd the littleness of the things that exasperate when the fountains of life are embittered! My father-in-law was

perpetually catching me in moody moments and urging me to take to gardening. He irritated me beyond measure.

"You think too much," he would say. "If you was to let in a bit with a spade, you might soon 'ave that garden of yours a Vision of Flowers. That's better than thinking, George."

Or in a torrent of exasperation, "I CARN'T think, George, why you don't get a bit of glass 'ere. This sunny corner you c'd do wonders with a bit of glass."

And in the summer time he never came in without performing a sort of conjuring trick in the hall, and taking cucumbers and tomatoes from unexpected points of his person. "All out o' MY little bit," he'd say in exemplary tones. He left a trail of vegetable produce in the most unusual places, on mantel boards, sideboards, the tops of pictures. Heavens! how the sudden unexpected tomato could annoy me!...

It did much to widen our estrangement that Marion and my aunt failed to make friends, became, by a sort of instinct, antagonistic.

My aunt, to begin with, called rather frequently, for she was really anxious to know Marion. At first she would arrive like a whirlwind and pervade the house with an atmosphere of hello! She dressed already with that cheerfully extravagant abandon that signalled her accession to fortune, and dressed her best for these visits.

She wanted to play the mother to me, I fancy, to tell Marion occult secrets about the way I wore out my boots and how I never could think to put on thicker things in cold weather. But Marion received her with that defensive suspiciousness of the shy person, thinking only of the possible criticism of herself; and

my aunt, perceiving this, became nervous and slangy...

"She says such queer things," said Marion once, discussing her.
"But I suppose it's witty."

"Yes," I said; "it IS witty."

"If I said things like she does--"

The queer things my aunt said were nothing to the queer things she didn't say. I remember her in our drawing-room one day, and how she cocked her eye--it's the only expression--at the India-rubber plant in a Douulton-ware pot which Marion had placed on the corner of the piano.

She was on the very verge of speech. Then suddenly she caught my expression, and shrank up like a cat that has been discovered looking at the milk.

Then a wicked impulse took her.

"Didn't say an old word, George," she insisted, looking me full in the eye.

I smiled. "You're a dear," I said, "not to," as Marion came lowering into the room to welcome her. But I felt extraordinarily like a traitor--to the India-rubber plant, I suppose--for all that nothing had been said...

"Your aunt makes Game of people," was Marion's verdict, and, open-mindedly: "I suppose it's all right... for her."

Several times we went to the house in Beckenham for lunch, and once or twice to dinner. My aunt did her peculiar best to be friends, but Marion was implacable. She was also, I know,

intensely uncomfortable, and she adopted as her social method, an exhausting silence, replying compactly and without giving openings to anything that was said to her.

The gaps between my aunt's visits grew wider and wider.

My married existence became at last like a narrow deep groove in the broad expanse of interests in which I was living. I went about the world; I met a great number of varied personalities; I read endless books in trains as I went to and fro. I developed social relationships at my uncle's house that Marion did not share. The seeds of new ideas poured in upon me and grew in me. Those early and middle years of one's third decade are, I suppose, for a man the years of greatest mental growth. They are restless years and full of vague enterprise.

Each time I returned to Ealing, life there seemed more alien, narrow, and unattractive--and Marion less beautiful and more limited and difficult--until at last she was robbed of every particle of her magic. She gave me always a cooler welcome, I think, until she seemed entirely apathetic. I never asked myself then what heartaches she might hide or what her discontents might be.

I would come home hoping nothing, expecting nothing.

This was my fated life, and I had chosen it. I became more sensitive to the defects I had once disregarded altogether; I began to associate her sallow complexion with her temperamental insufficiency, and the heavier lines of her mouth and nostril with her moods of discontent. We drifted apart; wider and wider the gap opened. I tired of baby-talk and stereotyped little fondlings; I tired of the latest intelligence from those wonderful workrooms, and showed it all too plainly; we hardly spoke when we were alone together. The mere unreciprocated

physical residue of my passion remained--an exasperation between us.

No children came to save us. Marion had acquired at Smithie's a disgust and dread of maternity. All that was the fruition and quintessence of the "horrid" elements in life, a disgusting thing, a last indignity that overtook unwary women. I doubt indeed a little if children would have saved us; we should have differed so fatally about their upbringing.

Altogether, I remember my life with Marion as a long distress, now hard, now tender. It was in those days that I first became critical of my life and burdened with a sense of error and maladjustment. I would lie awake in the night, asking myself the purpose of things, reviewing my unsatisfying, ungainly home-life, my days spent in rascal enterprise and rubbish-selling, contrasting all I was being and doing with my adolescent ambitions, my Wimblehurst dreams. My circumstances had an air of finality, and I asked myself in vain why I had forced myself into them.

VI

The end of our intolerable situation came suddenly and unexpectedly, but in a way that I suppose was almost inevitable.

My alienated affections wandered, and I was unfaithful to Marion.

I won't pretend to extenuate the quality of my conduct. I was a young and fairly vigorous male; all my appetite for love had been roused and whetted and none of it had been satisfied by my love affair and my marriage. I had pursued an elusive gleam of beauty to the disregard of all else, and it had failed me. It had faded when I had hoped it would grow brighter. I despaired of life and was embittered. And things happened as I am telling. I don't

draw any moral at all in the matter, and as for social remedies, I leave them to the social reformer. I've got to a time of life when the only theories that interest me are generalisations about realities.

To go to our inner office in Raggett Street I had to walk through a room in which the typists worked. They were the correspondence typists; our books and invoicing had long since overflowed into the premises we had had the luck to secure on either side of us. I was, I must confess, always in a faintly cloudily-emotional way aware of that collection of for the most part round-shouldered femininity, but presently one of the girls detached herself from the others and got a real hold upon my attention. I appreciated her at first as a straight little back, a neater back than any of the others; as a softly rounded neck with a smiling necklace of sham pearls; as chestnut hair very neatly done--and as a side-long glance; presently as a quickly turned face that looked for me.

My eye would seek her as I went through on business things--I dictated some letters to her and so discovered she had pretty, soft-looking hands with pink nails. Once or twice, meeting casually, we looked one another for the flash of a second in the eyes.

That was all. But it was enough in the mysterious free-masonry of sex to say essential things. We had a secret between us.

One day I came into Raggett Street at lunch time and she was alone, sitting at her desk. She glanced up as I entered, and then became very still, with a downcast face and her hands clenched on the table. I walked right by her to the door of the inner office, stopped, came back and stood over her.

We neither of us spoke for quite a perceptible time. I was

trembling violently.

"Is that one of the new typewriters?" I asked at last for the sake of speaking.

She looked up at me without a word, with her face flushed and her eyes alight, and I bent down and kissed her lips. She leant back to put an arm about me, drew my face to her and kissed me again and again. I lifted her and held her in my arms. She gave a little smothered cry to feel herself so held.

Never before had I known the quality of passionate kisses.

Somebody became audible in the shop outside.

We started back from one another with flushed faces and bright and burning eyes.

"We can't talk here," I whispered with a confident intimacy.
"Where do you go at five?"

"Along the Embankment to Charing Cross," she answered as intimately. "None of the others go that way..."

"About half-past five?"

"Yes, half-past five..."

The door from the shop opened, and she sat down very quickly.

"I'm glad," I said in a commonplace voice, "that these new typewriters are all right."

I went into the inner office and routed out the paysheet in order to find her name--Effie Rink. And did no work at all that

afternoon. I fretted about that dingy little den like a beast in a cage.

When presently I went out, Effie was working with an extraordinary appearance of calm--and there was no look for me at all....

We met and had our talk that evening, a talk in whispers when there was none to overhear; we came to an understanding. It was strangely unlike any dream of romance I had ever entertained.

VII

I came back after a week's absence to my home again--a changed man. I had lived out my first rush of passion for Effie, had come to a contemplation of my position. I had gauged Effie's place in the scheme of things, and parted from her for a time. She was back in her place at Raggett Street after a temporary indisposition. I did not feel in any way penitent or ashamed, I know, as I opened the little cast-iron gate that kept Marion's front grader and Pampas Grass from the wandering dog. Indeed, if anything, I felt as if I had vindicated some right that had been in question. I came back to Marion with no sense of wrong-doing at all with, indeed, a new friendliness towards her. I don't know how it may be proper to feel on such occasions; that is how I felt.

I followed her in our drawing-room, standing beside the tall lamp-stand that half filled the bay as though she had just turned from watching for me at the window. There was something in her pale face that arrested me. She looked as if she had not been sleeping. She did not come forward to greet me.

"You've come home," she said.

"As I wrote to you."

She stood very still, a dusky figure against the bright window.

"Where have you been?" she asked.

"East Coast," I said easily.

She paused for a moment. "I KNOW," she said.

I stared at her. It was the most amazing moment in any life....

"By Jove!" I said at last, "I believe you do!"

"And then you come home to me!"

I walked to the hearthrug and stood quite still there regarding this new situation.

"I didn't dream," she began. "How could you do such a thing?"

It seemed a long interval before either of us spoke another word.

"Who knows about it?" I asked at last.

"Smithie's brother. They were at Cromer."

"Confound Cromer! Yes!"

"How could you bring yourself"

I felt a spasm of petulant annoyance at this unexpected catastrophe.

"I should like to wring Smithie's brother's neck," I said....

Marion spoke in dry, broken fragments of sentences. "You... I'd always thought that anyhow you couldn't deceive me... I suppose all men are horrid--about this."

"It doesn't strike me as horrid. It seems to me the most necessary consequence--and natural thing in the world."

I became aware of some one moving about in the passage, and went and shut the door of the room, then I walked back to the hearthrug and turned.

"It's rough on you," I said. "But I didn't mean you to know. You've never cared for me. I've had the devil of a time. Why should you mind?"

She sat down in a draped armchair. "I HAVE cared for you," she said.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"I suppose," she said, "SHE cares for you?"

I had no answer.

"Where is she now?"

"Oh! does it matter to you?... Look here, Marion! This--this I didn't anticipate. I didn't mean this thing to smash down on you like this. But, you know, something had to happen. I'm sorry--sorry to the bottom of my heart that things have come to this between us. But indeed, I'm taken by surprise. I don't know where I am--I don't know how we got here. Things took me by surprise. I found myself alone with her one day. I kissed her. I went on. It seemed stupid to go back. And besides--why should

I have gone back? Why should I? From first to last, I've hardly thought of it as touching you.... Damn!"

She scrutinised my face, and pulled at the ball-fringe of the little table beside her.

"To think of it," she said. "I don't believe I can ever touch you again."

We kept a long silence. I was only beginning to realise in the most superficial way the immense catastrophe that had happened between us. Enormous issues had rushed upon us. I felt unprepared and altogether inadequate. I was unreasonably angry. There came a rush of stupid expressions to my mind that my rising sense of the supreme importance of the moment saved me from saying. The gap of silence widened until it threatened to become the vast memorable margin of some one among a thousand trivial possibilities of speech that would vex our relations for ever.

Our little general servant tapped at the door--Marion always liked the servant to tap--and appeared.

"Tea, M'm," she said--and vanished, leaving the door open.

"I will go upstairs," said I, and stopped. "I will go upstairs" I repeated, "and put my bag in the spare room."

We remained motionless and silent for a few seconds.

"Mother is having tea with us to-day," Marion remarked at last, and dropped the worried end of ball-fringe and stood up slowly....

And so, with this immense discussion of our changed relations hanging over us, we presently had tea with the unsuspecting Mrs.

Ramboats and the spaniel. Mrs. Ramboat was too well trained in her position to remark upon our somber preoccupation. She kept a thin trickle of talk going, and told us, I remember, that Mr. Ramboat was "troubled" about his cannas.

"They don't come up and they won't come up. He's been round and had an explanation with the man who sold him the bulbs--and he's very heated and upset."

The spaniel was a great bore, begging and doing small tricks first at one and then at the other of us. Neither of us used his name. You see we had called him Miggles, and made a sort of trio in the baby-talk of Mutney and Miggles and Ming.

VIII

Then presently we resumed our monstrous, momentous dialogue. I can't now make out how long that dialogue went on. It spread itself, I know, in heavy fragments over either three days or four. I remember myself grouped with Marion, talking sitting on our bed in her room, talking standing in our dining-room, saving this thing or that. Twice we went for long walks. And we had a long evening alone together, with jaded nerves and hearts that fluctuated between a hard and dreary recognition of facts and, on my part at least, a strange unwonted tenderness; because in some extraordinary way this crisis had destroyed our mutual apathy and made us feel one another again.

It was a dialogue that had discrepant parts that fell into lumps of talk that failed to join on to their predecessors, that began again at a different level, higher or lower, that assumed new aspects in the intervals and assimilated new considerations. We discussed the fact that we two were no longer lovers; never before had we faced that. It seems a strange thing to write, but

as I look back, I see clearly that those several days were the time when Marion and I were closest together, looked for the first and last time faithfully and steadfastly into each other's soul. For those days only, there were no pretences, I made no concessions to her nor she to me; we concealed nothing, exaggerated nothing. We had done with pretending. We had it out plainly and soberly with each other. Mood followed mood and got its stark expression.

Of course there was quarreling between us, bitter quarreling, and we said things to one another--long pent-up things that bruised and crushed and cut. But over it all in my memory now is an effect of deliberate confrontation, and the figure of Marion stands up, pale, melancholy, tear-stained, injured, implacable and dignified.

"You love her?" she asked once, and jerked that doubt into my mind.

I struggled with tangled ideas and emotions. "I don't know what love is. It's all sorts of things--it's made of a dozen strands twisted in a thousand ways."

"But you want her? You want her now--when you think of her?"

"Yes," I reflected. "I want her--right enough."

"And me? Where do I come in?"

"I suppose you come in here."

"Well, but what are you going to do?"

"Do!" I said with the exasperation of the situation growing upon me. "What do you want me to do?"

As I look back upon all that time--across a gulf of fifteen active years--I find I see it with an understanding judgment. I see it as if it were the business of some one else--indeed of two other people--intimately known yet judged without passion. I see now that this shock, this sudden immense disillusionment, did in real fact bring out a mind and soul in Marion; that for the first time she emerged from habits, timidities, imitations, phrases and a certain narrow will-impulse, and became a personality.

Her ruling motive at first was, I think, an indignant and outraged pride. This situation must end. She asked me categorically to give up Effie, and I, full of fresh and glowing memories, absolutely refused.

"It's too late, Marion," I said. "It can't be done like that."

"Then we can't very well go on living together," she said. "Can we?"

"Very well," I deliberated "if you must have it so."

"Well, can we?"

"Can you stay in this house? I mean--if I go away?"

"I don't know.... I don't think I could."

"Then--what do you want?"

Slowly we worked our way from point to point, until at last the word "divorce" was before us.

"If we can't live together we ought to be free," said Marion.

"I don't know anything of divorce," I said--"if you mean that. I don't know how it is done. I shall have to ask somebody--or look it up.... Perhaps, after all, it is the thing to do. We may as well face it."

We began to talk ourselves into a realisation of what our divergent futures might be. I came back on the evening of that day with my questions answered by a solicitor.

"We can't as a matter of fact," I said, "get divorced as things are. Apparently, so far as the law goes you've got to stand this sort of thing. It's silly but that is the law. However, it's easy to arrange a divorce. In addition to adultery there must be desertion or cruelty. To establish cruelty I should have to strike you, or something of that sort, before witnesses. That's impossible--but it's simple to desert you legally. I have to go away from you; that's all. I can go on sending you money--and you bring a suit, what is it?--for Restitution of Conjugal Rights. The Court orders me to return. I disobey. Then you can go on to divorce me. You get a Decree Nisi, and once more the Court tries to make me come back. If we don't make it up within six months and if you don't behave scandalously the Decree is made absolute. That's the end of the fuss. That's how one gets unmarried. It's easier, you see, to marry than unmarry."

"And then--how do I live? What becomes of me?"

"You'll have an income. They call it alimony. From a third to a half of my present income--more if you like--I don't mind--three hundred a year, say. You've got your old people to keep and you'll need all that."

"And then--then you'll be free?"

"Both of us."

"And all this life you've hated"

I looked up at her wrung and bitter face. "I haven't hated it," I lied, my voice near breaking with the pain of it all. "Have you?"

IX

The perplexing thing about life is the irresolvable complexity of reality, of things and relations alike. Nothing is simple. Every wrong done has a certain justice in it, and every good deed has dregs of evil. As for us, young still, and still without self-knowledge, resounded a hundred discordant notes in the harsh angle of that shock. We were furiously angry with each other, tender with each other, callously selfish, generously self-sacrificing.

I remember Marion saying innumerable detached things that didn't hang together one with another, that contradicted one another, that were, nevertheless, all in their places profoundly true and sincere. I see them now as so many vain experiments in her effort to apprehend the crumpled confusions of our complex moral landslide. Some I found irritating beyond measure. I answered her--sometimes quite abominably.

"Of course," she would say again and again, "my life has been a failure."

"I've besieged you for three years," I would retort "asking it not to be. You've done as you pleased. If I've turned away at last--"

Or again she would revive all the stresses before our marriage.

"How you must hate me! I made you wait. Well now--I suppose you have your revenge."

"REVENGE!" I echoed.

Then she would try over the aspects of our new separated lives.

"I ought to earn my own living," she would insist.

"I want to be quite independent. I've always hated London. Perhaps I shall try a poultry farm and bees. You won't mind at first my being a burden. Afterwards--"

"We've settled all that," I said.

"I suppose you will hate me anyhow..."

There were times when she seemed to regard our separation with absolute complacency, when she would plan all sorts of freedoms and characteristic interests.

"I shall go out a lot with Smithie," she said.

And once she said an ugly thing that I did indeed hate her for. that I cannot even now quite forgive her.

"Your aunt will rejoice at all this. She never cared for me..."

Into my memory of these pains and stresses comes the figure of Smithie, full-charged with emotion, so breathless in the presence of the horrid villain of the piece that she could make no articulate sounds. She had long tearful confidences with Marion, I know, sympathetic close clingings. There were moments when only absolute speechlessness prevented her giving me a stupendous "talking-to"--I could see it in her eye. The wrong

things she would have said! And I recall, too, Mrs. Ramboat's slow awakening to something in, the air, the growing expression of solicitude in her eye, only her well-trained fear of Marion keeping her from speech.

And at last through all this welter, like a thing fated and altogether beyond our control, parting came to Marion and me.

I hardened my heart, or I could not have gone. For at the last it came to Marion that she was parting from me for ever. That overbore all other things, had turned our last hour to anguish. She forgot for a time the prospect of moving into a new house, she forgot the outrage on her proprietorship and pride. For the first time in her life she really showed strong emotions in regard to me, for the first time, perhaps, they really came to her. She began to weep slow, reluctant tears. I came into her room, and found her asprawl on the bed, weeping.

"I didn't know," she cried. "Oh! I didn't understand!"

"I've been a fool. All my life is a wreck!

"I shall be alone!...MUTNEY! Mutney, don't leave me! Oh! Mutney! I didn't understand."

I had to harden my heart indeed, for it seemed to me at moments in those last hours together that at last, too late, the longed-for thing had happened and Marion had come alive. A new-born hunger for me lit her eyes.

"Don't leave me!" she said, "don't leave me!" She clung to me; she kissed me with tear-salt lips.

I was promised now and pledged, and I hardened my heart against this impossible dawn. Yet it seems to me that there were moments

when it needed but a cry, but one word to have united us again for all our lives. Could we have united again? Would that passage have enlightened us for ever or should we have fallen back in a week or so into the old estrangement, the old temperamental opposition?

Of that there is now no telling. Our own resolve carried us on our predestined way. We behaved more and more like separating lovers, parting inexorably, but all the preparations we had set going worked on like a machine, and we made no attempt to stop them. My trunks and boxes went to the station. I packed my bag with Marion standing before me. We were like children who had hurt each other horribly in sheer stupidity, who didn't know now how to remedy it. We belonged to each other immensely--immensely. The cab came to the little iron gate.

"Good-bye!" I said.

"Good-bye."

For a moment we held one another in each other's arms and kissed--incredibly without malice. We heard our little servant in the passage going to open the door. For the last time we pressed ourselves to one another. We were not lovers nor enemies, but two human souls in a frank community of pain. I tore myself from her.

"Go away," I said to the servant, seeing that Marion had followed me down.

I felt her standing behind me as I spoke to the cab man.

I got into the cab, resolutely not looking back, and then as it started jumped up, craned out and looked at the door.

It was wide open, but she had disappeared....

I wonder--I suppose she ran upstairs.

X

So I parted from Marion at an extremity of perturbation and regret, and went, as I had promised and arranged, to Effie, who was waiting for me in apartments near Orpington. I remember her upon the station platform, a bright, flitting figure looking along the train for me, and our walk over the fields in the twilight. I had expected an immense sense of relief where at last the stresses of separation were over, but now I found I was beyond measure wretched and perplexed, full of the profoundest persuasion of irreparable error. The dusk and somber Marion were so alike, her sorrow seemed to be all about me. I had to hold myself to my own plans, to remember that I must keep faith with Effie, with Effie who had made no terms, exacted no guarantees, but flung herself into my hands.

We went across the evening fields in silence, towards a sky of deepening gold and purple, and Effie was close beside me always, very close, glancing up ever and again at my face.

Certainly she knew I grieved for Marion, that ours was now no joyful reunion. But she showed no resentment and no jealousy. Extraordinarily, she did not compete against Marion. Never once in all our time together did she say an adverse word of Marion....

She set herself presently to dispel the shadow that brooded over me with the same instinctive skill that some women will show with the trouble of a child. She made herself my glad and pretty slave and handmaid; she forced me at last to rejoice in her. Yet at the back of it all Marion remained, stupid and tearful and

infinitely distressful, so that I was almost intolerably unhappy for her--for her and the dead body of my married love.

It is all, as I tell it now, unaccountable to me. I go back into these remote parts, these rarely visited uplands and lonely tares of memory, and it seems to me still a strange country. I had thought I might be going to some sensuous paradise with Effie, but desire which fills the universe before its satisfaction, vanishes utterly like the going of daylight--with achievement. All the facts and forms of life remain darkling and cold. It was an upland of melancholy questionings, a region from which I saw all the world at new angles and in new aspects; I had outflanked passion and romance.

I had come into a condition of vast perplexities. For the first time in my life, at least so it seems to me now in this retrospect, I looked at my existence as a whole.

Since this was nothing, what was I doing? What was I for?

I was going to and fro about Tono-Bungay--the business I had taken up to secure Marion and which held me now in spite of our intimate separation--and snatching odd week-ends and nights for Orpington, and all the while I struggled with these obstinate interrogations. I used to fall into musing in the trains, I became even a little inaccurate and forgetful about business things. I have the clearest memory of myself sitting thoughtful in the evening sunlight on a grassy hillside that looked toward Seven Oaks and commanded a wide sweep of country, and that I was thinking out my destiny. I could almost write my thought down now, I believe, as they came to me that afternoon. Effie, restless little cockney that she was, rustled and struggled in a hedgerow below, gathering flowers, discovering flowers she had never seen before. I had. I remember, a letter from Marion in my pocket. I had even made some tentatives for return, for a

reconciliation; Heaven knows now how I had put it! but her cold, ill-written letter repelled me. I perceived I could never face that old inconclusive dullness of life again, that stagnant disappointment. That, anyhow, wasn't possible. But what was possible? I could see no way of honour or fine living before me at all.

"What am I to do with life?" that was the question that besieged me.

I wondered if all the world was even as I, urged to this by one motive and to that by another, creatures of chance and impulse and unmeaning traditions. Had I indeed to abide by what I had said and done and chosen? Was there nothing for me in honour but to provide for Effie, go back penitent to Marion and keep to my trade in rubbish--or find some fresh one--and so work out the residue of my days? I didn't accept that for a moment. But what else was I to do? I wondered if my case was the case of many men, whether in former ages, too, men had been so guideless, so uncharted, so haphazard in their journey into life. In the Middle Ages, in the old Catholic days, one went to a priest, and he said with all the finality of natural law, this you are and this you must do. I wondered whether even in the Middle Ages I should have accepted that ruling without question.

I remember too very distinctly how Effie came and sat beside me on a little box: that was before the casement window of our room.

"Gloomkins," said she.

I smiled and remained head on hand, looking out of the window forgetful of her.

"Did you love your wife so well?" she whispered softly.

"Oh!" I cried, recalled again; "I don't know. I don't understand these things. Life is a thing that hurts, my dear! It hurts without logic or reason. I've blundered! I didn't understand. Anyhow--there is no need to go hurting you, is there?"

And I turned about and drew her to me, and kissed her ear....

Yes, I had a very bad time--I still recall. I suffered, I suppose, from a sort of ennui of the imagination. I found myself without an object to hold my will together. I sought. I read restlessly and discursively. I tried Ewart and got no help from him. As I regard it all now in this retrospect, it seems to me as if in those days of disgust and abandoned aims I discovered myself for the first time. Before that I had seen only the world and things in it, had sought them self-forgetful of all but my impulse. Now I found myself GROUPED with a system of appetites and satisfactions, with much work to do--and no desire, it seemed, left in me.

There were moments when I thought of suicide. At times my life appeared before me in bleak, relentless light, a series of ignorances, crude blunderings, degradation and cruelty. I had what the old theologians call a "conviction of sin." I sought salvation--not perhaps in the formula a Methodist preacher would recognise but salvation nevertheless.

Men find their salvation nowadays in many ways. Names and forms don't, I think, matter very much; the real need is something that we can hold and that holds one. I have known a man find that determining factor in a dry-plate factory, and another in writing a history of the Manor. So long as it holds one, it does not matter. Many men and women nowadays take up some concrete aspect of Socialism or social reform. But Socialism for me has always been a little bit too human, too set about with personalities and foolishness. It isn't my line. I don't like

things so human. I don't think I'm blind to the fun, the surprises, the jolly little coarsenesses and insufficiency of life, to the "humour of it," as people say, and to adventure, but that isn't the root of the matter with me. There's no humour in my blood. I'm in earnest in warp and woof. I stumble and flounder, but I know that over all these merry immediate things, there are other things that are great and serene, very high, beautiful things--the reality. I haven't got it, but it's there nevertheless. I'm a spiritual guttersnipe in love with unimaginable goddesses. I've never seen the goddesses nor ever shall--but it takes all the fun out of the mud--and at times I fear it takes all the kindness, too.

But I'm talking of things I can't expect the reader to understand, because I don't half understand them myself. There is something links things for me, a sunset or so, a mood or so, the high air, something there was in Marion's form and colour, something I find and lose in Mantegna's pictures, something in the lines of these boats I make. (You should see X2, my last and best!)

I can't explain myself, I perceive. Perhaps it all comes to this, that I am a hard and morally limited cad with a mind beyond my merits. Naturally I resist that as a complete solution. Anyhow, I had a sense of inexorable need, of distress and insufficiency that was unendurable, and for a time this aeronautical engineering allayed it....

In the end of this particular crisis of which I tell so badly, I idealised Science. I decided that in power and knowledge lay the salvation of my life, the secret that would fill my need; that to these things I would give myself.

I emerged at last like a man who has been diving in darkness, clutching at a new resolve for which he had groped desperately

and long.

I came into the inner office suddenly one day--it must have been just before the time of Marion's suit for restitution--and sat down before my uncle.

"Look here," I said, "I'm sick of this."

"Hullo!" he answered, and put some papers aside.

"What's up, George?"

"Things are wrong."

"As how?"

"My life," I said, "it's a mess, an infinite mess."

"She's been a stupid girl, George," he said; "I partly understand. But you're quit of her now, practically, and there's just as good fish in the sea--"

"Oh! it's not that!" I cried. "That's only the part that shows. I'm sick--I'm sick of all this damned rascality."

"Eh? Eh?" said my uncle. "WHAT--rascality?"

"Oh, YOU know. I want some STUFF, man. I want something to hold on to. I shall go amok if I don't get it. I'm a different sort of beast from you. You float in all this bunkum. I feel like a man floundering in a universe of soapsuds, up and downs, east and west. I can't stand it. I must get my foot on something solid or--I don't know what."

I laughed at the consternation in his face.

"I mean it," I said. "I've been thinking it over. I've made up my mind. It's no good arguing. I shall go in for work--real work. No! this isn't work; it's only laborious cheating. But I've got an idea! It's an old idea--I thought of years ago, but it came back to me. Look here! Why should I fence about with you? I believe the time has come for flying to be possible. Real flying!"

"Flying!"

I stuck to that, and it helped me through the worst time in my life. My uncle, after some half-hearted resistance and a talk with my aunt, behaved like the father of a spoilt son. He fixed up an arrangement that gave me capital to play with, released me from too constant a solicitude for the newer business developments--this was in what I may call the later Moggs period of our enterprises--and I went to work at once with grim intensity.

But I will tell of my soaring and flying machines in the proper place. I've been leaving the story of my uncle altogether too long. I wanted merely to tell how it was I took to this work. I took to these experiments after I had sought something that Marion in some indefinable way had seemed to promise. I toiled and forgot myself for a time, and did many things. Science too has been something of an irresponsive mistress since, though I've served her better than I served Marion. But at the time Science, with her order, her inhuman distance, yet steely certainties, saved me from despair.

Well, I have still to fly; but incidentally I have invented the lightest engines in the world.

I am trying to tell of all the things that happened to me. It's

hard enough simply to get it put down in the remotest degree right. But this is a novel, not a treatise. Don't imagine that I am coming presently to any sort of solution of my difficulties. Here among my drawings and hammerings NOW, I still question unanswering problems. All my life has been at bottom, SEEKING, disbelieving always, dissatisfied always with the thing seen and the thing believed, seeking something in toil, in force, in danger, something whose name and nature I do not clearly understand, something beautiful, worshipful, enduring, mine profoundly and fundamentally, and the utter redemption of myself; I don't know--all I can tell is that it is something I have ever failed to find.

XI

But before I finish this chapter and book altogether and go on with the great adventure of my uncle's career. I may perhaps tell what else remains to tell of Marion and Effie, and then for a time set my private life behind me.

For a time Marion and I corresponded with some regularity, writing friendly but rather uninforming letters about small business things. The clumsy process of divorce completed itself.

She left the house at Ealing and went into the country with her aunt and parents, taking a small farm near Lewes in Sussex. She put up glass, she put in heat for her father, happy man! and spoke of figs and peaches. The thing seemed to promise well throughout a spring and summer, but the Sussex winter after London was too much for the Ramboats. They got very muddy and dull; Mr. Ramboat killed a cow by improper feeding, and that disheartened them all. A twelvemonth saw the enterprise in difficulties. I had to help her out of this, and then they returned to London and she went into partnership with Smithie at Streatham, and ran a business that was intimated on the firm's

stationery as "Robes." The parents and aunt were stowed away in a cottage somewhere. After that the letters became infrequent. But in one I remember a postscript that had a little stab of our old intimacy: "Poor old Miggles is dead."

Nearly eight years slipped by. I grew up. I grew in experience, in capacity, until I was fully a man, but with many new interests, living on a larger scale in a wider world than I could have dreamt of in my Marion days. Her letters become rare and insignificant. At last came a gap of silence that made me curious. For eighteen months or more I had nothing from Marion save her quarterly receipts through the bank. Then I damned at Smithie, and wrote a card to Marion.

"Dear Marion," I said, "how goes it?"

She astonished me tremendously by telling me she had married again--"a Mr. Wachorn, a leading agent in the paper-pattern trade." But she still wrote on the Ponderevo and Smith (Robes) notepaper, from the Ponderevo and Smith address.

And that, except for a little difference of opinion about the continuance of alimony which gave me some passages of anger, and the use of my name by the firm, which also annoyed me, is the end of Marion's history for me, and she vanishes out of this story. I do not know where she is or what she is doing. I do not know whether she is alive or dead. It seems to me utterly grotesque that two people who have stood so close to one another as she and I should be so separated, but so it is between us.

Effie, too, I have parted from, though I still see her at times. Between us there was never any intention of marriage nor intimacy of soul. She had a sudden, fierce, hot-blooded passion for me and I for her, but I was not her first lover nor her last. She was in another world from Marion. She had a queer, delightful

nature; I've no memory of ever seeing her sullen or malicious. She was--indeed she was magnificently--eupeptic. That, I think, was the central secret of her agreeableness, and, moreover, that she was infinitely kind-hearted. I helped her at last into an opening she coveted, and she amazed me by a sudden display of business capacity. She has now a typewriting bureau in Riffle's Inn, and she runs it with a brisk vigour and considerable success, albeit a certain plumpness has overtaken her. And she still loves her kind. She married a year or so ago a boy half her age--a wretch of a poet, a wretched poet, and given to drugs, a thing with lank fair hair always getting into his blue eyes, and limp legs. She did it, she said, because he needed nursing....

But enough of this disaster of my marriage and of my early love affairs; I have told all that is needed for my picture to explain how I came to take up aeroplane experiments and engineering science; let me get back to my essential story, to Tono-Bungay and my uncle's promotions and to the vision of the world these things have given me.

BOOK THE THIRD

THE GREAT DAYS OF TONO-BUNGAY

CHAPTER THE FIRST

THE HARDINGHAM HOTEL, AND HOW WE BECAME BIG PEOPLE

I

But now that I resume the main line of my story it may be well to describe the personal appearance of my uncle as I remember him

during those magnificent years that followed his passage from trade to finance. The little man plumped up very considerably during the creation of the Tono-Bungay property, but with the increasing excitements that followed that first flotation came dyspepsia and a certain flabbiness and falling away. His abdomen--if the reader will pardon my taking his features in the order of their value--had at first a nice full roundness, but afterwards it lost tone without, however, losing size. He always went as though he was proud of it and would make as much of it as possible. To the last his movements remained quick and sudden, his short firm legs, as he walked, seemed to twinkle rather than display the scissors-stride of common humanity, and he never seemed to have knees, but instead, a dispersed flexibility of limb.

There was, I seem to remember, a secular intensification of his features; his nose developed character, became aggressive, stuck out at the world more and more; the obliquity of his mouth, I think, increased. From the face that returns to my memory projects a long cigar that is sometimes cocked jauntily up from the higher corner, that sometimes droops from the lower;--it was as eloquent as a dog's tail, and he removed it only for the more emphatic modes of speech. He assumed a broad black ribbon for his glasses, and wore them more and more askew as time went on. His hair seemed to stiffen with success, but towards the climax it thinned greatly over the crown, and he brushed it hard back over his ears where, however, it stuck out fiercely. It always stuck out fiercely over his forehead, up and forward.

He adopted an urban style of dressing with the onset of Tono-Bungay and rarely abandoned it. He preferred silk hats with ample rich brims, often a trifle large for him by modern ideas, and he wore them at various angles to his axis; his taste in trouserings was towards fairly emphatic stripes and his trouser cut was neat; he liked his frock-coat long and full, although

that seemed to shorten him. He displayed a number of valuable rings, and I remember one upon his left little finger with a large red stone bearing Gnostic symbols. "Clever chaps, those Gnostics, George," he told me. "Means a lot. Lucky!" He never had any but a black mohair watch-chain. In the country he affected grey and a large grey cloth top-hat, except when motoring; then he would have a brown deer-stalker cap and a fur suit of esquimaux cut with a sort of boot-end to the trousers. Of an evening he would wear white waistcoats and plain gold studs. He hated diamonds. "Flashy," he said they were. "Might as well wear--an income tax-receipt. All very well for Park Lane. Unsold stock. Not my style. Sober financier, George."

So much for his visible presence. For a time it was very familiar to the world, for at the crest of the boom he allowed quite a number of photographs and at least one pencil sketch to be published in the sixpenny papers.

His voice declined during those years from his early tenor to a flat rich quality of sound that my knowledge of music is inadequate to describe. His Zzz-ing inrush of air became less frequent as he ripened, but returned in moments of excitement. Throughout his career, in spite of his increasing and at last astounding opulence, his more intimate habits remained as simple as they had been at Wimblesbury. He would never avail himself of the services of a valet; at the very climax of his greatness his trousers were folded by a housemaid and his shoulders brushed as he left his house or hotel. He became wary about breakfast as life advanced, and at one time talked much of Dr. Haig and uric acid. But for other meals he remained reasonably omnivorous. He was something of a gastronome, and would eat anything he particularly liked in an audible manner, and perspire upon his forehead. He was a studiously moderate drinker--except when the spirit of some public banquet or some great occasion caught him and bore him beyond his wariness--there he would, as it were,

drink inadvertently and become flushed and talkative--about everything but his business projects.

To make the portrait complete one wants to convey an effect of sudden, quick bursts of movement like the jumps of a Chinese-cracker to indicate that his pose whatever it is, has been preceded and will be followed by a rush. If I were painting him, I should certainly give him for a background that distressed, uneasy sky that was popular in the eighteenth century, and at a convenient distance a throbbing motor-car, very big and contemporary, a secretary hurrying with papers, and an alert chauffeur.

Such was the figure that created and directed the great property of Tono-Bungay, and from the successful reconstruction of that company passed on to a slow crescendo of magnificent creations and promotions until the whole world of investors marveled. I have already I think, mentioned how, long before we offered Tono Bungay to the public, we took over the English agency of certain American specialties. To this was presently added our exploitation of Moggs' Domestic Soap, and so he took up the Domestic Convenience Campaign that, coupled with his equatorial rotundity and a certain resolute convexity in his bearings won my uncle his Napoleonic title.

II

It illustrates the romantic element in modern commerce that my uncle met young Moggs at a city dinner--I think it was the Bottle-makers' Company--when both were some way advanced beyond the initial sobriety of the occasion. This was the grandson of the original Moggs, and a very typical instance of an educated, cultivated, degenerate plutocrat. His people had taken him about in his youth as the Ruskins took their John and fostered a passion for history in him, and the actual management of the

Moggs' industry had devolved upon a cousin and a junior partner.

Mr. Moggs, being of a studious and refined disposition, had just decided--after a careful search for a congenial subject in which he would not be constantly reminded of soap--to devote himself to the History of the Thebaid, when this cousin died suddenly and precipitated responsibilities upon him. In the frankness of conviviality, Moggs bewailed the uncongenial task thus thrust into his hands, and my uncle offered to lighten his burden by a partnership then and there. They even got to terms--extremely muzzy terms, but terms nevertheless.

Each gentleman wrote the name and address of the other on his cuff, and they separated in a mood of brotherly carelessness, and next morning neither seems to have thought to rescue his shirt from the wash until it was too late. My uncle made a painful struggle--it was one of my business mornings--to recall name and particulars.

"He was an aquarium-faced, long, blond sort of chap, George, with glasses and a genteel accent," he said.

I was puzzled. "Aquarium-faced?"

"You know how they look at you. His stuff was soap, I'm pretty nearly certain. And he had a name--And the thing was the straightest Bit-of-All-right you ever. I was clear enough to spot that..."

We went out at last with knitted brows, and wandered up into Finsbury seeking a good, well-stocked looking grocer. We called first on a chemist for a pick-me-up for my uncle, and then we found the shop we needed.

"I want," said my uncle, "half a pound of every sort of soap you

got. Yes, I want to take them now. Wait a moment, George....
Now what sort of soap d'you call THAT?"

At the third repetition of that question the young man said,
"Moggs' Domestic."

"Right," said my uncle. "You needn't guess again. Come along, George, let's go to a telephone and get on to Moggs. Oh--the order? Certainly. I confirm it. Send it all--send it all to the Bishop of London; he'll have some good use for it--(First-rate man, George, he is--charities and all that)--and put it down to me, here's a card--Ponderevo--Tono-Bungay."

Then we went on to Moggs and found him in a camel-hair dressing-jacket in a luxurious bed, drinking China tea, and got the shape of everything but the figures fixed by lunch time.

Young Moggs enlarged my mind considerably; he was a sort of thing I hadn't met before; he seemed quite clean and well-informed and he assured me to never read newspapers nor used soap in any form at all, "Delicate skin," he said.

"No objection to our advertising you wide and free?" said my uncle.

"I draw the line at railway stations," said Moggs, "south-coast cliffs, theatre programmes, books by me and poetry generally--scenery--oh!--and the Mercure de France."

"We'll get along," said my uncle.

"So long as you don't annoy me," said Moggs, lighting a cigarette, "you can make me as rich as you like."

We certainly made him no poorer. His was the first firm that was

advertised by a circumstantial history; we even got to illustrated magazine articles telling of the quaint past of Moggs. We concocted Moggsiana. Trusting to our partner's preoccupation with the uncommercial aspects of life, we gave graceful history--of Moggs the First, Moggs the Second, Moggs the Third, and Moggs the Fourth. You must, unless you are very young, remember some of them and our admirable block of a Georgian shop window. My uncle brought early nineteenth-century memoirs, soaked himself in the style, and devised stories about old Moggs the First and the Duke of Wellington, George the Third and the soap dealer ("almost certainly old Moggs"). Very soon we had added to the original Moggs' Primrose several varieties of scented and superfatted, a "special nurseries used in the household of the Duke of Kent and for the old Queen in Infancy," a plate powder, "the Paragon," and a knife powder. We roped in a good little second-rate black-lead firm, and carried their origins back into the mists of antiquity. It was my uncle's own unaided idea that we should associate that commodity with the Black Prince. He became industriously curious about the past of black-lead. I remember his button-holing the president of the Pepys Society.

"I say, is there any black-lead in Pepys? You know --black-lead--for grates! OR DOES HE PASS IT OVER AS A MATTER OF COURSE?"

He became in those days the terror of eminent historians. "Don't want your drum and trumpet history--no fear," he used to say. "Don't want to know who was who's mistress, and why so-and-so devastated such a province; that's bound to be all lies and upsy-down anyhow. Not my affair. Nobody's affair now. Chaps who did it didn't clearly know.... What I want to know is, in the Middle Ages, did they do anything for Housemaid's Knee? What did they put in their hot baths after jousting, and was the Black Prince--you know the Black Prince--was he enameled or

painted, or what? I think myself, black-leaded--very likely--like pipe-clay--but DID they use blacking so early?"

So it came about that in designing and writing those Moggs' Soap Advertisements, that wrought a revolution in that department of literature, my uncle was brought to realise not only the lost history, but also the enormous field for invention and enterprise that lurked among the little articles, the dustpans and mincers, the mousetraps and carpet-sweepers that fringe the shops of the oilman and domestic ironmonger. He was recalled to one of the dreams of his youth, to his conception of the Ponderevo Patent Flat that had been in his mind so early as the days before I went to serve him at Wimblehurst. "The Home, George," he said, "wants straightening up. Silly muddle! Things that get in the way. Got to organise it."

For a time he displayed something like the zeal of a genuine social reformer in relation to these matters.

"We've got to bring the Home Up to Date? That's my idee, George. We got to make a civilised domestic machine out of these relics of barbarism. I'm going to hunt up inventors, make a corner in d'mestic ideas. Everything. Balls of string that won't dissolve into a tangle, and gum that won't dry into horn. See? Then after conveniences--beauty. Beauty, George! All these few things ought to be made fit to look at; it's your aunt's idea, that. Beautiful jam-pots! Get one of those new art chaps to design all the things they make ugly now. Patent carpet-sweepers by these greenwood chaps, housemaid's boxes it'll be a pleasure to fall over--rich coloured house-flannels. Zzzz. Pails, f'rinstance. Hang 'em up on the walls like warming-pans. All the polishes and things in such tins--you'll want to cuddle 'em, George! See the notion? 'Sted of all the silly ugly things we got." ...

We had some magnificent visions; they so affected me that when I passed ironmongers and oil-shops they seemed to me as full of promise as trees in late winter, flushed with the effort to burst into leaf and flower.... And really we did do much towards that very brightness these shops display. They were dingy things in the eighties compared to what our efforts have made them now, grey quiet displays.

Well, I don't intend to write down here the tortuous financial history of Moggs' Limited, which was our first development of Moggs and Sons; nor will I tell very much of how from that we spread ourselves with a larger and larger conception throughout the chandlery and minor ironmongery, how we became agents for this little commodity, partners in that, got a tentacle round the neck of a specialised manufacturer or so, secured a pull upon this or that supply of raw material, and so prepared the way for our second flotation, Domestic Utilities; "Do it," they reordered it in the city. And then came the reconstruction of Tono-Bungay, and then "Household services" and the Boom!

That sort of development is not to be told in detail in a novel. I have, indeed, told much of it elsewhere. It is to be found set out at length, painfully at length, in my uncle's examination and mine in the bankruptcy proceedings, and in my own various statements after his death. Some people know everything in that story, some know it all too well, most do not want the details. It is the story of a man of imagination among figures, and unless you are prepared to collate columns of pounds, shillings and pence, compare dates and check additions, you will find it very unmeaning and perplexing. And after all, you wouldn't find the early figures so much wrong as STRAINED. In the matter of Moggs and Do Ut, as in the first Tono-Bungay promotion and in its reconstruction, we left the court by city standards without a stain on our characters. The great amalgamation of Household Services was my uncle's first really big-scale enterprise and

his first display of bolder methods: for this we bought back Do Ut, Moggs (going strong with a seven per cent. dividend) and acquired Skinnerton's polishes, the Riffleshaw properties and the Runcorn's mincer and coffee-mill business. To that Amalgamation I was really not a party; I left it to my uncle because I was then beginning to get keen upon the soaring experiments I had taken on from the results then to hand of Lilienthal, Pilcher and the Wright brothers. I was developing a glider into a flyer. I meant to apply power to this glider as soon as I could work out one or two residual problems affecting the longitudinal stability. I knew that I had a sufficiently light motor in my own modification of Bridger's light turbine, but I knew too that until I had cured my aeroplane of a tendency demanding constant alertness from me, a tendency to jerk up its nose at unexpected moments and slide back upon me, the application of an engine would be little short of suicide.

But that I will tell about later. The point I was coming to was that I did not realise until after the crash how recklessly my uncle had kept his promise of paying a dividend of over eight per cent. on the ordinary shares of that hugely over-capitalised enterprise, Household Services.

I drifted out of business affairs into my research much more than either I or my uncle had contemplated. Finance was much less to my taste than the organisation of the Tono-Bungay factory. In the new field of enterprise there was a great deal of bluffing and gambling, of taking chances and concealing material facts--and these are hateful things to the scientific type of mind. It wasn't fear I felt so much as an uneasy inaccuracy. I didn't realise dangers, I simply disliked the sloppy, relaxing quality of this new sort of work. I was at last constantly making excuses not to come up to him in London. The latter part of his business career recedes therefore beyond the circle of any particular life. I lived more or less with him; I talked, I

advised, I helped him at times to fight his Sunday crowd at Crest Hill, but I did not follow nor guide him. From the Do Ut time onward he rushed up the financial world like a bubble in water and left me like some busy water-thing down below in the deeps.

Anyhow, he was an immense success. The public was, I think, particularly attracted by the homely familiarity of his field of work--you never lost sight of your investment they felt, with the name on the house-flannel and shaving-strop--and its allegiance was secured by the Egyptian solidity of his apparent results. Tono-Bungay, after its reconstruction, paid thirteen, Moggs seven, Domestic Utilities had been a safe-looking nine; here was Household Services with eight; on such a showing he had merely to buy and sell Roeburn's Antiseptic fluid, Razor soaks and Bath crystals in three weeks to clear twenty thousand pounds.

I do think that as a matter of fact Roeburn's was good value at the price at which he gave it to the public, at least until it was strained by ill-conserved advertisement. It was a period of expansion and confidence; much money was seeking investment and "Industrials" were the fashion. Prices were rising all round. There remained little more for my uncle to do therefore, in his climb to the high unstable crest of Financial Greatness but, as he said, to "grasp the cosmic oyster, George, while it gaped," which, being translated, meant for him to buy respectable businesses confidently and courageously at the vendor's estimate, add thirty or forty thousand to the price and sell them again. His sole difficulty indeed was the tactful management of the load of shares that each of these transactions left upon his hands. But I thought so little of these later things that I never fully appreciated the peculiar inconveniences of that until it was too late to help him.

When I think of my uncle near the days of his Great Boom and in connection with the actualities of his enterprises, I think of him as I used to see him in the suite of rooms he occupied in the Hardingham Hotel, seated at a great old oak writing-table, smoking, drinking, and incoherently busy; that was his typical financial aspect--our evenings, our mornings, our holidays, our motor-car expeditions, Lady Grove and Crest Hill belong to an altogether different set of memories.

These rooms in the Hardingham were a string of apartments along one handsome thick-carpeted corridor. All the doors upon the corridor were locked except the first; and my uncle's bedroom, breakfast-room and private sanctum were the least accessible and served by an entrance from the adjacent passage, which he also used at times as a means of escape from importunate callers. The most eternal room was a general waiting-room and very business-like in quality; it had one or two uneasy sofas, a number of chairs, a green baize table, and a collection of the very best Moggs and Tone posters: and the plush carpets normal to the Hardingham had been replaced by a grey-green cork linoleum; Here I would always find a remarkable miscellany of people presided over by a peculiarly faithful and ferocious looking commissioner, Ropper, who guarded the door that led a step nearer my uncle. Usually there would be a parson or so, and one or two widows; hairy, eyeglassy, middle-aged gentlemen, some of them looking singularly like Edward Ponderevos who hadn't come off, a variety of young and youngish men more or less attractively dressed, some with papers protruding from their pockets, others with their papers decently concealed. And wonderful, incidental, frowsy people.

All these persons maintained a practically hopeless siege--sometimes for weeks together; they had better have stayed at home. Next came a room full of people who had some sort of appointment, and here one would find smart-looking people,

brilliantly dressed, nervous women hiding behind magazines, nonconformist divines, clergy in gaiters, real business men, these latter for the most part gentlemen in admirable morning dress who stood up and scrutinised my uncle's taste in water colours manfully and sometimes by the hour together. Young men again were here of various social origins, young Americans, treasonable clerks from other concerns, university young men, keen-looking, most of them, resolute, reserved, but on a sort of hair trigger, ready at any moment to be most voluble, most persuasive.

This room had a window, too, looking out into the hotel courtyard with its fern-set fountains and mosaic pavement, and the young men would stand against this and sometimes even mutter. One day I heard one repeating in all urgent whisper as I passed "But you don't quite see, Mr. Ponderevo, the full advantages, the FULL advantages--" I met his eye and he was embarrassed.

Then came a room with a couple of secretaries--no typewriters, because my uncle hated the clatter--and a casual person or two sitting about, projectors whose projects were being entertained. Here and in a further room nearer the private apartments, my uncle's correspondence underwent an exhaustive process of pruning and digestion before it reached him. Then the two little rooms in which my uncle talked; my magic uncle who had got the investing public--to whom all things were possible. As one came in we would find him squatting with his cigar up and an expression of dubious beatitude upon his face, while some one urged him to grow still richer by this or that.

"That'ju, George?" he used to say. "Come in. Here's a thing. Tell him--Mister--over again. Have a drink, George? No! Wise man! Liss'n."

I was always ready to listen. All sorts of financial marvels

came out of the Hardingham, more particularly during my uncle's last great flurry, but they were nothing to the projects that passed in. It was the little brown and gold room he sat in usually. He had had it redecorated by Bordingly and half a dozen Sussex pictures by Webster hung about it. Latterly he wore a velveteen jacket of a golden-brown colour in this apartment that I think over-emphasised its esthetic intention, and he also added some gross Chinese bronzes.

He was, on the whole, a very happy man throughout all that wildly enterprising time. He made and, as I shall tell in its place, spent great sums of money. He was constantly in violent motion, constantly stimulated mentally and physically and rarely tired. About him was an atmosphere of immense deference much of his waking life was triumphal and all his dreams. I doubt if he had any dissatisfaction with himself at all until the crash bore him down. Things must have gone very rapidly with him.... I think he must have been very happy.

As I sit here writing about all these things, jerking down notes and throwing them aside in my attempt to give some literary form to the tale of our promotions, the marvel of it all comes to me as if it came for the first time the supreme unreason of it. At the climax of his Boom, my uncle at the most sparing estimate must have possessed in substance and credit about two million pounds'-worth of property to set off against his vague colossal liabilities, and from first to last he must have had a controlling influence in the direction of nearly thirty millions.

This irrational muddle of a community in which we live gave him that, paid him at that rate for sitting in a room and scheming and telling it lies. For he created nothing, he invented nothing, he economised nothing. I cannot claim that a single one of the great businesses we organised added any real value to human life at all. Several like Tono-Bungay were unmitigated

frauds by any honest standard, the giving of nothing coated in advertisements for money. And the things the Hardingham gave out, I repeat, were nothing to the things that came in. I think of the long procession of people who sat down before us and propounded this and that. Now it was a device for selling bread under a fancy name and so escaping the laws as to weight--this was afterwards floated as the Decorticated Health-Bread Company and bumped against the law--now it was a new scheme for still more strident advertisement, now it was a story of unsuspected deposits of minerals, now a cheap and nasty substitute for this or that common necessity, now the treachery of a too well-informed employee, anxious to become our partner. It was all put to us tentatively, persuasively. Sometimes one had a large pink blustering person trying to carry us off our feet by his pseudo-boyish frankness, now some dyspeptically yellow whisperer, now some earnest, specially dressed youth with an eye-glass and a buttonhole, now some homely-speaking, shrewd Manchester man or some Scotchman eager to be very clear and full.

Many came in couples or trios, often in tow of an explanatory solicitor. Some were white and earnest, some flustered beyond measure at their opportunity. Some of them begged and prayed to be taken up. My uncle chose what he wanted and left the rest. He became very autocratic to these applicants.

He felt he could make them, and they felt so too. He had but to say "No!" and they faded out of existence.... He had become a sort of vortex to which wealth flowed of its own accord. His possessions increased by heaps; his shares, his leaseholds and mortgages and debentures.

Behind his first-line things he found it necessary at last, and sanctioned by all the precincts, to set up three general trading companies, the London and African Investment Company, the British Traders' Loan Company, and Business Organisations Limited. This

was in the culminating time when I had least to do with affairs. I don't say that with any desire to exculpate myself; I admit I was a director of all three, and I will confess I was willfully incurious in that capacity. Each of these companies ended its financial year solvent by selling great holdings of shares to one or other of its sisters, and paying a dividend out of the proceeds. I sat at the table and agreed. That was our method of equilibrium at the iridescent climax of the bubble.

You perceive now, however, the nature of the services for which this fantastic community have him unmanageable wealth and power and real respect. It was all a monstrous payment for courageous fiction, a gratuity in return for the one reality of human life--illusion. We gave them a feeling of hope and profit; we sent a tidal wave of water and confidence into their stranded affairs. "We mint Faith, George," said my uncle one day. "That's what we do. And by Jove we got to keep minting! We been making human confidence ever since I drove the first cork of Tono-Bungay."

"Coining" would have been a better word than minting! And yet, you know, in a sense he was right. Civilisation is possible only through confidence, so that we can bank our money and go unarmed about the streets. The bank reserve or a policeman keeping order in a jostling multitude of people, are only slightly less impudent bluffs than my uncle's prospectuses. They couldn't for a moment "make good" if the quarter of what they guarantee was demanded of them. The whole of this modern mercantile investing civilisation is indeed such stuff as dreams are made of. A mass of people swelters and toils, great railway systems grow, cities arise to the skies and spread wide and far, mines are opened, factories hum, foundries roar, ships plough the seas, countries are settled; about this busy striving world the rich owners go, controlling all, enjoying all, confident and creating the confidence that draws us all together into a reluctant,

nearly unconscious brotherhood. I wonder and plan my engines. The flags flutter, the crowds cheer, the legislatures meet. Yet it seems to me indeed at times that all this present commercial civilisation is no more than my poor uncle's career writ large, a swelling, thinning bubble of assurances; that its arithmetic is just as unsound, its dividends as ill-advised, its ultimate aim as vague and forgotten; that it all drifts on perhaps to some tremendous parallel to his individual disaster...

Well, so it was we Boomed, and for four years and a half we lived a life of mingled substance and moonshine. Until our particular unsoundness overtook us we went about in the most magnificent of motor-cars upon tangible high roads, made ourselves conspicuous and stately in splendid houses, ate sumptuously and had a perpetual stream of notes and money trickling into our pockets; hundreds of thousands of men and women respected us, saluted us and gave us toil and honour; I asked, and my worksheets rose, my aeroplanes swooped out of nothingness to scare the downland pe-wits; my uncle waved his hand and Lady Grove and all its associations of chivalry and ancient peace were his; waved again, and architects were busy planning the great palace he never finished at Crest Hill and an army of folkmen gathered to do his bidding, blue marble came from Canada, and timber from New Zealand; and beneath it all, you know, there was nothing but fictitious values as evanescent as rainbow gold.

IV

I pass the Hardingham ever and again and glance aside through the great archway at the fountain and the ferns, and think of those receding days when I was so near the centre of our eddy of greed and enterprise. I see again my uncle's face, white and intent, and hear him discourse, hear him make consciously Napoleonic decisions, "grip" his nettles, put his "finger on the spot," "bluff," say "snap." He became particularly addicted to the last

idiom. Towards the end every conceivable act took the form of saying "snap!"

The odd fish that came to us! And among others came Gordon-Nasmyth, that queer blend of romance and illegality who was destined to drag me into the most irrelevant adventure in my life the Mordet Island affair; and leave me, as they say, with blood upon my hands. It is remarkable how little it troubles my conscience and how much it stirs my imagination, that particular memory of the life I took. The story of Mordet Island has been told in a government report and told all wrong; there are still excellent reasons for leaving it wrong in places, but the liveliest appeals of discretion forbid my leaving it out altogether.

I've still the vividest memory of Gordon-Nasmyth's appearance in the inner sanctum, a lank, sunburnt person in tweeds with a yellow-brown hatchet face and one faded blue eye--the other was a closed and sunken lid--and how he told us with a stiff affectation of ease his incredible story of this great heap of quap that lay abandoned or undiscovered on the beach behind Mordet's Island among white dead mangroves and the black ooze of brackish water.

"What's quap?" said my uncle on the fourth repetition of the word.

"They call it quap, or quab, or quabb," said Gordon-Nasmyth; "but our relations weren't friendly enough to get the accent right...."

But there the stuff is for the taking. They don't know about it.

Nobody knows about it. I got down to the damned place in a canoe alone. The boys wouldn't come. I pretended to be botanising."

...

To begin with, Gordon-Nasmyth was inclined to be dramatic.

"Look here," he said when he first came in, shutting the door rather carefully behind him as he spoke, "do you two men--yes or no--want to put up six thousand--for--a clear good chance of fifteen hundred per cent. on your money in a year?"

"We're always getting chances like that," said my uncle, cocking his cigar offensively, wiping his glasses and tilting his chair back. "We stick to a safe twenty."

Gordon-Nasmyth's quick temper showed in a slight stiffening of his attitude.

"Don't you believe him," said I, getting up before he could reply. "You're different, and I know your books. We're very glad you've come to us. Confound it, uncle! It's Gordon-Nasmyth! Sit down. What is it? Minerals?"

"Quap," said Gordon-Nasmyth, fixing his eye on me, "in heaps."

"In heaps," said my uncle softly, with his glasses very oblique.

"You're only fit for the grocery," said Gordon-Nasmyth scornfully, sitting down and helping himself to one of my uncle's cigars. "I'm sorry I came. But, still, now I'm here.... And first as to quap; quap, sir, is the most radio-active stuff in the world. That's quap! It's a festering mass of earths and heavy metals, polonium, radium, ythorium, thorium, carium, and new things, too. There's a stuff called Xk--provisionally. There they are, mucked up together in a sort of rotting sand. What it is, how it got made, I don't know. It's like as if some young creator had been playing about there. There it lies in two heaps, one small, one great, and the world for miles about it is

blasted and scorched and dead. You can have it for the getting. You've got to take it--that's all!"

"That sounds all right," said I. "Have you samples?"

"Well--should I? You can have anything--up to two ounces."

"Where is it?"...

His blue eye smiled at me and scrutinised me. He smoked and was fragmentary for a time, fending off my questions; then his story began to piece itself together. He conjured up a vision of this strange forgotten kink in the world's littoral, of the long meandering channels that spread and divaricate and spend their burden of mud and silt within the thunderbelt of Atlantic surf, of the dense tangled vegetation that creeps into the shimmering water with root and sucker. He gave a sense of heat and a perpetual reek of vegetable decay, and told how at last comes a break among these things, an arena fringed with bone-white dead trees, a sight of the hard-blue sea line beyond the dazzling surf and a wide desolation of dirty shingle and mud, bleached and scarred.... A little way off among charred dead weeds stands the abandoned station,--abandoned because every man who stayed two months at that station stayed to die, eaten up mysteriously like a leper with its dismantled sheds and its decaying pier of wormrotten and oblique piles and planks, still insecurely possible.

And in the midst, two clumsy heaps shaped like the backs of hogs, one small, one great, sticking out under a rib of rock that cuts the space across,--quap!

"There it is," said Gordon-Nasmyth, "worth three pounds an ounce, if it's worth a penny; two great heaps of it, rotten stuff and soft, ready to shovel and wheel, and you may get it by the

ton!"

"How did it get there?"

"God knows! ... There it is--for the taking! In a country where you mustn't trade. In a country where the company waits for good kind men to find it riches and then take 'em away from 'em. There you have it--derelict."

"Can't you do any sort of deal?"

"They're too damned stupid. You've got to go and take it. That's all."

"They might catch you."

"They might, of course. But they're not great at catching."

We went into the particulars of that difficulty. "They wouldn't catch me, because I'd sink first. Give me a yacht," said Gordon-Nasmyth; "that's all I need."

"But if you get caught," said my uncle.

I am inclined to think Gordon-Nasmyth imagined we would give him a cheque for six thousand pounds on the strength of his talk. It was very good talk, but we didn't do that. I stipulated for samples of his stuff for analysis, and he consented--reluctantly.

I think, on the whole, he would rather I didn't examine samples. He made a motion pocketwards, that gave us an invincible persuasion that he had a sample upon him, and that at the last instant he decided not to produce it prematurely.

There was evidently a curious strain of secretiveness in him. He

didn't like to give us samples, and he wouldn't indicate within three hundred miles the position of this Mordet Island of his. He had it clear in his mind that he had a secret of immense value, and he had no idea at all of just how far he ought to go with business people. And so presently, to gain time for these hesitations of his, he began to talk of other things. He talked very well. He talked of the Dutch East Indies and of the Congo, of Portuguese East Africa and Paraguay, of Malays and rich Chinese merchants, Dyaks and negroes and the spread of the Mahometan world in Africa to-day. And all this time he was trying to judge if we were good enough to trust with his adventure. Our cosy inner office became a little place, and all our business cold and lifeless exploits beside his glimpses of strange minglings of men, of slayings unavenged and curious customs, of trade where no writs run, and the dark treacheries of eastern ports and uncharted channels.

We had neither of us gone abroad except for a few vulgar raids on Paris; our world was England, are the places of origin of half the raw material of the goods we sold had seemed to us as remote as fairyland or the forest of Arden. But Gordon-Nasmyth made it so real and intimate for us that afternoon--for me, at any rate--that it seemed like something seen and forgotten and now again remembered.

And in the end he produced his sample, a little lump of muddy clay speckled with brownish grains, in a glass bottle wrapped about with lead and flannel--red flannel it was, I remember--a hue which is, I know, popularly supposed to double all the mystical efficacies of flannel.

"Don't carry it about on you," said Gordon-Nasmyth. "It makes a sore."

I took the stuff to Thorold, and Thorold had the exquisite agony

of discovering two new elements in what was then a confidential analysis. He has christened them and published since, but at the time Gordon-Nasmyth wouldn't hear for a moment of our publication of any facts at all; indeed, he flew into a violent passion and abused me mercilessly even for showing the stuff to Thorold. "I thought you were going to analyse it yourself," he said with the touching persuasion of the layman that a scientific man knows and practises at the sciences.

I made some commercial inquiries, and there seemed even then much truth in Gordon-Nasmyth's estimate of the value of the stuff. It was before the days of Capern's discovery of the value of canadum and his use of it in the Capern filament, but the cerium and thorium alone were worth the money he extracted for the gas-mantles then in vogue. There were, however, doubts. Indeed, there were numerous doubts. What were the limits of the gas-mantle trade? How much thorium, not to speak of cerium, could they take at a maximum. Suppose that quantity was high enough to justify our shipload, came doubts in another quarter. Were the heaps up to sample? Were they as big as he said? Was Gordon-Nasmyth--imaginative? And if these values held, could we after all get the stuff? It wasn't ours. It was on forbidden ground. You see, there were doubts of every grade and class in the way of this adventure.

We went some way, nevertheless, in the discussion of his project, though I think we tried his patience. Then suddenly he vanished from London, and I saw no more of him for a year and a half.

My uncle said that was what he had expected, and when at last Gordon-Nasmyth reappeared and mentioned in an incidental way that he had been to Paraguay on private (and we guessed passionate) affairs, the business of the "quap" expedition had to be begun again at the beginning. My uncle was disposed to be altogether sceptical, but I wasn't so decided. I think I was

drawn by its picturesque aspects. But we neither of us dreamt of touching it seriously until Capern's discovery.

Nasmyth's story had laid hold of my imagination like one small, intense picture of tropical sunshine hung on a wall of grey business affairs. I kept it going during Gordon-Nasmyth's intermittent appearances in England. Every now and then he and I would meet and reinforce its effect. We would lunch in London, or he would come to see my gliders at Crest Hill, and make new projects for getting at those heaps again now with me, now alone.

At times they became a sort of fairy-story with us, an imaginative exercise. And there came Capern's discovery of what he called the ideal filament and with it an altogether less problematical quality about the business side of quap. For the ideal filament needed five per cent. of canadium, and canadium was known to the world only as a newly separated constituent of a variety of the rare mineral rutile. But to Thorold it was better known as an element in a mysterious sample brought to him by me, and to me it was known as one of the elements in quap. I told my uncle, and we jumped on to the process at once. We found that Gordon-Nasmyth, still unaware of the altered value of the stuff, and still thinking of the experimental prices of radium and the rarity value of cerium, had got hold of a cousin named Pollack, made some extraordinary transaction about his life insurance policy, and was buying a brig. We put in, put down three thousand pounds, and forthwith the life insurance transaction and the Pollack side of this finance vanished into thin air, leaving Pollack, I regret to say, in the brig and in the secret--except so far as canadium and the filament went--as residuum. We discussed earnestly whether we should charter a steamer or go on with the brig, but we decided on the brig as a less conspicuous instrument for an enterprise that was after all, to put it plainly, stealing.

But that was one of our last enterprises before our great crisis, and I will tell of it in its place.

So it was quap came into our affairs, came in as a fairy-tale and became real. More and more real it grew until at last it was real, until at last I saw with my eyes the heaps my imagination had seen for so long, and felt between my fingers again that half-gritty, half soft texture of quap, like sanded moist-sugar mixed with clay in which there stirs something--

One must feel it to understand.

V

All sorts of things came to the Hardingham and offered themselves to my uncle. Gordon-Nasmyth stands but only because he played a part at last in the crisis of our fortunes. So much came to us that it seemed to me at times as though the whole world of human affairs was ready to prostitute itself to our real and imaginary millions. As I look back, I am still dazzled and incredulous to think of the quality of our opportunities.

We did the most extraordinary things; things that it seems absurd to me to leave to any casual man of wealth and enterprise who cares to do them. I had some amazing perceptions of just how modern thought and the supply of fact to the general mind may be controlled by money. Among other things that my uncle offered for, he tried very hard to buy the British Medical Journal and the Lancet, and run them on what he called modern lines, and when they resisted him he talked very vigorously for a time of organising a rival enterprise. That was a very magnificent idea indeed in its way; it would have given a tremendous advantage in the handling of innumerable specialties and indeed I scarcely know how far it would not have put the medical profession in our grip. It still amazes me--I shall die amazed--that such a thing

can be possible in the modern state. If my uncle failed to bring the thing off, some one else may succeed. But I doubt, even if he had got both these weeklies, whether his peculiar style would have suited them. The change of purpose would have shown. He would have found it difficult to keep up their dignity.

He certainly did not keep up the dignity of the Sacred Grove, an important critical organ which he acquired one day--by saying "snap"--for eight hundred pounds. He got it "lock, stock and barrel"--under one or other of which three aspects the editor was included. Even at that price it didn't pay. If you are a literary person you will remember the bright new cover he gave that representative organ of British intellectual culture, and how his sound business instincts jarred with the exalted pretensions of a vanishing age. One old wrapper I discovered the other day runs:--

"THE SACRED GROVE."

Weekly Magazine of Art, Philosophy, Science and
Belles Lettres.

HAVE YOU A NASTY TASTE IN YOUR MOUTH?
IT IS LIVER.

YOU NEED ONE TWENTY-THREE PILL.

(JUST ONE.)

NOT A DRUG BUT A LIVE AMERICAN REMEDY.

CONTENTS.

A Hitherto Unpublished Letter from Walter Pater.
Charlotte Bronte's Maternal Great Aunt.
A New Catholic History of England.
The Genius of Shakespeare.
Correspondence:--The Mendelian Hypothesis; The Split Infinitive;

"Commence," or "Begin;" Claverhouse; Socialism and the

Individual; The Dignity of Letters.
Folk-lore Gossip.
The Stage; the Paradox of Acting.
Travel Biography, Verse, Fiction, etc.

THE BEST PILL IN THE WORLD FOR AN IRREGULAR LIVER

I suppose it is some lingering traces of the Bladesover tradition to me that makes this combination of letters and pills seem so incongruous, just as I suppose it is a lingering trace of Plutarch and my ineradicable boyish imagination that at bottom our State should be wise, sane and dignified, that makes me think a country which leaves its medical and literary criticism, or indeed any such vitally important criticism, entirely to private enterprise and open to the advances of any purchaser must be in a frankly hopeless condition. These are ideal conceptions of mine.

As a matter of fact, nothing would be more entirely natural and representative of the relations of learning, thought and the economic situation in the world at the present time than this cover of the Sacred Grove--the quiet conservatism of the one element embedded in the aggressive brilliance of the other; the contrasted notes of bold physiological experiment and extreme mental immobility.

There comes back, too, among these Hardingham memories, an impression of a drizzling November day, and how we looked out of the windows upon a procession of the London unemployed.

It was like looking down a well into some momentarily revealed nether world. Some thousands of needy ineffectual men had been raked together to trail their spiritless misery through the West Eire with an appeal that was also in its way a weak and insubstantial threat: "It is Work we need, not Charity."

There they were, half-phantom through the fog, a silent, foot-dragging, interminable, grey procession. They carried wet, dirty banners, they rattled boxes for pence; these men who had not said "snap" in the right place, the men who had "snapped" too eagerly, the men who had never said "snap," the men who had never had a chance of saying "snap." A shambling, shameful stream they made, oozing along the street, the gutter waste of competitive civilisation. And we stood high out of it all, as high as if we looked godlike from another world, standing in a room beautifully lit and furnished, skillfully warmed, filled with costly things.

"There," thought I, "but for the grace of God, go George and Edward Ponderevo."

But my uncle's thoughts ran in a different channel, and he made that vision the test of a spirited but inconclusive harangue upon Tariff Reform.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

OUR PROGRESS FROM CAMDEN TOWN TO CREST HILL

I

So far my history of my aunt and uncle has dealt chiefly with his industrial and financial exploits. But side by side with that history of inflation from the infinitesimal to the immense is another development, the change year by year from the shabby impecuniosity of the Camden Town lodging to the lavish munificence of the Crest Hill marble staircase and my aunt's golden bed, the bed that was facsimiled from Fontainebleau. And the odd thing is that as I come to this nearer part of my story I find it much more difficult to tell than the clear little perspective memories of the earlier days. Impressions crowd upon one another and overlap one another; I was presently to fall in love again, to be seized by a passion to which I still faintly respond, a passion that still clouds my mind. I came and went between Ealing and my aunt and uncle, and presently between Effie and clubland, and then between business and a life of research that became far more continuous, infinitely more consecutive and memorable than any of these other sets of experiences. I didn't witness a regular social progress therefore; my aunt and uncle went up in the world, so far as I was concerned, as if they were displayed by an early cinematograph, with little jumps and flickers.

As I recall this side of our life, the figure of my round-eyes, button-nosed, pink-and-white Aunt Susan tends always to the central position. We drove the car and sustained the car, she sat in it with a magnificent variety of headgear poised upon her delicate neck, and always with that faint ghost of a lisp no misspelling can render--commented on and illuminated the new aspects.

I've already sketched the little home behind the Wimblehurst chemist's shop, the lodging near the Cobden statue, and the apartments in Gower Street. Thence my aunt and uncle went into a flat in Redgauntlet Mansions. There they lived when I married.

It was a compact flat, with very little for a woman to do in it. In those days my aunt, I think, used to find the time heavy upon her hands, and so she took to books and reading, and after a time even to going to lectures in the afternoon. I began to find unexpected books upon her table: sociological books, travels, Shaw's plays. "Hullo!" I said, at the sight of some volume of the latter.

"I'm keeping a mind, George," she explained.

"Eh?"

"Keeping a mind. Dogs I never cared for. It's been a toss-up between setting up a mind and setting up a soul. It's jolly lucky for Him and you it's a mind. I've joined the London Library, and I'm going in for the Royal Institution and every blessed lecture that comes along next winter. You'd better look out." ...

And I remember her coming in late one evening with a note-book in her hand.

"Where ya been, Susan?" said my uncle.

"Birkbeck--Physiology. I'm getting on." She sat down and took off her gloves. "You're just glass to me," she sighed, and then in a note of grave reproach: "You old PACKAGE! I had no idea! The Things you've kept from me!"

Presently they were setting; up the house at Beckenham, and my aunt intermitted her intellectual activities. The house at Beckenham was something of an enterprise for them at that time, a reasonably large place by the standards of the early years of Tono-Bungay. It was a big, rather gaunt villa, with a conservatory and a shrubbery, a tennis-lawn, a quite

considerable vegetable garden, and a small disused coach-house. I had some glimpses of the excitements of its inauguration, but not many because of the estrangement between my aunt and Marion.

My aunt went into that house with considerable zest, and my uncle distinguished himself by the thoroughness with which he did the repainting and replumbing. He had all the drains up and most of the garden with them, and stood administrative on heaps--administrating whisky to the workmen. I found him there one day, most Napoleonic, on a little Elba of dirt, in an atmosphere that defies print. He also, I remember, chose what he considered cheerful contrasts of colours for the painting of the woodwork. This exasperated my aunt extremely--she called him a "Pestilential old Splosher" with an unusual note of earnestness--and he also enraged her into novelties of abuse by giving each bedroom the name of some favourite hero--Cliff, Napoleon, Caesar, and so forth--and having it painted on the door in gilt letters on a black label. "Martin Luther" was kept for me. Only her respect for domestic discipline, she said, prevented her retaliating with "Old Pondo" on the housemaid's cupboard.

Also he went and ordered one of the completest sets of garden requisites I have ever seen--and had them all painted a hard clear blue. My aunt got herself large tins of a kindlier hued enamel and had everything secretly recoated, and this done, she found great joy in the garden and became an ardent rose grower and herbaceous borderer, leaving her Mind, indeed, to damp evenings and the winter months. When I think of her at Beckenham, I always think first of her as dressed in that blue cotton stuff she affected, with her arms in huge gauntleted gardening gloves, a trowel in one hand and a small but no doubt hardy and promising annual, limp and very young-looking and sheepish, in the other.

Beckenham, in the persons of a vicar, a doctor's wife, and a large proud lady called Hogberry, "called" on my uncle and aunt almost at once, so soon in fact as the lawn was down again, and afterwards my aunt made friends with a quiet gentlewoman next door, a propos of an overhanging cherry tree and the need of repairing the party fence. So she resumed her place in society from which she had fallen with the disaster of Wimblehurst. She made a partially facetious study of the etiquette of her position, had cards engraved and retaliated calls. And then she received a card for one of Mrs. Hogberry's At Homes, gave an old garden party herself, participated in a bazaar and sale of work, and was really becoming quite cheerfully entangled in Beckenham society when she was suddenly taken up by the roots again by my uncle and transplanted to Chiselhurst.

"Old Trek, George," she said compactly, "Onward and Up," when I found her superintending the loading of two big furniture vans. "Go up and say good-bye to 'Martin Luther,' and then I'll see what you can do to help me."

II

I look into the jumbled stores of the middle distance of memory, and Beckenham seems to me a quite transitory phase. But really they were there several years; through nearly all my married life, in fact, and far longer than the year and odd months we lived together at Wimblehurst. But the Wimblehurst time with them is fuller in my memory by far than the Beckenham period. There comes back to me with a quite considerable amount of detail the effect of that garden party of my aunt's and of a little social misbehaviour of which I was guilty on that occasion. It's like a scrap from another life. It's all set in what is for me a kind of cutaneous feeling, the feeling of rather ill-cut city clothes, frock coat and grey trousers, and of a high collar and tie worn in sunshine among flowers. I have still

a quite vivid memory of the little trapezoidal lawn, of the gathering, and particularly of the hats and feathers of the gathering, of the parlour-maid and the blue tea-cups, and of the magnificent presence of Mrs. Hogberry and of her clear, resonant voice. It was a voice that would have gone with a garden party on a larger scale; it went into adjacent premises; it included the gardener who was far up the vegetable patch and technically out of play. The only other men were my aunt's doctor, two of the clergy, amiable contrasted men, and Mrs. Hogberry's imperfectly grown-up son, a youth just bursting into collar. The rest were women, except for a young girl or so in a state of speechless good behaviour. Marion also was there.

Marion and I had arrived a little estranged, and I remember her as a silent presence, a shadow across all that sunlit emptiness of intercourse. We had embittered each other with one of those miserable little disputes that seemed so unavoidable between us. She had, with the help of Smithie, dressed rather elaborately for the occasion, and when she saw me prepared to accompany her in, I think it was a grey suit, she protested that silk hat and frock coat were imperative. I was recalcitrant, she quoted an illustrated paper showing a garden party with the King present, and finally I capitulated--but after my evil habit, resentfully.... Eh, dear! those old quarrels, how pitiful they were, how trivial! And how sorrowful they are to recall! I think they grow more sorrowful as I grow older, and all the small passionate reasons for our mutual anger fade and fade out of memory.

The impression that Beckenham company has left on my mind is one of a modest unreality; they were all maintaining a front of unspecified social pretension, and evading the display of the economic facts of the case. Most of the husbands were "in business" off stage, it would have been outrageous to ask what the business was--and the wives were giving their energies to

produce, with the assistance of novels and the illustrated magazines, a moralised version of the afternoon life of the aristocratic class. They hadn't the intellectual or moral enterprise of the upper-class woman, they had no political interests, they had no views about anything, and consequently they were, I remember, extremely difficult to talk to. They all sat about in the summer-house and in garden-chairs, and were very hatty and ruffley and sunshady. Three ladies and the curate played croquet with a general immense gravity, broken by occasional loud cries of feigned distress from the curate. "Oh! Whacking me about again! Augh!"

The dominant social fact that afternoon was Mrs. Hogberry; she took up a certain position commanding the croquet and went on, as my aunt said to me in an incidental aside, "like an old Roundabout." She talked of the way in which Beckenham society was getting mixed, and turned on to a touching letter she had recently received from her former nurse at Little Gossean. Followed a loud account of Little Gossean and how much she and her eight sisters had been looked up to there. "My poor mother was quite a little Queen there," she said. "And such NICE Common people! People say the country labourers are getting disrespectful nowadays. It isn't so--not if they're properly treated. Here of course in Beckenham it's different. I won't call the people we get here a Poor--they're certainly not a proper Poor. They're Masses. I always tell Mr. Bugshoot they're Masses, and ought to be treated as such."...

Dim memories of Mrs. Mackridge floated through my mind as I listened to her....

I was whirled on this roundabout for a bit, and then had the fortune to fall off into a tete-a-tete with a lady whom my aunt introduced as Mrs. Mumble--but then she introduced everybody to me as Mumble that afternoon, either by way of humour or

necessity.

That must have been one of my earliest essays in the art of polite conversation, and I remember that I began by criticising the local railway service, and that at the third sentence or thereabouts Mrs. Mumble said in a distinctly bright and encouraging way that she feared I was a very "frivolous" person.

I wonder now what it was I said that was "frivolous."

I don't know what happened to end that conversation, or if it had an end. I remember talking to one of the clergy for a time rather awkwardly, and being given a sort of topographical history of Beckenham, which he assured me time after time was "Quite an old place. Quite an old place." As though I had treated it as new and he meant to be very patient but very convincing. Then we hung up in a distinct pause, and my aunt rescued me. "George," she said in a confidential undertone, "keep the pot a-boiling." And then audibly, "I say, will you both old trot about with tea a bit?"

"Only too delighted to TROT for you, Mrs. Ponderevo," said the clergyman, becoming fearfully expert and in his elements; "only too delighted."

I found we were near a rustic table, and that the housemaid was behind us in a suitable position to catch us on the rebound with the tea things.

"Trot!" repeated the clergyman to me, much amused; "excellent expression!" And I just saved him from the tray as he turned about.

We handed tea for a while....

"Give 'em cakes," said my aunt, flushed, but well in hand.
"Helps 'em to talk, George. Always talk best after a little
nourishment. Like throwing a bit of turf down an old geyser."

She surveyed the gathering with a predominant blue eye and helped
herself to tea.

"They keep on going stiff," she said in an undertone.... "I've
done my best."

"It's been a huge success," I said encouragingly.

"That boy has had his legs crossed in that position and hasn't
spoken for ten minutes. Stiffer and stiffer. Brittle. He's
beginning a dry cough--always a bad sign, George.... Walk 'em
about, shall I?--rub their noses with snow?"

Happily she didn't. I got myself involved with the gentlewoman
from next door, a pensive, languid-looking little woman with a
low voice, and fell talking; our topic, Cats and Dogs, and which
it was we liked best.

"I always feel," said the pensive little woman, "that there's
something about a dog-- A cat hasn't got it."

"Yes," I found myself admitting with great enthusiasm, "there is
something. And yet again--"

"Oh! I know there's something about a cat, too. But it isn't the
same."

"Not quite the same," I admitted; "but still it's something."

"Ah! But such a different something!"

"More sinuous."

"Much more."

"Ever so much more."

"It makes all the difference, don't you think?"

"Yes," I said, "ALL."

She glanced at me gravely and sighed a long, deeply felt "Yes."
A long pause.

The thing seemed to me to amount to a stale-mate. Fear came into my heart and much perplexity.

"The--er--Roses," I said. I felt like a drowning man. "Those roses--don't you think they are--very beautiful flowers?"

"Aren't they!" she agreed gently. "There seems to be something in roses--something--I don't know how to express it."

"Something," I said helpfully.

"Yes," she said, "something. Isn't there?"

"So few people see it," I said; "more's the pity!"

She sighed and said again very softly, "Yes."...

There was another long pause. I looked at her and she was thinking dreamily. The drowning sensation returned, the fear and enfeeblement. I perceived by a sort of inspiration that her tea-cup was empty.

"Let me take your cup," I said abruptly, and, that secured, made for the table by the summer-house. I had no intention then of deserting my aunt. But close at hand the big French window of the drawing-room yawned inviting and suggestive. I can feel all that temptation now, and particularly the provocation of my collar. In an instant I was lost. I would--Just for a moment!

I dashed in, put down the cup on the keys of the grand piano and fled upstairs, softly, swiftly, three steps at a time, to the sanctuary of my uncle's study, his snugger. I arrived there breathless, convinced there was no return for me. I was very glad and ashamed of myself, and desperate. By means of a penknife I contrived to break open his cabinet of cigars, drew a chair to the window, took off my coat, collar and tie, and remained smoking guiltily and rebelliously, and peeping through the blind at the assembly on the lawn until it was altogether gone....

The clergymen, I thought, were wonderful.

III

A few such pictures of those early days at Beckenham stand out, and then I find myself among the Chiselhurst memories. The Chiselhurst mansion had "grounds" rather than a mere garden, and there was a gardener's cottage and a little lodge at the gate. The ascendant movement was always far more in evidence there than at Beckenham. The velocity was increasing

One night picks itself out as typical, as, in its way, marking an epoch. I was there, I think, about some advertisement stuff, on some sort of business anyhow, and my uncle and aunt had come back in a fly from a dinner at the Runcorns. (Even there he was nibbling at Runcorn with the idea of our great Amalgamation budding in his mind.) I got down there, I suppose, about eleven.

I found the two of them sitting in the study, my aunt on a chair-arm with a whimsical pensiveness on her face, regarding my uncle, and he, much extended and very rotund, in the low arm-chair drawn up to the fender.

"Look here, George," said my uncle, after my first greetings. "I just been saying: We aren't Oh Fay!"

"Eh?"

"Not Oh Fay! Socially!"

"Old FLY, he means, George--French!"

"Oh! Didn't think of French. One never knows where to have him. What's gone wrong to-night?"

"I been thinking. It isn't any particular thing. I ate too much of that fishy stuff at first, like salt frog spawn, and was a bit confused by olives; and--well, I didn't know which wine was which. Had to say THAT each time. It puts your talk all wrong. And she wasn't in evening dress, not like the others. We can't go on in that style, George--not a proper ad."

"I'm not sure you were right," I said, "in having a fly."

"We got to do it all better," said my uncle, "we got to do it in Style. Smart business, smart men. She tries to pass it off as humorous"--my aunt pulled a grimace-- "it isn't humorous! See! We're on the up-grade now, fair and square. We're going to be big. We aren't going to be laughed at as Poovenos, see!"

"Nobody laughed at you," said my aunt. "Old Bladder!"

"Nobody isn't going to laugh at me," said my uncle, glancing at

his contours and suddenly sitting up.

My aunt raised her eyebrows slightly, swung her foot, and said nothing.

"We aren't keeping pace with our own progress, George. We got to. We're bumping against new people, and they set up to be gentlefolks--etiquette dinners and all the rest of it. They give themselves airs and expect us to be fish-out-of-water. We aren't going to be. They think we've no Style. Well, we give them Style for our advertisements, and we're going to give 'em Style all through.... You needn't be born to it to dance well on the wires of the Bond Street tradesmen. See?"

I handed him the cigar-box.

"Runcorn hadn't cigars like these," he said, truncating one lovingly. "We beat him at cigars. We'll beat him all round."

My aunt and I regarded him, full of apprehensions.

"I got ideas," he said darkly to the cigar, deepening our dread.

He pocketed his cigar-cutter and spoke again.

"We got to learn all the rotten little game first. See, F'rinstance, we got to get samples of all the blessed wines there are--and learn 'em up. Stern, Smoor, Burgundy, all of 'em! She took Stern to-night--and when she tasted it first--you pulled a face, Susan, you did. I saw you. It surprised you. You bunched your nose. We got to get used to wine and not do that. We got to get used to wearing evening dress--YOU, Susan, too."

"Always have had a tendency to stick out of my clothes," said my aunt. "However--Who cares?" She shrugged her shoulders.

I had never seen my uncle so immensely serious.

"Got to get the hang of etiquette," he went on to the fire.
"Horses even. Practise everything. Dine every night in evening dress.... Get a brougham or something. Learn up golf and tennis and things. Country gentleman. Oh Fay. It isn't only freedom from Goochery."

"Eh?" I said.

"Oh!--Gawshery, if you like!"

"French, George," said my aunt. "But I'M not ol' Gooch. I made that face for fun."

"It isn't only freedom from Gawshery. We got to have Style. See! Style! Just all right and one better. That's what I call Style. We can do it, and we will."

He mumbled his cigar and smoked for a space, leaning forward and looking into the fire.

"What is it," he asked, "after all? What is it? Tips about eating; tips about drinking. Clothes. How to hold yourself, and not say jes' the few little things they know for certain are wrong--jes' the shibboleth things."

He was silent again, and the cigar crept up from the horizontal towards the zenith as the confidence of his mouth increased.

"Learn the whole bag of tricks in six months." he said, becoming more cheerful. "Ah, Susan? Beat it out! George, you in particular ought to get hold of it. Ought to get into a good club, and all that."

"Always ready to learn!" I said. "Ever since you gave me the chance of Latin. So far we don't seem to have hit upon any Latin-speaking stratum in the population."

"We've come to French," said my aunt, "anyhow."

"It's a very useful language," said my uncle. "Put a point on things. Zzzz. As for accent, no Englishman has an accent. No Englishman pronounces French properly. Don't you tell ME. It's a Bluff.--It's all a Bluff. Life's a Bluff--practically. That's why it's so important, Susan, for us to attend to Style. Le Steel Say Lum. The Style it's the man. Whad you laughing at, Susan? George, you're not smoking. These cigars are good for the mind.... What do YOU think of it all? We got to adapt ourselves. We have--so far.... Not going to be beat by these silly things."

IV

"What do you think of it, George?" he insisted.

What I said I thought of it I don't now recall. Only I have very distinctly the impression of meeting for a moment my aunt's impenetrable eye. And anyhow he started in with his accustomed energy to rape the mysteries of the Costly Life, and become the calmest of its lords. On the whole, I think he did it--thoroughly. I have crowded memories, a little difficult to disentangle, of his experimental stages, his experimental proceedings. It's hard at times to say which memory comes in front of which. I recall him as presenting on the whole a series of small surprises, as being again and again, unexpectedly, a little more self-confident, a little more polished, a little richer and finer, a little more aware of the positions and values of things and men.

There was a time--it must have been very early--when I saw him deeply impressed by the splendours of the dining-room of the National Liberal Club. Heaven knows who our host was or what that particular little "feed" was about now!--all that sticks is the impression of our straggling entry, a string of six or seven guests, and my uncle looking about him at the numerous bright red-shaded tables, at the exotics in great Majolica jars, at the shining ceramic columns and pilasters, at the impressive portraits of Liberal statesmen and heroes, and all that contributes to the ensemble of that palatial spectacle. He was betrayed into a whisper to me, "This is all Right, George!" he said. That artless comment seems almost incredible as I set it down; there came a time so speedily when not even the clubs of New York could have overawed my uncle, and when he could walk through the bowing magnificence of the Royal Grand Hotel to his chosen table in that aggressively exquisite gallery upon the river, with all the easy calm of one of earth's legitimate kings.

The two of them learnt the new game rapidly and well; they experimented abroad, they experimented at home. At Chiselhurst, with the aid of a new, very costly, but highly instructive cook, they tried over everything they heard of that roused their curiosity and had any reputation for difficulty, from asparagus to plover's eggs. They afterwards got a gardener who could wait at table--and he brought the soil home to one. Then there came a butler.

I remember my aunt's first dinner-gown very brightly, and how she stood before the fire in the drawing-room confessing once unsuspected pretty arms with all the courage she possessed, and looking over her shoulder at herself in a mirror.

"A ham," she remarked reflectively, "must feel like this. Just a necklace."...

I attempted, I think, some commonplace compliment.

My uncle appeared at the door in a white waistcoat and with his hands in his trouser pockets; he halted and surveyed her critically.

"Couldn't tell you from a duchess, Susan," he remarked. "I'd like to have you painted, standin' at the fire like that. Sargent! You look--spirited, somehow. Lord!--I wish some of those damned tradesmen at Wimblehurst could see you."...

They did a lot of week-ending at hotels, and sometimes I went down with them. We seemed to fall into a vast drifting crowd of social learners. I don't know whether it is due simply to my changed circumstances, but it seems to me there have been immensely disproportionate developments of the hotel-frequenting and restaurant-using population during the last twenty years. It is not only, I think, that there are crowds of people who, like we were, are in the economically ascendant phase, but whole masses of the prosperous section of the population must be altering its habits, giving up high-tea for dinner and taking to evening dress, using the week-end hotels as a practise-ground for these new social arts. A swift and systematic conversion to gentility has been going on, I am convinced, throughout the whole commercial upper-middle class since I was twenty-one. Curiously mixed was the personal quality of the people one saw in these raids. There were conscientiously refined and low-voiced people reeking with proud bashfulness; there were aggressively smart people using pet diminutives for each other loudly and seeking fresh occasions for brilliant rudeness; there were awkward husbands and wives quarrelling furtively about their manners and ill at ease under the eye of the winter; cheerfully amiable and often discrepant couples with a disposition to inconspicuous corners, and the jolly sort, affecting an unaffected ease; plump

happy ladies who laughed too loud, and gentlemen in evening dress who subsequently "got their pipes." And nobody, you knew, was anybody, however expensively they dressed and whatever rooms they took.

I look back now with a curious remoteness of spirit to those crowded dining-rooms with their dispersed tables and their inevitable red-shaded lights and the unsympathetic, unskillful waiters, and the choice of "Thig or Glear, Sir?" I've not dined in that way, in that sort of place, now for five years--it must be quite five years, so specialised and narrow is my life becoming.

My uncle's earlier motor-car phases work in with these associations, and there stands out a little bright vignette of the hall of the Magnificent, Bexhill-on-Sea, and people dressed for dinner and sitting about amidst the scarlet furniture--satin and white-enameled woodwork until the gong should gather them; and my aunt is there, very marvelously wrapped about in a dust cloak and a cage-like veil, and there are hotel porters and under-porters very alert, and an obsequious manager; and the tall young lady in black from the office is surprised into admiration, and in the middle of the picture is my uncle, making his first appearance in that Esquimaux costume I have already mentioned, a short figure, compactly immense, hugely goggled, wearing a sort of brown rubber proboscis, and surmounted by a table-land of motoring cap.

V

So it was we recognised our new needs as fresh invaders of the upper levels of the social system, and set ourselves quite consciously to the acquisition of Style and Savoir Faire. We became part of what is nowadays quite an important element in the confusion of our world, that multitude of economically ascendant

people who are learning how to spend money. It is made up of financial people, the owners of the businesses that are eating up their competitors, inventors of new sources of wealth, such as ourselves; it includes nearly all America as one sees it on the European stage. It is a various multitude having only this in common: they are all moving, and particularly their womankind are moving, from conditions in which means were insistently finite, things were few, and customs simple, towards a limitless expenditure and the sphere of attraction of Bond Street, Fifth Avenue, and Paris. Their general effect is one of progressive revolution, of limitless rope.

They discover suddenly indulgences their moral code never foresaw and has no provision for, elaborations, ornaments, possessions beyond their wildest dreams. With an immense astonished zest they begin shopping begin a systematic adaptation to a new life crowded and brilliant with things shopped, with jewels, maids, butlers, coachmen, electric broughams, hired town and country houses. They plunge into it as one plunges into a career; as a class, they talk, think, and dream possessions. Their literature, their Press, turns all on that; immense illustrated weeklies of unsurpassed magnificence guide them in domestic architecture, in the art of owning a garden, in the achievement of the sumptuous in motor-cars, in an elaborate sporting equipment, in the purchase and control of their estates, in travel and stupendous hotels. Once they begin to move they go far and fast. Acquisition becomes the substance of their lives. They find a world organised to gratify that passion. In a brief year or so they are connoisseurs. They join in the plunder of the eighteenth century, buy rare old books, fine old pictures, good old furniture. Their first crude conception of dazzling suites of the newly perfect is replaced almost from the outset by a jackdaw dream of accumulating costly discrepant old things.

I seem to remember my uncle taking to shopping quite suddenly.

In the Beckenham days and in the early Chiselhurst days he was chiefly interested in getting money, and except for his onslaught on the Beckenham house, bothered very little about his personal surroundings and possessions. I forget now when the change came and he began to spend. Some accident must have revealed to him this new source of power, or some subtle shifting occurred in the tissues of his brain. He began to spend and "shop." So soon as he began to shop, he began to shop violently. He began buying pictures, and then, oddly enough, old clocks. For the Chiselhurst house he bought nearly a dozen grandfather clocks and three copper warming pans. After that he bought much furniture. Then he plunged into art patronage, and began to commission pictures and to make presents to churches and institutions. His buying increased with a regular acceleration. Its development was a part of the mental changes that came to him in the wild excitements of the last four years of his ascent. Towards the climax he was a furious spender; he shopped with large unexpected purchases, he shopped like a mind seeking expression, he shopped to astonish and dismay; shopped crescendo, shopped fortissimo, con molto espressione until the magnificent smash of Crest Hill eroded his shopping for ever. Always it was he who shopped. My aunt did not shine as a purchaser. It is a curious thing, due to I know not what fine strain in her composition, that my aunt never set any great store upon possessions. She plunged through that crowded bazaar of Vanity Fair during those feverish years, spending no doubt freely and largely, but spending with detachment and a touch of humorous contempt for the things, even the "old" things, that money can buy. It came to me suddenly one afternoon just how detached she was, as I saw her going towards the Hardingham, sitting up, as she always did, rather stiffly in her electric brougham, regarding the glittering world with interested and ironically innocent blue eyes from under the brim of a hat that defied comment. "No one," I thought, "would sit so apart if she hadn't dreams--and what are her dreams?"

I'd never thought.

And I remember, too, an outburst of scornful description after she had lunched with a party of women at the Imperial Cosmic Club. She came round to my rooms on the chance of finding me there, and I gave her tea. She professed herself tired and cross, and flung herself into my chair....

"George," she cried, " the Things women are! Do I stink of money?"

"Lunching?" I asked.

She nodded.

"Plutocratic ladies?"

"Yes."

"Oriental type?"

"Oh! Like a burst hareem!... Bragging of possessions.... They feel you. They feel your clothes, George, to see if they are good!"

I soothed her as well as I could. "They ARE Good aren't they?" I said.

"It's the old pawnshop in their blood," she said, drinking tea; and then in infinite disgust, "They run their hands over your clothes--they paw you."

I had a moment of doubt whether perhaps she had not been discovered in possession of unsuspected forgeries. I don't know. After that my eyes were quickened, and I began to see for

myself women running their hands over other women's furs, scrutinising their lace, even demanding to handle jewelry, appraising, envying, testing. They have a kind of etiquette. The woman who feels says, "What beautiful sables?" "What lovely lace?" The woman felt admits proudly: "It's Real, you know," or disavows pretension modestly and hastily, "It's Rot Good." In each other's houses they peer at the pictures, handle the selvage of hangings, look at the bottoms of china....

I wonder if it IS the old pawnshop in the blood.

I doubt if Lady Drew and the Olympians did that sort of thing, but here I may be only clinging to another of my former illusions about aristocracy and the State. Perhaps always possessions have been Booty, and never anywhere has there been such a thing as house and furnishings native and natural to the women and men who made use of them....

VI

For me, at least, it marked an epoch in my uncle's career when I learnt one day that he had "shopped" Lady Grove. I realised a fresh, wide, unpreluded step. He took me by surprise with the sudden change of scale from such portable possessions as jewels and motor-cars to a stretch of countryside. The transaction was Napoleonic; he was told of the place; he said "snap"; there were no preliminary desirings or searchings. Then he came home and said what he had done. Even my aunt was for a day or so measurably awestricken by this exploit in purchase, and we both went down with him to see the house in a mood near consternation. It struck us then as a very lordly place indeed. I remember the three of us standing on the terrace that looked westward, surveying the sky-reflecting windows of the house, and a feeling of unwarrantable intrusion comes back to me.

Lady Grove, you know, is a very beautiful house indeed, a still and gracious place, whose age-long seclusion was only effectively broken with the toot of the coming of the motor-car. An old Catholic family had died out in it, century by century, and was now altogether dead. Portions of the fabric are thirteenth century, and its last architectural revision was Tudor; within, it is for the most part dark and chilly, save for two or three favoured rooms and its tall-windowed, oak-galleried hall. Its terrace is its noblest feature; a very wide, broad lawn it is, bordered by a low stone battlement, and there is a great cedar in one corner under whose level branches one looks out across the blue distances of the Weald, blue distances that are made extraordinarily Italian in quality by virtue of the dark masses of that single tree. It is a very high terrace; southward one looks down upon the tops of wayfaring trees and spruces, and westward on a steep slope of beechwood, through which the road comes. One turns back to the still old house, and sees a grey and lichenous facade with a very finely arched entrance. It was warmed by the afternoon light and touched with the colour of a few neglected roses and a pyracanthus. It seemed to me that the most modern owner conceivable in this serene fine place was some bearded scholarly man in a black cassock, gentle-voiced and white-handed, or some very soft-robed, grey gentlewoman. And there was my uncle holding his goggles in a sealskin glove, wiping the glass with a pocket-handkerchief, and asking my aunt if Lady Grove wasn't a "Bit of all Right."

My aunt made him no answer.

"The man who built this," I speculated, "wore armour and carried a sword."

"There's some of it inside still," said my uncle.

We went inside. An old woman with very white hair was in charge

of the place and cringed rather obviously to the new master. She evidently found him a very strange and frightful apparition indeed, and was dreadfully afraid of him. But if the surviving present bowed down to us, the past did not. We stood up to the dark, long portraits of the extinguished race--one was a Holbein--and looked them in their sidelong eyes. They looked back at us. We all, I know, felt the enigmatical quality in them. Even my uncle was momentarily embarrassed, I think, by that invincibly self-complacent expression. It was just as though, after all, he had not bought them up and replaced them altogether; as though that, secretly, they knew better and could smile at him.

The spirit of the place was akin to Bladesover, but touched with something older and remoter. That armour that stood about had once served in tilt-yards, if indeed it had not served in battle, and this family had sent its blood and treasure, time after time, upon the most romantic quest in history, to Palestine. Dreams, loyalties, place and honour, how utterly had it all evaporated, leaving, at last, the final expression of its spirit, these quaint painted smiles, these smiles of triumphant completion! It had evaporated, indeed, long before the ultimate Durgan had died, and in his old age he had cumbered the place with Early Victorian cushions and carpets and tapestry table-cloths and invalid appliances of a type even more extinct, it seemed to us, than the crusades.... Yes, it was different from Bladesover.

"Bit stuffy, George," said my uncle. "They hadn't much idea of ventilation when this was built."

One of the panelled rooms was half-filled with presses and a four-poster bed. "Might be the ghost room," said my uncle; but it did not seem to me that so retiring a family as the Durgans, so old and completely exhausted a family as the Durgans, was

likely to haunt anybody. What living thing now had any concern with their honour and judgments and good and evil deeds? Ghosts and witchcraft were a later innovation--that fashion came from Scotland with the Stuarts.

Afterwards, prying for epitaphs, we found a marble crusader with a broken nose, under a battered canopy of fretted stone, outside the restricted limits of the present Duffield church, and half buried in nettles. "Ichabod," said my uncle. "Eh? We shall be like that, Susan, some day.... I'm going to clean him up a bit and put a railing to keep off the children."

"Old saved at the eleventh hour," said my aunt, quoting one of the less successful advertisements of Tono-Bungay.

But I don't think my uncle heard her.

It was by our captured crusader that the vicar found us. He came round the corner at us briskly, a little out of breath. He had an air of having been running after us since the first toot of our horn had warned the village of our presence. He was an Oxford man, clean-shaven, with a cadaverous complexion and a guardedly respectful manner, a cultivated intonation, and a general air of accommodation to the new order of things. These Oxford men are the Greeks of our plutocratic empire. He was a Tory in spirit, and what one may call an adapted Tory by stress of circumstances; that is to say, he was no longer a legitimist; he was prepared for the substitution of new lords for old. We were pill vendors he knew, and no doubt horribly vulgar in soul; but then it might have been some polygamous Indian rajah, a great strain on a good man's tact, or some Jew with an inherited expression of contempt. Anyhow, we were English, and neither Dissenters nor Socialists, and he was cheerfully prepared to do what he could to make gentlemen of both of us. He might have preferred Americans for some reasons; they are not so obviously

taken from one part of the social system and dumped down in another, and they are more teachable; but in this world we cannot always be choosers. So he was very bright and pleasant with us, showed us the church, gossiped informingly about our neighbours on the countryside--Tux, the banker; Lord Boom, the magazine and newspaper proprietor; Lord Carnaby, that great sportsman, and old Lady Osprey. And finally he took us by way of a village lane--three children bobbed convulsively with eyes of terror for my uncle--through a meticulous garden to a big, slovenly Vicarage with faded Victorian furniture and a faded Victorian wife, who gave us tea and introduced us to a confusing family dispersed among a lot of disintegrating basket chairs upon the edge of a well-used tennis lawn.

These people interested me. They were a common type, no doubt, but they were new to me. There were two lank sons who had been playing singles at tennis, red-eared youths growing black moustaches, and dressed in conscientiously untidy tweeds and unbuttoned and ungirt Norfolk jackets. There were a number of ill-nourished-looking daughters, sensible and economical in their costume, the younger still with long, brown-stockinged legs, and the eldest present--there were, we discovered, one or two hidden away--displaying a large gold cross and other aggressive ecclesiastical symbols; there were two or three fox-terriers, a retrieverish mongrel, and an old, bloody-eyed and very evil-smelling St. Bernard. There was a jackdaw. There was, moreover, an ambiguous, silent lady that my aunt subsequently decided must be a very deaf paying guest. Two or three other people had concealed themselves at our coming and left unfinished teas behind them. Rugs and cushions lay among the chairs, and two of the latter were, I noted, covered with Union Jacks.

The vicar introduced us sketchily, and the faded Victorian wife regarded my aunt with a mixture of conventional scorn and abject respect, and talked to her in a languid, persistent voice about

people in the neighbourhood whom my aunt could not possibly know.

My aunt received these personalia cheerfully, with her blue eyes flitting from point to point, and coming back again and again to the pinched faces of the daughters and the cross upon the eldest's breast. Encouraged by my aunt's manner, the vicar's wife grew patronising and kindly, and made it evident that she could do much to bridge the social gulf between ourselves and the people of family about us.

I had just snatches of that conversation. "Mrs. Merridew brought him quite a lot of money. Her father, I believe, had been in the Spanish wine trade--quite a lady though. And after that he fell off his horse and cracked his brain pan and took to fishing and farming. I'm sure you'll like to know them. He's most amusing.... The daughter had a disappointment and went to China as a missionary and got mixed up in a massacre."...

"The most beautiful silks and things she brought back, you'd hardly believe!"

"Yes, they gave them to propitiate her. You see, they didn't understand the difference, and they thought that as they'd been massacring people, THEY'D be massacred. They didn't understand the difference Christianity makes."...

"Seven bishops they've had in the family!"

"Married a Papist and was quite lost to them."...

"He failed some dreadful examination and had to go into the militia."...

"So she bit his leg as hard as ever she could and he let go."...

"Had four of his ribs amputated."...

"Caught meningitis and was carried off in a week."

"Had to have a large piece of silver tube let into his throat, and if he wants to talk he puts his finger on it. It makes him so interesting, I think. You feel he's sincere somehow. A most charming man in every way."

"Preserved them both in spirits very luckily, and there they are in his study, though of course he doesn't show them to everybody."

The silent lady, unperturbed by these apparently exciting topics, scrutinised my aunt's costume with a singular intensity, and was visibly moved when she unbuttoned her dust cloak and flung it wide. Meanwhile we men conversed, one of the more spirited daughters listened brightly, and the youths lay on the grass at our feet. My uncle offered them cigars, but they both declined,--out of bashfulness, it seemed to me, whereas the vicar, I think, accepted out of tact. When we were not looking at them directly, these young men would kick each other furtively.

Under the influence of my uncle's cigar, the vicar's mind had soared beyond the limits of the district. "This Socialism," he said, "seems making great headway."

My uncle shook his head. "We're too individualistic in this country for that sort of nonsense," he said "Everybody's business is nobody's business. That's where they go wrong."

"They have some intelligent people in their ranks, I am told," said the vicar, "writers and so forth. Quite a distinguished playwright, my eldest daughter was telling me--I forget his name."

Milly, dear! Oh! she's not here. Painters, too, they have. This Socialist, it seems to me, is part of the Unrest of the Age.... But, as you say, the spirit of the people is against it. In the country, at any rate. The people down here are too sturdily independent in their small way--and too sensible altogether."...

"It's a great thing for Duffield to have Lady Grove occupied again," he was saying when my wandering attention came back from some attractive casualty in his wife's discourse. "People have always looked up to the house and considering all things, old Mr. Durgan really was extraordinarily good--extraordinarily good. You intend to give us a good deal of your time here, I hope."

"I mean to do my duty by the Parish," said my uncle.

"I'm sincerely glad to hear it--sincerely. We've missed--the house influence. An English village isn't complete--People get out of hand. Life grows dull. The young people drift away to London."

He enjoyed his cigar gingerly for a moment.

"We shall look to you to liven things up," he said, poor man!

My uncle cocked his cigar and removed it from his mouth.

"What you think the place wants?" he asked.

He did not wait for an answer. "I been thinking while you been talking--things one might do. Cricket--a good English game--sports. Build the chaps a pavilion perhaps. Then every village ought to have a miniature rifle range."

"Ye-ees," said the vicar. "Provided, of course, there isn't a constant popping."...

"Manage that all right," said my uncle. "Thing'd be a sort of long shed. Paint it red. British colour. Then there's a Union Jack for the church and the village school. Paint the school red, too, p'raps. Not enough colour about now. Too grey. Then a maypole."

"How far our people would take up that sort of thing--" began the vicar.

"I'm all for getting that good old English spirit back again," said my uncle. "Merrymakings. Lads and lasses dancing on the village green. Harvest home. Fairings. Yule Log--all the rest of it."

"How would old Sally Glue do for a May Queen?" asked one of the sons in the slight pause that followed.

"Or Annie Glassbound?" said the other, with the huge virile guffaw of a young man whose voice has only recently broken.

"Sally Glue is eighty-five," explained the vicar, "and Annie Glassbound is well--a young lady of extremely generous proportions. And not quite right, you know. Not quite right--here." He tapped his brow.

"Generous proportions!" said the eldest son, and the guffaws were renewed.

"You see," said the vicar, "all the brisker girls go into service in or near London. The life of excitement attracts them. And no doubt the higher wages have something to do with it. And the liberty to wear finery. And generally--freedom from restraint.

So that there might be a little difficulty perhaps to find a May Queen here just at present who was really young and er--pretty.... Of course I couldn't think of any of my girls--or anything of that sort."

"We got to attract 'em back," said my uncle. "That's what I feel about it. We got to Buck-Up the country. The English country is a going concern still; just as the Established Church--if you'll excuse me saying it, is a going concern. Just as Oxford is--or Cambridge. Or any of those old, fine old things. Only it wants fresh capital, fresh ideas and fresh methods. Light railways, f'rinstance--scientific use of drainage. Wire fencing machinery--all that."

The vicar's face for one moment betrayed dismay. Perhaps he was thinking of his country walks amidst the hawthorns and honeysuckle.

"There's great things," said my uncle, "to be done on Mod'un lines with Village Jam and Pickles--boiled in the country."

It was the reverberation of this last sentence in my mind, I think, that sharpened my sentimental sympathy as we went through the straggling village street and across the trim green on our way back to London. It seemed that afternoon the most tranquil and idyllic collection of creeper-sheltered homes you can imagine; thatch still lingered on a whitewashed cottage or two, pyracanthus, wall-flowers, and daffodils abounded, and an unsystematic orchard or so was white with blossom above and gay with bulbs below. I noted a row of straw beehives, beehive-shaped, beehives of the type long since condemned as inefficient by all progressive minds, and in the doctor's acre of grass a flock of two whole sheep was grazing,--no doubt he'd taken them on account. Two men and one old woman made gestures of abject vassalage, and my uncle replied with a lordly gesture

of his great motoring glove....

"England's full of Bits like this," said my uncle, leaning over the front seat and looking back with great satisfaction. The black glare of his goggles rested for a time on the receding turrets of Lady Grove just peeping over the trees.

"I shall have a flagstaff, I think," he considered. "Then one could show when one is in residence. The villagers will like to know."...

I reflected. "They will" I said. "They're used to liking to know."...

My aunt had been unusually silent. Suddenly she spoke. "He says Snap," she remarked; "he buys that place. And a nice old job of Housekeeping he gives me! He sails through the village swelling like an old turkey. And who'll have to scoot the butler? Me! Who's got to forget all she ever knew and start again? Me! Who's got to trek from Chiselhurst and be a great lady? Me! ... You old Bother! Just when I was settling down and beginning to feel at home."

My uncle turned his goggles to her. "Ah! THIS time it is home, Susan.... We got there."

VII

It seems to me now but a step from the buying of Lady Grove to the beginning of Crest Hill, from the days when the former was a stupendous achievement to the days when it was too small and dark and inconvenient altogether for a great financier's use. For me that was a period of increasing detachment from our business and the great world of London; I saw it more and more in broken glimpses, and sometimes I was working in my little pavilion above

Lady Grove for a fortnight together; even when I came up it was often solely for a meeting of the aeronautical society or for one of the learned societies or to consult literature or employ searchers or some such special business. For my uncle it was a period of stupendous inflation. Each time I met him I found him more confident, more comprehensive, more consciously a factor in great affairs. Soon he was no longer an associate of merely business men; he was big enough for the attentions of greater powers.

I grew used to discovering some item of personal news about him in my evening paper, or to the sight of a full-page portrait of him in a sixpenny magazine. Usually the news was of some munificent act, some romantic piece of buying or giving or some fresh rumour of reconstruction. He saved, you will remember, the Parbury Reynolds for the country. Or at times, it would be an interview or my uncle's contribution to some symposium on the "Secret of Success," or such-like topic. Or wonderful tales of his power of work, of his wonderful organisation to get things done, of his instant decisions and remarkable power of judging his fellow-men. They repeated his great mot: "Eight hour working day--I want eighty hours!"

He became modestly but resolutely "public." They cartooned him in Vanity Fair. One year my aunt, looking indeed a very gracious, slender lady, faced the portrait of the King in the great room at Burlington House, and the next year saw a medallion of my uncle by Ewart, looking out upon the world, proud and imperial, but on the whole a trifle too prominently convex, from the walls of the New Gallery.

I shared only intermittently in his social experiences. People knew of me, it is true, and many of them sought to make through me a sort of flank attack upon him, and there was a legend, owing, very unreasonably, partly to my growing scientific

reputation and partly to an element of reserve in my manner, that I played a much larger share in planning his operations than was actually the case. This led to one or two very intimate private dinners, to my inclusion in one or two house parties and various odd offers of introductions and services that I didn't for the most part accept. Among other people who sought me in this way was Archie Garvell, now a smart, impecunious soldier of no particular distinction, who would, I think, have been quite prepared to develop any sporting instincts I possessed, and who was beautifully unaware of our former contact. He was always offering me winners; no doubt in a spirit of anticipatory exchange for some really good thing in our more scientific and certain method of getting something for nothing....

In spite of my preoccupation with my experiments, work, I did, I find now that I come to ransack my impressions, see a great deal of the great world during those eventful years; I had a near view of the machinery by which an astounding Empire is run, rubbed shoulders and exchanged experiences with bishops and statesmen, political women and women who were not political, physicians and soldiers, artists and authors, the directors of great journals, philanthropists and all sorts of eminent, significant people. I saw the statesmen without their orders and the bishops with but a little purple silk left over from their canonicals, inhaling, not incense but cigar smoke. I could look at them all the better because, for the most part, they were not looking at me but at my uncle, and calculating consciously or unconsciously how they might use him and assimilate him to their system, the most unpremeditated, subtle, successful and aimless plutocracy that ever encumbered the destinies of mankind. Not one of them, so far as I could see, until disaster overtook him, resented his lies, his almost naked dishonesty of method, the disorderly disturbance of this trade and that, caused by his spasmodic operations. I can see them now about him, see them polite, watchful, various; his stiff compact little figure always a

centre of attention, his wiry hair, his brief nose, his under-lip, electric with self-confidence. Wandering marginally through distinguished gatherings, I would catch the whispers: "That's Mr. Ponderevo!"

"The little man?"

"Yes, the little boulder with the glasses."

"They say he's made--"...

Or I would see him on some parterre of a platform beside my aunt's hurrying hat, amidst titles and costumes, "holding his end up," as he would say, subscribing heavily to obvious charities, even at times making brief convulsive speeches in some good cause before the most exalted audiences. "Mr. Chairman, your Royal Highness, my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen," he would begin amidst subsiding applause and adjust those obstinate glasses and thrust back the wings of his frock-coat and rest his hands upon his hips and speak his fragment with ever and again an incidental Zzzz. His hands would fret about him as he spoke, fiddle his glasses, feel in his waistcoat pockets; ever and again he would rise slowly to his toes as a sentence unwound jerkily like a clockwork snake, and drop back on his heels at the end. They were the very gestures of our first encounter when he had stood before the empty fireplace in his minute draped parlour and talked of my future to my mother.

In those measurelessly long hot afternoons in the little shop at Wimblehurst he had talked and dreamt of the Romance of Modern Commerce. Here, surely, was his romance come true.

VIII

People say that my uncle lost his head at the crest of his

fortunes, but if one may tell so much truth of a man one has in a manner loved, he never had very much head to lose. He was always imaginative, erratic, inconsistent, recklessly inexact, and his inundation of wealth merely gave him scope for these qualities. It is true, indeed, that towards the climax he became intensely irritable at times and impatient of contradiction, but that, I think, was rather the gnawing uneasiness of sanity than any mental disturbance. But I find it hard either to judge him or convey the full development of him to the reader. I saw too much of him; my memory is choked with disarranged moods and aspects. Now he is distended with megalomania, now he is deflated, now he is quarrelsome, now impenetrably self-satisfied, but always he is sudden, jerky, fragmentary, energetic, and--in some subtle fundamental way that I find difficult to define--absurd.

There stands out--because of the tranquil beauty of its setting perhaps--a talk we had in the veranda of the little pavilion near my worksheds behind Crest Hill in which my aeroplanes and navigable balloons were housed. It was one of many similar conversations, and I do not know why it in particular should survive its fellows. It happens so. He had come up to me after his coffee to consult me about a certain chalice which in a moment of splendour and under the importunity of a countess he had determined to give to a deserving church in the east-end. I, in a moment of even rasher generosity, had suggested Ewart as a possible artist. Ewart had produced at once an admirable sketch for the sacred vessel surrounded by a sort of wreath of Millies with open arms and wings and had drawn fifty pounds on the strength of it. After that came a series of vexatious delays. The chalice became less and less of a commercial man's chalice, acquired more and more the elusive quality of the Holy Grail, and at last even the drawing receded.

My uncle grew restive...."You see, George, they'll begin to want the blasted thing!"

"What blasted thing?"

"That chalice, damn it! They're beginning to ask questions. It isn't Business, George."

"It's art," I protested, "and religion."

"That's all very well. But it's not a good ad for us, George, to make a promise and not deliver the goods.... I'll have to write off your friend Ewart as a bad debt, that's what it comes to, and go to a decent firm."...

We sat outside on deck chairs in the veranda of the pavilion, smoked, drank whisky, and, the chalice disposed of, meditated. His temporary annoyance passed. It was an altogether splendid summer night, following a blazing, indolent day. Full moonlight brought out dimly the lines of the receding hills, one wave beyond another; far beyond were the pin-point lights of Leatherhead, and in the foreground the little stage from which I used to start upon my gliders gleamed like wet steel. The season must have been high June, for down in the woods that hid the lights of the Lady Grove windows, I remember the nightingales thrilled and gurgled....

"We got here, George," said my uncle, ending a long pause. "Didn't I say?"

"Say!--when?" I asked.

"In that hole in the To'nem Court Road, eh? It's been a Straight Square Fight, and here we are!"

I nodded.

"Member me telling you--Tono-Bungay?... Well.... I'd just that afternoon thought of it!"

"I've fancied at times;" I admitted.

"It's a great world, George, nowadays, with a fair chance for every one who lays hold of things. The career ouvert to the Talons--eh? Tono-Bungay. Think of it! It's a great world and a growing world, and I'm glad we're in it--and getting a pull. We're getting big people, George. Things come to us. Eh? This Palestine thing."...

He meditated for a time and Zzzzed softly. Then he became still.

His theme was taken up by a cricket in the grass until he himself was ready to resume it. The cricket too seemed to fancy that in some scheme of its own it had got there. "Chirrrrrrup" it said; "chirrrrrrup."

"Lord, what a place that was at Wemblehurst!" he broke out. "If ever I get a day off we'll motor there, George, and run over that dog that sleeps in the High Street. Always was a dog asleep there--always. Always... I'd like to see the old shop again. I daresay old Ruck still stands between the sheep at his door, grinning with all his teeth, and Marbel, silly beggar! comes out with his white apron on and a pencil stuck behind his ear, trying to look awake... Wonder if they know it's me? I'd like 'em somehow to know it's me."

"They'll have had the International Tea Company and all sorts of people cutting them up," I said. "And that dog's been on the pavement this six years--can't sleep even there, poor dear, because of the motor-horns and its shattered nerves."

"Movin' everywhere," said my uncle. "I expect you're right...."

It's a big time we're in, George. It's a big Progressive On-coming Imperial Time. This Palestine business--the daring of it.... It's, it's a Process, George. And we got our hands on it. Here we sit--with our hands on it, George. Entrusted.

"It seems quiet to--night. But if we could see and hear." He waved his cigar towards Leatherhead and London.

"There they are, millions, George. Jes' think of what they've been up to to-day--those ten millions--each one doing his own particular job. You can't grasp it. It's like old Whitman says--what is it he says? Well, anyway it's like old Whitman. Fine chap, Whitman! Fine old chap! Queer, you can't quote him. ... And these millions aren't anything. There's the millions over seas, hundreds of millions, Chinese, M'rocco, Africa generally, 'Merica.... Well, here we are, with power, with leisure, picked out--because we've been energetic, because we've seized opportunities, because we've made things hum when other people have waited for them to hum. See? Here we are--with our hands on it. Big people. Big growing people. In a sort of way,--Forces."

He paused. "It's wonderful, George," he said.

"Anglo-Saxon energy," I said softly to the night.

"That's it, George--energy. It's put things in our grip--threads, wires, stretching out and out, George, from that little office of ours, out to West Africa, out to Egypt, out to Inja, out east, west, north and south. Running the world practically. Running it faster and faster. Creative. There's that Palestine canal affair. Marvellous idee! Suppose we take that up, suppose we let ourselves in for it, us and the others, and run that water sluice from the Mediterranean into the Dead Sea Valley--think of the difference it will make! All the desert

blooming like a rose, Jericho lost for ever, all the Holy Places under water.... Very likely destroy Christianity."...

He mused for a space. "Cuttin' canals," murmured my uncle. "Making tunnels.... New countries.... New centres.... Zzzz.... Finance.... Not only Palestine.

"I wonder where we shall get before we done, George? We got a lot of big things going. We got the investing public sound and sure. I don't see why in the end we shouldn't be very big. There's difficulties but I'm equal to them. We're still a bit soft in our bones, but they'll harden all right.... I suppose, after all, I'm worth something like a million, George, cleared up and settled. If I got out of things now. It's a great time, George, a wonderful time!"...

I glanced through the twilight at his convexity and I must confess it struck me that on the whole he wasn't particularly good value.

"We got our hands on things, George, us big people. We got to hang together, George run the show. Join up with the old order like that mill-wheel of Kipling's. (Finest thing he ever wrote, George; I jes' been reading it again. Made me buy Lady Grove.) Well, we got to run the country, George. It's ours. Make it a Scientific Organised Business Enterprise. Put idees into it. 'Lectrify it. Run the Press. Run all sorts of developments. All sorts of developments. I been talking to Lord Boom. I been talking to all sorts of people. Great things. Progress. The world on business lines. Only jes' beginning."...

He fell into a deep meditation.

He Zzzzed for a time and ceased.

"YES," he said at last in the tone of a man who has at last emerged with ultimate solutions to the profoundest problems.

"What?" I said after a seemingly pause.

My uncle hung fire for a moment and it seemed to me the fate of nations trembled in the balance. Then he spoke as one who speaks from the very bottom of his heart--and I think it was the very bottom of his heart.

"I'd jes' like to drop into the Eastry Arms, jes' when all those beggars in the parlour are sittin' down to whist, Ruck and Marbel and all, and give 'em ten minutes of my mind, George. Straight from the shoulder. Jes' exactly what I think of them. It's a little thing, but I'd like to do it jes' once before I die."...

He rested on that for some time Zzzz-ing.

Then he broke out at a new place in a tone of detached criticism.

"There's Boom," he reflected.

"It's a wonderful system this old British system, George. It's staid and stable and yet it has a place for new men. We come up and take our places. It's almost expected. We take a hand. That's where our Democracy differs from America. Over there a man succeeds; all he gets is money. Here there's a system open to every one--practically.... Chaps like Boom--come from nowhere."

His voice ceased. I reflected upon the spirit of his words. Suddenly I kicked my feet in the air, rolled on my side and sat up suddenly on my deck chair with my legs down.

"You don't mean it!" I said.

"Mean what, George?"

"Subscription to the party funds. Reciprocal advantage. Have we got to that?"

"Whad you driving at, George?"

"You know. They'd never do it, man!"

"Do what?" he said feebly; and, "Why shouldn't they?"

"They'd not even go to a baronetcy. NO!.... And yet, of course, there's Boom! And Collingshead and Gorver. They've done beer, they've done snippets! After all Tono-Bungay--it's not like a turf commission agent or anything like that!... There have of course been some very gentlemanly commission agents. It isn't like a fool of a scientific man who can't make money!"

My uncle grunted; we'd differed on that issue before.

A malignant humour took possession of me. "What would they call you?" I speculated. "The vicar would like Duffield. Too much like Duffer! Difficult thing, a title." I ran my mind over various possibilities. "Why not take a leaf from a socialist tract I came upon yesterday. Chap says we're all getting delocalised. Beautiful word--delocalised! Why not be the first delocalised peer? That gives you--Tono-Bungay! There is a Bungay, you know. Lord Tono of Bungay--in bottles everywhere. Eh?"

My uncle astonished me by losing his temper.

"Damn it. George, you don't seem to see I'm serious! You're always sneering at Tono-Bungay! As though it was some sort of swindle. It was perfec'ly legitimate trade, perfec'ly

legitimate. Good value and a good article.... When I come up here and tell you plans and exchange ideas--you sneer at me. You do. You don't see--it's a big thing. It's a big thing. You got to get used to new circumstances. You got to face what lies before us. You got to drop that tone."

IX

My uncle was not altogether swallowed up in business and ambition. He kept in touch with modern thought. For example, he was, I know, greatly swayed by what he called "This Overman idee, Nietzsche--all that stuff."

He mingled those comforting suggestions of a potent and exceptional human being emancipated from the pettier limitations of integrity with the Napoleonic legend. It gave his imagination a considerable outlet. That Napoleonic legend! The real mischief of Napoleon's immensely disastrous and accidental career began only when he was dead and the romantic type of mind was free to elaborate his character. I do believe that my uncle would have made a far less egregious smash if there had been no Napoleonic legend to misguide him. He was in many ways better and infinitely kinder than his career. But when in doubt between decent conduct and a base advantage, that cult came in more and more influentially: "think of Napoleon; think what the inflexibly-wilful Napoleon would have done with such scruples as yours;" that was the rule, and the end was invariably a new step in dishonour.

My uncle was in an unsystematic way a collector of Napoleonic relics; the bigger the book about his hero the more readily he bought it; he purchased letters and tinsel and weapons that bore however remotely upon the Man of Destiny, and he even secured in Geneva, though he never brought home, an old coach in which Buonaparte might have ridden; he crowded the quiet walls of Lady

Grove with engravings and figures of him, preferring, my aunt remarked, the more convex portraits with the white vest and those statuettes with the hands behind the back which threw forward the figure. The Durgans watched him through it all, sardonically.

And he would stand after breakfast at times in the light of the window at Lady Grove, a little apart, with two fingers of one hand stuck between his waistcoat-buttons and his chin sunken, thinking,--the most preposterous little fat man in the world. It made my aunt feel, she said, "like an old Field Marshal--knocks me into a cocked hat, George!"

Perhaps this Napoleonic bias made him a little less frequent with his cigars than he would otherwise have been, but of that I cannot be sure, and it certainly caused my aunt a considerable amount of vexation after he had read Napoleon and the Fair Sex, because for a time that roused him to a sense of a side of life he had in his commercial preoccupations very largely forgotten. Suggestion plays so great a part in this field. My uncle took the next opportunity and had an "affair"!

It was not a very impassioned affair, and the exact particulars never of course reached me. It is quite by chance I know anything of it at all. One evening I was surprised to come upon my uncle in a mixture of Bohemia and smart people at an At Home in the flat of Robbert, the R.A. who painted my aunt, and he was standing a little apart in a recess, talking or rather being talked to in undertones by a plump, blond little woman in pale blue, a Helen Scrymgeour who wrote novels and was organising a weekly magazine. I elbowed a large lady who was saying something about them, but I didn't need to hear the thing she said to perceive the relationship of the two. It hit me like a placard on a hoarding. I was amazed the whole gathering did not see it. Perhaps they did. She was wearing a remarkably fine diamond necklace, much too fine for journalism, and regarding him

with that quality of questionable proprietorship, of leashed but straining intimacy, that seems inseparable from this sort of affair. It is so much more palpable than matrimony. If anything was wanted to complete my conviction it was my uncle's eyes when presently he became aware of mine, a certain embarrassment and a certain pride and defiance. And the next day he made an opportunity to praise the lady's intelligence to me concisely, lest I should miss the point of it all.

After that I heard some gossip--from a friend of the lady's. I was much too curious to do anything but listen. I had never in all my life imagined my uncle in an amorous attitude. It would appear that she called him her "God in the Car"--after the hero in a novel of Anthony Hope's. It was essential to the convention of their relations that he should go relentlessly whenever business called, and it was generally arranged that it did call. To him women were an incident, it was understood between them; Ambition was the master-passion. A great world called him and the noble hunger for Power. I have never been able to discover just how honest Mrs. Scrymgeour was in all this, but it is quite possible the immense glamour of his financial largeness prevailed with her and that she did bring a really romantic feeling to their encounters. There must have been some extraordinary moments....

I was a good deal exercised and distressed about my aunt when I realised what was afoot. I thought it would prove a terrible humiliation to her. I suspected her of keeping up a brave front with the loss of my uncle's affections fretting at her heart, but there I simply underestimated her. She didn't hear for some time and when she did hear she was extremely angry and energetic. The sentimental situation didn't trouble her for a moment. She decided that my uncle "wanted smacking." She accentuated herself with an unexpected new hat, went and gave him an inconceivable talking-to at the Hardingham, and then came round to "blow-up"

me for not telling her what was going on before....

I tried to bring her to a proper sense of the accepted values in this affair, but my aunt's originality of outlook was never so invincible. "Men don't tell on one another in affairs of passion," I protested, and such-like worldly excuses.

"Women!" she said in high indignation, "and men! It isn't women and men--it's him and me, George! Why don't you talk sense?"

"Old passion's all very well, George, in its way, and I'm the last person to be jealous. But this is old nonsense.... I'm not going to let him show off what a silly old lobster he is to other women... I'll mark every scrap of his underclothes with red letters, 'Ponderevo-Private'--every scrap.

"Going about making love indeed,--in abdominal belts!--at his time of life!"

I cannot imagine what passed between her and my uncle. But I have no doubt that for once her customary badinage was laid aside. How they talked then I do not know, for I who knew them so well had never heard that much of intimacy between them. At any rate it was a concerned and preoccupied "God in the Car" I had to deal with in the next few days, unusually Zzzz-y and given to slight impatient gestures that had nothing to do with the current conversation. And it was evident that in all directions he was finding things unusually difficult to explain.

All the intimate moments in this affair were hidden from me, but in the end my aunt triumphed. He did not so much throw as jerk over Mrs. Scrymgeour, and she did not so much make a novel of it as upset a huge pailful of attenuated and adulterated female soul upon this occasion. My aunt did not appear in that, even remotely. So that it is doubtful if the lady knew the real

causes of her abandonment. The Napoleonic hero was practically unmarried, and he threw over his lady as Napoleon threw over Josephine for a great alliance.

It was a triumph for my aunt, but it had its price. For some time it was evident things were strained between them. He gave up the lady, but he resented having to do so, deeply. She had meant more to his imagination than one could have supposed. He wouldn't for a long time "come round." He became touchy and impatient and secretive towards my aunt, and she, I noted, after an amazing check or so, stopped that stream of kindly abuse that had flowed for so long and had been so great a refreshment in their lives. They were both the poorer for its cessation, both less happy. She devoted herself more and more to Lady Grove and the humours and complications of its management. The servants took to her--as they say--she god-mothered three Susans during her rule, the coachman's, the gardener's, and the Up Hill gamekeeper's. She got together a library of old household books that were in the vein of the place. She revived the still-room, and became a great artist in jellies and elder and cowslip wine.

X

And while I neglected the development of my uncle's finances--and my own, in my scientific work and my absorbing conflict with the difficulties of flying,--his schemes grew more and more expansive and hazardous, and his spending wilder and laxer. I believe that a haunting sense of the intensifying unsoundness of his position accounts largely for his increasing irritability and his increasing secretiveness with my aunt and myself during these crowning years. He dreaded, I think, having to explain, he feared our jests might pierce unwittingly to the truth. Even in the privacy of his mind he would not face the truth. He was accumulating unrealisable securities in his safes until they hung a potential avalanche over the economic world. But his buying

became a fever, and his restless desire to keep it up with himself that he was making a triumphant progress to limitless wealth gnawed deeper and deeper. A curious feature of this time with him was his buying over and over again of similar things. His ideas seemed to run in series. Within a twelve-month he bought five new motor-cars, each more swift and powerful than its predecessor, and only the repeated prompt resignation of his chief chauffeur at each moment of danger, prevented his driving them himself. He used them more and more. He developed a passion for locomotion for its own sake.

Then he began to chafe at Lady Grove, fretted by a chance jest he had overheard at a dinner. "This house, George," he said. "It's a misfit. There's no elbow-room in it; it's choked with old memories. And I can't stand all these damned Durgans!

"That chap in the corner, George. No! the other corner! The man in a cherry-coloured coat. He watched you! He'd look silly if I stuck a poker through his Gizzard!"

"He'd look," I reflected, "much as he does now. As though he was amused."

He replaced his glasses, which had fallen at his emotion, and glared at his antagonists. "What are they? What are they all, the lot of 'em? Dead as Mutton! They just stuck in the mud. They didn't even rise to the Reformation. The old out-of-date Reformation! Move with the times!--they moved against the times.

Just a Family of Failure,--they never even tried!

"They're jes', George, exactly what I'm not. Exactly. It isn't suitable.... All this living in the Past.

"And I want a bigger place too, George. I want air and sunlight

and room to move about and more service. A house where you can get a Move on things! Zzzz. Why! it's like a discord--it jars--even to have the telephone.... There's nothing, nothing except the terrace, that's worth a Rap. It's all dark and old and dried up and full of old-fashioned things--musty old ideas--fitter for a silver-fish than a modern man.... I don't know how I got here."

He broke out into a new grievance. "That damned vicar," he complained, "thinks I ought to think myself lucky to get this place! Every time I meet him I can see him think it.... One of these days, George I'll show him what a Mod'un house is like!"

And he did.

I remember the day when he declared, as Americans say, for Crest Hill. He had come up to see my new gas plant, for I was then only just beginning to experiment with auxiliary collapsible balloons, and all the time the shine of his glasses was wandering away to the open down beyond. "Let's go back to Lady Grove over the hill," he said. "Something I want to show you. Something fine!"

It was an empty sunlit place that summer evening, sky and earth warm with sundown, and a pe-wit or so just accentuating the pleasant stillness that ends a long clear day. A beautiful peace, it was, to wreck for ever. And there was my uncle, the modern man of power, in his grey top-hat and his grey suit and his black-ribboned glasses, short, thin-legged, large-stomached, pointing and gesticulating, threatening this calm.

He began with a wave of his arm. "That's the place, George," he said. "See?"

"Eh!" I cried--for I had been thinking of remote things.

"I got it."

"Got what?"

"For a house!--a Twentieth Century house! That's the place for it!"

One of his characteristic phrases was begotten in him.

"Four-square to the winds of heaven, George!" he said. "Eh? Four-square to the winds of heaven!"

"You'll get the winds up here," I said.

"A mammoth house it ought to be, George--to suit these hills."

"Quite," I said.

"Great galleries and things--running out there and there--See? I been thinking of it, George! Looking out all this way--across the Weald. With its back to Lady Grove."

"And the morning sun in its eye."

"Like an eagle, George,--like an eagle!"

So he broached to me what speedily became the leading occupation of his culminating years, Crest Hill. But all the world has heard of that extravagant place which grew and changed its plans as it grew, and bubbled like a salted snail, and burgeoned and bulged and evermore grew. I know not what delirium of pinnacles and terraces and arcades and corridors glittered at last upon the uplands of his mind; the place, for all that its expansion was

terminated abruptly by our collapse, is wonderful enough as it stands,--that empty instinctive building of a childless man. His chief architect was a young man named Westminster, whose work he had picked out in the architecture room of the Royal Academy on account of a certain grandiose courage in it, but with him he associated from time to time a number of fellow professionals, stonemasons, sanitary engineers, painters, sculptors, scribes, metal workers, wood carvers, furniture designers, ceramic specialists, landscape gardeners, and the man who designs the arrangement and ventilation of the various new houses in the London Zoological Gardens. In addition he had his own ideas. The thing occupied his mind at all times, but it held it completely from Friday night to Monday morning. He would come down to Lady Grove on Friday night in a crowded motor-car that almost dripped architects. He didn't, however, confine himself to architects; every one was liable to an invitation to week-end and view Crest Hill, and many an eager promoter, unaware of how Napoleonically and completely my uncle had departmentalised his mind, tried to creep up to him by way of tiles and ventilators and new electric fittings. Always on Sunday mornings, unless the weather was vile, he would, so soon as breakfast and his secretaries were disposed of, visit the site with a considerable retinue, and alter and develop plans, making modifications, Zzzz-ing, giving immense new orders verbally--an unsatisfactory way, as Westminster and the contractors ultimately found.

There he stands in my memory, the symbol of this age for me, the man of luck and advertisement, the current master of the world. There he stands upon the great outward sweep of the terrace before the huge main entrance, a little figure, ridiculously disproportionate to that forty-foot arch, with the granite ball behind him--the astronomical ball, brass coopered, that represented the world, with a little adjustable tube of lenses on a gun-metal arm that focussed the sun upon just that point of the earth on which it chanced to be shining vertically. There he

stands, Napoleonicly grouped with his retinue men in tweeds and golfing-suits, a little solicitor, whose name I forget, in grey trousers and a black jacket, and Westminster in Jaeger underclothing, a floriferous tie, and peculiar brown cloth of his own.

The downland breeze flutters my uncle's coat-tails, disarranges his stiff hair, and insists on the evidence of undisciplined appetites in face and form, as he points out this or that feature in the prospect to his attentive collaborator.

Below are hundreds of feet of wheeling-planks, ditches, excavations, heaps of earth, piles of garden stone from the Wealden ridges. On either hand the walls of his irrelevant unmeaning palace rise at one time he had working in that place--disturbing the economic balance of the whole countryside by their presence--upwards of three thousand men....

So he poses for my picture amidst the raw beginnings that were never to be completed. He did the strangest things about that place, things more and more detached from any conception of financial scale, things more and more apart from sober humanity. He seemed to think himself, at last, released from any such limitations. He moved a quite considerable hill, and nearly sixty mature trees were moved with it to open his prospect eastward, moved it about two hundred feet to the south. At another time he caught a suggestion from some city restaurant and made a billiard-room roofed with plate glass beneath the waters of his ornamental lake. He furnished one wing while its roof still awaited completion. He had a swimming bath thirty feet square next to his bedroom upstairs, and to crown it all he commenced a great wall to hold all his dominions together, free from the invasion of common men. It was a ten-foot wall, glass surmounted, and had it been completed as he intended it, it would have had a total length of nearly eleven miles. Some of it

towards the last was so dishonestly built that it collapsed within a year upon its foundations, but some miles of it still stand. I never think of it now but what I think of the hundreds of eager little investors who followed his "star," whose hopes and lives, whose wives' security and children's prospects are all mixed up beyond redemption with that flaking mortar....

It is curious how many of these modern financiers of chance and bluff have ended their careers by building. It was not merely my uncle. Sooner or later they all seem to bring their luck to the test of realisation, try to make their fluid opulence coagulate out as bricks and mortar, bring moonshine into relations with a weekly wages-sheet. Then the whole fabric of confidence and imagination totters--and down they come....

When I think of that despoiled hillside, that colossal litter of bricks and mortar, and crude roads and paths, the scaffolding and sheds, the general quality of unforeseeing outrage upon the peace of nature, I am reminded of a chat I had with the vicar one bleak day after he had witnessed a glide. He talked to me of aeronautics as I stood in jersey and shorts beside my machine, fresh from alighting, and his cadaverous face failed to conceal a peculiar desolation that possessed him.

"Almost you convince me," he said, coming up to me, "against my will.... A marvellous invention! But it will take you a long time, sir, before you can emulate that perfect mechanism--the wing of a bird."

He looked at my sheds.

"You've changed the look of this valley, too," he said.

"Temporary defilements," I remarked, guessing what was in his mind.

"Of course. Things come and go. Things come and go. But--H'm. I've just been up over the hill to look at Mr. Edward Ponderevo's new house. That--that is something more permanent. A magnificent place!--in many ways. Imposing. I've never somehow brought myself to go that way before. Things are greatly advanced.... We find--the great number of strangers introduced into the villages about here by these operations, working-men chiefly, a little embarrassing. It put us out. They bring a new spirit into the place; betting--ideas--all sorts of queer notions. Our publicans like it, of course. And they come and sleep in one's outhouses--and make the place a little unsafe at nights. The other morning I couldn't sleep--a slight dyspepsia--and I looked out of the window. I was amazed to see people going by on bicycles. A silent procession. I counted ninety-seven--in the dawn. All going up to the new road for Crest Hill. Remarkable I thought it. And so I've been up to see what they were doing."

"They would have been more than remarkable thirty years ago," I said.

"Yes, indeed. Things change. We think nothing of it now at all--comparatively. And that big house--"

He raised his eyebrows. "Really stupendous! Stupendous.

"All the hillside--the old turf--cut to ribbons!"

His eye searched my face. "We've grown so accustomed to look up to Lady Grove," he said, and smiled in search of sympathy. "It shifts our centre of gravity."

"Things will readjust themselves," I lied.

He snatched at the phrase. "Of course," he said.

"They'll readjust themselves--settle down again. Must. In the old way. It's bound to come right again--a comforting thought. Yes. After all, Lady Grove itself had to be built once upon a time--was--to begin with--artificial."

His eye returned to my aeroplane. He sought to dismiss his graver preoccupations. "I should think twice," he remarked, "before I trusted myself to that concern.... But I suppose one grows accustomed to the motion."

He bade me good morning and went his way, bowed and thoughtful....

He had kept the truth from his mind a long time, but that morning it had forced its way to him with an aspect that brooked no denial that this time it was not just changes that were coming in his world, but that all his world lay open and defenceless, conquered and surrendered, doomed so far as he could see, root and branch, scale and form alike, to change.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

SOARING

I

For nearly all the time that my uncle was incubating and hatching Crest Hill I was busy in a little transverse valley between that great beginning and Lady Grove with more and more costly and ambitious experiments in aerial navigation. This work was indeed the main substance of my life through all the great time of the Tono-Bungay symphony.

I have told already how I came to devote myself to this system of inquiries, how in a sort of disgust with the common adventure of life I took up the dropped ends of my college studies, taking them up again with a man's resolution instead of a boy's ambition. From the first I did well at this work. It--was, I think, largely a case of special aptitude, of a peculiar irrelevant vein of faculty running through my mind. It is one of those things men seem to have by chance, that has little or nothing to do with their general merit, and which it is ridiculous to be either conceited or modest about. I did get through a very big mass of work in those years, working for a time with a concentrated fierceness that left little of such energy or capacity as I possess unused. I worked out a series of problems connected with the stability of bodies pitching in the air and the internal movements of the wind, and I also revolutionised one leading part at last of the theory of explosive engines. These things are to be found in the *Philosophical Transactions*, the *Mathematical Journal*, and less frequently in one or two other such publications, and they needn't detain us here. Indeed, I doubt if I could write about them here. One acquires a sort of shorthand for one's notes and mind in relation to such special work. I have never taught; nor lectured, that is to say, I have never had to express my thoughts about mechanical things in ordinary everyday language, and I doubt very much if I could do so now without extreme tedium.

My work was, to begin with, very largely theoretical. I was able to attack such early necessities of verification as arose with quite little models, using a turntable to get the motion through the air, and cane, whalebone and silk as building material. But a time came when incalculable factors crept in, factors of human capacity and factors of insufficient experimental knowledge, when one must needs guess and try. Then I had to enlarge the scale of my operations, and soon I had enlarged them very greatly. I set

to work almost concurrently on the balance and stability of gliders and upon the steering of inflated bags, the latter a particularly expensive branch of work. I was no doubt moved by something of the same spirit of lavish expenditure that was running away with my uncle in these developments. Presently my establishment above Lady Grove had grown to a painted wood chalet big enough to accommodate six men, and in which I would sometimes live for three weeks together; to a gasometer, to a motor-house, to three big corrugated-roofed sheds and lock-up houses, to a stage from which to start gliders, to a workshop and so forth. A rough road was made. We brought up gas from Cheaping and electricity from Woking, which place I found also afforded a friendly workshop for larger operations than I could manage. I had the luck also to find a man who seemed my heaven-sent second-in-command--Cothope his name was. He was a self-educated-man; he had formerly been a sapper and he was one of the best and handiest working engineers alive. Without him I do not think I could have achieved half what I have done. At times he has been not so much my assistant as my collaborator, and has followed my fortunes to this day. Other men came and went as I needed them.

I do not know how far it is possible to convey to any one who has not experienced it, the peculiar interest, the peculiar satisfaction that lies in a sustained research when one is not hampered by want of money. It is a different thing from any other sort of human effort. You are free from the exasperating conflict with your fellow-creatures altogether--at least so far as the essential work goes; that for me is its peculiar merit. Scientific truth is the remotest of mistresses; she hides in strange places, she is attained by tortuous and laborious roads, but SHE IS ALWAYS THERE! Win to her and she will not fail you; she is yours and mankind's for ever. She is reality, the one reality I have found in this strange disorder of existence. She will not sulk with you nor misunderstand you nor cheat you of

your reward upon some petty doubt. You cannot change her by advertisement or clamour, nor stifle her in vulgarities. Things grow under your hands when you serve her, things that are permanent as nothing else is permanent in the whole life of man. That, I think, is the peculiar satisfaction of science and its enduring reward....

The taking up of experimental work produced a great change in my personal habits. I have told how already once in my life at Wimblehurst I had a period of discipline and continuous effort, and how, when I came to South Kensington, I became demoralised by the immense effect of London, by its innumerable imperative demands upon my attention and curiosity. And I parted with much of my personal pride when I gave up science for the development of Tono-Bungay. But my poverty kept me abstinent and my youthful romanticism kept me chaste until my married life was well under way. Then in all directions I relaxed. I did a large amount of work, but I never troubled to think whether it was my maximum nor whether the moods and indolences that came to me at times were avoidable things. With the coming of plenty I ate abundantly and foolishly, drank freely and followed my impulses more and more carelessly. I felt no reason why I should do anything else. Never at any point did I use myself to the edge of my capacity. The emotional crisis of my divorce did not produce any immediate change in these matters of personal discipline. I found some difficulty at first in concentrating my mind upon scientific work, it was so much more exacting than business, but I got over that difficulty by smoking. I became an inordinate cigar smoker; it gave me moods of profound depression, but I treated these usually by the homeopathic method,--by lighting another cigar. I didn't realise at all how loose my moral and nervous fibre had become until I reached the practical side of my investigations and was face to face with the necessity of finding out just how it felt to use a glider and just what a man could do with one.

I got into this relaxed habit of living in spite of very real tendencies in my nature towards discipline. I've never been in love with self-indulgence. That philosophy of the loose lip and the lax paunch is one for which I've always had an instinctive distrust. I like bare things, stripped things, plain, austere and continent things, fine lines and cold colours. But in these plethoric times when there is too much coarse stuff for everybody and the struggle for life takes the form of competitive advertisement and the effort to fill your neighbour's eye, when there is no urgent demand either for personal courage, sound nerves or stark beauty, we find ourselves by accident. Always before these times the bulk of the people did not over-eat themselves, because they couldn't, whether they wanted to do so or not, and all but a very few were kept "fit" by unavoidable exercise and personal danger. Now, if only he pitch his standard low enough and keep free from pride, almost any one can achieve a sort of excess. You can go through contemporary life fudging and evading, indulging and slacking, never really hungry nor frightened nor passionately stirred, your highest moment a mere sentimental orgasm, and your first real contact with primary and elemental necessities, the sweat of your death-bed. So I think it was with my uncle; so, very nearly, it was with me.

But the glider brought me up smartly. I had to find out how these things went down the air, and the only way to find out is to go down with one. And for a time I wouldn't face it.

There is something impersonal about a book, I suppose. At any rate I find myself able to write down here just the confession I've never been able to make to any one face to face, the frightful trouble it was to me to bring myself to do what I suppose every other coloured boy in the West Indies could do without turning a hair, and that is to fling myself off for my first soar down the wind. The first trial was bound to be the worst; it was an experiment I made with life, and the chance of

death or injury was, I supposed, about equal to the chance of success. I believed that with a dawn-like lucidity. I had begun with a glider that I imagined was on the lines of the Wright brothers' aeroplane, but I could not be sure. It might turn over. I might upset it. It might burrow its nose at the end and smash itself and me. The conditions of the flight necessitated alert attention; it wasn't a thing to be done by jumping off and shutting one's eyes or getting angry or drunk to do it. One had to use one's weight to balance. And when at last I did it it was horrible--for ten seconds. For ten seconds or so, as I swept down the air flattened on my infernal framework and with the wind in my eyes, the rush of the ground beneath me filled me with sick and helpless terror; I felt as though some violent oscillatory current was throbbing in brain and back bone, and I groaned aloud. I set my teeth and groaned. It was a groan wrung out of me in spite of myself. My sensations of terror swooped to a climax. And then, you know, they ended!

Suddenly my terror was over and done with. I was soaring through the air right way up, steadily, and no mischance had happened. I felt intensely alive and my nerves were strung like a bow. I shifted a limb, swerved and shouted between fear and triumph as I recovered from the swerve and heeled the other way and steadied myself.

I thought I was going to hit a rook that was flying athwart me,--it was queer with what projectile silence that jumped upon me out of nothingness, and I yelled helplessly, "Get out of the way!" The bird doubled itself up like a partly inverted V, flapped, went up to the right abruptly and vanished from my circle of interest. Then I saw the shadow of my aeroplane keeping a fixed distance before me and very steady, and the turf as it seemed streaming out behind it. The turf!--it wasn't after all streaming so impossibly fast.

When I came gliding down to the safe spread of level green I had chosen, I was as cool and ready as a city clerk who drops off an omnibus in motion, and I had learnt much more than soaring. I tilted up her nose at the right moment, levelled again and grounded like a snowflake on a windless day. I lay flat for an instant and then knelt up and got on my feet atremble, but very satisfied with myself. Cothope was running down the hill to me.

...

But from that day I went into training, and I kept myself in training for many months. I had delayed my experiments for very nearly six weeks on various excuses because of my dread of this first flight, because of the slackness of body and spirit that had come to me with the business life. The shame of that cowardice spurred me none the less because it was probably altogether my own secret. I felt that Cothope at any rate might suspect. Well,--he shouldn't suspect again.

It is curious that I remember that shame and self accusation and its consequences far more distinctly than I recall the weeks of vacillation before I soared. For a time I went altogether without alcohol, I stopped smoking altogether and ate very sparingly, and every day I did something that called a little upon my nerves and muscles. I soared as frequently as I could. I substituted a motor-bicycle for the London train and took my chances in the southward traffic, and I even tried what thrills were to be got upon a horse. But they put me on made horses, and I conceived a perhaps unworthy contempt for the certitudes of equestrian exercise in comparison with the adventures of mechanism. Also I walked along the high wall at the back of Lady Grove garden, and at last brought myself to stride the gap where the gate comes. If I didn't altogether get rid of a certain giddy instinct by such exercises, at least I trained my will until it didn't matter. And soon I no longer dreaded flight, but was eager to go higher into the air, and I came to esteem soaring

upon a glider, that even over the deepest dip in the ground had barely forty feet of fall beneath it, a mere mockery of what flight might be. I began to dream of the keener freshness in the air high above the beechwoods, and it was rather to satisfy that desire than as any legitimate development of my proper work that presently I turned a part of my energies and the bulk of my private income to the problem of the navigable balloon.

II

I had gone far beyond that initial stage; I had had two smashes and a broken rib which my aunt nursed with great energy, and was getting some reputation in the aeronautic world when, suddenly, as though she had never really left it, the Honourable Beatrice Normandy, dark-eyed, and with the old disorderly wave of the hair from her brow, came back into my life. She came riding down a grass path in the thickets below Lady Grove, perched up on a huge black horse, and the old Earl of Carnaby and Archie Garvell, her half-brother, were with her. My uncle had been bothering me about the Crest Hill hot-water pipes, and we were returning by a path transverse to theirs and came out upon them suddenly. Old Carnaby was trespassing on our ground, and so he hailed us in a friendly fashion and pulled up to talk to us.

I didn't note Beatrice at all at first. I was interested in Lord Carnaby, that remarkable vestige of his own brilliant youth. I had heard of him, but never seen him. For a man of sixty-five who had sinned all the sins, so they said, and laid waste the most magnificent political debut of any man of his generation, he seemed to me to be looking remarkably fit and fresh. He was a lean little man with grey-blue eyes in his brown face, and his cracked voice was the worst thing in his effect.

"Hope you don't mind us coming this way, Ponderevo," he cried; and my uncle, who was sometimes a little too general and generous

with titles, answered, "Not at all, my lord, not at all! Glad you make use of it!"

"You're building a great place over the hill," said Carnaby.

"Thought I'd make a show for once," said my uncle. "It looks big because it's spread out for the sun."

"Air and sunlight," said the earl. "You can't have too much of them. But before our time they used to build for shelter and water and the high road."

Then I discovered that the silent figure behind the earl was Beatrice.

I'd forgotten her sufficiently to think for a moment that she hadn't changed at all since she had watched me from behind the skirts of Lady Drew. She was looking at me, and her dainty brow under her broad brimmed hat--she was wearing a grey hat and loose unbuttoned coat--was knit with perplexity, trying, I suppose, to remember where she had seen me before. Her shaded eyes met mine with that mute question....

It seemed incredible to me she didn't remember.

"Well," said the earl and touched his horse.

Garvell was patting the neck of his horse, which was inclined to fidget, and disregarding me. He nodded over his shoulder and followed. His movement seemed to release a train of memories in her. She glanced suddenly at him and then back at me with a flash of recognition that warmed instantly to a faint smile. She hesitated as if to speak to me, smiled broadly and understandingly and turned to follow the others. All three broke into a canter and she did not look back. I stood for a second or

so at the crossing of the lanes, watching her recede, and then became aware that my uncle was already some paces off and talking over his shoulder in the belief that I was close behind. I turned about and strode to overtake him. My mind was full of Beatrice and this surprise. I remembered her simply as a Normandy. I'd clean forgotten that Garvell was the son and she the step-daughter of our neighbour, Lady Osprey. Indeed, I'd probably forgotten at that time that we had Lady Osprey as a neighbour. There was no reason at all for remembering it. It was amazing to find her in this Surrey countryside, when I'd never thought of her as living anywhere in the world but at Bladesover Park, near forty miles and twenty years away. She was so alive--so unchanged! The same quick warm blood was in her cheeks. It seemed only yesterday that we had kissed among the bracken stems....

"Eh?" I said.

"I say he's good stuff," said my uncle. "You can say what you like against the aristocracy, George; Lord Carnaby's rattling good stuff. There's a sort of Savoir Faire, something--it's an old-fashioned phrase, George, but a good one there's a Bong-Tong.... It's like the Oxford turf, George, you can't grow it in a year. I wonder how they do it. It's living always on a Scale, George. It's being there from the beginning."...

"She might," I said to myself, "be a picture by Romney come alive!"

"They tell all these stories about him," said my uncle, "but what do they all amount to?"

"Gods!" I said to myself; "but why have I forgotten for so long? Those queer little brows of hers, the touch of mischief in her eyes--the way she breaks into a smile!"

"I don't blame him," said my uncle. "Mostly it's imagination. That and leisure, George. When I was a young man I was kept pretty busy. So were you. Even then--!"

What puzzled me more particularly was the queer trick of my memory that had never recalled anything vital of Beatrice whatever when I met Garvell again that had, indeed, recalled nothing except a boyish antagonism and our fight. Now when my senses were full of her, it seemed incredible that I could ever have forgotten....

III

"Oh, Crikey!" said my aunt, reading a letter behind her coffee-machine. "HERE'S a young woman, George!"

We were breakfasting together in the big window bay at Lady Grove that looks upon the iris beds; my uncle was in London.

I sounded an interrogative note and decapitated an egg.

"Who's Beatrice Normandy?" asked my aunt. "I've not heard of her before."

"She the young woman?"

"Yes. Says she knows you. I'm no hand at old etiquette, George, but her line is a bit unusual. Practically she says she's going to make her mother--"

"Eh? Step-mother, isn't it?"

"You seem to know a lot about her. She says 'mother'--Lady Osprey. They're to call on me, anyhow, next Wednesday week at

four, and there's got to be you for tea."

"Eh?"

"You--for tea.

"H'm. She had rather--force of character. When I knew her before."

I became aware of my aunt's head sticking out obliquely from behind the coffee-machine and regarding me with wide blue curiosity. I met her gaze for a moment, flinched, coloured, and laughed.

"I've known her longer than I've known you," I said, and explained at length.

My aunt kept her eye on me over and round the coffee-machine as I did so. She was greatly interested, and asked several elucidatory questions.

"Why didn't you tell me the day you saw her? You've had her on your mind for a week," she said.

"It IS odd I didn't tell you," I admitted.

"You thought I'd get a Down on her," said my aunt conclusively. "That's what you thought" and opened the rest of her letters.

The two ladies came in a pony-carriage with conspicuous punctuality, and I had the unusual experience of seeing my aunt entertaining callers. We had tea upon the terrace under the cedar, but old Lady Osprey, being an embittered Protestant, had never before seen the inside of the house, and we made a sort of tour of inspection that reminded me of my first visit to the

place. In spite of my preoccupation with Beatrice, I stored a queer little memory of the contrast between the two other women; my aunt, tall, slender and awkward, in a simple blue homekeeping dress, an omnivorous reader and a very authentic wit, and the lady of pedigree, short and plump, dressed with Victorian fussiness, living at the intellectual level of palmistry and genteel fiction, pink in the face and generally flustered by a sense of my aunt's social strangeness and disposed under the circumstances to behave rather like an imitation of the more queenly moments of her own cook. The one seemed made of whalebone, the other of dough. My aunt was nervous, partly through the intrinsic difficulty of handling the lady and partly because of her passionate desire to watch Beatrice and me, and her nervousness took a common form with her, a wider clumsiness of gesture and an exacerbation of her habitual oddity of phrase which did much to deepen the pink perplexity of the lady of title. For instance, I heard my aunt admit that one of the Stuart Durgan ladies did look a bit "balmy on the crumpet"; she described the knights of the age of chivalry as "korvorting about on the off-chance of a dragon"; she explained she was "always old mucking about the garden," and instead of offering me a Garibaldi biscuit, she asked me with that faint lisp of hers, to "have some squashed flies, George." I felt convinced Lady Osprey would describe her as "a most eccentric person" on the very first opportunity;-- "a most eccentric person." One could see her, as people say, "shaping" for that.

Beatrice was dressed very quietly in brown, with a simple but courageous broad-brimmed hat, and an unexpected quality of being grown-up and responsible. She guided her step-mother through the first encounter, scrutinised my aunt, and got us all well in movement through the house, and then she turned her attention to me with a quick and half-confident smile.

"We haven't met," she said, "since--"

"It was in the Warren."

"Of course," she said, "the Warren! I remembered it all except just the name.... I was eight."

Her smiling eyes insisted on my memories being thorough. I looked up and met them squarely, a little at a loss for what I should say.

"I gave you away pretty completely," she said, meditating upon my face. "And afterwards I gave way Archie."

She turned her face away from the others, and her voice fell ever so little.

"They gave him a licking for telling lies!" she said, as though that was a pleasant memory. "And when it was all over I went to our wigwam. You remember the wigwam?"

"Out in the West Wood?"

"Yes--and cried--for all the evil I had done you, I suppose.... I've often thought of it since."...

Lady Osprey stopped for us to overtake her. "My dear!" she said to Beatrice. "Such a beautiful gallery!" Then she stared very hard at me, puzzled in the most naked fashion to understand who I might be.

"People say the oak staircase is rather good," said my aunt, and led the way.

Lady Osprey, with her skirts gathered for the ascent to the gallery and her hand on the newel, turned and addressed a look

full of meaning overflowing indeed with meanings--at her charge. The chief meaning no doubt was caution about myself, but much of it was just meaning at large. I chanced to catch the response in a mirror and detected Beatrice with her nose wrinkled into a swift and entirely diabolical grimace. Lady Osprey became a deeper shade of pink and speechless with indignation--it was evident she disavowed all further responsibility, as she followed my aunt upstairs.

"It's dark, but there's a sort of dignity," said Beatrice very distinctly, regarding the hall with serene tranquillity, and allowing the unwilling feet on the stairs to widen their distance from us. She stood a step up, so that she looked down a little upon me and over me at the old hall.

She turned upon me abruptly when she thought her step-mother was beyond ear-shot.

"But how did you get here?" she asked.

"Here?"

"All this." She indicated space and leisure by a wave of the hand at hall and tall windows and sunlit terrace. "Weren't you the housekeeper's son?"

"I've adventured. My uncle has become--a great financier. He used to be a little chemist about twenty miles from Bladesover. We're promoters now, amalgamators, big people on the new model."

"I understand." She regarded me with interested eyes, visibly thinking me out.

"And you recognised me?" I asked.

"After a second or so. I saw you recognised me. I couldn't place you, but I knew I knew you. Then Archie being there helped me to remember."

"I'm glad to meet again," I ventured. "I'd never forgotten you."

"One doesn't forget those childish things."

We regarded one another for a moment with a curiously easy and confident satisfaction in coming together again. I can't explain our ready zest in one another. The thing was so. We pleased each other, we had no doubt in our minds that we pleased each other. From the first we were at our ease with one another. "So picturesque, so very picturesque," came a voice from above, and then: "Bee-atrice!"

"I've a hundred things I want to know about you," she said with an easy intimacy, as we went up the winding steps....

As the four of us sat at tea together under the cedar on the terrace she asked questions about my aeronautics. My aunt helped with a word or so about my broken ribs. Lady Osprey evidently regarded flying as a most undesirable and improper topic--a blasphemous intrusion upon the angels. "It isn't flying," I explained. "We don't fly yet."

"You never will," she said compactly. "You never will."

"Well," I said, "we do what we can."

The little lady lifted a small gloved hand and indicated a height of about four feet from the ground. "Thus far," she said, "thus far--AND NO FARTHER! No!"

She became emphatically pink. "NO," she said again quite

conclusively, and coughed shortly. "Thank you," she said to her ninth or tenth cake. Beatrice burst into cheerful laughter with her eye on me. I was lying on the turf, and this perhaps caused a slight confusion about the primordial curse in Lady Osprey's mind.

"Upon his belly shall he go," she said with quiet distinctness, "all the days of his life."

After which we talked no more of aeronautics.

Beatrice sat bunched together in a chair and regarded me with exactly the same scrutiny, I thought, the same adventurous aggression, that I had faced long ago at the tea-table in my mother's room. She was amazingly like that little Princess of my Bladesover memories, the wilful misbehaviours of her hair seemed the same--her voice; things one would have expected to be changed altogether. She formed her plans in the same quick way, and acted with the same irresponsible decision.

She stood up abruptly.

"What is there beyond the terrace?" she said, and found me promptly beside her.

I invented a view for her.

At the further corner from the cedar she perched herself up upon the parapet and achieved an air of comfort among the lichenous stones. "Now tell me," she said, "all about yourself. Tell me about yourself; I know such duffers of men! They all do the same things. How did you get--here? All my men WERE here. They couldn't have got here if they hadn't been here always. They wouldn't have thought it right. You've climbed."

"If it's climbing," I said.

She went off at a tangent. "It's--I don't know if you'll understand--interesting to meet you again. I've remembered you. I don't know why, but I have. I've used you as a sort of lay figure--when I've told myself stories. But you've always been rather stiff and difficult in my stories--in ready-made clothes--a Labour Member or a Bradlaugh, or something like that. You're not like that a bit. And yet you ARE!"

She looked at me. "Was it much of a fight? They make out it is.

I don't know why."

"I was shot up here by an accident," I said. "There was no fight at all. Except to keep honest, perhaps and I made no great figure in that. I and my uncle mixed a medicine and it blew us up. No merit in that! But you've been here all the time. Tell me what you have done first."

"One thing we didn't do." She meditated for a moment.

"What?" said I.

"Produce a little half-brother for Bladesover. So it went to the Phillbrick gang. And they let it! And I and my step-mother--we let, too. And live in a little house."

She nodded her head vaguely over her shoulder and turned to me again. "Well, suppose it was an accident. Here you are! Now you're here, what are you going to do? You're young. Is it to be Parliament? heard some men the other day talking about you. Before I knew you were you. They said that was what you ought to do." ...

She put me through my intentions with a close and vital curiosity. It was just as she had tried to imagine me a soldier and place me years ago. She made me feel more planless and incidental than ever. "You want to make a flying-machine," she pursued, "and when you fly? What then? Would it be for fighting?"

I told her something of my experimental work. She had never heard of the soaring aeroplane, and was excited by the thought, and keen to hear about it. She had thought all the work so far had been a mere projecting of impossible machines. For her Pilcher and Lilienthal had died in vain. She did not know such men had lived in the world.

"But that's dangerous!" she said, with a note of discovery.

"Oh!--it's dangerous."

"Bee-atrice!" Lady Osprey called.

Beatrice dropped from the wall to her feet.

"Where do you do this soaring?"

"Beyond the high Barrows. East of Crest Hill and the wood."

"Do you mind people coming to see?"

"Whenever you please. Only let me know"

"I'll take my chance some day. Some day soon." She looked at me thoughtfully, smiled, and our talk was at an end.

IV

All my later work in aeronautics is associated in my memory with the quality of Beatrice, with her incidental presence, with things she said and did and things I thought of that had reference to her.

In the spring of that year I had got to a flying machine that lacked nothing but longitudinal stability. My model flew like a bird for fifty or a hundred yards or so, and then either dived and broke its nose or, what was commoner, reared up, slid back and smashed its propeller. The rhythm of the pitching puzzled me. I felt it must obey some laws not yet quite clearly stated. I became therefore a student of theory and literature for a time; I hit upon the string of considerations that led me to what is called Ponderevo's Principle and my F.R.S., and I worked this out in three long papers. Meanwhile I made a lot of turn-table and glider models and started in upon an idea of combining gas-bags and gliders. Balloon work was new to me. I had made one or two ascents in the balloons of the Aero Club before I started my gasometer and the balloon shed and gave Cothope a couple of months with Sir Peter Rumchase. My uncle found part of the money for these developments; he was growing interested and competitive in this business because of Lord Boom's prize and the amount of reclame involved, and it was at his request that I named my first navigable balloon Lord Roberts Alpha.

Lord Roberts A very nearly terminated all my investigations. My idea both in this and its more successful and famous younger brother, Lord Roberts B, was to utilise the idea of a contractile balloon with a rigid flat base, a balloon shaped rather like an inverted boat that should almost support the apparatus, but not quite. The gas-bag was of the chambered sort used for these long forms, and not with an internal balloonette. The trouble was to make the thing contractile. This I sought to do by fixing a long, fine-meshed silk net over it that was fastened to be rolled up on two longitudinal rods. Practically I contracted my

sausage gas-bag by netting it down. The ends were too complex for me to describe here, but I thought them out elaborately and they were very carefully planned. Lord Roberts A was furnished with a single big screw forward, and there was a rudder aft. The engine was the first one to be, so to speak, right in the plane of the gas-bag. I lay immediately under the balloon on a sort of glider framework, far away from either engine or rudder, controlling them by wire-pulls constructed on the principle of the well-known Bowden brake of the cyclist.

But Lord Roberts A has been pretty exhaustively figured and described in various aeronautical publications. The unforeseen defect was the badness of the work in the silk netting. It tore aft as soon as I began to contract the balloon, and the last two segments immediately bulged through the hole, exactly as an inner tube will bulge through the ruptured outer cover of a pneumatic tire, and then the sharp edge of the torn net cut the oiled-silk of the distended last segment along a weak seam and burst it with a loud report.

Up to that point the whole thing had been going on extremely well. As a navigable balloon and before I contracted it, the Lord Roberts A was an unqualified success. It had run out of the shed admirably at nine or ten miles an hour or more, and although there was a gentle southwester blowing, it had gone up and turned and faced it as well as any craft of the sort I have ever seen.

I lay in my customary glider position, horizontal and face downward, and the invisibility of all the machinery gave an extraordinary effect of independent levitation. Only by looking up, as it were, and turning my head back could I see the flat aeroplane bottom of the balloon and the rapid successive passages, swish, swish, swish of the vans of the propeller. I made a wide circle over Lady Grove and Duffield and out towards Effingham and came back quite successfully to the starting-point.

Down below in the October sunlight were my sheds and the little group that had been summoned to witness the start, their faces craned upward and most of them scrutinising my expression through field-glasses. I could see Carnaby and Beatrice on horseback, and two girls I did not know with them; Cothope and three or four workmen I employed; my aunt and Mrs. Levinstein, who was staying with her, on foot, and Dimmock, the veterinary surgeon, and one or two others. My shadow moved a little to the north of them like the shadow of a fish. At Lady Grove the servants were out on the lawn, and the Duffield school playground swarmed with children too indifferent to aeronautics to cease their playing. But in the Crest Hill direction--the place looked extraordinarily squat and ugly from above--there were knots and strings of staring workmen everywhere--not one of them working, but all agape. (But now I write it, it occurs to me that perhaps it was their dinner hour; it was certainly near twelve.) I hung for a moment or so enjoying the soar, then turned about to face a clear stretch of open down, let the engine out to full speed and set my rollers at work rolling in the net, and so tightening the gas-bags. Instantly the pace quickened with the diminished resistance...

In that moment before the bang I think I must have been really flying. Before the net ripped, just in the instant when my balloon was at its systole, the whole apparatus was, I am convinced, heavier than air. That, however, is a claim that has been disputed, and in any case this sort of priority is a very trivial thing.

Then came a sudden retardation, instantly followed by an inexpressibly disconcerting tilt downward of the machine. That I still recall with horror. I couldn't see what was happening at all and I couldn't imagine. It was a mysterious, inexplicable dive. The thing, it seemed, without rhyme or reason, was kicking

up its heels in the air. The bang followed immediately, and I perceived I was falling rapidly.

I was too much taken by surprise to think of the proper cause of the report. I don't even know what I made of it. I was obsessed, I suppose, by that perpetual dread of the modern aeronaut, a flash between engine and balloon. Yet obviously I wasn't wrapped in flames. I ought to have realised instantly it wasn't that. I did, at any rate, whatever other impressions there were, release the winding of the outer net and let the balloon expand again, and that no doubt did something to break my fall. I don't remember doing that. Indeed, all I do remember is the giddy effect upon the landscape of falling swiftly upon it down a flat spiral, the hurried rush of fields and trees and cottages on my left shoulder and the overhung feeling as if the whole apparatus was pressing down the top of my head. I didn't stop or attempt to stop the screw. That was going on, swish, swish, swish all the time.

Cothope really knows more about the fall than I do. He describes the easterly start, the tilt, and the appearance and bursting of a sort of bladder aft. Then down I swooped, very swiftly, but not nearly so steeply as I imagined I was doing. "Fifteen or twenty degrees," said Cothope, "to be exact." From him it was that I learnt that I let the nets loose again, and so arrested my fall. He thinks I was more in control of myself than I remember.

But I do not see why I should have forgotten so excellent a resolution. His impression is that I was really steering and trying to drop into the Farthing Down beeches. "You hit the trees," he said, "and the whole affair stood on its nose among them, and then very slowly crumpled up. I saw you'd been jerked out, as I thought, and I didn't stay for more. I rushed for my bicycle."

As a matter of fact, it was purely accidental that I came down in the woods. I am reasonably certain that I had no more control then than a thing in a parcel. I remember I felt a sort of wincing, "Now it comes!" as the trees rushed up to me. If I remember that, I should remember steering. Then the propeller smashed, everything stopped with a jerk, and I was falling into a mass of yellowing leaves, and Lord Roberts A, so it seemed to me, was going back into the sky.

I felt twigs and things hit me in the face, but I didn't feel injured at the time; I clutched at things that broke, tumbled through a froth of green and yellow into a shadowy world of great bark-covered arms, and there, snatching wildly, got a grip on a fair round branch, and hung.

I became intensely alert and clear-headed. I held by that branch for a moment and then looked about me, and caught at another, and then found myself holding to a practicable fork. I swung forward to that and got a leg around it below its junction, and so was able presently to clamber down, climbing very coolly and deliberately. I dropped ten feet or so from the lowest branch and fell on my feet. "That's all right," I said, and stared up through the tree to see what I could of the deflated and crumpled remains that had once been Lord Roberts A festooned on the branches it had broken. "Gods!" I said, "what a tumble!"

I wiped something that trickled from my face and was shocked to see my hand covered with blood. I looked at myself and saw what seemed to me an astonishing quantity of blood running down my arm and shoulder. I perceived my mouth was full of blood. It's a queer moment when one realises one is hurt, and perhaps badly hurt, and has still to discover just how far one is hurt. I explored my face carefully and found unfamiliar contours on the left side. The broken end of a branch had driven right through my cheek, damaging my cheek and teeth and gums, and left a

splinter of itself stuck, like an explorer's farthest-point flag, in the upper maxillary. That and a sprained wrist were all my damage. But I bled as though I had been chopped to pieces, and it seemed to me that my face had been driven in. I can't describe just the horrible disgust I felt at that.

"This blood must be stopped, anyhow," I said, thickheadedly.

"I wonder where there's a spider's web"--an odd twist for my mind to take. But it was the only treatment that occurred to me.

I must have conceived some idea of going home unaided, because I was thirty yards from the tree before I dropped.

Then a kind of black disc appeared in the middle of the world and rushed out to the edge of things and blotted them out. I don't remember falling down. I fainted from excitement, disgust at my injury and loss of blood, and lay there until Cothope found me.

He was the first to find me, scorching as he did over the downland turf, and making a wide course to get the Carnaby plantations at their narrowest. Then presently, while he was trying to apply the methodical teachings of the St. John's Ambulance classes to a rather abnormal case, Beatrice came galloping through the trees full-tilt, with Lord Carnaby hard behind her, and she was hatless, muddy from a fall, and white as death. "And cool as a cucumber, too," said Cothope, turning it over in his mind as he told me.

("They never seem quite to have their heads, and never seem quite to lose 'em," said Cothope, generalising about the sex.)

Also he witnessed she acted with remarkable decision. The question was whether I should be taken to the house her step-mother occupied at Bedley Corner, the Carnaby dower house,

or down to Carnaby's place at Easting. Beatrice had no doubt in the matter, for she meant to nurse me. Carnaby didn't seem to want that to happen. "She WOULD have it wasn't half so far," said Cothope. "She faced us out...."

"I hate to be faced out of my opinion, so I've taken a pedometer over it since. It's exactly forty-three yards further.

"Lord Carnaby looked at her pretty straight," said Cothope, finishing the picture; "and then he give in."

V

But my story has made a jump from June to October, and during that time my relations with Beatrice and the countryside that was her setting had developed in many directions. She came and went, moving in an orbit for which I had no data, going to London and Paris, into Wales and Northampton, while her stepmother, on some independent system of her own, also vanished and recurred intermittently. At home they obeyed the rule of an inflexible old maid, Charlotte, and Beatrice exercised all the rights of proprietorship in Carnaby's extensive stables. Her interest in me was from the first undisguised. She found her way to my worksheds and developed rapidly, in spite of the sincere discouragement of Cothope, into a keen amateur of aeronautics. She would come sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon, sometimes afoot with an Irish terrier, sometimes riding. She would come for three or four days every day, vanish for a fortnight or three weeks, return.

It was not long before I came to look for her. From the first I found her immensely interesting. To me she was a new feminine type altogether--I have made it plain, I think, how limited was my knowledge of women. But she made me not simply interested in her, but in myself. She became for me something that greatly

changes a man's world. How shall I put it? She became an audience. Since I've emerged from the emotional developments of the affair I have thought it out in a hundred aspects, and it does seem to me that this way in which men and women make audiences for one another is a curiously influential force in their lives. For some it seems an audience is a vital necessity, they seek audiences as creatures seek food; others again, my uncle among them, can play to an imaginary audience. I, I think, have lived and can live without one. In my adolescence I was my own audience and my own court of honour. And to have an audience in one's mind is to play a part, to become self-conscious and dramatic. For many years I had been self-forgetful and scientific. I had lived for work and impersonal interests until I found scrutiny, applause and expectation in Beatrice's eyes. Then I began to live for the effect I imagined I made upon her, to make that very soon the principal value in my life. I played to her. I did things for the look of them. I began to dream more and more of beautiful situations and fine poses and groupings with her and for her.

I put these things down because they puzzle me. I think I was in love with Beatrice, as being in love is usually understood; but it was quite a different state altogether from my passionate hunger for Marion, or my keen, sensuous desire for and pleasure in Effie. These were selfish, sincere things, fundamental and instinctive, as sincere as the leap of a tiger. But until matters drew to a crisis with Beatrice, there was an immense imaginative insurgence of a quite different quality. I am setting down here very gravely, and perhaps absurdly, what are no doubt elementary commonplaces for innumerable people. This love that grew up between Beatrice and myself was, I think--I put it quite tentatively and rather curiously--romantic love. That unfortunate and truncated affair of my uncle and the Scrymgeour lady was really of the same stuff, if a little different in quality. I have to admit that. The factor of audience was of

primary importance in either else.

Its effect upon me was to make me in many respects adolescent again. It made me keener upon the point of honour, and anxious and eager to do high and splendid things, and in particular, brave things. So far it ennobled and upheld me. But it did also push me towards vulgar and showy things. At bottom it was disingenuous; it gave my life the quality of stage scenery, with one side to the audience, another side that wasn't meant to show, and an economy of substance. It certainly robbed my work of high patience and quality. I cut down the toil of research in my eagerness and her eagerness for fine flourishes in the air, flights that would tell. I shirked the longer road.

And it robbed me, too, of any fine perception of absurdity.

Yet that was not everything in our relationship. The elemental thing was there also. It came in very suddenly.

It was one day in the summer, though I do not now recall without reference to my experimental memoranda whether it was in July or August. I was working with a new and more bird-like aeroplane with wing curvatures studied from Lilienthal, Pilcher and Phillips, that I thought would give a different rhythm for the pitching oscillations than anything I'd had before. I was soaring my long course from the framework on the old barrow by my sheds down to Tinker's Corner. It is a clear stretch of downland, except for two or three thickets of box and thorn to the right of my course; one transverse trough, in which there is bush and a small rabbit warren, comes in from the east. I had started, and was very intent on the peculiar long swoop with which any new arrangement flew. Then, without any sort of notice, right ahead of me appeared Beatrice, riding towards Tinker's Corner to waylay and talk to me. She looked round over her shoulder, saw me coming, touched her horse to a gallop, and

then the brute bolted right into the path of my machine.

There was a queer moment of doubt whether we shouldn't all smash together. I had to make up my mind very quickly whether I would pitch-up and drop backward at once and take my chance of falling undamaged--a poor chance it would have been--in order to avoid any risk to her, or whether I would lift against the wind and soar right over her. This latter I did. She had already got her horse in hand when I came up to her. Her woman's body lay along his neck, and she glanced up as I, with wings aspread, and every nerve in a state of tension, swept over her.

Then I had landed, and was going back to where her horse stood still and trembling.

We exchanged no greetings. She slid from her saddle into my arms, and for one instant I held her.

"Those great wings," she said, and that was all.

She lay in my arms, and I thought for a moment she had fainted.

"Very near a nasty accident," said Cothope, coming up and regarding our grouping with disfavour. He took her horse by the bridle. "Very dangerous thing coming across us like that."

Beatrice disengaged herself from me, stood for a moment trembling, and then sat down on the turf "I'll just sit down for a moment," she said.

"Oh!" she said.

She covered her face with her hands, while Cothope looked at her with an expression between suspicion and impatience.

For some moments nobody moved. Then Cothope remarked that perhaps he'd better get her water.

As for me, I was filled with a new outrageous idea, begotten I scarcely know how from this incident, with its instant contacts and swift emotions, and that was that I must make love to and possess Beatrice. I see no particular reason why that thought should have come to me in that moment, but it did. I do not believe that before then I had thought of our relations in such terms at all. Suddenly, as I remember it, the factor of passion came. She crouched there, and I stood over her, and neither of us said a word. But it was just as though something had been shouted from the sky.

Cothope had gone twenty paces perhaps when she uncovered her face. "I shan't want any water," she said. "Call him back."

VI

After that the spirit of our relations changed. The old ease had gone. She came to me less frequently, and when she came she would have some one with her, usually old Carnaby, and he would do the bulk of the talking. All through September she was away. When we were alone together there was a curious constraint. We became clouds of inexpressible feeling towards one another; we could think of nothing that was not too momentous for words.

Then came the smash of Lord Roberts A, and I found myself with a bandaged face in a bedroom in the Bedley Corner dower-house with Beatrice presiding over an inefficient nurse, Lady Osprey very pink and shocked in the background, and my aunt jealously intervening.

My injuries were much more showy than serious, and I could have been taken to Lady Grove next day, but Beatrice would not permit

that, and kept me at Bedley Corner three clear days. In the afternoon of the second day she became extremely solicitous for the proper aeration of the nurse, packed her off for an hour in a brisk rain, and sat by me alone.

I asked her to marry me.

All the while I must admit it was not a situation that lent itself to eloquence. I lay on my back and talked through bandages, and with some little difficulty, for my tongue and mouth had swollen. But I was feverish and in pain, and the emotional suspense I had been in so long with regard to her became now an unendurable impatience.

"Comfortable?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Shall I read to you?"

"No. I want to talk."

"You can't. I'd better talk to you."

"No," I said, "I want to talk to you."

She came and stood by my bedside and looked me in the eyes. "I don't--I don't want you to talk to me," she said. "I thought you couldn't talk."

"I get few chances--of you."

"You'd better not talk. Don't talk now. Let me chatter instead.

You ought not to talk."

"It isn't much" I said.

"I'd rather you didn't."

"I'm not going to be disfigured," I said. "Only a scar."

"Oh!" she said, as if she had expected something quite different. "Did you think you'd become a sort of gargoyle?"

"L'Homme qui Rit!--I didn't know. But that's all right. Jolly flowers those are!"

"Michaelmas daisies," she said. "I'm glad you'r not disfigured, and those are perennial sunflowers. Do you know no flowers at all? When I saw you on the ground I certainly thought you were dead. You ought to have been, by all the rules of the game."

She said some other things, but I was thinking of my next move.

"Are we social equals?" I said abruptly.

She stared at me. "Queer question," she said.

"But are we?"

"H'm. Difficult to say. But why do you ask? Is the daughter of a courtesy Baron who died--of general disreputableness, I believe--before his father--? I give it up. Does it matter?"

"No. My mind is confused. I want to know if you will marry me."

She whitened and said nothing. I suddenly felt I must plead with her. "Damn these bandages!" I said, breaking into ineffectual febrile rage.

She roused herself to her duties as nurse. "What are you doing? Why are you trying to sit up? Sit down! Don't touch your bandages. I told you not to talk."

She stood helpless for a moment, then took me firmly by the shoulders and pushed me back upon the pillow. She gripped the wrist of the hand I had raised to my face.

"I told you not to talk," she whispered close to my face. "I asked you not to talk. Why couldn't you do as I asked you?"

"You've been avoiding me for a month," I said.

"I know. You might have known. Put your hand back--down by your side."

I obeyed. She sat on the edge of the bed. A flush had come to her cheeks, and her eyes were very bright. "I asked you," she repeated, "not to talk."

My eyes questioned her mutely.

She put her hand on my chest. Her eyes were tormented.

"How can I answer you now?" she said.

"How can I say anything now?"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

She made no answer.

"Do you mean it must be 'No'?"

She nodded.

"But" I said, and my whole soul was full of accusations.

"I know," she said. "I can't explain. I can't. But it has to be 'No!' It can't be. It's utterly, finally, for ever impossible.... Keep your hands still!"

"But," I said, "when we met again--"

"I can't marry. I can't and won't."

She stood up. "Why did you talk?" she cried, "couldn't you SEE?"

She seemed to have something it was impossible to say.

She came to the table beside my bed and pulled the Michaelmas daisies awry. "Why did you talk like that?" she said in a tone of infinite bitterness. "To begin like that!"

"But what is it?" I said. "Is it some circumstance--my social position?"

"Oh, DAMN your social position!" she cried.

She went and stood at the further window, staring out at the rain. For a long time we were absolutely still. The wind and rain came in little gusts upon the pane. She turned to me abruptly.

"You didn't ask me if I loved you," she said.

"Oh, if it's THAT!" said I.

"It's not that," she said. "But if you want to know--" She

paused.

"I do," she said.

We stared at one another.

"I do--with all my heart, if you want to know."

"Then, why the devil--?" I asked.

She made no answer. She walked across the room to the piano and began to play, rather noisily and rapidly, with odd gusts of emphasis, the shepherd's pipe music from the last act in "Tristan and Isolde." Presently she missed a note, failed again, ran her finger heavily up the scale, struck the piano passionately with her fist, making a feeble jar in the treble, jumped up, and went out of the room....

The nurse found me still wearing my helmet of bandages, partially dressed, and pottering round the room to find the rest of my clothes. I was in a state of exasperated hunger for Beatrice, and I was too inflamed and weakened to conceal the state of my mind. I was feebly angry because of the irritation of dressing, and particularly of the struggle to put on my trousers without being able to see my legs. I was staggering about, and once I had fallen over a chair and I had upset the jar of Michaelmas daisies.

I must have been a detestable spectacle. "I'll go back to bed," said I, "if I may have a word with Miss Beatrice. I've got something to say to her. That's why I'm dressing."

My point was conceded, but there were long delays. Whether the household had my ultimatum or whether she told Beatrice directly I do not know, and what Lady Osprey can have made of it in the

former case I don't imagine.

At last Beatrice came and stood by my bedside. "Well?" she said.

"All I want to say," I said with the querulous note of a misunderstood child, "is that I can't take this as final. I want to see you and talk when I'm better, and write. I can't do anything now. I can't argue."

I was overtaken with self-pity and began to snivel, "I can't rest. You see? I can't do anything."

She sat down beside me again and spoke softly. "I promise I will talk it all over with you again. When you are well. I promise I will meet you somewhere so that we can talk. You can't talk now.

I asked you not to talk now. All you want to know you shall know... Will that do?"

"I'd like to know"

She looked round to see the door was closed, stood up and went to it.

Then she crouched beside me and began whispering very softly and rapidly with her face close to me.

"Dear," she said, "I love you. If it will make you happy to marry me, I will marry you. I was in a mood just now--a stupid, inconsiderate mood. Of course I will marry you. You are my prince, my king. Women are such things of mood--or I would have behaved differently. We say 'No' when we mean 'Yes'--and fly into crises. So now, Yes--yes--yes. I will. I can't even kiss you. Give me your hand to kiss that. Understand, I am yours. Do you understand? I am yours just as if we had been married

fifty years. Your wife--Beatrice. Is that enough? Now--now will you rest?"

"Yes," I said, "but why?"

"There are complications. There are difficulties. When you are better you will be able to--understand them. But now they don't matter. Only you know this must be secret--for a time. Absolutely secret between us. Will you promise that?"

"Yes," I said, "I understand. I wish I could kiss you."

She laid her head down beside mine for a moment and then she kissed my hand.

"I don't care what difficulties there are," I said, and I shut my eyes.

VII

But I was only beginning to gauge the unaccountable elements in Beatrice. For a week after my return to Lady Grove I had no sign of her, and then she called with Lady Osprey and brought a huge bunch of perennial sunflowers and Michaelmas daisies, "just the old flowers there were in your room," said my aunt, with a relentless eye on me. I didn't get any talk alone with Beatrice then, and she took occasion to tell us she was going to London for some indefinite number of weeks. I couldn't even pledge her to write to me, and when she did it was a brief, enigmatical, friendly letter with not a word of the reality between us.

I wrote back a love letter--my first love letter--and she made no reply for eight days. Then came a scrawl: "I can't write letters. Wait till we can talk. Are you better?"

I think the reader would be amused if he could see the papers on my desk as I write all this, the mangled and disfigured pages, the experimental arrangements of notes, the sheets of suggestions balanced in constellations, the blottesque intellectual battlegrounds over which I have been fighting. I find this account of my relations to Beatrice quite the most difficult part of my story to write. I happen to be a very objective-minded person, I forget my moods, and this was so much an affair of moods. And even such moods and emotions as I recall are very difficult to convey. To me it is about as difficult as describing a taste or a scent.

Then the objective story is made up of little things that are difficult to set in a proper order. And love in an hysterical passion, now high, now low, now exalted, and now intensely physical. No one has ever yet dared to tell a love story completely, its alternations, its comings and goings, its debased moments, its hate. The love stories we tell, tell only the net consequence, the ruling effect....

How can I rescue from the past now the mystical quality of Beatrice; my intense longing for her; the overwhelming, irrational, formless desire? How can I explain how intimately that worship mingled with a high, impatient resolve to make her mine, to take her by strength and courage, to do my loving in a violent heroic manner? And then the doubts, the puzzled arrest at the fact of her fluctuations, at her refusal to marry me, at the fact that even when at last she returned to Bedley Corner she seemed to evade me?

That exasperated me and perplexed me beyond measure.

I felt that it was treachery. I thought of every conceivable explanation, and the most exalted and romantic confidence in her did not simply alternate, but mingled with the basest misgivings.

And into the tangle of memories comes the figure of Carnaby, coming out slowly from the background to a position of significance, as an influence, as a predominant strand in the nets that kept us apart, as a rival. What were the forces that pulled her away from me when it was so clearly manifest she loved me? Did she think of marrying him? Had I invaded some long-planned scheme? It was evident he did not like me, that in some way I spoilt the world for him. She returned to Bedley Corner, and for some weeks she was flitting about me, and never once could I have talk with her alone. When she came to my sheds Carnaby was always with her, jealously observant. (Why the devil couldn't she send him about his business?) The days slipped by and my anger gathered.

All this mingles with the making of Lord Roberts B. I had resolved upon that one night as I lay awake at Bedley Corner; I got it planned out before the bandages were off my face. I conceived this second navigable balloon in a grandiose manner. It was to be a second Lord Roberts A, only more so; it was to be three times as big, large enough to carry three men, and it was to be an altogether triumphant vindication of my claims upon the air. The framework was to be hollow like a bird's bones, airtight, and the air pumped in or out, and the weight of fuel I carried changed. I talked much and boasted to Cothope--whom I suspected of scepticisms about this new type--of what it would do, and it progressed--slowly. It progressed slowly because I was restless and uncertain. At times I would go away to London to snatch some chance of seeing Beatrice there, at times nothing but a day of gliding and hard and dangerous exercise would satisfy me. And now in the newspapers, in conversation, in everything about me, arose a new invader of my mental states. Something was happening to the great schemes of my uncle's affairs; people were beginning to doubt, to question. It was the first quiver of his tremendous insecurity, the first wobble of

that gigantic credit top he had kept spinning so long.

There were comings and goings, November and December slipped by. I had two unsatisfactory meetings with Beatrice, meetings that had no privacy--in which we said things of the sort that need atmosphere, baldly and furtively. I wrote to her several times and she wrote back notes that I would sometimes respond to altogether, sometimes condemn as insincere evasions. "You don't understand. I can't just now explain. Be patient with me. Leave things a little while to me." She wrote.

I would talk aloud to these notes and wrangle over them in my workroom--while the plans of Lord Roberts B waited.

"You don't give me a chance!" I would say. "Why don't you let me know the secret? That's what I'm for--to settle difficulties! to tell difficulties to!"

And at last I could hold out no longer against these accumulating pressures.

I took an arrogant, outrageous line that left her no loopholes; I behaved as though we were living in a melodrama.

"You must come and talk to me," I wrote, "or I will come and take you. I want you--and the time runs away."

We met in a ride in the upper plantations. It must have been early in January, for there was snow on the ground and on the branches of the trees. We walked to and fro for an hour or more, and from the first I pitched the key high in romance and made understandings impossible. It was our worst time together. I boasted like an actor, and she, I know not why, was tired and spiritless.

Now I think over that talk in the light of all that has happened since, I can imagine how she came to me full of a human appeal I was too foolish to let her make. I don't know. I confess I have never completely understood Beatrice. I confess I am still perplexed at many things she said and did. That afternoon, anyhow, I was impossible. I posed and scolded. I was--I said it--for "taking the Universe by the throat!"

"If it was only that," she said, but though I heard, I did not heed her.

At last she gave way to me and talked no more. Instead she looked at me--as a thing beyond her controlling, but none the less interesting--much as she had looked at me from behind the skirts of Lady Drew in the Warren when we were children together.

Once even I thought she smiled faintly.

"What are the difficulties" I cried. "there's no difficulty I will not overcome for you! Do your people think I'm no equal for you? Who says it? My dear, tell me to win a title! I'll do it in five years!..."

"Here am I just grown a man at the sight of you. I have wanted something to fight for. Let me fight for you!..."

"I'm rich without intending it. Let me mean it, give me an honourable excuse for it, and I'll put all this rotten old Warren of England at your feet!"

I said such things as that. I write them down here in all their resounding base pride. I said these empty and foolish things, and they are part of me. Why should I still cling to pride and be ashamed? I shouted her down.

I passed from such megalomania to petty accusations.

"You think Carnaby is a better man than I?" I said.

"No!" she cried, stung to speech. "No!"

"You think we're unsubstantial. You've listened to all these rumours Boom has started because we talked of a newspaper of our own. When you are with me you know I'm a man; when you get away from me you think I'm a cheat and a cad.... There's not a word of truth in the things they say about us. I've been slack. I've left things. But we have only to exert ourselves. You do not know how wide and far we have spread our nets. Even now we have a coup--an expedition--in hand. It will put us on a footing."...

Her eyes asked mutely and asked in vain that I would cease to boast of the very qualities she admired in me.

In the night I could not sleep for thinking of that talk and the vulgar things I had said in it. I could not understand the drift my mind had taken. I was acutely disgusted. And my unwonted doubts about myself spread from a merely personal discontent to our financial position. It was all very well to talk as I had done of wealth and power and peerages, but what did I know nowadays of my uncle's position? Suppose in the midst of such boasting and confidence there came some turn I did not suspect, some rottenness he had concealed from me? I resolved I had been playing with aeronautics long enough; that next morning I would go to him and have things clear between us.

I caught an early train and went up to the Hardingham.

I went up to the Hardingham through a dense London fog to see how things really stood. Before I had talked to my uncle for ten minutes I felt like a man who has just awakened in a bleak,

inhospitable room out of a grandiose dream.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

HOW I STOLE THE HEAPS OF QUAP FROM MORDET ISLAND

I

"We got to make a fight for it," said my uncle. "We got to face the music!"

I remember that even at the sight of him I had a sense of impending calamity. He sat under the electric light with the shadow of his hair making bars down his face. He looked shrunken, and as though his skin had suddenly got loose and yellow. The decorations of the room seemed to have lost freshness, and outside the blinds were up--there was not so much fog as a dun darkness. One saw the dingy outlines of the chimneys opposite quite distinctly, and then a sky of such brown as only London can display.

"I saw a placard," I said: "'More Ponderevity.'"

"That's Boom," he said. "Boom and his damned newspapers. He's trying to fight me down. Ever since I offered to buy the Daily Decorator he's been at me. And he thinks consolidating Do Ut cut down the ads. He wants everything, damn him! He's got no sense of dealing. I'd like to bash his face!"

"Well," I said, "what's to be done?"

"Keep going," said my uncle.

"I'll smash Boom yet," he said, with sudden savagery.

"Nothing else?" I asked.

"We got to keep going. There's a scare on. Did you notice the rooms? Half the people out there this morning are reporters. And if I talk they touch it up!... They didn't used to touch things up! Now they put in character touches--insulting you. Don't know what journalism's coming to. It's all Boom's doing."

He cursed Lord Boom with considerable imaginative vigour.

"Well," said I, "what can he do?"

"Shove us up against time, George; make money tight for us. We been handling a lot of money--and he tightens us up."

"We're sound?"

"Oh, we're sound, George. Trust me for that! But all the same-- There's such a lot of imagination in these things.... We're sound enough. That's not it."

He blew. "Damn Boom!" he said, and his eyes over his glasses met mine defiantly.

"We can't, I suppose, run close hauled for a bitstop expenditure?"

"Where?"

"Well,--Crest Hill"

"What!" he shouted. "Me stop Crest Hill for Boom!" He waved a fist as if to hit his inkpot, and controlled himself with difficulty. He spoke at last in a reasonable voice. "If I did,"

he said, "he'd kick up a fuss. It's no good, even if I wanted to. Everybody's watching the place. If I was to stop building we'd be down in a week."

He had an idea. "I wish I could do something to start a strike or something. No such luck. Treat those workmen a sight too well. No, sink or swim, Crest Hill goes on until we're under water."

I began to ask questions and irritated him instantly.

"Oh, dash these explanations, George!" he cried; "You only make things look rottener than they are. It's your way. It isn't a case of figures. We're all right--there's only one thing we got to do."

"Yes?"

"Show value, George. That's where this quap comes in; that's why I fell in so readily with what you brought to me week before last. Here we are, we got our option on the perfect filament, and all we want's canadium. Nobody knows there's more canadium in the world than will go on the edge of a sixpence except me and you. Nobody has an idee the perfect filament's more than just a bit of theorising. Fifty tons of quap and we'd turn that bit of theorising into something. We'd make the lamp trade sit on its tail and howl. We'd put Ediswan and all of 'em into a parcel withour last year's trousers and a hat, and swap 'em off for a pot ofgeraniums. See? We'd do it through Business Organisations, and there you are! See? Capern's Patent Filament!

The Ideal and the Real! George, we'll do it! We'll bring it off! And then we'll give such a facer to Boom, he'll think for fifty years. He's laying up for our London and African meeting. Let him. He can turn the whole paper on to us. He says the

Business Organisations shares aren't worth fifty-two and we quote 'em at eighty-four. Well, here we are gettin' ready for him--loading our gun."

His pose was triumphant.

"Yes," I said, "that's all right. But I can't help thinking where should we be if we hadn't just by accident got Capern's Perfect Filament. Because, you know it was an accident--my buying up that."

He crumpled up his nose into an expression of impatient distaste at my unreasonableness.

"And after all, the meeting's in June, and you haven't begun to get the quap! After all, we've still got to load our gun."

"They start on Toosday."

"Have they got the brig?"

"They've got a brig."

"Gordon-Nasmyth!" I doubted.

"Safe as a bank," he said. "More I see of that man the more I like him. All I wish is we'd got a steamer instead of a sailing ship"

"And," I went on, "you seem to overlook what used to weigh with us a bit. This canadium side of the business and the Capern chance has rushed you off your legs. After all--it's stealing, and in its way an international outrage. They've got two gunboats on the coast."

I jumped up and went and stared out at the fog.

"And, by Jove, it's about our only chance! I didn't dream."

I turned on him. "I've been up in the air," I said.

"Heaven knows where I haven't been. And here's our only chance--and you give it to that adventurous lunatic to play in his own way--in a brig!"

"Well, you had a voice--"

"I wish I'd been in this before. We ought to have run out a steamer to Lagos or one of those West Coast places and done it from there. Fancy a brig in the channel at this time of year, if it blows southwest!"

"I dessay you'd have shoved it, George. Still you know, George.... I believe in him."

"Yes," I said. "Yes, I believe in him, too. In a way. Still--"

We took up a telegram that was lying on his desk and opened it. His face became a livid yellow. He put the flimsy paper down with a slow, reluctant movement and took off his glasses.

"George," he said, "the luck's against us."

"What?"

He grimaced with his mouth--in the queerest way at the telegram.

"That."

I took it up and read:

"Motor smash compound fracture of the leg gordon nasmyth what price mordet now"

For a moment neither of us spoke.

"That's all right," I said at last.

"Eh?" said my uncle.

"I'M going. I'll get that quap or bust."

II

I had a ridiculous persuasion that I was "saving the situation."

"I'm going," I said quite consciously and dramatically. I saw the whole affair--how shall I put it?--in American colours.

I sat down beside him. "Give me all the data you've got," I said, "and I'll pull this thing off."

"But nobody knows exactly where--"

"Nasmyth does, and he'll tell me."

"He's been very close," said my uncle, and regarded me.

"He'll tell me all right, now he's smashed."

He thought. "I believe he will."

"George," he said, "if you pull this thing off--Once or twice before you've stepped in--with that sort of Woosh of yours--"

He left the sentence unfinished.

"Give me that note-book," I said, "and tell me all you know. Where's the ship? Where's Pollack? And where's that telegram from? If that quap's to be got, I'll get it or bust. If you'll hold on here until I get back with it."...

And so it was I jumped into the wildest adventure of my life.

I requisitioned my uncle's best car forthwith. I went down that night to the place of despatch named on Nasmyth's telegram, Bampton S.O. Oxon, routed him out with a little trouble from that centre, made things right with him and got his explicit directions; and I was inspecting the Maud Mary with young Pollack, his cousin and aide, the following afternoon. She was rather a shock to me and not at all in my style, a beast of a brig inured to the potato trade, and she reeked from end to end with the faint, subtle smell of raw potatoes so that it prevailed even over the temporary smell of new paint. She was a beast of a brig, all hold and dirty framework, and they had ballasted her with old iron and old rails and iron sleepers, and got a miscellaneous lot of spades and iron wheelbarrows against the loading of the quap. I thought her over with Pollack, one of those tall blond young men who smoke pipes and don't help much, and then by myself, and as a result I did my best to sweep Gravesend clean of wheeling planks, and got in as much cord and small rope as I could for lashing. I had an idea we might need to run up a jetty. In addition to much ballast she held, remotely hidden in a sort of inadvertent way a certain number of ambiguous cases which I didn't examine, but which I gathered were a provision against the need of a trade.

The captain was a most extraordinary creature, under the impression we were after copper ore; he was a Roumanian Jew, with twitching, excitable features, who had made his way to a

certificate after some preliminary naval experiences in the Black Sea. The mate was an Essex man of impenetrable reserve. The crew were astoundingly ill-clad and destitute and dirty; most of them youths, unwashed, out of colliers. One, the cook was a mulatto; and one, the best-built fellow of them all, was a Breton. There was some subterfuge about our position on board--I forget the particulars now--I was called the supercargo and Pollack was the steward. This added to the piratical flavour that insufficient funds and Gordon-Nasmyth's original genius had already given the enterprise.

Those two days of bustle at Gravesend, under dingy skies, in narrow, dirty streets, were a new experience for me. It is like nothing else in my life. I realised that I was a modern and a civilised man. I found the food filthy and the coffee horrible; the whole town stank in my nostrils, the landlord of the Good Intent on the quay had a stand-up quarrel with us before I could get even a hot bath, and the bedroom I slept in was infested by a quantity of exotic but voracious flat parasites called locally "bugs," in the walls, in the woodwork, everywhere. I fought them with insect powder, and found them comatose in the morning. I was dipping down into the dingy underworld of the contemporary state, and I liked it no better than I did my first dip into it when I stayed with my Uncle Nicodemus Frapp at the bakery at Chatham--where, by-the-by, we had to deal with cockroaches of a smaller, darker variety, and also with bugs of sorts.

Let me confess that through all this time before we started I was immensely self-conscious, and that Beatrice played the part of audience in my imagination throughout. I was, as I say, "saving the situation," and I was acutely aware of that. The evening before we sailed, instead of revising our medicine-chest as I had intended, I took the car and ran across country to Lady Grove to tell my aunt of the journey I was making, dress, and astonish Lady Osprey by an after dinner call.

The two ladies were at home and alone beside a big fire that seemed wonderfully cheerful after the winter night. I remember the effect of the little parlour in which they sat as very bright and domestic. Lady Osprey, in a costume of mauve and lace, sat on a chintz sofa and played an elaborately spread-out patience by the light of a tall shaded lamp; Beatrice, in a whiteness that showed her throat, smoked a cigarette in an armchair and read with a lamp at her elbow. The room was white-panelled and chintz-curtained. About those two bright centres of light were warm dark shadow, in which a circular mirror shone like a pool of brown water. I carried off my raid by behaving like a slave of etiquette. There were moments when I think I really made Lady Osprey believe that my call was an unavoidable necessity, that it would have been negligent of me not to call just how and when I did. But at the best those were transitory moments.

They received me with disciplined amazement. Lady Osprey was interested in my face and scrutinised the scar. Beatrice stood behind her solicitude. Our eyes met, and in hers I could see startled interrogations.

"I'm going," I said, "to the west coast of Africa."

They asked questions, but it suited my mood to be vague.

"We've interests there. It is urgent I should go. I don't know when I may return."

After that I perceived Beatrice surveyed me steadily.

The conversation was rather difficult. I embarked upon lengthy thanks for their kindness to me after my accident. I tried to understand Lady Osprey's game of patience, but it didn't appear that Lady Osprey was anxious for me to understand her patience.

I came to the verge of taking my leave

"You needn't go yet," said Beatrice, abruptly.

She walked across to the piano, took a pile of music from the cabinet near, surveyed Lady Osprey's back, and with a gesture to me dropped it all deliberately on to the floor.

"Must talk," she said, kneeling close to me as I helped her to pick it up. "Turn my pages. At the piano."

"I can't read music."

"Turn my pages."

Presently we were at the piano, and Beatrice was playing with noisy inaccuracy. She glanced over her shoulder and Lady Osprey had resumed her patience. The old lady was very pink, and appeared to be absorbed in some attempt to cheat herself without our observing it.

"Isn't West Africa a vile climate?" "Are you going to live there?" "Why are you going?"

Beatrice asked these questions in a low voice and gave me no chance to answer. Then taking a rhythm from the music before her, she said--

"At the back of the house is a garden--a door in the wall--on the lane. Understand?"

I turned over the pages without any effect on her playing.

"When?" I asked.

She dealt in chords. "I wish I COULD play this!" she said.
"Midnight."

She gave her attention to the music for a time.

"You may have to wait."

"I'll wait."

She brought her playing to an end by--as school boys say--"stashing it up."

"I can't play to-night," she said, standing up and meeting my eyes. "I wanted to give you a parting voluntary."

"Was that Wagner, Beatrice?" asked Lady Osprey looking up from her cards. "It sounded very confused."

I took my leave. I had a curious twinge of conscience as I parted from Lady Osprey. Either a first intimation of middle-age or my inexperience in romantic affairs was to blame, but I felt a very distinct objection to the prospect of invading this good lady's premises from the garden door. I motored up to the pavilion, found Cothope reading in bed, told him for the first time of West Africa, spent an hour with him in settling all the outstanding details of Lord Roberts B, and left that in his hands to finish against my return. I sent the motor back to Lady Grove, and still wearing my fur coat--for the January night was damp and bitterly cold--walked to Bedley Corner. I found the lane to the back of the Dower House without any difficulty, and was at the door in the wall with ten minutes to spare. I lit a cigar and fell to walking up and down. This queer flavour of intrigue, this nocturnal garden-door business, had taken me by surprise and changed my mental altitudes. I was startled out of my egotistical pose and thinking intently of Beatrice, of that

elfin quality in her that always pleased me, that always took me by surprise, that had made her for example so instantly conceive this meeting.

She came within a minute of midnight; the door opened softly and she appeared, a short, grey figure in a motor-coat of sheepskin, bareheaded to the cold drizzle. She flitted up to me, and her eyes were shadows in her dusky face.

"Why are you going to West Africa?" she asked at once.

"Business crisis. I have to go."

"You're not going--? You're coming back?"

"Three or four months," I said, "at most."

"Then, it's nothing to do with me?"

"Nothing," I said. "Why should it have?"

"Oh, that's all right. One never knows what people think or what people fancy." She took me by the arm, "Let's go for a walk," she said.

I looked about me at darkness and rain.

"That's all right," she laughed. "We can go along the lane and into the Old Woking Road. Do you mind? Of course you don't. My head. It doesn't matter. One never meets anybody."

"How do you know?"

"I've wandered like this before.... Of course. Did you think"--she nodded her head back at her home--"that's all?"

"No, by Jove!" I cried; "it's manifest it isn't."

She took my arm and turned me down the lane. "Night's my time," she said by my side. "There's a touch of the werewolf in my blood. One never knows in these old families.... I've wondered often.... Here we are, anyhow, alone in the world. Just darkness and cold and a sky of clouds and wet. And we--together.

I like the wet on my face and hair, don't you? When do you sail?"

I told her to-morrow.

"Oh, well, there's no to-morrow now. You and I!" She stopped and confronted me.

"You don't say a word except to answer!"

"No," I said.

"Last time you did all the talking."

"Like a fool. Now--"

We looked at each other's two dim faces. "You're glad to be here?"

"I'm glad--I'm beginning to be--it's more than glad."

She put her hands on my shoulders and drew me down to kiss her.

"Ah!" she said, and for a moment or so we just clung to one another.

"That's all," she said, releasing herself. "What bundles of clothes we are to-night. I felt we should kiss some day again. Always. The last time was ages ago."

"Among the fern stalks."

"Among the bracken. You remember. And your lips were cold. Were mine? The same lips--after so long--after so much!... And now let's trudge through this blotted-out world together for a time. Yes, let me take your arm. Just trudge. See? Hold tight to me because I know the way--and don't talk--don't talk. Unless you want to talk.... Let me tell you things! You see, dear, the whole world is blotted out--it's dead and gone, and we're in this place. This dark wild place.... We're dead. Or all the world is dead. No! We're dead. No one can see us. We're shadows. We've got out of our positions, out of our bodies--and together. That's the good thing of it--together. But that's why the world can't see us and why we hardly see the world. Sssh! Is it all right?"

"It's all right," I said.

We stumbled along for a time in a close silence. We passed a dim-lit, rain-veiled window.

"The silly world," she said, "the silly world! It eats and sleeps. If the wet didn't patter so from the trees we'd hear it snoring. It's dreaming such stupid things--stupid judgments. It doesn't know we are passing, we two--free of it--clear of it. You and I!"

We pressed against each other reassuringly.

"I'm glad we're dead," she whispered. "I'm glad we're dead. I was tired of it, dear. I was so tired of it, dear, and so

entangled."

She stopped abruptly.

We splashed through a string of puddles. I began to remember things I had meant to say.

"Look here!" I cried. "I want to help you beyond measure. You are entangled. What is the trouble? I asked you to marry me. You said you would. But there's something."

My thoughts sounded clumsy as I said them.

"Is it something about my position?... Or is it something--perhaps--about some other man?"

There was an immense assenting silence.

"You've puzzled me so. At first--I mean quite early--I thought you meant to make me marry you."

"I did."

"And then?"

"To-night," she said after a long pause, "I can't explain. No! I can't explain. I love you! But--explanations! To-night my dear, here we are in the world alone--and the world doesn't matter. Nothing matters. Here I am in the cold with you and my bed away there deserted. I'd tell you--I will tell you when things enable me to tell you, and soon enough they will. But to-night--I won't--I won't."

She left my side and went in front of me.

She turned upon me. "Look here," she said, "I insist upon your being dead. Do you understand? I'm not joking. To-night you and I are out of life. It's our time together. There may be other times, but this we won't spoil. We're--in Hades if you like. Where there's nothing to hide and nothing to tell. No bodies even. No bothers. We loved each other--down there--and were kept apart, but now it doesn't matter. It's over.... If you won't agree to that--I will go home."

"I wanted," I began.

"I know. Oh! my dear, if you'd only understand I understand. If you'd only not care--and love me to-night."

"I do love you," I said.

"Then LOVE me," she answered, "and leave all the things that bother you. Love me! Here I am!"

"But!--"

"No!" she said.

"Well, have your way."

So she carried her point, and we wandered into the night together and Beatrice talked to me of love....

I'd never heard a woman before in all my life who could talk of love, who could lay bare and develop and touch with imagination all that mass of fine emotion every woman, it may be, hides. She had read of love, she had thought of love, a thousand sweet lyrics had sounded through her brain and left fine fragments in her memory; she poured it out, all of it, shamelessly, skilfully, for me. I cannot give any sense of that talk, I cannot even tell

how much of the delight of it was the magic of her voice, the glow of her near presence. And always we walked swathed warmly through a chilly air, along dim, interminable greasy roads--with never a soul abroad it seemed to us, never a beast in the fields.

"Why do people love each other?" I said.

"Why not?"

"But why do I love you? Why is your voice better than any voice, your face sweeter than any face?"

"And why do I love you?" she asked; "not only what is fine in you, but what isn't? Why do I love your dullness, your arrogance? For I do. To--night I love the very raindrops on the fur of your coat!"...

So we talked; and at last very wet, still glowing but a little tired, we parted at the garden door. We had been wandering for two hours in our strange irrational community of happiness, and all the world about us, and particularly Lady Osprey and her household, had been asleep--and dreaming of anything rather than Beatrice in the night and rain.

She stood in the doorway, a muffled figure with eyes that glowed.

"Come back," she whispered. "I shall wait for you."

She hesitated.

She touched the lapel of my coat. "I love you NOW," she said, and lifted her face to mine.

I held her to me and was atremble from top to toe. "O God!" I cried. "And I must go!"

She slipped from my arms and paused, regarding me. For an instant the world seemed full of fantastic possibilities.

"Yes, GO!" she said, and vanished and slammed the door upon me, leaving me alone like a man new fallen from fairyland in the black darkness of the night.

III

That expedition to Mordet Island stands apart from all the rest of my life, detached, a piece by itself with an atmosphere of its own. It would, I suppose, make a book by itself--it has made a fairly voluminous official report--but so far as this novel of mine goes it is merely an episode, a contributory experience, and I mean to keep it at that.

Vile weather, an impatient fretting against unbearable slowness and delay, sea--sickness, general discomfort and humiliating self--revelation are the master values of these memories.

I was sick all through the journey out. I don't know why. It was the only time I was ever sea-sick, and I have seen some pretty bad weather since I became a boat-builder. But that phantom smell of potatoes was peculiarly vile to me. Coming back on the brig we were all ill, every one of us, so soon as we got to sea, poisoned, I firmly believe, by quap. On the way out most of the others recovered in a few days, but the stuffiness below, the coarse food, the cramped dirty accommodation kept me, if not actually sea-sick, in a state of acute physical wretchedness the whole time. The ship abounded in cockroaches and more intimate vermin. I was cold all the time until after we passed Cape Verde, then I became steamily hot; I had been too preoccupied with Beatrice and my keen desire to get the Maud Mary under way at once, to consider a proper wardrobe for myself, and

in particular I lacked a coat. Heavens! how I lacked that coat! And, moreover, I was cooped up with two of the worst bores in Christendom, Pollack and the captain. Pollack, after conducting his illness in a style better adapted to the capacity of an opera house than a small compartment, suddenly got insupportably well and breezy, and produced a manly pipe in which he smoked a tobacco as blond as himself, and divided his time almost equally between smoking it and trying to clean it. "There's only three things you can clean a pipe with," he used to remark with a twist of paper in hand. "The best's a feather, the second's a straw, and the third's a girl's hairpin. I never see such a ship. You can't find any of 'em. Last time I came this way I did find hairpins anyway, and found 'em on the floor of the captain's cabin. Regular deposit. Eh?... Feelin' better?"

At which I usually swore.

"Oh, you'll be all right soon. Don't mind my puffin' a bit? Eh?"

He never tired of asking me to "have a hand at Nap. Good game. Makes you forget it, and that's half the battle."

He would sit swaying with the rolling of the ship and suck at his pipe of blond tobacco and look with an inexpressibly sage but somnolent blue eye at the captain by the hour together.

"Captain's a Card," he would say over and over again as the outcome of these meditations. "He'd like to know what we're up to. He'd like to know--no end."

That did seem to be the captain's ruling idea. But he also wanted to impress me with the notion that he was a gentleman of good family and to air a number of views adverse to the English, to English literature, to the English constitution, and the like.

He had learnt the sea in the Roumanian navy, and English out of a book; he would still at times pronounce the e's at the end of "there" and "here"; he was a naturalised Englishman, and he drove me into a reluctant and uncongenial patriotism by his everlasting carping at things English. Pollack would set himself to "draw him out." Heaven alone can tell how near I came to murder.

Fifty-three days I had outward, cooped up with these two and a shy and profoundly depressed mate who read the Bible on Sundays and spent the rest of his leisure in lethargy, three and fifty days of life cooped up in a perpetual smell, in a persistent sick hunger that turned from the sight of food, in darkness, cold and wet, in a lightly ballasted ship that rolled and pitched and swayed. And all the time the sands in the hour-glass of my uncle's fortunes were streaming out. Misery! Amidst it all I remember only one thing brightly, one morning of sunshine in the Bay of Biscay and a vision of frothing waves, sapphire green, a bird following our wake and our masts rolling about the sky. Then wind and rain close in on us again.

You must not imagine they were ordinary days, days, I mean, of an average length; they were not so much days as long damp slabs of time that stretched each one to the horizon, and much of that length was night. One paraded the staggering deck in a borrowed sou'-wester hour after hour in the chilly, windy, splashing and spitting darkness, or sat in the cabin, bored and ill, and looked at the faces of those inseparable companions by the help of a lamp that gave smell rather than light. Then one would see going up, up, up, and then sinking down, down, down, Pollack, extinct pipe in mouth, humorously observant, bringing his mind slowly to the seventy-seventh decision that the captain was a Card, while the words flowed from the latter in a nimble incessant good. "Dis England eet is not a country aristocratic, no! Eet is a glorified bourgeoisie! Eet is plutocratic. In England dere is no aristocracy since de Wars of Roses. In the

rest of Europe east of the Latins, yes; in England, no.

"Eet is all middle-class, youra England. Everything you look at, middle-class. Respectable! Everything good--eet is, you say, shocking. Madame Grundy! Eet is all limited and computing and self-seeking. Dat is why your art is so limited, youra fiction, your philosophin, why you are all so inartistic. You want nothing but profit! What will pay! What would you?"...

He had all those violent adjuncts to speech we Western Europeans have abandoned, shruggings of the shoulders, waving of the arms, thrusting out of the face, wonderful grimaces and twiddlings of the hands under your nose until you wanted to hit them away. Day after day it went on, and I had to keep any anger to myself, to reserve myself for the time ahead when it would be necessary to see the quap was got aboard and stowed--knee deep in this man's astonishment. I knew he would make a thousand objections to all we had before us. He talked like a drugged man. It ran glibly over his tongue. And all the time one could see his seamanship fretting him, he was gnawed by responsibility, perpetually uneasy about the ship's position, perpetually imagining dangers. If a sea hit us exceptionally hard he'd be out of the cabin in an instant making an outcry of inquiries, and he was pursued by a dread of the hold, of ballast shifting, of insidious wicked leaks. As we drew near the African coast his fear of rocks and shoals became infectious.

"I do not know dis coast," he used to say. "I cama hera because Gordon-Nasmyth was coming too. Den he does not come!"

"Fortunes of war," I said, and tried to think in vain if any motive but sheer haphazard could have guided Gordon-Nasmyth in the choice of these two men. I think perhaps Gordon-Nasmyth had the artistic temperament and wanted contrasts, and also that the captain helped him to express his own malignant Anti-Britishism.

He was indeed an exceptionally inefficient captain. On the whole I was glad I had come even at the eleventh hour to see to things.

(The captain, by-the-by, did at last, out of sheer nervousness, get aground at the end of Mordet's Island, but we got off in an hour or so with a swell and a little hard work in the boat.)

I suspected the mate of his opinion of the captain long before he expressed it. He was, I say, a taciturn man, but one day speech broke through him. He had been sitting at the table with his arms folded on it, musing drearily, pipe in mouth, and the voice of the captain drifted down from above.

The mate lifted his heavy eyes to me and regarded me for a moment. Then he began to heave with the beginnings of speech. He disembarrassed himself of his pipe. I cowered with expectation. Speech was coming at last. Before he spoke he nodded reassuringly once or twice.

"E--"

He moved his head strangely and mysteriously, but a child might have known he spoke of the captain.

"E's a foreigner."

He regarded me doubtfully for a time, and at last decided for the sake of lucidity to clench the matter.

"That's what E is--a DAGO!"

He nodded like a man who gives a last tap to a nail, and I could see he considered his remark well and truly laid. His face, though still resolute, became as tranquil and uneventful as a

huge hall after a public meeting has dispersed out of it, and finally he closed and locked it with his pipe.

"Roumanian Jew, isn't he?" I said.

He nodded darkly and almost forbiddingly.

More would have been too much. The thing was said. But from that time forth I knew I could depend upon him and that he and I were friends. It happens I never did have to depend upon him, but that does not affect our relationship.

Forward the crew lived lives very much after the fashion of ours, more crowded, more cramped and dirty, wetter, steamier, more verminous. The coarse food they had was still not so coarse but that they did not think they were living "like fighting cocks." So far as I could make out they were all nearly destitute men; hardly any of them had a proper sea outfit, and what small possessions they had were a source of mutual distrust. And as we pitched and floundered southward they gambled and fought, were brutal to one another, argued and wrangled loudly, until we protested at the uproar.

There's no romance about the sea in a small sailing ship as I saw it. The romance is in the mind of the landsman dreamer. These brigs and schooners and brigantines that still stand out from every little port are relics from an age of petty trade, as rotten and obsolescent as a Georgian house that has sunken into a slum. They are indeed just floating fragments of slum, much as icebergs are floating fragments of glacier. The civilised man who has learnt to wash, who has developed a sense of physical honour, of cleanly temperate feeding, of time, can endure them no more. They pass, and the clanking coal-wasting steamers will follow them, giving place to cleaner, finer things....

But so it was I made my voyage to Africa, and came at last into a world of steamy fogs and a hot smell of vegetable decay, and into sound and sight of surf and distant intermittent glimpses of the coast. I lived a strange concentrated life through all that time, such a life as a creature must do that has fallen in a well. All my former ways ceased, all my old vistas became memories.

The situation I was saving was very small and distant now; I felt its urgency no more. Beatrice and Lady Grove, my uncle and the Hardingham, my soaring in the air and my habitual wide vision of swift effectual things, became as remote as if they were in some world I had left for ever....

IV

All these African memories stand by themselves. It was for me an expedition into the realms of undisciplined nature out of the world that is ruled by men, my first bout with that hot side of our mother that gives you the jungle--that cold side that gives you the air-eddy I was beginning to know passing well. They are memories woven upon a fabric of sunshine and heat and a constant warm smell of decay. They end in rain--such rain as I had never seen before, a vehement, a frantic downpouring of water, but our first slow passage through the channels behind Mordet's Island was in incandescent sunshine.

There we go in my memory still, a blistered dirty ship with patched sails and a battered mermaid to present Maud Mary, sounding and taking thought between high ranks of forest whose trees come out knee-deep at last in the water. There we go with a little breeze on our quarter, Mordet Island rounded and the quap, it might be within a day of us.

Here and there strange blossoms woke the dank intensities of

green with a trumpet call of colour. Things crept among the jungle and peeped and dashed back rustling into stillness. Always in the sluggishly drifting, opaque water were eddyings and stirrings; little rushes of bubbles came chuckling up light-heartedly from this or that submerged conflict and tragedy; now and again were crocodiles like a stranded fleet of logs basking in the sun. Still it was by day, a dreary stillness broken only by insect sounds and the creaking and flapping of our progress, by the calling of the soundings and the captain's confused shouts; but in the night as we lay moored to a clump of trees the darkness brought a thousand swampy things to life and out of the forest came screaming and howlings, screaming and yells that made us glad to be afloat. And once we saw between the tree stems long blazing fires. We passed two or three villages landward, and brown-black women and children came and stared at us and gesticulated, and once a man came out in a boat from a creek and hailed us in an unknown tongue; and so at last we came to a great open place, a broad lake rimmed with a desolation of mud and bleached refuse and dead trees, free from crocodiles or water birds or sight or sound of any living thing, and saw far off, even as Nasmyth had described, the ruins of the deserted station, and hard by two little heaps of buff-hued rubbish under a great rib of rock, the quap! The forest receded. The land to the right of us fell away and became barren, and far on across notch in its backbone was surf and the sea.

We took the ship in towards those heaps and the ruined jetty slowly and carefully. The captain came and talked.

"This is eet?" he said.

"Yes," said I.

"Is eet for trade we have come?"

This was ironical.

"No," said I.

"Gordon-Nasmyth would haf told me long ago what it ees for we haf come."

"I'll tell you now," I said. "We are going to lay in as close as we can to those two heaps of stuff--you see them?--under the rock. Then we are going to chuck all our ballast overboard and take those in. Then we're going home."

"May I presume to ask--is eet gold?"

"No," I said incivilly, "it isn't."

"Then what is it?"

"It's stuff--of some commercial value."

"We can't do eet," he said.

"We can," I answered reassuringly.

"We can't," he said as confidently. "I don't mean what you mean.

You know so liddle--But--dis is forbidden country."

I turned on him suddenly angry and met bright excited eyes. For a minute we scrutinised one another. Then I said, "That's our risk. Trade is forbidden. But this isn't trade.... This thing's got to be done."

His eyes glittered and he shook his head....

The brig stood in slowly through the twilight toward this strange scorched and blistered stretch of beach, and the man at the wheel strained his ears to listening the low-voiced angry argument that began between myself and the captain, that was presently joined by Pollack. We moored at last within a hundred yards of our goal, and all through our dinner and far into the night we argued intermittently and fiercely with the captain about our right to load just what we pleased. "I will haf nothing to do with eet," he persisted. "I wash my hands." It seemed that night as though we argued in vain. "If it is not trade," he said, "it is prospecting and mining. That is worse. Any one who knows anything--outside England--knows that is worse."

We argued and I lost my temper and swore at him. Pollack kept cooler and chewed his pipe watchfully with that blue eye of his upon the captain's gestures. Finally I went on deck to cool. The sky was overcast I discovered all the men were in a knot forward, staring at the faint quivering luminosity that had spread over the heaps of quap, a phosphorescence such as one sees at times on rotting wood. And about the beach east and west there were patches and streaks of something like diluted moonshine....

In the small hours I was still awake and turning over scheme after scheme in my mind whereby I might circumvent the captain's opposition. I meant to get that quap aboard if I had to kill some one to do it. Never in my life had I been so thwarted! After this intolerable voyage! There came a rap at my cabin door and then it opened and I made out a bearded face. "Come in," I said, and a black voluble figure I could just see obscurely came in to talk in my private ear and fill my cabin with its whisperings and gestures. It was the captain. He, too, had been awake and thinking things over. He had come to explain--enormously. I lay there hating him and wondering if I and Pollack could lock him in his cabin and run the ship without

him. "I do not want to spoil this expedition," emerged from a cloud of protestations, and then I was able to disentangle "a commission--shush a small commission--for special risks!" "Special risks" became frequent. I let him explain himself out. It appeared he was also demanding an apology for something I had said. No doubt I had insulted him generously. At last came definite offers. I broke my silence and bargained.

"Pollack!" I cried and hammered the partition.

"What's up?" asked Pollack.

I stated the case concisely.

There came a silence.

"He's a Card," said Pollack. "Let's give him his commission. I don't mind."

"Eh?" I cried.

"I said he was a Card, that's all," said Pollack. "I'm coming."

He appeared in my doorway a faint white figure joined our vehement whisperings.

We had to buy the captain off; we had to promise him ten per cent. of our problematical profits. We were to give him ten per cent. on what we sold the cargo for over and above his legitimate pay, and I found in my out-bargained and disordered state small consolation in the thought that I, as the Gordon-Nasmyth expedition, was to sell the stuff to myself as Business Organisations. And he further exasperated me by insisting on having our bargain in writing. "In the form of a letter," he insisted.

"All right," I acquiesced, "in the form of a letter. Here goes! Get a light!"

"And the apology," he said, folding up the letter.

"All right," I said; "Apology."

My hand shook with anger as I wrote, and afterwards I could not sleep for hate of him. At last I got up. I suffered, I found, from an unusual clumsiness. I struck my toe against my cabin door, and cut myself as I shaved. I found myself at last pacing the deck under the dawn in a mood of extreme exasperation. The sun rose abruptly and splashed light blindingly into my eyes and I swore at the sun. I found myself imagining fresh obstacles with the men and talking aloud in anticipatory rehearsal of the consequent row.

The malaria of the quap was already in my blood.

V

Sooner or later the ridiculous embargo that now lies upon all the coast eastward of Mordet Island will be lifted and the reality of the deposits of quap ascertained. I am sure that we were merely taking the outcrop of a stratum of nodulated deposits that dip steeply seaward. Those heaps were merely the crumbled out contents of two irregular cavities in the rock; they are as natural as any talus or heap of that kind, and the mud along the edge of the water for miles is mixed with quap, and is radio-active and lifeless and faintly phosphorescent at night. But the reader will find the full particulars of my impression of all this in the Geological Magazine for October, 1905, and to that I must refer him. There, too, he will find my unconfirmed theories of its nature. If I am right it is something far more

significant from the scientific point of view than those incidental constituents of various rare metals, pitchblende, rutile, and the like, upon which the revolutionary discoveries of the last decade are based. Those are just little molecular centres of disintegration, of that mysterious decay and rotting of those elements, elements once regarded as the most stable things in nature. But there is something--the only word that comes near it is CANCEROUS--and that is not very near, about the whole of quap, something that creeps and lives as a disease lives by destroying; an elemental stirring and disarrangement, incalculably maleficent and strange.

This is no imaginative comparison of mine. To my mind radio-activity is a real disease of matter. Moreover, it is a contagious disease. It spreads. You bring those debased and crumbling atoms near others and those too presently catch the trick of swinging themselves out of coherent existence. It is in matter exactly what the decay of our old culture is in society, a loss of traditions and distinctions and assured reactions. When I think of these inexplicable dissolvent centres that have come into being in our globe--these quap heaps are surely by far the largest that have yet been found in the world; the rest as yet mere specks in grains and crystals--I am haunted by a grotesque fancy of the ultimate eating away and dry-rotting and dispersal of all our world. So that while man still struggles and dreams his very substance will change and crumble from beneath him. I mention this here as a queer persistent fancy. Suppose, indeed, that is to be the end of our planet; no splendid climax and finale, no towering accumulation of achievements, but just--atomic decay! I add that to the ideas of the suffocating comet, the dark body out of space, the burning out of the sun, the distorted orbit, as a new and far more possible end--as Science can see ends--to this strange by-play of matter that we call human life. I do not believe this can be the end; no human soul can believe in such an end and go on

living, but to it science points as a possible thing, science and reason alike. If single human beings--if one single rickety infant--can be born as it were by accident and die futile, why not the whole race? These are questions I have never answered, that now I never attempt to answer, but the thought of quap and its mysteries brings them back to me.

I can witness that the beach and mud for two miles or more either way was a lifeless beach--lifeless as I could have imagined no tropical mud could ever be, and all the dead branches and leaves and rotting dead fish and so forth that drifted ashore became presently shrivelled and white. Sometimes crocodiles would come up out of the water and bask, and now and then water birds would explore the mud and rocky ribs that rose out of it, in a mood of transitory speculation. That was its utmost admiration. And the air felt at once hot and austere, dry and blistering, and altogether different the warm moist embrace that had met us at our first African landfall and to which we had grown accustomed.

I believe that the primary influence of the quap upon us was to increase the conductivity of our nerves, but that is a mere unjustifiable speculation on my part. At any rate it gave a sort of east wind effect to life. We all became irritable, clumsy, languid and disposed to be impatient with our languor. We moored the brig to the rocks with difficulty, and got aground on mud and decided to stick there and tow off when we had done--the bottom was as greasy as butter. Our efforts to fix up planks and sleepers in order to wheel the quap aboard were as ill-conceived as that sort of work can be--and that sort of work can at times be very ill-conceived. The captain had a superstitious fear of his hold: he became wildly gesticulatory and expository and incompetent at the bare thought of it. His shouts still echo in my memory, becoming as each crisis approached less and less like any known tongue.

But I cannot now write the history of those days of blundering and toil: of how Milton, one of the boys, fell from a plank to the beach, thirty feet perhaps, with his barrow and broke his arm and I believe a rib, of how I and Pollack set the limb and nursed him through the fever that followed, of how one man after another succumbed to a feverish malaria, and how I--by virtue of my scientific reputation--was obliged to play the part of doctor and dose them with quinine, and then finding that worse than nothing, with rum and small doses of Easton's Syrup, of which there chanced to be a case of bottles aboard--Heaven and Gordon-Nasmyth know why. For three long days we lay in misery and never shipped a barrow-load. Then, when they resumed, the men's hands broke out into sores. There were no gloves available; and I tried to get them, while they shovelled and wheeled, to cover their hands with stockings or greased rags. They would not do this on account of the heat and discomfort. This attempt of mine did, however, direct their attention to the quap as the source of their illness and precipitated what in the end finished our lading, an informal strike. "We've had enough of this," they said, and they meant it. They came aft to say as much. They cowed the captain.

Through all these days the weather was variously vile, first a furnace heat under a sky of a scowling intensity of blue, then a hot fog that stuck in one's throat like wool and turned the men on the planks into colourless figures of giants, then a wild burst of thunderstorms, mad elemental uproar and rain. Through it all, against illness, heat, confusion of mind, one master impetus prevailed with me, to keep the shipping going, to maintain one motif at least, whatever else arose or ceased, the chuff of the spades, the squeaking and shriek of the barrows, the pluppa, pluppa, pluppa, as the men came trotting along the swinging high planks, and then at last, the dollop, dollop, as the stuff shot into the hold. "Another barrow-load, thank God! Another fifteen hundred, or it may be two thousand pounds, for

the saving of Ponderevo!...!"

I found out many things about myself and humanity in those weeks of effort behind Mordet Island. I understand now the heart of the sweater, of the harsh employer, of the nigger-driver. I had brought these men into a danger they didn't understand, I was fiercely resolved to overcome their opposition and bend and use them for my purpose, and I hated the men. But I hated all humanity during the time that the quap was near me.

And my mind was pervaded, too, by a sense of urgency and by the fear that we should be discovered and our proceedings stopped. I wanted to get out to sea again--to be beating up northward with our plunder. I was afraid our masts showed to seaward and might betray us to some curious passer on the high sea. And one evening near the end I saw a canoe with three natives far off down the lake; I got field-glasses from the captain and scrutinised them, and I could see them staring at us. One man might have been a half-breed and was dressed in white. They watched us for some time very quietly and then paddled off into some channel in the forest shadows.

And for three nights running, so that it took a painful grip upon my inflamed imagination, I dreamt of my uncle's face, only that it was ghastly white like a clown's, and the throat was cut from ear to ear--a long ochreous cut. "Too late," he said; "Too late!..."

VI

A day or so after we had got to work upon the quap I found myself so sleepless and miserable that the ship became unendurable. Just before the rush of sunrise I borrowed Pollack's gun, walked down the planks, clambered over the quap heaps and prowled along the beach. I went perhaps a mile and a half that day and some

distance beyond the ruins of the old station. I became interested in the desolation about me, and found when I returned that I was able to sleep for nearly an hour. It was delightful to have been alone for so long,--no captain, no Pollack, no one. Accordingly I repeated this expedition the next morning and the next until it became a custom with me. There was little for me to do once the digging and wheeling was organised, and so these prowlings of mine grew longer and longer, and presently I began to take food with me.

I pushed these walks far beyond the area desolated by the quap. On the edges of that was first a zone of stunted vegetation, then a sort of swampy jungle that was difficult to penetrate, and then the beginnings of the forest, a scene of huge tree stems and tangled creeper ropes and roots mingled with oozy mud. Here I used to loaf in a state between botanising and reverie--always very anxious to know what was up above in the sunlight--and here it was I murdered a man.

It was the most unmeaning and purposeless murder imaginable. Even as I write down its well-remembered particulars there comes again the sense of its strangeness, its pointlessness, its incompatibility with any of the neat and definite theories people hold about life and the meaning of the world. I did this thing and I want to tell of my doing it, but why I did it and particularly why I should be held responsible for it I cannot explain.

That morning I had come upon a track in the forest, and it had occurred to me as a disagreeable idea that this was a human pathway. I didn't want to come upon any human beings. The less our expedition saw of the African population the better for its prospects. Thus far we had been singularly free from native pestering. So I turned back and was making my way over mud and roots and dead fronds and petals scattered from the green world

above when abruptly I saw my victim.

I became aware of him perhaps forty feet off standing quite still and regarding me.

He wasn't by any means a pretty figure. He was very black and naked except for a dirty loin-cloth, his legs were ill-shaped and his toes spread wide and the upper edge of his cloth and a girdle of string cut his clumsy abdomen into folds. His forehead was low, his nose very flat and his lower lip swollen and purplish-red. His hair was short and fuzzy, and about his neck was a string and a little purse of skin. He carried a musket, and a powder-flask was stuck in his girdle. It was a curious confrontation. There opposed to him stood I, a little soiled, perhaps, but still a rather elaborately civilised human being, born, bred and trained in a vague tradition. In my hand was an unaccustomed gun. And each of us was essentially a teeming, vivid brain, tensely excited by the encounter, quite unaware of the other's mental content or what to do with him.

He stepped back a pace or so, stumbled and turned to run.

"Stop," I cried; "stop, you fool!" and started to run after him, shouting such things in English. But I was no match for him over the roots and mud.

I had a preposterous idea. "He mustn't get away and tell them!"

And with that instantly I brought both feet together, raised my gun, aimed quite coolly, drew the trigger carefully and shot him neatly in the back.

I saw, and saw with a leap of pure exaltation, the smash of my bullet between his shoulder blades. "Got him," said I, dropping my gun and down he flopped and died without a groan. "By Jove!"

I cried with note of surprise, "I've killed him!" I looked about me and then went forward cautiously, in a mood between curiosity and astonishment, to look at this man whose soul I had flung so unceremoniously out of our common world. I went to him, not as one goes to something one has made or done, but as one approaches something found.

He was frightfully smashed out in front; he must have died in the instant. I stooped and raised him by his shoulder and realised that. I dropped him, and stood about and peered about me through the trees. "My word!" I said. He was the second dead human being--apart, I mean, from surgical properties and mummies and common shows of that sort--that I have ever seen. I stood over him wondering, wondering beyond measure.

A practical idea came into that confusion. Had any one heard the gun?

I reloaded.

After a time I felt securer, and gave my mind again to the dead I had killed. What must I do?

It occurred to me that perhaps I ought to bury him. At any rate, I ought to hide him. I reflected coolly, and then put my gun within easy reach and dragged him by the arm towards a place where the mud seemed soft, and thrust him in. His powder-flask slipped from his loin-cloth, and I went back to get it. Then I pressed him down with the butt of my rifle.

Afterwards this all seemed to me most horrible, but at the time it was entirely a matter-of-fact transaction. I looked round for any other visible evidence of his fate, looked round as one does when one packs one's portmanteau in an hotel bedroom.

When I got my bearings, and carefully returned towards the ship. I had the mood of grave concentration of a boy who has lapsed into poaching. And the business only began to assume proper proportions for me as I got near the ship, to seem any other kind of thing than the killing of a bird or rabbit.

In the night, however, it took on enormous and portentous forms. "By God!" I cried suddenly, starting wide awake; "but it was murder!"

I lay after that wide awake, staring at my memories. In some odd way these visions mixed up with my dream of in my uncle in his despair. The black body which saw now damaged and partly buried, but which, nevertheless, I no longer felt was dead but acutely alive and perceiving, I mixed up with the ochreous slash under my uncle's face. I tried to dismiss this horrible obsession from my mind, but it prevailed over all my efforts.

The next day was utterly black with my sense of that ugly creature's body. I am the least superstitious of men, but it drew me. It drew me back into those thickets to the very place where I had hidden him.

Some evil and detestable beast had been at him, and he lay disinterred.

Methodically I buried his swollen and mangled carcass again, and returned to the ship for another night of dreams. Next day for all the morning I resisted the impulse to go to him, and played nap with Pollack with my secret gnawing at me, and in the evening started to go and was near benighted. I never told a soul of them of this thing I had done.

Next day I went early, and he had gone, and there were human footmarks and ugly stains round the muddy hole from which he had

been dragged.

I returned to the ship, disconcerted and perplexed. That day it was the men came aft, with blistered hands and faces, and sullen eyes. When they proclaimed, through Edwards, their spokesman, "We've had enough of this, and we mean it," I answered very readily, "So have I. Let's go."

VII

We were none too soon. People had been reconnoitring us, the telegraph had been at work, and we were not four hours at sea before we ran against the gunboat that had been sent down the coast to look for us and that would have caught us behind the island like a beast in a trap. It was a night of driving cloud that gave intermittent gleams of moonlight; the wind and sea were strong and we were rolling along through a drift of rails and mist. Suddenly the world was white with moonshine. The gunboat came out as a long dark shape wallowing on the water to the east.

She sighted the Maud Mary at once, and fired some sort of popgun to arrest us.

The mate turned to me.

"Shall I tell the captain?"

"The captain be damned" said I, and we let him sleep through two hours of chase till a rainstorm swallowed us up. Then we changed our course and sailed right across them, and by morning only her smoke was showing.

We were clear of Africa--and with the booty aboard I did not see what stood between us and home.

For the first time since I had fallen sick in the Thames my spirits rose. I was sea-sick and physically disgusted, of course, but I felt kindly in spite of my qualms. So far as I could calculate then the situation was saved. I saw myself returning triumphantly into the Thames, and nothing on earth to prevent old Capern's Perfect Filament going on the market in fortnight. I had the monopoly of electric lamps beneath my feet.

I was released from the spell of that bloodstained black body all mixed up with grey-black mud. I was going back to baths and decent food and aeronautics and Beatrice. I was going back to Beatrice and my real life again--out of this well into which I had fallen. It would have needed something more than sea-sickness and quap fever to prevent my spirits rising.

I told the captain that I agreed with him that the British were the scum of Europe, the westward drift of all the people, a disgusting rabble, and I lost three pounds by attenuated retail to Pollack at ha'penny nap and euchre.

And then you know, as we got out into the Atlantic this side of Cape Verde, the ship began to go to pieces. I don't pretend for one moment to understand what happened. But I think Greiffenhagen's recent work on the effects of radium upon ligneous tissue does rather carry out my idea that emanations from quap have rapid rotting effect upon woody fibre.

From the first there had been a different feel about the ship, and as the big winds and waves began to strain her she commenced leaking. Soon she was leaking--not at any particular point, but everywhere. She did not spring a leak, I mean, but water came in first of all near the decaying edges of her planks, and then through them.

I firmly believe the water came through the wood. First it began to ooze, then to trickle. It was like trying to carry moist sugar in a thin paper bag. Soon we were taking in water as though we had opened a door in her bottom.

Once it began, the thing went ahead beyond all fighting. For a day or so we did our best, and I can still remember in my limbs and back the pumping--the fatigue in my arms and the memory of a clear little dribble of water that jerked as one pumped, and of knocking off and the being awakened to go on again, and of fatigue piling up upon fatigue. At last we ceased to think of anything but pumping; one became a thing of torment enchanted, doomed to pump for ever. I still remember it as pure relief when at last Pollack came to me pipe in mouth.

"The captain says the damned thing's going down right now;' he remarked, chewing his mouthpiece. "Eh?"

"Good idea!" I said. "One can't go on pumping for ever."

And without hurry or alacrity, sullenly and wearily we got into the boats and pulled away from the Maud Mary until we were clear of her, and then we stayed resting on our oars, motionless upon a glassy sea, waiting for her to sink. We were all silent, even the captain was silent until she went down. And then he spoke quite mildly in an undertone.

"Dat is the first ship I haf ever lost.... And it was not a fair game! It wass not a cargo any man should take. No!"

I stared at the slow eddies that circled above the departed Maud Mary, and the last chance of Business Organisations. I felt weary beyond emotion. I thought of my heroics to Beatrice and my uncle, of my prompt "I'LL go," and of all the ineffectual months I had spent after this headlong decision. I was moved to

laughter at myself and fate.

But the captain and the men did not laugh. The men scowled at me and rubbed their sore and blistered hands, and set themselves to row....

As all the world knows we were picked up by the Union Castle liner, Portland Castle.

The hairdresser aboard was a wonderful man, and he even improvised me a dress suit, and produced a clean shirt and warm underclothing. I had a hot bath, and dressed and dined and drank a bottle of Burgundy.

"Now," I said, "are there any newspapers? I want to know what's been happening in the world."

My steward gave me what he had, but I landed at Plymouth still largely ignorant of the course of events. I shook off Pollack, and left the captain and mate in an hotel, and the men in a Sailor's Home until I could send to pay them off, and I made my way to the station.

The newspapers I bought, the placards I saw, all England indeed resounded to my uncle's bankruptcy.

BOOK THE FOURTH

THE AFTERMATH OF TONO-BUNGAY

CHAPTER THE FIRST

THE STICK OF THE ROCKET

I

That evening I talked with my uncle in the Hardingham for the last time. The atmosphere of the place had altered quite shockingly. Instead of the crowd of importunate courtiers there were just half a dozen uninviting men, journalists waiting for an interview. Ropper the big commissionaire was still there, but now indeed he was defending my uncle from something more than time-wasting intrusions. I found the little man alone in the inner office pretending to work, but really brooding. He was looking yellow and deflated.

"Lord!" he said at the sight of me. "You're lean, George. It makes that scar of yours show up."

We regarded each other gravely for a time.

"Quap," I said, "is at the bottom of the Atlantic. There's some bills--We've got to pay the men."

"Seen the papers?"

"Read 'em all in the train."

"At bay," he said. "I been at bay for a week.... Yelping round me.... And me facing the music. I'm feelin' a bit tired."

He blew and wiped his glasses.

"My stomach isn't what it was," he explained. "One finds it--these times. How did it all happen, George? Your Marconigram--it took me in the wind a bit."

I told him concisely. He nodded to the paragraphs of my narrative and at the end he poured something from a medicine

bottle into a sticky little wineglass and drank it. I became aware of the presence of drugs, of three or four small bottles before him among his disorder of papers, of a faint elusively familiar odour in the room.

"Yes," he said, wiping his lips and recorking the bottle.
"You've done your best, George. The luck's been against us."

He reflected, bottle in hand. "Sometimes the luck goes with you and sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes it doesn't. And then where are you? Grass in the oven! Fight or no fight."

He asked a few questions and then his thoughts came back to his own urgent affairs. I tried to get some comprehensive account of the situation from him, but he would not give it.

"Oh, I wish I'd had you. I wish I'd had you, George. I've had a lot on my hands. You're clear headed at times."

"What has happened?"

"Oh! Boom!--infernial things."

"Yes, but--how? I'm just off the sea, remember."

"It'd worry me too much to tell you now. It's tied up in a skein."

He muttered something to himself and mused darkly, and roused himself to say--

"Besides--you'd better keep out of it. It's getting tight. Get 'em talking. Go down to Crest Hill and fly. That's YOUR affair."

For a time his manner set free queer anxieties in my brain again.

I will confess that that Mordet Island nightmare of mine returned, and as I looked at him his hand went out for the drug again. "Stomach, George," he said.

"I been fightin' on that. Every man fights on some thing--gives way somewheres--head, heart, liver--something. Zzzz. Gives way somewhere. Napoleon did at last. All through the Waterloo campaign, his stomach--it wasn't a stomach! Worse than mine, no end."

The mood of depression passed as the drug worked within him. His eyes brightened. He began to talk big. He began to dress up the situation for my eyes, to recover what he had admitted to me. He put it as a retreat from Russia. There were still the chances of Leipzig.

"It's a battle, George--a big fight. We're fighting for millions. I've still chances. There's still a card or so. I can't tell all my plans--like speaking on the stroke."

"You might," I began.

"I can't, George. It's like asking to look at some embryo. You got to wait. I know. In a sort of way, I know. But to tell it-- No! You been away so long. And everything's got complicated."

My perception of disastrous entanglements deepened with the rise of his spirits. It was evident that I could only help to tie him up in whatever net was weaving round his mind by forcing questions and explanations upon him. My thoughts flew off at another angle. "How's Aunt Susan?" said I.

I had to repeat the question. His busy whispering lips stopped for a moment, and he answered in the note of one who repeats a formula.

"She'd like to be in the battle with me. She'd like to be here in London. But there's corners I got to turn alone." His eye rested for a moment on the little bottle beside him. "And things have happened.

"You might go down now and talk to her," he said, in a directer voice. "I shall be down to-morrow night, I think."

He looked up as though he hoped that would end our talk.

"For the week-end?" I asked.

"For the week-end. Thank God for week-ends, George!"

II

My return home to Lady Grove was a very different thing from what I had anticipated when I had got out to sea with my load of quap and fancied the Perfect-Filament was safe within my grasp. As I walked through the evening light along the downs, the summer stillness seemed like the stillness of something newly dead. There were no lurking workmen any more, no cyclists on the high road.

Cessation was manifest everywhere. There had been, I learnt from my aunt, a touching and quite voluntary demonstration when the Crest Hill work had come to an end and the men had drawn their last pay; they had cheered my uncle and hooted the contractors and Lord Boom.

I cannot now recall the manner in which my aunt and I greeted one

another. I must have been very tired there, but whatever impression was made has gone out of my memory. But I recall very clearly how we sat at the little round table near the big window that gave on the terrace, and dined and talked. I remember her talking of my uncle.

She asked after him, and whether he seemed well. "I wish I could help," she said. "But I've never helped him much, never. His way of doing things was never mine. And since--since--. Since he began to get so rich, he's kept things from me. In the old days--it was different....

"There he is--I don't know what he's doing. He won't have me near him....

"More's kept from me than anyone. The very servants won't let me know. They try and stop the worst of the papers--Boom's things--from coming upstairs.... I suppose they've got him in a corner, George. Poor old Teddy! Poor old Adam and Eve we are! Ficial Receivers with flaming swords to drive us out of our garden! I'd hoped we'd never have another Trek. Well--anyway, it won't be Crest Hill.... But it's hard on Teddy. He must be in such a mess up there. Poor old chap. I suppose we can't help him. I suppose we'd only worry him. Have some more soup George--while there is some?..."

The next day was one of those days of strong perception that stand out clear in one's memory when the common course of days is blurred. I can recall now the awakening in the large familiar room that was always kept for me, and how I lay staring at its chintz-covered chairs, its spaced fine furniture, its glimpse of the cedars without, and thought that all this had to end.

I have never been greedy for money, I have never wanted to be rich, but I felt now an immense sense of impending deprivation.

I read the newspapers after breakfast--I and my aunt together--and then I walked up to see what Cothope had done in the matter of Lord Roberts B. Never before had I appreciated so acutely the ample brightness of the Lady Grove gardens, the dignity and wide peace of all about me. It was one of those warm mornings in late May that have won all the glory of summer without losing the gay delicacy of spring. The shrubbery was bright with laburnum and lilac, the beds swarmed with daffodils and narcissi and with lilies of the valley in the shade.

I went along the well-kept paths among the rhododendra and through the private gate into the woods where the bluebells and common orchid were in profusion. Never before had I tasted so completely the fine sense of privilege and ownership. And all this has to end, I told myself, all this has to end.

Neither my uncle nor I had made any provision for disaster; all we had was in the game, and I had little doubt now of the completeness of our ruin. For the first time in my life since he had sent me that wonderful telegram of his I had to consider that common anxiety of mankind,--Employment. I had to come off my magic carpet and walk once more in the world.

And suddenly I found myself at the cross drives where I had seen Beatrice for the first time after so many years. It is strange, but so far as I can recollect I had not thought of her once since I had landed at Plymouth. No doubt she had filled the background of my mind, but I do not remember one definite, clear thought. I had been intent on my uncle and the financial collapse.

It came like a blow in the face now; all that, too, had to end!

Suddenly I was filled with the thought of her and a great longing for her. What would she do when she realised our immense disaster? What would she do? How would she take it? It filled

me with astonishment to realise how little I could tell....

Should I perhaps presently happen upon her?

I went on through the plantations and out upon the downs, and thence I saw Cothope with a new glider of his own design soaring down wind to my old familiar "grounding" place. To judge by its long rhythm it was a very good glider. "Like Cothope's cheek," thought I, "to go on with the research. I wonder if he's keeping notes.... But all this will have to stop."

He was sincerely glad to see me. "It's been a rum go," he said.

He had been there without wages for a month, a man forgotten in the rush of events.

"I just stuck on and did what I could with the stuff. I got a bit of money of my own--and I said to myself, 'Well, here you are with the gear and no one to look after you. You won't get such a chance again, my boy, not in all your born days. Why not make what you can with it?'"

"How's Lord Roberts B?"

Cothope lifted his eyebrows. "I've had to refrain," he said. "But he's looking very handsome."

"Gods!" I said, "I'd like to get him up just once before we smash. You read the papers? You know we're going to smash?"

"Oh! I read the papers. It's scandalous, sir, such work as ours should depend on things like that. You and I ought to be under the State, sir, if you'll excuse me"

"Nothing to excuse," I said. "I've always been a Socialist--of a

sort--in theory. Let's go and have a look at him. How is he?
Deflated?"

"Just about quarter full. That last oil glaze of yours holds the
gas something beautiful. He's not lost a cubic metre a week." ...

Cothope returned to Socialism as we went toward the sheds.

"Glad to think you're a Socialist, sir," he said, "it's the only
civilised state. I been a Socialist some years--off the
Clarion. It's a rotten scramble, this world. It takes the
things we make and invent and it plays the silly fool with 'em.
We scientific people, we'll have to take things over and stop all
this financing and advertisement and that. It's too silly.
It's a noosance. Look at us!"

Lord Roberts B, even in his partially deflated condition in his
shed, was a fine thing to stare up at. I stood side by side with
Cothope regarding him, and it was borne in upon me more acutely
than ever that all this had to end. I had a feeling just like
the feeling of a boy who wants to do wrong, that I would use up
the stuff while I had it before the creditors descended. I had a
queer fancy, too, I remember, that if I could get into the air it
would advertise my return to Beatrice.

"We'll fill her," I said concisely.

"It's all ready," said Cothope, and added as an afterthought,
"unless they cut off the gas." ...

I worked and interested myself with Cothope all the morning and
for a time forgot my other troubles. But the thought of Beatrice
flooded me slowly and steadily. It became an unintelligent sick
longing to see her. I felt that I could not wait for the filling
of Lord Roberts B, that I must hunt her up and see her soon. I

got everything forward and lunched with Cothope, and then with the feeblest excuses left him in order to prowl down through the woods towards Bedley Corner. I became a prey to wretched hesitations and diffidence. Ought I to go near her now? I asked myself, reviewing all the social abasements of my early years. At last, about five, I called at the Dower House. I was greeted by their Charlotte--with a forbidding eye and a cold astonishment.

Both Beatrice and Lady Osprey were out.

There came into my head some prowling dream of meeting her. I went along the lane towards Woking, the lane down which we had walked five months ago in the wind and rain.

I mooned for a time in our former footsteps, then swore and turned back across the fields, and then conceived a distaste for Cothope and went Downward. At last I found myself looking down on the huge abandoned masses of the Crest Hill house.

That gave my mind a twist into a new channel. My uncle came uppermost again. What a strange, melancholy emptiness of intention that stricken enterprise seemed in the even evening sunlight, what vulgar magnificence and crudity and utter absurdity! It was as idiotic as the pyramids. I sat down on the stile, staring at it as though I had never seen that forest of scaffold poles, that waste of walls and bricks and plaster and shaped stones, that wilderness of broken soil and wheeling tracks and dumps before. It struck me suddenly as the compactest image and sample of all that passes for Progress, of all the advertisement-inflated spending, the aimless building up and pulling down, the enterprise and promise of my age. This was our fruit, this was what he had done, I and my uncle, in the fashion of our time. We were its leaders and exponents, we were the thing it most flourishingly produced. For this futility in

its end, for an epoch of such futility, the solemn scroll of history had unfolded....

"Great God!" I cried, "but is this Life?"

For this the armies drilled, for this the Law was administered and the prisons did their duty, for this the millions toiled and perished in suffering, in order that a few of us should build palaces we never finished, make billiard-rooms under ponds, run imbecile walls round irrational estates, scorch about the world in motor-cars, devise flying-machines, play golf and a dozen such foolish games of ball, crowd into chattering dinner parties, gamble and make our lives one vast, dismal spectacle of witless waste! So it struck me then, and for a time I could think of no other interpretation. This was Life! It came to me like a revelation, a revelation at once incredible and indisputable of the abysmal folly of our being.

III

I was roused from such thoughts by the sound of footsteps behind me.

I turned half hopeful--so foolish is a lover's imagination, and stopped amazed. It was my uncle. His face was white--white as I had seen it in my dream.

"Hullo!" I said, and stared. "Why aren't you in London?"

"It's all up," he said....

"Adjudicated?"

"No!"

I stared at him for a moment, and then got off the stile.

We stood swaying and then came forward with a weak motion of his arms like a man who cannot see distinctly, and caught at and leant upon the stile. For a moment we were absolutely still. He made a clumsy gesture towards the great futility below and choked. I discovered that his face was wet with tears, that his wet glasses blinded him. He put up his little fat hand and clawed them off clumsily, felt inefficiently for his pocket-handkerchief, and then, to my horror, as he clung to me, he began to weep aloud, this little, old worldworn swindler. It wasn't just sobbing or shedding tears, it was crying as a child cries. It was oh! terrible!

"It's cruel," he blubbered at last. "They asked me questions. They KEP' asking me questions, George."

He sought for utterance, and spluttered.

"The Bloody bullies!" he shouted. "The Bloody Bullies."

He ceased to weep. He became suddenly rapid and explanatory.

"It's not a fair game, George. They tire you out. And I'm not well. My stomach's all wrong. And I been and got a cold. I always been li'ble to cold, and this one's on my chest. And then they tell you to speak up. They bait you--and bait you, and bait you. It's torture. The strain of it. You can't remember what you said. You're bound to contradict yourself. It's like Russia, George.... It isn't fair play.... Prominent man. I've been next at dinners with that chap, Neal; I've told him stories--and he's bitter! Sets out to ruin me. Don't ask a civil question--bellows." He broke down again. "I've been bellowed at, I been bullied, I been treated like a dog. Dirty cads they are! Dirty cads! I'd rather be a Three-Card Sharper

than a barrister; I'd rather sell cat's-meat in the streets.

"They sprung things on me this morning, things I didn't expect. They rushed me! I'd got it all in my hands and then I was jumped. By Neal! Neal I've given city tips to! Neal! I've helped Neal....

"I couldn't swallow a mouthful--not in the lunch hour. I couldn't face it. It's true, George--I couldn't face it. I said I'd get a bit of air and slipped out and down to the Embankment, and there I took a boat to Richmond. Some idee. I took a rowing boat when I got there and I rowed about on the river for a bit. A lot of chaps and girls there was on the bank laughed at my shirt-sleeves and top hat. Dessay they thought it was a pleasure trip. Fat lot of pleasure! I rowed round for a bit and came in. Then I came on here. Windsor way. And there they are in London doing what they like with me.... I don't care!"

"But" I said, looking down at him, perplexed.

"It's abscondin'. They'll have a warrant."

"I don't understand," I said.

"It's all up, George--all up and over.

"And I thought I'd live in that place, George and die a lord! It's a great place, reely, an imperial--if anyone has the sense to buy it and finish it. That terrace--"

I stood thinking him over.

"Look here!" I said. "What's that about--a warrant? Are you sure they'll get a warrant? I'm sorry uncle; but what have you done?"

"Haven't I told you?"

"Yes, but they won't do very much to you for that. They'll only bring you up for the rest of your examination."

He remained silent for a time. At last he spoke--speaking with difficulty.

"It's worse than that. I've done something. They're bound to get it out. Practically they HAVE got it out."

"What?"

"Writin' things down--I done something."

For the first time in his life, I believe, he felt and looked ashamed. It filled me with remorse to see him suffer so.

"We've all done things," I said. "It's part of the game the world makes us play. If they want to arrest you--and you've got no cards in your hand--! They mustn't arrest you."

"No. That's partly why I went to Richmond. But I never thought--"

His little bloodshot eyes stared at Crest Hill.

"That chap Wittaker Wright," he said, "he had his stuff ready. I haven't. Now you got it, George. That's the sort of hole I'm in."

IV

That memory of my uncle at the gate is very clear and full. I am

able to recall even the undertow of my thoughts while he was speaking. I remember my pity and affection for him in his misery growing and stirring within me, my realisation that at any risk I must help him. But then comes indistinctness again. I was beginning to act. I know I persuaded him to put himself in my hands, and began at once to plan and do. I think that when we act most we remember least, that just in the measure that the impulse of our impressions translates itself into schemes and movements, it ceases to record itself in memories. I know I resolved to get him away at once, and to use the Lord Roberts B in effecting that. It was clear he was soon to be a hunted man, and it seemed to me already unsafe for him to try the ordinary Continental routes in his flight. I had to evolve some scheme, and evolve it rapidly, how we might drop most inconspicuously into the world across the water. My resolve to have one flight at least in my airship fitted with this like hand to glove. It seemed to me we might be able to cross over the water in the night, set our airship adrift, and turn up as pedestrian tourists in Normandy or Brittany, and so get away. That, at any rate, was my ruling idea.

I sent off Cothope with a dummy note to Woking, because I did not want to implicate him, and took my uncle to the pavilion. I went down to my aunt, and made a clean breast of the situation. She became admirably competent. We went into his dressing-room and ruthlessly broke his locks. I got a pair of brown boots, a tweed suit and a cap of his, and indeed a plausible walking outfit, and a little game bag for his pedestrian gear; and, in addition, a big motoring overcoat and a supply of rugs to add to those I had at the pavilion. I also got a flask of brandy, and she made sandwiches. I don't remember any servants appearing, and I forget where she got those sandwiches. Meanwhile we talked. Afterwards I thought with what a sure confidence we talked to each other

"What's he done?" she said.

"D'you mind knowing?"

"No conscience left, thank God!"

"I think--forgery!"

There was just a little pause. "Can you carry this bundle?" she asked.

I lifted it.

"No woman ever has respected the law--ever," she said. "It's too silly.... The things it lets you do! And then pulls you up--like a mad nurse minding a child."

She carried some rugs for me through the shrubbery in the darkling.

"They'll think we're going mooning," she said, jerking her head at the household. "I wonder what they make of us--criminals." ... An immense droning note came as if in answer to that. It startled us both for a moment. "The dears!" she said. "It's the gong for dinner!... But I wish I could help little Teddy, George. It's awful to think of him there with hot eyes, red and dry. And I know--the sight of me makes him feel sore. Things I said, George. If I could have seen, I'd have let him have an omnibusful of Scrymgeours. I cut him up. He'd never thought I meant it before.... I'll help all I can, anyhow."

I turned at something in her voice, and got a moon light gleam of tears upon her face.

"Could SHE have helped?" she asked abruptly.

"SHE?"

"That woman."

"My God!" I cried, "HELPED! Those--things don't help!"

"Tell me again what I ought to do," she said after a silence.

I went over the plans I had made for communicating, and the things I thought she might do. I had given her the address of a solicitor she might put some trust in.

"But you must act for yourself," I insisted.

"Roughly," I said, "it's a scramble. You must get what you can for us, and follow as you can."

She nodded.

She came right up to the pavilion and hovered for a time shyly, and then went away.

I found my uncle in my sitting-room in an arm-chair, with his feet upon the fender of the gas stove, which he had lit, and now he was feebly drunken with my whisky, and very weary in body and spirit, and inclined to be cowardly.

"I lef' my drops," he said.

He changed his clothes slowly and unwillingly. I had to bully him, I had almost to shove him to the airship and tuck him up upon its wicker flat. Single-handed I made but a clumsy start; we scraped along the roof of the shed and bent a van of the propeller, and for a time I hung underneath without his offering

a hand to help me to clamber up. If it hadn't been for a sort of anchoring trolley device of Cothope's, a sort of slip anchor running on a rail, we should never have got clear at all.

V

The incidents of our flight in Lord Roberts B do not arrange themselves in any consecutive order. To think of that adventure is like dipping haphazard into an album of views. One is reminded first of this and then of that. We were both lying down on a horizontal plate of basketwork; for Lord Roberts B had none of the elegant accommodation of a balloon. I lay forward, and my uncle behind me in such a position that he could see hardly anything of our flight. We were protected from rolling over simply by netting between the steel stays. It was impossible for us to stand up at all; we had either to lie or crawl on all fours over the basket work. Amidships were lockers made of Watson's Aulite material,--and between these it was that I had put my uncle, wrapped in rugs. I wore sealskin motoring boots and gloves, and a motoring fur coat over my tweeds, and I controlled the engine by Bowden wires and levers forward.

The early part of that night's experience was made up of warmth, of moonlit Surrey and Sussex landscape, and of a rapid and successful flight, ascending and swooping, and then ascending again southward. I could not watch the clouds because the airship overhung me; I could not see the stars nor gauge the meteorological happening, but it was fairly clear to me that a wind shifting between north and northeast was gathering strength, and after I had satisfied myself by a series of entirely successful expansions and contractions of the real air-worthiness of Lord Roberts B, I stopped the engine to save my petrol, and let the monster drift, checking its progress by the dim landscape below. My uncle lay quite still behind me, saying little and staring in front of him, and I was left to my own thoughts and

sensations.

My thoughts, whatever they were, have long since faded out of memory, and my sensations have merged into one continuous memory of an countryside lying, as it seemed, under snow, with square patches of dimness, white phantoms of roads, rents and pools of velvety blackness, and lamp-jewelled houses. I remember a train boring its way like a hastening caterpillar of fire across the landscape, and how distinctly I heard its clatter. Every town and street was buttoned with street lamps. I came quite close to the South Downs near Lewes, and all the lights were out in the houses, and the people gone to bed. We left the land a little to the east of Brighton, and by that time Brighton was well abed. and the brightly lit sea-front deserted. Then I let out the gas chamber to its fullest extent and rose. I like to be high above water.

I do not clearly know what happened in the night. I think I must have dozed, and probably my uncle slept. I remember that once or twice I heard him talking in an eager, muffled voice to himself, or to an imaginary court. But there can be no doubt the wind changed right round into the east, and that we were carried far down the Channel without any suspicion of the immense leeway we were making. I remember the kind of stupid perplexity with which I saw the dawn breaking over a grey waste of water, below, and realised that something was wrong. I was so stupid that it was only after the sunrise I really noticed the trend of the foam caps below, and perceived we were in a severe easterly gale. Even then, instead of heading southeasterly, I set the engine going, headed south, and so continued a course that must needs have either just hit Ushant, or carry us over the Bay of Biscay. I thought I was east of Cherbourg, when I was far to the west and stopped my engine in that belief, and then set it going again. I did actually sight the coast of Brittany to the southeast in the late afternoon, and that it was woke me up to the gravity of our

position. I discovered it by accident in the southeast, when I was looking for it in the southwest. I turned about east and faced the wind for some time, and finding I had no chance in its teeth, went high, where it seemed less violent, and tried to make a course southeast. It was only then that I realised what a gale I was in. I had been going westward, and perhaps even in gusts north of west, at a pace of fifty or sixty miles an hour.

Then I began what I suppose would be called a Fight against the east wind. One calls it a Fight, but it was really almost as unlike a fight as plain sewing. The wind tried to drive me westwardly, and I tried to get as much as I could eastwardly, with the wind beating and rocking us irregularly, but by no means unbearably, for about twelve hours. My hope lay in the wind abating, and our keeping in the air and eastward of Finisterre until it did, and the chief danger was the exhaustion of our petrol. It was a long and anxious and almost meditative time; we were fairly warm, and only slowly getting hungry, and except that my uncle grumbled a little and produced some philosophical reflections, and began to fuss about having a temperature, we talked very little. I was tired and sulky, and chiefly worried about the engine. I had to resist a tendency to crawl back and look at it. I did not care to risk contracting our gas chamber for fear of losing gas. Nothing was less like a fight. I know that in popular magazines, and so forth, all such occasions as this are depicted in terms of hysteria. Captains save their ships engineers complete their bridges, generals conduct their battles, in a state of dancing excitement, foaming recondite technicalities at the lips. I suppose that sort of thing works up the reader, but so far as it professes to represent reality, I am convinced it is all childish nonsense. schoolboys of fifteen, girls of eighteen, and literary men all their lives, may have these squealing fits, but my own experience is that most exciting scenes are not exciting, and most of the urgent moments in life are met by steady-headed men.

Neither I nor my uncle spent the night in ejaculations, nor in humorous allusions, nor any of these things. We remained lumpish.

My uncle stuck in his place and grumbled about his stomach, and occasionally rambled off into expositions of his financial position and denunciations of Neal--he certainly struck out one or two good phrases for Neal--and I crawled about at rare intervals in a vague sort of way and grunted, and our basketwork creaked continually, and the wind on our quarter made a sort of ruffled flapping in the wall of the gas chamber. For all our wraps we got frightfully cold as the night wore on.

I must have dozed, and it was still dark when I realised with a start that we were nearly due south of, and a long way from, a regularly-flashing lighthouse, standing out before the glow of some great town, and then that the thing that had awakened me was the cessation of our engine, and that we were driving back to the west.

Then, indeed, for a time I felt the grim thrill of life. I crawled forward to the cords of the release valves, made my uncle crawl forward too, and let out the gas until we were falling down through the air like a clumsy glider towards the vague greyness that was land.

Something must have intervened here that I have forgotten.

I saw the lights of Bordeaux when it was quite dark, a nebulous haze against black; of that I am reasonably sure. But certainly our fall took place in the cold, uncertain light of early dawn. I am, at least, equally sure of that. And Mimizan, near where we dropped, is fifty miles from Bordeaux, whose harbour lights I must have seen.

I remember coming down at last with a curious indifference, and actually rousing myself to steer. But the actual coming to earth was exciting enough. I remember our prolonged dragging landfall, and the difficulty I had to get clear, and how a gust of wind caught Lord Roberts B as my uncle stumbled away from the ropes and litter, and dropped me heavily, and threw me on to my knees. Then came the realisation that the monster was almost consciously disentangling itself for escape, and then the light leap of its rebound. The rope slipped out of reach of my hand. I remember running knee-deep in a salt pool in hopeless pursuit of the airship.

As it dragged and rose seaward, and how only after it had escaped my uttermost effort to recapture it, did I realise that this was quite the best thing that could have happened. It drove swiftly over the sandy dunes, lifting and falling, and was hidden by a clump of windbitten trees. Then it reappeared much further off, and still receding. It soared for a time, and sank slowly, and after that I saw it no more. I suppose it fell into the sea and got wetted with salt water and heavy, and so became deflated and sank.

It was never found, and there was never a report of anyone seeing it after it escaped from me.

VI

But if I find it hard to tell the story of our long flight through the air overseas, at least that dawn in France stands cold and clear and full. I see again almost as if I saw once more with my bodily eyes the ridges of sand rising behind ridges of sand, grey and cold and black-browed, with an insufficient grass. I feel again the clear, cold chill of dawn, and hear the distant barking of a dog. I find myself asking again, "What shall we do now?" and trying to scheme with brain tired beyond

measure.

At first my uncle occupied my attention. He was shivering a good deal, and it was all I could do to resist my desire to get him into a comfortable bed at once. But I wanted to appear plausibly in this part of the world. I felt it would not do to turn up anywhere at dawn and rest, it would be altogether too conspicuous; we must rest until the day was well advanced, and then appear as road-stained pedestrians seeking a meal. I gave him most of what was left of the biscuits, emptied our flasks, and advised him to sleep, but at first it was too cold, albeit I wrapped the big fur rug around him.

I was struck now by the flushed weariness of his face, and the look of age the grey stubble on his unshaved chin gave him. He sat crumpled up, shivering and coughing, munching reluctantly, but drinking eagerly, and whimpering a little, a dreadfully pitiful figure to me. But we had to go through with it; there was no way out for us.

Presently the sun rose over the pines, and the sand grew rapidly warm. My uncle had done eating, and sat with his wrists resting on his knees, the most hopeless looking of lost souls.

"I'm ill," he said, "I'm damnably ill! I can feel it in my skin!"

Then--it was horrible to me--he cried, "I ought to be in bed; I ought to be in bed... instead of flying about," and suddenly he burst into tears.

I stood up. "Go to sleep, man!" I said, and took the rug from him, and spread it out and rolled him up in it.

"It's all very well," he protested; "I'm not young enough--"

"Lift up your head," I interrupted, and put his knapsack under it.

"They'll catch us here, just as much as in an inn," he grumbled and then lay still.

Presently, after a long time, I perceived he was asleep. His breath came with peculiar wheezings, and every now and again he would cough. I was very stiff and tired myself, and perhaps I dozed. I don't remember. I remember only sitting, as it seemed, night interminably, beside him, too weary even to think in that sandy desolation.

No one came near us; no creature, not even a dog. I roused myself at last, feeling that it was vain to seek to seem other than abnormal, and with an effort that was like lifting a sky of lead, we made our way through the wearisome sand to a farmhouse. There I feigned even a more insufficient French than I possess naturally, and let it appear that we were pedestrians from Biarritz who had lost our way along the shore and got benighted.

This explained us pretty well, I thought, and we got most heartening coffee and a cart to a little roadside station. My uncle grew more and more manifestly ill with every stage of our journey. I got him to Bayonne, where he refused at first to eat, and was afterwards very sick, and then took him shivering and collapsed up a little branch line to a frontier place called Luzon Gare.

We found one homely inn with two small bedrooms, kept by a kindly Basque woman. I got him to bed, and that night shared his room, and after an hour or so of sleep he woke up in a raging fever and with a wandering mind, cursing Neal and repeating long, inaccurate lists of figures. He was manifestly a case for a doctor, and in the morning we got one in. He was a young man

from Montpellier, just beginning to practise, and very mysterious and technical and modern and unhelpful. He spoke of cold and exposure, and la grippe and pneumonia. He gave many explicit and difficult directions.... I perceived it devolved upon me to organise nursing and a sick-room. I installed a religieuse in the second bedroom of the inn, and took a room for myself in the inn of Port de Luzon, a quarter of a mile away.

VII

And now my story converges on what, in that queer corner of refuge out of the world, was destined to be my uncle's deathbed. There is a background of the Pyrenees, of blue hills and sunlit houses, of the old castle of Luzon and a noisy cascading river, and for a foreground the dim, stuffy room whose windows both the religieuse and hostess conspired to shut, with its waxed floor, its four-poster bed, its characteristically French chairs and fireplace, its champagne bottles and dirty basins and used towels and packets of Somatose on the table. And in the sickly air of the confined space in behind the curtains of the bed lay my little uncle, with an effect of being enthroned and secluded, or sat up, or writhed and tossed in his last dealings of life. One went and drew back the edge of the curtains if one wanted to speak to him or look at him.

Usually he was propped up against pillows, because so he breathed more easily. He slept hardly at all.

I have a confused memory of vigils and mornings and afternoons spent by that bedside, and how the religieuse hovered about me, and how meek and good and inefficient she was, and how horribly black were her nails. Other figures come and go, and particularly the doctor, a young man plumply rococo, in bicycling dress, with fine waxen features, a little pointed beard, and the long black frizzy hair and huge tie of a minor poet. Bright and

clear-cut and irrelevant are memories of the Basque hostess of my uncle's inn and of the family of Spanish people who entertained me and prepared the most amazingly elaborate meals for me, with soup and salad and chicken and remarkable sweets. They were all very kind and sympathetic people, systematically so. And constantly, without attracting attention, I was trying to get newspapers from home.

My uncle is central to all these impressions.

I have tried to make you picture him, time after time, as the young man of the Wimblehurst chemist's shop, as the shabby assistant in Tottenham Court Road, as the adventurer of the early days of Tono-Bungay, as the confident, preposterous plutocrat. And now I have to tell of him strangely changed under the shadow of oncoming death, with his skin lax and yellow and glistening with sweat, his eyes large and glassy, his countenance unfamiliar through the growth of a beard, his nose pinched and thin. Never had he looked so small as now. And he talked to me in a whispering, strained voice of great issues, of why his life had been, and whither he was going. Poor little man! that last phase is, as it were, disconnected from all the other phases. It was as if he crawled out from the ruins of his career, and looked about him before he died. For he had quite clear-minded states in the intervals of his delirium.

He knew he was almost certainly dying. In a way that took the burthen of his cares off his mind. There was no more Neal to face, no more flights or evasions, no punishments.

"It has been a great career, George," he said, "but I shall be glad to rest. Glad to rest!... Glad to rest."

His mind ran rather upon his career, and usually, I am glad to recall, with a note of satisfaction and approval. In his

delirious phases he would most often exaggerate this self-satisfaction, and talk of his splendours. He would pluck at the sheet and stare before him, and whisper half-audible fragments of sentences.

"What is this great place, these cloud-capped towers, these any pinnacles?... Ilion. Sky-pointing.... Ilion House, the residence of one of our great merchant princes.... Terrace above terrace. Reaching to the heavens.... Kingdoms Caesar never knew.... A great poet, George. Zzzz. Kingdoms Caesar never knew.... Under entirely new management.

"Greatness....Millions... Universities.... He stands on the terrace--on the upper terrace--directing--directing--by the globe--directing--the trade."

It was hard at times to tell when his sane talk ceased and his delirium began. The secret springs of his life, the vain imaginations were revealed. I sometimes think that all the life of man sprawls abed, careless and unkempt, until it must needs clothe and wash itself and come forth seemly in act and speech for the encounter with one's fellow-men. I suspect that all things unspoken in our souls partake somewhat of the laxity of delirium and dementia. Certainly from those slimy, tormented lips above the bristling grey beard came nothing but dreams and disconnected fancies....

Sometimes he raved about Neal, threatened Neal. "What has he got invested?" he said. "Does he think he can escape me?... If I followed him up.... Ruin. Ruin.... One would think I had taken his money."

And sometimes he reverted to our airship flight. "It's too long, George, too long and too cold. I'm too old a man--too old--for this sort of thing.... You know you're not saving--you're killing

me."

Towards the end it became evident our identity was discovered. I found the press, and especially Boom's section of it, had made a sort of hue and cry for us, sent special commissioners to hunt for us, and though none of these emissaries reached us until my uncle was dead, one felt the forewash of that storm of energy. The thing got into the popular French press. People became curious in their manner towards us, and a number of fresh faces appeared about the weak little struggle that went on in the closeness behind the curtains of the bed. The young doctor insisted on consultations, and a motor-car came up from Biarritz, and suddenly odd people with questioning eyes began to poke in with inquiries and help. Though nothing was said, I could feel that we were no longer regarded as simple middle-class tourists; about me, as I went, I perceived almost as though it trailed visibly, the prestige of Finance and a criminal notoriety. Local personages of a plump and prosperous quality appeared in the inn making inquiries, the Luzon priest became helpful, people watched our window, and stared at me as I went to and fro; and then we had a raid from a little English clergyman and his amiable, capable wife in severely Anglican blacks, who swooped down upon us like virtuous but resolute vultures from the adjacent village of Saint Jean de Pollack.

The clergyman was one of those odd types that oscillate between remote country towns in England and the conduct of English Church services on mutual terms in enterprising hotels abroad, a tremulous, obstinate little being with sporadic hairs upon his face, spectacles, a red button nose, and aged black raiment. He was evidently enormously impressed by my uncle's monetary greatness, and by his own inkling of our identity, and he shone and brimmed over with tact and fussy helpfulness. He was eager to share the watching of the bedside with me, he proffered services with both hands, and as I was now getting into touch

with affairs in London again, and trying to disentangle the gigantic details of the smash from the papers I had succeeded in getting from Biarritz, I accepted his offers pretty generously, and began the studies in modern finance that lay before me. I had got so out of touch with the old traditions of religion that I overlooked the manifest possibility of his attacking my poor, sinking vestiges of an uncle with theological solitudes. My attention was called to that, however, very speedily by a polite but urgent quarrel between himself and the Basque landlady as to the necessity of her hanging a cheap crucifix in the shadow over the bed, where it might catch my uncle's eye, where, indeed, I found it had caught his eye.

"Good Lord!" I cried; "is THAT still going on!"

That night the little clergyman watched, and in the small hours he raised a false alarm that my uncle was dying, and made an extraordinary fuss. He raised the house. I shall never forget that scene, I think, which began with a tapping at my bedroom door just after I had fallen asleep, and his voice--

"If you want to see your uncle before he goes, you must come now."

The stuffy little room was crowded when I reached it, and lit by three flickering candles. I felt I was back in the eighteenth century. There lay my poor uncle amidst indescribably tumbled bedclothes, weary of life beyond measure, weary and rambling, and the little clergyman trying to hold his hand and his attention, and repeating over and over again:

"Mr. Ponderevo, Mr. Ponderevo, it is all right. It is all right.

Only Believe! 'Believe on me, and ye shall be saved!'"

Close at hand was the doctor with one of those cruel and idiotic injection needles modern science puts in the hands of these half-educated young men, keeping my uncle flickeringly alive for no reason whatever. The religieuse hovered sleepily in the background with an overdue and neglected dose. In addition, the landlady had not only got up herself, but roused an aged crone of a mother and a partially imbecile husband, and there was also a fattish, stolid man in grey alpaca, with an air of importance--who he was and how he got there, I don't know. I rather fancy the doctor explained him to me in French I did not understand. And they were all there, wearily nocturnal, hastily and carelessly dressed, intent upon the life that flickered and sank, making a public and curious show of its going, queer shapes of human beings lit by three uncertain candles, and every soul of them keenly and avidly resolved to be in at the death. The doctor stood, the others were all sitting on chairs the landlady had brought in and arranged for them.

And my uncle spoilt the climax, and did not die.

I replaced the little clergyman on the chair by the bedside, and he hovered about the room.

"I think," he whispered to me mysteriously, as he gave place to me, "I believe--it is well with him."

I heard him trying to render the stock phrases of Low Church piety into French for the benefit of the stolid man in grey alpaca. Then he knocked a glass off the table, and scrabbled for the fragments. From the first I doubted the theory of an immediate death. I consulted the doctor in urgent whispers. I turned round to get champagne, and nearly fell over the clergyman's legs. He was on his knees at the additional chair the Basque landlady had got on my arrival, and he was praying aloud, "Oh, Heavenly Father, have mercy on this thy Child...." I

hustled him up and out of the way, and in another minute he was down at another chair praying again, and barring the path of the religieuse, who had found me the corkscrew. Something put into my head that tremendous blasphemy of Carlyle's about "the last mew of a drowning kitten." He found a third chair vacant presently; it was as if he was playing a game.

"Good Heavens!" I said, "we must clear these people out," and with a certain urgency I did.

I had a temporary lapse of memory, and forgot all my French. I drove them out mainly by gesture, and opened the window, to the universal horror. I intimated the death scene was postponed, and, as a matter of fact, my uncle did not die until the next night.

I did not let the little clergyman come near him again, and I was watchful for any sign that his mind had been troubled. But he made none. He talked once about "that parson chap."

"Didn't bother you?" I asked.

"Wanted something," he said.

I kept silence, listening keenly to his mutterings. I understood him to say, "They wanted too much." His face puckered like a child's going to cry. "You can't get a safe six per cent.," he said. I had for a moment a wild suspicion that those urgent talks had not been altogether spiritual, but that, I think, was a quite unworthy and unjust suspicion. The little clergyman was as simple and honest as the day. My uncle was simply generalising about his class.

But it may have been these talks that set loose some long dormant string of ideas in my uncle's brain, ideas the things of this

world had long suppressed and hidden altogether. Near the end he suddenly became clearminded and lucid, albeit very weak, and his voice was little, but clear.

"George," he said.

"I'm here," I said, "close beside you."

"George. You have always been responsible for the science. George. You know better than I do. Is--Is it proved?"

"What proved?"

"Either way?"

"I don't understand."

"Death ends all. After so much--Such splendid beginnin's. Somewhere. Something."

I stared at him amazed. His sunken eyes were very grave.

"What do you expect?" I said in wonder.

He would not answer. "Aspirations," he whispered. He fell into a broken monologue, regardless of me. "Trailing clouds of glory," he said, and "first-rate poet, first-rate....George was always hard. Always."

For a long time there was silence.

Then he made a gesture that he wished to speak.

"Seems to me, George"

I bent my head down, and he tried to lift his hand to my shoulder. I raised him a little on his pillows, and listened.

"It seems to me, George, always--there must be something in me--that won't die."

He looked at me as though the decision rested with me.

"I think," he said; "--something."

Then, for a moment, his mind wandered. "Just a little link," he whispered almost pleadingly, and lay quite still, but presently he was uneasy again.

"Some other world"

"Perhaps," I said. "Who knows?"

"Some other world."

"Not the same scope for enterprise," I said.

"No."

He became silent. I sat leaning down to him, and following out my own thoughts, and presently the religieuse resumed her periodic conflict with the window fastening. For a time he struggled for breath.... It seemed such nonsense that he should have to suffer so--poor silly little man!

"George," he whispered, and his weak little hand came out.
"PERHAPS--"

He said no more, but I perceived from the expression of his eyes that he thought the question had been put.

"Yes, I think so;" I said stoutly.

"Aren't you sure?"

"Oh--practically sure," said I, and I think he tried to squeeze my hand. And there I sat, holding his hand tight, and trying to think what seeds of immortality could be found in all his being, what sort of ghost there was in him to wander out into the bleak immensities. Queer fancies came to me.... He lay still for a long time, save for a brief struggle or so for breath and ever and again I wiped his mouth and lips.

I fell into a pit of thought. I did not remark at first the change that was creeping over his face. He lay back on his pillow, made a faint zzzing sound that ceased, and presently and quite quietly he died--greatly comforted by my assurance. I do not know when he died. His hand relaxed insensibly. Suddenly, with a start, with a shock, I found that his mouth had fallen open, and that he was dead....

VIII

It was dark night when I left his deathbed and went back to my own inn down the straggling street of Luzon.

That return to my inn sticks in my memory also as a thing apart, as an experience apart. Within was a subdued bustle of women, a flitting of lights, and the doing of petty offices to that queer, exhausted thing that had once been my active and urgent little uncle. For me those offices were irksome and impertinent. I slammed the door, and went out into the warm, foggy drizzle of the village street lit by blurred specks of light in great voids of darkness, and never a soul abroad. That warm veil of fog produced an effect of vast seclusion. The very houses by the

roadside peered through it as if from another world. The stillness of the night was marked by an occasional remote baying of dogs; all these people kept dogs because of the near neighbourhood of the frontier.

Death!

It was one of those rare seasons of relief, when for a little time one walks a little outside of and beside life. I felt as I sometimes feel after the end of a play. I saw the whole business of my uncle's life as something familiar and completed. It was done, like a play one leaves, like a book one closes. I thought of the push and the promotions, the noise of London, the crowded, various company of people through which our lives had gone, the public meetings, the excitements, the dinners and disputations, and suddenly it appeared to me that none of these things existed.

It came to me like a discovery that none of these things existed.

Before and after I have thought and called life a phantasmagoria, but never have I felt its truth as I did that night.... We had parted; we two who had kept company so long had parted. But there was, I knew, no end to him or me. He had died a dream death, and ended a dream; his pain dream was over. It seemed to me almost as though I had died, too. What did it matter, since it was unreality, all of it, the pain and desire, the beginning and the end? There was no reality except this solitary road, this quite solitary road, along which one went rather puzzled, rather tired....

Part of the fog became a big mastiff that came towards me and stopped and slunk round me, growling, barked gruffly, and shortly and presently became fog again.

My mind swayed back to the ancient beliefs and fears of our race.

My doubts and disbeliefs slipped from me like a loosely fitting garment. I wondered quite simply what dogs bayed about the path of that other walker in the darkness, what shapes, what lights, it might be, loomed about him as he went his way from our last encounter on earth--along the paths that are real, and the way that endures for ever?

IX

Last belated figure in that grouping round my uncle's deathbed is my aunt. When it was beyond all hope that my uncle could live I threw aside whatever concealment remained to us and telegraphed directly to her. But she came too late to see him living. She saw him calm and still, strangely unlike his habitual garrulous animation, an unfamiliar inflexibility.

"It isn't like him," she whispered, awed by this alien dignity.

I remember her chiefly as she talked and wept upon the bridge below the old castle. We had got rid of some amateurish reporters from Biarritz, and had walked together in the hot morning sunshine down through Port Luzon. There, for a time, we stood leaning on the parapet of the bridge and surveying the distant peaks, the rich blue masses of the Pyrenees. For a long time we said nothing, and then she began talking.

"Life's a rum Go, George!" she began. "Who would have thought, when I used to darn your stockings at old Wimblehurst, that this would be the end of the story? It seems far away now--that little shop, his and my first home. The glow of the bottles, the big coloured bottles! Do you remember how the light shone on the mahogany drawers? The little gilt letters! Ol Amjig, and Snap! I can remember it all--bright and shining--like a Dutch picture. Real! And yesterday. And here we are in a dream. You

a man--and me an old woman, George. And poor little Teddy, who used to rush about and talk--making that noise he did--Oh!"

She choked, and the tears flowed unrestrained. She wept, and I was glad to see her weeping.

She stood leaning over the bridge; her tear-wet handkerchief gripped in her clenched hand.

"Just an hour in the old shop again--and him talking. Before things got done. Before they got hold of him. And fooled him.

"Men oughtn't to be so tempted with business and things....

"They didn't hurt him, George?" she asked suddenly.

For a moment I was puzzled.

"Here, I mean," she said.

"No," I lied stoutly, suppressing the memory of that foolish injection needle I had caught the young doctor using.

"I wonder, George, if they'll let him talk in Heaven...."

She faced me. "Oh! George, dear, my heart aches, and I don't know what I say and do. Give me your arm to lean on--it's good to have you, dear, and lean upon you.... Yes, I know you care for me. That's why I'm talking. We've always loved one another, and never said anything about it, and you understand, and I understand. But my heart's torn to pieces by this, torn to rags, and things drop out I've kept in it. It's true he wasn't a husband much for me at the last. But he was my child, George, he was my child and all my children, my silly child, and life has knocked him about for me, and I've never had a say in the matter;

never a say; it's puffed him up and smashed him--like an old bag--under my eyes. I was clever enough to see it, and not clever enough to prevent it, and all I could do was to jeer. I've had to make what I could of it. Like most people. Like most of us.... But it wasn't fair, George. It wasn't fair. Life and Death--great serious things--why couldn't they leave him alone, and his lies and ways? If WE could see the lightness of it--

"Why couldn't they leave him alone?" she repeated in a whisper as we went towards the inn.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

LOVE AMONG THE WRECKAGE

I

When I came back I found that my share in the escape and death of my uncle had made me for a time a notorious and even popular character. For two weeks I was kept in London "facing the music," as he would have said, and making things easy for my aunt, and I still marvel at the consideration with which the world treated me. For now it was open and manifest that I and my uncle were no more than specimens of a modern species of brigand, wasting the savings of the public out of the sheer wantonness of enterprise. I think that in a way, his death produced a reaction in my favour and my flight, of which some particulars now appeared stuck in the popular imagination. It seemed a more daring and difficult feat than it was, and I couldn't very well write to the papers to sustain my private estimate. There can be little doubt that men infinitely prefer the appearance of dash and enterprise to simple honesty. No one believed I was not an arch plotter in his financing. Yet they favoured me. I even

got permission from the trustee to occupy my chalet for a fortnight while I cleared up the mass of papers, calculations, notes of work, drawings and the like, that I left in disorder when I started on that impulsive raid upon the Mordet quap heaps.

I was there alone. I got work for Cothope with the Ilchesters, for whom I now build these destroyers. They wanted him at once, and he was short of money, so I let him go and managed very philosophically by myself.

But I found it hard to fix my attention on aeronautics, I had been away from the work for a full half-year and more, a half-year crowded with intense disconcerting things. For a time my brain refused these fine problems of balance and adjustment altogether; it wanted to think about my uncle's dropping jaw, my aunt's reluctant tears, about dead negroes and pestilential swamps, about the evident realities of cruelty and pain, about life and death. Moreover, it was weary with the frightful pile of figures and documents at the Hardingham, a task to which this raid to Lady Grove was simply an interlude. And there was Beatrice.

On the second morning, as I sat out upon the veranda recalling memories and striving in vain to attend to some too succinct pencil notes of Cothope's, Beatrice rode up suddenly from behind the pavilion, and pulled rein and became still; Beatrice, a little flushed from riding and sitting on a big black horse.

I did not instantly rise. I stared at her. "YOU!" I said.

She looked at me steadily. "Me," she said

I did not trouble about any civilities. I stood up and asked point blank a question that came into my head.

"Whose horse is that?" I said.

She looked me in the eyes. "Carnaby's," she answered.

"How did you get here--this way?"

"The wall's down."

"Down? Already?"

"A great bit of it between the plantations."

"And you rode through, and got here by chance?"

"I saw you yesterday. And I rode over to see you." I had now come close to her, and stood looking up into her face.

"I'm a mere vestige," I said.

She made no answer, but remained regarding me steadfastly with a curious air of proprietorship.

"You know I'm the living survivor now of the great smash. I'm rolling and dropping down through all the scaffolding of the social system.... It's all a chance whether I roll out free at the bottom, or go down a crack into the darkness out of sight for a year or two."

"The sun," she remarked irrelevantly, "has burnt you.... I'm getting down."

She swung herself down into my arms, and stood beside me face to face.

"Where's Cothope?" she asked.

"Gone."

Her eyes flitted to the pavilion and back to me. We stood close together, extraordinarily intimate, and extraordinarily apart.

"I've never seen this cottage of yours," she said, "and I want to."

She flung the bridle of her horse round the veranda post, and I helped her tie it.

"Did you get what you went for to Africa?" she asked.

"No," I said, "I lost my ship."

"And that lost everything?"

"Everything."

She walked before me into the living-room of the chalet, and I saw that she gripped her riding-whip very tightly in her hand. She looked about her for a moment,--and then at me.

"It's comfortable," she remarked.

Our eyes met in a conversation very different from the one upon our lips. A sombre glow surrounded us, drew us together; an unwonted shyness kept us apart. She roused herself, after an instant's pause, to examine my furniture.

"You have chintz curtains. I thought men were too feckless to have curtains without a woman. But, of course, your aunt did that! And a couch and a brass fender, and--is that a pianola? That is your desk. I thought men's desks were always untidy, and

covered with dust and tobacco ash."

She flitted to my colour prints and my little case of books. Then she went to the pianola. I watched her intently.

"Does this thing play?" she said.

"What?" I asked.

"Does this thing play?"

I roused myself from my preoccupation.

"Like a musical gorilla with fingers all of one length. And a sort of soul.... It's all the world of music to me."

"What do you play?"

"Beethoven, when I want to clear up my head while I'm working. He is--how one would always like to work. Sometimes Chopin and those others, but Beethoven. Beethoven mainly. Yes."

Silence again between us. She spoke with an effort.

"Play me something." She turned from me and explored the rack of music rolls, became interested and took a piece, the first part of the Kreutzer Sonata, hesitated. "No," she said, "that!"

She gave me Brahms' Second Concerto, Op. 58, and curled up on the sofa watching me as I set myself slowly to play....

"I say," he said when I had done, "that's fine. I didn't know those things could play like that. I'm all astir..."

She came and stood over me, looking at me. "I'm going to have a

concert," she said abruptly, and laughed uneasily and hovered at the pigeon-holes. "Now--now what shall I have?" She chose more of Brahms. Then we came to the Kreutzer Sonata. It is queer how Tolstoy has loaded that with suggestions, debauched it, made it a scandalous and intimate symbol. When I had played the first part of that, she came up to the pianola and hesitated over me. I sat stiffly--waiting.

Suddenly she seized my downcast head and kissed my hair. She caught at my face between her hands and kissed my lips. I put my arms about her and we kissed together. I sprang to my feet and clasped her.

"Beatrice!" I said. "Beatrice!"

"My dear," she whispered, nearly breathless, with her arms about me. "Oh! my dear!"

II

Love, like everything else in this immense process of social disorganisation in which we live, is a thing adrift, a fruitless thing broken away from its connexions. I tell of this love affair here because of its irrelevance, because it is so remarkable that it should mean nothing, and be nothing except itself. It glows in my memory like some bright casual flower starting up amidst the debris of a catastrophe. For nearly a fortnight we two met and made love together. Once more this mighty passion, that our aimless civilisation has fettered and maimed and sterilised and debased, gripped me and filled me with passionate delights and solemn joys--that were all, you know, futile and purposeless. Once more I had the persuasion "This matters. Nothing else matters so much as this." We were both infinitely grave in such happiness as we had. I do not remember any laughter at all between us.

Twelve days it lasted from that encounter in my chalet until our parting.

Except at the end, they were days of supreme summer, and there was a waxing moon. We met recklessly day by day. We were so intent upon each other at first so intent upon expressing ourselves to each other, and getting at each other, that we troubled very little about the appearance of our relationship. We met almost openly.... We talked of ten thousand things, and of ourselves. We loved. We made love. There is no prose of mine that can tell of hours transfigured. The facts are nothing. Everything we touched, the meanest things, became glorious. How can I render bare tenderness and delight and mutual possession? I sit here at my desk thinking of untellable things.

I have come to know so much of love that I know now what love might be. We loved, scarred and stained; we parted--basely and inevitably, but at least I met love.

I remember as we sat in a Canadian canoe, in a reedy, bush-masked shallow we had discovered operating out of that pine-shaded Woking canal, how she fell talking of the things that happened to her before she met me again....

She told me things, and they so joined and welded together other things that lay disconnected in my memory, that it seemed to me I had always known what she told me. And yet indeed I had not known nor suspected it, save perhaps for a luminous, transitory suspicion ever and again.

She made me see how life had shaped her. She told me of her girlhood after I had known her. "We were poor and pretending and managing. We hacked about on visits and things. I ought to have married. The chances I had weren't particularly good chances. I

didn't like 'em."

She paused. "Then Carnaby came along."

I remained quite still. She spoke now with downcast eyes, and one finger just touching the water.

"One gets bored, bored beyond redemption. One does about to these huge expensive houses I suppose--the scale's immense. One makes one's self useful to the other women, and agreeable to the men. One has to dress.... One has food and exercise and leisure, It's the leisure, and the space, and the blank opportunity it seems a sin not to fill. Carnaby isn't like the other men. He's bigger.... They go about making love. Everybody's making love. I did.... And I don't do things by halves."

She stopped.

"You knew?"--she asked, looking up, quite steadily. I nodded.

"Since when?"

"Those last days.... It hasn't seemed to matter really. I was a little surprised"

She looked at me quietly. "Cothope knew," she said. "By instinct. I could feel it."

"I suppose," I began, "once, this would have mattered immensely. Now--"

"Nothing matters," she said, completing me. "I felt I had to tell you. I wanted you to understand why I didn't marry you--with both hands. I have loved you"--she paused--"have loved you ever since the day I kissed you in the bracken. Only--I

forgot."

And suddenly she dropped her face upon her hands, and sobbed passionately--

"I forgot--I forgot," she cried, and became still....

I dabbled my paddle in the water. "Look here!" I said; "forget again! Here am I--a ruined man. Marry me."

She shook her head without looking up.

We were still for a long time. "Marry me!" I whispered.

She looked up, twined back a whisp of hair, and answered dispassionately--

"I wish I could. Anyhow, we have had this time. It has been a fine time--has it been--for you also? I haven't nudged you all I had to give. It's a poor gift--except for what it means and might have been. But we are near the end of it now."

"Why?" I asked. "Marry me! Why should we two--"

"You think," she said, "I could take courage and come to you and be your everyday wife--while you work and are poor?"

"Why not?" said I.

She looked at me gravely, with extended finger. "Do you really think that--of me? Haven't you seen me--all?"

I hesitated.

"Never once have I really meant marrying you," she insisted.

"Never once. I fell in love with you from the first. But when you seemed a successful man, I told myself I wouldn't. I was love-sick for you, and you were so stupid, I came near it then. But I knew I wasn't good enough. What could I have been to you? A woman with bad habits and bad associations, a woman smirched. And what could I do for you or be to you? If I wasn't good enough to be a rich man's wife, I'm certainly not good enough to be a poor one's. Forgive me for talking sense to you now, but I wanted to tell you this somehow."

She stopped at my gesture. I sat up, and the canoe rocked with my movement.

"I don't care," I said. "I want to marry you and make you my wife!"

"No," she said, "don't spoil things. That is impossible!"

"Impossible!"

"Think! I can't do my own hair! Do you mean you will get me a maid?"

"Good God!" I cried, disconcerted beyond measure, "won't you learn to do your own hair for me? Do you mean to say you can love a man--"

She flung out her hands at me. "Don't spoil it," she cried. "I have given you all I have, I have given you all I can. If I could do it, if I was good enough to do it, I would. But I am a woman spoilt and ruined, dear, and you are a ruined man. When we are making love we're lovers--but think of the gulf between us in habits and ways of thought, in will and training, when we are not making love. Think of it--and don't think of it! Don't think of it yet. We have snatched some hours. We still may have some

hours!"

She suddenly knelt forward toward me, with a glowing darkness in her eyes. "Who cares if it upsets?" she cried. "If you say another word I will kiss you. And go to the bottom clutching you.

I'm not afraid of that. I'm not a bit afraid of that. I'll die with you. Choose a death, and I'll die with you--readily. Do listen to me! I love you. I shall always love you. It's because I love you that I won't go down to become a dirty familiar thing with you amidst the grime. I've given all I can. I've had all I can.... Tell me," and she crept nearer, "have I been like the dusk to you, like the warm dusk? Is there magic still? Listen to the ripple of water from your paddle. Look at the warm evening light in the sky. Who cares if the canoe upsets? Come nearer to me. Oh, my love! come near! So."

She drew me to her and our lips met.

III

I asked her to marry me once again.

It was our last morning together, and we had met very early, about sunrise, knowing that we were to part. No sun shone that day. The sky was overcast, the morning chilly and lit by a clear, cold, spiritless light. A heavy dampness in the air verged close on rain. When I think of that morning, it has always the quality of greying ashes wet with rain.

Beatrice too had changed. The spring had gone out of her movement; it came to me, for the first time, that some day she might grow old. She had become one flesh with the rest of common humanity; the softness had gone from her voice and manner, the dusky magic of her presence had gone. I saw these things with

perfect clearness, and they made me sorry for them and for her. But they altered my love not a whit, abated it nothing. And when we had talked awkwardly for half a dozen sentences, I came dully to my point.

"And now," I cried, "will you marry me?"

"No," she said, "I shall keep to my life here."

I asked her to marry me in a year's time. She shook her head.

"This world is a soft world," I said, "in spite of my present disasters. I know now how to do things. If I had you to work for--in a year I could be a prosperous man"

"No," she said, "I will put it brutally, I shall go back to Carnaby."

"But--!" I did not feel angry. I had no sort of jealousy, no wounded pride, no sense of injury. I had only a sense of grey desolation, of hopeless cross-purposes.

"Look here," she said. "I have been awake all night and every night. I have been thinking of this--every moment when we have not been together. I'm not answering you on an impulse. I love you. I love you. I'll say that over ten thousand times. But here we are--"

"The rest of life together," I said.

"It wouldn't be together. Now we are together. Now we have been together. We are full of memories I do not feel I can ever forget a single one."

"Nor I."

"And I want to close it and leave it at that. You see, dear, what else is there to do?"

She turned her white face to me. "All I know of love, all I have ever dreamt or learnt of love I have packed into these days for you. You think we might live together and go on loving. No! For you I will have no vain repetitions. You have had the best and all of me. Would you have us, after this, meet again in London or Paris or somewhere, scuffle to some wretched dressmaker's, meet in a cabinet particulier?"

"No," I said. "I want you to marry me. I want you to play the game of life with me as an honest woman should. Come and live with me. Be my wife and squaw. Bear me children."

I looked at her white, drawn face, and it seemed to me I might carry her yet. I spluttered for words.

"My God! Beatrice!" I cried; "but this is cowardice and folly! Are you afraid of life? You of all people! What does it matter what has been or what we were? Here we are with the world before us! Start clean and new with me. We'll fight it through! I'm not such a simple lover that I'll not tell you plainly when you go wrong, and fight our difference out with you. It's the one thing I want, the one thing I need--to have you, and more of you and more! This love-making--it's love-making. It's just a part of us, an incident--"

She shook her head and stopped me abruptly. "It's all," she said.

"All!" I protested.

"I'm wiser than you. Wiser beyond words." She turned her eyes

to me and they shone with tears.

"I wouldn't have you say anything--but what you're saying," she said. "But it's nonsense, dear. You know it's nonsense as you say it."

I tried to keep up the heroic note, but she would not listen to it.

"It's no good," she cried almost petulantly. "This little world has made us what we are. Don't you see--don't you see what I am? I can make love. I can make love and be loved, prettily. Dear, don't blame me. I have given you all I have. If I had anything more--. I have gone through it all over and over again--thought it out. This morning my head aches, my eyes ache.

The light has gone out of me and I am a sick and tired woman. But I'm talking wisdom--bitter wisdom. I couldn't be any sort of helper to you, any sort of wife, any sort of mother. I'm spoilt.

I'm spoilt by this rich idle way of living, until every habit is wrong, every taste wrong. The world is wrong. People can be ruined by wealth just as much as by poverty. Do you think I wouldn't face life with you if I could, if I wasn't absolutely certain I should be down and dragging in the first half-mile of the journey? Here I am--damned! Damned! But I won't damn you. You know what I am! You know. You are too clear and simple not to know the truth. You try to romance and hector, but you know the truth. I am a little cad--sold and done. I'm--. My dear, you think I've been misbehaving, but all these days I've been on my best behaviour.... You don't understand, because you're a man.

A woman, when she's spoilt, is SPOILT. She's dirty in grain. She's done."

She walked on weeping.

"You're a fool to want me," she said. "You're a fool to want me--for my sake just as much as yours. We've done all we can. It's just romancing--"

She dashed the tears from her eyes and turned upon me. "Don't you understand?" she challenged. "Don't you know?"

We faced one another in silence for a moment.

"Yes," I said, "I know."

For a long time we spoke never a word, but walked on together, slowly and sorrowfully, reluctant to turn about towards our parting. When at last we did, she broke silence again.

"I've had you," she said.

"Heaven and hell," I said, "can't alter that."

"I've wanted--" she went on. "I've talked to you in the nights and made up speeches. Now when I want to make them I'm tongue-tied. But to me it's just as if the moments we have had lasted for ever. Moods and states come and go. To-day my light is out..."

To this day I cannot determine whether she said or whether I imagined she said "chloral." Perhaps a half-conscious diagnosis flashed it on my brain. Perhaps I am the victim of some perverse imaginative freak of memory, some hinted possibility that scratched and seared. There the word stands in my memory, as if it were written in fire.

We came to the door of Lady Osprey's garden at last, and it was

beginning to drizzle.

She held out her hands and I took them.

"Yours," she said, in a weary unimpassioned voice; "all that I had--such as it was. Will you forget?"

"Never," I answered.

"Never a touch or a word of it?"

"No."

"You will," she said.

We looked at one another in silence, and her face full of fatigue and misery.

What could I do? What was there to do?

"I wish--" I said, and stopped.

"Good-bye."

IV

That should have been the last I saw of her, but, indeed, I was destined to see her once again. Two days after I was at Lady Grove, I forget altogether upon what errand, and as I walked back to the station believing her to be gone away she came upon me, and she was riding with Carnaby, just as I had seen them first. The encounter jumped upon us unprepared. She rode by, her eyes dark in her white face, and scarcely noticed me. She winced and grew stiff at the sight of me and bowed her head. But Carnaby, because he thought I was a broken and discomfited man, saluted me

with an easy friendliness, and shouted some genial commonplace to me.

They passed out of sight and left me by the roadside....

And then, indeed, I tasted the ultimate bitterness of life. For the first time I felt utter futility, and was wrung by emotion that begot no action, by shame and pity beyond words. I had parted from her dully and I had seen my uncle break and die with dry eyes and a steady mind, but this chance sight of my lost Beatrice brought me to tears. My face was wrung, and tears came pouring down my cheeks. All the magic she had for me had changed to wild sorrow. "Oh God!" I cried, "this is too much," and turned my face after her and made appealing gestures to the beech trees and cursed at fate. I wanted to do preposterous things, to pursue her, to save her, to turn life back so that she might begin again. I wonder what would have happened had I overtaken them in pursuit, breathless with running, uttering incoherent words, weeping, expostulatory. I came near to doing that.

There was nothing in earth or heaven to respect my curses or weeping. In the midst of it a man who had been trimming the opposite hedge appeared and stared at me.

Abruptly, ridiculously, I dissembled before him and went on and caught my train....

But the pain I felt then I have felt a hundred times; it is with me as I write. It haunts this book, I see, that is what haunts this book, from end to end.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

NIGHT AND THE OPEN SEA

I

I have tried throughout all this story to tell things as they happened to me. In the beginning--the sheets are still here on the table, grimy and dogs-eared and old-looking--I said I wanted to tell MYSELF and the world in which I found myself, and I have done my best. But whether I have succeeded I cannot imagine. All this writing is grey now and dead and trite and unmeaning to me; some of it I know by heart. I am the last person to judge it.

As I turn over the big pile of manuscript before me certain things become clearer to me, and particularly the immense inconsequences of my experiences. It is, I see now that I have it all before me, a story of activity and urgency and sterility. I have called it Tono-Bungay, but I had far better have called it Waste. I have told of childless Marion, of my childless aunt, of Beatrice wasted and wasteful and futile. What hope is there for a people whose women become fruitless? I think of all the energy I have given to vain things. I think of my industrious scheming with my uncle, of Crest Hill's vast cessation, of his resonant strenuous career. Ten thousand men have envied him and wished to live as he lived. It is all one spectacle of forces running to waste, of people who use and do not replace, the story of a country hectic with a wasting aimless fever of trade and money-making and pleasure-seeking. And now I build destroyers!

Other people may see this country in other terms; this is how I have seen it. In some early chapter in this heap I compared all our present colour and abundance to October foliage before the frosts nip down the leaves. That I still feel was a good image. Perhaps I see wrongly. It may be I see decay all about me because I am, in a sense, decay. To others it may be a scene of achievement and construction radiant with hope. I, too, have a sort of hope, but it is a remote hope, a hope that finds no

promise in this Empire or in any of the great things of our time.

How they will look in history I do not know, how time and chance will prove them I cannot guess; that is how they have mirrored themselves on one contemporary mind.

II

Concurrently with writing the last chapter of this book I have been much engaged by the affairs of a new destroyer we have completed. It has been an oddly complementary alternation of occupations. Three weeks or so ago this novel had to be put aside in order that I might give all my time day and night to the fitting and finishing of the engines. Last Thursday X 2, for so we call her, was done and I took her down the Thames and went out nearly to Texel for a trial of speed.

It is curious how at times one's impressions will all fuse and run together into a sort of unity and become continuous with things that have hitherto been utterly alien and remote. That rush down the river became mysteriously connected with this book.

As I passed down the Thames I seemed in a new and parallel manner to be passing all England in review. I saw it then as I had wanted my readers to see it. The thought came to me slowly as I picked my way through the Pool; it stood out clear as I went dreaming into the night out upon the wide North Sea.

It wasn't so much thinking at the time as a sort of photographic thought that came and grew clear. X2 went ripping through the dirty oily water as scissors rip through canvas, and the front of my mind was all intent with getting her through under the bridges and in and out among the steam-boats and barges and rowing-boats and piers. I lived with my hands and eyes hard ahead. I thought nothing then of any appearances but obstacles, but for all that

the back of my mind took the photographic memory of it complete and vivid....

"This," it came to me, "is England. That is what I wanted to give in my book. This!"

We started in the late afternoon. We throbbed out of our yard above Hammersmith Bridge, fussed about for a moment, and headed down stream. We came at an easy rush down Craven Reach, past Fulham and Hurlingham, past the long stretches of muddy meadow And muddy suburb to Battersea and Chelsea, round the cape of tidy frontage that is Grosvenor Road and under Vauxhall Bridge, and Westminster opened before us. We cleared a string of coal barges and there on the left in the October sunshine stood the Parliament houses, and the flag was flying and Parliament was sitting.

I saw it at the time unseeingly; afterwards it came into my mind as the centre of the whole broad panoramic effect of that afternoon. The stiff square lace of Victorian Gothic with its Dutch clock of a tower came upon me suddenly and stared and whirled past in a slow half pirouette and became still, I know, behind me as if watching me recede. "Aren't you going to respect me, then?" it seemed to say.

Not I! There in that great pile of Victorian architecture the landlords and the lawyers, the bishops, the railway men and the magnates of commerce go to and fro--in their incurable tradition of commercialised Bladesoverly, of meretricious gentry and nobility sold for riches. I have been near enough to know. The Irish and the Labour-men run about among their feet, making a fuss, effecting little, they've got no better plans that I can see. Respect it indeed! There's a certain paraphernalia of dignity, but whom does it deceive? The King comes down in a gilt coach to open the show and wears long robes and a crown; and

there's a display of stout and slender legs in white stockings and stout and slender legs in black stockings and artful old gentlemen in ermine. I was reminded of one congested afternoon I had spent with my aunt amidst a cluster of agitated women's hats in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords and how I saw the King going to open Parliament, and the Duke of Devonshire looking like a gorgeous pedlar and terribly bored with the cap of maintenance on a tray before him hung by slings from his shoulder. A wonderful spectacle!

It is quaint, no doubt, this England--it is even dignified in places--and full of mellow associations. That does not alter the quality of the realities these robes conceal. The realities are greedy trade, base profit-- seeking, bold advertisement; and kingship and chivalry, spite of this wearing of treasured robes, are as dead among it all as that crusader my uncle championed against the nettles outside the Duffield church.

I have thought much of that bright afternoon's panorama.

To run down the Thames so is to run one's hand over the pages in the book of England from end to end. One begins in Craven Reach and it is as if one were in the heart of old England. Behind us are Kew and Hampton Court with their memories of Kings and Cardinals, and one runs at first between Fulham's episcopal garden parties and Hurlingham's playground for the sporting instinct of our race. The whole effect is English. There is space, there are old trees and all the best qualities of the home-land in that upper reach. Putney, too, looks Anglican on a dwindling scale. And then for a stretch the newer developments slop over, one misses Bladesover and there come first squalid stretches of mean homes right and left and then the dingy industrialism of the south side, and on the north bank the polite long front of nice houses, artistic, literary, administrative people's residences, that stretches from Cheyne Walk nearly to

Westminster and hides a wilderness of slums. What a long slow crescendo that is, mile after mile, with the houses crowding closer, the multiplying succession of church towers, the architectural moments, the successive bridges, until you come out into the second movement of the piece with Lambeth's old palace under your quarter and the houses of Parliament on your bow! Westminster Bridge is ahead of you then, and through it you flash, and in a moment the round-faced clock tower cranes up to peer at you again and New Scotland Yard squares at you, a fat beef-eater of a policeman disguised miraculously as a Bastille.

For a stretch you have the essential London; you have Charing Cross railway station, heart of the world, and the Embankment on the north side with its new hotels overshadowing its Georgian and Victorian architecture, and mud and great warehouses and factories, chimneys, shot towers, advertisements on the south. The northward skyline grows more intricate and pleasing, and more and more does one thank God for Wren. Somerset House is as picturesque as the civil war, one is reminded again of the original England, one feels in the fretted sky the quality of Restoration Lace.

And then comes Astor's strong box and the lawyers' Inns.

(I had a passing memory of myself there, how once I had trudged along the Embankment westward, weighing my uncle's offer of three hundred pounds a year....)

Through that central essential London reach I drove, and X2 bored her nose under the foam regardless of it all like a black hound going through reeds--on what trail even I who made her cannot tell.

And in this reach, too, one first meets the seagulls and is reminded of the sea. Blackfriars one takes--just under these two

bridges and just between them is the finest bridge moment in the world--and behold, soaring up, hanging in the sky over a rude tumult of warehouses, over a jostling competition of traders, irrelevantly beautiful and altogether remote, Saint Paul's! "Of course!" one says, "Saint Paul's!" It is the very figure of whatever fineness the old Anglican culture achieved, detached, a more dignified and chastened Saint Peter's, colder, greyer, but still ornate; it has never been over thrown, never disavowed, only the tall warehouses and all the roar of traffic have forgotten it, every one has forgotten it; the steamships, the barges, go heedlessly by regardless of it, intricacies of telephone wires and poles cut blackly into its thin mysteries, and presently, when in a moment the traffic permits you and you look round for it, it has dissolved like a cloud into the grey blues of the London sky.

And then the traditional and ostensible England falls from you altogether. The third movement begins, the last great movement in the London symphony, in which the trim scheme of the old order is altogether dwarfed and swallowed up. Comes London Bridge, and the great warehouses tower up about you, waving stupendous cranes, the gulls circle and scream in your ears, large ships lie among their lighters, and one is in the port of the world. Again and again in this book I have written of England as a feudal scheme overtaken by fatty degeneration and stupendous accidents of hypertrophy.

For the last time I must strike that note as the memory of the dear neat little sunlit ancient Tower of London lying away in a gap among the warehouses comes back to me, that little accumulation of buildings so provincially pleasant and dignified, overshadowed by the vulgarest, most typical exploit of modern England, the sham Gothic casings to the ironwork of the Tower Bridge. That Tower Bridge is the very balance and confirmation of Westminster's dull pinnacles and tower. That

sham Gothic bridge; in the very gates of our mother of change,
the Sea !

But after that one is in a world of accident and nature. For the third part of the panorama of London is beyond all law, order, and precedence; it is the seaport and the sea. One goes down the widening reaches through a monstrous variety of shipping, great steamers, great sailing-ships, trailing the flags of all the world, a monstrous confusion of lighters, witches' conferences of brown-sailed barges, wallowing tugs, a tumultuous crowding and jostling of cranes and spars, and wharves and stores, and assertive inscriptions. Huge vistas of dock open right and left of one, and here and there beyond and amidst it all are church towers, little patches of indescribably old-fashioned and worn-out houses, riverside pubs and the like, vestiges of townships that were long since torn to fragments and submerged in these new growths. And amidst it all no plan appears, no intention, no comprehensive desire. That is the very key of it all. Each day one feels that the pressure of commerce and traffic grew, grew insensibly monstrous, and first this man made a wharf and that erected a crane, and then this company set to work and then that, and so they jostled together to make this unassimilable enormity of traffic. Through it we dodged and drove eager for the high seas.

I remember how I laughed aloud at the glimpse of the name of a London County Council steamboat that ran across me. Caxton it was called, and another was Pepys, and another was Shakespeare. They seemed so wildly out of place, splashing about in that confusion. One wanted to take them out and wipe them and put them back in some English gentleman's library. Everything was alive about them, flashing, splashing, and passing, ships moving, tugs panting, hawsers taut, barges going down with men toiling at the sweeps, the water all a-swirl with the wash of shipping, scaling into millions of little wavelets, curling and

frothing under the whip of the unceasing wind. Past it all we drove. And at Greenwich to the south, you know, there stands a fine stone frontage where all the victories are recorded in a Painted Hall, and beside it is the "Ship" where once upon a time those gentlemen of Westminster used to have an annual dinner--before the port of London got too much for them altogether. The old facade of the Hospital was just warming to the sunset as we went by, and after that, right and left, the river opened, the sense of the sea increased and prevailed, reach after reach from Northfleet to the Nore.

And out you come at last with the sun behind you into the eastern sea. You speed up and tear the oily water louder and faster, siroo, siroo-swish-siroo, and the hills of Kent--over which I once fled from the Christian teachings of Nicodemus Frapp--fall away on the right hand and Essex on the left. They fall away and vanish into blue haze, and the tall slow ships behind the tugs, scarce moving ships and wallowing sturdy tugs, are all wrought of wet gold as one goes frothing by. They stand out, bound on strange missions of life and death, to the killing of men in unfamiliar lands. And now behind us is blue mystery and the phantom flash of unseen lights, and presently even these are gone, and I and my destroyer tear out to the unknown across a great grey space. We tear into the great spaces of the future and the turbines fall to talking in unfamiliar tongues. Out to the open we go, to windy freedom and trackless ways. Light after light goes down. England and the Kingdom, Britain and the Empire, the old prides and the old devotions, glide abeam, astern, sink down upon the horizon, pass--pass. The river passes--London passes, England passes...

III

This is the note I have tried to emphasise, the note that sounds clear in my mind when I think of anything beyond the purely

personal aspects of my story.

It is a note of crumbling and confusion, of change and seemingly aimless swelling, of a bubbling up and medley of futile loves and sorrows. But through the confusion sounds another note. Through the confusion something drives, something that is at once human achievement and the most inhuman of all existing things. Something comes out of it.... How can I express the values of a thing at once so essential and so immaterial. It is something that calls upon such men as I with an irresistible appeal.

I have figured it in my last section by the symbol of my destroyer, stark and swift, irrelevant to most human interests. Sometimes I call this reality Science, sometimes I call it Truth. But it is something we draw by pain and effort out of the heart of life, that we disentangle and make clear. Other men serve it, I know, in art, in literature, in social invention, and see it in a thousand different figures, under a hundred names. I see it always as austerity, as beauty. This thing we make clear is the heart of life. It is the one enduring thing. Men and nations, epochs and civilisation pass each making its contribution I do not know what it is, this something, except that it is supreme. It is, a something, a quality, an element, one may find now in colours, now in norms, now in sounds, now in thoughts. It emerges from life with each year one lives and feels, and generation by generation and age by age, but the how and why of it are all beyond the compass of my mind....

Yet the full sense of it was with me all that night as I drove, lonely above the rush and murmur of my engines, out upon the weltering circle of the sea.

Far out to the northeast there came the flicker of a squadron of warships waving white swords of light about the sky. I kept them hull-down, and presently they were mere summer lightning over

the watery edge of the globe.... I fell into thought that was nearly formless, into doubts and dreams that have no words, and it seemed good to me to drive ahead and on and on through the windy starlight, over the long black waves.

IV

It was morning and day before I returned with the four sick and starving journalists who had got permission to come with me, up the shining river, and past the old grey Tower....

I recall the back views of those journalists very distinctly, going with a certain damp weariness of movement, along a side street away from the river. They were good men and bore me no malice, and they served me up to the public in turgid degenerate Kiplingese, as a modest button on the complacent stomach of the Empire. Though as a matter of fact, X2 isn't intended for the empire, or indeed for the hands of any European power. We offered it to our own people first, but they would have nothing to do with me, and I have long since ceased to trouble much about such questions. I have come to see myself from the outside, my country from the outside--without illusions. We make and pass.

We are all things that make and pass striving upon a hidden mission, out to the open sea.

THE WAR IN THE AIR

by
H. G. WELLS
1908

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THE EPILOGUE

PREFACE TO REPRINT EDITION

The reader should grasp clearly the date at which this book was written. It was done in 1907: it appeared in various magazines as a serial in 1908 and it was published in the Fall of that year. At that time the aeroplane was, for most people, merely a rumour and the "Sausage" held the air. The contemporary reader has all the advantage of ten years' experience since this story was imagined. He can correct his author at a dozen points and estimate the value of these warnings by the standard of a decade of realities. The book is weak on anti-aircraft guns, for example, and still more negligent of submarines. Much, no doubt, will strike the reader as quaint and limited but upon much the writer may not unreasonably plume himself. The interpretation of the German spirit must have read as a caricature in 1908. Was it a caricature? Prince Karl seemed a fantasy then. Reality has since copied Prince Carl with an astonishing faithfulness. Is it too much to hope that some democratic "Bert" may not ultimately get even with his Highness? Our author tells us in this book, as he has told us in others, more especially in *The World Set Free*, and as he has been telling us this year in his *War and the Future*, that if mankind goes on with war, the smash-up of civilization is inevitable. It is chaos or the United States of the World for mankind. There is no other choice. Ten years have but added an enormous conviction to the message of this book. It remains essentially right, a pamphlet story--in support of the League to Enforce Peace.

K.

THE WAR IN THE AIR

CHAPTER I OF PROGRESS AND THE SMALLWAYS FAMILY

1

"This here Progress," said Mr. Tom Smallways, "it keeps on.

"You'd hardly think it could keep on," said Mr. Tom Smallways.

It was along before the War in the Air began that Mr. Smallways made this remark. He was sitting on the fence at the end of his garden and surveying the great Bun Hill gas-works with an eye that neither praised nor blamed. Above the clustering gasometers three unfamiliar shapes appeared, thin, wallowing bladders that flapped and rolled about, and grew bigger and bigger and rounder and rounder--balloons in course of inflation for the South of England Aero Club's Saturday-afternoon ascent.

"They goes up every Saturday," said his neighbour, Mr. Stringer, the milkman. "It's only yestiday, so to speak, when all London turned out to see a balloon go over, and now every little place in the country has its weekly-outings--uppings, rather. It's been the salvation of them gas companies."

"Larst Satiday I got three barrer-loads of gravel off my petaters," said Mr. Tom Smallways. "Three barrer-loads! What they dropped as ballase. Some of the plants was broke, and some was buried."

"Ladies, they say, goes up!"

"I suppose we got to call 'em ladies," said Mr Tom Smallways.

"Still, it ain't hardly my idea of a lady--flying about in the air, and throwing gravel at people. It ain't what I been accustomed to consider ladylike, whether or no."

Mr. Stringer nodded his head approvingly, and for a time they continued to regard the swelling bulks with expressions that had changed from indifference to disapproval.

Mr. Tom Smallways was a green-grocer by trade and a gardener by disposition; his little wife Jessica saw to the shop, and Heaven had planned him for a peaceful world. Unfortunately Heaven had not planned a peaceful world for him. He lived in a world of obstinate and incessant change, and in parts where its operations were unsparingly conspicuous. Vicissitude was in the very soil he tilled; even his garden was upon a yearly tenancy, and overshadowed by a huge board that proclaimed it not so much a garden as an eligible building site. He was horticulture under notice to quit, the last patch of country in a district flooded by new and prbaa things. He did his best to console himself, to imagine matters near the turn of the tide.

"You'd hardly think it could keep on," he said.

Mr. Smallways' aged father, could remember Bun Hill as an idyllic Kentish village. He had driven Sir Peter Bone until he was fifty and then he took to drink a little, and driving the station bus, which lasted him until he was seventy-eight. Then he retired. He sat by the fireside, a shrivelled, very, very old coachman, full charged with reminiscences, and ready for any careless stranger. He could tell you of the vanished estate of Sir Peter Bone, long since cut up for building, and how that magnate ruled the country-side when it was country-side, of shooting and

hunting, and of caches along the high road, of how "where the gas-works is" was a cricket-field, and of the coming of the Crystal Palace. The Crystal Palace was six miles away from Bun Hill, a great facade that glittered in the morning, and was a clear blue outline against the sky in the afternoon, and of a night, a source of gratuitous fireworks for all the population of Bun Hill. And then had come the railway, and then villas and villas, and then the gas-works and the water-works, and a great, ugly sea of workmen's houses, and then drainage, and the water vanished out of the Otterbourne and left it a dreadful ditch, and then a second railway station, Bun Hill South, and more houses and more, more shops, more competition, plate-glass shops, a school-board, rates, omnibuses, tramcars--going right away into London itself--bicycles, motor-cars and then more motor-cars, a Carnegie library.

"You'd hardly think it could keep on," said Mr. Tom Smallways, growing up among these marvels.

But it kept on. Even from the first the green-grocer's shop which he had set up in one of the smallest of the old surviving village houses in the tail of the High Street had a submerged air, an air of hiding from something that was looking for it. When they had made up the pavement of the High Street, they levelled that up so that one had to go down three steps into the shop. Tom did his best to sell only his own excellent but limited range of produce; but Progress came shoving things into his window, French artichokes and aubergines, foreign apples--apples from the State of New York, apples from California, apples from Canada, apples from New Zealand, "pretty lookin' fruit, but not what I should call English apples," said Tom--bananas, unfamiliar nuts, grape fruits, mangoes.

The motor-cars that went by northward and southward grew more and more powerful and efficient, whizzed faster and smelt worse,

there appeared great clangorous petrol trolleys delivering coal and parcels in the place of vanishing horse-vans, motor-omnibuses ousted the horse-omnibuses, even the Kentish strawberries going Londonward in the night took to machinery and clattered instead of creaking, and became affected in flavour by progress and petrol.

And then young Bert Smallways got a motor bicycle....

2

Bert, it is necessary to explain, was a progressive Smallways.

Nothing speaks more eloquently of the pitiless insistence of progress and expansion in our time than that it should get into the Smallways blood. But there was something advanced and enterprising about young Smallways before he was out of short frocks. He was lost for a whole day before he was five, and nearly drowned in the reservoir of the new water-works before he was seven. He had a real pistol taken away from him by a real policeman when he was ten. And he learnt to smoke, not with pipes and brown paper and cane as Tom had done, but with a penny packet of Boys of England American cigarettes. His language shocked his father before he was twelve, and by that age, what with touting for parcels at the station and selling the Bun Hill Weekly Express, he was making three shillings a week, or more, and spending it on Chips, Comic Cuts, Ally Sloper's Half-holiday, cigarettes, and all the concomitants of a life of pleasure and enlightenment. All of this without hindrance to his literary studies, which carried him up to the seventh standard at an exceptionally early age. I mention these things so that you may have no doubt at all concerning the sort of stuff Bert had in him.

He was six years younger than Tom, and for a time there was an

attempt to utilise him in the green-grocer's shop when Tom at twenty-one married Jessica--who was thirty, and had saved a little money in service. But it was not Bert's forte to be utilised. He hated digging, and when he was given a basket of stuff to deliver, a nomadic instinct arose irresistibly, it became his pack and he did not seem to care how heavy it was nor where he took it, so long as he did not take it to its destination. Glamour filled the world, and he strayed after it, basket and all. So Tom took his goods out himself, and sought employers for Bert who did not know of this strain of poetry in his nature. And Bert touched the fringe of a number of trades in succession--draper's porter, chemist's boy, doctor's page, junior assistant gas-fitter, envelope addresser, milk-cart assistant, golf caddie, and at last helper in a bicycle shop. Here, apparently, he found the progressive quality his nature had craved. His employer was a pirate-souled young man named Grubb, with a black-smear'd face by day, and a music-hall side in the evening, who dreamt of a patent lever chain; and it seemed to Bert that he was the perfect model of a gentleman of spirit. He hired out quite the dirtiest and unsafest bicycles in the whole south of England, and conducted the subsequent discussions with astonishing verve. Bert and he settled down very well together. Bert lived in, became almost a trick rider--he could ride bicycles for miles that would have come to pieces instantly under you or me--took to washing his face after business, and spent his surplus money upon remarkable ties and collars, cigarettes, and shorthand classes at the Bun Hill Institute.

He would go round to Tom at times, and look and talk so brilliantly that Tom and Jessie, who both had a natural tendency to be respectful to anybody or anything, looked up to him immensely.

"He's a go-ahead chap, is Bert," said Tom. "He knows a thing or two."

"Let's hope he don't know too much," said Jessica, who had a fine sense of limitations.

"It's go-ahead Times," said Tom. "Noo petaters, and English at that; we'll be having 'em in March if things go on as they do go.

I never see such Times. See his tie last night?"

"It wasn't suited to him, Tom. It was a gentleman's tie. He wasn't up to it--not the rest of him, It wasn't becoming" ...

Then presently Bert got a cyclist's suit, cap, badge, and all; and to see him and Grubb going down to Brighton (and back)--heads down, handle-bars down, backbones curved--was a revelation in the possibilities of the Smallways blood.

Go-ahead Times!

Old Smallways would sit over the fire mumbling of the greatness of other days, of old Sir Peter, who drove his coach to Brighton and back in eight-and-twenty hours, of old Sir Peter's white top-hats, of Lady Bone, who never set foot to ground except to walk in the garden, of the great, prize-fights at Crawley. He talked of pink and pig-skin breeches, of foxes at Ring's Bottom, where now the County Council pauper lunatics were enclosed, of Lady Bone's chintzes and crinolines. Nobody heeded him. The world had thrown up a new type of gentleman altogether--a gentleman of most ungentlemanly energy, a gentleman in dusty oilskins and motor goggles and a wonderful cap, a stink-making gentleman, a swift, high-class badger, who fled perpetually along high roads from the dust and stink he perpetually made. And his lady, as they were able to see her at Bun Hill, was a weather-bitten goddess, as free from refinement as a gipsy--not so much dressed as packed for transit at a high velocity.

So Bert grew up, filled with ideals of speed and enterprise, and became, so far as he became anything, a kind of bicycle engineer of the let's-have-a-look-at-it and enamel chipping variety. Even a road-racer, geared to a hundred and twenty, failed to satisfy him, and for a time he pined in vain at twenty miles an hour along roads that were continually more dusty and more crowded with mechanical traffic. But at last his savings accumulated, and his chance came. The hire-purchase system bridged a financial gap, and one bright and memorable Sunday morning he wheeled his new possession through the shop into the road, got on to it with the advice and assistance of Grubb, and teuf-teuffed off into the haze of the traffic-tortured high road, to add himself as one more voluntary public danger to the amenities of the south of England.

"Orf to Brighton!" said old Smallways, regarding his youngest son from the sitting-room window over the green-grocer's shop with something between pride and reprobation. "When I was 'is age, I'd never been to London, never bin south of Crawley--never bin anywhere on my own where I couldn't walk. And nobody didn't go. Not unless they was gentry. Now every body's orf everywhere; the whole dratted country sims flying to pieces. Wonder they all get back. Orf to Brighton indeed! Anybody want to buy 'orses?"

"You can't say I bin to Brighton, father," said Tom.

"Nor don't want to go," said Jessica sharply; "creering about and spendin' your money."

3

For a time the possibilities of the motor-bicycle so occupied Bert's mind that he remained regardless of the new direction in

which the striving soul of man was finding exercise and refreshment. He failed to observe that the type of motor-car, like the type of bicycle, was settling-down and losing its adventurous quality. Indeed, it is as true as it is remarkable that Tom was the first to observe the new development. But his gardening made him attentive to the heavens, and the proximity of the Bun Hill gas-works and the Crystal Palace, from which ascents were continually being made, and presently the descent of ballast upon his potatoes, conspired to bear in upon his unwilling mind the fact that the Goddess of Change was turning her disturbing attention to the sky. The first great boom in aeronautics was beginning.

Grubb and Bert heard of it in a music-hall, then it was driven home to their minds by the cinematograph, then Bert's imagination was stimulated by a sixpenny edition of that aeronautic classic, Mr. George Griffith's "Clipper of the Clouds," and so the thing really got hold of them.

At first the most obvious aspect was the multiplication of balloons. The sky of Bun Hill began to be infested by balloons. On Wednesday and Saturday afternoons particularly you could scarcely look skyward for a quarter of an hour without discovering a balloon somewhere. And then one bright day Bert, motoring toward Croydon, was arrested by the insurgence of a huge, bolster-shaped monster from the Crystal Palace grounds, and obliged to dismount and watch it. It was like a bolster with a broken nose, and below it, and comparatively small, was a stiff framework bearing a man and an engine with a screw that whizzed round in front and a sort of canvas rudder behind. The framework had an air of dragging the reluctant gas-cylinder after it like a brisk little terrier towing a shy gas-distended elephant into society. The combined monster certainly travelled and steered. It went overhead perhaps a thousand feet up (Bert heard the engine), sailed away southward, vanished over the hills,

reappeared a little blue outline far off in the east, going now very fast before a gentle south-west gale, returned above the Crystal Palace towers, circled round them, chose a position for descent, and sank down out of sight.

Bert sighed deeply, and turned to his motor-bicycle again.

And that was only the beginning of a succession of strange phenomena in the heavens--cylinders, cones, pear-shaped monsters, even at last a thing of aluminium that glittered wonderfully, and that Grubb, through some confusion of ideas about armour plates, was inclined to consider a war machine.

There followed actual flight.

This, however, was not an affair that was visible from Bun Hill; it was something that occurred in private grounds or other enclosed places and, under favourable conditions, and it was brought home to Grubb and Bert Smallways only by means of the magazine page of the half-penny newspapers or by cinematograph records. But it was brought home very insistently, and in those days if, ever one heard a man saying in a public place in a loud, reassuring, confident tone, "It's bound to come," the chances were ten to one he was talking of flying. And Bert got a box lid and wrote out in correct window-ticket style, and Grubb put in the window this inscription, "Aeroplanes made and repaired." It quite upset Tom--it seemed taking one's shop so lightly; but most of the neighbours, and all the sporting ones, approved of it as being very good indeed.

Everybody talked of flying, everybody repeated over and over again, "Bound to come," and then you know it didn't come. There was a hitch. They flew--that was all right; they flew in machines heavier than air. But they smashed. Sometimes they smashed the engine, sometimes they smashed the aeronaut, usually

they smashed both. Machines that made flights of three or four miles and came down safely, went up the next time to headlong disaster. There seemed no possible trusting to them. The breeze upset them, the eddies near the ground upset them, a passing thought in the mind of the aeronaut upset them. Also they upset--simply.

"It's this 'stability' does 'em," said Grubb, repeating his newspaper. "They pitch and they pitch, till they pitch themselves to pieces."

Experiments fell away after two expectant years of this sort of success, the public and then the newspapers tired of the expensive photographic reproductions, the optimistic reports, the perpetual sequence of triumph and disaster and silence. Flying slumped, even ballooning fell away to some extent, though it remained a fairly popular sport, and continued to lift gravel from the wharf of the Bun Hill gas-works and drop it upon deserving people's lawns and gardens. There were half a dozen reassuring years for Tom--at least so far as flying was concerned. But that was the great time of mono-rail development, and his anxiety was only diverted from the high heavens by the most urgent threats and symptoms of change in the lower sky.

There had been talk of mono-rails for several years. But the real mischief began when Brennan sprang his gyroscopic mono-rail car upon the Royal Society. It was the leading sensation of the 1907 soirees; that celebrated demonstration-room was all too small for its exhibition. Brave soldiers leading Zionists, deserving novelists, noble ladies, congested the narrow passage and thrust distinguished elbows into ribs the world would not willingly let break, deeming themselves fortunate if they could see "just a little bit of the rail." Inaudible, but convincing, the great inventor expounded his discovery, and sent his obedient little model of the trains of the future up gradients, round

curves, and across a sagging wire. It ran along its single rail, on its single wheels, simple and sufficient; it stopped, reversed, stood still, balancing perfectly. It maintained its astounding equilibrium amidst a thunder of applause. The audience dispersed at last, discussing how far they would enjoy crossing an abyss on a wire cable. "Suppose the gyroscope stopped!" Few of them anticipated a title of what the Brennan mono-rail would do for their railway securities and the face of the world.

In a few years they realised better. In a little while no one thought anything of crossing an abyss on a wire, and the mono-rail was superseding the tram-lines, railways: and indeed every form of track for mechanical locomotion. Where land was cheap the rail ran along the ground, where it was dear the rail lifted up on iron standards and passed overhead; its swift, convenient cars went everywhere and did everything that had once been done along made tracks upon the ground.

When old Smallways died, Tom could think of nothing more striking to say of him than that, "When he was a boy, there wasn't nothing higher than your chimbleys--there wasn't a wire nor a cable in the sky!"

Old Smallways went to his grave under an intricate network of wires and cables, for Bun Hill became not only a sort of minor centre of power distribution--the Home Counties Power Distribution Company set up transformers and a generating station close beside the old gas-works--but, also a junction on the suburban mono-rail system. Moreover, every tradesman in the place, and indeed nearly every house, had its own telephone.

The mono-rail cable standard became a striking fact in urban landscape, for the most part stout iron erections rather like tapering trestles, and painted a bright bluish green. One, it happened, bestrode Tom's house, which looked still more retiring

and apologetic beneath its immensity; and another giant stood just inside the corner of his garden, which was still not built upon and unchanged, except for a couple of advertisement boards, one recommending a two-and-sixpenny watch, and one a nerve restorer. These, by the bye, were placed almost horizontally to catch the eye of the passing mono-rail passengers above, and so served admirably to roof over a tool-shed and a mushroom-shed for Tom. All day and all night the fast cars from Brighton and Hastings went murmuring by overhead long, broad, comfortable-looking cars, that were brightly lit after dusk. As they flew by at night, transient flares of light and a rumbling sound of passage, they kept up a perpetual summer lightning and thunderstorm in the street below.

Presently the English Channel was bridged--a series of great iron Eiffel Tower pillars carrying mono-rail cables at a height of a hundred and fifty feet above the water, except near the middle, where they rose higher to allow the passage of the London and Antwerp shipping and the Hamburg-America liners.

Then heavy motor-cars began to run about on only a couple of wheels, one behind the other, which for some reason upset Tom dreadfully, and made him gloomy for days after the first one passed the shop...

All this gyroscopic and mono-rail development naturally absorbed a vast amount of public attention, and there, was also a huge excitement consequent upon the amazing gold discoveries off the coast of Anglesea made by a submarine prospector, Miss Patricia Giddy. She had taken her degree in geology and mineralogy in the University of London, and while working upon the auriferous rocks of North Wales, after a brief holiday spent in agitating for women's suffrage, she had been struck by the possibility of these reefs cropping up again under the water. She had set herself to verify this supposition by the use of the submarine crawler

invented by Doctor Alberto Cassini. By a happy mingling of reasoning and intuition peculiar to her sex she found gold at her first descent, and emerged after three hours' submersion with about two hundredweight of ore containing gold in the unparalleled quantity of seventeen ounces to the ton. But the whole story of her submarine mining, intensely interesting as it is, must be told at some other time; suffice it now to remark simply that it was during the consequent great rise of prices, confidence, and enterprise that the revival of interest in flying occurred.

It is curious how that revival began. It was like the coming of a breeze on a quiet day; nothing started it, it came. People began to talk of flying with an air of never having for one moment dropped the subject. Pictures of flying and flying machines returned to the newspapers; articles and allusions increased and multiplied in the serious magazines. People asked in mono-rail trains, "When are we going to fly?" A new crop of inventors sprang up in a night or so like fungi. The Aero Club announced the project of a great Flying Exhibition in a large area of ground that the removal of slums in Whitechapel had rendered available.

The advancing wave soon produced a sympathetic ripple in the Bun Hill establishment. Grubb routed out his flying-machine model again, tried it in the yard behind the shop, got a kind of flight out of it, and broke seventeen panes of glass and nine flower-pots in the greenhouse that occupied the next yard but one.

And then, springing from nowhere, sustained one knew not how, came a persistent, disturbing rumour that the problem had been solved, that the secret was known. Bert met it one early-closing afternoon as he refreshed himself in an inn near Nutfield, whither his motor-bicycle had brought him. There smoked and

meditated a person in khaki, an engineer, who presently took an interest in Bert's machine. It was a sturdy piece of apparatus, and it had acquired a kind of documentary value in these quick-changing times; it was now nearly eight years old. Its points discussed, the soldier broke into a new topic with, "My next's going to be an aeroplane, so far as I can see. I've had enough of roads and ways."

"They TORK," said Bert.

"They talk--and they do," said the soldier.

"The thing's coming--"

"It keeps ON coming," said Bert; "I shall believe when I see it."

"That won't be long," said the soldier.

The conversation seemed degenerating into an amiable wrangle of contradiction.

"I tell you they ARE flying," the soldier insisted. "I see it myself."

"We've all seen it," said Bert.

"I don't mean flap up and smash up; I mean real, safe, steady, controlled flying, against the wind, good and right."

"You ain't seen that!"

"I 'AVE! Aldershot. They try to keep it a secret. They got it right enough. You bet--our War Office isn't going to be caught-napping this time."

Bert's incredulity was shaken. He asked questions- and the soldier expanded.

"I tell you they got nearly a square mile fenced in--a sort of valley. Fences of barbed wire ten feet high, and inside that they do things. Chaps about the camp--now and then we get a peep. It isn't only us neither. There's the Japanese; you bet they got, it too--and the Germans!"

The soldier stood with his legs very wide apart, and filled his pipe thoughtfully. Bert sat on the low wall against which his motor-bicycle was leaning.

"Funny thing fighting'll be," he said.

"Flying's going to break out," said the soldier. "When it DOES come, when the curtain does go up, I tell you you'll find every one on the stage--busy.... Such fighting, too!... I suppose you don't read the papers about this sort of thing?"

"I read 'em a bit," said Bert.

"Well, have you noticed what one might call the remarkable case of the disappearing inventor--the inventor who turns up in a blaze of publicity, fires off a few successful experiments, and vanishes?"

"Can't say I 'ave," said Bert.

"Well, I 'ave, anyhow. You get anybody come along who does anything striking in this line, and, you bet, he vanishes. Just goes off quietly out of sight. After a bit, you don't hear anything more of 'em at all. See? They disappear. Gone--no address. First--oh! it's an old story now--there was those Wright Brothers out in America. They glided--they glided miles

and miles. Finally they glided off stage. Why, it must be nineteen hundred and four, or five, THEY vanished! Then there was those people in Ireland--no, I forget their names. Everybody said they could fly. THEY went. They ain't dead that I've heard tell; but you can't say they're alive. Not a feather of 'em can you see. Then that chap who flew round Paris and upset in the Seine. De Booley, was it? I forget. That was a grand fly, in spite of the accident; but where's he got to? The accident didn't hurt him. Eh? _'E_'s gone to cover."

The soldier prepared to light his pipe.

"Looks like a secret society got hold of them," said Bert.

"Secret society! NAW!"

The soldier lit his match, and drew. "Secret society," he repeated, with his pipe between his teeth and the match flaring, in response to his words. "War Departments; that's more like it." He threw his match aside, and walked to his machine. "I tell you, sir," he said, "there isn't a big Power in Europe, OR Asia, OR America, OR Africa, that hasn't got at least one or two flying machines hidden up its sleeve at the present time. Not one. Real, workable, flying machines. And the spying! The spying and manoeuvring to find out what the others have got. I tell you, sir, a foreigner, or, for the matter of that, an unaccredited native, can't get within four miles of Lydd nowadays --not to mention our little circus at Aldershot, and the experimental camp in Galway. No!"

"Well," said Bert, "I'd like to see one of them, anyhow. Jest to help believing. I'll believe when I see, that I'll promise you."

"You'll see 'em, fast enough," said the soldier, and led his machine out into the road.

He left Bert on his wall, grave and pensive, with his cap on the back of his head, and a cigarette smouldering in the corner of his mouth.

"If what he says is true," said Bert, "me and Grubb, we been wasting our blessed old time. Besides incurring expense with thet green-'ouse."

5

It was while this mysterious talk with the soldier still stirred in Bert Smallways' imagination that the most astounding incident in the whole of that dramatic chapter of human history, the coming of flying, occurred. People talk glibly enough of epoch-making events; this was an epoch-making event. It was the unanticipated and entirely successful flight of Mr. Alfred Butteridge from the Crystal Palace to Glasgow and back in a small businesslike-looking machine heavier than air--an entirely manageable and controllable machine that could fly as well as a pigeon.

It wasn't, one felt, a fresh step forward in the matter so much as a giant stride, a leap. Mr. Butteridge remained in the air altogether for about nine hours, and during that time he flew with the ease and assurance of a bird. His machine was, however neither bird-like nor butterfly-like, nor had it the wide, lateral expansion of the ordinary aeroplane. The effect upon the observer was rather something in the nature of a bee or wasp. Parts of the apparatus were spinning very rapidly, and gave one a hazy effect of transparent wings; but parts, including two peculiarly curved "wing-cases"--if one may borrow a figure from the flying beetles--remained expanded stiffly. In the middle was a long rounded body like the body of a moth, and on this Mr. Butteridge could be seen sitting astride, much as a man bestrides

a horse. The wasp-like resemblance was increased by the fact that the apparatus flew with a deep booming hum, exactly the sound made by a wasp at a windowpane.

Mr. Butteridge took the world by surprise. He was one of those gentlemen from nowhere Fate still succeeds in producing for the stimulation of mankind. He came, it was variously said, from Australia and America and the South of France. He was also described quite incorrectly as the son of a man who had amassed a comfortable fortune in the manufacture of gold nibs and the Butteridge fountain pens. But this was an entirely different strain of Butteridges. For some years, in spite of a loud voice, a large presence, an aggressive swagger, and an implacable manner, he had been an undistinguished member of most of the existing aeronautical associations. Then one day he wrote to all the London papers to announce that he had made arrangements for an ascent from the Crystal Palace of a machine that would demonstrate satisfactorily that the outstanding difficulties in the way of flying were finally solved. Few of the papers printed his letter, still fewer were the people who believed in his claim. No one was excited even when a fracas on the steps of a leading hotel in Piccadilly, in which he tried to horse-whip a prominent German musician upon some personal account, delayed his promised ascent. The quarrel was inadequately reported, and his name spelt variously Betteridge and Betridge. Until his flight indeed, he did not and could not contrive to exist in the public mind. There were scarcely thirty people on the look-out for him, in spite of all his clamour, when about six o'clock one summer morning the doors of the big shed in which he had been putting together his apparatus opened--it was near the big model of a megatherium in the Crystal Palace grounds--and his giant insect came droning out into a negligent and incredulous world.

But before he had made his second circuit of the Crystal Palace towers, Fame was lifting her trumpet, she drew a deep breath as

the startled tramps who sleep on the seats of Trafalgar Square were roused by his buzz and awoke to discover him circling the Nelson column, and by the time he had got to Birmingham, which place he crossed about half-past ten, her deafening blast was echoing throughout the country. The despaired-of thing was done.

A man was flying securely and well.

Scotland was agape for his coming. Glasgow he reached by one o'clock, and it is related that scarcely a ship-yard or factory in that busy hive of industry resumed work before half-past two. The public mind was just sufficiently educated in the impossibility of flying to appreciate Mr. Butteridge at his proper value. He eircled the University buildings, and dropped to within shouting distance of the crowds in West End Park and on the slope of Gilmorehill. The thing flew quite steadily at a pace of about three miles an hour, in a wide circle, making a deep hum that, would have drowned his full, rich voice completely had he not provided himself with a megaphone. He avoided churches, buildings, and mono-rail cables with consummate ease as he conversed.

"Me name's Butteridge," he shouted; "B-U-T-T-E-R-I-D-G-E.- Got it? Me mother was Scotch."

And having assured himself that he had been understood, he rose amidst cheers and shouting and patriotic cries, and then flew up very swiftly and easily into the south-eastern sky, rising and falling with long, easy undulations in an extraordinarily wasp-like manner.

His return to London--he visited and hovered over Manchester and Liverpool and Oxford on his way, and spelt his name out to each place--was an occasion of unparalleled excitement. Every one was staring heavenward. More people were run over in the streets

upon that one day, than in the previous three months, and a County Council steamboat, the Isaac Walton, collided with a pier of Westminster Bridge, and narrowly escaped disaster by running ashore--it was low water--on the mud on the south side. He returned to the Crystal Palace grounds, that classic starting-point of aeronautical adventure, about sunset, re-entered his shed without disaster, and had the doors locked immediately upon the photographers and journalists who been waiting his return.

"Look here, you chaps," he said, as his assistant did so, "I'm tired to death, and saddle sore. I can't give you a word of talk. I'm too--done. My name's Butteridge. B-U-T-T-E-R-I-D-G-E. Get that right. I'm an Imperial Englishman. I'll talk to you all to-morrow."

Foggy snapshots still survive to record that incident. His assistant struggles in a sea of aggressive young men carrying note-books or upholding cameras and wearing bowler hats and enterprising ties. He himself towers up in the doorway, a big figure with a mouth--an eloquent cavity beneath a vast black moustache--distorted by his shout to these relentless agents of publicity. He towers there, the most famous man in the country,.

Almost symbolically he holds and gesticulates with a megaphone in his left hand.

6

Tom and Bert Smallways both saw that return. They watched from the crest of Bun Hill, from which they had so often surveyed the pyrotechnics of the Crystal Palace. Bert was excited, Tom kept calm and lumpish, but neither of them realised how their own lives were to be invaded by the fruits of that beginning.

"P'raps old Grubb'll mind the shop a bit now," he said, "and put

his blessed model in the fire. Not that that can save us, if we don't tide over with Steinhart's account."

Bert knew enough of things and the problem of aeronautics to realise that this gigantic imitation of a bee would, to use his own idiom, "give the newspapers fits." The next day it was clear the fits had been given even as he said: their magazine pages were black with hasty photographs, their prose was convulsive they foamed at the headline. The next day they were worse. Before the week was out they were not so much published as carried screaming into the street.

The dominant fact in the uproar was the exceptional personality of Mr. Butteridge, and the extraordinary terms he demanded for the secret of his machine.

For it was a secret and he kept it secret in the most elaborate fashion. He built his apparatus himself in the safe privacy of the great Crystal Palace sheds, with the assistance of inattentive workmen, and the day next following his flight he took it to pieces single handed, packed certain portions, and then secured unintelligent assistance in packing and dispersing the rest. Sealed packing-cases went north and east and west to various pantechinons, and the engines were boxed with peculiar care. It became evident these precautions were not inadvisable in view of the violent demand for any sort of photograph or impressions of his machine. But Mr. Butteridge, having once made his demonstration, intended to keep his secret safe from any further risk of leakage. He faced the British public now with the question whether they wanted his secret or not; he was, he said perpetually, an "Imperial Englishman," and his first wish and his last was to see his invention the privilege and monopoly of the Empire. Only--

It was there the difficulty began.

Mr. Butteridge, it became evident, was a man singularly free from any false modesty--indeed, from any modesty of any kind--singularly willing to see interviewers, answer questions upon any topic except aeronautics, volunteer opinions, criticisms, and autobiography, supply portraits and photographs of himself, and generally spread his personality across the terrestrial sky. The published portraits insisted primarily upon an immense black moustache, and secondarily upon a fierceness behind the moustache. The general impression upon the public was that Butteridge, was a small man. No one big, it was felt, could have so virulently aggressive an expression, though, as a matter of fact, Butteridge had a height of six feet two inches, and a weight altogether proportionate to that. Moreover, he had a love affair of large and unusual dimensions and irregular circumstances and the still largely decorous British public learnt with reluctance and alarm that a sympathetic treatment of this affair was inseparable from the exclusive acquisition of the priceless secret of aerial stability by the British Empire. The exact particulars of the similarity never came to light, but apparently the lady had, in a fit of high-minded inadvertence, had gone through the ceremony of marriage with, one quotes the unpublished discourse of Mr. Butteridge--"a white-livered skunk," and this zoological aberration did in some legal and vexatious manner mar her social happiness. He wanted to talk about the business, to show the splendour of her nature in the light of its complications. It was really most embarrassing to a press that has always possessed a considerable turn for reticence, that wanted things personal indeed in the modern fashion. Yet not too personal. It was embarrassing, I say, to be inexorably confronted with Mr. Butteridge's great heart, to see it laid open in relentless self-vivisection, and its pulsating dissepiments' adorned with emphatic flag labels.

Confronted they were, and there was no getting away from it. He

would make this appalling viscus beat and throb before the shrinking journalists--no uncle with a big watch and a little ever baby ever harped upon it so relentlessly; whatever evasion they attempted he set aside. He "gloried in his love," he said, and compelled them to write it down.

"That's of course a private affair, Mr. Butteridge," they would object.

"The injustice, sorr, is public. I do not care either I am up against institutions or individuals. I do not care if I am up against the universal All. I am pleading the cause of a woman, a woman I lurve, sorr--a noble woman--misunderstood. I intend to vindicate her, sorr, to the four winds of heaven!"

"I lurve England," he used to say--"lurve England, but Puritanism, sorr, I abhor. It fills me with loathing. It raises my gorge. Take my own case."

He insisted relentlessly upon his heart, and upon seeing proofs of the interview. If they had not done justice to his erotic bellowings and gesticulations, he stuck in, in a large inky scrawl, all and more than they had omitted.

It was a strangely embarrassing thing for British journalism. Never was there a more obvious or uninteresting affair; never had the world heard the story of erratic affection with less appetite or sympathy. On the other hand it was extremely curious about Mr. Butteridge's invention. But when Mr. Butteridge could be deflected for a moment from the cause of the lady he championed, then he talked chiefly, and usually with tears of tenderness in his voice, about his mother and his childhood--his mother who crowned a complete encyclopedia of maternal virtue by being "largely Scotch." She was not quite neat, but nearly so. "I owe everything in me to me mother," he asserted--"everything. Eh!"

and--"ask any man who's done anything. You'll hear the same story. All we have we owe to women. They are the species, sorr.

Man is but a dream. He comes and goes. The woman's soul leadeth us upward and on!"

He was always going on like that.

What in particular he wanted from the Government for his secret did not appear, nor what beyond a money payment could be expected from a modern state in such an affair. The general effect upon judicious observers, indeed, was not that he was treating for anything, but that he was using an unexampled opportunity to bellow and show off to an attentive world. Rumours of his real identity spread abroad. It was said that he had been the landlord of an ambiguous hotel in Cape Town, and had there given shelter to, and witnessed, the experiments and finally stolen the papers and plans of, an extremely shy and friendless young inventor named Palliser, who had come to South Africa from England in an advanced stage of consumption, and died there. This, at any rate, was the allegation of the more outspoken American press. But the proof or disproof of that never reached the public.

Mr. Butteridge also involved himself passionately in a tangle of disputes for the possession of a great number of valuable money prizes. Some of these had been offered so long ago as 1906 for successful mechanical flight. By the time of Mr. Butteridge's success a really very considerable number of newspapers, tempted by the impunity of the pioneers in this direction, had pledged themselves to pay in some cases, quite overwhelming sums to the first person to fly from Manchester to Glasgow, from London to Manchester, one hundred miles, two hundred miles in England, and the like. Most had hedged a little with ambiguous conditions, and now offered resistance; one or two paid at once, and

vehemently called attention to the fact; and Mr. Butteridge plunged into litigation with the more recalcitrant, while at the same time sustaining a vigorous agitation and canvass to induce the Government to purchase his invention.

One fact, however, remained permanent throughout all the developments of this affair behind Butteridge's preposterous love interest, his politics and personality, and all his shouting and boasting, and that was that, so far as the mass of people knew, he was in sole possession of the secret of the practicable aeroplane in which, for all one could tell to the contrary, the key of the future empire of the world resided. And presently, to the great consternation of innumerable people, including among others Mr. Bert Smallways, it became apparent that whatever negotiations were in progress for the acquisition of this precious secret by the British Government were in danger of falling through. The London Daily Requiem first voiced the universal alarm, and published an interview under the terrific caption of, "Mr. Butteridge Speaks his Mind."

Therein the inventor--if he was an inventor--poured out his heart.

"I came from the end of the earth," he said, which rather seemed to confirm the Cape Town story, "bringing me Motherland the secret that would give her the empire of the world. And what do I get?" He paused. "I am sniffed at by elderly mandarins! . . . And the woman I love is treated like a leper!"

"I am an Imperial Englishman," he went on in a splendid outburst, subsequently written into the interview by his own hand; "but there there are limits to the human heart! There are younger nations--living nations! Nations that do not snore and gurgle helplessly in paroxysms of plethora upon beds of formality and red tape! There are nations that will not fling away the empire

of earth in order to slight an unknown man and insult a noble woman whose boots they are not fitted to unlatch. There are nations not blinded to Science, not given over hand and foot to effete snobocracies and Degenerate Decadents. In short, mark my words--THERE ARE OTHER NATIONS!"

This speech it was that particularly impressed Bert Smallways. "If them Germans or them Americans get hold of this," he said impressively to his brother, "the British Empire's done. It's U-P. The Union Jack, so to speak, won't be worth the paper it's written on, Tom."

"I suppose you couldn't lend us a hand this morning," said Jessica, in his impressive pause. "Everybody in Bun Hill seems wanting early potatoes at once. Tom can't carry half of them."

"We're living on a volcano," said Bert, disregarding the suggestion. "At any moment war may come--such a war!"

He shook his head portentously.

"You'd better take this lot first, Tom," said Jessica. She turned briskly on Bert. "Can you spare us a morning?" she asked.

"I dessay I can," said Bert. "The shop's very quiet s'morning. Though all this danger to the Empire worries me something frightful."

"Work'll take it off your mind," said Jessica.

And presently he too was going out into a world of change and wonder, bowed beneath a load of potatoes and patriotic insecurity, that merged at last into a very definite irritation at the weight and want of style of the potatoes and a very clear conception of the entire detestableness of Jessica.

CHAPTER II

HOW BERT SMALLWAYS GOT INTO DIFFICULTIES

It did not occur to either Tom or Bert Smallways that this remarkable aerial performance of Mr. Butteridge was likely to affect either of their lives in any special manner, that it would in any way single them out from the millions about them; and when they had witnessed it from the crest of Bun Hill and seen the fly-like mechanism, its rotating planes a golden haze in the sunset, sink humming to the harbour of its shed again, they turned back towards the sunken green-grocery beneath the great iron standard of the London to Brighton mono-rail, and their minds reverted to the discussion that had engaged them before Mr. Butteridge's triumph had come in sight out of the London haze.

It was a difficult and unsuccessful discussions. They had to carry it on in shouts because of the moaning and roaring of the gyroscopic motor-cars that traversed the High Street, and in its nature it was contentious and private. The Grubb business was in difficulties, and Grubb in a moment of financial eloquence had given a half-share in it to Bert, whose relations with his employer had been for some time unsalaried and pallish and informal.

Bert was trying to impress Tom with the idea that the reconstructed Grubb & Smallways offered unprecedented and unparalleled opportunities to the judicious small investor. It was coming home to Bert, as though it were an entirely new fact, that Tom was singularly impervious to ideas. In the end he put the financial issues on one side, and, making the thing entirely a matter of fraternal affection, succeeded in borrowing a sovereign on the security of his word of honour.

The firm of Grubb & Smallways, formerly Grubb, had indeed been singularly unlucky in the last year or so. For many years the business had struggled along with a flavour of romantic insecurity in a small, dissolute-looking shop in the High Street, adorned with brilliantly coloured advertisements of cycles, a display of bells, trouser-clips, oil-cans, pump-clips, frame-cases, wallets, and other accessories, and the announcement of "Bicycles on Hire," "Repairs," "Free inflation," "Petrol," and similar attractions. They were agents for several obscure makes of bicycle,--two samples constituted the stock,--and occasionally they effected a sale; they also repaired punctures and did their best--though luck was not always on their side--with any other repairing that was brought to them. They handled a line of cheap gramophones, and did a little with musical boxes.

The staple of their business was, however, the letting of bicycles on hire. It was a singular trade, obeying no known commercial or economic principles--indeed, no principles. There was a stock of ladies' and gentlemen's bicycles in a state of disrepair that passes description, and these, the hiring stock, were let to unexacting and reckless people, inexpert in the things of this world, at a nominal rate of one shilling for the first hour and sixpence per hour afterwards. But really there were no fixed prices, and insistent boys could get bicycles and the thrill of danger for an hour for so low a sum as threepence, provided they could convince Grubb that that was all they had. The saddle and handle-bar were then sketchily adjusted by Grubb, a deposit exacted, except in the case of familiar boys, the machine lubricated, and the adventurer started upon his career. Usually he or she came back, but at times, when the accident was serious, Bert or Grubb had to go out and fetch the machine home. Hire was always charged up to the hour of return to the shop and deducted from the deposit. It was rare that a bicycle started out from their hands in a state of pedantic efficiency. Romantic

possibilities of accident lurked in the worn thread of the screw that adjusted the saddle, in the precarious pedals, in the loose-knit chain, in the handle-bars, above all in the brakes and tyres. Tappings and clankings and strange rhythmic creakings awoke as the intrepid hirer pedalled out into the country. Then perhaps the bell would jam or a brake fail to act on a hill; or the seat-pillar would get loose, and the saddle drop three or four inches with a disconcerting bump; or the loose and rattling chain would jump the cogs of the chain-wheel as the machine ran downhill, and so bring the mechanism to an abrupt and disastrous stop without at the same time arresting the forward momentum of the rider; or a tyre would bang, or sigh quietly, and give up the struggle for efficiency.

When the hirer returned, a heated pedestrian, Grubb would ignore all verbal complaints, and examine the machine gravely.

"This ain't 'ad fair usage," he used to begin.

He became a mild embodiment of the spirit of reason. "You can't expect a bicycle to take you up in its arms and carry you," he used to say. "You got to show intelligence. After all--it's machinery."

Sometimes the process of liquidating the consequent claims bordered on violence. It was always a very rhetorical and often a trying affair, but in these progressive times you have to make a noise to get a living. It was often hard work, but nevertheless this hiring was a fairly steady source of profit, until one day all the panes in the window and door were broken and the stock on sale in the window greatly damaged and disordered by two over-critical hirers with no sense of rhetorical irrelevance. They were big, coarse stokers from Gravesend. One was annoyed because his left pedal had come off, and the other because his tyre had become deflated, small and

indeed negligible accidents by Bun Hill standards, due entirely to the ungentle handling of the delicate machines entrusted to them--and they failed to see clearly how they put themselves in the wrong by this method of argument. It is a poor way of convincing a man that he has let you a defective machine to throw his foot-pump about his shop, and take his stock of gongs outside in order to return them through the window-panes. It carried no real conviction to the minds of either Grubb or Bert; it only irritated and vexed them. One quarrel makes many, and this unpleasantness led to a violent dispute between Grubb and the landlord upon the moral aspects of and legal responsibility for the consequent re-glazing. In the end Grubb and Smallways were put to the expense of a strategic nocturnal removal to another position.

It was a position they had long considered. It was t small, shed-like shop with a plate-glass window and one room behind, just at the sharp bend in the road at the bottom of Bun Hill; and here they struggled along bravely, in spite of persistent annoyance from their former landlord, hoping for certain eventualities the peculiar situation of the shop seemed to promise. Here, too, they were doomed to disappointment.

The High Road from London to Brighton that ran through Bun Hill was like the British Empire or the British Constitution--a thing that had grown to its present importance. Unlike any other roads in Europe the British high roads have never been subjected to any organised attempts to grade or straighten them out, and to that no doubt their peculiar picturesqueness is to be ascribed. The old Bun Hill High Street drops at its end for perhaps eighty or a hundred feet of descent at an angle of one in five, turns at right angles to the left, runs in a curve for about thirty yards to a brick bridge over the dry ditch that had once been the Otterbourne, and then bends sharply to the right again round a dense clump of trees and goes on, a simple, straightforward,

peaceful high road. There had been one or two horse-and-van and bicycle accidents in the place before the shop Bert and Grubb took was built, and, to be frank, it was the probability of others that attracted them to it.

Its possibilities had come to them first with a humorous flavour.

"Here's one of the places where a chap might get a living by keeping hens," said Grubb.

"You can't get a living by keeping hens," said Bert.

"You'd keep the hen and have it spatch-cocked," said Grubb. "The motor chaps would pay for it."

When they really came to take the place they remembered this conversation. Hens, however, were out of the question; there was no place for a run unless they had it in the shop. It would have been obviously out of place there. The shop was much more modern than their former one, and had a plate-glass front. "Sooner or later," said Bert, "we shall get a motor-car through this."

"That's all right," said Grubb. "Compensation. I don't mind when that motor-car comes along. I don't mind even if it gives me a shock to the system.

"And meanwhile," said Bert, with great artfulness, "I'm going to buy myself a dog."

He did. He bought three in succession. He surprised the people at the Dogs' Home in Battersea by demanding a deaf retriever, and rejecting every candidate that pricked up its ears. "I want a good, deaf, slow-moving dog," he said. "A dog that doesn't put himself out for things."

They displayed inconvenient curiosity; they declared a great scarcity of deaf dogs.

"You see," they said, "dogs aren't deaf."

"Mine's got to be," said Bert. "I've HAD dogs that aren't deaf. All I want. It's like this, you see--I sell gramophones. Naturally I got to make 'em talk and tootle a bit to show 'em orf. Well, a dog that isn't deaf doesn't like it--gets excited, smells round, barks, growls. That upsets the customer. See? Then a dog that has his hearing fancies things. Makes burglars out of passing tramps. Wants to fight every motor that makes a whizz. All very well if you want livening up, but our place is lively enough. I don't want a dog of that sort. I want a quiet dog."

In the end he got three in succession, but none of them turned out well. The first strayed off into the infinite, heeding no appeals; the second was killed in the night by a fruit motor-waggon which fled before Grubb could get down; the third got itself entangled in the front wheel of a passing cyclist, who came through the plate glass, and proved to be an actor out of work and an undischarged bankrupt. He demanded compensation for some fancied injury, would hear nothing of the valuable dog he had killed or the window he had broken, obliged Grubb by sheer physical obduracy to straighten his buckled front wheel, and pestered the struggling firm with a series of inhumanly worded solicitor's letters. Grubb answered them--stingingly, and put himself, Bert thought, in the wrong.

Affairs got more and more exasperating and strained under these pressures. The window was boarded up, and an unpleasant altercation about their delay in repairing it with the new landlord, a Bun Hill butcher--and a loud, bellowing, unreasonable person at that--served to remind them of their unsettled troubles

with the old. Things were at this pitch when Bert bethought himself of creating a sort of debenture capital in the business for the benefit of Tom. But, as I have said, Tom had no enterprise in his composition. His idea of investment was the stocking; he bribed his brother not to keep the offer open.

And then ill-luck made its last lunge at their crumbling business and brought it to the ground.

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It is a poor heart that never rejoices, and Whitsuntide had an air of coming as an agreeable break in the business complications of Grubb & Smallways. Encouraged by the practical outcome of Bert's negotiations with his brother, and by the fact that half the hiring-stock was out from Saturday to Monday, they decided to ignore the residuum of hiring-trade on Sunday and devote that day to much-needed relaxation and refreshment--to have, in fact, an unstinted good time, a beano on Whit Sunday and return invigorated to grapple with their difficulties and the Bank Holiday repairs on the Monday. No good thing was ever done by exhausted and dispirited men. It happened that they had made the acquaintance of two young ladies in employment in Clapham, Miss Flossie Bright and Miss Edna Bunthorne, and it was resolved therefore to make a cheerful little cyclist party of four into the heart of Kent, and to picnic and spend an indolent afternoon and evening among the trees and bracken between Ashford and Maidstone.

Miss Bright could ride a bicycle, and a machine was found for her, not among the hiring stock, but specially, in the sample held for sale. Miss Bunthorne, whom Bert particularly affected, could not ride, and so with some difficulty he hired a basket-work trailer from the big business of Wray's in the Clapham Road.

To see our young men, brightly dressed and cigarettes alight, wheeling off to the rendezvous, Grubb guiding the lady's machine beside him with one skilful hand and Bert teuf-teuffing steadily, was to realise how pluck may triumph even over insolvency. Their landlord, the butcher, said, "Gurr," as they passed, and shouted, "Go it!" in a loud, savage tone to their receding backs.

Much they cared!

The weather was fine, and though they were on their way southward before nine o'clock, there was already a great multitude of holiday people abroad upon the roads. There were quantities of young men and women on bicycles and motor-bicycles, and a majority of gyroscopic motor-cars running bicycle-fashion on two wheels, mingled with old-fashioned four-wheeled traffic. Bank Holiday times always bring out old stored-away vehicles and odd people; one saw tricars and electric broughams and dilapidated old racing motors with huge pneumatic tyres. Once our holiday-makers saw a horse and cart, and once a youth riding a black horse amidst the badinage of the passersby. And there were several navigable gas air-ships, not to mention balloons, in the air. It was all immensely interesting and refreshing after the dark anxieties of the shop. Edna wore a brown straw hat with poppies, that suited her admirably, and sat in the trailer like a queen, and the eight-year-old motor-bicycle ran like a thing of yesterday.

Little it seemed to matter to Mr. Bert Smallways that a newspaper placard proclaimed:--

GERMANY DENOUNCES THE MONROE
DOCTRINE.

AMBIGUOUS ATTITUTDE OF JAPAN.

WHAT WILL BRITAIN DO? IS IT WAR?

This sort of thing was always going on, and on holidays one disregarded it as a matter of course. Week-days, in the slack time after the midday meal, then perhaps one might worry about the Empire and international politics; but not on a sunny Sunday, with a pretty girl trailing behind one, and envious cyclists trying to race you. Nor did our young people attach any great importance to the flitting suggestions of military activity they glimpsed ever and again. Near Maidstone they came on a string of eleven motor-guns of peculiar construction halted by the roadside, with a number of businesslike engineers grouped about them watching through field-glasses some sort of entrenchment that was going on near the crest of the downs. It signified nothing to Bert.

"What's up?" said Edna.

"Oh!--manoeuvres," stid Bert.

"Oh! I thought they did them at Easter," said Edna, and troubled no more.

The last great British war, the Boer war, was over and forgotten, and the public had lost the fashion of expert military criticism.

Our four young people picnicked cheerfully, and were happy in the manner of a happiness that was an ancient mode in Nineveh. Eyes were bright, Grubb was funny and almost witty, and Bert achieved epigrams; the hedges were full of honeysuckle and dog-roses; in the woods the distant toot-toot-toot of the traffic on the dust-hazy high road might have been no more than the horns of elf-land. They laughed and gossiped and picked flowers and made love and talked, and the girls smoked cigarettes. Also they

scuffled playfully. Among other things they talked aeronautics, and how they would come for a picnic together in Bert's flying-machine before ten years were out. The world seemed full of amusing possibilities that afternoon. They wondered what their great-grandparents would have thought of aeronautics. In the evening, about seven, the party turned homeward, expecting no disaster, and it was only on the crest of the downs between Wrotham and Kingsdown that disaster came.

They had come up the hill in the twilight; Bert was anxious to get as far as possible before he lit--or attempted to light, for the issue was a doubtful one--his lamps, and they had scorched past a number of cyclists, and by a four-wheeled motor-car of the old style lamed by a deflated tyre. Some dust had penetrated Bert's horn, and the result was a curious, amusing, wheezing sound had got into his "honk, honk." For the sake of merriment and glory he was making this sound as much as possible, and Edna was in fits of laughter in the trailer. They made a sort of rushing cheerfulness along the road that affected their fellow travellers variously, according to their temperaments. She did notice a good lot of bluish, evil-smelling smoke coming from about the bearings between his feet, but she thought this was one of the natural concomitants of motor-traction, and troubled no more about it, until abruptly it burst into a little yellow-tipped flame.

"Bert!" she screamed.

But Bert had put on the brakes with such suddenness that she found herself involved with his leg as he dismounted. She got to the side of the road and hastily readjusted her hat, which had suffered.

"Gaw!" said Bert.

He stood for some fatal seconds watching the petrol drip and catch, and the flame, which was now beginning to smell of enamel as well as oil, spread and grew. His chief idea was the sorrowful one that he had not sold the machine second-hand a year ago, and that he ought to have done so--a good idea in its way, but not immediately helpful. He turned upon Edna sharply. "Get a lot of wet sand," he said. Then he wheeled the machine a little towards the side of the roadway, and laid it down and looked about for a supply of wet sand. The flames received this as a helpful attention, and made the most of it. They seemed to brighten and the twilight to deepen about them. The road was a flinty road in the chalk country, and ill-provided with sand.

Edna accosted a short, fat cyclist. "We want wet sand," she said, and added, "our motor's on fire." The short, fat cyclist stared blankly for a moment, then with a helpful cry began to scabble in the road-grit. Whereupon Bert and Edna also scabbled in the road-grit. Other cyclists arrived, dismounted and stood about, and their flame-lit faces expressed satisfaction, interest, curiosity. "Wet sand," said the short, fat man, scabbling terribly--"wet sand." One joined him. They threw hard-earned handfuls of road-grit upon the flames, which accepted them with enthusiasm.

Grubb arrived, riding hard. He was shouting something. He sprang off and threw his bicycle into the hedge. "Don't throw water on it!" he said--"don't throw water on it!" He displayed commanding presence of mind. He became captain of the occasion. Others were glad to repeat the things he said and imitate his actions.

"Don't throw water on it!" they cried. Also there was no water.

"Beat it out, you fools!" he said.

He seized a rug from the trailer (it was an Austrian blanket, and Bert's winter coverlet) and began to beat at the burning petrol. For a wonderful minute he seemed to succeed. But he scattered burning pools of petrol on the road, and others, fired by his enthusiasm, imitated his action. Bert caught up a trailer-cushion and began to beat; there was another cushion and a table-cloth, and these also were seized. A young hero pulled off his jacket and joined the beating. For a moment there was less talking than hard breathing, and a tremendous flapping. Flossie, arriving on the outskirts of the crowd, cried, "Oh, my God!" and burst loudly into tears. "Help!" she said, and "Fire!"

The lame motor-car arrived, and stopped in consternation. A tall, goggled, grey-haired man who was driving inquired with an Oxford intonation and a clear, careful enunciation, "Can WE help at all?"

It became manifest that the rug, the table-cloth, the cushions, the jacket, were getting smeared with petrol and burning. The soul seemed to go out of the cushion Bert was swaying, and the air was full of feathers, like a snowstorm in the still twilight.

Bert had got very dusty and sweaty and strenuous. It seemed to him his weapon had been wrested from him at the moment of victory. The fire lay like a dying thing, close to the ground and wicked; it gave a leap of anguish at every whack of the beaters. But now Grubb had gone off to stomp out the burning blanket; the others were lacking just at the moment of victory. One had dropped the cushion and was running to the motorcar. "ERE!" cried Bert; "keep on!"

He flung the deflated burning rags of cushion aside, whipped off his jacket and sprang at the flames with a shout. He stamped into the ruin until flames ran up his boots. Edna saw him, a red-lit hero, and thought it was good to be a man.

A bystander was hit by a hot halfpenny flying out of the air. Then Bert thought of the papers in his pockets, and staggered back, trying to extinguish his burning jacket--checked, repulsed, dismayed.

Edna was struck by the benevolent appearance of an elderly spectator in a silk hat and Sabbatical garments. "Oh!" she cried to him. "Help this young man! How can you stand and see it?"

A cry of "The tarpaulin!" arose.

An earnest-looking man in a very light grey cycling-suit had suddenly appeared at the side of the lame motor-car and addressed the owner. "Have you a tarpaulin?" he said.

"Yes," said the gentlemanly man. "Yes. We've got a tarpaulin."

"That's it," said the earnest-looking man, suddenly shouting. "Let's have it, quick!"

The gentlemanly man, with feeble and deprecatory gestures, and in the manner of a hypnotised person, produced an excellent large tarpaulin.

"Here!" cried the earnest-looking man to Grubb. "Ketch holt!"

Then everybody realised that a new method was to be tried. A number of willing hands seized upon the Oxford gentleman's tarpaulin. The others stood away with approving noises. The tarpaulin was held over the burning bicycle like a canopy, and then smothered down upon it.

"We ought to have done this before," panted Grubb.

There was a moment of triumph. The flames vanished. Every one who could contrive to do so touched the edge of the tarpaulin. Bert held down a corner with two hands and a foot. The tarpaulin, bulged up in the centre, seemed to be suppressing triumphant exultation. Then its self-approval became too much for it; it burst into a bright red smile in the centre. It was exactly like the opening of a mouth. It laughed with a gust of flames. They were reflected redly in the observant goggles of the gentleman who owned the tarpaulin. Everybody recoiled.

"Save the trailer!" cried some one, and that was the last round in the battle. But the trailer could not be detached; its wicker-work had caught, and it was the last thing to burn. A sort of hush fell upon the gathering. The petrol burnt low, the wicker-work trailer banged and crackled. The crowd divided itself into an outer circle of critics, advisers, and secondary characters, who had played undistinguished parts or no parts at all in the affair, and a central group of heated and distressed principals. A young man with an inquiring mind and a considerable knowledge of motor-bicycles fixed on to Grubb and wanted to argue that the thing could not have happened. Grubb was short and inattentive with him, and the young man withdrew to the back of the crowd, and there told the benevolent old gentleman in the silk hat that people who went out with machines they didn't understand had only themselves to blame if things went wrong.

The old gentleman let him talk for some time, and then remarked, in a tone of rapturous enjoyment: "Stone deaf," and added, "Nasty things."

A rosy-faced man in a straw hat claimed attention. "I DID save the front wheel," he said; "you'd have had that tyre catch, too, if I hadn't kept turning it round." It became manifest that this was so. The front wheel had retained its tyre, was intact, was

still rotating slowly among the blackened and twisted ruins of the rest of the machine. It had something of that air of conscious virtue, of unimpeachable respectability, that distinguishes a rent collector in a low neighbourhood. "That wheel's worth a pound," said the rosy-faced man, making a song of it. "I kep' turning it round."

Newcomers kept arriving from the south with the question, "What's up?" until it got on Grubb's nerves. Londonward the crowd was constantly losing people; they would mount their various wheels with the satisfied manner of spectators who have had the best. Their voices would recede into the twilight; one would hear a laugh at the memory of this particularly salient incident or that.

"I'm afraid," said the gentleman of the motor-car, "my tarpaulin's a bit done for."

Grubb admitted that the owner was the best judge of that.

"Nothin, else I can do for you?" said the gentleman of the motor-car, it may be with a suspicion of irony.

Bert was roused to action. "Look here," he said. "There's my young lady. If she ain't 'ome by ten they lock her out. See? Well, all my money was in my jacket pocket, and it's all mixed up with the burnt stuff, and that's too 'ot to touch. IS Clapham out of your way?"

"All in the day's work," said the gentleman with the motor-car, and turned to Edna. "Very pleased indeed," he said, "if you'll come with us. We're late for dinner as it is, so it won't make much difference for us to go home by way of Clapham. We've got to get to Surbiton, anyhow. I'm afraid you'll find us a little slow."

"But what's Bert going to do?" said Edna.

"I don't know that we can accommodate Bert," said the motor-car gentleman, "though we're tremendously anxious to oblige."

"You couldn't take the whole lot?" said Bert, waving his hand at the deboshed and blackened ruins on the ground.

"I'm awfully afraid I can't," said the Oxford man. "Awfully sorry, you know."

"Then I'll have to stick 'ere for a bit," said Bert. "I got to see the thing through. You go on, Edna."

"Don't like leavin' you, Bert."

"You can't 'elp it, Edna." ...

The last Edna saw of Bert was his figure, in charred and blackened shirtsleeves, standing in the dusk. He was musing deeply by the mixed ironwork and ashes of his vanished motor-bicycle, a melancholy figure. His retinue of spectators had shrunk now to half a dozen figures. Flossie and Grubb were preparing to follow her desertion.

"Cheer up, old Bert!" cried Edna, with artificial cheerfulness. "So long."

"So long, Edna," said Bert.

"See you to-morrer."

"See you to-morrer," said Bert, though he was destined, as a matter of fact, to see much of the habitable globe before he saw

her again.

Bert began to light matches from a borrowed boxful, and search for a half-crown that still eluded him among the charred remains.

His face was grave and melancholy.

"I WISH that 'adn't 'appened," said Flossie, riding on with Grubb....

And at last Bert was left almost alone, a sad, blackened Promethean figure, cursed by the gift of fire. He had entertained vague ideas of hiring a cart, of achieving miraculous repairs, of still snatching some residual value from his one chief possession. Now, in the darkening night, he perceived the vanity of such intentions. Truth came to him bleakly, and laid her chill conviction upon him. He took hold of the handle-bar, stood the thing up, tried to push it forward. The tyreless hind-wheel was jammed hopelessly, even as he feared. For a minute or so he stood upholding his machine, a motionless despair. Then with a great effort he thrust the ruins from him into the ditch, kicked at it once, regarded it for a moment, and turned his face resolutely Londonward.

He did not once look back.

"That's the end of THAT game!" said Bert. "No more teuf-teuf-teuf for Bert Smallways for a year or two. Good-bye 'Olidays! ... Oh! I ought to 'ave sold the blasted thing when I had a chance three years ago."

3

The next morning found the firm of Grubb & Smallways in a state of profound despondency. It seemed a smallmatter to them that the

newspaper and cigarette shop opposite displayed such placards as this:--

REPORTED AMERICAN ULTIMATUM.

BRITAIN MUST FIGHT.

OUR INFATUATED WAR OFFICE STILL
REFUSES TO LISTEN TO MR. BUTTERIDGE.

GREAT MONO-RAIL DISASTER AT TIMBUCTOO.

or this:--

WAR A QUESTION OF HOURS.

NEW YORK CALM.

EXCITEMENT IN BERLIN.

or again:--

WASHINGTON STILL SILENT.

WHAT WILL PARIS DO?

THE PANIC ON THE BOURSE.

THE KING'S GARDEN PARTY TO THE
MASKED TWAREGS.

MR. BUTTERIDGE TAKES AN OFFER.

LATEST BETTING FROM TEHERAN.

or this:--

WILL AMERICA FIGHT?

ANTI-GERMAN RIOT IN BAGDAD.

THE MUNICIPAL SCANDALS AT DAMASCUS.

MR. BUTTERIDGE'S INVENTION FOR AMERICA.

Bert stared at these over the card of pump-clips in the pane in the door with unseeing eyes. He wore a blackened flannel shirt, and the jacketless ruins of the holiday suit of yesterday. The boarded-up shop was dark and depressing beyond words, the few scandalous hiring machines had never looked so hopelessly disreputable. He thought of their fellows who were "out," and of the approaching disputations of the afternoon. He thought of their new landlord, and of their old landlord, and of bills and claims. Life presented itself for the first time as a hopeless fight against fate....

"Grubb, o' man," he said, distilling the quintessence, "I'm fair sick of this shop."

"So'm I," said Grubb.

"I'm out of conceit with it. I don't seem to care ever to speak

to a customer again."

"There's that trailer," said Grubb, after a pause.

"Blow the trailer!" said Bert. "Anyhow, I didn't leave a deposit on it. I didn't do that. Still--"

He turned round on his friend. "Look 'ere," he said, "we aren't gettin' on here. We been losing money hand over fist. We got things tied up in fifty knots."

"What can we do?" said Grubb.

"Clear out. Sell what we can for what it will fetch, and quit. See? It's no good 'anging on to a losing concern. No sort of good. Jest foolishness."

"That's all right," said Grubb--"that's all right; but it ain't your capital been sunk in it."

"No need for us to sink after our capital," said Bert, ignoring the point.

"I'm not going to be held responsible for that trailer, anyhow. That ain't my affair."

"Nobody arst you to make it your affair. If you like to stick on here, well and good. I'm quitting. I'll see Bank Holiday through, and then I'm O-R-P-H. See?"

"Leavin' me?"

"Leavin' you. If you must be left."

Grubb looked round the shop. It certainly had become

distasteful. Once upon a time it had been bright with hope and new beginnings and stock and the prospect of credit. Now--now it was failure and dust. Very likely the landlord would be round presently to go on with the row about the window...."Where d'you think of going, Bert?" Grubb asked.

Bert turned round and regarded him. "I thought it out as I was walking 'ome, and in bed. I couldn't sleep a wink."

"What did you think out?"

"Plans."

"What plans?"

"Oh! You're for stickin, here."

"Not if anything better was to offer."

"It's only an ideer," said Bert

"You made the girls laugh yestiday, that song you sang."

"Seems a long time ago now," said Grubb.

"And old Edna nearly cried--over that bit of mine."

"She got a fly in her eye," said Grubb; "I saw it. But what's this got to do with your plan?"

"No end," said Bert.

"Ow?"

"Don't you see?"

"Not singing in the streets?"

"Streets! No fear! But 'ow about the Tour of the Waterin' Places of England, Grubb? Singing! Young men of family doing it for a lark? You ain't got a bad voice, you know, and mine's all right. I never see a chap singing on the beach yet that I couldn't 'ave sung into a cocked hat. And we both know how to put on the toff a bit. Eh? Well, that's my ideer. Me and you, Grubb, with a refined song and a breakdown. Like we was doing for foolery yestiday. That was what put it into my 'ead. Easy make up a programme--easy. Six choice items, and one or two for encores and patter. I'm all right for the patter anyhow."

Grubb remained regarding his darkened and disheartening shop; he thought of his former landlord and his present landlord, and of the general disgustingness of business in an age which re-echoes to The Bitter Cry of the Middle Class; and then it seemed to him that afar off he heard the twankle, twankle of a banjo, and the voice of a stranded siren singing. He had a sense of hot sunshine upon sand, of the children of it least transiently opulent holiday makers in a circle round about him, of the whisper, "They are really gentlemen," and then dollop, dollop came the coppers in the hat. Sometimes even silver. It was all income; no outgoings, no bills. "I'm on, Bert," he said.

"Right O!" said Bert, and, "Now we shan't be long."

"We needn't start without capital neither," said Grubb. "If we take the best of these machines up to the Bicycle Mart in Finsbury we'd raise six or seven pounds on 'em. We could easy do that tomorrow before anybody much was about...."

"Nice to think of old Suet-and-Bones coming round to make his usual row with us, and finding a card up 'Closed for Repairs.'"

"We'll do that," said Grubb with zest--"we'll do that. And we'll put up another notice, and jest arst all inquirers to go round to 'im and inquire. See? Then they'll know all about us."

Before the day was out the whole enterprise was planned. They decided at first that they would call themselves the Naval Mr. O's, a plagiarism, and not perhaps a very good one, from the title of the well-known troupe of "Scarlet Mr. E's," and Bert rather clung to the idea of a uniform of bright blue serge, with a lot of gold lace and cord and ornamentation, rather like a naval officer's, but more so. But that had to be abandoned as impracticable, it would have taken too much time and money to prepare. They perceived they must wear some cheaper and more readily prepared costume, and Grubb fell back on white dominoes. They entertained the notion for a time of selecting the two worst machines from the hiring-stock, painting them over with crimson enamel paint, replacing the bells by the loudest sort of motor-horn, and doing a ride about to begin and end the entertainment. They doubted the advisability of this step.

"There's people in the world," said Bert, "who wouldn't recognise us, who'd know them bicycles again like a shot, and we don't want to go on with no old stories. We want a fresh start."

"I do," said Grubb, "badly."

"We want to forget things--and cut all these rotten old worries. They ain't doin' us good."

Nevertheless, they decided to take the risk of these bicycles, and they decided their costumes should be brown stockings and sandals, and cheap unbleached sheets with a hole cut in the middle, and wigs and beards of tow. The rest their normal selves! "The Desert Dervishes," they would call themselves, and

their chief songs would be those popular ditties, "In my Trailer," and "What Price Hair-pins Now?"

They decided to begin with small seaside places, and gradually, as they gained confidence, attack larger centres. To begin with they selected Littlestone in Kent, chiefly because of its unassuming name.

So they planned, and it seemed a small and unimportant thing to them that as they clattered the governments of half the world and more were drifting into war. About midday they became aware of the first of the evening-paper placards shouting to them across the street:--

THE WAR-CLOUD DARKENS

Nothing else but that.

"Always rottin' about war now," said Bert.

"They'll get it in the neck in real earnest one of these days, if they ain't precious careful."

4

So you will understand the sudden apparition that surprised rather than delighted the quiet informality of Dymchurch sands. Dymchurch was one of the last places on the coast of England to be reached by the mono-rail, and so its spacious sands were still, at the time of this story, the secret and delight of quite a limited number of people. They went there to flee vulgarity and extravagances, and to bathe and sit and talk and play with their children in peace, and the Desert Dervishes did not please

them at all.

The two white figures on scarlet wheels came upon them out of the infinite along the sands from Littlestone, grew nearer and larger and more audible, honk-honking and emitting weird cries, and generally threatening liveliness of the most aggressive type.

"Good heavens!" said Dymchurch, "what's this?"

Then our young men, according to a preconcerted plan, wheeled round from file to line, dismounted and stood it attention.

"Ladies and gentlemen," they said, "we beg to present ourselves--the Desert Dervishes." They bowed profoundly.

The few scattered groups upon the beach regarded them with horror for the most part, but some of the children and young people were interested and drew nearer. "There ain't a bob on the beach," said Grubb in an undertone, and the Desert Dervishes plied their bicycles with comic "business," that got a laugh from one very unsophisticated little boy. Then they took a deep breath and struck into the cheerful strain of "What Price Hair-pins Now?" Grubb sang the song, Bert did his best to make the chorus a rousing one, and at the end of each verse they danced certain steps, skirts in hand, that they had carefully rehearsed.

"Ting-a-ling-a-ting-a-ling-a-ting-a-ling-a-tang...
What Price Hair-pins Now?"

So they chanted and danced their steps in the sunshine on Dymchurch beach, and the children drew near these foolish young men, marvelling that they should behave in this way, and the older people looked cold and unfriendly.

All round the coasts of Europe that morning banjos were ringing, voices were bawling and singing, children were playing in the sun, pleasure-boats went to and fro; the common abundant life of

the time, unsuspecting of all dangers that gathered darkly against it, flowed on its cheerful aimless way. In the cities men fussed about their businesses and engagements. The newspaper placards that had cried "wolf!" so often, cried "wolf!" now in vain.

5

Now as Bert and Grubb bawled their chorus for the third time, they became aware of a very big, golden-brown balloon low in the sky to the north-west, and coming rapidly towards them.

"Jest as we're gettin' hold of 'em," muttered Grubb, "up comes a counter-attraction. Go it, Bert!"

"Ting-a-ling-a-ting-a-ling-a-ting-a-ling-a-tang
What Price Hair-pins Now?"

The balloon rose and fell, went out of sight--"landed, thank goodness," said Grubb--re-appeared with a leap. "'ENG!" said Grubb. "Step it, Bert, or they'll see it!"

They finished their dance, and then stood frankly staring.

"There's something wrong with that balloon," said Bert.

Everybody now was looking at the balloon, drawing rapidly nearer before a brisk north-westerly breeze. The song and dance were a "dead frost." Nobody thought any more about it. Even Bert and Grubb forgot it, and ignored the next item on the programme altogether. The balloon was bumping as though its occupants were trying to land; it would approach, sinking slowly, touch the ground, and instantly jump fifty feet or so in the air and immediately begin to fall again. Its car touched a clump of trees, and the black figure that had been struggling in the ropes fell back, or jumped back, into the car. In another moment it

was quite close. It seemed a huge affair, as big as a house, and it floated down swiftly towards the sands; a long rope trailed behind it, and enormous shouts came from the man in the car. He seemed to be taking off his clothes, then his head came over the side of the car. "Catch hold of the rope!" they heard, quite plain.

"Salvage, Bert!" cried Grubb, and started to head off the rope.

Bert followed him, and collided, without upsetting, with a fisherman bent upon a similar errand. A woman carrying a baby in her arms, two small boys with toy spades, and a stout gentleman in flannels all got to the trailing rope at about the same time, and began to dance over it in their attempts to secure it. Bert came up to this wriggling, elusive serpent and got his foot on it, went down on all fours and achieved a grip. In half a dozen seconds the whole diffused population of the beach had, as it were, crystallised on the rope, and was pulling against the balloon under the vehement and stimulating directions of the man in the car. "Pull, I tell you!" said the man in the car--"pull!"

For a second or so the balloon obeyed its momentum and the wind and tugged its human anchor seaward. It dropped, touched the water, and made a flat, silvery splash, and recoiled as one's finger recoils when one touches anything hot. "Pull her in," said the man in the car. "SHE'S FAINTED!"

He occupied himself with some unseen object while the people on the rope pulled him in. Bert was nearest the balloon, and much excited and interested. He kept stumbling over the tail of the Dervish costume in his zeal. He had never imagined before what a big, light, wallowing thing a balloon was. The car was of brown coarse wicker-work, and comparatively small. The rope he tugged at was fastened to a stout-looking ring, four or five feet above the car. At each tug he drew in a yard or so of rope, and the

wagging wicker-work was drawn so much nearer. Out of the car came wrathful bellowings: "Fainted, she has!" and then: "It's her heart--broken with all she's had to go through."

The balloon ceased to struggle, and sank downward. Bert dropped the rope, and ran forward to catch it in a new place. In another moment he had his hand on the car. "Lay hold of it," said the man in the ear, and his face appeared close to Bert's--a strangely familiar face, fierce eyebrows, a flattish nose, a huge black moustache. He had discarded coat and waistcoat--perhaps with some idea of presently having to swim for his life--and his black hair was extraordinarily disordered. "Will all you people get hold round the car?" he said. "There's a lady here fainted--or got failure of the heart. Heaven alone knows which! My name is Butteridge. Butteridge, my name is--in a balloon. Now please, all on to the edge. This is the last time I trust myself to one of these paleolithic contrivances. The ripping-cord failed, and the valve wouldn't act. If ever I meet the scoundrel who ought to have seen--"

He stuck his head out between the ropes abruptly, and said, in a note of earnest expostulation: "Get some brandy!--some neat brandy!" Some one went up the beach for it.

In the car, sprawling upon a sort of bed-bench, in an attitude of elaborate self-abandonment, was a large, blond lady, wearing a fur coat and a big floriferous hat. Her head lolled back against the padded corner of the car, and her eyes were shut and her mouth open. "Me dear!" said Mr. Butteridge, in a common, loud voice, "we're safe!"

She gave no sign.

"Me dear!" said Mr. Butteridge, in a greatly intensified loud voice, "we're safe!"

She was still quite impassive.

Then Mr. Butteridge showed the fiery core of his soul. "If she is dead," he said, slowly lifting a fist towards the balloon above him, and speaking in an immense tremulous bellow--"if she is dead, I will r-r-rend the heavens like a garment! I must get her out," he cried, his nostrils dilated with emotion-"I must get her out. I cannot have her die in a wicker-work basket nine feet square--she who was made for kings' palaces! Keep holt of this car! Is there a strong man among ye to take her if I hand her out?"

He swept the lady together by a powerful movement of his arms, and lifted her. "Keep the car from jumping," he said to those who clustered about him. "Keep your weight on it. She is no light woman, and when she is out of it--it will be relieved."

Bert leapt lightly into a sitting position on the edge of the car. The others took a firmer grip upon the ropes and ring.

"Are you ready?" said Mr. Butteridge.

He stood upon the bed-bench and lifted the lady carefully. Then he sat down on the wicker edge opposite to Bert, and put one leg over to dangle outside. A rope or so seemed to incommode him. "Will some one assist me?" he said. "If they would take this lady?"

It was just at this moment, with Mr. Butteridge and the lady balanced finely on the basket brim, that she came-to. She came-to suddenly and violently with a loud, heart-rending cry of "Alfred! Save me!" And she waved her arms searchingly, and then clasped Mr. Butteridge about.

It seemed to Bert that the car swayed for a moment and then buck-jumped and kicked him. Also he saw the boots of the lady and the right leg of the gentleman describing arcs through the air, preparatory to vanishing over the side of the car. His impressions were complex, but they also comprehended the fact that he had lost his balance, and was going to stand on his head inside this creaking basket. He spread out clutching arms. He did stand on his head, more or less, his tow-beard came off and got in his mouth, and his cheek slid along against padding. His nose buried itself in a bag of sand. The car gave a violent lurch, and became still.

"Confound it!" he said.

He had an impression he must be stunned because of a surging in his ears, and because all the voices of the people about him had become small and remote. They were shouting like elves inside a hill.

He found it a little difficult to get on his feet. His limbs were mixed up with the garments Mr. Butteridge had discarded when that gentleman had thought he must needs plunge into the sea. Bert bawled out half angry, half rueful, "You might have said you were going to tip the basket." Then he stood up and clutched the ropes of the car convulsively.

Below him, far below him, shining blue, were the waters of the English Channel. Far off, a little thing in the sunshine, and rushing down as if some one was bending it hollow, was the beach and the irregular cluster of houses that constitutes Dymchurch. He could see the little crowd of people he had so abruptly left. Grubb, in the white wrapper of a Desert Dervish, was running along the edge of the sea. Mr. Butteridge was knee-deep in the water, bawling immensely. The lady was sitting up with her floriferous hat in her lap, shockingly neglected. The beach,

east and west, was dotted with little people--they seemed all heads and feet--looking up. And the balloon, released from the twenty-five stone or so of Mr. Butteridge and his lady, was rushing up into the sky at the pace of a racing motor-car. "My crikey!" said Bert; "here's a go!"

He looked down with a pinched face at the receding beach, and reflected that he wasn't giddy; then he made a superficial survey of the cords and ropes about him with a vague idea of "doing something." "I'm not going to mess about with the thing," he said at last, and sat down upon the mattress. "I'm not going to touch it.... I wonder what one ought to do?"

Soon he got up again and stared for a long time at the sinking world below, at white cliffs to the east and flattening marsh to the left, at a minute wide prospect of weald and downland, at dim towns and harbours and rivers and ribbon-like roads, at ships and ships, decks and foreshortened funnels upon the ever-widening sea, and at the great mono-rail bridge that straddled the Channel from Folkestone to Boulogne, until at last, first little wisps and then a veil of filmy cloud hid the prospect from his eyes. He wasn't at all giddy nor very much frightened, only in a state of enormous consternation.

CHAPTER III THE BALLOON

I

Bert Smallways was a vulgar little creature, the sort of pert, limited soul that the old civilisation of the early twentieth century produced by the million in every country of the world. He had lived all his life in narrow streets, and between mean

houses he could not look over, and in a narrow circle of ideas from which there was no escape. He thought the whole duty of man was to be smarter than his fellows, get his hands, as he put it, "on the dibs," and have a good time. He was, in fact, the sort of man who had made England and America what they were. The luck had been against him so far, but that was by the way. He was a mere aggressive and acquisitive individual with no sense of the State, no habitual loyalty, no devotion, no code of honour, no code even of courage. Now by a curious accident he found himself lifted out of his marvellous modern world for a time, out of all the rush and confused appeals of it, and floating like a thing dead and disembodied between sea and sky. It was as if Heaven was experimenting with him, had picked him out as a sample from the English millions, to look at him more nearly, and to see what was happening to the soul of man. But what Heaven made of him in that case I cannot profess to imagine, for I have long since abandoned all theories about the ideals and satisfactions of Heaven.

To be alone in a balloon at a height of fourteen or fifteen thousand feet--and to that height Bert Smallways presently rose is like nothing else in human experience. It is one of the supreme things possible to man. No flying machine can ever better it. It is to pass extraordinarily out of human things. It is to be still and alone to an unprecedented degree. It is solitude without the suggestion of intervention; it is calm without a single irrelevant murmur. It is to see the sky. No sound reaches one of all the roar and jar of humanity, the air is clear and sweet beyond the thought of defilement. No bird, no insect comes so high. No wind blows ever in a balloon, no breeze rustles, for it moves with the wind and is itself a part of the atmosphere. Once started, it does not rock nor sway; you cannot feel whether it rises or falls. Bert felt acutely cold, but he wasn't mountain-sick; he put on the coat and overcoat and gloves Butteridge had discarded--put them over the "Desert Dervish"

sheet that covered his cheap best suit--and sat very still for a long, time, overawed by the new-found quiet of the world.

Above him was the light, translucent, billowing globe of shining brown oiled silk and the blazing sunlight and the great deep blue dome of the sky.

Below, far below, was a torn floor of sunlit cloud slashed by enormous rents through which he saw the sea.

If you had been watching him from below, you would have seen his head, a motionless little black knob, sticking out from the car first of all for a long time on one side, and then vanishing to reappear after a time at some other point.

He wasn't in the least degree uncomfortable nor afraid. He did think that as this uncontrollable thing had thus rushed up the sky with him it might presently rush down again, but this consideration did not trouble him very much. Essentially his state was wonder. There is no fear nor trouble in balloons--until they descend.

"Gollys!" he said at last, feeling a need for talking; "it's better than a motor-bike.

"It's all right!

"I suppose they're telegraphing about, about me."...

The second hour found him examining the equipment of the car with great particularity. Above him was the throat of the balloon bunched and tied together, but with an open lumen through which, Bert could peer up into a vast, empty, quiet interior, and out of which descended two fine cords of unknown import, one white, one crimson, to pockets below the ring. The netting about the balloon-ended in cords attached to the ring, a big

steel-bound hoop. to which the car was slung by ropes. From it depended the trail rope and grapnel, and over the sides of the car were a number of canvas bags that Bert decided must be ballast to "chuck down" if the balloon fell. ("Not much falling just yet," said Bert.)

There were an aneroid and another box-shaped instrument hanging from the ring. The latter had an ivory plate bearing "statoscope" and other words in French, and a little indicator quivered and wagged, between Montee and Descente. "That's all right," said Bert. "That tells if you're going up or down." On the crimson padded seat of the balloon there lay a couple of rugs and a Kodak, and in opposite corners of the bottom of the car were an empty champagne bottle and a glass. "Refreshments," said Bert meditatively, tilting the empty bottle. Then he had a brilliant idea. The two padded bed-like seats, each with blankets and mattress, he perceived, were boxes, and within he found Mr. Butteridge's conception of an adequate equipment for a balloon ascent: a hamper which included a game pie, a Roman pie, a cold fowl, tomatoes, lettuce, ham sandwiches, shrimp sandwiches, a large cake, knives and forks and paper plates, self-heating tins of coffee and cocoa, bread, butter, and marmalade, several carefully packed bottles of champagne, bottles of Perrier water, and a big jar of water for washing, a portfolio, maps, and a compass, a rucksack containing a number of conveniences, including curling-tongs and hair-pins,, a cap with ear-flaps, and so forth.

"A 'ome from 'ome," said Bert, surveying this provision as he tied the ear-flaps under his chin. He looked over the side of the car. Far below were the shining clouds. They had thickened so that the whole world was hidden. Southward they were piled in great snowy masses, so that he was half disposed to think them mountains; northward and eastward they were in wavelike levels, and blindingly sunlit.

"Wonder how long a balloon keeps up?" he said.

He imagined he was not moving, so insensibly did the monster drift with the air about it. "No good coming down till we shift a bit," he said.

He consulted the statoscope.

"Still Monty," he said.

"Wonder what would happen if you pulled a cord?"

"No," he decided. "I ain't going to mess it about."

Afterwards he did pull both the ripping- and the valve-cords, but, as Mr. Butteridge had already discovered, they had fouled a fold of silk in the throat. Nothing happened. But for that little hitch the ripping-cord would have torn the balloon open as though it had been slashed by a sword, and hurled Mr. Smallways to eternity at the rate of some thousand feet a second. "No go!" he said, giving it a final tug. Then he lunched.

He opened a bottle of champagne, which, as soon as he cut the wire, blew its cork out with incredible violence, and for the most part followed it into space. Bert, however, got about a tumblerful. "Atmospheric pressure," said Bert, finding a use at last for the elementary physiography of his seventh-standard days. "I'll have to be more careful next time. No good wastin' drink."

Then he routed about for matches to utilise Mr. Butteridge's cigars; but here again luck was on his side, and he couldn't find any wherewith to set light to the gas above him. Or else he would have dropped in a flare, a splendid but transitory

pyrotechnic display. "'Eng old Grubb!" said Bert, slapping unproductive pockets. "'E didn't ought to 'ave kep' my box. 'E's always sneaking matches."

He reposed for a time. Then he got up, paddled about, rearranged the ballast bags on the floor, watched the clouds for a time, and turned over the maps on the locker. Bert liked maps, and he spent some time in trying to find one of France or the Channel; but they were all British ordnance maps of English counties. That set him thinking about languages and trying to recall his seventh-standard French. "Je suis Anglais. C'est une meprise. Je suis arrive par accident ici," he decided upon as convenient phrases. Then it occurred to him that he would entertain himself by reading Mr. Butteridge's letters and examining his pocket-book, and in this manner he whiled away the afternoon.

2

He sat upon the padded locker, wrapped about very carefully, for the air, though calm, was exhilaratingly cold and clear. He was wearing first a modest suit of blue serge and all the unpretending underwear of a suburban young man of fashion, with sandal-like cycling-shoes and brown stockings drawn over his trouser ends; then the perforated sheet proper to a Desert Dervish; then the coat and waistcoat and big fur-trimmed overcoat of Mr. Butteridge; then a lady's large fur cloak, and round his knees a blanket. Over his head was a tow wig, surmounted by a large cap of Mr. Butteridge's with the flaps down over his ears. And some fur sleeping-boots of Mr. Butteridge's warmed his feet. The car of the balloon was small and neat, some bags of ballast the untidiest of its contents, and he had found a light folding-table and put it at his elbow, and on that was a glass with champagne. And about him, above and below, was space--such a clear emptiness and silence of space as only the aeronaut can experience.

He did not know where he might be drifting, or what might happen next. He accepted this state of affairs with a serenity creditable to the Smallways' courage, which one might reasonably have expected to be of a more degenerate and contemptible quality altogether. His impression was that he was bound to come down somewhere, and that then, if he wasn't smashed, some one, some "society" perhaps, would probably pack him and the balloon back to England. If not, he would ask very firmly for the British Consul.

"Le consuelo Britannique," he decided this would be. "Apportez moi a le consuelo Britannique, s'il vous plait," he would say, for he was by no means ignorant of French. In the meanwhile, he found the intimate aspects of Mr. Butteridge an interesting study.

There were letters of an entirely private character addressed to Mr. Butteridge, and among others several love-letters of a devouring sort in a large feminine hand. These are no business of ours, and one remarks with regret that Bert read them.

When he had read them he remarked, "Gollys!" in an awestricken tone, and then, after a long interval, "I wonder if that was her?"

"Lord!"

He mused for a time.

He resumed his exploration of the Butteridge interior. It included a number of press cuttings of interviews and also several letters in German, then some in the same German handwriting, but in English. "Hul-LO!" said Bert.

One of the latter, the first he took, began with an apology to

Butteridge for not writing to him in English before, and for the inconvenience and delay that had been caused him by that, and went on to matter that Bert found exciting in, the highest degree. "We can understand entirely the difficulties of your position, and that you shall possibly be watched at the present juncture.--But, sir, we do not believe that any serious obstacles will be put in your way if you wished to endeavour to leave the country and come to us with your plans by the customary routes--either via Dover, Ostend, Boulogne, or Dieppe. We find it difficult to think you are right in supposing yourself to be in danger of murder for your invaluable invention."

"Funny!" said Bert, and meditated.

Then he went through the other letters.

"They seem to want him to come," said Bert, "but they don't seem hurting themselves to get 'im. Or else they're shamming don't care to get his prices down.

"They don't quite seem to be the gov'ment," he reflected, after an interval. "It's more like some firm's paper. All this printed stuff at the top. Drachenflieger. Drachenballons. Ballonstoffe. Kugelballons. Greek to me.

"But he was trying to sell his blessed secret abroad. That's all right. No Greek about that! Gollys! Here IS the secret!"

He tumbled off the seat, opened the locker, and had the portfolio open before him on the folding-table. It was full of drawings done in the peculiar flat style and conventional colours engineers adopt. And, in, addition there were some rather under-exposed photographs, obviously done by an amateur, at close quarters, of the actual machine's mutterings had made, in its shed near the Crystal Palace. Bert found he was trembling.

"Lord" he said, "here am I and the whole blessed secret of flying--lost up here on the roof of everywhere.

"Let's see!" He fell to studying the drawings and comparing them with the photographs. They puzzled him. Half of them seemed to be missing. He tried to imagine how they fitted together, and found the effort too great for his mind.

"It's tryin'," said Bert. "I wish I'd been brought up to the engineering. If I could only make it out!"

He went to the side of the car and remained for a time staring with unseeing eyes at a huge cluster of great clouds--a cluster of slowly dissolving Monte Rosas, sunlit below. His attention was arrested by a strange black spot that moved over them. It alarmed him. It was a black spot moving slowly with him far below, following him down there, indefatigably, over the cloud mountains. Why should such a thing follow him? What could it be?...

He had an inspiration. "Uv course!" he said. It was the shadow of the balloon. But he still watched it dubiously for a time.

He returned to the plans on the table.

He spent a long afternoon between his struggles to understand them and fits of meditation. He evolved a remarkable new sentence in French.

"Voici, Mossoo!--Je suis un inventeur Anglais. Mon nom est Butteridge. Beh. oo. teh. teh. eh. arr. E. deh. geh. eh. J'avais ici pour vendre le secret de le flying-machine. Comprenez? Vendre pour l'argent tout suite, l'argent en main. Comprenez? C'est le machine a jouer dans l'air. Comprenez? C'est le machine a faire l'oiseau. Comprenez? Balancer?"

Oui, exactement! Battir l'oiseau en fait, a son propre jeu. Je desire de vendre ceci a votre government national. Voulez vous me diracter la?

"Bit rummy, I expect, from the point of view of grammar," said Bert, "but they ought to get the hang of it all right.

"But then, if they arst me to explain the blessed thing?"

He returned in a worried way to the plans. "I don't believe it's all here!" he said....

He got more and more perplexed up there among the clouds as to what he should do with this wonderful find of his. At any moment, so far as he knew he might descend among he knew not what foreign people.

"It's the chance of my life!" he said.

It became more and more manifest to him that it wasn't. "Directly I come down they'll telegraph--put it in the papers. Butteridge'll know of it and come along--on my track."

Butteridge would be a terrible person to be on any one's track. Bert thought of the great black moustaches, the triangular nose, the searching bellow and the glare. His afternoon's dream of a marvellous seizure and sale of the great Butteridge secret crumpled up in his mind, dissolved, and vanished. He awoke to sanity again.

"Wouldn't do. What's the good of thinking of it?" He proceeded slowly and reluctantly to replace the Butteridge papers in pockets and portfolio as he had found them. He became aware of a splendid golden light upon the balloon above him, and of a new warmth in the blue dome of the sky. He stood up and beheld the

sun, a great ball of blinding gold, setting upon a tumbled sea of gold-edged crimson and purple clouds, strange and wonderful beyond imagining. Eastward cloud-land stretched for ever, darkling blue, and it seemed to Bert the whole round hemisphere of the world was under his eyes.

Then far, away over the blue he caught sight of three long, dark shapes like hurrying fish that drove one after the other, as porpoises follow one another in the water. They were very fish-like indeed--with tails. It was an unconvincing impression in that light. He blinked his eyes, stared again, and they had vanished. For a long time he scrutinised those remote blue levels and saw no more....

"Wonder if I ever saw anything," he said, and then: "There ain't such things...."

Down went the sun and down, not diving steeply, but passing northward as it sank, and then suddenly daylight and the expansive warmth of daylight had gone altogether, and the index of the statoscope quivered over to Descente.

3

"NOW what's going to 'appen?" said Bert.

He found the cold, grey cloud wilderness rising towards him with a wide, slow steadiness. As he sank down among them the clouds ceased to seem the snowclad mountain-slopes they had resembled heretofore, became unsubstantial, confessed an immense silent drift and eddy in their substance. For a moment, when he was nearly among their twilight masses, his descent was checked. Then abruptly the sky was hidden, the last vestiges of daylight gone, and he was falling rapidly in an evening twilight through a whirl of fine snowflakes that streamed past him towards

the zenith, that drifted in upon the things about him and melted, that touched his face with ghostly fingers. He shivered. His breath came smoking from his lips, and everything was instantly bedewed and wet.

He had an impression of a snowstorm pouring with unexampled and increasing fury UPWARD; then he realised that he was falling faster and faster.

Imperceptibly a sound grew upon his ears. The great silence of the world was at an end. What was this confused sound?

He craned his head over the side, concerned, perplexed.

First he seemed to see, and then not to see. Then he saw clearly little edges of foam pursuing each other, and a wide waste of weltering waters below him. Far away was a pilot boat with a big sail bearing dim black letters, and a little pinkish-yellow light, and it was rolling and pitching, rolling and pitching in a gale, while he could feel no wind at, all. Soon the sound of waters was loud and near. He was dropping, dropping--into the sea!

He became convulsively active.

"Ballast!" he cried, and seized a little sack from the floor, and heaved it overboard. He did not wait for the effect of that, but sent another after it. He looked over in time to see a minute white splash in the dim waters below him, and then he was back in the snow and clouds again.

He sent out quite needlessly a third sack of ballast and a fourth, and presently had the immense satisfaction of soaring up out of the damp and chill into the clear, cold, upper air in which the day still lingered. "Thang-God!" he said, with all his

heart.

A few stars now had pierced the blue, and in the east there shone brightly a prolate moon.

4

That first downward plunge filled Bert with a haunting sense of boundless waters below. It was a summer's night, but it seemed to him, nevertheless, extraordinarily long. He had a feeling of insecurity that he fancied quite irrationally the sunrise would dispel. Also he was hungry. He felt, in the dark, in the locker, put his fingers in the Roman pie, and got some sandwiches, and he also opened rather successfully a half-bottle of champagne. That warmed and restored him, he grumbled at Grubb about the matches, wrapped himself up warmly on the locker, and dozed for a time. He got up once or twice to make sure that he was still securely high above the sea. The first time the moonlit clouds were white and dense, and the shadow of the balloon ran athwart them like a dog that followed; afterwards they seemed thinner. As he lay still, staring up at the huge dark balloon above, he made a discovery. His--or rather Mr. Butteridge's--waistcoat rustled as he breathed. It was lined with papers. But Bert could not see to get them out or examine them, much as he wished to do so....

He was awakened by the crowing of cocks, the barking of dogs, and a clamour of birds. He was driving slowly at a low level over a broad land lit golden by sunrise under a clear sky. He stared out upon hedgeless, well-cultivated fields intersected by roads, each lined with cable-bearing red poles. He had just passed over a compact, whitewashed, village with a straight church tower and steep red-tiled roofs. A number of peasants, men and women, in shiny blouses and lumpish footwear, stood regarding him, arrested on their way to work. He was so low that the end of his rope was

trailing.

He stared out at these people. "I wonder how you land," he thought.

"S'pose I OUGHT to land?"

He found himself drifting down towards a mono-rail line, and hastily flung out two or three handfuls of ballast to clear it.

"Lemme see! One might say just 'Pre'nez'! Wish I knew the French for take hold of the rope!... I suppose they are French?"

He surveyed the country again. "Might be Holland. Or Luxembourg. Or Lorraine 's far as I know. Wonder what those big affairs over there are? Some sort of kiln. Prosperous-looking country..."

The respectability of the country's appearance awakened answering chords in his nature.

"Make myself a bit ship-shape first," he said.

He resolved to rise a little and get rid of his wig (which now felt hot on his head), and so forth. He threw out a bag of ballast, and was astonished to find himself careering up through the air very rapidly.

"Blow!" said Mr. Smallways. "I've over-done the ballast trick.... Wonder when I shall get down again? ... brekfus' on board, anyhow."

He removed his cap and wig, for the air was warm, and an improvident impulse made him cast the latter object overboard. The statoscope responded with a vigorous swing to Monte.

"The blessed thing goes up if you only LOOK overboard," he remarked, and assailed the locker. He found among other items several tins of liquid cocoa containing explicit directions for opening that he followed with minute care. He pierced the bottom with the key provided in the holes indicated, and forthwith the can grew from cold to hotter and hotter, until at last he could scarcely touch it, and then he opened the can at the other end, and there was his cocoa smoking, without the use of match or flame of any sort. It was an old invention, but new to Bert. There was also ham and marmalade and bread, so that he had a really very tolerable breakfast indeed.

Then he took off his overcoat, for the sunshine was now inclined to be hot, and that reminded him of the rustling he had heard in the night. He took off the waistcoat and examined it. "Old Butteridge won't like me unpicking this." He hesitated, and finally proceeded to unpick it. He found the missing drawings of the lateral rotating planes, on which the whole stability of the flying machine depended.

An observant angel would have seen Bert sitting for a long time after this discovery in a state of intense meditation. Then at last he rose with an air of inspiration, took Mr. Butteridge's ripped, demolished, and ransacked waistcoat, and hurled it from the balloon whence it fluttered down slowly and eddyingly until at last it came to rest with a contented flop upon the face of German tourist sleeping peacefully beside the Hohenweg near Wildbad. Also this sent the balloon higher, and so into a position still more convenient for observation by our imaginary angel who would next have seen Mr. Smallways tear open his own jacket and waistcoat, remove his collar, open his shirt, thrust his hand into his bosom, and tear his heart out--or at least, if not his heart, some large bright scarlet object. If the observer, overcoming a thrill of celestial horror, had

scrutinised this scarlet object more narrowly, one of Bert's most cherished secrets, one of his essential weaknesses, would have been laid bare. It was a red-flannel chest-protector, one of those large quasi-hygienic objects that with pills and medicines take the place of beneficial relics and images among the Protestant peoples of Christendom. Always Bert wore this thing; it was his cherished delusion, based on the advice of a shilling fortune-teller at Margate, that he was weak in the lungs.

He now proceeded to unbutton his fetish, to attack it with a periknife, and to thrust the new-found plans between the two layers of imitation Saxony flannel of which it was made. Then with the help of Mr. Butteridge's small shaving mirror and his folding canvas basin he readjusted his costume with the gravity of a man who has taken an irrevocable step in life, buttoned up his jacket, cast the white sheet of the Desert Dervish on one side, washed temperately, shaved, resumed the big cap and the fur overcoat, and, much refreshed by these exercises, surveyed the country below him.

It was indeed a spectacle of incredible magnificence. If perhaps it was not so strange and magnificent as the sunlit cloudland of the previous day, it was at any rate infinitely more interesting.

The air was at its utmost clearness and except to the south and south-west there was not a cloud in the sky. The country was hilly, with occasional fir plantations and bleak upland spaces, but also with numerous farms, and the hills were deeply intersected by the gorges of several winding rivers interrupted at intervals by the banked-up ponds and weirs of electric generating wheels. It was dotted with bright-looking, steep-roofed, villages, and each showed a distinctive and interesting church beside its wireless telegraph steeple; here and there were large chateaux and parks and white roads, and paths lined with red and, white cable posts were extremely

conspicuous in the landscape. There were walled enclosures like gardens and rickyards and great roofs of barns and many electric dairy centres. The uplands were mottled with cattle. At places he would see the track of one of the old railroads (converted now to mono-rails) dodging through tunnels and crossing embankments, and a rushing hum would mark the passing of a train. Everything was extraordinarily clear as well as minute. Once or twice he saw guns and soldiers, and was reminded of the stir of military preparations he had witnessed on the Bank Holiday in England; but there was nothing to tell him that these military preparations were abnormal or to explain an occasional faint irregular firing Of guns that drifted up to him....

"Wish I knew how to get down," said Bert, ten thousand feet or so above it all, and gave himself to much futile tugging at the red and white cords. Afterwards he made a sort of inventory of the provisions. Life in the high air was giving him an appalling appetite, and it seemed to him discreet at this stage to portion out his supply into rations. So far as he could see he might pass a week in the air.

At first all the vast panorama below had been as silent as a painted picture. But as the day wore on and the gas diffused slowly from the balloon, it sank earthward again, details increased, men became more visible, and he began to hear the whistle and moan of trains and cars, sounds of cattle, bugles and kettle drums, and presently even men's voices. And at last his guide-rope was trailing again, and he found it possible to attempt a landing. Once or twice as the rope dragged over cables he found his hair erect with electricity, and once he had a slight shock, and sparks snapped about the car. He took these things among the chances of the voyage. He had one idea now very clear in his mind, and that was to drop the iron grapnel that hung from the ring.

From the first this attempt was unfortunate, perhaps because the place for descent was ill-chosen. A balloon should come down in an empty open space, and he chose a crowd. He made his decision suddenly, and without proper reflection. As he trailed, Bert saw ahead of him one of the most attractive little towns in the world--a cluster of steep gables surmounted by a high church tower and diversified with trees, walled, and with a fine, large gateway opening out upon a tree-lined high road. All the wires and cables of the countryside converged upon it like guests to entertainment. It had a most home-like and comfortable quality, and it was made gayer by abundant flags. Along the road a quantity of peasant folk, in big pair-wheeled carts and afoot, were coming and going, besides an occasional mono-rail, car; and at the car-junction, under the trees outside the town, was a busy little fair of booths. It seemed a warm, human, well-rooted, and altogether delightful place to Bert. He came low over the tree-tops, with his grapnel ready to throw and so anchor him--a curious, interested, and interesting guest, so his imagination figured it, in the very middle of it all.

He thought of himself performing feats with the sign language and chance linguistics amidst a circle of admiring rustics....

And then the chapter of adverse accidents began.

The rope made itself unpopular long before the crowd had fully realised his advent over the trees. An elderly and apparently intoxicated peasant in a shiny black hat, and carrying a large crimson umbrella, caught sight of it first as it trailed past him, and was seized with a discreditable ambition to kill it. He pursued it, briskly with unpleasant cries. It crossed the road obliquely, splashed into a pail of milk upon a stall, and slapped its milky tail athwart a motor-car load of factory girls halted outside the town gates. They screamed loudly. People looked up and saw Bert making what he meant to be genial salutations, but

what they considered, in view of the feminine outcry, to be insulting gestures. Then, the car hit the roof of the gatehouse smartly, snapped a flag staff, played a tune upon some telegraph wires, and sent a broken wire like a whip-lash to do its share in accumulating unpopularity. Bert, by clutching convulsively, just escaped being pitched headlong. Two young soldiers and several peasants shouted things up to him and shook fists at him and began to run in pursuit as he disappeared over the wall into the town.

Admiring rustics, indeed!

The balloon leapt at once, in the manner of balloons when part of their weight is released by touching down, with a sort of flippancy, and in another moment Bert was over a street crowded with peasants and soldiers, that opened into a busy market-square. The wave of unfriendliness pursued him.

"Grapnel," said Bert, and then with an afterthought shouted, "TETES there, you! I say! I say! TETES. 'Eng it!"

The grapnel smashed down a steeply sloping roof, followed by an avalanche of broken tiles, jumped the street amidst shrieks and cries, and smashed into a plate-glass window with an immense and sickening impact. The balloon rolled nauseatingly, and the car pitched. But the grapnel had not held. It emerged at once bearing on one fluke, with a ridiculous air of fastidious selection, a small child's chair, and pursued by a maddened shopman. It lifted its catch, swung about with an appearance of painful indecision amidst a roar of wrath, and dropped it at last neatly, and as if by inspiration, over the head of a peasant woman in charge of an assortment of cabbages in the market-place.

Everybody now was aware of the balloon. Everybody was either trying to dodge the grapnel or catch the trail rope. With a

pendulum-like swoop through the crowd, that sent people flying right and left the grapnel came to earth again, tried for and missed a stout gentleman in a blue suit and a straw hat, smacked away a trestle from under a stall of haberdashery, made a cyclist soldier in knickerbockers leap like a chamois, and secured itself uncertainly among the hind-legs of a sheep--which made convulsive, ungenerous efforts to free itself, and was dragged into a position of rest against a stone cross in the middle of the place. The balloon pulled up with a jerk. In another moment a score of willing hands were tugging it earthward. At the same instant Bert became aware for the first time of a fresh breeze blowing about him.

For some seconds he stood staggering in the car, which now swayed sickeningly, surveying the exasperated crowd below him and trying to collect his mind. He was extraordinarily astonished at this run of mishaps. Were the people really so annoyed? Everybody seemed angry with him. No one seemed interested or amused by his arrival. A disproportionate amount of the outcry had the flavour of imprecation--had, indeed a strong flavour of riot. Several greatly uniformed officials in cocked hats struggled in vain to control the crowd. Fists and sticks were shaken. And when Bert saw a man on the outskirts of the crowd run to a haycart and get a brightly pronged pitch-fork, and a blue-clad soldier unbuckle his belt, his rising doubt whether this little town was after all such a good place for a landing became a certainty.

He had clung to the fancy that they would make something of a hero of him. Now he knew that he was mistaken.

He was perhaps ten feet above the people when he made his decision. His paralysis ceased. He leapt up on the seat, and, at imminent risk of falling headlong, released the grapnel-rope from the toggle that held it, sprang on to the trail rope and disengaged that also. A hoarse shout of disgust greeted the

descent of the grapnel-rope and the swift leap of the balloon, and something--he fancied afterwards it was a turnip--whizzed by his head. The trail-rope followed its fellow. The crowd seemed to jump away from him. With an immense and horrifying rustle the balloon brushed against a telephone pole, and for a tense instant he anticipated either an electric explosion or a bursting of the oiled silk, or both. But fortune was with him.

In another second he was cowering in the bottom of the car, and released from the weight of the grapnel and the two ropes, rushing up once more through the air. For a time he remained crouching, and when at last he looked out again the little town was very small and travelling, with the rest of lower Germany, in a circular orbit round and round the car--or atleast it appeared to be doing that. When he got used to it, he found this rotation of the balloon rather convenient; it saved moving about in the car.

5

Late in the afternoon of a pleasant summer day in the year 191-, if one may borrow a mode of phrasing that once found favour with the readers of the late G. P. R. James, a solitary balloonist--replacing. the solitary horseman of the classic romances--might have been observed wending his way across Franconia in a north-easterly direction, and at a height of about eleven thousand feet above the sea and still spindling slowly. His head was craned over the side of the car, and he surveyed the country below with an expression of profound perplexity; ever and again his lips shaped inaudible words. "Shootin' at a chap," for example, and "I'll come down right enough soon as I find out 'ow." Over the side of the basket the robe of the Desert Dervish was hanging, an appeal for consideration, an ineffectual white flag.

He was now very distinctly aware that the world below him, so far from being the naive countryside of his earlier imaginings that day, sleepily unconscious of him and capable of being amazed and nearly reverential at his descent, was acutely irritated by his career, and extremely impatient with the course he was taking.--But indeed it was not he who took that course, but his masters, the winds of heaven. Mysterious voices spoke to him in his ear, jerking the words up to him by means of megaphones, in a weird and startling ipanner, in a great variety of languages. Official-looking persons had signalled to him by means of flag flapping and arm waving. On the whole a guttural variant of English prevailed in the sentences that alighted upon the balloon; chiefly he was told to "gome down or you will be shot."

"All very well," said Bert, "but 'ow?"

Then they shot a little wide of the car. Latterly he had been shot at six or seven times, and once the bullet had gone by with a sound so persuasively like the tearing of silk that he had resigned himself to the prospect of a headlong fall. But either they were aiming near him or they had missed, and as yet nothing was torn but the air about him--and his anxious soul.

He was now enjoying a respite from these attentions, but he felt it was at best an interlude, and he was doing what he could to appreciate his position. Incidentally he was having some hot coffee and pie in an untidy inadvertent manner, with an eye fluttering nervously over the side of the car. At first he had ascribed the growing interest in his career to his ill-conceived attempt to land in the bright little upland town, but now he was beginning to realise that the military rather than the civil arm was concerned about him.

He was quite involuntarily playing that weird mysterious part--the part of an International Spy. He was seeing secret

things. He had, in fact, crossed the designs of no less a power than the German Empire, he had blundered into the hot focus of Welt-Politik, he was drifting helplessly towards the great Imperial secret, the immense aeronautic park that had been established at a headlong pace in Franconia to develop silently, swiftly, and on an immense scale the great discoveries of Hunstedt and Stossel, and so to give Germany before all other nations a fleet of airships, the air power and the Empire of the world.

Later, just before they shot him down altogether, Bert saw that great area of passionate work, warm lit in the evening light, a great area of upland on which the airships lay like a herd of grazing monsters at their feed. It was a vast busy space stretching away northward as far as he could see, methodically cut up into numbered sheds, gasometers, squad encampments, storage areas, interlaced with the omnipresent mono-rail lines, and altogether free from overhead wires or cables. Everywhere was the white, black and yellow of Imperial Germany, everywhere the black eagles spread their wings. Even without these indications, the large vigorous neatness of everything would have marked it German. Vast multitudes of men went to and fro, many in white and drab fatigue uniforms busy about the balloons, others drilling in sensible drab. Here and there a full uniform glittered. The airships chiefly engaged his attention, and he knew at once it was three of these he had seen on the previous night, taking advantage of the cloud welkin to manoeuvre unobserved. They were altogether fish-like. For the great airships with which Germany attacked New York in her last gigantic effort for world supremacy--before humanity realized that world supremacy was a dream--were the lineal descendants of the Zeppelin airship that flew over Lake Constance in 1906, and of the Lebaudy navigables that made their memorable excursions over Paris in 1907 and 1908.

These German airships were held together by rib-like skeletons of steel and aluminium and a stout inelastic canvas outer-skin, within which was an impervious rubber gas-bag, cut up by transverse dissepiments into from fifty to a hundred compartments. These were all absolutely gas tight and filled with hydrogen, and the entire aerostat was kept at any level by means of a long internal balloonette of oiled and toughened silk canvas, into which air could be forced and from which it could be pumped. So the airship could be made either heavier or lighter than air, and losses of weight through the consumption of fuel, the casting of bombs and so forth, could also be compensated by admitting air to sections of the general gas-bag. Ultimately that made a highly explosive mixture; but in all these matters risks must be taken and guarded against. There was a steel axis to the whole affair, a central backbone which terminated in the engine and propeller, and the men and magazines were forward in a series of cabins under the expanded headlike forepart. The engine, which was of the extraordinarily powerful Pforzheim type, that supreme triumph of German invention, was worked by wires from this forepart, which was indeed the only really habitable part of the ship. If anything went wrong, the engineers went aft along a rope ladder beneath the frame. The tendency of the whole affair to roll was partly corrected by a horizontal lateral fin on either side, and steering was chiefly effected by two vertical fins, which normally lay back like gill-flaps on either side of the head. It was indeed a most complete adaptation of the fish form to aerial conditions, the position of swimming bladder, eyes, and brain being, however, below instead of above. A striking, and unfish-like feature was the apparatus for wireless telegraphy that dangled from the forward cabin--that is to say, under the chin of the fish.

These monsters were capable of ninety miles an hour in a calm, so that they could face and make headway against nearly everything except the fiercest tornado. They varied in length from eight

hundred to two thousand feet, and they had a carrying power of from seventy to two hundred tons. How many Germany possessed history does not record, but Bert counted nearly eighty great bulks receding in perspective during his brief inspection. Such were the instruments on which she chiefly relied to sustain her in her repudiation of the Monroe Doctrine and her bold bid for a share in the empire of the New World. But not altogether did she rely on these; she had also a one-man bomb-throwing Drachenflieger of unknown value among the resources.

But the Drachenflieger were away in the second great aeronautic park east of Hamburg, and Bert Smallways saw nothing of them in the bird's-eye view he took of the Franconian establishment before they shot him down very neatly. The bullet tore past him and made a sort of pop as it pierced his balloon--a pop that was followed by a rustling sigh and a steady downward movement. And when in the confusion of the moment he dropped a bag of ballast, the Germans, very politely but firmly overcame his scruples by shooting his balloon again twice.

CHAPTER IV THE GERMAN AIR-FLEET

1

Of all the productions of the human imagination that make the world in which Mr. Bert Smallways lived confusingly wonderful, there was none quite so strange, so headlong and disturbing, so noisy and persuasive and dangerous, as the modernisations of patriotism produced by imperial and international politics. In the soul of all men is a liking for kind, a pride in one's own atmosphere, a tenderness for one's Mother speech and one's familiar land. Before the coming of the Scientific Age this

group of gentle and noble emotions had been a fine factor in the equipment of every worthy human being, a fine factor that had its less amiable aspect in a usually harmless hostility to strange people, and a usually harmless detraction of strange lands. But with the wild rush of change in the pace, scope, materials, scale, and possibilities of human life that then occurred, the old boundaries, the old seclusions and separations were violently broken down. All the old settled mental habits and traditions of men found themselves not simply confronted by new conditions, but by constantly renewed and changing new conditions. They had no chance of adapting themselves. They were annihilated or perverted or inflamed beyond recognition.

Bert Smallways' grandfather, in the days when Bun Hill was a village under the sway of Sir Peter Bone's parent, had "known his place" to the uttermost farthing, touched his hat to his betters, despised and condescended to his inferiors, and hadn't changed an idea from the cradle to the grave. He was Kentish and English, and that meant hops, beer, dog-rose's, and the sort of sunshine that was best in the world. Newspapers and politics and visits to "Lunnon" weren't for the likes of him. Then came the change. These earlier chapters have given an idea of what happened to Bun Hill, and how the flood of novel things had poured over its devoted rusticity. Bert Smallways was only one of countless millions in Europe and America and Asia who, instead of being born rooted in the soil, were born struggling in a torrent they never clearly understood. All the faiths of their fathers had been taken by surprise, and startled into the strangest forms and reactions. Particularly did the fine old tradition of patriotism get perverted and distorted in the rush of the new times. Instead of the sturdy establishment in prejudice of Bert's grandfather, to whom the word "Frenchified" was the ultimate term of contempt, there flowed through Bert's brain a squittering succession of thinly violent ideas about German competition, about the Yellow Danger, about the Black Peril, about the White

Man's Burthen--that is to say, Bert's preposterous right to muddle further the naturally very muddled politics of the entirely similar little cads to himself (except for a smear of brown) who smoked cigarettes and rode bicycles in Buluwayo, Kingston (Jamaica), or Bombay. These were Bert's "Subject Races," and he was ready to die--by proxy in the person of any one who cared to enlist--to maintain his hold upon that right. It kept him awake at nights to think that he might lose it.

The essential fact of the politics of the age in which Bert Smallways lived--the age that blundered at last into the catastrophe of the War in the Air--was a very simple one, if only people had had the intelligence to be simple about it. The development of Science had altered the scale of human affairs. By means of rapid mechanical traction, it had brought men nearer together, so much nearer socially, economically, physically, that the old separations into nations and kingdoms were no longer possible, a newer, wider synthesis was not only needed, but imperatively demanded. Just as the once independent dukedoms of France had to fuse into a nation, so now the nations had to adapt themselves to a wider coalescence, they had to keep what was precious and possible, and concede what was obsolete and dangerous. A saner world would have perceived this patent need for a reasonable synthesis, would have discussed it temperately, achieved and gone on to organise the great civilisation that was manifestly possible to mankind. The world of Bert Smallways did nothing of the sort. Its national governments, its national interests, would not hear of anything so obvious; they were too suspicious of each other, too wanting in generous imaginations. They began to behave like ill-bred people in a crowded public car, to squeeze against one another, elbow, thrust, dispute and quarrel. Vain to point out to them that they had only to rearrange themselves to be comfortable. Everywhere, all over the world, the historian, of the early twentieth century finds the same thing, the flow and rearrangement of human affairs

inextricably entangled by the old areas, the old prejudices and a sort of heated irascible stupidity, and everywhere congested nations in inconvenient areas, slopping population and produce into each other, annoying each other with tariffs, and every possible commercial vexation, and threatening each other with navies and armies that grew every year more portentous.

It is impossible now to estimate how much of the intellectual and physical energy of the world was wasted in military preparation and equipment, but it was an enormous proportion. Great Britain spent upon army and navy money and capacity, that directed into the channels of physical culture and education would have made the British the aristocracy of the world. Her rulers could have kept the whole population learning and exercising up to the age of eighteen and made a broad-chested and intelligent man of every Bert Smallways in the islands, had they given the resources they spent in war material to the making of men. Instead of which they wagged flags at him until he was fourteen, incited him to cheer, and then turned him out of school to begin that career of private enterprise we have compactly recorded. France achieved similar imbecilities; Germany was, if possible worse; Russia under the waste and stresses of militarism festered towards bankruptcy and decay. All Europe was producing big guns and countless swarms of little Smallways. The Asiatic peoples had been forced in self-defence into a like diversion of the new powers science had brought them. On the eve of the outbreak of the war there were six great powers in the world and a cluster of smaller ones, each armed to the teeth and straining every nerve to get ahead of the others in deadliness of equipment and military efficiency. The great powers were first the United States, a nation addicted to commerce, but roused to military necessities by the efforts of Germany to expand into South America, and by the natural consequences of her own unwary annexations of land in the very teeth of Japan. She maintained two immense fleets east and west, and internally she was in

violent conflict between Federal and State governments upon the question of universal service in a defensive militia. Next came the great alliance of Eastern Asia, a close-knit coalescence of China and Japan, advancing with rapid strides year by year to predominance in the world's affairs. Then the German alliance still struggled to achieve its dream of imperial expansion, and its imposition of the German language upon a forcibly united Europe. These were the three most spirited and aggressive powers in the world. Far more pacific was the British Empire, perilously scattered over the globe, and distracted now by insurrectionary movements in Ireland and among all its Subject Races. It had given these subject races cigarettes, boots, bowler hats, cricket, race meetings, cheap revolvers, petroleum, the factory system of industry, halfpenny newspapers in both English and the vernacular, inexpensive university degrees, motor-bicycles and electric trams; it had produced a considerable literature expressing contempt for the Subject Races, and rendered it freely accessible to them, and it had been content to believe that nothing would result from these stimulants because somebody once wrote "the immemorial east"; and also, in the inspired words of Kipling--

East is east and west is west,
And never the twain shall meet.

Instead of which, Egypt, India, and the subject countries generally had produced new generations in a state of passionate indignation and the utmost energy, activity and modernity. The governing class in Great Britain was slowly adapting itself to a new conception, of the Subject Races as waking peoples, and finding its efforts to keep the Empire together under these strains and changing ideas greatly impeded by the entirely sporting spirit with which Bert Smallways at home (by the million) cast his vote, and by the tendency of his more highly

coloured equivalents to be disrespectful to irascible officials. Their impertinence was excessive; it was no mere stone-throwing and shouting. They would quote Burns at them and Mill and Darwin and confute them in arguments.

Even more pacific than the British Empire were France and its allies, the Latin powers, heavily armed states indeed, but reluctant warriors, and in many ways socially and politically leading western civilisation. Russia was a pacific power perforce, divided within itself, torn between revolutionaries and reactionaries who were equally incapable of social reconstruction, and so sinking towards a tragic disorder of chronic political vendetta. Wedged in among these portentous larger bulks, swayed and threatened by them, the smaller states of the world maintained a precarious independence, each keeping itself armed as dangerously as its utmost ability could contrive.

So it came about that in every country a great and growing body of energetic and inventive men was busied either for offensive or defensive ends, in elaborating the apparatus of war, until the accumulating tensions should reach the breaking-point. Each power sought to keep its preparations secret, to hold new weapons in reserve, to anticipate and learn the preparations of its rivals. The feeling of danger from fresh discoveries affected the patriotic imagination of every people in the world. Now it was rumoured the British had an overwhelming gun, now the French an invincible rifle, now the Japanese a new explosive, now the Americans a submarine that would drive every ironclad from the seas. Each time there would be a war panic.

The strength and heart of the nations was given to the thought of war, and yet the mass of their citizens was a teeming democracy as heedless of and unfitted for fighting, mentally, morally, physically, as any population has ever been--or, one ventures to add, could ever be. That was the paradox of the time. It was a

period altogether unique in the world's history. The apparatus of warfare, the art and method of fighting, changed absolutely every dozen years in a stupendous progress towards perfection, and people grew less and less warlike, and there was no war.

And then at last it came. It came as a surprise to all the world because its real causes were hidden. Relations were strained between Germany and the United States because of the intense exasperation of a tariff conflict and the ambiguous attitude of the former power towards the Monroe Doctrine, and they were strained between the United States and Japan because of the perennial citizenship question. But in both cases these were standing causes of offence. The real deciding cause, it is now known, was the perfecting of the Pforzheim engine by Germany and the consequent possibility of a rapid and entirely practicable airship. At that time Germany was by far the most efficient power in the world, better organised for swift and secret action, better equipped with the resources of modern science, and with her official and administrative classes at a higher level of education and training. These things she knew, and she exaggerated that knowledge to the pitch of contempt for the secret counsels of her neighbours. It may be that with the habit of self-confidence her spying upon them had grown less thorough. Moreover, she had a tradition of unsentimental and unscrupulous action that vitiated her international outlook profoundly. With the coming of these new weapons her collective intelligence thrilled with the sense that now her moment had come. Once again in the history of progress it seemed she held the decisive weapon. Now she might strike and conquer--before the others had anything but experiments in the air.

Particularly she must strike America, swiftly, because there, if anywhere, lay the chance of an aerial rival. It was known that America possessed a flying-machine of considerable practical value, developed out of the Wright model; but it was not supposed

that the Washington War Office had made any wholesale attempts to create air aerial navy. It was necessary to strike before they could do so. France had a fleet of slow navigables, several dating from 1908, that could make no possible headway against the new type. They had been built solely for reconnoitring purposes on the eastern frontier, they were mostly too small to carry more than a couple, of dozen men without arms or provisions, and not one could do forty miles. an hour. Great Britain, it seemed, in an access of meanness, temporised and wrangled with the imperial spirited Butteridge and his extraordinary invention. That also was not in play--and could not be for some months at the earliest. From Asia there, came no sign. The Germans explained this by saying the yellow peoples were without invention. No other competitor was worth considering. "Now or never," said the Germans--"now or never we may seize the air--as once the British seized the seas! While all the other powers are still experimenting."

Swift and systematic and secret were their preparations, and their plan most excellent. So far as their knowledge went, America was the only dangerous possibility; America, which was also now the leading trade rival of Germany and one of the chief barriers to her Imperial expansion. So at once they would strike at America. They would fling a great force across the Atlantic heavens and bear America down unwarned and unprepared.

Altogether it was a well-imagined and most hopeful and spirited enterprise, having regard to the information in the possession of the German government. The chances of it being a successful surprise were very great. The airship and the flying-machine were very different things from ironclads, which take a couple of years to build. Given hands, given plant, they could be made innumerable in a few weeks. Once the needful parks and foundries were organised, air-ships and Dracheinflieger could be poured into the sky. Indeed, when the time came, they did pour into the

sky like, as a bitter French writer put it, flies roused from filth.

The attack upon America was to be the first move in this tremendous game. But no sooner had it started than instantly the aeronautic parks were to proceed to put together and inflate the second fleet which was to dominate Europe and manoeuvre significantly over London, Paris, Rome, St. Petersburg, or wherever else its moral effect was required. A World Surprise it was to be--no less a World Conquest; and it is wonderful how near the calmly adventurous minds that planned it came to succeeding in their colossal design.

Von Sternberg was the Moltke of this War in the Air, but it was the curious hard romanticism of Prince Karl Albert that won over the hesitating Emperor to the scheme. Prince Karl Albert was indeed the central figure of the world drama. He was the darling of the Imperialist spirit in German, and the ideal of the new aristocratic feeling--the new Chivalry, as it was called--that followed the overthrow of Socialism through its internal divisions and lack of discipline, and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few great families. He was compared by obsequious flatterers to the Black Prince, to Alcibiades, to the young Caesar. To many he seemed Nietzsche's Overman revealed. He was big and blond and virile, and splendidly non-moral. The first great feat that startled Europe, and almost brought about a new Trojan war, was his abduction of the Princess Helena of Norway and his blank refusal to marry her. Then followed his marriage with Gretchen Krass, a Swiss girl of peerless beauty. Then came the gallant rescue, which almost cost him his life, of three drowning sailors whose boat had upset in the sea near Heligoland. For that and his victory over the American yacht Defender, C.C.I., the Emperor forgave him and placed him in control of the new aeronautic arm of the German forces. This he developed with marvellous energy and ability,

being resolved, as he said, to give to Germany land and sea and sky. The national passion for aggression found in him its supreme exponent, and achieved through him its realisation in this astounding war. But his fascination was more than national; all over the world his ruthless strength dominated minds as the Napoleonic legend had dominated minds. Englishmen turned in disgust from the slow, complex, civilised methods of their national politics to this uncompromising, forceful figure. Frenchmen believed in him. Poems were written to him in American.

He made the war.

Quite equally with the rest of the world, the general German population was taken by surprise by the swift vigour of the Imperial government. A considerable literature of military forecasts, beginning as early as 1906 with Rudolf Martin, the author not merely of a brilliant book of anticipations, but of a proverb, "The future of Germany lies in the air," had, however, partially prepared the German imagination for some such enterprise.

2

Of all these world-forces and gigantic designs Bert Smallways knew nothing until he found himself in the very focus of it all and gaped down amazed on the spectacle of that giant herd of air-ships. Each one seemed as long as the Strand, and as big about as Trafalgar Square. Some must have been a third of a mile in length. He had never before seen anything so vast and disciplined as this tremendous park. For the first time in his life he really had an intimation of the extraordinary and quite important things of which a contemporary may go in ignorance. He had always clung to the illusion that Germans were fat, absurd men, who smoked china pipes, and were addicted to knowledge and

horseflesh and sauerkraut and indigestible things generally.

His bird's-eye view was quite transitory. He ducked at the first shot; and directly his balloon began to drop, his mind ran confusedly upon how he might explain himself, and whether he should pretend to be Butteridge or not. "O Lord!" he groaned, in an agony of indecision. Then his eye caught his sandals, and he felt a spasm of self-disgust. "They'll think I'm a bloomin' idiot," he said, and then it was he rose up desperately and threw over the sand-bag and provoked the second and third shots.

It flashed into his head, as he cowered in the bottom of the car, that he might avoid all sorts of disagreeable and complicated explanations by pretending to be mad.

That was his last idea before the airships seemed to rush up about him as if to look at him, and his car hit the ground and bounded and pitched him out on his head....

He awoke to find himself famous, and to hear a voice crying, "Booteraidge! Ja! Jai Herr Booteraidge! Selbst!"

He was lying on a little patch of grass beside one of the main avenues of the aeronautic park. The airships receded down a great vista, an immense perspective, and the blunt prow of each was adorned with a black eagle of a hundred feet or so spread. Down the other side of the avenue ran a series of gas generators, and big hose-pipes trailed everywhere across the intervening space. Close at hand was his now nearly deflated balloon and the car on its side looking minutely small, a mere broken toy, a shrivelled bubble, in contrast with the gigantic bulk of the nearer airship. This he saw almost end-on, rising like a cliff and sloping forward towards its fellow on the other side so as to overshadow the alley between them. There was a crowd of excited people about him, big men mostly in tight uniforms. Everybody

was talking, and several were shouting, in German; he knew that because they splashed and aspirated sounds like startled kittens.

Only one phrase, repeated again and again could he recognize--the name of "Herr Booteraidge."

"Gollys!" said Bert. "They've spotted it."

"Besser," said some one, and some rapid German followed.

He perceived that close at hand was a field telephone, and that a tall officer in blue was talking thereat about him. Another stood close beside him with the portfolio of drawings and photographs in his hand. They looked round at him.

"Do you spik Cherman, Herr Booteraidge?"

Bert decided that he had better be dazed. He did his best to seem thoroughly dazed. "Where AM I?" he asked.

Volubility prevailed. "Der Prinz," was mentioned. A bugle sounded far away, and its call was taken up by one nearer, and then by one close at hand. This seemed to increase the excitement greatly. A mono-rail car bumped past. The telephone bell rang passionately, and the tall officer seemed to engage in a heated altercation. Then he approached the group about Bert, calling out something about "mitbringen."

An earnest-faced, emaciated man with a white moustache appealed to Bert. "Herr Booteraidge, sir, we are chust to start!"

"Where am I?" Bert repeated.

Some one shook him by the other shoulder. "Are you Herr Booteraidge?" he asked.

"Herr Booteraidge, we are chust to start!" repeated the white moustache, and then helplessly, "What is de goot? What can we do?"

The officer from the telephone repeated his sentence about "Der Prinz" and "mitbringen." The man with the moustache stared for a moment, grasped an idea and became violently energetic, stood up and bawled directions at unseen people. Questions were asked, and the doctor at Bert's side answered, "Ja! Ja!" several times, also something about "Kopf." With a certain urgency he got Bert rather unwillingly to his feet. Two huge soldiers in grey advanced upon Bert and seized hold of him. "'Ullo!" said Bert, startled. "What's up?"

"It is all right," the doctor explained; "they are to carry you."

"Where?" asked Bert, unanswered.

"Put your arms roundt their--hals--round them!"

"Yes! but where?"

"Hold tight!"

Before Bert could decide to say anything more he was whisked up by the two soldiers. They joined hands to seat him, and his arms were put about their necks. "Vorwarts!" Some one ran before him with the portfolio, and he was borne rapidly along the broad avenue between the gas generators and the airships, rapidly and on the whole smoothly except that once or twice his bearers stumbled over hose-pipes and nearly let him down.

He was wearing Mr. Butteridge's Alpine cap, and his little shoulders were in Mr. Butteridge's fur-lined overcoat, and he had

responded to Mr. Butteridge's name. The sandals dangled helplessly. Gaw! Everybody seemed in a devil of a hurry. Why? He was carried joggling and gaping through the twilight, marvelling beyond measure.

The systematic arrangement of wide convenient spaces, the quantities of business-like soldiers everywhere, the occasional neat piles of material, the ubiquitous mono-rail lines, and the towering ship-like hulls about him, reminded him a little of impressions he had got as a boy on a visit to Woolwich Dockyard. The whole camp reflected the colossal power of modern science that had created it. A peculiar strangeness was produced by the lowness of the electric light, which lay upon the ground, casting all shadows upwards and making a grotesque shadow figure of himself and his bearers on the airship sides, fusing all three of them into a monstrous animal with attenuated legs and an immense fan-like humped body. The lights were on the ground because as far as possible all poles and standards had been dispensed with to prevent complications when the airships rose.

It was deep twilight now, a tranquil blue-skyed evening; everything rose out from the splashes of light upon the ground into dim translucent tall masses; within the cavities of the airships small inspecting lamps glowed like cloud-veiled stars, and made them seem marvellously unsubstantial. Each airship had its name in black letters on white on either flank, and forward the Imperial eagle sprawled, an overwhelming bird in the dimness.

Bugles sounded, mono-rail cars of quiet soldiers slithered burbling by. The cabins under the heads of the airships were being lit up; doors opened in them, and revealed padded passages.

Now and then a voice gave directions to workers indistinctly seen.

There was a matter of sentinels, gangways and a long narrow passage, a scramble over a disorder of baggage, and then Bert found himself lowered to the ground and standing in the doorway of a spacious cabin--it was perhaps ten feet square and eight high, furnished with crimson padding and aluminium. A tall, bird-like young man with a small head, a long nose, and very pale hair, with his hands full of things like shaving-strops, boot-trees, hair-brushes, and toilet tidies, was saying things about Gott and thunder and Dummer Booteraidge as Bert entered. He was apparently an evicted occupant. Then he vanished, and Bert was lying back on a couch in the corner with a pillow under his head and the door of the cabin shut upon him. He was alone. Everybody had hurried out again astonishingly.

"Gollys!" said Bert. "What next?"

He stared about him at the room.

"Butteridge! Shall I try to keep it up, or shan't I?"

The room he was in puzzled him. "'Tisn't a prison and 'tisn't a norfis?" Then the old trouble came uppermost. "I wish to 'eaven I adn't these silly sandals on," he cried querulously to the universe. "They give the whole blessed show away."

3

His door was flung open, and a compact young man in uniform appeared, carrying Mr. Butteridge's portfolio, rucksac, and shaving-glass.

"I say!" he said in faultless English as he entered. He had a beaming face, and a sort of pinkish blond hair. "Fancy you being Butteridge. He slapped Bert's meagre luggage down.

"We'd have started," he said, "in another half-hour! You didn't give yourself much time!"

He surveyed Bert curiously. His gaze rested for a fraction of a moment on the sandals. "You ought to have come on your flying-machine, Mr. Butteridge."

He didn't wait for an answer. "The Prince says I've got to look after you. Naturally he can't see you now, but he thinks your coming's providential. Last grace of Heaven. Like a sign. Hullo!"

He stood still and listened.

Outside there was a going to and fro of feet, a sound of distant bugles suddenly taken up and echoed close at hand, men called out in loud tones short, sharp, seemingly vital things, and were answered distantly. A bell jangled, and feet went down the corridor. Then came a stillness more distracting than sound, and then a great gurgling and rushing and splashing of water. The young man's eyebrows lifted. He hesitated, and dashed out of the room. Presently came a stupendous bang to vary the noises without, then a distant cheering. The young man re-appeared.

"They're running the water out of the ballonette already."

"What water?" asked Bert.

"The water that anchored us. Artful dodge. Eh?"

Bert tried to take it in.

"Of course!" said the compact young man. "You don't understand."

A gentle quivering crept upon Bert's senses. "That's the engine,"

said the compact young man approvingly. "Now we shan't be long."

Another long listening interval.

The cabin swayed. "By Jove! we're starting already;" he cried. "We're starting!"

"Starting!" cried Bert, sitting up. "Where?"

But the young man was out of the room again. There were noises of German in the passage, and other nerve-shaking sounds.

The swaying increased. The young man reappeared. "We're off, right enough!"

"I say!", said Bert, "where are we starting? I wish you'd explain. What's this place? I don't understand."

"What!" cried the young man, "you don't understand?"

"No. I'm 'all dazed-like from that crack on the nob I got. Where ARE we? WHERE are we starting?"

"Don't you know where you are--what this is?"

"Not a bit of it! What's all the swaying and the row?"

"What a lark!" cried the young man. "I say! What a thundering lark! Don't you know? We're off to America, and you haven't realised. You've just caught us by a neck. You're on the blessed old flagship with the Prince. You won't miss anything. Whatever's on, you bet the Vaterland will be there."

"Us!--off to America?"

"Ra--ther!

"In an airship?"

"What do YOU think?"

"Me! going to America on an airship! After that balloon! 'Ere! I say--I don't want to go! I want to walk about on my legs. Let me get out! I didn't understand."

He made a dive for the door.

The young man arrested Bert with a gesture, took hold of a strap, lifted up a panel in the padded wall, and a window appeared.

"Look!" he said. Side by side they looked out.

"Gaw!" said Bert. "We're going up!"

"We are!" said the young man, cheerfully; "fast!"

They were rising in the air smoothly and quietly, and moving slowly to the throb of the engine athwart the aeronautic park. Down below it stretched, dimly geometrical in the darkness, picked out at regular intervals by glow-worm spangles of light. One black gap in the long line of grey, round-backed airships marked the position from which the Vaterland had come. Beside it a second monster now rose softly, released from its bonds and cables into the air. Then, taking a beautifully exact distance, a third ascended, and then a fourth.

"Too late, Mr. Butteridge!" the young man remarked. "We're off! I daresay it is a bit of a shock to you, but there you are! The Prince said you'd have to come."

"Look 'ere, " said Bert. "I really am dazed. What's this thing?"

Where are we going?"

"This, Mr. Butteridge," said the young man, taking pains to be explicit, "is an airship. It's the flagship of Prince Karl Albert. This is the German air-fleet, and it is going over to America, to give that spirited people 'what for.' The only thing we were at all uneasy about was your invention. And here you are!"

"But!--you a German?" asked Bert.

"Lieutenant Kurt. Luft-lieutenant Kurt, at your service."

"But you speak English!"

"Mother was English--went to school in England. Afterwards, Rhodes scholar. German none the less for that. Detailed for the present, Mr. Butteridge, to look after you. You're shaken by your fall. It's all right, really. They're going to buy your machine and everything. You sit down, and take it quite calmly. You'll soon get the hang of the position."

4

Bert sat down on the locker, collecting his mind, and the young man talked to him about the airship.

He was really a very tactful young man indeed, in a natural sort of way. "Daresay all this is new to you," he said; "not your sort of machine. These cabins aren't half bad."

He got up and walked round the little apartment, showing its points.

"Here is the bed," he said, whipping down a couch from the wall

and throwing it back again with a click. "Here are toilet things," and he opened a neatly arranged cupboard. "Not much washing. No water we've got; no water at all except for drinking. No baths or anything until we get to America and land. Rub over with loofah. One pint of hot for shaving. That's all. In the locker below you are rugs and blankets; you will need them presently. They say it gets cold. I don't know. Never been up before. Except a little work with gliders--which is mostly going down. Three-quarters of the chaps in the fleet haven't. Here's a folding-chair and table behind the door. Compact, eh?"

He took the chair and balanced it on his little finger. "Pretty light, eh? Aluminium and magnesium alloy and a vacuum inside. All these cushions stuffed with hydrogen. Foxy! The whole ship's like that. And not a man in the fleet, except the Prince and one or two others, over eleven stone. Couldn't sweat the Prince, you know. We'll go all over the thing to-morrow. I'm frightfully keen on it."

He beamed at Bert. "You DO look young," he remarked. "I always thought you'd be an old man with a beard--a sort of philosopher. I don't know why one should expect clever people always to be old. I do."

Bert parried that compliment a little awkwardly, and then the lieutenant was struck with the riddle why Herr Butteridge had not come in his own flying machine.

"It's a long story," said Bert. "Look here!" he said abruptly, "I wish you'd lend me a pair of slippers, or something. I'm regular sick of these sandals. They're rotten things. I've been trying them for a friend."

"Right O!"

The ex-Rhodes scholar whisked out of the room and reappeared with a considerable choice of footwear--pumps, cloth bath-slippers, and a purple pair adorned with golden sun-flowers.

But these he repented of at the last moment.

"I don't even wear them myself," he said. "Only brought 'em in the zeal of the moment." He laughed confidentially. "Had 'em worked for me--in Oxford. By a friend. Take 'em everywhere."

So Bert chose the pumps.

The lieutenant broke into a cheerful snigger. "Here we are trying on slippers," he said, "and the world going by like a panorama below. Rather a lark, eh? Look!"

Bert peeped with him out of the window, looking from the bright pettiness of the red-and-silver cabin into a dark immensity. The land below, except for a lake, was black and featureless, and the other airships were hidden. "See more outside," said the lieutenant. "Let's go! There's a sort of little gallery."

He led the way into the long passage, which was lit by one small electric light, past some notices in German, to an open balcony and a light ladder and gallery of metal, lattice overhanging, empty space. Bert followed his leader down to the gallery slowly and cautiously. From it he was able to watch the wonderful spectacle of the first air-fleet flying through the night. They flew in a wedge-shaped formation, the Vaterland highest and leading, the tail receding into the corners of the sky. They flew in long, regular undulations, great dark fish-like shapes, showing hardly any light at all, the engines making a throb-throb-throbbing sound that was very audible out on the gallery. They were going at a level of five or six thousand feet, and rising steadily. Below, the country lay silent, a

clear darkness dotted and lined out with clusters of furnaces, and the lit streets of a group of big towns. The world seemed to lie in a bowl; the overhanging bulk of the airship above hid all but the lowest levels of the sky.

They watched the landscape for a space.

"Jolly it must be to invent things," said the lieutenant suddenly. "How did you come to think of your machine first?"

"Worked it out," said Bert, after a pause. "Jest ground away at it."

"Our people are frightfully keen on you. They thought the British had got you. Weren't the British keen?"

"In a way," said Bert. "Still--its a long story."

"I think it's an immense thing--to invent. I couldn't invent a thing to save my life."

They both fell silent, watching the darkened world and following their thoughts until a bugle summoned them to a belated dinner. Bert was suddenly alarmed. "Don't you 'ave to dress and things?" he said. "I've always been too hard at Science and things to go into Society and all that."

"No fear," said Kurt. "Nobody's got more than the clothes they wear. We're travelling light. You might perhaps take your overcoat off. They've an electric radiator each end of the room."

And so presently Bert found himself sitting to eat in the presence of the "German Alexander"--that great and puissant Prince, Prince Karl Albert, the War Lord, the hero of two

hemispheres. He was a handsome, blond man, with deep-set eyes, a snub nose, upturned moustache, and long white hands, a strange-looking man. He sat higher than the others, under a black eagle with widespread wings and the German Imperial flags; he was, as it were, enthroned, and it struck Bert greatly that as he ate he did not look at people, but over their heads like one who sees visions. Twenty officers of various ranks stood about the table--and Bert. They all seemed extremely curious to see the famous Butteridge, and their astonishment at his appearance was ill-controlled. The Prince gave him a dignified salutation, to which, by an inspiration, he bowed. Standing next the Prince was a brown-faced, wrinkled man with silver spectacles and fluffy, dingy-grey side-whiskers, who regarded Bert with a peculiar and disconcerting attention. The company sat after ceremonies Bert could not understand. At the other end of the table was the bird-faced officer Bert had dispossessed, still looking hostile and whispering about Bert to his neighbour. Two soldiers waited. The dinner was a plain one--a soup, some fresh mutton, and cheese--and there was very little talk.

A curious solemnity indeed brooded over every one. Partly this was reaction after the intense toil and restrained excitement of starting; partly it was the overwhelming sense of strange new experiences, of portentous adventure. The Prince was lost in thought. He roused himself to drink to the Emperor in champagne, and the company cried "Hoch!" like men repeating responses in church.

No smoking was permitted, but some of the officers went down to the little open gallery to chew tobacco. No lights whatever were safe amidst that bundle of inflammable things. Bert suddenly fell yawning and shivering. He was overwhelmed by a sense of his own insignificance amidst these great rushing monsters of the air. He felt life was' too big for him--too much for him altogether.

He said something to Kurt about his head, went up the steep ladder from the swaying little gallery into the airship again, and so, as if it were a refuge, to bed.

5

Bert slept for a time, and then his sleep was broken by dreams. Mostly he was fleeing from formless terrors down an interminable passage in an airship--a passage paved at first with ravenous trap-doors, and then with openwork canvas of the most careless description.

"Gaw!" said Bert, turning over after his seventh fall through infinite space that night.

He sat up in the darkness and nursed his knees. The progress of the airship was not nearly so smooth as a balloon; he could feel a regular swaying up, up, up and then down, down, down, and the throbbing and tremulous quiver of the engines.

His mind began to teem with memories--more memories and more.

Through them, like a struggling swimmer in broken water, came the perplexing question, what am I to do to-morrow? To-morrow, Kurt had told him, the Prince's secretary, the Graf Von Winterfeld, would come to him and discuss his flying-machine, and then he would see the Prince. He would have to stick it out now that he was Butteridge, and sell his invention. And then, if they found him out! He had a vision of infuriated Butteridges.... Suppose after all he owned up? Pretended it was their misunderstanding? He began to scheme devices for selling the secret and circumventing Butteridge.

What should he ask for the thing? Somehow twenty thousand pounds

struck him as about the sum indicated.

He fell into that despondency that lies in wait in the small hours. He had got too big a job on--too big a job....

Memories swamped his scheming.

"Where was I this time last night?"

He recapitulated his evenings tediously and lengthily. Last night he had been up above the clouds in Butteridge's balloon. He thought of the moment when he dropped through them and saw the cold twilight sea close below. He still remembered that disagreeable incident with a nightmare vividness. And the night before he and Grubb had been looking for cheap lodgings at Littlestone in Kent. How remote that seemed now. It might be years ago. For the first time he thought of his fellow Desert Dervish, left with the two red-painted bicycles on Dymchurch sands. "'E won't make much of a show of it, not without me. Any'ow 'e did 'ave the treasury--such as it was--in his pocket!" ...The night before that was Bank Holiday night and they had sat discussing their minstrel enterprise, drawing up a programme and rehearsing steps. And the night before was Whit Sunday. "Lord!" cried Bert, "what a doing that motor-bicycle give me!" He recalled the empty flapping of the eviscerated cushion, the feeling of impotence as the flames rose again. From among the confused memories of that tragic flare one little figure emerged very bright and poignantly sweet, Edna, crying back reluctantly from the departing motor-car, "See you to-morrer, Bert?"

Other memories of Edna clustered round that impression. They led Bert's mind step by step to an agreeable state that found expression in "I'll marry 'ER if she don't look out." And then in a flash it followed in his mind that if he sold the Butteridge secret he could! Suppose after all he did get twenty thousand

pounds; such sums have been paid! With that he could buy house and garden, buy new clothes beyond dreaming, buy a motor, travel, have every delight of the civilised life as he knew it, for himself and Edna. Of course, risks were involved. "I'll 'ave old Butteridge on my track, I expect!"

He meditated upon that. He declined again to despondency. As yet he was only in the beginning of the adventure. He had still to deliver the goods and draw the cash. And before that--Just now he was by no means on his way home. He was flying off to America to fight there. "Not much fighting," he considered; "all our own way." Still, if a shell did happen to hit the Vaterland on the underside!...

"S'pose I ought to make my will."

He lay back for some time composing wills--chiefly in favour of Edna. He had settled now it was to be twenty thousand pounds. He left a number of minor legacies. The wills became more and more meandering and extravagant....

He woke from the eighth repetition of his nightmare fall through space. "This flying gets on one's nerves," he said.

He could feel the airship diving down, down, down, then slowly swinging to up, up, up. Throb, throb, throb, throb, quivered the engine.

He got up presently and wrapped himself about with Mr. Butteridge's overcoat and all the blankets, for the air was very keen. Then he peeped out of the window to see a grey dawn breaking over clouds, then turned up his light and bolted his door, sat down to the table, and produced his chest-protector.

He smoothed the crumpled plans with his hand, and contemplated

them. Then he referred to the other drawings in the portfolio. Twenty thousand pounds. If he worked it right! It was worth trying, anyhow.

Presently he opened the drawer in which Kurt had put paper and writing-materials.

Bert Smallways was by no means a stupid person, and up to a certain limit he had not been badly educated. His board school had taught him to draw up to certain limits, taught him to calculate and understand a specification. If at that point his country had tired of its efforts, and handed him over unfinished to scramble for a living in an atmosphere of advertisements and individual enterprise, that was really not his fault. He was as his State had made him, and the reader must not imagine because he was a little Cockney cad, that he was absolutely incapable of grasping the idea of the Butteridge flying-machine. But he found it stiff and perplexing. His motor-bicycle and Grubb's experiments and the "mechanical drawing" he had done in standard seven all helped him out; and, moreover, the maker of these drawings, whoever he was, had been anxious to make his intentions plain. Bert copied sketches, he made notes, he made a quite tolerable and intelligent copy of the essential drawings and sketches of the others. Then he fell into a meditation upon them.

At last he rose with a sigh, folded up the originals that had formerly been in his chest-protector and put them into the breast-pocket of his jacket, and then very carefully deposited the copies he had made in the place of the originals. He had no very clear plan in his mind in doing this, except that he hated the idea of altogether parting with the secret. For a long time he meditated profoundly--nodding. Then he turned out his light and went to bed again and schemed himself to sleep.

The hochgeboren Graf von Winterfeld was also a light sleeper that night, but then he was one of these people who sleep little and play chess problems in their heads to while away the time--and that night he had a particularly difficult problem to solve.

He came in upon Bert while he was still in bed in the glow of the sunlight reflected from the North Sea below, consuming the rolls and coffee a soldier had brought him. He had a portfolio under his arm, and in the clear, early morning light his dingy grey hair and heavy, silver-rimmed spectacles made him look almost benevolent. He spoke English fluently, but with a strong German flavour. He was particularly bad with his "b's," and his "th's" softened towards weak "z'ds." He called Bert explosively, "Pooterage." He began with some indistinct civilities, bowed, took a folding-table and chair from behind the door, put the former between himself and Bert, sat down on the latter, coughed drily, and opened his portfolio. Then he put his elbows on the table, pinched his lower lip with his two fore-fingers, and regarded Bert disconcertingly with magnified eyes. "You came to us, Herr Pooterage, against your will," he said at last.

"Ow d'you make that out?" asked Bert, after a pause of astonishment.

"I chuge by ze maps in your car. They were all English. And your provisions. They were all picnic. Also your cords were entangled. You haf' been tugging--but no good. You could not manage ze balloon, and anuzzer power than yours prought you to us. Is it not so?"

Bert thought.

"Also--where is ze laty?"

"Ere!--what lady?"

"You started with a lady. That is evident. You started for an afternoon excursion--a picnic. A man of your temperament--he would take a lady. She was not with you in your balloon when you came down at Dornhof. No! Only her chacket! It is your affair. Still, I am curious."

Bert reflected. "'Ow d'you know that?"

"I chuge by ze nature of your farious provisions. I cannot account, Mr. Pooterage, for ze lady, what you haf done with her. Nor can I tell why you should wear nature-sandals, nor why you should wear such cheap plue clothes. These are outside my instructions. Trifles, perhaps. Officially they are to be ignored. Ladies come and go--I am a man of ze worldt. I haf known wise men wear sandals and efen practice vegetarian habits. I haf known men--or at any rate, I haf known chemists--who did not schmoke. You haf, no doubt, put ze lady down somewhere. Well. Let us get to--business. A higher power"--his voice changed its emotional quality, his magnified eyes seemed to dilate--"has prought you and your secret straight to us. So!"--he bowed his head--"so pe it. It is ze Destiny of Chermany and my Prince. I can undershtandt you always carry zat secret. You are afraidt of roppers and spies. So it comes wiz you--to us. Mr. Pooterage, Chermany will puy it."

"Will she?"

"She will," said the secretary, looking hard at Bert's abandoned sandals in the corner of the locker. He roused himself, consulted a paper of notes for a moment, and Bert eyed his brown and wrinkled face with expectation and terror. "Chermany, I am instructed to say," said the secretary, with his eyes on the

table and his notes spread out, "has always been willing to puy your secret. We haf indeed peen eager to acquire it fery eager; and it was only ze fear that you might be, on patriotic groundts, acting in collusion with your Pritish War Office zat has made us discreet in offering for your marvellous invention through intermediaries. We haf no hesitation whatefer now, I am instructed, in agreeing to your proposal of a hundert thousand poundts."

"Crikey!" said Bert, overwhelmed.

"I peg your pardon?"

"Jest a twinge," said Bert, raising his hand to his bandaged head.

"Ah! Also I am instructed to say that as for that noble, unrightly accused laty you haf championed so brafely against Pritish hypocrisy and coldness, all ze chivalry of Chermany is on her site."

"Lady?" said Bert faintly, and then recalled the great Butteridge love story. Had the old chap also read the letters? He must think him a scorcher if he had. "Oh! that's aw-right," he said, "about 'er. I 'adn't any doubts about that. I--"

He stopped. The secretary certainly had a most appalling stare. It seemed ages before he looked down again. "Well, ze laty as you please. She is your affair. I haf performt my instructions. And ze title of Paron, zat also can pe done. It can all pe done, Herr Pooterage."

He drummed on the table for a second or so, and resumed. "I haf to tell you, sir, zat you come to us at a crisis in--Welt-Politik. There can be no harm now for me to put our

plans before you. Before you leave this ship again they will be manifest to all the world. War is perhaps already declared. We go to America. Our fleet will descend out of the air upon the United States--it is a country quite unprepared for war everywhere--everywhere. They have always relied on the Atlantic. And their navy. We have selected a certain point--it is at present the secret of our commanders--which we shall seize, and then we shall establish a depot--a sort of inland Gibraltar. It will be--what will it be?--an eagle's nest. There our airships will gather and repair, and thence they will fly to and fro over the United States, terrorising cities, dominating Washington, levying what is necessary, until the terms we dictate are accepted. You follow me?"

"Go on!" said Bert.

"We could have done all this with such Luftschiffe and Drachenflieger as we possess, but the accession of your machine renders our project complete. It not only gives us a better Drachenflieger, but it removes our last uneasiness as to Great Britain. Without you, sir, Great Britain, the land you loved so well and that has requited you so ill, that land of Pharisees and reptiles, can do nothing!--nothing! You see, I am perfectly frank with you. Well, I am instructed that Germany recognises all this. We want you to place yourself at our disposal. We want you to become our Chief Head Flight Engineer. We want you to manufacture, we want to equip a swarm of hornets under your direction. We want you to direct this force. And it is at our depot in America we want you. So we offer you simply, and without haggling, the full terms you demanded weeks ago--one hundred thousand pounds in cash, a salary of three thousand pounds a year, a pension of one thousand pounds a year, and the title of Baron as you desired. These are my instructions."

He resumed his scrutiny of Bert's face.

"That's all right, of course," said Bert, a little short of breath, but otherwise resolute and calm; and it seemed to him that now was the time to bring his nocturnal scheming to the issue.

The secretary contemplated Bert's collar with sustained attention. Only for one moment did his gaze move to the sandals and back.

"Jes' lemme think a bit," said Bert, finding the stare debilitating. "Look 'ere I" he said at last, with an air of great explicitness, "I GOT the secret."

"Yes."

"But I don't want the name of Butteridge to appear--see? I been thinking that over."

"A little delicacy?"

"Exactly. You buy the secret--leastways, I give it you--from Bearer--see?"

His voice failed him a little, and the stare continued. "I want to do the thing Enonymously. See?"

Still staring. Bert drifted on like a swimmer caught by a current. "Fact is, I'm going to edop' the name of Smallways. I don't want no title of Baron; I've altered my mind. And I want the money quiet-like. I want the hundred thousand pounds paid into benks--thirty thousand into the London and County Benk Branch at Bun Hill in Kent directly I 'and over the plans; twenty thousand into the Benk of England; 'arf the rest into a good French bank, the other 'arf the German National Bank, see? I

want it put there, right away. I don't want it put in the name of Butteridge. I want it put in the name of Albert Peter Smallways; that's the name I'm going to edop'. That's condition one."

"Go on!" said the secretary.

"The nex condition," said Bert, "is that you don't make any inquiries as to title. I mean what English gentlemen do when they sell or let you land. You don't arst 'ow I got it. See? 'Ere I am--I deliver you the goods--that's all right. Some people 'ave the cheek to say this isn't my invention, see? It is, you know--THAT'S all right; but I don't want that gone into. I want a fair and square agreement saying that's all right. See?"

His "See?" faded into a profound silence.

The secretary sighed at last, leant back in his chair and produced a tooth-pick, and used it, to assist his meditation on Bert's case. "What was that name?" he asked at last, putting away the tooth-pick; "I must write it down."

"Albert Peter Smallways," said Bert, in a mild tone.

The secretary wrote it down, after a little difficulty about the spelling because of the different names of the letters of the alphabet in the two languages.

"And now, Mr. Schmallyays," he said at last, leaning back and resuming the stare, "tell me: how did you ket hold of Mister Pooterage's balloon?"

When at last the Graf von Winterfold left Bert Smallways, he left him in an extremely deflated condition, with all his little story told.

He had, as people say, made a clean breast of it. He had been pursued into details. He had had to explain the blue suit, the sandals, the Desert Dervishes--everything. For a time scientific zeal consumed the secretary, and the question of the plans remained in suspense. He even went into speculation about the previous occupants of the balloon. "I suppose," he said, "the lady WAS the lady. But that is not our affair.

"It is very curious and amusing, yes: but I am afraid the Prince may be annoyed. He acted with his usual decision--always he acts with wonderful decision. Like Napoleon. Directly he was told of your descent into the camp at Dornhof, he said, 'Bring him!--bring him! It is my schtar!' His schtar of Destiny! You see? He will be thwarted. He directed you to come as Herr Pooterage, and you have not done so. You have tried, of course; but it has been a poor try. His arrangements of men are very just and right, and it is better for men to act up to them--completely. Especially now. Particularly now."

He resumed that attitude of his, with his underlip pinched between his forefingers. He spoke almost confidentially. "It will be awkward. I tried to suggest some doubt, but I was over-ruled. The Prince does not listen. He is impatient in the high air. Perhaps he will think his schtar has been making a fool of him. Perhaps he will think I have been making a fool of him."

He wrinkled his forehead, and drew in the corners of his mouth.

"I got the plans," said Bert.

"Yes. There is that! Yes. But you see the Prince was interested in Herr Pooterage because of his romantic seit. Herr Pooterage was so much more--ah!--in the picture. I am afraid you are not equal to controlling the flying machine department of our aerial park as he wished you to do. He hadt promised himself that....

"And der was also the prestige--the worldt prestige of Pooterage with us.... Well, we must see what we can do." He held out his hand. "Gif me the plans."

A terrible chill ran through the being of Mr. Smallways. To this day he is not clear in his mind whether he wept or no, but certainly there was weeping in his voice. "'Ere, I say!" he protested. "Ain't I to 'ave--nothin' for 'em?"

The secretary regarded him with benevolent eyes. "You do not deserve anyzing!" he said.

"I might 'ave tore 'em up."

"Zey are not yours!"

"They weren't Butteridge's!"

"No need to pay anyzing."

Bert's being seemed to tighten towards desperate deeds. "Gaw!" he said, clutching his coat, "AIN'T there?"

"Pe galm,"said the secretary. "Listen! You shall haf five hundert poundts. You shall haf it on my promise. I will do that for you, and that is all I can do. Take it from me. Gif me the name of that bank. Write it down. So! I tell you the Prince-- is no choke. I do not think he approffed of your appearance last

night. No! I can't answer for him. He wanted Pooterage, and you haf spoilt it. The Prince--I do not understand quite, he is in a strange state. It is the excitement of the starting and this great soaring in the air. I cannot account for what he does. But if all goes well I will see to it--you shall haf five hundert poundts. Will that do? Then gif me the plans."

"Old beggar!" said Bert, as the door clicked. "Gaw!--what an ole beggar!--SHARP!"

He sat down in the folding-chair, and whistled noiselessly for a time.

"Nice 'old swindle for 'im if I tore 'em up! I could 'ave."

He rubbed the bridge of his nose thoughtfully. "I gave the whole blessed show away. If I'd j'es' kep quiet about being Enonymous.... Gaw! ...Too soon, Bert, my boy--too soon and too rushy. I'd like to kick my silly self.

"I couldn't 'ave kep' it up.

"After all, it ain't so very bad," he said.

"After all, five 'undred pounds....It isn't MY secret, anyhow. It's jes' a pickup on the road. Five 'undred.

"Wonder what the fare is from America back home?"

8

And later in the day an extremely shattered and disorganised Bert Smallways stood in the presence of the Prince Karl Albert.

The proceedings were in German. The Prince was in his own cabin,

the end room of the airship, a charming apartment furnished in wicker-work with a long window across its entire breadth, looking forward. He was sitting at a folding-table of green baize, with Von Winterfeld and two officers sitting beside him, and littered before them was a number of American maps and Mr. Butteridge's letters and his portfolio and a number of loose papers. Bert was not asked to sit down, and remained standing throughout the interview. Von Winterfeld told his story, and every now and then the words Ballon and Pooterage struck on Bert's ears. The Prince's face remained stern and ominous and the two officers watched it cautiously or glanced at Bert. There was something a little strange in their scrutiny of the Prince--a curiosity, an apprehension. Then presently he was struck by an idea, and they fell discussing the plans. The Prince asked Bert abruptly in English. "Did you ever see this thing go op?"

Bert jumped. "Saw it from Bun 'Ill, your Royal Highness."

Von Winterfeld made some explanation.

"How fast did it go?"

"Couldn't say, your Royal Highness. The papers, leastways the Daily Courier, said eighty miles an hour."

They talked German over that for a time.

"Couldt it standt still? Op in the air? That is what I want to know."

"It could 'ovver, your Royal Highness, like a wasp," said Bert.

"Viel besser, nicht wahr?" said the Prince to Von Winterfeld, and then went on in German for a time.

Presently they came to an end, and the two officers looked at Bert. One rang a bell, and the portfolio was handed to an attendant, who took it away.

Then they reverted to the case of Bert, and it was evident the Prince was inclined to be hard with him. Von Winterfeld protested. Apparently theological considerations came in, for there were several mentions of "Gott!" Some conclusions emerged, and it was apparent that Von Winterfeld was instructed to convey them to Bert.

"Mr. Schmallyays, you haf obtained a footing in this airship," he said, "by disgraceful and systematic lying."

"Ardly systematic," said Bert. "I--"

The Prince silenced him by a gesture.

"And it is within the power of his Highness to dispose of you as a spy."

"Ere!--I came to sell--"

"Ssh!" said one of the officers.

"However, in consideration of the happy chance that mate you the instrument unter Gott of this Pooterage flying-machine reaching his Highness's hand, you haf been spared. Yes,--you were the pearer of goot tidings. You will be allowed to remain on this ship until it is convenient to dispose of you. Do you understandt?"

"We will bring him," said the Prince, and added terribly with a terrible glare, "als Ballast."

"You are to come with us," said Winterfeld, "as pallast. Do you understandt?"

Bert opened his mouth to ask about the five hundred pounds, and then a saving gleam of wisdom silenced him. He met Von Winterfeld's eye, and it seemed to him the secretary nodded slightly.

"Go!" said the Prince, with a sweep of the great arm and hand towards the door. Bert went out like a leaf before a gale.

9

But in between the time when the Graf von Winterfeld had talked to him and this alarming conference with the Prince, Bert had explored the Vaterland from end to end. He had found it interesting in spite of grave preoccupations. Kurt, like the greater number of the men upon the German air-fleet, had known hardly anything of aeronautics before his appointment to the new flag-ship. But he was extremely keen upon this wonderful new weapon Germany had assumed so suddenly and dramatically. He showed things to Bert with a boyish eagerness and appreciation. It was as if he showed them, over again to himself, like a child showing a new toy. "Let's go all over the ship," he said with zest. He pointed out particularly the lightness of everything, the use of exhausted aluminium tubing, of springy cushions inflated with compressed hydrogen; the partitions were hydrogen bags covered with light imitation leather, the very crockery was a light biscuit glazed in a vacuum, and weighed next to nothing. Where strength was needed there was the new Charlottenburg alloy, German steel as it was called, the toughest and most resistant metal in the world.

There was no lack of space. Space did not matter, so long as load did not grow. The habitable part of the ship was two

hundred and fifty feet long, and the rooms in two tiers; above these one could go up into remarkable little white-metal turrets with big windows and airtight double doors that enabled one to inspect the vast cavity of the gas-chambers. This inside view impressed Bert very much. He had never realised before that an airship was not one simple continuous gas-bag containing nothing but gas. Now he saw far above him the backbone of the apparatus and its big ribs, "like the neural and haemal canals," said Kurt, who had dabbled in biology.

"Rather!" said Bert appreciatively, though he had not the ghost of an idea what these phrases meant.

Little electric lights could be switched on up there if anything went wrong in the night. There were even ladders across the space. "But you can't go into the gas," protested Bert. "You can't breathe it."

The lieutenant opened a cupboard door and displayed a diver's suit, only that it was made of oiled silk, and both its compressed-air knapsack and its helmet were of an alloy of aluminium and some light metal. "We can go all over the inside netting and stick up bullet holes or leaks," he explained. "There's netting inside and out. The whole outer-case is rope ladder, so to speak."

Aft of the habitable part of the airship was the magazine of explosives, coming near the middle of its length. They were all bombs of various types mostly in glass--none of the German airships carried any guns at all except one small pom-pom (to use the old English nickname dating from the Boer war), which was forward in the gallery upon the shield at the heart of the eagle.

From the magazine amidships a covered canvas gallery with aluminium treads on its floor and a hand-rope, ran back

underneath the gas-chamber to the engine-room at the tail; but along this Bert did not go, and from first to last he never saw the engines. But he went up a ladder against a gale of ventilation--a ladder that was encased in a kind of gas-tight fire escape--and ran right athwart the great forward air-chamber to the little look-out gallery with a telephone, that gallery that bore the light pom-pom of German steel and its locker of shells. This gallery was all of aluminium magnesium alloy, the tight front of the air-ship swelled cliff-like above and below, and the black eagle sprawled overwhelmingly gigantic, its extremities all hidden by the bulge of the gas-bag. And far down, under the soaring' eagles, was England, four thousand feet below perhaps, and looking very small and defenceless indeed in the morning sunlight.

The realisation that there was England gave Bert sudden and unexpected qualms of patriotic compunction. He was struck by a quite novel idea. After all, he might have torn up those plans and thrown them away. These people could not have done so very much to him. And even if they did, ought not an Englishman to die for his country? It was an idea that had hitherto been rather smothered up by the cares of a competitive civilisation. He became violently depressed. He ought, he perceived, to have seen it in that light before. Why hadn't he seen it in that light before?

Indeed, wasn't he a sort of traitor?....He wondered how the aerial fleet must look from down there. Tremendous, no doubt, and dwarfing all the buildings.

He was passing between Manchester and Liverpool, Kurt told him; a gleaming band across the prospect was the Ship Canal, and a weltering ditch of shipping far away ahead, the Mersey estuary. Bert was a Southerner; he had never been north of the Midland counties, and the multitude of factories and chimneys--the latter

for the most part obsolete and smokeless now, superseded by huge electric generating stations that consumed their own reek--old railway viaducts, mono-rail net-works and goods yards, and the vast areas of dingy homes and narrow streets, spreading aimlessly, struck him as though Camberwell and Rotherhithe had run to seed. Here and there, as if caught in a net, were fields and agricultural fragments. It was a sprawl of undistinguished population. There were, no doubt, museums and town halls and even cathedrals of a sort to mark theoretical centres of municipal and religious organisation in this confusion; but Bert could not see them, they did not stand out at all in that wide disorderly vision of congested workers' houses and places to work, and shops and meanly conceived chapels and churches. And across this landscape of an industrial civilisation swept the shadows of the German airships like a hurrying shoal of fishes....

Kurt and he fell talking of aerial tactics, and presently went down to the undergallery in order that Bert might see the Drachenflieger that the airships of the right wing had picked up overnight and were towing behind them; each airship towing three or four. They looked, like big box-kites of an exaggerated form, soaring at the ends of invisible cords. They had long, square heads and flattened tails, with lateral propellers.

"Much skill is required for those!--much skill!"

"Rather!"

Pause.

"Your machine is different from that, Mr. Butteridge?"

"Quite different," said Bert. "More like an insect, and less like a bird. And it buzzes, and don't drive about so. What can

those things do?"

Kurt was not very clear upon that himself, and was still explaining when Bert was called to the conference we have recorded with the Prince.

And after that was over, the last traces of Butteridge fell from Bert like a garment, and he became Smallways to all on board. The soldiers ceased to salute him, and the officers ceased to seem aware of his existence, except Lieutenant Kurt. He was turned out of his nice cabin, and packed in with his belongings to share that of Lieutenant Kurt, whose luck it was to be junior, and the bird-headed officer, still swearing slightly, and carrying strops and aluminium boot-trees and weightless hair-brushes and hand-mirrors and pomade in his hands, resumed possession. Bert was put in with Kurt because there was nowhere else for him to lay his bandaged head in that close-packed vessel. He was to mess, he was told, with the men.

Kurt came and stood with his legs wide apart and surveyed, him for a moment as he sat despondent in his new quarters.

"What's your real name, then?" said Kurt, who was only imperfectly informed of the new state of affairs.

"Smallways."

"I thought you were a bit of a fraud--even when I thought you were Butteridge. You're jolly lucky the Prince took it calmly. He's a pretty tidy blazer when he's roused. He wouldn't stick a moment at pitching a chap of your sort overboard if he thought fit. No!... They've shoved you on to me, but it's my cabin, you know."

"I won't forget," said Bert.

Kurt left him, and when he came to look about him the first thing he saw pasted on the padded wall was a reproduction, of the great picture by Siegfried Schmalz of the War God, that terrible, trampling figure with the viking helmet and the scarlet cloak, wading through destruction, sword in hand, which had so strong a resemblance to Karl Albert, the prince it was painted to please.

CHAPTER V THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC

1

The Prince Karl Albert had made a profound impression upon Bert. He was quite the most terrifying person Bert had ever encountered. He filled the Smallways soul with passionate dread and antipathy. For a long time Bert sat alone in Kurt's cabin, doing nothing and not venturing even to open the door lest he should be by that much nearer that appalling presence.

So it came about that he was probably the last person on board to hear the news that wireless telegraphy was bringing to the airship in throbs and fragments of a great naval battle in progress in mid-Atlantic.

He learnt it at last from Kurt.

Kurt came in with a general air of ignoring Bert, but muttering to himself in English nevertheless. "Stupendous!" Bert heard him say. "Here!" he said, "get off this locker." And he proceeded to rout out two books and a case of maps. He spread them on the folding-table, and stood regarding them. For a time his Germanic discipline struggled with his English informality and his natural

kindliness and talkativeness, and at last lost.

"They're at it, Smallways," he said.

"At what, sir?" said Bert, broken and respectful.

"Fighting! The American North Atlantic squadron and pretty nearly the whole of our fleet. Our Eiserne Kreuz has had a gruelling and is sinking, and their Miles Standish--she's one of their biggest--has sunk with all hands. Torpedoes, I suppose. She was a bigger ship than the Karl der Grosse, but five or six years older. Gods! I wish we could see it Smallways; a square fight in blue water, guns or nothing, and all of 'em steaming ahead!"

He spread his maps, he had to talk, and so he delivered a lecture on the naval situation to Bert.

"Here it is," he said, latitude 30 degrees 50 minutes N. longitude 30 degrees 50 minutes W. It's a good day off us, anyhow, and they're all going south-west by south at full pelt as hard as they can go. We shan't see a bit of it, worse luck! Not a sniff we shan't get!"

2

The naval situation in the North Atlantic at that time was a peculiar one. The United States was by far the stronger of the two powers upon the sea, but the bulk of the American fleet was still in the Pacific. It was in the direction of Asia that war had been most feared, for the situation between Asiatic and white had become unusually violent and dangerous, and the Japanese government had shown itself quite unprecedentedly difficult. The German attack therefore found half the American strength at Manila, and what was called the Second Fleet strung out across the Pacific in wireless contact between the Asiatic station and

San Francisco. The North Atlantic squadron was the sole American force on her eastern shore, it was returning from a friendly visit to France and Spain, and was pumping oil-fuel from tenders in mid-Atlantic--for most of its ships were steamships--when the international situation became acute. It was made up of four battleships and five armoured cruisers ranking almost with battleships, not one of which was of a later date than 1913. The Americans had indeed grown so accustomed to the idea that Great Britain could be trusted to keep the peace of the Atlantic that a naval attack on the eastern seaboard found them unprepared even in their imaginations. But long before the declaration of war--indeed, on Whit Monday--the whole German fleet of eighteen battleships, with a flotilla of fuel tenders and converted liners containing stores to be used in support of the air-fleet, had passed through the straits of Dover and headed boldly for New York. Not only did these German battleships outnumber the Americans two to one, but they were more heavily armed and more modern in construction--seven of them having high explosive engines built of Charlottenburg steel, and all carrying Charlottenburg steel guns.

The fleets came into contact on Wednesday before any actual declaration of war. The Americans had strung out in the modern fashion at distances of thirty miles or so, and were steaming to keep themselves between the Germans and either the eastern states or Panama; because, vital as it was to defend the seaboard cities and particularly New York, it was still more vital to save the canal from any attack that might prevent the return of the main fleet from the Pacific. No doubt, said Kurt, this was now making records across that ocean, "unless the Japanese have had the same idea as the Germans." It was obviously beyond human possibility that the American North Atlantic fleet could hope to meet and defeat the German; but, on the other hand, with luck it might fight a delaying action and inflict such damage as to greatly weaken the attack upon the coast defences. Its duty, indeed, was

not victory but devotion, the severest task in the world. Meanwhile the submarine defences of New York, Panama, and the other more vital points could be put in some sort of order.

This was the naval situation, and until Wednesday in Whit week it was the only situation the American people had realised. It was then they heard for the first time of the real scale of the Dornhof aeronautic park and the possibility of an attack coming upon them not only by sea, but by the air. But it is curious that so discredited were the newspapers of that period that a large majority of New Yorkers, for example, did not believe the most copious and circumstantial accounts of the German air-fleet until it was actually in sight of New York.

Kurt's talk was half soliloquy. He stood with a map on Mercator's projection before him, swaying to the swinging of the ship and talking of guns and tonnage, of ships and their build and powers and speed, of strategic points, and bases of operation. A certain shyness that reduced him to the status of a listener at the officers' table no longer silenced him.

Bert stood by, saying very little, but watching Kurt's finger on the map. "They've been saying things like this in the papers for a long time," he remarked. "Fancy it coming real!"

Kurt had a detailed knowledge of the Miles Standish. "She used to be a crack ship for gunnery--held the record. I wonder if we beat her shooting, or how? I wish I was in it. I wonder which of our ships beat her. Maybe she got a shell in her engines. It's a running fight! I wonder what the Barbarossa is doing," he went on, "She's my old ship. Not a first-rater, but good stuff. I bet she's got a shot or two home by now if old Schneider's up to form. Just think of it! There they are whacking away at each other, great guns going, shells exploding, magazines bursting, ironwork flying about like straw in a gale, all we've been

dreaming of for years! I suppose we shall fly right away to New York--just as though it wasn't anything at all. I suppose we shall reckon we aren't wanted down there. It's no more than a covering fight on our side. All those tenders and store-ships of ours are going on southwest by west to New York to make a floating depot for us. See?" He dabbed his forefinger on the map. "Here we are. Our train of stores goes there, our battleships elbow the Americans out of our way there."

When Bert went down to the men's mess-room to get his evening ration, hardly any one took notice of him except just to point him out for an instant. Every one was talking of the battle, suggesting, contradicting--at times, until the petty officers hushed them, it rose to a great uproar. There was a new bulletin, but what it said he did not gather except that it concerned the *Barbarossa*. Some of the men stared at him, and he heard the name of "Booteridge" several times; but no one molested him, and there was no difficulty about his soup and bread when his turn at the end of the queue came. He had feared there might be no ration for him, and if so he did not know what he would have done.

Afterwards he ventured out upon the little hanging gallery with the solitary sentinel. The weather was still fine, but the wind was rising and the rolling swing of the airship increasing. He clutched the rail tightly and felt rather giddy. They were now out of sight of land, and over blue water rising and falling in great masses. A dingy old brigantine under the British flag rose and plunged amid the broad blue waves--the only ship in sight.

3

In the evening it began to blow and the air-ship to roll like a porpoise as it swung through the air. Kurt said that several of the men were sea-sick, but the motion did not inconvenience Bert,

whose luck it was to be of that mysterious gastric disposition which constitutes a good sailor. He slept well, but in the small hours the light awoke him, and he found Kurt staggering about in search of something. He found it at last in the locker, and held it in his hand unsteadily--a compass. Then he compared his map.

"We've changed our direction," he said, "and come into the wind. I can't make it out. We've turned away from New York to the south. Almost as if we were going to take a hand--"

He continued talking to himself for some time.

Day came, wet and windy. The window was bedewed externally, and they could see nothing through it. It was also very cold, and Bert decided to keep rolled up in his blankets on the locker until the bugle summoned him to his morning ration. That consumed, he went out on the little gallery; but he could see nothing but eddying clouds driving headlong by, and the dim outlines of the nearer airships. Only at rare intervals could he get a glimpse of grey sea through the pouring cloud-drift.

Later in the morning the Vaterland changed altitude, and soared up suddenly in a high, clear sky, going, Kurt said, to a height of nearly thirteen thousand feet.

Bert was in his cabin, and chanced to see the dew vanish from the window and caught the gleam of sunlight outside. He looked out, and saw once more that sunlit cloud floor he had seen first from the balloon, and the ships of the German air-fleet rising one by one from the white, as fish might rise and become visible from deep water. He stared for a moment and then ran out to the little gallery to see this wonder better. Below was cloudland and storm, a great drift of tumbled weather going hard away to the north-east, and the air about him was clear and cold and serene save for the faintest chill breeze and a rare, drifting

snow-flake. Throb, throb, throb, throb, went the engines in the stillness. That huge herd of airships rising one after another had an effect of strange, portentous monsters breaking into an altogether unfamiliar world.

Either there was no news of the naval battle that morning, or the Prince kept to himself whatever came until past midday. Then the bulletins came with a rush, bulletins that made the lieutenant wild with excitement.

"Barbarossa disabled and sinking," he cried. "Gott im Himmel! Der alte Barbarossa! Aber Welch ein braver kriegler!"

He walked about the swinging cabin, and for a time he was wholly German.

Then he became English again. "Think of it, Smallways! The old ship we kept so clean and tidy! All smashed about, and the iron flying about in fragments, and the chaps one knew--Gott!--flying about too! Scalding water squirting, fire, and the smash, smash of the guns! They smash when you're near! Like everything bursting to pieces! Wool won't stop it--nothing! And me up here--so near and so far! Der alte Barbarossa!"

"Any other ships?" asked Smallways, presently.

"Gott! Yes! We've lost the Karl der Grosse, our best and biggest. Run down in the night by a British liner that blundered into the fighting in trying to blunder out. They're fighting in a gale. The liner's afloat with her nose broken, sagging about! There never was such a battle!--never before! Good ships and good men on both sides,--and a storm and the night and the dawn and all in the open ocean full steam ahead! No stabbing! No submarines! Guns and shooting! Half our ships we don't hear of any more, because their masts are shot away. Latitude, 30

degrees 40 minutes N.--longitude, 40 degrees 30 minutes W.-
-where's that?"

He routed out his map again, and stared at it with eyes that did not see.

"Der alte Barbarossa! I can't get it out of my head--with shells in her engine-room, and the fires flying out of her furnaces, and the stokers and engineers scalded and dead. Men I've messed with, Smallways--men I've talked to close! And they've had their day at last! And it wasn't all luck for them.!

"Disabled and sinking! I suppose everybody can't have all the luck in a battle. Poor old Schneider! I bet he gave 'em something back!"

So it was the news of the battle came filtering through to them all that morning. The Americans had lost a second ship, name unknown; the Hermann had been damaged in covering the Barbarossa.... Kurt fretted like an imprisoned animal about the airship, now going up to the forward gallery under the eagle, now down into the swinging gallery, now poring over his maps. He infected Smallways with a sense of the immediacy of this battle that was going on just over the curve of the earth. But when Bert went down to the gallery the world was empty and still, a clear inky-blue sky above and a rippled veil of still, thin sunlit cirrus below, through which one saw a racing drift of rain-cloud, and never a glimpse of sea. Throb, throb, throb, throb, went the engines, and the long, undulating wedge of airships hurried after the flagship like a flight of swans after their leader. Save for the quiver of the engines it was as noiseless as a dream. And down there, somewhere in the wind and rain, guns roared, shells crashed home, and, after the old manner of warfare, men toiled and died.

As the afternoon wore on the lower weather abated, and the sea became intermittently visible again. The air-fleet dropped slowly to the middle air, and towards sunset they had a glimpse of the disabled Barbarossa far away to the east. Smallways heard men hurrying along the passage, and was drawn out to the gallery, where he found nearly a dozen officers collected and scrutinising the helpless ruins of the battleship through field-glasses. Two other vessels stood by her, one an exhausted petrol tank, very high out of the water, and the other a converted liner. Kurt was at the end of the gallery, a little apart from the others.

"Gott!" he said at last, lowering his binocular, "it is like seeing an old friend with his nose cut off--waiting to be finished. Der Barbarossa!"

With a sudden impulse he handed his glass to Bert, who had peered beneath his hands, ignored by every one, seeing the three ships merely as three brown-black lines upon the sea.

Never had Bert seen the like of that magnified slightly hazy image before. It was not simply a battered ironclad that wallowed helpless, it was a mangled ironclad. It seemed wonderful she still floated. Her powerful engines had been her ruin. In the long chase of the night she had got out of line with her consorts, and nipped in between the Susquehanna and the Kansas City. They discovered her proximity, dropped back until she was nearly broadside on to the former battleship, and signalled up the Theodore Roosevelt and the little Monitor. As dawn broke she had found herself hostess of a circle. The fight had not lasted five minutes before the appearance of the Hermann to the east, and immediately after of the Furst Bismarck in the west, forced the Americans to leave her, but in that time they had smashed her iron to rags. They had vented the accumulated

tensions of their hard day's retreat upon her. As Bert saw her, she seemed a mere metal-worker's fantasy of frozen metal writhings. He could not tell part from part of her, except by its position.

"Gott!" murmured Kurt, taking the glasses Bert restored to him--
"Gott! Da waren Albrecht--der gute Albrecht und der alte Zimmermann--und von Rosen!"

Long after the Barbarosa had been swallowed up in the twilight and distance he remained on the gallery peering through his glasses, and when he came back to his cabin he was unusually silent and thoughtful.

"This is a rough game, Smallways," he said at last--"this war is a rough game. Somehow one sees it different after a thing like that. Many men there were worked to make that Barbarossa, and there were men in it--one does not meet the like of them every day. Albrecht--there was a man named Albrecht--played the zither and improvised; I keep on wondering what has happened to him. He and I--we were very close friends, after the German fashion."

Smallways woke--the next night to discover the cabin in darkness, a draught blowing through it, and Kurt talking to himself in German. He could see him dimly by the window, which he had unscrewed and opened, peering down. That cold, clear, attenuated light which is not so much light as a going of darkness, which casts inky shadows and so often heralds the dawn in the high air, was on his face.

"What's the row?" said Bert.

"Shut up!" said the lieutenant. "Can't you hear?"

Into the stillness came the repeated heavy thud of guns, one,

two, a pause, then three in quick succession.

"Gaw!" said Bert--"guns!" and was instantly at the lieutenant's side. The airship was still very high and the sea below was masked by a thin veil of clouds. The wind had fallen, and Bert, following Kurt's pointing finger, saw dimly through the colourless veil first a red glow, then a quick red flash, and then at a little distance from it another. They were, it seemed for a while, silent flashes, and seconds after, when one had ceased to expect them, came the belated thuds--thud, thud. Kurt spoke in German, very quickly.

A bugle call rang through the airship.

Kurt sprang to his feet, saying something in an excited tone, still using German, and went to the door.

"I say! What's up?" cried Bert. "What's that?"

The lieutenant stopped for an instant in the doorway, dark against the light passage. "You stay where you are, Smallways. You keep there and do nothing. We're going into action," he explained, and vanished.

Bert's heart began to beat rapidly. He felt himself poised over the fighting vessels far below. In a moment, were they to drop like a hawk striking a bird? "Gaw!" he whispered at last, in awestricken tones.

Thud! . . . thud! He discovered far away a second ruddy flare flashing guns back at the first. He perceived some difference on the Vaterland for which he could not account, and then he realised that the engines had slowed to an almost inaudible beat. He stuck his head out of the window--it was a tight fit--and saw in the bleak air the other airships slowed down to a scarcely

perceptible motion.

A second bugle sounded, was taken up faintly from ship to ship. Out went the lights; the fleet became dim, dark bulks against an intense blue sky that still retained an occasional star. For a long time they hung, for an interminable time it seemed to him, and then began the sound of air being pumped into the balloonette, and slowly, slowly the Vaterland sank down towards the clouds.

He craned his neck, but he could not see if the rest of the fleet was following them; the overhang of the gas-chambers intervened. There was something that stirred his imagination deeply in that stealthy, noiseless descent. The obscurity deepened for a time, the last fading star on the horizon vanished, and he felt the cold presence of cloud. Then suddenly the glow beneath assumed distinct outlines, became flames, and the Vaterland ceased to descend and hung observant, and it would seem unobserved, just beneath a drifting stratum of cloud, a thousand feet, perhaps, over the battle below.

In the night the struggling naval battle and retreat had entered upon a new phase. The Americans had drawn together the ends of the flying line skilfully and dexterously, until at last it was a column and well to the south of the lax sweeping pursuit of the Germans. Then in the darkness before the dawn they had come about and steamed northward in close order with the idea of passing through the German battle-line and falling upon the flotilla that was making for New York in support of the German air-fleet. Much had altered since the first contact of the fleets. By this time the American admiral, O'Connor, was fully informed of the existence of the airships, and he was no longer vitally concerned for Panama, since the submarine flotilla was reported arrived there from Key West, and the Delaware and Abraham Lincoln, two powerful and entirely modern ships, were

already at Rio Grande, on the Pacific side of the canal. His manoeuvre was, however, delayed by a boiler explosion on board the Susquehanna, and dawn found this ship in sight of and indeed so close to the Bremen and Weimar that they instantly engaged. There was no alternative to her abandonment but a fleet engagement. O'Connor chose the latter course. It was by no means a hopeless fight. The Germans, though much more numerous and powerful than the Americans, were in a dispersed line measuring nearly forty-five miles from end to end, and there were many chances that before they could gather in for the fight the column of seven Americans would have ripped them from end to end.

The day broke dim and overcast, and neither the Bremen nor the Weimar realised they had to deal with more than the Susquehanna until the whole column drew out from behind her at a distance of a mile or less and bore down on them. This was the position of affairs when the Vaterland appeared in the sky. The red glow Bert had seen through the column of clouds came from the luckless Susquehanna; she lay almost immediately below, burning fore and aft, but still fighting two of her guns and steaming slowly southward. The Bremen and the Weimar, both hit in several places, were going west by south and away from her. The American fleet, headed by the Theodore Roosevelt, was crossing behind them, pounding them in succession, steaming in between them and the big modern Furst Bismarck, which was coming up from the west. To Bert, however, the names of all these ships were unknown, and for a considerable time indeed, misled by the direction in which the combatants were moving, he imagined the Germans to be Americans and the Americans Germans. He saw what appeared to him to be a column of six battleships pursuing three others who were supported by a newcomer, until the fact that the Bremen and Weimar were firing into the Susquehanna upset his calculations. Then for a time he was hopelessly at a loss. The noise of the guns, too, confused him, they no longer seemed to boom; they went whack, whack, whack, whack, and each faint flash made his heart

jump in anticipation of the instant impact. He saw these ironclads, too, not in profile, as he was accustomed to see ironclads in pictures, but in plan and curiously foreshortened. For the most part they presented empty decks, but here and there little knots of men sheltered behind steel bulwarks. The long, agitated noses of their, big guns, jetting thin transparent flashes and the broadside activity of the quick-firers, were the chief facts in this bird's-eye view. The Americans being steam-turbine ships, had from two to four blast funnels each; the Germans lay lower in the water, having explosive engines, which now for some reason made an unwonted muzzling roar. Because of their steam propulsion, the American ships were larger and with a more graceful outline. He saw all these foreshortened ships rolling considerably and fighting their guns over a sea of huge low waves and under the cold, explicit light of dawn. The whole spectacle waved slowly with the long rhythmic rising and beat of the airship.

At first only the Vaterland of all the flying fleet appeared upon the scene below. She hovered high, over the Theodore Roosevelt, keeping pace with the full speed of that ship. From that ship she must have been intermittently visible through the drifting clouds. The rest of the German fleet remained above the cloud canopy at a height of six or seven thousand feet, communicating with the flagship by wireless telegraphy, but risking no exposure to the artillery below.

It is doubtful at what particular time the unlucky Americans realised the presence of this new factor in the fight. No account now survives of their experience. We have to imagine as well as we can what it must have been to a battled-strained sailor suddenly glancing upward to discover that huge long silent shape overhead, vaster than any battleship, and trailing now from its hinder quarter a big German flag. Presently, as the sky cleared, more of such ships appeared in the blue through the

dissolving clouds, and more, all disdainfully free of guns or armour, all flying fast to keep pace with the running fight below.

From first to last no gun whatever was fired at the Vaterland, and only a few rifle shots. It was a mere adverse stroke of chance that she had a man killed aboard her. Nor did she take any direct share in the fight until the end. She flew above the doomed American fleet while the Prince by wireless telegraphy directed the movements of her consorts. Meanwhile the Vogel-stern and Preussen, each with half a dozen drachenflieger in tow, went full speed ahead and then dropped through the clouds, perhaps five miles ahead of the Americans. The Theodore Roosevelt let fly at once with the big guns in her forward barbette, but the shells burst far below the Vogel-stern, and forthwith a dozen single-man drachenflieger were swooping down to make their attack.

Bert, craning his neck through the cabin port-hole, saw, the whole of that incident, that first encounter of aeroplane and ironclad. He saw the queer German drachenflieger, with their wide flat wings and square box-shaped heads, their wheeled bodies, and their single-man riders, soar down the air like a flight of birds. "Gaw!" he said. One to the right pitched extravagantly, shot steeply up into the air, burst with a loud report, and flamed down into the sea; another plunged nose forward into the water and seemed to fly to pieces as it hit the waves. He saw little men on the deck of the Theodore Roosevelt below, men foreshortened in plan into mere heads and feet, running out preparing to shoot at the others. Then the foremost flying-machine was rushing between Bert and the American's deck, and then bang! came the thunder of its bomb flung neatly at the forward barbette, and a thin little crackling of rifle shots in reply. Whack, whack, whack, went the quick-firing guns of the Americans' battery, and smash came an answering shell from the

Furst Bismarck. Then a second and third flying-machine passed between Bert and the American ironclad, dropping bombs also, and a fourth, its rider hit by a bullet, reeled down and dashed itself to pieces and exploded between the shot-torn funnels, blowing them apart. Bert had a momentary glimpse of a little black creature jumping from the crumpling frame of the flying-machine, hitting the funnel, and falling limply, to be instantly caught and driven to nothingness by the blaze and rush of the explosion.

Smash! came a vast explosion in the forward part of the flagship, and a huge piece of metalwork seemed to lift out of her and dump itself into the sea, dropping men and leaving a gap into which a prompt drachenflieger planted a flaring bomb. And then for an instant Bert perceived only too clearly in the growing, pitiless light a number of minute, convulsively active animalcula scorched and struggling in the Theodore Roosevelt's foaming wake. What were they? Not men--surely not men? Those drowning, mangled little creatures tore with their clutching fingers at Bert's soul. "Oh, Gord!" he cried, "Oh, Gord!" almost whimpering. He looked again and they had gone, and the black stem of the Andrew Jackson, a little disfigured by the sinking Bremen's last shot, was parting the water that had swallowed them into two neatly symmetrical waves. For some moments sheer blank horror blinded Bert to the destruction below.

Then, with an immense rushing sound, bearing as it were a straggling volley of crashing minor explosions on its back, the Susquehanna, three miles and more now to the east, blew up and vanished abruptly in a boiling, steaming welter. For a moment nothing was to be seen but tumbled water, and--then there came belching up from below, with immense gulping noises, eructations of steam and air and petrol and fragments of canvas and woodwork and men.

That made a distinct pause in the fight. It seemed a long pause to Bert. He found himself looking for the drachenflieger. The flattened ruin of one was floating abeam of the Monitor, the rest had passed, dropping bombs down the American column; several were in the water and apparently uninjured, and three or four were still in the air and coming round now in a wide circle to return to their mother airships. The American ironclads were no longer in column formation; the Theodore Roosevelt, badly damaged, had turned to the southeast, and the Andrew Jackson, greatly battered but uninjured in any fighting part was passing between her and the still fresh and vigorous Furst Bismarck to intercept and meet the latter's fire. Away to the west the Hermann and the Germanicus had appeared and were coming into action.

In the pause, after the Susquehanna's disaster Bert became aware of a trivial sound like the noise of an ill-greased, ill-hung door that falls ajar--the sound of the men in the Furst Bismarck cheering.

And in that pause in the uproar too, the sun rose, the dark waters became luminously blue, and a torrent of golden light irradiated the world. It came like a sudden smile in a scene of hate and terror. The cloud veil had vanished as if by magic, and the whole immensity of the German air-fleet was revealed in the sky; the air-fleet stooping now upon its prey.

"Whack-bang, whack-bang," the guns resumed, but ironclads were not built to fight the zenith, and the only hits the Americans scored were a few lucky chances in a generally ineffectual rifle fire. Their column was now badly broken, the Susquehanna had gone, the Theodore Roosevelt had fallen astern out of the line, with her forward guns disabled, in a heap of wreckage, and the Monitor was in some grave trouble. These two had ceased fire altogether, and so had the Bremen and Weimar, all four ships lying within shot of each other in an involuntary truce and with

their respective flags still displayed. Only four American ships now, with the Andrew Jackson readings kept to the south-easterly course. And the Furst Bismarck, the Hermann, and the Germanicus steamed parallel to them and drew ahead of them, fighting heavily. The Vaterland rose slowly in the air in preparation for the concluding act of the drama.

Then, falling into place one behind the other, a string of a dozen airships dropped with unhurrying swiftness down the air in pursuit of the American fleet. They kept at a height of two thousand feet or more until they were over and a little in advance of the rearmost ironclad, and then stooped swiftly down into a fountain of bullets, and going just a little faster than the ship below, pelted her thinly protected decks with bombs until they became sheets of detonating flame. So the airships passed one after the other along the American column as it sought to keep up its fight with the Furst Bismarck, the Hermann, and the Germanicus, and each airship added to the destruction and confusion its predecessor had made. The American gunfire ceased, except for a few heroic shots, but they still steamed on, obstinately unsubdued, bloody, battered, and wrathfully resistant, spitting bullets at the airships and unmercifully pounded by the German ironclads. But now Bert had but intermittent glimpses of them between the nearer bulks of the airships that assailed them....

It struck Bert suddenly that the whole battle was receding and growing small and less thunderously noisy. The Vaterland was rising in the air, steadily and silently, until the impact of the guns no longer smote upon the heart but came to the ear dulled by distance, until the four silenced ships to the eastward were little distant things: but were there four? Bert now could see only three of those floating, blackened, and smoking rafts of ruin against the sun. But the Bremen had two boats out; the Theodore Roosevelt was also dropping boats to where the drift of

minute objects struggled, rising and falling on the big, broad Atlantic waves.... The Vaterland was no longer following the fight. The whole of that hurrying tumult drove away to the south-eastward, growing smaller and less audible as it passed. One of the airships lay on the water burning, a remote monstrous fount of flames, and far in the south-west appeared first one and then three other German ironclads hurrying in support of their consorts....

5

Steadily the Vaterland soared, and the air-fleet soared with her and came round to head for New York, and the battle became a little thing far away, an incident before the breakfast. It dwindled to a string of dark shapes and one smoking yellow flare that presently became a mere indistinct smear upon the vast horizon and the bright new day, that was at last altogether lost to sight...

So it was that Bert Smallways saw the first fight of the airship and the last fight of those strangest things in the whole history of war: the ironclad battleships, which began their career with the floating batteries of the Emperor Napoleon III in the Crimean war and lasted, with an enormous expenditure of human energy and resources, for seventy years. In that space of time the world produced over twelve thousand five hundred of these strange monsters, in schools, in types, in series, each larger and heavier and more deadly than its predecessors. Each in its turn was hailed as the last birth of time, most in their turn were sold for old iron. Only about five per cent of them ever fought in a battle. Some foundered, some went ashore, and broke up, several rammed one another by accident and sank. The lives of countless men were spent in their service, the splendid genius, and patience of thousands of engineers and inventors, wealth and material beyond estimating; to their account we must put, stunted

and starved lives on land, millions of children sent to toil unduly, innumerable opportunities of fine living undeveloped and lost. Money had to be found for them at any cost--that was the law of a nation's existence during that strange time. Surely they were the weirdest, most destructive and wasteful megatheria in the whole history of mechanical invention.

And then cheap things of gas and basket-work made an end of them altogether, smiting out of the sky!...

Never before had Bert Smallways seen pure destruction, never had he realised the mischief and waste of war. His startled mind rose to the conception; this also is in life. Out of all this fierce torrent of sensation one impression rose and became cardinal--the impression of the men of the Theodore Roosevelt who had struggled in the water after the explosion of the first bomb. "Gaw!" he said at the memory; "it might 'ave been me and Grubb! ... I suppose you kick about and get the water in your mouf. I don't suppose it lasts long."

He became anxious to see how Kurt was affected by these things. Also he perceived he was hungry. He hesitated towards the door of the cabin and peeped out into the passage. Down forward, near the gangway to the men's mess, stood a little group of air sailors looking at something that was hidden from him in a recess. One of them was in the light diver's costume Bert had already seen in the gas chamber turret, and he was moved to walk along and look at this person more closely and examine the helmet he carried under his arm. But he forgot about the helmet when he got to the recess, because there he found lying on the floor the dead body of the boy who had been killed by a bullet from the Theodore Roosevelt.

Bert had not observed that any bullets at all had reached the Waterland or, indeed, imagined himself under fire. He could not

understand for a time what had killed the lad, and no one explained to him.

The boy lay just as he had fallen and died, with his jacket torn and scorched, his shoulder-blade smashed and burst away from his body and all the left side of his body ripped and rent. There was much blood. The sailors stood listening to the man with the helmet, who made explanations and pointed to the round bullet hole in the floor and the smash in the panel of the passage upon which the still vicious missile had spent the residue of its energy. All the faces were grave and earnest: they were the faces of sober, blond, blue-eyed men accustomed to obedience and an orderly life, to whom this waste, wet, painful thing that had been a comrade came almost as strangely as it did to Bert.

A peal of wild laughter sounded down the passage in the direction of the little gallery and something spoke--almost shouted--in German, in tones of exultation.

Other voices at a lower, more respectful pitch replied.

"Der Prinz," said a voice, and all the men became stiffer and less natural. Down the passage appeared a group of figures, Lieutenant Kurt walking in front carrying a packet of papers.

He stopped point blank when he saw the thing in the recess, and his ruddy face went white.

"So!" said he in surprise.

The Prince was following him, talking over his shoulder to Von Winterfeld and the Kapitan.

"Eh?" he said to Kurt, stopping in mid-sentence, and followed the gesture of Kurt's hand. He glared at the crumpled object in the

recess and seemed to think for a moment.

He made a slight, careless gesture towards the boy's body and turned to the Kapitan.

"Dispose of that," he said in German, and passed on, finishing his sentence to Von Winterfeld in the same cheerful tone in which it had begun.

6

The deep impression of helplessly drowning men that Bert had brought from the actual fight in the Atlantic mixed itself up inextricably with that of the lordly figure of Prince Karl Albert gesturing aside the dead body of the Vaterland sailor. Hitherto he had rather liked the idea of war as being a jolly, smashing, exciting affair, something like a Bank Holiday rag on a large scale, and on the whole agreeable and exhilarating. Now he knew it a little better.

The next day there was added to his growing disillusionment a third ugly impression, trivial indeed to describe, a mere necessary everyday incident of a state of war, but very distressing to his urbanised imagination. One writes "urbanised" to express the distinctive gentleness of the period. It was quite peculiar to the crowded townsmen of that time, and different altogether from the normal experience of any preceding age, that they never saw anything killed, never encountered, save through the mitigating media of book or picture, the fact of lethal violence that underlies all life. Three times in his existence, and three times only, had Bert seen a dead human being, and he had never assisted at the killing of anything bigger than a new-born kitten.

The incident that gave him his third shock was the execution of

one of the men on the Adler for carrying a box of matches. The case was a flagrant one. The man had forgotten he had it upon him when coming aboard. Ample notice had been given to every one of the gravity of this offence, and notices appeared at numerous points all over the airships. The man's defence was that he had grown so used to the notices and had been so preoccupied with his work that he hadn't applied them to himself; he pleaded, in his defence, what is indeed in military affairs another serious crime, inadvertency. He was tried by his captain, and the sentence confirmed by wireless telegraphy by the Prince, and it was decided to make his death an example to the whole fleet. "The Germans," the Prince declared, "hadn't crossed the Atlantic to go wool gathering." And in order that this lesson in discipline and obedience might be visible to every one, it was determined not to electrocute or drown but hang the offender.

Accordingly the air-fleet came clustering round the flagship like carp in a pond at feeding time. The Adler hung at the zenith immediately alongside the flagship. The whole crew of the Waterland assembled upon the hanging gallery; the crews of the other airships manned the air-chambers, that is to say, clambered up the outer netting to the upper sides. The officers appeared upon the machine-gun platforms. Bert thought it an altogether stupendous sight, looking down, as he was, upon the entire fleet. Far off below two steamers on the rippled blue water, one British and the other flying the American flag, seemed the minutest objects, and marked the scale. They were immensely distant. Bert stood on the gallery, curious to see the execution, but uncomfortable, because that terrible blond Prince was within a dozen feet of him, glaring terribly, with his arms folded, and his heels together in military fashion.

They hung the man from the Adler. They gave him sixty feet of rope, so, that he should hang and dangle in the sight of all evil-doers who might be hiding matches or contemplating any

kindred disobedience. Bert saw the man standing, a living, reluctant man, no doubt scared and rebellious enough in his heart, but outwardly erect and obedient, on the lower gallery of the Adler about a hundred yards away. Then they had thrust him overboard.

Down he fell, hands and feet extending, until with a jerk he was at the end of the rope. Then he ought to have died and swung edifyingly, but instead a more terrible thing happened; his head came right off, and down the body went spinning to the sea, feeble, grotesque, fantastic, with the head racing it in its fall.

"Ugh!" said Bert, clutching the rail before him, and a sympathetic grunt came from several of the men beside him.

"So!" said the Prince, stiffer and sterner, glared for some seconds, then turned to the gang way up into the airship.

For a long time Bert remained clinging to the railing of the gallery. He was almost physically sick with the horror of this trifling incident. He found it far more dreadful than the battle. He was indeed a very degenerate, latter-day, civilised person.

Late that afternoon Kurt came into the cabin and found him curled up on his locker, and looking very white and miserable. Kurt had also lost something of his pristine freshness.

"Sea-sick?" he asked.

"No!"

"We ought to reach New York this evening. There's a good breeze coming up under our tails. Then we shall see things."

Bert did not answer.

Kurt opened out folding chair and table, and rustled for a time with his maps. Then he fell thinking darkly. He roused himself presently, and looked at his companion. "What's the matter?" he said.

"Nothing!"

Kurt stared threateningly. "What's the matter?"

"I saw them kill that chap. I saw that flying-machine man hit the funnels of the big ironclad. I saw that dead chap in the passage. I seen too much smashing and killing lately. That's the matter. I don't like it. I didn't know war was this sort of thing. I'm a civilian. I don't like it"

"I don't like it," said Kurt. "By Jove, no!"

"I've read about war, and all that, but when you see it it's different. And I'm gettin' giddy. I'm gettin' giddy. I didn't mind a bit being up in that balloon at first, but all this looking down and floating over things and smashing up people, it's getting on my nerves. See?"

"It'll have to get off again...."

Kurt thought. "You're not the only one. The men are all getting strung up. The flying--that's just flying. Naturally it makes one a little swimmy in the head at first. As for the killing, we've got to be blooded; that's all. We're tame, civilised men. And we've got to get blooded. I suppose there's not a dozen men on the ship who've really seen bloodshed. Nice, quiet, law-abiding Germans they've been so far.... Here they are--in for it.

They're a bit squeamy now, but you wait till they've got their hands in."

He reflected. "Everybody's getting a bit strung up," he said.

He turned again to his maps. Bert sat crumpled up in the corner, apparently heedless of him. For some time both kept silence.

"What did the Prince want to go and 'ang that chap for?" asked Bert, suddenly.

"That was all right," said Kurt, "that was all right. QUITE right. Here were the orders, plain as the nose on your face, and here was that fool going about with matches--"

"Gaw! I shan't forget that bit in a 'urry," said Bert irrelevantly.

Kurt did not answer him. He was measuring their distance from New York and speculating. "Wonder what the American aeroplanes are like?" he said. "Something like our drachenflieger.... We shall know by this time to-morrow.... I wonder what we shall know? I wonder. Suppose, after all, they put up a fight.... Rum sort of fight!"

He whistled softly and mused. Presently he fretted out of the cabin, and later Bert found him in the twilight upon the swinging platform, staring ahead, and speculating about the things that might happen on the morrow. Clouds veiled the sea again, and the long straggling wedge of air-ships rising and falling as they flew seemed like a flock of strange new births in a Chaos that had neither earth nor water but only mist and sky.

CHAPTER VI HOW WAR CAME TO NEW YORK

1

The City of New York was in the year of the German attack the largest, richest, in many respects the most splendid, and in some, the wickedest city the world had ever seen. She was the supreme type of the City of the Scientific Commercial Age; she displayed its greatness, its power, its ruthless anarchic enterprise, and its social disorganisation most strikingly and completely. She had long ousted London from her pride of place as the modern Babylon, she was the centre of the world's finance, the world's trade, and the world's pleasure; and men likened her to the apocalyptic cities of the ancient prophets. She sat drinking up the wealth of a continent as Rome once drank the wealth of the Mediterranean and Babylon the wealth of the east. In her streets one found the extremes of magnificence and misery, of civilisation and disorder. In one quarter, palaces of marble, laced and, crowned with light and flame and flowers, towered up into her marvellous twilights beautiful, beyond description; in another, a black and sinister polyglot population sweltered in indescribable congestion in warrens, and excavations beyond the power and knowledge of government. Her vice, her crime, her law alike were inspired by a fierce and terrible energy, and like the great cities of mediaeval Italy, her ways were dark and adventurous with private war.

It was the peculiar shape of Manhattan Island, pressed in by arms of the sea on either side, and incapable of comfortable expansion, except along a narrow northward belt, that first gave the New York architects their bias for extreme vertical dimensions. Every need was lavishly supplied them--money, material, labour; only space was restricted. To begin, therefore, they built high perforce. But to do so was to

discover a whole new world of architectural beauty, of exquisite ascendant lines, and long after the central congestion had been relieved by tunnels under the sea, four colossal bridges over the east river, and a dozen mono-rail cables east and west, the upward growth went on. In many ways New York and her gorgeous plutocracy repeated Venice in the magnificence of her architecture, painting, metal-work and sculpture, for example, in the grim intensity, of her political method, in her maritime and commercial ascendancy. But she repeated no previous state at all in the lax disorder of her internal administration, a laxity that made vast sections of her area lawless beyond precedent, so that it was possible for whole districts to be impassable, while civil war raged between street and street, and for Alsacias to exist in her midst in which the official police never set foot. She was an ethnic whirlpool. The flags of all nations flew in her harbour, and at the climax, the yearly coming and going overseas numbered together upwards of two million human beings. To Europe she was America, to America she was the gateway of the world. But to tell the story of New York would be to write a social history of the world; saints and martyrs, dreamers and scoundrels, the traditions of a thousand races and a thousand religions, went to her making and throbbed and jostled in her streets. And over all that torrential confusion of men and purposes fluttered that strange flag, the stars and stripes, that meant at once the noblest thing in life, and the least noble, that is to say, Liberty on the one hand, and on the other the base jealousy the individual self-seeker feels towards the common purpose of the State.

For many generations New York had taken no heed of war, save as a thing that happened far away, that affected prices and supplied the newspapers with exciting headlines and pictures. The New Yorkers felt perhaps even more certainly than the English had done that war in their own land was an impossible thing. In that they shared the delusion of all North America. They felt as

secure as spectators at a bullfight; they risked their money perhaps on the result, but that was all. And such ideas of war as the common Americans possessed were derived from the limited, picturesque, adventurous war of the past. They saw war as they saw history, through an iridescent mist, deodorised, scented indeed, with all its essential cruelties tactfully hidden away. They were inclined to regret it as something ennobling, to sigh that it could no longer come into their own private experience. They read with interest, if not with avidity, of their new guns, of their immense and still more immense ironclads, of their incredible and still more incredible explosives, but just what these tremendous engines of destruction might mean for their personal lives never entered their heads. They did not, so far as one can judge from their contemporary literature, think that they meant anything to their personal lives at all. They thought America was safe amidst all this piling up of explosives. They cheered the flag by habit and tradition, they despised other nations, and whenever there was an international difficulty they were intensely patriotic, that is to say, they were ardently against any native politician who did not say, threaten, and do harsh and uncompromising things to the antagonist people. They were spirited to Asia, spirited to Germany, so spirited to Great Britain that the international attitude of the mother country to her great daughter was constantly compared in contemporary caricature to that between a hen-pecked husband and a vicious young wife. And for the rest, they all went about their business and pleasure as if war had died out with the megatherium....

And then suddenly, into a world peacefully busied for the most part upon armaments and the perfection of explosives, war came; came the shock of realising that the guns were going off, that the masses of inflammable material all over the world were at last ablaze.

The immediate effect upon New York of the sudden onset of war was merely to intensify her normal vehemence.

The newspapers and magazines that fed the American mind--for books upon this impatient continent had become simply material for the energy of collectors--were instantly a coruscation of war pictures and of headlines that rose like rockets and burst like shells. To the normal high-strung energy of New York streets was added a touch of war-fever. Great crowds assembled, more especially in the dinner hour, in Madison Square about the Farragut monument, to listen to and cheer patriotic speeches, and a veritable epidemic of little flags and buttons swept through these great torrents of swiftly moving young people, who poured into New York of a morning by car and mono-rail and subway and train, to toil, and ebb home again between the hours of five and seven. It was dangerous not to wear a war button. The splendid music-halls of the time sank every topic in patriotism and evolved scenes of wild enthusiasm, strong men wept at the sight of the national banner sustained by the whole strength of the ballet, and special searchlights and illuminations amazed the watching angels. The churches re-echoed the national enthusiasm in graver key and slower measure, and the aerial and naval preparations on the East River were greatly incommoded by the multitude of excursion steamers which thronged, helpfully cheering, about them. The trade in small-arms was enormously stimulated, and many overwrought citizens found an immediate relief for their emotions in letting off fireworks of a more or less heroic, dangerous, and national character in the public streets. Small children's air-balloons of the latest model attached to string became a serious check to the pedestrian in Central Park. And amidst scenes of indescribable emotion the Albany legislature in permanent session, and with a generous suspension of rules and precedents, passed through both Houses the long-disputed Bill for universal military service in New York

State.

Critics of the American character are disposed to consider--that up to the actual impact of the German attack the people of New York dealt altogether too much with the war as if it was a political demonstration. Little or no damage, they urge, was done to either the German or Japanese forces by the wearing of buttons, the waving of small flags, the fireworks, or the songs. They forgot that, under the conditions of warfare a century of science had brought about, the non-military section of the population could do no serious damage in any form to their enemies, and that there was no reason, therefore, why they should, not do as they did. The balance of military efficiency was shifting back from the many to the few, from the common to the specialised.

The days when the emotional infantryman decided battles had passed by for ever. War had become a matter of apparatus of special training and skill of the most intricate kind. It had become undemocratic. And whatever the value of the popular excitement, there can be no denying that the small regular establishment of the United States Government, confronted by this totally unexpected emergency of an armed invasion from Europe, acted with vigour, science, and imagination. They were taken by surprise so far as the diplomatic situation was concerned, and their equipment for building either navigables or aeroplanes was contemptible in comparison with the huge German parks. Still they set to work at once to prove to the world that the spirit that had created the Monitor and the Southern submarines of 1864 was not dead. The chief of the aeronautic establishment near West Point was Cabot Sinclair, and he allowed himself but one single moment of the posturing that was so universal in that democratic time. "We have chosen our epitaphs," he said to a reporter, "and we are going to have, 'They did all they could.' Now run away!"

The curious thing is that they did all do all they could; there is no exception known. Their only defect indeed was a defect of style. One of the most striking facts historically about this war, and the one that makes the complete separation that had arisen between the methods of warfare and the necessity of democratic support, is the effectual secrecy of the Washington authorities about their airships. They did not bother to confide a single fact of their preparations to the public. They did not even condescend to talk to Congress. They burked and suppressed every inquiry. The war was fought by the President and the Secretaries of State in an entirely autocratic manner. Such publicity as they sought was merely to anticipate and prevent inconvenient agitation to defend particular points. They realised that the chief danger in aerial warfare from an excitable and intelligent public would be a clamour for local airships and aeroplanes to defend local interests. This, with such resources as they possessed, might lead to a fatal division and distribution of the national forces. Particularly they feared that they might be forced into a premature action to defend New York. They realised with prophetic insight that this would be the particular advantage the Germans would seek. So they took great pains to direct the popular mind towards defensive artillery, and to divert it from any thought of aerial battle. Their real preparations they masked beneath ostensible ones. There was at Washington a large reserve of naval guns, and these were distributed rapidly, conspicuously, and with much press attention, among the Eastern cities. They were mounted for the most part upon hills and prominent crests around the threatened centres of population. They were mounted upon rough adaptations of the Doan swivel, which at that time gave the maximum vertical range to a heavy gun. Much of this artillery was still unmounted, and nearly all of it was unprotected when the German air-fleet reached New York. And down in the crowded streets, when that occurred, the readers of the New York papers

were regaling themselves with wonderful and wonderfully illustrated accounts of such matters as:--

THE SECRET OF THE THUNDERBOLT

AGED SCIENTIST PERFECTS ELECTRIC GUN

TO ELECTROCUTE AIRSHIP CREWS BY UPWARD LIGHTNING

WASHINGTON ORDERS FIVE HUNDRED

WAR SECRETARY LODGE DELIGHTED

SAYS THEY WILL SUIT THE GERMANS DOWN TO THE GROUND

PRESIDENT PUBLICLY APPLAUDS THIS MERRY QUIP

3

The German fleet reached New York in advance of the news of the American naval disaster. It reached New York in the late afternoon and was first seen by watchers at Ocean Grove and Long Branch coming swiftly out of the southward sea and going away to the northwest. The flagship passed almost vertically over the Sandy Hook observation station, rising rapidly as it did so, and in a few minutes all New York was vibrating to the Staten Island guns.

Several of these guns, and especially that at Giffords and the one on Beacon Hill above Matawan, were remarkably well handled. The former, at a distance of five miles, and with an elevation of six thousand feet, sent a shell to burst so close to the Waterland that a pane of the Prince's forward window was smashed by a fragment. This sudden explosion made Bert tuck in his head with the celerity of a startled tortoise. The whole air-fleet

immediately went up steeply to a height of about twelve thousand feet and at that level passed unscathed over the ineffectual guns. The airships lined out as they moved forward into the form of a flattened V, with its apex towards the city, and with the flagship going highest at the apex. The two ends of the V passed over Plumfield and Jamaica Bay, respectively, and the Prince directed his course a little to the east of the Narrows, soared over Upper Bay, and came to rest over Jersey City in a position that dominated lower New York. There the monsters hung, large and wonderful in the evening light, serenely regardless of the occasional rocket explosions and flashing shell-bursts in the lower air.

It was a pause of mutual inspection. For a time naive humanity swamped the conventions of warfare altogether; the interest of the millions below and of the thousands above alike was spectacular. The evening was unexpectedly fine--only a few thin level bands of clouds at seven or eight thousand feet broke its luminous clarity. The wind had dropped; it was an evening infinitely peaceful and still. The heavy concussions of the distant guns and those incidental harmless pyrotechnics at the level of the clouds seemed to have as little to do with killing and force, terror and submission, as a salute at a naval review. Below, every point of vantage bristled with spectators, the roofs of the towering buildings, the public squares, the active ferry boats, and every favourable street intersection had its crowds: all the river piers were dense with people, the Battery Park was solid black with east-side population, and every position of advantage in Central Park and along Riverside Drive had its peculiar and characteristic assembly from the adjacent streets. The footways of the great bridges over the East River were also closely packed and blocked. Everywhere shopkeepers had left their shops, men their work, and women and children their homes, to come out and see the marvel.

"It beat," they declared, "the newspapers."

And from above, many of the occupants of the airships stared with an equal curiosity. No city in the world was ever so finely placed as New York, so magnificently cut up by sea and bluff and river, so admirably disposed to display the tall effects of buildings, the complex immensities of bridges and mono-railways and feats of engineering. London, Paris, Berlin, were shapeless, low agglomerations beside it. Its port reached to its heart like Venice, and, like Venice, it was obvious, dramatic, and proud. Seen from above it was alive with crawling trains and cars, and at a thousand points it was already breaking into quivering light. New York was altogether at its best that evening, its splendid best.

"Gaw! What a place!" said Bert.

It was so great, and in its collective effect so pacifically magnificent, that to make war upon it seemed incongruous beyond measure, like laying siege to the National Gallery or attacking respectable people in an hotel dining-room with battle-axe and mail. It was in its entirety so large, so complex, so delicately immense, that to bring it to the issue of warfare was like driving a crowbar into the mechanism of a clock. And the fish-like shoal of great airships hovering light and sunlit above, filling the sky, seemed equally remote from the ugly forcefulness of war. To Kurt, to Smallways, to I know not how many more of the people in the air-fleet came the distinctest apprehension of these incompatibilities. But in the head of the Prince Karl Albert were the vapours of romance: he was a conqueror, and this was the enemy's city. The greater the city, the greater the triumph. No doubt he had a time of tremendous exultation and sensed beyond all precedent the sense of power that night.

There came an end at last to that pause. Some wireless communications had failed of a satisfactory ending, and fleet and city remembered they were hostile powers. "Look!" cried the multitude; "look!"

"What are they doing?"

"What?" ... Down through the twilight sank five attacking airships, one to the Navy Yard on East River, one to City Hall, two over the great business buildings of Wall Street and Lower Broadway, one to the Brooklyn Bridge, dropping from among their fellows through the danger zone from the distant guns smoothly and rapidly to a safe proximity to the city masses. At that descent all the cars in the streets stopped with dramatic suddenness, and all the lights that had been coming on in the streets and houses went out again. For the City Hall had awakened and was conferring by telephone with the Federal command and taking measures for defence. The City Hall was asking for airships, refusing to surrender as Washington advised, and developing into a centre of intense emotion, of hectic activity. Everywhere and hastily the police began to clear the assembled crowds. "Go to your homes," they said; and the word was passed from mouth to mouth, "There's going to be trouble." A chill of apprehension ran through the city, and men hurrying in the unwonted darkness across City Hall Park and Union Square came upon the dim forms of soldiers and guns, and were challenged and sent back. In half an hour New York had passed from serene sunset and gaping admiration to a troubled and threatening twilight.

The first loss of life occurred in the panic rush from Brooklyn Bridge as the airship approached it. With the cessation of the traffic an unusual stillness came upon New York, and the disturbing concussions of the futile defending guns on the hills about grew more and more audible. At last these ceased also. A

pause of further negotiation followed. People sat in darkness, sought counsel from telephones that were dumb. Then into the expectant hush came a great crash and uproar, the breaking down of the Brooklyn Bridge, the rifle fire from the Navy Yard, and the bursting of bombs in Wall Street and the City Hall. New York as a whole could do nothing, could understand nothing. New York in the darkness peered and listened to these distant sounds until presently they died away as suddenly as they had begun. "What could be happening?" They asked it in vain.

A long, vague period intervened, and people looking out of the windows of upper rooms discovered the dark hulls of German airships, gliding slowly and noiselessly, quite close at hand. Then quietly the electric lights came on again, and an uproar of nocturnal newsvendors began in the streets.

The units of that vast and varied population bought and learnt what had happened; there had been a fight and New York had hoisted the white flag.

4

The lamentable incidents that followed the surrender of New York seem now in the retrospect to be but the necessary and inevitable consequence of the clash of modern appliances and social conditions produced by the scientific century on the one hand, and the tradition of a crude, romantic patriotism on the other. At first people received the fact with an irresponsible detachment, much as they would have received the slowing down of the train in which they were travelling or the erection of a public monument by the city to which they belonged.

"We have surrendered. Dear me! HAVE we?" was rather the manner in which the first news was met. They took it in the same spectacular spirit they had displayed at the first apparition of

the air-fleet. Only slowly was this realisation of a capitulation suffused with the flush of passion, only with reflection did they make any personal application. "WE have surrendered!" came later; "in us America is defeated." Then they began to burn and tingle.

The newspapers, which were issued about one in the morning contained no particulars of the terms upon which New York had yielded--nor did they give any intimation of the quality of the brief conflict that had preceded the capitulation. The later issues remedied these deficiencies. There came the explicit statement of the agreement to victual the German airships, to supply the complement of explosives to replace those employed in the fight and in the destruction of the North Atlantic fleet, to pay the enormous ransom of forty million dollars, and to surrender the in the East River. There came, too, longer and longer descriptions of the smashing up of the City Hall and the Navy Yard, and people began to realise faintly what those brief minutes of uproar had meant. They read the tale of men blown to bits, of futile soldiers in that localised battle fighting against hope amidst an indescribable wreckage, of flags hauled down by weeping men. And these strange nocturnal editions contained also the first brief cables from Europe of the fleet disaster, the North Atlantic fleet for which New York had always felt an especial pride and solicitude. Slowly, hour by hour, the collective consciousness woke up, the tide of patriotic astonishment and humiliation came floating in. America had come upon disaster; suddenly New York discovered herself with amazement giving place to wrath unspeakable, a conquered city under the hand of her conqueror.

As that fact shaped itself in the public mind, there sprang up, as flames spring up, an angry repudiation. "No!" cried New York, waking in the dawn. "No! I am not defeated. This is a dream." Before day broke the swift American anger was running through all

the city, through every soul in those contagious millions. Before it took action, before it took shape, the men in the airships could feel the gigantic insurgence of emotion, as cattle and natural creatures feel, it is said, the coming of an earthquake. The newspapers of the Knype group first gave the thing words and a formula. "We do not agree," they said simply. "We have been betrayed!" Men took that up everywhere, it passed from mouth to mouth, at every street corner under the paling lights of dawn orators stood unchecked, calling upon the spirit of America to arise, making the shame a personal reality to every one who heard. To Bert, listening five hundred feet above, it seemed that the city, which had at first produced only confused noises, was now humming like a hive of bees--of very angry bees.

After the smashing of the City Hall and Post-Office, the white flag had been hoisted from a tower of the old Park Row building, and thither had gone Mayor O'Hagen, urged thither indeed by the terror-stricken property owners of lower New York, to negotiate the capitulation with Von Winterfeld. The Vaterland, having dropped the secretary by a rope ladder, remained hovering, circling very slowly above the great buildings, old and new, that clustered round City Hall Park, while the Helmholz, which had done the fighting there, rose overhead to a height of perhaps two thousand feet. So Bert had a near view of all that occurred in that central place. The City Hall and Court House, the Post-Office and a mass of buildings on the west side of Broadway, had been badly damaged, and the three former were a heap of blackened ruins. In the case of the first two the loss of life had not been considerable, but a great multitude of workers, including many girls and women, had been caught in the destruction of the Post-Office, and a little army of volunteers with white badges entered behind the firemen, bringing out the often still living bodies, for the most part frightfully charred, and carrying them into the big Monson building close at hand. Everywhere the busy firemen were directing their bright streams

of water upon the smouldering masses: their hose lay about the square, and long cordons of police held back the gathering lack masses of people, chiefly from the east side, from these central activities.

In violent and extraordinary contrast with this scene of destruction, close at hand were the huge newspaper establishments of Park Row. They were all alight and working; they had not been abandoned even while the actual bomb throwing was going on, and now staff and presses were vehemently active, getting out the story, the immense and dreadful story of the night, developing comment and, in most cases, spreading the idea of resistance under the very noses of the airships. For a long time Bert could not imagine what these callously active offices could be, then he detected the noise of the presses and emitted his "Gaw!"

Beyond these newspaper buildings again, and partially hidden by the arches of the old Elevated Railway of New York (long since converted into a mono-rail), there was another cordon of police and a sort of encampment of ambulances and doctors, busy with the dead and wounded who had been killed early in the night by the panic upon Brooklyn Bridge. All this he saw in the perspectives of a bird's-eye view, as things happening in a big, irregular-shaped pit below him, between cliffs of high building. Northward he looked along the steep canon of Broadway, down whose length at intervals crowds were assembling about excited speakers; and when he lifted his eyes he saw the chimneys and cable-stacks and roof spaces of New York, and everywhere now over these the watching, debating people clustered, except where the fires raged and the jets of water flew. Everywhere, too, were flagstuffs devoid of flags; one white sheet drooped and flapped and drooped again over the Park Row buildings. And upon the lurid lights, the festering movement and intense shadows of this strange scene, there was breaking now the cold, impartial dawn.

For Bert Smallways all this was framed in the frame of the open porthole. It was a pale, dim world outside that dark and tangible rim. All night he had clutched at that rim, jumped and quivered at explosions, and watched phantom events. Now he had been high and now low; now almost beyond hearing, now flying close to crashings and shouts and outcries. He had seen airships flying low and swift over darkened and groaning streets; watched great buildings, suddenly red-lit amidst the shadows, crumple at the smashing impact of bombs; witnessed for the first time in his life the grotesque, swift onset, of insatiable conflagrations. From it all he felt detached, disembodied. The Vaterland did not even fling a bomb; she watched and ruled. Then down they had come at last to hover over City Hall Park, and it had crept in upon his mind,, chillingly, terrifyingly, that these illuminated black masses were great offices afire, and that the going to and fro of minute, dim spectres of lantern-lit grey and white was a harvesting of the wounded and the dead. As the light grew clearer he began to understand more and more what these crumpled black things signified....

He had watched hour after hour since first New York had risen out of the blue indistinctness of the landfall. With the daylight he experienced an intolerable fatigue.

He lifted weary eyes to the pink flush in the sky, yawned immensely, and crawled back whispering to himself across the cabin to the locker. He did not so much lie down upon that as fall upon it and instantly become asleep.

There, hours after, sprawling undignified and sleeping profoundly, Kurt found him, a very image of the democratic mind confronted with the problems of a time too complex for its apprehension. His face was pale and indifferent, his mouth wide open, and he snored. He snored disagreeably.

Kurt regarded him for a moment with a mild distaste. Then he kicked his ankle.

"Wake up," he said to Smallways' stare, "and lie down decent."

Bert sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Any more fightin' yet?" he asked.

"No," said Kurt, and sat down, a tired man.

"Gott!" he cried presently, rubbing his hands over his face, "but I'd like a cold bath! I've been looking for stray bullet holes in the air-chambers all night until now." He yawned. "I must sleep. You'd better clear out, Smallways. I can't stand you here this morning. You're so infernally ugly and useless. Have you had your rations? No! Well, go in and get 'em, and don't come back. Stick in the gallery...."

5

So Bert, slightly refreshed by coffee and sleep, resumed his helpless co-operation in the War in the Air. He went down into the little gallery as the lieutenant had directed, and clung to the rail at the extreme end beyond the look-out man, trying to seem as inconspicuous and harmless a fragment of life as possible.

A wind was rising rather strongly from the south-east. It obliged the Vaterland to come about in that direction, and made her roll a great deal as she went to and fro over Manhattan Island. Away in the north-west clouds gathered. The throb-throb of her slow screw working against the breeze was much more perceptible than when she was going full speed ahead; and the friction of the wind against the underside of the gas-chamber

drove a series of shallow ripples along it and made a faint flapping sound like, but fainter than, the beating of ripples under the stem of a boat. She was stationed over the temporary City Hall in the Park Row building, and every now and then she would descend to resume communication with the mayor and with Washington. But the restlessness of the Prince would not suffer him to remain for long in any one place. Now he would circle over the Hudson and East River; now he would go up high, as if to peer away into the blue distances; once he ascended so swiftly and so far that mountain sickness overtook him and the crew and forced him down again; and Bert shared the dizziness and nausea.

The swaying view varied with these changes of altitude. Now they would be low and close, and he would distinguish in that steep, unusual perspective, windows, doors, street and sky signs, people and the minutest details, and watch the enigmatical behaviour of crowds and clusters upon the roofs and in the streets; then as they soared the details would shrink, the sides of streets draw together, the view widen, the people cease to be significant. At the highest the effect was that of a concave relief map; Bert saw the dark and crowded land everywhere intersected by shining waters, saw the Hudson River like a spear of silver, and Lower Island Sound like a shield. Even to Bert's unphilosophical mind the contrast of city below and fleet above pointed an opposition, the opposition of the adventurous American's tradition and character with German order and discipline. Below, the immense buildings, tremendous and fine as they were, seemed like the giant trees of a jungle fighting for life; their picturesque magnificence was as planless as the chances of crag and gorge, their casualty enhanced by the smoke and confusion of still unsubdued and spreading conflagrations. In the sky soared the German airships like beings in a different, entirely more orderly world, all oriented to the same angle of the horizon, uniform in build and appearance, moving accurately with one purpose as a pack of wolves will move, distributed with the most precise and

effectual co-operation.

It dawned upon Bert that hardly a third of the fleet was visible. The others had gone upon errands he could not imagine, beyond the compass of that great circle of earth. and sky. He wondered, but there was no one to ask. As the day wore on, about a dozen reappeared in the east with their stores replenished from the flotilla and towing a number of drachenffieger. Towards afternoon the weather thickened, driving clouds appeared in the south-west and ran together and seemed to engender more clouds, and the wind came round into that quarter and blew stronger. Towards the evening the, wind became a gale into which the now tossing airships had to beat.

All that day the Prince was negotiating with Washington, while his detached scouts sought far and wide over the Eastern States looking for anything resembling an aeronautic park. A squadron of twenty airships detached overnight had dropped out of the air upon Niagara and was holding the town and power works.

Meanwhile the insurrectionary movement in the giant city grew uncontrollable. In spite of five great fires already involving many acres, and spreading steadily, New York was still not satisfied that she was beaten.

At first the rebellious spirit below found vent only in isolated shouts, street-crowd speeches, and newspaper suggestions; then it found much more definite expression in the appearance in the morning sunlight of American flags at point after point above the architectural cliffs of the city. It is quite possible that in many cases this spirited display of bunting by a city already surrendered was the outcome of the innocent informality of the American mind, but it is also undeniable that in many it was a deliberate indication that the people "felt wicked."

The German sense of correctitude was deeply shocked by this outbreak. The Graf von Winterfeld immediately communicated with the mayor, and pointed out the irregularity, and the fire look-out stations were instructed in the matter. The New York police was speedily hard at work, and a foolish contest in full swing between impassioned citizens resolved to keep the flag flying, and irritated and worried officers instructed to pull it down.

The trouble became acute at last in the streets above Columbia University. The captain of the airship watching this quarter seems to have stooped to lasso and drag from its staff a flag hoisted upon Morgan Hall. As he did so a volley of rifle and revolver shots was fired from the upper windows of the huge apartment building that stands between the University and Riverside Drive.

Most of these were ineffectual, but two or three perforated gas-chambers, and one smashed the hand and arm of a man upon the forward platform; The sentinel on the lower gallery immediately replied, and the machine gun on the shield of the eagle let fly and promptly stopped any further shots. The airship rose and signalled the flagship and City Hall, police and militiamen were directed at once to the spot, and this particular incident closed.

But hard upon that came the desperate attempt of a party of young clubmen from New York, who, inspired by patriotic and adventurous imaginations, slipped off in half a dozen motor-cars to Beacon Hill, and set to work with remarkable vigour to improvise a fort about the Doan swivel gun that had been placed there. They found it still in the hands of the disgusted gunners, who had been ordered to cease fire at the capitulation, and it was easy to infect these men with their own spirit. They declared their gun hadn't had half a chance, and, were burning to show what it could

do. Directed by the newcomers, they made a trench and bank about the mounting of the piece, and constructed flimsy shelter-pits of corrugated iron.

They were actually loading the gun when they were observed by the airship Preussen and the shell they succeeded in firing before the bombs of the latter smashed them and their crude defences to fragments, burst over the middle gas-chambers of the Bingen, and brought her to earth, disabled, upon Staten Island. She was badly deflated, and dropped among trees, over which her empty central gas-bags spread in canopies and festoons. Nothing, however, had caught fire, and her men were speedily at work upon her repair. They behaved with a confidence that verged upon indiscretion. While most of them commenced patching the tears of the membrane, half a dozen of them started off for the nearest road in search of a gas main, and presently found themselves prisoners in the hands of a hostile crowd. Close at hand was a number of villa residences, whose occupants speedily developed from an unfriendly curiosity to aggression. At that time the police control of the large polyglot population of Staten Island had become very lax, and scarcely a household but had its rifle or pistols and ammunition. These were presently produced, and after two or three misses, one of the men at work was hit in the foot. Thereupon the Germans left their sewing and mending, took cover among the trees, and replied.

The crackling of shots speedily brought the Preussen and Kiel on the scene, and with a few hand grenades they made short work of every villa within a mile. A number of non-combatant American men, women, and children were killed and the actual assailants driven off. For a time the repairs went on in peace under the immediate protection of these two airships. Then when they returned to their quarters, an intermittent sniping and fighting round the stranded Bingen was resumed, and went on all the afternoon, and merged at last in the general combat of the

evening....

About eight the Bingen was rushed by an armed mob, and all its defenders killed after a fierce, disorderly struggle.

The difficulty of the Germans in both these cases came from the impossibility of landing any efficient force or, indeed, any force at all from the air-fleet. The airships were quite unequal to the transport of any adequate landing parties; their complement of men was just sufficient to manoeuvre and fight them in the air. From above they could inflict immense damage; they could reduce any organised Government to a capitulation in the briefest space, but they could not disarm, much less could they occupy, the surrendered areas below. They had to trust to the pressure upon the authorities below of a threat to renew the bombardment. It was their sole resource. No doubt, with a highly organised and undamaged Government and a homogeneous and well-disciplined people that would have sufficed to keep the peace. But this was not the American case. Not only was the New York Government a weak one and insufficiently provided with police, but the destruction of the City Hall--and Post-Office and other central ganglia had hopelessly disorganised the co-operation of part with part. The street cars and railways had ceased; the telephone service was out of gear and only worked intermittently. The Germans had struck at the head, and the head was conquered and stunned--only to release the body from its rule. New York had become a headless monster, no longer capable of collective submission. Everywhere it lifted itself rebelliously; everywhere authorities and officials left to their own imitative were joining in the arming and flag-hoisting and excitement of that afternoon.

6

The disintegrating truce gave place to a definite general breach

with the assassination of the Wetterhorn--for that is the only possible word for the act--above Union Square, and not a mile away from the exemplary ruins of City Hall. This occurred late in the afternoon, between five and six. By that time the weather had changed very much for the worse, and the operations of the airships were embarrassed by the necessity they were under of keeping head on to the gusts. A series of squalls, with hail and thunder, followed one another from the south by south-east, and in order to avoid these as much as possible, the air-fleet came low over the houses, diminishing its range of observation and exposing itself to a rifle attack.

Overnight there had been a gun placed in Union Square. It had never been mounted, much less fired, and in the darkness after the surrender it was taken with its supplies and put out of the way under the arches of the great Dexter building. Here late in the morning it was remarked by a number of patriotic spirits. They set to work to hoist and mount it inside the upper floors of the place. They made, in fact, a masked battery behind the decorous office blinds, and there lay in wait as simply excited as children until at last the stem of the luckless Wetterhorn appeared, beating and rolling at quarter speed over the recently reconstructed pinnacles of Tiffany's. Promptly that one-gun battery unmasked. The airship's look-out man must have seen the whole of the tenth story of the Dexter building crumble out and smash in the street below to discover the black muzzle looking out from the shadows behind. Then perhaps the shell hit him.

The gun fired two shells before the frame of the Dexter building collapsed, and each shell raked the Wetterhorn from stem to stern. They smashed her exhaustively. She crumpled up like a can that has been kicked by a heavy boot, her forepart came down in the square, and the rest of her length, with a great snapping and twisting of shafts and stays, descended, collapsing athwart Tammany Hall and the streets towards Second Avenue. Her gas

escaped to mix with air, and the air of her rent balloonette poured into her deflating gas-chambers. Then with an immense impact she exploded....

The Vaterland at that time was beating up to the south of City Hall from over the ruins of the Brooklyn Bridge, and the reports of the gun, followed by the first crashes of the collapsing Dexter building, brought Kurt and, Smallways to the cabin porthole. They were in time to see the flash of the exploding gun, and then they were first flattened against the window and then rolled head over heels across the floor of the cabin by the air wave of the explosion. The Vaterland bounded like a football some one has kicked and when they looked out again, Union Square was small and remote and shattered, as though some cosmically vast giant had rolled over it. The buildings to the east of it were ablaze at a dozen points, under the flaming tatters and warping skeleton of the airship, and all the roofs and walls were ridiculously askew and crumbling as one looked. "Gaw!" said Bert. "What's happened? Look at the people!"

But before Kurt could produce an explanation, the shrill bells of the airship were ringing to quarters, and he had to go. Bert hesitated and stepped thoughtfully into the passage, looking back at the window as he did so. He was knocked off his feet at once by the Prince, who was rushing headlong from his cabin to the central magazine.

Bert had a momentary impression of the great figure of the Prince, white with rage, bristling with gigantic anger, his huge fist swinging. "Blut und Eisen!" cried the Prince, as one who swears. "Oh! Blut und Eisen!"

Some one fell over Bert--something in the manner of falling suggested Von Winterfeld--and some one else paused and kicked him spitefully and hard. Then he was sitting up in the passage,

rubbing a freshly bruised cheek and readjusting the bandage he still wore on his head. "Dem that Prince," said Bert, indignant beyond measure. "'E 'asn't the menners of a 'og!"

He stood up, collected his wits for a minute, and then went slowly towards the gangway of the little gallery. As he did so he heard noises suggestive of the return of the Prince. The lot of them were coming back again. He shot into his cabin like a rabbit into its burrow, just in time to escape that shouting terror.

He shut the door, waited until the passage was still, then went across to the window and looked out. A drift of cloud made the prospect of the streets and squares hazy, and the rolling of the airship swung the picture up and down. A few people were running to and fro, but for the most part the aspect of the district was desertion. The streets seemed to broaden out, they became clearer, and the little dots that were people larger as the Waterland came down again. Presently she was swaying along above the lower end of Broadway. The dots below, Bert saw, were not running now, but standing and looking up. Then suddenly they were all running again.

Something had dropped from the aeroplane, something that looked small and flimsy. It hit the pavement near a big archway just underneath Bert. A little man was sprinting along the sidewalk within half a dozen yards, and two or three others and one woman were bolting across the roadway. They were odd little figures, so very small were they about the heads, so very active about the elbows and legs. It was really funny to see their legs going. Foreshortened, humanity has no dignity. The little man on the pavement jumped comically--no doubt with terror, as the bomb fell beside him.

Then blinding flames squirted out in all directions from the

point of impact, and the little man who had jumped became, for an instant, a flash of fire and vanished--vanished absolutely. The people running out into the road took preposterous clumsy leaps, then flopped down and lay still, with their torn clothes smouldering into flame. Then pieces of the archway began to drop, and the lower masonry of the building to fall in with the rumbling sound of coals being shot into a cellar. A faint screaming reached Bert, and then a crowd of people ran out into the street, one man limping and gesticulating awkwardly. He halted, and went back towards the building. A falling mass of brick-work hit him and sent him sprawling to lie still and crumpled where he fell. Dust and black smoke came pouring into the street, and were presently shot with red flame....

In this manner the massacre of New York began. She was the first of the great cities of the Scientific Age to suffer by the enormous powers and grotesque limitations of aerial warfare. She was wrecked as in the previous century endless barbaric cities had been bombarded, because she was at once too strong to be occupied and too undisciplined and proud to surrender in order to escape destruction. Given the circumstances, the thing had to be done. It was impossible for the Prince to desist, and own himself defeated, and it was impossible to subdue the city except by largely destroying it. The catastrophe was the logical outcome of the situation, created by the application of science to warfare. It was unavoidable that great cities should be destroyed. In spite of his intense exasperation with his dilemma, the Prince sought to be moderate even in massacre. He tried to give a memorable lesson with the minimum waste of life and the minimum expenditure of explosives. For that night he proposed only the wrecking of Broadway. He directed the air-fleet to move in column over the route of this thoroughfare, dropping bombs, the Vaterland leading. And so our Bert Smallways became a participant in one of the most cold-blooded slaughters in the world's history, in which men who were neither excited

nor, except for the remotest chance of a bullet, in any danger, poured death and destruction upon homes and crowds below.

He clung to the frame of the porthole as the airship tossed and swayed, and stared down through the light rain that now drove before the wind, into the twilight streets, watching people running out of the houses, watching buildings collapse and fires begin. As the airships sailed along they smashed up the city as a child will shatter its cities of brick and card. Below, they left ruins and blazing conflagrations and heaped and scattered dead; men, women, and children mixed together as though they had been no more than Moors, or Zulus, or Chinese. Lower New York was soon a furnace of crimson flames, from which there was no escape. Cars, railways, ferries, all had ceased, and never a light lit the way of the distracted fugitives in that dusky confusion but the light of burning. He had glimpses of what, it must mean to be down there--glimpses. And it came to him suddenly as an incredible discovery, that such disasters were not only possible now in this strange, gigantic, foreign New York, but also in London--in Bun Hill! that the little island in the silver seas was at the end of its immunity, that nowhere in the world any more was there a place left where a Smallways might lift his head proudly and vote for war and a spirited foreign policy, and go secure from such horrible things.

CHAPTER VII THE "VATERLAND" IS DISABLED

1

And then above the flames of Manhattan Island came a battle, the first battle in the air. The Americans had realised the price their waiting game must cost, and struck with all the strength

they had, if haply they might still save New York from this mad Prince of Blood and Iron, and from fire and death.

They came down upon the Germans on the wings of a great gale in the twilight, amidst thunder and rain. They came from the yards of Washington and Philadelphia, full tilt in two squadrons, and but for one sentinel airship hard by Trenton, the surprise would have been complete.

The Germans, sick and weary with destruction, and half empty of ammunition, were facing up into the weather when the news of this onset reached them. New York they had left behind to the south-eastward, a darkened city with one hideous red scar of flames. All the airships rolled and staggered, bursts of hailstorm bore them down and forced them to fight their way up again; the air had become bitterly cold. The Prince was on the point of issuing orders to drop earthward and trail copper lightning chains when the news of the aeroplane attack came to him. He faced his fleet in line abreast south, had the drachenflieger manned and held ready to cast loose, and ordered a general ascent into the freezing clearness above the wet and darkness.

The news of what was imminent came slowly to Bert's perceptions. He was standing in the messroom at the time and the evening rations were being served out. He had resumed Butteridge's coat and gloves, and in addition he had wrapped his blanket about him. He was dipping his bread into his soup and was biting off big mouthfuls. His legs were wide apart, and he leant against the partition in order to steady himself amidst the pitching and oscillation of the airship. The men about him looked tired and depressed; a few talked, but most were sullen and thoughtful, and one or two were air-sick. They all seemed to share the peculiarly outcast feeling that had followed the murders of the evening, a sense of a land beneath them, and an outraged humanity

grown more hostile than the Sea.

Then the news hit them. A red-faced sturdy man, a man with light eyelashes and a scar, appeared in the doorway and shouted something in German that manifestly startled every one. Bert felt the shock of the altered tone, though he could not understand a word that was said. The announcement was followed by a pause, and then a great outcry of questions and suggestions. Even the air-sick men flushed and spoke. For some minutes the mess-room was Bedlam, and then, as if it were a confirmation of the news, came the shrill ringing of the bells that called the men to their posts.

Bert with pantomime suddenness found himself alone.

"What's up?" he said, though he partly guessed.

He stayed only to gulp down the remainder of his soup, and then ran along the swaying passage and, clutching tightly, down the ladder to the little gallery. The weather hit him like cold water squirted from a hose. The airship engaged in some new feat of atmospheric Jiu-Jitsu. He drew his blanket closer about him, clutching with one straining hand. He found himself tossing in a wet twilight, with nothing to be seen but mist pouring past him. Above him the airship was warm with lights and busy with the movements of men going to their quarters. Then abruptly the lights went out, and the Vaterland with bounds and twists and strange writhings was fighting her way up the air.

He had a glimpse, as the Vaterland rolled over, of some large buildings burning close below them, a quivering acanthus of flames, and then he saw indistinctly through the driving weather another airship wallowing along like a porpoise, and also working up. Presently the clouds swallowed her again for a time, and then she came back to sight as a dark and whale-like monster,

amidst streaming weather. The air was full of flappings and pipings, of void, gusty shouts and noises; it buffeted him and confused him; ever and again his attention became rigid--a blind and deaf balancing and clutching.

"Wow!"

Something fell past him out of the vast darkneses above and vanished into the tumults below, going obliquely downward. It was a German drachenflieger. The thing was going so fast he had but an instant apprehension of the dark figure of the aeronaut crouched together clutching at his wheel. It might be a manoeuvre, but it looked like a catastrophe.

"Gaw!" said Bert.

"Pup-pup-pup" went a gun somewhere in the mirk ahead and suddenly and quite horribly the Vaterland lurched, and Bert and the sentinel were clinging to the rail for dear life. "Bang!" came a vast impact out of the zenith, followed by another huge roll, and all about him the tumbled clouds flashed red and lurid in response to flashes unseen, revealing immense gulfs. The rail went right overhead, and he was hanging loose in the air holding on to it.

For a time Bert's whole mind and being was given to clutching. "I'm going into the cabin," he said, as the airship righted again and brought back the gallery floor to his feet. He began to make his way cautiously towards the ladder. "Whee-wow!" he cried as the whole gallery reared itself up forward, and then plunged down like a desperate horse.

Crack! Bang! Bang! Bang! And then hard upon this little rattle of shots and bombs came, all about him, enveloping him, engulfing him, immense and overwhelming, a quivering white blaze of

lightning and a thunder-clap that was like the bursting of a world.

Just for the instant before that explosion the universe seemed to be standing still in a shadowless glare.

It was then he saw the American aeroplane. He saw it in the light of the flash as a thing altogether motionless. Even its screw appeared still, and its men were rigid dolls. (For it was so near he could see the men upon it quite distinctly.) Its stern was tilting down, and the whole machine was heeling over. It was of the Colt-Coburn-Langley pattern, with double up-tilted wings and the screw ahead, and the men were in a boat-like body netted over. From this very light long body, magazine guns projected on either side. One thing that was strikingly odd and wonderful in that moment of revelation was that the left upper wing was burning downward with a reddish, smoky flame. But this was not the most wonderful thing about this apparition. The most wonderful thing was that it and a German airship five hundred yards below were threaded as it were on the lightning flash, which turned out of its path as if to take them, and, that out from the corners and projecting points of its huge wings everywhere, little branching thorn-trees of lightning were streaming.

Like a picture Bert saw these things, a picture a little blurred by a thin veil of wind-torn mist.

The crash of the thunder-clap followed the flash and seemed a part of it, so that it is hard to say whether Bert was the rather deafened or blinded in that instant.

And then darkness, utter darkness, and a heavy report and a thin small sound of voices that went wailing downward into the abyss below.

There followed upon these things a long, deep swaying of the airship, and then Bert began a struggle to get back to his cabin. He was drenched and cold and terrified beyond measure, and now more than a little air-sick. It seemed to him that the strength had gone out of his knees and hands, and that his feet had become icily slippery over the metal they trod upon. But that was because a thin film of ice had frozen upon the gallery.

He never knew how long his ascent of the ladder back into the airship took him, but in his dreams afterwards, when he recalled it, that experience seemed to last for hours. Below, above, around him were gulfs, monstrous gulfs of howling wind and eddies of dark, whirling snowflakes, and he was protected from it all by a little metal grating and a rail, a grating and rail that seemed madly infuriated with him, passionately eager to wrench him off and throw him into the tumult of space.

Once he had a fancy that a bullet tore by his ear, and that the clouds and snowflakes were lit by a flash, but he never even turned his head to see what new assailant whirled past them in the void. He wanted to get into the passage! He wanted to get into the passage! He wanted to get into the passage! Would the arm by which he was clinging hold out, or would it give way and snap? A handful of hail smacked him in the face, so that for a time he was breathless and nearly insensible. Hold tight, Bert! He renewed his efforts.

He found himself, with an enormous sense of relief and warmth, in the passage. The passage was behaving like a dice-box, its disposition was evidently to rattle him about and then throw him out again. He hung on with the convulsive clutch of instinct until the passage lurched down ahead. Then he would make a short

run cabin-ward, and clutch again as the fore-end rose.

Behold! He was in the cabin!

He snapped-to the door, and for a time he was not a human being, he was a case of air-sickness. He wanted to get somewhere that would fix him, that he needn't clutch. He opened the locker and got inside among the loose articles, and sprawled there helplessly, with his head sometimes bumping one side and sometimes the other. The lid shut upon him with a click. He did not care then what was happening any more. He did not care who fought who, or what bullets were fired or explosions occurred. He did not care if presently he was shot or smashed to pieces. He was full of feeble, inarticulate rage and despair. "Foolery!" he said, his one exhaustive comment on human enterprise, adventure, war, and the chapter of accidents that had entangled him. "Foolery! Ugh!" He included the order of the universe in that comprehensive condemnation. He wished he was dead.

He saw nothing of the stars, as presently the Vaterland cleared the rush and confusion of the lower weather, nor of the duel she fought with two circling aeroplanes, how they shot her rear-most chambers through, and how she fought them off with explosive bullets and turned to run as she did so.

The rush and swoop of these wonderful night birds was all lost upon him; their heroic dash and self-sacrifice. The Vaterland was rammed, and for some moments she hung on the verge of destruction, and sinking swiftly, with the American aeroplane entangled with her smashed propeller, and the Americans trying to scramble aboard. It signified nothing to Bert. To him it conveyed itself simply as vehement swaying. Foolery! When the American airship dropped off at last, with most of its crew shot or fallen, Bert in his locker appreciated nothing but that the Vaterland had taken a hideous upward leap.

But then came infinite relief, incredibly blissful relief. The rolling, the pitching, the struggle ceased, ceased instantly and absolutely. The Vaterland was no longer fighting the gale; her smashed and exploded engines throbbed no more; she was disabled and driving before the wind as smoothly as a balloon, a huge, windspread, tattered cloud of aerial wreckage.

To Bert it was no more than the end of a series of disagreeable sensations. He was not curious to know what had happened to the airship, nor what had happened to the battle. For a long time he lay waiting apprehensively for the pitching and tossing and his qualms to return, and so, lying, boxed up in the locker, he presently fell asleep.

3

He awoke tranquil but very stuffy, and at the same time very cold, and quite unable to recollect where he could be. His head ached, and his breath was suffocated. He had been dreaming confusedly of Edna, and desert dervishes, and of riding bicycles in an extremely perilous manner through the upper air amidst a pyrotechnic display of crackers and Bengal lights--to the great annoyance of a sort of composite person made up of the Prince and Mr. Butteridge. Then for some reason Edna and he had begun to cry pitifully for each other, and he woke up with wet eye-lashes into this ill-ventilated darkness of the locker. He would never see Edna any more, never see Edna any more.

He thought he must be back in the bedroom behind the cycle shop at the bottom of Bun Hill, and he was sure the vision he had had of the destruction of a magnificent city, a city quite incredibly great and splendid, by means of bombs, was no more than a particularly vivid dream.

"Grubb!" he called, anxious to tell him.

The answering silence, and the dull resonance of the locker to his voice, supplementing the stifling quality of the air, set going a new train of ideas. He lifted up his hands and feet, and met an inflexible resistance. He was in a coffin, he thought! He had been buried alive! He gave way at once to wild panic. "Elp!" he screamed. "Elp!" and drummed with his feet, and kicked and struggled. "Let me out! Let me out!"

For some seconds he struggled with this intolerable horror, and then the side of his imagined coffin gave way, and he was flying out into daylight. Then he was rolling about on what seemed to be a padded floor with Kurt, and being punched and sworn at lustily.

He sat up. His head bandage had become loose and got over one eye, and he whipped the whole thing off. Kurt was also sitting up, a yard away from him, pink as ever, wrapped in blankets, and with an aluminium diver's helmet over his knee, staring at him with a severe expression, and rubbing his downy unshaven chin. They were both on a slanting floor of crimson padding, and above them was an opening like a long, low cellar flap that Bert by an effort perceived to be the cabin door in a half-inverted condition. The whole cabin had in fact turned on its side.

"What the deuce do you mean by it, Smallways?" said Kurt, "jumping out of that locker when I was certain you had gone overboard with the rest of them? Where have you been?"

"What's up?" asked Bert.

"This end of the airship is up. Most other things are down."

"Was there a battle?"

"There was."

"Who won?"

"I haven't seen the papers, Smallways. We left before the finish. We got disabled and unmanageable, and our colleagues--consorts I mean--were too busy most of them to trouble about us, and the wind blew us--Heaven knows where the wind IS blowing us. It blew us right out of action at the rate of eighty miles an hour or so. Gott! what a wind that was! What a fight! And here we are!"

"Where?"

"In the air, Smallways--in the air! When we get down on the earth again we shan't know what to do with our legs."

"But what's below us?"

"Canada, to the best of my knowledge--and a jolly bleak, empty, inhospitable country it looks."

"But why ain't we right ways up?"

Kurt made no answer for a space.

"Last I remember was seeing a sort of flying-machine in a lightning flash," said Bert. "Gaw! that was 'orrible. Guns going off ! Things explodin'! Clouds and 'ail. Pitching and tossing. I got so scared and desperate--and sick. You don't know how the fight came off?"

"Not a bit of it. I was up with my squad in those divers' dresses, inside the gas-chambers, with sheets of silk for caulking. We couldn't see a thing outside except the lightning

flashes. I never saw one of those American aeroplanes. Just saw the shots flicker through the chambers and sent off men for the tears. We caught fire a bit--not much, you know. We were too wet, so the fires spluttered out before we banged. And then one of their infernal things dropped out of the air on us and rammed. Didn't you feel it?"

"I felt everything," said Bert. "I didn't notice any particular smash--"

"They must have been pretty desperate if they meant it. They slashed down on us like a knife; simply ripped the after gas-chambers like gutting herrings, crumpled up the engines and screw. Most of the engines dropped off as they fell off us--or we'd have grounded--but the rest is sort of dangling. We just turned up our nose to the heavens and stayed there. Eleven men rolled off us from various points, and poor old Winterfeld fell through the door of the Prince's cabin into the chart-room and broke his ankle. Also we got our electric gear shot or carried away--no one knows how. That's the position, Smallways. We're driving through the air like a common aerostat, at the mercy of the elements, almost due north--probably to the North Pole. We don't know what aeroplanes the Americans have, or anything at all about it. Very likely we have finished 'em up. One fouled us, one was struck by lightning, some of the men saw a third upset, apparently just for fun. They were going cheap anyhow. Also we've lost most of our drachenflieger. They just skated off into the night. No stability in 'em. That's all. We don't know if we've won or lost. We don't know if we're at war with the British Empire yet or at peace. Consequently, we daren't get down. We don't know what we are up to or what we are going to do. Our Napoleon is alone, forward, and I suppose he's rearranging his plans. Whether New York was our Moscow or not remains to be seen. We've had a high old time and murdered no end of people! War! Noble war! I'm sick of it this morning. I

like sitting in rooms rightway up and not on slippery partitions. I'm a civilised man. I keep thinking of old Albrecht and the Barbarossa.... I feel I want a wash and kind words and a quiet home. When I look at you, I KNOW I want a wash. Gott!"--he stifled a vehement yawn--"What a Cockney tadpole of a ruffian you look!"

"Can we get any grub?" asked Bert.

"Heaven knows!" said Kurt.

He meditated upon Bert for a time. "So far as I can judge, Smallways," he said, "the Prince will probably want to throw you overboard--next time he thinks of you. He certainly will if he sees you.... After all, you know, you came als Ballast.... And we shall have to lighten ship extensively pretty soon. Unless I'm mistaken, the Prince will wake up presently and start doing things with tremendous vigour.... I've taken a fancy to you. It's the English strain in me. You're a rum little chap. I shan't like seeing you whizz down the air.... You'd better make yourself useful, Smallways. I think I shall requisition you for my squad. You'll have to work, you know, and be infernally intelligent and all that. And you'll have to hang about upside down a bit. Still, it's the best chance you have. We shan't carry passengers much farther this trip, I fancy. Ballast goes over-board--if we don't want to ground precious soon and be taken prisoners of war. The Prince won't do that anyhow. He'll be game to the last."

4

By means of a folding chair, which was still in its place behind the door, they got to the window and looked out in turn and contemplated a sparsely wooded country below, with no railways nor roads, and only occasional signs of habitation. Then a bugle

sounded, and Kurt interpreted it as a summons to food. They got through the door and clambered with some difficulty up the nearly vertical passage, holding on desperately with toes and finger-tips, to the ventilating perforations in its floor. The mess stewards had found their fireless heating arrangements intact, and there was hot cocoa for the officers and hot soup for the men.

Bert's sense of the queerness of this experience was so keen that it blotted out any fear he might have felt. Indeed, he was far more interested now than afraid. He seemed to have touched down to the bottom of fear and abandonment overnight. He was growing accustomed to the idea that he would probably be killed presently, that this strange voyage in the air was in all probability his death journey. No human being can keep permanently afraid: fear goes at last to the back of one's mind, accepted, and shelved, and done with. He squatted over his soup, sopping it up with his bread, and contemplated his comrades. They were all rather yellow and dirty, with four-day beards, and they grouped themselves in the tired, unpremeditated manner of men on a wreck. They talked little. The situation perplexed them beyond any suggestion of ideas. Three had been hurt in the pitching up of the ship during the fight, and one had a bandaged bullet wound. It was incredible that this little band of men had committed murder and massacre on a scale beyond precedent. None of them who squatted on the sloping gas-padded partition, soup mug in hand, seemed really guilty of anything of the sort, seemed really capable of hurting a dog wantonly. They were all so manifestly built for homely chalets on the solid earth and carefully tilled fields and blond wives and cheery merrymaking. The red-faced, sturdy man with light eyelashes who had brought the first news of the air battle to the men's mess had finished his soup, and with an expression of maternal solicitude was readjusting the bandages of a youngster whose arm had been sprained.

Bert was crumbling the last of his bread into the last of his soup, eking it out as long as possible, when suddenly he became aware that every one was looking at a pair of feet that were dangling across the downturned open doorway. Kurt appeared and squatted across the hinge. In some mysterious way he had shaved his face and smoothed down his light golden hair. He looked extraordinarily cherubic. "Der Prinz," he said.

A second pair of boots followed, making wide and magnificent gestures in their attempts to feel the door frame. Kurt guided them to a foothold, and the Prince, shaved and brushed and beeswaxed and clean and big and terrible, slid down into position astride of the door. All the men and Bert also stood up and saluted.

The Prince surveyed them with the gesture of a man who sits a steed. The head of the Kapitan appeared beside him.

Then Bert had a terrible moment. The blue blaze of the Prince's eye fell upon him, the great finger pointed, a question was asked. Kurt intervened with explanations.

"So," said the Prince, and Bert was disposed of.

Then the Prince addressed the men in short, heroic sentences, steadying himself on the hinge with one hand and waving the other in a fine variety of gesture. What he said Bert could not tell, but he perceived that their demeanor changed, their backs stiffened. They began to punctuate the Prince's discourse with cries of approval. At the end their leader burst into song and all the men with him. "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," they chanted in deep, strong tones, with an immense moral uplifting. It was glaringly inappropriate in a damaged, half-overturned, and sinking airship, which had been disabled and blown out of action

after inflicting the cruellest bombardment in the world's history; but it was immensely stirring nevertheless. Bert was deeply moved. He could not sing any of the words of Luther's great hymn, but he opened his mouth and emitted loud, deep, and partially harmonious notes....

Far below, this deep chanting struck on the ears of a little camp of Christianised half-breeds who were lumbering. They were breakfasting, but they rushed out cheerfully, quite prepared for the Second Advent. They stared at the shattered and twisted Vaterland driving before the gale, amazed beyond words. In so many respects it was like their idea of the Second Advent, and then again in so many respects, it wasn't. They stared at its passage, awe-stricken and perplexed beyond their power of words. The hymn ceased. Then after a long interval a voice came out of heaven. "Vat id diss blace here galled itself; vat?"

They made no answer. Indeed they did not understand, though the question repeated itself.

And at last the monster drove away northward over a crest of pine woods and was no more seen. They fell into a hot and long disputation....

The hymn ended. The Prince's legs dangled up the passage again, and every one was briskly prepared for heroic exertion and triumphant acts. "Smallways!" cried Kurt, "come here!"

5

Then Bert under Kurt's direction, had his first experience of the work of an air-sailor.

The immediate task before the captain of the Vaterland was a very simple one. He had to keep afloat. The wind, though it had

fallen from its earlier violence, was still blowing strongly enough to render the grounding of so clumsy a mass extremely dangerous, even if it had been desirable for the Prince to land in inhabited country, and so risk capture. It was necessary to keep the airship up until the wind fell and then, if possible, to descend in some lonely district of the Territory where there would be a chance of repair or rescue by some searching consort. In order to do this weight had to be dropped, and Kurt was detailed with a dozen men to climb down among the wreckage of the deflated air-chambers and cut the stuff clear, portion by portion, as the airship sank. So Bert, armed with a sharp cutlass, found himself clambering about upon netting four thousand feet up in the air, trying to understand Kurt when he spoke in English and to divine him when he used German.

It was giddy work, but not nearly so giddy as a rather overnourished reader sitting in a warm room might imagine. Bert found it quite possible to look down and contemplate the wild sub-arctic landscape below, now devoid of any sign of habitation, a land of rocky cliffs and cascades and broad swirling desolate rivers, and of trees and thickets that grew more stunted and scrubby as the day wore on. Here and there on the hills were patches and pockets of snow. And over all this he worked, hacking away at the tough and slippery oiled silk and clinging stoutly to the netting. Presently they cleared and dropped a tangle of bent steel rods and wires from the frame, and a big chunk of silk bladder. That was trying. The airship flew up at once as this loose hamper parted. It seemed almost as though they were dropping all Canada. The stuff spread out in the air and floated down and hit and twisted up in a nasty fashion on the lip of a gorge. Bert clung like a frozen monkey to his ropes and did not move a muscle for five minutes.

But there was something very exhilarating, he found, in this dangerous work, and above every thing else, there was the sense

of fellowship. He was no longer an isolated and distrustful stranger among these others, he had now a common object with them, he worked with a friendly rivalry to get through with his share before them. And he developed a great respect and affection for Kurt, which had hitherto been only latent in him. Kurt with a job to direct was altogether admirable; he was resourceful, helpful, considerate, swift. He seemed to be everywhere. One forgot his pinkness, his light cheerfulness of manner. Directly one had trouble he was at hand with sound and confident advice. He was like an elder brother to his men.

All together they cleared three considerable chunks of wreckage, and then Bert was glad to clamber up into the cabins again and give place to a second squad. He and his companions were given hot coffee, and indeed, even gloved as they were, the job had been a cold one. They sat drinking it and regarding each other with satisfaction. One man spoke to Bert amiably in German, and Bert nodded and smiled. Through Kurt, Bert, whose ankles were almost frozen, succeeded in getting a pair of top-boots from one of the disabled men.

In the afternoon the wind abated greatly, and small, infrequent snowflakes came drifting by. Snow also spread more abundantly below, and the only trees were clumps of pine and spruce in the lower valleys. Kurt went with three men into the still intact gas-chambers, let out a certain quantity of gas from them, and prepared a series of ripping panels for the descent. Also the residue of the bombs and explosives in the magazine were thrown overboard and fell, detonating loudly, in the wilderness below. And about four o'clock in the afternoon upon a wide and rocky plain within sight of snow-crested cliffs, the Vaterland ripped and grounded.

It was necessarily a difficult and violent affair, for the Vaterland had not been planned for the necessities of a balloon.

The captain got one panel ripped too soon and the others not soon enough. She dropped heavily, bounced clumsily, and smashed the hanging gallery into the fore-part, mortally injuring Von Winterfeld, and then came down in a collapsing heap after dragging for some moments. The forward shield and its machine gun tumbled in upon the things below. Two men were hurt badly--one got a broken leg and one was internally injured--by flying rods and wires, and Bert was pinned for a time under the side. When at last he got clear and could take a view of the situation, the great black eagle that had started so splendidly from Franconia six evenings ago, sprawled deflated over the cabins of the airship and the frost-bitten rocks of this desolate place and looked a most unfortunate bird--as though some one had caught it and wrung its neck and cast it aside. Several of the crew of the airship were standing about in silence, contemplating the wreckage and the empty wilderness into which they had fallen. Others were busy under the impromptu tent made by the empty gas-chambers. The Prince had gone a little way off and was scrutinising the distant heights through his field-glass. They had the appearance of old sea cliffs; here and there were small clumps of conifers, and in two places tall cascades. The nearer ground was strewn with glaciated boulders and supported nothing but a stunted Alpine vegetation of compact clustering stems and stalkless flowers. No river was visible, but the air was full of the rush and babble of a torrent close at hand. A bleak and biting wind was blowing. Ever and again a snowflake drifted past. The springless frozen earth under Bert's feet felt strangely dead and heavy after the buoyant airship.

6

So it came about that that great and powerful Prince Karl Albert was for a time thrust out of the stupendous conflict he chiefly had been instrumental in provoking. The chances of battle and the weather conspired to maroon him in Labrador, and there he

raged for six long days, while war and wonder swept the world. Nation rose against nation and air-fleet grappled air-fleet, cities blazed and men died in multitudes; but in Labrador one might have dreamt that, except for a little noise of hammering, the world was at peace.

There the encampment lay; from a distance the cabins, hovered over with the silk of the balloon part, looked like a gipsy's tent on a rather exceptional scale, and all the available hands were busy in building out of the steel of the framework a mast from which the Vaterland's electricians might hang the long conductors of the apparatus for wireless telegraphy that was to link the Prince to the world again. There were times when it seemed they would never rig that mast. From the outset the party suffered hardship. They were not too abundantly provisioned, and they were put on short rations, and for all the thick garments they had, they were but ill-equipped against the piercing wind and inhospitable violence of this wilderness. The first night was spent in darkness and without fires. The engines that had supplied power were smashed and dropped far away to the south, and there was never a match among the company. It had been death to carry matches. All the explosives had been thrown out of the magazine, and it was only towards morning that the bird-faced man whose cabin Bert had taken in the beginning confessed to a brace of duelling pistols and cartridges, with which a fire could be started. Afterwards the lockers of the machine gun were found to contain a supply of unused ammunition.

The night was a distressing one and seemed almost interminable. Hardly any one slept. There were seven wounded men aboard, and Von Winterfeld's head had been injured, and he was shivering and in delirium, struggling with his attendant and shouting strange things about the burning of New York. The men crept together in the mess-room in the darkling, wrapped in what they could find and drank cocoa from the fireless heaters and listened to his

cries. In the morning the Prince made them a speech about Destiny, and the God of his Fathers and the pleasure and glory of giving one's life for his dynasty, and a number of similar considerations that might otherwise have been neglected in that bleak wilderness. The men cheered without enthusiasm, and far away a wolf howled.

Then they set to work, and for a week they toiled to put up a mast of steel, and hang from it a gridiron of copper wires two hundred feet by twelve. The theme of all that time was work, work continually, straining and toilsome work, and all the rest was grim hardship and evil chances, save for a certain wild splendour in the sunset and sunrise in the torrents and drifting weather, in the wilderness about them. They built and tended a ring of perpetual fires, gangs roamed for brushwood and met with wolves, and the wounded men and their beds were brought out from the airship cabins, and put in shelters about the fires. There old Von Winterfeld raved and became quiet and presently died, and three of the other wounded sickened for want of good food, while their fellows mended. These things happened, as it were, in the wings; the central facts before Bert's consciousness were always firstly the perpetual toil, the holding and lifting, and lugging at heavy and clumsy masses, the tedious filing and winding of wires, and secondly, the Prince, urgent and threatening whenever a man relaxed. He would stand over them, and point over their heads, southward into the empty sky. "The world there," he said in German, "is waiting for us! Fifty Centuries come to their Consummation." Bert did not understand the words, but he read the gesture. Several times the Prince grew angry; once with a man who was working slowly, once with a man who stole a comrade's ration. The first he scolded and set to a more tedious task; the second he struck in the face and ill-used. He did no work himself. There was a clear space near the fires in which he would walk up and down, sometimes for two hours together, with arms folded, muttering to himself of Patience and his destiny.

At times these mutterings broke out into rhetoric, into shouts and gestures that would arrest the workers; they would stare at him until they perceived that his blue eyes glared and his waving hand addressed itself always to the southward hills. On Sunday the work ceased for half an hour, and the Prince preached on faith and God's friendship for David, and afterwards they all sang: "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott."

In an improvised hovel lay Von Winterfeld, and all one morning he raved of the greatness of Germany. "Blut und Eisen!" he shouted, and then, as if in derision, "Welt-Politik--ha, ha!" Then he would explain complicated questions of polity to imaginary hearers, in low, wily tones. The other sick men kept still, listening to him. Bert's distracted attention would be recalled by Kurt. "Smallways, take that end. So!"

Slowly, tediously, the great mast was rigged and hoisted foot by foot into place. The electricians had contrived a catchment pool and a wheel in the torrent close at hand--for the little Mulhausen dynamo with its turbinal volute used by the telegraphists was quite adaptable to water driving, and on the sixth day in the evening the apparatus was in working order and the Prince was calling--weakly, indeed, but calling--to his air-fleet across the empty spaces of the world. For a time he called unheeded.

The effect of that evening was to linger long in Bert's memory. A red fire spluttered and blazed close by the electricians at their work, and red gleams xan up the vertical steel mast and threads of copper wire towards the zenith. The Prince sat on a rock close by, with his chin on his hand, waiting. Beyond and to the northward was the cairn that covered Von Winterfeld, surmounted by a cross of steel, and from among the tumbled rocks in the distance the eyes of a wolf gleamed redly. On the other hand was the wreckage of the great airship and the men bivouacked

about a second ruddy flare. They were all keeping very still, as if waiting to hear what news might presently be given them. Far away, across many hundreds of miles of desolation, other wireless masts would be clicking, and snapping, and waking into responsive vibration. Perhaps they were not. Perhaps those throbs upon the etherz .wasted themselves upon a regardless world. When the men spoke, they spoke in low tones. Now and then a bird shrieked remotely, and once a wolf howled. All these things were set in the immense cold spaciousness of the wild.

7

Bert got the news last, and chiefly in broken English, from a linguist among his mates. It was only far on in the night that the weary telegraphist got an answer to his calls, but then the messages came clear and strong. And such news it was!

"I say," said Bert at his breakfast, amidst a great clamour, "tell us a bit."

"All de vorlt is at vor!" said the linguist, waving his cocoa in an illustrative manner, "all de vorlt is at vor!"

Bert stared southward into the dawn. It did not seem so.

"All de vorlt is at vor! They haf burn' Berlin; they haf burn' London; they haf burn' Hamburg and Paris. Chapan hass burn San Francisco. We haf mate a camp at Niagara. Dat is whad they are telling us. China has cot drachenflieger and luftschiffe beyont counting. All de vorlt is at vor!"

"Gaw I" said Bert.

"Yess," said the linguist, drinking his cocoa.

"Burnt up London, 'ave they? Like we did New York?"

"It wass a bombardment."

"They don't say anything about a place called Clapham, or Bun Hill, do they?"

"I haf heard noding," said the linguist.

That was all Bert could get for a time. But the excitement of all the men about him was contagious, and presently he saw Kurt standing alone, hands behind him, and looking at one of the distant waterfalls very steadfastly. He went up and saluted, soldier-fashion. "Beg pardon, lieutenant," he said.

Kurt turned his face. It was unusually grave that morning. "I was just thinking I would like to see that waterfall closer," he said. "It reminds me--what do you want?"

"I can't make 'ead or tail of what they're saying, sir. Would you mind telling me the news?"

"Damn the news," said Kurt. "You'll get news enough before the day's out. It's the end of the world. They're sending the Graf Zeppelin for us. She'll be here by the morning, and we ought to be at Niagara--or eternal smash--within eight and forty hours.... I want to look at that waterfall. You'd better come with me. Have you had your rations?"

"Yessir."

"Very well. Come."

And musing profoundly, Kurt led the way across the rocks towards the distant waterfall.

For a time Bert walked behind him in the character of an escort; then as they passed out of the atmosphere of the encampment, Kurt lagged for him to come alongside.

"We shall be back in it all in two days' time," he said. "And it's a devil of a war to go back to. That's the news. The world's gone mad. Our fleet beat the Americans the night we got disabled, that's clear. We lost eleven--eleven airships certain, and all their aeroplanes got smashed. God knows how much we smashed or how many we killed. But that was only the beginning. Our start's been like firing a magazine. Every country was hiding flying-machines. They're fighting in the air all over Europe--all over the world. The Japanese and Chinese have joined in. That's the great fact. That's the supreme fact. They've pounced into our little quarrels.... The Yellow Peril was a peril after all! They've got thousands of airships. They're all over the world. We bombarded London and Paris, and now the French and English have smashed up Berlin. And now Asia is at us all, and on the top of us all.... It's mania. China on the top. And they don't know where to stop. It's limitless. It's the last confusion. They're bombarding capitals, smashing up dockyards and factories, mines and fleets."

"Did they do much to London, sir?" asked Bert.

"Heaven knows...."

He said no more for a time.

"This Labrador seems a quiet place," he resumed at last. "I'm half a mind to stay here. Can't do that. No! I've got to see it through. I've got to see it through. You've got to, too. Every one.... But why?... I tell you--our world's gone to pieces. There's no way out of it, no way back. Here we are! We're like

mice caught in a house on fire, we're like cattle overtaken by a flood. Presently we shall be picked up, and back we shall go into the fighting. We shall kill and smash again--perhaps. It's a Chino-Japanese air-fleet this time, and the odds are against us. Our turns will come. What will happen to you I don't know, but for myself, I know quite well; I shall be killed."

"You'll be all right," said Bert, after a queer pause.

"No!" said Kurt, "I'm going to be killed. I didn't know, it before, but this morning, at dawn, I knew it-as though I'd been told."

"Ow?"

"I tell you I know."

"But 'ow COULD you know?"

"I know."

"Like being told?"

"Like being certain."

"I know," he repeated, and for a time they walked in silence towards the waterfall.

Kurt, wrapped in his thoughts, walked heedlessly, and at last broke out again. "I've always felt young before, Smallways, but this morning I feel old--old. So old! Nearer to death than old men feel. And I've always. thought life was a lark. It isn't.... This sort of thing has always been happening, I suppose--these things, wars and earthquakes, that sweep across all the decency of life. It's just as though I had woke up to it all for the

first time. Every night since we were at New York I've dreamt of it... And it's always been so--it's the way of life. People are torn away from the people they care for; homes are smashed, creatures full of life, and memories, and little peculiar gifts are scalded and smashed, and torn to pieces, and starved, and spoilt. London! Berlin! San Francisco! Think of all the human histories we ended in New York!... And the others go on again as though such things weren't possible. As I went on! Like animals! Just like animals."

He said nothing for a long time, and then he dropped out, "The Prince is a lunatic!"

They came to a place where they had to climb, and then to a long peat level beside rivulet. There a quantity of delicate little pink flowers caught Bert's eye. "Gaw!" he said, and stooped to pick one. "In a place like this."

Kurt stopped and half turned. His face winced.

"I never see such a flower," said Bert. "It's so delicate."

"Pick some more if you want to," said Kurt.

Bert did so, while Kurt stood and watched him.

"Funny 'ow one always wants to pick flowers," said Bert.

Kurt had nothing to add to that.

They went on again, without talking, for a long time.

At last they came to a rocky hummock, from which the view of the waterfall opened out. There Kurt stopped and seated himself on a rock.

"That's as much as I wanted to see," he explained. "It isn't very like, but it's like enough."

"Like what?"

"Another waterfall I knew."

He asked a question abruptly. "Got a girl, Smallways?"

"Funny thing," said Bert, "those flowers, I suppose.--I was jes' thinking of 'er."

"So was I."

"WHAT! Edna?"

"No. I was thinking of MY Edna. We've all got Ednas, I suppose, for our imaginations to play about. This was a girl. But all that's past for ever. It's hard to think I can't see her just for a minute--just let her know I'm thinking of her."

"Very likely," said Bert, "you'll see 'er all right."

"No," said Kurt with decision, "I KNOW."

"I met her," he went on, "in a place like this--in the Alps--Engstlen Alp. There's a waterfall rather like this one--a broad waterfall down towards Innertkirchen. That's why I came here this morning. We slipped away and had half a day together beside it. And we picked flowers. Just such flowers as you picked. The same for all I know. And gentian."

"I know" said Bert, "me and Edna--we done things like that. Flowers. And all that. Seems years off now."

"She was beautiful and daring and shy, Mein Gott! I can hardly hold myself for the desire to see her and hear her voice again before I die. Where is she?... Look here, Smallways, I shall write a sort of letter-- And there's her portrait." He touched his breast pocket.

"You'll see 'er again all right," said Bert.

"No! I shall never see her again.... I don't understand why people should meet just to be torn apart. But I know she and I will never meet again. That I know as surely as that the sun will rise, and that cascade come shining over the rocks after I am dead and done.... Oh! It's all foolishness and haste and violence and cruel folly, stupidity and blundering hate and selfish ambition--all the things that men have done--all the things they will ever do. Gott! Smallways, what a muddle and confusion life has always been--the battles and massacres and disasters, the hates and harsh acts, the murders and sweatings, the lynchings and cheatings. This morning I am tired of it all, as though I'd just found it out for the first time. I HAVE found it out. When a man is tired of life, I suppose it is time for him to die. I've lost heart, and death is over me. Death is close to me, and I know I have got to end. But think of all the hopes I had only a little time ago, the sense of fine beginnings!... It was all a sham. There were no beginnings.... We're just ants in ant-hill cities, in a world that doesn't matter; that goes on and rambles into nothingness. New York--New York doesn't even strike me as horrible. New York was nothing but an ant-hill kicked to pieces by a fool!

"Think of it, Smallways: there's war everywhere! They're smashing up their civilisation before they have made it. The sort of thing the English did at Alexandria, the Japanese at Port Arthur, the French at Casablanca, is going on everywhere.

Everywhere! Down in South America even they are fighting among themselves! No place is safe--no place is at peace. There is no place where a woman and her daughter can hide and be at peace. The war comes through the air, bombs drop in the night. Quiet people go out in the morning, and see air-fleets passing overhead--dripping death--dripping death!"

CHAPTER VIII A WORLD AT WAR

1

It was only very slowly that Bert got hold of this idea that the whole world was at war, that he formed any image at all of the crowded countries south of these Arctic solitudes stricken with terror and dismay as these new-born aerial navies swept across their skies. He was not used to thinking of the world as a whole, but as a limitless hinterland of happenings beyond the range of his immediate vision. War in his imagination was something, a source of news and emotion, that happened in a restricted area, called the Seat of War. But now the whole atmosphere was the Seat of War, and every land a cockpit. So closely had the nations raced along the path of research and invention, so secret and yet so parallel had been their plans and acquisitions, that it was within a few hours of the launching of the first fleet in Franconia that an Asiatic Armada beat its west-ward way across, high above the marvelling millions in the plain of the Ganges. But the preparations of the Confederation of Eastern Asia had been on an altogether more colossal scale than the German. "With this step," said Tan Ting-siang, "we overtake and pass the West. We recover the peace of the world that these barbarians have destroyed."

Their secrecy and swiftness and inventions had far surpassed those of the Germans, and where the Germans had had a hundred men at work the Asiatics had ten thousand. There came to their great aeronaut parks at Chinsi-fu and Tsingyen by the mono-rails that now laced the whole surface of China a limitless supply of skilled and able workmen, workmen far above the average European in industrial efficiency. The news of the German World Surprise simply quickened their efforts. At the time of the bombardment of New York it is doubtful if the Germans had three hundred airships all together in the world; the score of Asiatic fleets flying east and west and south must have numbered several thousand. Moreover the Asiatics had a real fighting flying-machine, the Niais as they were called, a light but quite efficient weapon, infinitely superior to the German drachenflieger. Like that, it was a one-man machine, but it was built very lightly of steel and cane and chemical silk, with a transverse engine, and a flapping sidewing. The aeronaut carried a gun firing explosive bullets loaded with oxygen, and in addition, and true to the best tradition of Japan, a sword. Mostly they were Japanese, and it is characteristic that from the first it was contemplated that the aeronaut should be a swordsman. The wings of these flyers had bat-like hooks forward, by which they were to cling to their antagonist's gas-chambers while boarding him. These light flying-machines were carried with the fleets, and also sent overland or by sea to the front with the men. They were capable of flights of from two to five hundred miles according to the wind.

So, hard upon the uprush of the first German air-fleet, these Asiatic swarms took to the atmosphere. Instantly every organised Government in the world, was frantically and vehemently building airships and whatever approach to a flying machine its inventors' had discovered. There was no time for diplomacy. Warnings and ultimatums wer telegraphed to and fro, and in a few hours all the panic-fierce world was openly at war, and at war in the most

complicated way. For Britain and France and Italy had declared war upon Germany and outraged Swiss neutrality; India, at the sight of Asiatic airships, had broken into a Hindoo insurrection in Bengal and a Mohametan revolt hostile to this in the North-west Provinces--the latter spreading like wildfire from Gobi to the Gold Coast--and the Confederation of Eastern Asia had seized the oil wells of Burmha and was impartially attacking America and Germany. In a week they were building airships in Damascus and Cairo and Johannesburg; Australia and New Zealand were frantically equipping themselves. One unique and terrifying aspect of this development was the swiftness with which these monsters could be produced. To build an ironclad took from two to four years; an airship could be put together in as many weeks. Moreover, compared with even a torpedo boat, the airship was remarkably simple to construct, given the air-chamber material, the engines, the gas plant, and the design, it was reallt not more complicated and far easier than an ordinary wooden boat had been a hundred years before. And now from Cape Horn to Nova Zembla, and from Canton round to Canton again, there were factories and workshops and industrial resources.

And the German airships were barely in sight of the Atlantic waters, the first Asiatic fleet was scarcely reported from Upper Burmah, before the fantastic fabric of credit and finance that had held the world together economically for a hundred years strained and snapped. A tornado of realisation swept through every stock exchange in the world; banks stopped payment, business shrank and ceased, factories ran on for a day or so by a sort of inertia, completing the orders of bankrupt and extinguished customers, then stopped. The New York Bert Smallways saw, for all its glare of light and traffic, was in the pit of an economic and financial collapse unparalleled in history. The flow of the food supply was already a little checked. And before the world-war had lasted two weeks--by the time, that is, that mast was rigged in Labrador--there was not a

city or town in the world outside China, however far from the actual centres of destruction, where police and government were not adopting special emergency methods to deal with a want of food and a glut of unemployed people.

The special peculiarities of aerial warfare were of such a nature as to trend, once it had begun, almost inevitably towards social disorganisation. The first of these peculiarities was brought home to the Germans in their attack upon New York; the immense power of destruction an airship has over the thing below, and its relative inability to occupy or police or guard or garrison a surrendered position. Necessarily, in the face of urban populations in a state of economic disorganisation and infuriated and starving, this led to violent and destructive collisions, and even where the air-fleet floated inactive above, there would be civil conflict and passionate disorder below. Nothing comparable to this state of affairs had been known in the previous history of warfare, unless we take such a case as that of a nineteenth century warship attacking some large savage or barbaric settlement, or one of those naval bombardments that disfigure the history of Great Britain in the late eighteenth century. Then, indeed, there had been cruelties and destruction that faintly foreshadowed the horrors of the aerial war. Moreover, before the twentieth century the world had had but one experience, and that a comparatively light one, in the Communist insurrection of Paris, 1871, of the possibilities of a modern urban population under warlike stresses.

A second peculiarity of airship war as it first came to the world that also made for social collapse, was the ineffectiveness of the early air-ships against each other. Upon anything below they could rain explosives in the most deadly fashion, forts and ships and cities lay at their mercy, but unless they were prepared for a suicidal grapple they could do remarkably little mischief to each other. The armament of the huge German airships, big as the

biggest mammoth liners afloat, was one machine gun that could easily have been packed up on a couple of mules. In addition, when it became evident that the air must be fought for, the air-sailors were provided with rifles with explosive bullets of oxygen or inflammable substance, but no airship at any time ever carried as much in the way of guns and armour as the smallest gunboat on the navy list had been accustomed to do. Consequently, when these monsters met in battle, they manoeuvred for the upper place, or grappled and fought like junks, throwing grenades fighting hand to hand in an entirely medieval fashion. The risks of a collapse and fall on either side came near to balancing in every case the chances of victory. As a consequence, and after their first experiences of battle, one finds a growing tendency on the part of the air-fleet admirals to evade joining battle, and to seek rather the moral advantage of a destructive counter attack.

And if the airships were too ineffective, the early drachenflieger were either too unstable, like the German, or too light, like the Japanese, to produce immediately decisive results. Later, it is true, the Brazilians launched a flying-machine of a type and scale that was capable of dealing with an airship, but they built only three or four, they operated only in South America, and they vanished from history untraceably in the time when world-bankruptcy put a stop to all further engineering production on any considerable scale.

The third peculiarity of aerial warfare was that it was at once enormously destructive and entirely indecisive. It had this unique feature, that both sides lay open to punitive attack. In all previous forms of war, both by land and sea, the losing side was speedily unable to raid its antagonist's territory and the communications. One fought on a "front," and behind that front the winner's supplies and resources, his towns and factories and capital, the peace of his country, were secure. If the war was a

naval one, you destroyed your enemy's battle fleet and then blockaded his ports, secured his coaling stations, and hunted down any stray cruisers that threatened your ports of commerce. But to blockade and watch a coastline is one thing, to blockade and watch the whole surface of a country is another, and cruisers and privateers are things that take long to make, that cannot be packed up and hidden and carried unostentatiously from point to point. In aerial war the stronger side, even supposing it destroyed the main battle fleet of the weaker, had then either to patrol and watch or destroy every possible point at which he might produce another and perhaps a novel and more deadly form of flyer. It meant darkening his air with airships. It meant building them by the thousand and making aeronauts by the hundred thousand. A small uninitiated airship could be hidden in a railway shed, in a village street, in a wood; a flying machine is even less conspicuous.

And in the air are no streets, no channels, no point where one can say of an antagonist, "If he wants to reach my capital he must come by here." In the air all directions lead everywhere.

Consequently it was impossible to end a war by any of the established methods. A, having outnumbered and overwhelmed B, hovers, a thousand airships strong, over his capital, threatening to bombard it unless B submits. B replies by wireless telegraphy that he is now in the act of bombarding the chief manufacturing city of A by means of three raider airships. A denounces B's raiders as pirates and so forth, bombards B's capital, and sets off to hunt down B's airships, while B, in a state of passionate emotion and heroic unconquerableness, sets to work amidst his ruins, making fresh airships and explosives for the benefit of A. The war became perforce a universal guerilla war, a war inextricably involving civilians and homes and all the apparatus of social life.

These aspects of aerial fighting took the world by surprise. There had been no foresight to deduce these consequences. If there had been, the world would have arranged for a Universal Peace Conference in 1900. But mechanical invention had gone faster than intellectual and social organisation, and the world, with its silly old flags, its silly unmeaning tradition of nationality, its cheap newspapers and cheaper passions and imperialisms, its base commercial motives and habitual insincerities and vulgarities, its race lies and conflicts, was taken by surprise. Once the war began there was no stopping it. The flimsy fabric of credit that had grown with no man foreseeing, and that had held those hundreds of millions in an economic interdependence that no man clearly understood, dissolved in panic. Everywhere went the airships dropping bombs, destroying any hope of a rally, and everywhere below were economic catastrophe, starving workless people, rioting, and social disorder. Whatever constructive guiding intelligence there had been among the nations vanished in the passionate stresses of the time. Such newspapers and documents and histories as survive from this period all tell one universal story of towns and cities with the food supply interrupted and their streets congested with starving unemployed; of crises in administration and states of siege, of provisional Governments and Councils of Defence, and, in the cases of India and Egypt, insurrectionary committees taking charge of the re-arming of the population, of the making of batteries and gun-pits, of the vehement manufacture of airships and flying-machines.

One sees these things in glimpses, in illuminated moments, as if through a driving reek of clouds, going on all over the world. It was the dissolution of an age; it was the collapse of the civilisation that had trusted to machinery, and the instruments of its destruction were machines. But while the collapse of the previous great civilisation, that of Rome, had been a matter of centuries, had been a thing of phase and phase, like the ageing

and dying of a man, this, like his killing by railway or motor car, was one swift, conclusive smashing and an end.

2

The early battles of the aerial war were no doubt determined by attempts to realise the old naval maxim, to ascertain the position of the enemy's fleet and to destroy it. There was first the battle of the Bernese Oberland, in which the Italian and French navigables in their flank raid upon the Franconian Park were assailed by the Swiss experimental squadron, supported as the day wore on by German airships, and then the encounter of the British Winterhouse-Dunn aeroplanes with three unfortunate Germans.

Then came the Battle of North India, in which the entire Anglo-Indian aeronautic settlement establishment fought for three days against overwhelming odds, and was dispersed and destroyed in detail.

And simultaneously with the beginning of that, commenced the momentous struggle of the Germans and Asiatics that is usually known as the Battle of Niagara because of the objective of the Asiatic attack. But it passed gradually into a sporadic conflict over half a continent. Such German airships as escaped destruction in battle descended and surrendered to the Americans, and were re-manned, and in the end it became a series of pitiless and heroic encounters between the Americans, savagely resolved to exterminate their enemies, and a continually reinforced army of invasion from Asia quartered upon the Pacific slope and supported by an immense fleet. From the first the war in America was fought with implacable bitterness; no quarter was asked, no prisoners were taken. With ferocious and magnificent energy the Americans constructed and launched ship after ship to battle and perish against the Asiatic multitudes. All other affairs were

subordinate to this war, the whole population was presently living or dying for it. Presently, as I shall tell, the white men found in the Butteridge machine a weapon that could meet and fight the flying-machines of the Asiatic swordsman.

The Asiatic invasion of America completely effaced the German-American conflict. It vanishes from history. At first it had seemed to promise quite sufficient tragedy in itself--beginning as it did in unforgettable massacre. After the destruction of central New York all America had risen like one man, resolved to die a thousand deaths rather than submit to Germany. The Germans grimly resolved upon beating the Americans into submission and, following out the plans developed by the Prince, had seized Niagara--in order to avail themselves of its enormous powerworks; expelled all its inhabitants and made a desert of its environs as far as Buffalo. They had also, directly Great Britain and France declare war, wrecked the country upon the Canadian side for nearly ten miles inland. They began to bring up men and material from the fleet off the east coast, stringing out to and fro like bees getting honey. It was then that the Asiatic forces appeared, and it was in their attack upon this German base at Niagara that the air-fleets of East and West first met and the greater issue became clear.

One conspicuous peculiarity of the early aerial fighting arose from the profound secrecy with which the airships had been prepared. Each power had had but the dimmest inkling of the schemes of its rivals, and even experiments with its own devices were limited by the needs of secrecy. None of the designers of airships and aeroplanes had known clearly what their inventions might have to fight; many had not imagined they would have to fight anything whatever in the air; and had planned them only for the dropping of explosives. Such had been the German idea. The only weapon for fighting another airship with which the Franconian fleet had been provided was the machine gun forward.

Only after the fight over New York were the men given short rifles with detonating bullets. Theoretically, the drachenflieger were to have been the fighting weapon. They were declared to be aerial torpedo-boats, and the aeronaut was supposed to swoop close to his antagonist and cast his bombs as he whirled past. But indeed these contrivances were hopelessly unstable; not one-third in any engagement succeeded in getting back to the mother airship. The rest were either smashed up or grounded.

The allied Chino-Japanese fleet made the same distinction as the Germans between airships and fighting machines heavier than air, but the type in both cases was entirely different from the occidental models, and--it is eloquent of the vigour with which these great peoples took up and bettered the European methods of scientific research in almost every particular the invention of Asiatic engineers. Chief among these, it is worth remarking, was Mohini K. Chatterjee, a political exile who had formerly served in the British-Indian aeronautic park at Lahore.

The German airship was fish-shaped, with a blunted head; the Asiatic airship was also fish-shaped, but not so much on the lines of a cod or goby as of a ray or sole. It had a wide, flat underside, unbroken by windows or any opening except along the middle line. Its cabins occupied its axis,, with a sort of bridge deck above, and the gas-chambers gave the whole affair the shape of a gipsy's hooped tent, except that it was much flatter. The German airship was essentially a navigable balloon very much lighter than air; the Asiatic airship was very little lighter than air and skimmed through it with much greater velocity if with considerably less stability. They carried fore and aft guns, the latter much the larger, throwing inflammatory shells, and in addition they had nests for riflemen on both the upper and the under side. Light as this armament was in comparison with the smallest gunboat that ever sailed, it was sufficient for them

to outfight as well as outfly the German monster airships. In action they flew to get behind or over the Germans: they even dashed underneath, avoiding only passing immediately beneath the magazine, and then as soon as they had crossed let fly with their rear gun, and sent flares or oxygen shells into the antagonist's gas-chambers.

It was not in their airships, but, as I have said, in their flying-machines proper, that the strength of the Asiatics lay. Next only to the Butteridge machine, these were certainly the most efficient heavier-than-air fliers that had ever appeared. They were the invention of a Japanese artist, and they differed in type extremely from the box-kite quality of the German drachenflieger. They had curiously curved, flexible side wings, more like BENT butterfly's wings than anything else, and made of a substance like celluloid and of brightly painted silk, and they had a long humming-bird tail. At the forward corner of the wings were hooks, rather like the claws of a bat, by which the machine could catch and hang and tear at the walls of an airship's gas-chamber. The solitary rider sat between the wings above a transverse explosive engine, an explosive engine that differed in no essential particular from those in use in the light motor bicycles of the period. Below was a single large wheel. The rider sat astride of a saddle, as in the Butteridge machine, and he carried a large double-edged two-handed sword, in addition to his explosive-bullet firing rifle.

3

One sets down these particulars and compares the points of the American and German pattern of aeroplane and navigable, but none of these facts were clearly known to any of those who fought in this monstrously confused battle above the American great lakes.

Each side went into action against it knew not what, under novel

conditions and with apparatus that even without hostile attacks was capable of producing the most disconcerting surprises. Schemes of action, attempts at collective manoeuvring necessarily went to pieces directly the fight began, just as they did in almost all the early ironclad battles of the previous century. Each captain then had to fall back upon individual action and his own devices; one would see triumph in what another read as a cue for flight and despair. It is as true of the Battle of Niagara as of the Battle of Lissa that it was not a battle but a bundle of "battlettes"!

To such a spectator as Bert it presented itself as a series of incidents, some immense, some trivial, but collectively incoherent. He never had a sense of any plain issue joined, of any point struggled for and won or lost. He saw tremendous things happen and in the end his world darkened to disaster and ruin.

He saw the battle from the ground, from Prospect Park and from Goat Island, whither he fled.

But the manner in which he came to be on the ground needs explaining.

The Prince had resumed command of his fleet through wireless telegraphy long before the Zeppelin had located his encampment in Labrador. By his direction the German air-fleet, whose advance scouts had been in contact with the Japanese over the Rocky Mountains, had concentrated upon Niagara and awaited his arrival. He had rejoined his command early in the morning of the twelfth, and Bert had his first prospect of the Gorge of Niagara while he was doing net drill outside the middle gas-chamber at sunrise. The Zeppelin was flying very high at the time, and far below he saw the water in the gorge marbled with froth and then away to the west the great crescent of the Canadian Fall shining,

flickering and foaming in the level sunlight and sending up a deep, incessant thudding rumble to the sky. The air-fleet was keeping station in an enormous crescent, with its horns pointing south-westward, a long array of shining monsters with tails rotating slowly and German ensigns now trailing from their bellies aft of their Marconi pendants.

Niagara city was still largely standing then, albeit its streets were empty of all life. Its bridges were intact; its hotels and restaurants still flying flags and inviting sky signs; its power-stations running. But about it the country on both sides of the gorge might have been swept by a colossal broom. Everything that could possibly give cover to an attack upon the German position at Niagara had been levelled as ruthlessly as machinery and explosives could contrive; houses blown up and burnt, woods burnt, fences and crops destroyed. The mono-rails had been torn up, and the roads in particular cleared of all possibility of concealment or shelter. Seen from above, the effect of this wreckage was grotesque. Young woods had been destroyed whole-sale by dragging wires, and the spoilt saplings, smashed or uprooted, lay in swathes like corn after the sickle. Houses had an appearance of being flattened down by the pressure of a gigantic finger. Much burning was still going on, and large areas had been reduced to patches of smouldering and sometimes still glowing blackness.

Here and there lay the debris of belated fugitives, carts, and dead bodies of horses and men; and where houses had had water-supplies there were pools of water and running springs from the ruptured pipes. In unscorched fields horses and cattle still fed peacefully. Beyond this desolated area the countryside was still standing, but almost all the people had fled. Buffalo was on fire to an enormous extent, and there were no signs of any efforts to grapple with the flames. Niagara city itself was being rapidly converted to the needs of a military depot. A

large number of skilled engineers had already been brought from the fleet and were busily at work adapting the exterior industrial apparatus of the place to the purposes of an aeronautic park. They had made a gas recharging station at the corner of the American Fall above the funicular railway, and they were, opening up a much larger area to the south for the same purpose. Over the power-houses and hotels and suchlike prominent or important points the German flag was flying.

The Zeppelin circled slowly over this scene twice while the Prince surveyed it from the swinging gallery; it then rose towards the centre of the crescent and transferred the Prince and his suite, Kurt included, to the Hohenzollern, which had been chosen as the flagship during the impending battle. They were swung up on a small cable from the forward gallery, and the men of the Zeppelin manned the outer netting as the Prince and his staff left them. The Zeppelin then came about, circled down and grounded in Prospect Park, in order to land the wounded and take aboard explosives; for she had come to Labrador with her magazines empty, it being uncertain what weight she might need to carry. She also replenished the hydrogen in one of her forward chambers which had leaked.

Bert was detailed as a bearer and helped carry the wounded one by one into the nearest of the large hotels that faced the Canadian shore. The hotel was quite empty except that there were two trained American nurses and a negro porter, and three or four Germans awaiting them. Bert went with the Zeppelin's doctor into the main street of the place, and they broke into a drug shop and obtained various things of which they stood in need. As they returned they found an officer and two men making a rough inventory of the available material in the various stores. Except for them the wide, main street of the town was quite deserted, the people had been given three hours to clear out, and everybody, it seemed, had done so. At one corner a dead man lay

against the wall--shot. Two or three dogs were visible up the empty vista, but towards its river end the passage of a string of mono-rail cars broke the stillness and the silence. They were loaded with hose, and were passing to the trainful of workers who were converting Prospect Park into an airship dock.

Bert pushed a case of medicine balanced on a bicycle taken from an adjacent shop, to the hotel, and then he was sent to load bombs into the Zeppelin magazine, a duty that called for elaborate care. From this job he was presently called off by the captain of the Zeppelin, who sent him with a note to the officer in charge of the Anglo-American Power Company, for the field telephone had still to be adjusted. Bert received his instructions in German, whose meaning he guessed, and saluted and took the note, not caring to betray his ignorance of the language. He started off with a bright air of knowing his way and turned a corner or so, and was only beginning to suspect that he did not know where he was going when his attention was recalled to the sky by the report of a gun from the Hohenzollern and celestial cheering.

He looked up and found the view obstructed by the houses on either side of the street. He hesitated, and then curiosity took him back towards the bank of the river. Here his view was inconvenienced by trees, and it was with a start that he discovered the Zeppelin, which he knew had still a quarter of her magazines to fill, was rising over Goat Island. She had not waited for her complement of ammunition. It occurred to him that he was left behind. He ducked back among the trees and bushes until he felt secure from any after-thought on the part of the Zeppelin's captain. Then his curiosity to see what the German air-fleet faced overcame him, and drew him at last halfway across the bridge to Goat Island.

From that point he had nearly a hemisphere of sky and got his

first glimpse of the Asiatic airships low in the sky above the glittering tumults of the Upper Rapids.

They were far less impressive than the German ships. He could not judge the distance, and they flew edgeways to him, so as to conceal the broader aspect of their bulk.

Bert stood there in the middle of the bridge, in a place that most people who knew it remembered as a place populous with sightseers and excursionists, and he was the only human being in sight there. Above him, very high in the heavens, the contending air-fleets manoeuvred; below him the river seethed like a sluice towards the American Fall. He was curiously dressed. His cheap blue serge trousers were thrust into German airship rubber boots, and on his head he wore an aeronaut's white cap that was a trifle too large for him. He thrust that back to reveal his staring little Cockney face, still scarred upon the brow. "Gaw!" he whispered.

He stared. He gesticulated. Once or twice he shouted and applauded.

Then at a certain point terror seized him and he took to his heels in the direction of Goat Island.

4

For a time after they were in sight of each other, neither fleet attempted to engage. The Germans numbered sixty-seven great airships and they maintained the crescent formation at a height of nearly four thousand feet. They kept a distance of about one and a half lengths, so that the horns of the crescent were nearly thirty miles apart. Closely in tow of the airships of the extreme squadrons on either wing were about thirty drachenflieger ready manned,, but these were too small and distant for Bert to

distinguish.

At first, only what was called the Southern fleet of the Asiatics was visible to him. It consisted of forty airships, carrying all together nearly four hundred one-man flying-machines upon their flanks, and for some time it flew slowly and at a minimum distance of perhaps a dozen miles from the Germans, eastward across their front. At first Bert could distinguish only the greater bulks, then he perceived the one-man machines as a multitude of very small objects drifting like motes in the sunshine about and beneath the larger shapes.

Bert saw nothing then of the second fleet of the Asiatics, though probably that was coming into sight of the Germans at the time, in the north-west.

The air was very still, the sky almost without a cloud, and the German fleet had risen to an immense height, so that the airships seemed no longer of any considerable size. Both ends of their crescent showed plainly. As they beat southward they passed slowly between Bert and the sunlight, and became black outlines of themselves. The drachenflieger appeared as little flecks of black on either wing of this aerial Armada.

The two fleets seemed in no hurry to engage. The Asiatics went far away into the east, quickening their pace and rising as they did so, and then tailed out into a long column and came flying back, rising towards the German left. The squadrons of the latter came about, facing this oblique advance, and suddenly little flickerings and a faint crepitating sound told that they had opened fire. For a time no effect was visible to the watcher on the bridge. Then, like a handful of snowflakes, the drachenflieger swooped to the attack, and a multitude of red specks whirled up to meet them. It was to Bert's sense not only enormously remote but singularly inhuman. Not four hours since

he had been on one of those very airships, and yet they seemed to him now not gas-bags carrying men, but strange sentient creatures that moved about and did things with a purpose of their own. The flight of the Asiatic and German flying-machines joined and dropped earthward, became like a handful of white and red rose petals flung from a distant window, grew larger, until Bert could see the overturned ones spinning through the air, and were hidden by great volumes of dark smoke that were rising in the direction of Buffalo. For a time they all were hidden, then two or three white and a number of red ones rose again into the sky, like a swarm of big butterflies, and circled fighting and drove away out of sight again towards the east.

A heavy report recalled Bert's eyes to the zenith, and behold, the great crescent had lost its dressing and burst into a disorderly long cloud of airships! One had dropped halfway down the sky. It was flaming fore and aft, and even as Bert looked it turned over and fell, spinning over and over itself and vanished into the smoke of Buffalo.

Bert's mouth opened and shut, and he clutched tighter on the rail of the bridge. For some moments--they seemed long moments--the two fleets remained without any further change flying obliquely towards each other, and making what came to Bert's ears as a midget uproar. Then suddenly from either side airships began dropping out of alignment, smitten by missiles he could neither see nor trace. The string of Asiatic ships swung round and either charged into or over (it was difficult to say from below) the shattered line of the Germans, who seemed to open out to give way to them. Some sort of manoeuvring began, but Bert could not grasp its import. The left of the battle became a confused dance of airships. For some minutes up there the two crossing lines of ships looked so close it seemed like a hand-to-hand scuffle in the sky. Then they broke up into groups and duels. The descent of German air-ships towards the lower sky increased. One of them

flared down and vanished far away in the north; two dropped with something twisted and crippled in their movements; then a group of antagonists came down from the zenith in an eddying conflict, two Asiatics against one German, and were presently joined by another, and drove away eastward all together with others dropping out of the German line to join them.

One Asiatic either rammed or collided with a still more gigantic German, and the two went spinning to destruction together. The northern squadron of Asiatics came into the battle unnoted by Bert, except that the multitude of ships above seemed presently increased. In a little while the fight was utter confusion, drifting on the whole to the southwest against the wind. It became more and more a series of group encounters. Here a huge German airship flamed earthward with a dozen flat Asiatic craft about her, crushing her every attempt to recover. Here another hung with its screw fighting off the swordsman from a swarm of flying-machines. Here, again, an Asiatic aflame at either end swooped out of the battle. His attention went from incident to incident in the vast clearness overhead; these conspicuous cases of destruction caught and held his mind; it was only very slowly that any sort of scheme manifested itself between those nearer, more striking episodes.

The mass of the airships that eddied remotely above was, however, neither destroying nor destroyed. The majority of them seemed to be going at full speed and circling upward for position, exchanging ineffectual shots as they did so. Very little ramming was essayed after the first tragic downfall of rammer and rammed, and what ever attempts at boarding were made were invisible to Bert. There seemed, however, a steady attempt to isolate antagonists, to cut them off from their fellows and bear them down, causing a perpetual sailing back and interlacing of these shoaling bulks. The greater numbers of the Asiatics and their swifter heeling movements gave them the effect of persistently

attacking the Germans. Overhead, and evidently endeavouring to keep itself in touch with the works of Niagara, a body of German airships drew itself together into a compact phalanx, and the Asiatics became more and more intent upon breaking this up. He was grotesquely reminded of fish in a fish-pond struggling for crumbs. He could see puny puffs of smoke and the flash of bombs, but never a sound came down to him....

A flapping shadow passed for a moment between Bert and the sun and was followed by another. A whirring of engines, click, clock, clitter clock, smote upon his ears. Instantly he forgot the zenith.

Perhaps a hundred yards above the water, out of the south, riding like Valkyries swiftly through the air on the strange steeds the engineering of Europe had begotten upon the artistic inspiration of Japan, came a long string of Asiatic swordsman. The wings flapped jerkily, click, block, clitter clock, and the machines drove up; they spread and ceased, and the apparatus came soaring through the air. So they rose and fell and rose again. They passed so closely overhead that Bert could hear their voices calling to one another. They swooped towards Niagara city and landed one after another in a long line in a clear space before the hotel. But he did not stay to watch them land. One yellow face had craned over and looked at him, and for one enigmatical instant met his eyes....

It was then the idea came to Bert that he was altogether too conspicuous in the middle of the bridge, and that he took to his heels towards Goat Island. Thence, dodging about among the trees, with perhaps an excessive self-consciousness, he watched the rest of the struggle.

When Bert's sense of security was sufficiently restored for him to watch the battle again, he perceived that a brisk little fight was in progress between the Asiatic aeronauts and the German engineers for the possession of Niagara city. It was the first time in the whole course of the war that he had seen anything resembling fighting as he had studied it in the illustrated papers of his youth. It seemed to him almost as though things were coming right. He saw men carrying rifles and taking cover and running briskly from point to point in a loose attacking formation. The first batch of aeronauts had probably been under the impression that the city was deserted. They had grounded in the open near Prospect Park and approached the houses towards the power-works before they were disillusioned by a sudden fire. They had scattered back to the cover of a bank near the water--it was too far for them to reach their machines again; they were lying and firing at the men in the hotels and frame-houses about the power-works.

Then to their support came a second string of red flying-machines driving up from the east. They rose up out of the haze above the houses and came round in a long curve as if surveying the position below. The fire of the Germans rose to a roar, and one of those soaring shapes gave an abrupt jerk backward and fell among the houses. The others swooped down exactly like great birds upon the roof of the power-house. They caught upon it, and from each sprang a nimble little figure and ran towards the parapet.

Other flapping bird-shapes came into this affair, but Bert had not seen their coming. A staccato of shots came over to him, reminding him of army manoeuvres, of newspaper descriptions of fights, of all that was entirely correct in his conception of warfare. He saw quite a number of Germans running from the outlying houses towards the power-house. Two fell. One lay still, but the other wriggled and made efforts for a time. The

hotel that was used as a hospital, and to which he had helped carry the wounded men from the Zeppelin earlier in the day, suddenly ran up the Geneva flag. The town that had seemed so quiet had evidently been concealing a considerable number of Germans, and they were now concentrating to hold the central power-house. He wondered what ammunition they might have. More and more of the Asiatic flying-machines came into the conflict. They had disposed of the unfortunate German drachenflieger and were now aiming at the incipient aeronautic park,--the electric gas generators and repair stations which formed the German base. Some, landed, and their aeronauts took cover and became energetic infantry soldiers. Others hovered above the fight, their men ever and again firing shots down at some chance exposure below. The firing came in paroxysms; now there would be a watchful lull and now a rapid tattoo of shots, rising to a roar. Once or twice flying machines, as they circled warily, came right overhead, and for a time Bert gave himself body and soul to cowering.

Ever and again a larger thunder mingled with the rattle and reminded him of the grapple of airships far above, but the nearer fight held his attention.

Abruptly something dropped from the zenith; something like a barrel or a huge football.

CRASH! It smashed with an immense report. It had fallen among the grounded Asiatic aeroplanes that lay among the turf and flower-beds near the river. They flew in scraps and fragments, turf, trees, and gravel leapt and fell; the aeronauts still lying along the canal bank were thrown about like sacks, catspaws flew across the foaming water. All the windows of the hotel hospital that had been shingly reflecting blue sky and airships the moment before became vast black stars. Bang!--a second followed. Bert looked up and was filled with a sense of a number of monstrous bodies swooping down, coming down on the whole affair

like a flight of bellying blankets, like a string of vast dish-covers. The central tangle of the battle above was circling down as if to come into touch with the power-house fight. He got a new effect of airships altogether, as vast things coming down upon him, growing swiftly larger and larger and more overwhelming, until the houses over the way seemed small, the American rapids narrow, the bridge flimsy, the combatants infinitesimal. As they came down they became audible as a complex of shootings and vast creakings and groanings and beatings and throbbings and shouts and shots. The fore-shortened black eagles at the fore-ends of the Germans had an effect of actual combat of flying feathers.

Some of these fighting airships came within five hundred feet of the ground. Bert could see men on the lower galleries of the Germans, firing rifles; could see Asiatics clinging to the ropes; saw one man in aluminium diver's gear fall flashing head-long into the waters above Goat Island. For the first time he saw the Asiatic airships closely. From this aspect they reminded him more than anything else of colossal snowshoes; they had a curious patterning in black and white, in forms that reminded him of the engine-turned cover of a watch. They had no hanging galleries, but from little openings on the middle line peeped out men and the muzzles of guns. So, driving in long, descending and ascending curves, these monsters wrestled and fought. It was like clouds fighting, like puddings trying to assassinate each other. They whirled and circled about each other, and for a time threw Goat Island and Niagara into a smoky twilight, through which the sunlight smote in shafts and beams. They spread and closed and spread and grappled and drove round over the rapids, and two miles away or more into Canada, and back over the Falls again. A German caught fire, and the whole crowd broke away from her flare and rose about her dispersing, leaving her to drop towards Canada and blow up as she dropped. Then with renewed uproar the others closed again. Once from the men in Niagara

city came a sound like an ant-hill cheering. Another German burnt, and one badly deflated by the prow of an antagonist, flopped out of action southward.

It became more and more evident that the Germans were getting the worst of the unequal fight. More and more obviously were they being persecuted. Less and less did they seem to fight with any object other than escape. The Asiatics swept by them and above them, ripped their bladders, set them alight, picked off their dimly seen men in diving clothes, who struggled against fire and tear with fire extinguishers and silk ribbons in the inner netting. They answered only with ineffectual shots. Thence the battle circled back over Niagara, and then suddenly the Germans, as if at a preconcerted signal, broke and dispersed, going east, west, north, and south, in open and confused flight. The Asiatics, as they realised this, rose to fly above them and after them. Only one little knot of four Germans and perhaps a dozen Asiatics remained fighting about the Hohenzollern and the Prince as he circled in a last attempt to save Niagara.

Round they swooped once again over the Canadian Fall, over the waste of waters eastward, until they were distant and small, and then round and back, hurrying, bounding, swooping towards the one gaping spectator.

The whole struggling mass approached very swiftly, growing rapidly larger, and coming out black and featureless against the afternoon sun and above the blinding welter of the Upper Rapids. It grew like a storm cloud until once more it darkened the sky. The flat Asiatic airships kept high above the Germans and behind them, and fired unanswered bullets into their gas-chambers and upon their flanks--the one-man flying-machines hovered and alighted like a swarm of attacking bees. Nearer they came, and nearer, filling the lower heaven. Two of the Germans swooped and rose again, but the Hohenzollern had suffered too much for that.

She lifted weakly, turned sharply as if to get out of the battle, burst into flames fore and aft, swept down to the water, splashed into it obliquely, and rolled over and over and came down stream rolling and smashing and writhing like a thing alive, halting and then coming on again, with her torn and bent propeller still beating the air. The bursting flames spluttered out again in clouds of steam. It was a disaster gigantic in its dimensions. She lay across the rapids like an island, like tall cliffs, tall cliffs that came rolling, smoking, and crumpling, and collapsing, advancing with a sort of fluctuating rapidity upon Bert. One Asiatic airship--it looked to Bert from below like three hundred yards of pavement--whirled back and circled two or three times over that great overthrow, and half a dozen crimson flying-machines danced for a moment like great midges in the sunlight before they swept on after their fellows. The rest of the fight had already gone over the island, a wild crescendo of shots and yells and smashing uproar. It was hidden from Bert now by the trees of the island, and forgotten by him in the nearer spectacle of the huge advance of the defeated German airship. Something fell with a mighty smashing and splintering of boughs unheeded behind him.

It seemed for a time that the Hohenzollern must needs break her back upon the Parting of the Waters, and then for a time her propeller flopped and frothed in the river and thrust the mass of buckling, crumpled wreckage towards the American shore. Then the sweep of the torrent that foamed down to the American Fall caught her, and in another minute the immense mass of deflating wreckage, with flames spurting out in three new places, had crashed against the bridge that joined Goat Island and Niagara city, and forced a long arm, as it were, in a heaving tangle under the central span. Then the middle chambers blew up with a loud report, and in another moment the bridge had given way and the main bulk of the airship, like some grotesque cripple in rags, staggered, flapping and waving flambeaux to the crest of

the Fall and hesitated there and vanished in a desperate suicidal leap.

Its detached fore-end remained jammed against that little island, Green Island it used to be called, which forms the stepping-stone between the mainland and Goat Island's patch of trees.

Bert followed this disaster from the Parting of the Waters to the bridge head. Then, regardless of cover, regardless of the Asiatic airship hovering like a huge house roof without walls above the Suspension Bridge, he sprinted along towards the north and came out for the first time upon that rocky point by Luna Island that looks sheer down upon the American Fall. There he stood breathless amidst that eternal rush of sound, breathless and staring.

Far below, and travelling rapidly down the gorge, whirled something like a huge empty sack. For him it meant--what did it not mean?--the German air-fleet, Kurt, the Prince, Europe, all things stable and familiar, the forces that had brought him, the forces that had seemed indisputably victorious. And it went down the rapids like an empty sack and left the visible world to Asia, to yellow people beyond Christendom, to all that was terrible and strange!

Remote over Canada receded the rest of that conflict and vanished beyond the range of his vision....

CHAPTER IX ON GOAT ISLAND

The whack of a bullet on the rocks beside him reminded him that he was a visible object and wearing at least portions of a German uniform. It drove him into the trees again, and for a time he dodged and dropped and sought cover like a chick hiding among reeds from imaginary hawks.

"Beaten," he whispered. "Beaten and done for... Chinese! Yellow chaps chasing 'em!"

At last he came to rest in a clump of bushes near a locked-up and deserted refreshment shed within view of the American side. They made a sort of hole and harbour for him; they met completely overhead. He looked across the rapids, but the firing had ceased now altogether and everything seemed quiet. The Asiatic aeroplane had moved from its former position above the Suspension Bridge, was motionless now above Niagara city, shadowing all that district about the power-house which had been the scene of the land fight. The monster had an air of quiet and assured predominance, and from its stern it trailed, serene and ornamental, a long streaming flag, the red, black, and yellow of the great alliance, the Sunrise and the Dragon. Beyond, to the east, at a much higher level, hung a second consort, and Bert, presently gathering courage, wriggled out and craned his neck to find another still airship against the sunset in the south.

"Gaw!" he said. "Beaten and chased! My Gawd!"

The fighting, it seemed at first, was quite over in Niagara city, though a German flag was still flying from one shattered house. A white sheet was hoisted above the power-house, and this remained flying all through the events that followed. But presently came a sound of shots and then German soldiers running. They disappeared among the houses, and then came two engineers in blue shirts and trousers hotly pursued by three Japanese swordsmen. The foremost of the two fugitives was a shapely man,

and ran lightly and well; the second was a sturdy little man, and rather fat. He ran comically in leaps and bounds, with his plump arms bent up by his side and his head thrown back. The pursuers ran with uniforms and dark thin metal and leather head-dresses. The little man stumbled, and Bert gasped, realising a new horror in war.

The foremost swordsman won three strides on him and was near enough to slash at him and miss as he spurted.

A dozen yards they ran, and then the swordsman slashed again, and Bert could hear across the waters a little sound like the moo of an elfin cow as the fat little man fell forward. Slash went the swordsman and slash at something on the ground that tried to save itself with ineffectual hands. "Oh, I carn't!" cried Bert, near blubbering, and staring with starting eyes.

The swordsman slashed a fourth time and went on as his fellows came up after the better runner. The hindmost swordsman stopped and turned back. He had perceived some movement perhaps; but at any rate he stood, and ever and again slashed at the fallen body.

"Oo-oo!" groaned Bert at every slash, and shrank closer into the bushes and became very still. Presently came a sound of shots from the town, and then everything was quiet, everything, even the hospital.

He saw presently little figures sheathing swords come out from the houses and walk to the debris of the flying-machines the bomb had destroyed. Others appeared wheeling undamaged aeroplanes upon their wheels as men might wheel bicycles, and sprang into the saddles and flapped into the air. A string of three airships appeared far away in the east and flew towards the zenith. The one that hung low above Niagara city came still lower and dropped a rope ladder to pick up men from the power-house.

For a long time he watched the further happenings in Niagara city as a rabbit might watch a meet. He saw men going from building to building, to set fire to them, as he presently realised, and he heard a series of dull detonations from the wheel pit of the power-house. Some similar business went on among the works on the Canadian side. Meanwhile more and more airships appeared, and many more flying-machines, until at last it seemed to him nearly a third of the Asiatic fleet had re-assembled. He watched them from his bush, cramped but immovable, watched them gather and range themselves and signal and pick up men, until at last they sailed away towards the glowing sunset, going to the great Asiatic rendez-vous, above the oil wells of Cleveland. They dwindled and passed away, leaving him alone, so far as he could tell, the only living man in a world of ruin and strange loneliness almost beyond describing. He watched them recede and vanish. He stood gaping after them.

"Gaw!" he said at last, like one who rouses himself from a trance.

It was far more than any personal desolation extremity that flooded his soul. It seemed to him indeed that this must be the sunset of his race.

2

He did not at first envisage his own plight in definite and comprehensible terms. Things happened to him so much of late, his own efforts had counted for so little, that he had become passive and planless. His last scheme had been to go round the coast of England as a desert dervish giving refined entertainment to his fellow-creatures. Fate had quashed that. Fate had seen fit to direct him to other destinies, had hurried him from point to point, and dropped him at last upon this little wedge of rock

between the cataracts. It did not instantly occur to him that now it was his turn to play. He had a singular feeling that all must end as a dream ends, that presently surely he would be back in the world of Grubb and Edna and Bun Hill, that this roar, this glittering presence of incessant water, would be drawn aside as a curtain is drawn aside after a holiday lantern show, and old familiar, customary things re-assume their sway. It would be interesting to tell people how he had seen Niagara. And then Kurt's words came into his head: "People torn away from the people they care for; homes smashed, creatures full of life and memories and peculiar little gifts--torn to pieces, starved, and spoilt." ...

He wondered, half incredulous, if that was in deed true. It was so hard to realise it. Out beyond there was it possible that Tom and Jessica were also in some dire extremity? that the little green-grocer's shop was no longer standing open, with Jessica serving respectfully, warming Tom's ear in sharp asides, or punctually sending out the goods?

He tried to think what day of the week it was, and found he had lost his reckoning. Perhaps it was Sunday. If so, were they going to church or, were they hiding, perhaps in bushes? What had happened to the landlord, the butcher, and to Butteridge and all those people on Dymchurch beach? Something, he knew, had happened to London--a bombardment. But who had bombarded? Were Tom and Jessica too being chased by strange brown men with long bare swords and evil eyes? He thought of various possible aspects of affliction, but presently one phase ousted all the others. Were they getting much to eat? The question haunted him, obsessed him.

If one was very hungry would one eat rats?

It dawned upon him that a peculiar misery that oppressed him was

not so much anxiety and patriotic sorrow as hunger. Of course he was hungry!

He reflected and turned his steps towards the little refreshment shed that stood near the end of the ruined bridge. "Ought to be somethin'--"

He strolled round it once or twice, and then attacked the shutters with his pocket-knife, reinforced presently by a wooden stake he found conveniently near. At last he got a shutter to give, and tore it back and stuck in his head.

"Grub," he remarked, "anyhow. Leastways--"

He got at the inside fastening of the shutter and had presently this establishment open for his exploration. He found several sealed bottles of sterilized milk, much mineral water, two tins of biscuits and a crock of very stale cakes, cigarettes in great quantity but very dry, some rather dry oranges, nuts, some tins of canned meat and fruit, and plates and knives and forks and glasses sufficient for several score of people. There was also a zinc locker, but he was unable to negotiate the padlock of this.

"Shan't starve," said Bert, "for a bit, anyhow." He sat on the vendor's seat and regaled himself with biscuits and milk, and felt for a moment quite contented.

"Quite restful," he muttered, munching and glancing about him restlessly, "after what I been through.

"Crikey! WOT a day! Oh! WOT a day!"

Wonder took possession of him. "Gaw!" he cried: "Wot a fight it's been! Smashing up the poor fellers! 'Eadlong! The airships--the fliers and all. I wonder what happened to the

Zeppelin? ... And that chap Kurt--I wonder what happened to 'im? 'E was a good sort of chap, was Kurt."

Some phantom of imperial solicitude floated through his mind. "Injia," he said....

A more practical interest arose.

"I wonder if there's anything to open one of these tins of corned beef?"

3

After he had feasted, Bert lit a cigarette and sat meditative for a time. "Wonder where Grubb is?" he said; "I do wonder that! Wonder if any of 'em wonder about me?"

He reverted to his own circumstances. "Dessay I shall 'ave to stop on this island for some time."

He tried to feel at his ease and secure, but presently the indefinable restlessness of the social animal in solitude distressed him. He began to want to look over his shoulder, and, as a corrective, roused himself to explore the rest of the island.

It was only very slowly that he began to realise the peculiarities of his position, to perceive that the breaking down of the arch between Green Island and the mainland had cut him off completely from the world. Indeed it was only when he came back to where the fore-end of the Hohenzollern lay like a stranded ship, and was contemplating the shattered bridge, that this dawned upon him. Even then it came with no sort of shock to his mind, a fact among a number of other extraordinary and unmanageable facts. He stared at the shattered cabins of the

Hohenzollern and its widow's garment of dishevelled silk for a time, but without any idea of its containing any living thing; it was all so twisted and smashed and entirely upside down. Then for a while he gazed at the evening sky. A cloud haze was now appearing and not an airship was in sight. A swallow flew by and snapped some invisible victim. "Like a dream," he repeated.

Then for a time the rapids held his mind. "Roaring. It keeps on roaring and splashin' always and always. Keeps on...."

At last his interests became personal. "Wonder what I ought to do now?"

He reflected. "Not an idee," he said.

He was chiefly conscious that a fortnight ago he had been in Bun Hill with no idea of travel in his mind, and that now he was between the Falls of Niagara amidst the devastation and ruins of the greatest air fight in the world, and that in the interval he had been across France, Belgium, Germany, England, Ireland, and a number of other countries. It was an interesting thought and suitable for conversation, but of no great practical utility. "Wonder 'ow I can get orf this?" he said. "Wonder if there is a way out? If not... rummy!"

Further reflection decided, "I believe I got myself in a bit of a 'ole coming over that bridge...."

"Any'ow--got me out of the way of them Japanesy chaps. Wouldn't 'ave taken 'em long to cut MY froat. No. Still--"

He resolved to return to the point of Luna Island. For a long time he stood without stirring, scrutinising the Canadian shore and the wreckage of hotels and houses and the fallen trees of the Victoria Park, pink now in the light of sundown. Not a human

being was perceptible in that scene of headlong destruction. Then he came back to the American side of the island, crossed close to the crumpled aluminium wreckage of the Hohenzollern to Green Islet, and scrutinised the hopeless breach in the further bridge and the water that boiled beneath it. Towards Buffalo there was still much smoke, and near the position of the Niagara railway station the houses were burning vigorously. Everything was deserted now, everything was still. One little abandoned thing lay on a transverse path between town and road, a crumpled heap of clothes with sprawling limbs....

"Ave a look round," said Bert, and taking a path that ran through the middle of the island he presently discovered the wreckage of the two Asiatic aeroplanes that had fallen out of the struggle that ended the Hohenzollern.

With the first he found the wreckage of an aeronaut too.

The machine had evidently dropped vertically and was badly knocked about amidst a lot of smashed branches in a clump of trees. Its bent and broken wings and shattered stays sprawled amidst new splintered wood, and its forepeak stuck into the ground. The aeronaut dangled weirdly head downward among the leaves and branches some yards away, and Bert only discovered him as he turned from the aeroplane. In the dusky evening light and stillness--for the sun had gone now and the wind had altogether fallen--this inverted yellow face was anything but a tranquilising object to discover suddenly a couple of yards away. A broken branch had run clean through the man's thorax, and he hung, so stabbed, looking limp and absurd. In his hand he still clutched, with the grip of death, a short light rifle.

For some time Bert stood very still, inspecting this thing.

Then he began to walk away from it, looking constantly back at

it.

Presently in an open glade he came to a stop.

"Gaw!" he whispered, "I don' like dead bodies some'ow! I'd almost rather that chap was alive."

He would not go along the path athwart which the Chinaman hung. He felt he would rather not have trees round him any more, and that it would be more comfortable to be quite close to the sociable splash and uproar of the rapids.

He came upon the second aeroplane in a clear grassy space by the side of the streaming water, and it seemed scarcely damaged at all. It looked as though it had floated down into a position of rest. It lay on its side with one wing in the air. There was no aeronaut near it, dead or alive. There it lay abandoned, with the water lapping about its long tail.

Bert remained a little aloof from it for a long time, looking into the gathering shadows among the trees, in the expectation of another Chinaman alive or dead. Then very cautiously he approached the machine and stood regarding its widespread vans, its big steering wheel and empty saddle. He did not venture to touch it.

"I wish that other chap wasn't there," he said. "I do wish 'e wasn't there!"

He saw a few yards away, something bobbing about in an eddy that spun within a projecting head of rock. As it went round it seemed to draw him unwillingly towards it....

What could it be?

"Blow!" said Bert. "It's another of 'em."

It held him. He told himself that it was the other aeronaut that had been shot in the fight and fallen out of the saddle as he strove to land. He tried to go away, and then it occurred to him that he might get a branch or something and push this rotating object out into the stream. That would leave him with only one dead body to worry about. Perhaps he might get along with one. He hesitated and then with a certain emotion forced himself to do this. He went towards the bushes and cut himself a wand and returned to the rocks and clambered out to a corner between the eddy and the stream, By that time the sunset was over and the bats were abroad--and he was wet with perspiration.

He prodded the floating blue-clad thing with his wand, failed, tried again successfully as it came round, and as it went out into the stream it turned over, the light gleamed on golden hair and--it was Kurt!

It was Kurt, white and dead and very calm. There was no mistaking him. There was still plenty of light for that. The stream took him and he seemed to compose himself in its swift grip as one who stretches himself to rest. White-faced he was now, and all the colour gone out of him.

A feeling of infinite distress swept over Bert as the body swept out of sight towards the fall. "Kurt!" he cried, "Kurt! I didn't mean to! Kurt! don' leave me 'ere! Don' leave me!"

Loneliness and desolation overwhelmed him. He gave way. He stood on the rock in the evening light, weeping and wailing passionately like a child. It was as though some link that had held him to all these things had broken and gone. He was afraid like a child in a lonely room, shamelessly afraid.

The twilight was closing about him. The trees were full now of strange shadows. All the things about him became strange and unfamiliar with that subtle queerness one feels oftenest in dreams. "O God! I carn' stand, this," he said, and crept back from the rocks to the grass and crouched down, and suddenly wild sorrow for the death of Kurt, Kurt the brave, Kurt the kindly, came to his help and he broke from whimpering to weeping. He ceased to crouch; he sprawled upon the grass and clenched an impotent fist.

"This war," he cried, "this blarsted foolery of a war.

"O Kurt! Lieutenant Kurt!

"I done," he said, "I done. I've 'ad all I want, and more than I want. The world's all rot, and there ain't no sense in it. The night's coming.... If 'E comes after me--'E can't come after me--'E can't! ...

"If 'E comes after me, I'll fro' myself into the water." ...

Presently he was talking again in a low undertone.

"There ain't nothing to be afraid of reely. It's jest imagination. Poor old Kurt--he thought it would happen. Prevision like. 'E never gave me that letter or tole me who the lady was. It's like what 'e said--people tore away from everything they belonged to--everywhere. Exactly like what 'e said.... 'Ere I am cast away--thousands of miles from Edna or Grubb or any of my lot--like a plant tore up by the roots.... And every war's been like this, only I 'adn't the sense to understand it. Always. All sorts of 'oles and corners chaps 'ave died in. And people 'adn't the sense to understand, 'adn't the sense to feel it and stop it. Thought war was fine. My Gawd! ...

"Dear old Edna. She was a fair bit of all right--she was. That time we 'ad a boat at Kingston

"I bet--I'll see 'er again yet. Won't be my fault if I don't."...

4

Suddenly, on the very verge of this heroic resolution, Bert became rigid with terror. Something was creeping towards him through the grass. Something was creeping and halting and creeping again towards him through the dim dark grass. The night was electrical with horror. For a time everything was still. Bert ceased to breathe. It could not be. No, it was too small!

It advanced suddenly upon him with a rush, with a little meawling cry and tail erect. It rubbed its head against him and purred. It was a tiny, skinny little kitten.

"Gaw, Pussy! 'ow you frightened me!" said Bert, with drops of perspiration on his brow.

5

He sat with his back to a tree stump all that night, holding the kitten in his arms. His mind was tired, and he talked or thought coherently no longer. Towards dawn he dozed.

When he awoke, he was stiff but in better heart, and the kitten slept warmly and reassuringly inside his jacket. And fear, he found, had gone from amidst the trees.

He stroked the kitten, and the little creature woke up to excessive fondness and purring. "You want some milk," said Bert. "That's what you want. And I could do with a bit of brekker too."

He yawned and stood up, with the kitten on his shoulder, and stared about him, recalling the circumstances of the previous day, the grey, immense happenings.

"Mus' do something," he said.

He turned towards the trees, and was presently contemplating the dead aeronaut again. The kitten he held companionably against his neck. The body was horrible, but not nearly so horrible as it had been at twilight, and now the limbs were limper and the gun had slipped to the ground and lay half hidden in the grass.

"I suppose we ought to bury 'im, Kitty," said Bert, and looked helplessly at the rocky soil about him. "We got to stay on the island with 'im."

It was some time before he could turn away and go on towards that provision shed. "Brekker first," he said, "anyhow," stroking the kitten on his shoulder. She rubbed his cheek affectionately with her furry little face and presently nibbled at his ear. "Wan' some milk, eh?" he said, and turned his back on the dead man as though he mattered nothing.

He was puzzled to find the door of the shed open, though he had closed and latched it very carefully overnight, and he found also some dirty plates he had not noticed before on the bench. He discovered that the hinges of the tin locker were unscrewed and that it could be opened. He had not observed this overnight.

"Silly of me!" said Bert. "'Ere I was puzzlin' and whackin' away at the padlock, never noticing." It had been used apparently as an ice-chest, but it contained nothing now but the remains of half-dozen boiled chickens, some ambiguous substance that might once have been butter, and a singularly unappetising smell. He

closed the lid again carefully.

He gave the kitten some milk in a dirty plate and sat watching its busy little tongue for a time. Then he was moved to make an inventory of the provisions. There were six bottles of milk unopened and one opened, sixty bottles of mineral water and a large stock of syrups, about two thousand cigarettes and upwards of a hundred cigars, nine oranges, two unopened tins of corned beef and one opened, and five large tins California peaches. He jotted it down on a piece of paper "'Ain't much solid food," he said. "Still--A fortnight, say!

"Anything might happen in a fortnight."

He gave the kitten a small second helping and a scrap of beef and then went down with the little creature running after him, tail erect and in high spirits, to look at the remains of the Hohenzollern.

It had shifted in the night and seemed on the whole more firmly grounded on Green Island than before. From it his eye went to the shattered bridge and then across to the still desolation of Niagara city. Nothing moved over there but a number of crows. They were busy with the engineer he had seen cut down on the previous day. He saw no dogs, but he heard one howling.

"We got to get out of this some'ow, Kitty," he said. "That milk won't last forever--not at the rate you lap it."

He regarded the sluice-like flood before him.

"Plenty of water," he said. "Wont be drink we shall want."

He decided to make a careful exploration of the island. Presently he came to a locked gate labelled "Biddle Stairs," and

clambered over to discover a steep old wooden staircase leading down the face of the cliff amidst a vast and increasing uproar of waters. He left the kitten above and descended these, and discovered with a thrill of hope a path leading among the rocks at the foot of the roaring downrush of the Centre Fall. Perhaps this was a sort of way!

It led him only to the choking and deafening experience of the Cave of the Winds, and after he had spent a quarter of an hour in a partially stupefied condition flattened between solid rock and nearly as solid waterfall, he decided that this was after all no practicable route to Canada and retraced his steps. As he reascended the Biddle Stairs, he heard what he decided at last must be a sort of echo, a sound of some one walking about on the gravel paths above. When he got to the top, the place was as solitary as before.

Thence he made his way, with the kitten skirmishing along beside him in the grass, to a staircase that led to a lump of projecting rock that enfiladed the huge green majesty of the Horseshoe Fall. He stood there for some time in silence.

"You wouldn't think," he said at last, "there was so much water.... This roarin' and splashin', it gets on one's nerves at last.... Sounds like people talking.... Sounds like people going about.... Sounds like anything you fancy."

He retired up the staircase again. "I s'pose I shall keep on goin' round this blessed island," he said drearily. "Round and round and round."

He found himself presently beside the less damaged Asiatic aeroplane again. He stared at it and the kitten smelt it. "Broke!" he said.

He looked up with a convulsive start.

Advancing slowly towards him out from among the trees were two tall gaunt figures. They were blackened and tattered and bandaged; the hind-most one limped and had his head swathed in white, but the foremost one still carried himself as a Prince should do, for all that his left arm was in a sling and one side of his face scalded a livid crimson. He was the Prince Karl Albert, the War Lord, the "German Alexander," and the man behind him was the bird-faced man whose cabin had once been taken from him and given to Bert.

6

With that apparition began a new phase of GoatIsland in Bert's experience. He ceased to be a solitary representative of humanity in a vast and violent and incomprehensible universe, and became once more a social creature, a man in a world of other men. For an instant these two were terrible, then they seemed sweet and desirable as brothers. They too were in this scrape with him, marooned and puzzled. He wanted extremely to hear exactly what had happened to them. What mattered it if one was a Prince and both were foreign soldiers, if neither perhaps had adequate English? His native Cockney freedom flowed too generously for him to think of that, and surely the Asiatic fleets had purged all such trivial differences. "UI-LO!" he said; "'ow did you get 'ere?"

"It is the Englishman who brought us the Butteridge machine," said the bird-faced officer in German, and then in a tone of horror, as Bert advanced, "Salute!" and again louder, "SALUTE!"

"Gaw!" said Bert, and stopped with a second comment under his breath. He stared and saluted awkwardly and became at once a masked defensive thing with whom co-operation was impossible.

For a time these two perfected modern aristocrats stood regarding the difficult problem of the Anglo-Saxon citizen, that ambiguous citizen who, obeying some mysterious law in his blood, would neither drill nor be a democrat. Bert was by no means a beautiful object, but in some inexplicable way he looked resistant. He wore his cheap suit of serge, now showing many signs of wear, and its loose fit made him seem sturdier than he was; above his disengaging face was a white German cap that was altogether too big for him, and his trousers were crumpled up his legs and their ends tucked into the rubber highlows of a deceased German aeronaut. He looked an inferior, though by no means an easy inferior, and instinctively they hated him.

The Prince pointed to the flying-machine and said something in broken English that Bert took for German and failed to understand. He intimated as much.

"Dummer Kerl!" said the bird-faced officer from among his bandages.

The Prince pointed again with his undamaged hand. "You verstehen dis drachenflieger?"

Bert began to comprehend the situation. He regarded the Asiatic machine. The habits of Bun Hill returned to him. "It's a foreign make," he said ambiguously.

The two Germans consulted. "You are an expert?" said the Prince.

"We reckon to repair," said Bert, in the exact manner of Grubb.

The Prince sought in his vocabulary. "Is dat," he said, "goot to fly?"

Bert reflected and scratched his cheek slowly. "I got to look at it," he replied.... "It's 'ad rough usage!"

He made a sound with his teeth he had also acquired from Grubb, put his hands in his trouser pockets, and strolled back to the machine. Typically Grubb chewed something, but Bert could chew only imaginatively. "Three days' work in this," he said, teething. For the first time it dawned on him that there were possibilities in this machine. It was evident that the wing that lay on the ground was badly damaged. The three stays that held it rigid had snapped across a ridge of rock and there was also a strong possibility of the engine being badly damaged. The wing hook on that side was also askew, but probably that would not affect the flight. Beyond that there probably wasn't much the matter. Bert scratched his cheek again and contemplated the broad sunlit waste of the Upper Rapids. "We might make a job of this.... You leave it to me."

He surveyed it intently again, and the Prince and his officer watched him. In Bun Hill Bert and Grubb had developed to a very high pitch among the hiring stock a method of repair by substituting; they substituted bits of other machines. A machine that was too utterly and obviously done for even to proffer for hire, had nevertheless still capital value. It became a sort of quarry for nuts and screws and wheels, bars and spokes, chain-links and the like; a mine of ill-fitting "parts" to replace the defects of machines still current. And back among the trees was a second Asiatic aeroplane....

The kitten caressed Bert's airship boots unheeded.

"Mend dat drachenflieger," said the Prince.

"If I do mend it," said Bert, struck by a new thought, "none of us ain't to be trusted to fly it."

"_I_ vill fly it," said the Prince.

"Very likely break your neck," said Bert, after a pause.

The Prince did not understand him and disregarded what he said. He pointed his gloved finger to the machine and turned to the bird-faced officer with some remark in German. The officer answered and the Prince responded with a sweeping gesture towards the sky. Then he spoke--it seemed eloquently. Bert watched him and guessed his meaning. "Much more likely to break your, neck," he said. "'Owever. 'Ere goes."

He began to pry about the saddle and engine of the drachenflieger in search for tools. Also he wanted some black oily stuff for his hands and face. For the first rule in the art of repairing, as it was known to the firm of Grubb and Smallways, was to get your hands and face thoroughly and conclusively blackened. Also he took off his jacket and waistcoat and put his cap carefully to the back of his head in order to facilitate scratching.

The Prince and the officer seemed disposed to watch him, but he succeeded in making it clear to them that this would inconvenience him and that he had to "puzzle out a bit" before he could get to work. They thought him over, but his shop experience had given him something of the authoritative way of the expert with common men. And at last they went away. Thereupon he went straight to the second aeroplane, got the aeronaut's gun and ammunition and hid them in a clump of nettles close at hand. "That's all right," said Bert, and then proceeded to a careful inspection of the debris of the wings in the trees. Then he went back to the first aeroplane to compare the two. The Bun Hill method was quite possibly practicable if there was nothing hopeless or incomprehensible in the engine.

The Germans returned presently to find him already generously smutty and touching and testing knobs and screws and levers with an expression of profound sagacity. When the bird-faced officer addressed a remark to him, he waved him aside with, "Nong comprong. Shut it! It's no good."

Then he had an idea. "Dead chap back there wants burying," he said, jerking a thumb over his shoulder.

7

With the appearance of these two men Bert's whole universe had changed again. A curtain fell before the immense and terrible desolation that had overwhelmed him. He was in a world of three people, a minute human world that nevertheless filled his brain with eager speculations and schemes and cunning ideas. What were they thinking of? What did they think of him? What did they mean to do? A hundred busy threads interlaced in his mind as he pottered studiously over the Asiatic aeroplane. New ideas came up like bubbles in soda water.

"Gaw!" he said suddenly. He had just appreciated as a special aspect of this irrational injustice of fate that these two men were alive and that Kurt was dead. All the crew of the Hohenzollern were shot or burnt or smashed or drowned, and these two lurking in the padded forward cabin had escaped.

"I suppose 'e thinks it's 'is bloomin' Star," he muttered, and found himself uncontrollably exasperated.

He stood up, facing round to the two men. They were standing side by side regarding him.

"It's no good," he said, "starin' at me. You only put me out." And then seeing they did not understand, he advanced towards

them, wrench in hand. It occurred to him as he did so that the Prince was really a very big and powerful and serene-looking person. But he said, nevertheless, pointing through the trees, "dead man!"

The bird-faced man intervened with a reply in German.

"Dead man!" said Bert to him. "There."

He had great difficulty in inducing them to inspect the dead Chinaman, and at last led them to him. Then they made it evident that they proposed that he, as a common person below the rank of officer should have the sole and undivided privilege of disposing of the body by dragging it to the water's edge. There was some heated gesticulation, and at last the bird-faced officer abased himself to help. Together they dragged the limp and now swollen Asiatic through the trees, and after a rest or so--for he trailed very heavily--dumped him into the westward rapid. Bert returned to his expert investigation of the flying-machine at last with aching arms and in a state of gloomy rebellion. "Brasted cheek!" he said. "One'd think I was one of 'is beastly German slaves!

"Prancing beggar!"

And then he fell speculating what would happen when the flying-machine, was repaired--if it could be repaired.

The two Germans went away again, and after some reflection Bert removed several nuts, resumed his jacket and vest, pocketed those nuts and his tools and hid the set of tools from the second aeroplane in the fork of a tree. "Right O," he said, as he jumped down after the last of these precautions. The Prince and his companion reappeared as he returned to the machine by the water's edge. The Prince surveyed his progress for a time, and then went towards the Parting of the Waters and stood with folded

arms gazing upstream in profound thought. The bird-faced officer came up to Bert, heavy with a sentence in English.

"Go," he said with a helping gesture, "und eat."

When Bert got to the refreshment shed, he found all the food had vanished except one measured ration of corned beef and three biscuits.

He regarded this with open eyes and mouth.

The kitten appeared from under the vendor's seat with an ingratiating purr. "Of course!" said Bert. "Why! where's your milk?"

He accumulated wrath for a moment or so, then seized the plate in one hand, and the biscuits in another, and went in search of the Prince, breathing vile words anent "grub" and his intimate interior. He approached without saluting.

"Ere!" he said fiercely. "Whad the devil's this?"

An entirely unsatisfactory altercation followed. Bert expounded the Bun Hill theory of the relations of grub to efficiency in English, the bird-faced man replied with points about nations and discipline in German. The Prince, having made an estimate of Bert's quality and physique, suddenly hectored. He gripped Bert by the shoulder and shook him, making his pockets rattle, shouted something to him, and flung him struggling back. He hit him as though he was a German private. Bert went back, white and scared, but resolved by all his Cockney standards upon one thing. He was bound in honour to "go for" the Prince. "Gaw!" he gasped, buttoning his jacket.

"Now," cried the Prince, "Vil you go?" and then catching the

heroic gleam in Bert's eye, drew his sword.

The bird-faced officer intervened, saying something in German and pointing skyward.

Far away in the southwest appeared a Japanese airship coming fast toward them. Their conflict ended at that. The Prince was first to grasp the situation and lead the retreat. All three scuttled like rabbits for the trees, and ran to and for cover until they found a hollow in which the grass grew rank. There they all squatted within six yards of one another. They sat in this place for a long time, up to their necks in the grass and watching through the branches for the airship. Bert had dropped some of his corned beef, but he found the biscuits in his hand and ate them quietly. The monster came nearly overhead and then went away to Niagara and dropped beyond the power-works. When it was near, they all kept silence, and then presently they fell into an argument that was robbed perhaps of immediate explosive effect only by their failure to understand one another.

It was Bert began the talking and he talked on regardless of what they understood or failed to understand. But his voice must have conveyed his cantankerous intentions.

"You want that machine done, he said first, "you better keep your 'ands off me!"

They disregarded that and he repeated it.

Then he expanded his idea and the spirit of speech took hold of him. "You think you got 'old of a chap you can kick and 'it like you do your private soldiers--you're jolly well mistaken. See? I've 'ad about enough of you and your antics. I been thinking you over, you and your war and your Empire and all the rot of it. Rot it is! It's you Germans made all the trouble in Europe first

and last. And all for nothin'. Jest silly prancing! Jest because you've got the uniforms and flags! 'Ere I was--I didn't want to 'ave anything to do with you. I jest didn't care a 'eng at all about you. Then you get 'old of me--steal me practically--and 'ere I am, thousands of miles away from 'ome and everything, and all your silly fleet smashed up to rags. And you want to go on prancin' NOW! Not if 'I know it!

"Look at the mischief you done! Look at the way you smashed up New York--the people you killed, the stuff you wasted. Can't you learn?"

"Dummer Kerl!" said the bird-faced man suddenly in a tone of concentrated malignancy, glaring under his bandages. "Esel!"

"That's German for silly ass!--I know. But who's the silly ass--'im or me? When I was a kid, I used to read penny dreadfuls about 'avin adventures and bein' a great c'mander and all that rot. I stowed it. But what's 'e got in 'is head? Rot about Napoleon, rot about Alexander, rot about 'is blessed family and 'im and Gord and David and all that. Any one who wasn't a dressed-up silly fool of a Prince could 'ave told all this was goin' to 'appen. There was us in Europe all at sixes and sevens with our silly flags and our silly newspapers raggin' us up against each other and keepin' us apart, and there was China, solid as a cheese, with millions and millions of men only wantin' a bit of science and a bit of enterprise to be as good as all of us. You thought they couldn't get at you. And then they got flying-machines. And bif!--'ere we are. Why, when they didn't go on making guns and armies in China, we went and poked 'em up until they did. They 'AD to give us this lickin' they've give us. We wouldn't be happy until they did, and as I say, 'ere we are!"

The bird-faced officer shouted to him to be quiet, and then began a conversation with the Prince.

"British citizen," said Bert. "You ain't obliged to listen, but I ain't obliged to shut up."

And for some time he continued his dissertation upon Imperialism, militarism, and international politics. But their talking put him out, and for a time he was certainly merely repeating abusive terms, "prancin' nincompoops" and the like, old terms and new. Then suddenly he remembered his essential grievance. "'Owever, look 'ere--'ere!--the thing I started this talk about is where's that food there was in that shed? That's what I want to know. Where you put it?"

He paused. They went on talking in German. He repeated his question. They disregarded him. He asked a third time in a manner insupportably aggressive.

There fell a tense silence. For some seconds the three regarded one another. The Prince eyed Bert steadfastly, and Bert quailed under his eye. Slowly the Prince rose to his feet and the bird-faced officer jerked up beside him. Bert remained squatting.

"Be quaiat," said the Prince.

Bert perceived this was no moment for eloquence.

The two Germans regarded him as he crouched there. Death for a moment seemed near.

Then the Prince turned away and the two of them went towards the flying-machine.

"Gaw!" whispered Bert, and then uttered under his breath one single word of abuse. He sat crouched together for perhaps three

minutes, then he sprang to his feet and went off towards the Chinese aeronaut's gun hidden among the weeds.

8

There was no pretence after that moment that Bert was under the orders of the Prince or that he was going on with the repairing of the flying-machine. The two Germans took possession of that and set to work upon it. Bert, with his new weapon went off to the neighbourhood of Terrapin Rock, and there sat down to examine it. It was a short rifle with a big cartridge, and a nearly full magazine. He took out the cartridges carefully and then tried the trigger and fittings until he felt sure he had the use of it. He reloaded carefully. Then he remembered he was hungry and went off, gun under his arm, to hunt in and about the refreshment shed. He had the sense to perceive that he must not show himself with the gun to the Prince and his companion. So long as they thought him unarmed they would leave him alone, but there was no knowing what the Napoleonic person might do if he saw Bert's weapon. Also he did not go near them because he knew that within himself boiled a reservoir of rage and fear that he wanted to shoot these two men. He wanted to shoot them, and he thought that to shoot them would be a quite horrible thing to do. The two sides of his inconsistent civilisation warred within him.

Near the shed the kitten turned up again, obviously keen for milk. This greatly enhanced his own angry sense of hunger. He began to talk as he hunted about, and presently stood still, shouting insults. He talked of war and pride and Imperialism. "Any other Prince but you would have died with his men and his ship!" he cried.

The two Germans at the machine heard his voice going ever and again amidst the clamour of the waters. Their eyes met and they smiled slightly.

He was disposed for a time to sit in the refreshment shed waiting for them, but then it occurred to him that so he might get them both at close quarters. He strolled off presently to the point of Luna Island to think the situation out.

It had seemed a comparatively simple one at first, but as he turned it over in his mind its possibilities increased and multiplied. Both these men had swords,--had either a revolver?

Also, if he shot them both, he might never find the food!

So far he had been going about with this gun under his arm, and a sense of lordly security in his mind, but what if they saw the gun and decided to ambush him? Goat Island is nearly all cover, trees, rocks, thickets, and irregularities.

Why not go and murder them both now?

"I can't," said Bert, dismissing that. "I got to be worked up."

But it was a mistake to get right away from them. That suddenly became clear. He ought to keep them under observation, ought to "scout" them. Then he would be able to see what they were doing, whether either of them had a revolver, where they had hidden the food. He would be better able to determine what they meant to do to him. If he didn't "scout" them, presently they would begin to "scout" him. This seemed so eminently reasonable that he acted upon it forthwith. He thought over his costume and threw his collar and the tell-tale aeronaut's white cap into the water far below. He turned his coat collar up to hide any gleam of his dirty shirt. The tools and nuts in his pockets were disposed to clank, but he rearranged them and wrapped some letters and his pocket-handkerchief about them. He started off circumspectly and noiselessly, listening and peering at every step. As he drew

near his antagonists, much grunting and creaking served to locate them. He discovered them engaged in what looked like a wrestling match with the Asiatic flying-machine. Their coats were off, their swords laid aside, they were working magnificently. Apparently they were turning it round and were having a good deal of difficulty with the long tail among the trees. He dropped flat at the sight of them and wriggled into a little hollow, and so lay watching their exertions. Ever and again, to pass the time, he would cover one or other of them with his gun.

He found them quite interesting to watch, so interesting that at times he came near shouting to advise them. He perceived that when they had the machine turned round, they would then be in immediate want of the nuts and tools he carried. Then they would come after him. They would certainly conclude he had them or had hidden them. Should he hide his gun and do a deal for food with these tools? He felt he would not be able to part with the gun again now he had once felt its reassuring company. The kitten turned up again and made a great fuss with him and licked and bit his ear.

The sun clambered to midday, and once that morning he saw, though the Germans did not, an Asiatic airship very far to the south, going swiftly eastward.

At last the flying-machine was turned and stood poised on its wheel, with its hooks pointing up the Rapids. The two officers wiped their faces, resumed jackets and swords, spoke and bore themselves like men who congratulated themselves on a good laborious morning. Then they went off briskly towards the refreshment shed, the Prince leading. Bert became active in pursuit; but he found it impossible to stalk them quickly enough and silently enough to discover the hiding-place of the food. He found them, when he came into sight of them again, seated with their backs against the shed, plates on knee, and a tin of corned

beef and a plateful of biscuits between them. They seemed in fairly good spirits, and once the Prince laughed. At this vision of eating Bert's plans gave way. Fierce hunger carried him. He appeared before them suddenly at a distance of perhaps twenty yards, gun in hand.

"Ands up!" he said in a hard, ferocious voice.

The Prince hesitated, and then up went two pairs of hands. The gun had surprised them both completely.

"Stand up," said Bert.... "Drop that fork!"

They obeyed again.

"What nex'?" said Bert to himself. "'Orf stage, I suppose. That way," he said. "Go!"

The Prince obeyed with remarkable alacrity. When he reached the head of the clearing, he said something quickly to the bird-faced man and they both, with an entire lack of dignity, RAN!

Bert was struck with an exasperating afterthought.

"Gord!" he cried with infinite vexation. "Why! I ought to 'ave took their swords! 'Ere!"

But the Germans were already out of sight, and no doubt taking cover among the trees. Bert fell back upon imprecations, then he went up to the shed, cursorily examined the possibility of a flank attack, put his gun handy, and set to work, with a convulsive listening pause before each mouthful on the Prince's plate of corned beef. He had finished that up and handed its gleanings to the kitten and he was falling-to on the second plateful, when the plate broke in his hand! He stared, with the

fact slowly creeping upon him that an instant before he had heard a crack among the thickets. Then he sprang to his feet, snatched up his gun in one hand and the tin of corned beef in the other, and fled round the shed to the other side of the clearing. As he did so came a second crack from the thickets, and something went phwit! by his ear.

He didn't stop running until he was in what seemed to him a strongly defensible position near Luna Island. Then he took cover, panting, and crouched expectant.

"They got a revolver after all!" he panted....

"Wonder if they got two? If they 'ave--Gord! I'm done!
"Where's the kitten? Finishin' up that corned beef, I suppose.
Little beggar!"

9

So it was that war began upon Goat Island. It lasted a day and a night, the longest day and the longest night in Bert's life. He had to lie close and listen And watch. Also he had to scheme what he should do. It was clear now that he had to kill these two men if he could, and that if they could, they would kill him. The prize was first food and then the flying-machine and the doubtful privilege of trying' to ride it. If one failed, one would certainly be killed; if one succeeded, one would get away somewhere over there. For a time Bert tried to imagine what it was like over there. His mind ran over possibilities, deserts, angry Americans, Japanese, Chinese--perhaps Red Indians! (Were there still Red Indians?)

"Got to take what comes," said Bert. "No way out of it that I can see!"

Was that voices? He realised that his attention was wandering. For a time all his senses were very alert. The uproar of the Falls was very confusing, and it mixed in all sorts of sounds, like feet walking, like voices talking, like shouts and cries.

"Silly great catarac'," said Bert. "There ain't no sense in it, fallin' and fallin'."

Never mind that, now! What were the Germans doing?

Would they go back to the flying-machine? They couldn't do anything with it, because he had those nuts and screws and the wrench and other tools. But suppose they found the second set of tools he had hidden in a tree! He had hidden the things well, of course, but they MIGHT find them. One wasn't sure, of course--one wasn't sure. He tried to remember just exactly how he had hidden those tools. He tried to persuade himself they were certainly and surely hidden, but his memory began to play antics. Had he really left the handle of the wrench sticking out, shining out at the fork of the branch?

Ssh! What was that? Some one stirring in those bushes? Up went an expectant muzzle. No! Where was the kitten? No! It was just imagination, not even the kitten.

The Germans would certainly miss and hunt about for the tools and nuts and screws he carried in his pockets; that was clear., Then they would decide he had them and come for him. He had only to remain still under cover, therefore, and he would get them. Was there any flaw in that? Would they take off more removable parts of the flying-machine and then lie up for him? No, they wouldn't do that, because they were two to one; they would have no apprehension of his getting off in the flying-machine, and no sound reason for supposing he would approach it, and so they would do nothing to damage or disable it. That he decided was

clear. But suppose they lay up for him by the food. Well, that they wouldn't do, because they would know he had this corned beef; there was enough in this can to last, with moderation, several days. Of course they might try to tire him out instead of attacking him--

He roused himself with a start. He had just grasped the real weakness of his position. He might go to sleep!

It needed but ten minutes under the suggestion of that idea, before he realised that he was going to sleep!

He rubbed his eyes and handled his gun. He had never before realised the intensely soporific effect of the American sun, of the American air, the drowsy, sleep-compelling uproar of Niagara. Hitherto these things had on the whole seemed stimulating....

If he had not eaten so much and eaten it so fast, he would not be so heavy. Are vegetarians always bright? ...

He roused himself with a jerk again.

If he didn't do something, he would fall asleep, and if he fell asleep, it was ten to one they would find him snoring, and finish him forthwith. If he sat motionless and noiseless, he would inevitably sleep. It was better, he told himself, to take even the risks of attacking than that. This sleep trouble, he felt, was going to beat him, must beat him in the end. They were all right; one could sleep and the other could watch. That, come to think of it, was what they would always do; one would do anything they wanted done, the other would lie under cover near at hand, ready to shoot. They might even trap him like that. One might act as a decoy.

That set him thinking of decoys. What a fool he had been to

throw his cap away. It would have been invaluable on a stick--especially at night.

He found himself wishing for a drink. He settled that for a time by putting a pebble in his mouth. And then the sleep craving returned.

It became clear to him he must attack. Like many great generals before him, he found his baggage, that is to say his tin of corned beef, a serious impediment to mobility. At last he decided to put the beef loose in his pocket and abandon the tin. It was not perhaps an ideal arrangement, but one must make sacrifices when one is campaigning. He crawled perhaps ten yards, and then for a time the possibilities of the situation paralysed him.

The afternoon was still. The roar of the cataract simply threw up that immense stillness in relief. He was doing his best to contrive the death of two better men than himself. Also they were doing their best to contrive his. What, behind this silence, were they doing.

Suppose he came upon them suddenly and fired, and missed?

10

He crawled, and halted listening, and crawled again until nightfall, and no doubt the German Alexander and his lieutenant did the same. A large scale map of Goat Island marked with red and blue lines to show these strategic movements would no doubt have displayed much interlacing, but as a matter of fact neither side saw anything of the other throughout that age-long day of tedious alertness. Bert never knew how near he got to them nor how far he kept from them. Night found him no longer sleepy, but athirst, and near the American Fall. He was inspired by the idea

that his antagonists might be in the wreckage of the Hohenzollern cabins that was jammed against Green Island. He became enterprising, broke from any attempt to conceal himself, and went across the little bridge at the double. He found nobody. It was his first visit to these huge fragments of airships, and for a time he explored them curiously in the dim light. He discovered the forward cabin was nearly intact, with its door slanting downward and a corner under water. He crept in, drank, and then was struck by the brilliant idea of shutting the door and sleeping on it.

But now he could not sleep at all.

He nodded towards morning and woke up to find it fully day. He breakfasted on corned beef and water, and sat for a long time appreciative of the security of his position. At last he became enterprising and bold. He would, he decided, settle this business forthwith, one way or the other. He was tired of all this crawling. He set out in the morning sunshine, gun in hand, scarcely troubling to walk softly. He went round the refreshment shed without finding any one, and then through the trees towards the flying-machine. He came upon the bird-faced man sitting on the ground with his back against a tree, bent up over his folded arms, sleeping, his bandage very much over one eye.

Bert stopped abruptly and stood perhaps fifteen yards away, gun in hand ready. Where was the Prince? Then, sticking out at the side of the tree beyond, he saw a shoulder. Bert took five deliberate paces to the left. The great man became visible, leaning up against the trunk, pistol in one hand and sword in the other, and yawning--yawning. You can't shoot a yawning man Bert found. He advanced upon his antagonist with his gun levelled, some foolish fancy of "hands up" in his mind. The Prince became aware of him, the yawning mouth shut like a trap and he stood stiffly up. Bert stopped, silent. For a moment the two regarded

one another.

Had the Prince been a wise man he would, I suppose, have dodged behind the tree. Instead, he gave vent to a shout, and raised pistol and sword. At that, like an automaton, Bert pulled his trigger.

It was his first experience of an oxygen-containing bullet. A great flame spurted from the middle of the Prince, a blinding flare, and there came a thud like the firing of a gun. Something hot and wet struck Bert's face. Then through a whirl of blinding smoke and steam he saw limbs and a collapsing, burst body fling themselves to earth.

Bert was so astonished that he stood agape, and the bird-faced officer might have cut him to the earth without a struggle. But instead the bird-faced officer was running away through the undergrowth, dodging as he went. Bert roused himself to a brief ineffectual pursuit, but he had no stomach for further killing. He returned to the mangled, scattered thing that had so recently been the great Prince Karl Albert. He surveyed the scorched and splashed vegetation about it. He made some speculative identifications. He advanced gingerly and picked up the hot revolver, to find all its chambers strained and burst. He became aware of a cheerful and friendly presence. He was greatly shocked that one so young should see so frightful a scene.

"Ere, Kitty," he said, "this ain't no place for you."

He made three strides across the devastated area, captured the kitten neatly, and went his way towards the shed, with her purring loudly on his shoulder.

"YOU don't seem to mind," he said.

For a time he fussed about the shed, and at last discovered the rest of the provisions hidden in the roof. "Seems 'ard," he said, as he administered a saucerful of milk, "when you get three men in a 'ole like this, they can't work together. But 'im and 'is princing was jest a bit too thick!"

"Gaw!" he reflected, sitting on the counter and eating, "what a thing life is! 'Ere am I; I seen 'is picture, 'eard 'is name since I was a kid in frocks. Prince Karl Albert! And if any one 'ad tole me I was going to blow lim to smithereens--there! I shouldn't 'ave believed it, Kitty.

"That chap at Margit ought to 'ave tole me about it. All 'e tole me was that I got a weak chess.

"That other chap, 'e ain't going to do much. Wonder what I ought to do about 'im?"

He surveyed the trees with a keen blue eye and fingered the gun on his knee. "I don't like this killing, Kitty," he said. "It's like Kurt said about being blooded. Seems to me you got to be blooded young.... If that Prince 'ad come up to me and said, 'Shake 'ands!' I'd 'ave shook 'ands.... Now 'ere's that other chap, dodging about! 'E's got 'is 'ead 'urt already, and there's something wrong with his leg. And burns. Golly! it isn't three weeks ago I first set eyes on 'im, and then 'e was smart and set up--'ands full of 'air-brushes and things, and swearin' at me. A regular gentleman! Now 'e's 'arfway to a wild man. What am I to do with 'im? What the 'ell am I to do with 'im? I can't leave 'im 'ave that flying-machine; that's a bit too good, and if I don't kill 'im, 'e'll jest 'ang about this island and starve....

"'E's got a sword, of course"....

He resumed his philosophising after he had lit a cigarette.

"War's a silly gaim, Kitty. It's a silly gaim! We common people--we were fools. We thought those big people knew what they were up to--and they didn't. Look at that chap! 'E 'ad all Germany be'ind 'im, and what 'as 'e made of it? Smeshin' and blunderin' and destroyin', and there 'e 'is! Jest a mess of blood and boots and things! Jest an 'orrid splash! Prince Karl Albert! And all the men 'e led and the ships 'e 'ad, the airships, and the dragon-fliers--all scattered like a paper-chase between this 'ole and Germany. And fightin' going on and burnin' and killin' that 'e started, war without end all over the world!

"I suppose I shall 'ave to kill that other chap. I suppose I must. But it ain't at all the sort of job I fancy, Kitty!"

For a time he hunted about the island amidst the uproar of the waterfall, looking for the wounded officer, and at last he started him out of some bushes near the head of Biddle Stairs. But as he saw the bent and bandaged figure in limping flight before him, he found his Cockney softness too much for him again; he could neither shoot nor pursue. "I carn't," he said, "that's flat. I 'aven't the guts for it! 'E'll 'ave to go."

He turned his steps towards the flying-machine....

He never saw the bird-faced officer again, nor any further evidence of his presence. Towards evening he grew fearful of ambushes and hunted vigorously for an hour or so, but in vain. He slept in a good defensible position at the extremity of the rocky point that runs out to the Canadian Fall, and in the night he woke in panic terror and fired his gun. But it was nothing. He slept no more that night. In the morning he became curiously concerned for the vanished man, and hunted for him as one might for an erring brother.

"If I knew some German," he said, "I'd 'oller. It's jest not knowing German does it. You can't explain"

He discovered, later, traces of an attempt to cross the gap in the broken bridge. A rope with a bolt attached had been flung across and had caught in a fenestration of a projecting fragment of railing. The end of the rope trailed in the seething water towards the fall.

But the bird-faced officer was already rubbing shoulders with certain inert matter that had once been Lieutenant Kurt and the Chinese aeronaut and a dead cow, and much other uncongenial company, in the huge circle of the Whirlpool two and a quarter miles away. Never had that great gathering place, that incessant, aimless, unprogressive hurry of waste and battered things, been so crowded with strange and melancholy derelicts. Round they went and round, and every day brought its new contributions, luckless brutes, shattered fragments of boat and flying-machine, endless citizens from the cities upon the shores of the great lakes above. Much came from Cleveland. It all gathered here, and whirled about indefinitely, and over it all gathered daily a greater abundance of birds.

CHAPTER X THE WORLD UNDER THE WAR

1

Bert spent two more days upon Goat Island, and finished all his provisions except the cigarettes and mineral water, before he brought himself to try the Asiatic flying-machine.

Even at last he did not so much go off upon it as get carried

off. It had taken only an hour or so to substitute wing stays from the second flying-machine and to replace the nuts he had himself removed. The engine was in working order, and differed only very simply and obviously from that of a contemporary motor-bicycle. The rest of the time was taken up by a vast musing and delaying and hesitation. Chiefly he saw himself splashing into the rapids and whirling down them to the Fall, clutching and drowning, but also he had a vision of being hopelessly in the air, going fast and unable to ground. His mind was too concentrated upon the business of flying for him to think very much of what might happen to an indefinite-spirited Cockney without credential who arrived on an Asiatic flying-machine amidst the war-infuriated population beyond.

He still had a lingering solicitude for the bird-faced officer. He had a haunting fancy he might be lying disabled or badly smashed in some way in some nook or cranny of the Island; and it was only after a most exhaustive search that he abandoned that distressing idea. "If I found 'im," he reasoned the while, "what could I do wiv 'im? You can't blow a chap's brains out when 'e's down. And I don' see 'ow else I can 'elp 'im."

Then the kitten bothered his highly developed sense of social responsibility. "If I leave 'er, she'll starve.... Ought to catch mice for 'erself.... ARE there mice?... Birds? ... She's too young.... She's like me; she's a bit too civilised."

Finally he stuck her in his side pocket and she became greatly interested in the memories of corned beef she found there. With her in his pocket, he seated himself in the saddle of the flying-machine. Big, clumsy thing it was--and not a bit like a bicycle. Still the working of it was fairly plain. You set the engine going--SO; kicked yourself up until the wheel was vertical, SO; engaged the gyroscope, SO, and then--then--you just pulled up this lever.

Rather stiff it was, but suddenly it came over--

The big curved wings on either side flapped disconcertingly, flapped again' click, clock, click, clock, clitter-clock!

Stop! The thing was heading for the water; its wheel was in the water. Bert groaned from his heart and struggled to restore the lever to its first position. Click, clock, clitter-clock, he was ising! The machine was lifting its dripping wheel out of the eddies, and he was going up! There was no stopping now, no good in stopping now. In another moment Bert, clutching and convulsive and rigid, with staring eyes and a face pale as death, was flapping up above the Rapids, jerking to every jerk of the wings, and rising, rising.

There was no comparison in dignity and comfort between a flying-machine and a balloon. Except in its moments of descent, the balloon was a vehicle of faultless urbanity; this was a buck-jumping mule, a mule that jumped up and never came down again. Click, clock, click, clock; with each beat of the strangely shaped wings it jumped Bert upward and caught him neatly again half a second later on the saddle. And while in ballooning there is no wind, since the balloon is a part of the wind, flying is a wild perpetual creation of and plunging into wind. It was a wind that above all things sought to blind him, to force him to close his eyes. It occurred to him presently to twist his knees and legs inward and grip with them, or surely he would have been bumped into two clumsy halves. And he was going up, a hundred yards high, two hundred, three hundred, over the streaming, frothing wilderness of water below--up, up, up. That was all right, but how presently would one go horizontally? He tried to think if these things did go horizontally. No! They flapped up and then they soared down. For a time he would keep on flapping up. Tears streamed from his eyes. He wiped them with one

temerariouly disengaged hand.

Was it better to risk a fall over land or over water--such water?

He was flapping up above the Upper Rapids towards Buffalo. It was at any rate a comfort that the Falls and the wild swirl of waters below them were behind him. He was flying up straight. That he could see. How did one turn?

He was presently almost cool, and his eyes got more used to the rush of air, but he was getting very high, very high. He tilted his head forwards and surveyed the country, blinking. He could see all over Buffalo, a place with three great blackened scars of ruin, and hills and stretches beyond. He wondered if he was half a mile high, or more. There were some people among some houses near a railway station between Niagara and Buffalo, and then more people. They went like ants busily in and out of the houses. He saw two motor cars gliding along the road towards Niagara city. Then far away in the south he saw a great Asiatic airship going eastward. "Oh, Gord!" he said, and became earnest in his ineffectual attempts to alter his direction. But that airship took no notice of him, and he continued to ascend convulsively. The world got more and more extensive and maplike. Click, clock, clitter-clock. Above him and very near to him now was a hazy stratum of cloud.

He determined to disengage the wing clutch. He did so. The lever resisted his strength for a time, then over it came, and instantly the tail of the machine cocked up and the wings became rigidly spread. Instantly everything was swift and smooth and silent. He was gliding rapidly down the air against a wild gale of wind, his eyes three-quarters shut.

A little lever that had hitherto been obdurate now confessed itself mobile. He turned it over gently to the right, and

whiroo!--the left wing had in some mysterious way given at its edge and he was sweeping round and downward in an immense right-handed spiral. For some moments he experienced all the helpless sensations of catastrophe. He restored the lever to its middle position with some difficulty, and the wings were equalised again.

He turned it to the left and had a sensation of being spun round backwards. "Too much!" he gasped.

He discovered that he was rushing down at a headlong pace towards a railway line and some factory buildings. They appeared to be tearing up to him to devour him. He must have dropped all that height. For a moment he had the ineffectual sensations of one whose bicycle bolts downhill. The ground had almost taken him by surprise. "Ere!" he cried; and then with a violent effort of all his being he got the beating engine at work again and set the wings flapping. He swooped down and up and resumed his quivering and pulsating ascent of the air.

He went high again, until he had a wide view of the pleasant upland country of western New York State, and then made a long coast down, and so up again, and then a coast. Then as he came swooping a quarter of a mile above a village he saw people running about, running away--evidently in relation to his hawk-like passage. He got an idea that he had been shot at.

"Up!" he said, and attacked that lever again. It came over with remarkable docility, and suddenly the wings seemed to give way in the middle. But the engine was still! It had stopped. He flung the lever back rather by instinct than design. What to do?

Much happened in a few seconds, but also his mind was quick, he thought very quickly. He couldn't get up again, he was gliding down the air; he would have to hit something.

He was travelling at the rate of perhaps thirty miles an hour down, down.

That plantation of larches looked the softest thing--mossy almost!

Could he get it? He gave himself to the steering. Round to the right--left!

Swirroo! Crackle! He was gliding over the tops of the trees, ploughing through them, tumbling into a cloud of green sharp leaves and black twigs. There was a sudden snapping, and he fell off the saddle forward, a thud and a crashing of branches. Some twigs hit him smartly in the face....

He was between a tree-stem and the saddle, with his leg over the steering lever and, so far as he could realise, not hurt. He tried to alter his position and free his leg, and found himself slipping and dropping through branches with everything giving way beneath him. He clutched and found himself in the lower branches of a tree beneath the flying-machine. The air was full of a pleasant resinous smell. He stared for a moment motionless, and then very carefully clambered down branch by branch to the soft needle-covered ground below.

"Good business," he said, looking up at the bent and tilted kite-wings above.

"I dropped soft!"

He rubbed his chin with his hand and meditated. "Blowed if I don't think I'm a rather lucky fellow!" he said, surveying the pleasant sun-bespattered ground under the trees. Then he became aware of a violent tumult at his side. "Lord!" he said, "You

must be 'arf smothered," and extracted the kitten from his pocket-handkerchief and pocket. She was twisted and crumpled and extremely glad to see the light again. Her little tongue peeped between her teeth. He put her down, and she ran a dozen paces and shook herself and stretched and sat up and began to wash.

"Nex'?" he said, looking about him, and then with a gesture of vexation, "Desh it! I ought to 'ave brought that gun!"

He had rested it against a tree when he had seated himself in the flying-machine saddle.

He was puzzled for a time by the immense peacefulness in the quality of the world, and then he perceived that the roar of the cataract was no longer in his ears.

2

He had no very clear idea of what sort of people he might come upon in this country. It was, he knew, America. Americans he had always understood were the citizens of a great and powerful nation, dry and humorous in their manner, addicted to the use of the bowie-knife and revolver, and in the habit of talking through the nose like Norfolkshire, and saying "allow" and "reckon" and "calculate," after the manner of the people who live on the New Forest side of Hampshire. Also they were very rich, had rocking-chairs, and put their feet at unusual altitudes, and they chewed tobacco, gum, and other substances, with untiring industry. Commingled with them were cowboys, Red Indians, and comic, respectful niggers. This he had learnt from the fiction in his public library. Beyond that he had learnt very little. He was not surprised therefore when he met armed men.

He decided to abandon the shattered flying-machine. He wandered through the trees for some time, and then struck a road that

seemed to his urban English eyes to be remarkably wide but not properly "made." Neither hedge nor ditch nor curbed distinctive footpath separated it from the woods, and it went in that long easy curve which distinguishes the tracks of an open continent. Ahead he saw a man carrying a gun under his arm, a man in a soft black hat, a blue blouse, and black trousers, and with a broad round-fat face quite innocent of goatee. This person regarded him askance and heard him speak with a start.

"Can you tell me whereabouts I am at all?" asked Bert.

The man regarded him, and more particularly his rubber boots, with sinister suspicion. Then he replied in a strange outlandish tongue that was, as a matter of fact, Czech. He ended suddenly at the sight of Bert's blank face with "Don't spik English."

"Oh!" said Bert. He reflected gravely for a moment, and then went his way.

"Thanks," he, said as an afterthought. The man regarded his back for a moment, was struck with an idea, began an abortive gesture, sighed, gave it up, and went on also with a depressed countenance.

Presently Bert came to a big wooden house standing casually among the trees. It looked a bleak, bare box of a house to him, no creeper grew on it, no hedge nor wall nor fence parted it off from the woods about it. He stopped before the steps that led up to the door, perhaps thirty yards away. The place seemed deserted. He would have gone up to the door and rapped, but suddenly a big black dog appeared at the side and regarded him. It was a huge heavy-jawed dog of some unfamiliar breed, and it, wore a spike-studded collar. It did not bark nor approach him, it just bristled quietly and emitted a single sound like a short, deep cough.

Bert hesitated and went on.

He stopped thirty paces away and stood peering about him among the trees. "If I 'aven't been and lef' that kitten," he said.

Acute sorrow wrenched him for a time. The black dog came through the trees to get a better look at him and coughed that well-bred cough again. Bert resumed the road.

"She'll do all right," he said.... "She'll catch things.

"She'll do all right," he said presently, without conviction. But if it had not been for the black dog, he would have gone back.

When he was out of sight of the house and the black dog, he went into the woods on the other side of the way and emerged after an interval trimming a very tolerable cudgel with his pocket-knife. Presently he saw an attractive-looking rock by the track and picked it up and put it in his pocket. Then he came to three or four houses, wooden like the last, each with an ill-painted white verandah (that was his name for it) and all standing in the same casual way upon the ground. Behind, through the woods, he saw pig-stys and a rooting black sow leading a brisk, adventurous family. A wild-looking woman with sloe-black eyes and dishevelled black hair sat upon the steps of one of the houses nursing a baby, but at the sight of Bert she got up and went inside, and he heard her bolting the door. Then a boy appeared among the pig-stys, but he would not understand Bert's hail.

"I suppose it is America!" said Bert.

The houses became more frequent down the road, and he passed two other extremely wild and dirty-looking men without addressing

them. One carried a gun and the other a hatchet, and they scrutinised him and his cudgel scornfully. Then he struck a cross-road with a mono-rail at its side, and there was a notice board at the corner with "Wait here for the cars." "That's all right, any'ow," said Bert. "Wonder 'ow long I should 'ave to wait?" It occurred to him that in the present disturbed state of the country the service might be interrupted, and as there seemed more houses to the right than the left he turned to the right. He passed an old negro. "Ullo!" said Bert. "Goo' morning!"

"Good day, sah!" said the old negro, in a voice of almost incredible richness.

"What's the name of this place?" asked Bert.

"Tanooda, sah!" said the negro.

"Thenks!" said Bert.

"Thank YOU, sah!" said the negro, overwhelmingly.

Bert came to houses of the same detached, unwalled, wooden type, but adorned now with enamelled advertisements partly in English and partly in Esperanto. Then he came to what he concluded was a grocer's shop. It was the first house that professed the hospitality of an open door, and from within came a strangely familiar sound. "Gaw!" he said searching in his pockets. "Why! I 'aven't wanted money for free weeks! I wonder if I--Grubb 'ad most of it. Ah!" He produced a handful of coins and regarded it; three pennies, sixpence, and a shilling. "That's all right," he said, forgetting a very obvious consideration.

He approached the door, and as he did so a compactly built, grey-faced man in shirt sleeves appeared in it and scrutinised him and his cudgel. "Mornin'," said Bert. "Can I get anything to

eat 'r drink in this shop?"

The man in the door replied, thank Heaven, in clear, good American. "This, sir, is not A shop, it is A store."

"Oh!" said Bert, and then, "Well, can I get anything to eat?"

"You can," said the American in a tone of confident encouragement, and led the way inside.

The shop seemed to him by his Bun Hill standards extremely roomy, well lit, and unencumbered. There was a long counter to the left of him, with drawers and miscellaneous commodities ranged behind it, a number of chairs, several tables, and two spittoons to the right, various barrels, cheeses, and bacon up the vista, and beyond, a large archway leading to more space. A little group of men was assembled round one of the tables, and a woman of perhaps five-and-thirty leant with her elbows on the counter. All the men were armed with rifles, and the barrel of a gun peeped above the counter. They were all listening idly, inattentively, to a cheap, metallic-toned gramophone that occupied a table near at hand. From its brazen throat came words that gave Bert a qualm of homesickness, that brought back in his memory a sunlit beach, a group of children, red-painted bicycles, Grubb, and an approaching balloon:--

"Ting-a-ling-a-ting-a-ling-a-ting-a ling-a-tang...
What Price Hair-pins Now?"

A heavy-necked man in a straw hat, who was chewing something, stopped the machine with a touch, and they all, turned their eyes on Bert. And all their eyes were tired eyes.

"Can we give this gentleman anything to eat, mother, or can we not?" said the proprietor.

"He kin have what he likes?" said the woman at the counter, without moving, "right up from a cracker to a square meal." She struggled with a yawn, after the manner of one who has been up all night.

"I want a meal," said Bert, "but I 'aven't very much money. I don' want to give mor'n a shillin'."

"Mor'n a WHAT?" said the proprietor, sharply.

"Mor'n a shillin'," said Bert, with a sudden disagreeable realisation coming into his mind.

"Yes," said the proprietor, startled for a moment from his courtly bearing. "But what in hell is a shilling?"

"He means a quarter," said a wise-looking, lank young man in riding gaiters.

Bert, trying to conceal his consternation, produced a coin.

"That's a shilling," he said.

"He calls A store A shop," said the proprietor, "and he wants A meal for A shilling. May I ask you, sir, what part of America you hail from?"

Bert replaced the shilling, in his pocket as he spoke, "Niagara," he said.

"And when did you leave Niagara?"

"'Bout an hour ago."

"Well," said the proprietor, and turned with a puzzled smile to

the others. "Well!"

They asked various questions simultaneously.

Bert selected one or two for reply. "You see," he said, "I been with the German air-fleet. I got caught up by them, sort of by accident, and brought over here."

"From England?"

"Yes--from England. Way of Germany. I was in a great battle with them Asiatics, and I got lef' on a little island between the Falls."

"Goat Island?"

"I don' know what it was called. But any'ow I found a flying-machine and made a sort of fly with it and got here."

Two men stood up with incredulous eyes on him. "Where's the flying-machine?" they asked; "outside?"

"It's back in the woods here--'bout arf a mile away."

"Is it good?" said a thick-lipped man with a scar.

"I come down rather a smash--."

Everybody got up and stood about him and talked confusingly. They wanted him to take them to the flying-machine at once.

"Look 'ere," said Bert, "I'll show you--only I 'aven't 'ad anything to eat since yestiday--except mineral water."

A gaunt soldierly-looking young man with long lean legs in riding

gaiters and a bandolier, who had hitherto not spoken, intervened now on his behalf in a note of confident authority. "That's aw right," he said. "Give him a feed, Mr. Logan--from me. I want to hear more of that story of his. We'll see his machine afterwards. If you ask me, I should say it's a remarkably interesting accident had dropped this gentleman here. I guess we requisition that flying-machine--if we find it--,for local defence."

3

So Bert fell on his feet again, and sat eating cold meat and good bread and mustard and drinking very good beer, and telling in the roughest outline and with the omissions and inaccuracies of statement natural to his type of mind, the simple story of his adventures. He told how he and a "gentleman friend" had been visiting the seaside for their health, how a "chep" came along in a balloon and fell out as he fell in, how he had drifted to Franconia, how the Germans had seemed to mistake him for some one and had "took him prisoner" and brought him to New York, how he had been to Labrador and back, how he had got to Goat Island and found himself there alone. He omitted the matter of the Prince and the Butteridge aspect of the affair, not out of any deep deceitfulness, but because he felt the inadequacy of his narrative powers. He wanted everything to seem easy and natural and correct, to present himself as a trustworthy and understandable Englishman in a sound mediocre position, to whom refreshment and accommodation might be given with freedom and confidence.

When his fragmentary story came to New York and the battle of Niagara, they suddenly produced newspapers which had been lying about on the table, and began to check him and question him by these vehement accounts. It became evident to him that his descent had revived and roused to flames again a discussion, a topic, that had been burning continuously, that had smouldered

only through sheer exhaustion of material during the temporary diversion of the gramophone, a discussion that had drawn these men together, rifle in hand, the one supreme topic of the whole world, the War and the methods of the War. He found any question of his personality and his personal adventures falling into the background, found himself taken for granted, and no more than a source of information. The ordinary affairs of life, the buying and selling of everyday necessities, the cultivation of the ground, the tending of beasts, was going on as it were by force of routine, as the common duties of life go on in a house whose master lies under the knife of some supreme operation. The overruling interest was furnished by those great Asiatic airships that went upon incalculable missions across the sky, the crimson-clad swordsmen who might come fluttering down demanding petrol, or food, or news. These men were asking, all the continent was asking, "What are we to do? What can we try? How can we get at them?" Bert fell into his place as an item, ceased even in his own thoughts to be a central and independent thing.

After he had eaten and drunken his fill and sighed and stretched and told them how good the food seemed to him, he lit a cigarette they gave him and led the way, with some doubts and trouble, to the flying-machine amidst the larches. It became manifest that the gaunt young man, whose name, it seemed, was Laurier, was a leader both by position and natural aptitude. He knew the names and characters and capabilities of all the men who were with him, and he set them to work at once with vigour and effect to secure this precious instrument of war. They got the thing down to the ground deliberately and carefully, felling a couple of trees in the process, and they built a wide flat roof of timbers and tree boughs to guard their precious find against its chance discovery by any passing Asiatics. Long before evening they had an engineer from the next township at work upon it, and they were casting lots among the seventeen picked men who wanted to take it for its first flight. And Bert found his kitten and carried it

back to Logan's store and handed it with earnest admonition to Mrs. Logan. And it was reassuringly clear to him that in Mrs. Logan both he and the kitten had found a congenial soul.

Laurier was not only a masterful person and a wealthy property owner and employer--he was president, Bert learnt with awe, of the Tanooda Canning Corporation--but he was popular and skilful in the arts of popularity. In the evening quite a crowd of men gathered in the store and talked of the flying-machine and of the war that was tearing the world to pieces. And presently came a man on a bicycle with an ill-printed newspaper of a single sheet which acted like fuel in a blazing furnace of talk. It was nearly all American news; the old-fashioned cables had fallen into disuse for some years, and the Marconi stations across the ocean and along the Atlantic coastline seemed to have furnished particularly tempting points of attack.

But such news it was.

Bert sat in the background--for by this time they had gauged his personal quality pretty completely--listening. Before his staggering mind passed strange vast images as they talked, of great issues at a crisis, of nations in tumultuous march, of continents overthrown, of famine and destruction beyond measure. Ever and again, in spite of his efforts to suppress them, certain personal impressions would scamper across the weltering confusion, the horrible mess of the exploded Prince, the Chinese aeronaut upside down, the limping and bandaged bird-faced officer blundering along in miserable and hopeless flight....

They spoke of fire and massacre, of cruelties and counter cruelties, of things that had been done to harmless Asiatics by race-mad men, of the wholesale burning and smashing up of towns, railway junctions, bridges, of whole populations in hiding and exodus. "Every ship they've got is in the Pacific," he heard one

man exclaim. "Since the fighting began they can't have landed on the Pacific slope less than a million men. They've come to stay in these States, and they will--living or dead."

Slowly, broadly, invincibly, there grew upon Bert's mind realisation of the immense tragedy of humanity into which his life was flowing; the appalling and universal nature of the epoch that had arrived; the conception of an end to security and order and habit. The whole world was at war and it could not get back to peace, it might never recover peace.

He had thought the things he had seen had been exceptional, conclusive things, that the besieging of New York and the battle of the Atlantic were epoch-making events between long years of security. And they had been but the first warning impacts of universal cataclysm. Each day destruction and hate and disaster grew, the fissures widened between man and man, new regions of the fabric of civilisation crumbled and gave way. Below, the armies grew and the people perished; above, the airships and aeroplanes fought and fled, raining destruction.

It is difficult perhaps for the broad-minded and long-perspectived reader to understand how incredible the breaking down of the scientific civilisation seemed to those, who actually lived at this time, who in their own persons went down in that debacle. Progress had marched as it seemed invincible about the earth, never now to rest again. For three hundred years and more the long steadily accelerated diastole of Europeanised civilisation had been in progress: towns had been multiplying, populations increasing, values rising, new countries developing; thought, literature, knowledge unfolding and spreading. It seemed but a part of the process that every year the instruments of war were vaster and more powerful, and that armies and explosives outgrew all other growing things....

Three hundred years of diastole, and then came the swift and unexpected systole, like the closing of a fist. They could not understand it was systole.

They could not think of it as anything but a jolt, a hitch, a mere oscillatory indication of the swiftness of their progress. Collapse, though it happened all about them, remained incredible. Presently some falling mass smote them down, or the ground opened beneath their feet. They died incredulous....

These men in the store made a minute, remote group under this immense canopy of disaster. They turned from one little aspect to another. What chiefly concerned them was defence against Asiatic raiders swooping for petrol or to destroy weapons or communications. Everywhere levies were being formed at that time to defend the plant of the railroads day and night in the hope that communication would speedily be restored. The land war was still far away. A man with a flat voice distinguished himself by a display of knowledge and cunning. He told them all with confidence just what had been wrong with the German drachenflieger and the American aeroplanes, just what advantage the Japanese flyers possessed. He launched out into a romantic description of the Butteridge machine and riveted Bert's attention. "I SEE that," said Bert, and was smitten silent by a thought. The man with the flat voice talked on, without heeding him, of the strange irony of Butteridge's death. At that Bert had a little twinge of relief--he would never meet Butteridge again. It appeared Butteridge had died suddenly, very suddenly.

"And his secret, sir, perished with him! When they came to look for the parts--none could find them. He had hidden them all too well."

"But couldn't he tell?" asked the man in the straw hat. "Did he die so suddenly as that?"

"Struck down, sir. Rage and apoplexy. At a place called Dymchurch in England."

"That's right, said Laurier. "I remember a page about it in the Sunday American. At the time they said it was a German spy had stolen his balloon."

"Well, sir," said the flat-voiced man, "that fit of apoplexy at Dyrnchurch was the worst thing--absolutely the worst thing that ever happened to the world. For if it had not been for the death of Mr. Butteridge--"

"No one knows his secret?"

"Not a soul. It's gone. His balloon, it appears, was lost at sea, with all the plans. Down it went, and they went with it."

Pause.

"With machines such as he made we could fight these Asiatic fliers on more than equal terms. We could outfly and beat down those scarlet humming-birds wherever they appeared. But it's gone, it's gone, and there's no time to reinvent it now. We got to fight with what we got--and the odds are against us. THAT won't stop us fightin'. No! but just think of it!"

Bert was trembling violently. He cleared his throat hoarsely.

"I say," he said, "look here, I--"

Nobody regarded him. The man with the flat voice was opening a new branch of the subject.

"I allow--" he began.

Bert became violently excited. He stood up.

He made clawing motions with his hands. "I say!" he exclaimed, "Mr. Laurier. Look 'ere--I want--about that Butteridge machine--."

Mr. Laurier, sitting on an adjacent table, with a magnificent gesture, arrested the discourse of the flat-voiced man. "What's HE saying?" said he.

Then the whole company realised that something was happening to Bert; either he was suffocating or going mad. He was spluttering.

"Look 'ere! I say! 'Old on a bit!" and trembling and eagerly unbuttoning himself.

He tore open his collar and opened vest and shirt. He plunged into his interior and for an instant it seemed he was plucking forth his liver. Then as he struggled with buttons on his shoulder they perceived this flattened horror was in fact a terribly dirty flannel chest-protector. In an other moment Bert, in a state of irregular decolletage, was standing over the table displaying a sheaf of papers.

"These!" he gasped. "These are the plans!... You know! Mr. Butteridge--his machine ! What died! I was the chap that went off in that balloon!"

For some seconds every one was silent. They stared from these papers to Bert's white face and blazing eyes, and back to the papers on the table. Nobody moved. Then the man with the flat voice spoke.

"Irony!" he said, with a note of satisfaction. "Real rightdown Irony! When it's too late to think of making 'em any more!"

4

They would all no doubt have been eager to hear Bert's story over again, but it was at this point that Laurier showed his quality. "No, SIR," he said, and slid from off his table.

He impounded the dispersing Butteridge plans with one comprehensive sweep of his arm, rescuing them even from the expository finger-marks of the man with the flat voice, and handed them to Bert. "Put those back," he said, "where you had 'em. We have a journey before us."

Bert took them.

"Whar?" said the man in the straw hat.

"Why, sir, we are going to find the President of these States and give these plans over to him. I decline to believe, sir, we are too late."

"Where is the President?" asked Bert weakly in that pause that followed.

"Logan," said Laurier, disregarding that feeble inquiry, "you must help us in this."

It seemed only a matter of a few minutes before Bert and Laurier and the storekeeper were examining a number of bicycles that were stowed in the hinder room of the store. Bert didn't like any of them very much. They had wood rims and an experience of wood rims in the English climate had taught him to hate them. That, however, and one or two other objections to an immediate start

were overruled by Laurier. "But where IS the President?" Bert repeated as they stood behind Logan while he pumped up a deflated tyre.

Laurier looked down on him. "He is reported in the neighbourhood of Albany--out towards the Berkshire Hills. He is moving from place to place and, as far as he can, organising the defence by telegraph and telephones The Asiatic air-fleet is trying to locate him. When they think they have located the seat of government, they throw bombs. This inconveniences him, but so far they have not come within ten miles of him. The Asiatic air-fleet is at present scattered all over the Eastern States, seeking out and destroying gas-works and whatever seems conducive to the building of airships or the transport of troops. Our retaliatory measures are slight in the extreme. But with these machines--Sir, this ride of ours will count among the historical rides of the world!"

He came near to striking an attitude. "We shan't get to him to-night?" asked Bert.

"No, sir!" said Laurier. "We shall have to ride some days, sure!"

"And suppose we can.'t get a lift on a train--or anything?"

"No, sir! There's been no transit by Tanooda for three days. It is no good waiting. We shall have to get on as well as we can."

"Startin' now?"

"Starting now!"

"But 'ow about--We shan't be able to do much to-night."

"May as well ride till we're fagged and sleep then. So much clear gain. Our road is eastward."

"Of course," began Bert, with memories of the dawn upon Goat Island, and left his sentence unfinished.

He gave his attention to the more scientific packing of the chest-protector, for several of the plans flapped beyond his vest.

5

For a week Bert led a life of mixed sensations. Amidst these fatigue in the legs predominated. Mostly he rode, rode with Laurier's back inexorably ahead, through a land like a larger England, with bigger hills and wider valleys, larger fields, wider roads, fewer hedges, and wooden houses with commodious piazzas. He rode. Laurier made inquiries, Laurier chose the turnings, Laurier doubted, Laurier decided. Now it seemed they were in telephonic touch with the President; now something had happened and he was lost again. But always they had to go on, and always Bert rode. A tyre was deflated. Still he rode. He grew saddle sore. Laurier declared that unimportant. Asiatic flying ships passed overhead, the two cyclists made a dash for cover until the sky was clear. Once a red Asiatic flying-machine came fluttering after them, so low they could distinguish the aeronaut's head. He followed them for a mile. Now they came to regions of panic, now to regions of destruction; here people were fighting for food, here they seemed hardly stirred from the countryside routine. They spent a day in a deserted and damaged Albany. The Asiatics had descended and cut every wire and made a cinder-heap of the Junction, and our travellers pushed on eastward. They passed a hundred half-heeded incidents, and always Bert was toiling after Laurier's indefatigable back....

Things struck upon Bert's attention and perplexed him, and then he passed on with unanswered questionings fading from his mind.

He saw a large house on fire on a hillside to the right, and no man heeding it....

They came to a narrow railroad bridge and presently to a mono-rail train standing in the track on its safety feet. It was a remarkably sumptuous train, the Last Word Trans-Continental Express, and the passengers were all playing cards or sleeping or preparing a picnic meal on a grassy slope near at hand. They had been there six days....

At one point ten dark-complexioned men were hanging in a string from the trees along the roadside. Bert wondered why....

At one peaceful-looking village where they stopped off to get Bert's tyre mended and found beer and biscuits, they were approached by an extremely dirty little boy without boots, who spoke as follows:--

"Deyse been hanging a Chink in dose woods!"

"Hanging a Chinaman?" said Laurier.

"Sure. Der sleuths got him rubberin' der rail-road sheds!"

"Oh!"

"Dose guys done wase cartridges. Deyse hung him and dey pulled his legs. Deyse doin' all der Chinks dey can fine dat weh! Dey ain't takin' no risks. All der Chinks dey can fine."

Neither Bert nor Laurier made any reply, and presently, after a

little skilful expectoration, the young gentleman was attracted by the appearance of two of his friends down the road and shuffled off, whooping weirdly....

That afternoon they almost ran over a man shot through the body and partly decomposed, lying near the middle of the road, just outside Albany. He must have been lying there for some days....

Beyond Albany they came upon a motor car with a tyre burst and a young woman sitting absolutely passive beside the driver's seat. An old man was under the car trying to effect some impossible repairs. Beyond, sitting with a rifle across his knees, with his back to the car, and staring into the woods, was a young man.

The old man crawled out at their approach and still on all-fours accosted Bert and Laurier. The car had broken down overnight. The old man, said he could not understand what was wrong, but he was trying to puzzle it out. Neither he nor his son-in-law had any mechanical aptitude. They had been assured this was a fool-proof car. It was dangerous to have to stop in this place. The party had been attacked by tramps and had had to fight. It was known they had provisions. He mentioned a great name in the world of finance. Would Laurier and Bert stop and help him? He proposed it first hopefully, then urgently, at last in tears and terror.

"No!" said Laurier inexorable. "We must go on! We have something more than a woman to save. We have to save America!"

The girl never stirred.

And once they passed a madman singing.

And at last they found the President hiding in a small saloon upon the outskirts of a place called Pinkerville on the Hudson,

and gave the plans of the Butteridge machine into his hands.

CHAPTER XI THE GREAT COLLAPSE

1

And now the whole fabric of civilisation was bending and giving, and dropping to pieces and melting in the furnace of the war.

The stages of the swift and universal collapse of the financial and scientific civilisation with which the twentieth century opened followed each other very swiftly, so swiftly that upon the foreshortened page of history--they seem altogether to overlap. To begin with, one sees the world nearly at a maximum wealth and prosperity. To its inhabitants indeed it seemed also at a maximum of security. When now in retrospect the thoughtful observer surveys the intellectual history of this time, when one reads its surviving fragments of literature, its scraps of political oratory, the few small voices that chance has selected out of a thousand million utterances to speak to later days, the most striking thing of all this web of wisdom and error is surely that hallucination of security. To men living in our present world state, orderly, scientific and secured, nothing seems so precarious, so giddily dangerous, as the fabric of the social order with which the men of the opening of the twentieth century were content. To us it seems that every institution and relationship was the fruit of haphazard and tradition and the manifest sport of chance, their laws each made for some separate occasion and having no relation to any future needs, their customs illogical, their education aimless and wasteful. Their method of economic exploitation indeed impresses a trained and informed mind as the most frantic and destructive scramble it is

possible to conceive; their credit and monetary system resting on an unsubstantial tradition of the worthiness of gold, seems a thing almost fantastically unstable. And they lived in planless cities, for the most part dangerously congested; their rails and roads and population were distributed over the earth in the wanton confusion ten thousand irrelevant considerations had made.

Yet they thought confidently that this was a secure and permanent progressive system, and on the strength of some three hundred years of change and irregular improvement answered the doubter with, "Things always have gone well. We'll worry through!"

But when we contrast the state of man in the opening of the twentieth century with the condition of any previous period in his history, then perhaps we may begin to understand something of that blind confidence. It was not so much a reasoned confidence as the inevitable consequence of sustained good fortune. By such standards as they possessed, things HAD gone amazingly well for them. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that for the first time in history whole populations found themselves regularly supplied with more than enough to eat, and the vital statistics of the time witness to an amelioration of hygienic conditions rapid beyond all precedent, and to a vast development of intelligence and ability in all the arts that make life wholesome. The level and quality of the average education had risen tremendously; and at the dawn of the twentieth century comparatively few people in Western Europe or America were unable to read or write. Never before had there been such reading masses. There was wide social security. A common man might travel safely over three-quarters of the habitable globe, could go round the earth at a cost of less than the annual earnings of a skilled artisan. Compared with the liberality and comfort of the ordinary life of the time, the order of the Roman Empire under the Antonines was local and limited. And every year, every month, came some new increment to human achievement, a new

country opened up, new mines, new scientific discoveries, a new machine!

For those three hundred years, indeed, the movement of the world seemed wholly beneficial to mankind. Men said, indeed, that moral organisation was not keeping pace with physical progress, but few attached any meaning to these phrases, the understanding of which lies at the basis of our present safety. Sustaining and constructive forces did indeed for a time more than balance the malign drift of chance and the natural ignorance, prejudice, blind passion, and, wasteful self-seeking of mankind.

The accidental balance on the side of Progress was far slighter and infinitely more complex and delicate in its adjustments than the people of that time suspected; but that did not alter the fact that it was an effective balance. They did not realise that this age of relative good fortune was an age of immense but temporary opportunity for their kind. They complacently assumed a necessary progress towards which they had no moral responsibility. They did not realise that this security of progress was a thing still to be won--or lost, and that the time to win it was a time that passed. They went about their affairs energetically enough and yet with a curious idleness towards those threatening things. No one troubled over the real dangers of mankind. They, saw their armies and navies grow larger and more portentous; some of their ironclads at the last cost as much as the whole annual expenditure upon advanced education; they accumulated explosives and the machinery of destruction; they allowed their national traditions and jealousies to accumulate; they contemplated a steady enhancement of race hostility as the races drew closer without concern or understanding, and they permitted the growth in their midst of an evil-spirited press, mercenary, and unscrupulous, incapable of good, and powerful for evil. The State had practically no control over the press at all. Quite heedlessly they allowed this touch-paper to lie at the

door of their war magazine for any spark to fire. The precedents of history were all one tale of the collapse of civilisations, the dangers of the time were manifest. One is incredulous now to believe they could not see.

Could mankind have prevented this disaster of the War in the Air?

An idle question that, as idle as to ask could mankind have prevented the decay that turned Assyria and Babylon to empty deserts or the slow decline and fall, the gradual social disorganisation, phase by phase, that closed the chapter of the Empire of the West! They could not, because they did not, they had not the will to arrest it. What mankind could achieve with a different will is a speculation as idle as it is magnificent.

And this was no slow decadence that came to the Europeanised world; those other civilisations rotted and crumbled down, the Europeanised civilisation was, as it were, blown up. Within the space of five years it was altogether disintegrated and destroyed. Up to the very eve of the War in the Air one sees a spacious spectacle of incessant advance, a world-wide security, enormous areas with highly organised industry and settled populations, gigantic cities spreading gigantically, the seas and oceans dotted with shipping, the land netted with rails, and open ways. Then suddenly the German air-fleets sweep across the scene, and we are in the beginning of the end.

2

This story has already told of the swift rush upon New York of the first German air-fleet and of the wild, inevitable orgy of inconclusive destruction that ensued. Behind it a second air-fleet was already swelling at its gasometers when England and France and Spain and Italy showed their hands. None of these countries had prepared for aeronautic warfare on the magnificent scale of the Germans, but each guarded secrets, each in a measure

was making ready, and a common dread of German vigour and that aggressive spirit Prince Karl Albert embodied, had long been drawing these powers together in secret anticipation of some such attack. This rendered their prompt co-operation possible, and they certainly co-operated promptly. The second aerial power in Europe at this time was France; the British, nervous for their Asiatic empire, and sensible of the immense moral effect of the airship upon half-educated populations, had placed their aeronautic parks in North India, and were able to play but a subordinate part in the European conflict. Still, even in England they had nine or ten big navigables, twenty or thirty smaller ones, and a variety of experimental aeroplanes. Before the fleet of Prince Karl Albert had crossed England, while Bert was still surveying Manchester in bird's-eye view, the diplomatic exchanges were going on that led to an attack upon Germany. A heterogeneous collection of navigable balloons of all sizes and types gathered over the Bernese Oberland, crushed and burnt the twenty-five Swiss air-ships' that unexpectedly resisted this concentration in the battle of the Alps, and then, leaving the Alpine glaciers and valleys strewn with strange wreckage, divided into two fleets and set itself to terrorise Berlin and destroy the Franconian Park, seeking to do this before the second air-fleet could be inflated.

Both over Berlin and Franconia the assailants with their modern explosives effected great damage before they were driven off. In Franconia twelve fully distended and five partially filled and manned giants were able to make head against and at last, with the help of a squadron of drachenflieger from Hamburg, defeat and pursue the attack and to relieve Berlin, and the Germans were straining every nerve to get an overwhelming fleet in the air, and were already raiding London and Paris when the advance fleets from the Asiatic air-parks, the first intimation of a new factor in the conflict, were reported from Burmah and Armenia.

Already the whole financial fabric of the world was staggering when that occurred. With the destruction of the American fleet in the North Atlantic, and the smashing conflict that ended the naval existence of Germany in the North Sea, with the burning and wrecking of billions of pounds' worth of property in the four cardinal cities of the world, the fact of the hopeless costliness of war came home for the first time, came, like a blow in the face, to the consciousness of mankind. Credit went down in a wild whirl of selling. Everywhere appeared a phenomenon that had already in a mild degree manifested itself in preceding periods of panic; a desire to SECURE AND HOARD GOLD before prices reached

bottom. But now it spread like wild-fire, it became universal. Above was visible conflict and destruction; below something was happening far more deadly and incurable to the flimsy fabric of finance and commercialism in which men had so blindly put their trust. As the airships fought above, the visible gold supply of the world vanished below. An epidemic of private cornering and universal distrust swept the world. In a few weeks, money, except for depreciated paper, vanished into vaults, into holes, into the walls of houses, into ten million hiding-places. Money vanished, and at its disappearance trade and industry came to an end. The economic world staggered and fell dead. It was like the stroke of some disease it was like the water vanishing out of the blood of a living creature; it was a sudden, universal coagulation of intercourse....

And as the credit system, that had been the living fortress of the scientific civilisation, reeled and fell upon the millions it had held together in economic relationship, as these people, perplexed and helpless, faced this marvel of credit utterly destroyed, the airships of Asia, countless and relentless, poured across the heavens, swooped eastward to America and westward to Europe. The page of history becomes a long crescendo of battle. The main body of the British-Indian air-fleet perished upon a

pyre of blazing antagonists in Burmah; the Germans were scattered in the great battle of the Carpathians; the vast peninsula of India burst into insurrection and civil war from end to end, and from Gobi to Morocco rose the standards of the "Jihad." For some weeks of warfare and destruction it seemed as though the Confederation of Eastern Asia must needs conquer the world, and then the jerry-built "modern" civilisation of China too gave way under the strain. The teeming and peaceful population of China had been "westernised" during the opening years of the twentieth century with the deepest resentment and reluctance; they had been dragooned and disciplined under Japanese and European--influence into an acquiescence with sanitary methods, police controls, military service, and wholesale process of exploitation against which their whole tradition rebelled. Under the stresses of the war their endurance reached the breaking point, the whole of China rose in incoherent revolt, and the practical destruction of the central government at Peking by a handful of British and German airships that had escaped from the main battles rendered that revolt invincible. In Yokohama appeared barricades, the black flag and the social revolution. With that the whole world became a welter of conflict.

So that a universal social collapse followed, as it were a logical consequence, upon world-wide war. Wherever there were great populations, great masses of people found themselves without work, without money, and unable to get food. Famine was in every working-class quarter in the world within three weeks of the beginning of the war. Within a month there was not a city anywhere in which the ordinary law and social procedure had not been replaced by some form of emergency control, in which firearms and military executions were not being used to keep order and prevent violence. And still in the poorer quarters, and in the populous districts, and even here and there already among those who had been wealthy, famine spread.

So what historians have come to call the Phase of the Emergency Committees sprang from the opening phase and from the phase of social collapse. Then followed a period of vehement and passionate conflict against disintegration; everywhere the struggle to keep order and to keep fighting went on. And at the same time the character of the war altered through the replacement of the huge gas-filled airships by flying-machines as the instruments of war. So soon as the big fleet engagements were over, the Asiatics endeavoured to establish in close proximity to the more vulnerable points of the countries against which they were acting, fortified centres from which flying-machine raids could be made. For a time they had everything their own way in this, and then, as this story has told, the lost secret of the Butteridge machine came to light, and the conflict became equalized and less conclusive than ever. For these small flying-machines, ineffectual for any large expedition or conclusive attack, were horribly convenient for guerilla warfare, rapidly and cheaply made, easily used, easily hidden. The design of them was hastily copied and printed in Pinkerville and scattered broadcast over the United States and copies were sent to Europe, and there reproduced. Every man, every town, every parish that could, was exhorted to make and use them. In a little while they were being constructed not only by governments and local authorities, but by robber bands, by insurgent committees, by every type of private person. The peculiar social destructiveness of the Butteridge machine lay in its complete simplicity. It was nearly as simple as a motor-bicycle. The broad outlines of the earlier stages of the war disappeared under its influence, the spacious antagonism of nations and empires and races vanished in a seething mass of detailed conflict. The world passed at a stride from a unity and simplicity broader than that of the Roman Empire at its best, to as social fragmentation as complete as the robber-baron period of

the Middle Ages. But this time, for a long descent down gradual slopes of disintegration, comes a fall like a fall over a cliff. Everywhere were men and women perceiving this and struggling desperately to keep as it were a hold upon the edge of the cliff.

A fourth phase follows. Through the struggle against Chaos, in the wake of the Famine, came now another old enemy of humanity--the Pestilence, the Purple Death. But the war does not pause. The flags still fly. Fresh air-fleets rise, new forms of airship, and beneath their swooping struggles the world darkens--scarcely heeded by history.

It is not within the design of this book to tell what further story, to tell how the War in the Air kept on through the sheer inability of any authorities to meet and agree and end it, until every organised government in the world was as shattered and broken as a heap of china beaten with a stick. With every week of those terrible years history becomes more detailed and confused, more crowded and uncertain. Not without great and heroic resistance was civilisation borne down. Out of the bitter social conflict below rose patriotic associations, brotherhoods of order, city mayors, princes, provisional committees, trying to establish an order below and to keep the sky above. The double effort destroyed them. And as the exhaustion of the mechanical resources of civilisation clears the heavens of airships at last altogether, Anarchy, Famine and Pestilence are discovered triumphant below. The great nations and empires have become but names in the mouths of men. Everywhere there are ruins and unburied dead, and shrunken, yellow-faced survivors in a mortal apathy. Here there are robbers, here vigilance committees, and here guerilla bands ruling patches of exhausted territory, strange federations and brotherhoods form and dissolve, and religious fanaticisms begotten of despair gleam in famine-bright eyes. It is a universal dissolution. The fine order and welfare of the earth have crumpled like an exploded bladder. In five

short years the world and the scope of human life have undergone a retrogressive change as great as that between the age of the Antonines and the Europe of the ninth century....

4

Across this sombre spectacle of disaster goes a minute and insignificant person for whom perhaps the readers of this story have now some slight solicitude. Of him there remains to be told just one single and miraculous thing. Through a world darkened and lost, through a civilisation in its death agony, our little Cockney errant went and found his Edna! He found his Edna!

He got back across the Atlantic partly by means of an order from the President and partly through his own good luck. He contrived to get himself aboard a British brig in the timber trade that put out from Boston without cargo, chiefly, it would seem, because its captain had a vague idea of "getting home" to South Shields. Bert was able to ship himself upon her mainly because of the seamanlike appearance of his rubber boots. They had a long, eventful voyage; they were chased, or imagined themselves to be chased, for some hours by an Asiatic ironclad, which was presently engaged by a British cruiser. The two ships fought for three hours, circling and driving southward as they fought, until the twilight and the cloud-drift of a rising gale swallowed them up. A few days later Bert's ship lost her rudder and mainmast in a gale. The crew ran out of food and subsisted on fish. They saw strange air-ships going eastward near the Azores and landed to get provisions and repair the rudder at Teneriffe. There they found the town destroyed and two big liners, with dead still aboard, sunken in the harbour. From there they got canned food and material for repairs, but their operations were greatly impeded by the hostility of a band of men amidst the ruins of the town, who sniped them and tried to drive them away.

At Mogador, they stayed and sent a boat ashore for water, and were nearly captured by an Arab ruse. Here too they got the Purple Death aboard, and sailed with it incubating in their blood. The cook sickened first, and then the mate, and presently every one was down and three in the fore-castle were dead. It chanced to be calm weather, and they drifted helplessly and indeed careless of their fate backwards towards the Equator. The captain doctored them all with rum. Nine died all together, and of the four survivors none understood navigation; when at last they took heart again and could handle a sail, they made a course by the stars roughly northward and were already short of food once more when they fell in with a petrol-driven ship from Rio to Cardiff, shorthanded by reason of the Purple Death and glad to take them aboard. So at last, after a year of wandering Bert reached England. He landed in bright June weather, and found the Purple Death was there just beginning its ravages.

The people were in a state of panic in Cardiff and many had fled to the hills, and directly the steamer came to the harbour she was boarded and her residue of food impounded by some unauthenticated Provisional Committee. Bert tramped through a country disorganised by pestilence, foodless, and shaken to the very base of its immemorial order. He came near death and starvation many times, and once he was drawn into scenes of violence that might have ended his career. But the Bert Smallways who tramped from Cardiff to London vaguely "going home," vaguely seeking something of his own that had no tangible form but Edna, was a very different person from the Desert Dervish who was swept out of England in Mr. Butteridge's balloon a year before. He was brown and lean and enduring, steady-eyed and pestilence-salted, and his mouth, which had once hung open, shut now like a steel trap. Across his brow ran a white scar that he had got in a fight on the brig. In Cardiff he had felt the need of new clothes and a weapon, and had, by means that would have shocked him a year ago, secured a flannel shirt, a

corduroy suit, and a revolver and fifty cartridges from an abandoned pawnbroker's. He also got some soap and had his first real wash for thirteen months in a stream outside the town. The Vigilance bands that had at first shot plunderers very freely were now either entirely dispersed by the plague, or busy between town and cemetery in a vain attempt to keep pace with it. He prowled on the outskirts of the town for three or four days, starving, and then went back to join the Hospital Corps for a week, and so fortified himself with a few square meals before he started eastward.

The Welsh and English countryside at that time presented the strangest mingling of the assurance and wealth of the opening twentieth century with a sort of Dureresque medievalism. All the gear, the houses and mono-rails, the farm hedges and power cables, the roads and pavements, the sign-posts and advertisements of the former order were still for the most part intact. Bankruptcy, social collapse, famine, and pestilence had done nothing to damage these, and it was only to the great capitals and ganglionic centres, as it were, of this State, that positive destruction had come. Any one dropped suddenly into the country would have noticed very little difference. He would have remarked first, perhaps, that all the hedges needed clipping, that the roadside grass grew rank, that the road-tracks were unusually rainworn, and that the cottages by the wayside seemed in many cases shut up, that a telephone wire had dropped here, and that a cart stood abandoned by the wayside. But he would still find his hunger whetted by the bright assurance that Wilder's Canned Peaches were excellent, or that there was nothing so good for the breakfast table as Gobble's Sausages. And then suddenly would come the Dureresque element; the skeleton of a horse, or some crumpled mass of rags in the ditch, with gaunt extended feet and a yellow, purple-blotched skin and face, or what had been a face, gaunt and glaring and devastated. Then here would be a field that had been ploughed and not sown, and

here a field of corn carelessly trampled by beasts, and here a hoarding torn down across the road to make a fire.

Then presently he would meet a man or a woman, yellow-faced and probably negligently dressed and armed--prowling for food. These people would have the complexions and eyes and expressions of tramps or criminals, and often the clothing of prosperous middle-class or upper-class people. Many of these would be eager for news, and willing to give help and even scraps of queer meat, or crusts of grey and doughy bread, in return for it. They would listen to Bert's story with avidity, and attempt to keep him with them for a day or so. The virtual cessation of postal distribution and the collapse of all newspaper enterprise had left an immense and aching gap in the mental life of this time. Men had suddenly lost sight of the ends of the earth and had still to recover the rumour-spreading habits of the Middle Ages. In their eyes, in their bearing, in their talk, was the quality of lost and deoriented souls.

As Bert travelled from parish to parish, and from district to district, avoiding as far as possible those festering centres of violence and despair, the larger towns, he found the condition of affairs varying widely. In one parish he would find the large house burnt, the vicarage wrecked, evidently in violent conflict for some suspected and perhaps imaginary store of food unburied dead everywhere, and the whole mechanism of the community at a standstill. In another he would find organising forces stoutly at work, newly-painted notice boards warning off vagrants, the roads and still cultivated fields policed by armed men, the pestilence under control, even nursing going on, a store of food husbanded, the cattle and sheep well guarded, and a group of two or three justices, the village doctor or a farmer, dominating the whole place; a reversion, in fact, to the autonomous community of the fifteenth century. But at any time such a village would be liable to a raid of Asiatics or Africans or such-like

air-pirates, demanding petrol and alcohol or provisions. The price of its order was an almost intolerable watchfulness and tension.

Then the approach to the confused problems of some larger centre of population and the presence of a more intricate conflict would be marked by roughly smeared notices of "Quarantine" or "Strangers Shot," or by a string of decaying plunderers dangling from the telephone poles at the roadside. About Oxford big boards were put on the roofs warning all air wanderers off with the single word, "Guns."

Taking their risks amidst these things, cyclists still kept abroad, and once or twice during Bert's long tramp powerful motor cars containing masked and goggled figures went tearing past him. There were few police in evidence, but ever and again squads of gaunt and tattered soldier-cyclists would come drifting along, and such encounters became more frequent as he got out of Wales into England. Amidst all this wreckage they were still campaigning. He had had some idea of resorting to the workhouses for the night if hunger pressed him too closely, but some of these were closed and others converted into temporary hospitals, and one he came up to at twilight near a village in Gloucestershire stood with all its doors and windows open, silent as the grave, and, as he found to his horror by stumbling along evil-smelling corridors, full of unburied dead.

From Gloucestershire Bert went northward to the British aeronautic park outside Birmingham, in the hope that he might be taken on and given food, for there the Government, or at any rate the War Office, still existed as an energetic fact, concentrated amidst collapse and social disaster upon the effort to keep the British flag still flying in the air, and trying to brisk up mayor and mayor and magistrate and magistrate in a new effort of organisation. They had brought together all the best of the

surviving artisans from that region, they had provisioned the park for a siege, and they were urgently building a larger type of Butteridge machine. Bert could get no footing at this work: he was not sufficiently skilled, and he had drifted to Oxford when the great fight occurred in which these works were finally wrecked. He saw something, but not very much, of the battle from a place called Boar Hill. He saw the Asiatic squadron coming up across the hills to the south-west, and he saw one of their airships circling southward again chased by two aeroplanes, the one that was ultimately overtaken, wrecked and burnt at Edge Hill. But he never learnt the issue of the combat as a whole.

He crossed the Thames from Eton to Windsor and made his way round the south of London to Bun Hill, and there he found his brother Tom, looking like some dark, defensive animal in the old shop, just recovering from the Purple Death, and Jessica upstairs delirious, and, as it seemed to him, dying grimly. She raved of sending out orders to customers, and scolded Tom perpetually lest he should be late with Mrs. Thompson's potatoes and Mrs. Hopkins' cauliflower, though all business had long since ceased and Tom had developed a quite uncanny skill in the snaring of rats and sparrows and the concealment of certain stores of cereals and biscuits from plundered grocers' shops. Tom received his brother with a sort of guarded warmth.

"Lor!" he said, "it's Bert. I thought you'd be coming back some day, and I'm glad to see you. But I can't arst you to eat anything, because I 'aven't got anything to eat.... Where you been, Bert, all this time?"

Bert reassured his brother by a glimpse of a partly eaten swede, and was still telling his story in fragments and parentheses, when he discovered behind the counter a yellow and forgotten note addressed to himself. "What's this?" he said, and found it was a year-old note from Edna. "She came 'ere," said Tom, like one who

recalls a trivial thing, "arstin' for you and arstin' us to take 'er in. That was after the battle and settin' Clapham Rise afire. I was for takin' 'er in, but Jessica wouldn't 'ave it--and so she borrowed five shillings of me quiet like and went on. I dessay she's tole you--"

She had, Bert found. She had gone on, she said in her note, to an aunt and uncle who had a brickfield near Horsham. And there at last, after another fortnight of adventurous journeying, Bert found her.

5

When Bert and Edna set eyes on one another, they stared and laughed foolishly, so changed they were, and so ragged and surprised. And then they both fell weeping.

"Oh! Bertie, boy!" she cried. "You've come--you've come!" and put out her arms and staggered. "I told 'im. He said he'd kill me if I didn't marry him."

But Edna was not married, and when presently Bert could get talk from her, she explained the task before him. That little patch of lonely agricultural country had fallen under the power of a band of bullies led by a chief called Bill Gore who had begun life as a butcher boy and developed into a prize-fighter and a professional sport. They had been organised by a local nobleman of former eminence upon the turf, but after a time he had disappeared, no one quite knew how and Bill had succeeded to the leadership of the countryside, and had developed his teacher's methods with considerable vigour. There had been a strain of advanced philosophy about the local nobleman, and his mind ran to "improving the race" and producing the Over-Man, which in practice took the form of himself especially and his little band in moderation marrying with some frequency. Bill followed up the

idea with an enthusiasm that even trenched upon his popularity with his followers. One day he had happened upon Edna tending her pigs, and had at once fallen a-wooing with great urgency among the troughs of slush. Edna had made a gallant resistance, but he was still vigorously about and extraordinarily impatient. He might, she said, come at any time, and she looked Bert in the eyes. They were back already in the barbaric stage when a man must fight for his love.

And here one deplores the conflicts of truth with the chivalrous tradition. One would like to tell of Bert sallying forth to challenge his rival, of a ring formed and a spirited encounter, and Bert by some miracle of pluck and love and good fortune winning. But indeed nothing of the sort occurred. Instead, he reloaded his revolver very carefully, and then sat in the best room of the cottage by the derelict brickfield, looking anxious and perplexed, and listening to talk about Bill and his ways, and thinking, thinking. Then suddenly Edna's aunt, with a thrill in her voice, announced the appearance of that individual. He was coming with two others of his gang through the garden gate. Bert got up, put the woman aside, and looked out. They presented remarkable figures. They wore a sort of uniform of red golfing jackets and white sweaters, football singlet, and stockings and boots and each had let his fancy play about his head-dress. Bill had a woman's hat full of cock's feathers, and all had wild, slouching cowboy brims.

Bert sighed and stood up, deeply thoughtful, and Edna watched him, marvelling. The women stood quite still. He left the window, and went out into the passage rather slowly, and with the careworn expression of a man who gives his mind to a complex and uncertain business. "Edna!" he called, and when she came he opened the front door.

He asked very simply, and pointing to the foremost of the three,

"That 'im? ... Sure?" ... and being told that it was, shot his rival instantly and very accurately through the chest. He then shot Bill's best man much less tidily in the head, and then shot at and winged the third man as he fled. The third gentleman yelped, and continued running with a comical end-on twist.

Then Bert stood still meditating, with the pistol in his hand, and quite regardless of the women behind him.

So far things had gone well.

It became evident to him that if he did not go into politics at once, he would be hanged as an assassin and accordingly, and without a word to the women, he went down to the village public-house he had passed an hour before on his way to Edna, entered it from the rear, and confronted the little band of ambiguous roughs, who were drinking in the tap-room and discussing matrimony and Bill's affection in a facetious but envious manner, with a casually held but carefully reloaded revolver, and an invitation to join what he called, I regret to say, a "Vigilance Committee" under his direction. "It's wanted about 'ere, and some of us are gettin' it up." He presented himself as one having friends outside, though indeed, he had no friends at all in the world but Edna and her aunt and two female cousins.

There was a quick but entirely respectful discussion of the situation. They thought him a lunatic who had tramped into, this neighbourhood ignorant of Bill. They desired to temporise until their leader came. Bill would settle him. Some one spoke of Bill.

"Bill's dead, I jest shot 'im," said Bert. "We don't need reckon with 'IM. 'E's shot, and a red-'aired chap with a squint, 'E'S shot. We've settled up all that. There ain't going to be no more

Bill, ever. 'E'd got wrong ideas about marriage and things. It's 'is sort of chap we're after."

That carried the meeting.

Bill was perfunctorily buried, and Bert's Vigilance Committee (for so it continued to be called) reigned in his stead.

That is the end of this story so far as Bert Smallways is concerned. We leave him with his Edna to become squatters among the clay and oak thickets of the Weald, far away from the stream of events. From that time forth life became a succession of peasant encounters, an affair of pigs and hens and small needs and little economies and children, until Clapham and Bun Hill and all the life of the Scientific Age became to Bert no more than the fading memory of a dream. He never knew how the War in the Air went on, nor whether it still went on. There were rumours of airships going and coming, and of happenings Londonward. Once or twice their shadows fell on him as he worked, but whence they came or whither they went he could not tell. Even his desire to tell died out for want of food. At times came robbers and thieves, at times came diseases among the beasts and shortness of food, once the country was worried by a pack of boar-hounds he helped to kill; he went through many inconsecutive, irrelevant adventures. He survived them all.

Accident and death came near them both ever and again and passed them by, and they loved and suffered and were happy, and she bore him many children--eleven children--one after the other, of whom only four succumbed to the necessary hardships of their simple life. They lived and did well, as well was understood in those days. They went the way of all flesh, year by year.

THE EPILOGUE

It happened that one bright summer's morning exactly thirty years after the launching of the first German air-fleet, an old man took a small boy to look for a missing hen through the ruins of Bun Hill and out towards the splintered pinnacles of the Crystal Palace. He was not a very old man; he was, as a matter of fact, still within a few weeks of sixty-three, but constant stooping over spades and forks and the carrying of roots and manure, and exposure to the damps of life in the open-air without a change of clothing, had bent him into the form of a sickle. Moreover, he had lost most of his teeth and that had affected his digestion and through that his skin and temper. In face and expression he was curiously like that old Thomas Smallways who had once been coachman to Sir Peter Bone, and this was just as it should be, for he was Tom Smallways the son, who formerly kept the little green-grocer's shop under the straddle of the mono-rail viaduct in the High Street of Bun Hill. But now there were no green-grocer's shops, and Tom was living in one of the derelict villas hard by that unoccupied building site that had been and was still the scene of his daily horticulture. He and his wife lived upstairs, and in the drawing and dining rooms, which had each French windows opening on the lawn, and all about the ground floor generally, Jessica, who was now a lean and lined and baldish but still very efficient and energetic old woman, kept her three cows and a multitude of gawky hens. These two were part of a little community of stragglers and returned fugitives, perhaps a hundred and fifty souls of them all together, that had settled down to the new conditions of things after the Panic and Famine and Pestilence that followed in the wake of the War. They had come back from strange refuges and hiding-places and had squatted down among the familiar houses and begun that hard struggle against nature for food which was now the chief interest of their lives. They were by sheer preoccupation with that a peaceful people, more particularly after Wilkes, the house agent,

driven by some obsolete dream of acquisition, had been drowned in the pool by the ruined gas-works for making inquiries into title and displaying a litigious turn of mind. (He had not been murdered, you understand, but the people had carried an exemplary ducking ten minutes or so beyond its healthy limits.)

This little community had returned from its original habits of suburban parasitism to what no doubt had been the normal life of humanity for nearly immemorial years, a life of homely economies in the most intimate, contact with cows and hens and patches of around, a life that breathes and exhales the scent of cows and finds the need for stimulants satisfied by the activity of the bacteria and vermin it engenders. Such had been the life of the European peasant from the dawn of history to the beginning of the Scientific Era, so it was the large majority of the people of Asia and Africa had always been wont to live. For a time it had seemed that, by virtue of machines, and scientific civilisation, Europe was to be lifted out of this perpetual round of animal drudgery, and that America was to evade it very largely from the outset. And with the smash of the high and dangerous and splendid edifice of mechanical civilisation that had arisen so marvellously, back to the land came the common man, back to the manure.

The little communities, still haunted by ten thousand memories of a greater state, gathered and developed almost tacitly a customary law and fell under the guidance of a medicine man or a priest. The world rediscovered religion and the need of something to hold its communities together. At Bun Hill this function was entrusted to an old Baptist minister. He taught a simple but adequate faith. In his teaching a good principle called the Word fought perpetually against a diabolical female influence called the Scarlet Woman and an evil being called Alcohol. This Alcohol had long since become a purely spiritualised conception deprived of any element of material

application; it had no relation to the occasional finds of whiskey and wine in Londoners' cellars that gave Bun Hill its only holidays. He taught this doctrine on Sundays, and on weekdays he was an amiable and kindly old man, distinguished by his quaint disposition to wash his hands, and if possible his face, daily, and with a wonderful genius for cutting up pigs. He held his Sunday services in the old church in the Beckenham Road, and then the countryside came out in a curious reminiscence of the urban dress of Edwardian times. All the men without exception wore frock coats, top hats, and white shirts, though many had no boots. Tom was particularly distinguished on these occasions because he wore a top hat with gold lace about it and a green coat and trousers that he had found upon a skeleton in the basement of the Urban and District Bank. The women, even Jessica, came in jackets and immense hats extravagantly trimmed with artificial flowers and exotic birds' feathers--of which there were abundant supplies in the shops to the north--and the children (there were not many children, because a large proportion of the babies born in Bun Hill died in a few days' time of inexplicable maladies) had similar clothes cut down to accommodate them; even Stringer's little grandson of four wore a large top hat.

That was the Sunday costume of the Bun Hill district, a curious and interesting survival of the genteel traditions of the Scientific Age. On a weekday the folk were dingily and curiously hung about with dirty rags of housecloth and scarlet flannel, sacking, curtain serge, and patches of old carpet, and went either bare-footed or on rude wooden sandals. These people, the reader must understand, were an urban population sunken back to the state of a barbaric peasantry, and so without any of the simple arts a barbaric peasantry would possess. In many ways they were curiously degenerate and incompetent. They had lost any idea of making textiles, they could hardly make up clothes when they had material, and they were forced to plunder the

continually dwindling supplies of the ruins about them for cover.

All the simple arts they had ever known they had lost, and with the breakdown of modern drainage, modern water supply, shopping, and the like, their civilised methods were useless. Their cooking was worse than primitive. It was a feeble muddling with food over wood fires in rusty drawing-room fireplaces; for the kitcheners burnt too much. Among them all no sense of baking or brewing or metal-working was to be found.

Their employment of sacking and such-like coarse material for work-a-day clothing, and their habit of tying it on with string and of thrusting wadding and straw inside it for warmth, gave these people an odd, "packed" appearance, and as it was a week-day when Tom took his little nephew for the hen-seeking excursion, so it was they were attired.

"So you've really got to Bun Hill at last, Teddy," said old Tom, beginning to talk and slackening his pace so soon as they were out of range of old Jessica. "You're the last of Bert's boys for me to see. Wat I've seen, young Bert I've seen, Sissie and Matt, Tom what's called after me, and Peter. The traveller people brought you along all right, eh?"

"I managed," said Teddy, who was a dry little boy.

"Didn't want to eat you on the way?"

"They was all right," said Teddy. "and on the way near Leatherhead we saw a man riding on a bicycle."

"My word!" said Tom, "there ain't many of those about nowadays. Where was he going?"

"Said 'e was going to Dorking if the High Road was good enough.

But I doubt if he got there. All about Burford it was flooded. We came over the hill, uncle--what they call the Roman Road. That's high and safe."

"Don't know it," said old Tom. "But a bicycle! You're sure it was a bicycle? Had two wheels?"

"It was a bicycle right enough."

"Why! I remember a time, Teddy, where there was bicycles no end, when you could stand just here--the road was as smooth as a board then--and see twenty or thirty coming and going at the same time, bicycles and moty-bicycles; moty cars, all sorts of whirly things."

"No!" said Teddy.

"I do. They'd keep on going by all day,--'undreds and 'undreds."

"But where was they all going?" asked Teddy.

"Tearin' off to Brighton--you never seen Brighton, I expect--it's down by the sea, used to be a moce 'mazing place--and coming and going from London."

"Why?"

"They did."

"But why?"

"Lord knows why, Teddy. They did. Then you see that great thing there like a great big rusty nail sticking up higher than all the houses, and that one yonder, and that, and how something's fell in between 'em among the houses. They was parts of the

mono-rail. They went down to Brighton too and all day and night there was people going, great cars as big as 'ouses full of people."

The little boy regarded the rusty evidences acrosss the narrow muddy ditch of cow-droppings that had once been a High Street. He was clearly disposed to be sceptical, and yet there the ruins were! He grappled with ideas beyond the strength of his imagination.

"What did they go for?" he asked, "all of 'em?"

"They 'AD to. Everything was on the go those days--everything."

"Yes, but where did they come from?"

"All round 'ere, Teddy, there was people living in those 'ouses, and up the road more 'ouses and more people. You'd 'ardly believe me, Teddy, but it's Bible truth. You can go on that way for ever and ever, and keep on coming on 'ouses, more 'ouses, and more. There's no end to 'em. No end. They get bigger and bigger." His voice dropped as though he named strange names.

"It's LONDON," he said.

"And it's all empty now and left alone. All day it's left alone.

You don't find 'ardly a man, you won't find nothing but dogs and cats after the rats until you get round by Bromley and Beckenham, and there you find the Kentish men herding swine. (Nice rough lot they are too!) I tell you that so long as the sun is up it's as still as the grave. I been about by day--orfen and orfen." He paused.

"And all those 'ouses and streets and ways used to be full of

people before the War in the Air and the Famine and the Purple Death. They used to be full of people, Teddy, and then came a time when they was full of corpses, when you couldn't go a mile that way before the stink of 'em drove you back. It was the Purple Death 'ad killed 'em every one. The cats and dogs and 'ens and vermin caught it. Everything and every one 'ad it. Jest a few of us 'appened to live. I pulled through, and your aunt, though it made 'er lose 'er 'air. Why, you find the skeletons in the 'ouses now. This way we been into all the 'ouses and took what we wanted and buried moce of the people, but up that way, Norwood way, there's 'ouses with the glass in the windows still, and the furniture not touched--all dusty and falling to pieces--and the bones of the people lying, some in bed, some about the 'ouse, jest as the Purple Death left 'em five-and-twenty years ago. I went into one--me and old Higgins las' year--and there was a room with books, Teddy--you know what I mean by books, Teddy?"

"I seen 'em. I seen 'em with pictures."

"Well, books all round, Teddy, 'undreds of books, beyond-rhyme or reason, as the saying goes, green-mouldy and dry. I was for leaven' 'em alone--I was never much for reading--but ole Higgins he must touch em. 'I believe I could read one of 'em NOW,' 'e says.

"'Not it,' I says.

"'I could,' 'e says, laughing and takes one out and opens it.

"I looked, and there, Teddy, was a cullud picture, oh, so lovely! It was a picture of women and serpents in a garden. I never see anything like it.

"'This suits me,' said old Higgins, 'to rights.'

"And then kind of friendly he gave the book a pat--

Old Tom Smallways paused impressively.

"And then?" said Teddy.

"It all fell to dus'. White dus'!" He became still more impressive. "We didn't touch no more of them books that day. Not after that."

For a long time both were silent. Then Tom, playing with a subject that attracted him with a fatal fascination, repeated, "All day long they lie--still as the grave."

Teddy took the point at last. "Don't they lie o' nights?" he asked.

Old Tom shook his head. "Nobody knows, boy, nobody knows."

"But what could they do?"

"Nobody knows. Nobody ain't seen to tell not nobody."

"Nobody?"

"They tell tales," said old Tom. "They tell tales, but there ain't no believing 'em. I gets 'ome about sundown, and keeps indoors, so I can't say nothing, can I? But there's them that thinks some things and them as thinks others. I've 'eard it's unlucky to take clo'es off of 'em unless they got white bones. There's stories--"

The boy watched his uncle sharply. "WOT stories?" he said.

"Stories of moonlight nights and things walking about. But I take no stock in 'em. I keeps in bed. If you listen to stories --Lord! You'll get afraid of yourself in a field at midday."

The little boy looked round and ceased his questions for a space.

"They say there's a 'og man in Beck'n'am what was lost in London three days and three nights. 'E went up after whiskey to Cheapside, and lorst 'is way among the ruins and wandered. Three days and three nights 'e wandered about and the streets kep' changing so's he couldn't get 'ome. If 'e 'adn't remembered some words out of the Bible 'e might 'ave been there now. All day 'e went and all night--and all day long it was still. It was as still as death all day long, until the sunset came and the twilight thickened, and then it began to rustle and whisper and go pit-a-pat with a sound like 'urrying feet."

He paused.

"Yes," said the little boy breathlessly. "Go on. What then?"

"A sound of carts and 'orses there was, and a sound of cabs and omnibuses, and then a lot of whistling, shrill whistles, whistles that froze 'is marrer. And directly the whistles began things begun to show, people in the streets 'urrying, people in the 'ouses and shops busying themselves, moty cars in the streets, a sort of moonlight in all the lamps and winders. People, I say, Teddy, but they wasn't people. They was the ghosts of them that was overtook, the ghosts of them that used to crowd those streets. And they went past 'im and through 'im and never 'eeded 'im, went by like fogs and vapours, Teddy. And sometimes they was cheerful and sometimes they was 'orrible, 'orrible beyond words. And once 'e come to a place called Piccadilly, Teddy, and there was lights blazing like daylight and ladies and gentlemen in splendid clo'es crowding the pavement, and taxicabs follering

along the road. And as 'e looked, they all went evil--evil in the face, Teddy. And it seemed to 'im SUDDENLY THEY SAW 'IM, and the women began to look at 'im and say things to 'im--'orrible--wicked things. One come very near 'im, Teddy, right up to 'im, and looked into 'is face--close. And she 'adn't got a face to look with, only a painted skull, and then 'e see; they was all painted skulls. And one after another they crowded on 'im saying 'orrible things, and catchin' at 'im and threatenin' and coaxing 'im, so that 'is 'eart near left 'is body for fear."

"Yes," gasped Teddy in an unendurable pause.

"Then it was he remembered the words of Scripture and saved himself alive. 'The Lord is my 'Elper, 'e says, 'therefore I will fear nothing,' and straightaway there came a cock-crowing and the street was empty from end to end. And after that the Lord was good to 'im and guided 'im 'ome."

Teddy stared and caught at another question. "But who was the people," he asked, "who lived in all these 'ouses? What was they?"

"Gent'men in business, people with money--leastways we thought it was money till everything smashed up, and then seemingly it was jes' paper--all sorts. Why, there was 'undreds of thousands of them. There was millions. I've seen that 'I Street there regular so's you couldn't walk along the pavements, shoppin' time, with women and people shoppin'."

"But where'd they get their food and things?"

"Bort 'em in shops like I used to 'ave. I'll show you the place, Teddy, if we go back. People nowadays 'aven't no idee of a shop--no idee. Plate-glass winders--it's all Greek to them. Why, I've 'ad as much as a ton and a 'arf of petaties to 'andle

all at one time. You'd open your eyes till they dropped out to see jes' what I used to 'ave in my shop. Baskets of pears 'eaped up, marrers, apples and pears, d'licious great nuts." His voice became luscious--"Benanas, oranges."

"What's benanas?" asked the boy, "and Oranges?"

"Fruits they was. Sweet, juicy, d'licious fruits. Foreign fruits. They brought 'em from Spain and N' York and places. In ships and things. They brought 'em to me from all over the world, and I sold 'em in my shop. _I_ sold 'em, Teddy! me what goes about now with you, dressed up in old sacks and looking for lost 'ens. People used to come into my shop, great beautiful ladies like you'd 'ardly dream of now, dressed up to the nines, and say, 'Well, Mr. Smallways, what you got 'smorning?' and I'd say, 'Well, I got some very nice C'nadian apples, 'or p'raps I got custed marrers. See? And they'd buy 'em. Right off they'd say, 'Send me some up.' Lord! what a life that was. The business of it, the bussel, the smart things you saw, moty cars going by, kerridges, people, organ-grinders, German bands. Always something going past--always. If it wasn't for those empty 'ouses, I'd think it all a dream."

"But what killed all the people, uncle?" asked Teddy.

"It was a smash-up," said old Tom. "Everything was going right until they started that War. Everything was going like clock-work. Everybody was busy and everybody was 'appy and everybody got a good square meal every day."

He met incredulous eyes. "Everybody," he said firmly. "If you couldn't get it anywhere else, you could get it in the workhuss, a nice 'ot bowl of soup called skilly, and bread better'n any one knows 'ow to make now, reg'lar WHITE bread, gov'ment bread."

Teddy marvelled, but said nothing. It made him feel deep longings that he found it wisest to fight down.

For a time the old man resigned himself to the pleasures of gustatory reminiscence. His lips moved. "Pickled Sammin!" he whispered, "an' vinegar.... Dutch cheese, BEER! A pipe of terbakker."

"But 'OW did the people get killed?" asked Teddy presently.

"There was the War. The War was the beginning of it. The War banged and flummocked about, but it didn't really KILL many people. But it upset things. They came and set fire to London and burnt and sank all the ships there used to be in the Thames--we could see the smoke and steam for weeks--and they threw a bomb into the Crystal Palace and made a bust-up, and broke down the rail lines and things like that. But as for killin' people, it was just accidental if they did. They killed each other more. There was a great fight all hereabout one day, Teddy--up in the air. Great things bigger than fifty 'ouses, bigger than the Crystal Palace--bigger, bigger than anything, flying about up in the air and whacking at each other and dead men fallin' off 'em. T'riffic! But, it wasn't so much the people they killed as the business they stopped. There wasn't any business doin', Teddy, there wasn't any money about, and nothin' to buy if you 'ad it."

"But 'ow did the people get KILLED?" said the little boy in the pause.

"I'm tellin' you, Teddy," said the old man. "It was the stoppin' of business come next. Suddenly there didn't seem to be any money. There was cheques--they was a bit of paper written on, and they was jes' as good as money--jes' as good if they come from customers you knew. Then all of a sudden they wasn't. I was left with three of 'em and two I'd given' change. Then it got

about that five-pun' notes were no good, and then the silver sort of went off. Gold you 'couldn't get for love or--anything. The banks in London 'ad got it, and the banks was all smashed up. Everybody went bankrup'. Everybody was thrown out of work. Everybody!"

He paused, and scrutinised his hearer. The small boy's intelligent face expressed hopeless perplexity.

"That's 'ow it 'appened," said old Tom. He sought for some means of expression. "It was like stoppin' a clock," he said. "Things were quiet for a bit, deadly quiet, except for the air-ships fighting about in the sky, and then people begun to get excited. I remember my lars' customer, the very lars' customer that ever I 'ad. He was a Mr. Moses Gluckstein, a city gent and very pleasant and fond of sparrowgrass and chokes, and 'e cut in--there 'adn't been no customers for days--and began to talk very fast, offerin' me for anything I 'ad, anything, petaties or anything, its weight in gold. 'E said it was a little speculation 'e wanted to try. 'E said it was a sort of bet reely, and very likely 'e'd lose; but never mind that, 'e wanted to try. 'E always 'ad been a gambler, 'e said. 'E said I'd only got to weigh it out and 'e'd give me 'is cheque right away. Well, that led to a bit of a argument, perfect respectful it was, but a argument about whether a cheque was still good, and while 'e was explaining there come by a lot of these here unemployed with a great banner they 'ad for every one to read--every one could read those days--'We want Food.' Three or four of 'em suddenly turns and comes into my shop.

"'Got any food?' says one.

"'No, I says, 'not to sell. I wish I 'ad. But if I 'ad, I'm afraid I couldn't let you have it. This gent, 'e's been offerin' me--'

"Mr. Gluckstein 'e tried to stop me, but it was too late.

"'What's 'e been offerin' you?' says a great big chap with a 'atchet; 'what's 'e been offerin you?' I 'ad to tell.

"'Boys,' 'e said, 'ere's another feenancier!' and they took 'im out there and then, and 'ung 'im on a lam'pose down the street. 'E never lifted a finger to resist. After I tole on 'im 'e never said a word...."

Tom meditated for a space. "First chap I ever sin 'ung!" he said.

"Ow old was you?" asked Teddy.

"'Bout thirty," said old Tom.

"Why! I saw free pig-stealers 'ung before I was six," said Teddy. "Father took me because of my birfday being near. Said I ought to be blooded...."

"Well, you never saw no-one killed by a moty car, any'ow," said old Tom after a moment of chagrin. "And you never saw no dead men carried into a chemis' shop."

Teddy's momentary triumph faded. "No," he said, "I 'aven't."

"Nor won't. Nor won't. You'll never see the things I've seen, never. Not if you live to be a 'undred... Well, as I was saying, that's how the Famine and Riotin' began. Then there was strikes and Socialism, things I never did 'old with, worse and worse. There was fightin' and shootin' down, and burnin' and plundering. They broke up the banks up in London and got the gold, But they couldn't make food out of gold. 'Ow did WE get

on? Well, we kep' quiet. We didn't interfere with no-one and no-one didn't interfere with us. We 'ad some old 'tatoes about, but mocely we lived on rats. Ours was a old 'ouse, full of rats, and the famine never seemed to bother 'em. Orfen we got a rat. Orfen. But moce of the people who lived hereabouts was too tender stummicked for rats. Didn't seem to fancy 'em. They'd been used to all sorts of fallals, and they didn't take to 'onest feeding, not till it was too late. Died rather.

"It was the famine began to kill people. Even before the Purple Death came along they was dying like flies at the end of the summer. 'Ow I remember it all! I was one of the first to 'ave it. I was out, seein' if I mightn't get 'old of a cat or somethin', and then I went round to my bit of ground to see whether I couldn't get up some young turnips I'd forgot, and I was took something awful. You've no idee the pain, Teddy--it doubled me up pretty near. I jes' lay down by 'at there corner, and your aunt come along to look for me and dragged me 'ome like a sack.

"I'd never 'ave got better if it 'adn't been for your aunt. 'Tom,' she says to me, 'you got to get well,' and I 'AD to. Then SHE sickened. She sickened but there ain't much dyin' about your aunt. 'Lor!' she says, 'as if I'd leave you to go muddlin' along alone!' That's what she says. She's got a tongue, 'as your aunt.

But it took 'er 'air off--and arst though I might, she's never cared for the wig I got 'er--orf the old lady what was in the vicarage garden.

"Well, this 'ere Purple Death,--it jes' wiped people out, Teddy. You couldn't bury 'em. And it took the dogs and the cats too, and the rats and 'orses. At last every house and garden was full of dead bodies. London way, you couldn't go for the smell of there, and we 'ad to move out of the 'I street into that villa we

got. And all the water run short that way. The drains and underground tunnels took it. Gor' knows where the Purple Death come from; some say one thing and some another. Some said it come from eatin' rats and some from eatin' nothin'. Some say the Asiatics brought it from some 'I place, Thibet, I think, where it never did nobody much 'arm. All I know is it come after the Famine. And the Famine come after the Penic and the Penic come after the War."

Teddy thought. "What made the Purple Death?" he asked.

"'Aven't I tole you!"

"But why did they 'ave a Penic?"

"They 'ad it."

"But why did they start the War?"

"They couldn't stop theirselves. 'Aving them airships made 'em."

"And 'ow did the War end?"

"Lord knows if it's ended, boy," said old Tom. "Lord knows if it's ended. There's been travellers through 'ere--there was a chap only two summers ago--say it's goin' on still. They say there's bands of people up north who keep on with it and people in Germany and China and 'Merica and places. 'E said they still got flying-machines and gas and things. But we 'aven't seen nothin' in the air now for seven years, and nobody 'asn't come nigh of us. Last we saw was a crumpled sort of airship going away--over there. It was a littleish-sized thing and lopsided, as though it 'ad something the matter with it."

He pointed, and came to a stop at a gap in the fence, the

vestiges of the old fence from which, in the company of his neighbour Mr. Stringer the milkman, he had once watched the South of England Aero Club's Saturday afternoon ascents. Dim memories, it may be, of that particular afternoon returned to him.

"There, down there, where all that rus' looks so red and bright, that's the gas-works."

"What's gas?" asked the little boy.

"Oh, a hairy sort of nothin' what you put in balloons to make 'em go up. And you used to burn it till the 'lectricity come."

The little boy tried vainly to imagine gas on the basis of these particulars. Then his thoughts reverted to a previous topic.

"But why didn't they end the War?"

"Obstinacy. Everybody was getting 'urt, but everybody was 'urtin' and everybody was 'igh-spirited and patriotic, and so they smeshed up things instead. They jes' went on smeshin'. And afterwards they jes' got desp'rite and savige."

"It ought to 'ave ended," said the little boy.

"It didn't ought to 'ave begun," said old Tom, "But people was proud. People was la-dy-da-ish and uppish and proud. Too much meat and drink they 'ad. Give in--not them! And after a bit nobody arst 'em to give in. Nobody arst 'em...."

He sucked his old gums thoughtfully, and his gaze strayed away across the valley to where the shattered glass of the Crystal Palace glittered in the sun. A dim large sense of waste and irrevocable lost opportunities pervaded his mind. He repeated his ultimate judgment upon all these things, obstinately, slowly,

and conclusively, his final saying upon the matter.

"You can say what you like," he said. "It didn't ought ever to 'ave begun."

He said it simply--somebody somewhere ought to have stopped something, but who or how or why were all beyond his ken.

ANN VERONICA
A MODERN LOVE STORY

BY
H. G. WELLS
1909

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"The art of ignoring is one of the accomplishments of every well-bred girl, so carefully instilled that at last she can even ignore her own thoughts and her own knowledge."

ANN VERONICA

CHAPTER THE FIRST

ANN VERONICA TALKS TO HER FATHER

Part 1

One Wednesday afternoon in late September, Ann Veronica Stanley came down from London in a state of solemn excitement and quite resolved to have things out with her father that very evening. She had trembled on the verge of such a resolution before, but this time quite definitely she made it. A crisis had been reached, and she was almost glad it had been reached. She made up her mind in the train home that it should be a decisive crisis. It is for that reason that this novel begins with her there, and neither earlier nor later, for it is the history of this crisis and its consequences that this novel has to tell.

She had a compartment to herself in the train from London to Morningside Park, and she sat with both her feet on the seat in an attitude that would certainly have distressed her mother to see, and horrified her grandmother beyond measure; she sat with her knees up to her chin and her hands clasped before them, and she was so lost in thought that she discovered with a start, from a lettered lamp, that she was at Morningside Park, and thought she was moving out of the station, whereas she was only moving in. "Lord!" she said. She jumped up at once, caught up a leather clutch containing notebooks, a fat text-book, and a chocolate-and-yellow-covered pamphlet, and leaped neatly from the carriage, only to discover that the train was slowing down and that she had to traverse the full length of the platform past it

again as the result of her precipitation. "Sold again," she remarked. "Idiot!" She raged inwardly while she walked along with that air of self-contained serenity that is proper to a young lady of nearly two-and-twenty under the eye of the world.

She walked down the station approach, past the neat, obtrusive offices of the coal merchant and the house agent, and so to the wicket-gate by the butcher's shop that led to the field path to her home. Outside the post-office stood a no-hatted, blond young man in gray flannels, who was elaborately affixing a stamp to a letter. At the sight of her he became rigid and a singularly bright shade of pink. She made herself serenely unaware of his existence, though it may be it was his presence that sent her by the field detour instead of by the direct path up the Avenue.

"Umph!" he said, and regarded his letter doubtfully before consigning it to the pillar-box. "Here goes," he said. Then he hovered undecidedly for some seconds with his hands in his pockets and his mouth puckered to a whistle before he turned to go home by the Avenue.

Ann Veronica forgot him as soon as she was through the gate, and her face resumed its expression of stern preoccupation. "It's either now or never," she said to herself. . . .

Morningside Park was a suburb that had not altogether, as people say, come off. It consisted, like pre-Roman Gaul, of three parts. There was first the Avenue, which ran in a consciously elegant curve from the railway station into an undeveloped wilderness of agriculture, with big, yellow brick villas on either side, and then there was the pavement, the little clump of shops about the post-office, and under the railway arch was a congestion of workmen's dwellings. The road from Surbiton and Epsom ran under the arch, and, like a bright fungoid growth in the ditch, there was now appearing a sort of fourth estate of

little red-and-white rough-cast villas, with meretricious gables and very brassy window-blinds. Behind the Avenue was a little hill, and an iron-fenced path went over the crest of this to a stile under an elm-tree, and forked there, with one branch going back into the Avenue again.

"It's either now or never," said Ann Veronica, again ascending this stile. "Much as I hate rows, I've either got to make a stand or give in altogether."

She seated herself in a loose and easy attitude and surveyed the backs of the Avenue houses; then her eyes wandered to where the new red-and-white villas peeped among the trees. She seemed to be making some sort of inventory. "Ye Gods!" she said at last. "WHAT a place!

"Stuffy isn't the word for it.

"I wonder what he takes me for?"

When presently she got down from the stile a certain note of internal conflict, a touch of doubt, had gone from her warm-tinted face. She had now the clear and tranquil expression of one whose mind is made up. Her back had stiffened, and her hazel eyes looked steadfastly ahead.

As she approached the corner of the Avenue the blond, no-hatted man in gray flannels appeared. There was a certain air of forced fortuity in his manner. He saluted awkwardly. "Hello, Vee!" he said.

"Hello, Teddy!" she answered.

He hung vaguely for a moment as she passed.

But it was clear she was in no mood for Teddys. He realized that he was committed to the path across the fields, an uninteresting walk at the best of times.

"Oh, dammit!" he remarked, "dammit!" with great bitterness as he faced it.

Part 2

Ann Veronica Stanley was twenty-one and a half years old. She had black hair, fine eyebrows, and a clear complexion; and the forces that had modelled her features had loved and lingered at their work and made them subtle and fine. She was slender, and sometimes she seemed tall, and walked and carried herself lightly and joyfully as one who commonly and habitually feels well, and sometimes she stooped a little and was preoccupied. Her lips came together with an expression between contentment and the faintest shadow of a smile, her manner was one of quiet reserve, and behind this mask she was wildly discontented and eager for freedom and life.

She wanted to live. She was vehemently impatient--she did not clearly know for what--to do, to be, to experience. And experience was slow in coming. All the world about her seemed to be--how can one put it? --in wrappers, like a house when people leave it in the summer. The blinds were all drawn, the sunlight kept out, one could not tell what colors these gray swathings hid. She wanted to know. And there was no intimation whatever that the blinds would ever go up or the windows or doors be opened, or the chandeliers, that seemed to promise such a blaze of fire, unveiled and furnished and lit. Dim souls flitted about her, not only speaking but it would seem even thinking in

undertones. . . .

During her school days, especially her earlier school days, the world had been very explicit with her, telling her what to do, what not to do, giving her lessons to learn and games to play and interests of the most suitable and various kinds. Presently she woke up to the fact that there was a considerable group of interests called being in love and getting married, with certain attractive and amusing subsidiary developments, such as flirtation and "being interested" in people of the opposite sex. She approached this field with her usual liveliness of apprehension. But here she met with a check. These interests her world promptly, through the agency of schoolmistresses, older school-mates, her aunt, and a number of other responsible and authoritative people, assured her she must on no account think about. Miss Moffatt, the history and moral instruction mistress, was particularly explicit upon this score, and they all agreed in indicating contempt and pity for girls whose minds ran on such matters, and who betrayed it in their conversation or dress or bearing. It was, in fact, a group of interests quite unlike any other group, peculiar and special, and one to be thoroughly ashamed of. Nevertheless, Ann Veronica found it a difficult matter not to think of these things. However having a considerable amount of pride, she decided she would disavow these undesirable topics and keep her mind away from them just as far as she could, but it left her at the end of her school days with that wrapped feeling I have described, and rather at loose ends.

The world, she discovered, with these matters barred had no particular place for her at all, nothing for her to do, except a functionless existence varied by calls, tennis, selected novels, walks, and dusting in her father's house. She thought study would be better. She was a clever girl, the best of her year in the High School, and she made a valiant fight for Somerville or Newnham but her father had met and argued with a Somerville girl

at a friend's dinner-table and he thought that sort of thing unsexed a woman. He said simply that he wanted her to live at home. There was a certain amount of disputation, and meanwhile she went on at school. They compromised at length on the science course at the Tredgold Women's College--she had already matriculated into London University from school--she came of age, and she bickered with her aunt for latch-key privileges on the strength of that and her season ticket. Shamefaced curiosities began to come back into her mind, thinly disguised as literature and art. She read voraciously, and presently, because of her aunt's censorship, she took to smuggling any books she thought might be prohibited instead of bringing them home openly, and she went to the theatre whenever she could produce an acceptable friend to accompany her. She passed her general science examination with double honors and specialized in science. She happened to have an acute sense of form and unusual mental lucidity, and she found in biology, and particularly in comparative anatomy, a very considerable interest, albeit the illumination it cast upon her personal life was not altogether direct. She dissected well, and in a year she found herself chafing at the limitations of the lady B. Sc. who retailed a store of faded learning in the Tredgold laboratory. She had already realized that this instructress was hopelessly wrong and foggy--it is the test of the good comparative anatomist--upon the skull. She discovered a desire to enter as a student in the Imperial College at Westminster, where Russell taught, and go on with her work at the fountain-head.

She had asked about that already, and her father had replied, evasively: "We'll have to see about that, little Vee; we'll have to see about that." In that posture of being seen about the matter hung until she seemed committed to another session at the Tredgold College, and in the mean time a small conflict arose and brought the latch-key question, and in fact the question of Ann Veronica's position generally, to an acute issue.

In addition to the various business men, solicitors, civil servants, and widow ladies who lived in the Morningside Park Avenue, there was a certain family of alien sympathies and artistic quality, the Widgetts, with which Ann Veronica had become very friendly. Mr. Widgett was a journalist and art critic, addicted to a greenish-gray tweed suit and "art" brown ties; he smoked corncob pipes in the Avenue on Sunday morning, travelled third class to London by unusual trains, and openly despised golf. He occupied one of the smaller houses near the station. He had one son, who had been co-educated, and three daughters with peculiarly jolly red hair that Ann Veronica found adorable. Two of these had been her particular intimates at the High School, and had done much to send her mind exploring beyond the limits of the available literature at home. It was a cheerful, irresponsible, shamelessly hard-up family in the key of faded green and flattened purple, and the girls went on from the High School to the Fadden Art School and a bright, eventful life of art student dances, Socialist meetings, theatre galleries, talking about work, and even, at intervals, work; and ever and again they drew Ann Veronica from her sound persistent industry into the circle of these experiences. They had asked her to come to the first of the two great annual Fadden Dances, the October one, and Ann Veronica had accepted with enthusiasm. And now her father said she must not go.

He had "put his foot down," and said she must not go.

Going involved two things that all Ann Veronica's tact had been ineffectual to conceal from her aunt and father. Her usual dignified reserve had availed her nothing. One point was that she was to wear fancy dress in the likeness of a Corsair's bride, and the other was that she was to spend whatever vestiges of the night remained after the dance was over in London with the Widgett girls and a select party in "quite a decent little hotel"

near Fitzroy Square.

"But, my dear!" said Ann Veronica's aunt.

"You see," said Ann Veronica, with the air of one who shares a difficulty, "I've promised to go. I didn't realize-- I don't see how I can get out of it now."

Then it was her father issued his ultimatum. He had conveyed it to her, not verbally, but by means of a letter, which seemed to her a singularly ignoble method of prohibition. "He couldn't look me in the face and say it," said Ann Veronica.

"But of course it's aunt's doing really."

And thus it was that as Ann Veronica neared the gates of home, she said to herself: "I'll have it out with him somehow. I'll have it out with him. And if he won't--"

But she did not give even unspoken words to the alternative at that time.

Part 3

Ann Veronica's father was a solicitor with a good deal of company business: a lean, trustworthy, worried-looking, neuralgic, clean-shaven man of fifty-three, with a hard mouth, a sharp nose, iron-gray hair, gray eyes, gold-framed glasses, and a small, circular baldness at the crown of his head. His name was Peter. He had had five children at irregular intervals, of whom Ann Veronica was the youngest, so that as a parent he came to her perhaps a little practised and jaded and inattentive; and he

called her his "little Vee," and patted her unexpectedly and disconcertingly, and treated her promiscuously as of any age between eleven and eight-and-twenty. The City worried him a good deal, and what energy he had left over he spent partly in golf, a game he treated very seriously, and partly in the practices of microscopic petrography.

He "went in" for microscopy in the unphilosophical Victorian manner as his "hobby." A birthday present of a microscope had turned his mind to technical microscopy when he was eighteen, and a chance friendship with a Holborn microscope dealer had confirmed that bent. He had remarkably skilful fingers and a love of detailed processes, and he had become one of the most dexterous amateur makers of rock sections in the world. He spent a good deal more money and time than he could afford upon the little room at the top of the house, in producing new lapidary apparatus and new microscopic accessories and in rubbing down slices of rock to a transparent thinness and mounting them in a beautiful and dignified manner. He did it, he said, "to distract his mind." His chief successes he exhibited to the Lowndean Microscopical Society, where their high technical merit never failed to excite admiration. Their scientific value was less considerable, since he chose rocks entirely with a view to their difficulty of handling or their attractiveness at conversaziones when done. He had a great contempt for the sections the "theorizers" produced. They proved all sorts of things perhaps, but they were thick, unequal, pitiful pieces of work. Yet an indiscriminating, wrong-headed world gave such fellows all sorts of distinctions....

He read but little, and that chiefly healthy light fiction with chromatic titles, *The Red Sword*, *The Black Helmet*, *The Purple Robe*, also in order "to distract his mind." He read it in winter in the evening after dinner, and Ann Veronica associated it with a tendency to monopolize the lamp, and to spread a very worn pair

of dappled fawn-skin slippers across the fender. She wondered occasionally why his mind needed so much distraction. His favorite newspaper was the Times, which he began at breakfast in the morning often with manifest irritation, and carried off to finish in the train, leaving no other paper at home.

It occurred to Ann Veronica once that she had known him when he was younger, but day had followed day, and each had largely obliterated the impression of its predecessor. But she certainly remembered that when she was a little girl he sometimes wore tennis flannels, and also rode a bicycle very dexterously in through the gates to the front door. And in those days, too, he used to help her mother with her gardening, and hover about her while she stood on the ladder and hammered creepers to the scullery wall.

It had been Ann Veronica's lot as the youngest child to live in a home that became less animated and various as she grew up. Her mother had died when she was thirteen, her two much older sisters had married off--one submissively, one insubordinately; her two brothers had gone out into the world well ahead of her, and so she had made what she could of her father. But he was not a father one could make much of.

His ideas about girls and women were of a sentimental and modest quality; they were creatures, he thought, either too bad for a modern vocabulary, and then frequently most undesirably desirable, or too pure and good for life. He made this simple classification of a large and various sex to the exclusion of all intermediate kinds; he held that the two classes had to be kept apart even in thought and remote from one another. Women are made like the potter's vessels--either for worship or contumely, and are withal fragile vessels. He had never wanted daughters. Each time a daughter had been born to him he had concealed his chagrin with great tenderness and effusion from his wife, and had

sworn unwontedly and with passionate sincerity in the bathroom. He was a manly man, free from any strong maternal strain, and he had loved his dark-eyed, dainty bright-colored, and active little wife with a real vein of passion in his sentiment. But he had always felt (he had never allowed himself to think of it) that the promptitude of their family was a little indelicate of her, and in a sense an intrusion. He had, however, planned brilliant careers for his two sons, and, with a certain human amount of warping and delay, they were pursuing these. One was in the Indian Civil Service and one in the rapidly developing motor business. The daughters, he had hoped, would be their mother's care.

He had no ideas about daughters. They happen to a man.

Of course a little daughter is a delightful thing enough. It runs about gayly, it romps, it is bright and pretty, it has enormous quantities of soft hair and more power of expressing affection than its brothers. It is a lovely little appendage to the mother who smiles over it, and it does things quaintly like her, gestures with her very gestures. It makes wonderful sentences that you can repeat in the City and are good enough for Punch. You call it a lot of nicknames--"Babs" and "Bibs" and "Viddles" and "Vee"; you whack at it playfully, and it whacks you back. It loves to sit on your knee. All that is jolly and as it should be.

But a little daughter is one thing and a daughter quite another. There one comes to a relationship that Mr. Stanley had never thought out. When he found himself thinking about it, it upset him so that he at once resorted to distraction. The chromatic fiction with which he relieved his mind glanced but slightly at this aspect of life, and never with any quality of guidance. Its heroes never had daughters, they borrowed other people's. The one fault, indeed, of this school of fiction for him was that it

had rather a light way with parental rights. His instinct was in the direction of considering his daughters his absolute property, bound to obey him, his to give away or his to keep to be a comfort in his declining years just as he thought fit. About this conception of ownership he perceived and desired a certain sentimental glamour, he liked everything properly dressed, but it remained ownership. Ownership seemed only a reasonable return for the cares and expenses of a daughter's upbringing. Daughters were not like sons. He perceived, however, that both the novels he read and the world he lived in discountenanced these assumptions. Nothing else was put in their place, and they remained sotto voce, as it were, in his mind. The new and the old cancelled out; his daughters became quasi-independent dependents--which is absurd. One married as he wished and one against his wishes, and now here was Ann Veronica, his little Vee, discontented with her beautiful, safe, and sheltering home, going about with hatless friends to Socialist meetings and art-class dances, and displaying a disposition to carry her scientific ambitions to unwomanly lengths. She seemed to think he was merely the paymaster, handing over the means of her freedom. And now she insisted that she MUST leave the chastened security of the Tredgold Women's College for Russell's unbridled classes, and wanted to go to fancy dress dances in pirate costume and spend the residue of the night with Widgett's ramshackle girls in some indescribable hotel in Soho!

He had done his best not to think about her at all, but the situation and his sister had become altogether too urgent. He had finally put aside *The Lilac Sunbonnet*, gone into his study, lit the gas fire, and written the letter that had brought these unsatisfactory relations to a head.

MY DEAR VEE, he wrote.

These daughters! He gnawed his pen and reflected, tore the sheet up, and began again.

"MY DEAR VERONICA,--Your aunt tells me you have involved yourself in some arrangement with the Widgeott girls about a Fancy Dress Ball in London. I gather you wish to go up in some fantastic get-up, wrapped about in your opera cloak, and that after the festivities you propose to stay with these friends of yours, and without any older people in your party, at an hotel. Now I am sorry to cross you in anything you have set your heart upon, but I regret to say--"

"H'm," he reflected, and crossed out the last four words.

"--but this cannot be."

"No," he said, and tried again: "but I must tell you quite definitely that I feel it to be my duty to forbid any such exploit."

"Damn!" he remarked at the defaced letter; and, taking a fresh sheet, he recopied what he had written. A certain irritation crept into his manner as he did so.

"I regret that you should ever have proposed it," he went on.

He meditated, and began a new paragraph.

"The fact of it is, and this absurd project of yours only brings it to a head, you have begun to get hold of some very queer ideas about what a young lady in your position may or may not venture to do. I do not think you quite understand my ideals or what is becoming as between father and daughter. Your attitude to me--"

He fell into a brown study. It was so difficult to put precisely.

"--and your aunt--"

For a time he searched for the mot juste. Then he went on:

"--and, indeed, to most of the established things in life is, frankly, unsatisfactory. You are restless, aggressive, critical with all the crude unthinking criticism of youth. You have no grasp upon the essential facts of life (I pray God you never may), and in your rash ignorance you are prepared to dash into positions that may end in lifelong regret. The life of a young girl is set about with prowling pitfalls."

He was arrested for a moment by an indistinct picture of Veronica reading this last sentence. But he was now too deeply moved to trace a certain unsatisfactoriness to its source in a mixture of metaphors. "Well," he said, argumentatively, "it IS. That's all about it. It's time she knew."

"The life of a young girl is set about with prowling pitfalls, from which she must be shielded at all costs."

His lips tightened, and he frowned with solemn resolution.

"So long as I am your father, so long as your life is entrusted to my care, I feel bound by every obligation to use my authority to check this odd disposition of yours toward extravagant enterprises. A day will come when you will thank me. It is not, my dear Veronica, that I think there is any harm in you; there is not. But a girl is soiled not only by evil but by the proximity of evil, and a reputation for rashness may do her as serious an injury as really reprehensible conduct. So do please believe

that in this matter I am acting for the best."

He signed his name and reflected. Then he opened the study door and called "Mollie!" and returned to assume an attitude of authority on the hearthrug, before the blue flames and orange glow of the gas fire.

His sister appeared.

She was dressed in one of those complicated dresses that are all lace and work and confused patternings of black and purple and cream about the body, and she was in many ways a younger feminine version of the same theme as himself. She had the same sharp nose--which, indeed, only Ann Veronica, of all the family, had escaped. She carried herself well, whereas her brother slouched, and there was a certain aristocratic dignity about her that she had acquired through her long engagement to a curate of family, a scion of the Wiltshire Edmondshaws. He had died before they married, and when her brother became a widower she had come to his assistance and taken over much of the care of his youngest daughter. But from the first her rather old-fashioned conception of life had jarred with the suburban atmosphere, the High School spirit and the memories of the light and little Mrs. Stanley, whose family had been by any reckoning inconsiderable--to use the kindest term. Miss Stanley had determined from the outset to have the warmest affection for her youngest niece and to be a second mother in her life--a second and a better one; but she had found much to battle with, and there was much in herself that Ann Veronica failed to understand. She came in now with an air of reserved solicitude.

Mr. Stanley pointed to the letter with a pipe he had drawn from his jacket pocket. "What do you think of that?" he asked.

She took it up in her many-ringed hands and read it judicially.

He filled his pipe slowly.

"Yes," she said at last, "it is firm and affectionate."

"I could have said more."

"You seem to have said just what had to be said. It seems to me exactly what is wanted. She really must not go to that affair."

She paused, and he waited for her to speak.

"I don't think she quite sees the harm of those people or the sort of life to which they would draw her," she said. "They would spoil every chance."

"She has chances?" he said, helping her out.

"She is an extremely attractive girl," she said; and added, "to some people. Of course, one doesn't like to talk about things until there are things to talk about."

"All the more reason why she shouldn't get herself talked about."

"That is exactly what I feel."

Mr. Stanley took the letter and stood with it in his hand thoughtfully for a time. "I'd give anything," he remarked, "to see our little Vee happily and comfortably married."

He gave the note to the parlormaid the next morning in an inadvertent, casual manner just as he was leaving the house to catch his London train. When Ann Veronica got it she had at first a wild, fantastic idea that it contained a tip.

Part 5

Ann Veronica's resolve to have things out with her father was not accomplished without difficulty.

He was not due from the City until about six, and so she went and played Badminton with the Widdett girls until dinner-time. The atmosphere at dinner was not propitious. Her aunt was blandly amiable above a certain tremulous undertow, and talked as if to a caller about the alarming spread of marigolds that summer at the end of the garden, a sort of Yellow Peril to all the smaller hardy annuals, while her father brought some papers to table and presented himself as preoccupied with them. "It really seems as if we shall have to put down marigolds altogether next year," Aunt Molly repeated three times, "and do away with marguerites. They seed beyond all reason." Elizabeth, the parlormaid, kept coming in to hand vegetables whenever there seemed a chance of Ann Veronica asking for an interview. Directly dinner was over Mr. Stanley, having pretended to linger to smoke, fled suddenly up-stairs to petrography, and when Veronica tapped he answered through the locked door, "Go away, Vee! I'm busy," and made a lapidary's wheel buzz loudly.

Breakfast, too, was an impossible occasion. He read the Times with an unusually passionate intentness, and then declared suddenly for the earlier of the two trains he used.

"I'll come to the station," said Ann Veronica. "I may as well come up by this train."

"I may have to run," said her father, with an appeal to his watch.

"I'll run, too," she volunteered.

Instead of which they walked sharply. . . .

"I say, daddy," she began, and was suddenly short of breath.

"If it's about that dance project," he said, "it's no good, Veronica. I've made up my mind."

"You'll make me look a fool before all my friends."

"You shouldn't have made an engagement until you'd consulted your aunt."

"I thought I was old enough," she gasped, between laughter and crying.

Her father's step quickened to a trot. "I won't have you quarrelling and crying in the Avenue," he said. "Stop it! . . . If you've got anything to say, you must say it to your aunt--"

"But look here, daddy!"

He flapped the Times at her with an imperious gesture.

"It's settled. You're not to go. You're NOT to go."

"But it's about other things."

"I don't care. This isn't the place."

"Then may I come to the study to-night--after dinner?"

"I'm--BUSY!"

"It's important. If I can't talk anywhere else--I DO want an

understanding."

Ahead of them walked a gentleman whom it was evident they must at their present pace very speedily overtake. It was Ramage, the occupant of the big house at the end of the Avenue. He had recently made Mr. Stanley's acquaintance in the train and shown him one or two trifling civilities. He was an outside broker and the proprietor of a financial newspaper; he had come up very rapidly in the last few years, and Mr. Stanley admired and detested him in almost equal measure. It was intolerable to think that he might overhear words and phrases. Mr. Stanley's pace slackened.

"You've no right to badger me like this, Veronica," he said. "I can't see what possible benefit can come of discussing things that are settled. If you want advice, your aunt is the person. However, if you must air your opinions--"

"To-night, then, daddy!"

He made an angry but conceivably an assenting noise, and then Ramage glanced back and stopped, saluted elaborately, and waited for them to come up. He was a square-faced man of nearly fifty, with iron-gray hair a mobile, clean-shaven mouth and rather protuberant black eyes that now scrutinized Ann Veronica. He dressed rather after the fashion of the West End than the City, and affected a cultured urbanity that somehow disconcerted and always annoyed Ann Veronica's father extremely. He did not play golf, but took his exercise on horseback, which was also unsympathetic.

"Stuffy these trees make the Avenue," said Mr. Stanley as they drew alongside, to account for his own ruffled and heated expression. "They ought to have been lopped in the spring."

"There's plenty of time," said Ramage. "Is Miss Stanley coming up with us?"

"I go second," she said, "and change at Wimbledon."

"We'll all go second," said Ramage, "if we may?"

Mr. Stanley wanted to object strongly, but as he could not immediately think how to put it, he contented himself with a grunt, and the motion was carried. "How's Mrs. Ramage?" he asked.

"Very much as usual," said Ramage. "She finds lying up so much very irksome. But, you see, she HAS to lie up."

The topic of his invalid wife bored him, and he turned at once to Ann Veronica. "And where are YOU going?" he said. "Are you going on again this winter with that scientific work of yours? It's an instance of heredity, I suppose." For a moment Mr. Stanley almost liked Ramage. "You're a biologist, aren't you?"

He began to talk of his own impressions of biology as a commonplace magazine reader who had to get what he could from the monthly reviews, and was glad to meet with any information from nearer the fountainhead. In a little while he and she were talking quite easily and agreeably. They went on talking in the train--it seemed to her father a slight want of deference to him--and he listened and pretended to read the Times. He was struck disagreeably by Ramage's air of gallant consideration and Ann Veronica's self-possessed answers. These things did not harmonize with his conception of the forthcoming (if unavoidable) interview. After all, it came to him suddenly as a harsh discovery that she might be in a sense regarded as grownup. He was a man who in all things classified without nuance, and for him there were in the matter of age just two feminine classes and no more--girls and women. The distinction lay chiefly in the

right to pat their heads. But here was a girl--she must be a girl, since she was his daughter and pat-able--imitating the woman quite remarkably and cleverly. He resumed his listening. She was discussing one of those modern advanced plays with a remarkable, with an extraordinary, confidence.

"His love-making," she remarked, "struck me as unconvincing. He seemed too noisy."

The full significance of her words did not instantly appear to him. Then it dawned. Good heavens! She was discussing love-making. For a time he heard no more, and stared with stony eyes at a Book-War proclamation in leaded type that filled half a column of the Times that day. Could she understand what she was talking about? Luckily it was a second-class carriage and the ordinary fellow-travellers were not there. Everybody, he felt, must be listening behind their papers.

Of course, girls repeat phrases and opinions of which they cannot possibly understand the meaning. But a middle-aged man like Ramage ought to know better than to draw out a girl, the daughter of a friend and neighbor. . . .

Well, after all, he seemed to be turning the subject. "Broddick is a heavy man," he was saying, "and the main interest of the play was the embezzlement." Thank Heaven! Mr. Stanley allowed his paper to drop a little, and scrutinized the hats and brows of their three fellow-travellers .

They reached Wimbledon, and Ramage whipped out to hand Miss Stanley to the platform as though she had been a duchess, and she descended as though such attentions from middle-aged, but still gallant, merchants were a matter of course. Then, as Ramage readjusted himself in a corner, he remarked: "These young people shoot up, Stanley. It seems only yesterday that she was running

down the Avenue, all hair and legs."

Mr. Stanley regarded him through his glasses with something approaching animosity.

"Now she's all hat and ideas," he said, with an air of humor.

"She seems an unusually clever girl," said Ramage.

Mr. Stanley regarded his neighbor's clean-shaven face almost warily. "I'm not sure whether we don't rather overdo all this higher education," he said, with an effect of conveying profound meanings.

Part 6

He became quite sure, by a sort of accumulation of reflection, as the day wore on. He found his youngest daughter intrusive in his thoughts all through the morning, and still more so in the afternoon. He saw her young and graceful back as she descended from the carriage, severely ignoring him, and recalled a glimpse he had of her face, bright and serene, as his train ran out of Wimbledon. He recalled with exasperating perplexity her clear, matter-of-fact tone as she talked about love-making being unconvincing. He was really very proud of her, and extraordinarily angry and resentful at the innocent and audacious self-reliance that seemed to intimate her sense of absolute independence of him, her absolute security without him. After all, she only LOOKED a woman. She was rash and ignorant, absolutely inexperienced. Absolutely. He began to think of speeches, very firm, explicit speeches, he would make.

He lunched in the Legal Club in Chancery Lane, and met Ogilvy.

Daughters were in the air that day. Ogilvy was full of a client's trouble in that matter, a grave and even tragic trouble. He told some of the particulars.

"Curious case," said Ogilvy, buttering his bread and cutting it up in a way he had. "Curious case--and sets one thinking."

He resumed, after a mouthful: "Here is a girl of sixteen or seventeen, seventeen and a half to be exact, running about, as one might say, in London. Schoolgirl. Her family are solid West End people, Kensington people. Father--dead. She goes out and comes home. Afterward goes on to Oxford. Twenty-one, twenty-two. Why doesn't she marry? Plenty of money under her father's will. Charming girl."

He consumed Irish stew for some moments.

"Married already," he said, with his mouth full. "Shopman."

"Good God!" said Mr. Stanley.

"Good-looking rascal she met at Worthing. Very romantic and all that. He fixed it."

"But--"

"He left her alone. Pure romantic nonsense on her part. Sheer calculation on his. Went up to Somerset House to examine the will before he did it. Yes. Nice position."

"She doesn't care for him now?"

"Not a bit. What a girl of sixteen cares for is hair and a high color and moonlight and a tenor voice. I suppose most of our daughters would marry organ-grinders if they had a chance--at

that age. My son wanted to marry a woman of thirty in a tobacconist's shop. Only a son's another story. We fixed that. Well, that's the situation. My people don't know what to do. Can't face a scandal. Can't ask the gent to go abroad and condone a bigamy. He misstated her age and address; but you can't get home on him for a thing like that. . . . There you are! Girl spoilt for life. Makes one want to go back to the Oriental system!"

Mr. Stanley poured wine. "Damned Rascal!" he said. "Isn't there a brother to kick him?"

"Mere satisfaction," reflected Ogilvy. "Mere sensuality. I rather think they have kicked him, from the tone of some of the letters. Nice, of course. But it doesn't alter the situation."

"It's these Rascals," said Mr. Stanley, and paused.

"Always has been," said Ogilvy. "Our interest lies in heading them off."

"There was a time when girls didn't get these extravagant ideas."

"Lydia Languish, for example. Anyhow, they didn't run about so much."

"Yes. That's about the beginning. It's these damned novels. All this torrent of misleading, spurious stuff that pours from the press. These sham ideals and advanced notions. Women who Dids, and all that kind of thing. . . ."

Ogilvy reflected. "This girl--she's really a very charming, frank person--had had her imagination fired, so she told me, by a school performance of Romeo and Juliet."

Mr. Stanley decided to treat that as irrelevant. "There ought to be a Censorship of Books. We want it badly at the present time. Even WITH the Censorship of Plays there's hardly a decent thing to which a man can take his wife and daughters, a creeping taint of suggestion everywhere. What would it be without that safeguard?"

Ogilvy pursued his own topic. "I'm inclined to think, Stanley, myself that as a matter of fact it was the expurgated Romeo and Juliet did the mischief. If our young person hadn't had the nurse part cut out, eh? She might have known more and done less. I was curious about that. All they left it was the moon and stars. And the balcony and 'My Romeo!' "

"Shakespeare is altogether different from the modern stuff. Altogether different. I'm not discussing Shakespeare. I don't want to Bowdlerize Shakespeare. I'm not that sort I quite agree.

But this modern miasma--"

Mr. Stanley took mustard savagely.

"Well, we won't go into Shakespeare," said Ogilvy "What interests me is that our young women nowadays are running about as free as air practically, with registry offices and all sorts of accommodation round the corner. Nothing to check their proceedings but a declining habit of telling the truth and the limitations of their imaginations. And in that respect they stir up one another. Not my affair, of course, but I think we ought to teach them more or restrain them more. One or the other. They're too free for their innocence or too innocent for their freedom. That's my point. Are you going to have any apple-tart, Stanley? The apple-tart's been very good lately--very good!"

Part 7

At the end of dinner that evening Ann Veronica began: "Father!"

Her father looked at her over his glasses and spoke with grave deliberation; "If there is anything you want to say to me," he said, "you must say it in the study. I am going to smoke a little here, and then I shall go to the study. I don't see what you can have to say. I should have thought my note cleared up everything. There are some papers I have to look through to-night--important papers."

"I won't keep you very long, daddy," said Ann Veronica.

"I don't see, Mollie," he remarked, taking a cigar from the box on the table as his sister and daughter rose, "why you and Vee shouldn't discuss this little affair--whatever it is--without bothering me."

It was the first time this controversy had become triangular, for all three of them were shy by habit.

He stopped in mid-sentence, and Ann Veronica opened the door for her aunt. The air was thick with feelings. Her aunt went out of the room with dignity and a rustle, and up-stairs to the fastness of her own room. She agreed entirely with her brother. It distressed and confused her that the girl should not come to her.

It seemed to show a want of affection, to be a deliberate and unmerited disregard, to justify the reprisal of being hurt.

When Ann Veronica came into the study she found every evidence of a carefully foreseen grouping about the gas fire. Both

arm-chairs had been moved a little so as to face each other on either side of the fender, and in the circular glow of the green-shaded lamp there lay, conspicuously waiting, a thick bundle of blue and white papers tied with pink tape. Her father held some printed document in his hand, and appeared not to observe her entry. "Sit down," he said, and perused--"perused" is the word for it--for some moments. Then he put the paper by. "And what is it all about, Veronica?" he asked, with a deliberate note of irony, looking at her a little quizzically over his glasses.

Ann Veronica looked bright and a little elated, and she disregarded her father's invitation to be seated. She stood on the mat instead, and looked down on him. "Look here, daddy," she said, in a tone of great reasonableness, "I MUST go to that dance, you know."

Her father's irony deepened. "Why?" he asked, suavely.

Her answer was not quite ready. "Well, because I don't see any reason why I shouldn't."

"You see I do."

"Why shouldn't I go?"

"It isn't a suitable place; it isn't a suitable gathering."

"But, daddy, what do you know of the place and the gathering?"

"And it's entirely out of order; it isn't right, it isn't correct; it's impossible for you to stay in an hotel in London--the idea is preposterous. I can't imagine what possessed you, Veronica."

He put his head on one side, pulled down the corners of his mouth, and looked at her over his glasses.

"But why is it preposterous?" asked Ann Veronica, and fiddled with a pipe on the mantel.

"Surely!" he remarked, with an expression of worried appeal.

"You see, daddy, I don't think it IS preposterous. That's really what I want to discuss. It comes to this--am I to be trusted to take care of myself, or am I not?"

"To judge from this proposal of yours, I should say not."

"I think I am."

"As long as you remain under my roof--" he began, and paused.

"You are going to treat me as though I wasn't. Well, I don't think that's fair."

"Your ideas of fairness--" he remarked, and discontinued that sentence. "My dear girl," he said, in a tone of patient reasonableness, "you are a mere child. You know nothing of life, nothing of its dangers, nothing of its possibilities. You think everything is harmless and simple, and so forth. It isn't. It isn't. That's where you go wrong. In some things, in many things, you must trust to your elders, to those who know more of life than you do. Your aunt and I have discussed all this matter. There it is. You can't go."

The conversation hung for a moment. Ann Veronica tried to keep hold of a complicated situation and not lose her head. She had turned round sideways, so as to look down into the fire.

"You see, father," she said, "it isn't only this affair of the dance. I want to go to that because it's a new experience, because I think it will be interesting and give me a view of things. You say I know nothing. That's probably true. But how am I to know of things?"

"Some things I hope you may never know," he said.

"I'm not so sure. I want to know--just as much as I can."

"Tut!" he said, fuming, and put out his hand to the papers in the pink tape.

"Well, I do. It's just that I want to say. I want to be a human being; I want to learn about things and know about things, and not to be protected as something too precious for life, cooped up in one narrow little corner."

"Cooped up!" he cried. "Did I stand in the way of your going to college? Have I ever prevented you going about at any reasonable hour? You've got a bicycle!"

"H'm!" said Ann Veronica, and then went on "I want to be taken seriously. A girl--at my age--is grown-up. I want to go on with my University work under proper conditions, now that I've done the Intermediate. It isn't as though I haven't done well. I've never muffed an exam. yet. Roddy muffed two. . . ."

Her father interrupted. "Now look here, Veronica, let us be plain with each other. You are not going to that infidel Russell's classes. You are not going anywhere but to the Tredgold College. I've thought that out, and you must make up your mind to it. All sorts of considerations come in. While you live in my house you must follow my ideas. You are wrong even about that man's scientific position and his standard of work.

There are men in the Lowndean who laugh at him--simply laugh at him. And I have seen work by his pupils myself that struck me as being--well, next door to shameful. There's stories, too, about his demonstrator, Capes Something or other. The kind of man who isn't content with his science, and writes articles in the monthly reviews. Anyhow, there it is: YOU ARE NOT GOING THERE."

The girl received this intimation in silence. but the face that looked down upon the gas fire took an expression of obstinacy that brought out a hitherto latent resemblance between parent and child. When she spoke, her lips twitched.

"Then I suppose when I have graduated I am to come home?"

"It seems the natural course "

"And do nothing?"

"There are plenty of things a girl can find to do at home."

"Until some one takes pity on me and marries me?"

He raised his eyebrows in mild appeal. His foot tapped impatiently, and he took up the papers.

"Look here, father," she said, with a change in her voice, "suppose I won't stand it?"

He regarded her as though this was a new idea.

"Suppose, for example, I go to this dance?"

"You won't."

"Well"--her breath failed her for a moment. "How would you

prevent it?" she asked.

"But I have forbidden it!" he said, raising his voice.

"Yes, I know. But suppose I go?"

"Now, Veronica! No, no. This won't do. Understand me! I forbid it. I do not want to hear from you even the threat of disobedience." He spoke loudly. "The thing is forbidden!"

"I am ready to give up anything that you show to be wrong."

"You will give up anything I wish you to give up."

They stared at each other through a pause, and both faces were flushed and obstinate.

She was trying by some wonderful, secret, and motionless gymnastics to restrain her tears. But when she spoke her lips quivered, and they came. "I mean to go to that dance!" she blubbered. "I mean to go to that dance! I meant to reason with you, but you won't reason. You're dogmatic."

At the sight of her tears his expression changed to a mingling of triumph and concern. He stood up, apparently intending to put an arm about her, but she stepped back from him quickly. She produced a handkerchief, and with one sweep of this and a simultaneous gulp had abolished her fit of weeping. His voice now had lost its ironies.

"Now, Veronica," he pleaded, "Veronica, this is most unreasonable. All we do is for your good. Neither your aunt nor I have any other thought but what is best for you."

"Only you won't let me live. Only you won't let me exist!"

Mr. Stanley lost patience. He bullied frankly.

"What nonsense is this? What raving! My dear child, you DO live, you DO exist! You have this home. You have friends, acquaintances, social standing, brothers and sisters, every advantage! Instead of which, you want to go to some mixed classes or other and cut up rabbits and dance about at nights in wild costumes with casual art student friends and God knows who. That--that isn't living! You are beside yourself. You don't know what you ask nor what you say. You have neither reason nor logic. I am sorry to seem to hurt you, but all I say is for your good. You MUST not, you SHALL not go. On this I am resolved. I put my foot down like--like adamant. And a time will come, Veronica, mark my words, a time will come when you will bless me for my firmness to-night. It goes to my heart to disappoint you, but this thing must not be."

He sidled toward her, but she recoiled from him, leaving him in possession of the hearth-rug.

"Well," she said, "good-night, father."

"What!" he asked; "not a kiss?"

She affected not to hear.

The door closed softly upon her. For a long time he remained standing before the fire, staring at the situation. Then he sat down and filled his pipe slowly and thoughtfully. . . .

"I don't see what else I could have said," he remarked.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

ANN VERONICA GATHERS POINTS OF VIEW

Part 1

"Are you coming to the Fadden Dance, Ann Veronica?" asked Constance Widgett.

Ann Veronica considered her answer. "I mean to," she replied.

"You are making your dress?"

"Such as it is."

They were in the elder Widgett girl's bedroom; Hetty was laid up, she said, with a sprained ankle, and a miscellaneous party was gossiping away her tedium. It was a large, littered, self-forgetful apartment, decorated with unframed charcoal sketches by various incipient masters; and an open bookcase, surmounted by plaster casts and the half of a human skull, displayed an odd miscellany of books--Shaw and Swinburne, Tom Jones, Fabian Essays, Pope and Dumas, cheek by jowl. Constance Widgett's abundant copper-red hair was bent down over some dimly remunerative work--stencilling in colors upon rough, white material--at a kitchen table she had dragged up-stairs for the purpose, while on her bed there was seated a slender lady of thirty or so in a dingy green dress, whom Constance had introduced with a wave of her hand as Miss Miniver. Miss Miniver looked out on the world through large emotional blue eyes that were further magnified by the glasses she wore, and her nose was pinched and pink, and her mouth was whimsically petulant. Her glasses moved quickly as her glance travelled from face to face. She seemed bursting with the desire to talk, and watching for her

opportunity. On her lapel was an ivory button, bearing the words "Votes for Women." Ann Veronica sat at the foot of the sufferer's bed, while Teddy Widgett, being something of an athlete, occupied the only bed-room chair--a decadent piece, essentially a tripod and largely a formality--and smoked cigarettes, and tried to conceal the fact that he was looking all the time at Ann Veronica's eyebrows. Teddy was the hatless young man who had turned Ann Veronica aside from the Avenue two days before. He was the junior of both his sisters, co-educated and much broken in to feminine society. A bowl of roses, just brought by Ann Veronica, adorned the communal dressing-table, and Ann Veronica was particularly trim in preparation for a call she was to make with her aunt later in the afternoon.

Ann Veronica decided to be more explicit. "I've been," she said, "forbidden to come."

"Hul-LO!" said Hetty, turning her head on the pillow; and Teddy remarked with profound emotion, "My God!"

"Yes," said Ann Veronica, "and that complicates the situation."

"Auntie?" asked Constance, who was conversant with Ann Veronica's affairs.

"No! My father. It's--it's a serious prohibition."

"Why?" asked Hetty.

"That's the point. I asked him why, and he hadn't a reason."

"YOU ASKED YOUR FATHER FOR A REASON!" said Miss Miniver, with great intensity.

"Yes. I tried to have it out with him, but he wouldn't have it out. "Ann Veronica reflected for an instant "That's why I think I ought to come."

"You asked your father for a reason!" Miss Miniver repeated.

"We always have things out with OUR father, poor dear!" said Hetty. "He's got almost to like it."

"Men," said Miss Miniver, "NEVER have a reason. Never! And they don't know it! They have no idea of it. It's one of their worst traits, one of their very worst."

"But I say, Vee," said Constance, "if you come and you are forbidden to come there'll be the deuce of a row."

Ann Veronica was deciding for further confidences. Her situation was perplexing her very much, and the Widgett atmosphere was lax and sympathetic, and provocative of discussion. "It isn't only the dance," she said.

"There's the classes," said Constance, the well-informed.

"There's the whole situation. Apparently I'm not to exist yet. I'm not to study, I'm not to grow. I've got to stay at home and remain in a state of suspended animation."

"DUSTING!" said Miss Miniver, in a sepulchral voice.

"Until you marry, Vee," said Hetty.

"Well, I don't feel like standing it."

"Thousands of women have married merely for freedom," said Miss Miniver. "Thousands! Ugh! And found it a worse slavery."

"I suppose," said Constance, stencilling away at bright pink petals, "it's our lot. But it's very beastly."

"What's our lot?" asked her sister.

"Slavery! Downtroddenness! When I think of it I feel all over boot marks--men's boots. We hide it bravely, but so it is. Damn! I've splashed."

Miss Miniver's manner became impressive. She addressed Ann Veronica with an air of conveying great open secrets to her. "As things are at present," she said, "it is true. We live under man-made institutions, and that is what they amount to. Every girl in the world practically, except a few of us who teach or type-write, and then we're underpaid and sweated--it's dreadful to think how we are sweated!" She had lost her generalization, whatever it was. She hung for a moment, and then went on, conclusively, "Until we have the vote that is how things WILL be."

"I'm all for the vote," said Teddy.

"I suppose a girl MUST be underpaid and sweated," said Ann Veronica. "I suppose there's no way of getting a decent income--independently."

"Women have practically NO economic freedom," said Miss Miniver, "because they have no political freedom. Men have seen to that. The one profession, the one decent profession, I mean, for a woman--except the stage--is teaching, and there we trample on one another. Everywhere else--the law, medicine, the Stock Exchange--prejudice bars us."

"There's art," said Ann Veronica, "and writing."

"Every one hasn't the Gift. Even there a woman never gets a fair chance. Men are against her. Whatever she does is minimized. All the best novels have been written by women, and yet see how men sneer at the lady novelist still! There's only one way to get on for a woman, and that is to please men. That is what they think we are for!"

"We're beasts," said Teddy. "Beasts!"

But Miss Miniver took no notice of his admission.

"Of course," said Miss Miniver--she went on in a regularly undulating voice--"we DO please men. We have that gift. We can see round them and behind them and through them, and most of us use that knowledge, in the silent way we have, for our great ends. Not all of us, but some of us. Too many. I wonder what men would say if we threw the mask aside--if we really told them what WE thought of them, really showed them what WE were." A flush of excitement crept into her cheeks.

"Maternity," she said, "has been our undoing."

From that she opened out into a long, confused emphatic discourse on the position of women, full of wonderful statements, while Constance worked at her stencilling and Ann Veronica and Hetty listened, and Teddy contributed sympathetic noises and consumed cheap cigarettes. As she talked she made weak little gestures with her hands, and she thrust her face forward from her bent shoulders; and she peered sometimes at Ann Veronica and sometimes at a photograph of the Axenstrasse, near Fluelen, that hung upon the wall. Ann Veronica watched her face, vaguely sympathizing with her, vaguely disliking her physical insufficiency and her convulsive movements, and the fine eyebrows were knit with a faint perplexity. Essentially the talk was a mixture of

fragments of sentences heard, of passages read, or arguments indicated rather than stated, and all of it was served in a sauce of strange enthusiasm, thin yet intense. Ann Veronica had had some training at the Tredgold College in disentangling threads from confused statements, and she had a curious persuasion that in all this fluent muddle there was something--something real, something that signified. But it was very hard to follow. She did not understand the note of hostility to men that ran through it all, the bitter vindictiveness that lit Miss Miniver's cheeks and eyes, the sense of some at last insupportable wrong slowly accumulated. She had no inkling of that insupportable wrong.

"We are the species," said Miss Miniver, "men are only incidents.

They give themselves airs, but so it is. In all the species of animals the females are more important than the males; the males have to please them. Look at the cock's feathers, look at the competition there is everywhere, except among humans. The stags and oxen and things all have to fight for us, everywhere. Only in man is the male made the most important. And that happens through our maternity; it's our very importance that degrades us.

While we were minding the children they stole our rights and liberties. The children made us slaves, and the men took advantage of it. It's --Mrs. Shalford says--the accidental conquering the essential. Originally in the first animals there were no males, none at all. It has been proved. Then they appear among the lower things"--she made meticulous gestures to figure the scale of life; she seemed to be holding up specimens, and peering through her glasses at them--"among crustaceans and things, just as little creatures, ever so inferior to the females. Mere hangers on. Things you would laugh at. And among human beings, too, women to begin with were the rulers and leaders; they owned all the property, they invented all the arts.

The primitive government was the Matriarchate. The Matriarchate! The Lords of Creation just ran about and did what they were told."

"But is that really so?" said Ann Veronica.

"It has been proved," said Miss Miniver, and added, "by American professors."

"But how did they prove it?"

"By science," said Miss Miniver, and hurried on, putting out a rhetorical hand that showed a slash of finger through its glove. "And now, look at us! See what we have become. Toys! Delicate trifles! A sex of invalids. It is we who have become the parasites and toys."

It was, Ann Veronica felt, at once absurd and extraordinarily right. Hetty, who had periods of lucid expression, put the thing for her from her pillow. She charged boldly into the space of Miss Miniver's rhetorical pause.

"It isn't quite that we're toys. Nobody toys with me. Nobody regards Constance or Vee as a delicate trifle."

Teddy made some confused noise, a thoracic street row; some remark was assassinated by a rival in his throat and buried hastily under a cough.

"They'd better not," said Hetty. "The point is we're not toys, toys isn't the word; we're litter. We're handfuls. We're regarded as inflammable litter that mustn't be left about. We are the species, and maternity is our game; that's all right, but nobody wants that admitted for fear we should all catch fire, and set about fulfilling the purpose of our beings without waiting

for further explanations. As if we didn't know! The practical trouble is our ages. They used to marry us off at seventeen, rush us into things before we had time to protest. They don't now. Heaven knows why! They don't marry most of us off now until high up in the twenties. And the age gets higher. We have to hang about in the interval. There's a great gulf opened, and nobody's got any plans what to do with us. So the world is choked with waste and waiting daughters. Hanging about! And they start thinking and asking questions, and begin to be neither one thing nor the other. We're partly human beings and partly females in suspense."

Miss Miniver followed with an expression of perplexity, her mouth shaped to futile expositions. The Widgeott method of thought puzzled her weakly rhetorical mind. "There is no remedy, girls," she began, breathlessly, "except the Vote. Give us that--"

Ann Veronica came in with a certain disregard of Miss Miniver. "That's it," she said. "They have no plans for us. They have no ideas what to do with us."

"Except," said Constance, surveying her work with her head on one side, "to keep the matches from the litter."

"And they won't let us make plans for ourselves."

"We will," said Miss Miniver, refusing to be suppressed, "if some of us have to be killed to get it." And she pressed her lips together in white resolution and nodded, and she was manifestly full of that same passion for conflict and self-sacrifice that has given the world martyrs since the beginning of things. "I wish I could make every woman, every girl, see this as clearly as I see it--just what the Vote means to us. Just what it means. . . ."

Part 2

As Ann Veronica went back along the Avenue to her aunt she became aware of a light-footed pursuer running. Teddy overtook her, a little out of breath, his innocent face flushed, his straw-colored hair disordered. He was out of breath, and spoke in broken sentences.

"I say, Vee. Half a minute, Vee. It's like this: You want freedom. Look here. You know--if you want freedom. Just an idea of mine. You know how those Russian students do? In Russia. Just a formal marriage. Mere formality. Liberates the girl from parental control. See? You marry me. Simply. No further responsibility whatever. Without hindrance--present occupation. Why not? Quite willing. Get a license--just an idea of mine. Doesn't matter a bit to me. Do anything to please you, Vee. Anything. Not fit to be dust on your boots. Still--there you are!"

He paused.

Ann Veronica's desire to laugh unrestrainedly was checked by the tremendous earnestness of his expression. "Awfully good of you, Teddy." she said.

He nodded silently, too full for words.

"But I don't see," said Ann Veronica, "just how it fits the present situation."

"No! Well, I just suggested it. Threw it out. Of course, if at any time--see reason--alter your opinion. Always at your service.

No offence, I hope. All right! I'm off. Due to play hockey. Jackson's. Horrid snorters! So long, Vee! Just suggested it. See? Nothing really. Passing thought."

"Teddy," said Ann Veronica, "you're a dear!"

"Oh, quite!" said Teddy, convulsively, and lifted an imaginary hat and left her.

Part 3

The call Ann Veronica paid with her aunt that afternoon had at first much the same relation to the Widgett conversation that a plaster statue of Mr. Gladstone would have to a carelessly displayed interior on a dissecting-room table. The Widgetts talked with a remarkable absence of external coverings; the Palsworthys found all the meanings of life on its surfaces. They seemed the most wrapped things in all Ann Veronica's wrapped world. The Widgett mental furniture was perhaps worn and shabby, but there it was before you, undisguised, fading visibly in an almost pitiless sunlight. Lady Palsworthy was the widow of a knight who had won his spurs in the wholesale coal trade, she was of good seventeenth-century attorney blood, a county family, and distantly related to Aunt Mollie's deceased curate. She was the social leader of Morningside Park, and in her superficial and euphuistic way an extremely kind and pleasant woman. With her lived a Mrs. Pramlay, a sister of the Morningside Park doctor, and a very active and useful member of the Committee of the Impoverished Gentlewomen's Aid Society. Both ladies were on easy and friendly terms with all that was best in Morningside Park society; they had an afternoon once a month that was quite well

attended, they sometimes gave musical evenings, they dined out and gave a finish to people's dinners, they had a full-sized croquet lawn and tennis beyond, and understood the art of bringing people together. And they never talked of anything at all, never discussed, never even encouraged gossip. They were just nice.

Ann Veronica found herself walking back down the Avenue that had just been the scene of her first proposal beside her aunt, and speculating for the first time in her life about that lady's mental attitudes. Her prevailing effect was one of quiet and complete assurance, as though she knew all about everything, and was only restrained by her instinctive delicacy from telling what she knew. But the restraint exercised by her instinctive delicacy was very great; over and above coarse or sexual matters it covered religion and politics and any mention of money matters or crime, and Ann Veronica found herself wondering whether these exclusions represented, after all, anything more than suppressions. Was there anything at all in those locked rooms of her aunt's mind? Were they fully furnished and only a little dusty and cobwebby and in need of an airing, or were they stark vacancy except, perhaps, for a cockroach or so or the gnawing of a rat? What was the mental equivalent of a rat's gnawing? The image was going astray. But what would her aunt think of Teddy's recent off-hand suggestion of marriage? What would she think of the Widgett conversation? Suppose she was to tell her aunt quietly but firmly about the parasitic males of degraded crustacea. The girl suppressed a chuckle that would have been inexplicable.

There came a wild rush of anthropological lore into her brain, a flare of indecorous humor. It was one of the secret troubles of her mind, this grotesque twist her ideas would sometimes take, as though they rebelled and rioted. After all, she found herself reflecting, behind her aunt's complacent visage there was a past

as lurid as any one's--not, of course, her aunt's own personal past, which was apparently just that curate and almost incredibly jejune, but an ancestral past with all sorts of scandalous things in it: fire and slaughterings, exogamy, marriage by capture, corroborees, cannibalism! Ancestresses with perhaps dim anticipatory likenesses to her aunt, their hair less neatly done, no doubt, their manners and gestures as yet undisciplined, but still ancestresses in the direct line, must have danced through a brief and stirring life in the woody buff. Was there no echo anywhere in Miss Stanley's pacified brain? Those empty rooms, if they were empty, were the equivalents of astoundingly decorated predecessors. Perhaps it was just as well there was no inherited memory.

Ann Veronica was by this time quite shocked at her own thoughts, and yet they would go on with their freaks. Great vistas of history opened, and she and her aunt were near reverting to the primitive and passionate and entirely indecorous arboreal--were swinging from branches by the arms, and really going on quite dread-fully--when their arrival at the Palsworthys' happily checked this play of fancy, and brought Ann Veronica back to the exigencies of the wrapped life again.

Lady Palsworthy liked Ann Veronica because she was never awkward, had steady eyes, and an almost invariable neatness and dignity in her clothes. She seemed just as stiff and shy as a girl ought to be, Lady Palsworthy thought, neither garrulous nor unready, and free from nearly all the heavy aggressiveness, the overgrown, overblown quality, the egotism and want of consideration of the typical modern girl. But then Lady Palsworthy had never seen Ann Veronica running like the wind at hockey. She had never seen her sitting on tables nor heard her discussing theology, and had failed to observe that the graceful figure was a natural one and not due to ably chosen stays. She took it for granted Ann Veronica wore stays--mild stays, perhaps, but stays, and thought

no more of the matter. She had seen her really only at teas, with the Stanley strain in her uppermost. There are so many girls nowadays who are quite unpresentable at tea, with their untrimmed laughs, their awful dispositions of their legs when they sit down, their slangy disrespect; they no longer smoke, it is true, like the girls of the eighties and nineties, nevertheless to a fine intelligence they have the flavor of tobacco. They have no amenities, they scratch the mellow surface of things almost as if they did it on purpose; and Lady Palsworthy and Mrs. Pramlay lived for amenities and the mellowed surfaces of things. Ann Veronica was one of the few young people--and one must have young people just as one must have flowers--one could ask to a little gathering without the risk of a painful discord. Then the distant relationship to Miss Stanley gave them a slight but pleasant sense of proprietorship in the girl. They had their little dreams about her.

Mrs. Pramlay received them in the pretty chintz drawing-room, which opened by French windows on the trim garden, with its croquet lawn, its tennis-net in the middle distance, and its remote rose alley lined with smart dahlias and flaming sunflowers. Her eye met Miss Stanley's understandingly, and she was if anything a trifle more affectionate in her greeting to Ann Veronica. Then Ann Veronica passed on toward the tea in the garden, which was dotted with the elite of Morningside Park society, and there she was pounced upon by Lady Palsworthy and given tea and led about. Across the lawn and hovering indecisively, Ann Veronica saw and immediately affected not to see Mr. Manning, Lady Palsworthy's nephew, a tall young man of seven-and-thirty with a handsome, thoughtful, impassive face, a full black mustache, and a certain heavy luxuriousness of gesture. The party resolved itself for Ann Veronica into a game in which she manoeuvred unostentatiously and finally unsuccessfully to avoid talking alone with this gentleman.

Mr. Manning had shown on previous occasions that he found Ann Veronica interesting and that he wished to interest her. He was a civil servant of some standing, and after a previous conversation upon aesthetics of a sententious, nebulous, and sympathetic character, he had sent her a small volume, which he described as the fruits of his leisure and which was as a matter of fact rather carefully finished verse. It dealt with fine aspects of Mr. Manning's feelings, and as Ann Veronica's mind was still largely engaged with fundamentals and found no pleasure in metrical forms, she had not as yet cut its pages. So that as she saw him she remarked to herself very faintly but definitely, "Oh, golly!" and set up a campaign of avoidance that Mr. Manning at last broke down by coming directly at her as she talked with the vicar's aunt about some of the details of the alleged smell of the new church lamps. He did not so much cut into this conversation as loom over it, for he was a tall, if rather studiously stooping, man.

The face that looked down upon Ann Veronica was full of amiable intention. "Splendid you are looking to-day, Miss Stanley," he said. "How well and jolly you must be feeling."

He beamed over the effect of this and shook hands with effusion, and Lady Palsworthy suddenly appeared as his confederate and disentangled the vicar's aunt.

"I love this warm end of summer more than words can tell," he said. "I've tried to make words tell it. It's no good. Mild, you know, and boon. You want music."

Ann Veronica agreed, and tried to make the manner of her assent cover a possible knowledge of a probable poem.

"Splendid it must be to be a composer. Glorious! The Pastoral. Beethoven; he's the best of them. Don't you think? Tum, tay,

tum, tay."

Ann Veronica did.

"What have you been doing since our last talk? Still cutting up rabbits and probing into things? I've often thought of that talk of ours--often."

He did not appear to require any answer to his question.

"Often," he repeated, a little heavily.

"Beautiful these autumn flowers are," said Ann Veronica, in a wide, uncomfortable pause.

"Do come and see the Michaelmas daisies at the end of the garden," said Mr. Manning, "they're a dream." And Ann Veronica found herself being carried off to an isolation even remoter and more conspicuous than the corner of the lawn, with the whole of the party aiding and abetting and glancing at them. "Damn!" said Ann Veronica to herself, rousing herself for a conflict.

Mr. Manning told her he loved beauty, and extorted a similar admission from her; he then expatiated upon his own love of beauty. He said that for him beauty justified life, that he could not imagine a good action that was not a beautiful one nor any beautiful thing that could be altogether bad. Ann Veronica hazarded an opinion that as a matter of history some very beautiful people had, to a quite considerable extent, been bad, but Mr. Manning questioned whether when they were bad they were really beautiful or when they were beautiful bad. Ann Veronica found her attention wandering a little as he told her that he was not ashamed to feel almost slavish in the presence of really beautiful people, and then they came to the Michaelmas daisies. They were really very fine and abundant, with a blaze of

perennial sunflowers behind them.

"They make me want to shout," said Mr. Manning, with a sweep of the arm.

"They're very good this year," said Ann Veronica, avoiding controversial matter.

"Either I want to shout," said Mr. Manning, "when I see beautiful things, or else I want to weep." He paused and looked at her, and said, with a sudden drop into a confidential undertone, "Or else I want to pray."

"When is Michaelmas Day?" said Ann Veronica, a little abruptly.

"Heaven knows!" said Mr. Manning; and added, "the twenty-ninth."

"I thought it was earlier," said Ann Veronica. "Wasn't Parliament to reassemble?"

He put out his hand and leaned against a tree and crossed his legs. "You're not interested in politics?" he asked, almost with a note of protest.

"Well, rather," said Ann Veronica. "It seems-- It's interesting."

"Do you think so? I find my interest in that sort of thing decline and decline."

"I'm curious. Perhaps because I don't know. I suppose an intelligent person OUGHT to be interested in political affairs. They concern us all."

"I wonder," said Mr. Manning, with a baffling smile.

"I think they do. After all, they're history in the making."

"A sort of history," said Mr. Manning; and repeated, "a sort of history. But look at these glorious daisies!"

"But don't you think political questions ARE important?"

"I don't think they are this afternoon, and I don't think they are to you."

Ann Veronica turned her back on the Michaelmas daisies, and faced toward the house with an air of a duty completed.

"Just come to that seat now you are here, Miss Stanley, and look down the other path; there's a vista of just the common sort. Better even than these."

Ann Veronica walked as he indicated.

"You know I'm old-fashioned, Miss Stanley. I don't think women need to trouble about political questions."

"I want a vote," said Ann Veronica.

"Really!" said Mr. Manning, in an earnest voice, and waved his hand to the alley of mauve and purple. "I wish you didn't."

"Why not?" She turned on him.

"It jars. It jars with all my ideas. Women to me are something so serene, so fine, so feminine, and politics are so dusty, so sordid, so wearisome and quarrelsome. It seems to me a woman's duty to be beautiful, to BE beautiful and to behave beautifully, and politics are by their very nature ugly. You see, I--I am a

woman worshipper. I worshipped women long before I found any woman I might ever hope to worship. Long ago. And--the idea of committees, of hustings, of agenda-papers!"

"I don't see why the responsibility of beauty should all be shifted on to the women," said Ann Veronica, suddenly remembering a part of Miss Miniver's discourse.

"It rests with them by the nature of things. Why should you who are queens come down from your thrones? If you can afford it, WE can't. We can't afford to turn our women, our Madonnas, our Saint Catherines, our Mona Lisas, our goddesses and angels and fairy princesses, into a sort of man. Womanhood is sacred to me.

My politics in that matter wouldn't be to give women votes. I'm a Socialist, Miss Stanley."

"WHAT?" said Ann Veronica, startled.

"A Socialist of the order of John Ruskin. Indeed I am! I would make this country a collective monarchy, and all the girls and women in it should be the Queen. They should never come into contact with politics or economics--or any of those things. And we men would work for them and serve them in loyal fealty."

"That's rather the theory now," said Ann Veronica. "Only so many men neglect their duties."

"Yes," said Mr. Manning, with an air of emerging from an elaborate demonstration, "and so each of us must, under existing conditions, being chivalrous indeed to all women, choose for himself his own particular and worshipful queen."

"So far as one can judge from the system in practice," said Ann Veronica, speaking in a loud, common-sense, detached tone, and

beginning to walk slowly but resolutely toward the lawn, "it doesn't work."

"Every one must be experimental," said Mr. Manning, and glanced round hastily for further horticultural points of interest in secluded corners. None presented themselves to save him from that return.

"That's all very well when one isn't the material experimented upon," Ann Veronica had remarked.

"Women would--they DO have far more power than they think, as influences, as inspirations."

Ann Veronica said nothing in answer to that.

"You say you want a vote," said Mr. Manning, abruptly.

"I think I ought to have one."

"Well, I have two," said Mr. Manning--"one in Oxford University and one in Kensington." He caught up and went on with a sort of clumsiness: "Let me present you with them and be your voter."

There followed an instant's pause, and then Ann Veronica had decided to misunderstand.

"I want a vote for myself," she said. "I don't see why I should take it second-hand. Though it's very kind of you. And rather unscrupulous. Have you ever voted, Mr. Manning? I suppose there's a sort of place like a ticket-office. And a ballot-box--" Her face assumed an expression of intellectual conflict. "What is a ballot-box like, exactly?" she asked, as though it was very important to her.

Mr. Manning regarded her thoughtfully for a moment and stroked his mustache. "A ballot-box, you know," he said, "is very largely just a box." He made quite a long pause, and went on, with a sigh: "You have a voting paper given you--"

They emerged into the publicity of the lawn.

"Yes," said Ann Veronica, "yes," to his explanation, and saw across the lawn Lady Palsworthy talking to her aunt, and both of them staring frankly across at her and Mr. Manning as they talked.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

THE MORNING OF THE CRISIS

Part 1

Two days after came the day of the Crisis, the day of the Fadden Dance. It would have been a crisis anyhow, but it was complicated in Ann Veronica's mind by the fact that a letter lay on the breakfast-table from Mr. Manning, and that her aunt focussed a brightly tactful disregard upon this throughout the meal. Ann Veronica had come down thinking of nothing in the world but her inflexible resolution to go to the dance in the teeth of all opposition. She did not know Mr. Manning's handwriting, and opened his letter and read some lines before its import appeared. Then for a time she forgot the Fadden affair altogether. With a well-simulated unconcern and a heightened color she finished her breakfast.

She was not obliged to go to the Tredgold College, because as yet the College had not settled down for the session. She was

supposed to be reading at home, and after breakfast she strolled into the vegetable garden, and having taken up a position upon the staging of a disused greenhouse that had the double advantage of being hidden from the windows of the house and secure from the sudden appearance of any one, she resumed the reading of Mr. Manning's letter.

Mr. Manning's handwriting had an air of being clear without being easily legible; it was large and rather roundish, with a lack of definition about the letters and a disposition to treat the large ones as liberal-minded people nowadays treat opinions, as all amounting to the same thing really--a years-smoothed boyish rather than an adult hand. And it filled seven sheets of notepaper, each written only on one side.

"MY DEAR MISS STANLEY," it began,--"I hope you will forgive my bothering you with a letter, but I have been thinking very much over our conversation at Lady Palsworthy's, and I feel there are things I want to say to you so much that I cannot wait until we meet again. It is the worst of talk under such social circumstances that it is always getting cut off so soon as it is beginning; and I went home that afternoon feeling I had said nothing--literally nothing--of the things I had meant to say to you and that were coursing through my head. They were things I had meant very much to talk to you about, so that I went home vexed and disappointed, and only relieved myself a little by writing a few verses. I wonder if you will mind very much when I tell you they were suggested by you. You must forgive the poet's license I take. Here is one verse. The metrical irregularity is intentional, because I want, as it were, to put you apart: to change the lilt and the mood altogether when I speak of you.

" 'A SONG OF LADIES AND MY LADY

" 'Saintly white and a lily is Mary,
Margaret's violets, sweet and shy;
Green and dewy is Nellie-bud fairy,
Forget-me-nots live in Gwendolen's eye.
Annabel shines like a star in the darkness,
Rosamund queens it a rose, deep rose;
But the lady I love is like sunshine in April weather,

She gleams and gladdens, she warms--and goes.'

"Crude, I admit. But let that verse tell my secret. All bad verse--originally the epigram was Lang's, I believe--is written in a state of emotion.

"My dear Miss Stanley, when I talked to you the other afternoon of work and politics and such-like things, my mind was all the time resenting it beyond measure. There we were discussing whether you should have a vote, and I remembered the last occasion we met it was about your prospects of success in the medical profession or as a Government official such as a number of women now are, and all the time my heart was crying out within me, 'Here is the Queen of your career.' I wanted, as I have never wanted before, to take you up, to make you mine, to carry you off and set you apart from all the strain and turmoil of life. For nothing will ever convince me that it is not the man's share in life to shield, to protect, to lead and toil and watch and battle with the world at large. I want to be your knight, your servant, your protector, your--I dare scarcely write the word--your husband. So I come suppliant. I am five-and-thirty, and I have knocked about in the world and tasted the quality of life. I had a hard fight to begin with to win my way into the Upper Division--I was third on a list of forty-seven--and since then I have found myself promoted almost yearly in a widening sphere of social service. Before I met you I never met any one whom I felt I could love, but you have discovered depths in my

own nature I had scarcely suspected. Except for a few early ebullitions of passion, natural to a warm and romantic disposition, and leaving no harmful after-effects--ebullitions that by the standards of the higher truth I feel no one can justly cast a stone at, and of which I for one am by no means ashamed--I come to you a pure and unencumbered man. I love you. In addition to my public salary I have a certain private property and further expectations through my aunt, so that I can offer you a life of wide and generous refinement, travel, books, discussion, and easy relations with a circle of clever and brilliant and thoughtful people with whom my literary work has brought me into contact, and of which, seeing me only as you have done alone in Morningside Park, you can have no idea. I have a certain standing not only as a singer but as a critic, and I belong to one of the most brilliant causerie dinner clubs of the day, in which successful Bohemianism, politicians, men of affairs, artists, sculptors, and cultivated noblemen generally, mingle together in the easiest and most delightful intercourse. That is my real milieu, and one that I am convinced you would not only adorn but delight in.

"I find it very hard to write this letter. There are so many things I want to tell you, and they stand on such different levels, that the effect is necessarily confusing and discordant, and I find myself doubting if I am really giving you the thread of emotion that should run through all this letter. For although I must confess it reads very much like an application or a testimonial or some such thing as that, I can assure you I am writing this in fear and trembling with a sinking heart. My mind is full of ideas and images that I have been cherishing and accumulating--dreams of travelling side by side, of lunching quietly together in some jolly restaurant, of moonlight and music and all that side of life, of seeing you dressed like a queen and shining in some brilliant throng--mine; of your looking at flowers in some old-world garden, our garden--there are splendid

places to be got down in Surrey, and a little runabout motor is quite within my means. You know they say, as, indeed, I have just quoted already, that all bad poetry is written in a state of emotion, but I have no doubt that this is true of bad offers of marriage. I have often felt before that it is only when one has nothing to say that one can write easy poetry. Witness Browning. And how can I get into one brief letter the complex accumulated desires of what is now, I find on reference to my diary, nearly sixteen months of letting my mind run on you--ever since that jolly party at Surbiton, where we raced and beat the other boat. You steered and I rowed stroke. My very sentences stumble and give way. But I do not even care if I am absurd. I am a resolute man, and hitherto when I have wanted a thing I have got it; but I have never yet wanted anything in my life as I have wanted you. It isn't the same thing. I am afraid because I love you, so that the mere thought of failure hurts. If I did not love you so much I believe I could win you by sheer force of character, for people tell me I am naturally of the dominating type. Most of my successes in life have been made with a sort of reckless vigor.

"Well, I have said what I had to say, stumblingly and badly, and baldly. But I am sick of tearing up letters and hopeless of getting what I have to say better said. It would be easy enough for me to write an eloquent letter about something else. Only I do not care to write about anything else. Let me put the main question to you now that I could not put the other afternoon. Will you marry me, Ann Veronica?"

Very sincerely yours,
"HUBERT MANNING."

Ann Veronica read this letter through with grave, attentive eyes.

Her interest grew as she read, a certain distaste disappeared.

Twice she smiled, but not unkindly. Then she went back and mixed up the sheets in a search for particular passages. Finally she fell into reflection.

"Odd!" she said. "I suppose I shall have to write an answer. It's so different from what one has been led to expect."

She became aware of her aunt, through the panes of the greenhouse, advancing with an air of serene unconsciousness from among the raspberry canes.

"No you don't!" said Ann Veronica, and walked out at a brisk and business-like pace toward the house.

"I'm going for a long tramp, auntie," she said.

"Alone, dear?"

"Yes, aunt. I've got a lot of things to think about."

Miss Stanley reflected as Ann Veronica went toward the house. She thought her niece very hard and very self-possessed and self-confident. She ought to be softened and tender and confidential at this phase of her life. She seemed to have no idea whatever of the emotional states that were becoming to her age and position. Miss Stanley walked round the garden thinking, and presently house and garden reverberated to Ann Veronica's slamming of the front door.

"I wonder!" said Miss Stanley.

For a long time she surveyed a row of towering holly-hocks, as though they offered an explanation. Then she went in and up-stairs, hesitated on the landing, and finally, a little breathless and with an air of great dignity, opened the door and

walked into Ann Veronica's room. It was a neat, efficient-looking room, with a writing-table placed with a business-like regard to the window, and a bookcase surmounted by a pig's skull, a dissected frog in a sealed bottle, and a pile of shiny, black-covered note-books. In the corner of the room were two hockey-sticks and a tennis-racket, and upon the walls Ann Veronica, by means of autotypes, had indicated her proclivities in art. But Miss Stanley took no notice of these things. She walked straight across to the wardrobe and opened it. There, hanging among Ann Veronica's more normal clothing, was a skimpy dress of red canvas, trimmed with cheap and tawdry braid, and short--it could hardly reach below the knee. On the same peg and evidently belonging to it was a black velvet Zouave jacket. And then! a garment that was conceivably a secondary skirt.

Miss Stanley hesitated, and took first one and then another of the constituents of this costume off its peg and surveyed it.

The third item she took with a trembling hand by its waistbelt. As she raised it, its lower portion fell apart into two baggy crimson masses.

"TROUSERS!" she whispered.

Her eyes travelled about the room as if in appeal to the very chairs.

Tucked under the writing-table a pair of yellow and gold Turkish slippers of a highly meretricious quality caught her eye. She walked over to them still carrying the trousers in her hands, and stooped to examine them. They were ingenious disguises of gilt paper destructively gummed, it would seem, to Ann Veronicas' best dancing-slippers.

Then she reverted to the trousers.

"How CAN I tell him?" whispered Miss Stanley.

Part 2

Ann Veronica carried a light but business-like walking-stick. She walked with an easy quickness down the Avenue and through the proletarian portion of Morningside Park, and crossing these fields came into a pretty overhung lane that led toward Caddington and the Downs. And then her pace slackened. She tucked her stick under her arm and re-read Manning's letter.

"Let me think," said Ann Veronica. "I wish this hadn't turned up to-day of all days."

She found it difficult to begin thinking, and indeed she was anything but clear what it was she had to think about. Practically it was most of the chief interests in life that she proposed to settle in this pedestrian meditation. Primarily it was her own problem, and in particular the answer she had to give to Mr. Manning's letter, but in order to get data for that she found that she, having a logical and ordered mind, had to decide upon the general relations of men to women, the objects and conditions of marriage and its bearing upon the welfare of the race, the purpose of the race, the purpose, if any, of everything. . . .

"Frightful lot of things aren't settled," said Ann Veronica. In addition, the Fadden Dance business, all out of proportion, occupied the whole foreground of her thoughts and threw a color of rebellion over everything. She kept thinking she was thinking about Mr. Manning's proposal of marriage and finding she was thinking of the dance.

For a time her efforts to achieve a comprehensive concentration were dispersed by the passage of the village street of Caddington, the passing of a goggled car-load of motorists, and the struggles of a stable lad mounted on one recalcitrant horse and leading another. When she got back to her questions again in the monotonous high-road that led up the hill, she found the image of Mr. Manning central in her mind. He stood there, large and dark, enunciating, in his clear voice from beneath his large mustache, clear flat sentences, deliberately kindly. He proposed, he wanted to possess her! He loved her.

Ann Veronica felt no repulsion at the prospect. That Mr. Manning loved her presented itself to her bloodlessly, stilled from any imaginative quiver or thrill of passion or disgust. The relationship seemed to have almost as much to do with blood and body as a mortgage. It was something that would create a mutual claim, a relationship. It was in another world from that in which men will die for a kiss, and touching hands lights fires that burn up lives--the world of romance, the world of passionately beautiful things.

But that other world, in spite of her resolute exclusion of it, was always looking round corners and peeping through chinks and crannies, and rustling and raiding into the order in which she chose to live, shining out of pictures at her, echoing in lyrics and music; it invaded her dreams, it wrote up broken and enigmatical sentences upon the passage walls of her mind. She was aware of it now as if it were a voice shouting outside a house, shouting passionate verities in a hot sunlight, a voice that cries while people talk insincerely in a darkened room and pretend not to hear. Its shouting now did in some occult manner convey a protest that Mr. Manning would on no account do, though he was tall and dark and handsome and kind, and thirty-five and adequately prosperous, and all that a husband should be. But

there was, it insisted, no mobility in his face, no movement, nothing about him that warmed. If Ann Veronica could have put words to that song they would have been, "Hot-blooded marriage or none!" but she was far too indistinct in this matter to frame any words at all.

"I don't love him," said Ann Veronica, getting a gleam. "I don't see that his being a good sort matters. That really settles about that. . . . But it means no end of a row."

For a time she sat on a rail before leaving the road for the downland turf. "But I wish," she said, "I had some idea what I was really up to."

Her thoughts went into solution for a time, while she listened to a lark singing.

"Marriage and mothering," said Ann Veronica, with her mind crystallizing out again as the lark dropped to the nest in the turf. "And all the rest of it perhaps is a song."

Part 3

Her mind got back to the Fadden Ball.

She meant to go, she meant to go, she meant to go. Nothing would stop her, and she was prepared to face the consequences. Suppose her father turned her out of doors! She did not care, she meant to go. She would just walk out of the house and go. . . .

She thought of her costume in some detail and with considerable satisfaction, and particularly of a very jolly property dagger

with large glass jewels in the handle, that reposed in a drawer in her room. She was to be a Corsair's Bride. "Fancy stabbing a man for jealousy!" she thought. "You'd have to think how to get in between his bones."

She thought of her father, and with an effort dismissed him from her mind.

She tried to imagine the collective effect of the Fadden Ball; she had never seen a fancy-dress gathering in her life. Mr. Manning came into her thoughts again, an unexpected, tall, dark, self-contained presence at the Fadden. One might suppose him turning up; he knew a lot of clever people, and some of them might belong to the class. What would he come as?

Presently she roused herself with a guilty start from the task of dressing and re-dressing Mr. Manning in fancy costume, as though he was a doll. She had tried him as a Crusader, in which guise he seemed plausible but heavy--"There IS something heavy about him; I wonder if it's his mustache?"--and as a Hussar, which made him preposterous, and as a Black Brunswicker, which was better, and as an Arab sheik. Also she had tried him as a dragoman and as a gendarme, which seemed the most suitable of all to his severely handsome, immobile profile. She felt he would tell people the way, control traffic, and refuse admission to public buildings with invincible correctness and the very finest explicit feelings possible. For each costume she had devised a suitable form of matrimonial refusal. "Oh, Lord!" she said, discovering what she was up to, and dropped lightly from the fence upon the turf and went on her way toward the crest.

"I shall never marry," said Ann Veronica, resolutely; "I'm not the sort. That's why it's so important I should take my own line now."

Part 4

Ann Veronica's ideas of marriage were limited and unsystematic. Her teachers and mistresses had done their best to stamp her mind with an ineradicable persuasion that it was tremendously important, and on no account to be thought about. Her first intimations of marriage as a fact of extreme significance in a woman's life had come with the marriage of Alice and the elopement of her second sister, Gwen.

These convulsions occurred when Ann Veronica was about twelve. There was a gulf of eight years between her and the youngest of her brace of sisters--an impassable gulf inhabited chaotically by two noisy brothers. These sisters moved in a grown-up world inaccessible to Ann Veronica's sympathies, and to a large extent remote from her curiosity. She got into rows through meddling with their shoes and tennis-rackets, and had moments of carefully concealed admiration when she was privileged to see them just before her bedtime, rather radiantly dressed in white or pink or amber and prepared to go out with her mother. She thought Alice a bit of a sneak, an opinion her brothers shared, and Gwen rather a snatch at meals. She saw nothing of their love-making, and came home from her boarding-school in a state of decently suppressed curiosity for Alice's wedding.

Her impressions of this cardinal ceremony were rich and confused, complicated by a quite transitory passion that awakened no reciprocal fire for a fat curly headed cousin in black velveteen and a lace collar, who assisted as a page. She followed him about persistently, and succeeded, after a brisk, unchivalrous struggle (in which he pinched and asked her to "cheese it"), in kissing him among the raspberries behind the greenhouse. Afterward her brother Roddy, also strange in velveteen, feeling

rather than knowing of this relationship, punched this Adonis's head.

A marriage in the house proved to be exciting but extremely disorganizing. Everything seemed designed to unhinge the mind and make the cat wretched. All the furniture was moved, all the meals were disarranged, and everybody, Ann Veronica included, appeared in new, bright costumes. She had to wear cream and a brown sash and a short frock and her hair down, and Gwen cream and a brown sash and a long skirt and her hair up. And her mother, looking unusually alert and hectic, wore cream and brown also, made up in a more complicated manner.

Ann Veronica was much impressed by a mighty trying on and altering and fussing about Alice's "things"--Alice was being re-costumed from garret to cellar, with a walking-dress and walking-boots to measure, and a bride's costume of the most ravishing description, and stockings and such like beyond the dreams of avarice --and a constant and increasing dripping into the house of irrelevant remarkable objects, such as--

Real lace bedspread;

Gilt travelling clock;

Ornamental pewter plaque;

Salad bowl (silver mounted) and servers;

Madgett's "English Poets" (twelve volumes), bound purple morocco;

Etc., etc.

Through all this flutter of novelty there came and went a solicitous, preoccupied, almost depressed figure. It was Doctor

Ralph, formerly the partner of Doctor Stickell in the Avenue, and now with a thriving practice of his own in Wamblesmith. He had shaved his side-whiskers and come over in flannels, but he was still indisputably the same person who had attended Ann Veronica for the measles and when she swallowed the fish-bone. But his role was altered, and he was now playing the bridegroom in this remarkable drama. Alice was going to be Mrs. Ralph. He came in apologetically; all the old "Well, and how ARE we?" note gone; and once he asked Ann Veronica, almost furtively,

"How's Alice getting on, Vee?" Finally, on the Day, he appeared like his old professional self transfigured, in the most beautiful light gray trousers Ann Veronica had ever seen and a new shiny silk hat with a most becoming roll. . . .

It was not simply that all the rooms were rearranged and everybody dressed in unusual fashions, and all the routines of life abolished and put away: people's tempers and emotions also seemed strangely disturbed and shifted about. Her father was distinctly irascible, and disposed more than ever to hide away among the petrological things--the study was turned out. At table he carved in a gloomy but resolute manner. On the Day he had trumpet-like outbreaks of cordiality, varied by a watchful preoccupation. Gwen and Alice were fantastically friendly, which seemed to annoy him, and Mrs. Stanley was throughout enigmatical, with an anxious eye on her husband and Alice.

There was a confused impression of livery carriages and whips with white favors, people fussily wanting other people to get in before them, and then the church. People sat in unusual pews, and a wide margin of hassocky emptiness intervened between the ceremony and the walls.

Ann Veronica had a number of fragmentary impressions of Alice strangely transfigured in bridal raiment. It seemed to make her

sister downcast beyond any precedent. The bridesmaids and pages got rather jumbled in the aisle, and she had an effect of Alice's white back and sloping shoulders and veiled head receding toward the altar. In some incomprehensible way that back view made her feel sorry for Alice. Also she remembered very vividly the smell of orange blossom, and Alice, drooping and spiritless, mumbling responses, facing Doctor Ralph, while the Rev. Edward Bribble stood between them with an open book. Doctor Ralph looked kind and large, and listened to Alice's responses as though he was listening to symptoms and thought that on the whole she was progressing favorably.

And afterward her mother and Alice kissed long and clung to each other. And Doctor Ralph stood by looking considerate. He and her father shook hands manfully.

Ann Veronica had got quite interested in Mr. Bribble's rendering of the service--he had the sort of voice that brings out things--and was still teeming with ideas about it when finally a wild outburst from the organ made it clear that, whatever snivelling there might be down in the chancel, that excellent wind instrument was, in its Mendelssohnian way, as glad as ever it could be. "Pump, pump, per-um-pump, Pum, Pump, Per-um. . . ."

The wedding-breakfast was for Ann Veronica a spectacle of the unreal consuming the real; she liked that part very well, until she was carelessly served against her expressed wishes with mayonnaise. She was caught by an uncle, whose opinion she valued, making faces at Roddy because he had exulted at this.

Of the vast mass of these impressions Ann Veronica could make nothing at the time; there they were--Fact! She stored them away in a mind naturally retentive, as a squirrel stores away nuts, for further digestion. Only one thing emerged with any reasonable clarity in her mind at once, and that was that unless

she was saved from drowning by an unmarried man, in which case the ceremony is unavoidable, or totally destitute of under-clothing, and so driven to get a trousseau, in which hardship a trousseau would certainly be "ripping," marriage was an experience to be strenuously evaded.

When they were going home she asked her mother why she and Gwen and Alice had cried.

"Ssh!" said her mother, and then added, "A little natural feeling, dear."

"But didn't Alice want to marry Doctor Ralph?"

"Oh, ssh, Vee!" said her mother, with an evasion as patent as an advertisement board. "I am sure she will be very happy indeed with Doctor Ralph."

But Ann Veronica was by no means sure of that until she went over to Wamblesmith and saw her sister, very remote and domestic and authoritative, in a becoming tea-gown, in command of Doctor Ralph's home. Doctor Ralph came in to tea and put his arm round Alice and kissed her, and Alice called him "Squiggles," and stood in the shelter of his arms for a moment with an expression of satisfied proprietorship. She HAD cried, Ann Veronica knew. There had been fusses and scenes dimly apprehended through half-open doors. She had heard Alice talking and crying at the same time, a painful noise. Perhaps marriage hurt. But now it was all over, and Alice was getting on well. It reminded Ann Veronica of having a tooth stopped.

And after that Alice became remoter than ever, and, after a time, ill. Then she had a baby and became as old as any really grown-up person, or older, and very dull. Then she and her husband went off to a Yorkshire practice, and had four more

babies, none of whom photographed well, and so she passed beyond the sphere of Ann Veronica's sympathies altogether.

Part 5

The Gwen affair happened when she was away at school at Marticombe-on-Sea, a term before she went to the High School, and was never very clear to her.

Her mother missed writing for a week, and then she wrote in an unusual key. "My dear," the letter ran, "I have to tell you that your sister Gwen has offended your father very much. I hope you will always love her, but I want you to remember she has offended your father and married without his consent. Your father is very angry, and will not have her name mentioned in his hearing. She has married some one he could not approve of, and gone right away. . . ."

When the next holidays came Ann Veronica's mother was ill, and Gwen was in the sick-room when Ann Veronica returned home. She was in one of her old walking-dresses, her hair was done in an unfamiliar manner, she wore a wedding-ring, and she looked as if she had been crying.

"Hello, Gwen!" said Ann Veronica, trying to put every one at their ease. "Been and married? . . . What's the name of the happy man?"

Gwen owned to "Fortescue."

"Got a photograph of him or anything?" said Ann Veronica, after kissing her mother.

Gwen made an inquiry, and, directed by Mrs. Stanley, produced a portrait from its hiding-place in the jewel-drawer under the mirror. It presented a clean-shaven face with a large Corinthian nose, hair tremendously waving off the forehead and more chin and neck than is good for a man.

"LOOKS all right," said Ann Veronica, regarding him with her head first on one side and then on the other, and trying to be agreeable. "What's the objection?"

"I suppose she ought to know?" said Gwen to her mother, trying to alter the key of the conversation.

"You see, Vee," said Mrs. Stanley, "Mr. Fortescue is an actor, and your father does not approve of the profession."

"Oh!" said Ann Veronica. "I thought they made knights of actors?"

"They may of Hal some day," said Gwen. "But it's a long business."

"I suppose this makes you an actress?" said Ann Veronica.

"I don't know whether I shall go on," said Gwen, a novel note of languorous professionalism creeping into her voice. "The other women don't much like it if husband and wife work together, and I don't think Hal would like me to act away from him."

Ann Veronica regarded her sister with a new respect, but the traditions of family life are strong. "I don't suppose you'll be able to do it much," said Ann Veronica.

Later Gwen's trouble weighed so heavily on Mrs. Stanley in her

illness that her husband consented to receive Mr. Fortescue in the drawing-room, and actually shake hands with him in an entirely hopeless manner and hope everything would turn out for the best.

The forgiveness and reconciliation was a cold and formal affair, and afterwards her father went off gloomily to his study, and Mr. Fortescue rambled round the garden with soft, propitiatory steps, the Corinthian nose upraised and his hands behind his back, pausing to look long and hard at the fruit-trees against the wall.

Ann Veronica watched him from the dining-room window, and after some moments of maidenly hesitation rambled out into the garden in a reverse direction to Mr. Fortescue's steps, and encountered him with an air of artless surprise.

"Hello!" said Ann Veronica, with arms akimbo and a careless, breathless manner. "You Mr. Fortescue?"

"At your service. You Ann Veronica?"

"Rather! I say--did you marry Gwen?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

Mr. Fortescue raised his eyebrows and assumed a light-comedy expression. "I suppose I fell in love with her, Ann Veronica."

"Rum," said Ann Veronica. "Have you got to keep her now?"

"To the best of my ability," said Mr. Fortescue, with a bow.

"Have you much ability?" asked Ann Veronica.

Mr. Fortescue tried to act embarrassment in order to conceal its reality, and Ann Veronica went on to ask a string of questions about acting, and whether her sister would act, and was she beautiful enough for it, and who would make her dresses, and so on.

As a matter of fact Mr. Fortescue had not much ability to keep her sister, and a little while after her mother's death Ann Veronica met Gwen suddenly on the staircase coming from her father's study, shockingly dingy in dusty mourning and tearful and resentful, and after that Gwen receded from the Morningside Park world, and not even the begging letters and distressful communications that her father and aunt received, but only a vague intimation of dreadfulness, a leakage of incidental comment, flashes of paternal anger at "that blackguard," came to Ann Veronica's ears.

Part 6

These were Ann Veronica's leading cases in the question of marriage. They were the only real marriages she had seen clearly. For the rest, she derived her ideas of the married state from the observed behavior of married women, which impressed her in Morningside Park as being tied and dull and inelastic in comparison with the life of the young, and from a remarkably various reading among books. As a net result she had come to think of all married people much as one thinks of insects that have lost their wings, and of her sisters as new hatched creatures who had scarcely for a moment had wings. She evolved a dim image of herself cooped up in a house under the benevolent

shadow of Mr. Manning. Who knows?--on the analogy of "Squiggles" she might come to call him "Mangles!"

"I don't think I can ever marry any one," she said, and fell suddenly into another set of considerations that perplexed her for a time. Had romance to be banished from life? . . .

It was hard to part with romance, but she had never thirsted so keenly to go on with her University work in her life as she did that day. She had never felt so acutely the desire for free initiative, for a life unhampered by others. At any cost! Her brothers had it practically--at least they had it far more than it seemed likely she would unless she exerted herself with quite exceptional vigor. Between her and the fair, far prospect of freedom and self-development manoeuvred Mr. Manning, her aunt and father, neighbors, customs, traditions, forces. They seemed to her that morning to be all armed with nets and prepared to throw them over her directly her movements became in any manner truly free.

She had a feeling as though something had dropped from her eyes, as though she had just discovered herself for the first time--discovered herself as a sleep-walker might do, abruptly among dangers, hindrances, and perplexities, on the verge of a cardinal crisis.

The life of a girl presented itself to her as something happy and heedless and unthinking, yet really guided and controlled by others, and going on amidst unsuspected screens and concealments.

And in its way it was very well. Then suddenly with a rush came reality, came "growing up"; a hasty imperative appeal for seriousness, for supreme seriousness. The Ralphs and Mannings and Fortescues came down upon the raw inexperience, upon the blinking ignorance of the newcomer; and before her eyes were

fairly open, before she knew what had happened, a new set of guides and controls, a new set of obligations and responsibilities and limitations, had replaced the old. "I want to be a Person," said Ann Veronica to the downs and the open sky; "I will not have this happen to me, whatever else may happen in its place."

Ann Veronica had three things very definitely settled by the time when, a little after mid-day, she found herself perched up on a gate between a bridle-path and a field that commanded the whole wide stretch of country between Chalking and Waldersham. Firstly, she did not intend to marry at all, and particularly she did not mean to marry Mr. Manning; secondly, by some measure or other, she meant to go on with her studies, not at the Tredgold Schools but at the Imperial College; and, thirdly, she was, as an immediate and decisive act, a symbol of just exactly where she stood, a declaration of free and adult initiative, going that night to the Fadden Ball.

But the possible attitude of her father she had still to face. So far she had the utmost difficulty in getting on to that vitally important matter. The whole of that relationship persisted in remaining obscure. What would happen when next morning she returned to Morningside Park?

He couldn't turn her out of doors. But what he could do or might do she could not imagine. She was not afraid of violence, but she was afraid of something mean, some secondary kind of force. Suppose he stopped all her allowance, made it imperative that she should either stay ineffectually resentful at home or earn a living for herself at once. . . . It appeared highly probable to her that he would stop her allowance.

What can a girl do?

Somewhere at this point Ann Veronica's speculations were interrupted and turned aside by the approach of a horse and rider. Mr. Ramage, that iron-gray man of the world, appeared dressed in a bowler hat and a suit of hard gray, astride of a black horse. He pulled rein at the sight of her, saluted, and regarded her with his rather too protuberant eyes. The girl's gaze met his in interested inquiry.

"You've got my view," he said, after a pensive second. "I always get off here and lean over that rail for a bit. May I do so to-day?"

"It's your gate," she said, amiably; "you got it first. It's for you to say if I may sit on it."

He slipped off the horse. "Let me introduce you to Caesar," he said; and she patted Caesar's neck, and remarked how soft his nose was, and secretly deplored the ugliness of equine teeth. Ramage tethered the horse to the farther gate-post, and Caesar blew heavily and began to investigate the hedge.

Ramage leaned over the gate at Ann Veronica's side, and for a moment there was silence.

He made some obvious comments on the wide view warming toward its autumnal blaze that spread itself in hill and valley, wood and village, below.

"It's as broad as life," said Mr. Ramage, regarding it and putting a well-booted foot up on the bottom rail.

"And what are you doing here, young lady," he said, looking up at her face, "wandering alone so far from home?"

"I like long walks," said Ann Veronica, looking down on him.

"Solitary walks?"

"That's the point of them. I think over all sorts of things."

"Problems?"

"Sometimes quite difficult problems."

"You're lucky to live in an age when you can do so. Your mother, for instance, couldn't. She had to do her thinking at home--under inspection."

She looked down on him thoughtfully, and he let his admiration of her free young poise show in his face.

"I suppose things have changed?" she said.

"Never was such an age of transition."

She wondered what to. Mr. Ramage did not know. "Sufficient unto me is the change thereof," he said, with all the effect of an epigram.

"I must confess," he said, "the New Woman and the New Girl intrigue me profoundly. I am one of those people who are interested in women, more interested than I am in anything else. I don't conceal it. And the change, the change of attitude! The way all the old clingingness has been thrown aside is amazing. And all the old--the old trick of shrinking up like a snail at a

touch. If you had lived twenty years ago you would have been called a Young Person, and it would have been your chief duty in life not to know, never to have heard of, and never to understand."

"There's quite enough still," said Ann Veronica, smiling, "that one doesn't understand."

"Quite. But your role would have been to go about saying, 'I beg your pardon' in a reproving tone to things you understood quite well in your heart and saw no harm in. That terrible Young Person! she's vanished. Lost, stolen, or strayed, the Young Person! . . . I hope we may never find her again."

He rejoiced over this emancipation. "While that lamb was about every man of any spirit was regarded as a dangerous wolf. We wore invisible chains and invisible blinkers. Now, you and I can gossip at a gate, and { }Honi soit qui mal y pense. The change has given man one good thing he never had before," he said. "Girl friends. And I am coming to believe the best as well as the most beautiful friends a man can have are girl friends."

He paused, and went on, after a keen look at her:

"I had rather gossip to a really intelligent girl than to any man alive."

"I suppose we ARE more free than we were?" said Ann Veronica, keeping the question general.

"Oh, there's no doubt of it! Since the girls of the eighties broke bounds and sailed away on bicycles--my young days go back to the very beginnings of that--it's been one triumphant relaxation."

"Relaxation, perhaps. But are we any more free?"

"Well?"

"I mean we've long strings to tether us, but we are bound all the same. A woman isn't much freer--in reality."

Mr. Ramage demurred.

"One runs about," said Ann Veronica.

"Yes."

"But it's on condition one doesn't do anything."

"Do what?"

"Oh!--anything."

He looked interrogation with a faint smile.

"It seems to me it comes to earning one's living in the long run," said Ann Veronica, coloring faintly. "Until a girl can go away as a son does and earn her independent income, she's still on a string. It may be a long string, long enough if you like to tangle up all sorts of people; but there it is! If the paymaster pulls, home she must go. That's what I mean."

Mr. Ramage admitted the force of that. He was a little impressed by Ann Veronica's metaphor of the string, which, indeed, she owed to Hetty Widdett. "YOU wouldn't like to be independent?" he asked, abruptly. "I mean REALLY independent. On your own. It isn't such fun as it seems."

"Every one wants to be independent," said Ann Veronica. "Every one. Man or woman."

"And you?"

"Rather!"

"I wonder why?"

"There's no why. It's just to feel--one owns one's self."

"Nobody does that," said Ramage, and kept silence for a moment.

"But a boy--a boy goes out into the world and presently stands on his own feet. He buys his own clothes, chooses his own company, makes his own way of living."

"You'd like to do that?"

"Exactly."

"Would you like to be a boy?"

"I wonder! It's out of the question, any way."

Ramage reflected. "Why don't you?"

"Well, it might mean rather a row."

"I know--" said Ramage, with sympathy.

"And besides," said Ann Veronica, sweeping that aspect aside, "what could I do? A boy sails out into a trade or profession. But--it's one of the things I've just been thinking over. Suppose--suppose a girl did want to start in life, start in life

for herself--" She looked him frankly in the eyes. "What ought she to do?"

"Suppose you--"

"Yes, suppose I--"

He felt that his advice was being asked. He became a little more personal and intimate. "I wonder what you could do?" he said. "I should think YOU could do all sorts of things. . . ."

"What ought you to do?" He began to produce his knowledge of the world for her benefit, jerkily and allusively, and with a strong, rank flavor of "savoir faire." He took an optimist view of her chances. Ann Veronica listened thoughtfully, with her eyes on the turf, and now and then she asked a question or looked up to discuss a point. In the meanwhile, as he talked, he scrutinized her face, ran his eyes over her careless, gracious poise, wondered hard about her. He described her privately to himself as a splendid girl. It was clear she wanted to get away from home, that she was impatient to get away from home. Why? While the front of his mind was busy warning her not to fall into the hopeless miseries of underpaid teaching, and explaining his idea that for women of initiative, quite as much as for men, the world of business had by far the best chances, the back chambers of his brain were busy with the problem of that "Why?"

His first idea as a man of the world was to explain her unrest by a lover, some secret or forbidden or impossible lover. But he dismissed that because then she would ask her lover and not him all these things. Restlessness, then, was the trouble, simple restlessness: home bored her. He could quite understand the daughter of Mr. Stanley being bored and feeling limited. But was that enough? Dim, formless suspicions of something more vital wandered about his mind. Was the young lady impatient for

experience? Was she adventurous? As a man of the world he did not think it becoming to accept maidenly calm as anything more than a mask. Warm life was behind that always, even if it slept. If it was not an actual personal lover, it still might be the lover not yet incarnate, not yet perhaps suspected. . . .

He had diverged only a little from the truth when he said that his chief interest in life was women. It wasn't so much women as Woman that engaged his mind. His was the Latin turn of thinking; he had fallen in love at thirteen, and he was still capable--he prided himself--of falling in love. His invalid wife and her money had been only the thin thread that held his life together; beaded on that permanent relation had been an inter-weaving series of other feminine experiences, disturbing, absorbing, interesting, memorable affairs. Each one had been different from the others, each had had a quality all its own, a distinctive freshness, a distinctive beauty. He could not understand how men could live ignoring this one predominant interest, this wonderful research into personality and the possibilities of pleasing, these complex, fascinating expeditions that began in interest and mounted to the supremest, most passionate intimacy. All the rest of his existence was subordinate to this pursuit; he lived for it, worked for it, kept himself in training for it.

So while he talked to this girl of work and freedom, his slightly protuberant eyes were noting the gracious balance of her limbs and body across the gate, the fine lines of her chin and neck. Her grave fine face, her warm clear complexion, had already aroused his curiosity as he had gone to and fro in Morningside Park, and here suddenly he was near to her and talking freely and intimately. He had found her in a communicative mood, and he used the accumulated skill of years in turning that to account.

She was pleased and a little flattered by his interest and sympathy. She became eager to explain herself, to show herself

in the right light. He was manifestly exerting his mind for her, and she found herself fully disposed to justify his interest.

She, perhaps, displayed herself rather consciously as a fine person unduly limited. She even touched lightly on her father's unreasonableness.

"I wonder," said Ramage, "that more girls don't think as you do and want to strike out in the world."

And then he speculated. "I wonder if you will?"

"Let me say one thing," he said. "If ever you do and I can help you in any way, by advice or inquiry or recommendation-- You see, I'm no believer in feminine incapacity, but I do perceive there is such a thing as feminine inexperience. As a sex you're a little under-trained--in affairs. I'd take it--forgive me if I seem a little urgent--as a sort of proof of friendliness. I can imagine nothing more pleasant in life than to help you, because I know it would pay to help you. There's something about you, a little flavor of Will, I suppose, that makes one feel--good luck about you and success. . . ."

And while he talked and watched her as he talked, she answered, and behind her listening watched and thought about him. She liked the animated eagerness of his manner.

His mind seemed to be a remarkably full one; his knowledge of detailed reality came in just where her own mind was most weakly equipped. Through all he said ran one quality that pleased her--the quality of a man who feels that things can be done, that one need not wait for the world to push one before one moved. Compared with her father and Mr. Manning and the men in "fixed" positions generally that she knew, Ramage, presented by himself, had a fine suggestion of freedom, of power, of deliberate and

sustained adventure. . . .

She was particularly charmed by his theory or friendship. It was really very jolly to talk to a man in this way--who saw the woman in her and did not treat her as a child. She was inclined to think that perhaps for a girl the converse of his method was the case; an older man, a man beyond the range of anything "nonsensical," was, perhaps, the most interesting sort of friend one could meet. But in that reservation it may be she went a little beyond the converse of his view. . . .

They got on wonderfully well together. They talked for the better part of an hour, and at last walked together to the junction of highroad and the bridle-path. There, after protestations of friendliness and helpfulness that were almost ardent, he mounted a little clumsily and rode off at an amiable pace, looking his best, making a leg with his riding gaiters, smiling and saluting, while Ann Veronica turned northward and so came to Micklechesil. There, in a little tea and sweet-stuff shop, she bought and consumed slowly and absent-mindedly the insufficient nourishment that is natural to her sex on such occasions.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

THE CRISIS

Part 1

We left Miss Stanley with Ann Veronica's fancy dress in her hands and her eyes directed to Ann Veronica's pseudo-Turkish slippers.

When Mr. Stanley came home at a quarter to six--an earlier train by fifteen minutes than he affected--his sister met him in the hall with a hushed expression. "I'm so glad you're here, Peter," she said. "She means to go."

"Go!" he said. "Where?"

"To that ball."

"What ball?" The question was rhetorical. He knew.

"I believe she's dressing up-stairs--now."

"Then tell her to undress, confound her!" The City had been thoroughly annoying that day, and he was angry from the outset.

Miss Stanley reflected on this proposal for a moment.

"I don't think she will," she said.

"She must," said Mr. Stanley, and went into his study. His sister followed. "She can't go now. She'll have to wait for dinner," he said, uncomfortably.

"She's going to have some sort of meal with the Widgetts down the Avenue, and go up with them.

"She told you that?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"At tea."

"But why didn't you prohibit once for all the whole thing? How dared she tell you that?"

"Out of defiance. She just sat and told me that was her arrangement. I've never seen her quite so sure of herself."

"What did you say?"

"I said, 'My dear Veronica! how can you think of such things?' "

"And then?"

"She had two more cups of tea and some cake, and told me of her walk."

"She'll meet somebody one of these days--walking about like that."

"She didn't say she'd met any one."

"But didn't you say some more about that ball?"

"I said everything I could say as soon as I realized she was trying to avoid the topic. I said, 'It is no use your telling me about this walk and pretend I've been told about the ball, because you haven't. Your father has forbidden you to go!' "

"Well?"

"She said, 'I hate being horrid to you and father, but I feel it my duty to go to that ball!' "

"Felt it her duty!"

" 'Very well,' I said, 'then I wash my hands of the whole business. Your disobedience be upon your own head.' "

"But that is flat rebellion!" said Mr. Stanley, standing on the hearthrug with his back to the unlit gas-fire. "You ought at once--you ought at once to have told her that. What duty does a girl owe to any one before her father? Obedience to him, that is surely the first law. What CAN she put before that?" His voice began to rise. "One would think I had said nothing about the matter. One would think I had agreed to her going. I suppose this is what she learns in her infernal London colleges. I suppose this is the sort of damned rubbish--"

"Oh! Ssh, Peter!" cried Miss Stanley.

He stopped abruptly. In the pause a door could be heard opening and closing on the landing up-stairs. Then light footsteps became audible, descending the staircase with a certain deliberation and a faint rustle of skirts.

"Tell her," said Mr. Stanley, with an imperious gesture, "to come in here."

Part 2

Miss Stanley emerged from the study and stood watching Ann Veronica descend.

The girl was flushed with excitement, bright-eyed, and braced for a struggle; her aunt had never seen her looking so fine or so pretty. Her fancy dress, save for the green-gray stockings, the pseudo-Turkish slippers, and baggy silk trousered ends natural to

a Corsair's bride, was hidden in a large black-silk-hooded opera-cloak. Beneath the hood it was evident that her rebellious hair was bound up with red silk, and fastened by some device in her ears (unless she had them pierced, which was too dreadful a thing to suppose!) were long brass filigree earrings.

"I'm just off, aunt," said Ann Veronica.

"Your father is in the study and wishes to speak to you."

Ann Veronica hesitated, and then stood in the open doorway and regarded her father's stern presence. She spoke with an entirely false note of cheerful off-handedness. "I'm just in time to say good-bye before I go, father. I'm going up to London with the Widgetts to that ball."

"Now look here, Ann Veronica," said Mr. Stanley, "just a moment. You are NOT going to that ball!"

Ann Veronica tried a less genial, more dignified note.

"I thought we had discussed that, father."

"You are not going to that ball! You are not going out of this house in that get-up!"

Ann Veronica tried yet more earnestly to treat him, as she would treat any man, with an insistence upon her due of masculine respect. "You see," she said, very gently, "I AM going. I am sorry to seem to disobey you, but I am. I wish"--she found she had embarked on a bad sentence--"I wish we needn't have quarrelled."

She stopped abruptly, and turned about toward the front door. In a moment he was beside her. "I don't think you can have heard

me, Vee," he said, with intensely controlled fury. "I said you were"--he shouted--"NOT TO GO!"

She made, and overdid, an immense effort to be a princess. She tossed her head, and, having no further words, moved toward the door. Her father intercepted her, and for a moment she and he struggled with their hands upon the latch. A common rage flushed their faces. "Let go!" she gasped at him, a blaze of anger.

"Veronica!" cried Miss Stanley, warningly, and, "Peter!"

For a moment they seemed on the verge of an altogether desperate scuffle. Never for a moment had violence come between these two since long ago he had, in spite of her mother's protest in the background, carried her kicking and squalling to the nursery for some forgotten crime. With something near to horror they found themselves thus confronted.

The door was fastened by a catch and a latch with an inside key, to which at night a chain and two bolts were added. Carefully abstaining from thrusting against each other, Ann Veronica and her father began an absurdly desperate struggle, the one to open the door, the other to keep it fastened. She seized the key, and he grasped her hand and squeezed it roughly and painfully between the handle and the ward as she tried to turn it. His grip twisted her wrist. She cried out with the pain of it.

A wild passion of shame and self-disgust swept over her. Her spirit awoke in dismay to an affection in ruins, to the immense undignified disaster that had come to them.

Abruptly she desisted, recoiled, and turned and fled up-stairs.

She made noises between weeping and laughter as she went. She gained her room, and slammed her door and locked it as though she

feared violence and pursuit.

"Oh God!" she cried, "Oh God!" and flung aside her opera-cloak, and for a time walked about the room--a Corsair's bride at a crisis of emotion. "Why can't he reason with me," she said, again and again, "instead of doing this?"

Part 3

There presently came a phase in which she said: "I WON'T stand it even now. I will go to-night."

She went as far as her door, then turned to the window. She opened this and scrambled out--a thing she had not done for five long years of adolescence--upon the leaded space above the built-out bath-room on the first floor. Once upon a time she and Roddy had descended thence by the drain-pipe.

But things that a girl of sixteen may do in short skirts are not things to be done by a young lady of twenty-one in fancy dress and an opera-cloak, and just as she was coming unaided to an adequate realization of this, she discovered Mr. Pragmar, the wholesale druggist, who lived three gardens away, and who had been mowing his lawn to get an appetite for dinner, standing in a fascinated attitude beside the forgotten lawn-mower and watching her intently.

She found it extremely difficult to infuse an air of quiet correctitude into her return through the window, and when she was safely inside she waved clinched fists and executed a noiseless dance of rage.

When she reflected that Mr. Pragmar probably knew Mr. Ramage, and might describe the affair to him, she cried "Oh!" with renewed vexation, and repeated some steps of her dance in a new and more ecstatic measure.

Part 4

At eight that evening Miss Stanley tapped at Ann Veronica's bedroom door.

"I've brought you up some dinner, Vee," she said.

Ann Veronica was lying on her bed in a darkling room staring at the ceiling. She reflected before answering. She was frightfully hungry. She had eaten little or no tea, and her mid-day meal had been worse than nothing.

She got up and unlocked the door.

Her aunt did not object to capital punishment or war, or the industrial system or casual wards, or flogging of criminals or the Congo Free State, because none of these things really got hold of her imagination; but she did object, she did not like, she could not bear to think of people not having and enjoying their meals. It was her distinctive test of an emotional state, its interference with a kindly normal digestion. Any one very badly moved choked down a few mouthfuls; the symptom of supreme distress was not to be able to touch a bit. So that the thought of Ann Veronica up-stairs had been extremely painful for her through all the silent dinner-time that night. As soon as dinner was over she went into the kitchen and devoted herself to compiling a tray --not a tray merely of half-cooled dinner

things, but a specially prepared "nice" tray, suitable for tempting any one. With this she now entered.

Ann Veronica found herself in the presence of the most disconcerting fact in human experience, the kindness of people you believe to be thoroughly wrong. She took the tray with both hands, gulped, and gave way to tears.

Her aunt leaped unhappily to the thought of penitence.

"My dear," she began, with an affectionate hand on Ann Veronica's shoulder, "I do SO wish you would realize how it grieves your father."

Ann Veronica flung away from her hand, and the pepper-pot on the tray upset, sending a puff of pepper into the air and instantly filling them both with an intense desire to sneeze.

"I don't think you see," she replied, with tears on her cheeks, and her brows knitting, "how it shames and, ah!--disgraces me--AH TISHU!"

She put down the tray with a concussion on her toilet-table.

"But, dear, think! He is your father. SHOOH!"

"That's no reason," said Ann Veronica, speaking through her handkerchief and stopping abruptly.

Niece and aunt regarded each other for a moment over their pocket-handkerchiefs with watery but antagonistic eyes, each far too profoundly moved to see the absurdity of the position.

"I hope," said Miss Stanley, with dignity, and turned doorward with features in civil warfare. "Better state of mind," she

gasped. . . .

Ann Veronica stood in the twilight room staring at the door that had slammed upon her aunt, her pocket-handkerchief rolled tightly in her hand. Her soul was full of the sense of disaster. She had made her first fight for dignity and freedom as a grown-up and independent Person, and this was how the universe had treated her. It had neither succumbed to her nor wrathfully overwhelmed her. It had thrust her back with an undignified scuffle, with vulgar comedy, with an unendurable, scornful grin.

"By God!" said Ann Veronica for the first time in her life. "But I will! I will!"

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

THE FLIGHT TO LONDON

Part 1

Ann Veronica had an impression that she did not sleep at all that night, and at any rate she got through an immense amount of feverish feeling and thinking.

What was she going to do?

One main idea possessed her: she must get away from home, she must assert herself at once or perish. "Very well," she would say, "then I must go." To remain, she felt, was to concede everything. And she would have to go to-morrow. It was clear it must be to-morrow. If she delayed a day she would delay two

days, if she delayed two days she would delay a week, and after a week things would be adjusted to submission forever. "I'll go," she vowed to the night, "or I'll die!" She made plans and estimated means and resources. These and her general preparations had perhaps a certain disproportion. She had a gold watch, a very good gold watch that had been her mother's, a pearl necklace that was also pretty good, some unpretending rings, some silver bangles and a few other such inferior trinkets, three pounds thirteen shillings unspent of her dress and book allowance and a few good salable books. So equipped, she proposed to set up a separate establishment in the world.

And then she would find work.

For most of a long and fluctuating night she was fairly confident that she would find work; she knew herself to be strong, intelligent, and capable by the standards of most of the girls she knew. She was not quite clear how she should find it, but she felt she would. Then she would write and tell her father what she had done, and put their relationship on a new footing.

That was how she projected it, and in general terms it seemed plausible and possible. But in between these wider phases of comparative confidence were gaps of disconcerting doubt, when the universe was presented as making sinister and threatening faces at her, defying her to defy, preparing a humiliating and shameful overthrow. "I don't care," said Ann Veronica to the darkness; "I'll fight it."

She tried to plan her proceedings in detail. The only difficulties that presented themselves clearly to her were the difficulties of getting away from Morningside Park, and not the difficulties at the other end of the journey. These were so outside her experience that she found it possible to thrust them almost out of sight by saying they would be "all right" in

confident tones to herself. But still she knew they were not right, and at times they became a horrible obsession as of something waiting for her round the corner. She tried to imagine herself "getting something," to project herself as sitting down at a desk and writing, or as returning after her work to some pleasantly equipped and free and independent flat. For a time she furnished the flat. But even with that furniture it remained extremely vague, the possible good and the possible evil as well!

The possible evil! "I'll go," said Ann Veronica for the hundredth time. "I'll go. I don't care WHAT happens."

She awoke out of a doze, as though she had never been sleeping. It was time to get up.

She sat on the edge of her bed and looked about her, at her room, at the row of black-covered books and the pig's skull. "I must take them," she said, to help herself over her own incredulity. "How shall I get my luggage out of the house? . . ."

The figure of her aunt, a little distant, a little propitiatory, behind the coffee things, filled her with a sense of almost catastrophic adventure. Perhaps she might never come back to that breakfast-room again. Never! Perhaps some day, quite soon, she might regret that breakfast-room. She helped herself to the remainder of the slightly congealed bacon, and reverted to the problem of getting her luggage out of the house. She decided to call in the help of Teddy Widgett, or, failing him, of one of his sisters.

Part 2

She found the younger generation of the Widgetts engaged in languid reminiscences, and all, as they expressed it, a "bit decayed." Every one became tremendously animated when they heard that Ann Veronica had failed them because she had been, as she expressed it, "locked in."

"My God!" said Teddy, more impressively than ever.

"But what are you going to do?" asked Hetty.

"What can one do?" asked Ann Veronica. "Would you stand it? I'm going to clear out."

"Clear out?" cried Hetty.

"Go to London," said Ann Veronica.

She had expected sympathetic admiration, but instead the whole Widgett family, except Teddy, expressed a common dismay. "But how can you?" asked Constance. "Who will you stop with?"

"I shall go on my own. Take a room!"

"I say!" said Constance. "But who's going to pay for the room?"

"I've got money," said Ann Veronica. "Anything is better than this--this stifled life down here." And seeing that Hetty and Constance were obviously developing objections, she plunged at once into a demand for help. "I've got nothing in the world to pack with except a toy size portmanteau. Can you lend me some stuff?"

"You ARE a chap!" said Constance, and warmed only slowly from the idea of dissuasion to the idea of help. But they did what they could for her. They agreed to lend her their hold-all and a

large, formless bag which they called the communal trunk. And Teddy declared himself ready to go to the ends of the earth for her, and carry her luggage all the way.

Hetty, looking out of the window--she always smoked her after-breakfast cigarette at the window for the benefit of the less advanced section of Morningside Park society--and trying not to raise objections, saw Miss Stanley going down toward the shops.

"If you must go on with it," said Hetty, "now's your time." And Ann Veronica at once went back with the hold-all, trying not to hurry indecently but to keep up her dignified air of being a wronged person doing the right thing at a smart trot, to pack. Teddy went round by the garden backs and dropped the bag over the fence. All this was exciting and entertaining. Her aunt returned before the packing was done, and Ann Veronica lunched with an uneasy sense of bag and hold-all packed up-stairs and inadequately hidden from chance intruders by the valance of the bed. She went down, flushed and light-hearted, to the Widgetts' after lunch to make some final arrangements and then, as soon as her aunt had retired to lie down for her usual digestive hour, took the risk of the servants having the enterprise to report her proceedings and carried her bag and hold-all to the garden gate, whence Teddy, in a state of ecstatic service, bore them to the railway station. Then she went up-stairs again, dressed herself carefully for town, put on her most businesslike-looking hat, and with a wave of emotion she found it hard to control, walked down to catch the 3.17 up-train.

Teddy handed her into the second-class compartment her season-ticket warranted, and declared she was "simply splendid." "If you want anything," he said, "or get into any trouble, wire me. I'd come back from the ends of the earth. I'd do anything, Vee. It's horrible to think of you!"

"You're an awful brick, Teddy!" she said.

"Who wouldn't be for you?"

The train began to move. "You're splendid!" said Teddy, with his hair wild in the wind. "Good luck! Good luck!"

She waved from the window until the bend hid him.

She found herself alone in the train asking herself what she must do next, and trying not to think of herself as cut off from home or any refuge whatever from the world she had resolved to face. She felt smaller and more adventurous even than she had expected to feel. "Let me see," she said to herself, trying to control a slight sinking of the heart, "I am going to take a room in a lodging-house because that is cheaper. . . . But perhaps I had better get a room in an hotel to-night and look round. . . .

"It's bound to be all right," she said.

But her heart kept on sinking. What hotel should she go to? If she told a cabman to drive to an hotel, any hotel, what would he do--or say? He might drive to something dreadfully expensive, and not at all the quiet sort of thing she required. Finally she decided that even for an hotel she must look round, and that meanwhile she would "book" her luggage at Waterloo. She told the porter to take it to the booking-office, and it was only after a disconcerting moment or so that she found she ought to have directed him to go to the cloak-room. But that was soon put right, and she walked out into London with a peculiar exaltation of mind, an exaltation that partook of panic and defiance, but was chiefly a sense of vast unexampled release.

She inhaled a deep breath of air--London air.

Part 3

She dismissed the first hotels she passed, she scarcely knew why, mainly perhaps from the mere dread of entering them, and crossed Waterloo Bridge at a leisurely pace. It was high afternoon, there was no great throng of foot-passengers, and many an eye from omnibus and pavement rested gratefully on her fresh, trim presence as she passed young and erect, with the light of determination shining through the quiet self-possession of her face. She was dressed as English girls do dress for town, without either coquetry or harshness: her collarless blouse confessed a pretty neck, her eyes were bright and steady, and her dark hair waved loosely and graciously over her ears. . . .

It seemed at first the most beautiful afternoon of all time to her, and perhaps the thrill of her excitement did add a distinctive and culminating keenness to the day. The river, the big buildings on the north bank, Westminster, and St. Paul's, were rich and wonderful with the soft sunshine of London, the softest, the finest grained, the most penetrating and least emphatic sunshine in the world. The very carts and vans and cabs that Wellington Street poured out incessantly upon the bridge seemed ripe and good in her eyes. A traffic of copious barges slumbered over the face of the river-barges either altogether stagnant or dreaming along in the wake of fussy tugs; and above circled, urbanely voracious, the London seagulls. She had never been there before at that hour, in that light, and it seemed to her as if she came to it all for the first time. And this great mellow place, this London, now was hers, to struggle with, to go where she pleased in, to overcome and live in. "I am glad," she told herself, "I came."

She marked an hotel that seemed neither opulent nor odd in a little side street opening on the Embankment, made up her mind with an effort, and, returning by Hungerford Bridge to Waterloo, took a cab to this chosen refuge with her two pieces of luggage. There was just a minute's hesitation before they gave her a room.

The young lady in the bureau said she would inquire, and Ann Veronica, while she affected to read the appeal on a hospital collecting-box upon the bureau counter, had a disagreeable sense of being surveyed from behind by a small, whiskered gentleman in a frock-coat, who came out of the inner office and into the hall among a number of equally observant green porters to look at her and her bags. But the survey was satisfactory, and she found herself presently in Room No. 47, straightening her hat and waiting for her luggage to appear.

"All right so far," she said to herself. . . .

Part 4

But presently, as she sat on the one antimacassared red silk chair and surveyed her hold-all and bag in that tidy, rather vacant, and dehumanized apartment, with its empty wardrobe and desert toilet-table and pictureless walls and stereotyped furnishings, a sudden blankness came upon her as though she didn't matter, and had been thrust away into this impersonal corner, she and her gear. . . .

She decided to go out into the London afternoon again and get something to eat in an Aerated Bread shop or some such place, and perhaps find a cheap room for herself. Of course that was what

she had to do; she had to find a cheap room for herself and work!

This Room No. 47 was no more than a sort of railway compartment on the way to that.

How does one get work?

She walked along the Strand and across Trafalgar Square, and by the Haymarket to Piccadilly, and so through dignified squares and palatial alleys to Oxford Street; and her mind was divided between a speculative treatment of employment on the one hand, and breezes --zephyr breezes--of the keenest appreciation for London, on the other. The jolly part of it was that for the first time in her life so far as London was concerned, she was not going anywhere in particular; for the first time in her life it seemed to her she was taking London in.

She tried to think how people get work. Ought she to walk into some of these places and tell them what she could do? She hesitated at the window of a shipping-office in Cockspur Street and at the Army and Navy Stores, but decided that perhaps there would be some special and customary hour, and that it would be better for her to find this out before she made her attempt. And, besides, she didn't just immediately want to make her attempt.

She fell into a pleasant dream of positions and work. Behind every one of these myriad fronts she passed there must be a career or careers. Her ideas of women's employment and a modern woman's pose in life were based largely on the figure of Vivie Warren in Mrs. Warren's Profession. She had seen Mrs. Warren's Profession furtively with Hetty Widdett from the gallery of a Stage Society performance one Monday afternoon. Most of it had been incomprehensible to her, or comprehensible in a way that checked further curiosity, but the figure of Vivien, hard, capable, successful, and bullying, and ordering about a veritable

Teddy in the person of Frank Gardner, appealed to her. She saw herself in very much Vivie's position--managing something.

Her thoughts were deflected from Vivie Warren by the peculiar behavior of a middle-aged gentleman in Piccadilly. He appeared suddenly from the infinite in the neighborhood of the Burlington Arcade, crossing the pavement toward her and with his eyes upon her. He seemed to her indistinguishably about her father's age. He wore a silk hat a little tilted, and a morning coat buttoned round a tight, contained figure; and a white slip gave a finish to his costume and endorsed the quiet distinction of his tie. His face was a little flushed perhaps, and his small, brown eyes were bright. He stopped on the curb-stone, not facing her but as if he was on his way to cross the road, and spoke to her suddenly over his shoulder.

"Whither away?" he said, very distinctly in a curiously wheedling voice. Ann Veronica stared at his foolish, propitiatory smile, his hungry gaze, through one moment of amazement, then stepped aside and went on her way with a quickened step. But her mind was ruffled, and its mirror-like surface of satisfaction was not easily restored.

Queer old gentleman!

The art of ignoring is one of the accomplishments of every well-bred girl, so carefully instilled that at last she can even ignore her own thoughts and her own knowledge. Ann Veronica could at the same time ask herself what this queer old gentleman could have meant by speaking to her, and know--know in general terms, at least--what that accosting signified. About her, as she had gone day by day to and from the Tredgold College, she had seen and not seen many an incidental aspect of those sides of life about which girls are expected to know nothing, aspects that were extraordinarily relevant to her own position and outlook on

the world, and yet by convention ineffably remote. For all that she was of exceptional intellectual enterprise, she had never yet considered these things with unaverted eyes. She had viewed them askance, and without exchanging ideas with any one else in the world about them.

She went on her way now no longer dreaming and appreciative, but disturbed and unwillingly observant behind her mask of serene contentment.

That delightful sense of free, unembarrassed movement was gone.

As she neared the bottom of the dip in Piccadilly she saw a woman approaching her from the opposite direction--a tall woman who at the first glance seemed altogether beautiful and fine. She came along with the fluttering assurance of some tall ship. Then as she drew nearer paint showed upon her face, and a harsh purpose behind the quiet expression of her open countenance, and a sort of unreality in her splendor betrayed itself for which Ann Veronica could not recall the right word --a word, half understood, that lurked and hid in her mind, the word "meretricious." Behind this woman and a little to the side of her, walked a man smartly dressed, with desire and appraisal in his eyes. Something insisted that those two were mysteriously linked--that the woman knew the man was there.

It was a second reminder that against her claim to go free and untrammelled there was a case to be made, that after all it was true that a girl does not go alone in the world unchallenged, nor ever has gone freely alone in the world, that evil walks abroad and dangers, and petty insults more irritating than dangers, lurk.

It was in the quiet streets and squares toward Oxford Street that it first came into her head disagreeably that she herself was

being followed. She observed a man walking on the opposite side of the way and looking toward her.

"Bother it all!" she swore. "Bother!" and decided that this was not so, and would not look to right or left again.

Beyond the Circus Ann Veronica went into a British Tea-Table Company shop to get some tea. And as she was yet waiting for her tea to come she saw this man again. Either it was an unfortunate recovery of a trail, or he had followed her from Mayfair. There was no mistaking his intentions this time. He came down the shop looking for her quite obviously, and took up a position on the other side against a mirror in which he was able to regard her steadfastly.

Beneath the serene unconcern of Ann Veronica's face was a boiling tumult. She was furiously angry. She gazed with a quiet detachment toward the window and the Oxford Street traffic, and in her heart she was busy kicking this man to death. He HAD followed her! What had he followed her for? He must have followed her all the way from beyond Grosvenor Square.

He was a tall man and fair, with bluish eyes that were rather protuberant, and long white hands of which he made a display. He had removed his silk hat, and now sat looking at Ann Veronica over an untouched cup of tea; he sat gloating upon her, trying to catch her eye. Once, when he thought he had done so, he smiled an ingratiating smile. He moved, after quiet intervals, with a quick little movement, and ever and again stroked his small mustache and coughed a self-conscious cough.

"That he should be in the same world with me!" said Ann Veronica, reduced to reading the list of good things the British Tea-Table Company had priced for its patrons.

Heaven knows what dim and tawdry conceptions of passion and desire were in that blond cranium, what romance-begotten dreams of intrigue and adventure! but they sufficed, when presently Ann Veronica went out into the darkling street again, to inspire a flitting, dogged pursuit, idiotic, exasperating, indecent.

She had no idea what she should do. If she spoke to a policeman she did not know what would ensue. Perhaps she would have to charge this man and appear in a police-court next day.

She became angry with herself. She would not be driven in by this persistent, sneaking aggression. She would ignore him. Surely she could ignore him. She stopped abruptly, and looked in a flower-shop window. He passed, and came loitering back and stood beside her, silently looking into her face.

The afternoon had passed now into twilight. The shops were lighting up into gigantic lanterns of color, the street lamps were glowing into existence, and she had lost her way. She had lost her sense of direction, and was among unfamiliar streets. She went on from street to street, and all the glory of London had departed. Against the sinister, the threatening, monstrous inhumanity of the limitless city, there was nothing now but this supreme, ugly fact of a pursuit--the pursuit of the undesired, persistent male.

For a second time Ann Veronica wanted to swear at the universe.

There were moments when she thought of turning upon this man and talking to him. But there was something in his face at once stupid and invincible that told her he would go on forcing himself upon her, that he would esteem speech with her a great point gained. In the twilight he had ceased to be a person one could tackle and shame; he had become something more general, a something that crawled and sneaked toward her and would not let

her alone. . . .

Then, when the tension was getting unendurable, and she was on the verge of speaking to some casual passer-by and demanding help, her follower vanished. For a time she could scarcely believe he was gone. He had. The night had swallowed him up, but his work on her was done. She had lost her nerve, and there was no more freedom in London for her that night. She was glad to join in the stream of hurrying homeward workers that was now welling out of a thousand places of employment, and to imitate their driven, preoccupied haste. She had followed a bobbing white hat and gray jacket until she reached the Euston Road corner of Tottenham Court Road, and there, by the name on a bus and the cries of a conductor, she made a guess of her way. And she did not merely affect to be driven--she felt driven. She was afraid people would follow her, she was afraid of the dark, open doorways she passed, and afraid of the blazes of light; she was afraid to be alone, and she knew not what it was she feared.

It was past seven when she got back to her hotel. She thought then that she had shaken off the man of the bulging blue eyes forever, but that night she found he followed her into her dreams. He stalked her, he stared at her, he craved her, he sidled slinking and propitiatory and yet relentlessly toward her, until at last she awoke from the suffocating nightmare nearness of his approach, and lay awake in fear and horror listening to the unaccustomed sounds of the hotel.

She came very near that night to resolving that she would return to her home next morning. But the morning brought courage again, and those first intimations of horror vanished completely from her mind.

Part 5

She had sent her father a telegram from the East Strand post-office worded thus:

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| All | is | well | with | me |  
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|  
| and | quite | safe | Veronica | |  
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and afterward she had dined a la carte upon a cutlet, and had then set herself to write an answer to Mr. Manning's proposal of marriage. But she had found it very difficult.

"DEAR MR. MANNING, she had begun. So far it had been plain sailing, and it had seemed fairly evident to go on: "I find it very difficult to answer your letter."

But after that neither ideas nor phrases had come and she had fallen thinking of the events of the day. She had decided that she would spend the next morning answering advertisements in the papers that abounded in the writing-room; and so, after half an hour's perusal of back numbers of the Sketch in the drawing-room, she had gone to bed.

She found next morning, when she came to this advertisement answering, that it was more difficult than she had supposed. In the first place there were not so many suitable advertisements as she had expected. She sat down by the paper-rack with a general feeling of resemblance to Vivie Warren, and looked through the Morning Post and Standard and Telegraph, and afterward the half-penny sheets. The Morning Post was hungry for governesses and nursery governesses, but held out no other hopes; the Daily

Telegraph that morning seemed eager only for skirt hands. She went to a writing-desk and made some memoranda on a sheet of note-paper, and then remembered that she had no address as yet to which letters could be sent.

She decided to leave this matter until the morrow and devote the morning to settling up with Mr. Manning. At the cost of quite a number of torn drafts she succeeded in evolving this:

"DEAR MR. MANNING,--I find it very difficult to answer your letter. I hope you won't mind if I say first that I think it does me an extraordinary honor that you should think of any one like myself so highly and seriously, and, secondly, that I wish it had not been written."

She surveyed this sentence for some time before going on. "I wonder," she said, "why one writes him sentences like that? It'll have to go," she decided, "I've written too many already." She went on, with a desperate attempt to be easy and colloquial:

"You see, we were rather good friends, I thought, and now perhaps it will be difficult for us to get back to the old friendly footing. But if that can possibly be done I want it to be done. You see, the plain fact of the case is that I think I am too young and ignorant for marriage. I have been thinking these things over lately, and it seems to me that marriage for a girl is just the supremest thing in life. It isn't just one among a number of important things; for her it is the important thing, and until she knows far more than I know of the facts of life, how is she to undertake it? So please; if you will, forget that you wrote that letter, and forgive this answer. I want you to think of me just as if I was a man, and quite outside marriage altogether.

"I do hope you will be able to do this, because I value men

friends. I shall be very sorry if I cannot have you for a friend. I think that there is no better friend for a girl than a man rather older than herself.

"Perhaps by this time you will have heard of the step I have taken in leaving my home. Very likely you will disapprove highly of what I have done--I wonder? You may, perhaps, think I have done it just in a fit of childish petulance because my father locked me in when I wanted to go to a ball of which he did not approve. But really it is much more than that. At Morningside Park I feel as though all my growing up was presently to stop, as though I was being shut in from the light of life, and, as they say in botany, etiolated. I was just like a sort of dummy that does things as it is told--that is to say, as the strings are pulled. I want to be a person by myself, and to pull my own strings. I had rather have trouble and hardship like that than be taken care of by others. I want to be myself. I wonder if a man can quite understand that passionate feeling? It is quite a passionate feeling. So I am already no longer the girl you knew at Morningside Park. I am a young person seeking employment and freedom and self-development, just as in quite our first talk of all I said I wanted to be.

"I do hope you will see how things are, and not be offended with me or frightfully shocked and distressed by what I have done.

"Very sincerely yours,

"ANN VERONICA STANLEY."

In the afternoon she resumed her search for apartments. The intoxicating sense of novelty had given place to a more business-like mood. She drifted northward from the Strand, and came on some queer and dingy quarters.

She had never imagined life was half so sinister as it looked to her in the beginning of these investigations. She found herself again in the presence of some element in life about which she had been trained not to think, about which she was perhaps instinctively indisposed to think; something which jarred, in spite of all her mental resistance, with all her preconceptions of a clean and courageous girl walking out from Morningside Park as one walks out of a cell into a free and spacious world. One or two landladies refused her with an air of conscious virtue that she found hard to explain. "We don't let to ladies," they said.

She drifted, via Theobald's Road, obliquely toward the region about Titchfield Street. Such apartments as she saw were either scandalously dirty or unaccountably dear, or both. And some were adorned with engravings that struck her as being more vulgar and undesirable than anything she had ever seen in her life. Ann Veronica loved beautiful things, and the beauty of undraped loveliness not least among them; but these were pictures that did but insist coarsely upon the roundness of women's bodies. The windows of these rooms were obscured with draperies, their floors a carpet patchwork; the china ornaments on their mantels were of a class apart. After the first onset several of the women who had apartments to let said she would not do for them, and in effect dismissed her. This also struck her as odd.

About many of these houses hung a mysterious taint as of something weakly and commonly and dustily evil; the women who negotiated the rooms looked out through a friendly manner as though it was a mask, with hard, defiant eyes. Then one old crone, short-sighted and shaky-handed, called Ann Veronica

"dearie," and made some remark, obscure and slangy, of which the spirit rather than the words penetrated to her understanding.

For a time she looked at no more apartments, and walked through gaunt and ill-cleaned streets, through the sordid under side of life, perplexed and troubled, ashamed of her previous obtuseness.

She had something of the feeling a Hindoo must experience who has been into surroundings or touched something that offends his caste. She passed people in the streets and regarded them with a quickening apprehension, once or twice came girls dressed in slatternly finery, going toward Regent Street from out these places. It did not occur to her that they at least had found a way of earning a living, and had that much economic superiority to herself. It did not occur to her that save for some accidents of education and character they had souls like her own.

For a time Ann Veronica went on her way gauging the quality of sordid streets. At last, a little way to the northward of Euston Road, the moral cloud seemed to lift, the moral atmosphere to change; clean blinds appeared in the windows, clean doorsteps before the doors, a different appeal in the neatly placed cards bearing the word

APARTMENTS

in the clear bright windows. At last in a street near the Hampstead Road she hit upon a room that had an exceptional quality of space and order, and a tall woman with a kindly face to show it. "You're a student, perhaps?" said the tall woman. "At the Tredgold Women's College," said Ann Veronica. She felt it would save explanations if she did not state she had left her home and was looking for employment. The room was papered with green, large-patterned paper that was at worst a trifle dingy,

and the arm-chair and the seats of the other chairs were covered with the unusual brightness of a large-patterned chintz, which also supplied the window-curtain. There was a round table covered, not with the usual "tapestry" cover, but with a plain green cloth that went passably with the wall-paper. In the recess beside the fireplace were some open bookshelves. The carpet was a quiet drugget and not excessively worn, and the bed in the corner was covered by a white quilt. There were neither texts nor rubbish on the walls, but only a stirring version of Belshazzar's feast, a steel engraving in the early Victorian manner that had some satisfactory blacks. And the woman who showed this room was tall, with an understanding eye and the quiet manner of the well-trained servant.

Ann Veronica brought her luggage in a cab from the hotel; she tipped the hotel porter sixpence and overpaid the cabman eighteenpence, unpacked some of her books and possessions, and so made the room a little homelike, and then sat down in a by no means uncomfortable arm-chair before the fire. She had arranged for a supper of tea, a boiled egg, and some tinned peaches. She had discussed the general question of supplies with the helpful landlady. "And now," said Ann Veronica surveying her apartment with an unprecedented sense of proprietorship, "what is the next step?"

She spent the evening in writing--it was a little difficult--to her father and--which was easier--to the Widgetts. She was greatly heartened by doing this. The necessity of defending herself and assuming a confident and secure tone did much to dispell the sense of being exposed and indefensible in a huge dingy world that abounded in sinister possibilities. She addressed her letters, meditated on them for a time, and then took them out and posted them. Afterward she wanted to get her letter to her father back in order to read it over again, and, if it tallied with her general impression of it, re-write it.

He would know her address to-morrow. She reflected upon that with a thrill of terror that was also, somehow, in some faint remote way, gleeful.

"Dear old Daddy," she said, "he'll make a fearful fuss. Well, it had to happen somewhen. . . . Somehow. I wonder what he'll say?"

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

EXPOSTULATIONS

Part 1

The next morning opened calmly, and Ann Veronica sat in her own room, her very own room, and consumed an egg and marmalade, and read the advertisements in the Daily Telegraph. Then began expostulations, preluded by a telegram and headed by her aunt. The telegram reminded Ann Veronica that she had no place for interviews except her bed-sitting-room, and she sought her landlady and negotiated hastily for the use of the ground floor parlor, which very fortunately was vacant. She explained she was expecting an important interview, and asked that her visitor should be duly shown in. Her aunt arrived about half-past ten, in black and with an unusually thick spotted veil. She raised this with the air of a conspirator unmasking, and displayed a tear-flushed face. For a moment she remained silent.

"My dear," she said, when she could get her breath, "you must come home at once."

Ann Veronica closed the door quite softly and stood still.

"This has almost killed your father. . . . After Gwen!"

"I sent a telegram."

"He cares so much for you. He did so care for you."

"I sent a telegram to say I was all right."

"All right! And I never dreamed anything of the sort was going on. I had no idea!" She sat down abruptly and threw her wrists limply upon the table. "Oh, Veronica!" she said, "to leave your home!"

She had been weeping. She was weeping now. Ann Veronica was overcome by this amount of emotion.

"Why did you do it?" her aunt urged. "Why could you not confide in us?"

"Do what?" said Ann Veronica.

"What you have done."

"But what have I done?"

"Elope! Go off in this way. We had no idea. We had such a pride in you, such hope in you. I had no idea you were not the happiest girl. Everything I could do! Your father sat up all night. Until at last I persuaded him to go to bed. He wanted to put on his overcoat and come after you and look for you--in London. We made sure it was just like Gwen. Only Gwen left a letter on the pincushion. You didn't even do that Vee; not even that."

"I sent a telegram, aunt," said Ann Veronica.

"Like a stab. You didn't even put the twelve words."

"I said I was all right."

"Gwen said she was happy. Before that came your father didn't even know you were gone. He was just getting cross about your being late for dinner--you know his way--when it came. He opened it--just off-hand, and then when he saw what it was he hit at the table and sent his soup spoon flying and splashing on to the tablecloth. 'My God!' he said, 'I'll go after them and kill him.

I'll go after them and kill him.' For the moment I thought it was a telegram from Gwen."

"But what did father imagine?"

"Of course he imagined! Any one would! 'What has happened, Peter?' I asked. He was standing up with the telegram crumpled in his hand. He used a most awful word! Then he said, 'It's Ann Veronica gone to join her sister!' 'Gone!' I said. 'Gone!' he said. 'Read that,' and threw the telegram at me, so that it went into the tureen. He swore when I tried to get it out with the ladle, and told me what it said. Then he sat down again in a chair and said that people who wrote novels ought to be strung up. It was as much as I could do to prevent him flying out of the house there and then and coming after you. Never since I was a girl have I seen your father so moved. 'Oh! little Vee!' he cried, 'little Vee!' and put his face between his hands and sat still for a long time before he broke out again."

Ann Veronica had remained standing while her aunt spoke.

"Do you mean, aunt," she asked, "that my father thought I had gone off--with some man?"

"What else COULD he think? Would any one DREAM you would be so mad as to go off alone?"

"After--after what had happened the night before?"

"Oh, why raise up old scores? If you could see him this morning, his poor face as white as a sheet and all cut about with shaving! He was for coming up by the very first train and looking for you, but I said to him, 'Wait for the letters,' and there, sure enough, was yours. He could hardly open the envelope, he trembled so. Then he threw the letter at me. 'Go and fetch her home,' he said; 'it isn't what we thought! It's just a practical joke of hers.' And with that he went off to the City, stern and silent, leaving his bacon on his plate--a great slice of bacon hardly touched. No breakfast, he's had no dinner, hardly a mouthful of soup--since yesterday at tea."

She stopped. Aunt and niece regarded each other silently.

"You must come home to him at once," said Miss Stanley.

Ann Veronica looked down at her fingers on the claret-colored table-cloth. Her aunt had summoned up an altogether too vivid picture of her father as the masterful man, overbearing, emphatic, sentimental, noisy, aimless. Why on earth couldn't he leave her to grow in her own way? Her pride rose at the bare thought of return

"I don't think I CAN do that," she said. She looked up and said, a little breathlessly, "I'm sorry, aunt, but I don't think I can."

Part 2

Then it was the expostulations really began.

From first to last, on this occasion, her aunt expostulated for about two hours. "But, my dear," she began, "it is Impossible! It is quite out of the Question. You simply can't." And to that, through vast rhetorical meanderings, she clung. It reached her only slowly that Ann Veronica was standing to her resolution. "How will you live?" she appealed. "Think of what people will say!" That became a refrain. "Think of what Lady Palsworthy will say! Think of what"--So-and-so--"will say! What are we to tell people?

"Besides, what am I to tell your father?"

At first it had not been at all clear to Ann Veronica that she would refuse to return home; she had had some dream of a capitulation that should leave her an enlarged and defined freedom, but as her aunt put this aspect and that of her flight to her, as she wandered illogically and inconsistently from one urgent consideration to another, as she mingled assurances and aspects and emotions, it became clearer and clearer to the girl that there could be little or no change in the position of things if she returned. "And what will Mr. Manning think?" said her aunt.

"I don't care what any one thinks," said Ann Veronica.

"I can't imagine what has come over you," said her aunt. "I can't conceive what you want. You foolish girl!"

Ann Veronica took that in silence. At the back of her mind, dim

and yet disconcerting, was the perception that she herself did not know what she wanted. And yet she knew it was not fair to call her a foolish girl.

"Don't you care for Mr. Manning?" said her aunt.

"I don't see what he has to do with my coming to London?"

"He--he worships the ground you tread on. You don't deserve it, but he does. Or at least he did the day before yesterday. And here you are!"

Her aunt opened all the fingers of her gloved hand in a rhetorical gesture. "It seems to me all madness--madness! Just because your father--wouldn't let you disobey him!"

Part 3

In the afternoon the task of expostulation was taken up by Mr. Stanley in person. Her father's ideas of expostulation were a little harsh and forcible, and over the claret-colored table-cloth and under the gas chandelier, with his hat and umbrella between them like the mace in Parliament, he and his daughter contrived to have a violent quarrel. She had intended to be quietly dignified, but he was in a smouldering rage from the beginning, and began by assuming, which alone was more than flesh and blood could stand, that the insurrection was over and that she was coming home submissively. In his desire to be emphatic and to avenge himself for his over-night distresses, he speedily became brutal, more brutal than she had ever known him before.

"A nice time of anxiety you've given me, young lady," he said, as he entered the room. "I hope you're satisfied."

She was frightened--his anger always did frighten her--and in her resolve to conceal her fright she carried a queen-like dignity to what she felt even at the time was a preposterous pitch. She said she hoped she had not distressed him by the course she had felt obliged to take, and he told her not to be a fool. She tried to keep her side up by declaring that he had put her into an impossible position, and he replied by shouting, "Nonsense! Nonsense! Any father in my place would have done what I did."

Then he went on to say: "Well, you've had your little adventure, and I hope now you've had enough of it. So go up-stairs and get your things together while I look out for a hansom."

To which the only possible reply seemed to be, "I'm not coming home."

"Not coming home!"

"No!" And, in spite of her resolve to be a Person, Ann Veronica began to weep with terror at herself. Apparently she was always doomed to weep when she talked to her father. But he was always forcing her to say and do such unexpectedly conclusive things. She feared he might take her tears as a sign of weakness. So she said: "I won't come home. I'd rather starve!"

For a moment the conversation hung upon that declaration. Then Mr. Stanley, putting his hands on the table in the manner rather of a barrister than a solicitor, and regarding her balefully through his glasses with quite undisguised animosity, asked, "And may I presume to inquire, then, what you mean to do?--how do you propose to live?"

"I shall live," sobbed Ann Veronica. "You needn't be anxious about that! I shall contrive to live."

"But I AM anxious," said Mr. Stanley, "I am anxious. Do you think it's nothing to me to have my daughter running about London looking for odd jobs and disgracing herself?"

"Sha'n't get odd jobs," said Ann Veronica, wiping her eyes.

And from that point they went on to a thoroughly embittering wrangle. Mr. Stanley used his authority, and commanded Ann Veronica to come home, to which, of course, she said she wouldn't; and then he warned her not to defy him, warned her very solemnly, and then commanded her again. He then said that if she would not obey him in this course she should "never darken his doors again," and was, indeed, frightfully abusive. This threat terrified Ann Veronica so much that she declared with sobs and vehemence that she would never come home again, and for a time both talked at once and very wildly. He asked her whether she understood what she was saying, and went on to say still more precisely that she should never touch a penny of his money until she came home again--not one penny. Ann Veronica said she didn't care.

Then abruptly Mr. Stanley changed his key. "You poor child!" he said; "don't you see the infinite folly of these proceedings? Think! Think of the love and affection you abandon! Think of your aunt, a second mother to you. Think if your own mother was alive!"

He paused, deeply moved.

"If my own mother was alive," sobbed Ann Veronica, "she would understand."

The talk became more and more inconclusive and exhausting. Ann Veronica found herself incompetent, undignified, and detestable, holding on desperately to a hardening antagonism to her father, quarrelling with him, wrangling with him, thinking of repartees--almost as if he was a brother. It was horrible, but what could she do? She meant to live her own life, and he meant, with contempt and insults, to prevent her. Anything else that was said she now regarded only as an aspect of or diversion from that.

In the retrospect she was amazed to think how things had gone to pieces, for at the outset she had been quite prepared to go home again upon terms. While waiting for his coming she had stated her present and future relations with him with what had seemed to her the most satisfactory lucidity and completeness. She had looked forward to an explanation. Instead had come this storm, this shouting, this weeping, this confusion of threats and irrelevant appeals. It was not only that her father had said all sorts of inconsistent and unreasonable things, but that by some incomprehensible infection she herself had replied in the same vein. He had assumed that her leaving home was the point at issue, that everything turned on that, and that the sole alternative was obedience, and she had fallen in with that assumption until rebellion seemed a sacred principle. Moreover, atrociously and inexorably, he allowed it to appear ever and again in horrible gleams that he suspected there was some man in the case. . . . Some man!

And to conclude it all was the figure of her father in the doorway, giving her a last chance, his hat in one hand, his umbrella in the other, shaken at her to emphasize his point.

"You understand, then," he was saying, "you understand?"

"I understand," said Ann Veronica, tear-wet and flushed with a

reciprocal passion, but standing up to him with an equality that amazed even herself, "I understand." She controlled a sob. "Not a penny--not one penny--and never darken your doors again!"

Part 4

The next day her aunt came again and expostulated, and was just saying it was "an unheard-of thing" for a girl to leave her home as Ann Veronica had done, when her father arrived, and was shown in by the pleasant-faced landlady.

Her father had determined on a new line. He put down his hat and umbrella, rested his hands on his hips, and regarded Ann Veronica firmly.

"Now," he said, quietly, "it's time we stopped this nonsense."

Ann Veronica was about to reply, when he went on, with a still more deadly quiet: "I am not here to bandy words with you. Let us have no more of this humbug. You are to come home."

"I thought I explained--"

"I don't think you can have heard me," said her father; "I have told you to come home."

"I thought I explained--"

"Come home!"

Ann Veronica shrugged her shoulders.

"Very well," said her father.

"I think this ends the business," he said, turning to his sister.

"It's not for us to supplicate any more. She must learn wisdom--as God pleases."

"But, my dear Peter!" said Miss Stanley.

"No," said her brother, conclusively, "it's not for a parent to go on persuading a child."

Miss Stanley rose and regarded Ann Veronica fixedly. The girl stood with her hands behind her back, sulky, resolute, and intelligent, a strand of her black hair over one eye and looking more than usually delicate-featured, and more than ever like an obdurate child.

"She doesn't know."

"She does."

"I can't imagine what makes you fly out against everything like this," said Miss Stanley to her niece.

"What is the good of talking?" said her brother. "She must go her own way. A man's children nowadays are not his own. That's the fact of the matter. Their minds are turned against him. . . . Rubbishy novels and pernicious rascals. We can't even protect them from themselves."

An immense gulf seemed to open between father and daughter as he said these words.

"I don't see," gasped Ann Veronica, "why parents and children . .

. shouldn't be friends."

"Friends!" said her father. "When we see you going through disobedience to the devil! Come, Molly, she must go her own way."

I've tried to use my authority. And she defies me. What more is there to be said? She defies me!"

It was extraordinary. Ann Veronica felt suddenly an effect of tremendous pathos; she would have given anything to have been able to frame and make some appeal, some utterance that should bridge this bottomless chasm that had opened between her and her father, and she could find nothing whatever to say that was in the least sincere and appealing.

"Father," she cried, "I have to live!"

He misunderstood her. "That," he said, grimly, with his hand on the door-handle, "must be your own affair, unless you choose to live at Morningside Park."

Miss Stanley turned to her. "Vee," she said, "come home. Before it is too late."

"Come, Molly," said Mr. Stanley, at the door.

"Vee!" said Miss Stanley, "you hear what your father says!"

Miss Stanley struggled with emotion. She made a curious movement toward her niece, then suddenly, convulsively, she dabbed down something lumpy on the table and turned to follow her brother. Ann Veronica stared for a moment in amazement at this dark-green object that clashed as it was put down. It was a purse. She made a step forward. "Aunt!" she said, "I can't--"

Then she caught a wild appeal in her aunt's blue eye, halted, and the door clicked upon them.

There was a pause, and then the front door slammed. . . .

Ann Veronica realized that she was alone with the world. And this time the departure had a tremendous effect of finality. She had to resist an impulse of sheer terror, to run out after them and give in.

"Gods," she said, at last, "I've done it this time!"

"Well!" She took up the neat morocco purse, opened it, and examined the contents.

It contained three sovereigns, six and fourpence, two postage stamps, a small key, and her aunt's return half ticket to Morningside Park.

Part 5

After the interview Ann Veronica considered herself formally cut off from home. If nothing else had clinched that, the purse had.

Nevertheless there came a residuum of expostulations. Her brother Roddy, who was in the motor line, came to expostulate; her sister Alice wrote. And Mr. Manning called.

Her sister Alice seemed to have developed a religious sense away there in Yorkshire, and made appeals that had no meaning for Ann Veronica's mind. She exhorted Ann Veronica not to become one of "those unsexed intellectuals, neither man nor woman."

Ann Veronica meditated over that phrase. "That's HIM," said Ann Veronica, in sound, idiomatic English. "Poor old Alice!"

Her brother Roddy came to her and demanded tea, and asked her to state a case. "Bit thick on the old man, isn't it?" said Roddy, who had developed a bluff, straightforward style in the motor shop.

"Mind my smoking?" said Roddy. "I don't see quite what your game is, Vee, but I suppose you've got a game on somewhere.

"Rummy lot we are!" said Roddy. "Alice--Alice gone dotty, and all over kids. Gwen--I saw Gwen the other day, and the paint's thicker than ever. Jim is up to the neck in Mahatmas and Theosophy and Higher Thought and rot--writes letters worse than Alice. And now YOU'RE on the war-path. I believe I'm the only sane member of the family left. The G.V.'s as mad as any of you, in spite of all his respectability; not a bit of him straight anywhere, not one bit."

"Straight?"

"Not a bit of it! He's been out after eight per cent. since the beginning. Eight per cent.! He'll come a cropper one of these days, if you ask me. He's been near it once or twice already. That's got his nerves to rags. I suppose we're all human beings really, but what price the sacred Institution of the Family! Us as a bundle! Eh? . . . I don't half disagree with you, Vee, really; only thing is, I don't see how you're going to pull it off. A home MAY be a sort of cage, but still--it's a home. Gives you a right to hang on to the old man until he busts--practically. Jolly hard life for a girl, getting a living. Not MY affair."

He asked questions and listened to her views for a time.

"I'd chuck this lark right off if I were you, Vee," he said.
"I'm five years older than you, and no end wiser, being a man. What you're after is too risky. It's a damned hard thing to do. It's all very handsome starting out on your own, but it's too damned hard. That's my opinion, if you ask me. There's nothing a girl can do that isn't sweated to the bone. You square the G.V., and go home before you have to. That's my advice. If you don't eat humble-pie now you may live to fare worse later. I can't help you a cent. Life's hard enough nowadays for an unprotected male. Let alone a girl. You got to take the world as it is, and the only possible trade for a girl that isn't sweated is to get hold of a man and make him do it for her. It's no good flying out at that, Vee; I didn't arrange it. It's Providence. That's how things are; that's the order of the world. Like appendicitis. It isn't pretty, but we're made so. Rot, no doubt; but we can't alter it. You go home and live on the G.V., and get some other man to live on as soon as possible. It isn't sentiment but it's horse sense. All this Woman-who-Diddery--no damn good. After all, old P.--Providence, I mean--HAS arranged it so that men will keep you, more or less. He made the universe on those lines. You've got to take what you can get."

That was the quintessence of her brother Roddy.

He played variations on this theme for the better part of an hour.

"You go home," he said, at parting; "you go home. It's all very fine and all that, Vee, this freedom, but it isn't going to work.

The world isn't ready for girls to start out on their own yet; that's the plain fact of the case. Babies and females have got to keep hold of somebody or go under--anyhow, for the next few

generations. You go home and wait a century, Vee, and then try again. Then you may have a bit of a chance. Now you haven't the ghost of one--not if you play the game fair."

Part 6

It was remarkable to Ann Veronica how completely Mr. Manning, in his entirely different dialect, indorsed her brother Roddy's view of things. He came along, he said, just to call, with large, loud apologies, radiantly kind and good. Miss Stanley, it was manifest, had given him Ann Veronica's address. The kindly faced landlady had failed to catch his name, and said he was a tall, handsome gentleman with a great black mustache. Ann Veronica, with a sigh at the cost of hospitality, made a hasty negotiation for an extra tea and for a fire in the ground-floor apartment, and preened herself carefully for the interview. In the little apartment, under the gas chandelier, his inches and his stoop were certainly very effective. In the bad light he looked at once military and sentimental and studious, like one of Ouida's guardsmen revised by Mr. Haldane and the London School of Economics and finished in the Keltic school.

"It's unforgivable of me to call, Miss Stanley," he said, shaking hands in a peculiar, high, fashionable manner; "but you know you said we might be friends."

"It's dreadful for you to be here," he said, indicating the yellow presence of the first fog of the year without, "but your aunt told me something of what had happened. It's just like your Splendid Pride to do it. Quite!"

He sat in the arm-chair and took tea, and consumed several of the

extra cakes which she had sent out for and talked to her and expressed himself, looking very earnestly at her with his deep-set eyes, and carefully avoiding any crumbs on his mustache the while. Ann Veronica sat firelit by her tea-tray with, quite unconsciously, the air of an expert hostess.

"But how is it all going to end?" said Mr. Manning.

"Your father, of course," he said, "must come to realize just how Splendid you are! He doesn't understand. I've seen him, and he doesn't a bit understand. I didn't understand before that letter. It makes me want to be just everything I CAN be to you. You're like some splendid Princess in Exile in these Dreadful Dingy apartments!"

"I'm afraid I'm anything but a Princess when it comes to earning a salary," said Ann Veronica. "But frankly, I mean to fight this through if I possibly can."

"My God!" said Manning, in a stage-aside. "Earning a salary!"

"You're like a Princess in Exile!" he repeated, overruling her. "You come into these sordid surroundings--you mustn't mind my calling them sordid--and it makes them seem as though they didn't matter. . . . I don't think they do matter. I don't think any surroundings could throw a shadow on you."

Ann Veronica felt a slight embarrassment. "Won't you have some more tea, Mr. Manning?" she asked.

"You know--," said Mr. Manning, relinquishing his cup without answering her question, "when I hear you talk of earning a living, it's as if I heard of an archangel going on the Stock Exchange--or Christ selling doves. . . . Forgive my daring. I couldn't help the thought."

"It's a very good image," said Ann Veronica.

"I knew you wouldn't mind."

"But does it correspond with the facts of the case? You know, Mr. Manning, all this sort of thing is very well as sentiment, but does it correspond with the realities? Are women truly such angelic things and men so chivalrous? You men have, I know, meant to make us Queens and Goddesses, but in practice--well, look, for example, at the stream of girls one meets going to work of a morning, round-shouldered, cheap, and underfed! They aren't queens, and no one is treating them as queens. And look, again, at the women one finds letting lodgings. . . . I was looking for rooms last week. It got on my nerves--the women I saw. Worse than any man. Everywhere I went and rapped at a door I found behind it another dreadful dingy woman--another fallen queen, I suppose--dingier than the last, dirty, you know, in grain. Their poor hands!"

"I know," said Mr. Manning, with entirely suitable emotion.

"And think of the ordinary wives and mothers, with their anxiety, their limitations, their swarms of children!"

Mr. Manning displayed distress. He fended these things off from him with the rump of his fourth piece of cake. "I know that our social order is dreadful enough," he said, "and sacrifices all that is best and most beautiful in life. I don't defend it."

"And besides, when it comes to the idea of queens," Ann Veronica went on, "there's twenty-one and a half million women to twenty million men. Suppose our proper place is a shrine. Still, that leaves over a million shrines short, not reckoning widows who re-marry. And more boys die than girls, so that the real

disproportion among adults is even greater."

"I know," said Mr Manning, "I know these Dreadful Statistics. I know there's a sort of right in your impatience at the slowness of Progress. But tell me one thing I don't understand--tell me one thing: How can you help it by coming down into the battle and the mire? That's the thing that concerns me."

"Oh, I'm not trying to help it," said Ann Veronica. "I'm only arguing against your position of what a woman should be, and trying to get it clear in my own mind. I'm in this apartment and looking for work because-- Well, what else can I do, when my father practically locks me up?"

"I know," said Mr. Manning, "I know. Don't think I can't sympathize and understand. Still, here we are in this dingy, foggy city. Ye gods! what a wilderness it is! Every one trying to get the better of every one, every one regardless of every one--it's one of those days when every one bumps against you--every one pouring coal smoke into the air and making confusion worse confounded, motor omnibuses clattering and smelling, a horse down in the Tottenham Court Road, an old woman at the corner coughing dreadfully--all the painful sights of a great city, and here you come into it to take your chances. It's too valiant, Miss Stanley, too valiant altogether!"

Ann Veronica meditated. She had had two days of employment-seeking now. "I wonder if it is."

"It isn't," said Mr. Manning, "that I mind Courage in a Woman--I love and admire Courage. What could be more splendid than a beautiful girl facing a great, glorious tiger? Una and the Lion again, and all that! But this isn't that sort of thing; this is just a great, ugly, endless wilderness of selfish, sweating, vulgar competition!"

"That you want to keep me out of?"

"Exactly!" said Mr. Manning.

"In a sort of beautiful garden-close--wearing lovely dresses and picking beautiful flowers?"

"Ah! If one could!"

"While those other girls trudge to business and those other women let lodgings. And in reality even that magic garden-close resolves itself into a villa at Morningside Park and my father being more and more cross and overbearing at meals--and a general feeling of insecurity and futility."

Mr. Manning relinquished his cup, and looked meaningly at Ann Veronica. "There," he said, "you don't treat me fairly, Miss Stanley. My garden-close would be a better thing than that."

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

IDEALS AND A REALITY

Part 1

And now for some weeks Ann Veronica was to test her market value in the world. She went about in a negligent November London that had become very dark and foggy and greasy and forbidding indeed, and tried to find that modest but independent employment she had so rashly assumed. She went about, intent-looking and

self-possessed, trim and fine, concealing her emotions whatever they were, as the realities of her position opened out before her. Her little bed-sitting-room was like a lair, and she went out from it into this vast, dun world, with its smoke-gray houses, its glaring streets of shops, its dark streets of homes, its orange-lit windows, under skies of dull copper or muddy gray or black, much as an animal goes out to seek food. She would come back and write letters, carefully planned and written letters, or read some book she had fetched from Mudie's--she had invested a half-guinea with Mudie's--or sit over her fire and think.

Slowly and reluctantly she came to realize that Vivie Warren was what is called an "ideal." There were no such girls and no such positions. No work that offered was at all of the quality she had vaguely postulated for herself. With such qualifications as she possessed, two chief channels of employment lay open, and neither attracted her, neither seemed really to offer a conclusive escape from that subjection to mankind against which, in the person of her father, she was rebelling. One main avenue was for her to become a sort of salaried accessory wife or mother, to be a governess or an assistant schoolmistress, or a very high type of governess-nurse. The other was to go into business --into a photographer's reception-room, for example, or a costumer's or hat-shop. The first set of occupations seemed to her to be altogether too domestic and restricted; for the latter she was dreadfully handicapped by her want of experience. And also she didn't like them. She didn't like the shops, she didn't like the other women's faces; she thought the smirking men in frock-coats who dominated these establishments the most intolerable persons she had ever had to face. One called her very distinctly "My dear!"

Two secretarial posts did indeed seem to offer themselves in which, at least, there was no specific exclusion of womanhood;

one was under a Radical Member of Parliament, and the other under a Harley Street doctor, and both men declined her proffered services with the utmost civility and admiration and terror.

There was also a curious interview at a big hotel with a middle-aged, white-powdered woman, all covered with jewels and reeking of scent, who wanted a Companion. She did not think Ann Veronica would do as her companion.

And nearly all these things were fearfully ill-paid. They carried no more than bare subsistence wages; and they demanded all her time and energy. She had heard of women journalists, women writers, and so forth; but she was not even admitted to the presence of the editors she demanded to see, and by no means sure that if she had been she could have done any work they might have given her. One day she desisted from her search and went unexpectedly to the Tredgold College. Her place was not filled; she had been simply noted as absent, and she did a comforting day of admirable dissection upon the tortoise. She was so interested, and this was such a relief from the trudging anxiety of her search for work, that she went on for a whole week as if she was still living at home. Then a third secretarial opening occurred and renewed her hopes again: a position as amanuensis--with which some of the lighter duties of a nurse were combined--to an infirm gentleman of means living at Twickenham, and engaged upon a great literary research to prove that the "Faery Queen" was really a treatise upon molecular chemistry written in a peculiar and picturesquely handled cipher.

Part 2

Now, while Ann Veronica was taking these soundings in the industrial sea, and measuring herself against the world as it is,

she was also making extensive explorations among the ideas and attitudes of a number of human beings who seemed to be largely concerned with the world as it ought to be. She was drawn first by Miss Miniver, and then by her own natural interest, into a curious stratum of people who are busied with dreams of world progress, of great and fundamental changes, of a New Age that is to replace all the stresses and disorders of contemporary life.

Miss Miniver learned of her flight and got her address from the Widgetts. She arrived about nine o'clock the next evening in a state of tremulous enthusiasm. She followed the landlady half way up-stairs, and called up to Ann Veronica, "May I come up? It's me! You know--Nettie Miniver!" She appeared before Ann Veronica could clearly recall who Nettie Miniver might be.

There was a wild light in her eye, and her straight hair was out demonstrating and suffragetting upon some independent notions of its own. Her fingers were bursting through her gloves, as if to get at once into touch with Ann Veronica. "You're Glorious!" said Miss Miniver in tones of rapture, holding a hand in each of hers and peering up into Ann Veronica's face. "Glorious! You're so calm, dear, and so resolute, so serene!

"It's girls like you who will show them what We are," said Miss Miniver; "girls whose spirits have not been broken!"

Ann Veronica sunned herself a little in this warmth.

"I was watching you at Morningside Park, dear," said Miss Miniver. "I am getting to watch all women. I thought then perhaps you didn't care, that you were like so many of them. NOW it's just as though you had grown up suddenly."

She stopped, and then suggested: "I wonder--I should love--if it was anything I said."

She did not wait for Ann Veronica's reply. She seemed to assume that it must certainly be something she had said. "They all catch on," she said. "It spreads like wildfire. This is such a grand time! Such a glorious time! There never was such a time as this! Everything seems so close to fruition, so coming on and leading on! The Insurrection of Women! They spring up everywhere. Tell me all that happened, one sister-woman to another."

She chilled Ann Veronica a little by that last phrase, and yet the magnetism of her fellowship and enthusiasm was very strong; and it was pleasant to be made out a heroine after so much expostulation and so many secret doubts.

But she did not listen long; she wanted to talk. She sat, crouched together, by the corner of the hearthrug under the bookcase that supported the pig's skull, and looked into the fire and up at Ann Veronica's face, and let herself go. "Let us put the lamp out," she said; "the flames are ever so much better for talking," and Ann Veronica agreed. "You are coming right out into life--facing it all."

Ann Veronica sat with her chin on her hand, red-lit and saying little, and Miss Miniver discoursed. As she talked, the drift and significance of what she was saying shaped itself slowly to Ann Veronica's apprehension. It presented itself in the likeness of a great, gray, dull world--a brutal, superstitious, confused, and wrong-headed world, that hurt people and limited people unaccountably. In remote times and countries its evil tendencies had expressed themselves in the form of tyrannies, massacres, wars, and what not; but just at present in England they shaped as commercialism and competition, silk hats, suburban morals, the sweating system, and the subjection of women. So far the thing was acceptable enough. But over against the world Miss Miniver

assembled a small but energetic minority, the Children of Light--people she described as "being in the van," or "altogether in the van," about whom Ann Veronica's mind was disposed to be more sceptical.

Everything, Miss Miniver said, was "working up," everything was "coming on"--the Higher Thought, the Simple Life, Socialism, Humanitarianism, it was all the same really. She loved to be there, taking part in it all, breathing it, being it. Hitherto in the world's history there had been precursors of this Progress at great intervals, voices that had spoken and ceased, but now it was all coming on together in a rush. She mentioned, with familiar respect, Christ and Buddha and Shelley and Nietzsche and Plato. Pioneers all of them. Such names shone brightly in the darkness, with black spaces of unilluminated emptiness about them, as stars shine in the night; but now--now it was different; now it was dawn--the real dawn.

"The women are taking it up," said Miss Miniver; "the women and the common people, all pressing forward, all roused."

Ann Veronica listened with her eyes on the fire.

"Everybody is taking it up," said Miss Miniver. "YOU had to come in. You couldn't help it. Something drew you. Something draws everybody. From suburbs, from country towns--everywhere. I see all the Movements. As far as I can, I belong to them all. I keep my finger on the pulse of things."

Ann Veronica said nothing.

"The dawn!" said Miss Miniver, with her glasses reflecting the fire like pools of blood-red flame.

"I came to London," said Ann Veronica, "rather because of my own

difficulty. I don't know that I understand altogether."

"Of course you don't," said Miss Miniver, gesticulating triumphantly with her thin hand and thinner wrist, and patting Ann Veronica's knee. "Of course you don't. That's the wonder of it. But you will, you will. You must let me take you to things--to meetings and things, to conferences and talks. Then you will begin to see. You will begin to see it all opening out. I am up to the ears in it all--every moment I can spare. I throw up work--everything! I just teach in one school, one good school, three days a week. All the rest--Movements! I can live now on fourpence a day. Think how free that leaves me to follow things up! I must take you everywhere. I must take you to the Suffrage people, and the Tolstoyans, and the Fabians."

"I have heard of the Fabians," said Ann Veronica.

"It's THE Society!" said Miss Miniver. "It's the centre of the intellectuals. Some of the meetings are wonderful! Such earnest, beautiful women! Such deep-browed men! . . . And to think that there they are making history! There they are putting together the plans of a new world. Almos light-heartedly. There is Shaw, and Webb, and Wilkins the author, and Toomer, and Doctor Tumpany--the most wonderful people! There you see them discussing, deciding, planning! Just think--THEY ARE MAKING A NEW WORLD!"

"But ARE these people going to alter everything?" said Ann Veronica.

"What else can happen?" asked Miss Miniver, with a little weak gesture at the glow. "What else can possibly happen--as things are going now?"

Part 3

Miss Miniver let Ann Veronica into her peculiar levels of the world with so enthusiastic a generosity that it seemed ingratitude to remain critical. Indeed, almost insensibly Ann Veronica became habituated to the peculiar appearance and the peculiar manners of the people "in the van." The shock of their intellectual attitude was over, usage robbed it of the first quaint effect of deliberate unreason. They were in many respects so right; she clung to that, and shirked more and more the paradoxical conviction that they were also somehow, and even in direct relation to that rightness, absurd.

Very central in Miss Miniver's universe were the Goopes. The Goopes were the oddest little couple conceivable, following a fruitarian career upon an upper floor in Theobald's Road. They were childless and servantless, and they had reduced simple living to the finest of fine arts. Mr. Goopes, Ann Veronica gathered, was a mathematical tutor and visited schools, and his wife wrote a weekly column in *New Ideas* upon vegetarian cookery, vivisection, degeneration, the lacteal secretion, appendicitis, and the Higher Thought generally, and assisted in the management of a fruit shop in the Tottenham Court Road. Their very furniture had mysteriously a high-browed quality, and Mr. Goopes when at home dressed simply in a pajama-shaped suit of canvas sacking tied with brown ribbons, while his wife wore a purple djibbah with a richly embroidered yoke. He was a small, dark, reserved man, with a large inflexible-looking convex forehead, and his wife was very pink and high-spirited, with one of those chins that pass insensibly into a full, strong neck. Once a week, every Saturday, they had a little gathering from nine till the small hours, just talk and perhaps reading aloud and fruitarian refreshments--chestnut sandwiches buttered with nut

tose, and so forth--and lemonade and unfermented wine; and to one of these symposia Miss Miniver after a good deal of preliminary solicitude, conducted Ann Veronica.

She was introduced, perhaps a little too obviously for her taste, as a girl who was standing out against her people, to a gathering that consisted of a very old lady with an extremely wrinkled skin and a deep voice who was wearing what appeared to Ann Veronica's inexperienced eye to be an antimacassar upon her head, a shy, blond young man with a narrow forehead and glasses, two undistinguished women in plain skirts and blouses, and a middle-aged couple, very fat and alike in black, Mr. and Mrs. Alderman Dunstable, of the Borough Council of Marylebone. These were seated in an imperfect semicircle about a very copper-adorned fireplace, surmounted by a carved wood inscription:

"DO IT NOW."

And to them were presently added a roguish-looking young man, with reddish hair, an orange tie, and a fluffy tweed suit, and others who, in Ann Veronica's memory, in spite of her efforts to recall details, remained obstinately just "others."

The talk was animated, and remained always brilliant in form even when it ceased to be brilliant in substance. There were moments when Ann Veronica rather more than suspected the chief speakers to be, as school-boys say, showing off at her.

They talked of a new substitute for dripping in vegetarian cookery that Mrs. Goopes was convinced exercised an exceptionally purifying influence on the mind. And then they talked of Anarchism and Socialism, and whether the former was the exact opposite of the latter or only a higher form. The reddish-haired young man contributed allusions to the Hegelian philosophy that

momentarily confused the discussion. Then Alderman Dunstable, who had hitherto been silent, broke out into speech and went off at a tangent, and gave his personal impressions of quite a number of his fellow-councillors. He continued to do this for the rest of the evening intermittently, in and out, among other topics. He addressed himself chiefly to Goopes, and spoke as if in reply to long-sustained inquiries on the part of Goopes into the personnel of the Marylebone Borough Council. "If you were to ask me," he would say, "I should say Blinders is straight. An ordinary type, of course--"

Mrs. Dunstable's contributions to the conversation were entirely in the form of nods; whenever Alderman Dunstable praised or blamed she nodded twice or thrice, according to the requirements of his emphasis. And she seemed always to keep one eye on Ann Veronica's dress. Mrs. Goopes disconcerted the Alderman a little by abruptly challenging the roguish-looking young man in the orange tie (who, it seemed, was the assistant editor of *New Ideas*) upon a critique of Nietzsche and Tolstoy that had appeared in his paper, in which doubts had been cast upon the perfect sincerity of the latter. Everybody seemed greatly concerned about the sincerity of Tolstoy.

Miss Miniver said that if once she lost her faith in Tolstoy's sincerity, nothing she felt would really matter much any more, and she appealed to Ann Veronica whether she did not feel the same; and Mr. Goopes said that we must distinguish between sincerity and irony, which was often indeed no more than sincerity at the sublimated level.

Alderman Dunstable said that sincerity was often a matter of opportunity, and illustrated the point to the fair young man with an anecdote about Blinders on the Dust Destructor Committee, during which the young man in the orange tie succeeded in giving the whole discussion a daring and erotic flavor by questioning

whether any one could be perfectly sincere in love.

Miss Miniver thought that there was no true sincerity except in love, and appealed to Ann Veronica, but the young man in the orange tie went on to declare that it was quite possible to be sincerely in love with two people at the same time, although perhaps on different planes with each individual, and deceiving them both. But that brought Mrs. Goopes down on him with the lesson Titian teaches so beautifully in his "Sacred and Profane Love," and became quite eloquent upon the impossibility of any deception in the former.

Then they discoursed on love for a time, and Alderman Dunstable, turning back to the shy, blond young man and speaking in undertones of the utmost clearness, gave a brief and confidential account of an unfounded rumor of the bifurcation of the affections of Blinders that had led to a situation of some unpleasantness upon the Borough Council.

The very old lady in the antimacassar touched Ann Veronica's arm suddenly, and said, in a deep, arch voice:

"Talking of love again; spring again, love again. Oh! you young people!"

The young man with the orange tie, in spite of Sisyphus-like efforts on the part of Goopes to get the topic on to a higher plane, displayed great persistence in speculating upon the possible distribution of the affections of highly developed modern types.

The old lady in the antimacassar said, abruptly, "Ah! you young people, you young people, if you only knew!" and then laughed and then mused in a marked manner; and the young man with the narrow forehead and glasses cleared his throat and asked the young man

in the orange tie whether he believed that Platonic love was possible. Mrs. Goopes said she believed in nothing else, and with that she glanced at Ann Veronica, rose a little abruptly, and directed Goopes and the shy young man in the handing of refreshments.

But the young man with the orange tie remained in his place, disputing whether the body had not something or other which he called its legitimate claims. And from that they came back by way of the Kreutzer Sonata and Resurrection to Tolstoy again.

So the talk went on. Goopes, who had at first been a little reserved, resorted presently to the Socratic method to restrain the young man with the orange tie, and bent his forehead over him, and brought out at last very clearly from him that the body was only illusion and everything nothing but just spirit and molecules of thought. It became a sort of duel at last between them, and all the others sat and listened--every one, that is, except the Alderman, who had got the blond young man into a corner by the green-stained dresser with the aluminum things, and was sitting with his back to every one else, holding one hand over his mouth for greater privacy, and telling him, with an accent of confidential admission, in whispers of the chronic struggle between the natural modesty and general inoffensiveness of the Borough Council and the social evil in Marylebone.

So the talk went on, and presently they were criticising novelists, and certain daring essays of Wilkins got their due share of attention, and then they were discussing the future of the theatre. Ann Veronica intervened a little in the novelist discussion with a defence of Esmond and a denial that the Egoist was obscure, and when she spoke every one else stopped talking and listened. Then they deliberated whether Bernard Shaw ought to go into Parliament. And that brought them to vegetarianism and teetotalism, and the young man in the orange tie and Mrs.

Goopes had a great set-to about the sincerity of Chesterton and Belloc that was ended by Goopes showing signs of resuming the Socratic method.

And at last Ann Veronica and Miss Miniver came down the dark staircase and out into the foggy spaces of the London squares, and crossed Russell Square, Woburn Square, Gordon Square, making an oblique route to Ann Veronica's lodging. They trudged along a little hungry, because of the fruitarian refreshments, and mentally very active. And Miss Miniver fell discussing whether Goopes or Bernard Shaw or Tolstoy or Doctor Tumpany or Wilkins the author had the more powerful and perfect mind in existence at the present time. She was clear there were no other minds like them in all the world.

Part 4

Then one evening Ann Veronica went with Miss Miniver into the back seats of the gallery at Essex Hall, and heard and saw the giant leaders of the Fabian Society who are re-making the world: Bernard Shaw and Toomer and Doctor Tumpany and Wilkins the author, all displayed upon a platform. The place was crowded, and the people about her were almost equally made up of very good-looking and enthusiastic young people and a great variety of Goopes-like types. In the discussion there was the oddest mixture of things that were personal and petty with an idealist devotion that was fine beyond dispute. In nearly every speech she heard was the same implication of great and necessary changes in the world--changes to be won by effort and sacrifice indeed, but surely to be won. And afterward she saw a very much larger and more enthusiastic gathering, a meeting of the advanced section of the woman movement in Caxton Hall, where the same note

of vast changes in progress sounded; and she went to a soiree of the Dress Reform Association and visited a Food Reform Exhibition, where imminent change was made even alarmingly visible. The women's meeting was much more charged with emotional force than the Socialists'. Ann Veronica was carried off her intellectual and critical feet by it altogether, and applauded and uttered cries that subsequent reflection failed to endorse. "I knew you would feel it," said Miss Miniver, as they came away flushed and heated. "I knew you would begin to see how it all falls into place together."

It did begin to fall into place together. She became more and more alive, not so much to a system of ideas as to a big diffused impulse toward change, to a great discontent with and criticism of life as it is lived, to a clamorous confusion of ideas for reconstruction--reconstruction of the methods of business, of economic development, of the rules of property, of the status of children, of the clothing and feeding and teaching of every one; she developed a quite exaggerated consciousness of a multitude of people going about the swarming spaces of London with their minds full, their talk and gestures full, their very clothing charged with the suggestion of the urgency of this pervasive project of alteration. Some indeed carried themselves, dressed themselves even, rather as foreign visitors from the land of "Looking Backward" and "News from Nowhere" than as the indigenous Londoners they were. For the most part these were detached people: men practising the plastic arts, young writers, young men in employment, a very large proportion of girls and women--self-supporting women or girls of the student class. They made a stratum into which Ann Veronica was now plunged up to her neck; it had become her stratum.

None of the things they said and did were altogether new to Ann Veronica, but now she got them massed and alive, instead of by glimpses or in books--alive and articulate and insistent. The

London backgrounds, in Bloomsbury and Marylebone, against which these people went to and fro, took on, by reason of their gray facades, their implacably respectable windows and window-blinds, their reiterated unmeaning iron railings, a stronger and stronger suggestion of the flavor of her father at his most obdurate phase, and of all that she felt herself fighting against.

She was already a little prepared by her discursive reading and discussion under the Widgett influence for ideas and "movements," though temperamentally perhaps she was rather disposed to resist and criticise than embrace them. But the people among whom she was now thrown through the social exertions of Miss Miniver and the Widgetts--for Teddy and Hetty came up from Morningside Park and took her to an eighteen-penny dinner in Soho and introduced her to some art students, who were also Socialists, and so opened the way to an evening of meandering talk in a studio--carried with them like an atmosphere this implication, not only that the world was in some stupid and even obvious way WRONG, with which indeed she was quite prepared to agree, but that it needed only a few pioneers to behave as such and be thoroughly and indiscriminately "advanced," for the new order to achieve itself.

When ninety per cent. out of the ten or twelve people one meets in a month not only say but feel and assume a thing, it is very hard not to fall into the belief that the thing is so.

Imperceptibly almost Ann Veronica began to acquire the new attitude, even while her mind still resisted the felt ideas that went with it. And Miss Miniver began to sway her.

The very facts that Miss Miniver never stated an argument clearly, that she was never embarrassed by a sense of self-contradiction, and had little more respect for consistency of statement than a washerwoman has for wisps of vapor, which made Ann Veronica critical and hostile at their first encounter in Morningside Park, became at last with constant association the

secret of Miss Miniver's growing influence. The brain tires of resistance, and when it meets again and again, incoherently active, the same phrases, the same ideas that it has already slain, exposed and dissected and buried, it becomes less and less energetic to repeat the operation. There must be something, one feels, in ideas that achieve persistently a successful resurrection. What Miss Miniver would have called the Higher Truth supervenes.

Yet through these talks, these meetings and conferences, these movements and efforts, Ann Veronica, for all that she went with her friend, and at times applauded with her enthusiastically, yet went nevertheless with eyes that grew more and more puzzled, and fine eyebrows more and more disposed to knit. She was with these movements--akin to them, she felt it at times intensely--and yet something eluded her. Morningside Park had been passive and defective; all this rushed about and was active, but it was still defective. It still failed in something. It did seem germane to the matter that so many of the people "in the van" were plain people, or faded people, or tired-looking people. It did affect the business that they all argued badly and were egotistical in their manners and inconsistent in their phrases. There were moments when she doubted whether the whole mass of movements and societies and gatherings and talks was not simply one coherent spectacle of failure protecting itself from abjection by the glamour of its own assertions. It happened that at the extremest point of Ann Veronica's social circle from the Widgetts was the family of the Morningside Park horse-dealer, a company of extremely dressy and hilarious young women, with one equestrian brother addicted to fancy waistcoats, cigars, and facial spots. These girls wore hats at remarkable angles and bows to startle and kill; they liked to be right on the spot every time and up to everything that was it from the very beginning and they rendered their conception of Socialists and all reformers by the words "positively frightening" and "weird." Well, it was beyond

dispute that these words did convey a certain quality of the Movements in general amid which Miss Miniver disported herself. They WERE weird. And yet for all that--

It got into Ann Veronica's nights at last and kept her awake, the perplexing contrast between the advanced thought and the advanced thinker. The general propositions of Socialism, for example, struck her as admirable, but she certainly did not extend her admiration to any of its exponents. She was still more stirred by the idea of the equal citizenship of men and women, by the realization that a big and growing organization of women were giving form and a generalized expression to just that personal pride, that aspiration for personal freedom and respect which had brought her to London; but when she heard Miss Miniver discoursing on the next step in the suffrage campaign, or read of women badgering Cabinet Ministers, padlocked to railings, or getting up in a public meeting to pipe out a demand for votes and be carried out kicking and screaming, her soul revolted. She could not part with dignity. Something as yet unformulated within her kept her estranged from all these practical aspects of her beliefs.

"Not for these things, O Ann Veronica, have you revolted," it said; "and this is not your appropriate purpose."

It was as if she faced a darkness in which was something very beautiful and wonderful as yet unimagined. The little pucker in her brows became more perceptible.

Part 5

In the beginning of December Ann Veronica began to speculate

privately upon the procedure of pawning. She had decided that she would begin with her pearl necklace. She spent a very disagreeable afternoon and evening--it was raining fast outside, and she had very unwisely left her soundest pair of boots in the boothole of her father's house in Morningside Park--thinking over the economic situation and planning a course of action. Her aunt had secretly sent on to Ann Veronica some new warm underclothing, a dozen pairs of stockings, and her last winter's jacket, but the dear lady had overlooked those boots.

These things illuminated her situation extremely. Finally she decided upon a step that had always seemed reasonable to her, but that hitherto she had, from motives too faint for her to formulate, refrained from taking. She resolved to go into the City to Ramage and ask for his advice. And next morning she attired herself with especial care and neatness, found his address in the Directory at a post-office, and went to him.

She had to wait some minutes in an outer office, wherein three young men of spirited costume and appearance regarded her with ill-concealed curiosity and admiration. Then Ramage appeared with effusion, and ushered her into his inner apartment. The three young men exchanged expressive glances.

The inner apartment was rather gracefully furnished with a thick, fine Turkish carpet, a good brass fender, a fine old bureau, and on the walls were engravings of two young girls' heads by Greuze, and of some modern picture of boys bathing in a sunlit pool.

"But this is a surprise!" said Ramage. "This is wonderful! I've been feeling that you had vanished from my world. Have you been away from Morningside Park?"

"I'm not interrupting you?"

"You are. Splendidly. Business exists for such interruptions. There you are, the best client's chair."

Ann Veronica sat down, and Ramage's eager eyes feasted on her.

"I've been looking out for you," he said. "I confess it."

She had not, she reflected, remembered how prominent his eyes were.

"I want some advice," said Ann Veronica.

"Yes?"

"You remember once, how we talked--at a gate on the Downs? We talked about how a girl might get an independent living."

"Yes, yes."

"Well, you see, something has happened at home."

She paused.

"Nothing has happened to Mr. Stanley?"

"I've fallen out with my father. It was about--a question of what I might do or might not do. He--In fact, he--he locked me in my room. Practically."

Her breath left her for a moment.

"I SAY!" said Mr. Ramage.

"I wanted to go to an art-student ball of which he disapproved."

"And why shouldn't you?"

"I felt that sort of thing couldn't go on. So I packed up and came to London next day."

"To a friend?"

"To lodgings--alone."

"I say, you know, you have some pluck. You did it on your own?"

Ann Veronica smiled. "Quite on my own," she said.

"It's magnificent!" He leaned back and regarded her with his head a little on one side. "By Jove!" he said, "there is something direct about you. I wonder if I should have locked you up if I'd been your father. Luckily I'm not. And you started out forthwith to fight the world and be a citizen on your own basis?" He came forward again and folded his hands under him on his desk.

"How has the world taken it?" he asked. "If I was the world I think I should have put down a crimson carpet, and asked you to say what you wanted, and generally walk over me. But the world didn't do that."

"Not exactly."

"It presented a large impenetrable back, and went on thinking about something else."

"It offered from fifteen to two-and-twenty shillings a week--for drudgery."

"The world has no sense of what is due to youth and courage. It never has had."

"Yes," said Ann Veronica. "But the thing is, I want a job."

"Exactly! And so you came along to me. And you see, I don't turn my back, and I am looking at you and thinking about you from top to toe."

"And what do you think I ought to do?"

"Exactly!" He lifted a paper-weight and dabbed it gently down again. "What ought you to do?"

"I've hunted up all sorts of things."

"The point to note is that fundamentally you don't want particularly to do it."

"I don't understand."

"You want to be free and so forth, yes. But you don't particularly want to do the job that sets you free--for its own sake. I mean that it doesn't interest you in itself."

"I suppose not."

"That's one of our differences. We men are like children. We can get absorbed in play, in games, in the business we do. That's really why we do them sometimes rather well and get on. But women--women as a rule don't throw themselves into things like that. As a matter of fact it isn't their affair. And as a natural consequence, they don't do so well, and they don't get on--and so the world doesn't pay them. They don't catch on to discursive interests, you see, because they are more serious, they are concentrated on the central reality of life, and a little impatient of its--its outer aspects. At least that, I

think, is what makes a clever woman's independent career so much more difficult than a clever man's."

"She doesn't develop a specialty." Ann Veronica was doing her best to follow him.

"She has one, that's why. Her specialty is the central thing in life, it is life itself, the warmth of life, sex--and love."

He pronounced this with an air of profound conviction and with his eyes on Ann Veronica's face. He had an air of having told her a deep, personal secret. She winced as he thrust the fact at her, was about to answer, and checked herself. She colored faintly.

"That doesn't touch the question I asked you," she said. "It may be true, but it isn't quite what I have in mind."

"Of course not," said Ramage, as one who rouses himself from deep preoccupations. And he began to question her in a business-like way upon the steps she had taken and the inquiries she had made. He displayed none of the airy optimism of their previous talk over the downland gate. He was helpful, but gravely dubious. "You see," he said, "from my point of view you're grown up--you're as old as all the goddesses and the contemporary of any man alive. But from the--the economic point of view you're a very young and altogether inexperienced person."

He returned to and developed that idea. "You're still," he said, "in the educational years. From the point of view of most things in the world of employment which a woman can do reasonably well and earn a living by, you're unripe and half-educated. If you had taken your degree, for example."

He spoke of secretarial work, but even there she would need to be

able to do typing and shorthand. He made it more and more evident to her that her proper course was not to earn a salary but to accumulate equipment. "You see," he said, "you are like an inaccessible gold-mine in all this sort of matter. You're splendid stuff, you know, but you've got nothing ready to sell. That's the flat business situation."

He thought. Then he slapped his hand on his desk and looked up with the air of a man struck by a brilliant idea. "Look here," he said, protruding his eyes; "why get anything to do at all just yet? Why, if you must be free, why not do the sensible thing? Make yourself worth a decent freedom. Go on with your studies at the Imperial College, for example, get a degree, and make yourself good value. Or become a thorough-going typist and stenographer and secretarial expert."

"But I can't do that."

"Why not?"

"You see, if I do go home my father objects to the College, and as for typing--"

"Don't go home."

"Yes, but you forget; how am I to live?"

"Easily. Easily. . . . Borrow. . . . From me."

"I couldn't do that," said Ann Veronica, sharply.

"I see no reason why you shouldn't."

"It's impossible."

"As one friend to another. Men are always doing it, and if you set up to be a man--"

"No, it's absolutely out of the question, Mr. Ramage." And Ann Veronica's face was hot.

Ramage pursed his rather loose lips and shrugged his shoulders, with his eyes fixed steadily upon her. "Well anyhow-- I don't see the force of your objection, you know. That's my advice to you. Here I am. Consider you've got resources deposited with me. Perhaps at the first blush--it strikes you as odd. People are brought up to be so shy about money. As though it was indelicate--it's just a sort of shyness. But here I am to draw upon. Here I am as an alternative either to nasty work--or going home."

"It's very kind of you--" began Ann Veronica.

"Not a bit. Just a friendly polite suggestion. I don't suggest any philanthropy. I shall charge you five per cent., you know, fair and square."

Ann Veronica opened her lips quickly and did not speak. But the five per cent. certainly did seem to improve the aspect of Ramage's suggestion.

"Well, anyhow, consider it open." He dabbed with his paper-weight again, and spoke in an entirely indifferent tone. "And now tell me, please, how you eloped from Morningside Park. How did you get your luggage out of the house? Wasn't it--wasn't it rather in some respects--rather a lark? It's one of my regrets for my lost youth. I never ran away from anywhere with anybody anywhen. And now--I suppose I should be considered too old. I don't feel it. . . . Didn't you feel rather EVENTFUL--in the train--coming up to Waterloo?"

Part 6

Before Christmas Ann Veronica had gone to Ramage again and accepted this offer she had at first declined.

Many little things had contributed to that decision. The chief influence was her awakening sense of the need of money. She had been forced to buy herself that pair of boots and a walking-skirt, and the pearl necklace at the pawnbrokers' had yielded very disappointingly. And, also, she wanted to borrow that money. It did seem in so many ways exactly what Ramage said it was--the sensible thing to do. There it was--to be borrowed. It would put the whole adventure on a broader and better footing; it seemed, indeed, almost the only possible way in which she might emerge from her rebellion with anything like success. If only for the sake of her argument with her home, she wanted success. And why, after all, should she not borrow money from Ramage?

It was so true what he said; middle-class people WERE ridiculously squeamish about money. Why should they be?

She and Ramage were friends, very good friends. If she was in a position to help him she would help him; only it happened to be the other way round. He was in a position to help her. What was the objection?

She found it impossible to look her own diffidence in the face. So she went to Ramage and came to the point almost at once.

"Can you spare me forty pounds?" she said.

Mr. Ramage controlled his expression and thought very quickly.

"Agreed," he said, "certainly," and drew a checkbook toward him.

"It's best," he said, "to make it a good round sum.

"I won't give you a check though-- Yes, I will. I'll give you an uncrossed check, and then you can get it at the bank here, quite close by. . . . You'd better not have all the money on you; you had better open a small account in the post-office and draw it out a fiver at a time. That won't involve references, as a bank account would--and all that sort of thing. The money will last longer, and--it won't bother you."

He stood up rather close to her and looked into her eyes. He seemed to be trying to understand something very perplexing and elusive. "It's jolly," he said, "to feel you have come to me. It's a sort of guarantee of confidence. Last time--you made me feel snubbed."

He hesitated, and went off at a tangent. "There's no end of things I'd like to talk over with you. It's just upon my lunch-time. Come and have lunch with me."

Ann Veronica fenced for a moment. "I don't want to take up your time."

"We won't go to any of these City places. They're just all men, and no one is safe from scandal. But I know a little place where we'll get a little quiet talk."

Ann Veronica for some indefinable reason did not want to lunch with him, a reason indeed so indefinable that she dismissed it, and Ramage went through the outer office with her, alert and

attentive, to the vivid interest of the three clerks. The three clerks fought for the only window, and saw her whisked into a hansom. Their subsequent conversation is outside the scope of our story.

"Ritter's!" said Ramage to the driver, "Dean Street."

It was rare that Ann Veronica used hansom, and to be in one was itself eventful and exhilarating. She liked the high, easy swing of the thing over its big wheels, the quick clatter-patter of the horse, the passage of the teeming streets. She admitted her pleasure to Ramage.

And Ritter's, too, was very amusing and foreign and discreet; a little rambling room with a number of small tables, with red electric light shades and flowers. It was an overcast day, albeit not foggy, and the electric light shades glowed warmly, and an Italian waiter with insufficient English took Ramage's orders, and waited with an appearance of affection. Ann Veronica thought the whole affair rather jolly. Ritter sold better food than most of his compatriots, and cooked it better, and Ramage, with a fine perception of a feminine palate, ordered Vero Capri. It was, Ann Veronica felt, as a sip or so of that remarkable blend warmed her blood, just the sort of thing that her aunt would not approve, to be lunching thus, *tete-a-tete* with a man; and yet at the same time it was a perfectly innocent as well as agreeable proceeding.

They talked across their meal in an easy and friendly manner about Ann Veronica's affairs. He was really very bright and clever, with a sort of conversational boldness that was just within the limits of permissible daring. She described the Goopes and the Fabians to him, and gave him a sketch of her landlady; and he talked in the most liberal and entertaining way of a modern young woman's outlook. He seemed to know a great

deal about life. He gave glimpses of possibilities. He roused curiosities. He contrasted wonderfully with the empty showing-off of Teddy. His friendship seemed a thing worth having. . . .

But when she was thinking it over in her room that evening vague and baffling doubts came drifting across this conviction. She doubted how she stood toward him and what the restrained gleam of his face might signify. She felt that perhaps, in her desire to play an adequate part in the conversation, she had talked rather more freely than she ought to have done, and given him a wrong impression of herself.

Part 7

That was two days before Christmas Eve. The next morning came a compact letter from her father.

"MY DEAR DAUGHTER," it ran,--"Here, on the verge of the season of forgiveness I hold out a last hand to you in the hope of a reconciliation. I ask you, although it is not my place to ask you, to return home. This roof is still open to you. You will not be taunted if you return and everything that can be done will be done to make you happy.

"Indeed, I must implore you to return. This adventure of yours has gone on altogether too long; it has become a serious distress to both your aunt and myself. We fail altogether to understand your motives in doing what you are doing, or, indeed, how you are managing to do it, or what you are managing on. If you will think only of one trifling aspect--the inconvenience it must be

to us to explain your absence--I think you may begin to realize what it all means for us. I need hardly say that your aunt joins with me very heartily in this request.

"Please come home. You will not find me unreasonable with you.

"Your affectionate

"FATHER."

Ann Veronica sat over her fire with her father's note in her hand. "Queer letters he writes," she said. "I suppose most people's letters are queer. Roof open--like a Noah's Ark. I wonder if he really wants me to go home. It's odd how little I know of him, and of how he feels and what he feels."

"I wonder how he treated Gwen."

Her mind drifted into a speculation about her sister. "I ought to look up Gwen," she said. "I wonder what happened."

Then she fell to thinking about her aunt. "I would like to go home," she cried, "to please her. She has been a dear. Considering how little he lets her have."

The truth prevailed. "The unaccountable thing is that I wouldn't go home to please her. She is, in her way, a dear. One OUGHT to want to please her. And I don't. I don't care. I can't even make myself care."

Presently, as if for comparison with her father's letter, she got out Ramage's check from the box that contained her papers. For so far she had kept it uncashed. She had not even endorsed it.

"Suppose I chuck it," she remarked, standing with the mauve slip in her hand--"suppose I chuck it, and surrender and go home! Perhaps, after all, Roddy was right!"

"Father keeps opening the door and shutting it, but a time will come--"

"I could still go home!"

She held Ramage's check as if to tear it across. "No," she said at last; "I'm a human being--not a timid female. What could I do at home? The other's a crumple-up--just surrender. Funk! I'll see it out."

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

BIOLOGY

Part 1

January found Ann Veronica a student in the biological laboratory of the Central Imperial College that towers up from among the back streets in the angle between Euston Road and Great Portland Street. She was working very steadily at the Advanced Course in Comparative Anatomy, wonderfully relieved to have her mind engaged upon one methodically developing theme in the place of the discursive uncertainties of the previous two months, and doing her utmost to keep right in the back of her mind and out of sight the facts, firstly, that she had achieved this haven of satisfactory activity by incurring a debt to Ramage of forty pounds, and, secondly, that her present position was necessarily

temporary and her outlook quite uncertain.

The biological laboratory had an atmosphere that was all its own.

It was at the top of the building, and looked clear over a clustering mass of inferior buildings toward Regent's Park. It was long and narrow, a well-lit, well-ventilated, quiet gallery of small tables and sinks, pervaded by a thin smell of methylated spirit and of a mitigated and sterilized organic decay. Along the inner side was a wonderfully arranged series of displayed specimens that Russell himself had prepared. The supreme effect for Ann Veronica was its surpassing relevance; it made every other atmosphere she knew seem discursive and confused. The whole place and everything in it aimed at one thing--to illustrate, to elaborate, to criticise and illuminate, and make ever plainer and plainer the significance of animal and vegetable structure. It dealt from floor to ceiling and end to end with the Theory of the Forms of Life; the very duster by the blackboard was there to do its share in that work, the very washers in the taps; the room was more simply concentrated in aim even than a church. To that, perhaps, a large part of its satisfyingness was due. Contrasted with the confused movement and presences of a Fabian meeting, or the inexplicable enthusiasm behind the suffrage demand, with the speeches that were partly egotistical displays, partly artful manoeuvres, and partly incoherent cries for unsoundly formulated ends, compared with the comings and goings of audiences and supporters that were like the eddy-driven drift of paper in the street, this long, quiet, methodical chamber shone like a star seen through clouds.

Day after day for a measured hour in the lecture-theatre, with elaborate power and patience, Russell pieced together difficulty and suggestion, instance and counter-instance, in the elaborate construction of the family tree of life. And then the students went into the long laboratory and followed out these facts in

almost living tissue with microscope and scalpel, probe and microtome, and the utmost of their skill and care, making now and then a raid into the compact museum of illustration next door, in which specimens and models and directions stood in disciplined ranks, under the direction of the demonstrator Capes. There was a couple of blackboards at each end of the aisle of tables, and at these Capes, with quick and nervous speech that contrasted vividly with Russell's slow, definitive articulation, directed the dissection and made illuminating comments on the structures under examination. Then he would come along the laboratory, sitting down by each student in turn, checking the work and discussing its difficulties, and answering questions arising out of Russell's lecture.

Ann Veronica had come to the Imperial College obsessed by the great figure of Russell, by the part he had played in the Darwinian controversies, and by the resolute effect of the grim-lipped, yellow, leonine face beneath the mane of silvery hair. Capes was rather a discovery. Capes was something superadded. Russell burned like a beacon, but Capes illuminated by darting flashes and threw light, even if it was but momentary light, into a hundred corners that Russell left steadfastly in the shade.

Capes was an exceptionally fair man of two or three-and-thirty, so ruddily blond that it was a mercy he had escaped light eyelashes, and with a minor but by no means contemptible reputation of his own. He talked at the blackboard in a pleasant, very slightly lispng voice with a curious spontaneity, and was sometimes very clumsy in his exposition, and sometimes very vivid. He dissected rather awkwardly and hurriedly, but, on the whole, effectively, and drew with an impatient directness that made up in significance what it lacked in precision. Across the blackboard the colored chalks flew like flights of variously tinted rockets as diagram after diagram flickered into being.

There happened that year to be an unusual proportion of girls and women in the advanced laboratory, perhaps because the class as a whole was an exceptionally small one. It numbered nine, and four of these were women students. As a consequence of its small size, it was possible to get along with the work on a much easier and more colloquial footing than a larger class would have permitted. And a custom had grown up of a general tea at four o'clock, under the auspices of a Miss Garvice, a tall and graceful girl of distinguished intellectual incompetence, in whom the hostess instinct seemed to be abnormally developed.

Capes would come to these teas; he evidently liked to come, and he would appear in the doorway of the preparation-room, a pleasing note of shyness in his manner, hovering for an invitation.

From the first, Ann Veronica found him an exceptionally interesting man. To begin with, he struck her as being the most variable person she had ever encountered. At times he was brilliant and masterful, talked round and over every one, and would have been domineering if he had not been extraordinarily kindly; at times he was almost monosyllabic, and defeated Miss Garvice's most skilful attempts to draw him out. Sometimes he was obviously irritable and uncomfortable and unfortunate in his efforts to seem at ease. And sometimes he overflowed with a peculiarly malignant wit that played, with devastating effect, upon any topics that had the courage to face it. Ann Veronica's experiences of men had been among more stable types--Teddy, who was always absurd; her father, who was always authoritative and sentimental; Manning, who was always Manning. And most of the others she had met had, she felt, the same steadfastness. Goopes, she was sure was always high-browed and slow and Socratic. And Ramage too--about Ramage there would always be that air of avidity, that air of knowledge and inquiry, the

mixture of things in his talk that were rather good with things that were rather poor. But one could not count with any confidence upon Capes.

The five men students were a mixed company. There was a very white-faced youngster of eighteen who brushed back his hair exactly in Russell's manner, and was disposed to be uncomfortably silent when he was near her, and to whom she felt it was only Christian kindness to be consistently pleasant; and a lax young man of five-and-twenty in navy blue, who mingled Marx and Bebel with the more orthodox gods of the biological pantheon. There was a short, red-faced, resolute youth who inherited an authoritative attitude upon bacteriology from his father; a Japanese student of unassuming manners who drew beautifully and had an imperfect knowledge of English; and a dark, unwashed Scotchman with complicated spectacles, who would come every morning as a sort of volunteer supplementary demonstrator, look very closely at her work and her, tell her that her dissections were "fairish," or "very fairish indeed," or "high above the normal female standard," hover as if for some outbreak of passionate gratitude and with admiring retrospects that made the faceted spectacles gleam like diamonds, return to his own place.

The women, Ann Veronica thought, were not quite so interesting as the men. There were two school-mistresses, one of whom--Miss Klegg--might have been a first cousin to Miss Miniver, she had so many Miniver traits; there was a preoccupied girl whose name Ann Veronica never learned, but who worked remarkably well; and Miss Garvice, who began by attracting her very greatly--she moved so beautifully--and ended by giving her the impression that moving beautifully was the beginning and end of her being.

The next few weeks were a time of the very liveliest thought and growth for Ann Veronica. The crowding impressions of the previous weeks seemed to run together directly her mind left the chaotic search for employment and came into touch again with a coherent and systematic development of ideas. The advanced work at the Central Imperial College was in the closest touch with living interests and current controversies; it drew its illustrations and material from Russell's two great researches--upon the relation of the brachiopods to the echinodermata, and upon the secondary and tertiary mammalian and pseudo-mammalian factors in the free larval forms of various marine organisms. Moreover, a vigorous fire of mutual criticism was going on now between the Imperial College and the Cambridge Mendelians and echoed in the lectures. From beginning to end it was first-hand stuff.

But the influence of the science radiated far beyond its own special field--beyond those beautiful but highly technical problems with which we do not propose for a moment to trouble the naturally terrified reader. Biology is an extraordinarily digestive science. It throws out a number of broad experimental generalizations, and then sets out to bring into harmony or relation with these an infinitely multifarious collection of phenomena. The little streaks upon the germinating area of an egg, the nervous movements of an impatient horse, the trick of a calculating boy, the senses of a fish, the fungus at the root of a garden flower, and the slime upon a sea-wet rock--ten thousand such things bear their witness and are illuminated. And not only did these tentacular generalizations gather all the facts of natural history and comparative anatomy together, but they seemed always stretching out further and further into a world of interests that lay altogether outside their legitimate bounds.

It came to Ann Veronica one night after a long talk with Miss Miniver, as a sudden remarkable thing, as a grotesque, novel aspect, that this slowly elaborating biological scheme had something more than an academic interest for herself. And not only so, but that it was after all, a more systematic and particular method of examining just the same questions that underlay the discussions of the Fabian Society, the talk of the West Central Arts Club, the chatter of the studios and the deep, the bottomless discussions of the simple-life homes. It was the same Bios whose nature and drift and ways and methods and aspects engaged them all. And she, she in her own person too, was this eternal Bios, beginning again its recurrent journey to selection and multiplication and failure or survival.

But this was but a momentary gleam of personal application, and at this time she followed it up no further.

And now Ann Veronica's evenings were also becoming very busy. She pursued her interest in the Socialist movement and in the Suffragist agitation in the company of Miss Miniver. They went to various central and local Fabian gatherings, and to a number of suffrage meetings. Teddy Widgett hovered on the fringe of all these gatherings, blinking at Ann Veronica and occasionally making a wildly friendly dash at her, and carrying her and Miss Miniver off to drink cocoa with a choice diversity of other youthful and congenial Fabians after the meetings. Then Mr. Manning loomed up ever and again into her world, full of a futile solicitude, and almost always declaring she was splendid, splendid, and wishing he could talk things out with her. Teas he contributed to the commissariat of Ann Veronica's campaign--quite a number of teas. He would get her to come to tea with him, usually in a pleasant tea-room over a fruit-shop in Tottenham Court Road, and he would discuss his own point of view and hint at a thousand devotions were she but to command him. And he would express various artistic sensibilities and aesthetic

appreciations in carefully punctuated sentences and a large, clear voice. At Christmas he gave her a set of a small edition of Meredith's novels, very prettily bound in flexible leather, being guided in the choice of an author, as he intimated, rather by her preferences than his own.

There was something markedly and deliberately liberal-minded in his manner in all their encounters. He conveyed not only his sense of the extreme want of correctitude in their unsanctioned meetings, but also that, so far as he was concerned, this irregularity mattered not at all, that he had flung--and kept on flinging --such considerations to the wind.

And, in addition, she was now seeing and talking to Ramage almost weekly, on a theory which she took very gravely, that they were exceptionally friends. He would ask her to come to dinner with him in some little Italian or semi-Bohemian restaurant in the district toward Soho, or in one of the more stylish and magnificent establishments about Piccadilly Circus, and for the most part she did not care to refuse. Nor, indeed, did she want to refuse. These dinners, from their lavish display of ambiguous hors d'oeuvre to their skimpy ices in dishes of frilled paper, with their Chianti flasks and Parmesan dishes and their polyglot waiters and polyglot clientele, were very funny and bright; and she really liked Ramage, and valued his help and advice. It was interesting to see how different and characteristic his mode of approach was to all sorts of questions that interested her, and it was amusing to discover this other side to the life of a Morningside Park inhabitant. She had thought that all Morningside Park householders came home before seven at the latest, as her father usually did. Ramage talked always about women or some woman's concern, and very much about Ann Veronica's own outlook upon life. He was always drawing contrasts between a woman's lot and a man's, and treating her as a wonderful new departure in this comparison. Ann Veronica liked their

relationship all the more because it was an unusual one.

After these dinners they would have a walk, usually to the Thames Embankment to see the two sweeps of river on either side of Waterloo Bridge; and then they would part at Westminster Bridge, perhaps, and he would go on to Waterloo. Once he suggested they should go to a music-hall and see a wonderful new dancer, but Ann Veronica did not feel she cared to see a new dancer. So, instead, they talked of dancing and what it might mean in a human life. Ann Veronica thought it was a spontaneous release of energy expressive of well-being, but Ramage thought that by dancing, men, and such birds and animals as dance, come to feel and think of their bodies.

This intercourse, which had been planned to warm Ann Veronica to a familiar affection with Ramage, was certainly warming Ramage to a constantly deepening interest in Ann Veronica. He felt that he was getting on with her very slowly indeed, but he did not see how he could get on faster. He had, he felt, to create certain ideas and vivify certain curiosities and feelings in her. Until that was done a certain experience of life assured him that a girl is a locked coldness against a man's approach. She had all the fascination of being absolutely perplexing in this respect. On the one hand, she seemed to think plainly and simply, and would talk serenely and freely about topics that most women have been trained either to avoid or conceal; and on the other she was unconscious, or else she had an air of being unconscious--that was the riddle--to all sorts of personal applications that almost any girl or woman, one might have thought, would have made. He was always doing his best to call her attention to the fact that he was a man of spirit and quality and experience, and she a young and beautiful woman, and that all sorts of constructions upon their relationship were possible, trusting her to go on from that to the idea that all sorts of relationships were possible. She responded with an unfaltering appearance of insensibility,

and never as a young and beautiful woman conscious of sex; always in the character of an intelligent girl student.

His perception of her personal beauty deepened and quickened with each encounter. Every now and then her general presence became radiantly dazzling in his eyes; she would appear in the street coming toward him, a surprise, so fine and smiling and welcoming was she, so expanded and illuminated and living, in contrast with his mere expectation. Or he would find something--a wave in her hair, a little line in the contour of her brow or neck, that made an exquisite discovery.

He was beginning to think about her inordinately. He would sit in his inner office and compose conversations with her, penetrating, illuminating, and nearly conclusive--conversations that never proved to be of the slightest use at all with her when he met her face to face. And he began also at times to wake at night and think about her.

He thought of her and himself, and no longer in that vein of incidental adventure in which he had begun. He thought, too, of the fretful invalid who lay in the next room to his, whose money had created his business and made his position in the world.

"I've had most of the things I wanted," said Ramage, in the stillness of the night.

Part 3

For a time Ann Veronica's family had desisted from direct offers of a free pardon; they were evidently waiting for her resources to come to an end. Neither father, aunt, nor brothers made a

sign, and then one afternoon in early February her aunt came up in a state between expostulation and dignified resentment, but obviously very anxious for Ann Veronica's welfare. "I had a dream in the night," she said. "I saw you in a sort of sloping, slippery place, holding on by your hands and slipping. You seemed to me to be slipping and slipping, and your face was white. It was really most vivid, most vivid! You seemed to be slipping and just going to tumble and holding on. It made me wake up, and there I lay thinking of you, spending your nights up here all alone, and no one to look after you. I wondered what you could be doing and what might be happening to you. I said to myself at once, 'Either this is a coincidence or the caper sauce.' But I made sure it was you. I felt I MUST do something anyhow, and up I came just as soon as I could to see you."

She had spoken rather rapidly. "I can't help saying it," she said, with the quality of her voice altering, "but I do NOT think it is right for an unprotected girl to be in London alone as you are."

"But I'm quite equal to taking care of myself, aunt."

"It must be most uncomfortable here. It is most uncomfortable for every one concerned."

She spoke with a certain asperity. She felt that Ann Veronica had duped her in that dream, and now that she had come up to London she might as well speak her mind.

"No Christmas dinner," she said, "or anything nice! One doesn't even know what you are doing."

"I'm going on working for my degree."

"Why couldn't you do that at home?"

"I'm working at the Imperial College. You see, aunt, it's the only possible way for me to get a good degree in my subjects, and father won't hear of it. There'd only be endless rows if I was at home. And how could I come home--when he locks me in rooms and all that?"

"I do wish this wasn't going on," said Miss Stanley, after a pause. "I do wish you and your father could come to some agreement."

Ann Veronica responded with conviction: "I wish so, too."

"Can't we arrange something? Can't we make a sort of treaty?"

"He wouldn't keep it. He would get very cross one evening and no one would dare to remind him of it."

"How can you say such things?"

"But he would!"

"Still, it isn't your place to say so."

"It prevents a treaty."

"Couldn't I make a treaty?"

Ann Veronica thought, and could not see any possible treaty that would leave it open for her to have quasi-surreptitious dinners with Ramage or go on walking round the London squares discussing Socialism with Miss Miniver toward the small hours. She had tasted freedom now, and so far she had not felt the need of protection. Still, there certainly was something in the idea of a treaty.

"I don't see at all how you can be managing," said Miss Stanley, and Ann Veronica hastened to reply, "I do on very little." Her mind went back to that treaty.

"And aren't there fees to pay at the Imperial College?" her aunt was saying--a disagreeable question.

"There are a few fees."

"Then how have you managed?"

"Bother!" said Ann Veronica to herself, and tried not to look guilty. "I was able to borrow the money."

"Borrow the money! But who lent you the money?"

"A friend," said Ann Veronica.

She felt herself getting into a corner. She sought hastily in her mind for a plausible answer to an obvious question that didn't come. Her aunt went off at a tangent. "But my dear Ann Veronica, you will be getting into debt!"

Ann Veronica at once, and with a feeling of immense relief, took refuge in her dignity. "I think, aunt," she said, "you might trust to my self-respect to keep me out of that."

For the moment her aunt could not think of any reply to this counterstroke, and Ann Veronica followed up her advantage by a sudden inquiry about her abandoned boots.

But in the train going home her aunt reasoned it out.

"If she is borrowing money," said Miss Stanley, "she **MUST** be

getting into debt. It's all nonsense. . . ."

Part 4

It was by imperceptible degrees that Capes became important in Ann Veronica's thoughts. But then he began to take steps, and, at last, strides to something more and more like predominance. She began by being interested in his demonstrations and his biological theory, then she was attracted by his character, and then, in a manner, she fell in love with his mind.

One day they were at tea in the laboratory and a discussion sprang up about the question of women's suffrage. The movement was then in its earlier militant phases, and one of the women only, Miss Garvice, opposed it, though Ann Veronica was disposed to be lukewarm. But a man's opposition always inclined her to the suffrage side; she had a curious feeling of loyalty in seeing the more aggressive women through. Capes was irritatingly judicial in the matter, neither absurdly against, in which case one might have smashed him, or hopelessly undecided, but tepidly sceptical. Miss Klegg and the youngest girl made a vigorous attack on Miss Garvice, who had said she thought women lost something infinitely precious by mingling in the conflicts of life. The discussion wandered, and was punctuated with bread and butter. Capes was inclined to support Miss Klegg until Miss Garvice cornered him by quoting him against himself, and citing a recent paper in the *Nineteenth Century*, in which, following Atkinson, he had made a vigorous and damaging attack on Lester Ward's case for the primitive matriarchate and the predominant importance of the female throughout the animal kingdom.

Ann Veronica was not aware of this literary side of her teacher;

she had a little tinge of annoyance at Miss Garvice's advantage. Afterwards she hunted up the article in question, and it seemed to her quite delightfully written and argued. Capes had the gift of easy, unaffected writing, coupled with very clear and logical thinking, and to follow his written thought gave her the sensation of cutting things with a perfectly new, perfectly sharp knife. She found herself anxious to read more of him, and the next Wednesday she went to the British Museum and hunted first among the half-crown magazines for his essays and then through various scientific quarterlies for his research papers. The ordinary research paper, when it is not extravagant theorizing, is apt to be rather sawdusty in texture, and Ann Veronica was delighted to find the same easy and confident luminosity that distinguished his work for the general reader. She returned to these latter, and at the back of her mind, as she looked them over again, was a very distinct resolve to quote them after the manner of Miss Garvice at the very first opportunity.

When she got home to her lodgings that evening she reflected with something like surprise upon her half-day's employment, and decided that it showed nothing more nor less than that Capes was a really very interesting person indeed.

And then she fell into a musing about Capes. She wondered why he was so distinctive, so unlike other men, and it never occurred to her for some time that this might be because she was falling in love with him.

Part 5

Yet Ann Veronica was thinking a very great deal about love. A dozen shynesses and intellectual barriers were being outflanked

or broken down in her mind. All the influences about her worked with her own predisposition and against all the traditions of her home and upbringing to deal with the facts of life in an unabashed manner. Ramage, by a hundred skilful hints had led her to realize that the problem of her own life was inseparably associated with, and indeed only one special case of, the problems of any woman's life, and that the problem of a woman's life is love.

"A young man comes into life asking how best he may place himself," Ramage had said; "a woman comes into life thinking instinctively how best she may give herself."

She noted that as a good saying, and it germinated and spread tentacles of explanation through her brain. The biological laboratory, perpetually viewing life as pairing and breeding and selection, and again pairing and breeding, seemed only a translated generalization of that assertion. And all the talk of the Miniver people and the Widgeott people seemed always to be like a ship in adverse weather on the lee shore of love. "For seven years," said Ann Veronica, "I have been trying to keep myself from thinking about love. . . ."

"I have been training myself to look askance at beautiful things."

She gave herself permission now to look at this squarely. She made herself a private declaration of liberty. "This is mere nonsense, mere tongue-tied fear!" she said. "This is the slavery of the veiled life. I might as well be at Morningside Park. This business of love is the supreme affair in life, it is the woman's one event and crisis that makes up for all her other restrictions, and I cower--as we all cower--with a blushing and paralyzed mind until it overtakes me! . . ."

"I'll be hanged if I do."

But she could not talk freely about love, she found, for all that manumission.

Ramage seemed always fencing about the forbidden topic, probing for openings, and she wondered why she did not give him them. But something instinctive prevented that, and with the finest resolve not to be "silly" and prudish she found that whenever he became at all bold in this matter she became severely scientific and impersonal, almost entomological indeed, in her method; she killed every remark as he made it and pinned it out for examination. In the biological laboratory that was their invincible tone. But she disapproved more and more of her own mental austerity. Here was an experienced man of the world, her friend, who evidently took a great interest in this supreme topic and was willing to give her the benefit of his experiences! Why should not she be at her ease with him? Why should not she know things? It is hard enough anyhow for a human being to learn, she decided, but it is a dozen times more difficult than it need be because of all this locking of the lips and thoughts.

She contrived to break down the barriers of shyness at last in one direction, and talked one night of love and the facts of love with Miss Miniver.

But Miss Miniver was highly unsatisfactory. She repeated phrases of Mrs. Goopes's: "Advanced people," she said, with an air of great elucidation, "tend to GENERALIZE love. 'He prayeth best who loveth best--all things both great and small.' For my own part I go about loving."

"Yes, but men;" said Ann Veronica, plunging; "don't you want the love of men?"

For some seconds they remained silent, both shocked by this question.

Miss Miniver looked over her glasses at her friend almost balefully. "NO!" she said, at last, with something in her voice that reminded Ann Veronica of a sprung tennis-racket.

"I've been through all that," she went on, after a pause.

She spoke slowly. "I have never yet met a man whose intellect I could respect."

Ann Veronica looked at her thoughtfully for a moment, and decided to persist on principle.

"But if you had?" she said.

"I can't imagine it," said Miss Miniver. "And think, think"--her voice sank--"of the horrible coarseness!"

"What coarseness?" said Ann Veronica.

"My dear Vee!" Her voice became very low. "Don't you know?"

"Oh! I know--"

"Well--" Her face was an unaccustomed pink.

Ann Veronica ignored her friend's confusion.

"Don't we all rather humbug about the coarseness? All we women, I mean," said she. She decided to go on, after a momentary halt.

"We pretend bodies are ugly. Really they are the most beautiful things in the world. We pretend we never think of everything that makes us what we are."

"No," cried Miss Miniver, almost vehemently. "You are wrong! I did not think you thought such things. Bodies! Bodies! Horrible things! We are souls. Love lives on a higher plane. We are not animals. If ever I did meet a man I could love, I should love him" --her voice dropped again--"platonically."

She made her glasses glint. "Absolutely platonically," she said.

"Soul to soul."

She turned her face to the fire, gripped her hands upon her elbows, and drew her thin shoulders together in a shrug. "Ugh!" she said.

Ann Veronica watched her and wondered about her.

"We do not want the men," said Miss Miniver; "we do not want them, with their sneers and loud laughter. Empty, silly, coarse brutes. Brutes! They are the brute still with us! Science some day may teach us a way to do without them. It is only the women matter. It is not every sort of creature needs--these males. Some have no males."

"There's green-fly," admitted Ann Veronica. "And even then--"

The conversation hung for a thoughtful moment.

Ann Veronica readjusted her chin on her hand. "I wonder which of us is right," she said. "I haven't a scrap--of this sort of aversion."

"Tolstoy is so good about this," said Miss Miniver, regardless of her friend's attitude. "He sees through it all. The Higher Life and the Lower. He sees men all defiled by coarse thoughts,

coarse ways of living cruelties. Simply because they are hardened by--by bestiality, and poisoned by the juices of meat slain in anger and fermented drinks--fancy! drinks that have been swarmed in by thousands and thousands of horrible little bacteria!"

"It's yeast," said Ann Veronica--"a vegetable."

"It's all the same," said Miss Miniver. "And then they are swollen up and inflamed and drunken with matter. They are blinded to all fine and subtle things--they look at life with bloodshot eyes and dilated nostrils. They are arbitrary and unjust and dogmatic and brutish and lustful."

"But do you really think men's minds are altered by the food they eat?"

"I know it," said Miss Miniver. "Experte credo. When I am leading a true life, a pure and simple life free of all stimulants and excitements, I think--I think --oh! with pellucid clearness; but if I so much as take a mouthful of meat--or anything--the mirror is all blurred."

Part 6

Then, arising she knew not how, like a new-born appetite, came a craving in Ann Veronica for the sight and sound of beauty.

It was as if her aesthetic sense had become inflamed. Her mind turned and accused itself of having been cold and hard. She began to look for beauty and discover it in unexpected aspects and places. Hitherto she had seen it chiefly in pictures and

other works of art, incidentally, and as a thing taken out of life. Now the sense of beauty was spreading to a multitude of hitherto unsuspected aspects of the world about her.

The thought of beauty became an obsession. It interwove with her biological work. She found herself asking more and more curiously, "Why, on the principle of the survival of the fittest, have I any sense of beauty at all?" That enabled her to go on thinking about beauty when it seemed to her right that she should be thinking about biology.

She was very greatly exercised by the two systems of values--the two series of explanations that her comparative anatomy on the one hand and her sense of beauty on the other, set going in her thoughts. She could not make up her mind which was the finer, more elemental thing, which gave its values to the other. Was it that the struggle of things to survive produced as a sort of necessary by-product these intense preferences and appreciations, or was it that some mystical outer thing, some great force, drove life beautyward, even in spite of expediency, regardless of survival value and all the manifest discretions of life? She went to Capes with that riddle and put it to him very carefully and clearly, and he talked well--he always talked at some length when she took a difficulty to him--and sent her to a various literature upon the markings of butterflies, the incomprehensible elaboration and splendor of birds of Paradise and humming-birds' plumes, the patterning of tigers, and a leopard's spots. He was interesting and inconclusive, and the original papers to which he referred her discursive were at best only suggestive. Afterward, one afternoon, he hovered about her, and came and sat beside her and talked of beauty and the riddle of beauty for some time. He displayed a quite unprofessional vein of mysticism in the matter. He contrasted with Russell, whose intellectual methods were, so to speak, sceptically dogmatic. Their talk drifted to the beauty of music, and they took that up again at tea-time.

But as the students sat about Miss Garvice's tea-pot and drank tea or smoked cigarettes, the talk got away from Capes. The Scotchman informed Ann Veronica that your view of beauty necessarily depended on your metaphysical premises, and the young man with the Russell-like hair became anxious to distinguish himself by telling the Japanese student that Western art was symmetrical and Eastern art asymmetrical, and that among the higher organisms the tendency was toward an external symmetry veiling an internal want of balance. Ann Veronica decided she would have to go on with Capes another day, and, looking up, discovered him sitting on a stool with his hands in his pockets and his head a little on one side, regarding her with a thoughtful expression. She met his eye for a moment in curious surprise.

He turned his eyes and stared at Miss Garvice like one who wakes from a reverie, and then got up and strolled down the laboratory toward his refuge, the preparation-room.

Part 7

Then one day a little thing happened that clothed itself in significance.

She had been working upon a ribbon of microtome sections of the developing salamander, and he came to see what she had made of them. She stood up and he sat down at the microscope, and for a time he was busy scrutinizing one section after another. She looked down at him and saw that the sunlight was gleaming from his cheeks, and that all over his cheeks was a fine golden down of delicate hairs. And at the sight something leaped within her.

Something changed for her.

She became aware of his presence as she had never been aware of any human being in her life before. She became aware of the modelling of his ear, of the muscles of his neck and the textures of the hair that came off his brow, the soft minute curve of eyelid that she could just see beyond his brow; she perceived all these familiar objects as though they were acutely beautiful things. They WERE, she realized, acutely beautiful things. Her sense followed the shoulders under his coat, down to where his flexible, sensitive-looking hand rested lightly upon the table. She felt him as something solid and strong and trustworthy beyond measure. The perception of him flooded her being.

He got up. "Here's something rather good," he said, and with a start and an effort she took his place at the microscope, while he stood beside her and almost leaning over her.

She found she was trembling at his nearness and full of a thrilling dread that he might touch her. She pulled herself together and put her eye to the eye-piece.

"You see the pointer?" he asked.

"I see the pointer," she said.

"It's like this," he said, and dragged a stool beside her and sat down with his elbow four inches from hers and made a sketch. Then he got up and left her.

She had a feeling at his departure as of an immense cavity, of something enormously gone; she could not tell whether it was infinite regret or infinite relief. . . .

But now Ann Veronica knew what was the matter with her.

Part 8

And as she sat on her bed that night, musing and half-undressed, she began to run one hand down her arm and scrutinize the soft flow of muscle under her skin. She thought of the marvellous beauty of skin, and all the delightfulness of living texture. Oh the back of her arm she found the faintest down of hair in the world. "Etherealized monkey," she said. She held out her arm straight before her, and turned her hand this way and that.

"Why should one pretend?" she whispered. "Why should one pretend?"

"Think of all the beauty in the world that is covered up and overlaid."

She glanced shyly at the mirror above her dressing-table, and then about her at the furniture, as though it might penetrate to the thoughts that peeped in her mind.

"I wonder," said Ann Veronica at last, "if I am beautiful? I wonder if I shall ever shine like a light, like a translucent goddess?--"

"I wonder--"

"I suppose girls and women have prayed for this, have come to this-- In Babylon, in Nineveh.

"Why shouldn't one face the facts of one's self?"

She stood up. She posed herself before her mirror and surveyed herself with gravely thoughtful, gravely critical, and yet admiring eyes. "And, after all, I am just one common person!"

She watched the throb of the arteries in the stem of her neck, and put her hand at last gently and almost timidly to where her heart beat beneath her breast.

Part 9

The realization that she was in love flooded Ann Veronica's mind, and altered the quality of all its topics.

She began to think persistently of Capes, and it seemed to her now that for some weeks at least she must have been thinking persistently of him unawares. She was surprised to find how stored her mind was with impressions and memories of him, how vividly she remembered his gestures and little things that he had said. It occurred to her that it was absurd and wrong to be so continuously thinking of one engrossing topic, and she made a strenuous effort to force her mind to other questions.

But it was extraordinary what seemingly irrelevant things could restore her to the thought of Capes again. And when she went to sleep, then always Capes became the novel and wonderful guest of her dreams.

For a time it really seemed all-sufficient to her that she should love. That Capes should love her seemed beyond the compass of her imagination. Indeed, she did not want to think of him as loving her. She wanted to think of him as her beloved person, to

be near him and watch him, to have him going about, doing this and that, saying this and that, unconscious of her, while she too remained unconscious of herself. To think of him as loving her would make all that different. Then he would turn his face to her, and she would have to think of herself in his eyes. She would become defensive--what she did would be the thing that mattered. He would require things of her, and she would be passionately concerned to meet his requirements. Loving was better than that. Loving was self-forgetfulness, pure delighting in another human being. She felt that with Capes near to her she would be content always to go on loving.

She went next day to the schools, and her world seemed all made of happiness just worked up roughly into shapes and occasions and duties. She found she could do her microscope work all the better for being in love. She winced when first she heard the preparation-room door open and Capes came down the laboratory; but when at last he reached her she was self-possessed. She put a stool for him at a little distance from her own, and after he had seen the day's work he hesitated, and then plunged into a resumption of their discussion about beauty.

"I think," he said, "I was a little too mystical about beauty the other day."

"I like the mystical way," she said.

"Our business here is the right way. I've been thinking, you know-- I'm not sure that primarily the perception of beauty isn't just intensity of feeling free from pain; intensity of perception without any tissue destruction."

"I like the mystical way better," said Ann Veronica, and thought.

"A number of beautiful things are not intense."

"But delicacy, for example, may be intensely perceived."

"But why is one face beautiful and another not?" objected Ann Veronica; "on your theory any two faces side by side in the sunlight ought to be equally beautiful. One must get them with exactly the same intensity."

He did not agree with that. "I don't mean simply intensity of sensation. I said intensity of perception. You may perceive harmony, proportion, rhythm, intensely. They are things faint and slight in themselves, as physical facts, but they are like the detonator of a bomb: they let loose the explosive. There's the internal factor as well as the external. . . . I don't know if I express myself clearly. I mean that the point is that vividness of perception is the essential factor of beauty; but, of course, vividness may be created by a whisper."

"That brings us back," said Ann Veronica, "to the mystery. Why should some things and not others open the deeps?"

"Well, that might, after all, be an outcome of selection --like the preference for blue flowers, which are not nearly so bright as yellow, of some insects."

"That doesn't explain sunsets."

"Not quite so easily as it explains an insect alighting on colored paper. But perhaps if people didn't like clear, bright, healthy eyes--which is biologically understandable--they couldn't like precious stones. One thing may be a necessary collateral of the others. And, after all, a fine clear sky of bright colors is the signal to come out of hiding and rejoice and go on with life."

"H'm!" said Ann Veronica, and shook her head.

Capes smiled cheerfully with his eyes meeting hers. "I throw it out in passing," he said. "What I am after is that beauty isn't a special inserted sort of thing; that's my idea. It's just life, pure life, life nascent, running clear and strong."

He stood up to go on to the next student.

"There's morbid beauty," said Ann Veronica.

"I wonder if there is!" said Capes, and paused, and then bent down over the boy who wore his hair like Russell.

Ann Veronica surveyed his sloping back for a moment, and then drew her microscope toward her. Then for a time she sat very still. She felt that she had passed a difficult corner, and that now she could go on talking with him again, just as she had been used to do before she understood what was the matter with her. .

..

She had one idea, she found, very clear in her mind--that she would get a Research Scholarship, and so contrive another year in the laboratory.

"Now I see what everything means," said Ann Veronica to herself; and it really felt for some days as though the secret of the universe, that had been wrapped and hidden from her so obstinately, was at last altogether displayed.

CHAPTER THE NINTH

DISCORDS

Part 1

One afternoon, soon after Ann Veronica's great discovery, a telegram came into the laboratory for her. It ran:

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-----  
| Bored | and   | nothing | to   | do   |  
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|  
| will  | you  | dine  | with | me  |  
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|  
| to-night | somewhere | and  | talk | I   |  
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|  
| shall | be  | grateful | Ramage |    |  
-----
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Ann Veronica was rather pleased by this. She had not seen Ramage for ten or eleven days, and she was quite ready for a gossip with him. And now her mind was so full of the thought that she was in love--in love!--that marvellous state! that I really believe she had some dim idea of talking to him about it. At any rate, it would be good to hear him saying the sort of things he did--perhaps now she would grasp them better--with this world--shaking secret brandishing itself about inside her head within a yard of him.

She was sorry to find Ramage a little disposed to be melancholy.

"I have made over seven hundred pounds in the last week," he said.

"That's exhilarating," said Ann Veronica.

"Not a bit of it," he said; "it's only a score in a game."

"It's a score you can buy all sorts of things with."

"Nothing that one wants."

He turned to the waiter, who held a wine-card. "Nothing can cheer me," he said, "except champagne." He meditated. "This," he said, and then: "No! Is this sweeter? Very well."

"Everything goes well with me," he said, folding his arms under him and regarding Ann Veronica with the slightly projecting eyes wide open. "And I'm not happy. I believe I'm in love."

He leaned back for his soup.

Presently he resumed: "I believe I must be in love."

"You can't be that," said Ann Veronica, wisely.

"How do you know?"

"Well, it isn't exactly a depressing state, is it?"

"YOU don't know."

"One has theories," said Ann Veronica, radiantly.

"Oh, theories! Being in love is a fact."

"It ought to make one happy."

"It's an unrest--a longing-- What's that?" The waiter had intervened. "Parmesan--take it away!"

He glanced at Ann Veronica's face, and it seemed to him that she

really was exceptionally radiant. He wondered why she thought love made people happy, and began to talk of the smilax and pinks that adorned the table. He filled her glass with champagne.

"You MUST," he said, "because of my depression."

They were eating quails when they returned to the topic of love.

"What made you think" he said, abruptly, with the gleam of avidity in his face, "that love makes people happy?"

"I know it must."

"But how?"

He was, she thought, a little too insistent. "Women know these things by instinct," she answered.

"I wonder," he said, "if women do know things by instinct? I have my doubts about feminine instinct. It's one of our conventional superstitions. A woman is supposed to know when a man is in love with her. Do you think she does?"

Ann Veronica picked among her salad with a judicial expression of face. "I think she would," she decided.

"Ah!" said Ramage, impressively.

Ann Veronica looked up at him and found him regarding her with eyes that were almost woebegone, and into which, indeed, he was trying to throw much more expression than they could carry.

There was a little pause between them, full for Ann Veronica of rapid elusive suspicions and intimations.

"Perhaps one talks nonsense about a woman's instinct," she said.

"It's a way of avoiding explanations. And girls and women, perhaps, are different. I don't know. I don't suppose a girl

can tell if a man is in love with her or not in love with her." Her mind went off to Capes. Her thoughts took words for themselves. "She can't. I suppose it depends on her own state of mind. If one wants a thing very much, perhaps one is inclined to think one can't have it. I suppose if one were to love some one, one would feel doubtful. And if one were to love some one very much, it's just so that one would be blindest, just when one wanted most to see."

She stopped abruptly, afraid that Ramage might be able to infer Capes from the things she had said, and indeed his face was very eager.

"Yes?" he said.

Ann Veronica blushed. "That's all," she said "I'm afraid I'm a little confused about these things."

Ramage looked at her, and then fell into deep reflection as the waiter came to paraphrase their talk again.

"Have you ever been to the opera, Ann Veronica?" said Ramage.

"Once or twice."

"Shall we go now?"

"I think I would like to listen to music. What is there?"

"Tristan."

"I've never heard Tristan and Isolde."

"That settles it. We'll go. There's sure to be a place somewhere."

"It's rather jolly of you," said Ann Veronica.

"It's jolly of you to come," said Ramage.

So presently they got into a hansom together, and Ann Veronica sat back feeling very luxurious and pleasant, and looked at the light and stir and misty glitter of the street traffic from under slightly drooping eyelids, while Ramage sat closer to her than he need have done, and glanced ever and again at her face, and made to speak and said nothing. And when they got to Covent Garden Ramage secured one of the little upper boxes, and they came into it as the overture began.

Ann Veronica took off her jacket and sat down in the corner chair, and leaned forward to look into the great hazy warm brown cavity of the house, and Ramage placed his chair to sit beside her and near her, facing the stage. The music took hold of her slowly as her eyes wandered from the indistinct still ranks of the audience to the little busy orchestra with its quivering violins, its methodical movements of brown and silver instruments, its brightly lit scores and shaded lights. She had never been to the opera before except as one of a congested mass of people in the cheaper seats, and with backs and heads and women's hats for the frame of the spectacle; there was by contrast a fine large sense of space and ease in her present position. The curtain rose out of the concluding bars of the overture and revealed Isolde on the prow of the barbaric ship. The voice of the young seaman came floating down from the masthead, and the story of the immortal lovers had begun. She knew the story only imperfectly, and followed it now with a passionate and deepening interest. The splendid voices sang on from phase to phase of love's unfolding, the ship drove across the sea to the beating rhythm of the rowers. The lovers broke into passionate knowledge of themselves and each other, and then,

a jarring intervention, came King Mark amidst the shouts of the sailormen, and stood beside them.

The curtain came festooning slowly down, the music ceased, the lights in the auditorium glowed out, and Ann Veronica woke out of her confused dream of involuntary and commanding love in a glory of sound and colors to discover that Ramage was sitting close beside her with one hand resting lightly on her waist. She made a quick movement, and the hand fell away.

"By God! Ann Veronica," he said, sighing deeply. "This stirs one."

She sat quite still looking at him.

"I wish you and I had drunk that love potion," he said.

She found no ready reply to that, and he went on: "This music is the food of love. It makes me desire life beyond measure. Life!

Life and love! It makes me want to be always young, always strong, always devoting my life--and dying splendidly."

"It is very beautiful," said Ann Veronica in a low tone.

They said no more for a moment, and each was now acutely aware of the other. Ann Veronica was excited and puzzled, with a sense of a strange and disconcerting new light breaking over her relations with Ramage. She had never thought of him at all in that way before. It did not shock her; it amazed her, interested her beyond measure. But also this must not go on. She felt he was going to say something more--something still more personal and intimate. She was curious, and at the same time clearly resolved she must not hear it. She felt she must get him talking upon some impersonal theme at any cost. She snatched about in her mind.

"What is the exact force of a motif?" she asked at random.
"Before I heard much Wagnerian music I heard enthusiastic descriptions of it from a mistress I didn't like at school. She gave me an impression of a sort of patched quilt; little bits of patterned stuff coming up again and again."

She stopped with an air of interrogation.

Ramage looked at her for a long and discriminating interval without speaking. He seemed to be hesitating between two courses of action. "I don't know much about the technique of music," he said at last, with his eyes upon her. "It's a matter of feeling with me."

He contradicted himself by plunging into an exposition of motifs.

By a tacit agreement they ignored the significant thing between them, ignored the slipping away of the ground on which they had stood together hitherto. . . .

All through the love music of the second act, until the hunting horns of Mark break in upon the dream, Ann Veronica's consciousness was flooded with the perception of a man close beside her, preparing some new thing to say to her, preparing, perhaps, to touch her, stretching hungry invisible tentacles about her. She tried to think what she should do in this eventuality or that. Her mind had been and was full of the thought of Capes, a huge generalized Capes-lover. And in some incomprehensible way, Ramage was confused with Capes; she had a grotesque disposition to persuade herself that this was really Capes who surrounded her, as it were, with wings of desire. The fact that it was her trusted friend making illicit love to her remained, in spite of all her effort, an insignificant thing in her mind. The music confused and distracted her, and made her struggle against a feeling of intoxication. Her head swam. That

was the inconvenience of it; her head was swimming. The music throbbed into the warnings that preceded the king's irruption.

Abruptly he gripped her wrist. "I love you, Ann Veronica. I love you--with all my heart and soul."

She put her face closer to his. She felt the warm nearness of his. "DON'T!" she said, and wrenched her wrist from his retaining hand.

"My God! Ann Veronica," he said, struggling to keep his hold upon her; "my God! Tell me--tell me now--tell me you love me!"

His expression was as it were rapaciously furtive. She answered in whispers, for there was the white arm of a woman in the next box peeping beyond the partition within a yard of him.

"My hand! This isn't the place."

He released her hand and talked in eager undertones against an auditory background of urgency and distress.

"Ann Veronica," he said, "I tell you this is love. I love the soles of your feet. I love your very breath. I have tried not to tell you--tried to be simply your friend. It is no good. I want you. I worship you. I would do anything--I would give anything to make you mine. . . . Do you hear me? Do you hear what I am saying? . . . Love!"

He held her arm and abandoned it again at her quick defensive movement. For a long time neither spoke again.

She sat drawn together in her chair in the corner of the box, at a loss what to say or do--afraid, curious, perplexed. It seemed to her that it was her duty to get up and clamor to go home to

her room, to protest against his advances as an insult. But she did not in the least want to do that. These sweeping dignities were not within the compass of her will; she remembered she liked Ramage, and owed things to him, and she was interested--she was profoundly interested. He was in love with her! She tried to grasp all the welter of values in the situation simultaneously, and draw some conclusion from their disorder.

He began to talk again in quick undertones that she could not clearly hear.

"I have loved you," he was saying, "ever since you sat on that gate and talked. I have always loved you. I don't care what divides us. I don't care what else there is in the world. I want you beyond measure or reckoning. . . ."

His voice rose and fell amidst the music and the singing of Tristan and King Mark, like a voice heard in a badly connected telephone. She stared at his pleading face.

She turned to the stage, and Tristan was wounded in Kurvenal's arms, with Isolde at his feet, and King Mark, the incarnation of masculine force and obligation, the masculine creditor of love and beauty, stood over him, and the second climax was ending in wreaths and reek of melodies; and then the curtain was coming down in a series of short rushes, the music had ended, and the people were stirring and breaking out into applause, and the lights of the auditorium were resuming. The lighting-up pierced the obscurity of the box, and Ramage stopped his urgent flow of words abruptly and sat back. This helped to restore Ann Veronica's self-command.

She turned her eyes to him again, and saw her late friend and pleasant and trusted companion, who had seen fit suddenly to change into a lover, babbling interesting unacceptable things.

He looked eager and flushed and troubled. His eyes caught at hers with passionate inquiries. "Tell me," he said; "speak to me." She realized it was possible to be sorry for him--acutely sorry for the situation. Of course this thing was absolutely impossible. But she was disturbed, mysteriously disturbed. She remembered abruptly that she was really living upon his money. She leaned forward and addressed him.

"Mr. Ramage," she said, "please don't talk like this."

He made to speak and did not.

"I don't want you to do it, to go on talking to me. I don't want to hear you. If I had known that you had meant to talk like this I wouldn't have come here."

"But how can I help it? How can I keep silence?"

"Please!" she insisted. "Please not now."

"I MUST talk with you. I must say what I have to say!"

"But not now--not here."

"It came," he said. "I never planned it-- And now I have begun--"

She felt acutely that he was entitled to explanations, and as acutely that explanations were impossible that night. She wanted to think.

"Mr. Ramage," she said, "I can't-- Not now. Will you please-- Not now, or I must go."

He stared at her, trying to guess at the mystery of her thoughts.

"You don't want to go?"

"No. But I must--I ought--"

"I MUST talk about this. Indeed I must."

"Not now."

"But I love you. I love you--unendurably."

"Then don't talk to me now. I don't want you to talk to me now. There is a place-- This isn't the place. You have misunderstood.

I can't explain--"

They regarded one another, each blinded to the other. "Forgive me," he decided to say at last, and his voice had a little quiver of emotion, and he laid his hand on hers upon her knee. "I am the most foolish of men. I was stupid--stupid and impulsive beyond measure to burst upon you in this way. I--I am a love-sick idiot, and not accountable for my actions. Will you forgive me--if I say no more?"

She looked at him with perplexed, earnest eyes.

"Pretend," he said, "that all I have said hasn't been said. And let us go on with our evening. Why not? Imagine I've had a fit of hysteria--and that I've come round."

"Yes," she said, and abruptly she liked him enormously. She felt this was the sensible way out of this oddly sinister situation.

He still watched her and questioned her.

"And let us have a talk about this--some other time. Somewhere, where we can talk without interruption. Will you?"

She thought, and it seemed to him she had never looked so self-disciplined and deliberate and beautiful. "Yes," she said, "that is what we ought to do." But now she doubted again of the quality of the armistice they had just made.

He had a wild impulse to shout. "Agreed," he said with queer exaltation, and his grip tightened on her hand. "And to-night we are friends?"

"We are friends," said Ann Veronica, and drew her hand quickly away from him.

"To-night we are as we have always been. Except that this music we have been swimming in is divine. While I have been pestering you, have you heard it? At least, you heard the first act. And all the third act is love-sick music. Tristan dying and Isolde coming to crown his death. Wagner had just been in love when he wrote it all. It begins with that queer piccolo solo. Now I shall never hear it but what this evening will come pouring back over me."

The lights sank, the prelude to the third act was beginning, the music rose and fell in crowded intimations of lovers separated--lovers separated with scars and memories between them, and the curtain went reefing up to display Tristan lying wounded on his couch and the shepherd crouching with his pipe.

Part 2

They had their explanations the next evening, but they were explanations in quite other terms than Ann Veronica had anticipated, quite other and much more startling and illuminating terms. Ramage came for her at her lodgings, and she met him graciously and kindly as a queen who knows she must needs give sorrow to a faithful liege. She was unusually soft and gentle in her manner to him. He was wearing a new silk hat, with a slightly more generous brim than its predecessor, and it suited his type of face, robbed his dark eyes a little of their aggressiveness and gave him a solid and dignified and benevolent air. A faint anticipation of triumph showed in his manner and a subdued excitement.

"We'll go to a place where we can have a private room," he said. "Then--then we can talk things out."

So they went this time to the Rococo, in Germain Street, and up-stairs to a landing upon which stood a bald-headed waiter with whiskers like a French admiral and discretion beyond all limits in his manner. He seemed to have expected them. He ushered them with an amiable flat hand into a minute apartment with a little gas-stove, a silk crimson-covered sofa, and a bright little table, gay with napery and hot-house flowers.

"Odd little room," said Ann Veronica, dimly apprehending that obtrusive sofa.

"One can talk without undertones, so to speak," said Ramage. "It's--private." He stood looking at the preparations before them with an unusual preoccupation of manner, then roused himself to take her jacket, a little awkwardly, and hand it to the waiter who hung it in the corner of the room. It appeared he had already ordered dinner and wine, and the whiskered waiter waved in his subordinate with the soup forthwith.

"I'm going to talk of indifferent themes," said Ramage, a little fussily, "until these interruptions of the service are over. Then--then we shall be together. . . . How did you like Tristan?"

Ann Veronica paused the fraction of a second before her reply came.

"I thought much of it amazingly beautiful."

"Isn't it. And to think that man got it all out of the poorest little love-story for a respectable titled lady! Have you read of it?"

"Never."

"It gives in a nutshell the miracle of art and the imagination. You get this queer irascible musician quite impossibly and unfortunately in love with a wealthy patroness, and then out of his brain comes THIS, a tapestry of glorious music, setting out love to lovers, lovers who love in spite of all that is wise and respectable and right."

Ann Veronica thought. She did not want to seem to shrink from conversation, but all sorts of odd questions were running through her mind. "I wonder why people in love are so defiant, so careless of other considerations?"

"The very hares grow brave. I suppose because it IS the chief thing in life." He stopped and said earnestly: "It is the chief thing in life, and everything else goes down before it. Everything, my dear, everything! . . . But we have got to talk upon indifferent themes until we have done with this blond young gentleman from Bavaria. . . ."

The dinner came to an end at last, and the whiskered waiter

presented his bill and evacuated the apartment and closed the door behind him with an almost ostentatious discretion. Ramage stood up, and suddenly turned the key in the door in an off-hand manner. "Now," he said, "no one can blunder in upon us. We are alone and we can say and do what we please. We two." He stood still, looking at her.

Ann Veronica tried to seem absolutely unconcerned. The turning of the key startled her, but she did not see how she could make an objection. She felt she had stepped into a world of unknown usages.

"I have waited for this," he said, and stood quite still, looking at her until the silence became oppressive.

"Won't you sit down," she said, "and tell me what you want to say?" Her voice was flat and faint. Suddenly she had become afraid. She struggled not to be afraid. After all, what could happen?

He was looking at her very hard and earnestly. "Ann Veronica," he said.

Then before she could say a word to arrest him he was at her side. "Don't!" she said, weakly, as he had bent down and put one arm about her and seized her hands with his disengaged hand and kissed her--kissed her almost upon her lips. He seemed to do ten things before she could think to do one, to leap upon her and take possession.

Ann Veronica's universe, which had never been altogether so respectful to her as she could have wished, gave a shout and whirled head over heels. Everything in the world had changed for her. If hate could kill, Ramage would have been killed by a flash of hate. "Mr. Ramage!" she cried, and struggled to her

feet.

"My darling!" he said, clasping her resolutely in his arms, "my dearest!"

"Mr. Ramage!" she began, and his mouth sealed hers and his breath was mixed with her breath. Her eye met his four inches away, and his was glaring, immense, and full of resolution, a stupendous monster of an eye.

She shut her lips hard, her jaw hardened, and she set herself to struggle with him. She wrenched her head away from his grip and got her arm between his chest and hers. They began to wrestle fiercely. Each became frightfully aware of the other as a plastic energetic body, of the strong muscles of neck against cheek, of hands gripping shoulder-blade and waist. "How dare you!" she panted, with her world screaming and grimacing insult at her. "How dare you!"

They were both astonished at the other's strength. Perhaps Ramage was the more astonished. Ann Veronica had been an ardent hockey player and had had a course of jiu-jitsu in the High School. Her defence ceased rapidly to be in any sense ladylike, and became vigorous and effective; a strand of black hair that had escaped its hairpins came athwart Ramage's eyes, and then the knuckles of a small but very hardly clinched fist had thrust itself with extreme effectiveness and painfulness under his jawbone and ear.

"Let go!" said Ann Veronica, through her teeth, strenuously inflicting agony, and he cried out sharply and let go and receded a pace.

"NOW!" said Ann Veronica. "Why did you dare to do that?"

Part 3

Each of them stared at the other, set in a universe that had changed its system of values with kaleidoscopic completeness. She was flushed, and her eyes were bright and angry; her breath came sobbing, and her hair was all abroad in wandering strands of black. He too was flushed and ruffled; one side of his collar had slipped from its stud and he held a hand to the corner of his jaw.

"You vixen!" said Mr. Ramage, speaking the simplest first thought of his heart.

"You had no right--" panted Ann Veronica.

"Why on earth," he asked, "did you hurt me like that?"

Ann Veronica did her best to think she had not deliberately attempted to cause him pain. She ignored his question.

"I never dreamt!" she said.

"What on earth did you expect me to do, then?" he asked.

Part 4

Interpretation came pouring down upon her almost blindingly; she understood now the room, the waiter, the whole situation. She understood. She leaped to a world of shabby knowledge, of furtive base realizations. She wanted to cry out upon herself for

the uttermost fool in existence.

"I thought you wanted to have a talk to me," she said.

"I wanted to make love to you.

"You knew it," he added, in her momentary silence.

"You said you were in love with me," said Ann Veronica; "I wanted to explain--"

"I said I loved and wanted you." The brutality of his first astonishment was evaporating. "I am in love with you. You know I am in love with you. And then you go--and half throttle me. . . . I believe you've crushed a gland or something. It feels like it."

"I am sorry," said Ann Veronica. "What else was I to do?"

For some seconds she stood watching him. and both were thinking very quickly. Her state of mind would have seemed altogether discreditable to her grandmother. She ought to have been disposed to faint and scream at all these happenings; she ought to have maintained a front of outraged dignity to veil the sinking of her heart. I would like to have to tell it so. But indeed that is not at all a good description of her attitude. She was an indignant queen, no doubt she was alarmed and disgusted within limits; but she was highly excited, and there was something, some low adventurous strain in her being, some element, subtle at least if base, going about the rioting ways and crowded insurgent meeting-places of her mind declaring that the whole affair was after all--they are the only words that express it--a very great lark indeed. At the bottom of her heart she was not a bit afraid of Ramage. She had unaccountable gleams of sympathy with and liking for him. And the grotesquest fact was that she did not so

much loathe, as experience with a quite critical condemnation this strange sensation of being kissed. Never before had any human being kissed her lips. . . .

It was only some hours after that these ambiguous elements evaporated and vanished and loathing came, and she really began to be thoroughly sick and ashamed of the whole disgraceful quarrel and scuffle.

He, for his part, was trying to grasp the series of unexpected reactions that had so wrecked their tete-a-tete. He had meant to be master of his fate that evening and it had escaped him altogether. It had, as it were, blown up at the concussion of his first step. It dawned upon him that he had been abominably used by Ann Veronica.

"Look here," he said, "I brought you here to make love to you."

"I didn't understand--your idea of making love. You had better let me go again."

"Not yet," he said. "I do love you. I love you all the more for the streak of sheer devil in you. . . . You are the most beautiful, the most desirable thing I have ever met in this world. It was good to kiss you, even at the price. But, by Jove! you are fierce! You are like those Roman women who carry stilettos in their hair."

"I came here to talk reasonably, Mr. Ramage. It is abominable--"

"What is the use of keeping up this note of indignation, Ann Veronica? Here I am! I am your lover, burning for you. I mean to have you! Don't frown me off now. Don't go back into Victorian respectability and pretend you don't know and you can't think and all the rest of it. One comes at last to the step from

dreams to reality. This is your moment. No one will ever love you as I love you now. I have been dreaming of your body and you night after night. I have been imaging--"

"Mr. Ramage, I came here-- I didn't suppose for one moment you would dare--"

"Nonsense! That is your mistake! You are too intellectual. You want to do everything with your mind. You are afraid of kisses. You are afraid of the warmth in your blood. It's just because all that side of your life hasn't fairly begun."

He made a step toward her.

"Mr. Ramage," she said, sharply, "I have to make it plain to you. I don't think you understand. I don't love you. I don't. I can't love you. I love some one else. It is repulsive. It disgusts me that you should touch me."

He stared in amazement at this new aspect of the situation. "You love some one else?" he repeated.

"I love some one else. I could not dream of loving you."

And then he flashed his whole conception of the relations of men and women upon her in one astonishing question. His hand went with an almost instinctive inquiry to his jawbone again. "Then why the devil," he demanded, "do you let me stand you dinners and the opera--and why do you come to a cabinet particulier with me?"

He became radiant with anger. "You mean to tell me" he said, "that you have a lover? While I have been keeping you! Yes--keeping you!"

This view of life he hurled at her as if it were an offensive

missile. It stunned her. She felt she must fly before it and could no longer do so. She did not think for one moment what interpretation he might put upon the word "lover."

"Mr. Ramage," she said, clinging to her one point, "I want to get out of this horrible little room. It has all been a mistake. I have been stupid and foolish. Will you unlock that door?"

"Never!" he said. "Confound your lover! Look here! Do you really think I am going to run you while he makes love to you? No fear! I never heard of anything so cool. If he wants you, let him get you. You're mine. I've paid for you and helped you, and I'm going to conquer you somehow--if I have to break you to do it. Hitherto you've seen only my easy, kindly side. But now confound it! how can you prevent it? I will kiss you."

"You won't!" said Ann Veronica; with the clearest note of determination.

He seemed to be about to move toward her. She stepped back quickly, and her hand knocked a wine-glass from the table to smash noisily on the floor. She caught at the idea. "If you come a step nearer to me," she said, "I will smash every glass on this table."

"Then, by God!" he said, "you'll be locked up!"

Ann Veronica was disconcerted for a moment. She had a vision of policemen, reprovng magistrates, a crowded court, public disgrace. She saw her aunt in tears, her father white-faced and hard hit. "Don't come nearer!" she said.

There was a discreet knocking at the door, and Ramage's face changed.

"No," she said, under her breath, "you can't face it." And she knew that she was safe.

He went to the door. "It's all right," he said, reassuringly to the inquirer without.

Ann Veronica glanced at the mirror to discover a flushed and dishevelled disorder. She began at once a hasty readjustment of her hair, while Ramage parleyed with inaudible interrogations. "A glass slipped from the table," he explained. . . . "Non. Fas du tout. Non. . . . Niente. . . . Bitte! . . . Oui, dans la note. . . . Presently. Presently." That conversation ended and he turned to her again.

"I am going," she said grimly, with three hairpins in her mouth.

She took her hat from the peg in the corner and began to put it on. He regarded that perennial miracle of pinning with wrathful eyes.

"Look here, Ann Veronica," he began. "I want a plain word with you about all this. Do you mean to tell me you didn't understand why I wanted you to come here?"

"Not a bit of it," said Ann Veronica stoutly.

"You didn't expect that I should kiss you?"

"How was I to know that a man would--would think it was possible--when there was nothing--no love?"

"How did I know there wasn't love?"

That silenced her for a moment. "And what on earth," he said, "do you think the world is made of? Why do you think I have been

doing things for you? The abstract pleasure of goodness? Are you one of the members of that great white sisterhood that takes and does not give? The good accepting woman! Do you really suppose a girl is entitled to live at free quarters on any man she meets without giving any return?"

"I thought," said Ann Veronica, "you were my friend."

"Friend! What have a man and a girl in common to make them friends? Ask that lover of yours! And even with friends, would you have it all Give on one side and all Take on the other? . . . Does HE know I keep you? . . . You won't have a man's lips near you, but you'll eat out of his hand fast enough."

Ann Veronica was stung to helpless anger.

"Mr. Ramage," she cried, "you are outrageous! You understand nothing. You are--horrible. Will you let me go out of this room?"

"No," cried Ramage; "hear me out! I'll have that satisfaction, anyhow. You women, with your tricks of evasion, you're a sex of swindlers. You have all the instinctive dexterity of parasites. You make yourself charming for help. You climb by disappointing men. This lover of yours--"

"He doesn't know!" cried Ann Veronica.

"Well, you know."

Ann Veronica could have wept with vexation. Indeed, a note of weeping broke her voice for a moment as she burst out, "You know as well as I do that money was a loan!"

"Loan!"

"You yourself called it a loan!"

"Euphuism. We both understood that."

"You shall have every penny of it back."

"I'll frame it--when I get it."

"I'll pay you if I have to work at shirt-making at threepence an hour."

"You'll never pay me. You think you will. It's your way of glossing over the ethical position. It's the sort of way a woman always does gloss over her ethical positions. You're all dependents--all of you. By instinct. Only you good ones--shirk. You shirk a straightforward and decent return for what you get from us--taking refuge in purity and delicacy and such-like when it comes to payment."

"Mr. Ramage," said Ann Veronica, "I want to go--NOW!"

Part 5

But she did not get away just then.

Ramage's bitterness passed as abruptly as his aggression. "Oh, Ann Veronica!" he cried, "I cannot let you go like this! You don't understand. You can't possibly understand!"

He began a confused explanation, a perplexing contradictory apology for his urgency and wrath. He loved Ann Veronica, he

said; he was so mad to have her that he defeated himself, and did crude and alarming and senseless things. His vicious abusiveness vanished. He suddenly became eloquent and plausible. He did make her perceive something of the acute, tormenting desire for her that had arisen in him and possessed him. She stood, as it were, directed doorward, with her eyes watching every movement, listening to him, repelled by him and yet dimly understanding.

At any rate he made it very clear that night that there was an ineradicable discord in life, a jarring something that must shatter all her dreams of a way of living for women that would enable them to be free and spacious and friendly with men, and that was the passionate predisposition of men to believe that the love of women can be earned and won and controlled and compelled.

He flung aside all his talk of help and disinterested friendship as though it had never been even a disguise between them, as though from the first it was no more than a fancy dress they had put quite understandingly upon their relationship. He had set out to win her, and she had let him start. And at the thought of that other lover--he was convinced that that beloved person was a lover, and she found herself unable to say a word to explain to him that this other person, the person she loved, did not even know of her love--Ramage grew angry and savage once more, and returned suddenly to gibe and insult. Men do services for the love of women, and the woman who takes must pay. Such was the simple code that displayed itself in all his thoughts. He left that arid rule clear of the least mist of refinement or delicacy.

That he should pay forty pounds to help this girl who preferred another man was no less in his eyes than a fraud and mockery that made her denial a maddening and outrageous disgrace to him. And this though he was evidently passionately in love with her.

For a while he threatened her. "You have put all your life in my

hands," he declared. "Think of that check you endorsed. There it is--against you. I defy you to explain it away. What do you think people will make of that? What will this lover of yours make of that?"

At intervals Ann Veronica demanded to go, declaring her undying resolve to repay him at any cost, and made short movements doorward.

But at last this ordeal was over, and Ramage opened the door. She emerged with a white face and wide-open eyes upon a little, red-lit landing. She went past three keenly observant and ostentatiously preoccupied waiters down the thick-carpeted staircase and out of the Hotel Rococo, that remarkable laboratory of relationships, past a tall porter in blue and crimson, into a cool, clear night.

Part 6

When Ann Veronica reached her little bed-sitting-room again, every nerve in her body was quivering with shame and self-disgust.

She threw hat and coat on the bed and sat down before the fire.

"And now," she said, splintering the surviving piece of coal into indignant flame-spurting fragments with one dexterous blow, "what am I to do?"

"I'm in a hole!--mess is a better word, expresses it better .
I'm in a mess--a nasty mess! a filthy mess! Oh, no end of a mess!"

Do you hear, Ann Veronica?--you're in a nasty, filthy, unforgivable mess!

"Haven't I just made a silly mess of things?"

"Forty pounds! I haven't got twenty!"

She got up, stamped with her foot, and then, suddenly remembering the lodger below, sat down and wrenched off her boots.

"This is what comes of being a young woman up to date. By Jove! I'm beginning to have my doubts about freedom!"

"You silly young woman, Ann Veronica! You silly young woman! The smeariness of the thing!"

"The smeariness of this sort of thing! . . . Mauled about!"

She fell to rubbing her insulted lips savagely with the back of her hand. "Ugh!" she said.

"The young women of Jane Austen's time didn't get into this sort of scrape! At least--one thinks so. . . . I wonder if some of them did--and it didn't get reported. Aunt Jane had her quiet moments. Most of them didn't, anyhow. They were properly brought up, and sat still and straight, and took the luck fate brought them as gentlewomen should. And they had an idea of what men were like behind all their nicety. They knew they were all Bogey in disguise. I didn't! I didn't! After all--"

For a time her mind ran on daintiness and its defensive restraints as though it was the one desirable thing. That world of fine printed cambrics and escorted maidens, of delicate secondary meanings and refined allusiveness, presented itself to her imagination with the brightness of a lost paradise, as indeed

for many women it is a lost paradise.

"I wonder if there is anything wrong with my manners," she said.
"I wonder if I've been properly brought up. If I had been quite quiet and white and dignified, wouldn't it have been different? Would he have dared? . . ."

For some creditable moments in her life Ann Veronica was utterly disgusted with herself; she was wrung with a passionate and belated desire to move gently, to speak softly and ambiguously--to be, in effect, prim.

Horrible details recurred to her.

"Why, among other things, did I put my knuckles in his neck--deliberately to hurt him?"

She tried to sound the humorous note.

"Are you aware, Ann Veronica, you nearly throttled that gentleman?"

Then she reviled her own foolish way of putting it.

"You ass and imbecile, Ann Veronica! You female cad! Cad! Cad! . . . Why aren't you folded up clean in lavender--as every young woman ought to be? What have you been doing with yourself? . . ."

She raked into the fire with the poker.

"All of which doesn't help me in the slightest degree to pay back that money."

That night was the most intolerable one that Ann Veronica had

ever spent. She washed her face with unwonted elaboration before she went to bed. This time, there was no doubt, she did not sleep. The more she disentangled the lines of her situation the deeper grew her self-disgust. Occasionally the mere fact of lying in bed became unendurable, and she rolled out and marched about her room and whispered abuse of herself--usually until she hit against some article of furniture.

Then she would have quiet times, in which she would say to herself, "Now look here! Let me think it all out!"

For the first time, it seemed to her, she faced the facts of a woman's position in the world--the meagre realities of such freedom as it permitted her, the almost unavoidable obligation to some individual man under which she must labor for even a foothold in the world. She had flung away from her father's support with the finest assumption of personal independence. And here she was--in a mess because it had been impossible for her to avoid leaning upon another man. She had thought--What had she thought? That this dependence of women was but an illusion which needed only to be denied to vanish. She had denied it with vigor, and here she was!

She did not so much exhaust this general question as pass from it to her insoluble individual problem again: "What am I to do?"

She wanted first of all to fling the forty pounds back into Ramage's face. But she had spent nearly half of it, and had no conception of how such a sum could be made good again. She thought of all sorts of odd and desperate expedients, and with passionate petulance rejected them all.

She took refuge in beating her pillow and inventing insulting epithets for herself. She got up, drew up her blind, and stared out of window at a dawn-cold vision of chimneys for a time, and

then went and sat on the edge of her bed. What was the alternative to going home? No alternative appeared in that darkness.

It seemed intolerable that she should go home and admit herself beaten. She did most urgently desire to save her face in Morningside Park, and for long hours she could think of no way of putting it that would not be in the nature of unconditional admission of defeat.

"I'd rather go as a chorus-girl," she said.

She was not very clear about the position and duties of a chorus-girl, but it certainly had the air of being a last desperate resort. There sprang from that a vague hope that perhaps she might extort a capitulation from her father by a threat to seek that position, and then with overwhelming clearness it came to her that whatever happened she would never be able to tell her father about her debt. The completest capitulation would not wipe out that trouble. And she felt that if she went home it was imperative to pay. She would always be going to and fro up the Avenue, getting glimpses of Ramage, seeing him in trains. . . .

For a time she promenaded the room.

"Why did I ever take that loan? An idiot girl in an asylum would have known better than that!

"Vulgarity of soul and innocence of mind--the worst of all conceivable combinations. I wish some one would kill Ramage by accident! . . .

"But then they would find that check endorsed in his bureau. . .

.

"I wonder what he will do?" She tried to imagine situations that might arise out of Ramage's antagonism, for he had been so bitter and savage that she could not believe that he would leave things as they were.

The next morning she went out with her post-office savings bank-book, and telegraphed for a warrant to draw out all the money she had in the world. It amounted to two-and-twenty pounds. She addressed an envelope to Ramage, and scrawled on a half-sheet of paper, "The rest shall follow." The money would be available in the afternoon, and she would send him four five-pound notes. The rest she meant to keep for her immediate necessities. A little relieved by this step toward reinstatement, she went on to the Imperial College to forget her muddle of problems for a time, if she could, in the presence of Capes.

Part 7

For a time the biological laboratory was full of healing virtue. Her sleepless night had left her languid but not stupefied, and for an hour or so the work distracted her altogether from her troubles.

Then, after Capes had been through her work and had gone on, it came to her that the fabric of this life of hers was doomed to almost immediate collapse; that in a little while these studies would cease, and perhaps she would never set eyes on him again. After that consolations fled.

The overnight nervous strain began to tell; she became

inattentive to the work before her, and it did not get on. She felt sleepy and unusually irritable. She lunched at a creamery in Great Portland Street, and as the day was full of wintry sunshine, spent the rest of the lunch-hour in a drowsy gloom, which she imagined to be thought upon the problems of her position, on a seat in Regent's Park. A girl of fifteen or sixteen gave her a handbill that she regarded as a tract until she saw "Votes for Women" at the top. That turned her mind to the more generalized aspects of her perplexities again. She had never been so disposed to agree that the position of women in the modern world is intolerable.

Capes joined the students at tea, and displayed himself in an impish mood that sometimes possessed him. He did not notice that Ann Veronica was preoccupied and heavy-eyed. Miss Klegg raised the question of women's suffrage, and he set himself to provoke a duel between her and Miss Garvice. The youth with the hair brushed back and the spectacled Scotchman joined in the fray for and against the women's vote.

Ever and again Capes appealed to Ann Veronica. He liked to draw her in, and she did her best to talk. But she did not talk readily, and in order to say something she plunged a little, and felt she plunged. Capes scored back with an uncompromising vigor that was his way of complimenting her intelligence. But this afternoon it discovered an unusual vein of irritability in her. He had been reading Belfort Bax, and declared himself a convert. He contrasted the lot of women in general with the lot of men, presented men as patient, self-immolating martyrs, and women as the pampered favorites of Nature. A vein of conviction mingled with his burlesque.

For a time he and Miss Klegg contradicted one another.

The question ceased to be a tea-table talk, and became suddenly

tragically real for Ann Veronica. There he sat, cheerfully friendly in his sex's freedom--the man she loved, the one man she cared should unlock the way to the wide world for her imprisoned feminine possibilities, and he seemed regardless that she stifled under his eyes; he made a jest of all this passionate insurgence of the souls of women against the fate of their conditions.

Miss Garvice repeated again, and almost in the same words she used at every discussion, her contribution to the great question.

She thought that women were not made for the struggle and turmoil of life--their place was the little world, the home; that their power lay not in votes but in influence over men and in making the minds of their children fine and splendid.

"Women should understand men's affairs, perhaps," said Miss Garvice, "but to mingle in them is just to sacrifice that power of influencing they can exercise now."

"There IS something sound in that position," said Capes, intervening as if to defend Miss Garvice against a possible attack from Ann Veronica. "It may not be just and so forth, but, after all, it is how things are. Women are not in the world in the same sense that men are--fighting individuals in a scramble. I don't see how they can be. Every home is a little recess, a niche, out of the world of business and competition, in which women and the future shelter."

"A little pit!" said Ann Veronica; "a little prison!"

"It's just as often a little refuge. Anyhow, that is how things are."

"And the man stands as the master at the mouth of the den."

"As sentinel. You forget all the mass of training and tradition and instinct that go to make him a tolerable master. Nature is a mother; her sympathies have always been feminist, and she has tempered the man to the shorn woman."

"I wish," said Ann Veronica, with sudden anger, "that you could know what it is to live in a pit!"

She stood up as she spoke, and put down her cup beside Miss Garvice's. She addressed Capes as though she spoke to him alone.

"I can't endure it," she said.

Every one turned to her in astonishment.

She felt she had to go on. "No man can realize," she said, "what that pit can be. The way--the way we are led on! We are taught to believe we are free in the world, to think we are queens. . . . Then we find out. We find out no man will treat a woman fairly as man to man--no man. He wants you--or he doesn't; and then he helps some other woman against you. . . . What you say is probably all true and necessary. . . . But think of the disillusionment! Except for our sex we have minds like men, desires like men. We come out into the world, some of us--"

She paused. Her words, as she said them, seemed to her to mean nothing, and there was so much that struggled for expression. "Women are mocked," she said. "Whenever they try to take hold of life a man intervenes."

She felt, with a sudden horror, that she might weep. She wished she had not stood up. She wondered wildly why she had stood up. No one spoke, and she was impelled to flounder on. "Think of the mockery!" she said. "Think how dumb we find ourselves and stifled! I know we seem to have a sort of freedom. . . . Have

you ever tried to run and jump in petticoats, Mr. Capes? Well, think what it must be to live in them--soul and mind and body! It's fun for a man to jest at our position."

"I wasn't jesting," said Capes, abruptly.

She stood face to face with him, and his voice cut across her speech and made her stop abruptly. She was sore and overstrung, and it was intolerable to her that he should stand within three yards of her unsuspectingly, with an incalculably vast power over her happiness. She was sore with the perplexities of her preposterous position. She was sick of herself, of her life, of everything but him; and for him all her masked and hidden being was crying out.

She stopped abruptly at the sound of his voice, and lost the thread of what she was saying. In the pause she realized the attention of the others converged upon her, and that the tears were brimming over her eyes. She felt a storm of emotion surging up within her. She became aware of the Scotch student regarding her with stupendous amazement, a tea-cup poised in one hairy hand and his faceted glasses showing a various enlargement of segments of his eye.

The door into the passage offered itself with an irresistible invitation--the one alternative to a public, inexplicable passion of weeping.

Capes flashed to an understanding of her intention, sprang to his feet, and opened the door for her retreat.

"Why should I ever come back?" she said to herself, as she went down the staircase.

She went to the post-office and drew out and sent off her money to Ramage. And then she came out into the street, sure only of one thing--that she could not return directly to her lodgings. She wanted air--and the distraction of having moving and changing things about her. The evenings were beginning to draw out, and it would not be dark for an hour. She resolved to walk across the Park to the Zoological gardens, and so on by way of Primrose Hill to Hampstead Heath. There she would wander about in the kindly darkness. And think things out. . . .

Presently she became aware of footsteps hurrying after her, and glanced back to find Miss Klegg, a little out of breath, in pursuit.

Ann Veronica halted a pace, and Miss Klegg came alongside.

"Do YOU go across the Park?"

"Not usually. But I'm going to-day. I want a walk."

"I'm not surprised at it. I thought Mr. Capes most trying."

"Oh, it wasn't that. I've had a headache all day."

"I thought Mr. Capes most unfair," Miss Klegg went on in a small, even voice; "MOST unfair! I'm glad you spoke out as you did."

"I didn't mind that little argument."

"You gave it him well. What you said wanted saying. After you went he got up and took refuge in the preparation-room. Or else

I would have finished him."

Ann Veronica said nothing, and Miss Klegg went on: "He very often IS--most unfair. He has a way of sitting on people. He wouldn't like it if people did it to him. He jumps the words out of your mouth; he takes hold of what you have to say before you have had time to express it properly."

Pause.

"I suppose he's frightfully clever," said Miss Klegg.

"He's a Fellow of the Royal Society, and he can't be much over thirty," said Miss Klegg.

"He writes very well," said Ann Veronica.

"He can't be more than thirty. He must have married when he was quite a young man."

"Married?" said Ann Veronica.

"Didn't you know he was married?" asked Miss Klegg, and was struck by a thought that made her glance quickly at her companion.

Ann Veronica had no answer for a moment. She turned her head away sharply. Some automaton within her produced in a quite unfamiliar voice the remark, "They're playing football."

"It's too far for the ball to reach us," said Miss Klegg.

"I didn't know Mr. Capes was married," said Ann Veronica, resuming the conversation with an entire disappearance of her former lassitude.

"Oh yes," said Miss Klegg; "I thought every one knew."

"No," said Ann Veronica, offhandedly. "Never heard anything of it."

"I thought every one knew. I thought every one had heard about it."

"But why?"

"He's married--and, I believe, living separated from his wife. There was a case, or something, some years ago."

"What case?"

"A divorce--or something--I don't know. But I have heard that he almost had to leave the schools. If it hadn't been for Professor Russell standing up for him, they say he would have had to leave."

"Was he divorced, do you mean?"

"No, but he got himself mixed up in a divorce case. I forget the particulars, but I know it was something very disagreeable. It was among artistic people."

Ann Veronica was silent for a while.

"I thought every one had heard," said Miss Klegg. "Or I wouldn't have said anything about it."

"I suppose all men," said Ann Veronica, in a tone of detached criticism, "get some such entanglement. And, anyhow, it doesn't matter to us." She turned abruptly at right angles to the path

they followed. "This is my way back to my side of the Park," she said.

"I thought you were coming right across the Park."

"Oh no," said Ann Veronica; "I have some work to do. I just wanted a breath of air. And they'll shut the gates presently. It's not far from twilight."

Part 9

She was sitting brooding over her fire about ten o'clock that night when a sealed and registered envelope was brought up to her.

She opened it and drew out a letter, and folded within it were the notes she had sent off to Ramage that day. The letter began:

"MY DEAREST GIRL,--I cannot let you do this foolish thing--"

She crumpled notes and letter together in her hand, and then with a passionate gesture flung them into the fire. Instantly she seized the poker and made a desperate effort to get them out again. But she was only able to save a corner of the letter. The twenty pounds burned with avidity.

She remained for some seconds crouching at the fender, poker in hand.

"By Jove!" she said, standing up at last, "that about finishes it, Ann Veronica!"

CHAPTER THE TENTH

THE SUFFRAGETTES

Part 1

"There is only one way out of all this," said Ann Veronica, sitting up in her little bed in the darkness and biting at her nails.

"I thought I was just up against Morningside Park and father, but it's the whole order of things--the whole blessed order of things. . . ."

She shivered. She frowned and gripped her hands about her knees very tightly. Her mind developed into savage wrath at the present conditions of a woman's life.

"I suppose all life is an affair of chances. But a woman's life is all chance. It's artificially chance. Find your man, that's the rule. All the rest is humbug and delicacy. He's the handle of life for you. He will let you live if it pleases him. . . ."

"Can't it be altered?"

"I suppose an actress is free? . . ."

She tried to think of some altered state of affairs in which

these monstrous limitations would be alleviated, in which women would stand on their own feet in equal citizenship with men. For a time she brooded on the ideals and suggestions of the Socialists, on the vague intimations of an Endowment of Motherhood, of a complete relaxation of that intense individual dependence for women which is woven into the existing social order. At the back of her mind there seemed always one irrelevant qualifying spectator whose presence she sought to disregard. She would not look at him, would not think of him; when her mind wavered, then she muttered to herself in the darkness so as to keep hold of her generalizations.

"It is true. It is no good waiving the thing; it is true. Unless women are never to be free, never to be even respected, there must be a generation of martyrs. . . . Why shouldn't we be martyrs? There's nothing else for most of us, anyhow. It's a sort of blacklegging to want to have a life of one's own. . . ."

She repeated, as if she answered an objector: "A sort of blacklegging.

"A sex of blacklegging clients."

Her mind diverged to other aspects, and another type of womanhood.

"Poor little Miniver! What can she be but what she is? . . . Because she states her case in a tangle, drags it through swamps of nonsense, it doesn't alter the fact that she is right."

That phrase about dragging the truth through swamps of nonsense she remembered from Capes. At the recollection that it was his, she seemed to fall through a thin surface, as one might fall through the crust of a lava into glowing depths. She wallowed for a time in the thought of Capes, unable to escape from his

image and the idea of his presence in her life.

She let her mind run into dreams of that cloud paradise of an altered world in which the Goopes and Minivers, the Fabians and reforming people believed. Across that world was written in letters of light, "Endowment of Motherhood." Suppose in some complex yet conceivable way women were endowed, were no longer economically and socially dependent on men. "If one was free," she said, "one could go to him. . . . This vile hovering to catch a man's eye! . . . One could go to him and tell him one loved him. I want to love him. A little love from him would be enough. It would hurt no one. It would not burden him with any obligation."

She groaned aloud and bowed her forehead to her knees. She floundered deep. She wanted to kiss his feet. His feet would have the firm texture of his hands.

Then suddenly her spirit rose in revolt. "I will not have this slavery," she said. "I will not have this slavery."

She shook her fist ceilingward. "Do you hear!" she said "whatever you are, wherever you are! I will not be slave to the thought of any man, slave to the customs of any time. Confound this slavery of sex! I am a man! I will get this under if I am killed in doing it!"

She scowled into the cold blacknesses about her.

"Manning," she said, and contemplated a figure of inaggressive persistence. "No!" Her thoughts had turned in a new direction.

"It doesn't matter," she said, after a long interval, "if they are absurd. They mean something. They mean everything that women can mean--except submission. The vote is only the

beginning, the necessary beginning. If we do not begin--"

She had come to a resolution. Abruptly she got out of bed, smoothed her sheet and straightened her pillow and lay down, and fell almost instantly asleep.

Part 2

The next morning was as dark and foggy as if it was mid-November instead of early March. Ann Veronica woke rather later than usual, and lay awake for some minutes before she remembered a certain resolution she had taken in the small hours. Then instantly she got out of bed and proceeded to dress.

She did not start for the Imperial College. She spent the morning up to ten in writing a series of unsuccessful letters to Ramage, which she tore up unfinished; and finally she desisted and put on her jacket and went out into the lamp-lit obscurity and slimy streets. She turned a resolute face southward.

She followed Oxford Street into Holborn, and then she inquired for Chancery Lane. There she sought and at last found 107A, one of those heterogeneous piles of offices which occupy the eastern side of the lane. She studied the painted names of firms and persons and enterprises on the wall, and discovered that the Women's Bond of Freedom occupied several contiguous suites on the first floor. She went up-stairs and hesitated between four doors with ground-glass panes, each of which professed "The Women's Bond of Freedom" in neat black letters. She opened one and found herself in a large untidy room set with chairs that were a little disarranged as if by an overnight meeting. On the walls were notice-boards bearing clusters of newspaper slips, three or four

big posters of monster meetings, one of which Ann Veronica had attended with Miss Miniver, and a series of announcements in purple copying-ink, and in one corner was a pile of banners. There was no one at all in this room, but through the half-open door of one of the small apartments that gave upon it she had a glimpse of two very young girls sitting at a littered table and writing briskly.

She walked across to this apartment and, opening the door a little wider, discovered a press section of the movement at work.

"I want to inquire," said Ann Veronica.

"Next door," said a spectacled young person of seventeen or eighteen, with an impatient indication of the direction.

In the adjacent apartment Ann Veronica found a middle-aged woman with a tired face under the tired hat she wore, sitting at a desk opening letters while a dusky, untidy girl of eight-or-nine-and-twenty hammered industriously at a typewriter. The tired woman looked up in inquiring silence at Ann Veronica's diffident entry.

"I want to know more about this movement," said Ann Veronica.

"Are you with us?" said the tired woman.

"I don't know," said Ann Veronica; "I think I am. I want very much to do something for women. But I want to know what you are doing."

The tired woman sat still for a moment. "You haven't come here to make a lot of difficulties?" she asked.

"No," said Ann Veronica, "but I want to know."

The tired woman shut her eyes tightly for a moment, and then looked with them at Ann Veronica. "What can you do?" she asked.

"Do?"

"Are you prepared to do things for us? Distribute bills? Write letters? Interrupt meetings? Canvass at elections? Face dangers?"

"If I am satisfied--"

"If we satisfy you?"

"Then, if possible, I would like to go to prison."

"It isn't nice going to prison."

"It would suit me."

"It isn't nice getting there."

"That's a question of detail," said Ann Veronica.

The tired woman looked quietly at her. "What are your objections?" she said.

"It isn't objections exactly. I want to know what you are doing; how you think this work of yours really does serve women."

"We are working for the equal citizenship of men and women," said the tired woman. "Women have been and are treated as the inferiors of men, we want to make them their equals."

"Yes," said Ann Veronica, "I agree to that. But--"

The tired woman raised her eyebrows in mild protest.

"Isn't the question more complicated than that?" said Ann Veronica.

"You could have a talk to Miss Kitty Brett this afternoon, if you liked. Shall I make an appointment for you?"

Miss Kitty Brett was one of the most conspicuous leaders of the movement. Ann Veronica snatched at the opportunity, and spent most of the intervening time in the Assyrian Court of the British Museum, reading and thinking over a little book upon the feminist movement the tired woman had made her buy. She got a bun and some cocoa in the little refreshment-room, and then wandered through the galleries up-stairs, crowded with Polynesian idols and Polynesian dancing-garments, and all the simple immodest accessories to life in Polynesia, to a seat among the mummies. She was trying to bring her problems to a head, and her mind insisted upon being even more discursive and atmospheric than usual. It generalized everything she put to it.

"Why should women be dependent on men?" she asked; and the question was at once converted into a system of variations upon the theme of "Why are things as they are?"--"Why are human beings viviparous?"--"Why are people hungry thrice a day?"--"Why does one faint at danger?"

She stood for a time looking at the dry limbs and still human face of that desiccated unwrapped mummy from the very beginnings of social life. It looked very patient, she thought, and a little self-satisfied. It looked as if it had taken its world for granted and prospered on that assumption--a world in which children were trained to obey their elders and the wills of women over-ruled as a matter of course. It was wonderful to think this

thing had lived, had felt and suffered. Perhaps once it had desired some other human being intolerably. Perhaps some one had kissed the brow that was now so cadaverous, rubbed that sunken cheek with loving fingers, held that stringy neck with passionately living hands. But all of that was forgotten. "In the end," it seemed to be thinking, "they embalmed me with the utmost respect--sound spices chosen to endure--the best! I took my world as I found it. THINGS ARE SO!"

Part 3

Ann Veronica's first impression of Kitty Brett was that she was aggressive and disagreeable; her next that she was a person of amazing persuasive power. She was perhaps three-and-twenty, and very pink and healthy-looking, showing a great deal of white and rounded neck above her business-like but altogether feminine blouse, and a good deal of plump, gesticulating forearm out of her short sleeve. She had animated dark blue-gray eyes under her fine eyebrows, and dark brown hair that rolled back simply and effectively from her broad low forehead. And she was about as capable of intelligent argument as a runaway steam-roller. She was a trained being--trained by an implacable mother to one end.

She spoke with fluent enthusiasm. She did not so much deal with Ann Veronica's interpolations as dispose of them with quick and use-hardened repartee, and then she went on with a fine directness to sketch the case for her agitation, for that remarkable rebellion of the women that was then agitating the whole world of politics and discussion. She assumed with a kind of mesmeric force all the propositions that Ann Veronica wanted her to define.

"What do we want? What is the goal?" asked Ann Veronica.

"Freedom! Citizenship! And the way to that--the way to everything--is the Vote."

Ann Veronica said something about a general change of ideas.

"How can you change people's ideas if you have no power?" said Kitty Brett.

Ann Veronica was not ready enough to deal with that counter-stroke .

"One doesn't want to turn the whole thing into a mere sex antagonism."

"When women get justice," said Kitty Brett, "there will be no sex antagonism. None at all. Until then we mean to keep on hammering away."

"It seems to me that much of a woman's difficulties are economic."

"That will follow," said Kitty Brett--"that will follow."

She interrupted as Ann Veronica was about to speak again, with a bright contagious hopefulness. "Everything will follow," she said.

"Yes," said Ann Veronica, trying to think where they were, trying to get things plain again that had seemed plain enough in the quiet of the night.

"Nothing was ever done," Miss Brett asserted, "without a certain element of Faith. After we have got the Vote and are recognized

as citizens, then we can come to all these other things."

Even in the glamour of Miss Brett's assurance it seemed to Ann Veronica that this was, after all, no more than the gospel of Miss Miniver with a new set of resonances. And like that gospel it meant something, something different from its phrases, something elusive, and yet something that in spite of the superficial incoherence of its phrasing, was largely essentially true. There was something holding women down, holding women back, and if it wasn't exactly man-made law, man-made law was an aspect of it. There was something indeed holding the whole species back from the imaginable largeness of life. . . .

"The Vote is the symbol of everything," said Miss Brett.

She made an abrupt personal appeal.

"Oh! please don't lose yourself in a wilderness of secondary considerations," she said. "Don't ask me to tell you all that women can do, all that women can be. There is a new life, different from the old life of dependence, possible. If only we are not divided. If only we work together. This is the one movement that brings women of different classes together for a common purpose. If you could see how it gives them souls, women who have taken things for granted, who have given themselves up altogether to pettiness and vanity. . . ."

"Give me something to do," said Ann Veronica, interrupting her persuasions at last. "It has been very kind of you to see me, but I don't want to sit and talk and use your time any longer. I want to do something. I want to hammer myself against all this that pens women in. I feel that I shall stifle unless I can do something--and do something soon."

Part 4

It was not Ann Veronica's fault that the night's work should have taken upon itself the forms of wild burlesque. She was in deadly earnest in everything she did. It seemed to her the last desperate attack upon the universe that would not let her live as she desired to live, that penned her in and controlled her and directed her and disapproved of her, the same invincible wrapping, the same leaden tyranny of a universe that she had vowed to overcome after that memorable conflict with her father at Morningside Park.

She was listed for the raid--she was informed it was to be a raid upon the House of Commons, though no particulars were given her--and told to go alone to 14, Dexter Street, Westminster, and not to ask any policeman to direct her. 14, Dexter Street, Westminster, she found was not a house but a yard in an obscure street, with big gates and the name of Podgers & Carlo, Carriers and Furniture Removers, thereon. She was perplexed by this, and stood for some seconds in the empty street hesitating, until the appearance of another circumspect woman under the street lamp at the corner reassured her. In one of the big gates was a little door, and she rapped at this. It was immediately opened by a man with light eyelashes and a manner suggestive of restrained passion. "Come right in," he hissed under his breath, with the true conspirator's note, closed the door very softly and pointed, "Through there!"

By the meagre light of a gas lamp she perceived a cobbled yard with four large furniture vans standing with horses and lamps alight. A slender young man, wearing glasses, appeared from the shadow of the nearest van. "Are you A, B, C, or D?" he asked.

"They told me D," said Ann Veronica.

"Through there," he said, and pointed with the pamphlet he was carrying.

Ann Veronica found herself in a little stirring crowd of excited women, whispering and tittering and speaking in undertones.

The light was poor, so that she saw their gleaming faces dimly and indistinctly. No one spoke to her. She stood among them, watching them and feeling curiously alien to them. The oblique ruddy lighting distorted them oddly, made queer bars and patches of shadow upon their clothes. "It's Kitty's idea," said one, "we are to go in the vans."

"Kitty is wonderful," said another.

"Wonderful!"

"I have always longed for prison service," said a voice, "always.

From the beginning. But it's only now I'm able to do it."

A little blond creature close at hand suddenly gave way to a fit of hysterical laughter, and caught up the end of it with a sob.

"Before I took up the Suffrage," a firm, flat voice remarked, "I could scarcely walk up-stairs without palpitations."

Some one hidden from Ann Veronica appeared to be marshalling the assembly. "We have to get in, I think," said a nice little old lady in a bonnet to Ann Veronica, speaking with a voice that quavered a little. "My dear, can you see in this light? I think I would like to get in. Which is C?"

Ann Veronica, with a curious sinking of the heart, regarded the black cavities of the vans. Their doors stood open, and placards with big letters indicated the section assigned to each. She directed the little old woman and then made her way to van D. A young woman with a white badge on her arm stood and counted the sections as they entered their vans.

"When they tap the roof," she said, in a voice of authority, "you are to come out. You will be opposite the big entrance in Old Palace Yard. It's the public entrance. You are to make for that and get into the lobby if you can, and so try and reach the floor of the House, crying 'Votes for Women!' as you go."

She spoke like a mistress addressing school-children.

"Don't bunch too much as you come out," she added.

"All right?" asked the man with the light eyelashes, suddenly appearing in the doorway. He waited for an instant, wasting an encouraging smile in the imperfect light, and then shut the doors of the van, leaving the women in darkness. . . .

The van started with a jerk and rumbled on its way.

"It's like Troy!" said a voice of rapture. "It's exactly like Troy!"

Part 5

So Ann Veronica, enterprising and a little dubious as ever, mingled with the stream of history and wrote her Christian name upon the police-court records of the land.

But out of a belated regard for her father she wrote the surname of some one else.

Some day, when the rewards of literature permit the arduous research required, the Campaign of the Women will find its Carlyle, and the particulars of that marvellous series of exploits by which Miss Brett and her colleagues nagged the whole Western world into the discussion of women's position become the material for the most delightful and amazing descriptions. At present the world waits for that writer, and the confused record of the newspapers remains the only resource of the curious. When he comes he will do that raid of the pantehnicons the justice it deserves; he will picture the orderly evening scene about the Imperial Legislature in convincing detail, the coming and going of cabs and motor-cabs and broughams through the chill, damp evening into New Palace Yard, the reinforced but untroubled and unsuspecting police about the entries of those great buildings whose square and panelled Victorian Gothic streams up from the glare of the lamps into the murkiness of the night; Big Ben shining overhead, an unassailable beacon, and the incidental traffic of Westminster, cabs, carts, and glowing omnibuses going to and from the bridge. About the Abbey and Abingdon Street stood the outer pickets and detachments of the police, their attention all directed westward to where the women in Caxton Hall, Westminster, hummed like an angry hive. Squads reached to the very portal of that centre of disturbance. And through all these defences and into Old Palace Yard, into the very vitals of the defenders' position, lumbered the unsuspected vans.

They travelled past the few idle sightseers who had braved the uninviting evening to see what the Suffragettes might be doing; they pulled up unchallenged within thirty yards of those coveted portals.

And then they disgorged.

Were I a painter of subject pictures, I would exhaust all my skill in proportion and perspective and atmosphere upon the august seat of empire, I would present it gray and dignified and immense and respectable beyond any mere verbal description, and then, in vivid black and very small, I would put in those valiantly impertinent vans, squatting at the base of its altitudes and pouring out a swift, straggling rush of ominous little black objects, minute figures of determined women at war with the universe.

Ann Veronica was in their very forefront.

In an instant the expectant calm of Westminster was ended, and the very Speaker in the chair blanched at the sound of the policemen's whistles. The bolder members in the House left their places to go lobbyward, grinning. Others pulled hats over their noses, cowered in their seats, and feigned that all was right with the world. In Old Palace Yard everybody ran. They either ran to see or ran for shelter. Even two Cabinet Ministers took to their heels, grinning insincerely. At the opening of the van doors and the emergence into the fresh air Ann Veronica's doubt and depression gave place to the wildest exhilaration. That same adventurousness that had already buoyed her through crises that would have overwhelmed any normally feminine girl with shame and horror now became uppermost again. Before her was a great Gothic portal. Through that she had to go.

Past her shot the little old lady in the bonnet, running incredibly fast, but otherwise still alertly respectable, and she was making a strange threatening sound as she ran, such as one would use in driving ducks out of a garden--"B-r-r-r-r--!" and pawing with black-gloved hands. The policemen were closing in from the sides to intervene. The little old lady struck like a projectile upon the resounding chest of the foremost of these,

and then Ann Veronica had got past and was ascending the steps.

Then most horribly she was clasped about the waist from behind and lifted from the ground.

At that a new element poured into her excitement, an element of wild disgust and terror. She had never experienced anything so disagreeable in her life as the sense of being held helplessly off her feet. She screamed involuntarily--she had never in her life screamed before --and then she began to wriggle and fight like a frightened animal against the men who were holding her.

The affair passed at one leap from a spree to a nightmare of violence and disgust. Her hair got loose, her hat came over one eye, and she had no arm free to replace it. She felt she must suffocate if these men did not put her down, and for a time they would not put her down. Then with an indescribable relief her feet were on the pavement, and she was being urged along by two policemen, who were gripping her wrists in an irresistible expert manner. She was writhing to get her hands loose and found herself gasping with passionate violence, "It's damnable!--damnable!" to the manifest disgust of the fatherly policeman on her right.

Then they had released her arms and were trying to push her away.

"You be off, missie," said the fatherly policeman. "This ain't no place for you."

He pushed her a dozen yards along the greasy pavement with flat, well-trained hands that there seemed to be no opposing. Before her stretched blank spaces, dotted with running people coming toward her, and below them railings and a statue. She almost submitted to this ending of her adventure. But at the word "home" she turned again.

"I won't go home," she said; "I won't!" and she evaded the clutch of the fatherly policeman and tried to thrust herself past him in the direction of that big portal. "Steady on!" he cried.

A diversion was created by the violent struggles of the little old lady. She seemed to be endowed with superhuman strength. A knot of three policemen in conflict with her staggered toward Ann Veronica's attendants and distracted their attention. "I WILL be arrested! I WON'T go home!" the little old lady was screaming over and over again. They put her down, and she leaped at them; she smote a helmet to the ground.

"You'll have to take her!" shouted an inspector on horseback, and she echoed his cry: "You'll have to take me!" They seized upon her and lifted her, and she screamed. Ann Veronica became violently excited at the sight. "You cowards!" said Ann Veronica, "put her down!" and tore herself from a detaining hand and battered with her fists upon the big red ear and blue shoulder of the policeman who held the little old lady.

So Ann Veronica also was arrested.

And then came the vile experience of being forced and borne along the street to the police-station. Whatever anticipation Ann Veronica had formed of this vanished in the reality. Presently she was going through a swaying, noisy crowd, whose faces grinned and stared pitilessly in the light of the electric standards.

"Go it, miss!" cried one. "Kick aht at 'em!" though, indeed, she went now with Christian meekness, resenting only the thrusting policemen's hands. Several people in the crowd seemed to be fighting. Insulting cries became frequent and various, but for the most part she could not understand what was said. "Who'll mind the baby nar?" was one of the night's inspirations, and very frequent. A lean young man in spectacles pursued her for some

time, crying "Courage! Courage!" Somebody threw a dab of mud at her, and some of it got down her neck. Immeasurable disgust possessed her. She felt dragged and insulted beyond redemption.

She could not hide her face. She attempted by a sheer act of will to end the scene, to will herself out of it anywhere. She had a horrible glimpse of the once nice little old lady being also borne stationward, still faintly battling and very muddy--one lock of grayish hair straggling over her neck, her face scared, white, but triumphant. Her bonnet dropped off and was trampled into the gutter. A little Cockney recovered it, and made ridiculous attempts to get to her and replace it.

"You must arrest me!" she gasped, breathlessly, insisting insanely on a point already carried; "you shall!"

The police-station at the end seemed to Ann Veronica like a refuge from unnamable disgraces. She hesitated about her name, and, being prompted, gave it at last as Ann Veronica Smith, 107A, Chancery Lane. . . .

Indignation carried her through that night, that men and the world could so entreat her. The arrested women were herded in a passage of the Panton Street Police-station that opened upon a cell too unclean for occupation, and most of them spent the night standing. Hot coffee and cakes were sent in to them in the morning by some intelligent sympathizer, or she would have starved all day. Submission to the inevitable carried her through the circumstances of her appearance before the magistrate.

He was no doubt doing his best to express the attitude of society toward these wearily heroic defendants, but he seemed to be merely rude and unfair to Ann Veronica. He was not, it seemed, the proper stipendiary at all, and there had been some demur to

his jurisdiction that had ruffled him. He resented being regarded as irregular. He felt he was human wisdom prudentially interpolated. . . . "You silly wimmin," he said over and over again throughout the hearing, plucking at his blotting-pad with busy hands. "You silly creatures! Ugh! Fie upon you!" The court was crowded with people, for the most part supporters and admirers of the defendants, and the man with the light eyelashes was conspicuously active and omnipresent.

Ann Veronica's appearance was brief and undistinguished. She had nothing to say for herself. She was guided into the dock and prompted by a helpful police inspector. She was aware of the body of the court, of clerks seated at a black table littered with papers, of policemen standing about stiffly with expressions of conscious integrity, and a murmuring background of the heads and shoulders of spectators close behind her. On a high chair behind a raised counter the stipendiary's substitute regarded her malevolently over his glasses. A disagreeable young man, with red hair and a loose mouth, seated at the reporter's table, was only too manifestly sketching her.

She was interested by the swearing of the witnesses. The kissing of the book struck her as particularly odd, and then the policemen gave their evidence in staccato jerks and stereotyped phrases.

"Have you anything to ask the witness?" asked the helpful inspector.

The ribald demons that infested the back of Ann Veronica's mind urged various facetious interrogations upon her, as, for example, where the witness had acquired his prose style. She controlled herself, and answered meekly, "No."

"Well, Ann Veronica Smith," the magistrate remarked when the case

was all before him, "you're a good-looking, strong, respectable gell, and it's a pity you silly young wimmin can't find something better to do with your exuberance. Two-and-twenty! I can't imagine what your parents can be thinking about to let you get into these scrapes."

Ann Veronica's mind was filled with confused unutterable replies.

"You are persuaded to come and take part in these outrageous proceedings--many of you, I am convinced, have no idea whatever of their nature. I don't suppose you could tell me even the derivation of suffrage if I asked you. No! not even the derivation! But the fashion's been set and in it you must be."

The men at the reporter's table lifted their eyebrows, smiled faintly, and leaned back to watch how she took her scolding. One with the appearance of a bald little gnome yawned agonizingly. They had got all this down already--they heard the substance of it now for the fourteenth time. The stipendiary would have done it all very differently.

She found presently she was out of the dock and confronted with the alternative of being bound over in one surety for the sum of forty pounds--whatever that might mean or a month's imprisonment.

"Second class," said some one, but first and second were all alike to her. She elected to go to prison.

At last, after a long rumbling journey in a stuffy windowless van, she reached Canongate Prison--for Holloway had its quota already. It was bad luck to go to Canongate.

Prison was beastly. Prison was bleak without spaciousness, and pervaded by a faint, oppressive smell; and she had to wait two hours in the sullenly defiant company of two unclean women

thieves before a cell could be assigned to her. Its dreariness, like the filthiness of the police cell, was a discovery for her. She had imagined that prisons were white-tiled places, reeking of lime-wash and immaculately sanitary. Instead, they appeared to be at the hygienic level of tramps' lodging-houses. She was bathed in turbid water that had already been used. She was not allowed to bathe herself: another prisoner, with a privileged manner, washed her. Conscientious objectors to that process are not permitted, she found, in Canongate. Her hair was washed for her also. Then they dressed her in a dirty dress of coarse serge and a cap, and took away her own clothes. The dress came to her only too manifestly unwashed from its former wearer; even the under-linen they gave her seemed unclean. Horrible memories of things seen beneath the microscope of the baser forms of life crawled across her mind and set her shuddering with imagined irritations. She sat on the edge of the bed--the wardress was too busy with the flood of arrivals that day to discover that she had it down--and her skin was shivering from the contact of these garments. She surveyed accommodation that seemed at first merely austere, and became more and more manifestly inadequate as the moments fled by. She meditated profoundly through several enormous cold hours on all that had happened and all that she had done since the swirl of the suffrage movement had submerged her personal affairs. . . .

Very slowly emerging out of a phase of stupefaction, these personal affairs and her personal problem resumed possession of her mind. She had imagined she had drowned them altogether.

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

THOUGHTS IN PRISON

Part 1

The first night in prison she found it impossible to sleep. The bed was hard beyond any experience of hers, the bed-clothes coarse and insufficient, the cell at once cold and stuffy. The little grating in the door, the sense of constant inspection, worried her. She kept opening her eyes and looking at it. She was fatigued physically and mentally, and neither mind nor body could rest. She became aware that at regular intervals a light flashed upon her face and a bodiless eye regarded her, and this, as the night wore on, became a torment. . . .

Capes came back into her mind. He haunted a state between hectic dreaming and mild delirium, and she found herself talking aloud to him. All through the night an entirely impossible and monumental Capes confronted her, and she argued with him about men and women. She visualized him as in a policeman's uniform and quite impassive. On some insane score she fancied she had to state her case in verse. "We are the music and you are the instrument," she said; "we are verse and you are prose.

"For men have reason, women rhyme
A man scores always, all the time."

This couplet sprang into her mind from nowhere, and immediately begot an endless series of similar couplets that she began to compose and address to Capes. They came teeming distressfully through her aching brain:

"A man can kick, his skirts don't tear;
A man scores always, everywhere.

"His dress for no man lays a snare;

A man scores always, everywhere.
For hats that fail and hats that flare;
Toppers their universal wear;
A man scores always, everywhere.

"Men's waists are neither here nor there;
A man scores always, everywhere.

"A man can manage without hair;
A man scores always, everywhere.

"There are no males at men to stare;
A man scores always, everywhere.

"And children must we women bear--

"Oh, damn!" she cried, as the hundred-and-first couplet or so presented itself in her unwilling brain.

For a time she worried about that compulsory bath and cutaneous diseases.

Then she fell into a fever of remorse for the habit of bad language she had acquired.

"A man can smoke, a man can swear;
A man scores always, everywhere."

She rolled over on her face, and stuffed her fingers in her ears to shut out the rhythm from her mind. She lay still for a long time, and her mind resumed at a more tolerable pace. She found herself talking to Capes in an undertone of rational admission.

"There is something to be said for the lady-like theory after all," she admitted. "Women ought to be gentle and submissive

persons, strong only in virtue and in resistance to evil compulsion. My dear--I can call you that here, anyhow--I know that. The Victorians over-did it a little, I admit. Their idea of maidenly innocence was just a blank white--the sort of flat white that doesn't shine. But that doesn't alter the fact that there IS innocence. And I've read, and thought, and guessed, and looked--until MY innocence--it's smirched.

"Smirched! . . .

"You see, dear, one IS passionately anxious for something--what is it? One wants to be CLEAN. You want me to be clean. You would want me to be clean, if you gave me a thought, that is. . .

.

"I wonder if you give me a thought. . . .

"I'm not a good woman. I don't mean I'm not a good woman--I mean that I'm not a GOOD woman. My poor brain is so mixed, dear, I hardly know what I am saying. I mean I'm not a good specimen of a woman. I've got a streak of male. Things happen to women--proper women--and all they have to do is to take them well. They've just got to keep white. But I'm always trying to make things happen. And I get myself dirty . . .

"It's all dirt that washes off, dear, but it's dirt.

"The white unaggressive woman who corrects and nurses and serves, and is worshipped and betrayed--the martyr-queen of men, the white mother. . . . You can't do that sort of thing unless you do it over religion, and there's no religion in me--of that sort--worth a rap.

"I'm not gentle. Certainly not a gentlewoman.

"I'm not coarse--no! But I've got no purity of mind--no real purity of mind. A good woman's mind has angels with flaming swords at the portals to keep out fallen thoughts. . . .

"I wonder if there are any good women really.

"I wish I didn't swear. I do swear. It began as a joke. . . . It developed into a sort of secret and private bad manners. It's got to be at last like tobacco-ash over all my sayings and doings. . . .

" 'Go it, missie,' they said; 'kick aht!'

"I swore at that policeman--and disgusted him. Disgusted him!

"For men policemen never blush;
A man in all things scores so much . . .

"Damn! Things are getting plainer. It must be the dawn creeping in.

"Now here hath been dawning another blue day;
I'm just a poor woman, please take it away.

"Oh, sleep! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep!"

Part 2

"Now," said Ann Veronica, after the half-hour of exercise, and sitting on the uncomfortable wooden seat without a back that was

her perch by day, "it's no good staying here in a sort of maze. I've got nothing to do for a month but think. I may as well think. I ought to be able to think things out.

"How shall I put the question? What am I? What have I got to do with myself? . . .

"I wonder if many people HAVE thought things out?

"Are we all just seizing hold of phrases and obeying moods?

"It wasn't so with old-fashioned people, they knew right from wrong; they had a clear-cut, religious faith that seemed to explain everything and give a rule for everything. We haven't. I haven't, anyhow. And it's no good pretending there is one when there isn't. . . . I suppose I believe in God. . . . Never really thought about Him--people don't. . . . I suppose my creed is, 'I believe rather indistinctly in God the Father Almighty, substratum of the evolutionary process, and, in a vein of vague sentimentality that doesn't give a datum for anything at all, in Jesus Christ, His Son.' . . .

"It's no sort of good, Ann Veronica, pretending one does believe when one doesn't. . . .

"And as for praying for faith--this sort of monologue is about as near as any one of my sort ever gets to prayer. Aren't I asking--asking plainly now? . . .

"We've all been mixing our ideas, and we've got intellectual hot coppers--every blessed one of us. . . .

"A confusion of motives--that's what I am! . . .

"There is this absurd craving for Mr. Capes--the 'Capes crave,'

they would call it in America. Why do I want him so badly? Why do I want him, and think about him, and fail to get away from him?

"It isn't all of me.

"The first person you love, Ann Veronica, is yourself--get hold of that! The soul you have to save is Ann Veronica's soul. . . ."

She knelt upon the floor of her cell and clasped her hands, and remained for a long time in silence.

"Oh, God!" she said at last, "how I wish I had been taught to pray!"

Part 3

She had some idea of putting these subtle and difficult issues to the chaplain when she was warned of his advent. But she had not reckoned with the etiquette of Canongate. She got up, as she had been told to do, at his appearance, and he amazed her by sitting down, according to custom, on her stool. He still wore his hat, to show that the days of miracles and Christ being civil to sinners are over forever. She perceived that his countenance was only composed by a great effort, his features severely compressed. He was ruffled, and his ears were red, no doubt from some adjacent controversy. He classified her as he seated himself.

"Another young woman, I suppose," he said, "who knows better than her Maker about her place in the world. Have you anything to ask

me?"

Ann Veronica readjusted her mind hastily. Her back stiffened. She produced from the depths of her pride the ugly investigatory note of the modern district visitor. "Are you a special sort of clergyman," she said, after a pause, and looking down her nose at him, "or do you go to the Universities?"

"Oh!" he said, profoundly.

He panted for a moment with unuttered replies, and then, with a scornful gesture, got up and left the cell.

So that Ann Veronica was not able to get the expert advice she certainly needed upon her spiritual state.

Part 4

After a day or so she thought more steadily. She found herself in a phase of violent reaction against the suffrage movement, a phase greatly promoted by one of those unreasonable objections people of Ann Veronica's temperament take at times--to the girl in the next cell to her own. She was a large, resilient girl, with a foolish smile, a still more foolish expression of earnestness, and a throaty contralto voice. She was noisy and hilarious and enthusiastic, and her hair was always abominably done. In the chapel she sang with an open-lunged gusto that silenced Ann Veronica altogether, and in the exercising-yard slouched round with carelessly dispersed feet. Ann Veronica decided that "hoydenish ragger" was the only phrase to express her. She was always breaking rules, whispering asides, intimating signals. She became at times an embodiment for Ann

Veronica of all that made the suffrage movement defective and unsatisfying.

She was always initiating petty breaches of discipline. Her greatest exploit was the howling before the mid-day meal. This was an imitation of the noises made by the carnivora at the Zoological Gardens at feeding-time; the idea was taken up by prisoner after prisoner until the whole place was alive with barkings, yappings, roarings, pelican chatterings, and feline yowlings, interspersed with shrieks of hysterical laughter. To many in that crowded solitude it came as an extraordinary relief. It was better even than the hymn-singing. But it annoyed Ann Veronica.

"Idiots!" she said, when she heard this pandemonium, and with particular reference to this young lady with the throaty contralto next door. "Intolerable idiots! . . ."

It took some days for this phase to pass, and it left some scars and something like a decision. "Violence won't do it," said Ann Veronica. "Begin violence, and the woman goes under. . . ."

"But all the rest of our case is right. . . . Yes."

As the long, solitary days wore on, Ann Veronica found a number of definite attitudes and conclusions in her mind.

One of these was a classification of women into women who are and women who are not hostile to men. "The real reason why I am out of place here," she said, "is because I like men. I can talk with them. I've never found them hostile. I've got no feminine class feeling. I don't want any laws or freedoms to protect me from a man like Mr. Capes. I know that in my heart I would take whatever he gave. . . ."

"A woman wants a proper alliance with a man, a man who is better stuff than herself. She wants that and needs it more than anything else in the world. It may not be just, it may not be fair, but things are so. It isn't law, nor custom, nor masculine violence settled that. It is just how things happen to be. She wants to be free--she wants to be legally and economically free, so as not to be subject to the wrong man; but only God, who made the world, can alter things to prevent her being slave to the right one.

"And if she can't have the right one?"

"We've developed such a quality of preference!"

She rubbed her knuckles into her forehead. "Oh, but life is difficult!" she groaned. "When you loosen the tangle in one place you tie a knot in another. . . . Before there is any change, any real change, I shall be dead--dead--dead and finished--two hundred years! . . ."

Part 5

One afternoon, while everything was still, the wardress heard her cry out suddenly and alarmingly, and with great and unmistakable passion, "Why in the name of goodness did I burn that twenty pounds?"

Part 6

She sat regarding her dinner. The meat was coarse and

disagreeably served.

"I suppose some one makes a bit on the food," she said. . . .

"One has such ridiculous ideas of the wicked common people and the beautiful machinery of order that ropes them in. And here are these places, full of contagion!

"Of course, this is the real texture of life, this is what we refined secure people forget. We think the whole thing is straight and noble at bottom, and it isn't. We think if we just defy the friends we have and go out into the world everything will become easy and splendid. One doesn't realize that even the sort of civilization one has at Morningside Park is held together with difficulty. By policemen one mustn't shock.

"This isn't a world for an innocent girl to walk about in. It's a world of dirt and skin diseases and parasites. It's a world in which the law can be a stupid pig and the police-stations dirty dens. One wants helpers and protectors--and clean water.

"Am I becoming reasonable or am I being tamed?

"I'm simply discovering that life is many-sided and complex and puzzling. I thought one had only to take it by the throat.

"It hasn't GOT a throat!"

Part 7

One day the idea of self-sacrifice came into her head, and she made, she thought, some important moral discoveries.

It came with an extreme effect of re-discovery, a remarkable novelty. "What have I been all this time?" she asked herself, and answered, "Just stark egotism, crude assertion of Ann Veronica, without a modest rag of religion or discipline or respect for authority to cover me!"

It seemed to her as though she had at last found the touchstone of conduct. She perceived she had never really thought of any one but herself in all her acts and plans. Even Capes had been for her merely an excitant to passionate love--a mere idol at whose feet one could enjoy imaginative wallowings. She had set out to get a beautiful life, a free, untrammelled life, self-development, without counting the cost either for herself or others.

"I have hurt my father," she said; "I have hurt my aunt. I have hurt and snubbed poor Teddy. I've made no one happy. I deserve pretty much what I've got. . . .

"If only because of the way one hurts others if one kicks loose and free, one has to submit. . . .

"Broken-in people! I suppose the world is just all egotistical children and broken-in people.

"Your little flag of pride must flutter down with the rest of them, Ann Veronica. . . .

"Compromise--and kindness.

"Compromise and kindness.

"Who are YOU that the world should lie down at your feet?"

"You've got to be a decent citizen, Ann Veronica. Take your half loaf with the others. You mustn't go clawing after a man that doesn't belong to you--that isn't even interested in you. That's one thing clear.

"You've got to take the decent reasonable way. You've got to adjust yourself to the people God has set about you. Every one else does."

She thought more and more along that line. There was no reason why she shouldn't be Capes' friend. He did like her, anyhow; he was always pleased to be with her. There was no reason why she shouldn't be his restrained and dignified friend. After all, that was life. Nothing was given away, and no one came so rich to the stall as to command all that it had to offer. Every one has to make a deal with the world.

It would be very good to be Capes' friend.

She might be able to go on with biology, possibly even work upon the same questions that he dealt with. . . .

Perhaps her granddaughter might marry his grandson. . . .

It grew clear to her that throughout all her wild raid for independence she had done nothing for anybody, and many people had done things for her. She thought of her aunt and that purse that was dropped on the table, and of many troublesome and ill-requited kindnesses; she thought of the help of the Widgetts, of Teddy's admiration; she thought, with a new-born charity, of her father, of Manning's conscientious unselfishness, of Miss Miniver's devotion.

"And for me it has been Pride and Pride and Pride!"

"I am the prodigal daughter. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him--

"I suppose pride and self-assertion are sin? Sinned against heaven-- Yes, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. . . .

"Poor old daddy! I wonder if he'll spend much on the fatted calf? . . .

"The wrapped life-discipline! One comes to that at last. I begin to understand Jane Austen and chintz covers and decency and refinement and all the rest of it. One puts gloves on one's greedy fingers. One learns to sit up . . .

"And somehow or other," she added, after a long interval, "I must pay Mr. Ramage back his forty pounds."

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH

ANN VERONICA PUTS THINGS IN ORDER

Part 1

Ann Veronica made a strenuous attempt to carry out her good resolutions. She meditated long and carefully upon her letter to her father before she wrote it, and gravely and deliberately again before she despatched it.

"MY DEAR FATHER," she wrote,--"I have been thinking hard about everything since I was sent to this prison. All these experiences

have taught me a great deal about life and realities. I see that compromise is more necessary to life than I ignorantly supposed it to be, and I have been trying to get Lord Morley's book on that subject, but it does not appear to be available in the prison library, and the chaplain seems to regard him as an undesirable writer."

At this point she had perceived that she was drifting from her subject.

"I must read him when I come out. But I see very clearly that as things are a daughter is necessarily dependent on her father and bound while she is in that position to live harmoniously with his ideals."

"Bit starchy," said Ann Veronica, and altered the key abruptly. Her concluding paragraph was, on the whole, perhaps, hardly starchy enough.

"Really, daddy, I am sorry for all I have done to put you out. May I come home and try to be a better daughter to you?"

"ANN VERONICA."

Part 2

Her aunt came to meet her outside Canongate, and, being a little confused between what was official and what was merely a rebellious slight upon our national justice, found herself involved in a triumphal procession to the Vindicator Vegetarian Restaurant, and was specifically and personally cheered by a small, shabby crowd outside that rendezvous. They decided quite

audibly, "She's an Old Dear, anyhow. Voting wouldn't do no 'arm to 'er." She was on the very verge of a vegetarian meal before she recovered her head again. Obeying some fine instinct, she had come to the prison in a dark veil, but she had pushed this up to kiss Ann Veronica and never drawn it down again. Eggs were procured for her, and she sat out the subsequent emotions and eloquence with the dignity becoming an injured lady of good family. The quiet encounter and home-coming Ann Veronica and she had contemplated was entirely disorganized by this misadventure; there were no adequate explanations, and after they had settled things at Ann Veronica's lodgings, they reached home in the early afternoon estranged and depressed, with headaches and the trumpet voice of the indomitable Kitty Brett still ringing in their ears.

"Dreadful women, my dear!" said Miss Stanley. "And some of them quite pretty and well dressed. No need to do such things. We must never let your father know we went. Why ever did you let me get into that wagonette?"

"I thought we had to," said Ann Veronica, who had also been a little under the compulsion of the marshals of the occasion. "It was very tiring."

"We will have some tea in the drawing-room as soon as ever we can--and I will take my things off. I don't think I shall ever care for this bonnet again. We'll have some buttered toast. Your poor cheeks are quite sunken and hollow. . . ."

Part 3

When Ann Veronica found herself in her father's study that evening it seemed to her for a moment as though all the events of

the past six months had been a dream. The big gray spaces of London, the shop-lit, greasy, shining streets, had become very remote; the biological laboratory with its work and emotions, the meetings and discussions, the rides in hansoms with Ramage, were like things in a book read and closed. The study seemed absolutely unaltered, there was still the same lamp with a little chip out of the shade, still the same gas fire, still the same bundle of blue and white papers, it seemed, with the same pink tape about them, at the elbow of the arm-chair, still the same father. He sat in much the same attitude, and she stood just as she had stood when he told her she could not go to the Fadden Dance. Both had dropped the rather elaborate politeness of the dining-room, and in their faces an impartial observer would have discovered little lines of obstinate wilfulness in common; a certain hardness--sharp, indeed, in the father and softly rounded in the daughter --but hardness nevertheless, that made every compromise a bargain and every charity a discount.

"And so you have been thinking?" her father began, quoting her letter and looking over his slanting glasses at her. "Well, my girl, I wish you had thought about all these things before these bothers began."

Ann Veronica perceived that she must not forget to remain eminently reasonable.

"One has to live and learn," she remarked, with a passable imitation of her father's manner.

"So long as you learn," said Mr. Stanley.

Their conversation hung.

"I suppose, daddy, you've no objection to my going on with my work at the Imperial College?" she asked.

"If it will keep you busy," he said, with a faintly ironical smile.

"The fees are paid to the end of the session."

He nodded twice, with his eyes on the fire, as though that was a formal statement.

"You may go on with that work," he said, "so long as you keep in harmony with things at home. I'm convinced that much of Russell's investigations are on wrong lines, unsound lines. Still--you must learn for yourself. You're of age--you're of age."

"The work's almost essential for the B.Sc. exam."

"It's scandalous, but I suppose it is."

Their agreement so far seemed remarkable, and yet as a home-coming the thing was a little lacking in warmth. But Ann Veronica had still to get to her chief topic. They were silent for a time. "It's a period of crude views and crude work," said Mr. Stanley. "Still, these Mendelian fellows seem likely to give Mr. Russell trouble, a good lot of trouble. Some of their specimens--wonderfully selected, wonderfully got up."

"Daddy," said Ann Veronica, "these affairs--being away from home has--cost money."

"I thought you would find that out."

"As a matter of fact, I happen to have got a little into debt."

"NEVER!"

Her heart sank at the change in his expression.

"Well, lodgings and things! And I paid my fees at the College."

"Yes. But how could you get--Who gave you credit?"

"You see," said Ann Veronica, "my landlady kept on my room while I was in Holloway, and the fees for the College mounted up pretty considerably." She spoke rather quickly, because she found her father's question the most awkward she had ever had to answer in her life.

"Molly and you settled about the rooms. She said you HAD some money."

"I borrowed it," said Ann Veronica in a casual tone, with white despair in her heart.

"But who could have lent you money?"

"I pawned my pearl necklace. I got three pounds, and there's three on my watch."

"Six pounds. H'm. Got the tickets? Yes, but then--you said you borrowed?"

"I did, too," said Ann Veronica.

"Who from?"

She met his eye for a second and her heart failed her. The truth was impossible, indecent. If she mentioned Ramage he might have a fit--anything might happen. She lied. "The Widgetts," she said.

"Tut, tut!" he said. "Really, Vee, you seem to have advertised our relations pretty generally!"

"They--they knew, of course. Because of the Dance."

"How much do you owe them?"

She knew forty pounds was a quite impossible sum for their neighbors. She knew, too, she must not hesitate. "Eight pounds," she plunged, and added foolishly, "fifteen pounds will see me clear of everything." She muttered some unlady-like comment upon herself under her breath and engaged in secret additions.

Mr. Stanley determined to improve the occasion. He seemed to deliberate. "Well," he said at last slowly, "I'll pay it. I'll pay it. But I do hope, Vee, I do hope --this is the end of these adventures. I hope you have learned your lesson now and come to see--come to realize --how things are. People, nobody, can do as they like in this world. Everywhere there are limitations."

"I know," said Ann Veronica (fifteen pounds!). "I have learned that. I mean--I mean to do what I can." (Fifteen pounds. Fifteen from forty is twenty-five.)

He hesitated. She could think of nothing more to say.

"Well," she achieved at last. "Here goes for the new life!"

"Here goes for the new life," he echoed and stood up. Father and daughter regarded each other warily, each more than a little insecure with the other. He made a movement toward her, and then recalled the circumstances of their last conversation in that study. She saw his purpose and his doubt hesitated also, and

then went to him, took his coat lapels, and kissed him on the cheek.

"Ah, Vee," he said, "that's better! and kissed her back rather clumsily. "We're going to be sensible."

She disengaged herself from him and went out of the room with a grave, preoccupied expression. (Fifteen pounds! And she wanted forty!)

Part 4

It was, perhaps, the natural consequence of a long and tiring and exciting day that Ann Veronica should pass a broken and distressful night, a night in which the noble and self-subduing resolutions of Canongate displayed themselves for the first time in an atmosphere of almost lurid dismay. Her father's peculiar stiffness of soul presented itself now as something altogether left out of the calculations upon which her plans were based, and, in particular, she had not anticipated the difficulty she would find in borrowing the forty pounds she needed for Ramage. That had taken her by surprise, and her tired wits had failed her. She was to have fifteen pounds, and no more. She knew that to expect more now was like anticipating a gold-mine in the garden. The chance had gone. It became suddenly glaringly apparent to her that it was impossible to return fifteen pounds or any sum less than twenty pounds to Ramage --absolutely impossible. She realized that with a pang of disgust and horror.

Already she had sent him twenty pounds, and never written to explain to him why it was she had not sent it back sharply directly he returned it. She ought to have written at once and

told him exactly what had happened. Now if she sent fifteen pounds the suggestion that she had spent a five-pound note in the meanwhile would be irresistible. No! That was impossible. She would have just to keep the fifteen pounds until she could make it twenty. That might happen on her birthday--in August.

She turned about, and was persecuted by visions, half memories, half dreams, of Ramage. He became ugly and monstrous, dunning her, threatening her, assailing her.

"Confound sex from first to last!" said Ann Veronica. "Why can't we propagate by sexless spores, as the ferns do? We restrict each other, we badger each other, friendship is poisoned and buried under it! . . . I MUST pay off that forty pounds. I MUST."

For a time there seemed no comfort for her even in Capes. She was to see Capes to-morrow, but now, in this state of misery she had achieved, she felt assured he would turn his back upon her, take no notice of her at all. And if he didn't, what was the good of seeing him?

"I wish he was a woman," she said, "then I could make him my friend. I want him as my friend. I want to talk to him and go about with him. Just go about with him."

She was silent for a time, with her nose on the pillow, and that brought her to: "What's the good of pretending?"

"I love him," she said aloud to the dim forms of her room, and repeated it, and went on to imagine herself doing acts of tragically dog-like devotion to the biologist, who, for the purposes of the drama, remained entirely unconscious of and indifferent to her proceedings.

At last some anodyne formed itself from these exercises, and, with eyelashes wet with such feeble tears as only three-o'clock-in-the-morning pathos can distil, she fell asleep.

Part 5

Pursuant to some altogether private calculations she did not go up to the Imperial College until after mid-day, and she found the laboratory deserted, even as she desired. She went to the table under the end window at which she had been accustomed to work, and found it swept and garnished with full bottles of re-agents. Everything was very neat; it had evidently been straightened up and kept for her. She put down the sketch-books and apparatus she had brought with her, pulled out her stool, and sat down. As she did so the preparation-room door opened behind her. She heard it open, but as she felt unable to look round in a careless manner she pretended not to hear it. Then Capes' footsteps approached. She turned with an effort.

"I expected you this morning," he said. "I saw--they knocked off your fetters yesterday."

"I think it is very good of me to come this afternoon."

"I began to be afraid you might not come at all."

"Afraid!"

"Yes. I'm glad you're back for all sorts of reasons." He spoke a little nervously. "Among other things, you know, I didn't understand quite--I didn't understand that you were so keenly interested in this suffrage question. I have it on my conscience

that I offended you--"

"Offended me when?"

"I've been haunted by the memory of you. I was rude and stupid. We were talking about the suffrage--and I rather scoffed."

"You weren't rude," she said.

"I didn't know you were so keen on this suffrage business."

"Nor I. You haven't had it on your mind all this time?"

"I have rather. I felt somehow I'd hurt you."

"You didn't. I--I hurt myself."

"I mean--"

"I behaved like an idiot, that's all. My nerves were in rags. I was worried. We're the hysterical animal, Mr. Capes. I got myself locked up to cool off. By a sort of instinct. As a dog eats grass. I'm right again now."

"Because your nerves were exposed, that was no excuse for my touching them. I ought to have seen--"

"It doesn't matter a rap--if you're not disposed to resent the--the way I behaved."

"_I_ resent!"

"I was only sorry I'd been so stupid."

"Well, I take it we're straight again," said Capes with a note of

relief, and assumed an easier position on the edge of her table. "But if you weren't keen on the suffrage business, why on earth did you go to prison?"

Ann Veronica reflected. "It was a phase," she said.

He smiled. "It's a new phase in the life history," he remarked. "Everybody seems to have it now. Everybody who's going to develop into a woman."

"There's Miss Garvice."

"She's coming on," said Capes. "And, you know, you're altering us all. I'M shaken. The campaign's a success." He met her questioning eye, and repeated, "Oh! it IS a success. A man is so apt to--to take women a little too lightly. Unless they remind him now and then not to. . . . YOU did."

"Then I didn't waste my time in prison altogether?"

"It wasn't the prison impressed me. But I liked the things you said here. I felt suddenly I understood you--as an intelligent person. If you'll forgive my saying that, and implying what goes with it. There's something--puppyish in a man's usual attitude to women. That is what I've had on my conscience. . . . I don't think we're altogether to blame if we don't take some of your lot seriously. Some of your sex, I mean. But we smirk a little, I'm afraid, habitually when we talk to you. We smirk, and we're a bit--furtive."

He paused, with his eyes studying her gravely. "You, anyhow, don't deserve it," he said.

Their colloquy was ended abruptly by the apparition of Miss Klegg at the further door. When she saw Ann Veronica she stood for a

moment as if entranced, and then advanced with outstretched hands. "Veronique!" she cried with a rising intonation, though never before had she called Ann Veronica anything but Miss Stanley, and seized her and squeezed her and kissed her with profound emotion. "To think that you were going to do it--and never said a word! You are a little thin, but except for that you look--you look better than ever. Was it VERY horrible? I tried to get into the police-court, but the crowd was ever so much too big, push as I would. . . .

"I mean to go to prison directly the session is over," said Miss Klegg. "Wild horses--not if they have all the mounted police in London--shan't keep me out."

Part 6

Capes lit things wonderfully for Ann Veronica all that afternoon, he was so friendly, so palpably interested in her, and glad to have her back with him. Tea in the laboratory was a sort of suffragette reception. Miss Garvice assumed a quality of neutrality, professed herself almost won over by Ann Veronica's example, and the Scotchman decided that if women had a distinctive sphere it was, at any rate, an enlarging sphere, and no one who believed in the doctrine of evolution could logically deny the vote to women "ultimately," however much they might be disposed to doubt the advisability of its immediate concession. It was a refusal of expediency, he said, and not an absolute refusal. The youth with his hair like Russell cleared his throat and said rather irrelevantly that he knew a man who knew Thomas Bayard Simmons, who had rioted in the Strangers' Gallery, and then Capes, finding them all distinctly pro-Ann Veronica, if not pro-feminist, ventured to be perverse, and started a vein of

speculation upon the Scotchman's idea--that there were still hopes of women evolving into something higher.

He was unusually absurd and ready, and all the time it seemed to Ann Veronica as a delightful possibility, as a thing not indeed to be entertained seriously, but to be half furtively felt, that he was being so agreeable because she had come back again. She returned home through a world that was as roseate as it had been gray overnight.

But as she got out of the train at Morningside Park Station she had a shock. She saw, twenty yards down the platform, the shiny hat and broad back and inimitable swagger of Ramage. She dived at once behind the cover of the lamp-room and affected serious trouble with her shoe-lace until he was out of the station, and then she followed slowly and with extreme discretion until the bifurcation of the Avenue from the field way insured her escape. Ramage went up the Avenue, and she hurried along the path with a beating heart and a disagreeable sense of unsolved problems in her mind.

"That thing's going on," she told herself. "Everything goes on, confound it! One doesn't change anything one has set going by making good resolutions."

And then ahead of her she saw the radiant and welcoming figure of Manning. He came as an agreeable diversion from an insoluble perplexity. She smiled at the sight of him, and thereat his radiation increased.

"I missed the hour of your release," he said, "but I was at the Vindicator Restaurant. You did not see me, I know. I was among the common herd in the place below, but I took good care to see you."

"Of course you're converted?" she said.

"To the view that all those Splendid Women in the movement ought to have votes. Rather! Who could help it?"

He towered up over her and smiled down at her in his fatherly way.

"To the view that all women ought to have votes whether they like it or not."

He shook his head, and his eyes and the mouth under the black mustache wrinkled with his smile. And as he walked by her side they began a wrangle that was none the less pleasant to Ann Veronica because it served to banish a disagreeable preoccupation. It seemed to her in her restored geniality that she liked Manning extremely. The brightness Capes had diffused over the world glorified even his rival.

Part 7

The steps by which Ann Veronica determined to engage herself to marry Manning were never very clear to her. A medley of motives warred in her, and it was certainly not one of the least of these that she knew herself to be passionately in love with Capes; at moments she had a giddy intimation that he was beginning to feel keenly interested in her. She realized more and more the quality of the brink upon which she stood--the dreadful readiness with which in certain moods she might plunge, the unmitigated wrongness and recklessness of such a self-abandonment. "He must never know," she would whisper to herself, "he must never know. Or else--Else it will be impossible that I can be his friend."

That simple statement of the case was by no means all that went on in Ann Veronica's mind. But it was the form of her ruling determination; it was the only form that she ever allowed to see daylight. What else was there lurked in shadows and deep places; if in some mood of reverie it came out into the light, it was presently overwhelmed and hustled back again into hiding. She would never look squarely at these dream forms that mocked the social order in which she lived, never admit she listened to the soft whisperings in her ear. But Manning seemed more and more clearly indicated as a refuge, as security. Certain simple purposes emerged from the disingenuous muddle of her feelings and desires. Seeing Capes from day to day made a bright eventfulness that hampered her in the course she had resolved to follow. She vanished from the laboratory for a week, a week of oddly interesting days. . . .

When she renewed her attendance at the Imperial College the third finger of her left hand was adorned with a very fine old ring with dark blue sapphires that had once belonged to a great-aunt of Manning's.

That ring manifestly occupied her thoughts a great deal. She kept pausing in her work and regarding it, and when Capes came round to her, she first put her hand in her lap and then rather awkwardly in front of him. But men are often blind to rings. He seemed to be.

In the afternoon she had considered certain doubts very carefully, and decided on a more emphatic course of action. "Are these ordinary sapphires?" she said. He bent to her hand, and she slipped off the ring and gave it to him to examine.

"Very good," he said. "Rather darker than most of them. But I'm generously ignorant of gems. Is it an old ring?" he asked,

returning it.

"I believe it is. It's an engagement ring. . . ." She slipped it on her finger, and added, in a voice she tried to make matter-of-fact: "It was given to me last week."

"Oh!" he said, in a colorless tone, and with his eyes on her face.

"Yes. Last week."

She glanced at him, and it was suddenly apparent for one instant of illumination that this ring upon her finger was the crowning blunder of her life. It was apparent, and then it faded into the quality of an inevitable necessity.

"Odd!" he remarked, rather surprisingly, after a little interval.

There was a brief pause, a crowded pause, between them.

She sat very still, and his eyes rested on that ornament for a moment, and then travelled slowly to her wrist and the soft lines of her forearm.

"I suppose I ought to congratulate you," he said. Their eyes met, and his expressed perplexity and curiosity. "The fact is--I don't know why--this takes me by surprise. Somehow I haven't connected the idea with you. You seemed complete--without that."

"Did I?" she said.

"I don't know why. But this is like--like walking round a house that looks square and complete and finding an unexpected long wing running out behind."

She looked up at him, and found he was watching her closely. For some seconds of voluminous thinking they looked at the ring between them, and neither spoke. Then Capes shifted his eyes to her microscope and the little trays of unmounted sections beside it. "How is that carmine working?" he asked, with a forced interest.

"Better," said Ann Veronica, with an unreal alacrity. "But it still misses the nucleolus."

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH

THE SAPPHIRE RING

Part 1

For a time that ring set with sapphires seemed to be, after all, the satisfactory solution of Ann Veronica's difficulties. It was like pouring a strong acid over dulled metal. A tarnish of constraint that had recently spread over her intercourse with Capes vanished again. They embarked upon an open and declared friendship. They even talked about friendship. They went to the Zoological Gardens together one Saturday to see for themselves a point of morphological interest about the toucan's bill--that friendly and entertaining bird--and they spent the rest of the afternoon walking about and elaborating in general terms this theme and the superiority of intellectual fellowship to all merely passionate relationships. Upon this topic Capes was heavy and conscientious, but that seemed to her to be just exactly what he ought to be. He was also, had she known it, more than a little insincere. "We are only in the dawn of the Age of

Friendship," he said, "when interest, I suppose, will take the place of passions. Either you have had to love people or hate them--which is a sort of love, too, in its way--to get anything out of them. Now, more and more, we're going to be interested in them, to be curious about them and--quite mildly-experimental with them." He seemed to be elaborating ideas as he talked. They watched the chimpanzees in the new apes' house, and admired the gentle humanity of their eyes--"so much more human than human beings" --and they watched the Agile Gibbon in the next apartment doing wonderful leaps and aerial somersaults.

"I wonder which of us enjoys that most," said Capes--"does he, or do we?"

"He seems to get a zest--"

"He does it and forgets it. We remember it. These joyful bounds just lace into the stuff of my memories and stay there forever. Living's just material."

"It's very good to be alive."

"It's better to know life than be life."

"One may do both," said Ann Veronica.

She was in a very uncritical state that afternoon. When he said, "Let's go and see the wart-hog," she thought no one ever had had so quick a flow of good ideas as he; and when he explained that sugar and not buns was the talisman of popularity among the animals, she marvelled at his practical omniscience.

Finally, at the exit into Regent's Park, they ran against Miss Klegg. It was the expression of Miss Klegg's face that put the idea into Ann Veronica's head of showing Manning at the College

one day, an idea which she didn't for some reason or other carry out for a fortnight.

Part 2

When at last she did so, the sapphire ring took on a new quality in the imagination of Capes. It ceased to be the symbol of liberty and a remote and quite abstracted person, and became suddenly and very disagreeably the token of a large and portentous body visible and tangible.

Manning appeared just at the end of the afternoon's work, and the biologist was going through some perplexities the Scotchman had created by a metaphysical treatment of the skulls of Hyrax and a young African elephant. He was clearing up these difficulties by tracing a partially obliterated suture the Scotchman had overlooked when the door from the passage opened, and Manning came into his universe.

Seen down the length of the laboratory, Manning looked a very handsome and shapely gentleman indeed, and, at the sight of his eager advance to his fiancée, Miss Klegg replaced one long-cherished romance about Ann Veronica by one more normal and simple. He carried a cane and a silk hat with a mourning-band in one gray-gloved hand; his frock-coat and trousers were admirable; his handsome face, his black mustache, his prominent brow conveyed an eager solicitude.

"I want," he said, with a white hand outstretched, "to take you out to tea."

"I've been clearing up," said Ann Veronica, brightly.

"All your dreadful scientific things?" he said, with a smile that Miss Klegg thought extraordinarily kindly.

"All my dreadful scientific things," said Ann Veronica.

He stood back, smiling with an air of proprietorship, and looking about him at the business-like equipment of the room. The low ceiling made him seem abnormally tall. Ann Veronica wiped a scalpel, put a card over a watch-glass containing thin shreds of embryonic guinea-pig swimming in mauve stain, and dismantled her microscope.

"I wish I understood more of biology," said Manning.

"I'm ready," said Ann Veronica, closing her microscope-box with a click, and looking for one brief instant up the laboratory. "We have no airs and graces here, and my hat hangs from a peg in the passage."

She led the way to the door, and Manning passed behind her and round her and opened the door for her. When Capes glanced up at them for a moment, Manning seemed to be holding his arms all about her, and there was nothing but quiet acquiescence in her bearing.

After Capes had finished the Scotchman's troubles he went back into the preparation-room. He sat down on the sill of the open window, folded his arms, and stared straight before him for a long time over the wilderness of tiles and chimney-pots into a sky that was blue and empty. He was not addicted to monologue, and the only audible comment he permitted himself at first upon a universe that was evidently anything but satisfactory to him that afternoon, was one compact and entirely unassigned "Damn!"

The word must have had some gratifying quality, because he repeated it. Then he stood up and repeated it again. "The fool I have been!" he cried; and now speech was coming to him. He tried this sentence with expletives. "Ass!" he went on, still warming. "Muck-headed moral ass! I ought to have done anything.

I ought to have done anything!

"What's a man for?"

"Friendship!"

He doubled up his fist, and seemed to contemplate thrusting it through the window. He turned his back on that temptation. Then suddenly he seized a new preparation bottle that stood upon his table and contained the better part of a week's work--a displayed dissection of a snail, beautifully done--and hurled it across the room, to smash resoundingly upon the cemented floor under the bookcase; then, without either haste or pause, he swept his arm along a shelf of re-agents and sent them to mingle with the debris on the floor. They fell in a diapason of smashes. "H'm!" he said, regarding the wreckage with a calmer visage. "Silly!" he remarked after a pause. "One hardly knows--all the time."

He put his hands in his pockets, his mouth puckered to a whistle, and he went to the door of the outer preparation-room and stood there, looking, save for the faintest intensification of his natural ruddiness, the embodiment of blond serenity.

"Gellett," he called, "just come and clear up a mess, will you? I've smashed some things."

Part 3

There was one serious flaw in Ann Veronica's arrangements for self-rehabilitation, and that was Ramage. He hung over her--he and his loan to her and his connection with her and that terrible evening--a vague, disconcerting possibility of annoyance and exposure. She could not see any relief from this anxiety except repayment, and repayment seemed impossible. The raising of twenty-five pounds was a task altogether beyond her powers. Her birthday was four months away, and that, at its extremist point, might give her another five pounds.

The thing rankled in her mind night and day. She would wake in the night to repeat her bitter cry: "Oh, why did I burn those notes?"

It added greatly to the annoyance of the situation that she had twice seen Ramage in the Avenue since her return to the shelter of her father's roof. He had saluted her with elaborate civility, his eyes distended with indecipherable meanings.

She felt she was bound in honor to tell the whole affair to Manning sooner or later. Indeed, it seemed inevitable that she must clear it up with his assistance, or not at all. And when Manning was not about the thing seemed simple enough. She would compose extremely lucid and honorable explanations. But when it came to broaching them, it proved to be much more difficult than she had supposed.

They went down the great staircase of the building, and, while she sought in her mind for a beginning, he broke into appreciation of her simple dress and self-congratulations upon their engagement.

"It makes me feel," he said, "that nothing is impossible--to have

you here beside me. I said, that day at Surbiton, 'There's many good things in life, but there's only one best, and that's the wild-haired girl who's pulling away at that oar. I will make her my Grail, and some day, perhaps, if God wills, she shall become my wife!' "

He looked very hard before him as he said this, and his voice was full of deep feeling.

"Grail!" said Ann Veronica, and then: "Oh, yes--of course! Anything but a holy one, I'm afraid."

"Altogether holy, Ann Veronica. Ah! but you can't imagine what you are to me and what you mean to me! I suppose there is something mystical and wonderful about all women."

"There is something mystical and wonderful about all human beings. I don't see that men need bank it with the women."

"A man does," said Manning--"a true man, anyhow. And for me there is only one treasure-house. By Jove! When I think of it I want to leap and shout!"

"It would astonish that man with the barrow."

"It astonishes me that I don't," said Manning, in a tone of intense self-enjoyment.

"I think," began Ann Veronica, "that you don't realize--"

He disregarded her entirely. He waved an arm and spoke with a peculiar resonance. "I feel like a giant! I believe now I shall do great things. Gods! what it must be to pour out strong, splendid verse--mighty lines! mighty lines! If I do, Ann Veronica, it will be you. It will be altogether you. I will

dedicate my books to you. I will lay them all at your feet."

He beamed upon her.

"I don't think you realize," Ann Veronica began again, "that I am rather a defective human being."

"I don't want to," said Manning. "They say there are spots on the sun. Not for me. It warms me, and lights me, and fills my world with flowers. Why should I peep at it through smoked glass to see things that don't affect me?" He smiled his delight at his companion.

"I've got bad faults."

He shook his head slowly, smiling mysteriously.

"But perhaps I want to confess them."

"I grant you absolution."

"I don't want absolution. I want to make myself visible to you."

"I wish I could make you visible to yourself. I don't believe in the faults. They're just a joyous softening of the outline--more beautiful than perfection. Like the flaws of an old marble. If you talk of your faults, I shall talk of your splendors."

"I do want to tell you things, nevertheless."

"We'll have, thank God! ten myriad days to tell each other things. When I think of it--"

"But these are things I want to tell you now!"

"I made a little song of it. Let me say it to you. I've no name for it yet. Epithalamy might do.

"Like him who stood on Darien
I view uncharted sea
Ten thousand days, ten thousand nights
Before my Queen and me.

"And that only brings me up to about sixty-five!

"A glittering wilderness of time
That to the sunset reaches
No keel as yet its waves has ploughed
Or gritted on its beaches.

"And we will sail that splendor wide,
From day to day together,
From isle to isle of happiness
Through year's of God's own weather."

"Yes," said his prospective fellow-sailor, "that's very pretty."
She stopped short, full of things un-said. Pretty! Ten thousand days, ten thousand nights!

"You shall tell me your faults," said Manning. "If they matter to you, they matter."

"It isn't precisely faults," said Ann Veronica. "It's something that bothers me." Ten thousand! Put that way it seemed so different.

"Then assuredly!" said Manning.

She found a little difficulty in beginning. She was glad when he went on: "I want to be your city of refuge from every sort of bother. I want to stand between you and all the force and vileness of the world. I want to make you feel that here is a place where the crowd does not clamor nor ill-winds blow."

"That is all very well," said Ann Veronica, unheeded.

"That is my dream of you," said Manning, warming. "I want my life to be beaten gold just in order to make it a fitting setting for yours. There you will be, in an inner temple. I want to enrich it with hangings and gladden it with verses. I want to fill it with fine and precious things. And by degrees, perhaps, that maiden distrust of yours that makes you shrink from my kisses, will vanish. . . . Forgive me if a certain warmth creeps into my words! The Park is green and gray to-day, but I am glowing pink and gold. . . . It is difficult to express these things."

Part 4

They sat with tea and strawberries and cream before them at a little table in front of the pavilion in Regent's Park. Her confession was still unmade. Manning leaned forward on the table, talking discursively on the probable brilliance of their married life. Ann Veronica sat back in an attitude of inattention, her eyes on a distant game of cricket, her mind perplexed and busy. She was recalling the circumstances under which she had engaged herself to Manning, and trying to understand a curious development of the quality of this relationship.

The particulars of her engagement were very clear in her memory.

She had taken care he should have this momentous talk with her on a garden-seat commanded by the windows of the house. They had been playing tennis, with his manifest intention looming over her.

"Let us sit down for a moment," he had said. He made his speech a little elaborately. She plucked at the knots of her racket and heard him to the end, then spoke in a restrained undertone.

"You ask me to be engaged to you, Mr. Manning," she began.

"I want to lay all my life at your feet."

"Mr. Manning, I do not think I love you. . . . I want to be very plain with you. I have nothing, nothing that can possibly be passion for you. I am sure. Nothing at all."

He was silent for some moments.

"Perhaps that is only sleeping," he said. "How can you know?"

"I think--perhaps I am rather a cold-blooded person."

She stopped. He remained listening attentively.

"You have been very kind to me," she said.

"I would give my life for you."

Her heart had warmed toward him. It had seemed to her that life might be very good indeed with his kindness and sacrifice about her. She thought of him as always courteous and helpful, as realizing, indeed, his ideal of protection and service, as chivalrously leaving her free to live her own life, rejoicing with an infinite generosity in every detail of her irresponsible

being. She twanged the catgut under her fingers.

"It seems so unfair," she said, "to take all you offer me and give so little in return."

"It is all the world to me. And we are not traders looking at equivalents."

"You know, Mr. Manning, I do not really want to marry."

"No."

"It seems so--so unworthy"--she picked among her phrases "of the noble love you give--"

She stopped, through the difficulty she found in expressing herself.

"But I am judge of that," said Manning.

"Would you wait for me?"

Manning was silent for a space. "As my lady wills."

"Would you let me go on studying for a time?"

"If you order patience."

"I think, Mr. Manning . . . I do not know. It is so difficult. When I think of the love you give me--One ought to give you back love."

"You like me?"

"Yes. And I am grateful to you. . . ."

Manning tapped with his racket on the turf through some moments of silence. "You are the most perfect, the most glorious of created things--tender, frank intellectual, brave, beautiful. I am your servitor. I am ready to wait for you, to wait your pleasure, to give all my life to winning it. Let me only wear your livery. Give me but leave to try. You want to think for a time, to be free for a time. That is so like you, Diana--Pallas Athene! (Pallas Athene is better.) You are all the slender goddesses. I understand. Let me engage myself. That is all I ask."

She looked at him; his face, downcast and in profile, was handsome and strong. Her gratitude swelled within her.

"You are too good for me," she said in a low voice.

"Then you--you will?"

A long pause.

"It isn't fair. . . ."

"But will you?"

"YES."

For some seconds he had remained quite still.

"If I sit here," he said, standing up before her abruptly, "I shall have to shout. Let us walk about. Tum, tum, turray, tum, tum, tum, te-tum--that thing of Mendelssohn's! If making one human being absolutely happy is any satisfaction to you--"

He held out his hands, and she also stood up.

He drew her close up to him with a strong, steady pull. Then suddenly, in front of all those windows, he folded her in his arms and pressed her to him, and kissed her unresisting face.

"Don't!" cried Ann Veronica, struggling faintly, and he released her.

"Forgive me," he said. "But I am at singing-pitch."

She had a moment of sheer panic at the thing she had done. "Mr. Manning," she said, "for a time--Will you tell no one? Will you keep this--our secret? I'm doubtful-- Will you please not even tell my aunt?"

"As you will," he said. "But if my manner tells! I cannot help it if that shows. You only mean a secret for a little time?"

"Just for a little time," she said; "yes. . . ."

But the ring, and her aunt's triumphant eye, and a note of approval in her father's manner, and a novel disposition in him to praise Manning in a just, impartial voice had soon placed very definite qualifications upon that covenanted secrecy.

Part 5

At first the quality of her relationship to Manning seemed moving and beautiful to Ann Veronica. She admired and rather pitied him, and she was unfeignedly grateful to him. She even thought that perhaps she might come to love him, in spite of that faint indefinable flavor of absurdity that pervaded his courtly

bearing. She would never love him as she loved Capes, of course, but there are grades and qualities of love. For Manning it would be a more temperate love altogether. Much more temperate; the discreet and joyless love of a virtuous, reluctant, condescending wife. She had been quite convinced that an engagement with him and at last a marriage had exactly that quality of compromise which distinguishes the ways of the wise. It would be the wrapped world almost at its best. She saw herself building up a life upon that--a life restrained, kindly, beautiful, a little pathetic and altogether dignified; a life of great disciplines and suppressions and extensive reserves. . . .

But the Ramage affair needed clearing up, of course; it was a flaw upon that project. She had to explain about and pay off that forty pounds. . . .

Then, quite insensibly, her queenliness had declined. She was never able to trace the changes her attitude had undergone, from the time when she believed herself to be the pampered Queen of Fortune, the crown of a good man's love (and secretly, but nobly, worshipping some one else), to the time when she realized she was in fact just a mannequin for her lover's imagination, and that he cared no more for the realities of her being, for the things she felt and desired, for the passions and dreams that might move her, than a child cares for the sawdust in its doll. She was the actress his whim had chosen to play a passive part. . . .

It was one of the most educational disillusionments in Ann Veronica's career.

But did many women get anything better?

This afternoon, when she was urgent to explain her hampering and tainting complication with Ramage, the realization of this alien quality in her relationship with Manning became acute. Hitherto

it had been qualified by her conception of all life as a compromise, by her new effort to be unexacting of life. But she perceived that to tell Manning of her Ramage adventures as they had happened would be like tarring figures upon a water-color. They were in different key, they had a different timbre. How could she tell him what indeed already began to puzzle herself, why she had borrowed that money at all? The plain fact was that she had grabbed a bait. She had grabbed! She became less and less attentive to his meditative, self-complacent fragments of talk as she told herself this. Her secret thoughts made some hasty, half-hearted excursions into the possibility of telling the thing in romantic tones--Ramage was as a black villain, she as a white, fantastically white, maiden. . . . She doubted if Manning would even listen to that. He would refuse to listen and absolve her unshriven.

Then it came to her with a shock, as an extraordinary oversight, that she could never tell Manning about Ramage--never.

She dismissed the idea of doing so. But that still left the forty pounds! . . .

Her mind went on generalizing. So it would always be between herself and Manning. She saw her life before her robbed of all generous illusions, the wrapped life unwrapped forever, vistas of dull responses, crises of make-believe, years of exacting mutual disregard in a misty garden of fine sentiments.

But did any woman get anything better from a man? Perhaps every woman conceals herself from a man perforce! . . .

She thought of Capes. She could not help thinking of Capes. Surely Capes was different. Capes looked at one and not over one, spoke to one, treated one as a visible concrete fact. Capes saw her, felt for her, cared for her greatly, even if he did not

love her. Anyhow, he did not sentimentalize her. And she had been doubting since that walk in the Zoological Gardens whether, indeed, he did simply care for her. Little things, almost impalpable, had happened to justify that doubt; something in his manner had belied his words. Did he not look for her in the morning when she entered--come very quickly to her? She thought of him as she had last seen him looking down the length of the laboratory to see her go. Why had he glanced up--quite in that way? . . .

The thought of Capes flooded her being like long-veiled sunlight breaking again through clouds. It came to her like a dear thing rediscovered, that she loved Capes. It came to her that to marry any one but Capes was impossible. If she could not marry him, she would not marry any one. She would end this sham with Manning. It ought never to have begun. It was cheating, pitiful cheating. And then if some day Capes wanted her--saw fit to alter his views upon friendship. . . .

Dim possibilities that she would not seem to look at even to herself gesticulated in the twilight background of her mind.

She leaped suddenly at a desperate resolution, and in one moment had made it into a new self. She flung aside every plan she had in life, every discretion. Of course, why not? She would be honest, anyhow!

She turned her eyes to Manning.

He was sitting back from the table now, with one arm over the back of his green chair and the other resting on the little table. He was smiling under his heavy mustache, and his head was a little on one side as he looked at her.

"And what was that dreadful confession you had to make?" he was

saying. His quiet, kindly smile implied his serene disbelief in any confessible thing. Ann Veronica pushed aside a tea-cup and the vestiges of her strawberries and cream, and put her elbows before her on the table. "Mr. Manning," she said, "I HAVE a confession to make."

"I wish you would use my Christian name," he said.

She attended to that, and then dismissed it as unimportant.

Something in her voice and manner conveyed an effect of unwonted gravity to him. For the first time he seemed to wonder what it might be that she had to confess. His smile faded.

"I don't think our engagement can go on," she plunged, and felt exactly that loss of breath that comes with a dive into icy water.

"But, how," he said, sitting up astonished beyond measure, "not go on?"

"I have been thinking while you have been talking. You see--I didn't understand."

She stared hard at her finger-nails. "It is hard to express one's self, but I do want to be honest with you. When I promised to marry you I thought I could; I thought it was a possible arrangement. I did think it could be done. I admired your chivalry. I was grateful."

She paused.

"Go on," he said.

She moved her elbow nearer to him and spoke in a still lower

tone. "I told you I did not love you."

"I know," said Manning, nodding gravely. "It was fine and brave of you."

"But there is something more."

She paused again.

"I--I am sorry-- I didn't explain. These things are difficult. It wasn't clear to me that I had to explain. . . . I love some one else."

They remained looking at each other for three or four seconds. Then Manning flopped back in his chair and dropped his chin like a man shot. There was a long silence between them.

"My God!" he said at last, with tremendous feeling, and then again, "My God!"

Now that this thing was said her mind was clear and calm. She heard this standard expression of a strong soul wrung with a critical coldness that astonished herself. She realized dimly that there was no personal thing behind his cry, that countless myriads of Mannings had "My God!"-ed with an equal gusto at situations as flatly apprehended. This mitigated her remorse enormously. He rested his brow on his hand and conveyed magnificent tragedy by his pose.

"But why," he said in the gasping voice of one subduing an agony, and looked at her from under a pain-wrinkled brow, "why did you not tell me this before?"

"I didn't know-- I thought I might be able to control myself."

"And you can't?"

"I don't think I ought to control myself."

"And I have been dreaming and thinking--"

"I am frightfully sorry. . . ."

"But-- This bolt from the blue! My God! Ann Veronica, you don't understand. This--this shatters a world!"

She tried to feel sorry, but her sense of his immense egotism was strong and clear.

He went on with intense urgency.

"Why did you ever let me love you? Why did you ever let me peep through the gates of Paradise? Oh! my God! I don't begin to feel and realize this yet. It seems to me just talk; it seems to me like the fancy of a dream. Tell me I haven't heard. This is a joke of yours." He made his voice very low and full, and looked closely into her face.

She twisted her fingers tightly. "It isn't a joke," she said. "I feel shabby and disgraced. . . . I ought never to have thought of it. Of you, I mean. . . ."

He fell back in his chair with an expression of tremendous desolation. "My God!" he said again. . . .

They became aware of the waitress standing over them with book and pencil ready for their bill. "Never mind the bill," said Manning tragically, standing up and thrusting a four-shilling piece into her hand, and turning a broad back on her astonishment. "Let us walk across the Park at least," he said to

Ann Veronica. "Just at present my mind simply won't take hold of this at all. . . . I tell you--never mind the bill. Keep it! Keep it!"

Part 6

They walked a long way that afternoon. They crossed the Park to the westward, and then turned back and walked round the circle about the Royal Botanical Gardens and then southwardly toward Waterloo. They trudged and talked, and Manning struggled, as he said, to "get the hang of it all."

It was a long, meandering talk, stupid, shameful, and unavoidable. Ann Veronica was apologetic to the bottom of her soul. At the same time she was wildly exultant at the resolution she had taken, the end she had made to her blunder. She had only to get through this, to solace Manning as much as she could, to put such clumsy plasterings on his wounds as were possible, and then, anyhow, she would be free--free to put her fate to the test. She made a few protests, a few excuses for her action in accepting him, a few lame explanations, but he did not heed them or care for them. Then she realized that it was her business to let Manning talk and impose his own interpretations upon the situation so far as he was concerned. She did her best to do this. But about his unknown rival he was acutely curious.

He made her tell him the core of the difficulty.

"I cannot say who he is," said Ann Veronica, "but he is a married man. . . . No! I do not even know that he cares for me. It is no good going into that. Only I just want him. I just want him, and no one else will do. It is no good arguing about a thing

like that."

"But you thought you could forget him."

"I suppose I must have thought so. I didn't understand. Now I do."

"By God!" said Manning, making the most of the word, "I suppose it's fate. Fate! You are so frank so splendid!"

"I'm taking this calmly now," he said, almost as if he apologized, "because I'm a little stunned."

Then he asked, "Tell me! has this man, has he DARED to make love to you?"

Ann Veronica had a vicious moment. "I wish he had," she said.

"But--"

The long inconsecutive conversation by that time was getting on her nerves. "When one wants a thing more than anything else in the world," she said with outrageous frankness, "one naturally wishes one had it."

She shocked him by that. She shattered the edifice he was building up of himself as a devoted lover, waiting only his chance to win her from a hopeless and consuming passion.

"Mr. Manning," she said, "I warned you not to idealize me. Men ought not to idealize any woman. We aren't worth it. We've done nothing to deserve it. And it hampers us. You don't know the thoughts we have; the things we can do and say. You are a sisterless man; you have never heard the ordinary talk that goes on at a girls' boarding-school."

"Oh! but you ARE splendid and open and fearless! As if I couldn't allow! What are all these little things? Nothing! Nothing! You can't sully yourself. You can't! I tell you frankly you may break off your engagement to me--I shall hold myself still engaged to you, yours just the same. As for this infatuation--it's like some obsession, some magic thing laid upon you. It's not you--not a bit. It's a thing that's happened to you. It is like some accident. I don't care. In a sense I don't care. It makes no difference. . . . All the same, I wish I had that fellow by the throat! Just the virile, unregenerate man in me wishes that. . . .

"I suppose I should let go if I had.

"You know," he went on, "this doesn't seem to me to end anything.

I'm rather a persistent person. I'm the sort of dog, if you turn it out of the room it lies down on the mat at the door. I'm not a lovesick boy. I'm a man, and I know what I mean. It's a tremendous blow, of course--but it doesn't kill me. And the situation it makes!--the situation!"

Thus Manning, egotistical, inconsecutive, unreal. And Ann Veronica walked beside him, trying in vain to soften her heart to him by the thought of how she had ill-used him, and all the time, as her feet and mind grew weary together, rejoicing more and more that at the cost of this one interminable walk she escaped the prospect of--what was it?--"Ten thousand days, ten thousand nights" in his company. Whatever happened she need never return to that possibility.

"For me," Manning went on, "this isn't final. In a sense it alters nothing. I shall still wear your favor--even if it is a stolen and forbidden favor--in my casque. . . . I shall still

believe in you. Trust you."

He repeated several times that he would trust her, though it remained obscure just exactly where the trust came in.

"Look here," he cried out of a silence, with a sudden flash of understanding, "did you mean to throw me over when you came out with me this afternoon?"

Ann Veronica hesitated, and with a startled mind realized the truth. "No," she answered, reluctantly.

"Very well," said Manning. "Then I don't take this as final. That's all. I've bored you or something. . . . You think you love this other man! No doubt you do love him. Before you have lived--"

He became darkly prophetic. He thrust out a rhetorical hand.

"I will MAKE you love me! Until he has faded--faded into a memory. . ."

He saw her into the train at Waterloo, and stood, a tall, grave figure, with hat upraised, as the carriage moved forward slowly and hid him. Ann Veronica sat back with a sigh of relief. Manning might go on now idealizing her as much as he liked. She was no longer a confederate in that. He might go on as the devoted lover until he tired. She had done forever with the Age of Chivalry, and her own base adaptations of its traditions to the compromising life. She was honest again.

But when she turned her thoughts to Morningside Park she perceived the tangled skein of life was now to be further complicated by his romantic importunity.

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH

THE COLLAPSE OF THE PENITENT

Part 1

Spring had held back that year until the dawn of May, and then spring and summer came with a rush together. Two days after this conversation between Manning and Ann Veronica, Capes came into the laboratory at lunch-time and found her alone there standing by the open window, and not even pretending to be doing anything.

He came in with his hands in his trousers pockets and a general air of depression in his bearing. He was engaged in detesting Manning and himself in almost equal measure. His face brightened at the sight of her, and he came toward her.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Ann Veronica, and stared over her shoulder out of the window.

"So am I. . . . Lassitude?"

"I suppose so."

"_I_ can't work."

"Nor I," said Ann Veronica.

Pause.

"It's the spring," he said. "It's the warming up of the year, the coming of the light mornings, the way in which everything begins to run about and begin new things. Work becomes distasteful; one thinks of holidays. This year--I've got it badly. I want to get away. I've never wanted to get away so much."

"Where do you go?"

"Oh!--Alps."

"Climbing?"

"Yes."

"That's rather a fine sort of holiday!"

He made no answer for three or four seconds.

"Yes," he said, "I want to get away. I feel at moments as though I could bolt for it. . . . Silly, isn't it? Undisciplined."

He went to the window and fidgeted with the blind, looking out to where the tree-tops of Regent's Park showed distantly over the houses. He turned round toward her and found her looking at him and standing very still.

"It's the stir of spring," he said.

"I believe it is."

She glanced out of the window, and the distant trees were a froth of hard spring green and almond blossom. She formed a wild resolution, and, lest she should waver from it, she set about at

once to realize it. "I've broken off my engagement," she said, in a matter-of-fact tone, and found her heart thumping in her neck. He moved slightly, and she went on, with a slight catching of her breath: "It's a bother and disturbance, but you see--" She had to go through with it now, because she could think of nothing but her preconceived words. Her voice was weak and flat.

"I've fallen in love."

He never helped her by a sound.

"I--I didn't love the man I was engaged to," she said. She met his eyes for a moment, and could not interpret their expression. They struck her as cold and indifferent.

Her heart failed her and her resolution became water. She remained standing stiffly, unable even to move. She could not look at him through an interval that seemed to her a vast gulf of time. But she felt his lax figure become rigid.

At last his voice came to release her tension.

"I thought you weren't keeping up to the mark. You-- It's jolly of you to confide in me. Still--" Then, with incredible and obviously deliberate stupidity, and a voice as flat as her own, he asked, "Who is the man?"

Her spirit raged within her at the dumbness, the paralysis that had fallen upon her. Grace, confidence, the power of movement even, seemed gone from her. A fever of shame ran through her being. Horrible doubts assailed her. She sat down awkwardly and helplessly on one of the little stools by her table and covered her face with her hands.

"Can't you SEE how things are?" she said.

Part 2

Before Capes could answer her in any way the door at the end of the laboratory opened noisily and Miss Klegg appeared. She went to her own table and sat down. At the sound of the door Ann Veronica uncovered a tearless face, and with one swift movement assumed a conversational attitude. Things hung for a moment in an awkward silence.

"You see," said Ann Veronica, staring before her at the window-sash, "that's the form my question takes at the present time."

Capes had not quite the same power of recovery. He stood with his hands in his pockets looking at Miss Klegg's back. His face was white. "It's--it's a difficult question." He appeared to be paralyzed by abstruse acoustic calculations. Then, very awkwardly, he took a stool and placed it at the end of Ann Veronica's table, and sat down. He glanced at Miss Klegg again, and spoke quickly and furtively, with eager eyes on Ann Veronica's face.

"I had a faint idea once that things were as you say they are, but the affair of the ring--of the unexpected ring--puzzled me. Wish SHE"--he indicated Miss Klegg's back with a nod--"was at the bottom of the sea. . . . I would like to talk to you about this--soon. If you don't think it would be a social outrage, perhaps I might walk with you to your railway station."

"I will wait," said Ann Veronica, still not looking at him, "and we will go into Regent's Park. No--you shall come with me to

Waterloo."

"Right!" he said, and hesitated, and then got up and went into the preparation-room.

Part 3

For a time they walked in silence through the back streets that lead southward from the College. Capes bore a face of infinite perplexity.

"The thing I feel most disposed to say, Miss Stanley," he began at last, "is that this is very sudden."

"It's been coming on since first I came into the laboratory."

"What do you want?" he asked, bluntly.

"You!" said Ann Veronica.

The sense of publicity, of people coming and going about them, kept them both unemotional. And neither had any of that theatricality which demands gestures and facial expression.

"I suppose you know I like you tremendously?" he pursued.

"You told me that in the Zoological Gardens."

She found her muscles a-tremble. But there was nothing in her bearing that a passer-by would have noted, to tell of the excitement that possessed her.

"I"--he seemed to have a difficulty with the word--"I love you. I've told you that practically already. But I can give it its name now. You needn't be in any doubt about it. I tell you that because it puts us on a footing. . . ."

They went on for a time without another word.

"But don't you know about me?" he said at last.

"Something. Not much."

"I'm a married man. And my wife won't live with me for reasons that I think most women would consider sound. . . . Or I should have made love to you long ago."

There came a silence again.

"I don't care," said Ann Veronica.

"But if you knew anything of that--"

"I did. It doesn't matter."

"Why did you tell me? I thought--I thought we were going to be friends."

He was suddenly resentful. He seemed to charge her with the ruin of their situation. "Why on earth did you TELL me?" he cried.

"I couldn't help it. It was an impulse. I HAD to."

"But it changes things. I thought you understood."

"I had to," she repeated. "I was sick of the make-believe. I don't care! I'm glad I did. I'm glad I did."

"Look here!" said Capes, "what on earth do you want? What do you think we can do? Don't you know what men are, and what life is?--to come to me and talk to me like this!"

"I know--something, anyhow. But I don't care; I haven't a spark of shame. I don't see any good in life if it hasn't got you in it. I wanted you to know. And now you know. And the fences are down for good. You can't look me in the eyes and say you don't care for me."

"I've told you," he said.

"Very well," said Ann Veronica, with an air of concluding the discussion.

They walked side by side for a time.

"In that laboratory one gets to disregard these passions," began Capes. "Men are curious animals, with a trick of falling in love readily with girls about your age. One has to train one's self not to. I've accustomed myself to think of you--as if you were like every other girl who works at the schools--as something quite outside these possibilities. If only out of loyalty to co-education one has to do that. Apart from everything else, this meeting of ours is a breach of a good rule."

"Rules are for every day," said Ann Veronica. "This is not every day. This is something above all rules."

"For you."

"Not for you?"

"No. No; I'm going to stick to the rules. . . . It's odd, but

nothing but cliché seems to meet this case. You've placed me in a very exceptional position, Miss Stanley." The note of his own voice exasperated him. "Oh, damn!" he said.

She made no answer, and for a time he debated some problems with himself.

"No!" he said aloud at last.

"The plain common-sense of the case," he said, "is that we can't possibly be lovers in the ordinary sense. That, I think, is manifest. You know, I've done no work at all this afternoon. I've been smoking cigarettes in the preparation-room and thinking this out. We can't be lovers in the ordinary sense, but we can be great and intimate friends."

"We are," said Ann Veronica.

"You've interested me enormously. . . ."

He paused with a sense of ineptitude. "I want to be your friend," he said. "I said that at the Zoo, and I mean it. Let us be friends--as near and close as friends can be."

Ann Veronica gave him a pallid profile.

"What is the good of pretending?" she said.

"We don't pretend."

"We do. Love is one thing and friendship quite another. Because I'm younger than you. . . . I've got imagination. . . . I know what I am talking about. Mr. Capes, do you think . . . do you think I don't know the meaning of love?"

Part 4

Capes made no answer for a time.

"My mind is full of confused stuff," he said at length. "I've been thinking--all the afternoon. Oh, and weeks and months of thought and feeling there are bottled up too. . . . I feel a mixture of beast and uncle. I feel like a fraudulent trustee. Every rule is against me-- Why did I let you begin this? I might have told--"

"I don't see that you could help--"

"I might have helped--"

"You couldn't."

"I ought to have--all the same.

"I wonder," he said, and went off at a tangent. "You know about my scandalous past?"

"Very little. It doesn't seem to matter. Does it?"

"I think it does. Profoundly."

"How?"

"It prevents our marrying. It forbids--all sorts of things."

"It can't prevent our loving."

"I'm afraid it can't. But, by Jove! it's going to make our loving a fiercely abstract thing."

"You are separated from your wife?"

"Yes, but do you know how?"

"Not exactly."

"Why on earth--? A man ought to be labelled. You see, I'm separated from my wife. But she doesn't and won't divorce me. You don't understand the fix I am in. And you don't know what led to our separation. And, in fact, all round the problem you don't know and I don't see how I could possibly have told you before. I wanted to, that day in the Zoo. But I trusted to that ring of yours."

"Poor old ring!" said Ann Veronica.

"I ought never have gone to the Zoo, I suppose. I asked you to go. But a man is a mixed creature. . . . I wanted the time with you. I wanted it badly."

"Tell me about yourself," said Ann Veronica.

"To begin with, I was--I was in the divorce court. I was--I was a co-respondent. You understand that term?"

Ann Veronica smiled faintly. "A modern girl does understand these terms. She reads novels--and history --and all sorts of things. Did you really doubt if I knew?"

"No. But I don't suppose you can understand."

"I don't see why I shouldn't."

"To know things by name is one thing; to know them by seeing them and feeling them and being them quite another. That is where life takes advantage of youth. You don't understand."

"Perhaps I don't."

"You don't. That's the difficulty. If I told you the facts, I expect, since you are in love with me, you'd explain the whole business as being very fine and honorable for me--the Higher Morality, or something of that sort. . . . It wasn't."

"I don't deal very much," said Ann Veronica, "in the Higher Morality, or the Higher Truth, or any of those things."

"Perhaps you don't. But a human being who is young and clean, as you are, is apt to ennoble--or explain away."

"I've had a biological training. I'm a hard young woman."

"Nice clean hardness, anyhow. I think you are hard. There's something--something ADULT about you. I'm talking to you now as though you had all the wisdom and charity in the world. I'm going to tell you things plainly. Plainly. It's best. And then you can go home and think things over before we talk again. I want you to be clear what you're really and truly up to, anyhow."

"I don't mind knowing," said Ann Veronica.

"It's precious unromantic."

"Well, tell me."

"I married pretty young," said Capes. "I've got--I have to tell you this to make myself clear--a streak of ardent animal in my

composition. I married--I married a woman whom I still think one of the most beautiful persons in the world. She is a year or so older than I am, and she is, well, of a very serene and proud and dignified temperament. If you met her you would, I am certain, think her as fine as I do. She has never done a really ignoble thing that I know of--never. I met her when we were both very young, as young as you are. I loved her and made love to her, and I don't think she quite loved me back in the same way."

He paused for a time. Ann Veronica said nothing.

"These are the sort of things that aren't supposed to happen. They leave them out of novels--these incompatibilities. Young people ignore them until they find themselves up against them. My wife doesn't understand, doesn't understand now. She despises me, I suppose. . . . We married, and for a time we were happy. She was fine and tender. I worshipped her and subdued myself."

He left off abruptly. "Do you understand what I am talking about? It's no good if you don't."

"I think so," said Ann Veronica, and colored. "In fact, yes, I do."

"Do you think of these things--these matters--as belonging to our Higher Nature or our Lower?"

"I don't deal in Higher Things, I tell you," said Ann Veronica, "or Lower, for the matter of that. I don't classify." She hesitated. "Flesh and flowers are all alike to me."

"That's the comfort of you. Well, after a time there came a fever in my blood. Don't think it was anything better than fever--or a bit beautiful. It wasn't. Quite soon, after we were married--it was just within a year--I formed a friendship with

the wife of a friend, a woman eight years older than myself. . . . It wasn't anything splendid, you know. It was just a shabby, stupid, furtive business that began between us. Like stealing. We dressed it in a little music. . . . I want you to understand clearly that I was indebted to the man in many small ways. I was mean to him. . . . It was the gratification of an immense necessity. We were two people with a craving. We felt like thieves. We WERE thieves. . . . We LIKED each other well enough. Well, my friend found us out, and would give no quarter. He divorced her. How do you like the story?"

"Go on," said Ann Veronica, a little hoarsely, "tell me all of it."

"My wife was astounded--wounded beyond measure. She thought me--filthy. All her pride raged at me. One particularly humiliating thing came out--humiliating for me. There was a second co-respondent. I hadn't heard of him before the trial. I don't know why that should be so acutely humiliating. There's no logic in these things. It was."

"Poor you!" said Ann Veronica.

"My wife refused absolutely to have anything more to do with me. She could hardly speak to me; she insisted relentlessly upon a separation. She had money of her own--much more than I have--and there was no need to squabble about that. She has given herself up to social work."

"Well--"

"That's all. Practically all. And yet-- Wait a little, you'd better have every bit of it. One doesn't go about with these passions allayed simply because they have made wreckage and a scandal. There one is! The same stuff still! One has a craving

in one's blood, a craving roused, cut off from its redeeming and guiding emotional side. A man has more freedom to do evil than a woman. Irregularly, in a quite inglorious and unromantic way, you know, I am a vicious man. That's --that's my private life. Until the last few months. It isn't what I have been but what I am. I haven't taken much account of it until now. My honor has been in my scientific work and public discussion and the things I write. Lots of us are like that. But, you see, I'm smirched. For the sort of love-making you think about. I've muddled all this business. I've had my time and lost my chances. I'm damaged goods. And you're as clean as fire. You come with those clear eyes of yours, as valiant as an angel. . . ."

He stopped abruptly.

"Well?" she said.

"That's all."

"It's so strange to think of you--troubled by such things. I didn't think-- I don't know what I thought. Suddenly all this makes you human. Makes you real."

"But don't you see how I must stand to you? Don't you see how it bars us from being lovers-- You can't --at first. You must think it over. It's all outside the world of your experience."

"I don't think it makes a rap of difference, except for one thing. I love you more. I've wanted you--always. I didn't dream, not even in my wildest dreaming, that--you might have any need of me."

He made a little noise in his throat as if something had cried out within him, and for a time they were both too full for speech.

They were going up the slope into Waterloo Station.

"You go home and think of all this," he said, "and talk about it to-morrow. Don't, don't say anything now, not anything. As for loving you, I do. I do--with all my heart. It's no good hiding it any more. I could never have talked to you like this, forgetting everything that parts us, forgetting even your age, if I did not love you utterly. If I were a clean, free man--We'll have to talk of all these things. Thank goodness there's plenty of opportunity! And we two can talk. Anyhow, now you've begun it, there's nothing to keep us in all this from being the best friends in the world. And talking of every conceivable thing. Is there?"

"Nothing," said Ann Veronica, with a radiant face.

"Before this there was a sort of restraint--a make-believe. It's gone."

"It's gone."

"Friendship and love being separate things. And that confounded engagement!"

"Gone!"

They came upon a platform, and stood before her compartment.

He took her hand and looked into her eyes and spoke, divided against himself, in a voice that was forced and insincere.

"I shall be very glad to have you for a friend," he said, "loving friend. I had never dreamed of such a friend as you."

She smiled, sure of herself beyond any pretending, into his troubled eyes. Hadn't they settled that already?

"I want you as a friend," he persisted, almost as if he disputed something.

Part 5

The next morning she waited in the laboratory at the lunch-hour in the reasonable certainty that he would come to her.

"Well, you have thought it over?" he said, sitting down beside her.

"I've been thinking of you all night," she answered.

"Well?"

"I don't care a rap for all these things."

He said nothing for a space.

"I don't see there's any getting away from the fact that you and I love each other," he said, slowly. "So far you've got me and I you. . . . You've got me. I'm like a creature just wakened up. My eyes are open to you. I keep on thinking of you. I keep on thinking of little details and aspects of your voice, your eyes, the way you walk, the way your hair goes back from the side of your forehead. I believe I have always been in love with you. Always. Before ever I knew you."

She sat motionless, with her hand tightening over the edge of the table, and he, too, said no more. She began to tremble violently.

He stood up abruptly and went to the window.

"We have," he said, "to be the utmost friends."

She stood up and held her arms toward him. "I want you to kiss me," she said.

He gripped the window-sill behind him.

"If I do," he said. . . . "No! I want to do without that. I want to do without that for a time. I want to give you time to think. I am a man--of a sort of experience. You are a girl with very little. Just sit down on that stool again and let's talk of this in cold blood. People of your sort-- I don't want the instincts to--to rush our situation. Are you sure what it is you want of me?"

"I want you. I want you to be my lover. I want to give myself to you. I want to be whatever I can to you." She paused for a moment. "Is that plain?" she asked.

"If I didn't love you better than myself," said Capes, "I wouldn't fence like this with you.

"I am convinced you haven't thought this out," he went on. "You do not know what such a relation means. We are in love. Our heads swim with the thought of being together. But what can we do? Here am I, fixed to respectability and this laboratory; you're living at home. It means . . . just furtive meetings."

"I don't care how we meet," she said.

"It will spoil your life."

"It will make it. I want you. I am clear I want you. You are different from all the world for me. You can think all round me. You are the one person I can understand and feel--feel right with. I don't idealize you. Don't imagine that. It isn't because you're good, but because I may be rotten bad; and there's something--something living and understanding in you. Something that is born anew each time we meet, and pines when we are separated. You see, I'm selfish. I'm rather scornful. I think too much about myself. You're the only person I've really given good, straight, unselfish thought to. I'm making a mess of my life--unless you come in and take it. I am. In you--if you can love me--there is salvation. Salvation. I know what I am doing better than you do. Think--think of that engagement!"

Their talk had come to eloquent silences that contradicted all he had to say.

She stood up before him, smiling faintly.

"I think we've exhausted this discussion," she said.

"I think we have," he answered, gravely, and took her in his arms, and smoothed her hair from her forehead, and very tenderly kissed her lips.

Part 6

They spent the next Sunday in Richmond Park, and mingled the happy sensation of being together uninterrupted through the long sunshine of a summer's day with the ample discussion of their position. "This has all the clean freshness of spring and youth," said Capes; "it is love with the down on; it is like the

glitter of dew in the sunlight to be lovers such as we are, with no more than one warm kiss between us. I love everything to-day, and all of you, but I love this, this--this innocence upon us most of all.

"You can't imagine," he said, "what a beastly thing a furtive love affair can be.

"This isn't furtive," said Ann Veronica.

"Not a bit of it. And we won't make it so. . . . We mustn't make it so."

They loitered under trees, they sat on mossy banks they gossiped on friendly benches, they came back to lunch at the "Star and Garter," and talked their afternoon away in the garden that looks out upon the crescent of the river. They had a universe to talk about--two universes.

"What are we going to do?" said Capes, with his eyes on the broad distances beyond the ribbon of the river.

"I will do whatever you want," said Ann Veronica.

"My first love was all blundering," said Capes.

He thought for a moment, and went on: "Love is something that has to be taken care of. One has to be so careful. . . . It's a beautiful plant, but a tender one. . . . I didn't know. I've a dread of love dropping its petals, becoming mean and ugly. How can I tell you all I feel? I love you beyond measure. And I'm afraid. . . . I'm anxious, joyfully anxious, like a man when he has found a treasure."

"YOU know," said Ann Veronica. "I just came to you and put

myself in your hands."

"That's why, in a way, I'm prudish. I've--dreads. I don't want to tear at you with hot, rough hands."

"As you will, dear lover. But for me it doesn't matter. Nothing is wrong that you do. Nothing. I am quite clear about this. I know exactly what I am doing. I give myself to you."

"God send you may never repent it!" cried Capes.

She put her hand in his to be squeezed.

"You see," he said, "it is doubtful if we can ever marry. Very doubtful. I have been thinking-- I will go to my wife again. I will do my utmost. But for a long time, anyhow, we lovers have to be as if we were no more than friends."

He paused. She answered slowly. "That is as you will," she said.

"Why should it matter?" he said.

And then, as she answered nothing, "Seeing that we are lovers."

Part 7

It was rather less than a week after that walk that Capes came and sat down beside Ann Veronica for their customary talk in the lunch hour. He took a handful of almonds and raisins that she held out to him--for both these young people had given up the practice of going out for luncheon--and kept her hand for a

moment to kiss her finger-tips. He did not speak for a moment.

"Well?" she said.

"I say!" he said, without any movement. "Let's go."

"Go!" She did not understand him at first, and then her heart began to beat very rapidly.

"Stop this--this humbugging," he explained. "It's like the Picture and the Bust. I can't stand it. Let's go. Go off and live together--until we can marry. Dare you?"

"Do you mean NOW?"

"At the end of the session. It's the only clean way for us. Are you prepared to do it?"

Her hands clenched. "Yes," she said, very faintly. And then: "Of course! Always. It is what I have wanted, what I have meant all along."

She stared before her, trying to keep back a rush of tears.

Capes kept obstinately stiff, and spoke between his teeth.

"There's endless reasons, no doubt, why we shouldn't," he said. "Endless. It's wrong in the eyes of most people. For many of them it will smirch us forever. . . . You DO understand?"

"Who cares for most people?" she said, not looking at him.

"I do. It means social isolation--struggle."

"If you dare--I dare," said Ann Veronica. "I was never so clear

in all my life as I have been in this business." She lifted steadfast eyes to him. "Dare!" she said. The tears were welling over now, but her voice was steady. "You're not a man for me--not one of a sex, I mean. You're just a particular being with nothing else in the world to class with you. You are just necessary to life for me. I've never met any one like you. To have you is all important. Nothing else weighs against it. Morals only begin when that is settled. I sha'n't care a rap if we can never marry. I'm not a bit afraid of anything--scandal, difficulty, struggle. . . . I rather want them. I do want them."

"You'll get them," he said. "This means a plunge."

"Are you afraid?"

"Only for you! Most of my income will vanish. Even unbelieving biological demonstrators must respect decorum; and besides, you see--you were a student. We shall have--hardly any money."

"I don't care."

"Hardship and danger."

"With you!"

"And as for your people?"

"They don't count. That is the dreadful truth. This--all this swamps them. They don't count, and I don't care."

Capes suddenly abandoned his attitude of meditative restraint. "By Jove!" he broke out, "one tries to take a serious, sober view. I don't quite know why. But this is a great lark, Ann Veronica! This turns life into a glorious adventure!"

"Ah!" she cried in triumph.

"I shall have to give up biology, anyhow. I've always had a sneaking desire for the writing-trade. That is what I must do. I can."

"Of course you can."

"And biology was beginning to bore me a bit. One research is very like another. . . . Latterly I've been doing things. . . . Creative work appeals to me wonderfully. Things seem to come rather easily. . . . But that, and that sort of thing, is just a day-dream. For a time I must do journalism and work hard. . . . What isn't a day-dream is this: that you and I are going to put an end to flummery--and go!"

"Go!" said Ann Veronica, clenching her hands.

"For better or worse."

"For richer or poorer."

She could not go on, for she was laughing and crying at the same time. "We were bound to do this when you kissed me," she sobbed through her tears. "We have been all this time-- Only your queer code of honor-- Honor! Once you begin with love you have to see it through."

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH

THE LAST DAYS AT HOME

Part 1

They decided to go to Switzerland at the session's end. "We'll clean up everything tidy," said Capes. . . .

For her pride's sake, and to save herself from long day-dreams and an unappeasable longing for her lover, Ann Veronica worked hard at her biology during those closing weeks. She was, as Capes had said, a hard young woman. She was keenly resolved to do well in the school examination, and not to be drowned in the seas of emotion that threatened to submerge her intellectual being.

Nevertheless, she could not prevent a rising excitement as the dawn of the new life drew near to her--a thrilling of the nerves, a secret and delicious exaltation above the common circumstances of existence. Sometimes her straying mind would become astonishingly active--embroidering bright and decorative things that she could say to Capes; sometimes it passed into a state of passive acquiescence, into a radiant, formless, golden joy. She was aware of people--her aunt, her father, her fellow-students, friends, and neighbors--moving about outside this glowing secret, very much as an actor is aware of the dim audience beyond the barrier of the footlights. They might applaud, or object, or interfere, but the drama was her very own. She was going through with that, anyhow.

The feeling of last days grew stronger with her as their number diminished. She went about the familiar home with a clearer and clearer sense of inevitable conclusions. She became exceptionally considerate and affectionate with her father and aunt, and more and more concerned about the coming catastrophe that she was about to precipitate upon them. Her aunt had a once exasperating

habit of interrupting her work with demands for small household services, but now Ann Veronica rendered them with a queer readiness of anticipatory propitiation. She was greatly exercised by the problem of confiding in the Widgetts; they were dears, and she talked away two evenings with Constance without broaching the topic; she made some vague intimations in letters to Miss Miniver that Miss Miniver failed to mark. But she did not bother her head very much about her relations with these sympathizers.

And at length her penultimate day in Morningside Park dawned for her. She got up early, and walked about the garden in the dewy June sunshine and revived her childhood. She was saying good-bye to childhood and home, and her making; she was going out into the great, multitudinous world; this time there would be no returning. She was at the end of girlhood and on the eve of a woman's crowning experience. She visited the corner that had been her own little garden--her forget-me-nots and candytuft had long since been elbowed into insignificance by weeds; she visited the raspberry-canecan that had sheltered that first love affair with the little boy in velvet, and the greenhouse where she had been wont to read her secret letters. Here was the place behind the shed where she had used to hide from Roddy's persecutions, and here the border of herbaceous perennials under whose stems was fairyland. The back of the house had been the Alps for climbing, and the shrubs in front of it a Terai. The knots and broken pale that made the garden-fence scalable, and gave access to the fields behind, were still to be traced. And here against a wall were the plum-trees. In spite of God and wasps and her father, she had stolen plums; and once because of discovered misdeeds, and once because she had realized that her mother was dead, she had lain on her face in the unmown grass, beneath the elm-trees that came beyond the vegetables, and poured out her soul in weeping.

Remote little Ann Veronica! She would never know the heart of

that child again! That child had loved fairy princes with velvet suits and golden locks, and she was in love with a real man named Capes, with little gleams of gold on his cheek and a pleasant voice and firm and shapely hands. She was going to him soon and certainly, going to his strong, embracing arms. She was going through a new world with him side by side. She had been so busy with life that, for a vast gulf of time, as it seemed, she had given no thought to those ancient, imagined things of her childhood. Now, abruptly, they were real again, though very distant, and she had come to say farewell to them across one sundering year.

She was unusually helpful at breakfast, and unselfish about the eggs: and then she went off to catch the train before her father's. She did this to please him. He hated travelling second-class with her--indeed, he never did--but he also disliked travelling in the same train when his daughter was in an inferior class, because of the look of the thing. So he liked to go by a different train. And in the Avenue she had an encounter with Ramage.

It was an odd little encounter, that left vague and dubitable impressions in her mind. She was aware of him--a silk-hatted, shiny-black figure on the opposite side of the Avenue; and then, abruptly and startlingly, he crossed the road and saluted and spoke to her.

"I MUST speak to you," he said. "I can't keep away from you."

She made some inane response. She was struck by a change in his appearance. His eyes looked a little bloodshot to her; his face had lost something of its ruddy freshness.

He began a jerky, broken conversation that lasted until they reached the station, and left her puzzled at its drift and

meaning. She quickened her pace, and so did he, talking at her slightly averted ear. She made lumpish and inadequate interruptions rather than replies. At times he seemed to be claiming pity from her; at times he was threatening her with her check and exposure; at times he was boasting of his inflexible will, and how, in the end, he always got what he wanted. He said that his life was boring and stupid without her. Something or other--she did not catch what--he was damned if he could stand. He was evidently nervous, and very anxious to be impressive; his projecting eyes sought to dominate. The crowning aspect of the incident, for her mind, was the discovery that he and her indiscretion with him no longer mattered very much. Its importance had vanished with her abandonment of compromise. Even her debt to him was a triviality now.

And of course! She had a brilliant idea. It surprised her she hadn't thought of it before! She tried to explain that she was going to pay him forty pounds without fail next week. She said as much to him. She repeated this breathlessly.

"I was glad you did not send it back again," he said.

He touched a long-standing sore, and Ann Veronica found herself vainly trying to explain--the inexplicable. "It's because I mean to send it back altogether," she said.

He ignored her protests in order to pursue some impressive line of his own.

"Here we are, living in the same suburb," he began. "We have to be--modern."

Her heart leaped within her as she caught that phrase. That knot also would be cut. Modern, indeed! She was going to be as primordial as chipped flint.

Part 2

In the late afternoon, as Ann Veronica was gathering flowers for the dinner-table, her father came strolling across the lawn toward her with an affectation of great deliberation.

"I want to speak to you about a little thing, Vee," said Mr. Stanley.

Ann Veronica's tense nerves started, and she stood still with her eyes upon him, wondering what it might be that impended.

"You were talking to that fellow Ramage to-day--in the Avenue. Walking to the station with him."

So that was it!

"He came and talked to me."

"Ye--e--es. "Mr. Stanley considered. "Well, I don't want you to talk to him," he said, very firmly.

Ann Veronica paused before she answered. "Don't you think I ought to?" she asked, very submissively.

"No." Mr. Stanley coughed and faced toward the house. "He is not-- I don't like him. I think it inadvisable-- I don't want an intimacy to spring up between you and a man of that type."

Ann Veronica reflected. "I HAVE--had one or two talks with him, daddy."

"Don't let there be any more. I-- In fact, I dislike him extremely."

"Suppose he comes and talks to me?"

"A girl can always keep a man at a distance if she cares to do it. She-- She can snub him."

Ann Veronica picked a cornflower.

"I wouldn't make this objection," Mr. Stanley went on, "but there are things--there are stories about Ramage. He's--He lives in a world of possibilities outside your imagination. His treatment of his wife is most unsatisfactory. Most unsatisfactory. A bad man, in fact. A dissipated, loose-living man."

"I'll try not to see him again," said Ann Veronica. "I didn't know you objected to him, daddy."

"Strongly," said Mr. Stanley, "very strongly."

The conversation hung. Ann Veronica wondered what her father would do if she were to tell him the full story of her relations with Ramage.

"A man like that taints a girl by looking at her, by his mere conversation." He adjusted his glasses on his nose. There was another little thing he had to say. "One has to be so careful of one's friends and acquaintances," he remarked, by way of transition. "They mould one insensibly." His voice assumed an easy detached tone. "I suppose, Vee, you don't see much of those Widgetts now?"

"I go in and talk to Constance sometimes."

"Do you?"

"We were great friends at school."

"No doubt. . . . Still--I don't know whether I quite like--Something ramshackle about those people, Vee. While I am talking about your friends, I feel--I think you ought to know how I look at it." His voice conveyed studied moderation. "I don't mind, of course, your seeing her sometimes, still there are differences--differences in social atmospheres. One gets drawn into things. Before you know where you are you find yourself in a complication. I don't want to influence you unduly--But--They're artistic people, Vee. That's the fact about them. We're different."

"I suppose we are," said Vee, rearranging the flowers in her hand.

"Friendships that are all very well between school-girls don't always go on into later life. It's--it's a social difference."

"I like Constance very much."

"No doubt. Still, one has to be reasonable. As you admitted to me--one has to square one's self with the world. You don't know. With people of that sort all sorts of things may happen. We don't want things to happen."

Ann Veronica made no answer.

A vague desire to justify himself ruffled her father. "I may seem unduly--anxious. I can't forget about your sister. It's that has always made me--SHE, you know, was drawn into a set--didn't discriminate Private theatricals."

Ann Veronica remained anxious to hear more of her sister's story from her father's point of view, but he did not go on. Even so much allusion as this to that family shadow, she felt, was an immense recognition of her ripening years. She glanced at him. He stood a little anxious and fussy, bothered by the responsibility of her, entirely careless of what her life was or was likely to be, ignoring her thoughts and feelings, ignorant of every fact of importance in her life, explaining everything he could not understand in her as nonsense and perversity, concerned only with a terror of bothers and undesirable situations. "We don't want things to happen!" Never had he shown his daughter so clearly that the womenkind he was persuaded he had to protect and control could please him in one way, and in one way only, and that was by doing nothing except the punctual domestic duties and being nothing except restful appearances. He had quite enough to see to and worry about in the City without their doing things. He had no use for Ann Veronica; he had never had a use for her since she had been too old to sit upon his knee. Nothing but the constraint of social usage now linked him to her. And the less "anything" happened the better. The less she lived, in fact, the better. These realizations rushed into Ann Veronica's mind and hardened her heart against him. She spoke slowly. "I may not see the Widgetts for some little time, father," she said. "I don't think I shall."

"Some little tiff?"

"No; but I don't think I shall see them."

Suppose she were to add, "I am going away!"

"I'm glad to hear you say it," said Mr. Stanley, and was so evidently pleased that Ann Veronica's heart smote her.

"I am very glad to hear you say it," he repeated, and refrained from further inquiry. "I think we are growing sensible," he said. "I think you are getting to understand me better."

He hesitated, and walked away from her toward the house. Her eyes followed him. The curve of his shoulders, the very angle of his feet, expressed relief at her apparent obedience. "Thank goodness!" said that retreating aspect, "that's said and over. Vee's all right. There's nothing happened at all!" She didn't mean, he concluded, to give him any more trouble ever, and he was free to begin a fresh chromatic novel--he had just finished the Blue Lagoon, which he thought very beautiful and tender and absolutely irrelevant to Morningside Park--or work in peace at his microtome without bothering about her in the least.

The immense disillusionment that awaited him! The devastating disillusionment! She had a vague desire to run after him, to state her case to him, to wring some understanding from him of what life was to her. She felt a cheat and a sneak to his unsuspecting retreating back.

"But what can one do?" asked Ann Veronica.

Part 3

She dressed carefully for dinner in a black dress that her father liked, and that made her look serious and responsible. Dinner was quite uneventful. Her father read a draft prospectus warily, and her aunt dropped fragments of her projects for managing while the cook had a holiday. After dinner Ann Veronica went into the drawing-room with Miss Stanley, and her father went up to his den for his pipe and pensive petrography. Later in the evening she

heard him whistling, poor man!

She felt very restless and excited. She refused coffee, though she knew that anyhow she was doomed to a sleepless night. She took up one of her father's novels and put it down again, fretted up to her own room for some work, sat on her bed and meditated upon the room that she was now really abandoning forever, and returned at length with a stocking to darn. Her aunt was making herself cuffs out of little slips of insertion under the newly lit lamp.

Ann Veronica sat down in the other arm-chair and darned badly for a minute or so. Then she looked at her aunt, and traced with a curious eye the careful arrangement of her hair, her sharp nose, the little drooping lines of mouth and chin and cheek.

Her thought spoke aloud. "Were you ever in love, aunt?" she asked.

Her aunt glanced up startled, and then sat very still, with hands that had ceased to work. "What makes you ask such a question, Vee?" she said.

"I wondered."

Her aunt answered in a low voice: "I was engaged to him, dear, for seven years, and then he died."

Ann Veronica made a sympathetic little murmur.

"He was in holy orders, and we were to have been married when he got a living. He was a Wiltshire Edmondshaw, a very old family."

She sat very still.

Ann Veronica hesitated with a question that had leaped up in her mind, and that she felt was cruel. "Are you sorry you waited, aunt?" she said.

Her aunt was a long time before she answered. "His stipend forbade it," she said, and seemed to fall into a train of thought. "It would have been rash and unwise," she said at the end of a meditation. "What he had was altogether insufficient."

Ann Veronica looked at the mildly pensive gray eyes and the comfortable, rather refined face with a penetrating curiosity. Presently her aunt sighed deeply and looked at the clock. "Time for my Patience," she said. She got up, put the neat cuffs she had made into her work-basket, and went to the bureau for the little cards in the morocco case. Ann Veronica jumped up to get her the card-table. "I haven't seen the new Patience, dear," she said. "May I sit beside you?"

"It's a very difficult one," said her aunt. "Perhaps you will help me shuffle?"

Ann Veronica did, and also assisted nimbly with the arrangements of the rows of eight with which the struggle began. Then she sat watching the play, sometimes offering a helpful suggestion, sometimes letting her attention wander to the smoothly shining arms she had folded across her knees just below the edge of the table. She was feeling extraordinarily well that night, so that the sense of her body was a deep delight, a realization of a gentle warmth and strength and elastic firmness. Then she glanced at the cards again, over which her aunt's many-ringed hand played, and then at the rather weak, rather plump face that surveyed its operations.

It came to Ann Veronica that life was wonderful beyond measure. It seemed incredible that she and her aunt were, indeed,

creatures of the same blood, only by a birth or so different beings, and part of that same broad interlacing stream of human life that has invented the fauns and nymphs, Astarte, Aphrodite, Freya, and all the twining beauty of the gods. The love-songs of all the ages were singing in her blood, the scent of night stock from the garden filled the air, and the moths that beat upon the closed frames of the window next the lamp set her mind dreaming of kisses in the dusk. Yet her aunt, with a ringed hand flitting to her lips and a puzzled, worried look in her eyes, deaf to all this riot of warmth and flitting desire, was playing Patience--playing Patience, as if Dionysius and her curate had died together. A faint buzz above the ceiling witnessed that petrography, too, was active. Gray and tranquil world! Amazing, passionless world! A world in which days without meaning, days in which "we don't want things to happen" followed days without meaning--until the last thing happened, the ultimate, unavoidable, coarse, "disagreeable." It was her last evening in that wrapped life against which she had rebelled. Warm reality was now so near her she could hear it beating in her ears. Away in London even now Capes was packing and preparing; Capes, the magic man whose touch turned one to trembling fire. What was he doing? What was he thinking? It was less than a day now, less than twenty hours. Seventeen hours, sixteen hours. She glanced at the soft-ticking clock with the exposed brass pendulum upon the white marble mantel, and made a rapid calculation. To be exact, it was just sixteen hours and twenty minutes. The slow stars circled on to the moment of their meeting. The softly glittering summer stars! She saw them shining over mountains of snow, over valleys of haze and warm darkness. . . . There would be no moon.

"I believe after all it's coming out!" said Miss Stanley. "The aces made it easy."

Ann Veronica started from her reverie, sat up in her chair,

became attentive. "Look, dear," she said presently, "you can put the ten on the Jack."

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH

IN THE MOUNTAINS

Part 1

Next day Ann Veronica and Capes felt like newborn things. It seemed to them they could never have been really alive before, but only dimly anticipating existence. They sat face to face beneath an experienced-looking rucksack and a brand new portmanteau and a leather handbag, in the afternoon-boat train that goes from Charing Cross to Folkestone for Boulogne. They tried to read illustrated papers in an unconcerned manner and with forced attention, lest they should catch the leaping exultation in each other's eyes. And they admired Kent sedulously from the windows.

They crossed the Channel in sunshine and a breeze that just ruffled the sea to glittering scales of silver. Some of the people who watched them standing side by side thought they must be newly wedded because of their happy faces, and others that they were an old-established couple because of their easy confidence in each other.

At Boulogne they took train to Basle; next morning they breakfasted together in the buffet of that station, and thence they caught the Interlaken express, and so went by way of Spies to Frutigen. There was no railway beyond Frutigen in those

days; they sent their baggage by post to Kandersteg, and walked along the mule path to the left of the stream to that queer hollow among the precipices, Blau See, where the petrifying branches of trees lie in the blue deeps of an icy lake, and pine-trees clamber among gigantic boulders. A little inn flying a Swiss flag nestles under a great rock, and there they put aside their knapsacks and lunched and rested in the mid-day shadow of the gorge and the scent of resin. And later they paddled in a boat above the mysterious deeps of the See, and peered down into the green-blues and the blue-greens together. By that time it seemed to them they had lived together twenty years.

Except for one memorable school excursion to Paris, Ann Veronica had never yet been outside England. So that it seemed to her the whole world had changed--the very light of it had changed. Instead of English villas and cottages there were chalets and Italian-built houses shining white; there were lakes of emerald and sapphire and clustering castles, and such sweeps of hill and mountain, such shining uplands of snow, as she had never seen before. Everything was fresh and bright, from the kindly manners of the Frutigen cobbler, who hammered mountain nails into her boots, to the unfamiliar wild flowers that spangled the wayside. And Capes had changed into the easiest and jolliest companion in the world. The mere fact that he was there in the train alongside her, helping her, sitting opposite to her in the dining-car, presently sleeping on a seat within a yard of her, made her heart sing until she was afraid their fellow passengers would hear it. It was too good to be true. She would not sleep for fear of losing a moment of that sense of his proximity. To walk beside him, dressed akin to him, rucksacked and companionable, was bliss in itself; each step she took was like stepping once more across the threshold of heaven.

One trouble, however, shot its slanting bolts athwart the shining warmth of that opening day and marred its perfection, and that

was the thought of her father.

She had treated him badly; she had hurt him and her aunt; she had done wrong by their standards, and she would never persuade them that she had done right. She thought of her father in the garden, and of her aunt with her Patience, as she had seen them--how many ages was it ago? Just one day intervened. She felt as if she had struck them unawares. The thought of them distressed her without subtracting at all from the oceans of happiness in which she swam. But she wished she could put the thing she had done in some way to them so that it would not hurt them so much as the truth would certainly do. The thought of their faces, and particularly of her aunt's, as it would meet the fact--disconcerted, unfriendly, condemning, pained--occurred to her again and again.

"Oh! I wish," she said, "that people thought alike about these things."

Capes watched the limpid water dripping from his oar. "I wish they did," he said, "but they don't."

"I feel-- All this is the rightest of all conceivable things. I want to tell every one. I want to boast myself."

"I know."

"I told them a lie. I told them lies. I wrote three letters yesterday and tore them up. It was so hopeless to put it to them. At last--I told a story."

"You didn't tell them our position?"

"I implied we had married."

"They'll find out. They'll know."

"Not yet."

"Sooner or later."

"Possibly--bit by bit. . . . But it was hopelessly hard to put. I said I knew he disliked and distrusted you and your work--that you shared all Russell's opinions: he hates Russell beyond measure--and that we couldn't possibly face a conventional marriage. What else could one say? I left him to suppose--a registry perhaps. . . ."

Capes let his oar smack on the water.

"Do you mind very much?"

He shook his head.

"But it makes me feel inhuman," he added.

"And me. . . ."

"It's the perpetual trouble," he said, "of parent and child. They can't help seeing things in the way they do. Nor can we. WE don't think they're right, but they don't think we are. A deadlock. In a very definite sense we are in the wrong--hopelessly in the wrong. But--It's just this: who was to be hurt?"

"I wish no one had to be hurt," said Ann Veronica. "When one is happy--I don't like to think of them. Last time I left home I felt as hard as nails. But this is all different. It is different."

"There's a sort of instinct of rebellion," said Capes. "It isn't anything to do with our times particularly. People think it is, but they are wrong. It's to do with adolescence. Long before religion and Society heard of Doubt, girls were all for midnight coaches and Gretna Green. It's a sort of home-leaving instinct."

He followed up a line of thought.

"There's another instinct, too," he went on, "in a state of suppression, unless I'm very much mistaken; a child-expelling instinct. . . . I wonder. . . . There's no family uniting instinct, anyhow; it's habit and sentiment and material convenience hold families together after adolescence. There's always friction, conflict, unwilling concessions. Always! I don't believe there is any strong natural affection at all between parents and growing-up children. There wasn't, I know, between myself and my father. I didn't allow myself to see things as they were in those days; now I do. I bored him. I hated him. I suppose that shocks one's ideas. . . . It's true. . . . There are sentimental and traditional deferences and reverences, I know, between father and son; but that's just exactly what prevents the development of an easy friendship. Father-worshipping sons are abnormal--and they're no good. No good at all. One's got to be a better man than one's father, or what is the good of successive generations? Life is rebellion, or nothing."

He rowed a stroke and watched the swirl of water from his oar broaden and die away. At last he took up his thoughts again: "I wonder if, some day, one won't need to rebel against customs and laws? If this discord will have gone? Some day, perhaps--who knows?--the old won't coddle and hamper the young, and the young won't need to fly in the faces of the old. They'll face facts as facts, and understand. Oh, to face facts! Gods! what a world it might be if people faced facts! Understanding! Understanding!"

There is no other salvation. Some day older people, perhaps, will trouble to understand younger people, and there won't be these fierce disruptions; there won't be barriers one must defy or perish. . . . That's really our choice now, defy--or futility. . . . The world, perhaps, will be educated out of its idea of fixed standards. . . . I wonder, Ann Veronica, if, when our time comes, we shall be any wiser?"

Ann Veronica watched a water-beetle fussing across the green depths. "One can't tell. I'm a female thing at bottom. I like high tone for a flourish and stars and ideas; but I want my things."

Part 2

Capes thought.

"It's odd--I have no doubt in my mind that what we are doing is wrong," he said. "And yet I do it without compunction."

"I never felt so absolutely right," said Ann Veronica.

"You ARE a female thing at bottom," he admitted. "I'm not nearly so sure as you. As for me, I look twice at it. . . . Life is two things, that's how I see it; two things mixed and muddled up together. Life is morality--life is adventure. Squire and master. Adventure rules, and morality--looks up the trains in the Bradshaw. Morality tells you what is right, and adventure moves you. If morality means anything it means keeping bounds, respecting implications, respecting implicit bounds. If individuality means anything it means breaking bounds--adventure.

Will you be moral and your species, or immoral and yourself? We've decided to be immoral. We needn't try and give ourselves airs. We've deserted the posts in which we found ourselves, cut our duties, exposed ourselves to risks that may destroy any sort of social usefulness in us. . . . I don't know. One keeps rules in order to be one's self. One studies Nature in order not to be blindly ruled by her. There's no sense in morality, I suppose, unless you are fundamentally immoral."

She watched his face as he traced his way through these speculative thickets.

"Look at our affair," he went on, looking up at her. "No power on earth will persuade me we're not two rather disreputable persons. You desert your home; I throw up useful teaching, risk every hope in your career. Here we are absconding, pretending to be what we are not; shady, to say the least of it. It's not a bit of good pretending there's any Higher Truth or wonderful principle in this business. There isn't. We never started out in any high-browed manner to scandalize and Shelleyfy. When first you left your home you had no idea that I was the hidden impulse. I wasn't. You came out like an ant for your nuptial flight. It was just a chance that we in particular hit against each other--nothing predestined about it. We just hit against each other, and here we are flying off at a tangent, a little surprised at what we are doing, all our principles abandoned, and tremendously and quite unreasonably proud of ourselves. Out of all this we have struck a sort of harmony. . . . And it's gorgeous!"

"Glorious!" said Ann Veronica.

"Would YOU like us--if some one told you the bare outline of our story?--and what we are doing?"

"I shouldn't mind," said Ann Veronica.

"But if some one else asked your advice? If some one else said, 'Here is my teacher, a jaded married man on the verge of middle age, and he and I have a violent passion for one another. We propose to disregard all our ties, all our obligations, all the established prohibitions of society, and begin life together afresh.' What would you tell her?"

"If she asked advice, I should say she wasn't fit to do anything of the sort. I should say that having a doubt was enough to condemn it."

"But waive that point."

"It would be different all the same. It wouldn't be you."

"It wouldn't be you either. I suppose that's the gist of the whole thing." He stared at a little eddy. "The rule's all right, so long as there isn't a case. Rules are for established things, like the pieces and positions of a game. Men and women are not established things; they're experiments, all of them. Every human being is a new thing, exists to do new things. Find the thing you want to do most intensely, make sure that's it, and do it with all your might. If you live, well and good; if you die, well and good. Your purpose is done. . . . Well, this is OUR thing."

He woke the glassy water to swirling activity again, and made the deep-blue shapes below writhe and shiver.

"This is MY thing," said Ann Veronica, softly, with thoughtful eyes upon him.

Then she looked up the sweep of pine-trees to the towering

sunlit cliffs and the high heaven above and then back to his face. She drew in a deep breath of the sweet mountain air. Her eyes were soft and grave, and there was the faintest of smiles upon her resolute lips.

Part 3

Later they loitered along a winding path above the inn, and made love to one another. Their journey had made them indolent, the afternoon was warm, and it seemed impossible to breathe a sweeter air. The flowers and turf, a wild strawberry, a rare butterfly, and suchlike little intimate things had become more interesting than mountains. Their flitting hands were always touching. Deep silences came between them. . . .

"I had thought to go on to Kandersteg," said Capes, "but this is a pleasant place. There is not a soul in the inn but ourselves. Let us stay the night here. Then we can loiter and gossip to our heart's content."

"Agreed," said Ann Veronica.

"After all, it's our honeymoon."

"All we shall get," said Ann Veronica.

"This place is very beautiful."

"Any place would be beautiful," said Ann Veronica, in a low voice.

For a time they walked in silence.

"I wonder," she began, presently, "why I love you --and love you so much? . . . I know now what it is to be an abandoned female. I AM an abandoned female. I'm not ashamed--of the things I'm doing. I want to put myself into your hands. You know--I wish I could roll my little body up small and squeeze it into your hand and grip your fingers upon it. Tight. I want you to hold me and have me SO. . . . Everything. Everything. It's a pure joy of giving--giving to YOU. I have never spoken of these things to any human being. Just dreamed--and ran away even from my dreams. It is as if my lips had been sealed about them. And now I break the seals--for you. Only I wish--I wish to-day I was a thousand times, ten thousand times more beautiful."

Capes lifted her hand and kissed it.

"You are a thousand times more beautiful," he said, "than anything else could be. . . . You are you. You are all the beauty in the world. Beauty doesn't mean, never has meant, anything--anything at all but you. It heralded you, promised you. . . ."

Part 4

They lay side by side in a shallow nest of turf and mosses among boulders and stunted bushes on a high rock, and watched the day sky deepen to evening between the vast precipices overhead and looked over the tree-tops down the widening gorge. A distant suggestion of chalets and a glimpse of the road set them talking for a time of the world they had left behind.

Capes spoke casually of their plans for work. "It's a flabby,

loose-willed world we have to face. It won't even know whether to be scandalized at us or forgiving. It will hold aloof, a little undecided whether to pelt or not--"

"That depends whether we carry ourselves as though we expected pelting," said Ann Veronica.

"We won't."

"No fear!"

"Then, as we succeed, it will begin to sidle back to us. It will do its best to overlook things--"

"If we let it, poor dear."

"That's if we succeed. If we fail," said Capes, "then--"

"We aren't going to fail," said Ann Veronica.

Life seemed a very brave and glorious enterprise to Ann Veronica that day. She was quivering with the sense of Capes at her side and glowing with heroic love; it seemed to her that if they put their hands jointly against the Alps and pushed they would be able to push them aside. She lay and nibbled at a sprig of dwarf rhododendron.

"FAIL!" she said.

Part 5

Presently it occurred to Ann Veronica to ask about the journey he

had planned. He had his sections of the Siegfried map folded in his pocket, and he squatted up with his legs crossed like an Indian idol while she lay prone beside him and followed every movement of his indicatory finger.

"Here," he said, "is this Blau See, and here we rest until to-morrow. I think we rest here until to-morrow?"

There was a brief silence.

"It is a very pleasant place," said Ann Veronica, biting a rhododendron stalk through, and with that faint shadow of a smile returning to her lips. . . .

"And then?" said Ann Veronica.

"Then we go on to this place, the Oeschinensee. It's a lake among precipices, and there is a little inn where we can stay, and sit and eat our dinner at a pleasant table that looks upon the lake. For some days we shall be very idle there among the trees and rocks. There are boats on the lake and shady depths and wildernesses of pine-wood. After a day or so, perhaps, we will go on one or two little excursions and see how good your head is--a mild scramble or so; and then up to a hut on a pass just here, and out upon the Blumlis-alp glacier that spreads out so and so."

She roused herself from some dream at the word. "Glaciers?" she said.

"Under the Wilde Frau--which was named after you."

He bent and kissed her hair and paused, and then forced his attention back to the map. "One day," he resumed, "we will start off early and come down into Kandersteg and up these zigzags and

here and here, and so past this Daubensee to a tiny inn--it won't be busy yet, though; we may get it all to ourselves--on the brim of the steepest zigzag you can imagine, thousands of feet of zigzag; and you will sit and eat lunch with me and look out across the Rhone Valley and over blue distances beyond blue distances to the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa and a long regiment of sunny, snowy mountains. And when we see them we shall at once want to go to them--that's the way with beautiful things--and down we shall go, like flies down a wall, to Leukerbad, and so to Leuk Station, here, and then by train up the Rhone Valley and this little side valley to Stalden; and there, in the cool of the afternoon, we shall start off up a gorge, torrents and cliffs below us and above us, to sleep in a half-way inn, and go on next day to Saas Fee, Saas of the Magic, Saas of the Pagan People. And there, about Saas, are ice and snows again, and sometimes we will loiter among the rocks and trees about Saas or peep into Samuel Butler's chapels, and sometimes we will climb up out of the way of the other people on to the glaciers and snow. And, for one expedition at least, we will go up this desolate valley here to Mattmark, and so on to Monte Moro. There indeed you see Monte Rosa. Almost the best of all."

"Is it very beautiful?"

"When I saw it there it was very beautiful. It was wonderful. It was the crowned queen of mountains in her robes of shining white. It towered up high above the level of the pass, thousands of feet, still, shining, and white, and below, thousands of feet below, was a floor of little woolly clouds. And then presently these clouds began to wear thin and expose steep, deep slopes, going down and down, with grass and pine-trees, down and down, and at last, through a great rent in the clouds, bare roofs, shining like very minute pin-heads, and a road like a fibre of white silk-Macugnana, in Italy. That will be a fine day--it will have to be, when first you set eyes on Italy. . . . That's as

far as we go."

"Can't we go down into Italy?"

"No," he said; "it won't run to that now. We must wave our hands at the blue hills far away there and go back to London and work."

"But Italy--"

"Italy's for a good girl," he said, and laid his hand for a moment on her shoulder. "She must look forward to Italy."

"I say," she reflected, "you ARE rather the master, you know."

The idea struck him as novel. "Of course I'm manager for this expedition," he said, after an interval of self-examination.

She slid her cheek down the tweed sleeve of his coat. "Nice sleeve," she said, and came to his hand and kissed it.

"I say!" he cried. "Look here! Aren't you going a little too far? This--this is degradation--making a fuss with sleeves. You mustn't do things like that."

"Why not?"

"Free woman--and equal."

"I do it--of my own free will," said Ann Veronica, kissing his hand again. "It's nothing to what I WILL do."

"Oh, well!" he said, a little doubtfully, "it's just a phase," and bent down and rested his hand on her shoulder for a moment, with his heart beating and his nerves a-quiver. Then as she lay very still, with her hands clinched and her black hair tumbled

about her face, he came still closer and softly kissed the nape of her neck. . . .

Part 6

Most of the things that he had planned they did. But they climbed more than he had intended because Ann Veronica proved rather a good climber, steady-headed and plucky, rather daring, but quite willing to be cautious at his command.

One of the things that most surprised him in her was her capacity for blind obedience. She loved to be told to do things.

He knew the circle of mountains about Saas Fee fairly well: he had been there twice before, and it was fine to get away from the straggling pedestrians into the high, lonely places, and sit and munch sandwiches and talk together and do things together that were just a little difficult and dangerous. And they could talk, they found; and never once, it seemed, did their meaning and intention hitch. They were enormously pleased with one another; they found each other beyond measure better than they had expected, if only because of the want of substance in mere expectation. Their conversation degenerated again and again into a strain of self-congratulation that would have irked an eavesdropper.

"You're--I don't know," said Ann Veronica. "You're splendid."

"It isn't that you're splendid or I," said Capes. "But we satisfy one another. Heaven alone knows why. So completely! The oddest fitness! What is it made of? Texture of skin and texture of mind? Complexion and voice. I don't think I've got illusions,

nor you. . . . If I had never met anything of you at all but a scrap of your skin binding a book, Ann Veronica, I know I would have kept that somewhere near to me. . . . All your faults are just jolly modelling to make you real and solid."

"The faults are the best part of it," said Ann Veronica; "why, even our little vicious strains run the same way. Even our coarseness."

"Coarse?" said Capes, "We're not coarse."

"But if we were?" said Ann Veronica.

"I can talk to you and you to me without a scrap of effort," said Capes; "that's the essence of it. It's made up of things as small as the diameter of hairs and big as life and death. . . . One always dreamed of this and never believed it. It's the rarest luck, the wildest, most impossible accident. Most people, every one I know else, seem to have mated with foreigners and to talk uneasily in unfamiliar tongues, to be afraid of the knowledge the other one has, of the other one's perpetual misjudgment and misunderstandings.

"Why don't they wait?" he added.

Ann Veronica had one of her flashes of insight.

"One doesn't wait," said Ann Veronica.

She expanded that. "_I_ shouldn't have waited," she said. "I might have muddled for a time. But it's as you say. I've had the rarest luck and fallen on my feet."

"We've both fallen on our feet! We're the rarest of mortals! The real thing! There's not a compromise nor a sham nor a

concession between us. We aren't afraid; we don't bother. We don't consider each other; we needn't. That wrapped life, as you call it--we've burned the confounded rags! Danced out of it! We're stark!"

"Stark!" echoed Ann Veronica.

Part 7

As they came back from that day's climb--it was up the Mittaghorn--they had to cross a shining space of wet, steep rocks between two grass slopes that needed a little care. There were a few loose, broken fragments of rock to reckon with upon the ledges, and one place where hands did as much work as toes. They used the rope--not that a rope was at all necessary, but because Ann Veronica's exalted state of mind made the fact of the rope agreeably symbolical; and, anyhow, it did insure a joint death in the event of some remotely possibly mischance. Capes went first, finding footholds and, where the drops in the strata-edges came like long, awkward steps, placing Ann Veronica's feet. About half-way across this interval, when everything seemed going well, Capes had a shock.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Ann Veronica, with extraordinary passion. "My God!" and ceased to move.

Capes became rigid and adhesive. Nothing ensued. "All right?" he asked.

"I'll have to pay it."

"Eh?"

"I've forgotten something. Oh, cuss it!"

"Eh?"

"He said I would."

"What?"

"That's the devil of it!"

"Devil of what? . . . You DO use vile language!"

"Forget about it like this."

"Forget WHAT?"

"And I said I wouldn't. I said I'd do anything. I said I'd make shirts."

"Shirts?"

"Shirts at one--and--something a dozen. Oh, goodness! Bilking! Ann Veronica, you're a bilker!"

Pause.

"Will you tell me what all this is about?" said Capes.

"It's about forty pounds."

Capes waited patiently.

"G. I'm sorry. . . . But you've got to lend me forty pounds."

"It's some sort of delirium," said Capes. "The rarefied air? I thought you had a better head."

"No! I'll explain lower. It's all right. Let's go on climbing now. It's a thing I've unaccountably overlooked. All right really. It can wait a bit longer. I borrowed forty pounds from Mr. Ramage. Thank goodness you'll understand. That's why I chucked Manning. . . . All right, I'm coming. But all this business has driven it clean out of my head. . . . That's why he was so annoyed, you know."

"Who was annoyed?"

"Mr. Ramage--about the forty pounds." She took a step. "My dear," she added, by way of afterthought, "you DO obliterate things!"

Part 8

They found themselves next day talking love to one another high up on some rocks above a steep bank of snow that overhung a precipice on the eastern side of the Fee glacier. By this time Capes' hair had bleached nearly white, and his skin had become a skin of red copper shot with gold. They were now both in a state of unprecedented physical fitness. And such skirts as Ann Veronica had had when she entered the valley of Saas were safely packed away in the hotel, and she wore a leather belt and loose knickerbockers and puttees--a costume that suited the fine, long lines of her limbs far better than any feminine walking-dress could do. Her complexion had resisted the snow-glare wonderfully; her skin had only deepened its natural warmth a little under the Alpine sun. She had pushed aside her azure

veil, taken off her snow-glasses, and sat smiling under her hand at the shining glories--the lit cornices, the blue shadows, the softly rounded, enormous snow masses, the deep places full of quivering luminosity--of the Taschhorn and Dom. The sky was cloudless, effulgent blue.

Capes sat watching and admiring her, and then he fell praising the day and fortune and their love for each other.

"Here we are," he said, "shining through each other like light through a stained-glass window. With this air in our blood, this sunlight soaking us. . . . Life is so good. Can it ever be so good again?"

Ann Veronica put out a firm hand and squeezed his arm. "It's very good," she said. "It's glorious good!"

"Suppose now--look at this long snow-slope and then that blue deep beyond--do you see that round pool of color in the ice--a thousand feet or more below? Yes? Well, think--we've got to go but ten steps and lie down and put our arms about each other. See? Down we should rush in a foam--in a cloud of snow--to flight and a dream. All the rest of our lives would be together then, Ann Veronica. Every moment. And no ill-chances."

"If you tempt me too much," she said, after a silence, "I shall do it. I need only just jump up and throw myself upon you. I'm a desperate young woman. And then as we went down you'd try to explain. And that would spoil it. . . . You know you don't mean it."

"No, I don't. But I liked to say it."

"Rather! But I wonder why you don't mean it?"

"Because, I suppose, the other thing is better. What other reason could there be? It's more complex, but it's better. THIS, this glissade, would be damned scoundrelism. You know that, and I know that, though we might be put to it to find a reason why. It would be swindling. Drawing the pay of life and then not living. And besides--We're going to live, Ann Veronica! Oh, the things we'll do, the life we'll lead! There'll be trouble in it at times--you and I aren't going to run without friction. But we've got the brains to get over that, and tongues in our heads to talk to each other. We sha'n't hang up on any misunderstanding. Not us. And we're going to fight that old world down there. That old world that had shoved up that silly old hotel, and all the rest of it. . . . If we don't live it will think we are afraid of it. . . . Die, indeed! We're going to do work; we're going to unfold about each other; we're going to have children."

"Girls!" cried Ann Veronica.

"Boys!" said Capes.

"Both!" said Ann Veronica. "Lots of 'em!"

Capes chuckled. "You delicate female!"

"Who cares," said Ann Veronica, "seeing it's you? Warm, soft little wonders! Of course I want them."

Part 9

"All sorts of things we're going to do," said Capes; "all sorts of times we're going to have. Sooner or later we'll certainly do

something to clean those prisons you told me about--limewash the underside of life. You and I. We can love on a snow cornice, we can love over a pail of whitewash. Love anywhere. Anywhere! Moonlight and music--pleasing, you know, but quite unnecessary. We met dissecting dogfish. . . . Do you remember your first day with me? . . . Do you indeed remember? The smell of decay and cheap methylated spirit! . . . My dear! we've had so many moments! I used to go over the times we'd had together, the things we'd said--like a rosary of beads. But now it's beads by the cask--like the hold of a West African trader. It feels like too much gold-dust clutched in one's hand. One doesn't want to lose a grain. And one must--some of it must slip through one's fingers."

"I don't care if it does," said Ann Veronica. "I don't care a rap for remembering. I care for you. This moment couldn't be better until the next moment comes. That's how it takes me. Why should WE hoard? We aren't going out presently, like Japanese lanterns in a gale. It's the poor dears who do, who know they will, know they can't keep it up, who need to clutch at way-side flowers. And put 'em in little books for remembrance. Flattened flowers aren't for the likes of us. Moments, indeed! We like each other fresh and fresh. It isn't illusions--for us. We two just love each other --the real, identical other--all the time."

"The real, identical other," said Capes, and took and bit the tip of her little finger.

"There's no delusions, so far as I know," said Ann Veronica.

"I don't believe there is one. If there is, it's a mere wrapping--there's better underneath. It's only as if I'd begun to know you the day before yesterday or thereabouts. You keep on coming truer, after you have seemed to come altogether true. You. . . . brick!"

Part 10

"To think," he cried, "you are ten years younger than I! . . . There are times when you make me feel a little thing at your feet--a young, silly, protected thing. Do you know, Ann Veronica, it is all a lie about your birth certificate; a forgery--and fooling at that. You are one of the Immortals. Immortal! You were in the beginning, and all the men in the world who have known what love is have worshipped at your feet. You have converted me to--Lester Ward! You are my dear friend, you are a slip of a girl, but there are moments when my head has been on your breast, when your heart has been beating close to my ears, when I have known you for the goddess, when I have wished myself your slave, when I have wished that you could kill me for the joy of being killed by you. You are the High Priestess of Life. . . ."

"Your priestess," whispered Ann Veronica, softly. "A silly little priestess who knew nothing of life at all until she came to you."

Part 11

They sat for a time without speaking a word, in an enormous shining globe of mutual satisfaction.

"Well," said Capes, at length, "we've to go down, Ann Veronica. Life waits for us."

He stood up and waited for her to move.

"Gods!" cried Ann Veronica, and kept him standing. "And to think that it's not a full year ago since I was a black-hearted rebel school-girl, distressed, puzzled, perplexed, not understanding that this great force of love was bursting its way through me! All those nameless discontents--they were no more than love's birth-pangs. I felt--I felt living in a masked world. I felt as though I had bandaged eyes. I felt--wrapped in thick cobwebs. They blinded me. They got in my mouth. And now--Dear! Dear! The dayspring from on high hath visited me. I love. I am loved. I want to shout! I want to sing! I am glad! I am glad to be alive because you are alive! I am glad to be a woman because you are a man! I am glad! I am glad! I am glad! I thank God for life and you. I thank God for His sunlight on your face. I thank God for the beauty you love and the faults you love. I thank God for the very skin that is peeling from your nose, for all things great and small that make us what we are. This is grace I am saying! Oh! my dear! all the joy and weeping of life are mixed in me now and all the gratitude. Never a new-born dragon-fly that spread its wings in the morning has felt as glad as I!"

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH

IN PERSPECTIVE

Part 1

About four years and a quarter later--to be exact, it was four years and four months--Mr. and Mrs. Capes stood side by side upon

an old Persian carpet that did duty as a hearthrug in the dining-room of their flat and surveyed a shining dinner-table set for four people, lit by skilfully-shaded electric lights, brightened by frequent gleams of silver, and carefully and simply adorned with sweet-pea blossom. Capes had altered scarcely at all during the interval, except for a new quality of smartness in the cut of his clothes, but Ann Veronica was nearly half an inch taller; her face was at once stronger and softer, her neck firmer and rounder, and her carriage definitely more womanly than it had been in the days of her rebellion. She was a woman now to the tips of her fingers; she had said good-bye to her girlhood in the old garden four years and a quarter ago. She was dressed in a simple evening gown of soft creamy silk, with a yoke of dark old embroidery that enhanced the gentle gravity of her style, and her black hair flowed off her open forehead to pass under the control of a simple ribbon of silver. A silver necklace enhanced the dusky beauty of her neck. Both husband and wife affected an unnatural ease of manner for the benefit of the efficient parlor-maid, who was putting the finishing touches to the sideboard arrangements.

"It looks all right," said Capes.

"I think everything's right," said Ann Veronica, with the roaming eye of a capable but not devoted house-mistress.

"I wonder if they will seem altered," she remarked for the third time.

"There I can't help," said Capes.

He walked through a wide open archway, curtained with deep-blue curtains, into the apartment that served as a reception-room. Ann Veronica, after a last survey of the dinner appointments, followed him, rustling, came to his side by the high brass

fender, and touched two or three ornaments on the mantel above the cheerful fireplace.

"It's still a marvel to me that we are to be forgiven," she said, turning.

"My charm of manner, I suppose. But, indeed, he's very human."

"Did you tell him of the registry office?"

"No--o--certainly not so emphatically as I did about the play."

"It was an inspiration--your speaking to him?"

"I felt impudent. I believe I am getting impudent. I had not been near the Royal Society since--since you disgraced me. What's that?"

They both stood listening. It was not the arrival of the guests, but merely the maid moving about in the hall.

"Wonderful man!" said Ann Veronica, reassured, and stroking his cheek with her finger.

Capes made a quick movement as if to bite that aggressive digit, but it withdrew to Ann Veronica's side.

"I was really interested in his stuff. I WAS talking to him before I saw his name on the card beside the row of microscopes. Then, naturally, I went on talking. He--he has rather a poor opinion of his contemporaries. Of course, he had no idea who I was."

"But how did you tell him? You've never told me. Wasn't it--a little bit of a scene?"

"Oh! let me see. I said I hadn't been at the Royal Society soiree for four years, and got him to tell me about some of the fresh Mendelian work. He loves the Mendelians because he hates all the big names of the eighties and nineties. Then I think I remarked that science was disgracefully under-endowed, and confessed I'd had to take to more profitable courses. 'The fact of it is,' I said, 'I'm the new playwright, Thomas More. Perhaps you've heard--?' Well, you know, he had."

"Fame!"

"Isn't it? 'I've not seen your play, Mr. More,' he said, 'but I'm told it's the most amusing thing in London at the present time. A friend of mine, Ogilvy'--I suppose that's Ogilvy & Ogilvy, who do so many divorces, Vee?--'was speaking very highly of it--very highly!' " He smiled into her eyes.

"You are developing far too retentive a memory for praises," said Ann Veronica.

"I'm still new to them. But after that it was easy. I told him instantly and shamelessly that the play was going to be worth ten thousand pounds. He agreed it was disgraceful. Then I assumed a rather portentous manner to prepare him."

"How? Show me."

"I can't be portentous, dear, when you're about. It's my other side of the moon. But I was portentous, I can assure you. 'My name's NOT More, Mr. Stanley,' I said. 'That's my pet name.' "

"Yes?"

"I think--yes, I went on in a pleasing blend of the casual and

sotto voce, 'The fact of it is, sir, I happen to be your son-in-law, Capes. I do wish you could come and dine with us some evening. It would make my wife very happy.' "

"What did he say?"

"What does any one say to an invitation to dinner point-blank? One tries to collect one's wits. 'She is constantly thinking of you,' I said."

"And he accepted meekly?"

"Practically. What else could he do? You can't kick up a scene on the spur of the moment in the face of such conflicting values as he had before him. With me behaving as if everything was infinitely matter-of-fact, what could he do? And just then Heaven sent old Manningtree--I didn't tell you before of the fortunate intervention of Manningtree, did I? He was looking quite infernally distinguished, with a wide crimson ribbon across him--what IS a wide crimson ribbon? Some sort of knight, I suppose. He is a knight. 'Well, young man,' he said, 'we haven't seen you lately,' and something about 'Bateson & Co.'--he's frightfully anti-Mendelian--having it all their own way. So I introduced him to my father-in-law like a shot. I think that WAS decision. Yes, it was Manningtree really secured your father. He--"

"Here they are!" said Ann Veronica as the bell sounded.

Part 2

They received the guests in their pretty little hall with genuine

effusion. Miss Stanley threw aside a black cloak to reveal a discreet and dignified arrangement of brown silk, and then embraced Ann Veronica with warmth. "So very clear and cold," she said. "I feared we might have a fog." The housemaid's presence acted as a useful restraint. Ann Veronica passed from her aunt to her father, and put her arms about him and kissed his cheek. "Dear old daddy!" she said, and was amazed to find herself shedding tears. She veiled her emotion by taking off his overcoat. "And this is Mr. Capes?" she heard her aunt saying.

All four people moved a little nervously into the drawing-room, maintaining a sort of fluttered amiability of sound and movement.

Mr. Stanley professed a great solicitude to warm his hands. "Quite unusually cold for the time of year," he said. "Everything very nice, I am sure," Miss Stanley murmured to Capes as he steered her to a place upon the little sofa before the fire. Also she made little pussy-like sounds of a reassuring nature.

"And let's have a look at you, Vee!" said Mr. Stanley, standing up with a sudden geniality and rubbing his hands together.

Ann Veronica, who knew her dress became her, dropped a curtsy to her father's regard.

Happily they had no one else to wait for, and it heartened her mightily to think that she had ordered the promptest possible service of the dinner. Capes stood beside Miss Stanley, who was beaming unnaturally, and Mr. Stanley, in his effort to seem at ease, took entire possession of the hearthrug.

"You found the flat easily?" said Capes in the pause. "The numbers are a little difficult to see in the archway. They ought to put a lamp."

Her father declared there had been no difficulty.

"Dinner is served, m'm," said the efficient parlor-maid in the archway, and the worst was over.

"Come, daddy," said Ann Veronica, following her husband and Miss Stanley; and in the fulness of her heart she gave a friendly squeeze to the parental arm.

"Excellent fellow!" he answered a little irrelevantly. "I didn't understand, Vee."

"Quite charming apartments," Miss Stanley admired; "charming! Everything is so pretty and convenient."

The dinner was admirable as a dinner; nothing went wrong, from the golden and excellent clear soup to the delightful iced marrons and cream; and Miss Stanley's praises died away to an appreciative acquiescence. A brisk talk sprang up between Capes and Mr. Stanley, to which the two ladies subordinated themselves intelligently. The burning topic of the Mendelian controversy was approached on one or two occasions, but avoided dexterously; and they talked chiefly of letters and art and the censorship of the English stage. Mr. Stanley was inclined to think the censorship should be extended to the supply of what he styled latter-day fiction; good wholesome stories were being ousted, he said, by "vicious, corrupting stuff" that "left a bad taste in the mouth." He declared that no book could be satisfactory that left a bad taste in the mouth, however much it seized and interested the reader at the time. He did not like it, he said, with a significant look, to be reminded of either his books or his dinners after he had done with them. Capes agreed with the utmost cordiality.

"Life is upsetting enough, without the novels taking a share," said Mr. Stanley.

For a time Ann Veronica's attention was diverted by her aunt's interest in the salted almonds.

"Quite particularly nice," said her aunt. "Exceptionally so."

When Ann Veronica could attend again she found the men were discussing the ethics of the depreciation of house property through the increasing tumult of traffic in the West End, and agreeing with each other to a devastating extent. It came into her head with real emotional force that this must be some particularly fantastic sort of dream. It seemed to her that her father was in some inexplicable way meaner-looking than she had supposed, and yet also, as unaccountably, appealing. His tie had demanded a struggle; he ought to have taken a clean one after his first failure. Why was she noting things like this? Capes seemed self-possessed and elaborately genial and commonplace, but she knew him to be nervous by a little occasional clumsiness, by the faintest shadow of vulgarity in the urgency of his hospitality. She wished he could smoke and dull his nerves a little. A gust of irrational impatience blew through her being. Well, they'd got to the pheasants, and in a little while he would smoke. What was it she had expected? Surely her moods were getting a little out of hand.

She wished her father and aunt would not enjoy their dinner with such quiet determination. Her father and her husband, who had both been a little pale at their first encounter, were growing now just faintly flushed. It was a pity people had to eat food.

"I suppose," said her father, "I have read at least half the novels that have been at all successful during the last twenty years. Three a week is my allowance, and, if I get short ones,

four. I change them in the morning at Cannon Street, and take my book as I come down."

It occurred to her that she had never seen her father dining out before, never watched him critically as an equal. To Capes he was almost deferential, and she had never seen him deferential in the old time, never. The dinner was stranger than she had ever anticipated. It was as if she had grown right past her father into something older and of infinitely wider outlook, as if he had always been unsuspectedly a flattened figure, and now she had discovered him from the other side.

It was a great relief to arrive at last at that pause when she could say to her aunt, "Now, dear?" and rise and hold back the curtain through the archway. Capes and her father stood up, and her father made a belated movement toward the curtain. She realized that he was the sort of man one does not think much about at dinners. And Capes was thinking that his wife was a supremely beautiful woman. He reached a silver cigar and cigarette box from the sideboard and put it before his father-in-law, and for a time the preliminaries of smoking occupied them both. Then Capes flittered to the hearthrug and poked the fire, stood up, and turned about. "Ann Veronica is looking very well, don't you think?" he said, a little awkwardly.

"Very," said Mr. Stanley. "Very," and cracked a walnut appreciatively.

"Life--things--I don't think her prospects now--Hopeful outlook."

"You were in a difficult position," Mr. Stanley pronounced, and seemed to hesitate whether he had not gone too far. He looked at his port wine as though that tawny ruby contained the solution of the matter. "All's well that ends well," he said; "and the less

one says about things the better."

"Of course," said Capes, and threw a newly lit cigar into the fire through sheer nervousness. "Have some more port wine, sir?"

"It's a very sound wine," said Mr. Stanley, consenting with dignity.

"Ann Veronica has never looked quite so well, I think," said Capes, clinging, because of a preconceived plan, to the suppressed topic.

Part 3

At last the evening was over, and Capes and his wife had gone down to see Mr. Stanley and his sister into a taxicab, and had waved an amiable farewell from the pavement steps.

"Great dears!" said Capes, as the vehicle passed out of sight.

"Yes, aren't they?" said Ann Veronica, after a thoughtful pause. And then, "They seem changed."

"Come in out of the cold," said Capes, and took her arm.

"They seem smaller, you know, even physically smaller," she said.

"You've grown out of them. . . . Your aunt liked the pheasant."

"She liked everything. Did you hear us through the archway, talking cookery?"

They went up by the lift in silence.

"It's odd," said Ann Veronica, re-entering the flat.

"What's odd?"

"Oh, everything!"

She shivered, and went to the fire and poked it. Capes sat down in the arm-chair beside her.

"Life's so queer," she said, kneeling and looking into the flames. "I wonder--I wonder if we shall ever get like that."

She turned a firelit face to her husband. "Did you tell him?"

Capes smiled faintly. "Yes."

"How?"

"Well--a little clumsily."

"But how?"

"I poured him out some port wine, and I said--let me see--oh, 'You are going to be a grandfather!' "

"Yes. Was he pleased?"

"Calmly! He said--you won't mind my telling you?"

"Not a bit."

"He said, 'Poor Alice has got no end!' "

"Alice's are different," said Ann Veronica, after an interval.

"Quite different. She didn't choose her man. . . . Well, I told aunt. . . . Husband of mine, I think we have rather overrated the emotional capacity of those--those dears."

"What did your aunt say?"

"She didn't even kiss me. She said"--Ann Veronica shivered again--" 'I hope it won't make you uncomfortable, my dear'--like that--'and whatever you do, do be careful of your hair!' I think--I judge from her manner--that she thought it was just a little indelicate of us--considering everything; but she tried to be practical and sympathetic and live down to our standards."

Capes looked at his wife's unsmiling face.

"Your father," he said, "remarked that all's well that ends well, and that he was disposed to let bygones be bygones. He then spoke with a certain fatherly kindness of the past. . . ."

"And my heart has ached for him!"

"Oh, no doubt it cut him at the time. It must have cut him."

"We might even have--given it up for them!"

"I wonder if we could."

"I suppose all IS well that ends well. Somehow to-night--I don't know."

"I suppose so. I'm glad the old sore is assuaged. Very glad. But if we had gone under--!"

They regarded one another silently, and Ann Veronica had one of her penetrating flashes.

"We are not the sort that goes under," said Ann Veronica, holding her hands so that the red reflections vanished from her eyes.

"We settled long ago--we're hard stuff. We're hard stuff!"

Then she went on: "To think that is my father! Oh, my dear! He stood over me like a cliff; the thought of him nearly turned me aside from everything we have done. He was the social order; he was law and wisdom. And they come here, and they look at our furniture to see if it is good; and they are not glad, it does not stir them, that at last, at last we can dare to have children."

She dropped back into a crouching attitude and began to weep.

"Oh, my dear!" she cried, and suddenly flung herself, kneeling, into her husband's arms.

"Do you remember the mountains? Do you remember how we loved one another? How intensely we loved one another! Do you remember the light on things and the glory of things? I'm greedy, I'm greedy! I want children like the mountains and life like the sky. Oh! and love--love! We've had so splendid a time, and fought our fight and won. And it's like the petals falling from a flower. Oh, I've loved love, dear! I've loved love and you, and the glory of you; and the great time is over, and I have to go carefully and bear children, and--take care of my hair--and when I am done with that I shall be an old woman. The petals have fallen --the red petals we loved so. We're hedged about with discretions--and all this furniture--and successes! We are successful at last! Successful! But the mountains, dear! We won't forget the mountains, dear, ever. That shining slope of snow, and how we talked of death! We might have died! Even when we are old, when we are rich as we may be, we won't forget the tune when we cared nothing for anything but the joy of one another, when we risked everything for one another, when all the

wrappings and coverings seemed to have fallen from life and left it light and fire. Stark and stark! Do you remember it all? . . . Say you will never forget! That these common things and secondary things sha'n't overwhelm us. These petals! I've been wanting to cry all the evening, cry here on your shoulder for my petals. Petals! . . . Silly woman! . . . I've never had these crying fits before. . . ."

"Blood of my heart!" whispered Capes, holding her close to him.
"I know. I understand."

**THE DOOR
IN THE WALL
And Other Stories**

**BY
H. G. WELLS
1911**

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THE DOOR IN THE WALL

I

One confidential evening, not three months ago, Lionel Wallace told me this story of the Door in the Wall. And at the time I thought that so far as he was concerned it was a true story.

He told it me with such a direct simplicity of conviction that I could not do otherwise than believe in him. But in the morning, in my own flat, I woke to a different atmosphere, and as I lay in bed and recalled the things he had told me, stripped of the glamour of his earnest slow voice, denuded of the focussed shaded table light, the shadowy atmosphere that wrapped about him and the pleasant bright things, the dessert and glasses and napery of the dinner we had shared, making them for the time a bright little world quite cut off from every-day realities, I saw it all as frankly incredible. "He was mystifying!" I said, and then: "How well he did it! It isn't quite the thing I should have expected him, of all people, to do well."

Afterwards, as I sat up in bed and sipped my morning tea, I found myself trying to account for the flavour of reality that perplexed me in his impossible reminiscences, by supposing they did in some way suggest, present, convey--I hardly know which word to use--experiences it was otherwise impossible to tell.

Well, I don't resort to that explanation now. I have got over my intervening doubts. I believe now, as I believed at the moment of telling, that Wallace did to the very best of his ability strip the truth of his secret for me. But whether he himself saw, or only thought he saw, whether he himself was the possessor of an

inestimable privilege, or the victim of a fantastic dream, I cannot pretend to guess. Even the facts of his death, which ended my doubts forever, throw no light on that. That much the reader must judge for himself.

I forget now what chance comment or criticism of mine moved so reticent a man to confide in me. He was, I think, defending himself against an imputation of slackness and unreliability I had made in relation to a great public movement in which he had disappointed me. But he plunged suddenly. "I have" he said, "a preoccupation--"

"I know," he went on, after a pause that he devoted to the study of his cigar ash, "I have been negligent. The fact is--it isn't a case of ghosts or apparitions--but--it's an odd thing to tell of, Redmond--I am haunted. I am haunted by something--that rather takes the light out of things, that fills me with longings"

He paused, checked by that English shyness that so often overcomes us when we would speak of moving or grave or beautiful things. "You were at Saint Athelstan's all through," he said, and for a moment that seemed to me quite irrelevant. "Well"--and he paused. Then very haltingly at first, but afterwards more easily, he began to tell of the thing that was hidden in his life, the haunting memory of a beauty and a happiness that filled his heart with insatiable longings that made all the interests and spectacle of worldly life seem dull and tedious and vain to him.

Now that I have the clue to it, the thing seems written visibly in his face. I have a photograph in which that look of detachment has been caught and intensified. It reminds me of what a woman once said of him--a woman who had loved him greatly. "Suddenly," she said, "the interest goes out of him. He forgets you. He doesn't care a rap for you--under his very nose"

Yet the interest was not always out of him, and when he was holding his attention to a thing Wallace could contrive to be an extremely successful man. His career, indeed, is set with successes. He left me behind him long ago; he soared up over my head, and cut a figure in the world that I couldn't cut--anyhow. He was still a year short of forty, and they say now that he would have been in office and very probably in the new Cabinet if he had lived. At school he always beat me without effort--as it were by nature. We were at school together at Saint Athelstan's College in West Kensington for almost all our school time. He came into the school as my co-equal, but he left far above me, in a blaze of scholarships and brilliant performance. Yet I think I made a fair average running. And it was at school I heard first of the Door in the Wall--that I was to hear of a second time only a month before his death.

To him at least the Door in the Wall was a real door leading through a real wall to immortal realities. Of that I am now quite assured.

And it came into his life early, when he was a little fellow between five and six. I remember how, as he sat making his confession to me with a slow gravity, he reasoned and reckoned the date of it. "There was," he said, "a crimson Virginia creeper in it--all one bright uniform crimson in a clear amber sunshine against a white wall. That came into the impression somehow, though I don't clearly remember how, and there were horse-chestnut leaves upon the clean pavement outside the green door. They were blotched yellow and green, you know, not brown nor dirty, so that they must have been new fallen. I take it that means October. I look out for horse-chestnut leaves every year, and I ought to know.

"If I'm right in that, I was about five years and four months old."

He was, he said, rather a precocious little boy--he learned to talk at an abnormally early age, and he was so sane and "old-fashioned," as people say, that he was permitted an amount of initiative that most children scarcely attain by seven or eight. His mother died when he was born, and he was under the less vigilant and authoritative care of a nursery governess. His father was a stern, preoccupied lawyer, who gave him little attention, and expected great things of him. For all his brightness he found life a little grey and dull I think. And one day he wandered.

He could not recall the particular neglect that enabled him to get away, nor the course he took among the West Kensington roads. All that had faded among the incurable blurs of memory. But the white wall and the green door stood out quite distinctly.

As his memory of that remote childish experience ran, he did at the very first sight of that door experience a peculiar emotion, an attraction, a desire to get to the door and open it and walk in.

And at the same time he had the clearest conviction that either it was unwise or it was wrong of him--he could not tell which--to yield to this attraction. He insisted upon it as a curious thing that he knew from the very beginning--unless memory has played him the queerest trick--that the door was unfastened, and that he could go in as he chose.

I seem to see the figure of that little boy, drawn and repelled. And it was very clear in his mind, too, though why it should be so was never explained, that his father would be very angry if he went through that door.

Wallace described all these moments of hesitation to me with the utmost particularity. He went right past the door, and then, with his hands in his pockets, and making an infantile attempt to whistle, strolled right along beyond the end of the wall. There he

recalls a number of mean, dirty shops, and particularly that of a plumber and decorator, with a dusty disorder of earthenware pipes, sheet lead ball taps, pattern books of wall paper, and tins of enamel. He stood pretending to examine these things, and coveting, passionately desiring the green door.

Then, he said, he had a gust of emotion. He made a run for it, lest hesitation should grip him again, he went plump with outstretched hand through the green door and let it slam behind him. And so, in a trice, he came into the garden that has haunted all his life.

It was very difficult for Wallace to give me his full sense of that garden into which he came.

There was something in the very air of it that exhilarated, that gave one a sense of lightness and good happening and well being; there was something in the sight of it that made all its colour clean and perfect and subtly luminous. In the instant of coming into it one was exquisitely glad--as only in rare moments and when one is young and joyful one can be glad in this world. And everything was beautiful there

Wallace mused before he went on telling me. "You see," he said, with the doubtful inflection of a man who pauses at incredible things, "there were two great panthers there . . . Yes, spotted panthers. And I was not afraid. There was a long wide path with marble-edged flower borders on either side, and these two huge velvety beasts were playing there with a ball. One looked up and came towards me, a little curious as it seemed. It came right up to me, rubbed its soft round ear very gently against the small hand I held out and purred. It was, I tell you, an enchanted garden. I know. And the size? Oh! it stretched far and wide, this way and that. I believe there were hills far away. Heaven knows where West Kensington had suddenly got to. And somehow it

was just like coming home.

"You know, in the very moment the door swung to behind me, I forgot the road with its fallen chestnut leaves, its cabs and tradesmen's carts, I forgot the sort of gravitational pull back to the discipline and obedience of home, I forgot all hesitations and fear, forgot discretion, forgot all the intimate realities of this life. I became in a moment a very glad and wonder-happy little boy--in another world. It was a world with a different quality, a warmer, more penetrating and mellower light, with a faint clear gladness in its air, and wisps of sun-touched cloud in the blueness of its sky. And before me ran this long wide path, invitingly, with weedless beds on either side, rich with untended flowers, and these two great panthers. I put my little hands fearlessly on their soft fur, and caressed their round ears and the sensitive corners under their ears, and played with them, and it was as though they welcomed me home. There was a keen sense of home-coming in my mind, and when presently a tall, fair girl appeared in the pathway and came to meet me, smiling, and said 'Well?' to me, and lifted me, and kissed me, and put me down, and led me by the hand, there was no amazement, but only an impression of delightful rightness, of being reminded of happy things that had in some strange way been overlooked. There were broad steps, I remember, that came into view between spikes of delphinium, and up these we went to a great avenue between very old and shady dark trees. All down this avenue, you know, between the red chapped stems, were marble seats of honour and statuary, and very tame and friendly white doves

"And along this avenue my girl-friend led me, looking down--I recall the pleasant lines, the finely-modelled chin of her sweet kind face--asking me questions in a soft, agreeable voice, and telling me things, pleasant things I know, though what they were I was never able to recall . . . And presently a little Capuchin monkey, very clean, with a fur of ruddy brown and kindly hazel

eyes, came down a tree to us and ran beside me, looking up at me and grinning, and presently leapt to my shoulder. So we went on our way in great happiness"

He paused.

"Go on," I said.

"I remember little things. We passed an old man musing among laurels, I remember, and a place gay with paroquets, and came through a broad shaded colonnade to a spacious cool palace, full of pleasant fountains, full of beautiful things, full of the quality and promise of heart's desire. And there were many things and many people, some that still seem to stand out clearly and some that are a little vague, but all these people were beautiful and kind. In some way--I don't know how--it was conveyed to me that they all were kind to me, glad to have me there, and filling me with gladness by their gestures, by the touch of their hands, by the welcome and love in their eyes. Yes--"

He mused for awhile. "Playmates I found there. That was very much to me, because I was a lonely little boy. They played delightful games in a grass-covered court where there was a sun-dial set about with flowers. And as one played one loved

"But--it's odd--there's a gap in my memory. I don't remember the games we played. I never remembered. Afterwards, as a child, I spent long hours trying, even with tears, to recall the form of that happiness. I wanted to play it all over again--in my nursery --by myself. No! All I remember is the happiness and two dear playfellows who were most with me Then presently came a sombre dark woman, with a grave, pale face and dreamy eyes, a sombre woman wearing a soft long robe of pale purple, who carried a book and beckoned and took me aside with her into a gallery above a hall--though my playmates were loth to have me go, and ceased

their game and stood watching as I was carried away. 'Come back to us!' they cried. 'Come back to us soon!' I looked up at her face, but she heeded them not at all. Her face was very gentle and grave. She took me to a seat in the gallery, and I stood beside her, ready to look at her book as she opened it upon her knee. The pages fell open. She pointed, and I looked, marvelling, for in the living pages of that book I saw myself; it was a story about myself, and in it were all the things that had happened to me since ever I was born

"It was wonderful to me, because the pages of that book were not pictures, you understand, but realities."

Wallace paused gravely--looked at me doubtfully.

"Go on," I said. "I understand."

"They were realities--yes, they must have been; people moved and things came and went in them; my dear mother, whom I had near forgotten; then my father, stern and upright, the servants, the nursery, all the familiar things of home. Then the front door and the busy streets, with traffic to and fro: I looked and marvelled, and looked half doubtfully again into the woman's face and turned the pages over, skipping this and that, to see more of this book, and more, and so at last I came to myself hovering and hesitating outside the green door in the long white wall, and felt again the conflict and the fear.

"And next?" I cried, and would have turned on, but the cool hand of the grave woman delayed me.

"Next?" I insisted, and struggled gently with her hand, pulling up her fingers with all my childish strength, and as she yielded and the page came over she bent down upon me like a shadow and kissed my brow.

"But the page did not show the enchanted garden, nor the panthers, nor the girl who had led me by the hand, nor the playfellows who had been so loth to let me go. It showed a long grey street in West Kensington, on that chill hour of afternoon before the lamps are lit, and I was there, a wretched little figure, weeping aloud, for all that I could do to restrain myself, and I was weeping because I could not return to my dear play-fellows who had called after me, 'Come back to us! Come back to us soon!' I was there. This was no page in a book, but harsh reality; that enchanted place and the restraining hand of the grave mother at whose knee I stood had gone--whither have they gone?"

He halted again, and remained for a time, staring into the fire.

"Oh! the wretchedness of that return!" he murmured.

"Well?" I said after a minute or so.

"Poor little wretch I was--brought back to this grey world again! As I realised the fulness of what had happened to me, I gave way to quite ungovernable grief. And the shame and humiliation of that public weeping and my disgraceful homecoming remain with me still. I see again the benevolent-looking old gentleman in gold spectacles who stopped and spoke to me--prodding me first with his umbrella. 'Poor little chap,' said he; 'and are you lost then?'--and me a London boy of five and more! And he must needs bring in a kindly young policeman and make a crowd of me, and so march me home. Sobbing, conspicuous and frightened, I came from the enchanted garden to the steps of my father's house.

"That is as well as I can remember my vision of that garden--the garden that haunts me still. Of course, I can convey nothing of that indescribable quality of translucent unreality, that difference from the common things of experience that hung

about it all; but that--that is what happened. If it was a dream, I am sure it was a day-time and altogether extraordinary dream H'm!--naturally there followed a terrible questioning, by my aunt, my father, the nurse, the governess--everyone

"I tried to tell them, and my father gave me my first thrashing for telling lies. When afterwards I tried to tell my aunt, she punished me again for my wicked persistence. Then, as I said, everyone was forbidden to listen to me, to hear a word about it. Even my fairy tale books were taken away from me for a time--because I was 'too imaginative.' Eh? Yes, they did that! My father belonged to the old school And my story was driven back upon myself. I whispered it to my pillow--my pillow that was often damp and salt to my whispering lips with childish tears. And I added always to my official and less fervent prayers this one heartfelt request: 'Please God I may dream of the garden. Oh! take me back to my garden! Take me back to my garden!'

"I dreamt often of the garden. I may have added to it, I may have changed it; I do not know All this you understand is an attempt to reconstruct from fragmentary memories a very early experience. Between that and the other consecutive memories of my boyhood there is a gulf. A time came when it seemed impossible I should ever speak of that wonder glimpse again."

I asked an obvious question.

"No," he said. "I don't remember that I ever attempted to find my way back to the garden in those early years. This seems odd to me now, but I think that very probably a closer watch was kept on my movements after this misadventure to prevent my going astray. No, it wasn't until you knew me that I tried for the garden again. And I believe there was a period --incredible as it seems now--when I forgot the garden altogether--when I was about eight or nine it may have been. Do you remember me as a kid at

Saint Athelstan's?"

"Rather!"

"I didn't show any signs did I in those days of having a secret dream?"

II

He looked up with a sudden smile.

"Did you ever play North-West Passage with me? No, of course you didn't come my way!"

"It was the sort of game," he went on, "that every imaginative child plays all day. The idea was the discovery of a North-West Passage to school. The way to school was plain enough; the game consisted in finding some way that wasn't plain, starting off ten minutes early in some almost hopeless direction, and working one's way round through unaccustomed streets to my goal. And one day I got entangled among some rather low-class streets on the other side of Campden Hill, and I began to think that for once the game would be against me and that I should get to school late. I tried rather desperately a street that seemed a cul de sac, and found a passage at the end. I hurried through that with renewed hope. 'I shall do it yet,' I said, and passed a row of frowsy little shops that were inexplicably familiar to me, and behold! there was my long white wall and the green door that led to the enchanted garden!

"The thing whacked upon me suddenly. Then, after all, that garden, that wonderful garden, wasn't a dream!"

He paused.

"I suppose my second experience with the green door marks the world of difference there is between the busy life of a schoolboy and the infinite leisure of a child. Anyhow, this second time I didn't for a moment think of going in straight away. You see . . . For one thing my mind was full of the idea of getting to school in time--set on not breaking my record for punctuality. I must surely have felt SOME little desire at least to try the door--yes, I must have felt that But I seem to remember the attraction of the door mainly as another obstacle to my overmastering determination to get to school. I was immediately interested by this discovery I had made, of course--I went on with my mind full of it--but I went on. It didn't check me. I ran past tugging out my watch, found I had ten minutes still to spare, and then I was going downhill into familiar surroundings. I got to school, breathless, it is true, and wet with perspiration, but in time. I can remember hanging up my coat and hat . . . Went right by it and left it behind me. Odd, eh?"

He looked at me thoughtfully. "Of course, I didn't know then that it wouldn't always be there. School boys have limited imaginations. I suppose I thought it was an awfully jolly thing to have it there, to know my way back to it, but there was the school tugging at me. I expect I was a good deal distraught and inattentive that morning, recalling what I could of the beautiful strange people I should presently see again. Oddly enough I had no doubt in my mind that they would be glad to see me . . . Yes, I must have thought of the garden that morning just as a jolly sort of place to which one might resort in the interludes of a strenuous scholastic career.

"I didn't go that day at all. The next day was a half holiday, and that may have weighed with me. Perhaps, too, my state of inattention brought down impositions upon me and docked the margin of time necessary for the detour. I don't know. What I do

know is that in the meantime the enchanted garden was so much upon my mind that I could not keep it to myself.

"I told--What was his name?--a ferrety-looking youngster we used to call Squiff."

"Young Hopkins," said I.

"Hopkins it was. I did not like telling him, I had a feeling that in some way it was against the rules to tell him, but I did. He was walking part of the way home with me; he was talkative, and if we had not talked about the enchanted garden we should have talked of something else, and it was intolerable to me to think about any other subject. So I blabbed.

"Well, he told my secret. The next day in the play interval I found myself surrounded by half a dozen bigger boys, half teasing and wholly curious to hear more of the enchanted garden. There was that big Fawcett--you remember him?--and Carnaby and Morley Reynolds. You weren't there by any chance? No, I think I should have remembered if you were

"A boy is a creature of odd feelings. I was, I really believe, in spite of my secret self-disgust, a little flattered to have the attention of these big fellows. I remember particularly a moment of pleasure caused by the praise of Crawshaw--you remember Crawshaw major, the son of Crawshaw the composer?--who said it was the best lie he had ever heard. But at the same time there was a really painful undertow of shame at telling what I felt was indeed a sacred secret. That beast Fawcett made a joke about the girl in green--."

Wallace's voice sank with the keen memory of that shame. "I pretended not to hear," he said. "Well, then Carnaby suddenly called me a young liar and disputed with me when I said the thing

was true. I said I knew where to find the green door, could lead them all there in ten minutes. Carnaby became outrageously virtuous, and said I'd have to--and bear out my words or suffer. Did you ever have Carnaby twist your arm? Then perhaps you'll understand how it went with me. I swore my story was true. There was nobody in the school then to save a chap from Carnaby though Crawshaw put in a word or so. Carnaby had got his game. I grew excited and red-eared, and a little frightened, I behaved altogether like a silly little chap, and the outcome of it all was that instead of starting alone for my enchanted garden, I led the way presently--cheeks flushed, ears hot, eyes smarting, and my soul one burning misery and shame--for a party of six mocking, curious and threatening school-fellows.

"We never found the white wall and the green door . . ."

"You mean?--"

"I mean I couldn't find it. I would have found it if I could.

"And afterwards when I could go alone I couldn't find it. I never found it. I seem now to have been always looking for it through my school-boy days, but I've never come upon it again."

"Did the fellows--make it disagreeable?"

"Beastly Carnaby held a council over me for wanton lying. I remember how I sneaked home and upstairs to hide the marks of my blubbering. But when I cried myself to sleep at last it wasn't for Carnaby, but for the garden, for the beautiful afternoon I had hoped for, for the sweet friendly women and the waiting playfellows and the game I had hoped to learn again, that beautiful forgotten game"

"I believed firmly that if I had not told-- I had

bad times after that--crying at night and woolgathering by day. For two terms I slackened and had bad reports. Do you remember? Of course you would! It was YOU--your beating me in mathematics that brought me back to the grind again."

III

For a time my friend stared silently into the red heart of the fire. Then he said: "I never saw it again until I was seventeen.

"It leapt upon me for the third time--as I was driving to Paddington on my way to Oxford and a scholarship. I had just one momentary glimpse. I was leaning over the apron of my hansom smoking a cigarette, and no doubt thinking myself no end of a man of the world, and suddenly there was the door, the wall, the dear sense of unforgettable and still attainable things.

"We clattered by--I too taken by surprise to stop my cab until we were well past and round a corner. Then I had a queer moment, a double and divergent movement of my will: I tapped the little door in the roof of the cab, and brought my arm down to pull out my watch. 'Yes, sir!' said the cabman, smartly. 'Er-- well--it's nothing,' I cried. 'MY mistake! We haven't much time! Go on!' and he went on . . .

"I got my scholarship. And the night after I was told of that I sat over my fire in my little upper room, my study, in my father's house, with his praise--his rare praise--and his sound counsels ringing in my ears, and I smoked my favourite pipe--the formidable bulldog of adolescence--and thought of that door in the long white wall. 'If I had stopped,' I thought, 'I should have missed my scholarship, I should have missed Oxford--muddled all the fine career before me! I begin to see things better!' I fell

musing deeply, but I did not doubt then this career of mine was a thing that merited sacrifice.

"Those dear friends and that clear atmosphere seemed very sweet to me, very fine, but remote. My grip was fixing now upon the world. I saw another door opening--the door of my career."

He stared again into the fire. Its red lights picked out a stubborn strength in his face for just one flickering moment, and then it vanished again.

"Well", he said and sighed, "I have served that career. I have done--much work, much hard work. But I have dreamt of the enchanted garden a thousand dreams, and seen its door, or at least glimpsed its door, four times since then. Yes--four times. For a while this world was so bright and interesting, seemed so full of meaning and opportunity that the half-effaced charm of the garden was by comparison gentle and remote. Who wants to pat panthers on the way to dinner with pretty women and distinguished men? I came down to London from Oxford, a man of bold promise that I have done something to redeem. Something--and yet there have been disappointments

"Twice I have been in love--I will not dwell on that--but once, as I went to someone who, I know, doubted whether I dared to come, I took a short cut at a venture through an unfrequented road near Earl's Court, and so happened on a white wall and a familiar green door. 'Odd!' said I to myself, 'but I thought this place was on Campden Hill. It's the place I never could find somehow--like counting Stonehenge--the place of that queer day dream of mine.' And I went by it intent upon my purpose. It had no appeal to me that afternoon.

"I had just a moment's impulse to try the door, three steps aside were needed at the most--though I was sure enough in my heart

that it would open to me--and then I thought that doing so might delay me on the way to that appointment in which I thought my honour was involved. Afterwards I was sorry for my punctuality--I might at least have peeped in I thought, and waved a hand to those panthers, but I knew enough by this time not to seek again belatedly that which is not found by seeking. Yes, that time made me very sorry

"Years of hard work after that and never a sight of the door. It's only recently it has come back to me. With it there has come a sense as though some thin tarnish had spread itself over my world. I began to think of it as a sorrowful and bitter thing that I should never see that door again. Perhaps I was suffering a little from overwork--perhaps it was what I've heard spoken of as the feeling of forty. I don't know. But certainly the keen brightness that makes effort easy has gone out of things recently, and that just at a time with all these new political developments --when I ought to be working. Odd, isn't it? But I do begin to find life toilsome, its rewards, as I come near them, cheap. I began a little while ago to want the garden quite badly. Yes--and I've seen it three times."

"The garden?"

"No--the door! And I haven't gone in!"

He leaned over the table to me, with an enormous sorrow in his voice as he spoke. "Thrice I have had my chance--THRICE! If ever that door offers itself to me again, I swore, I will go in out of this dust and heat, out of this dry glitter of vanity, out of these toilsome futilities. I will go and never return. This time I will stay I swore it and when the time came-- I DIDN'T GO.

"Three times in one year have I passed that door and failed to

enter. Three times in the last year.

"The first time was on the night of the snatch division on the Tenants' Redemption Bill, on which the Government was saved by a majority of three. You remember? No one on our side--perhaps very few on the opposite side--expected the end that night. Then the debate collapsed like eggshells. I and Hotchkiss were dining with his cousin at Brentford, we were both unpaired, and we were called up by telephone, and set off at once in his cousin's motor. We got in barely in time, and on the way we passed my wall and door--livid in the moonlight, blotched with hot yellow as the glare of our lamps lit it, but unmistakable. 'My God!' cried I. 'What?' said Hotchkiss. 'Nothing!' I answered, and the moment passed.

"I've made a great sacrifice,' I told the whip as I got in. 'They all have,' he said, and hurried by.

"I do not see how I could have done otherwise then. And the next occasion was as I rushed to my father's bedside to bid that stern old man farewell. Then, too, the claims of life were imperative. But the third time was different; it happened a week ago. It fills me with hot remorse to recall it. I was with Gurker and Ralphs--it's no secret now you know that I've had my talk with Gurker. We had been dining at Frobisher's, and the talk had become intimate between us. The question of my place in the reconstructed ministry lay always just over the boundary of the discussion. Yes--yes. That's all settled. It needn't be talked about yet, but there's no reason to keep a secret from you Yes--thanks! thanks! But let me tell you my story.

"Then, on that night things were very much in the air. My position was a very delicate one. I was keenly anxious to get some definite word from Gurker, but was hampered by Ralphs' presence. I was using the best power of my brain to keep that light and careless talk not too obviously directed to the point that concerns

me. I had to. Ralphs' behaviour since has more than justified my caution Ralphs, I knew, would leave us beyond the Kensington High Street, and then I could surprise Gurker by a sudden frankness. One has sometimes to resort to these little devices. . . . And then it was that in the margin of my field of vision I became aware once more of the white wall, the green door before us down the road.

"We passed it talking. I passed it. I can still see the shadow of Gurker's marked profile, his opera hat tilted forward over his prominent nose, the many folds of his neck wrap going before my shadow and Ralphs' as we sauntered past.

"I passed within twenty inches of the door. 'If I say good-night to them, and go in,' I asked myself, 'what will happen?' And I was all a-tingle for that word with Gurker.

"I could not answer that question in the tangle of my other problems. 'They will think me mad,' I thought. 'And suppose I vanish now!--Amazing disappearance of a prominent politician!' That weighed with me. A thousand inconceivably petty worldlinesses weighed with me in that crisis."

Then he turned on me with a sorrowful smile, and, speaking slowly; "Here I am!" he said.

"Here I am!" he repeated, "and my chance has gone from me. Three times in one year the door has been offered me--the door that goes into peace, into delight, into a beauty beyond dreaming, a kindness no man on earth can know. And I have rejected it, Redmond, and it has gone--"

"How do you know?"

"I know. I know. I am left now to work it out, to stick to

the tasks that held me so strongly when my moments came. You say, I have success--this vulgar, tawdry, irksome, envied thing. I have it." He had a walnut in his big hand. "If that was my success," he said, and crushed it, and held it out for me to see.

"Let me tell you something, Redmond. This loss is destroying me. For two months, for ten weeks nearly now, I have done no work at all, except the most necessary and urgent duties. My soul is full of inappeasable regrets. At nights--when it is less likely I shall be recognised--I go out. I wander. Yes. I wonder what people would think of that if they knew. A Cabinet Minister, the responsible head of that most vital of all departments, wandering alone--grieving--sometimes near audibly lamenting--for a door, for a garden!"

IV

I can see now his rather pallid face, and the unfamiliar sombre fire that had come into his eyes. I see him very vividly to-night. I sit recalling his words, his tones, and last evening's Westminster Gazette still lies on my sofa, containing the notice of his death. At lunch to-day the club was busy with him and the strange riddle of his fate.

They found his body very early yesterday morning in a deep excavation near East Kensington Station. It is one of two shafts that have been made in connection with an extension of the railway southward. It is protected from the intrusion of the public by a hoarding upon the high road, in which a small doorway has been cut for the convenience of some of the workmen who live in that direction. The doorway was left unfastened through a misunderstanding between two gangers, and through it he made his way

My mind is darkened with questions and riddles.

It would seem he walked all the way from the House that night--he has frequently walked home during the past Session--and so it is I figure his dark form coming along the late and empty streets, wrapped up, intent. And then did the pale electric lights near the station cheat the rough planking into a semblance of white? Did that fatal unfastened door awaken some memory?

Was there, after all, ever any green door in the wall at all?

I do not know. I have told his story as he told it to me.

There are times when I believe that Wallace was no more than the victim of the coincidence between a rare but not unprecedented type of hallucination and a careless trap, but that indeed is not my profoundest belief. You may think me superstitious if you will, and foolish; but, indeed, I am more than half convinced that he had in truth, an abnormal gift, and a sense, something--I know not what--that in the guise of wall and door offered him an outlet, a secret and peculiar passage of escape into another and altogether more beautiful world. At any rate, you will say, it betrayed him in the end. But did it betray him? There you touch the inmost mystery of these dreamers, these men of vision and the imagination.

We see our world fair and common, the hoarding and the pit. By our daylight standard he walked out of security into darkness, danger and death. But did he see like that?

THE STAR

It was on the first day of the New Year that the announcement was made, almost simultaneously from three observatories, that the motion of the planet Neptune, the outermost of all the planets that wheel about the sun, had become very erratic. Ogilvy had already called attention to a suspected retardation in its velocity in December. Such a piece of news was scarcely calculated to interest a world the greater portion of whose inhabitants were unaware of the existence of the planet Neptune, nor outside the astronomical profession did the subsequent discovery of a faint remote speck of light in the region of the perturbed planet cause any very great excitement. Scientific people, however, found the intelligence remarkable enough, even before it became known that the new body was rapidly growing larger and brighter, that its motion was quite different from the orderly progress of the planets, and that the deflection of Neptune and its satellite was becoming now of an unprecedented kind.

Few people without a training in science can realise the huge isolation of the solar system. The sun with its specks of planets, its dust of planetoids, and its impalpable comets, swims in a vacant immensity that almost defeats the imagination. Beyond the orbit of Neptune there is space, vacant so far as human observation has penetrated, without warmth or light or sound, blank emptiness, for twenty million times a million miles. That is the smallest estimate of the distance to be traversed before the very nearest of the stars is attained. And, saving a few comets more unsubstantial than the thinnest flame, no matter had ever to human knowledge crossed this gulf of space, until early in the twentieth century this strange wanderer appeared. A vast mass of matter it was, bulky, heavy, rushing without warning out of the black mystery of the sky into the radiance of the sun. By the second day it was

clearly visible to any decent instrument, as a speck with a barely sensible diameter, in the constellation Leo near Regulus. In a little while an opera glass could attain it.

On the third day of the new year the newspaper readers of two hemispheres were made aware for the first time of the real importance of this unusual apparition in the heavens. "A Planetary Collision," one London paper headed the news, and proclaimed Duchaine's opinion that this strange new planet would probably collide with Neptune. The leader writers enlarged upon the topic; so that in most of the capitals of the world, on January 3rd, there was an expectation, however vague of some imminent phenomenon in the sky; and as the night followed the sunset round the globe, thousands of men turned their eyes skyward to see--the old familiar stars just as they had always been.

Until it was dawn in London and Pollux setting and the stars overhead grown pale. The Winter's dawn it was, a sickly filtering accumulation of daylight, and the light of gas and candles shone yellow in the windows to show where people were astir. But the yawning policeman saw the thing, the busy crowds in the markets stopped agape, workmen going to their work betimes, milkmen, the drivers of news-carts, dissipation going home jaded and pale, homeless wanderers, sentinels on their beats, and in the country, labourers trudging afield, poachers slinking home, all over the dusky quickening country it could be seen--and out at sea by seamen watching for the day--a great white star, come suddenly into the westward sky!

Brighter it was than any star in our skies; brighter than the evening star at its brightest. It still glowed out white and large, no mere twinkling spot of light, but a small round clear shining disc, an hour after the day had come. And where science has not reached, men stared and feared, telling one another of the wars and pestilences that are foreshadowed by these fiery signs in

the Heavens. Sturdy Boers, dusky Hottentots, Gold Coast Negroes, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Portuguese, stood in the warmth of the sunrise watching the setting of this strange new star.

And in a hundred observatories there had been suppressed excitement, rising almost to shouting pitch, as the two remote bodies had rushed together; and a hurrying to and fro, to gather photographic apparatus and spectroscope, and this appliance and that, to record this novel astonishing sight, the destruction of a world. For it was a world, a sister planet of our earth, far greater than our earth indeed, that had so suddenly flashed into flaming death. Neptune it was, had been struck, fairly and squarely, by the strange planet from outer space and the heat of the concussion had incontinently turned two solid globes into one vast mass of incandescence. Round the world that day, two hours before the dawn, went the pallid great white star, fading only as it sank westward and the sun mounted above it. Everywhere men marvelled at it, but of all those who saw it none could have marvelled more than those sailors, habitual watchers of the stars, who far away at sea had heard nothing of its advent and saw it now rise like a pigmy moon and climb zenithward and hang overhead and sink westward with the passing of the night.

And when next it rose over Europe everywhere were crowds of watchers on hilly slopes, on house-roofs, in open spaces, staring eastward for the rising of the great new star. It rose with a white glow in front of it, like the glare of a white fire, and those who had seen it come into existence the night before cried out at the sight of it. "It is larger," they cried. "It is brighter!" And, indeed the moon a quarter full and sinking in the west was in its apparent size beyond comparison, but scarcely in all its breadth had it as much brightness now as the little circle of the strange new star.

"It is brighter!" cried the people clustering in the streets.

But in the dim observatories the watchers held their breath and peered at one another IT IS NEARER," they said. "NEARER!"

And voice after voice repeated, "It is nearer," and the clicking telegraph took that up, and it trembled along telephone wires, and in a thousand cities grimy compositors fingered the type. "It is nearer." Men writing in offices, struck with a strange realisation, flung down their pens, men talking in a thousand places suddenly came upon a grotesque possibility in those words, "It is nearer." It hurried along wakening streets, it was shouted down the frost-stilled ways of quiet villages; men who had read these things from the throbbing tape stood in yellow-lit doorways shouting the news to the passersby. "It is nearer." Pretty women, flushed and glittering, heard the news told jestingly between the dances, and feigned an intelligent interest they did not feel. "Nearer! Indeed. How curious! How very, very clever people must be to find out things like that!"

Lonely tramps faring through the wintry night murmured those words to comfort themselves--looking skyward. "It has need to be nearer, for the night's as cold as charity. Don't seem much warmth from it if it IS nearer, all the same."

"What is a new star to me?" cried the weeping woman kneeling beside her dead.

The schoolboy, rising early for his examination work, puzzled it out for himself--with the great white star shining broad and bright through the frost-flowers of his window. "Centrifugal, centripetal," he said, with his chin on his fist. "Stop a planet in its flight, rob it of its centrifugal force, what then? Centripetal has it, and down it falls into the sun! And this--!"

"Do WE come in the way? I wonder--"

The light of that day went the way of its brethren, and with the later watches of the frosty darkness rose the strange star again. And it was now so bright that the waxing moon seemed but a pale yellow ghost of itself, hanging huge in the sunset. In a South African City a great man had married, and the streets were alight to welcome his return with his bride. "Even the skies have illuminated," said the flatterer. Under Capricorn, two negro lovers, daring the wild beasts and evil spirits, for love of one another, crouched together in a cane brake where the fire-flies hovered. "That is our star," they whispered, and felt strangely comforted by the sweet brilliance of its light.

The master mathematician sat in his private room and pushed the papers from him. His calculations were already finished. In a small white phial there still remained a little of the drug that had kept him awake and active for four long nights. Each day, serene, explicit, patient as ever, he had given his lecture to his students, and then had come back at once to this momentous calculation. His face was grave, a little drawn and hectic from his drugged activity. For some time he seemed lost in thought. Then he went to the window, and the blind went up with a click. Half way up the sky, over the clustering roofs, chimneys and steeples of the city, hung the star.

He looked at it as one might look into the eyes of a brave enemy. "You may kill me," he said after a silence. "But I can hold you--and all the universe for that matter--in the grip of this little brain. I would not change. Even now."

He looked at the little phial. "There will be no need of sleep again," he said. The next day at noon--punctual to the minute, he entered his lecture theatre, put his hat on the end of the table as his habit was, and carefully selected a large piece of chalk. It was a joke among his students that he could not lecture without that piece of chalk to fumble in his fingers, and once he

had been stricken to impotence by their hiding his supply. He came and looked under his grey eyebrows at the rising tiers of young fresh faces, and spoke with his accustomed studied commonness of phrasing. "Circumstances have arisen--circumstances beyond my control," he said and paused, "which will debar me from completing the course I had designed. It would seem, gentlemen, if I may put the thing clearly and briefly, that--Man has lived in vain."

The students glanced at one another. Had they heard aright? Mad? Raised eyebrows and grinning lips there were, but one or two faces remained intent upon his calm grey-fringed face. "It will be interesting," he was saying, "to devote this morning to an exposition, so far as I can make it clear to you, of the calculations that have led me to this conclusion. Let us assume--"

He turned towards the blackboard, meditating a diagram in the way that was usual to him. "What was that about 'lived in vain?'" whispered one student to another. "Listen," said the other, nodding towards the lecturer.

And presently they began to understand.

That night the star rose later, for its proper eastward motion had carried it some way across Leo towards Virgo, and its brightness was so great that the sky became a luminous blue as it rose, and every star was hidden in its turn, save only Jupiter near the zenith, Capella, Aldebaran, Sirius and the pointers of the Bear. It was very white and beautiful. In many parts of the world that night a pallid halo encircled it about. It was perceptibly larger; in the clear refractive sky of the tropics it seemed as if it were nearly a quarter the size of the moon. The frost was still on the ground in England, but the world was as brightly lit as if it were midsummer moonlight. One could see to read quite ordinary print by that cold clear light, and in the cities the lamps burnt yellow and wan.

And everywhere the world was awake that night, and throughout Christendom a sombre murmur hung in the keen air over the country side like the belling of bees in the heather, and this murmurous tumult grew to a clangour in the cities. It was the tolling of the bells in a million belfry towers and steeples, summoning the people to sleep no more, to sin no more, but to gather in their churches and pray. And overhead, growing larger and brighter as the earth rolled on its way and the night passed, rose the dazzling star.

And the streets and houses were alight in all the cities, the shipyards glared, and whatever roads led to high country were lit and crowded all night long. And in all the seas about the civilised lands, ships with throbbing engines, and ships with bellying sails, crowded with men and living creatures, were standing out to ocean and the north. For already the warning of the master mathematician had been telegraphed all over the world, and translated into a hundred tongues. The new planet and Neptune, locked in a fiery embrace, were whirling headlong, ever faster and faster towards the sun. Already every second this blazing mass flew a hundred miles, and every second its terrific velocity increased. As it flew now, indeed, it must pass a hundred million of miles wide of the earth and scarcely affect it. But near its destined path, as yet only slightly perturbed, spun the mighty planet Jupiter and his moons sweeping splendid round the sun. Every moment now the attraction between the fiery star and the greatest of the planets grew stronger. And the result of that attraction? Inevitably Jupiter would be deflected from its orbit into an elliptical path, and the burning star, swung by his attraction wide of its sunward rush, would "describe a curved path" and perhaps collide with, and certainly pass very close to, our earth. "Earthquakes, volcanic outbreaks, cyclones, sea waves, floods, and a steady rise in temperature to I know not what limit"--so prophesied the master mathematician.

And overhead, to carry out his words, lonely and cold and livid, blazed the star of the coming doom.

To many who stared at it that night until their eyes ached, it seemed that it was visibly approaching. And that night, too, the weather changed, and the frost that had gripped all Central Europe and France and England softened towards a thaw.

But you must not imagine because I have spoken of people praying through the night and people going aboard ships and people fleeing toward mountainous country that the whole world was already in a terror because of the star. As a matter of fact, use and wont still ruled the world, and save for the talk of idle moments and the splendour of the night, nine human beings out of ten were still busy at their common occupations. In all the cities the shops, save one here and there, opened and closed at their proper hours, the doctor and the undertaker plied their trades, the workers gathered in the factories, soldiers drilled, scholars studied, lovers sought one another, thieves lurked and fled, politicians planned their schemes. The presses of the newspapers roared through the night, and many a priest of this church and that would not open his holy building to further what he considered a foolish panic. The newspapers insisted on the lesson of the year 1000--for then, too, people had anticipated the end. The star was no star--mere gas--a comet; and were it a star it could not possibly strike the earth. There was no precedent for such a thing. Common sense was sturdy everywhere, scornful, jesting, a little inclined to persecute the obdurate fearful. That night, at seven-fifteen by Greenwich time, the star would be at its nearest to Jupiter. Then the world would see the turn things would take. The master mathematician's grim warnings were treated by many as so much mere elaborate self-advertisement. Common sense at last, a little heated by argument, signified its unalterable convictions by going to bed. So, too, barbarism and savagery, already tired of the novelty, went

about their nightly business, and save for a howling dog here and there, the beast world left the star unheeded.

And yet, when at last the watchers in the European States saw the star rise, an hour later it is true, but no larger than it had been the night before, there were still plenty awake to laugh at the master mathematician--to take the danger as if it had passed.

But hereafter the laughter ceased. The star grew--it grew with a terrible steadiness hour after hour, a little larger each hour, a little nearer the midnight zenith, and brighter and brighter, until it had turned night into a second day. Had it come straight to the earth instead of in a curved path, had it lost no velocity to Jupiter, it must have leapt the intervening gulf in a day, but as it was it took five days altogether to come by our planet. The next night it had become a third the size of the moon before it set to English eyes, and the thaw was assured. It rose over America near the size of the moon, but blinding white to look at, and HOT; and a breath of hot wind blew now with its rising and gathering strength, and in Virginia, and Brazil, and down the St. Lawrence valley, it shone intermittently through a driving reek of thunder-clouds, flickering violet lightning, and hail unprecedented. In Manitoba was a thaw and devastating floods. And upon all the mountains of the earth the snow and ice began to melt that night, and all the rivers coming out of high country flowed thick and turbid, and soon--in their upper reaches --with swirling trees and the bodies of beasts and men. They rose steadily, steadily in the ghostly brilliance, and came trickling over their banks at last, behind the flying population of their valleys.

And along the coast of Argentina and up the South Atlantic the tides were higher than had ever been in the memory of man, and the storms drove the waters in many cases scores of miles inland, drowning whole cities. And so great grew the heat during the night

that the rising of the sun was like the coming of a shadow. The earthquakes began and grew until all down America from the Arctic Circle to Cape Horn, hillsides were sliding, fissures were opening, and houses and walls crumbling to destruction. The whole side of Cotopaxi slipped out in one vast convulsion, and a tumult of lava poured out so high and broad and swift and liquid that in one day it reached the sea.

So the star, with the wan moon in its wake, marched across the Pacific, trailed the thunderstorms like the hem of a robe, and the growing tidal wave that toiled behind it, frothing and eager, poured over island and island and swept them clear of men. Until that wave came at last--in a blinding light and with the breath of a furnace, swift and terrible it came--a wall of water, fifty feet high, roaring hungrily, upon the long coasts of Asia, and swept inland across the plains of China. For a space the star, hotter now and larger and brighter than the sun in its strength, showed with pitiless brilliance the wide and populous country; towns and villages with their pagodas and trees, roads, wide cultivated fields, millions of sleepless people staring in helpless terror at the incandescent sky; and then, low and growing, came the murmur of the flood. And thus it was with millions of men that night--a flight nowhither, with limbs heavy with heat and breath fierce and scant, and the flood like a wall swift and white behind. And then death.

China was lit glowing white, but over Japan and Java and all the islands of Eastern Asia the great star was a ball of dull red fire because of the steam and smoke and ashes the volcanoes were spouting forth to salute its coming. Above was the lava, hot gases and ash, and below the seething floods, and the whole earth swayed and rumbled with the earthquake shocks. Soon the immemorial snows of Thibet and the Himalaya were melting and pouring down by ten million deepening converging channels upon the plains of Burmah and Hindostan. The tangled summits of the Indian jungles were aflame

in a thousand places, and below the hurrying waters around the stems were dark objects that still struggled feebly and reflected the blood-red tongues of fire. And in a rudderless confusion a multitude of men and women fled down the broad river-ways to that one last hope of men--the open sea.

Larger grew the star, and larger, hotter, and brighter with a terrible swiftness now. The tropical ocean had lost its phosphorescence, and the whirling steam rose in ghostly wreaths from the black waves that plunged incessantly, speckled with storm-tossed ships.

And then came a wonder. It seemed to those who in Europe watched for the rising of the star that the world must have ceased its rotation. In a thousand open spaces of down and upland the people who had fled thither from the floods and the falling houses and sliding slopes of hill watched for that rising in vain. Hour followed hour through a terrible suspense, and the star rose not. Once again men set their eyes upon the old constellations they had counted lost to them forever. In England it was hot and clear overhead, though the ground quivered perpetually, but in the tropics, Sirius and Capella and Aldebaran showed through a veil of steam. And when at last the great star rose near ten hours late, the sun rose close upon it, and in the centre of its white heart was a disc of black.

Over Asia it was the star had begun to fall behind the movement of the sky, and then suddenly, as it hung over India, its light had been veiled. All the plain of India from the mouth of the Indus to the mouths of the Ganges was a shallow waste of shining water that night, out of which rose temples and palaces, mounds and hills, black with people. Every minaret was a clustering mass of people, who fell one by one into the turbid waters, as heat and terror overcame them. The whole land seemed a-wailing and suddenly there swept a shadow across that furnace of

despair, and a breath of cold wind, and a gathering of clouds, out of the cooling air. Men looking up, near blinded, at the star, saw that a black disc was creeping across the light. It was the moon, coming between the star and the earth. And even as men cried to God at this respite, out of the East with a strange inexplicable swiftness sprang the sun. And then star, sun and moon rushed together across the heavens.

So it was that presently, to the European watchers, star and sun rose close upon each other, drove headlong for a space and then slower, and at last came to rest, star and sun merged into one glare of flame at the zenith of the sky. The moon no longer eclipsed the star but was lost to sight in the brilliance of the sky. And though those who were still alive regarded it for the most part with that dull stupidity that hunger, fatigue, heat and despair engender, there were still men who could perceive the meaning of these signs. Star and earth had been at their nearest, had swung about one another, and the star had passed. Already it was receding, swifter and swifter, in the last stage of its headlong journey downward into the sun.

And then the clouds gathered, blotting out the vision of the sky, the thunder and lightning wove a garment round the world; all over the earth was such a downpour of rain as men had never before seen, and where the volcanoes flared red against the cloud canopy there descended torrents of mud. Everywhere the waters were pouring off the land, leaving mud-silted ruins, and the earth littered like a storm-worn beach with all that had floated, and the dead bodies of the men and brutes, its children. For days the water streamed off the land, sweeping away soil and trees and houses in the way, and piling huge dykes and scooping out Titanic gullies over the country side. Those were the days of darkness that followed the star and the heat. All through them, and for many weeks and

months, the earthquakes continued.

But the star had passed, and men, hunger-driven and gathering courage only slowly, might creep back to their ruined cities, buried granaries, and sodden fields. Such few ships as had escaped the storms of that time came stunned and shattered and sounding their way cautiously through the new marks and shoals of once familiar ports. And as the storms subsided men perceived that everywhere the days were hotter than of yore, and the sun larger, and the moon, shrunk to a third of its former size, took now fourscore days between its new and new.

But of the new brotherhood that grew presently among men, of the saving of laws and books and machines, of the strange change that had come over Iceland and Greenland and the shores of Baffin's Bay, so that the sailors coming there presently found them green and gracious, and could scarce believe their eyes, this story does not tell. Nor of the movement of mankind now that the earth was hotter, northward and southward towards the poles of the earth. It concerns itself only with the coming and the passing of the Star.

The Martian astronomers--for there are astronomers on Mars, although they are very different beings from men--were naturally profoundly interested by these things. They saw them from their own standpoint of course. "Considering the mass and temperature of the missile that was flung through our solar system into the sun," one wrote, "it is astonishing what a little damage the earth, which it missed so narrowly, has sustained. All the familiar continental markings and the masses of the seas remain intact, and indeed the only difference seems to be a shrinkage of the white discoloration (supposed to be frozen water) round either pole." Which only shows how small the vastest of human catastrophes may seem, at a distance of a few million miles.

A DREAM OF ARMAGEDDON

The man with the white face entered the carriage at Rugby. He moved slowly in spite of the urgency of his porter, and even while he was still on the platform I noted how ill he seemed. He dropped into the corner over against me with a sigh, made an incomplete attempt to arrange his travelling shawl, and became motionless, with his eyes staring vacantly. Presently he was moved by a sense of my observation, looked up at me, and put out a spiritless hand for his newspaper. Then he glanced again in my direction.

I feigned to read. I feared I had unwittingly embarrassed him, and in a moment I was surprised to find him speaking.

"I beg your pardon?" said I.

"That book," he repeated, pointing a lean finger, "is about dreams."

"Obviously," I answered, for it was Fortnum Roscoe's Dream States, and the title was on the cover.

He hung silent for a space as if he sought words. "Yes," he said at last, "but they tell you nothing."

I did not catch his meaning for a second.

"They don't know," he added.

I looked a little more attentively at his face.

"There are dreams," he said, "and dreams."

That sort of proposition I never dispute.

"I suppose--" he hesitated. "Do you ever dream? I mean vividly."

"I dream very little," I answered. "I doubt if I have three vivid dreams in a year."

"Ah!" he said, and seemed for a moment to collect his thoughts.

"Your dreams don't mix with your memories?" he asked abruptly.

"You don't find yourself in doubt; did this happen or did it not?"

"Hardly ever. Except just for a momentary hesitation now and then. I suppose few people do."

"Does he say--?" He indicated the book.

"Says it happens at times and gives the usual explanation about intensity of impression and the like to account for its not happening as a rule. I suppose you know something of these theories--"

"Very little--except that they are wrong."

His emaciated hand played with the strap of the window for a time. I prepared to resume reading, and that seemed to precipitate his next remark. He leant forward almost as though he would touch me.

"Isn't there something called consecutive dreaming--that goes on night after night?"

"I believe there is. There are cases given in most books on mental trouble."

"Mental trouble! Yes. I daresay there are. It's the right place for them. But what I mean--" He looked at his bony knuckles. "Is that sort of thing always dreaming? Is it dreaming?"

Or is it something else? Mightn't it be something else?"

I should have snubbed his persistent conversation but for the drawn anxiety of his face. I remember now the look of his faded eyes and the lids red stained--perhaps you know that look.

"I'm not just arguing about a matter of opinion," he said. "The thing's killing me."

"Dreams?"

"If you call them dreams. Night after night. Vivid!--so vivid this--" (he indicated the landscape that went streaming by the window) "seems unreal in comparison! I can scarcely remember who I am, what business I am on"

He paused. "Even now--"

"The dream is always the same--do you mean?" I asked.

"It's over."

"You mean?"

"I died."

"Died?"

"Smashed and killed, and now, so much of me as that dream was, is dead. Dead forever. I dreamt I was another man, you know, living in a different part of the world and in a different time. I dreamt that night after night. Night after night I woke into that other life. Fresh scenes and fresh happenings--until I came upon the last--"

"When you died?"

"When I died."

"And since then--"

"No," he said. "Thank God! That was the end of the dream . . ."

It was clear I was in for this dream. And after all, I had an hour before me, the light was fading fast, and Fortnum Roscoe has a dreary way with him. "Living in a different time," I said: "do you mean in some different age?"

"Yes."

"Past?"

"No, to come--to come."

"The year three thousand, for example?"

"I don't know what year it was. I did when I was asleep, when I was dreaming, that is, but not now--not now that I am awake. There's a lot of things I have forgotten since I woke out of these dreams, though I knew them at the time when I was--I suppose it was dreaming. They called the year differently from our way of calling the year . . . What did they call it?" He put his hand to his

forehead. "No," said he, "I forget."

He sat smiling weakly. For a moment I feared he did not mean to tell me his dream. As a rule I hate people who tell their dreams, but this struck me differently. I proffered assistance even. "It began--" I suggested.

"It was vivid from the first. I seemed to wake up in it suddenly. And it's curious that in these dreams I am speaking of I never remembered this life I am living now. It seemed as if the dream life was enough while it lasted. Perhaps--But I will tell you how I find myself when I do my best to recall it all. I don't remember anything clearly until I found myself sitting in a sort of loggia looking out over the sea. I had been dozing, and suddenly I woke up--fresh and vivid--not a bit dreamlike--because the girl had stopped fanning me."

"The girl?"

"Yes, the girl. You must not interrupt or you will put me out."

He stopped abruptly. "You won't think I'm mad?" he said.

"No," I answered. "You've been dreaming. Tell me your dream."

"I woke up, I say, because the girl had stopped fanning me. I was not surprised to find myself there or anything of that sort, you understand. I did not feel I had fallen into it suddenly. I simply took it up at that point. Whatever memory I had of this life, this nineteenth-century life, faded as I woke, vanished like a dream. I knew all about myself, knew that my name was no longer Cooper but Hedon, and all about my position in the world. I've forgotten a lot since I woke--there's a want of connection--but it

was all quite clear and matter of fact then."

He hesitated again, gripping the window strap, putting his face forward and looking up to me appealingly.

"This seems bosh to you?"

"No, no!" I cried. "Go on. Tell me what this loggia was like!"

"It was not really a loggia--I don't know what to call it. It faced south. It was small. It was all in shadow except the semicircle above the balcony that showed the sky and sea and the corner where the girl stood. I was on a couch--it was a metal couch with light striped cushions--and the girl was leaning over the balcony with her back to me. The light of the sunrise fell on her ear and cheek. Her pretty white neck and the little curls that nestled there, and her white shoulder were in the sun, and all the grace of her body was in the cool blue shadow. She was dressed--how can I describe it? It was easy and flowing. And altogether there she stood, so that it came to me how beautiful and desirable she was, as though I had never seen her before. And when at last I sighed and raised myself upon my arm she turned her face to me--"

He stopped.

"I have lived three-and-fifty years in this world. I have had mother, sisters, friends, wife and daughters--all their faces, the play of their faces, I know. But the face of this girl--it is much more real to me. I can bring it back into memory so that I see it again--I could draw it or paint it. And after all--"

He stopped--but I said nothing.

"The face of a dream--the face of a dream. She was beautiful.

Not that beauty which is terrible, cold, and worshipful, like the beauty of a saint; nor that beauty that stirs fierce passions; but a sort of radiation, sweet lips that softened into smiles, and grave gray eyes. And she moved gracefully, she seemed to have part with all pleasant and gracious things--"

He stopped, and his face was downcast and hidden. Then he looked up at me and went on, making no further attempt to disguise his absolute belief in the reality of his story.

"You see, I had thrown up my plans and ambitions, thrown up all I had ever worked for or desired for her sake. I had been a master man away there in the north, with influence and property and a great reputation, but none of it had seemed worth having beside her. I had come to the place, this city of sunny pleasures with her, and left all those things to wreck and ruin just to save a remnant at least of my life. While I had been in love with her before I knew that she had any care for me, before I had imagined that she would dare--that we should dare, all my life had seemed vain and hollow, dust and ashes. It was dust and ashes. Night after night and through the long days I had longed and desired--my soul had beaten against the thing forbidden!

"But it is impossible for one man to tell another just these things. It's emotion, it's a tint, a light that comes and goes. Only while it's there, everything changes, everything. The thing is I came away and left them in their Crisis to do what they could."

"Left whom?" I asked, puzzled.

"The people up in the north there. You see--in this dream, anyhow--I had been a big man, the sort of man men come to trust in, to group themselves about. Millions of men who had never seen me

were ready to do things and risk things because of their confidence in me. I had been playing that game for years, that big laborious game, that vague, monstrous political game amidst intrigues and betrayals, speech and agitation. It was a vast weltering world, and at last I had a sort of leadership against the Gang--you know it was called the Gang--a sort of compromise of scoundrelly projects and base ambitions and vast public emotional stupidities and catch-words--the Gang that kept the world noisy and blind year by year, and all the while that it was drifting, drifting towards infinite disaster. But I can't expect you to understand the shades and complications of the year--the year something or other ahead. I had it all--down to the smallest details--in my dream. I suppose I had been dreaming of it before I awoke, and the fading outline of some queer new development I had imagined still hung about me as I rubbed my eyes. It was some grubby affair that made me thank God for the sunlight. I sat up on the couch and remained looking at the woman and rejoicing--rejoicing that I had come away out of all that tumult and folly and violence before it was too late. After all, I thought, this is life--love and beauty, desire and delight, are they not worth all those dismal struggles for vague, gigantic ends? And I blamed myself for having ever sought to be a leader when I might have given my days to love. But then, thought I, if I had not spent my early days sternly and austere, I might have wasted myself upon vain and worthless women, and at the thought all my being went out in love and tenderness to my dear mistress, my dear lady, who had come at last and compelled me--compelled me by her invincible charm for me--to lay that life aside.

"'You are worth it,' I said, speaking without intending her to hear; 'you are worth it, my dearest one; worth pride and praise and all things. Love! to have you is worth them all together.'" And at the murmur of my voice she turned about.

"'Come and see,' she cried--'I can hear her now--'come and see the sunrise upon Monte Solaro.'

"I remember how I sprang to my feet and joined her at the balcony. She put a white hand upon my shoulder and pointed towards great masses of limestone, flushing, as it were, into life. I looked. But first I noted the sunlight on her face caressing the lines of her cheeks and neck. How can I describe to you the scene we had before us? We were at Capri--"

"I have been there," I said. "I have clambered up Monte Solaro and drunk vero Capri--muddy stuff like cider--at the summit."

"Ah!" said the man with the white face; "then perhaps you can tell me--you will know if this is indeed Capri. For in this life I have never been there. Let me describe it. We were in a little room, one of a vast multitude of little rooms, very cool and sunny, hollowed out of the limestone of a sort of cape, very high above the sea. The whole island, you know, was one enormous hotel, complex beyond explaining, and on the other side there were miles of floating hotels, and huge floating stages to which the flying machines came. They called it a pleasure city. Of course, there was none of that in your time--rather, I should say, is none of that now. Of course. Now!--yes.

"Well, this room of ours was at the extremity of the cape, so that one could see east and west. Eastward was a great cliff--a thousand feet high perhaps--coldly gray except for one bright edge of gold, and beyond it the Isle of the Sirens, and a falling coast that faded and passed into the hot sunrise. And when one turned to the west, distinct and near was a little bay, a little beach still in shadow. And out of that shadow rose Solaro straight and tall, flushed and golden crested, like a beauty throned, and the white moon was floating behind her in the sky. And before us from east to west stretched the many-tinted sea all dotted with little sailing boats.

"To the eastward, of course, these little boats were gray and very minute and clear, but to the westward they were little boats of gold--shining gold--almost like little flames. And just below us was a rock with an arch worn through it. The blue sea-water broke to green and foam all round the rock, and a galley came gliding out of the arch."

"I know that rock." I said. "I was nearly drowned there. It is called the Faraglioni."

"I Faraglioni? Yes, she called it that," answered the man with the white face. "There was some story--but that--"

He put his hand to his forehead again. "No," he said, "I forget that story."

"Well, that is the first thing I remember, the first dream I had, that little shaded room and the beautiful air and sky and that dear lady of mine, with her shining arms and her graceful robe, and how we sat and talked in half whispers to one another. We talked in whispers not because there was any one to hear, but because there was still such a freshness of mind between us that our thoughts were a little frightened, I think, to find themselves at last in words. And so they went softly.

"Presently we were hungry and we went from our apartment, going by a strange passage with a moving floor, until we came to the great breakfast room--there was a fountain and music. A pleasant and joyful place it was, with its sunlight and splashing, and the murmur of plucked strings. And we sat and ate and smiled at one another, and I would not heed a man who was watching me from a table near by.

"And afterwards we went on to the dancing-hall. But I cannot

describe that hall. The place was enormous--larger than any building you have ever seen--and in one place there was the old gate of Capri, caught into the wall of a gallery high overhead. Light girders, stems and threads of gold, burst from the pillars like fountains, streamed like an Aurora across the roof and interlaced, like--like conjuring tricks. All about the great circle for the dancers there were beautiful figures, strange dragons, and intricate and wonderful grotesques bearing lights. The place was inundated with artificial light that shamed the newborn day. And as we went through the throng the people turned about and looked at us, for all through the world my name and face were known, and how I had suddenly thrown up pride and struggle to come to this place. And they looked also at the lady beside me, though half the story of how at last she had come to me was unknown or mistold. And few of the men who were there, I know, but judged me a happy man, in spite of all the shame and dishonour that had come upon my name.

"The air was full of music, full of harmonious scents, full of the rhythm of beautiful motions. Thousands of beautiful people swarmed about the hall, crowded the galleries, sat in a myriad recesses; they were dressed in splendid colours and crowned with flowers; thousands danced about the great circle beneath the white images of the ancient gods, and glorious processions of youths and maidens came and went. We two danced, not the dreary monotones of your days--of this time, I mean--but dances that were beautiful, intoxicating. And even now I can see my lady dancing--dancing joyously. She danced, you know, with a serious face; she danced with a serious dignity, and yet she was smiling at me and caressing me--smiling and caressing with her eyes.

"The music was different," he murmured. "It went--I cannot describe it; but it was infinitely richer and more varied than any music that has ever come to me awake.

"And then--it was when we had done dancing--a man came to speak to me. He was a lean, resolute man, very soberly clad for that place, and already I had marked his face watching me in the breakfasting hall, and afterwards as we went along the passage I had avoided his eye. But now, as we sat in a little alcove, smiling at the pleasure of all the people who went to and fro across the shining floor, he came and touched me, and spoke to me so that I was forced to listen. And he asked that he might speak to me for a little time apart.

"'No,' I said. 'I have no secrets from this lady. What do you want to tell me?'

"He said it was a trivial matter, or at least a dry matter, for a lady to hear.

"'Perhaps for me to hear,' said I.

"He glanced at her, as though almost he would appeal to her. Then he asked me suddenly if I had heard of a great and avenging declaration that Evesham had made? Now, Evesham had always before been the man next to myself in the leadership of that great party in the north. He was a forcible, hard, and tactless man, and only I had been able to control and soften him. It was on his account even more than my own, I think, that the others had been so dismayed at my retreat. So this question about what he had done reawakened my old interest in the life I had put aside just for a moment.

"'I have taken no heed of any news for many days,' I said. 'What has Evesham been saying?'

"And with that the man began, nothing loth, and I must confess even I was struck by Evesham's reckless folly in the wild and threatening words he had used. And this messenger they had sent to

me not only told me of Evesham's speech, but went on to ask counsel and to point out what need they had of me. While he talked, my lady sat a little forward and watched his face and mine.

"My old habits of scheming and organising reasserted themselves. I could even see myself suddenly returning to the north, and all the dramatic effect of it. All that this man said witnessed to the disorder of the party indeed, but not to its damage. I should go back stronger than I had come. And then I thought of my lady. You see--how can I tell you? There were certain peculiarities of our relationship--as things are I need not tell you about that--which would render her presence with me impossible. I should have had to leave her; indeed, I should have had to renounce her clearly and openly, if I was to do all that I could do in the north. And the man knew that, even as he talked to her and me, knew it as well as she did, that my steps to duty were--first, separation, then abandonment. At the touch of that thought my dream of a return was shattered. I turned on the man suddenly, as he was imagining his eloquence was gaining ground with me.

"What have I to do with these things now?" I said. 'I have done with them. Do you think I am coquetting with your people in coming here?'

"No,' he said. 'But--'

"Why cannot you leave me alone. I have done with these things. I have ceased to be anything but a private man.'

"Yes,' he answered. 'But have you thought?--this talk of war, these reckless challenges, these wild aggressions--'

"I stood up.

"No,' I cried. 'I won't hear you. I took count of all those things, I weighed them--and I have come away.'

"He seemed to consider the possibility of persistence. He looked from me to where the lady sat regarding us.

"War,' he said, as if he were speaking to himself, and then turned slowly from me and walked away.

"I stood, caught in the whirl of thoughts his appeal had set going.

"I heard my lady's voice.

"Dear,' she said; 'but if they had need of you--'

"She did not finish her sentence, she let it rest there. I turned to her sweet face, and the balance of my mood swayed and reeled.

"They want me only to do the thing they dare not do themselves,' I said. 'If they distrust Evesham they must settle with him themselves.'

"She looked at me doubtfully.

"But war--' she said.

"I saw a doubt on her face that I had seen before, a doubt of herself and me, the first shadow of the discovery that, seen strongly and completely, must drive us apart for ever.

"Now, I was an older mind than hers, and I could sway her to this belief or that.

"My dear one,' I said, 'you must not trouble over these things. There will be no war. Certainly there will be no war. The age of wars is past. Trust me to know the justice of this case. They have no right upon me, dearest, and no one has a right upon me. I have been free to choose my life, and I have chosen this.'

"But war--,' she said.

"I sat down beside her. I put an arm behind her and took her hand in mine. I set myself to drive that doubt away--I set myself to fill her mind with pleasant things again. I lied to her, and in lying to her I lied also to myself. And she was only too ready to believe me, only too ready to forget.

"Very soon the shadow had gone again, and we were hastening to our bathing-place in the Grotta del Bovo Marino, where it was our custom to bathe every day. We swam and splashed one another, and in that buoyant water I seemed to become something lighter and stronger than a man. And at last we came out dripping and rejoicing and raced among the rocks. And then I put on a dry bathing-dress, and we sat to bask in the sun, and presently I nodded, resting my head against her knee, and she put her hand upon my hair and stroked it softly and I dozed. And behold! as it were with the snapping of the string of a violin, I was awakening, and I was in my own bed in Liverpool, in the life of to-day.

"Only for a time I could not believe that all these vivid moments had been no more than the substance of a dream.

"In truth, I could not believe it a dream for all the sobering reality of things about me. I bathed and dressed as it were by habit, and as I shaved I argued why I of all men should leave the woman I loved to go back to fantastic politics in the hard and strenuous north. Even if Evesham did force the world back to war,

what was that to me? I was a man with the heart of a man, and why should I feel the responsibility of a deity for the way the world might go?

"You know that is not quite the way I think about affairs, about my real affairs. I am a solicitor, you know, with a point of view.

"The vision was so real, you must understand, so utterly unlike a dream that I kept perpetually recalling little irrelevant details; even the ornament of the book-cover that lay on my wife's sewing-machine in the breakfast-room recalled with the utmost vividness the gilt line that ran about the seat in the alcove where I had talked with the messenger from my deserted party. Have you ever heard of a dream that had a quality like that?"

"Like--?"

"So that afterwards you remembered little details you had forgotten."

I thought. I had never noticed the point before, but he was right.

"Never," I said. "That is what you never seem to do with dreams."

"No," he answered. "But that is just what I did. I am a solicitor, you must understand, in Liverpool, and I could not help wondering what the clients and business people I found myself talking to in my office would think if I told them suddenly I was in love with a girl who would be born a couple of hundred years or so hence, and worried about the politics of my great-great-great-grandchildren. I was chiefly busy that day negotiating a ninety-nine-year building lease. It was a private builder in a

hurry, and we wanted to tie him in every possible way. I had an interview with him, and he showed a certain want of temper that sent me to bed still irritated. That night I had no dream. Nor did I dream the next night, at least, to remember.

"Something of that intense reality of conviction vanished. I began to feel sure it was a dream. And then it came again.

"When the dream came again, nearly four days later, it was very different. I think it certain that four days had also elapsed in the dream. Many things had happened in the north, and the shadow of them was back again between us, and this time it was not so easily dispelled. I began I know with moody musings. Why, in spite of all, should I go back, go back for all the rest of my days to toil and stress, insults and perpetual dissatisfaction, simply to save hundreds of millions of common people, whom I did not love, whom too often I could do no other than despise, from the stress and anguish of war and infinite misrule? And after all I might fail. They all sought their own narrow ends, and why should not I--why should not I also live as a man? And out of such thoughts her voice summoned me, and I lifted my eyes.

I found myself awake and walking. We had come out above the Pleasure City, we were near the summit of Monte Solaro and looking towards the bay. It was the late afternoon and very clear. Far away to the left Ischia hung in a golden haze between sea and sky, and Naples was coldly white against the hills, and before us was Vesuvius with a tall and slender streamer feathering at last towards the south, and the ruins of Torre dell' Annunziata and Castellammare glittering and near."

I interrupted suddenly: "You have been to Capri, of course?"

"Only in this dream," he said, "only in this dream. All across the bay beyond Sorrento were the floating palaces of the

Pleasure City moored and chained. And northward were the broad floating stages that received the aeroplanes. Aeroplanes fell out of the sky every afternoon, each bringing its thousands of pleasure-seekers from the uttermost parts of the earth to Capri and its delights. All these things, I say, stretched below.

"But we noticed them only incidentally because of an unusual sight that evening had to show. Five war aeroplanes that had long slumbered useless in the distant arsenals of the Rhinemouth were manoeuvring now in the eastward sky. Evesham had astonished the world by producing them and others, and sending them to circle here and there. It was the threat material in the great game of bluff he was playing, and it had taken even me by surprise. He was one of those incredibly stupid energetic people who seem sent by heaven to create disasters. His energy to the first glance seemed so wonderfully like capacity! But he had no imagination, no invention, only a stupid, vast, driving force of will, and a mad faith in his stupid idiot 'luck' to pull him through. I remember how we stood upon the headland watching the squadron circling far away, and how I weighed the full meaning of the sight, seeing clearly the way things must go. And then even it was not too late.

I might have gone back, I think, and saved the world. The people of the north would follow me, I knew, granted only that in one thing I respected their moral standards. The east and south would trust me as they would trust no other northern man. And I knew I had only to put it to her and she would have let me go
Not because she did not love me!

"Only I did not want to go; my will was all the other way about. I had so newly thrown off the incubus of responsibility: I was still so fresh a renegade from duty that the daylight clearness of what I ought to do had no power at all to touch my will. My will was to live, to gather pleasures and make my dear lady happy. But though this sense of vast neglected duties had no power to draw

me, it could make me silent and preoccupied, it robbed the days I had spent of half their brightness and roused me into dark meditations in the silence of the night. And as I stood and watched Evesham's aeroplanes sweep to and fro--those birds of infinite ill omen--she stood beside me watching me, perceiving the trouble indeed, but not perceiving it clearly--her eyes questioning my face, her expression shaded with perplexity. Her face was gray because the sunset was fading out of the sky. It was no fault of hers that she held me. She had asked me to go from her, and again in the night time and with tears she had asked me to go.

"At last it was the sense of her that roused me from my mood. I turned upon her suddenly and challenged her to race down the mountain slopes. 'No,' she said, as if I had jarred with her gravity, but I was resolved to end that gravity, and make her run--no one can be very gray and sad who is out of breath--and when she stumbled I ran with my hand beneath her arm. We ran down past a couple of men, who turned back staring in astonishment at my behaviour--they must have recognised my face. And half way down the slope came a tumult in the air, clang-clank, clang-clank, and we stopped, and presently over the hill-crest those war things came flying one behind the other."

The man seemed hesitating on the verge of a description.

"What were they like?" I asked.

"They had never fought," he said. "They were just like our ironclads are nowadays; they had never fought. No one knew what they might do, with excited men inside them; few even cared to speculate. They were great driving things shaped like spear-heads without a shaft, with a propeller in the place of the shaft."

"Steel?"

"Not steel."

"Aluminum?"

"No, no, nothing of that sort. An alloy that was very common--as common as brass, for example. It was called--let me see--" He squeezed his forehead with the fingers of one hand. "I am forgetting everything," he said.

"And they carried guns?"

"Little guns, firing high explosive shells. They fired the guns backwards, out of the base of the leaf, so to speak, and rammed with the beak. That was the theory, you know, but they had never been fought. No one could tell exactly what was going to happen. And meanwhile I suppose it was very fine to go whirling through the air like a flight of young swallows, swift and easy. I guess the captains tried not to think too clearly what the real thing would be like. And these flying war machines, you know, were only one sort of the endless war contrivances that had been invented and had fallen into abeyance during the long peace. There were all sorts of these things that people were routing out and refurbishing up; infernal things, silly things; things that had never been tried; big engines, terrible explosives, great guns. You know the silly way of these ingenious sort of men who make these things; they turn 'em out as beavers build dams, and with no more sense of the rivers they're going to divert and the lands they're going to flood!

"As we went down the winding stepway to our hotel again, in the twilight, I foresaw it all: I saw how clearly and inevitably things were driving for war in Evesham's silly, violent hands, and I had some inkling of what war was bound to be under these new conditions. And even then, though I knew it was drawing near the limit of my opportunity, I could find no will to go back."

He sighed.

"That was my last chance.

"We didn't go into the city until the sky was full of stars, so we walked out upon the high terrace, to and fro, and--she counselled me to go back.

"My dearest,' she said, and her sweet face looked up to me, 'this is Death. This life you lead is Death. Go back to them, go back to your duty--'

"She began to weep, saying, between her sobs, and clinging to my arm as she said it, 'Go back--Go back.'

"Then suddenly she fell mute, and, glancing down at her face, I read in an instant the thing she had thought to do. It was one of those moments when one sees.

"No!' I said.

"No?' she asked, in surprise and I think a little fearful at the answer to her thought.

"Nothing,' I said, 'shall send me back. Nothing! I have chosen. Love, I have chosen, and the world must go. Whatever happens I will live this life--I will live for you! It--nothing shall turn me aside; nothing, my dear one. Even if you died--even if you died--'

"Yes?' she murmured, softly.

"Then--I also would die.'

"And before she could speak again I began to talk, talking eloquently--as I could do in that life--talking to exalt love, to make the life we were living seem heroic and glorious; and the thing I was deserting something hard and enormously ignoble that it was a fine thing to set aside. I bent all my mind to throw that glamour upon it, seeking not only to convert her but myself to that. We talked, and she clung to me, torn too between all that she deemed noble and all that she knew was sweet. And at last I did make it heroic, made all the thickening disaster of the world only a sort of glorious setting to our unparalleled love, and we two poor foolish souls strutted there at last, clad in that splendid delusion, drunken rather with that glorious delusion, under the still stars.

"And so my moment passed.

"It was my last chance. Even as we went to and fro there, the leaders of the south and east were gathering their resolve, and the hot answer that shattered Evesham's bluffing for ever, took shape and waited. And, all over Asia, and the ocean, and the South, the air and the wires were throbbing with their warnings to prepare --prepare.

"No one living, you know, knew what war was; no one could imagine, with all these new inventions, what horror war might bring. I believe most people still believed it would be a matter of bright uniforms and shouting charges and triumphs and flags and bands--in a time when half the world drew its food supply from regions ten thousand miles away--"

The man with the white face paused. I glanced at him, and his face was intent on the floor of the carriage. A little railway station, a string of loaded trucks, a signal-box, and the back of a cottage, shot by the carriage window, and a bridge passed with a clap of noise, echoing the tumult of the train.

"After that," he said, "I dreamt often. For three weeks of nights that dream was my life. And the worst of it was there were nights when I could not dream, when I lay tossing on a bed in this accursed life; and there--somewhere lost to me--things were happening--momentous, terrible things . . . I lived at nights--my days, my waking days, this life I am living now, became a faded, far-away dream, a drab setting, the cover of the book."

He thought.

"I could tell you all, tell you every little thing in the dream, but as to what I did in the daytime--no. I could not tell--I do not remember. My memory--my memory has gone. The business of life slips from me--"

He leant forward, and pressed his hands upon his eyes. For a long time he said nothing.

"And then?" said I.

"The war burst like a hurricane."

He stared before him at unspeakable things.

"And then?" I urged again.

"One touch of unreality," he said, in the low tone of a man who speaks to himself," and they would have been nightmares. But they were not nightmares--they were not nightmares. No!"

He was silent for so long that it dawned upon me that there was a danger of losing the rest of the story. But he went on talking again in the same tone of questioning self-communion.

"What was there to do but flight? I had not thought the war would touch Capri--I had seemed to see Capri as being out of it all, as the contrast to it all; but two nights after the whole place was shouting and bawling, every woman almost and every other man wore a badge--Evesham's badge--and there was no music but a jangling war-song over and over again, and everywhere men enlisting, and in the dancing halls they were drilling. The whole island was awchirl with rumours; it was said, again and again, that fighting had begun. I had not expected this. I had seen so little of the life of pleasure that I had failed to reckon with this violence of the amateurs. And as for me, I was out of it. I was like the man who might have prevented the firing of a magazine. The time had gone. I was no one; the vainest stripling with a badge counted for more than I. The crowd jostled us and bawled in our ears; that accursed song deafened us; a woman shrieked at my lady because no badge was on her, and we two went back to our own place again, ruffled and insulted--my lady white and silent, and I aquiver with rage. So furious was I, I could have quarrelled with her if I could have found one shade of accusation in her eyes.

"All my magnificence had gone from me. I walked up and down our rock cell, and outside was the darkling sea and a light to the southward that flared and passed and came again.

"'We must get out of this place,' I said over and over. 'I have made my choice, and I will have no hand in these troubles. I will have nothing of this war. We have taken our lives out of all these things. This is no refuge for us. Let us go.'

"And the next day we were already in flight from the war that covered the world.

"And all the rest was Flight--all the rest was Flight."

He mused darkly.

"How much was there of it?"

He made no answer.

"How many days?"

His face was white and drawn and his hands were clenched. He took no heed of my curiosity.

I tried to draw him back to his story with questions.

"Where did you go?" I said.

"When?"

"When you left Capri."

"South-west," he said, and glanced at me for a second. "We went in a boat."

"But I should have thought an aeroplane?"

"They had been seized."

I questioned him no more. Presently I thought he was beginning again. He broke out in an argumentative monotone:

"But why should it be? If, indeed, this battle, this slaughter and stress is life, why have we this craving for pleasure and beauty? If there is no refuge, if there is no place of peace, and if all our dreams of quiet places are a folly and a snare, why have we such dreams? Surely it was no ignoble cravings, no base intentions, had brought us to this; it was Love had isolated us. Love had come to me with her eyes and robed in her beauty, more

glorious than all else in life, in the very shape and colour of life, and summoned me away. I had silenced all the voices, I had answered all the questions--I had come to her. And suddenly there was nothing but War and Death!"

I had an inspiration. "After all," I said, "it could have been only a dream."

"A dream!" he cried, flaming upon me, "a dream--when, even now--"

For the first time he became animated. A faint flush crept into his cheek. He raised his open hand and clenched it, and dropped it to his knee. He spoke, looking away from me, and for all the rest of the time he looked away. "We are but phantoms!" he said, "and the phantoms of phantoms, desires like cloud-shadows and wills of straw that eddy in the wind; the days pass, use and wont carry us through as a train carries the shadow of its lights--so be it! But one thing is real and certain, one thing is no dream-stuff, but eternal and enduring. It is the centre of my life, and all other things about it are subordinate or altogether vain. I loved her, that woman of a dream. And she and I are dead together!"

"A dream! How can it be a dream, when it drenched a living life with unappeasable sorrow, when it makes all that I have lived for and cared for, worthless and unmeaning?"

"Until that very moment when she was killed I believed we had still a chance of getting away," he said. "All through the night and morning that we sailed across the sea from Capri to Salerno, we talked of escape. We were full of hope, and it clung about us to the end, hope for the life together we should lead, out of it all, out of the battle and struggle, the wild and empty passions, the empty arbitrary 'thou shalt' and 'thou shalt not' of the world. We were uplifted, as though our quest was a holy thing, as though love

for another was a mission

"Even when from our boat we saw the fair face of that great rock Capri--already scarred and gashed by the gun emplacements and hiding-places that were to make it a fastness--we reckoned nothing of the imminent slaughter, though the fury of preparation hung about in the puffs and clouds of dust at a hundred points amidst the gray; but, indeed, I made a text of that and talked. There, you know, was the rock, still beautiful for all its scars, with its countless windows and arches and ways, tier upon tier, for a thousand feet, a vast carving of gray, broken by vine-clad terraces, and lemon and orange groves, and masses of agave and prickly pear, and puffs of almond blossom. And out under the archway that is built over the Piccola Marina other boats were coming; and as we came round the cape and within sight of the mainland, another little string of boats came into view, driving before the wind towards the south-west. In a little while a multitude had come out, the remoter just little specks of ultramarine in the shadow of the eastward cliff.

"It is love and reason,' I said, 'fleeing from all this madness of war.'

"And though we presently saw a squadron of aeroplanes flying across the southern sky we did not heed it. There it was--a line of little dots in the sky--and then more, dotting the south-eastern horizon, and then still more, until all that quarter of the sky was stippled with blue specks. Now they were all thin little strokes of blue, and now one and now a multitude would heel and catch the sun and become short flashes of light. They came, rising and falling and growing larger, like some huge flight of gulls or rooks or such-like birds, moving with a marvellous uniformity, and ever as they drew nearer they spread over a greater width of sky. The southward wind flung itself in an arrow-headed cloud athwart the sun. And then suddenly they swept round to the eastward and

streamed eastward, growing smaller and smaller and clearer and clearer again until they vanished from the sky. And after that we noted to the northward and very high Evesham's fighting machines hanging high over Naples like an evening swarm of gnats.

"It seemed to have no more to do with us than a flight of birds.

"Even the mutter of guns far away in the south-east seemed to us to signify nothing . . .

"Each day, each dream after that, we were still exalted, still seeking that refuge where we might live and love. Fatigue had come upon us, pain and many distresses. For though we were dusty and stained by our toilsome tramping, and half starved and with the horror of the dead men we had seen and the flight of the peasants--for very soon a gust of fighting swept up the peninsula--with these things haunting our minds it still resulted only in a deepening resolution to escape. Oh, but she was brave and patient! She who had never faced hardship and exposure had courage for herself and me. We went to and fro seeking an outlet, over a country all commandeered and ransacked by the gathering hosts of war. Always we went on foot. At first there were other fugitives, but we did not mingle with them. Some escaped northward, some were caught in the torrent of peasantry that swept along the main roads; many gave themselves into the hands of the soldiery and were sent northward. Many of the men were impressed. But we kept away from these things; we had brought no money to bribe a passage north, and I feared for my lady at the hands of these conscript crowds. We had landed at Salerno, and we had been turned back from Cava, and we had tried to cross towards Taranto by a pass over Mount Alburno, but we had been driven back for want of food, and so we had come down among the marshes by Paestum, where those great temples stand alone. I had some vague idea that by Paestum it might be possible to find a boat or something, and take

once more to sea. And there it was the battle overtook us.

"A sort of soul-blindness had me. Plainly I could see that we were being hemmed in; that the great net of that giant Warfare had us in its toils. Many times we had seen the levies that had come down from the north going to and fro, and had come upon them in the distance amidst the mountains making ways for the ammunition and preparing the mounting of the guns. Once we fancied they had fired at us, taking us for spies--at any rate a shot had gone shuddering over us. Several times we had hidden in woods from hovering aeroplanes.

"But all these things do not matter now, these nights of flight and pain . . . We were in an open place near those great temples at Paestum, at last, on a blank stony place dotted with spiky bushes, empty and desolate and so flat that a grove of eucalyptus far away showed to the feet of its stems. How I can see it! My lady was sitting down under a bush resting a little, for she was very weak and weary, and I was standing up watching to see if I could tell the distance of the firing that came and went. They were still, you know, fighting far from each other, with those terrible new weapons that had never before been used: guns that would carry beyond sight, and aeroplanes that would do--What they would do no man could foretell.

"I knew that we were between the two armies, and that they drew together. I knew we were in danger, and that we could not stop there and rest!

"Though all these things were in my mind, they were in the background. They seemed to be affairs beyond our concern. Chiefly, I was thinking of my lady. An aching distress filled me. For the first time she had owned herself beaten and had fallen a-weeping. Behind me I could hear her sobbing, but I would not turn round to her because I knew she had need of weeping, and had

held herself so far and so long for me. It was well, I thought, that she would weep and rest and then we would toil on again, for I had no inkling of the thing that hung so near. Even now I can see her as she sat there, her lovely hair upon her shoulder, can mark again the deepening hollow of her cheek.

"If we had parted,' she said, 'if I had let you go.'

"No,' said I.' Even now, I do not repent. I will not repent; I made my choice, and I will hold on to the end.'

"And then--

"Overhead in the sky flashed something and burst, and all about us I heard the bullets making a noise like a handful of peas suddenly thrown. They chipped the stones about us, and whirled fragments from the bricks and passed"

He put his hand to his mouth, and then moistened his lips.

"At the flash I had turned about . . .

"You know--she stood up--

"She stood up, you know, and moved a step towards me--as though she wanted to reach me--

"And she had been shot through the heart."

He stopped and stared at me. I felt all that foolish incapacity an Englishman feels on such occasions. I met his eyes for a moment, and then stared out of the window. For a long space we kept silence. When at last I looked at him he was sitting back in his corner, his arms folded, and his teeth gnawing at his knuckles.

He bit his nail suddenly, and stared at it.

"I carried her," he said, "towards the temples, in my arms--as though it mattered. I don't know why. They seemed a sort of sanctuary, you know, they had lasted so long, I suppose.

"She must have died almost instantly. Only--I talked to her all the way."

Silence again.

"I have seen those temples," I said abruptly, and indeed he had brought those still, sunlit arcades of worn sandstone very vividly before me.

"It was the brown one, the big brown one. I sat down on a fallen pillar and held her in my arms . . . Silent after the first babble was over. And after a little while the lizards came out and ran about again, as though nothing unusual was going on, as though nothing had changed . . . It was tremendously still there, the sun high and the shadows still; even the shadows of the weeds upon the entablature were still--in spite of the thudding and banging that went all about the sky.

"I seem to remember that the aeroplanes came up out of the south, and that the battle went away to the west. One aeroplane was struck, and overset and fell. I remember that--though it didn't interest me in the least. It didn't seem to signify. It was like a wounded gull, you know--flapping for a time in the water. I could see it down the aisle of the temple--a black thing in the bright blue water.

"Three or four times shells burst about the beach, and then that ceased. Each time that happened all the lizards scuttled in

and hid for a space. That was all the mischief done, except that once a stray bullet gashed the stone hard by--made just a fresh bright surface.

"As the shadows grew longer, the stillness seemed greater.

"The curious thing," he remarked, with the manner of a man who makes a trivial conversation, "is that I didn't THINK--at all. I sat with her in my arms amidst the stones--in a sort of lethargy--stagnant.

"And I don't remember waking up. I don't remember dressing that day. I know I found myself in my office, with my letters all slit open in front of me, and how I was struck by the absurdity of being there, seeing that in reality I was sitting, stunned, in that Paestum Temple with a dead woman in my arms. I read my letters like a machine. I have forgotten what they were about."

He stopped, and there was a long silence.

Suddenly I perceived that we were running down the incline from Chalk Farm to Euston. I started at this passing of time. I turned on him with a brutal question, with the tone of "Now or never."

"And did you dream again?"

"Yes."

He seemed to force himself to finish. His voice was very low.

"Once more, and as it were only for a few instants. I seemed to have suddenly awakened out of a great apathy, to have risen into a sitting position, and the body lay there on the stones beside me.

A gaunt body. Not her, you know. So soon--it was not her

"I may have heard voices. I do not know. Only I knew clearly that men were coming into the solitude and that that was a last outrage.

"I stood up and walked through the temple, and then there came into sight--first one man with a yellow face, dressed in a uniform of dirty white, trimmed with blue, and then several, climbing to the crest of the old wall of the vanished city, and crouching there. They were little bright figures in the sunlight, and there they hung, weapon in hand, peering cautiously before them.

"And further away I saw others and then more at another point in the wall. It was a long lax line of men in open order.

"Presently the man I had first seen stood up and shouted a command, and his men came tumbling down the wall and into the high weeds towards the temple. He scrambled down with them and led them. He came facing towards me, and when he saw me he stopped.

"At first I had watched these men with a mere curiosity, but when I had seen they meant to come to the temple I was moved to forbid them. I shouted to the officer.

"'You must not come here,' I cried, 'I am here. I am here with my dead.'

"He stared, and then shouted a question back to me in some unknown tongue.

"I repeated what I had said.

"He shouted again, and I folded my arms and stood still. Presently he spoke to his men and came forward. He carried a drawn

sword.

"I signed to him to keep away, but he continued to advance. I told him again very patiently and clearly: 'You must not come here. These are old temples and I am here with my dead.'

"Presently he was so close I could see his face clearly. It was a narrow face, with dull gray eyes, and a black moustache. He had a scar on his upper lip, and he was dirty and unshaven. He kept shouting unintelligible things, questions, perhaps, at me.

"I know now that he was afraid of me, but at the time that did not occur to me. As I tried to explain to him, he interrupted me in imperious tones, bidding me, I suppose, stand aside.

"He made to go past me, and I caught hold of him.

"I saw his face change at my grip.

"'You fool,' I cried. 'Don't you know? She is dead!'

"He started back. He looked at me with cruel eyes. I saw a sort of exultant resolve leap into them--delight. Then, suddenly, with a scowl, he swept his sword back--SO--and thrust."

He stopped abruptly.

I became aware of a change in the rhythm of the train. The brakes lifted their voices and the carriage jarred and jerked. This present world insisted upon itself, became clamorous. I saw through the steamy window huge electric lights glaring down from tall masts upon a fog, saw rows of stationary empty carriages passing by, and then a signal-box hoisting its constellation of green and red into the murky London twilight, marched after them. I looked again at his drawn features.

"He ran me through the heart. It was with a sort of astonishment--no fear, no pain--but just amazement, that I felt it pierce me, felt the sword drive home into my body. It didn't hurt, you know. It didn't hurt at all."

The yellow platform lights came into the field of view, passing first rapidly, then slowly, and at last stopping with a jerk. Dim shapes of men passed to and fro without.

"Euston!" cried a voice.

"Do you mean--?"

"There was no pain, no sting or smart. Amazement and then darkness sweeping over everything. The hot, brutal face before me, the face of the man who had killed me, seemed to recede. It swept out of existence--"

"Euston!" clamoured the voices outside; "Euston!"

The carriage door opened admitting a flood of sound, and a porter stood regarding us. The sounds of doors slamming, and the hoof-clatter of cab-horses, and behind these things the featureless remote roar of the London cobble-stones, came to my ears. A truckload of lighted lamps blazed along the platform.

"A darkness, a flood of darkness that opened and spread and blotted out all things."

"Any luggage, sir?" said the porter.

"And that was the end?" I asked.

He seemed to hesitate. Then, almost inaudibly, he answered, "NO."

"You mean?"

"I couldn't get to her. She was there on the other side of the temple--
And then--"

"Yes," I insisted. "Yes?"

"Nightmares," he cried; "nightmares indeed! My God! Great
birds that fought and tore."

THE CONE

The night was hot and overcast, the sky red, rimmed with the lingering sunset of mid-summer. They sat at the open window, trying to fancy the air was fresher there. The trees and shrubs of the garden stood stiff and dark; beyond in the roadway a gas-lamp burnt, bright orange against the hazy blue of the evening. Farther were the three lights of the railway signal against the lowering sky. The man and woman spoke to one another in low tones.

"He does not suspect?" said the man, a little nervously.

"Not he," she said peevishly, as though that too irritated her. "He thinks of nothing but the works and the prices of fuel. He has no imagination, no poetry."

"None of these men of iron have," he said sententiously.

"They have no hearts."

"HE has not," she said. She turned her discontented face towards the window. The distant sound of a roaring and rushing drew nearer and grew in volume; the house quivered; one heard the metallic rattle of the tender. As the train passed, there was a glare of light above the cutting and a driving tumult of smoke; one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight black oblongs--eight trucks--passed across the dim grey of the embankment, and were suddenly extinguished one by one in the throat of the tunnel, which, with the last, seemed to swallow down train, smoke, and sound in one abrupt gulp.

"This country was all fresh and beautiful once," he said; "and now--it is Gehenna. Down that way--nothing but pot-banks and chimneys belching fire and dust into the face of heaven But what does it matter? An end comes, an end to all this cruelty TO-MORROW." He spoke the last word in a whisper.

"TO-MORROW," she said, speaking in a whisper too, and still staring out of the window.

"Dear!" he said, putting his hand on hers.

She turned with a start, and their eyes searched one another's. Hers softened to his gaze. "My dear one!" she said, and then: "It seems so strange --that you should have come into my life like this--to open--" She paused.

"To open?" he said.

"All this wonderful world--" she hesitated, and spoke still more softly--"this world of LOVE to me."

Then suddenly the door clicked and closed. They turned their heads, and he started violently back. In the shadow of the room stood a great shadowy figure--silent. They saw the face dimly in the half-light, with unexpressive dark patches under the penthouse brows. Every muscle in Raut's body suddenly became tense. When could the door have opened? What had he heard? Had he heard all? What had he seen? A tumult of questions.

The new-comer's voice came at last, after a pause that seemed interminable. "Well?" he said.

"I was afraid I had missed you, Horrocks," said the man at the window, gripping the window-ledge with his hand. His voice was unsteady.

The clumsy figure of Horrocks came forward out of the shadow. He made no answer to Raut's remark. For a moment he stood above them.

The woman's heart was cold within her. "I told Mr. Raut it was just possible you might come back," she said, in a voice that never quivered.

Horrocks, still silent, sat down abruptly in the chair by her little work-table. His big hands were clenched; one saw now the fire of his eyes under the shadow of his brows. He was trying to get his breath. His eyes went from the woman he had trusted to the friend he had trusted, and then back to the woman.

By this time and for the moment all three half understood one another. Yet none dared say a word to ease the pent-up things that choked them.

It was the husband's voice that broke the silence at last.

"You wanted to see me?" he said to Raut.

Raut started as he spoke. "I came to see you," he said, resolved to lie to the last.

"Yes," said Horrocks.

"You promised," said Raut, "to show me some fine effects of moonlight and smoke."

"I promised to show you some fine effects of moonlight and smoke," repeated Horrocks in a colourless voice.

"And I thought I might catch you to-night before you went down to the works," proceeded Raut, "and come with you."

There was another pause. Did the man mean to take the thing coolly? Did he after all know? How long had he been in the room? Yet even at the moment when they heard the door, their attitudes .

. . . Horrocks glanced at the profile of the woman, shadowy pallid in the half-light. Then he glanced at Raut, and seemed to recover himself suddenly. "Of course," he said, "I promised to show you the works under their proper dramatic conditions. It's odd how I could have forgotten."

"If I am troubling you--" began Raut.

Horrocks started again. A new light had suddenly come into the sultry gloom of his eyes. "Not in the least," he said.

"Have you been telling Mr. Raut of all these contrasts of flame and shadow you think so splendid?" said the woman, turning now to her husband for the first time, her confidence creeping back again, her voice just one half-note too high. "That dreadful theory of yours that machinery is beautiful, and everything else in the world ugly. I thought he would not spare you, Mr. Raut. It's his great theory, his one discovery in art."

"I am slow to make discoveries," said Horrocks grimly, damping her suddenly. "But what I discover" He stopped.

"Well?" she said.

"Nothing;" and suddenly he rose to his feet.

"I promised to show you the works," he said to Raut, and put his big, clumsy hand on his friend's shoulder. "And you are ready to go?"

"Quite," said Raut, and stood up also.

There was another pause. Each of them peered through the indistinctness of the dusk at the other two. Horrocks' hand still rested on Raut's shoulder. Raut half fancied still that the

incident was trivial after all. But Mrs. Horrocks knew her husband better, knew that grim quiet in his voice, and the confusion in her mind took a vague shape of physical evil. "Very well", said Horrocks, and, dropping his hand, turned towards the door.

"My hat?" Raut looked round in the half-light.

"That's my work-basket," said Mrs. Horrocks, with a gust of hysterical laughter. Their hands came together on the back of the chair. "Here it is!" he said. She had an impulse to warn him in an undertone, but she could not frame a word. "Don't go!" and "Beware of him!" struggled in her mind, and the swift moment passed.

"Got it?" said Horrocks, standing with the door half open.

Raut stepped towards him. "Better say good-bye to Mrs. Horrocks," said the ironmaster, even more grimly quiet in his tone than before.

Raut started and turned. "Good-evening, Mrs. Horrocks," he said, and their hands touched.

Horrocks held the door open with a ceremonial politeness unusual in him towards men. Raut went out, and then, after a wordless look at her, her husband followed. She stood motionless while Raut's light footfall and her husband's heavy tread, like bass and treble, passed down the passage together. The front door slammed heavily. She went to the window, moving slowly, and stood watching--leaning forward. The two men appeared for a moment at the gateway in the road, passed under the street lamp, and were hidden by the black masses of the shrubbery. The lamp-light fell for a moment on their faces, showing only unmeaning pale patches, telling nothing of what she still feared, and doubted, and craved vainly to know. Then she sank down into a crouching attitude in

the big arm-chair, her eyes wide open and staring out at the red lights from the furnaces that flickered in the sky. An hour after she was still there, her attitude scarcely changed.

The oppressive stillness of the evening weighed heavily upon Raut. They went side by side down the road in silence, and in silence turned into the cinder-made by-way that presently opened out the prospect of the valley.

A blue haze, half dust, half mist, touched the long valley with mystery. Beyond were Hanley and Etruria, grey and dark masses, outlined thinly by the rare golden dots of the street lamps, and here and there a gaslit window, or the yellow glare of some late-working factory or crowded public-house. Out of the masses, clear and slender against the evening sky, rose a multitude of tall chimneys, many of them reeking, a few smokeless during a season of "play." Here and there a pallid patch and ghostly stunted beehive shapes showed the position of a pot-bank, or a wheel, black and sharp against the hot lower sky, marked some colliery where they raise the iridescent coal of the place. Nearer at hand was the broad stretch of railway, and half invisible trains shunted--a steady puffing and rumbling, with every run a ringing concussion and a rhythmic series of impacts, and a passage of intermittent puffs of white steam across the further view. And to the left, between the railway and the dark mass of the low hill beyond, dominating the whole view, colossal, inky-black, and crowned with smoke and fitful flames, stood the great cylinders of the Jeddah Company Blast Furnaces, the central edifices of the big ironworks of which Horrocks was the manager. They stood heavy and threatening, full of an incessant turmoil of flames and seething molten iron, and about the feet of them rattled the rolling-mills, and the steam hammer beat heavily and splashed the white iron sparks hither and thither. Even as they looked, a truckful of fuel was shot into one of the giants, and the red flames gleamed out, and a confusion of smoke and black dust came boiling upwards

towards the sky.

"Certainly you get some fine effects of colour with your furnaces," said Raut, breaking a silence that had become apprehensive.

Horrocks grunted. He stood with his hands in his pockets, frowning down at the dim steaming railway and the busy ironworks beyond, frowning as if he were thinking out some knotty problem.

Raut glanced at him and away again. "At present your moonlight effect is hardly ripe," he continued, looking upward. "The moon is still smothered by the vestiges of daylight."

Horrocks stared at him with the expression of a man who has suddenly awakened. "Vestiges of daylight? . . . Of course, of course." He too looked up at the moon, pale still in the midsummer sky. "Come along," he said suddenly, and, gripping Raut's arm in his hand, made a move towards the path that dropped from them to the railway.

Raut hung back. Their eyes met and saw a thousand things in a moment that their eyes came near to say. Horrocks' hand tightened and then relaxed. He let go, and before Raut was aware of it, they were arm in arm, and walking, one unwillingly enough, down the path.

"You see the fine effect of the railway signals towards Burslem," said Horrocks, suddenly breaking into loquacity, striding fast, and tightening the grip of his elbow the while. "Little green lights and red and white lights, all against the haze. You have an eye for effect, Raut. It's a fine effect. And look at those furnaces of mine, how they rise upon us as we come down the hill. That to the right is my pet--seventy feet of him. I packed him myself, and he's boiled away cheerfully with iron in his guts

for five long years. I've a particular fancy for HIM. That line of red there--a lovely bit of warm orange you'd call it, Raut--that's the puddlers' furnaces, and there, in the hot light, three black figures--did you see the white splash of the steam-hammer then?--that's the rolling mills. Come along! Clang, clatter, how it goes rattling across the floor! Sheet tin, Raut, --amazing stuff. Glass mirrors are not in it when that stuff comes from the mill. And, squelch!--there goes the hammer again. Come along!"

He had to stop talking to catch at his breath. His arm twisted into Raut's with benumbing tightness. He had come striding down the black path towards the railway as though he was possessed.

Raut had not spoken a word, had simply hung back against Horrocks' pull with all his strength.

"I say," he said now, laughing nervously, but with an undernote of snarl in his voice, "why on earth are you nipping my arm off, Horrocks, and dragging me along like this?"

At length Horrocks released him. His manner changed again. "Nipping your arm off?" he said. "Sorry. But it's you taught me the trick of walking in that friendly way."

"You haven't learnt the refinements of it yet then," said Raut, laughing artificially again. "By Jove! I'm black and blue."

Horrocks offered no apology. They stood now near the bottom of the hill, close to the fence that bordered the railway. The ironworks had grown larger and spread out with their approach. They looked up to the blast furnaces now instead of down; the further view of Etruria and Hanley had dropped out of sight with their descent. Before them, by the stile rose a notice-board, bearing still dimly

visible, the words, "BEWARE OF THE TRAINS," half hidden by splashes of coaly mud.

"Fine effects," said Horrocks, waving his arm. "Here comes a train. The puffs of smoke, the orange glare, the round eye of light in front of it, the melodious rattle. Fine effects! But these furnaces of mine used to be finer, before we shoved cones in their throats, and saved the gas."

"How?" said Raut. "Cones?"

"Cones, my man, cones. I'll show you one nearer. The flames used to flare out of the open throats, great--what is it?--pillars of cloud by day, red and black smoke, and pillars of fire by night.

Now we run it off in pipes, and burn it to heat the blast, and the top is shut by a cone. You'll be interested in that cone."

"But every now and then," said Raut, "you get a burst of fire and smoke up there."

"The cone's not fixed, it's hung by a chain from a lever, and balanced by an equipoise. You shall see it nearer. Else, of course, there'd be no way of getting fuel into the thing. Every now and then the cone dips, and out comes the flare."

"I see," said Raut. He looked over his shoulder. "The moon gets brighter," he said.

"Come along," said Horrocks abruptly, gripping his shoulder again, and moving him suddenly towards the railway crossing. And then came one of those swift incidents, vivid, but so rapid that they leave one doubtful and reeling. Halfway across, Horrocks' hand suddenly clenched upon him like a vice, and swung him backward

and through a half-turn, so that he looked up the line. And there a chain of lamp-lit carriage-windows telescoped swiftly as it came towards them, and the red and yellow lights of an engine grew larger and larger, rushing down upon them. As he grasped what this meant, he turned his face to Horrocks, and pushed with all his strength against the arm that held him back between the rails. The struggle did not last a moment. Just as certain as it was that Horrocks held him there, so certain was it that he had been violently lugged out of danger.

"Out of the way," said Horrocks, with a gasp, as the train came rattling by, and they stood panting by the gate into the ironworks.

"I did not see it coming," said Raut, still, even in spite of his own apprehensions, trying to keep up an appearance of ordinary intercourse.

Horrocks answered with a grunt. "The cone," he said, and then, as one who recovers himself, "I thought you did not hear."

"I didn't," said Raut.

"I wouldn't have had you run over then for the world," said Horrocks.

"For a moment I lost my nerve," said Raut.

Horrocks stood for half a minute, then turned abruptly towards the ironworks again. "See how fine these great mounds of mine, these clinker-heaps, look in the night! That truck yonder, up above there! Up it goes, and out-tilts the slag. See the palpitating red stuff go sliding down the slope. As we get nearer, the heap rises up and cuts the blast furnaces. See the quiver up above the big one. Not that way! This way, between the heaps.

That goes to the puddling furnaces, but I want to show you the canal first." He came and took Raut by the elbow, and so they went along side by side. Raut answered Horrocks vaguely. What, he asked himself, had really happened on the line? Was he deluding himself with his own fancies, or had Horrocks actually held him back in the way of the train? Had he just been within an ace of being murdered?

Suppose this slouching, scowling monster DID know anything? For a minute or two then Raut was really afraid for his life, but the mood passed as he reasoned with himself. After all, Horrocks might have heard nothing. At any rate, he had pulled him out of the way in time. His odd manner might be due to the mere vague jealousy he had shown once before. He was talking now of the ash-heaps and the canal. "Eigh?" said Horrocks.

"What?" said Raut. "Rather! The haze in the moonlight. Fine!"

"Our canal," said Horrocks, stopping suddenly. "Our canal by moonlight and firelight is an immense effect. You've never seen it? Fancy that! You've spent too many of your evenings philandering up in Newcastle there. I tell you, for real florid effects--But you shall see. Boiling water . . . "

As they came out of the labyrinth of clinker-heaps and mounds of coal and ore, the noises of the rolling-mill sprang upon them suddenly, loud, near, and distinct. Three shadowy workmen went by and touched their caps to Horrocks. Their faces were vague in the darkness. Raut felt a futile impulse to address them, and before he could frame his words, they passed into the shadows. Horrocks pointed to the canal close before them now: a weird-looking place it seemed, in the blood-red reflections of the furnaces. The hot water that cooled the tuyeres came into it, some fifty yards up--a tumultuous, almost boiling affluent, and the steam rose up from

the water in silent white wisps and streaks, wrapping damply about them, an incessant succession of ghosts coming up from the black and red eddies, a white uprising that made the head swim. The shining black tower of the larger blast-furnace rose overhead out of the mist, and its tumultuous riot filled their ears. Raut kept away from the edge of the water, and watched Horrocks.

"Here it is red," said Horrocks, "blood-red vapour as red and hot as sin; but yonder there, where the moonlight falls on it, and it drives across the clinker-heaps, it is as white as death."

Raut turned his head for a moment, and then came back hastily to his watch on Horrocks. "Come along to the rolling-mills," said Horrocks. The threatening hold was not so evident that time, and Raut felt a little reassured. But all the same, what on earth did Horrocks mean about "white as death" and "red as sin?"
Coincidence, perhaps?

They went and stood behind the puddlers for a little while, and then through the rolling-mills, where amidst an incessant din the deliberate steam-hammer beat the juice out of the succulent iron, and black, half-naked Titans rushed the plastic bars, like hot sealing-wax, between the wheels. "Come on," said Horrocks in Raut's ear, and they went and peeped through the little glass hole behind the tuyeres, and saw the tumbled fire writhing in the pit of the blast-furnace. It left one eye blinded for a while. Then, with green and blue patches dancing across the dark, they went to the lift by which the trucks of ore and fuel and lime were raised to the top of the big cylinder.

And out upon the narrow rail that overhung the furnace, Raut's doubts came upon him again. Was it wise to be here? If Horrocks did know--everything! Do what he would, he could not resist a violent trembling. Right under foot was a sheer depth of seventy feet. It was a dangerous place. They pushed by a truck of fuel to

get to the railing that crowned the place. The reek of the furnace, a sulphurous vapor streaked with pungent bitterness, seemed to make the distant hillside of Hanley quiver. The moon was riding out now from among a drift of clouds, halfway up the sky above the undulating wooded outlines of Newcastle. The steaming canal ran away from below them under an indistinct bridge, and vanished into the dim haze of the flat fields towards Burslem.

"That's the cone I've been telling you of," shouted Horrocks; "and, below that, sixty feet of fire and molten metal, with the air of the blast frothing through it like gas in soda-water."

Raut gripped the hand-rail tightly, and stared down at the cone. The heat was intense. The boiling of the iron and the tumult of the blast made a thunderous accompaniment to Horrocks' voice. But the thing had to be gone through now. Perhaps, after all . . .

"In the middle," bawled Horrocks, "temperature near a thousand degrees. If YOU were dropped into it . . . flash into flame like a pinch of gunpowder in a candle. Put your hand out and feel the heat of his breath. Why, even up here I've seen the rain-water boiling off the trucks. And that cone there. It's a damned sight too hot for roasting cakes. The top side of it's three hundred degrees."

"Three hundred degrees!" said Raut.

"Three hundred centigrade, mind!" said Horrocks. "It will boil the blood out of you in no time."

"Eigh?" said Raut, and turned.

"Boil the blood out of you in . . . No, you don't!"

"Let me go!" screamed Raut. "Let go my arm!"

With one hand he clutched at the hand-rail, then with both. For a moment the two men stood swaying. Then suddenly, with a violent jerk, Horrocks had twisted him from his hold. He clutched at Horrocks and missed, his foot went back into empty air; in mid-air he twisted himself, and then cheek and shoulder and knee struck the hot cone together.

He clutched the chain by which the cone hung, and the thing sank an infinitesimal amount as he struck it. A circle of glowing red appeared about him, and a tongue of flame, released from the chaos within, flickered up towards him. An intense pain assailed him at the knees, and he could smell the singeing of his hands. He raised himself to his feet, and tried to climb up the chain, and then something struck his head. Black and shining with the moonlight, the throat of the furnace rose about him.

Horrocks, he saw, stood above him by one of the trucks of fuel on the rail. The gesticulating figure was bright and white in the moonlight, and shouting, "Fizzle, you fool! Fizzle, you hunter of women! You hot-blooded hound! Boil! boil! boil!"

Suddenly he caught up a handful of coal out of the truck, and flung it deliberately, lump after lump, at Raut.

"Horrocks!" cried Raut. "Horrocks!"

He clung crying to the chain, pulling himself up from the burning of the cone. Each missile Horrocks flung hit him. His clothes charred and glowed, and as he struggled the cone dropped, and a rush of hot suffocating gas whooped out and burned round him in a swift breath of flame.

His human likeness departed from him. When the momentary red

had passed, Horrocks saw a charred, blackened figure, its head streaked with blood, still clutching and fumbling with the chain, and writhing in agony--a cindery animal, an inhuman, monstrous creature that began a sobbing intermittent shriek.

Abruptly, at the sight, the ironmaster's anger passed. A deadly sickness came upon him. The heavy odour of burning flesh came drifting up to his nostrils. His sanity returned to him.

"God have mercy upon me!" he cried. "O God! what have I done?"

He knew the thing below him, save that it still moved and felt, was already a dead man--that the blood of the poor wretch must be boiling in his veins. An intense realisation of that agony came to his mind, and overcame every other feeling. For a moment he stood irresolute, and then, turning to the truck, he hastily tilted its contents upon the struggling thing that had once been a man. The mass fell with a thud, and went radiating over the cone. With the thud the shriek ended, and a boiling confusion of smoke, dust, and flame came rushing up towards him. As it passed, he saw the cone clear again.

Then he staggered back, and stood trembling, clinging to the rail with both hands. His lips moved, but no words came to them.

Down below was the sound of voices and running steps. The clangour of rolling in the shed ceased abruptly.

A MOONLIGHT FABLE

There was once a little man whose mother made him a beautiful suit of clothes. It was green and gold and woven so that I cannot describe how delicate and fine it was, and there was a tie of orange fluffiness that tied up under his chin. And the buttons in their newness shone like stars. He was proud and pleased by his suit beyond measure, and stood before the long looking-glass when first he put it on, so astonished and delighted with it that he could hardly turn himself away.

He wanted to wear it everywhere and show it to all sorts of people. He thought over all the places he had ever visited and all the scenes he had ever heard described, and tried to imagine what the feel of it would be if he were to go now to those scenes and places wearing his shining suit, and he wanted to go out forthwith into the long grass and the hot sunshine of the meadow wearing it. Just to wear it! But his mother told him, "No." She told him he must take great care of his suit, for never would he have another nearly so fine; he must save it and save it and only wear it on rare and great occasions. It was his wedding suit, she said. And she took his buttons and twisted them up with tissue paper for fear their bright newness should be tarnished, and she tacked little guards over the cuffs and elbows and wherever the suit was most likely to come to harm. He hated and resisted these things, but what could he do? And at last her warnings and persuasions had effect and he consented to take off his beautiful suit and fold it into its proper creases and put it away. It was almost as though he gave it up again. But he was always thinking of wearing it and of the supreme occasion when some day it might be worn without the guards, without the tissue paper on the buttons, utterly and delightfully, never caring, beautiful beyond measure.

One night when he was dreaming of it, after his habit, he dreamed he took the tissue paper from one of the buttons and found its brightness a little faded, and that distressed him mightily in his dream. He polished the poor faded button and polished it, and if anything it grew duller. He woke up and lay awake thinking of the brightness a little dulled and wondering how he would feel if perhaps when the great occasion (whatever it might be) should arrive, one button should chance to be ever so little short of its first glittering freshness, and for days and days that thought remained with him, distressingly. And when next his mother let him wear his suit, he was tempted and nearly gave way to the temptation just to fumble off one little bit of tissue paper and see if indeed the buttons were keeping as bright as ever.

He went trimly along on his way to church full of this wild desire. For you must know his mother did, with repeated and careful warnings, let him wear his suit at times, on Sundays, for example, to and fro from church, when there was no threatening of rain, no dust nor anything to injure it, with its buttons covered and its protections tacked upon it and a sunshade in his hand to shadow it if there seemed too strong a sunlight for its colours. And always, after such occasions, he brushed it over and folded it exquisitely as she had taught him, and put it away again.

Now all these restrictions his mother set to the wearing of his suit he obeyed, always he obeyed them, until one strange night he woke up and saw the moonlight shining outside his window. It seemed to him the moonlight was not common moonlight, nor the night a common night, and for a while he lay quite drowsily with this odd persuasion in his mind. Thought joined on to thought like things that whisper warmly in the shadows. Then he sat up in his little bed suddenly, very alert, with his heart beating very fast and a quiver in his body from top to toe. He had made up his mind. He knew now that he was going to wear his suit as it should be worn. He had no doubt in the matter. He was afraid, terribly afraid, but

glad, glad.

He got out of his bed and stood a moment by the window looking at the moonshine-flooded garden and trembling at the thing he meant to do. The air was full of a minute clamor of crickets and murmurings, of the infinitesimal shouting of little living things. He went very gently across the creaking boards, for fear that he might wake the sleeping house, to the big dark clothes-press wherein his beautiful suit lay folded, and he took it out garment by garment and softly and very eagerly tore off its tissue-paper covering and its tacked protections, until there it was, perfect and delightful as he had seen it when first his mother had given it to him--a long time it seemed ago. Not a button had tarnished, not a thread had faded on this dear suit of his; he was glad enough for weeping as in a noiseless hurry he put it on. And then back he went, soft and quick, to the window and looked out upon the garden and stood there for a minute, shining in the moonlight, with his buttons twinkling like stars, before he got out on the sill and, making as little of a rustling as he could, clambered down to the garden path below. He stood before his mother's house, and it was white and nearly as plain as by day, with every window-blind but his own shut like an eye that sleeps. The trees cast still shadows like intricate black lace upon the wall.

The garden in the moonlight was very different from the garden by day; moonshine was tangled in the hedges and stretched in phantom cobwebs from spray to spray. Every flower was gleaming white or crimson black, and the air was aquiver with the thridding of small crickets and nightingales singing unseen in the depths of the trees.

There was no darkness in the world, but only warm, mysterious shadows; and all the leaves and spikes were edged and lined with iridescent jewels of dew. The night was warmer than any night had ever been, the heavens by some miracle at once vaster and nearer,

and spite of the great ivory-tinted moon that ruled the world, the sky was full of stars.

The little man did not shout nor sing for all his infinite gladness. He stood for a time like one awe-stricken, and then, with a queer small cry and holding out his arms, he ran out as if he would embrace at once the whole warm round immensity of the world. He did not follow the neat set paths that cut the garden squarely, but thrust across the beds and through the wet, tall, scented herbs, through the night stock and the nicotine and the clusters of phantom white mallow flowers and through the thickets of southern-wood and lavender, and knee-deep across a wide space of mignonette. He came to the great hedge and he thrust his way through it, and though the thorns of the brambles scored him deeply and tore threads from his wonderful suit, and though burs and goosegrass and havers caught and clung to him, he did not care. He did not care, for he knew it was all part of the wearing for which he had longed. "I am glad I put on my suit," he said; "I am glad I wore my suit."

Beyond the hedge he came to the duck-pond, or at least to what was the duck-pond by day. But by night it was a great bowl of silver moonshine all noisy with singing frogs, of wonderful silver moonshine twisted and clotted with strange patternings, and the little man ran down into its waters between the thin black rushes, knee-deep and waist-deep and to his shoulders, smiting the water to black and shining wavelets with either hand, swaying and shivering wavelets, amid which the stars were netted in the tangled reflections of the brooding trees upon the bank. He waded until he swam, and so he crossed the pond and came out upon the other side, trailing, as it seemed to him, not duckweed, but very silver in long, clinging, dripping masses. And up he went through the transfigured tangles of the willow-herb and the uncut seeding grass of the farther bank. And so he came glad and breathless into the highroad. "I am glad," he said, "beyond measure, that I had

clothes that fitted this occasion."

The highroad ran straight as an arrow flies, straight into the deep blue pit of sky beneath the moon, a white and shining road between the singing nightingales, and along it he went, running now and leaping, and now walking and rejoicing, in the clothes his mother had made for him with tireless, loving hands. The road was deep in dust, but that for him was only soft whiteness, and as he went a great dim moth came fluttering round his wet and shimmering and hastening figure. At first he did not heed the moth, and then he waved his hands at it and made a sort of dance with it as it circled round his head. "Soft moth!" he cried, "dear moth! And wonderful night, wonderful night of the world! Do you think my clothes are beautiful, dear moth? As beautiful as your scales and all this silver vesture of the earth and sky?"

And the moth circled closer and closer until at last its velvet wings just brushed his lips

And next morning they found him dead with his neck broken in the bottom of the stone pit, with his beautiful clothes a little bloody and foul and stained with the duckweed from the pond. But his face was a face of such happiness that, had you seen it, you would have understood indeed how that he had died happy, never knowing the cool and streaming silver for the duckweed in the pond.

THE DIAMOND MAKER

Some business had detained me in Chancery Lane nine in the evening, and thereafter, having some inkling of a headache, I was disinclined either for entertainment or further work. So much of the sky as the high cliffs of that narrow canon of traffic left visible spoke of a serene night, and I determined to make my way down to the Embankment, and rest my eyes and cool my head by watching the variegated lights upon the river. Beyond comparison the night is the best time for this place; a merciful darkness hides the dirt of the waters, and the lights of this transitional age, red glaring orange, gas-yellow, and electric white, are set in shadowy outlines of every possible shade between grey and deep purple. Through the arches of Waterloo Bridge a hundred points of light mark the sweep of the Embankment, and above its parapet rise the towers of Westminster, warm grey against the starlight. The black river goes by with only a rare ripple breaking its silence, and disturbing the reflections of the lights that swim upon its surface.

"A warm night," said a voice at my side.

I turned my head, and saw the profile of a man who was leaning over the parapet beside me. It was a refined face, not unhandsome, though pinched and pale enough, and the coat collar turned up and pinned round the throat marked his status in life as sharply as a uniform. I felt I was committed to the price of a bed and breakfast if I answered him.

I looked at him curiously. Would he have anything to tell me worth the money, or was he the common incapable--incapable even of telling his own story? There was a quality of intelligence in his forehead and eyes, and a certain tremulousness in his nether lip that decided me.

"Very warm," said I; "but not too warm for us here."

"No," he said, still looking across the water, "it is pleasant enough here just now."

"It is good," he continued after a pause, "to find anything so restful as this in London. After one has been fretting about business all day, about getting on, meeting obligations, and parrying dangers, I do not know what one would do if it were not for such pacific corners." He spoke with long pauses between the sentences. "You must know a little of the irksome labour of the world, or you would not be here. But I doubt if you can be so brain-weary and footsore as I am Bah! Sometimes I doubt if the game is worth the candle. I feel inclined to throw the whole thing over--name, wealth and position--and take to some modest trade. But I know if I abandoned my ambition--hardly as she uses me--I should have nothing but remorse left for the rest of my days."

He became silent. I looked at him in astonishment. If ever I saw a man hopelessly hard-up it was the man in front of me. He was ragged and he was dirty, unshaven and unkempt; he looked as though he had been left in a dust-bin for a week. And he was talking to ME of the irksome worries of a large business. I almost laughed outright. Either he was mad or playing a sorry jest on his own poverty.

"If high aims and high positions," said I, "have their drawbacks of hard work and anxiety, they have their compensations. Influence, the power of doing good, of assisting those weaker and poorer than ourselves; and there is even a certain gratification in display"

My banter under the circumstances was in very vile taste. I spoke on the spur of the contrast of his appearance and speech. I

was sorry even while I was speaking.

He turned a haggard but very composed face upon me. Said he: "I forgot myself. Of course you would not understand."

He measured me for a moment. "No doubt it is very absurd. You will not believe me even when I tell you, so that it is fairly safe to tell you. And it will be a comfort to tell someone. I really have a big business in hand, a very big business. But there are troubles just now. The fact is I make diamonds."

"I suppose," said I, "you are out of work just at present?"

"I am sick of being disbelieved," he said impatiently, and suddenly unbuttoning his wretched coat he pulled out a little canvas bag that was hanging by a cord round his neck. From this he produced a brown pebble. "I wonder if you know enough to know what that is?" He handed it to me.

Now, a year or so ago, I had occupied my leisure in taking a London science degree, so that I have a smattering of physics and mineralogy. The thing was not unlike an uncut diamond of the darker sort, though far too large, being almost as big as the top of my thumb. I took it, and saw it had the form of a regular octahedron, with the curved faces peculiar to the most precious of minerals. I took out my penknife and tried to scratch it--vainly. Leaning forward towards the gas-lamp, I tried the thing on my watch-glass, and scored a white line across that with the greatest ease.

I looked at my interlocutor with rising curiosity. "It certainly is rather like a diamond. But, if so, it is a Behemoth of diamonds. Where did you get it?"

"I tell you I made it," he said. "Give it back to me."

He replaced it hastily and buttoned his jacket. "I will sell it you for one hundred pounds," he suddenly whispered eagerly. With that my suspicions returned. The thing might, after all, be merely a lump of that almost equally hard substance, corundum, with an accidental resemblance in shape to the diamond. Or if it was a diamond, how came he by it, and why should he offer it at a hundred pounds?

We looked into one another's eyes. He seemed eager, but honestly eager. At that moment I believed it was a diamond he was trying to sell. Yet I am a poor man, a hundred pounds would leave a visible gap in my fortunes and no sane man would buy a diamond by gaslight from a ragged tramp on his personal warranty only. Still, a diamond that size conjured up a vision of many thousands of pounds. Then, thought I, such a stone could scarcely exist without being mentioned in every book on gems, and again I called to mind the stories of contraband and light-fingered Kaffirs at the Cape. I put the question of purchase on one side.

"How did you get it?" said I.

"I made it."

I had heard something of Moissan, but I knew his artificial diamonds were very small. I shook my head.

"You seem to know something of this kind of thing. I will tell you a little about myself. Perhaps then you may think better of the purchase." He turned round with his back to the river, and put his hands in his pockets. He sighed. "I know you will not believe me."

"Diamonds," he began--and as he spoke his voice lost its faint flavour of the tramp and assumed something of the easy tone of an

educated man--are to be made by throwing carbon out of combination in a suitable flux and under a suitable pressure; the carbon crystallises out, not as black-lead or charcoal-powder, but as small diamonds. So much has been known to chemists for years, but no one yet had hit upon exactly the right flux in which to melt up the carbon, or exactly the right pressure for the best results. Consequently the diamonds made by chemists are small and dark, and worthless as jewels. Now I, you know, have given up my life to this problem--given my life to it.

"I began to work at the conditions of diamond making when I was seventeen, and now I am thirty-two. It seemed to me that it might take all the thought and energies of a man for ten years, or twenty years, but, even if it did, the game was still worth the candle. Suppose one to have at last just hit the right trick before the secret got out and diamonds became as common as coal, one might realize millions. Millions!"

He paused and looked for my sympathy. His eyes shone hungrily. "To think," said he, "that I am on the verge of it all, and here!

"I had," he proceeded, "about a thousand pounds when I was twenty-one, and this, I thought, eked out by a little teaching, would keep my researches going. A year or two was spent in study, at Berlin chiefly, and then I continued on my own account. The trouble was the secrecy. You see, if once I had let out what I was doing, other men might have been spurred on by my belief in the practicability of the idea; and I do not pretend to be such a genius as to have been sure of coming in first, in the case of a race for the discovery. And you see it was important that if I really meant to make a pile, people should not know it was an artificial process and capable of turning out diamonds by the ton. So I had to work all alone. At first I had a little laboratory, but as my resources began to run out I had to conduct my

experiments in a wretched unfurnished room in Kentish Town, where I slept at last on a straw mattress on the floor among all my apparatus. The money simply flowed away. I grudged myself everything except scientific appliances. I tried to keep things going by a little teaching, but I am not a very good teacher, and I have no university degree, nor very much education except in chemistry, and I found I had to give a lot of time and labour for precious little money. But I got nearer and nearer the thing. Three years ago I settled the problem of the composition of the flux, and got near the pressure by putting this flux of mine and a certain carbon composition into a closed-up gun-barrel, filling up with water, sealing tightly, and heating."

He paused.

"Rather risky," said I.

"Yes. It burst, and smashed all my windows and a lot of my apparatus; but I got a kind of diamond powder nevertheless. Following out the problem of getting a big pressure upon the molten mixture from which the things were to crystallise, I hit upon some researches of Daubree's at the Paris Laboratoire des Poudres et Salpêtres. He exploded dynamite in a tightly screwed steel cylinder, too strong to burst, and I found he could crush rocks into a muck not unlike the South African bed in which diamonds are found. It was a tremendous strain on my resources, but I got a steel cylinder made for my purpose after his pattern. I put in all my stuff and my explosives, built up a fire in my furnace, put the whole concern in, and--went out for a walk."

I could not help laughing at his matter-of-fact manner. "Did you not think it would blow up the house? Were there other people in the place?"

"It was in the interest of science," he said, ultimately.

"There was a costermonger family on the floor below, a begging-letter writer in the room behind mine, and two flower-women were upstairs. Perhaps it was a bit thoughtless. But possibly some of them were out.

"When I came back the thing was just where I left it, among the white-hot coals. The explosive hadn't burst the case. And then I had a problem to face. You know time is an important element in crystallisation. If you hurry the process the crystals are small--it is only by prolonged standing that they grow to any size. I resolved to let this apparatus cool for two years, letting the temperature go down slowly during the time. And I was now quite out of money; and with a big fire and the rent of my room, as well as my hunger to satisfy, I had scarcely a penny in the world.

"I can hardly tell you all the shifts I was put to while I was making the diamonds. I have sold newspapers, held horses, opened cab-doors. For many weeks I addressed envelopes. I had a place as assistant to a man who owned a barrow, and used to call down one side of the road while he called down the other.

"Once for a week I had absolutely nothing to do, and I begged. What a week that was! One day the fire was going out and I had eaten nothing all day, and a little chap taking his girl out, gave me sixpence--to show off. Thank heaven for vanity! How the fish-shops smelt! But I went and spent it all on coals, and had the furnace bright red again, and then--Well, hunger makes a fool of a man.

"At last, three weeks ago, I let the fire out. I took my cylinder and unscrewed it while it was still so hot that it punished my hands, and I scraped out the crumbling lava-like mass with a chisel, and hammered it into a powder upon an iron plate. And I found three big diamonds and five small ones. As I sat on the floor hammering, my door opened, and my neighbour, the

begging-letter writer came in. He was drunk--as he usually is. "Nerchist," said he. 'You're drunk,' said I. "Structive scoundrel," said he. 'Go to your father,' said I, meaning the Father of Lies. 'Never you mind,' said he, and gave me a cunning wink, and hiccuped, and leaning up against the door, with his other eye against the door-post, began to babble of how he had been prying in my room, and how he had gone to the police that morning, and how they had taken down everything he had to say--"siffi was a ge'm," said he. Then I suddenly realised I was in a hole. Either I should have to tell these police my little secret, and get the whole thing blown upon, or be lagged as an Anarchist. So I went up to my neighbour and took him by the collar, and rolled him about a bit, and then I gathered up my diamonds and cleared out. The evening newspapers called my den the Kentish Town Bomb Factory. And now I cannot part with the things for love or money.

"If I go in to respectable jewellers they ask me to wait, and go and whisper to a clerk to fetch a policeman, and then I say I cannot wait. And I found out a receiver of stolen goods, and he simply stuck to the one I gave him and told me to prosecute if I wanted it back. I am going about now with several hundred thousand pounds-worth of diamonds round my neck, and without either food or shelter. You are the first person I have taken into my confidence. But I like your face and I am hard-driven."

He looked into my eyes.

"It would be madness," said I, "for me to buy a diamond under the circumstances. Besides, I do not carry hundreds of pounds about in my pocket. Yet I more than half believe your story. I will, if you like, do this: come to my office to-morrow"

"You think I am a thief!" said he keenly. "You will tell the police. I am not coming into a trap."

"Somehow I am assured you are no thief. Here is my card. Take that, anyhow. You need not come to any appointment. Come when you will."

He took the card, and an earnest of my good-will.

"Think better of it and come," said I.

He shook his head doubtfully. "I will pay back your half-crown with interest some day--such interest as will amaze you," said he. "Anyhow, you will keep the secret? . . . Don't follow me."

He crossed the road and went into the darkness towards the little steps under the archway leading into Essex Street, and I let him go. And that was the last I ever saw of him.

Afterwards I had two letters from him asking me to send bank-notes--not cheques--to certain addresses. I weighed the matter over and took what I conceived to be the wisest course. Once he called upon me when I was out. My urchin described him as a very thin, dirty, and ragged man, with a dreadful cough. He left no message. That was the finish of him so far as my story goes. I wonder sometimes what has become of him. Was he an ingenious monomaniac, or a fraudulent dealer in pebbles, or has he really made diamonds as he asserted? The latter is just sufficiently credible to make me think at times that I have missed the most brilliant opportunity of my life. He may of course be dead, and his diamonds carelessly thrown aside--one, I repeat, was almost as big as my thumb. Or he may be still wandering about trying to sell the things. It is just possible he may yet emerge upon society, and, passing athwart my heavens in the serene altitude sacred to the wealthy and the well-advertised, reproach me silently for my want of enterprise. I sometimes think I might at least have risked five pounds.

THE LORD OF THE DYNAMOS

The chief attendant of the three dynamos that buzzed and rattled at Camberwell, and kept the electric railway going, came out of Yorkshire, and his name was James Holroyd. He was a practical electrician, but fond of whisky, a heavy red-haired brute with irregular teeth. He doubted the existence of the deity, but accepted Carnot's cycle, and he had read Shakespeare and found him weak in chemistry. His helper came out of the mysterious East, and his name was Azuma-zi. But Holroyd called him Pooh-bah. Holroyd liked a nigger because he would stand kicking--a habit with Holroyd--and did not pry into the machinery and try to learn the ways of it. Certain odd possibilities of the negro mind brought into abrupt contact with the crown of our civilisation Holroyd never fully realised, though just at the end he got some inkling of them.

To define Azuma-zi was beyond ethnology. He was, perhaps, more negroid than anything else, though his hair was curly rather than frizzy, and his nose had a bridge. Moreover, his skin was brown rather than black, and the whites of his eyes were yellow. His broad cheekbones and narrow chin gave his face something of the viperine V. His head, too, was broad behind, and low and narrow at the forehead, as if his brain had been twisted round in the reverse way to a European's. He was short of stature and still shorter of English. In conversation he made numerous odd noises of no known marketable value, and his infrequent words were carved and wrought into heraldic grotesqueness. Holroyd tried to elucidate his religious beliefs, and--especially after whisky--lectured to him against superstition and missionaries. Azuma-zi, however, shirked the discussion of his gods, even though he was kicked for it.

Azuma-zi had come, clad in white but insufficient raiment, out of the stokehole of the Lord Clive, from the Straits Settlements, and beyond, into London. He had heard even in his

youth of the greatness and riches of London, where all the women are white and fair, and even the beggars in the streets are white, and he arrived, with newly earned gold coins in his pocket, to worship at the shrine of civilisation. The day of his landing was a dismal one; the sky was dun, and a wind-worried drizzle filtered down to the greasy streets, but he plunged boldly into the delights of Shadwell, and was presently cast up, shattered in health, civilised in costume, penniless and, except in matters of the direst necessity, practically a dumb animal, to toil for James Holroyd and to be bullied by him in the dynamo shed at Camberwell. And to James Holroyd bullying was a labour of love.

There were three dynamos with their engines at Camberwell. The two that had been there since the beginning were small machines; the larger one was new. The smaller machines made a reasonable noise; their straps hummed over the drums, every now and then the brushes buzzed and fizzled, and the air churned steadily, whoo! whoo! whoo! between their poles. One was loose in its foundations and kept the shed vibrating. But the big dynamo drowned these little noises altogether with the sustained drone of its iron core, which somehow set part of the ironwork humming. The place made the visitor's head reel with the throb, throb, throb of the engines, the rotation of the big wheels, the spinning ball-valves, the occasional spittings of the steam, and over all the deep, unceasing, surging note of the big dynamo. This last noise was from an engineering point of view a defect, but Azuma-zi accounted it unto the monster for mightiness and pride.

If it were possible we would have the noises of that shed always about the reader as he reads, we would tell all our story to such an accompaniment. It was a steady stream of din, from which the ear picked out first one thread and then another; there was the intermittent snorting, panting, and seething of the steam engines, the suck and thud of their pistons, the dull beat on the air as the spokes of the great driving-wheels came round, a note the leather

straps made as they ran tighter and looser, and a fretful tumult from the dynamos; and over all, sometimes inaudible, as the ear tired of it, and then creeping back upon the senses again, was this trombone note of the big machine. The floor never felt steady and quiet beneath one's feet, but quivered and jarred. It was a confusing, unsteady place, and enough to send anyone's thoughts jerking into odd zigzags. And for three months, while the big strike of the engineers was in progress, Holroyd, who was a blackleg, and Azuma-zi, who was a mere black, were never out of the stir and eddy of it, but slept and fed in the little wooden shanty between the shed and the gates.

Holroyd delivered a theological lecture on the text of his big machine soon after Azuma-zi came. He had to shout to be heard in the din. "Look at that," said Holroyd; "where's your 'eathen idol to match 'im?" And Azuma-zi looked. For a moment Holroyd was inaudible, and then Azuma-zi heard: "Kill a hundred men. Twelve per cent. on the ordinary shares," said Holroyd, "and that's something like a Gord!"

Holroyd was proud of his big dynamo, and expatiated upon its size and power to Azuma-zi until heaven knows what odd currents of thought that and the incessant whirling and shindy set up within the curly black cranium. He would explain in the most graphic manner the dozen or so ways in which a man might be killed by it, and once he gave Azuma-zi a shock as a sample of its quality. After that, in the breathing-times of his labour--it was heavy labour, being not only his own, but most of Holroyd's--Azuma-zi would sit and watch the big machine. Now and then the brushes would sparkle and spit blue flashes, at which Holroyd would swear, but all the rest was as smooth and rhythmic as breathing. The band ran shouting over the shaft, and ever behind one as one watched was the complacent thud of the piston. So it lived all day in this big airy shed, with him and Holroyd to wait upon it; not prisoned up and slaving to drive a ship as the other engines he knew--mere

captive devils of the British Solomon--had been, but a machine enthroned. Those two smaller dynamos, Azuma-zi by force of contrast despised; the large one he privately christened the Lord of the Dynamos. They were fretful and irregular, but the big dynamo was steady. How great it was! How serene and easy in its working! Greater and calmer even than the Buddhas he had seen at Rangoon, and yet not motionless, but living! The great black coils spun, spun, spun, the rings ran round under the brushes, and the deep note of its coil steadied the whole. It affected Azuma-zi queerly.

Azuma-zi was not fond of labour. He would sit about and watch the Lord of the Dynamos while Holroyd went away to persuade the yard porter to get whisky, although his proper place was not in the dynamo shed but behind the engines, and, moreover, if Holroyd caught him skulking he got hit for it with a rod of stout copper wire. He would go and stand close to the colossus and look up at the great leather band running overhead. There was a black patch on the band that came round, and it pleased him somehow among all the clatter to watch this return again and again. Odd thoughts spun with the whirl of it. Scientific people tell us that savages give souls to rocks and trees--and a machine is a thousand times more alive than a rock or a tree. And Azuma-zi was practically a savage still; the veneer of civilisation lay no deeper than his slop suit, his bruises, and the coal grime on his face and hands. His father before him had worshipped a meteoric stone, kindred blood it may be had splashed the broad wheels of Juggernaut.

He took every opportunity Holroyd gave him of touching and hand, ling the great dynamo that was fascinating him. He polished and cleaned it until the metal parts were blinding in the sun. He felt a mysterious sense of service in doing this. He would go up to it and touch its spinning coils gently. The gods he had worshipped were all far away. The people in London hid their gods.

At last his dim feelings grew more distinct, and took shape in thoughts and at last in acts. When he came into the roaring shed one morning he salaamed to the Lord of the Dynamos, and then when Holroyd was away, he went and whispered to the thundering machine that he was its servant, and prayed it to have pity on him and save him from Holroyd. As he did so a rare gleam of light came in through the open archway of the throbbing machine-shed, and the Lord of the Dynamos, as he whirled and roared, was radiant with pale gold. Then Azuma-zi knew that his service was acceptable to his Lord. After that he did not feel so lonely as he had done, and he had indeed been very much alone in London. And even when his work time was over, which was rare, he loitered about the shed.

Then, the next time Holroyd maltreated him, Azuma-zi went presently to the Lord of the Dynamos and whispered, "Thou seest, O my Lord!" and the angry whir of the machinery seemed to answer him. Thereafter it appeared to him that whenever Holroyd came into the shed a different note came into the sounds of the dynamo. "My Lord bides his time," said Azuma-zi to himself. "The iniquity of the fool is not yet ripe." And he waited and watched for the day of reckoning. One day there was evidence of short circuiting, and Holroyd, making an unwary examination--it was in the afternoon--got a rather severe shock. Azuma-zi from behind the engine saw him jump off and curse at the peccant coil.

"He is warned," said Azuma-zi to himself. "Surely my Lord is very patient."

Holroyd had at first initiated his "nigger" into such elementary conceptions of the dynamo's working as would enable him to take temporary charge of the shed in his absence. But when he noticed the manner in which Azuma-zi hung about the monster he became suspicious. He dimly perceived his assistant was "up to something," and connecting him with the anointing of the coils with oil that had rotted the varnish in one place, he issued an edict,

shouted above the confusion of the machinery, "Don't 'ee go nigh that big dynamo any more, Pooh-bah, or a'll take thy skin off!" Besides, if it pleased Azuma-zi to be near the big machine, it was plain sense and decency to keep him away from it.

Azuma-zi obeyed at the time, but later he was caught bowing before the Lord of the Dynamos. At which Holroyd twisted his arm and kicked him as he turned to go away. As Azuma-zi presently stood behind the engine and glared at the back of the hated Holroyd, the noises of the machinery took a new rhythm, and sounded like four words in his native tongue.

It is hard to say exactly what madness is. I fancy Azuma-zi was mad. The incessant din and whirl of the dynamo shed may have churned up his little store of knowledge and his big store of superstitious fancy, at last, into something akin to frenzy. At any rate, when the idea of making Holroyd a sacrifice to the Dynamo Fetich was thus suggested to him, it filled him with a strange tumult of exultant emotion.

That night the two men and their black shadows were alone in the shed together. The shed was lit with one big arc light that winked and flickered purple. The shadows lay black behind the dynamos, the ball governors of the engines whirled from light to darkness, and their pistons beat loud and steady. The world outside seen through the open end of the shed seemed incredibly dim and remote. It seemed absolutely silent, too, since the riot of the machinery drowned every external sound. Far away was the black fence of the yard with grey shadowy houses behind, and above was the deep blue sky and the pale little stars. Azuma-zi suddenly walked across the centre of the shed above which the leather bands were running, and went into the shadow by the big dynamo. Holroyd heard a click, and the spin of the armature changed.

"What are you dewin' with that switch?" he bawled in surprise.

"Han't I told you--"

Then he saw the set expression of Azuma-zi's eyes as the Asiatic came out of the shadow towards him.

In another moment the two men were grappling fiercely in front of the great dynamo.

"You coffee-headed fool!" gasped Holroyd, with a brown hand at his throat. "Keep off those contact rings." In another moment he was tripped and reeling back upon the Lord of the Dynamos. He instinctively loosened his grip upon his antagonist to save himself from the machine.

The messenger, sent in furious haste from the station to find out what had happened in the dynamo shed, met Azuma-zi at the porter's lodge by the gate. Azuma-zi tried to explain something, but the messenger could make nothing of the black's incoherent English, and hurried on to the shed. The machines were all noisily at work, and nothing seemed to be disarranged. There was, however, a queer smell of singed hair. Then he saw an odd-looking crumpled mass clinging to the front of the big dynamo, and, approaching, recognised the distorted remains of Holroyd.

The man stared and hesitated a moment. Then he saw the face, and shut his eyes convulsively. He turned on his heel before he opened them, so that he should not see Holroyd again, and went out of the shed to get advice and help.

When Azuma-zi saw Holroyd die in the grip of the Great Dynamo he had been a little scared about the consequences of his act. Yet he felt strangely elated, and knew that the favour of the Lord Dynamo was upon him. His plan was already settled when he met the man coming from the station, and the scientific manager who speedily arrived on the scene jumped at the obvious conclusion of

suicide. This expert scarcely noticed Azuma-zi, except to ask a few questions. Did he see Holroyd kill himself? Azuma-zi explained that he had been out of sight at the engine furnace until he heard a difference in the noise from the dynamo. It was not a difficult examination, being untinged by suspicion.

The distorted remains of Holroyd, which the electrician removed from the machine, were hastily covered by the porter with a coffee-stained tablecloth. Somebody, by a happy inspiration, fetched a medical man. The expert was chiefly anxious to get the machine at work again, for seven or eight trains had stopped midway in the stuffy tunnels of the electric railway. Azuma-zi, answering or misunderstanding the questions of the people who had by authority or impudence come into the shed, was presently sent back to the stoke-hole by the scientific manager. Of course a crowd collected outside the gates of the yard--a crowd, for no known reason, always hovers for a day or two near the scene of a sudden death in London; two or three reporters percolated somehow into the engine-shed, and one even got to Azuma-zi; but the scientific expert cleared them out again, being himself an amateur journalist.

Presently the body was carried away, and public interest departed with it. Azuma-zi remained very quietly at his furnace, seeing over and over again in the coals a figure that wriggled violently and became still. An hour after the murder, to anyone coming into the shed it would have looked exactly as if nothing had ever happened there. Peeping presently from his engine-room the black saw the Lord Dynamo spin and whirl beside his little brothers, and the driving wheels were beating round, and the steam in the pistons went thud, thud, exactly as it had been earlier in the evening. After all, from the mechanical point of view, it had been a most insignificant incident--the mere temporary deflection of a current. But now the slender form and slender shadow of the scientific manager replaced the sturdy outline of Holroyd travelling up and down the lane of light upon the vibrating floor

under the straps between the engines and the dynamos.

"Have I not served my Lord?" said Azuma-zi inaudibly, from his shadow, and the note of the great dynamo rang out full and clear. As he looked at the big whirling mechanism the strange fascination of it that had been a little in abeyance since Holroyd's death, resumed its sway.

Never had Azuma-zi seen a man killed so swiftly and pitilessly. The big humming machine had slain its victim without wavering for a second from its steady beating. It was indeed a mighty god.

The unconscious scientific manager stood with his back to him, scribbling on a piece of paper. His shadow lay at the foot of the monster.

"Was the Lord Dynamo still hungry? His servant was ready."

Azuma-zi made a stealthy step forward; then stopped. The scientific manager suddenly stopped writing, and walked down the shed to the endmost of the dynamos, and began to examine the brushes.

Azuma-zi hesitated, and then slipped across noiselessly into shadow by the switch. There he waited. Presently the manager's footsteps could be heard returning. He stopped in his old position, unconscious of the stoker crouching ten feet away from him. Then the big dynamo suddenly fizzled, and in another moment Azuma-zi had sprung out of the darkness upon him.

First, the scientific manager was gripped round the body and swung towards the big dynamo, then, kicking with his knee and forcing his antagonist's head down with his hands, he loosened the grip on his waist and swung round away from the machine. Then the

black grasped him again, putting a curly head against his chest, and they swayed and panted as it seemed for an age or so. Then the scientific manager was impelled to catch a black ear in his teeth and bite furiously. The black yelled hideously.

They rolled over on the floor, and the black, who had apparently slipped from the vice of the teeth or parted with some ear--the scientific manager wondered which at the time--tried to throttle him. The scientific manager was making some ineffectual attempts to claw something with his hands and to kick, when the welcome sound of quick footsteps sounded on the floor. The next moment Azuma-zi had left him and darted towards the big dynamo. There was a splutter amid the roar.

The officer of the company who had entered, stood staring as Azuma-zi caught the naked terminals in his hands, gave one horrible convulsion, and then hung motionless from the machine, his face violently distorted.

"I'm jolly glad you came in when you did," said the scientific manager, still sitting on the floor.

He looked at the still quivering figure.

"It's not a nice death to die, apparently--but it is quick."

The official was still staring at the body. He was a man of slow apprehension.

There was a pause.

The scientific manager got up on his feet rather awkwardly. He ran his fingers along his collar thoughtfully, and moved his head to and fro several times.

"Poor Holroyd! I see now." Then almost mechanically he went towards the switch in the shadow and turned the current into the railway circuit again. As he did so the singed body loosened its grip upon the machine and fell forward on its face. The core of the dynamo roared out loud and clear, and the armature beat the air.

So ended prematurely the Worship of the Dynamo Deity, perhaps the most short-lived of all religions. Yet withal it could at least boast a Martyrdom and a Human Sacrifice.

THE COUNTRY OF THE BLIND

Three hundred miles and more from Chimborazo, one hundred from the snows of Cotopaxi, in the wildest wastes of Ecuador's Andes, there lies that mysterious mountain valley, cut off from all the world of men, the Country of the Blind. Long years ago that valley lay so far open to the world that men might come at last through frightful gorges and over an icy pass into its equable meadows, and thither indeed men came, a family or so of Peruvian half-breeds fleeing from the lust and tyranny of an evil Spanish ruler. Then came the stupendous outbreak of Mindobamba, when it was night in Quito for seventeen days, and the water was boiling at Yaguachi and all the fish floating dying even as far as Guayaquil; everywhere along the Pacific slopes there were land-slips and swift thawings and sudden floods, and one whole side of the old Arauca crest slipped and came down in thunder, and cut off the Country of the Blind for ever from the exploring feet of men. But one of these early settlers had chanced to be on the hither side of the gorges when the world had so terribly shaken itself, and he perforce had to forget his wife and his child and all the friends and possessions he had left up there, and start life over again in the lower world. He started it again but ill, blindness overtook him, and he died of punishment in the mines; but the story he told begot a legend that lingers along the length of the Cordilleras of the Andes to this day.

He told of his reason for venturing back from that fastness, into which he had first been carried lashed to a llama, beside a vast bale of gear, when he was a child. The valley, he said, had in it all that the heart of man could desire--sweet water, pasture, an even climate, slopes of rich brown soil with tangles of a shrub that bore an excellent fruit, and on one side great hanging forests of pine that held the avalanches high. Far overhead, on three sides, vast cliffs of grey-green rock were capped by cliffs of ice; but the glacier stream came not to them, but flowed away by the farther slopes, and only now and then huge ice masses fell on the

valley side. In this valley it neither rained nor snowed, but the abundant springs gave a rich green pasture, that irrigation would spread over all the valley space. The settlers did well indeed there. Their beasts did well and multiplied, and but one thing marred their happiness. Yet it was enough to mar it greatly. A strange disease had come upon them and had made all the children born to them there--and, indeed, several older children also--blind. It was to seek some charm or antidote against this plague of blindness that he had with fatigue and danger and difficulty returned down the gorge. In those days, in such cases, men did not think of germs and infections, but of sins, and it seemed to him that the reason of this affliction must be in the negligence of these priestless immigrants to set up a shrine so soon as they entered the valley. He wanted a shrine--a handsome, cheap, effectual shrine--to be erected in the valley; he wanted relics and such-like potent things of faith, blessed objects and mysterious medals and prayers. In his wallet he had a bar of native silver for which he would not account; he insisted there was none in the valley with something of the insistence of an inexperienced liar. They had all clubbed their money and ornaments together, having little need for such treasure up there, he said, to buy them holy help against their ill. I figure this dim-eyed young mountaineer, sunburnt, gaunt, and anxious, hat brim clutched feverishly, a man all unused to the ways of the lower world, telling this story to some keen-eyed, attentive priest before the great convulsion; I can picture him presently seeking to return with pious and infallible remedies against that trouble, and the infinite dismay with which he must have faced the tumbled vastness where the gorge had once come out. But the rest of his story of mischances is lost to me, save that I know of his evil death after several years. Poor stray from that remoteness! The stream that had once made the gorge now bursts from the mouth of a rocky cave, and the legend his poor, ill-told story set going developed into the legend of a race of blind men somewhere "over there" one may still hear to-day.

And amidst the little population of that now isolated and forgotten valley the disease ran its course. The old became groping, the young saw but dimly, and the children that were born to them never saw at all. But life was very easy in that snow-rimmed basin, lost to all the world, with neither thorns nor briars, with no evil insects nor any beasts save the gentle breed of llamas they had lugged and thrust and followed up the beds of the shrunken rivers in the gorges up which they had come. The seeing had become purblind so gradually that they scarcely noticed their loss. They guided the sightless youngsters hither and thither until they knew the whole valley marvellously, and when at last sight died out among them the race lived on. They had even time to adapt themselves to the blind control of fire, which they made carefully in stoves of stone. They were a simple strain of people at the first, unlettered, only slightly touched with the Spanish civilisation, but with something of a tradition of the arts of old Peru and of its lost philosophy. Generation followed generation. They forgot many things; they devised many things. Their tradition of the greater world they came from became mythical in colour and uncertain. In all things save sight they were strong and able, and presently chance sent one who had an original mind and who could talk and persuade among them, and then afterwards another. These two passed, leaving their effects, and the little community grew in numbers and in understanding, and met and settled social and economic problems that arose. Generation followed generation. Generation followed generation. There came a time when a child was born who was fifteen generations from that ancestor who went out of the valley with a bar of silver to seek God's aid, and who never returned. Thereabout it chanced that a man came into this community from the outer world. And this is the story of that man.

He was a mountaineer from the country near Quito, a man who had been down to the sea and had seen the world, a reader of books

in an original way, an acute and enterprising man, and he was taken on by a party of Englishmen who had come out to Ecuador to climb mountains, to replace one of their three Swiss guides who had fallen ill. He climbed here and he climbed there, and then came the attempt on Parascotopetl, the Matterhorn of the Andes, in which he was lost to the outer world. The story of that accident has been written a dozen times. Pointer's narrative is the best. He tells how the little party worked their difficult and almost vertical way up to the very foot of the last and greatest precipice, and how they built a night shelter amidst the snow upon a little shelf of rock, and, with a touch of real dramatic power, how presently they found Nunez had gone from them. They shouted, and there was no reply; shouted and whistled, and for the rest of that night they slept no more.

As the morning broke they saw the traces of his fall. It seems impossible he could have uttered a sound. He had slipped eastward towards the unknown side of the mountain; far below he had struck a steep slope of snow, and ploughed his way down it in the midst of a snow avalanche. His track went straight to the edge of a frightful precipice, and beyond that everything was hidden. Far, far below, and hazy with distance, they could see trees rising out of a narrow, shut-in valley--the lost Country of the Blind. But they did not know it was the lost Country of the Blind, nor distinguish it in any way from any other narrow streak of upland valley. Unnerved by this disaster, they abandoned their attempt in the afternoon, and Pointer was called away to the war before he could make another attack. To this day Parascotopetl lifts an unconquered crest, and Pointer's shelter crumbles unvisited amidst the snows.

And the man who fell survived.

At the end of the slope he fell a thousand feet, and came down in the midst of a cloud of snow upon a snow-slope even steeper than

the one above. Down this he was whirled, stunned and insensible, but without a bone broken in his body; and then at last came to gentler slopes, and at last rolled out and lay still, buried amidst a softening heap of the white masses that had accompanied and saved him. He came to himself with a dim fancy that he was ill in bed; then realized his position with a mountaineer's intelligence and worked himself loose and, after a rest or so, out until he saw the stars. He rested flat upon his chest for a space, wondering where he was and what had happened to him. He explored his limbs, and discovered that several of his buttons were gone and his coat turned over his head. His knife had gone from his pocket and his hat was lost, though he had tied it under his chin. He recalled that he had been looking for loose stones to raise his piece of the shelter wall. His ice-axe had disappeared.

He decided he must have fallen, and looked up to see, exaggerated by the ghastly light of the rising moon, the tremendous flight he had taken. For a while he lay, gazing blankly at the vast, pale cliff towering above, rising moment by moment out of a subsiding tide of darkness. Its phantasmal, mysterious beauty held him for a space, and then he was seized with a paroxysm of sobbing laughter

After a great interval of time he became aware that he was near the lower edge of the snow. Below, down what was now a moon-lit and practicable slope, he saw the dark and broken appearance of rock-strewn turf. He struggled to his feet, aching in every joint and limb, got down painfully from the heaped loose snow about him, went downward until he was on the turf, and there dropped rather than lay beside a boulder, drank deep from the flask in his inner pocket, and instantly fell asleep

He was awakened by the singing of birds in the trees far below.

He sat up and perceived he was on a little alp at the foot of a vast precipice that sloped only a little in the gully down which he and his snow had come. Over against him another wall of rock reared itself against the sky. The gorge between these precipices ran east and west and was full of the morning sunlight, which lit to the westward the mass of fallen mountain that closed the descending gorge. Below him it seemed there was a precipice equally steep, but behind the snow in the gully he found a sort of chimney-cleft dripping with snow-water, down which a desperate man might venture. He found it easier than it seemed, and came at last to another desolate alp, and then after a rock climb of no particular difficulty, to a steep slope of trees. He took his bearings and turned his face up the gorge, for he saw it opened out above upon green meadows, among which he now glimpsed quite distinctly a cluster of stone huts of unfamiliar fashion. At times his progress was like clambering along the face of a wall, and after a time the rising sun ceased to strike along the gorge, the voices of the singing birds died away, and the air grew cold and dark about him. But the distant valley with its houses was all the brighter for that. He came presently to talus, and among the rocks he noted--for he was an observant man--an unfamiliar fern that seemed to clutch out of the crevices with intense green hands. He picked a frond or so and gnawed its stalk, and found it helpful.

About midday he came at last out of the throat of the gorge into the plain and the sunlight. He was stiff and weary; he sat down in the shadow of a rock, filled up his flask with water from a spring and drank it down, and remained for a time, resting before he went on to the houses.

They were very strange to his eyes, and indeed the whole aspect of that valley became, as he regarded it, queerer and more unfamiliar. The greater part of its surface was lush green meadow, starred with many beautiful flowers, irrigated with extraordinary care, and bearing evidence of systematic cropping piece by piece.

High up and ringing the valley about was a wall, and what appeared to be a circumferential water channel, from which the little trickles of water that fed the meadow plants came, and on the higher slopes above this flocks of llamas cropped the scanty herbage. Sheds, apparently shelters or feeding-places for the llamas, stood against the boundary wall here and there. The irrigation streams ran together into a main channel down the centre of the valley, and this was enclosed on either side by a wall breast high. This gave a singularly urban quality to this secluded place, a quality that was greatly enhanced by the fact that a number of paths paved with black and white stones, and each with a curious little kerb at the side, ran hither and thither in an orderly manner. The houses of the central village were quite unlike the casual and higgledy-piggledy agglomeration of the mountain villages he knew; they stood in a continuous row on either side of a central street of astonishing cleanness, here and there their parti-coloured facade was pierced by a door, and not a solitary window broke their even frontage. They were parti-coloured with extraordinary irregularity, smeared with a sort of plaster that was sometimes grey, sometimes drab, sometimes slate-coloured or dark brown; and it was the sight of this wild plastering first brought the word "blind" into the thoughts of the explorer. "The good man who did that," he thought, "must have been as blind as a bat."

He descended a steep place, and so came to the wall and channel that ran about the valley, near where the latter spouted out its surplus contents into the deeps of the gorge in a thin and wavering thread of cascade. He could now see a number of men and women resting on piled heaps of grass, as if taking a siesta, in the remoter part of the meadow, and nearer the village a number of recumbent children, and then nearer at hand three men carrying pails on yokes along a little path that ran from the encircling wall towards the houses. These latter were clad in garments of llama cloth and boots and belts of leather, and they wore caps of

cloth with back and ear flaps. They followed one another in single file, walking slowly and yawning as they walked, like men who have been up all night. There was something so reassuringly prosperous and respectable in their bearing that after a moment's hesitation Nunez stood forward as conspicuously as possible upon his rock, and gave vent to a mighty shout that echoed round the valley.

The three men stopped, and moved their heads as though they were looking about them. They turned their faces this way and that, and Nunez gesticulated with freedom. But they did not appear to see him for all his gestures, and after a time, directing themselves towards the mountains far away to the right, they shouted as if in answer. Nunez bawled again, and then once more, and as he gestured ineffectually the word "blind" came up to the top of his thoughts. "The fools must be blind," he said.

When at last, after much shouting and wrath, Nunez crossed the stream by a little bridge, came through a gate in the wall, and approached them, he was sure that they were blind. He was sure that this was the Country of the Blind of which the legends told. Conviction had sprung upon him, and a sense of great and rather enviable adventure. The three stood side by side, not looking at him, but with their ears directed towards him, judging him by his unfamiliar steps. They stood close together like men a little afraid, and he could see their eyelids closed and sunken, as though the very balls beneath had shrunk away. There was an expression near awe on their faces.

"A man," one said, in hardly recognisable Spanish. "A man it is--a man or a spirit--coming down from the rocks."

But Nunez advanced with the confident steps of a youth who enters upon life. All the old stories of the lost valley and the Country of the Blind had come back to his mind, and through his thoughts ran this old proverb, as if it were a refrain:--

"In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King."

"In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King."

And very civilly he gave them greeting. He talked to them and used his eyes.

"Where does he come from, brother Pedro?" asked one.

"Down out of the rocks."

"Over the mountains I come," said Nunez, "out of the country beyond there--where men can see. From near Bogota--where there are a hundred thousands of people, and where the city passes out of sight."

"Sight?" muttered Pedro. "Sight?"

"He comes," said the second blind man, "out of the rocks."

The cloth of their coats, Nunez saw was curious fashioned, each with a different sort of stitching.

They startled him by a simultaneous movement towards him, each with a hand outstretched. He stepped back from the advance of these spread fingers.

"Come hither," said the third blind man, following his motion and clutching him neatly.

And they held Nunez and felt him over, saying no word further until they had done so.

"Carefully," he cried, with a finger in his eye, and found

they thought that organ, with its fluttering lids, a queer thing in him. They went over it again.

"A strange creature, Correa," said the one called Pedro.
"Feel the coarseness of his hair. Like a llama's hair."

"Rough he is as the rocks that begot him," said Correa, investigating Nunez's unshaven chin with a soft and slightly moist hand. "Perhaps he will grow finer."

Nunez struggled a little under their examination, but they gripped him firm.

"Carefully," he said again.

"He speaks," said the third man. "Certainly he is a man."

"Ugh!" said Pedro, at the roughness of his coat.

"And you have come into the world?" asked Pedro.

"OUT of the world. Over mountains and glaciers; right over above there, half-way to the sun. Out of the great, big world that goes down, twelve days' journey to the sea."

They scarcely seemed to heed him. "Our fathers have told us men may be made by the forces of Nature," said Correa. "It is the warmth of things, and moisture, and rottenness--rottenness."

"Let us lead him to the elders," said Pedro.

"Shout first," said Correa, "lest the children be afraid. This is a marvellous occasion."

So they shouted, and Pedro went first and took Nunez by the

hand to lead him to the houses.

He drew his hand away. "I can see," he said.

"See?" said Correa.

"Yes; see," said Nunez, turning towards him, and stumbled against Pedro's pail.

"His senses are still imperfect," said the third blind man.
"He stumbles, and talks unmeaning words. Lead him by the hand."

"As you will," said Nunez, and was led along laughing.

It seemed they knew nothing of sight.

Well, all in good time he would teach them.

He heard people shouting, and saw a number of figures gathering together in the middle roadway of the village.

He found it tax his nerve and patience more than he had anticipated, that first encounter with the population of the Country of the Blind. The place seemed larger as he drew near to it, and the smeared plasterings queerer, and a crowd of children and men and women (the women and girls he was pleased to note had, some of them, quite sweet faces, for all that their eyes were shut and sunken) came about him, holding on to him, touching him with soft, sensitive hands, smelling at him, and listening at every word he spoke. Some of the maidens and children, however, kept aloof as if afraid, and indeed his voice seemed coarse and rude beside their softer notes. They mobbed him. His three guides kept close to him with an effect of proprietorship, and said again and again, "A wild man out of the rocks."

"Bogota," he said. "Bogota. Over the mountain crests."

"A wild man--using wild words," said Pedro. "Did you hear that--"BOGOTA? His mind has hardly formed yet. He has only the beginnings of speech."

A little boy nipped his hand. "Bogota!" he said mockingly.

"Aye! A city to your village. I come from the great world --where men have eyes and see."

"His name's Bogota," they said.

"He stumbled," said Correa--" stumbled twice as we came hither."

"Bring him in to the elders."

And they thrust him suddenly through a doorway into a room as black as pitch, save at the end there faintly glowed a fire. The crowd closed in behind him and shut out all but the faintest glimmer of day, and before he could arrest himself he had fallen headlong over the feet of a seated man. His arm, outflung, struck the face of someone else as he went down; he felt the soft impact of features and heard a cry of anger, and for a moment he struggled against a number of hands that clutched him. It was a one-sided fight. An inkling of the situation came to him and he lay quiet.

"I fell down," he said; I couldn't see in this pitchy darkness."

There was a pause as if the unseen persons about him tried to understand his words. Then the voice of Correa said: "He is but newly formed. He stumbles as he walks and mingles words that mean nothing with his speech."

Others also said things about him that he heard or understood imperfectly.

"May I sit up?" he asked, in a pause. "I will not struggle against you again."

They consulted and let him rise.

The voice of an older man began to question him, and Nunez found himself trying to explain the great world out of which he had fallen, and the sky and mountains and such-like marvels, to these elders who sat in darkness in the Country of the Blind. And they would believe and understand nothing whatever that he told them, a thing quite outside his expectation. They would not even understand many of his words. For fourteen generations these people had been blind and cut off from all the seeing world; the names for all the things of sight had faded and changed; the story of the outer world was faded and changed to a child's story; and they had ceased to concern themselves with anything beyond the rocky slopes above their circling wall. Blind men of genius had arisen among them and questioned the shreds of belief and tradition they had brought with them from their seeing days, and had dismissed all these things as idle fancies and replaced them with new and saner explanations. Much of their imagination had shrivelled with their eyes, and they had made for themselves new imaginations with their ever more sensitive ears and finger-tips. Slowly Nunez realised this: that his expectation of wonder and reverence at his origin and his gifts was not to be borne out; and after his poor attempt to explain sight to them had been set aside as the confused version of a new-made being describing the marvels of his incoherent sensations, he subsided, a little dashed, into listening to their instruction. And the eldest of the blind men explained to him life and philosophy and religion, how that the world (meaning their valley) had been first an empty hollow in the

rocks, and then had come first inanimate things without the gift of touch, and llamas and a few other creatures that had little sense, and then men, and at last angels, whom one could hear singing and making fluttering sounds, but whom no one could touch at all, which puzzled Nunez greatly until he thought of the birds.

He went on to tell Nunez how this time had been divided into the warm and the cold, which are the blind equivalents of day and night, and how it was good to sleep in the warm and work during the cold, so that now, but for his advent, the whole town of the blind would have been asleep. He said Nunez must have been specially created to learn and serve the wisdom they had acquired, and that for all his mental incoherency and stumbling behaviour he must have courage and do his best to learn, and at that all the people in the door-way murmured encouragingly. He said the night--for the blind call their day night--was now far gone, and it behooved everyone to go back to sleep. He asked Nunez if he knew how to sleep, and Nunez said he did, but that before sleep he wanted food. They brought him food, llama's milk in a bowl and rough salted bread, and led him into a lonely place to eat out of their hearing, and afterwards to slumber until the chill of the mountain evening roused them to begin their day again. But Nunez slumbered not at all.

Instead, he sat up in the place where they had left him, resting his limbs and turning the unanticipated circumstances of his arrival over and over in his mind.

Every now and then he laughed, sometimes with amusement and sometimes with indignation.

"Unformed mind!" he said. "Got no senses yet! They little know they've been insulting their Heaven-sent King and master . .

. . .

"I see I must bring them to reason.

"Let me think.

"Let me think."

He was still thinking when the sun set.

Nunez had an eye for all beautiful things, and it seemed to him that the glow upon the snow-fields and glaciers that rose about the valley on every side was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. His eyes went from that inaccessible glory to the village and irrigated fields, fast sinking into the twilight, and suddenly a wave of emotion took him, and he thanked God from the bottom of his heart that the power of sight had been given him.

He heard a voice calling to him from out of the village.

"Yaho there, Bogota! Come hither!"

At that he stood up, smiling. He would show these people once and for all what sight would do for a man. They would seek him, but not find him.

"You move not, Bogota," said the voice.

He laughed noiselessly and made two stealthy steps aside from the path.

"Trample not on the grass, Bogota; that is not allowed."

Nunez had scarcely heard the sound he made himself. He stopped, amazed.

The owner of the voice came running up the piebald path

towards him.

He stepped back into the pathway. "Here I am," he said.

"Why did you not come when I called you?" said the blind man. "Must you be led like a child? Cannot you hear the path as you walk?"

Nunez laughed. "I can see it," he said.

"There is no such word as SEE," said the blind man, after a pause. "Cease this folly and follow the sound of my feet."

Nunez followed, a little annoyed.

"My time will come," he said.

"You'll learn," the blind man answered. "There is much to learn in the world."

"Has no one told you, 'In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King?'"

"What is blind?" asked the blind man, carelessly, over his shoulder.

Four days passed and the fifth found the King of the Blind still incognito, as a clumsy and useless stranger among his subjects.

It was, he found, much more difficult to proclaim himself than he had supposed, and in the meantime, while he meditated his coup d'etat, he did what he was told and learnt the manners and customs of the Country of the Blind. He found working and going about at night a particularly irksome thing, and he decided

that that should be the first thing he would change.

They led a simple, laborious life, these people, with all the elements of virtue and happiness as these things can be understood by men. They toiled, but not oppressively; they had food and clothing sufficient for their needs; they had days and seasons of rest; they made much of music and singing, and there was love among them and little children. It was marvellous with what confidence and precision they went about their ordered world. Everything, you see, had been made to fit their needs; each of the radiating paths of the valley area had a constant angle to the others, and was distinguished by a special notch upon its kerbing; all obstacles and irregularities of path or meadow had long since been cleared away; all their methods and procedure arose naturally from their special needs. Their senses had become marvellously acute; they could hear and judge the slightest gesture of a man a dozen paces away--could hear the very beating of his heart. Intonation had long replaced expression with them, and touches gesture, and their work with hoe and spade and fork was as free and confident as garden work can be. Their sense of smell was extraordinarily fine; they could distinguish individual differences as readily as a dog can, and they went about the tending of llamas, who lived among the rocks above and came to the wall for food and shelter, with ease and confidence. It was only when at last Nunez sought to assert himself that he found how easy and confident their movements could be.

He rebelled only after he had tried persuasion.

He tried at first on several occasions to tell them of sight.

"Look you here, you people," he said. "There are things you do not understand in me."

Once or twice one or two of them attended to him; they sat with faces downcast and ears turned intelligently towards him, and

he did his best to tell them what it was to see. Among his hearers was a girl, with eyelids less red and sunken than the others, so that one could almost fancy she was hiding eyes, whom especially he hoped to persuade. He spoke of the beauties of sight, of watching the mountains, of the sky and the sunrise, and they heard him with amused incredulity that presently became condemnatory. They told him there were indeed no mountains at all, but that the end of the rocks where the llamas grazed was indeed the end of the world; thence sprang a cavernous roof of the universe, from which the dew and the avalanches fell; and when he maintained stoutly the world had neither end nor roof such as they supposed, they said his thoughts were wicked. So far as he could describe sky and clouds and stars to them it seemed to them a hideous void, a terrible blankness in the place of the smooth roof to things in which they believed--it was an article of faith with them that the cavern roof was exquisitely smooth to the touch. He saw that in some manner he shocked them, and gave up that aspect of the matter altogether, and tried to show them the practical value of sight. One morning he saw Pedro in the path called Seventeen and coming towards the central houses, but still too far off for hearing or scent, and he told them as much. "In a little while," he prophesied, "Pedro will be here." An old man remarked that Pedro had no business on path Seventeen, and then, as if in confirmation, that individual as he drew near turned and went transversely into path Ten, and so back with nimble paces towards the outer wall. They mocked Nunez when Pedro did not arrive, and afterwards, when he asked Pedro questions to clear his character, Pedro denied and outfaced him, and was afterwards hostile to him.

Then he induced them to let him go a long way up the sloping meadows towards the wall with one complaisant individual, and to him he promised to describe all that happened among the houses. He noted certain goings and comings, but the things that really seemed to signify to these people happened inside of or behind the windowless houses--the only things they took note of to test him

by--and of those he could see or tell nothing; and it was after the failure of this attempt, and the ridicule they could not repress, that he resorted to force. He thought of seizing a spade and suddenly smiting one or two of them to earth, and so in fair combat showing the advantage of eyes. He went so far with that resolution as to seize his spade, and then he discovered a new thing about himself, and that was that it was impossible for him to hit a blind man in cold blood.

He hesitated, and found them all aware that he had snatched up the spade. They stood all alert, with their heads on one side, and bent ears towards him for what he would do next.

"Put that spade down," said one, and he felt a sort of helpless horror. He came near obedience.

Then he had thrust one backwards against a house wall, and fled past him and out of the village.

He went athwart one of their meadows, leaving a track of trampled grass behind his feet, and presently sat down by the side of one of their ways. He felt something of the buoyancy that comes to all men in the beginning of a fight, but more perplexity. He began to realise that you cannot even fight happily with creatures who stand upon a different mental basis to yourself. Far away he saw a number of men carrying spades and sticks come out of the street of houses and advance in a spreading line along the several paths towards him. They advanced slowly, speaking frequently to one another, and ever and again the whole cordon would halt and sniff the air and listen.

The first time they did this Nunez laughed. But afterwards he did not laugh.

One struck his trail in the meadow grass and came stooping and

feeling his way along it.

For five minutes he watched the slow extension of the cordon, and then his vague disposition to do something forthwith became frantic. He stood up, went a pace or so towards the circumferential wall, turned, and went back a little way. There they all stood in a crescent, still and listening.

He also stood still, gripping his spade very tightly in both hands. Should he charge them?

The pulse in his ears ran into the rhythm of "In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King."

Should he charge them?

He looked back at the high and unclimbable wall behind--unclimbable because of its smooth plastering, but withal pierced with many little doors and at the approaching line of seekers. Behind these others were now coming out of the street of houses.

Should he charge them?

"Bogota!" called one. "Bogota! where are you?"

He gripped his spade still tighter and advanced down the meadows towards the place of habitations, and directly he moved they converged upon him. "I'll hit them if they touch me," he swore; "by Heaven, I will. I'll hit." He called aloud, "Look here, I'm going to do what I like in this valley! Do you hear? I'm going to do what I like and go where I like."

They were moving in upon him quickly, groping, yet moving rapidly. It was like playing blind man's buff with everyone

blindfolded except one. "Get hold of him!" cried one. He found himself in the arc of a loose curve of pursuers. He felt suddenly he must be active and resolute.

"You don't understand," he cried, in a voice that was meant to be great and resolute, and which broke. "You are blind and I can see. Leave me alone!"

"Bogota! Put down that spade and come off the grass!"

The last order, grotesque in its urban familiarity, produced a gust of anger. "I'll hurt you," he said, sobbing with emotion. "By Heaven, I'll hurt you! Leave me alone!"

He began to run--not knowing clearly where to run. He ran from the nearest blind man, because it was a horror to hit him. He stopped, and then made a dash to escape from their closing ranks. He made for where a gap was wide, and the men on either side, with a quick perception of the approach of his paces, rushed in on one another. He sprang forward, and then saw he must be caught, and SWISH! the spade had struck. He felt the soft thud of hand and arm, and the man was down with a yell of pain, and he was through.

Through! And then he was close to the street of houses again, and blind men, whirling spades and stakes, were running with a reasoned swiftness hither and thither.

He heard steps behind him just in time, and found a tall man rushing forward and swiping at the sound of him. He lost his nerve, hurled his spade a yard wide of this antagonist, and whirled about and fled, fairly yelling as he dodged another.

He was panic-stricken. He ran furiously to and fro, dodging when there was no need to dodge, and, in his anxiety to see on

every side of him at once, stumbling. For a moment he was down and they heard his fall. Far away in the circumferential wall a little doorway looked like Heaven, and he set off in a wild rush for it. He did not even look round at his pursuers until it was gained, and he had stumbled across the bridge, clambered a little way among the rocks, to the surprise and dismay of a young llama, who went leaping out of sight, and lay down sobbing for breath.

And so his coup d'etat came to an end.

He stayed outside the wall of the valley of the blind for two nights and days without food or shelter, and meditated upon the Unexpected. During these meditations he repeated very frequently and always with a profounder note of derision the exploded proverb: "In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King." He thought chiefly of ways of fighting and conquering these people, and it grew clear that for him no practicable way was possible. He had no weapons, and now it would be hard to get one.

The canker of civilisation had got to him even in Bogota, and he could not find it in himself to go down and assassinate a blind man. Of course, if he did that, he might then dictate terms on the threat of assassinating them all. But--Sooner or later he must sleep!

He tried also to find food among the pine trees, to be comfortable under pine boughs while the frost fell at night, and--with less confidence--to catch a llama by artifice in order to try to kill it--perhaps by hammering it with a stone--and so finally, perhaps, to eat some of it. But the llamas had a doubt of him and regarded him with distrustful brown eyes and spat when he drew near. Fear came on him the second day and fits of shivering. Finally he crawled down to the wall of the Country of the Blind and tried to make his terms. He crawled along by the stream, shouting, until two blind men came out to the gate and talked to him.

"I was mad," he said. "But I was only newly made."

They said that was better.

He told them he was wiser now, and repented of all he had done.

Then he wept without intention, for he was very weak and ill now, and they took that as a favourable sign.

They asked him if he still thought he could SEE."

"No," he said. "That was folly. The word means nothing. Less than nothing!"

They asked him what was overhead.

"About ten times ten the height of a man there is a roof above the world--of rock--and very, very smooth. So smooth--so beautifully smooth . . ."He burst again into hysterical tears. "Before you ask me any more, give me some food or I shall die!"

He expected dire punishments, but these blind people were capable of toleration. They regarded his rebellion as but one more proof of his general idiocy and inferiority, and after they had whipped him they appointed him to do the simplest and heaviest work they had for anyone to do, and he, seeing no other way of living, did submissively what he was told.

He was ill for some days and they nursed him kindly. That refined his submission. But they insisted on his lying in the dark, and that was a great misery. And blind philosophers came and talked to him of the wicked levity of his mind, and reproved him so

impressively for his doubts about the lid of rock that covered their cosmic casserole that he almost doubted whether indeed he was not the victim of hallucination in not seeing it overhead.

So Nunez became a citizen of the Country of the Blind, and these people ceased to be a generalised people and became individualities to him, and familiar to him, while the world beyond the mountains became more and more remote and unreal. There was Yacob, his master, a kindly man when not annoyed; there was Pedro, Yacob's nephew; and there was Medina-sarote, who was the youngest daughter of Yacob. She was little esteemed in the world of the blind, because she had a clear-cut face and lacked that satisfying, glossy smoothness that is the blind man's ideal of feminine beauty, but Nunez thought her beautiful at first, and presently the most beautiful thing in the whole creation. Her closed eyelids were not sunken and red after the common way of the valley, but lay as though they might open again at any moment; and she had long eyelashes, which were considered a grave disfigurement. And her voice was weak and did not satisfy the acute hearing of the valley swains. So that she had no lover.

There came a time when Nunez thought that, could he win her, he would be resigned to live in the valley for all the rest of his days.

He watched her; he sought opportunities of doing her little services and presently he found that she observed him. Once at a rest-day gathering they sat side by side in the dim starlight, and the music was sweet. His hand came upon hers and he dared to clasp it. Then very tenderly she returned his pressure. And one day, as they were at their meal in the darkness, he felt her hand very softly seeking him, and as it chanced the fire leapt then, and he saw the tenderness of her face.

He sought to speak to her.

He went to her one day when she was sitting in the summer moonlight spinning. The light made her a thing of silver and mystery. He sat down at her feet and told her he loved her, and told her how beautiful she seemed to him. He had a lover's voice, he spoke with a tender reverence that came near to awe, and she had never before been touched by adoration. She made him no definite answer, but it was clear his words pleased her.

After that he talked to her whenever he could take an opportunity. The valley became the world for him, and the world beyond the mountains where men lived by day seemed no more than a fairy tale he would some day pour into her ears. Very tentatively and timidly he spoke to her of sight.

Sight seemed to her the most poetical of fancies, and she listened to his description of the stars and the mountains and her own sweet white-lit beauty as though it was a guilty indulgence. She did not believe, she could only half understand, but she was mysteriously delighted, and it seemed to him that she completely understood.

His love lost its awe and took courage. Presently he was for demanding her of Yacob and the elders in marriage, but she became fearful and delayed. And it was one of her elder sisters who first told Yacob that Medina-sarote and Nunez were in love.

There was from the first very great opposition to the marriage of Nunez and Medina-sarote; not so much because they valued her as because they held him as a being apart, an idiot, incompetent thing below the permissible level of a man. Her sisters opposed it bitterly as bringing discredit on them all; and old Yacob, though he had formed a sort of liking for his clumsy, obedient serf, shook his head and said the thing could not be. The young men were all angry at the idea of corrupting the race, and one went so far as to

revile and strike Nunez. He struck back. Then for the first time he found an advantage in seeing, even by twilight, and after that fight was over no one was disposed to raise a hand against him. But they still found his marriage impossible.

Old Yacob had a tenderness for his last little daughter, and was grieved to have her weep upon his shoulder.

"You see, my dear, he's an idiot. He has delusions; he can't do anything right."

"I know," wept Medina-sarote. "But he's better than he was. He's getting better. And he's strong, dear father, and kind--stronger and kinder than any other man in the world. And he loves me--and, father, I love him."

Old Yacob was greatly distressed to find her inconsolable, and, besides--what made it more distressing--he liked Nunez for many things. So he went and sat in the windowless council-chamber with the other elders and watched the trend of the talk, and said, at the proper time, "He's better than he was. Very likely, some day, we shall find him as sane as ourselves."

Then afterwards one of the elders, who thought deeply, had an idea. He was a great doctor among these people, their medicine-man, and he had a very philosophical and inventive mind, and the idea of curing Nunez of his peculiarities appealed to him. One day when Yacob was present he returned to the topic of Nunez. "I have examined Nunez," he said, "and the case is clearer to me. I think very probably he might be cured."

"This is what I have always hoped," said old Yacob.

"His brain is affected," said the blind doctor.

The elders murmured assent.

"Now, WHAT affects it?"

"Ah!" said old Yacob.

THIS," said the doctor, answering his own question.

"Those queer things that are called the eyes, and which exist to make an agreeable depression in the face, are diseased, in the case of Nunez, in such a way as to affect his brain. They are greatly distended, he has eyelashes, and his eyelids move, and consequently his brain is in a state of constant irritation and distraction."

"Yes?" said old Yacob. "Yes?"

"And I think I may say with reasonable certainty that, in order to cure him complete, all that we need to do is a simple and easy surgical operation--namely, to remove these irritant bodies."

"And then he will be sane?"

"Then he will be perfectly sane, and a quite admirable citizen."

"Thank Heaven for science!" said old Yacob, and went forth at once to tell Nunez of his happy hopes.

But Nunez's manner of receiving the good news struck him as being cold and disappointing.

"One might think," he said, "from the tone you take that you did not care for my daughter."

It was Medina-sarote who persuaded Nunez to face the blind surgeons.

"YOU do not want me," he said, "to lose my gift of sight?"

She shook her head.

"My world is sight."

Her head drooped lower.

"There are the beautiful things, the beautiful little things--the flowers, the lichens amidst the rocks, the light and softness on a piece of fur, the far sky with its drifting dawn of clouds, the sunsets and the stars. And there is YOU. For you alone it is good to have sight, to see your sweet, serene face, your kindly lips, your dear, beautiful hands folded together. . . . It is these eyes of mine you won, these eyes that hold me to you, that these idiots seek. Instead, I must touch you, hear you, and never see you again. I must come under that roof of rock and stone and darkness, that horrible roof under which your imaginations stoop . . . NO; YOU would not have me do that?"

A disagreeable doubt had arisen in him. He stopped and left the thing a question.

"I wish," she said, "sometimes--" She paused.

"Yes?" he said, a little apprehensively.

"I wish sometimes--you would not talk like that."

"Like what?"

"I know it's pretty--it's your imagination. I love it, but NOW--"

He felt cold. "NOW?" he said, faintly.

She sat quite still.

"You mean--you think--I should be better, better perhaps--"

He was realising things very swiftly. He felt anger perhaps, anger at the dull course of fate, but also sympathy for her lack of understanding--a sympathy near akin to pity.

"DEAR," he said, and he could see by her whiteness how tensely her spirit pressed against the things she could not say. He put his arms about her, he kissed her ear, and they sat for a time in silence.

"If I were to consent to this?" he said at last, in a voice that was very gentle.

She flung her arms about him, weeping wildly. "Oh, if you would," she sobbed, "if only you would!"

For a week before the operation that was to raise him from his servitude and inferiority to the level of a blind citizen Nunez knew nothing of sleep, and all through the warm, sunlit hours, while the others slumbered happily, he sat brooding or wandered aimlessly, trying to bring his mind to bear on his dilemma. He had given his answer, he had given his consent, and still he was not sure. And at last work-time was over, the sun rose in splendour over the golden crests, and his last day of vision began for him. He had a few minutes with Medina-sarote before she went apart to sleep.

"To-morrow," he said, "I shall see no more."

"Dear heart!" she answered, and pressed his hands with all her

strength.

"They will hurt you but little," she said; "and you are going through this pain, you are going through it, dear lover, for ME Dear, if a woman's heart and life can do it, I will repay you. My dearest one, my dearest with the tender voice, I will repay."

He was drenched in pity for himself and her.

He held her in his arms, and pressed his lips to hers and looked on her sweet face for the last time. "Good-bye!" he whispered to that dear sight, "good-bye!"

And then in silence he turned away from her.

She could hear his slow retreating footsteps, and something in the rhythm of them threw her into a passion of weeping.

He walked away.

He had fully meant to go to a lonely place where the meadows were beautiful with white narcissus, and there remain until the hour of his sacrifice should come, but as he walked he lifted up his eyes and saw the morning, the morning like an angel in golden armour, marching down the steeps

It seemed to him that before this splendour he and this blind world in the valley, and his love and all, were no more than a pit of sin.

He did not turn aside as he had meant to do, but went on and passed through the wall of the circumference and out upon the rocks, and his eyes were always upon the sunlit ice and snow.

He saw their infinite beauty, and his imagination soared over them to the things beyond he was now to resign for ever!

He thought of that great free world that he was parted from, the world that was his own, and he had a vision of those further slopes, distance beyond distance, with Bogota, a place of multitudinous stirring beauty, a glory by day, a luminous mystery by night, a place of palaces and fountains and statues and white houses, lying beautifully in the middle distance. He thought how for a day or so one might come down through passes drawing ever nearer and nearer to its busy streets and ways. He thought of the river journey, day by day, from great Bogota to the still vaster world beyond, through towns and villages, forest and desert places, the rushing river day by day, until its banks receded, and the big steamers came splashing by and one had reached the sea--the limitless sea, with its thousand islands, its thousands of islands, and its ships seen dimly far away in their incessant journeyings round and about that greater world. And there, unpent by mountains, one saw the sky--the sky, not such a disc as one saw it here, but an arch of immeasurable blue, a deep of deeps in which the circling stars were floating

His eyes began to scrutinise the great curtain of the mountains with a keener inquiry.

For example; if one went so, up that gully and to that chimney there, then one might come out high among those stunted pines that ran round in a sort of shelf and rose still higher and higher as it passed above the gorge. And then? That talus might be managed. Thence perhaps a climb might be found to take him up to the precipice that came below the snow; and if that chimney failed, then another farther to the east might serve his purpose better. And then? Then one would be out upon the amber-lit snow there, and half-way up to the crest of those beautiful desolations. And suppose one had good fortune!

He glanced back at the village, then turned right round and regarded it with folded arms.

He thought of Medina-sarote, and she had become small and remote.

He turned again towards the mountain wall down which the day had come to him.

Then very circumspectly he began his climb.

When sunset came he was not longer climbing, but he was far and high. His clothes were torn, his limbs were bloodstained, he was bruised in many places, but he lay as if he were at his ease, and there was a smile on his face.

From where he rested the valley seemed as if it were in a pit and nearly a mile below. Already it was dim with haze and shadow, though the mountain summits around him were things of light and fire. The mountain summits around him were things of light and fire, and the little things in the rocks near at hand were drenched with light and beauty, a vein of green mineral piercing the grey, a flash of small crystal here and there, a minute, minutely-beautiful orange lichen close beside his face. There were deep, mysterious shadows in the gorge, blue deepening into purple, and purple into a luminous darkness, and overhead was the illimitable vastness of the sky. But he heeded these things no longer, but lay quite still there, smiling as if he were content now merely to have escaped from the valley of the Blind, in which he had thought to be King. And the glow of the sunset passed, and the night came, and still he lay there, under the cold, clear stars.

THE NEW MACHIAVELLI

**by
H. G. Wells
1911**

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BOOK THE FIRST

THE MAKING OF A MAN

CHAPTER THE FIRST

CONCERNING A BOOK THAT WAS NEVER WRITTEN

1

Since I came to this place I have been very restless, wasting my energies in the futile beginning of ill-conceived books. One does not settle down very readily at two and forty to a new way of living, and I have found myself with the teeming interests of the life I have abandoned still buzzing like a swarm of homeless bees in my head. My mind has been full of confused protests and justifications. In any case I should have found difficulties enough in expressing the complex thing I have to tell, but it has added greatly to my trouble that I have a great analogue, that a certain Niccolo Machiavelli chanced to fall out of politics at very much the age I have reached, and wrote a book to engage the restlessness of his mind, very much as I have wanted to do. He wrote about the relation of the great constructive spirit in politics to individual character and weaknesses, and so far his achievement lies like a deep rut in the road of my intention. It has taken me far astray. It is a matter of many weeks now--diversified indeed by some long drives into the mountains behind us and a memorable sail to Genoa across the blue and purple waters that drowned Shelley--since I began a laboured and futile imitation of "The Prince." I sat up late last night with the jumbled accumulation; and at last made a little fire of olive twigs and burnt it all, sheet by sheet--to

begin again clear this morning.

But incidentally I have re-read most of Machiavelli, not excepting those scandalous letters of his to Vettori, and it seems to me, now that I have released myself altogether from his literary precedent, that he still has his use for me. In spite of his vast prestige I claim kindred with him and set his name upon my title-page, in partial intimation of the matter of my story. He takes me with sympathy not only by reason of the dream he pursued and the humanity of his politics, but by the mixture of his nature. His vices come in, essential to my issue. He is dead and gone, all his immediate correlations to party and faction have faded to insignificance, leaving only on the one hand his broad method and conceptions, and upon the other his intimate living personality, exposed down to its salacious corners as the soul of no contemporary can ever be exposed. Of those double strands it is I have to write, of the subtle protesting perplexing play of instinctive passion and desire against too abstract a dream of statesmanship. But things that seemed to lie very far apart in Machiavelli's time have come near to one another; it is no simple story of white passions struggling against the red that I have to tell.

The state-making dream is a very old dream indeed in the world's history. It plays too small a part in novels. Plato and Confucius are but the highest of a great host of minds that have had a kindred aspiration, have dreamt of a world of men better ordered, happier, finer, securer. They imagined cities grown more powerful and peoples made rich and multitudinous by their efforts, they thought in terms of harbours and shining navies, great roads engineered marvellously, jungles cleared and deserts conquered, the ending of muddle and diseases and dirt and misery; the ending of confusions that waste human possibilities; they thought of these things with passion and desire as other men think of the soft lines and tender beauty of women. Thousands of men there are to-day almost mastered by this white passion of statecraft, and in nearly every one who

reads and thinks you could find, I suspect, some sort of answering response. But in every one it presents itself extraordinarily entangled and mixed up with other, more intimate things.

It was so with Machiavelli. I picture him at San Casciano as he lived in retirement upon his property after the fall of the Republic, perhaps with a twinge of the torture that punished his conspiracy still lurking in his limbs. Such twinges could not stop his dreaming. Then it was "The Prince" was written. All day he went about his personal affairs, saw homely neighbours, dealt with his family, gave vent to everyday passions. He would sit in the shop of Donato del Corno gossiping curiously among vicious company, or pace the lonely woods of his estate, book in hand, full of bitter meditations. In the evening he returned home and went to his study. At the entrance, he says, he pulled off his peasant clothes covered with the dust and dirt of that immediate life, washed himself, put on his "noble court dress," closed the door on the world of toiling and getting, private loving, private hating and personal regrets, sat down with a sigh of contentment to those wider dreams.

I like to think of him so, with brown books before him lit by the light of candles in silver candlesticks, or heading some new chapter of "The Prince," with a grey quill in his clean fine hand.

So writing, he becomes a symbol for me, and the less none because of his animal humour, his queer indecent side, and because of such lapses into utter meanness as that which made him sound the note of the begging-letter writer even in his "Dedication," reminding His Magnificence very urgently, as if it were the gist of his matter, of the continued malignity of fortune in his affairs. These flaws complete him. They are my reason for preferring him as a symbol to Plato, of whose indelicate side we know nothing, and whose correspondence with Dionysius of Syracuse has perished; or to Confucius who travelled China in search of a Prince he might instruct, with lapses and indignities now lost in the mists of ages.

They have achieved the apotheosis of individual forgetfulness, and Plato has the added glory of that acquired beauty, that bust of the Indian Bacchus which is now indissolubly mingled with his tradition. They have passed into the world of the ideal, and every humbug takes his freedoms with their names. But Machiavelli, more recent and less popular, is still all human and earthly, a fallen brother--and at the same time that nobly dressed and nobly dreaming writer at the desk.

That vision of the strengthened and perfected state is protagonist in my story. But as I re-read "The Prince" and thought out the manner of my now abandoned project, I came to perceive how that stir and whirl of human thought one calls by way of embodiment the French Revolution, has altered absolutely the approach to such a question. Machiavelli, like Plato and Pythagoras and Confucius two hundred odd decades before him, saw only one method by which a thinking man, himself not powerful, might do the work of state building, and that was by seizing the imagination of a Prince. Directly these men turned their thoughts towards realisation, their attitudes became--what shall I call it?--secretarial. Machiavelli, it is true, had some little doubts about the particular Prince he wanted, whether it was Caesar Borgia of Giuliano or Lorenzo, but a Prince it had to be. Before I saw clearly the differences of our own time I searched my mind for the modern equivalent of a Prince. At various times I redrafted a parallel dedication to the Prince of Wales, to the Emperor William, to Mr. Evesham, to a certain newspaper proprietor who was once my schoolfellow at City Merchants', to Mr. J. D. Rockefeller--all of them men in their several ways and circumstances and possibilities, princely. Yet in every case my pen bent of its own accord towards irony because--because, although at first I did not realise it, I myself am just as free to be a prince. The appeal was unfair. The old sort of Prince, the old little principality has vanished from the world. The commonweal is one man's absolute estate and responsibility no more. In Machiavelli's time it was indeed to an extreme degree one man's affair. But the days of the

Prince who planned and directed and was the source and centre of all power are ended. We are in a condition of affairs infinitely more complex, in which every prince and statesman is something of a servant and every intelligent human being something of a Prince. No magnificent pensive Lorenzos remain any more in this world for secretarial hopes.

In a sense it is wonderful how power has vanished, in a sense wonderful how it has increased. I sit here, an unarmed discredited man, at a small writing-table in a little defenceless dwelling among the vines, and no human being can stop my pen except by the deliberate self-immolation of murdering me, nor destroy its fruits except by theft and crime. No King, no council, can seize and torture me; no Church, no nation silence me. Such powers of ruthless and complete suppression have vanished. But that is not because power has diminished, but because it has increased and become multitudinous, because it has dispersed itself and specialised. It is no longer a negative power we have, but positive; we cannot prevent, but we can do. This age, far beyond all previous ages, is full of powerful men, men who might, if they had the will for it, achieve stupendous things.

The things that might be done to-day! The things indeed that are being done! It is the latter that give one so vast a sense of the former. When I think of the progress of physical and mechanical science, of medicine and sanitation during the last century, when I measure the increase in general education and average efficiency, the power now available for human service, the merely physical increment, and compare it with anything that has ever been at man's disposal before, and when I think of what a little straggling, incidental, undisciplined and uncoordinated minority of inventors, experimenters, educators, writers and organisers has achieved this development of human possibilities, achieved it in spite of the disregard and aimlessness of the huge majority, and the passionate resistance of the active dull, my imagination grows giddy with

dazzling intimations of the human splendours the justly organised state may yet attain. I glimpse for a bewildering instant the heights that may be scaled, the splendid enterprises made possible.

But the appeal goes out now in other forms, in a book that catches at thousands of readers for the eye of a Prince diffused. It is the old appeal indeed for the unification of human effort, the ending of confusions, but instead of the Machiavellian deference to a flattered lord, a man cries out of his heart to the unseen fellowship about him. The last written dedication of all those I burnt last night, was to no single man, but to the socially constructive passion--in any man. . . .

There is, moreover, a second great difference in kind between my world and Machiavelli's. We are discovering women. It is as if they had come across a vast interval since his time, into the very chamber of the statesman.

2

In Machiavelli's outlook the interest of womanhood was in a region of life almost infinitely remote from his statecraft. They were the vehicle of children, but only Imperial Rome and the new world of to-day have ever had an inkling of the significance that might give them in the state. They did their work, he thought, as the ploughed earth bears its crops. Apart from their function of fertility they gave a humorous twist to life, stimulated worthy men to toil, and wasted the hours of Princes. He left the thought of women outside with his other dusty things when he went into his study to write, dismissed them from his mind. But our modern world is burthened with its sense of the immense, now half articulate, significance of women. They stand now, as it were, close beside the silver candlesticks, speaking as Machiavelli writes, until he stays his pen and turns to discuss his writing with them.

It is this gradual discovery of sex as a thing collectively portentous that I have to mingle with my statecraft if my picture is to be true which has turned me at length from a treatise to the telling of my own story. In my life I have paralleled very closely the slow realisations that are going on in the world about me. I began life ignoring women, they came to me at first perplexing and dishonouring; only very slowly and very late in my life and after misadventure, did I gauge the power and beauty of the love of man and woman and learnt how it must needs frame a justifiable vision of the ordered world. Love has brought me to disaster, because my career had been planned regardless of its possibility and value. But Machiavelli, it seems to me, when he went into his study, left not only the earth of life outside but its unsuspected soul.

3

Like Machiavelli at San Casciano, if I may take this analogy one step further, I too am an exile. Office and leading are closed to me. The political career that promised so much for me is shattered and ended for ever.

I look out from this vine-wreathed veranda under the branches of a stone pine; I see wide and far across a purple valley whose sides are terraced and set with houses of pine and ivory, the Gulf of Liguria gleaming sapphire blue, and cloud-like baseless mountains hanging in the sky, and I think of lank and coaly steamships heaving on the grey rollers of the English Channel and darkling streets wet with rain, I recall as if I were back there the busy exit from Charing Cross, the cross and the money-changers' offices, the splendid grime of giant London and the crowds going perpetually to and fro, the lights by night and the urgency and eventfulness of that great rain-swept heart of the modern world.

It is difficult to think we have left that--for many years if not for ever. In thought I walk once more in Palace Yard and hear the clink and clatter of hansoms and the quick quiet whirr of motors; I go in vivid recent memories through the stir in the lobbies, I sit again at eventful dinners in those old dining-rooms like cellars below the House--dinners that ended with shrill division bells, I think of huge clubs swarming and excited by the bulletins of that electoral battle that was for me the opening opportunity. I see the stencilled names and numbers go up on the green baize, constituency after constituency, amidst murmurs or loud shouting. . . .

It is over for me now and vanished. That opportunity will come no more. Very probably you have heard already some crude inaccurate version of our story and why I did not take office, and have formed your partial judgement on me. And so it is I sit now at my stone table, half out of life already, in a warm, large, shadowy leisure, splashed with sunlight and hung with vine tendrils, with paper before me to distil such wisdom as I can, as Machiavelli in his exile sought to do, from the things I have learnt and felt during the career that has ended now in my divorce.

I climbed high and fast from small beginnings. I had the mind of my party. I do not know where I might not have ended, but for this red blaze that came out of my unguarded nature and closed my career for ever.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

BROMSTEAD AND MY FATHER

1

I dreamt first of states and cities and political things when I was a little boy in knickerbockers.

When I think of how such things began in my mind, there comes back to me the memory of an enormous bleak room with its ceiling going up to heaven and its floor covered irregularly with patched and defective oilcloth and a dingy mat or so and a "surround" as they call it, of dark stained wood. Here and there against the wall are trunks and boxes. There are cupboards on either side of the fireplace and bookshelves with books above them, and on the wall and rather tattered is a large yellow-varnished geological map of the South of England. Over the mantel is a huge lump of white coral rock and several big fossil bones, and above that hangs the portrait of a brainy gentleman, sliced in half and displaying an interior of intricate detail and much vigour of coloring. It is the floor I think of chiefly; over the oilcloth of which, assumed to be land, spread towns and villages and forts of wooden bricks; there are steep square hills (geologically, volumes of Orr's *CYCLOPAEDIA OF THE SCIENCES*) and the cracks and spaces of the floor and the bare brown surround were the water channels and open sea of that continent of mine.

I still remember with infinite gratitude the great-uncle to whom I owe my bricks. He must have been one of those rare adults who have not forgotten the chagrins and dreams of childhood. He was a prosperous west of England builder; including my father he had three nephews, and for each of them he caused a box of bricks to be made by an out-of-work carpenter, not the insufficient supply of the toyshop, you understand, but a really adequate quantity of bricks

made out of oak and shaped and smoothed, bricks about five inches by two and a half by one, and half-bricks and quarter-bricks to correspond. There were hundreds of them, many hundreds. I could build six towers as high as myself with them, and there seemed quite enough for every engineering project I could undertake. I could build whole towns with streets and houses and churches and citadels; I could bridge every gap in the oilcloth and make causeways over crumpled spaces (which I feigned to be morasses), and on a keel of whole bricks it was possible to construct ships to push over the high seas to the remotest port in the room. And a disciplined population, that rose at last by sedulous begging on birthdays and all convenient occasions to well over two hundred, of lead sailors and soldiers, horse, foot and artillery, inhabited this world.

Justice has never been done to bricks and soldiers by those who write about toys. The praises of the toy theatre have been a common theme for essayists, the planning of the scenes, the painting and cutting out of the caste, penny plain twopence coloured, the stink and glory of the performance and the final conflagration. I had such a theatre once, but I never loved it nor hoped for much from it; my bricks and soldiers were my perpetual drama. I recall an incessant variety of interests. There was the mystery and charm of the complicated buildings one could make, with long passages and steps and windows through which one peeped into their intricacies, and by means of slips of card one could make slanting ways in them, and send marbles rolling from top to base and thence out into the hold of a waiting ship. Then there were the fortresses and gun emplacements and covered ways in which one's soldiers went. And there was commerce; the shops and markets and store-rooms full of nasturtium seed, thrift seed, lupin beans and suchlike provender from the garden; such stuff one stored in match-boxes and pill-boxes, or packed in sacks of old glove fingers tied up with thread and sent off by waggon along the great military road to the beleaguered fortress on the Indian frontier beyond the worn places that were dismal swamps. And there were battles on the way.

That great road is still clear in my memory. I was given, I forget by what benefactor, certain particularly fierce red Indians of lead-- I have never seen such soldiers since--and for these my father helped me to make tepees of brown paper, and I settled them in a hitherto desolate country under the frowning nail-studded cliffs of an ancient trunk. Then I conquered them and garrisoned their land. (Alas! they died, no doubt through contact with civilisation--one my mother trod on--and their land became a wilderness again and was ravaged for a time by a clockwork crocodile of vast proportions.) And out towards the coal-scuttle was a region near the impassable thickets of the ragged hearthrug where lived certain china Zulus brandishing spears, and a mountain country of rudely piled bricks concealing the most devious and enchanting caves and several mines of gold and silver paper. Among these rocks a number of survivors from a Noah's Ark made a various, dangerous, albeit frequently invalid and crippled fauna, and I was wont to increase the uncultivated wildness of this region further by trees of privet-twigs from the garden hedge and box from the garden borders. By these territories went my Imperial Road carrying produce to and fro, bridging gaps in the oilcloth, tunnelling through Encyclopaedic hills--one tunnel was three volumes long--defended as occasion required by camps of paper tents or brick blockhouses, and ending at last in a magnificently engineered ascent to a fortress on the cliffs commanding the Indian reservation.

My games upon the floor must have spread over several years and developed from small beginnings, incorporating now this suggestion and now that. They stretch, I suppose, from seven to eleven or twelve. I played them intermittently, and they bulk now in the retrospect far more significantly than they did at the time. I played them in bursts, and then forgot them for long periods; through the spring and summer I was mostly out of doors, and school and classes caught me early. And in the retrospect I see them all not only magnified and transfigured, but fore-shortened and confused

together. A clockwork railway, I seem to remember, came and went; one or two clockwork boats, toy sailing ships that, being keeled, would do nothing but lie on their beam ends on the floor; a detestable lot of cavalymen, undersized and gilt all over, given me by a maiden aunt, and very much what one might expect from an aunt, that I used as Nero used his Christians to ornament my public buildings; and I finally melted some into fratricidal bullets, and therewith blew the rest to flat splashes of lead by means of a brass cannon in the garden.

I find this empire of the floor much more vivid and detailed in my memory now than many of the owners of the skirts and legs and boots that went gingerly across its territories. Occasionally, alas! they stooped to scrub, abolishing in one universal destruction the slow growth of whole days of civilised development. I still remember the hatred and disgust of these catastrophes. Like Noah I was given warnings. Did I disregard them, coarse red hands would descend, plucking garrisons from fortresses and sailors from ships, jumbling them up in their wrong boxes, clumsily so that their rifles and swords were broken, sweeping the splendid curves of the Imperial Road into heaps of ruins, casting the jungle growth of Zululand into the fire.

Well, Master Dick," the voice of this cosmic calamity would say, "you ought to have put them away last night. No! I can't wait until you've sailed them all away in ships. I got my work to do, and do it I will."

And in no time all my continents and lands were swirling water and swiping strokes of house-flannel.

That was the worst of my giant visitants, but my mother too, dear lady, was something of a terror to this microcosm. She wore spring-sided boots, a kind of boot now vanished, I believe, from the world, with dull bodies and shiny toes, and a silk dress with flounces that

were very destructive to the more hazardous viaducts of the Imperial Road. She was always, I seem to remember, fetching me; fetching me for a meal, fetching me for a walk or, detestable absurdity! fetching me for a wash and brush up, and she never seemed to understand anything whatever of the political Systems across which she came to me. Also she forbade all toys on Sundays except the bricks for church-building and the soldiers for church parade, or a Scriptural use of the remains of the Noah's Ark mixed up with a wooden Swiss dairy farm. But she really did not know whether a thing was a church or not unless it positively bristled with cannon, and many a Sunday afternoon have I played Chicago (with the fear of God in my heart) under an infidel pretence that it was a new sort of ark rather elaborately done.

Chicago, I must explain, was based upon my father's description of the pig slaughterings in that city and certain pictures I had seen. You made your beasts--which were all the ark lot really, provisionally conceived as pigs--go up elaborate approaches to a central pen, from which they went down a cardboard slide four at a time, and dropped most satisfyingly down a brick shaft, and pitter-litter over some steep steps to where a head slaughterman (ne Noah) strung a cotton loop round their legs and sent them by pin hooks along a wire to a second slaughterman with a chipped foot (formerly Mrs. Noah) who, if I remember rightly, converted them into Army sausage by means of a portion of the inside of an old alarum clock.

My mother did not understand my games, but my father did. He wore bright-coloured socks and carpet slippers when he was indoors--my mother disliked boots in the house--and he would sit down on my little chair and survey the microcosm on the floor with admirable understanding and sympathy.

It was he gave me most of my toys and, I more than suspect, most of my ideas. "Here's some corrugated iron," he would say, "suitable for roofs and fencing," and hand me a lump of that stiff crinkled

paper that is used for packing medicine bottles. Or, "Dick, do you see the tiger loose near the Imperial Road?--won't do for your cattle ranch." And I would find a bright new lead tiger like a special creation at large in the world, and demanding a hunting expedition and much elaborate effort to get him safely housed in the city menagerie beside the captured dragon crocodile, tamed now, and his key lost and the heart and spring gone out of him.

And to the various irregular reading of my father I owe the inestimable blessing of never having a boy's book in my boyhood except those of Jules Verne. But my father used to get books for himself and me from the Bromstead Institute, Fenimore Cooper and Mayne Reid and illustrated histories; one of the Russo-Turkish war and one of Napier's expedition to Abyssinia I read from end to end; Stanley and Livingstone, lives of Wellington, Napoleon and Garibaldi, and back volumes of PUNCH, from which I derived conceptions of foreign and domestic politics it has taken years of adult reflection to correct. And at home permanently we had Wood's NATURAL HISTORY, a brand-new illustrated Green's HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE, Irving's COMPANIONS OF COLUMBUS, a great number of unbound parts of some geographical work, a VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD I think it was called, with pictures of foreign places, and Clarke's NEW TESTAMENT with a map of Palestine, and a variety of other informing books bought at sales. There was a Sowerby's BOTANY also, with thousands of carefully tinted pictures of British plants, and one or two other important works in the sitting-room. I was allowed to turn these over and even lie on the floor with them on Sundays and other occasions of exceptional cleanliness.

And in the attic I found one day a very old forgotten map after the fashion of a bird's-eye view, representing the Crimea, that fascinated me and kept me for hours navigating its waters with a

pin.

2

My father was a lank-limbed man in easy shabby tweed clothes and with his hands in his trouser pockets. He was a science teacher, taking a number of classes at the Bromstead Institute in Kent under the old Science and Art Department, and "visiting" various schools; and our resources were eked out by my mother's income of nearly a hundred pounds a year, and by his inheritance of a terrace of three palatial but structurally unsound stucco houses near Bromstead Station.

They were big clumsy residences in the earliest Victorian style, interminably high and with deep damp basements and downstairs coal-cellars and kitchens that suggested an architect vindictively devoted to the discomfort of the servant class. If so, he had overreached himself and defeated his end, for no servant would stay in them unless for exceptional wages or exceptional tolerance of inefficiency or exceptional freedom in repartee. Every storey in the house was from twelve to fifteen feet high (which would have been cool and pleasant in a hot climate), and the stairs went steeply up, to end at last in attics too inaccessible for occupation. The ceilings had vast plaster cornices of classical design, fragments of which would sometimes fall unexpectedly, and the wall-papers were bold and gigantic in pattern and much variegated by damp and ill-mended rents.

As my father was quite unable to let more than one of these houses at a time, and that for the most part to eccentric and undesirable tenants, he thought it politic to live in one of the two others, and devote the rent he received from the let one, when it was let, to the incessant necessary repairing of all three. He also did some of the repairing himself and, smoking a bull-dog pipe the while, which

my mother would not allow him to do in the house, he cultivated vegetables in a sketchy, unpunctual and not always successful manner in the unoccupied gardens. The three houses faced north, and the back of the one we occupied was covered by a grape-vine that yielded, I remember, small green grapes for pies in the spring, and imperfectly ripe black grapes in favourable autumns for the purposes of dessert. The grape-vine played an important part in my life, for my father broke his neck while he was pruning it, when I was thirteen.

My father was what is called a man of ideas, but they were not always good ideas. My grandfather had been a private schoolmaster and one of the founders of the College of Preceptors, and my father had assisted him in his school until increasing competition and diminishing attendance had made it evident that the days of small private schools kept by unqualified persons were numbered. Thereupon my father had roused himself and had qualified as a science teacher under the Science and Art Department, which in these days had charge of the scientific and artistic education of the mass of the English population, and had thrown himself into science teaching and the earning of government grants therefor with great if transitory zeal and success.

I do not remember anything of my father's earlier and more energetic time. I was the child of my parents' middle years; they married when my father was thirty-five and my mother past forty, and I saw only the last decadent phase of his educational career.

The Science and Art Department has vanished altogether from the world, and people are forgetting it now with the utmost readiness and generosity. Part of its substance and staff and spirit survive, more or less completely digested into the Board of Education.

The world does move on, even in its government. It is wonderful how many of the clumsy and limited governing bodies of my youth and

early manhood have given place now to more scientific and efficient machinery. When I was a boy, Bromstead, which is now a borough, was ruled by a strange body called a Local Board--it was the Age of Boards--and I still remember indistinctly my father rejoicing at the breakfast-table over the liberation of London from the corrupt and devastating control of a Metropolitan Board of Works. Then there were also School Boards; I was already practically in politics before the London School Board was absorbed by the spreading tentacles of the London County Council.

It gives a measure of the newness of our modern ideas of the State to remember that the very beginnings of public education lie within my father's lifetime, and that many most intelligent and patriotic people were shocked beyond measure at the State doing anything of the sort. When he was born, totally illiterate people who could neither read a book nor write more than perhaps a clumsy signature, were to be found everywhere in England; and great masses of the population were getting no instruction at all. Only a few schools flourished upon the patronage of exceptional parents; all over the country the old endowed grammar schools were to be found sinking and dwindling; many of them had closed altogether. In the new great centres of population multitudes of children were sweated in the factories, darkly ignorant and wretched and the under-equipped and under-staffed National and British schools, supported by voluntary contributions and sectarian rivalries, made an ineffectual fight against this festering darkness. It was a condition of affairs clamouring for remedies, but there was an immense amount of indifference and prejudice to be overcome before any remedies were possible. Perhaps some day some industrious and lucid historian will disentangle all the muddle of impulses and antagonisms, the commercialism, utilitarianism, obstinate conservatism, humanitarian enthusiasm, out of which our present educational organisation arose. I have long since come to believe it necessary that all new social institutions should be born in confusion, and that at first they should present chiefly crude and ridiculous aspects. The distrust

of government in the Victorian days was far too great, and the general intelligence far too low, to permit the State to go about the new business it was taking up in a businesslike way, to train teachers, build and equip schools, endow pedagogic research, and provide properly written school-books. These things it was felt MUST be provided by individual and local effort, and since it was manifest that it was individual and local effort that were in default, it was reluctantly agreed to stimulate them by money payments. The State set up a machinery of examination both in Science and Art and for the elementary schools; and payments, known technically as grants, were made in accordance with the examination results attained, to such schools as Providence might see fit to send into the world. In this way it was felt the Demand would be established that would, according to the beliefs of that time, inevitably ensure the Supply. An industry of "Grant earning" was created, and this would give education as a necessary by-product.

In the end this belief was found to need qualification, but Grant-earning was still in full activity when I was a small boy. So far as the Science and Art Department and my father are concerned, the task of examination was entrusted to eminent scientific men, for the most part quite unaccustomed to teaching. You see, if they also were teaching similar classes to those they examined, it was feared that injustice might be done. Year after year these eminent persons set questions and employed subordinates to read and mark the increasing thousands of answers that ensued, and having no doubt the national ideal of fairness well developed in their minds, they were careful each year to re-read the preceding papers before composing the current one, in order to see what it was usual to ask. As a result of this, in the course of a few years the recurrence and permutation of questions became almost calculable, and since the practical object of the teaching was to teach people not science, but how to write answers to these questions, the industry of Grant-earning assumed a form easily distinguished from any kind of genuine education whatever.

Other remarkable compromises had also to be made with the spirit of the age. The unfortunate conflict between Religion and Science prevalent at this time was mitigated, if I remember rightly, by making graduates in arts and priests in the established church Science Teachers EX OFFICIO, and leaving local and private enterprise to provide schools, diagrams, books, material, according to the conceptions of efficiency prevalent in the district. Private enterprise made a particularly good thing of the books. A number of competing firms of publishers sprang into existence specialising in Science and Art Department work; they set themselves to produce text-books that should supply exactly the quantity and quality of knowledge necessary for every stage of each of five and twenty subjects into which desirable science was divided, and copies and models and instructions that should give precisely the method and gestures esteemed as proficiency in art. Every section of each book was written in the idiom found to be most satisfactory to the examiners, and test questions extracted from papers set in former years were appended to every chapter. By means of these last the teacher was able to train his class to the very highest level of grant-earning efficiency, and very naturally he cast all other methods of exposition aside. First he posed his pupils with questions and then dictated model replies.

That was my father's method of instruction. I attended his classes as an elementary grant-earner from the age of ten until his death, and it is so I remember him, sitting on the edge of a table, smothering a yawn occasionally and giving out the infallible formulae to the industriously scribbling class sitting in rows of desks before him. Occasionally he would slide to his feet and go to a blackboard on an easel and draw on that very slowly and deliberately in coloured chalks a diagram for the class to copy in coloured pencils, and sometimes he would display a specimen or arrange an experiment for them to see. The room in the Institute in which he taught was equipped with a certain amount of apparatus

prescribed as necessary for subject this and subject that by the Science and Art Department, and this my father would supplement with maps and diagrams and drawings of his own.

But he never really did experiments, except that in the class in systematic botany he sometimes made us tease common flowers to pieces. He did not do experiments if he could possibly help it, because in the first place they used up time and gas for the Bunsen burner and good material in a ruinous fashion, and in the second they were, in his rather careless and sketchy hands, apt to endanger the apparatus of the Institute and even the lives of his students. Then thirdly, real experiments involved washing up. And moreover they always turned out wrong, and sometimes misled the too observant learner very seriously and opened demoralising controversies. Quite early in life I acquired an almost ineradicable sense of the unscientific perversity of Nature and the impassable gulf that is fixed between systematic science and elusive fact. I knew, for example, that in science, whether it be subject XII., Organic Chemistry, or subject XVII., Animal Physiology, when you blow into a glass of lime water it instantly becomes cloudy, and if you continue to blow it clears again, whereas in truth you may blow into the stuff from the lime-water bottle until you are crimson in the face and painful under the ears, and it never becomes cloudy at all. And I knew, too, that in science if you put potassium chlorate into a retort and heat it over a Bunsen burner, oxygen is disengaged and may be collected over water, whereas in real life if you do anything of the sort the vessel cracks with a loud report, the potassium chlorate descends sizzling upon the flame, the experimenter says "Oh! Damn!" with astonishing heartiness and distinctness, and a lady student in the back seats gets up and leaves the room.

Science is the organised conquest of Nature, and I can quite understand that ancient libertine refusing to cooperate in her own undoing. And I can quite understand, too, my father's preference for what he called an illustrative experiment, which was simply an

arrangement of the apparatus in front of the class with nothing whatever by way of material, and the Bunsen burner clean and cool, and then a slow luminous description of just what you did put in it when you were so ill-advised as to carry the affair beyond illustration, and just exactly what ought anyhow to happen when you did. He had considerable powers of vivid expression, so that in this way he could make us see all he described. The class, freed from any unpleasant nervous tension, could draw this still life without flinching, and if any part was too difficult to draw, then my father would produce a simplified version on the blackboard to be copied instead. And he would also write on the blackboard any exceptionally difficult but grant-earning words, such as "emphyreumatic" or "botryoidal."

Some words in constant use he rarely explained. I remember once sticking up my hand and asking him in the full flow of description, "Please, sir, what is flocculent?"

"The precipitate is."

"Yes, sir, but what does it mean?"

"Oh! flocculent! " said my father, "flocculent! Why--" he extended his hand and arm and twiddled his fingers for a second in the air. "Like that," he said.

I thought the explanation sufficient, but he paused for a moment after giving it. "As in a flock bed, you know," he added and resumed his discourse.

3

My father, I am afraid, carried a natural incompetence in practical affairs to an exceptionally high level. He combined practical

incompetence, practical enterprise and a thoroughly sanguine temperament, in a manner that I have never seen paralleled in any human being. He was always trying to do new things in the briskest manner, under the suggestion of books or papers or his own spontaneous imagination, and as he had never been trained to do anything whatever in his life properly, his futilities were extensive and thorough. At one time he nearly gave up his classes for intensive culture, so enamoured was he of its possibilities; the peculiar pungency of the manure he got, in pursuit of a chemical theory of his own, has scarred my olfactory memories for a lifetime. The intensive culture phase is very clear in my memory; it came near the end of his career and when I was between eleven and twelve. I was mobilised to gather caterpillars on several occasions, and assisted in nocturnal raids upon the slugs by lantern-light that wrecked my preparation work for school next day. My father dug up both lawns, and trenched and manured in spasms of immense vigour alternating with periods of paralysing distaste for the garden. And for weeks he talked about eight hundred pounds an acre at every meal.

A garden, even when it is not exasperated by intensive methods, is a thing as exacting as a baby, its moods have to be watched; it does not wait upon the cultivator's convenience, but has times of its own. Intensive culture greatly increases this disposition to trouble mankind; it makes a garden touchy and hysterical, a drugged and demoralised and over-irritated garden. My father got at cross purposes with our two patches at an early stage. Everything grew wrong from the first to last, and if my father's manures intensified nothing else, they certainly intensified the Primordial Curse. The peas were eaten in the night before they were three inches high, the beans bore nothing but blight, the only apparent result of a spraying of the potatoes was to develop a PENCHANT in the cat for being ill indoors, the cucumber frames were damaged by the catapulting of boys going down the lane at the back, and all your cucumbers were mysteriously embittered. That lane with its

occasional passers-by did much to wreck the intensive scheme, because my father always stopped work and went indoors if any one watched him. His special manure was apt to arouse a troublesome spirit of inquiry in hardy natures.

In digging his rows and shaping his patches he neglected the guiding string and trusted to his eye altogether too much, and the consequent obliquity and the various wind-breaks and scare-crows he erected, and particularly an irrigation contrivance he began and never finished by which everything was to be watered at once by means of pieces of gutter from the roof and outhouses of Number 2, and a large and particularly obstinate clump of elder-bushes in the abolished hedge that he had failed to destroy entirely either by axe or by fire, combined to give the gardens under intensive culture a singularly desolate and disorderly appearance. He took steps towards the diversion of our house drain under the influence of the Sewage Utilisation Society; but happily he stopped in time. He hardly completed any of the operations he began; something else became more urgent or simply he tired; a considerable area of the Number 2 territory was never even dug up.

In the end the affair irritated him beyond endurance. Never was a man less horticulturally-minded. The clamour of these vegetables he had launched into the world for his service and assistance, wore out his patience. He would walk into the garden the happiest of men after a day or so of disregard, talking to me of history perhaps or social organisation, or summarising some book he had read. He talked to me of anything that interested him, regardless of my limitations. Then he would begin to note the growth of the weeds. "This won't do," he would say and pull up a handful.

More weeding would follow and the talk would become fragmentary. His hands would become earthy, his nails black, weeds would snap off in his careless grip, leaving the roots behind. The world would darken. He would look at his fingers with disgusted astonishment.

"CURSE these weeds!" he would say from his heart. His discourse was at an end.

I have memories, too, of his sudden unexpected charges into the tranquillity of the house, his hands and clothes intensively enriched. He would come in like a whirlwind. "This damned stuff all over me and the Agricultural Chemistry Class at six! Bah! AAAAAAH!"

My mother would never learn not to attempt to break him of swearing on such occasions. She would remain standing a little stiffly in the scullery refusing to assist him to the adjectival towel he sought.

"If you say such things--"

He would dance with rage and hurl the soap about. "The towel!" he would cry, flicking suds from big fingers in every direction; "the towel! I'll let the blithering class slide if you don't give me the towel! I'll give up everything, I tell you--everything!" . . .

At last with the failure of the lettuces came the breaking point. I was in the little arbour learning Latin irregular verbs when it happened. I can see him still, his peculiar tenor voice still echoes in my brain, shouting his opinion of intensive culture for all the world to hear, and slashing away at that abominable mockery of a crop with a hoe. We had tied them up with bast only a week or so before, and now half were rotten and half had shot up into tall slender growths. He had the hoe in both hands and slogged. Great wipes he made, and at each stroke he said, "Take that!"

The air was thick with flying fragments of abortive salad. It was a fantastic massacre. It was the French Revolution of that cold tyranny, the vindictive overthrow of the pampered vegetable aristocrats. After he had assuaged his passion upon them, he turned

for other prey; he kicked holes in two of our noblest marrows, flicked off the heads of half a row of artichokes, and shied the hoe with a splendid smash into the cucumber frame. Something of the awe of that moment returns to me as I write of it.

Well, my boy," he said, approaching with an expression of beneficent happiness, "I've done with gardening. Let's go for a walk like reasonable beings. I've had enough of this"--his face was convulsed for an instant with bitter resentment--"Pandering to cabbages."

4

That afternoon's walk sticks in my memory for many reasons. One is that we went further than I had ever been before; far beyond Keston and nearly to Seven-oaks, coming back by train from Dunton Green, and the other is that my father as he went along talked about himself, not so much to me as to himself, and about life and what he had done with it. He monologued so that at times he produced an effect of weird world-forgetfulness. I listened puzzled, and at that time not understanding many things that afterwards became plain to me. It is only in recent years that I have discovered the pathos of that monologue; how friendless my father was and unaccompanied in his thoughts and feelings, and what a hunger he may have felt for the sympathy of the undeveloped youngster who trotted by his side.

"I'm no gardener," he said, "I'm no anything. Why the devil did I start gardening?"

"I suppose man was created to mind a garden. . . But the Fall let us out of that! What was I created for? God! what was I created for? . . ."

"Slaves to matter! Minding inanimate things! It doesn't suit me, you know. I've got no hands and no patience. I've mucked about

with life. Mucked about with life." He suddenly addressed himself to me, and for an instant I started like an eavesdropper discovered. "Whatever you do, boy, whatever you do, make a Plan. Make a good Plan and stick to it. Find out what life is about--I never have-- and set yourself to do whatever you ought to do. I admit it's a puzzle. . . .

"Those damned houses have been the curse of my life. Stucco white elephants! Beastly cracked stucco with stains of green--black and green. Conferva and soot. . . . Property, they are! . . . Beware of Things, Dick, beware of Things! Before you know where you are you are waiting on them and minding them. They'll eat your life up. Eat up your hours and your blood and energy! When those houses came to me, I ought to have sold them--or fled the country. I ought to have cleared out. Sarcophagi--eaters of men! Oh! the hours and days of work, the nights of anxiety those vile houses have cost me! The painting! It worked up my arms; it got all over me. I stank of it. It made me ill. It isn't living--it's minding. . . .

"Property's the curse of life. Property! Ugh! Look at this country all cut up into silly little parallelograms, look at all those villas we passed just now and those potato patches and that tarred shanty and the hedge! Somebody's minding every bit of it like a dog tied to a cart's tail. Patching it and bothering about it. Bothering! Yapping at every passer-by. Look at that notice-board! One rotten worried little beast wants to keep us other rotten little beasts off HIS patch,--God knows why! Look at the weeds in it. Look at the mended fence! . . . There's no property worth having, Dick, but money. That's only good to spend. All these things. Human souls buried under a cartload of blithering rubbish. . . .

"I'm not a fool, Dick. I have qualities, imagination, a sort of go. I ought to have made a better thing of life.

"I'm sure I could have done things. Only the old people pulled my leg. They started me wrong. They never started me at all. I only began to find out what life was like when I was nearly forty.

"If I'd gone to a university; if I'd had any sort of sound training, if I hadn't slipped into the haphazard places that came easiest. . . .

"Nobody warned me. Nobody. It isn't a world we live in, Dick; it's a cascade of accidents; it's a chaos exasperated by policemen! YOU be warned in time, Dick. You stick to a plan. Don't wait for any one to show you the way. Nobody will. There isn't a way till you make one. Get education, get a good education. Fight your way to the top. It's your only chance. I've watched you. You'll do no good at digging and property minding. There isn't a neighbour in Bromstead won't be able to skin you at suchlike games. You and I are the brainy unstable kind, topside or nothing. And if ever those blithering houses come to you--don't have 'em. Give them away! Dynamite 'em--and off! LIVE, Dick! I'll get rid of them for you if I can, Dick, but remember what I say." . . .

So it was my father discoursed, if not in those particular words, yet exactly in that manner, as he slouched along the southward road, with resentful eyes becoming less resentful as he talked, and flinging out clumsy illustrative motions at the outskirts of Bromstead as we passed along them. That afternoon he hated Bromstead, from its foot-tiring pebbles up. He had no illusions about Bromstead or himself. I have the clearest impression of him in his garden-stained tweeds with a deer-stalker hat on the back of his head and presently a pipe sometimes between his teeth and sometimes in his gesticulating hand, as he became diverted by his talk from his original exasperation. . . .

This particular afternoon is no doubt mixed up in my memory with many other afternoons; all sorts of things my father said and did at different times have got themselves referred to it; it filled me at

the time with a great unprecedented sense of fellowship and it has become the symbol now for all our intercourse together. If I didn't understand the things he said, I did the mood he was in. He gave me two very broad ideas in that talk and the talks I have mingled with it; he gave them to me very clearly and they have remained fundamental in my mind; one a sense of the extraordinary confusion and waste and planlessness of the human life that went on all about us; and the other of a great ideal of order and economy which he called variously Science and Civilisation, and which, though I do not remember that he ever used that word, I suppose many people nowadays would identify with Socialism,--as the Fabians expound it.

He was not very definite about this Science, you must understand, but he seemed always to be waving his hand towards it,--just as his contemporary Tennyson seems always to be doing--he belonged to his age and mostly his talk was destructive of the limited beliefs of his time, he led me to infer rather than actually told me that this Science was coming, a spirit of light and order, to the rescue of a world groaning and travailing in muddle for the want of it. . . .

5

When I think of Bromstead nowadays I find it inseparably bound up with the disorders of my father's gardening, and the odd patchings and paintings that disfigured his houses. It was all of a piece with that.

Let me try and give something of the quality of Bromstead and something of its history. It is the quality and history of a thousand places round and about London, and round and about the other great centres of population in the world. Indeed it is in a measure the quality of the whole of this modern world from which we who have the statesman's passion struggle to evolve, and dream still of evolving order.

First, then, you must think of Bromstead a hundred and fifty years ago, as a narrow irregular little street of thatched houses strung out on the London and Dover Road, a little mellow sample unit of a social order that had a kind of completeness, at its level, of its own. At that time its population numbered a little under two thousand people, mostly engaged in agricultural work or in trades serving agriculture. There was a blacksmith, a saddler, a chemist, a doctor, a barber, a linen-draper (who brewed his own beer); a veterinary surgeon, a hardware shop, and two capacious inns. Round and about it were a number of pleasant gentlemen's seats, whose owners went frequently to London town in their coaches along the very tolerable high-road. The church was big enough to hold the whole population, were people minded to go to church, and indeed a large proportion did go, and all who married were married in it, and everybody, to begin with, was christened at its font and buried at last in its yew-shaded graveyard. Everybody knew everybody in the place. It was, in fact, a definite place and a real human community in those days. There was a pleasant old market-house in the middle of the town with a weekly market, and an annual fair at which much cheerful merry making and homely intoxication occurred; there was a pack of hounds which hunted within five miles of London Bridge, and the local gentry would occasionally enliven the place with valiant cricket matches for a hundred guineas a side, to the vast excitement of the entire population. It was very much the same sort of place that it had been for three or four centuries. A Bromstead Rip van Winkle from 1550 returning in 1750 would have found most of the old houses still as he had known them, the same trades a little improved and differentiated one from the other, the same roads rather more carefully tended, the Inns not very much altered, the ancient familiar market-house. The occasional wheeled traffic would have struck him as the most remarkable difference, next perhaps to the swaggering painted stone monuments instead of brasses and the protestant severity of the communion-table in the parish church,-- both from the material point of view very little things. A Rip van

Winkle from 1350, again, would have noticed scarcely greater changes; fewer clergy, more people, and particularly more people of the middling sort; the glass in the windows of many of the houses, the stylish chimneys springing up everywhere would have impressed him, and suchlike details. The place would have had the same boundaries, the same broad essential features, would have been still itself in the way that a man is still himself after he has "filled out" a little and grown a longer beard and changed his clothes.

But after 1750 something got hold of the world, something that was destined to alter the scale of every human affair.

That something was machinery and a vague energetic disposition to improve material things. In another part of England ingenious people were beginning to use coal in smelting iron, and were producing metal in abundance and metal castings in sizes that had hitherto been unattainable. Without warning or preparation, increment involving countless possibilities of further increment was coming to the strength of horses and men. "Power," all unsuspected, was flowing like a drug into the veins of the social body.

Nobody seems to have perceived this coming of power, and nobody had calculated its probable consequences. Suddenly, almost inadvertently, people found themselves doing things that would have amazed their ancestors. They began to construct wheeled vehicles much more easily and cheaply than they had ever done before, to make up roads and move things about that had formerly been esteemed too heavy for locomotion, to join woodwork with iron nails instead of wooden pegs, to achieve all sorts of mechanical possibilities, to trade more freely and manufacture on a larger scale, to send goods abroad in a wholesale and systematic way, to bring back commodities from overseas, not simply spices and fine commodities, but goods in bulk. The new influence spread to agriculture, iron appliances replaced wooden, breeding of stock became systematic, paper-making

and printing increased and cheapened. Roofs of slate and tile appeared amidst and presently prevailed over the original Bromstead thatch, the huge space of Common to the south was extensively enclosed, and what had been an ill-defined horse-track to Dover, only passable by adventurous coaches in dry weather, became the Dover Road, and was presently the route first of one and then of several daily coaches. The High Street was discovered to be too tortuous for these awakening energies, and a new road cut off its worst contortions. Residential villas appeared occupied by retired tradesmen and widows, who esteemed the place healthy, and by others of a strange new unoccupied class of people who had money invested in joint-stock enterprises. First one and then several boys' boarding-schools came, drawing their pupils from London,--my grandfather's was one of these. London, twelve miles to the north-west, was making itself felt more and more.

But this was only the beginning of the growth period, the first trickle of the coming flood of mechanical power. Away in the north they were casting iron in bigger and bigger forms, working their way to the production of steel on a large scale, applying power in factories. Bromstead had almost doubled in size again long before the railway came; there was hardly any thatch left in the High Street, but instead were houses with handsome brass-knocked front doors and several windows, and shops with shop-fronts all of square glass panes, and the place was lighted publicly now by oil lamps--previously only one flickering lamp outside each of the coaching inns had broken the nocturnal darkness. And there was talk, it long remained talk,--of gas. The gasworks came in 1834, and about that date my father's three houses must have been built convenient for the London Road. They mark nearly the beginning of the real suburban quality; they were let at first to City people still engaged in business.

And then hard on the gasworks had come the railway and cheap coal; there was a wild outbreak of brickfields upon the claylands to the

east, and the Great Growth had begun in earnest. The agricultural placidities that had formerly come to the very borders of the High Street were broken up north, west and south, by new roads. This enterprising person and then that began to "run up" houses, irrespective of every other enterprising person who was doing the same thing. A Local Board came into existence, and with much hesitation and penny-wise economy inaugurated drainage works. Rates became a common topic, a fact of accumulating importance. Several chapels of zinc and iron appeared, and also a white new church in commercial Gothic upon the common, and another of red brick in the residential district out beyond the brickfields towards Chessington.

The population doubled again and doubled again, and became particularly teeming in the prolific "working-class" district about the deep-rutted, muddy, coal-blackened roads between the gasworks, Blodgett's laundries, and the railway goods-yard. Weekly properties, that is to say small houses built by small property owners and let by the week, sprang up also in the Cage Fields, and presently extended right up the London Road. A single national school in an inconvenient situation set itself inadequately to collect subscriptions and teach the swarming, sniffing, grimy offspring of this dingy new population to read. The villages of Beckington, which used to be three miles to the west, and Blamely four miles to the east of Bromstead, were experiencing similar distensions and proliferations, and grew out to meet us. All effect of locality or community had gone from these places long before I was born; hardly any one knew any one; there was no general meeting place any more, the old fairs were just common nuisances haunted by gypsies, van showmen, Cheap Jacks and London roughs, the churches were incapable of a quarter of the population. One or two local papers of shameless veniality reported the proceedings of the local Bench and the local Board, compelled tradesmen who were interested in these affairs to advertise, used the epithet "Bromstedian" as one expressing peculiar virtues, and so maintained in the general mind a weak tradition of some local quality that embraced us all. Then the

parish graveyard filled up and became a scandal, and an ambitious area with an air of appetite was walled in by a Bromstead Cemetery Company, and planted with suitably high-minded and sorrowful varieties of conifer. A stonemason took one of the earlier villas with a front garden at the end of the High Street, and displayed a supply of urns on pillars and headstones and crosses in stone, marble, and granite, that would have sufficed to commemorate in elaborate detail the entire population of Bromstead as one found it in 1750.

The cemetery was made when I was a little boy of five or six; I was in the full tide of building and growth from the first; the second railway with its station at Bromstead North and the drainage followed when I was ten or eleven, and all my childish memories are of digging and wheeling, of woods invaded by building, roads gashed open and littered with iron pipes amidst a fearful smell of gas, of men peeped at and seen toiling away deep down in excavations, of hedges broken down and replaced by planks, of wheelbarrows and builders' sheds, of rivulets overtaken and swallowed up by drain-pipes. Big trees, and especially elms, cleared of undergrowth and left standing amid such things, acquired a peculiar tattered dinginess rather in the quality of needy widow women who have seen happier days.

The Ravensbrook of my earlier memories was a beautiful stream. It came into my world out of a mysterious Beyond, out of a garden, splashing brightly down a weir which had once been the weir of a mill. (Above the weir and inaccessible there were bulrushes growing in splendid clumps, and beyond that, pampas grass, yellow and crimson spikes of hollyhock, and blue suggestions of wonderland.) From the pool at the foot of this initial cascade it flowed in a leisurely fashion beside a footpath,--there were two pretty thatched cottages on the left, and here were ducks, and there were willows on the right,--and so came to where great trees grew on high banks on either hand and bowed closer, and at last met overhead. This part

was difficult to reach because of an old fence, but a little boy might glimpse that long cavern of greenery by wading. Either I have actually seen kingfishers there, or my father has described them so accurately to me that he inserted them into my memory. I remember them there anyhow. Most of that overhung part I never penetrated at all, but followed the field path with my mother and met the stream again, where beyond there were flat meadows, Roper's meadows. The Ravensbrook went meandering across the middle of these, now between steep banks, and now with wide shallows at the bends where the cattle waded and drank. Yellow and purple loose-strife and ordinary rushes grew in clumps along the bank, and now and then a willow. On rare occasions of rapture one might see a rat cleaning his whiskers at the water's edge. The deep places were rich with tangled weeds, and in them fishes lurked--to me they were big fishes--water-boatmen and water-beetles traversed the calm surface of these still deeps; in one pool were yellow lilies and water-soldiers, and in the shoaly places hovering fleets of small fry basked in the sunshine--to vanish in a flash at one's shadow. In one place, too, were Rapids, where the stream woke with a start from a dreamless brooding into foaming panic and babbled and hastened. Well do I remember that half-mile of rivulet; all other rivers and cascades have their reference to it for me. And after I was eleven, and before we left Bromstead, all the delight and beauty of it was destroyed.

The volume of its water decreased abruptly--I suppose the new drainage works that linked us up with Beckington, and made me first acquainted with the geological quality of the London clay, had to do with that--until only a weak unclesing trickle remained. That at first did not strike me as a misfortune. An adventurous small boy might walk dryshod in places hitherto inaccessible. But hard upon that came the pegs, the planks and carts and devastation. Roper's meadows, being no longer in fear of floods, were now to be slashed out into parallelograms of untidy road, and built upon with rows of working-class cottages. The roads came,--horribly; the houses followed. They seemed to rise in the night. People moved into them

as soon as the roofs were on, mostly workmen and their young wives, and already in a year some of these raw houses stood empty again from defaulting tenants, with windows broken and wood-work warping and rotting. The Ravensbrook became a dump for old iron, rusty cans, abandoned boots and the like, and was a river only when unusual rains filled it for a day or so with an inky flood of surface water. . . .

That indeed was my most striking perception in the growth of Bromstead. The Ravensbrook had been important to my imaginative life; that way had always been my first choice in all my walks with my mother, and its rapid swamping by the new urban growth made it indicative of all the other things that had happened just before my time, or were still, at a less dramatic pace, happening. I realised that building was the enemy. I began to understand why in every direction out of Bromstead one walked past scaffold-poles into litter, why fragments of broken brick and cinder mingled in every path, and the significance of the universal notice-boards, either white and new or a year old and torn and battered, promising sites, proffering houses to be sold or let, abusing and intimidating passers-by for fancied trespass, and protecting rights of way.

It is difficult to disentangle now what I understood at this time and what I have since come to understand, but it seems to me that even in those childish days I was acutely aware of an invading and growing disorder. The serene rhythms of the old established agriculture, I see now, were everywhere being replaced by cultivation under notice and snatch crops; hedges ceased to be repaired, and were replaced by cheap iron railings or chunks of corrugated iron; more and more hoardings sprang up, and contributed more and more to the nomad tribes of filthy paper scraps that flew before the wind and overspread the country. The outskirts of Bromstead were a maze of exploitation roads that led nowhere, that ended in tarred fences studded with nails (I don't remember barbed wire in those days; I think the Zeitgeist did not produce that until

later), and in trespass boards that used vehement language. Broken glass, tin cans, and ashes and paper abounded. Cheap glass, cheap tin, abundant fuel, and a free untaxed Press had rushed upon a world quite unprepared to dispose of these blessings when the fulness of enjoyment was past.

I suppose one might have persuaded oneself that all this was but the replacement of an ancient tranquillity, or at least an ancient balance, by a new order. Only to my eyes, quickened by my father's intimations, it was manifestly no order at all. It was a multitude of incoordinated fresh starts, each more sweeping and destructive than the last, and none of them ever really worked out to a ripe and satisfactory completion. Each left a legacy of products, houses, humanity, or what not, in its wake. It was a sort of progress that had bolted; it was change out of hand, and going at an unprecedented pace nowhere in particular.

No, the Victorian epoch was not the dawn of a new era; it was a hasty, trial experiment, a gigantic experiment of the most slovenly and wasteful kind. I suppose it was necessary; I suppose all things are necessary. I suppose that before men will discipline themselves to learn and plan, they must first see in a hundred convincing forms the folly and muddle that come from headlong, aimless and haphazard methods. The nineteenth century was an age of demonstrations, some of them very impressive demonstrations, of the powers that have come to mankind, but of permanent achievement, what will our descendants cherish? It is hard to estimate what grains of precious metal may not be found in a mud torrent of human production on so large a scale, but will any one, a hundred years from now, consent to live in the houses the Victorians built, travel by their roads or railways, value the furnishings they made to live among or esteem, except for curious or historical reasons, their prevalent art and the clipped and limited literature that satisfied their souls?

That age which bore me was indeed a world full of restricted and

undisciplined people, overtaken by power, by possessions and great new freedoms, and unable to make any civilised use of them whatever; stricken now by this idea and now by that, tempted first by one possession and then another to ill-considered attempts; it was my father's exploitation of his villa gardens on the wholesale level. The whole of Bromstead as I remember it, and as I saw it last--it is a year ago now--is a dull useless boiling-up of human activities, an immense clustering of futilities. It is as unfinished as ever; the builders' roads still run out and end in mid-field in their old fashion; the various enterprises jumble in the same hopeless contradiction, if anything intensified. Pretentious villas jostle slums, and public-house and tin tabernacle glower at one another across the cat-haunted lot that intervenes. Roper's meadows are now quite frankly a slum; back doors and sculleries gape towards the railway, their yards are hung with tattered washing unashamed; and there seem to be more boards by the railway every time I pass, advertising pills and pickles, tonics and condiments, and suchlike solitudes of a people with no natural health nor appetite left in them. . . .

Well, we have to do better. Failure is not failure nor waste wasted if it sweeps away illusion and lights the road to a plan.

6

Chaotic indiscipline, ill-adjusted effort, spasmodic aims, these give the quality of all my Bromstead memories. The crowning one of them all rises to desolating tragedy. I remember now the wan spring sunshine of that Sunday morning, the stiff feeling of best clothes and aggressive cleanliness and formality, when I and my mother returned from church to find my father dead. He had been pruning the grape vine. He had never had a ladder long enough to reach the sill of the third-floor windows--at house-painting times he had borrowed one from the plumber who mixed his paint--and he had in his

own happy-go-lucky way contrived a combination of the garden fruit ladder with a battered kitchen table that served all sorts of odd purposes in an outhouse. He had stayed up this arrangement by means of the garden roller, and the roller had at the critical moment--rolled. He was lying close by the garden door with his head queerly bent back against a broken and twisted rainwater pipe, an expression of pacific contentment on his face, a bamboo curtain rod with a tableknife tied to end of it, still gripped in his hand. We had been rapping for some time at the front door unable to make him hear, and then we came round by the door in the side trellis into the garden and so discovered him.

"Arthur!" I remember my mother crying with the strangest break in her voice, "What are you doing there? Arthur! And--SUNDAY!"

I was coming behind her, musing remotely, when the quality of her voice roused me. She stood as if she could not go near him. He had always puzzled her so, he and his ways, and this seemed only another enigma. Then the truth dawned on her, she shrieked as if afraid of him, ran a dozen steps back towards the trellis door and stopped and clasped her ineffectual gloved hands, leaving me staring blankly, too astonished for feeling, at the carelessly flung limbs.

The same idea came to me also. I ran to her. "Mother!" I cried, pale to the depths of my spirit, "IS HE DEAD?"

I had been thinking two minutes before of the cold fruit pie that glorified our Sunday dinner-table, and how I might perhaps get into the tree at the end of the garden to read in the afternoon. Now an immense fact had come down like a curtain and blotted out all my childish world. My father was lying dead before my eyes. . . . I perceived that my mother was helpless and that things must be done.

"Mother!" I said, "we must get Doctor Beaseley,--and carry him indoors."

CHAPTER THE THIRD

SCHOLASTIC

1

My formal education began in a small preparatory school in Bromstead. I went there as a day boy. The charge for my instruction was mainly set off by the periodic visits of my father with a large bag of battered fossils to lecture to us upon geology. I was one of those fortunate youngsters who take readily to school work, I had a good memory, versatile interests and a considerable appetite for commendation, and when I was barely twelve I got a scholarship at the City Merchants School and was entrusted with a scholar's railway season ticket to Victoria. After my father's death a large and very animated and solidly built uncle in tweeds from Staffordshire, Uncle Minter, my mother's sister's husband, with a remarkable accent and remarkable vowel sounds, who had plunged into the Bromstead home once or twice for the night but who was otherwise unknown to me, came on the scene, sold off the three gaunt houses with the utmost gusto, invested the proceeds and my father's life insurance money, and got us into a small villa at Penge within sight of that immense facade of glass and iron, the Crystal Palace. Then he retired in a mood of good-natured contempt to his native habitat again. We stayed at Penge until my mother's death.

School became a large part of the world to me, absorbing my time and interest, and I never acquired that detailed and intimate knowledge of Penge and the hilly villadom round about, that I have of the town and outskirts of Bromstead.

It was a district of very much the same character, but it was more completely urbanised and nearer to the centre of things; there were the same unfinished roads, the same occasional disconcerted hedges

and trees, the same butcher's horse grazing under a builder's notice-board, the same incidental lapses into slum. The Crystal Palace grounds cut off a large part of my walking radius to the west with impassable fences and forbiddingly expensive turnstiles, but it added to the ordinary spectacle of meteorology a great variety of gratuitous fireworks which banged and flared away of a night after supper and drew me abroad to see them better. Such walks as I took, to Croydon, Wembleton, West Wickham and Greenwich, impressed upon me

the interminable extent of London's residential suburbs; mile after mile one went, between houses, villas, rows of cottages, streets of shops, under railway arches, over railway bridges. I have forgotten the detailed local characteristics--if there were any--of much of that region altogether. I was only there two years, and half my perambulations occurred at dusk or after dark. But with Penge I associate my first realisations of the wonder and beauty of twilight and night, the effect of dark walls reflecting lamplight, and the mystery of blue haze-veiled hillsides of houses, the glare of shops by night, the glowing steam and streaming sparks of railway trains and railway signals lit up in the darkness. My first rambles in the evening occurred at Penge--I was becoming a big and independent-spirited boy--and I began my experience of smoking during these twilight prowls with the threepenny packets of American cigarettes then just appearing in the world.

My life centred upon the City Merchants School. Usually I caught the eight-eighteen for Victoria, I had a midday meal and tea; four nights a week I stayed for preparation, and often I was not back home again until within an hour of my bedtime. I spent my half holidays at school in order to play cricket and football. This, and a pretty voracious appetite for miscellaneous reading which was fostered by the Penge Middleton Library, did not leave me much leisure for local topography. On Sundays also I sang in the choir at St. Martin's Church, and my mother did not like me to walk out alone on the Sabbath afternoon, she herself slumbered, so that I

wrote or read at home. I must confess I was at home as little as I could contrive.

Home, after my father's death, had become a very quiet and uneventful place indeed. My mother had either an unimaginative temperament or her mind was greatly occupied with private religious solitudes, and I remember her talking to me but little, and that usually upon topics I was anxious to evade. I had developed my own view about low-Church theology long before my father's death, and my meditation upon that event had finished my secret estrangement from my mother's faith. My reason would not permit even a remote chance of his being in hell, he was so manifestly not evil, and this religion would not permit him a remote chance of being out yet. When I was a little boy my mother had taught me to read and write and pray and had done many things for me, indeed she persisted in washing me and even in making my clothes until I rebelled against these things as indignities. But our minds parted very soon. She never began to understand the mental processes of my play, she never interested herself in my school life and work, she could not understand things I said; and she came, I think, quite insensibly to regard me with something of the same hopeless perplexity she had felt towards my father.

Him she must have wedded under considerable delusions. I do not think he deceived her, indeed, nor do I suspect him of mercenariness in their union; but no doubt he played up to her requirements in the half ingenuous way that was and still is the quality of most wooing, and presented himself as a very brisk and orthodox young man. I wonder why nearly all lovemaking has to be fraudulent. Afterwards he must have disappointed her cruelly by letting one aspect after another of his careless, sceptical, experimental temperament appear. Her mind was fixed and definite, she embodied all that confidence in church and decorum and the assurances of the pulpit which was characteristic of the large mass of the English people--for after all, the rather low-Church section WAS the largest single mass--in

early Victorian times. She had dreams, I suspect, of going to church with him side by side; she in a little poke bonnet and a large flounced crinoline, all mauve and magenta and starched under a little lace-trimmed parasol, and he in a tall silk hat and peg-top trousers and a roll-collar coat, and looking rather like the Prince Consort,--white angels almost visibly raining benedictions on their amiable progress. Perhaps she dreamt gently of much-belaced babies and an interestingly pious (but not too dissenting or fanatical) little girl or boy or so, also angel-haunted. And I think, too, she must have seen herself ruling a seemingly "home of taste," with a vivarium in the conservatory that opened out of the drawing-room, or again, making preserves in the kitchen. My father's science-teaching, his diagrams of disembowelled humanity, his pictures of prehistoric beasts that contradicted the Flood, his disposition towards soft shirts and loose tweed suits, his inability to use a clothes brush, his spasmodic reading fits and his bulldog pipes, must have jarred cruelly with her rather unintelligent anticipations. His wild moments of violent temper when he would swear and smash things, absurd almost lovable storms that passed like summer thunder, must have been starkly dreadful to her. She was constitutionally inadaptable, and certainly made no attempt to understand or tolerate these outbreaks. She tried them by her standards, and by her standards they were wrong. Her standards hid him from her. The blazing things he said rankled in her mind unforgettably.

As I remember them together they chafed constantly. Her attitude to nearly all his moods and all his enterprises was a sceptical disapproval. She treated him as something that belonged to me and not to her. "YOUR father," she used to call him, as though I had got him for her.

She had married late and she had, I think, become mentally self-subsisting before her marriage. Even in those Herne Hill days I used to wonder what was going on in her mind, and I find that old

speculative curiosity return as I write this. She took a considerable interest in the housework that our generally servantless condition put upon her--she used to have a charwoman in two or three times a week--but she did not do it with any great skill. She covered most of our furniture with flouncey ill-fitting covers, and she cooked plainly and without very much judgment. The Penge house, as it contained nearly all our Bromstead things, was crowded with furniture, and is chiefly associated in my mind with the smell of turpentine, a condiment she used very freely upon the veneered mahogany pieces. My mother had an equal dread of "blacks" by day and the "night air," so that our brightly clean windows were rarely open.

She took a morning paper, and she would open it and glance at the headlines, but she did not read it until the afternoon and then, I think, she was interested only in the more violent crimes, and in railway and mine disasters and in the minutest domesticities of the Royal Family. Most of the books at home were my father's, and I do not think she opened any of them. She had one or two volumes that dated from her own youth, and she tried in vain to interest me in them; there was Miss Strickland's QUEENS OF ENGLAND, a book I remember with particular animosity, and QUEECHY and the WIDE WIDE WORLD. She made these books of hers into a class apart by sewing outer covers upon them of calico and figured muslin. To me in these habiliments they seemed not so much books as confederated old ladies.

My mother was also very punctual with her religious duties, and rejoiced to watch me in the choir.

On winter evenings she occupied an armchair on the other side of the table at which I sat, head on hand reading, and she would be darning stockings or socks or the like. We achieved an effect of rather stuffy comfortableness that was soporific, and in a passive way I

think she found these among her happy times. On such occasions she was wont to put her work down on her knees and fall into a sort of thoughtless musing that would last for long intervals and rouse my curiosity. For like most young people I could not imagine mental states without definite forms.

She carried on a correspondence with a number of cousins and friends, writing letters in a slanting Italian hand and dealing mainly with births, marriages and deaths, business starts (in the vaguest terms) and the distresses of bankruptcy.

And yet, you know, she did have a curious intimate life of her own that I suspected nothing of at the time, that only now becomes credible to me. She kept a diary that is still in my possession, a diary of fragmentary entries in a miscellaneous collection of pocket books. She put down the texts of the sermons she heard, and queer stiff little comments on casual visitors,--" Miss G. and much noisy shrieking talk about games and such frivolities and CROQUAY. A. delighted and VERY ATTENTIVE." Such little human entries abound. She had an odd way of never writing a name, only an initial; my father is always "A.," and I am always "D." It is manifest she followed the domestic events in the life of the Princess of Wales, who is now Queen Mother, with peculiar interest and sympathy. "Pray G. all may be well," she writes in one such crisis.

But there are things about myself that I still find too poignant to tell easily, certain painful and clumsy circumstances of my birth in very great detail, the distresses of my infantile ailments. Then later I find such things as this: "Heard D. s----." The "s" is evidently "swear "--" G. bless and keep my boy from evil." And again, with the thin handwriting shaken by distress: "D. would not go to church, and hardened his heart and said wicked infidel things, much disrespect of the clergy. The anthem is tiresome!!! That men should set up to be wiser than their maker!!!" Then trebly underlined: "I FEAR HIS FATHER'S TEACHING." Dreadful little tangle

of misapprehensions and false judgments! More comforting for me to read, "D. very kind and good. He grows more thoughtful every day." I suspect myself of forgotten hypocrisies.

At just one point my mother's papers seem to dip deeper. I think the death of my father must have stirred her for the first time for many years to think for herself. Even she could not go on living in any peace at all, believing that he had indeed been flung headlong into hell. Of this gnawing solicitude she never spoke to me, never, and for her diary also she could find no phrases. But on a loose half-sheet of notepaper between its pages I find this passage that follows, written very carefully. I do not know whose lines they are nor how she came upon them. They run:--

"And if there be no meeting past the grave;
If all is darkness, silence, yet 'tis rest.
Be not afraid ye waiting hearts that weep,
For God still giveth His beloved sleep,
And if an endless sleep He wills, so best."

That scrap of verse amazed me when I read it. I could even wonder if my mother really grasped the import of what she had copied out. It affected me as if a stone-deaf person had suddenly turned and joined in a whispered conversation. It set me thinking how far a mind in its general effect quite hopelessly limited, might range. After that I went through all her diaries, trying to find something more than a conventional term of tenderness for my father. But I found nothing. And yet somehow there grew upon me the realisation that there had been love. . . . Her love for me, on the other hand, was abundantly expressed.

I knew nothing of that secret life of feeling at the time; such expression as it found was all beyond my schoolboy range. I did not know when I pleased her and I did not know when I distressed her. Chiefly I was aware of my mother as rather dull company, as a mind

thorny with irrational conclusions and incapable of explication, as one believing quite wilfully and irritatingly in impossible things. So I suppose it had to be; life was coming to me in new forms and with new requirements. It was essential to our situation that we should fail to understand. After this space of years I have come to realisations and attitudes that dissolve my estrangement from her, I can pierce these barriers, I can see her and feel her as a loving and feeling and desiring and muddle-headed person. There are times when I would have her alive again, if only that I might be kind to her for a little while and give her some return for the narrow intense affection, the tender desires, she evidently lavished so abundantly on me. But then again I ask how I could make that return? And I realise the futility of such dreaming. Her demand was rigid, and to meet it I should need to act and lie.

So she whose blood fed me, whose body made me, lies in my memory as I saw her last, fixed, still, infinitely intimate, infinitely remote. . . .

My own case with my mother, however, does not awaken the same regret I feel when I think of how she misjudged and irked my father, and turned his weaknesses into thorns for her own tormenting. I wish I could look back without that little twinge to two people who were both in their different quality so good. But goodness that is narrow is a pedestrian and ineffectual goodness. Her attitude to my father seems to me one of the essentially tragic things that have come to me personally, one of those things that nothing can transfigure, that REMAIN sorrowful, that I cannot soothe with any explanation, for as I remember him he was indeed the most lovable of weak spasmodic men. But my mother had been trained in a hard and narrow system that made evil out of many things not in the least evil, and inculcated neither kindness nor charity. All their estrangement followed from that.

These cramping cults do indeed take an enormous toll of human love

and happiness, and not only that but what we Machiavellians must needs consider, they make frightful breaches in human solidarity. I suppose I am a deeply religious man, as men of my quality go, but I hate more and more, as I grow older, the shadow of intolerance cast by religious organisations. All my life has been darkened by irrational intolerance, by arbitrary irrational prohibitions and exclusions. Mahometanism with its fierce proselytism, has, I suppose, the blackest record of uncharitableness, but most of the Christian sects are tainted, tainted to a degree beyond any of the anterior paganisms, with this same hateful quality. It is their exclusive claim that sends them wrong, the vain ambition that inspires them all to teach a uniform one-sided God and be the one and only gateway to salvation. Deprecation of all outside the household of faith, an organised undervaluation of heretical goodness and loveliness, follows, necessarily. Every petty difference is exaggerated to the quality of a saving grace or a damning defect. Elaborate precautions are taken to shield the believer's mind against broad or amiable suggestions; the faithful are deterred by dark allusions, by sinister warnings, from books, from theatres, from worldly conversation, from all the kindly instruments that mingle human sympathy. For only by isolating its flock can the organisation survive.

Every month there came to my mother a little magazine called, if I remember rightly, the HOME CHURCHMAN, with the combined authority of print and clerical commendation. It was the most evil thing that ever came into the house, a very devil, a thin little pamphlet with one woodcut illustration on the front page of each number; now the uninviting visage of some exponent of the real and only doctrine and attitudes, now some coral strand in act of welcoming the missionaries of God's mysterious preferences, now a new church in the Victorian Gothic. The vile rag it was! A score of vices that shun the policeman have nothing of its subtle wickedness. It was an outrage upon the natural kindness of men. The contents were all

admirably adjusted to keep a spirit in prison. Their force of sustained suggestion was tremendous. There would be dreadful intimations of the swift retribution that fell upon individuals for Sabbath-breaking, and upon nations for weakening towards Ritualism, or treating Roman Catholics as tolerable human beings; there would be great rejoicings over the conversion of alleged Jews, and terrible descriptions of the death-beds of prominent infidels with boldly invented last words,--the most unscrupulous lying; there would be the appallingly edifying careers of "early piety" lusciously described, or stories of condemned criminals who traced their final ruin unerringly to early laxities of the kind that leads people to give up subscribing to the HOME CHURCHMAN.

Every month that evil spirit brought about a slump in our mutual love. My mother used to read the thing and become depressed and anxious for my spiritual welfare, used to be stirred to unintelligent pestering. . . .

2

A few years ago I met the editor of this same HOME CHURCHMAN. It was at one of the weekly dinners of that Fleet Street dining club, the Blackfriars.

I heard the paper's name with a queer little shock and surveyed the man with interest. No doubt he was only a successor of the purveyor of discords who darkened my boyhood. It was amazing to find an influence so terrible embodied in a creature so palpably petty. He was seated some way down a table at right angles to the one at which I sat, a man of mean appearance with a greyish complexion, thin, with a square nose, a heavy wiry moustache and a big Adam's apple sticking out between the wings of his collar. He ate with considerable appetite and unconcealed relish, and as his jaw was underhung, he chummed and made the moustache wave like reeds in the

swell of a steamer. It gave him a conscientious look. After dinner he a little forced himself upon me. At that time, though the shadow of my scandal was already upon me, I still seemed to be shaping for great successes, and he was glad to be in conversation with me and anxious to intimate political sympathy and support. I tried to make him talk of the HOME CHURCHMAN and the kindred publications he ran, but he was manifestly ashamed of his job so far as I was concerned.

"One wants," he said, pitching himself as he supposed in my key, "to put constructive ideas into our readers, but they are narrow, you know, very narrow. Very." He made his moustache and lips express judicious regret. "One has to consider them carefully, one has to respect their attitudes. One dare not go too far with them. One has to feel one's way."

He chummed and the moustache bristled.

A hireling, beyond question, catering for a demand. I gathered there was a home in Tufnell Park, and three boys to be fed and clothed and educated. . . .

I had the curiosity to buy a copy of his magazine afterwards, and it seemed much the same sort of thing that had worried my mother in my boyhood. There was the usual Christian hero, this time with mutton-chop whiskers and a long bare upper lip. The Jesuits, it seemed, were still hard at it, and Heaven frightfully upset about the Sunday opening of museums and the falling birth-rate, and as touchy and vindictive as ever. There were two vigorous paragraphs upon the utter damnableness of the Rev. R. J. Campbell, a contagious damnableness I gathered, one wasn't safe within a mile of Holborn Viaduct, and a foul-mouthed attack on poor little Wilkins the novelist--who was being baited by the moralists at that time for making one of his big women characters, not being in holy wedlock, desire a baby and say so. . . .

The broadening of human thought is a slow and complex process. We do go on, we do get on. But when one thinks that people are living and dying now, quarrelling and sulking, misled and misunderstanding, vaguely fearful, condemning and thwarting one another in the close darkneses of these narrow cults--Oh, God! one wants a gale out of Heaven, one wants a great wind from the sea!

3

While I lived at Penge two little things happened to me, trivial in themselves and yet in their quality profoundly significant. They had this in common, that they pierced the texture of the life I was quietly taking for granted and let me see through it into realities--realities I had indeed known about before but never realised. Each of these experiences left me with a sense of shock, with all the values in my life perplexingly altered, attempting readjustment. One of these disturbing and illuminating events was that I was robbed of a new pocket-knife and the other that I fell in love. It was altogether surprising to me to be robbed. You see, as an only child I had always been fairly well looked after and protected, and the result was an amazing confidence in the practical goodness of the people one met in the world. I knew there were robbers in the world, just as I knew there were tigers; that I was ever likely to meet robber or tiger face to face seemed equally impossible.

The knife as I remember it was a particularly jolly one with all sorts of instruments in it, tweezers and a thing for getting a stone out of the hoof of a horse, and a corkscrew; it had cost me a carefully accumulated half-crown, and amounted indeed to a new experience in knives. I had had it for two or three days, and then one afternoon I dropped it through a hole in my pocket on a footpath crossing a field between Penge and Anerley. I heard it fall in the way one does without at the time appreciating what had happened,

then, later, before I got home, when my hand wandered into my pocket to embrace the still dear new possession I found it gone, and instantly that memory of something hitting the ground sprang up into consciousness. I went back and commenced a search. Almost immediately I was accosted by the leader of a little gang of four or five extremely dirty and ragged boys of assorted sizes and slouching carriage who were coming from the Anerley direction.

"Lost anythink, Matey?" said he.

I explained.

"'E's dropped 'is knife," said my interlocutor, and joined in the search.

"What sort of 'andle was it, Matey?" said a small white-faced sniffing boy in a big bowler hat.

I supplied the information. His sharp little face scrutinised the ground about us.

"GOT it," he said, and pounced.

"Give it 'ere," said the big boy hoarsely, and secured it.

I walked towards him serenely confident that he would hand it over to me, and that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

"No bloomin' fear!" he said, regarding me obliquely. "Oo said it was your knife?"

Remarkable doubts assailed me. "Of course it's my knife," I said. The other boys gathered round me.

"This ain't your knife," said the big boy, and spat casually.

"I dropped it just now."

"Findin's keepin's, I believe," said the big boy.

"Nonsense," I said. "Give me my knife."

"Ow many blades it got?"

"Three."

"And what sort of 'andle?"

"Bone."

"Got a corkscrew like?"

"Yes."

"Ah! This ain't your knife no'ow. See?"

He made no offer to show it to me. My breath went.

"Look here!" I said. "I saw that kid pick it up. It IS my knife."

"Rot!" said the big boy, and slowly, deliberately put my knife into his trouser pocket.

I braced my soul for battle. All civilisation was behind me, but I doubt if it kept the colour in my face. I buttoned my jacket and clenched my fists and advanced on my antagonist--he had, I suppose, the advantage of two years of age and three inches of height. "Hand over that knife," I said.

Then one of the smallest of the band assailed me with extraordinary vigour and swiftness from behind, had an arm round my neck and a knee in my back before I had the slightest intimation of attack, and so got me down. "I got 'im, Bill," squeaked this amazing little ruffian. My nose was flattened by a dirty hand, and as I struck out and hit something like sacking, some one kicked my elbow. Two or three seemed to be at me at the same time. Then I rolled over and sat up to discover them all making off, a ragged flight, footballing my cap, my City Merchants' cap, amongst them. I leapt to my feet in a passion of indignation and pursued them.

But I did not overtake them. We are beings of mixed composition, and I doubt if mine was a single-minded pursuit. I knew that honour required me to pursue, and I had a vivid impression of having just been down in the dust with a very wiry and active and dirty little antagonist of disagreeable odour and incredible and incalculable unscrupulousness, kneeling on me and gripping my arm and neck. I wanted of course to be even with him, but also I doubted if catching him would necessarily involve that. They kicked my cap into the ditch at the end of the field, and made off compactly along a cinder lane while I turned aside to recover my dishonoured headdress. As I knocked the dust out of that and out of my jacket, and brushed my knees and readjusted my very crumpled collar, I tried to focus this startling occurrence in my mind.

I had vague ideas of going to a policeman or of complaining at a police station, but some boyish instinct against informing prevented that. No doubt I entertained ideas of vindictive pursuit and murderous reprisals. And I was acutely enraged whenever I thought of my knife. The thing indeed rankled in my mind for weeks and weeks, and altered all the flavour of my world for me. It was the first time I glimpsed the simple brute violence that lurks and peeps beneath our civilisation. A certain kindly complacency of attitude towards the palpably lower classes was qualified for ever

But the other experience was still more cardinal. It was the first clear intimation of a new motif in life, the sex motif, that was to rise and increase and accumulate power and enrichment and interweave with and at last dominate all my life.

It was when I was nearly fifteen this happened. It is inseparably connected in my mind with the dusk of warm September evenings. I never met the girl I loved by daylight, and I have forgotten her name. It was some insignificant name.

Yet the peculiar quality of the adventure keeps it shining darkly like some deep coloured gem in the common setting of my memories. It came as something new and strange, something that did not join on to anything else in my life or connect with any of my thoughts or beliefs or habits; it was a wonder, a mystery, a discovery about myself, a discovery about the whole world. Only in after years did sexual feeling lose that isolation and spread itself out to illuminate and pervade and at last possess the whole broad vision of life.

It was in that phase of an urban youth's development, the phase of the cheap cigarette, that this thing happened. One evening I came by chance on a number of young people promenading by the light of a row of shops towards Beckington, and, with all the glory of a glowing cigarette between my lips, I joined their strolling number. These twilight parades of young people, youngsters chiefly of the lower middle-class, are one of the odd social developments of the great suburban growths--unkindly critics, blind to the inner meanings of things, call them, I believe, Monkeys' Parades--the shop apprentices, the young work girls, the boy clerks and so forth, stirred by mysterious intimations, spend their first-earned money upon collars and ties, chiffon hats, smart lace collars, walking-

sticks, sunshades or cigarettes, and come valiantly into the vague transfiguring mingling of gaslight and evening, to walk up and down, to eye meaningly, even to accost and make friends. It is a queer instinctive revolt from the narrow limited friendless homes in which so many find themselves, a going out towards something, romance if you will, beauty, that has suddenly become a need--a need that hitherto has lain dormant and unsuspected. They promenade.

Vulgar!--it is as vulgar as the spirit that calls the moth abroad in the evening and lights the body of the glow-worm in the night. I made my way through the throng, a little contemptuously as became a public schoolboy, my hands in my pockets--none of your cheap canes for me!--and very careful of the lie of my cigarette upon my lips. And two girls passed me, one a little taller than the other, with dim warm-tinted faces under clouds of dark hair and with dark eyes like pools reflecting stars.

I half turned, and the shorter one glanced back at me over her shoulder--I could draw you now the pose of her cheek and neck and shoulder--and instantly I was as passionately in love with the girl as I have ever been before or since, as any man ever was with any woman. I turned about and followed them, I flung away my cigarette ostentatiously and lifted my school cap and spoke to them.

The girl answered shyly with her dark eyes on my face. What I said and what she said I cannot remember, but I have little doubt it was something absolutely vapid. It really did not matter; the thing was we had met. I felt as I think a new-hatched moth must feel when suddenly its urgent headlong searching brings it in tremulous amazement upon its mate.

We met, covered from each other, with all the nets of civilisation keeping us apart. We walked side by side.

It led to scarcely more than that. I think we met four or five

times altogether, and always with her nearly silent elder sister on the other side of her. We walked on the last two occasions arm in arm, furtively caressing each other's hands, we went away from the glare of the shops into the quiet roads of villadom, and there we whispered instead of talking and looked closely into one another's warm and shaded face. "Dear," I whispered very daringly, and she answered, "Dear!" We had a vague sense that we wanted more of that quality of intimacy and more. We wanted each other as one wants beautiful music again or to breathe again the scent of flowers.

And that is all there was between us. The events are nothing, the thing that matters is the way in which this experience stabbed through the common stuff of life and left it pierced, with a light, with a huge new interest shining through the rent.

When I think of it I can recall even now the warm mystery of her face, her lips a little apart, lips that I never kissed, her soft shadowed throat, and I feel again the sensuous stir of her proximity. . . .

Those two girls never told me their surname nor let me approach their house. They made me leave them at the corner of a road of small houses near Penge Station. And quite abruptly, without any intimation, they vanished and came to the meeting place no more, they vanished as a moth goes out of a window into the night, and left me possessed of an intolerable want. . . .

The affair pervaded my existence for many weeks. I could not do my work and I could not rest at home. Night after night I promenaded up and down that Monkeys' Parade full of an unappeasable desire, with a thwarted sense of something just begun that ought to have gone on. I went backwards and forwards on the way to the vanishing place, and at last explored the forbidden road that had swallowed them up. But I never saw her again, except that later she came to me, my symbol of womanhood, in dreams. How my blood was stirred! I

lay awake of nights whispering in the darkness for her. I prayed for her.

Indeed that girl, who probably forgot the last vestiges of me when her first real kiss came to her, ruled and haunted me, gave a Queen to my imagination and a texture to all my desires until I became a man.

I generalised her at last. I suddenly discovered that poetry was about her and that she was the key to all that had hitherto seemed nonsense about love. I took to reading novels, and if the heroine could not possibly be like her, dusky and warm and starlike, I put the book aside. . . .

I hesitate and add here one other confession. I want to tell this thing because it seems to me we are altogether too restrained and secretive about such matters. The cardinal thing in life sneaks in to us darkly and shamefully like a thief in the night.

One day during my Cambridge days--it must have been in my first year before I knew Hatherleigh--I saw in a print-shop window near the Strand an engraving of a girl that reminded me sharply of Penge and its dusky encounter. It was just a half length of a bare-shouldered, bare-breasted Oriental with arms akimbo, smiling faintly. I looked at it, went my way, then turned back and bought it. I felt I must have it. The odd thing is that I was more than a little shamefaced about it. I did not have it framed and hung in my room open to the criticism of my friends, but I kept it in the drawer of my writing-table. And I kept that drawer locked for a year. It speedily merged with and became identified with the dark girl of Penge. That engraving became in a way my mistress. Often when I had sported my oak and was supposed to be reading, I was sitting with it before me.

Obeying some instinct I kept the thing very secret indeed. For a

time nobody suspected what was locked in my drawer nor what was locked in me. I seemed as sexless as my world required.

5

These things stabbed through my life, intimations of things above and below and before me. They had an air of being no more than incidents, interruptions.

The broad substance of my existence at this time was the City Merchants School. Home was a place where I slept and read, and the mooning explorations of the south-eastern postal district which occupied the restless evenings and spare days of my vacations mere interstices, giving glimpses of enigmatical lights and distant spaces between the woven threads of a school-boy's career. School life began for me every morning at Herne Hill, for there I was joined by three or four other boys and the rest of the way we went together. Most of the streets and roads we traversed in our morning's walk from Victoria are still intact, the storms of rebuilding that have submerged so much of my boyhood's London have passed and left them, and I have revived the impression of them again and again in recent years as I have clattered dinnerward in a hansom or hummed along in a motor cab to some engagement. The main gate still looks out with the same expression of ancient well-proportioned kindness upon St. Margaret's Close. There are imposing new science laboratories in Chambers Street indeed, but the old playing fields are unaltered except for the big electric trams that go droning and spitting blue flashes along the western boundary. I know Ratten, the new Head, very well, but I have not been inside the school to see if it has changed at all since I went up to Cambridge.

I took all they put before us very readily as a boy, for I had a mind of vigorous appetite, but since I have grown mentally to man's

estate and developed a more and more comprehensive view of our national process and our national needs, I am more and more struck by the oddity of the educational methods pursued, their aimless disconnectedness from the constructive forces in the community. I suppose if we are to view the public school as anything more than an institution that has just chanced to happen, we must treat it as having a definite function towards the general scheme of the nation, as being in a sense designed to take the crude young male of the more or less responsible class, to correct his harsh egotisms, broaden his outlook, give him a grasp of the contemporary developments he will presently be called upon to influence and control, and send him on to the university to be made a leading and ruling social man. It is easy enough to carp at schoolmasters and set up for an Educational Reformer, I know, but still it is impossible not to feel how infinitely more effectually--given certain impossibilities perhaps--the job might be done.

My memory of school has indeed no hint whatever of that quality of elucidation it seems reasonable to demand from it. Here all about me was London, a vast inexplicable being, a vortex of gigantic forces, that filled and overwhelmed me with impressions, that stirred my imagination to a perpetual vague enquiry; and my school not only offered no key to it, but had practically no comment to make upon it at all. We were within three miles of Westminster and Charing Cross, the government offices of a fifth of mankind were all within an hour's stroll, great economic changes were going on under our eyes, now the hoardings flamed with election placards, now the Salvation Army and now the unemployed came trailing in procession through the winter-grey streets, now the newspaper placards outside news-shops told of battles in strange places, now of amazing discoveries, now of sinister crimes, abject squalor and poverty, imperial splendour and luxury, Buckingham Palace, Rotten Row, Mayfair, the slums of Pimlico, garbage-littered streets of bawling costermongers, the inky silver of the barge-laden Thames--such was the background of our days. We went across St. Margaret's Close and

through the school gate into a quiet puerile world apart from all these things. We joined in the earnest acquirement of all that was necessary for Greek epigrams and Latin verse, and for the rest played games. We dipped down into something clear and elegantly proportioned and time-worn and for all its high resolve of stalwart virility a little feeble, like our blackened and decayed portals by Inigo Jones.

Within, we were taught as the chief subjects of instruction, Latin and Greek. We were taught very badly because the men who taught us did not habitually use either of these languages, nobody uses them any more now except perhaps for the Latin of a few Levantine monasteries. At the utmost our men read them. We were taught these languages because long ago Latin had been the language of civilisation; the one way of escape from the narrow and localised life had lain in those days through Latin, and afterwards Greek had come in as the vehicle of a flood of new and amazing ideas. Once these two languages had been the sole means of initiation to the detached criticism and partial comprehension of the world. I can imagine the fierce zeal of our first Heads, Gardener and Roper, teaching Greek like passionate missionaries, as a progressive Chinaman might teach English to the boys of Peking, clumsily, impatiently, with rod and harsh urgency, but sincerely, patriotically, because they felt that behind it lay revelations, the irresistible stimulus to a new phase of history. That was long ago. A new great world, a vaster Imperialism had arisen about the school, had assimilated all these amazing and incredible ideas, had gone on to new and yet more amazing developments of its own. But the City Merchants School still made the substance of its teaching Latin and Greek, still, with no thought of rotating crops, sowed in a dream amidst the harvesting.

There is no fierceness left in the teaching now. Just after I went up to Trinity, Gates, our Head, wrote a review article in defence of our curriculum. In this, among other indiscretions, he asserted

that it was impossible to write good English without an illuminating knowledge of the classic tongues, and he split an infinitive and failed to button up a sentence in saying so. His main argument conceded every objection a reasonable person could make to the City Merchants' curriculum. He admitted that translation had now placed all the wisdom of the past at a common man's disposal, that scarcely a field of endeavour remained in which modern work had not long since passed beyond the ancient achievement. He disclaimed any utility. But there was, he said, a peculiar magic in these grammatical exercises no other subjects of instruction possessed. Nothing else provided the same strengthening and orderly discipline for the mind.

He said that, knowing the Senior Classics he did, himself a Senior Classic!

Yet in a dim confused way I think he was making out a case. In schools as we knew them, and with the sort of assistant available, the sort of assistant who has been trained entirely on the old lines, he could see no other teaching so effectual in developing attention, restraint, sustained constructive effort and various yet systematic adjustment. And that was as far as his imagination could go.

It is infinitely easier to begin organised human affairs than end them; the curriculum and the social organisation of the English public school are the crowning instances of that. They go on because they have begun. Schools are not only immortal institutions but reproductive ones. Our founder, Jabez Arvon, knew nothing, I am sure, of Gates' pedagogic values and would, I feel certain, have dealt with them disrespectfully. But public schools and university colleges sprang into existence correlated, the scholars went on to the universities and came back to teach the schools, to teach as they themselves had been taught, before they had ever made any real use of the teaching; the crowd of boys herded together, a crowd

perpetually renewed and unbrokenly the same, adjusted itself by means of spontaneously developed institutions. In a century, by its very success, this revolutionary innovation of Renaissance public schools had become an immense tradition woven closely into the fabric of the national life. Intelligent and powerful people ceased to talk Latin or read Greek, they had got what was wanted, but that only left the schoolmaster the freer to elaborate his point. Since most men of any importance or influence in the country had been through the mill, it was naturally a little difficult to persuade them that it was not quite the best and most ennobling mill the wit of man could devise. And, moreover, they did not want their children made strange to them. There was all the machinery and all the men needed to teach the old subjects, and none to teach whatever new the critic might propose. Such science instruction as my father gave seemed indeed the uninviting alternative to the classical grind. It was certainly an altogether inferior instrument at that time.

So it was I occupied my mind with the exact study of dead languages for seven long years. It was the strangest of detachments. We would sit under the desk of such a master as Topham like creatures who had fallen into an enchanted pit, and he would do his considerable best to work us up to enthusiasm for, let us say, a Greek play. If we flagged he would lash himself to revive us. He would walk about the class-room mouthing great lines in a rich roar, and asking us with a flushed face and shining eyes if it was not "GLORIOUS." The very sight of Greek letters brings back to me the dingy, faded, ink-splashed quality of our class-room, the banging of books, Topham's disordered hair, the sheen of his alpaca gown, his deep unmusical intonations and the wide striding of his creaking boots. Glorious! And being plastic human beings we would consent that it was glorious, and some of us even achieved an answering reverberation and a sympathetic flush. I at times responded freely. We all accepted from him unquestioningly that these melodies, these strange sounds, exceeded any possibility of beauty that lay in the

Gothic intricacy, the splash and glitter, the jar and recovery, the stabbing lights, the heights and broad distances of our English tongue. That indeed was the chief sin of him. It was not that he was for Greek and Latin, but that he was fiercely against every beauty that was neither classic nor deferred to classical canons.

And what exactly did we make of it, we seniors who understood it best? We visualised dimly through that dust and the grammatical difficulties, the spectacle of the chorus chanting grotesquely, helping out protagonist and antagonist, masked and buskined, with the telling of incomprehensible parricides, of inexplicable incest, of gods faded beyond symbolism, of that Relentless Law we did not believe in for a moment, that no modern western European can believe in. We thought of the characters in the unconvincing wigs and costumes of our school performance. No Gilbert Murray had come as yet to touch these things to life again. It was like the ghost of an antiquarian's toy theatre, a ghost that crumbled and condensed into a gritty dust of construing as one looked at it.

Marks, shindies, prayers and punishments, all flavoured with the leathery stuffiness of time-worn Big Hall. . . .

And then out one would come through our grey old gate into the evening light and the spectacle of London hurrying like a cataract, London in black and brown and blue and gleaming silver, roaring like the very loom of Time. We came out into the new world no teacher has yet had the power and courage to grasp and expound. Life and death sang all about one, joys and fears on such a scale, in such an intricacy as never Greek nor Roman knew. The interminable procession of horse omnibuses went lumbering past, bearing countless people we knew not whence, we knew not whither. Hansoms clattered, foot passengers jostled one, a thousand appeals of shop and boarding caught the eye. The multi-coloured lights of window and street mingled with the warm glow of the declining day under the softly flushing London skies; the ever-changing placards, the shouting

news-vendors, told of a kaleidoscopic drama all about the globe. One did not realise what had happened to us, but the voice of Topham was suddenly drowned and lost, he and his minute, remote gesticulations. . . .

That submerged and isolated curriculum did not even join on to living interests where it might have done so. We were left absolutely to the hints of the newspapers, to casual political speeches, to the cartoons of the comic papers or a chance reading of some Socialist pamphlet for any general ideas whatever about the huge swirling world process in which we found ourselves. I always look back with particular exasperation to the cessation of our modern history at the year 1815. There it pulled up abruptly, as though it had come upon something indelicate. . . .

But, after all, what would Topham or Flack have made of the huge adjustments of the nineteenth century? Flack was the chief cricketer on the staff; he belonged to that great cult which pretends that the place of this or that county in the struggle for the championship is a matter of supreme importance to boys. He obliged us to affect a passionate interest in the progress of county matches, to work up unnatural enthusiasms. What a fuss there would be when some well-trained boy, panting as if from Marathon, appeared with an evening paper! "I say, you chaps, Middlesex all out for a hundred and five!"

Under Flack's pressure I became, I confess, a cricket humbug of the first class. I applied myself industriously year by year to mastering scores and averages; I pretended that Lords or the Oval were the places nearest Paradise for me. (I never went to either.) Through a slight mistake about the county boundary I adopted Surrey for my loyalty, though as a matter of fact we were by some five hundred yards or so in Kent. It did quite as well for my purposes. I bowled rather straight and fast, and spent endless hours acquiring the skill to bowl Flack out. He was a bat in the Corinthian style,

rich and voluminous, and succumbed very easily to a low shooter or an unexpected Yorker, but usually he was caught early by long leg. The difficulty was to bowl him before he got caught. He loved to lift a ball to leg. After one had clean bowled him at the practice nets one deliberately gave him a ball to leg just to make him feel nice again.

Flack went about a world of marvels dreaming of leg hits. He has been observed, going across the Park on his way to his highly respectable club in Piccadilly, to break from profound musings into a strange brief dance that ended with an imaginary swipe with his umbrella, a roofer, over the trees towards Buckingham Palace. The hit accomplished, Flack resumed his way.

Inadequately instructed foreigners would pass him in terror, needlessly alert.

6

These schoolmasters move through my memory as always a little distant and more than a little incomprehensible. Except when they wore flannels, I saw them almost always in old college caps and gowns, a uniform which greatly increased their detachment from the world of actual men. Gates, the head, was a lean loose-limbed man, rather stupid I discovered when I reached the Sixth and came into contact with him, but honest, simple and very eager to be liberal-minded. He was bald, with an almost conical baldness, with a grizzled pointed beard, small featured and, under the stresses of a *Zeitgeist* that demanded liberality, with an expression of puzzled but resolute resistance to his own unalterable opinions. He made a tall dignified figure in his gown. In my junior days he spoke to me only three or four times, and then he annoyed me by giving me a wrong surname; it was a sore point because I was an outsider and not one of the old school families, the Shoemiths, the Naylor, the

Marklows, the Tophams, the Pevises and suchlike, who came generation after generation. I recall him most vividly against the background of faded brown book-backs in the old library in which we less destructive seniors were trusted to work, with the light from the stained-glass window falling in coloured patches on his face. It gave him the appearance of having no colour of his own. He had a habit of scratching the beard on his cheek as he talked, and he used to come and consult us about things and invariably do as we said. That, in his phraseology, was "maintaining the traditions of the school."

He had indeed an effect not of a man directing a school, but of a man captured and directed by a school. Dead and gone Elizabethans had begotten a monster that could carry him about in its mouth.

Yet being a man, as I say, with his hair a little stirred by a Zeitgeist that made for change, Gates did at times display a disposition towards developments. City Merchants had no modern side, and utilitarian spirits were carping in the PALL MALL GAZETTE and elsewhere at the omissions from our curriculum, and particularly at our want of German. Moreover, four classes still worked together with much clashing and uproar in the old Big Hall that had once held in a common tumult the entire school. Gates used to come and talk to us older fellows about these things.

"I don't wish to innovate unduly," he used to say. But we ought to get in some German, you know,--for those who like it. The army men will be wanting it some of these days."

He referred to the organisation of regular evening preparation for the lower boys in Big Hall as a "revolutionary change," but he achieved it, and he declared he began the replacement of the hacked wooden tables, at which the boys had worked since Tudor days, by sloping desks with safety inkpots and scientifically adjustable seats, "with grave misgivings." And though he never birched a boy

in his life, and was, I am convinced, morally incapable of such a scuffle, he retained the block and birch in the school through all his term of office, and spoke at the Headmasters' Conference in temperate approval of corporal chastisement, comparing it, dear soul! to the power of the sword. . . .

I wish I could, in some measure and without tediousness, convey the effect of his discourses to General Assembly in Big Hall. But that is like trying to draw the obverse and reverse of a sixpence worn to complete illegibility. His tall fine figure stood high on the days, his thoughtful tenor filled the air as he steered his hazardous way through sentences that dragged inconclusive tails and dropped redundant prepositions. And he pleaded ever so urgently, ever so finely, that what we all knew for Sin was sinful, and on the whole best avoided altogether, and so went on with deepening notes and even with short arresting gestures of the right arm and hand, to stir and exhort us towards goodness, towards that modern, unsectarian goodness, goodness in general and nothing in particular, which the *Zeitgeist* seemed to indicate in those transitional years.

7

The school never quite got hold of me. Partly I think that was because I was a day-boy and so freer than most of the boys, partly because of a temperamental disposition to see things in my own way and have my private dreams, partly because I was a little antagonised by the family traditions that ran through the school. I was made to feel at first that I was a rank outsider, and I never quite forgot it. I suffered very little bullying, and I never had a fight--in all my time there were only three fights--but I followed my own curiosities. I was already a very keen theologian and politician before I was fifteen. I was also intensely interested in modern warfare. I read the morning papers in the Reading Room during the midday recess, never missed the illustrated weeklies, and

often when I could afford it I bought a PALL MALL GAZETTE on my way home.

I do not think that I was very exceptional in that; most intelligent boys, I believe, want naturally to be men, and are keenly interested in men's affairs. There is not the universal passion for a magnified puerility among them it is customary to assume. I was indeed a voracious reader of everything but boys' books--which I detested--and fiction. I read histories, travel, popular science and controversy with particular zest, and I loved maps. School work and school games were quite subordinate affairs for me. I worked well and made a passable figure at games, and I do not think I was abnormally insensitive to the fine quality of our school, to the charm of its mediaeval nucleus, its Gothic cloisters, its scraps of Palladian and its dignified Georgian extensions; the contrast of the old quiet, that in spite of our presence pervaded it everywhere, with the rushing and impending London all about it, was indeed a continual pleasure to me. But these things were certainly not the living and central interests of my life.

I had to conceal my wider outlook to a certain extent--from the masters even more than from the boys. Indeed I only let myself go freely with one boy, Britten, my especial chum, the son of the Agent-General for East Australia. We two discovered in a chance conversation A PROPOS of a map in the library that we were both of us curious why there were Malays in Madagascar, and how the Mecca pilgrims came from the East Indies before steamships were available. Neither of us had suspected that there was any one at all in the school who knew or cared a rap about the Indian Ocean, except as water on the way to India. But Britten had come up through the Suez Canal, and his ship had spoken a pilgrim ship on the way. It gave him a startling quality of living knowledge. From these pilgrims we got to a comparative treatment of religions, and from that, by a sudden plunge, to entirely sceptical and disrespectful confessions

concerning Gates' last outbreak of simple piety in School Assembly. We became congenial intimates from that hour.

The discovery of Britten happened to me when we were both in the Lower Fifth. Previously there had been a watertight compartment between the books I read and the thoughts they begot on the one hand and human intercourse on the other. Now I really began my higher education, and aired and examined and developed in conversation the doubts, the ideas, the interpretations that had been forming in my mind. As we were both day-boys with a good deal of control over our time we organised walks and expeditions together, and my habit of solitary and rather vague prowling gave way to much more definite joint enterprises. I went several times to his house, he was the youngest of several brothers, one of whom was a medical student and let us assist at the dissection of a cat, and once or twice in vacation time he came to Penge, and we went with parcels of provisions to do a thorough day in the grounds and galleries of the Crystal Palace, ending with the fireworks at close quarters. We went in a river steamboat down to Greenwich, and fired by that made an excursion to Margate and back; we explored London docks and Bethnal Green Museum, Petticoat Lane and all sorts of out-of-the-way places together.

We confessed shyly to one another a common secret vice, "Phantom warfare." When we walked alone, especially in the country, we had both developed the same practice of fighting an imaginary battle about us as we walked. As we went along we were generals, and our attacks pushed along on either side, crouching and gathering behind hedges, cresting ridges, occupying copses, rushing open spaces, fighting from house to house. The hillsides about Penge were honeycombed in my imagination with the pits and trenches I had created to cheek a victorious invader coming out of Surrey. For him West Kensington was chiefly important as the scene of a desperate and successful last stand of insurrectionary troops (who had seized the Navy, the Bank and other advantages) against a royalist army--

reinforced by Germans--advancing for reasons best known to themselves by way of Harrow and Ealing. It is a secret and solitary game, as we found when we tried to play it together. We made a success of that only once. All the way down to Margate we schemed defences and assailed and fought them as we came back against the sunset. Afterwards we recapitulated all that conflict by means of a large scale map of the Thames and little paper ironclads in plan cut out of paper.

A subsequent revival of these imaginings was brought about by Britten's luck in getting, through a friend of his father's, admission for us both to the spectacle of volunteer officers fighting the war game in Caxton Hall. We developed a war game of our own at Britten's home with nearly a couple of hundred lead soldiers, some excellent spring cannons that shot hard and true at six yards, hills of books and a constantly elaborated set of rules. For some months that occupied an immense proportion of our leisure. Some of our battles lasted several days. We kept the game a profound secret from the other fellows. They would not have understood.

And we also began, it was certainly before we were sixteen, to write, for the sake of writing. We liked writing. We had discovered Lamb and the best of the middle articles in such weeklies as the SATURDAY GAZETTE, and we imitated them. Our minds were full

of dim uncertain things we wanted to drag out into the light of expression. Britten had got hold of IN MEMORIAM, and I had disinterred Pope's ESSAY ON MAN and RABBI BEN EZRA, and these things

had set our theological and cosmic solitudes talking. I was somewhere between sixteen and eighteen, I know, when he and I walked along the Thames Embankment confessing shamefully to one another that we had never read Lucretius. We thought every one who mattered had read Lucretius.

When I was nearly sixteen my mother was taken ill very suddenly, and died of some perplexing complaint that involved a post-mortem examination; it was, I think, the trouble that has since those days been recognised as appendicitis. This led to a considerable change in my circumstances; the house at Penge was given up, and my Staffordshire uncle arranged for me to lodge during school terms with a needy solicitor and his wife in Vicars Street, S. W., about a mile and a half from the school. So it was I came right into London; I had almost two years of London before I went to Cambridge.

These were our great days together. Afterwards we were torn apart; Britten went to Oxford, and our circumstances never afterwards threw us continuously together until the days of the BLUE WEEKLY.

As boys, we walked together, read and discussed the same books, pursued the same enquiries. We got a reputation as inseparables and the nickname of the Rose and the Lily, for Britten was short and thick-set with dark close curling hair and a ruddy Irish type of face; I was lean and fair-haired and some inches taller than he. Our talk ranged widely and yet had certain very definite limitations. We were amazingly free with politics and religion, we went to that little meeting-house of William Morris's at Hammersmith and worked out the principles of Socialism pretty thoroughly, and we got up the Darwinian theory with the help of Britten's medical-student brother and the galleries of the Natural History Museum in Cromwell Road. Those wonderful cases on the ground floor illustrating mimicry, dimorphism and so forth, were new in our times, and we went through them with earnest industry and tried over our Darwinism in the light of that. Such topics we did exhaustively. But on the other hand I do not remember any discussion whatever of human sex or sexual relationships. There, in spite of intense secret curiosities, our lips were sealed by a peculiar shyness. And I do not believe we ever had occasion either of us to use the word "love." It was not only that we were

instinctively shy of the subject, but that we were mightily ashamed of the extent of our ignorance and uncertainty in these matters. We evaded them elaborately with an assumption of exhaustive knowledge.

We certainly had no shyness about theology. We marked the emancipation of our spirits from the frightful teachings that had oppressed our boyhood, by much indulgence in blasphemous wit. We had a secret literature of irreverent rhymes, and a secret art of theological caricature. Britten's father had delighted his family by reading aloud from Dr. Richard Garnett's TWILIGHT OF THE GODS, and Britten conveyed the precious volume to me. That and the BAB BALLADS were the inspiration of some of our earliest lucubrations.

For an imaginative boy the first experience of writing is like a tiger's first taste of blood, and our literary flowerings led very directly to the revival of the school magazine, which had been comatose for some years. But there we came upon a disappointment.

8

In that revival we associated certain other of the Sixth Form boys, and notably one for whom our enterprise was to lay the foundations of a career that has ended in the House of Lords, Arthur Cossington, now Lord Paddockhurst. Cossington was at that time a rather heavy, rather good-looking boy who was chiefly eminent in cricket, an outsider even as we were and preoccupied no doubt, had we been sufficiently detached to observe him, with private imaginings very much of the same quality and spirit as our own. He was, we were inclined to think, rather a sentimentalist, rather a poseur, he affected a concise emphatic styl, played chess very well, betrayed a belief in will-power, and earned Britten's secret hostility, Britten being a sloven, by the invariable neatness of his collars and ties. He came into our magazine with a vigour that we found extremely surprising and unwelcome.

Britten and I had wanted to write. We had indeed figured our project modestly as a manuscript magazine of satirical, liberal and brilliant literature by which in some rather inexplicable way the vague tumult of ideas that teemed within us was to find form and expression; Cossington, it was manifest from the outset, wanted neither to write nor writing, but a magazine. I remember the inaugural meeting in Shoemith major's study--we had had great trouble in getting it together--and how effectually Cossington bolted with the proposal.

"I think we fellows ought to run a magazine," said Cossington. "The school used to have one. A school like this ought to have a magazine."

"The last one died in '84," said Shoemith from the hearthrug. "Called the OBSERVER. Rot rather."

"Bad title," said Cossington.

"There was a TATLER before that," said Britten, sitting on the writing table at the window that was closed to deaden the cries of the Lower School at play, and clashing his boots together.

"We want something suggestive of City Merchants."

"CITY MERCHANDIZE," said Britten.

"Too fanciful. What of ARVONIAN? Richard Arvon was our founder, and it seems almost a duty--"

"They call them all -usians or -onians," said Britten.

"I like CITY MERCHANDIZE," I said. "We could probably find a quotation to suggest--oh! mixed good things."

Cossington regarded me abstractedly.

Don't want to put the accent on the City, do we?" said Shoemith, who had a feeling for county families, and Naylor supported him by a murmur of approval.

"We ought to call it the ARVONIAN," decided Cossington, "and we might very well have underneath, 'With which is incorporated the OBSERVER.' That picks up the old traditions, makes an appeal to old boys and all that, and it gives us something to print under the title."

I still held out for CITY MERCHANDIZE, which had taken my fancy. "Some of the chaps' people won't like it," said Naylor, "certain not to. And it sounds Rum."

"Sounds Weird," said a boy who had not hitherto spoken.

"We aren't going to do anything Queer," said Shoemith, pointedly not looking at Britten.

The question of the title had manifestly gone against us. "Oh! HAVE it ARVONIAN," I said.

"And next, what size shall we have?" said Cossington.

"Something like MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINE--or LONGMANS'; LONGMANS' is better because it has a whole page, not columns. It makes no end of difference to one's effects."

"What effects?" asked Shoemith abruptly.

"Oh! a pause or a white line or anything. You've got to write

closer for a double column. It's nuggetty. You can't get a swing on your prose." I had discussed this thoroughly with Britten.

"If the fellows are going to write--" began Britten.

"We ought to keep off fine writing," said Shoesmith. "It's cheek. I vote we don't have any."

"We sha'n't get any," said Cossington, and then as an olive branch to me, "unless Remington does a bit. Or Britten. But it's no good making too much space for it."

"We ought to be very careful about the writing," said Shoesmith. "We don't want to give ourselves away."

"I vote we ask old Topham to see us through," said Naylor.

Britten groaned aloud and every one regarded him. "Greek epigrams on the fellows' names," he said. "Small beer in ancient bottles. Let's get a stuffed broody hen to SIT on the magazine."

"We might do worse than a Greek epigram," said Cossington. "One in each number. It--it impresses parents and keeps up our classieal tradition. And the masters CAN help. We don't want to antagonise them. Of course--we've got to dcpartmentalise. Writing is only one section of the thing. The ARVONIAN has to stand for the school. There's questions of space and questions of expense. We can't turn out a great chunk of printed prose like--like wet cold toast and call it a magazine."

Britten writhed, appreciating the image.

"There's to be a section of sports. YOU must do that."

"I'm not going to do any fine writing," said Shoesmith.

"What you've got to do is just to list all the chaps and put a note to their play:--'Naylor minor must pass more. Football isn't the place for extreme individualism.' 'Ammersham shapes well as half-back.' Things like that."

"I could do that all right," said Shoesmith, brightening and manifestly becoming pregnant with judgments.

"One great thing about a magazine of this sort," said Cossington, "is to mention just as many names as you can in each number. It keeps the interest alive. Chaps will turn it over looking for their own little bit. Then it all lights up for them."

"Do you want any reports of matches?" Shoesmith broke from his meditation.

"Rather. With comments."

"Naylor surpassed himself and negotiated the lemon safely home," said Shoesmith.

"Shut it," said Naylor modestly.

"Exactly," said Cossington. "That gives us three features," touching them off on his fingers, "Epigram, Literary Section, Sports. Then we want a section to shove anything into, a joke, a notice of anything that's going on. So on. Our Note Book."

"Oh, Hell!" said Britten, and clashed his boots, to the silent disapproval of every one.

"Then we want an editorial."

"A WHAT?" cried Britten, with a note of real terror in his voice.

"Well, don't we? Unless we have our Note Book to begin on the front page. It gives a scrappy effect to do that. We want something manly and straightforward and a bit thoughtful, about Patriotism, say, or ESPRIT DE CORPS, or After-Life."

I looked at Britten. Hitherto we had not considered Cossington mattered very much in the world.

He went over us as a motor-car goes over a dog. There was a sort of energy about him, a new sort of energy to us; we had never realised that anything of the sort existed in the world. We were hopelessly at a disadvantage. Almost instantly we had developed a clear and detailed vision of a magazine made up of everything that was most acceptable in the magazines that flourished in the adult world about us, and had determined to make it a success. He had by a kind of instinct, as it were, synthetically plagiarised every successful magazine and breathed into this dusty mixture the breath of life. He was elected at his own suggestion managing director, with the earnest support of Shoesmith and Naylor, and conducted the magazine so successfully and brilliantly that he even got a whole back page of advertisements from the big sports shop in Holborn, and made the printers pay at the same rate for a notice of certain books of their own which they said they had inserted by inadvertency to fill up space. The only literary contribution in the first number was a column by Topham in faultless stereotyped English in depreciation of some fancied evil called Utilitarian Studies and ending with that noble old quotation:--

"To the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome."

And Flack crowded us out of number two with a bright little paper on the "Humours of Cricket," and the Head himself was profusely

thoughtful all over the editorial under the heading of "The School Chapel; and How it Seems to an Old Boy."

Britten and I found it difficult to express to each other with any grace or precision what we felt about that magazine.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

ADOLESCENCE

1

I find it very difficult to trace how form was added to form and interpretation followed interpretation in my ever-spreading, ever-deepening, ever-multiplying and enriching vision of this world into which I had been born. Every day added its impressions, its hints, its subtle explications to the growing understanding. Day after day the living interlacing threads of a mind weave together. Every morning now for three weeks and more (for to-day is Thursday and I started on a Tuesday) I have been trying to convey some idea of the factors and early influences by which my particular scrap of subjective tapestry was shaped, to show the child playing on the nursery floor, the son perplexed by his mother, gazing aghast at his dead father, exploring interminable suburbs, touched by first intimations of the sexual mystery, coming in with a sort of confused avidity towards the centres of the life of London. It is only by such an effort to write it down that one realises how marvellously crowded, how marvellously analytical and synthetic those ears must be. One begins with the little child to whom the sky is a roof of blue, the world a screen of opaque and disconnected facts, the home a thing eternal, and "being good" just simple obedience to unquestioned authority; and one comes at last to the vast world of one's adult perception, pierced deep by flaring searchlights of partial understanding, here masked by mists, here refracted and distorted through half translucent veils, here showing broad prospects and limitless vistas and here impenetrably dark.

I recall phases of deep speculation, doubts and even prayers by night, and strange occasions when by a sort of hypnotic contemplation of nothingness I sought to pierce the web of

appearances about me. It is hard to measure these things in receding perspective, and now I cannot trace, so closely has mood succeeded and overlaid and obliterated mood, the phases by which an utter horror of death was replaced by the growing realisation of its necessity and dignity. Difficulty of the imagination with infinite space, infinite time, entangled my mind; and moral distress for the pain and suffering of bygone ages that made all thought of reformation in the future seem but the grimmest irony upon now irreparable wrongs. Many an intricate perplexity of these broadening years did not so much get settled as cease to matter. Life crowded me away from it.

I have confessed myself a temerarious theologian, and in that passage from boyhood to manhood I ranged widely in my search for some permanently satisfying Truth. That, too, ceased after a time to be urgently interesting. I came at last into a phase that endures to this day, of absolute tranquillity, of absolute confidence in whatever that Incomprehensible Comprehensive which must needs be the substratum of all things, may be. Feeling OF IT, feeling BY IT, I cannot feel afraid of it. I think I had got quite clearly and finally to that adjustment long before my Cambridge days were done. I am sure that the evil in life is transitory and finite like an accident or distress in the nursery; that God is my Father and that I may trust Him, even though life hurts so that one must needs cry out at it, even though it shows no consequence but failure, no promise but pain. . . .

But while I was fearless of theology I must confess it was comparatively late before I faced and dared to probe the secrecies of sex. I was afraid of sex. I had an instinctive perception that it would be a large and difficult thing in my life, but my early training was all in the direction of regarding it as an irrelevant thing, as something disconnected from all the broad significances of life, as hostile and disgraceful in its quality. The world was never so emasculated in thought, I suppose, as it was in the

Victorian time. . . .

I was afraid to think either of sex or (what I have always found inseparable from a kind of sexual emotion) beauty. Even as a boy I knew the thing as a haunting and alluring mystery that I tried to keep away from. Its dim presence obsessed me none the less for all the extravagant decency, the stimulating silences of my upbringing. . . .

The plaster Venuses and Apollos that used to adorn the vast aisle and huge grey terraces of the Crystal Palace were the first intimations of the beauty of the body that ever came into my life. As I write of it I feel again the shameful attraction of those gracious forms. I used to look at them not simply, but curiously and askance. Once at least in my later days at Penge, I spent a shilling in admission chiefly for the sake of them. . . .

The strangest thing of all my odd and solitary upbringing seems to me now that swathing up of all the splendours of the flesh, that strange combination of fanatical terrorism and shyness that fenced me about with prohibitions. It caused me to grow up, I will not say blankly ignorant, but with an ignorance blurred and dishonoured by shame, by enigmatical warnings, by cultivated aversions, an ignorance in which a fascinated curiosity and desire struggled like a thing in a net. I knew so little and I felt so much. There was indeed no Aphrodite at all in my youthful Pantheon, but instead there was a mysterious and minatory gap. I have told how at last a new Venus was born in my imagination out of gas lamps and the twilight, a Venus with a cockney accent and dark eyes shining out of the dusk, a Venus who was a warm, passion-stirring atmosphere rather than incarnate in a body. And I have told, too, how I bought a picture.

All this was a thing apart from the rest of my life, a locked avoided chamber. . . .

It was not until my last year at Trinity that I really broke down the barriers of this unwholesome silence and brought my secret broodings to the light of day. Then a little set of us plunged suddenly into what we called at first sociological discussion. I can still recall even the physical feeling of those first tentative talks. I remember them mostly as occurring in the rooms of Ted Hatherleigh, who kept at the corner by the Trinity great gate, but we also used to talk a good deal at a man's in King's, a man named, if I remember rightly, Redmayne. The atmosphere of Hatherleigh's rooms was a haze of tobacco smoke against a background brown and deep. He professed himself a socialist with anarchistic leanings--he had suffered the martyrdom of ducking for it--and a huge French May-day poster displaying a splendid proletarian in red and black on a barricade against a flaring orange sky, dominated his decorations. Hatherleigh affected a fine untidiness, and all the place, even the floor, was littered with books, for the most part open and face downward; deeper darknesses were supplied by a discarded gown and our caps, all conscientiously battered, Hatherleigh's flopped like an elephant's ear and inserted quill pens supported the corners of mine; the highlights of the picture came chiefly as reflections from his chequered blue mugs full of audit ale. We sat on oak chairs, except the four or five who crowded on a capacious settle, we drank a lot of beer and were often fuddled, and occasionally quite drunk, and we all smoked reckless-looking pipes,--there was a transient fashion among us for corn cobs for which Mark Twain, I think, was responsible. Our little excesses with liquor were due far more to conscience than appetite, indicated chiefly a resolve to break away from restraints that we suspected were keeping us off the instructive knife-edges of life. Hatherleigh was a good Englishman of the premature type with a red face, a lot of hair, a deep voice and an explosive plunging manner, and it was he who said one evening--Heaven knows how we got to it--" Look here, you know, it's all Rot, this Shutting Up about Women. We OUGHT to talk about them. What are we going to do about them? It's got to come. We're all

festering inside about it. Let's out with it. There's too much Decency altogether about this Infernal University!"

We rose to his challenge a little awkwardly and our first talk was clumsy, there were flushed faces and red ears, and I remember Hatherleigh broke out into a monologue on decency. "Modesty and Decency," said Hatherleigh, "are Oriental vices. The Jews brought them to Europe. They're Semitic, just like our monasticism here and the seclusion of women and mutilating the dead on a battlefield. And all that sort of thing."

Hatherleigh's mind progressed by huge leaps, leaps that were usually wildly inaccurate, and for a time we engaged hotly upon the topic of those alleged mutilations and the Semitic responsibility for decency. Hatherleigh tried hard to saddle the Semitic race with the less elegant war customs of the Soudan and the northwest frontier of India, and quoted Doughty, at that time a little-known author, and Cunninghame Graham to show that the Arab was worse than a county-town spinster in his regard for respectability. But his case was too preposterous, and Esmeer, with his shrill penetrating voice and his way of pointing with all four long fingers flat together, carried the point against him. He quoted Cato and Roman law and the monasteries of Thibet.

"Well, anyway," said Hatherleigh, escaping from our hands like an intellectual frog, "Semitic or not, I've got no use for decency."

We argued points and Hatherleigh professed an unusually balanced and tolerating attitude. "I don't mind a certain refinement and dignity," he admitted generously. "What I object to is this spreading out of decency until it darkens the whole sky, until it makes a man's father afraid to speak of the most important things, until it makes a man afraid to look a frank book in the face or think--even think! until it leads to our coming to--to the business at last with nothing but a few prohibitions, a few hints, a lot of

dirty jokes and, and "--he waved a hand and seemed to seek and catch his image in the air--" oh, a confounded buttered slide of sentiment, to guide us. I tell you I'm going to think about it and talk about it until I see a little more daylight than I do at present. I'm twenty-two. Things might happen to me anywhen. You men can go out into the world if you like, to sin like fools and marry like fools, not knowing what you are doing and ashamed to ask. You'll take the consequences, too, I expect, pretty meekly, sniggering a bit, sentimentalising a bit, like--like Cambridge humorists. . . . I mean to know what I'm doing."

He paused to drink, and I think I cut in with ideas of my own. But one is apt to forget one's own share in a talk, I find, more than one does the clear-cut objectivity of other people's, and I do not know how far I contributed to this discussion that followed. I am, however, pretty certain that it was then that ideal that we were pleased to call aristocracy and which soon became the common property of our set was developed. It was Esmeer, I know, who laid down and maintained the proposition that so far as minds went there were really only two sorts of man in the world, the aristocrat and the man who subdues his mind to other people's.

"I couldn't THINK of it, Sir," said Esmeer in his elucidatory tones; "that's what a servant says. His mind even is broken in to run between fences, and he admits it. WE'VE got to be able to think of anything. And 'such things aren't for the Likes of Us!' That's another servant's saying. Well, everything IS for the Likes of Us. If we see fit, that is."

A small fresh-coloured man in grey objected.

"Well," exploded Hatherleigh, "if that isn't so what the deuce are we up here for? Instead of working in mines? If some things aren't to be thought about ever! We've got the privilege of all these extra years for getting things straight in our heads, and then we

won't use 'em. Good God! what do you think a university's for?" . . .

Esmeer's idea came with an effect of real emancipation to several of us. We were not going to be afraid of ideas any longer, we were going to throw down every barrier of prohibition and take them in and see what came of it. We became for a time even intemperately experimental, and one of us, at the bare suggestion of an eminent psychic investigator, took hashish and very nearly died of it within a fortnight of our great elucidation.

The chief matter of our interchanges was of course the discussion of sex. Once the theme had been opened it became a sore place in our intercourse; none of us seemed able to keep away from it. Our imaginations got astir with it. We made up for lost time and went round it and through it and over it exhaustively. I recall prolonged discussion of polygamy on the way to Royston, muddy November tramps to Madingley, when amidst much profanity from Hatherleigh at the serious treatment of so obsolete a matter, we weighed the reasons, if any, for the institution of marriage. The fine dim night-time spaces of the Great Court are bound up with the inconclusive finales of mighty hot-eared wrangles; the narrows of Trinity Street and Petty Cury and Market Hill have their particular associations for me with that spate of confession and free speech, that almost painful goal delivery of long pent and crapped and sometimes crippled ideas.

And we went on a reading party that Easter to a place called Pulborough in Sussex, where there is a fishing inn and a river that goes under a bridge. It was a late Easter and a blazing one, and we boated and bathed and talked of being Hellenic and the beauty of the body until at moments it seemed to us that we were destined to restore the Golden Age, by the simple abolition of tailors and outfitters.

Those undergraduate talks! how rich and glorious they seemed, how

splendidly new the ideas that grew and multiplied in our seething minds! We made long afternoon and evening raids over the Downs towards Arundel, and would come tramping back through the still keen moonlight singing and shouting. We formed romantic friendships with one another, and grieved more or less convincingly that there were no splendid women fit to be our companions in the world. But Hatherleigh, it seemed, had once known a girl whose hair was gloriously red. "My God!" said Hatherleigh to convey the quality of her; just simply and with projectile violence: "My God!

Benton had heard of a woman who lived with a man refusing to be married to him--we thought that splendid beyond measure,--I cannot now imagine why. She was "like a tender goddess," Benton said. A sort of shame came upon us in the dark in spite of our liberal intentions when Benton committed himself to that. And after such talk we would fall upon great pauses of emotional dreaming, and if by chance we passed a girl in a governess cart, or some farmer's daughter walking to the station, we became alertly silent or obstreperously indifferent to her. For might she not be just that one exception to the banal decency, the sickly pointless conventionality, the sham modesty of the times in which we lived?

We felt we stood for a new movement, not realising how perennially this same emancipation returns to those ancient courts beside the Cam. We were the anti-decency party, we discovered a catch phrase that we flourished about in the Union and made our watchword, namely, "stark fact." We hung nude pictures in our rooms much as if they had been flags, to the earnest concern of our bedders, and I disinterred my long-kept engraving and had it framed in fumed oak, and found for it a completer and less restrained companion, a companion I never cared for in the slightest degree. . . .

This efflorescence did not prevent, I think indeed it rather helped, our more formal university work, for most of us took firsts, and three of us got Fellowships in one year or another. There was

Benton who had a Research Fellowship and went to Tübingen, there was Esmeer and myself who both became Residential Fellows. I had taken the Mental and Moral Science Tripos (as it was then), and three years later I got a lectureship in political science. In those days it was disguised in the cloak of Political Economy.

2

It was our affectation to be a little detached from the main stream of undergraduate life. We worked pretty hard, but by virtue of our beer, our socialism and suchlike heterodoxy, held ourselves to be differentiated from the swatting reading man. None of us, except Baxter, who was a rowing blue, a rather abnormal blue with an appetite for ideas, took games seriously enough to train, and on the other hand we intimated contempt for the rather mediocre, deliberately humorous, consciously gentlemanly and consciously wild undergraduate men who made up the mass of Cambridge life. After the manner of youth we were altogether too hard on our contemporaries. We battered our caps and tore our gowns lest they should seem new, and we despised these others extremely for doing exactly the same things; we had an idea of ourselves and resented beyond measure a similar weakness in these our brothers.

There was a type, or at least there seemed to us to be a type--I'm a little doubtful at times now whether after all we didn't create it--for which Hatherleigh invented the nickname the "Pinky Dinkys," intending thereby both contempt and abhorrence in almost equal measure. The Pinky Dinky summarised all that we particularly did not want to be, and also, I now perceive, much of what we were and all that we secretly dreaded becoming.

But it is hard to convey the Pinky Dinky idea, for all that it meant

so much to us. We spent one evening at least during that reading party upon the Pinky Dinky; we sat about our one fire after a walk in the rain--it was our only wet day--smoked our excessively virile pipes, and elaborated the natural history of the Pinky Dinky. We improvised a sort of Pinky Dinky litany, and Hatherleigh supplied deep notes for the responses.

"The Pinky Dinky extracts a good deal of amusement from life," said some one.

"Damned prig! " said Hatherleigh.

"The Pinky Dinky arises in the Union and treats the question with a light gay touch. He makes the weird ones mad. But sometimes he cannot go on because of the amusement he extracts."

"I want to shy books at the giggling swine," said Hatherleigh.

"The Pinky Dinky says suddenly while he is making the tea, 'We're all being frightfully funny. It's time for you to say something now.'"

"The Pinky Dinky shakes his head and says: 'I'm afraid I shall never be a responsible being.' And he really IS frivolous."

"Frivolous but not vulgar," said Esmeer.

"Pinky Dinkys are chaps who've had their buds nipped," said Hatherleigh. "They're Plebs and they know it. They haven't the Guts to get hold of things. And so they worry up all those silly little jokes of theirs to carry it off." . . .

We tried bad ones for a time, viciously flavoured.

Pinky Dinkys are due to over-production of the type that ought to

keep outfitters' shops. Pinky Dinkys would like to keep outfitters' shops with whimsy 'scriptions on the boxes and make your bill out funny, and not be snobs to customers, no!--not even if they had titles."

"Every Pinky Dinky's people are rather good people, and better than most Pinky Dinky's people. But he does not put on side."

"Pinky Dinkys become playful at the sight of women."

"'Croquet's my game,' said the Pinky Dinky, and felt a man condescended."

"But what the devil do they think they're up to, anyhow?" roared old Hatherleigh suddenly, dropping plump into bottomless despair.

We felt we had still failed to get at the core of the mystery of the Pinky Dinky.

We tried over things about his religion. "The Pinky Dinky goes to King's Chapel, and sits and feels in the dusk. Solemn things! Oh HUSH! He wouldn't tell you--"

"He COULDN'T tell you."

"Religion is so sacred to him he never talks about it, never reads about it, never thinks about it. Just feels!"

"But in his heart of hearts, oh! ever so deep, the Pinky Dinky has a doubt--"

Some one protested.

"Not a vulgar doubt," Esmeer went on, "but a kind of hesitation whether the Ancient of Days is really exactly what one would call

good form. . . . There's a lot of horrid coarseness got into the world somehow. **SOMEBODY** put it there. . . . And anyhow there's no particular reason why a man should be seen about with Him. He's jolly Awful of course and all that--"

"The Pinky Dinky for all his fun and levity has a clean mind."

"A thoroughly clean mind. Not like Esmeer's--the Pig!"

"If once he began to think about sex, how could he be comfortable at croquet?"

"It's their Damned Modesty," said Hatherleigh suddenly, "that's what's the matter with the Pinky Dinky. It's Mental Cowardice dressed up as a virtue and taking the poor dears in. Cambridge is soaked with it; it's some confounded local bacillus. Like the thing that gives a flavour to Havana cigars. He comes up here to be made into a man and a ruler of the people, and he thinks it shows a nice disposition not to take on the job! How the Devil is a great Empire to be run with men like him?"

"All his little jokes and things," said Esmeer regarding his feet on the fender, "it's just a nervous sniggering--because he's afraid. . . . Oxford's no better."

"What's he afraid of?" said I.

"God knows!" exploded Hatherleigh and stared at the fire.

"LIFE!" said Esmeer. "And so in a way are we," he added, and made a thoughtful silence for a time.

"I say," began Carter, who was doing the Natural Science Tripos, "what is the adult form of the Pinky Dinky?"

But there we were checked by our ignorance of the world.

"What is the adult form of any of us?" asked Benton, voicing the thought that had arrested our flow.

3

I do not remember that we ever lifted our criticism to the dons and the organisation of the University. I think we took them for granted. When I look back at my youth I am always astonished by the multitude of things that we took for granted. It seemed to us that Cambridge was in the order of things, for all the world like having eyebrows or a vermiform appendix. Now with the larger scepticism of middle age I can entertain very fundamental doubts about these old universities. Indeed I had a scheme--

I do not see what harm I can do now by laying bare the purpose of the political combinations I was trying to effect.

My educational scheme was indeed the starting-point of all the big project of conscious public reconstruction at which I aimed. I wanted to build up a new educational machine altogether for the governing class out of a consolidated system of special public service schools. I meant to get to work upon this whatever office I was given in the new government. I could have begun my plan from the Admiralty or the War Office quite as easily as from the Education Office. I am firmly convinced it is hopeless to think of reforming the old public schools and universities to meet the needs of a modern state, they send their roots too deep and far, the cost would exceed any good that could possibly be effected, and so I have sought a way round this invincible obstacle. I do think it would be quite practicable to side-track, as the Americans say, the whole

system by creating hardworking, hard-living, modern and scientific boys' schools, first for the Royal Navy and then for the public service generally, and as they grew, opening them to the public without any absolute obligation to subsequent service.

Simultaneously with this it would not be impossible to develop a new college system with strong faculties in modern philosophy, modern history, European literature and criticism, physical and biological science, education and sociology.

We could in fact create a new liberal education in this way, and cut the umbilicus of the classical languages for good and all. I should have set this going, and trusted it to correct or kill the old public schools and the Oxford and Cambridge tradition altogether. I had men in my mind to begin the work, and I should have found others. I should have aimed at making a hard-trained, capable, intellectually active, proud type of man. Everything else would have been made subservient to that. I should have kept my grip on the men through their vacation, and somehow or other I would have contrived a young woman to match them. I think I could have seen to it effectually enough that they didn't get at croquet and tennis with the vicarage daughters and discover sex in the Peeping Tom fashion I did, and that they realised quite early in life that it isn't really virile to reek of tobacco. I should have had military manoeuvres, training ships, aeroplane work, mountaineering and so forth, in the place of the solemn trivialities of games, and I should have fed and housed my men clean and very hard--where there wasn't any audit ale, no credit tradesmen, and plenty of high pressure douches. . . .

I have revisited Cambridge and Oxford time after time since I came down, and so far as the Empire goes, I want to get clear of those two places. . . .

Always I renew my old feelings, a physical oppression, a sense of lowness and dampness almost exactly like the feeling of an

underground room where paper moulders and leaves the wall, a feeling of ineradicable contagion in the Gothic buildings, in the narrow ditch-like rivers, in those roads and roads of stuffy little villas. Those little villas have destroyed all the good of the old monastic system and none of its evil. . . .

Some of the most charming people in the world live in them, but their collective effect is below the quality of any individual among them. Cambridge is a world of subdued tones, of excessively subtle humours, of prim conduct and free thinking; it fears the Parent, but it has no fear of God; it offers amidst surroundings that vary between disguises and antiquarian charm the inflammation of literature's purple draught; one hears there a peculiar thin scandal like no other scandal in the world--a covetous scandal--so that I am always reminded of Ibsen in Cambridge. In Cambridge and the plays of Ibsen alone does it seem appropriate for the heroine before the great crisis of life to "enter, take off her overshoes, and put her wet umbrella upon the writing desk." . . .

We have to make a new Academic mind for modern needs, and the last thing to make it out of, I am convinced, is the old Academic mind. One might as soon try to fake the old VICTORY at Portsmouth into a line of battleship again. Besides which the old Academic mind, like those old bathless, damp Gothic colleges, is much too delightful in its peculiar and distinctive way to damage by futile patching.

My heart warms to a sense of affectionate absurdity as I recall dear old Codger, surely the most "unleaderly" of men. No more than from the old Schoolmen, his kindred, could one get from him a School for Princes. Yet apart from his teaching he was as curious and adorable as a good Netsuke. Until quite recently he was a power in Cambridge, he could make and bar and destroy, and in a way he has become the quintessence of Cambridge in my thoughts.

I see him on his way to the morning's lecture, with his plump

childish face, his round innocent eyes, his absurdly non-prehensile fat hand carrying his cap, his grey trousers braced up much too high, his feet a trifle inturned, and going across the great court with a queer tripping pace that seemed cultivated even to my naive undergraduate eye. Or I see him lecturing. He lectured walking up and down between the desks, talking in a fluting rapid voice, and with the utmost lucidity. If he could not walk up and down he could not lecture. His mind and voice had precisely the fluid quality of some clear subtle liquid; one felt it could flow round anything and overcome nothing. And its nimble eddies were wonderful! Or again I recall him drinking port with little muscular movements in his neck and cheek and chin and his brows knit--very judicial, very concentrated, preparing to say the apt just thing; it was the last thing he would have told a lie about.

When I think of Codger I am reminded of an inscription I saw on some occasion in Regent's Park above two eyes scarcely more limpidly innocent than his--"Born in the Menagerie." Never once since Codger began to display the early promise of scholarship at the age of eight or more, had he been outside the bars. His utmost travel had been to lecture here and lecture there. His student phase had culminated in papers of quite exceptional brilliance, and he had gone on to lecture with a cheerful combination of wit and mannerism that had made him a success from the beginning. He has lectured ever since. He lectures still. Year by year he has become plumper, more rubicund and more and more of an item for the intelligent visitor to see. Even in my time he was pointed out to people as part of our innumerable enrichments, and obviously he knew it. He has become now almost the leading Character in a little donnish world of much too intensely appreciated Characters.

He boasted he took no exercise, and also of his knowledge of port wine. Of other wines he confessed quite frankly he had no "special knowledge." Beyond these things he had little pride except that he claimed to have read every novel by a woman writer that had ever

entered the Union Library. This, however, he held to be remarkable rather than ennobling, and such boasts as he made of it were tinged with playfulness. Certainly he had a scholar's knowledge of the works of Miss Marie Corelli, Miss Braddon, Miss Elizabeth Glyn and Madame Sarah Grand that would have astonished and flattered those ladies enormously, and he loved nothing so much in his hours of relaxation as to propound and answer difficult questions upon their books. Tusher of King's was his ineffectual rival in this field, their bouts were memorable and rarely other than glorious for Codger; but then Tusher spread himself too much, he also undertook to rehearse whole pages out of Bradshaw, and tell you with all the changes how to get from any station to any station in Great Britain by the nearest and cheapest routes. . . .

Codger lodged with a little deaf innocent old lady, Mrs. Araminta Mergle, who was understood to be herself a very redoubtable Character in the Gyp-Bedder class; about her he related quietly absurd anecdotes. He displayed a marvellous invention in ascribing to her plausible expressions of opinion entirely identical in import with those of the Oxford and Harvard Pragmatists, against whom he waged a fierce obscure war. . . .

It was Codger's function to teach me philosophy, philosophy! the intimate wisdom of things. He dealt in a variety of Hegelian stuff like nothing else in the world, but marvellously consistent with itself. It was a wonderful web he spun out of that queer big active childish brain that had never lusted nor hated nor grieved nor feared nor passionately loved,--a web of iridescent threads. He had luminous final theories about Love and Death and Immortality, odd matters they seemed for him to think about! and all his woven thoughts lay across my perception of the realities of things, as flimsy and irrelevant and clever and beautiful, oh!--as a dew-wet spider's web slung in the morning sunshine across the black mouth of a gun. . . .

All through those years of development I perceive now there must have been growing in me, slowly, irregularly, assimilating to itself all the phrases and forms of patriotism, diverting my religious impulses, utilising my esthetic tendencies, my dominating idea, the statesman's idea, that idea of social service which is the protagonist of my story, that real though complex passion for Making, making widely and greatly, cities, national order, civilisation, whose interplay with all those other factors in life I have set out to present. It was growing in me--as one's bones grow, no man intending it.

I have tried to show how, quite early in my life, the fact of disorderliness, the conception of social life as being a multitudinous confusion out of hand, came to me. One always of course simplifies these things in the telling, but I do not think I ever saw the world at large in any other terms. I never at any stage entertained the idea which sustained my mother, and which sustains so many people in the world,--the idea that the universe, whatever superficial discords it may present, is as a matter of fact "all right," is being steered to definite ends by a serene and unquestionable God. My mother thought that Order prevailed, and that disorder was just incidental and foredoomed rebellion; I feel and have always felt that order rebels against and struggles against disorder, that order has an up-hill job, in gardens, experiments, suburbs, everything alike; from the very beginnings of my experience I discovered hostility to order, a constant escaping from control.

The current of living and contemporary ideas in which my mind was presently swimming made all in the same direction; in place of my mother's attentive, meticulous but occasionally extremely irascible

Providence, the talk was all of the Struggle for Existence and the survival not of the Best--that was nonsense, but of the fittest to survive.

The attempts to rehabilitate Faith in the form of the Individualist's LAISSEZ FAIRE never won upon me. I disliked Herbert Spencer all my life until I read his autobiography, and then I laughed a little and loved him. I remember as early as the City Merchants' days how Britten and I scoffed at that pompous question-begging word "Evolution," having, so to speak, found it out. Evolution, some illuminating talker had remarked at the Britten lunch table, had led not only to man, but to the liver-fluke and skunk, obviously it might lead anywhere; order came into things only through the struggling mind of man. That lit things wonderfully for us. When I went up to Cambridge I was perfectly clear that life was a various and splendid disorder of forces that the spirit of man sets itself to tame. I have never since fallen away from that persuasion.

I do not think I was exceptionally precocious in reaching these conclusions and a sort of religious finality for myself by eighteen or nineteen. I know men and women vary very much in these matters, just as children do in learning to talk. Some will chatter at eighteen months and some will hardly speak until three, and the thing has very little to do with their subsequent mental quality. So it is with young people; some will begin their religious, their social, their sexual interests at fourteen, some not until far on in the twenties. Britten and I belonged to one of the precocious types, and Cossington very probably to another. It wasn't that there was anything priggish about any of us; we should have been prigs to have concealed our spontaneous interests and ape the theoretical boy.

The world of man centred for my imagination in London, it still centres there; the real and present world, that is to say, as

distinguished from the wonder-lands of atomic and microscopic science and the stars and future time. I had travelled scarcely at all, I had never crossed the Channel, but I had read copiously and I had formed a very good working idea of this round globe with its mountains and wildernesses and forests and all the sorts and conditions of human life that were scattered over its surface. It was all alive, I felt, and changing every day; how it was changing, and the changes men might bring about, fascinated my mind beyond measure.

I used to find a charm in old maps that showed The World as Known to the Ancients, and I wish I could now without any suspicion of self-deception write down compactly the world as it was known to me at nineteen. So far as extension went it was, I fancy, very like the world I know now at forty-two; I had practically all the mountains and seas, boundaries and races, products and possibilities that I have now. But its intension was very different. All the interval has been increasing and deepening my social knowledge, replacing crude and second-hand impressions by felt and realised distinctions.

In 1895--that was my last year with Britten, for I went up to Cambridge in September--my vision of the world had much the same relation to the vision I have to-day that an ill-drawn daub of a mask has to the direct vision of a human face. Britten and I looked at our world and saw--what did we see? Forms and colours side by side that we had no suspicion were interdependent. We had no conception of the roots of things nor of the reaction of things. It did not seem to us, for example, that business had anything to do with government, or that money and means affected the heroic issues of war. There were no wagons in our war game, and where there were guns, there it was assumed the ammunition was gathered together. Finance again was a sealed book to us; we did not so much connect it with the broad aspects of human affairs as regard it as a sort of intrusive nuisance to be earnestly ignored by all right-minded men. We had no conception of the quality of politics, nor how "interests"

came into such affairs; we believed men were swayed by purely intellectual convictions and were either right or wrong, honest or dishonest (in which ease they deserved to be shot), good or bad. We knew nothing of mental inertia, and could imagine the opinion of a whole nation changed by one lucid and convincing exposition. We were capable of the most incongruous transfers from the scroll of history to our own times, we could suppose Brixton ravaged and Hampstead burnt in civil wars for the succession to the throne, or Cheapside a lane of death and the front of the Mansion House set about with guillotines in the course of an accurately transposed French Revolution. We rebuilt London by Act of Parliament, and once in a mood of hygienic enterprise we transferred its population EN MASSE to the North Downs by an order of the Local Government Board. We thought nothing of throwing religious organisations out of employment or superseding all the newspapers by freely distributed bulletins. We could contemplate the possibility of laws abolishing whole classes; we were equal to such a dream as the peaceful and orderly proclamation of Communism from the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral, after the passing of a simply worded bill,--a close and not unnaturally an exciting division carrying the third reading. I remember quite distinctly evolving that vision. We were then fully fifteen and we were perfectly serious about it. We were not fools; it was simply that as yet we had gathered no experience at all of the limits and powers of legislation and conscious collective intention. . . .

I think this statement does my boyhood justice, and yet I have my doubts. It is so hard now to say what one understood and what one did not understand. It isn't only that every day changed one's general outlook, but also that a boy fluctuates between phases of quite adult understanding and phases of tawdrily magnificent puerility. Sometimes I myself was in those tumbrils that went along Cheapside to the Mansion House, a Sydney Cartonesque figure, a white defeated Mirabeau; sometimes it was I who sat judging and condemning and ruling (sleeping in my clothes and feeding very simply) the soul

and autocrat of the Provisional Government, which occupied, of all inconvenient places! the General Post Office at St. Martin's-le-Grand! . . .

I cannot trace the development of my ideas at Cambridge, but I believe the mere physical fact of going two hours' journey away from London gave that place for the first time an effect of unity in my imagination. I got outside London. It became tangible instead of being a frame almost as universal as sea and sky.

At Cambridge my ideas ceased to live in a duologue; in exchange for Britten, with whom, however, I corresponded lengthily, stylishly and self-consciously for some years, I had now a set of congenial friends. I got talk with some of the younger dons, I learnt to speak in the Union, and in my little set we were all pretty busily sharpening each other's wits and correcting each other's interpretations. Cambridge made politics personal and actual. At City Merchants' we had had no sense of effective contact; we boasted, it is true, an under secretary and a colonial governor among our old boys, but they were never real to us; such distinguished sons as returned to visit the old school were allusive and pleasant in the best Pinky Dinky style, and pretended to be in earnest about nothing but our football and cricket, to mourn the abolition of "water," and find a shuddering personal interest in the ancient swishing block. At Cambridge I felt for the first time that I touched the thing that was going on. Real living statesmen came down to debate in the Union, the older dons had been their college intimates, their sons and nephews expounded them to us and made them real to us. They invited us to entertain ideas; I found myself for the first time in my life expected to read and think and discuss, my secret vice had become a virtue.

That combination-room world is at last larger and more populous and various than the world of schoolmasters. The Shoemiths and Naylor's who had been the aristocracy of City Merchants' fell into their

place in my mind; they became an undistinguished mass on the more athletic side of Pinky Dinkyism, and their hostility to ideas and to the expression of ideas ceased to limit and trouble me. The brighter men of each generation stay up; these others go down to propagate their tradition, as the fathers of families, as mediocre professional men, as assistant masters in schools. Cambridge which perfects them is by the nature of things least oppressed by them,--except when it comes to a vote in Convocation.

We were still in those days under the shadow of the great Victorians. I never saw Gladstone (as I never set eyes on the old Queen), but he had resigned office only a year before I went up to Trinity, and the Combination Rooms were full of personal gossip about him and Disraeli and the other big figures of the gladiatorial stage of Parliamentary history, talk that leaked copiously into such sets as mine. The ceiling of our guest chamber at Trinity was glorious with the arms of Sir William Harcourt, whose Death Duties had seemed at first like a socialist dawn. Mr. Evesham we asked to come to the Union every year, Masters, Chamberlain and the old Duke of Devonshire; they did not come indeed, but their polite refusals brought us all, as it were, within personal touch of them. One heard of cabinet councils and meetings at country houses. Some of us, pursuing such interests, went so far as to read political memoirs and the novels of Disraeli and Mrs. Humphry Ward. From gossip, example and the illustrated newspapers one learnt something of the way in which parties were split, coalitions formed, how permanent officials worked and controlled their ministers, how measures were brought forward and projects modified.

And while I was getting the great leading figures on the political stage, who had been presented to me in my schooldays not so much as men as the pantomimic monsters of political caricature, while I was getting them reduced in my imagination to the stature of humanity, and their motives to the quality of impulses like my own, I was also acquiring in my Tripos work a constantly developing and enriching

conception of the world of men as a complex of economic, intellectual and moral processes. . . .

5

Socialism is an intellectual Proteus, but to the men of my generation it came as the revolt of the workers. Rodbertus we never heard of and the Fabian Society we did not understand; Marx and Morris, the Chicago Anarchists, JUSTICE and Social Democratic Federation (as it was then) presented socialism to our minds. Hatherleigh was the leading exponent of the new doctrines in Trinity, and the figure upon his wall of a huge-muscled, black-haired toiler swaggering sledgehammer in hand across a revolutionary barricade, seemed the quintessence of what he had to expound. Landlord and capitalist had robbed and enslaved the workers, and were driving them quite automatically to inevitable insurrection. They would arise and the capitalist system would flee and vanish like the mists before the morning, like the dews before the sunrise, giving place in the most simple and obvious manner to an era of Right and Justice and Virtue and Well Being, and in short a Perfectly Splendid Time.

I had already discussed this sort of socialism under the guidance of Britten, before I went up to Cambridge. It was all mixed up with ideas about freedom and natural virtue and a great scorn for kings, titles, wealth and officials, and it was symbolised by the red ties we wore. Our simple verdict on existing arrangements was that they were "all wrong." The rich were robbers and knew it, kings and princes were usurpers and knew it, religious teachers were impostors in league with power, the economic system was an elaborate plot on the part of the few to expropriate the many. We went about feeling scornful of all the current forms of life, forms that esteemed

themselves solid, that were, we knew, no more than shapes painted on a curtain that was presently to be torn aside. . . .

It was Hatherleigh's poster and his capacity for overstating things, I think, that first qualified my simple revolutionary enthusiasm. Perhaps also I had met with Fabian publications, but if I did I forget the circumstances. And no doubt my innate constructiveness with its practical corollary of an analytical treatment of the material supplied, was bound to push me on beyond this melodramatic interpretation of human affairs.

I compared that Working Man of the poster with any sort of working man I knew. I perceived that the latter was not going to change, and indeed could not under any stimulus whatever be expected to change, into the former. It crept into my mind as slowly and surely as the dawn creeps into a room that the former was not, as I had at first rather glibly assumed, an "ideal," but a complete misrepresentation of the quality and possibilities of things.

I do not know now whether it was during my school-days or at Cambridge that I first began not merely to see the world as a great contrast of rich and poor, but to feel the massive effect of that multitudinous majority of people who toil continually, who are for ever anxious about ways and means, who are restricted, ill clothed, ill fed and ill housed, who have limited outlooks and continually suffer misadventures, hardships and distresses through the want of money. My lot had fallen upon the fringe of the possessing minority; if I did not know the want of necessities I knew shabbiness, and the world that let me go on to a university education intimated very plainly that there was not a thing beyond the primary needs that my stimulated imagination might demand that it would not be an effort for me to secure. A certain aggressive radicalism against the ruling and propertied classes followed almost naturally from my circumstances. It did not at first connect itself at all with the perception of a planless disorder in human affairs

that had been forced upon me by the atmosphere of my upbringing, nor did it link me in sympathy with any of the profounder realities of poverty. It was a personal independent thing. The dingier people one saw in the back streets and lower quarters of Bromstead and Penge, the drift of dirty children, ragged old women, street loafers, grimy workers that made the social background of London, the stories one heard of privation and sweating, only joined up very slowly with the general propositions I was making about life. We could become splendidly eloquent about the social revolution and the triumph of the Proletariat after the Class war, and it was only by a sort of inspiration that it came to me that my bedder, a garrulous old thing with a dusty black bonnet over one eye and an ostentatiously clean apron outside the dark mysteries that clothed her, or the cheeky little ruffians who yelled papers about the streets, were really material to such questions.

Directly any of us young socialists of Trinity found ourselves in immediate contact with servants or cadgers or gyps or bedders or plumbers or navvies or cabmen or railway porters we became unconsciously and unthinkingly aristocrats. Our voices altered, our gestures altered. We behaved just as all the other men, rich or poor, swatters or sportsmen or Pinky Dinkys, behaved, and exactly as we were expected to behave. On the whole it is a population of poor quality round about Cambridge, rather stunted and spiritless and very difficult to idealise. That theoretical Working Man of ours!-- if we felt the clash at all we explained it, I suppose, by assuming that he came from another part of the country; Esmeer, I remember, who lived somewhere in the Fens, was very eloquent about the Cornish fishermen, and Hatherleigh, who was a Hampshire man, assured us we ought to know the Scottish miner. My private fancy was for the Lancashire operative because of his co-operative societies, and because what Lancashire thinks to-day England thinks to-morrow. . . . And also I had never been in Lancashire.

By little increments of realisation it was that the profounder

verities of the problem of socialism came to me. It helped me very much that I had to go down to the Potteries several times to discuss my future with my uncle and guardian; I walked about and saw Bursley Wakes and much of the human aspects of organised industrialism at close quarters for the first time. The picture of a splendid Working Man cheated out of his innate glorious possibilities, and presently to arise and dash this scoundrelly and scandalous system of private ownership to fragments, began to give place to a limitless spectacle of inefficiency, to a conception of millions of people not organised as they should be, not educated as they should be, not simply prevented from but incapable of nearly every sort of beauty, mostly kindly and well meaning, mostly incompetent, mostly obstinate, and easily humbugged and easily diverted. Even the tragic and inspiring idea of Marx, that the poor were nearing a limit of painful experience, and awakening to a sense of intolerable wrongs, began to develop into the more appalling conception that the poor were simply in a witless uncomfortable inconclusive way-- "muddling along"; that they wanted nothing very definitely nor very urgently, that mean fears enslaved them and mean satisfactions decoyed them, that they took the very gift of life itself with a spiritless lassitude, hoarding it, being rather anxious not to lose it than to use it in any way whatever.

The complete development of that realisation was the work of many years. I had only the first intimations at Cambridge. But I did have intimations. Most acutely do I remember the doubts that followed the visit of Chris Robinson. Chris Robinson was heralded by such heroic anticipations, and he was so entirely what we had not anticipated.

Hatherleigh got him to come, arranged a sort of meeting for him at Redmayne's rooms in King's, and was very proud and proprietorial. It failed to stir Cambridge at all profoundly. Beyond a futile attempt to screw up Hatherleigh made by some inexpert duffers who used nails instead of screws and gimlets, there was no attempt to

rag. Next day Chris Robinson went and spoke at Bennett Hall in Newnham College, and left Cambridge in the evening amidst the cheers of twenty men or so. Socialism was at such a low ebb politically in those days that it didn't even rouse men to opposition.

And there sat Chris under that flamboyant and heroic Worker of the poster, a little wrinkled grey-bearded apologetic man in ready-made clothes, with watchful innocent brown eyes and a persistent and invincible air of being out of his element. He sat with his stout boots tucked up under his chair, and clung to a teacup and saucer and looked away from us into the fire, and we all sat about on tables and chair-arms and windowsills and boxes and anywhere except upon chairs after the manner of young men. The only other chair whose seat was occupied was the one containing his knitted woollen comforter and his picturesque old beach-photographer's hat. We were all shy and didn't know how to take hold of him now we had got him, and, which was disconcertingly unanticipated, he was manifestly having the same difficulty with us. We had expected to be gripped.

"I'll not be knowing what to say to these Chaps," he repeated with a north-country quality in his speech.

We made reassuring noises.

The Ambassador of the Workers stirred his tea earnestly through an uncomfortable pause.

"I'd best tell 'em something of how things are in Lancashire, what with the new machines and all that," he speculated at last with red reflections in his thoughtful eyes.

We had an inexcusable dread that perhaps he would make a mess of the meeting.

But when he was no longer in the unaccustomed meshes of refined

conversation, but speaking with an audience before him, he became a different man. He declared he would explain to us just exactly what socialism was, and went on at once to an impassioned contrast of social conditions. "You young men," he said "come from homes of luxury; every need you feel is supplied--"

We sat and stood and sprawled about him, occupying every inch of Redmayne's floor space except the hearthrug-platform, and we listened to him and thought him over. He was the voice of wrongs that made us indignant and eager. We forgot for a time that he had been shy and seemed not a little incompetent, his provincial accent became a beauty of his earnest speech, we were carried away by his indignations. We looked with shining eyes at one another and at the various dons who had dropped in and were striving to maintain a front of judicious severity. We felt more and more that social injustice must cease, and cease forthwith. We felt we could not sleep upon it. At the end we clapped and murmured our applause and wanted badly to cheer.

Then like a lancet stuck into a bladder came the heckling. Denson, that indolent, liberal-minded sceptic, did most of the questioning. He lay contorted in a chair, with his ugly head very low, his legs crossed and his left boot very high, and he pointed his remarks with a long thin hand and occasionally adjusted the unstable glasses that hid his watery eyes. "I don't want to carp," he began. "The present system, I admit, stands condemned. Every present system always HAS stood condemned in the minds of intelligent men. But where it seems to me you get thin, is just where everybody has been thin, and that's when you come to the remedy."

"Socialism," said Chris Robinson, as if it answered everything, and Hatherleigh said "Hear! Hear!" very resolutely.

"I suppose I OUGHT to take that as an answer," said Denson, getting his shoulder-blades well down to the seat of his chair; "but I

don't. I don't, you know. It's rather a shame to cross-examine you after this fine address of yours"--Chris Robinson on the hearthrug made acquiescent and inviting noises--"but the real question remains how exactly are you going to end all these wrongs? There are the administrative questions. If you abolish the private owner, I admit you abolish a very complex and clumsy way of getting businesses run, land controlled and things in general administered, but you don't get rid of the need of administration, you know."

"Democracy," said Chris Robinson.

"Organised somehow," said Denson. "And it's just the How perplexes me. I can quite easily imagine a socialist state administered in a sort of scrambling tumult that would be worse than anything we have got now.

"Nothing could be worse than things are now," said Chris Robinson. "I have seen little children--"

"I submit life on an ill-provisioned raft, for example, could easily be worse--or life in a beleaguered town."

Murmurs.

They wrangled for some time, and it had the effect upon me of coming out from the glow of a good matinee performance into the cold daylight of late afternoon. Chris Robinson did not shine in conflict with Denson; he was an orator and not a dialectician, and he missed Denson's points and displayed a disposition to plunge into untimely pathos and indignation. And Denson hit me curiously hard with one of his shafts. "Suppose," he said, "you found yourself prime minister--"

I looked at Chris Robinson, bright-eyed and his hair a little ruffled and his whole being rhetorical, and measured him against the

huge machine of government muddled and mysterious. Oh! but I was perplexed!

And then we took him back to Hatherleigh's rooms and drank beer and smoked about him while he nursed his knee with hairy wristed hands that protruded from his flannel shirt, and drank lemonade under the cartoon of that emancipated Worker, and we had a great discursive talk with him.

"Eh! you should see our big meetings up north?" he said.

Denson had ruffled him and worried him a good deal, and ever and again he came back to that discussion. "It's all very easy for your learned men to sit and pick holes," he said, "while the children suffer and die. They don't pick holes up north. They mean business."

He talked, and that was the most interesting part of it all, of his going to work in a factory when he was twelve--" when you Chaps were all with your mammies "--and how he had educated himself of nights until he would fall asleep at his reading.

"It's made many of us keen for all our lives," he remarked, "all that clemming for education. Why! I longed all through one winter to read a bit of Darwin. I must know about this Darwin if I die for it, I said. And I couldno' get the book."

Hatherleigh made an enthusiastic noise and drank beer at him with round eyes over the mug.

"Well, anyhow I wasted no time on Greek and Latin," said Chris Robinson. "And one learns to go straight at a thing without splitting straws. One gets hold of the Elementals."

(Well, did they? That was the gist of my perplexity.)

"One doesn't quibble," he said, returning to his rankling memory of Denson, "while men decay and starve."

"But suppose," I said, suddenly dropping into opposition, "the alternative is to risk a worse disaster--or do something patently futile."

"I don't follow that," said Chris Robinson. "We don't propose anything futile, so far as I can see."

6

The prevailing force in my undergraduate days was not Socialism but Kiplingism. Our set was quite exceptional in its socialistic professions. And we were all, you must understand, very distinctly Imperialists also, and professed a vivid sense of the "White Man's Burden."

It is a little difficult now to get back to the feelings of that period; Kipling has since been so mercilessly and exhaustively mocked, criticised and torn to shreds;--never was a man so violently exalted and then, himself assisting, so relentlessly called down. But in the middle nineties this spectacled and moustached little figure with its heavy chin and its general effect of vehement gesticulation, its wild shouts of boyish enthusiasm for effective force, its lyric delight in the sounds and colours, in the very odours of empire, its wonderful discovery of machinery and cotton waste and the under officer and the engineer, and "shop" as a poetic dialect, became almost a national symbol. He got hold of us wonderfully, he filled us with tinkling and haunting quotations, he stirred Britten and myself to futile imitations, he coloured the very idiom of our conversation. He rose to his climax with his

"Recessional," while I was still an undergraduate.

What did he give me exactly?

He helped to broaden my geographical sense immensely, and he provided phrases for just that desire for discipline and devotion and organised effort the Socialism of our time failed to express, that the current socialist movement still fails, I think, to express. The sort of thing that follows, for example, tore something out of my inmost nature and gave it a shape, and I took it back from him shaped and let much of the rest of him, the tumult and the bullying, the hysteria and the impatience, the incoherence and inconsistency, go uncriticised for the sake of it:--

"Keep ye the Law--be swift in all obedience--
Clear the land of evil, drive the road and bridge the ford,
Make ye sure to each his own
That he reap where he hath sown;
By the peace among Our peoples let men know we serve the Lord!"

And then again, and for all our later criticism, this sticks in my mind, sticks there now as quintessential wisdom:

The 'eathen in 'is blindness bows down to wood an' stone;
'E don't obey no orders unless they is 'is own;
'E keeps 'is side-arms awful: 'e leaves 'em all about
An' then comes up the regiment an' pokes the 'eathen out.
All along o' dirtiness, all along o' mess,
All along o' doin' things rather-more-or-less,
All along of abby-nay, kul, an' hazar-ho,
Mind you keep your rifle an' yourself jus' so!"

It is after all a secondary matter that Kipling, not having been born and brought up in Bromstead and Penge, and the war in South Africa being yet in the womb of time, could quite honestly entertain the now remarkable delusion that England had her side-arms at that time kept anything but "awful." He learnt better, and we all learnt with him in the dark years of exasperating and humiliating struggle that followed, and I do not see that we fellow learners are justified in turning resentfully upon him for a common ignorance and assumption. . . .

South Africa seems always painted on the back cloth of my Cambridge memories. How immense those disasters seemed at the time, disasters our facile English world has long since contrived in any edifying or profitable sense to forget! How we thrilled to the shouting newspaper sellers as the first false flush of victory gave place to the realisation of defeat. Far away there our army showed itself human, mortal and human in the sight of all the world, the pleasant officers we had imagined would change to wonderful heroes at the first crackling of rifles, remained the pleasant, rather incompetent men they had always been, failing to imagine, failing to plan and co-operate, failing to grip. And the common soldiers, too, they were just what our streets and country-side had made them, no sudden magic came out of the war bugles for them. Neither splendid nor disgraceful were they,--just ill-trained and fairly plucky and wonderfully good-tempered men--paying for it. And how it lowered our vitality all that first winter to hear of Nicholson's Nek, and then presently close upon one another, to realise the bloody waste of Magersfontein, the shattering retreat from Stormberg, Colenso--Colenso, that blundering battle, with White, as it seemed, in Ladysmith near the point of surrender! and so through the long unfolding catalogue of bleak disillusionments, of aching, unconcealed anxiety lest worse should follow. To advance upon your enemy singing about his lack of cleanliness and method went out of fashion altogether! The dirty retrogressive Boer vanished from our

scheme of illusion.

All through my middle Cambridge period, the guns boomed and the rifles crackled away there on the veldt, and the horsemen rode and the tale of accidents and blundering went on. Men, mules, horses, stores and money poured into South Africa, and the convalescent wounded streamed home. I see it in my memory as if I had looked at it through a window instead of through the pages of the illustrated papers; I recall as if I had been there the wide open spaces, the ragged hillsides, the open order attacks of helmeted men in khaki, the scarce visible smoke of the guns, the wrecked trains in great lonely places, the burnt isolated farms, and at last the blockhouses and the fences of barbed wire uncoiling and spreading for endless miles across the desert, netting the elusive enemy until at last, though he broke the meshes again and again, we had him in the toils. If one's attention strayed in the lecture-room it wandered to those battle-fields.

And that imagined panorama of war unfolds to an accompaniment of yelling newsboys in the narrow old Cambridge streets, of the flicker of papers hastily bought and torn open in the twilight, of the doubtful reception of doubtful victories, and the insensate rejoicings at last that seemed to some of us more shameful than defeats. . . .

7

A book that stands out among these memories, that stimulated me immensely so that I forced it upon my companions, half in the spirit of propaganda and half to test it by their comments, was Meredith's **ONE OF OUR CONQUERORS**. It is one of the books that have made me.

In that I got a supplement and corrective of Kipling. It was the first detached and adverse criticism of the Englishman I had ever encountered. It must have been published already nine or ten years when I read it. The country had paid no heed to it, had gone on to the expensive lessons of the War because of the dull aversion our people feel for all such intimations, and so I could read it as a book justified. The war endorsed its every word for me, underlined each warning indication of the gigantic dangers that gathered against our system across the narrow seas. It discovered Europe to me, as watching and critical.

But while I could respond to all its criticisms of my country's intellectual indolence, of my country's want of training and discipline and moral courage, I remember that the idea that on the continent there were other peoples going ahead of us, mentally alert while we fumbled, disciplined while we slouched, aggressive and preparing to bring our Imperial pride to a reckoning, was extremely novel and distasteful to me. It set me worrying of nights. It put all my projects for social and political reconstruction upon a new uncomfortable footing. It made them no longer merely desirable but urgent. Instead of pride and the love of making one might own to a baser motive. Under Kipling's sway I had a little forgotten the continent of Europe, treated it as a mere envious echo to our own world-wide display. I began now to have a disturbing sense as it were of busy searchlights over the horizon. . . .

One consequence of the patriotic chagrin Meredith produced in me was an attempt to belittle his merit. "It isn't a good novel, anyhow," I said.

The charge I brought against it was, I remember, a lack of unity. It professed to be a study of the English situation in the early nineties, but it was all deflected, I said, and all the interest was confused by the story of Victor Radnor's fight with society to vindicate the woman he had loved and never married. Now in the

retrospect and with a mind full of bitter enlightenment, I can do Meredith justice, and admit the conflict was not only essential but cardinal in his picture, that the terrible inflexibility of the rich aunts and the still more terrible claim of Mrs. Burman Radnor, the "infernal punctilio," and Dudley Sowerby's limitations, were the central substance of that inalertness the book set itself to assail. So many things have been brought together in my mind that were once remotely separated. A people that will not valiantly face and understand and admit love and passion can understand nothing whatever. But in those days what is now just obvious truth to me was altogether outside my range of comprehension. . . .

8

As I seek to recapitulate the interlacing growth of my apprehension of the world, as I flounder among the half-remembered developments that found me a crude schoolboy and left me a man, there comes out, as if it stood for all the rest, my first holiday abroad. That did not happen until I was twenty-two. I was a fellow of Trinity, and the Peace of Vereeniging had just been signed.

I went with a man named Willersley, a man some years senior to myself, who had just missed a fellowship and the higher division of the Civil Service, and who had become an enthusiastic member of the London School Board, upon which the cumulative vote and the support of the "advanced" people had placed him. He had, like myself, a small independent income that relieved him of any necessity to earn a living, and he had a kindred craving for social theorising and some form of social service. He had sought my acquaintance after reading a paper of mine (begotten by the visit of Chris Robinson) on the limits of pure democracy. It had marched with some thoughts of his own.

We went by train to Spiez on the Lake of Thun, then up the Gemmi, and thence with one or two halts and digressions and a little modest climbing we crossed over by the Antrona pass (on which we were benighted) into Italy, and by way of Domo D'ossola and the Santa Maria Maggiore valley to Cannobio, and thence up the lake to Locarno (where, as I shall tell, we stayed some eventful days) and so up the Val Maggia and over to Airolo and home.

As I write of that long tramp of ours, something of its freshness and enlargement returns to me. I feel again the faint pleasant excitement of the boat train, the trampling procession of people with hand baggage and laden porters along the platform of the Folkestone pier, the scarcely perceptible swaying of the moored boat beneath our feet. Then, very obvious and simple, the little emotion of standing out from the homeland and seeing the long white Kentish cliffs recede. One walked about the boat doing one's best not to feel absurdly adventurous, and presently a movement of people directed one's attention to a white lighthouse on a cliff to the east of us, coming up suddenly; and then one turned to scan the little different French coast villages, and then, sliding by in a pale sunshine came a long wooden pier with oddly dressed children upon it, and the clustering town of Boulogne.

One took it all with the outward calm that became a young man of nearly three and twenty, but one was alive to one's finger-tips with pleasing little stimulations. The custom house examination excited one, the strangeness of a babble in a foreign tongue; one found the French of City Merchants' and Cambridge a shy and viscous flow, and then one was standing in the train as it went slowly through the rail-laid street to Boulogne Ville, and one looked out at the world in French, porters in blouses, workmen in enormous purple trousers, police officers in peaked caps instead of helmets and romantically cloaked, big carts, all on two wheels instead of four, green shuttered casements instead of sash windows, and great numbers of

neatly dressed women in economical mourning.

"Oh! there's a priest!" one said, and was betrayed into suchlike artless cries.

It was a real other world, with different government and different methods, and in the night one was roused from uneasy slumbers and sat blinking and surly, wrapped up in one's couverture and with one's oreiller all awry, to encounter a new social phenomenon, the German official, so different in manner from the British; and when one woke again after that one had come to Bale, and out one tumbled to get coffee in Switzerland. . . .

I have been over that route dozens of times since, but it still revives a certain lingering youthfulness, a certain sense of cheerful release in me.

I remember that I and Willersley became very sociological as we ran on to Spiez, and made all sorts of generalisations from the steeply sloping fields on the hillsides, and from the people we saw on platforms and from little differences in the way things were done.

The clean prosperity of Bale and Switzerland, the big clean stations, filled me with patriotic misgivings, as I thought of the vast dirtiness of London, the mean dirtiness of Cambridgeshire. It came to me that perhaps my scheme of international values was all wrong, that quite stupendous possibilities and challenges for us and our empire might be developing here--and I recalled Meredith's Skepsey in France with a new understanding.

Willersley had dressed himself in a world-worn Norfolk suit of greenish grey tweeds that ended unfamiliarly at his rather impending, spectacled, intellectual visage. I didn't, I remember, like the contrast of him with the drilled Swiss and Germans about us. Convict coloured stockings and vast hobnail boots finished him

below, and all his luggage was a borrowed rucksac that he had tied askew. He did not want to shave in the train, but I made him at one of the Swiss stations--I dislike these Oxford slovenlinesses--and then confound him! he cut himself and bled. . . .

Next morning we were breathing a thin exhilarating air that seemed to have washed our very veins to an incredible cleanliness, and eating hard-boiled eggs in a vast clear space of rime-edged rocks, snow-mottled, above a blue-gashed glacier. All about us the monstrous rock surfaces rose towards the shining peaks above, and there were winding moraines from which the ice had receded, and then dark clustering fir trees far below.

I had an extraordinary feeling of having come out of things, of being outside.

"But this is the round world!" I said, with a sense of never having perceived it before; "this is the round world!"

9

That holiday was full of big comprehensive effects; the first view of the Rhone valley and the distant Valaisian Alps, for example, which we saw from the shoulder of the mountain above the Gemmi, and the early summer dawn breaking over Italy as we moved from our night's crouching and munched bread and chocolate and stretched our stiff limbs among the tumbled and precipitous rocks that hung over Lake Cingolo, and surveyed the winding tiring rocky track going down and down to Antronapiano.

And our thoughts were as comprehensive as our impressions. Willersley's mind abounded in historical matter; he had an

inaccurate abundant habit of topographical reference; he made me see and trace and see again the Roman Empire sweep up these winding valleys, and the coming of the first great Peace among the warring tribes of men. . . .

In the retrospect each of us seems to have been talking about our outlook almost continually. Each of us, you see, was full of the same question, very near and altogether predominant to us, the question: "What am I going to do with my life?" He saw it almost as importantly as I, but from a different angle, because his choice was largely made and mine still hung in the balance.

"I feel we might do so many things," I said, "and everything that calls one, calls one away from something else."

Willersley agreed without any modest disavowals.

"We have got to think out," he said, "just what we are and what we are up to. We've got to do that now. And then--it's one of those questions it is inadvisable to reopen subsequently."

He beamed at me through his glasses. The sententious use of long words was a playful habit with him, that and a slight deliberate humour, habits occasional Extension Lecturing was doing very much to intensify.

"You've made your decision?"

He nodded with a peculiar forward movement of his head.

"How would you put it?"

"Social Service--education. Whatever else matters or doesn't matter, it seems to me there is one thing we **MUST** have and increase, and that is the number of people who can think a little--and have "--

he beamed again--" an adequate sense of causation."

"You're sure it's worth while."

"For me--certainly. I don't discuss that any more."

"I don't limit myself too narrowly," he added. "After all, the work is all one. We who know, we who feel, are building the great modern state, joining wall to wall and way to way, the new great England rising out of the decaying old . . . we are the real statesmen--I like that use of 'statesmen.' . . ."

"Yes," I said with many doubts. "Yes, of course. . . ."

Willersley is middle-aged now, with silver in his hair and a deepening benevolence in his always amiable face, and he has very fairly kept his word. He has lived for social service and to do vast masses of useful, undistinguished, fertilising work. Think of the days of arid administrative plodding and of contention still more arid and unrewarded, that he must have spent! His little affectations of gesture and manner, imitative affectations for the most part, have increased, and the humorous beam and the humorous intonations have become a thing he puts on every morning like an old coat. His devotion is mingled with a considerable whimsicality, and they say he is easily flattered by subordinates and easily offended into opposition by colleagues; he has made mistakes at times and followed wrong courses, still there he is, a flat contradiction to all the ordinary doctrine of motives, a man who has foregone any chances of wealth and profit, foregone any easier paths to distinction, foregone marriage and parentage, in order to serve the community. He does it without any fee or reward except his personal self-satisfaction in doing this work, and he does it without any hope of future joys and punishments, for he is an implacable Rationalist. No doubt he idealises himself a little, and dreams of recognition. No doubt he gets his pleasure from a sense of power,

from the spending and husbanding of large sums of public money, and from the inevitable proprietorship he must feel in the fair, fine, well-ordered schools he has done so much to develop. "But for me," he can say, "there would have been a Job about those diagrams, and that subject or this would have been less ably taught." . . .

The fact remains that for him the rewards have been adequate, if not to content at any rate to keep him working. Of course he covets the notice of the world he has served, as a lover covets the notice of his mistress. Of course he thinks somewhere, somewhen, he will get credit. Only last year I heard some men talking of him, and they were noting, with little mean smiles, how he had shown himself self-conscious while there was talk of some honorary degree-giving or other; it would, I have no doubt, please him greatly if his work were to flower into a crimson gown in some Academic parterre. Why shouldn't it? But that is incidental vanity at the worst; he goes on anyhow. Most men don't.

But we had our walk twenty years and more ago now. He was oldish even then as a young man, just as he is oldish still in middle age. Long may his industrious elderliness flourish for the good of the world! He lectured a little in conversation then; he lectures more now and listens less, toilsomely disentangling what you already understand, giving you in detail the data you know; these are things like callosities that come from a man's work.

Our long three weeks' talk comes back to me as a memory of ideas and determinations slowly growing, all mixed up with a smell of wood smoke and pine woods and huge precipices and remote gleams of snow-fields and the sound of cascading torrents rushing through deep gorges far below. It is mixed, too, with gossips with waitresses and fellow travellers, with my first essays in colloquial German and Italian, with disputes about the way to take, and other things that I will tell of in another section. But the white passion of human service was our dominant theme. Not simply perhaps nor altogether

unselfishly, but quite honestly, and with at least a frequent self-forgetfulness, did we want to do fine and noble things, to help in their developing, to lessen misery, to broaden and exalt life. It is very hard--perhaps it is impossible--to present in a page or two the substance and quality of nearly a month's conversation, conversation that is casual and discursive in form, that ranges carelessly from triviality to immensity, and yet is constantly resuming a constructive process, as workmen on a wall loiter and jest and go and come back, and all the while build.

We got it more and more definite that the core of our purpose beneath all its varied aspects must needs be order and discipline. "Muddle," said I, "is the enemy." That remains my belief to this day. Clearness and order, light and foresight, these things I know for Good. It was muddle had just given us all the still freshly painful disasters and humiliations of the war, muddle that gives us the visibly sprawling disorder of our cities and industrial countryside, muddle that gives us the waste of life, the limitations, wretchedness and unemployment of the poor. Muddle! I remember myself quoting Kipling--

"All along o' dirtiness, all along o' mess,
All along o' doin' things rather-more-or-less."

"We build the state," we said over and over again. "That is what we are for--servants of the new reorganisation!"

We planned half in earnest and half Utopianising, a League of Social Service.

We talked of the splendid world of men that might grow out of such unpaid and ill-paid work as we were setting our faces to do. We spoke of the intricate difficulties, the monstrous passive

resistances, the hostilities to such a development as we conceived our work subserved, and we spoke with that underlying confidence in the invincibility of the causes we adopted that is natural to young and scarcely tried men.

We talked much of the detailed life of politics so far as it was known to us, and there Willersley was more experienced and far better informed than I; we discussed possible combinations and possible developments, and the chances of some great constructive movement coming from the heart-searchings the Boer war had occasioned. We would sink to gossip--even at the Suetonius level. Willersley would decline towards illuminating anecdotes that I capped more or less loosely from my private reading. We were particularly wise, I remember, upon the management of newspapers, because about that we knew nothing whatever. We perceived that great things were to be done through newspapers. We talked of swaying opinion and moving great classes to massive action.

Men are egotistical even in devotion. All our splendid projects were thickset with the first personal pronoun. We both could write, and all that we said in general terms was reflected in the particular in our minds; it was ourselves we saw, and no others, writing and speaking that moving word. We had already produced manuscript and passed the initiations of proof reading; I had been a frequent speaker in the Union, and Willersley was an active man on the School Board. Our feet were already on the lower rungs that led up and up. He was six and twenty, and I twenty-two. We intimated our individual careers in terms of bold expectation. I had prophetic glimpses of walls and hoardings clamorous with "Vote for Remington," and Willersley no doubt saw himself chairman of this committee and that, saying a few slightly ironical words after the declaration of the poll, and then sitting friendly beside me on the government benches. There was nothing impossible in such dreams. Why not the Board of Education for him? My preference at that time wavered between the Local Government Board--I had great ideas about

town-planning, about revisions of municipal areas and re-organised internal transit--and the War Office. I swayed strongly towards the latter as the journey progressed. My educational bias came later.

The swelling ambitions that have tramped over Alpine passes! How many of them, like mine, have come almost within sight of realisation before they failed?

There were times when we posed like young gods (of unassuming exterior), and times when we were full of the absurdest little solitudes about our prospects. There were times when one surveyed the whole world of men as if it was a little thing at one's feet, and by way of contrast I remember once lying in bed--it must have been during this holiday, though I cannot for the life of me fix where--and speculating whether perhaps some day I might not be a K. C. B., Sir Richard Remington, K. C. B., M. P.

But the big style prevailed. . . .

We could not tell from minute to minute whether we were planning for a world of solid reality, or telling ourselves fairy tales about this prospect of life. So much seemed possible, and everything we could think of so improbable. There were lapses when it seemed to me I could never be anything but just the entirely unimportant and undistinguished young man I was for ever and ever. I couldn't even think of myself as five and thirty.

Once I remember Willersley going over a list of failures, and why they had failed--but young men in the twenties do not know much about failures.

Willersley and I professed ourselves Socialists, but by this time I knew my Rodbertus as well as my Marx, and there was much in our socialism that would have shocked Chris Robinson as much as anything in life could have shocked him. Socialism as a simple democratic cry we had done with for ever. We were socialists because Individualism for us meant muddle, meant a crowd of separated, undisciplined little people all obstinately and ignorantly doing things jarringly, each one in his own way. "Each," I said quoting words of my father's that rose apt in my memory, "snarling from his own little bit of property, like a dog tied to a cart's tail."

"Essentially," said Willersley, "essentially we're for conscription, in peace and war alike. The man who owns property is a public official and has to behave as such. That's the gist of socialism as I understand it."

"Or be dismissed from his post," I said, "and replaced by some better sort of official. A man's none the less an official because he's irresponsible. What he does with his property affects people just the same. Private! No one is really private but an outlaw. . . ."

Order and devotion were the very essence of our socialism, and a splendid collective vigour and happiness its end. We projected an ideal state, an organised state as confident and powerful as modern science, as balanced and beautiful as a body, as beneficent as sunshine, the organised state that should end muddle for ever; it ruled all our ideals and gave form to all our ambitions.

Every man was to be definitely related to that, to have his predominant duty to that. Such was the England renewed we had in mind, and how to serve that end, to subdue undisciplined worker and undisciplined wealth to it, and make the Scientific Commonweal, King, was the continuing substance of our intercourse.

Every day the wine of the mountains was stronger in our blood, and the flush of our youth deeper. We would go in the morning sunlight along some narrow Alpine mule-path shouting large suggestions for national re-organisation, and weighing considerations as lightly as though the world was wax in our hands. "Great England," we said in effect, over and over again, "and we will be among the makers! England renewed! The country has been warned; it has learnt its lesson. The disasters and anxieties of the war have sunk in. England has become serious. . . . Oh! there are big things before us to do; big enduring things!"

One evening we walked up to the loggia of a little pilgrimage church, I forget its name, that stands out on a conical hill at the head of a winding stair above the town of Locarno. Down below the houses clustered amidst a confusion of heat-bitten greenery. I had been sitting silently on the parapet, looking across to the purple mountain masses where Switzerland passes into Italy, and the drift of our talk seemed suddenly to gather to a head.

I broke into speech, giving form to the thoughts that had been accumulating. My words have long since passed out of my memory, the phrases of familiar expression have altered for me, but the substance remains as clear as ever. I said how we were in our measure emperors and kings, men undriven, free to do as we pleased with life; we classed among the happy ones, our bread and common necessities were given us for nothing, we had abilities,--it wasn't modesty but cowardice to behave as if we hadn't--and Fortune watched us to see what we might do with opportunity and the world.

"There are so many things to do, you see," began Willersley, in his

judicial lecturer's voice.

"So many things we may do," I interrupted, "with all these years before us. . . . We're exceptional men. It's our place, our duty, to do things."

"Here anyhow," I said, answering the faint amusement of his face; "I've got no modesty. Everything conspires to set me up. Why should I run about like all those grubby little beasts down there, seeking nothing but mean little vanities and indulgencies--and then take credit for modesty? I KNOW I am capable. I KNOW I have imagination. Modesty! I know if I don't attempt the very biggest things in life I am a damned shirk. The very biggest! Somebody has to attempt them. I feel like a loaded gun that is only a little perplexed because it has to find out just where to aim itself. . . ."

The lake and the frontier villages, a white puff of steam on the distant railway to Luino, the busy boats and steamers trailing triangular wakes of foam, the long vista eastward towards battlemented Bellinzona, the vast mountain distances, now tinged with sunset light, behind this nearer landscape, and the southward waters with remote coast towns shining dimly, waters that merged at last in a luminous golden haze, made a broad panoramic spectacle. It was as if one surveyed the world,--and it was like the games I used to set out upon my nursery floor. I was exalted by it; I felt larger than men. So kings should feel.

That sense of largeness came to me then, and it has come to me since, again and again, a splendid intimation or a splendid vanity. Once, I remember, when I looked at Genoa from the mountain crest behind the town and saw that multitudinous place in all its beauty of width and abundance and clustering human effort, and once as I was steaming past the brown low hills of Staten Island towards the towering vigour and clamorous vitality of New York City, that mood rose to its quintessence. And once it came to me, as I shall tell,

on Dover cliffs. And a hundred times when I have thought of England as our country might be, with no wretched poor, no wretched rich, a nation armed and ordered, trained and purposeful amidst its vales and rivers, that emotion of collective ends and collective purposes has returned to me. I felt as great as humanity. For a brief moment I was humanity, looking at the world I had made and had still to make. . . .

12

And mingled with these dreams of power and patriotic service there was another series of a different quality and a different colour, like the antagonistic colour of a shot silk. The white life and the red life, contrasted and interchanged, passing swiftly at a turn from one to another, and refusing ever to mingle peacefully one with the other. I was asking myself openly and distinctly: what are you going to do for the world? What are you going to do with yourself? and with an increasing strength and persistence Nature in spite of my averted attention was asking me in penetrating undertones: what are you going to do about this other fundamental matter, the beauty of girls and women and your desire for them?

I have told of my sisterless youth and the narrow circumstances of my upbringing. It made all women-kind mysterious to me. If it had not been for my Staffordshire cousins I do not think I should have known any girls at all until I was twenty. Of Staffordshire I will tell a little later. But I can remember still how through all those ripening years, the thought of women's beauty, their magic presence in the world beside me and the unknown, untried reactions of their intercourse, grew upon me and grew, as a strange presence grows in a room when one is occupied by other things. I busied myself and pretended to be wholly occupied, and there the woman stood, full

half of life neglected, and it seemed to my averted mind sometimes that she was there clad and dignified and divine, and sometimes Aphrodite shining and commanding, and sometimes that Venus who stoops and allures.

This travel abroad seemed to have released a multitude of things in my mind; the clear air, the beauty of the sunshine, the very blue of the glaciers made me feel my body and quickened all those disregarded dreams. I saw the sheathed beauty of women's forms all about me, in the cheerful waitresses at the inns, in the pedestrians one encountered in the tracks, in the chance fellow travellers at the hotel tables. "Confound it!" said I, and talked all the more zealously of that greater England that was calling us.

I remember that we passed two Germans, an old man and a tall fair girl, father and daughter, who were walking down from Saas. She came swinging and shining towards us, easy and strong. I worshipped her as she approached.

"Gut Tag!" said Willersley, removing his hat.

"Morgen!" said the old man, saluting.

I stared stockishly at the girl, who passed with an indifferent face.

That sticks in my mind as a picture remains in a room, it has kept there bright and fresh as a thing seen yesterday, for twenty years. . . .

I flirted hesitatingly once or twice with comely serving girls, and was a little ashamed lest Willersley should detect the keen interest I took in them, and then as we came over the pass from Santa Maria Maggiore to Cannobio, my secret preoccupation took me by surprise and flooded me and broke down my pretences.

The women in that valley are very beautiful--women vary from valley to valley in the Alps and are plain and squat here and divinities five miles away--and as we came down we passed a group of five or six of them resting by the wayside. Their burthens were beside them, and one like Ceres held a reaping hook in her brown hand. She watched us approaching and smiled faintly, her eyes at mine.

There was some greeting, and two of them laughed together.

We passed.

"Glorious girls they were," said Willersley, and suddenly an immense sense of boredom enveloped me. I saw myself striding on down that winding road, talking of politics and parties and bills of parliament and all sorts of dessicated things. That road seemed to me to wind on for ever down to dust and infinite dreariness. I knew it for a way of death. Reality was behind us.

Willersley set himself to draw a sociological moral. "I'm not so sure," he said in a voice of intense discriminations, "after all, that agricultural work isn't good for women."

"Damn agricultural work!" I said, and broke out into a vigorous cursing of all I held dear. "Fettered things we are!" I cried. "I wonder why I stand it!"

"Stand what?"

"Why don't I go back and make love to those girls and let the world and you and everything go hang? Deep breasts and rounded limbs--and we poor emasculated devils go tramping by with the blood of youth in us! . . ."

"I'm not quite sure, Remington," said Willersley, looking at me with

a deliberately quaint expression over his glasses, "that picturesque scenery is altogether good for your morals."

That fever was still in my blood when we came to Locarno.

13

Along the hot and dusty lower road between the Orrido of Traffiume and Cannobio Willersley had developed his first blister. And partly because of that and partly because there was a bag at the station that gave us the refreshment of clean linen and partly because of the lazy lower air into which we had come, we decided upon three or four days' sojourn in the Empress Hotel.

We dined that night at a table-d'hote, and I found myself next to an Englishwoman who began a conversation that was resumed presently in the hotel lounge. She was a woman of perhaps thirty-three or thirty-four, slenderly built, with a warm reddish skin and very abundant fair golden hair, the wife of a petulant-looking heavy-faced man of perhaps fifty-three, who smoked a cigar and dozed over his coffee and presently went to bed. "He always goes to bed like that," she confided startlingly. "He sleeps after all his meals. I never knew such a man to sleep."

Then she returned to our talk, whatever it was.

We had begun at the dinner table with itineraries and the usual topographical talk, and she had envied our pedestrian travel. "My husband doesn't walk," she said. "His heart is weak and he cannot manage the hills."

There was something friendly and adventurous in her manner; she

conveyed she liked me, and when presently Willersley drifted off to write letters our talk sank at once to easy confidential undertones. I felt enterprising, and indeed it is easy to be daring with people one has never seen before and may never see again. I said I loved beautiful scenery and all beautiful things, and the pointing note in my voice made her laugh. She told me I had bold eyes, and so far as I can remember I said she made them bold. "Blue they are," she remarked, smiling archly. "I like blue eyes." Then I think we compared ages, and she said she was the Woman of Thirty, "George Moore's Woman of Thirty."

I had not read George Moore at the time, but I pretended to understand.

That, I think, was our limit that evening. She went to bed, smiling good-night quite prettily down the big staircase, and I and Willersley went out to smoke in the garden. My head was full of her, and I found it necessary to talk about her. So I made her a problem in sociology. "Who the deuce are these people?" I said, and how do they get a living? They seem to have plenty of money. He strikes me as being--Willersley, what is a drysalter? I think he's a retired drysalter."

Willersley theorised while I thought of the woman and that provocative quality of dash she had displayed. The next day at lunch she and I met like old friends. A huge mass of private thinking during the interval had been added to our effect upon one another. We talked for a time of insignificant things.

"What do you do," she asked rather quickly, "after lunch? Take a siesta?"

"Sometimes," I said, and hung for a moment eye to eye.

We hadn't a doubt of each other, but my heart was beating like a

steamer propeller when it lifts out of the water.

"Do you get a view from your room?" she asked after a pause.

"It's on the third floor, Number seventeen, near the staircase. My friend's next door."

She began to talk of books. She was interested in Christian Science, she said, and spoke of a book. I forget altogether what that book was called, though I remember to this day with the utmost exactness the purplish magenta of its cover. She said she would lend it to me and hesitated.

Willersley wanted to go for an expedition across the lake that afternoon, but I refused. He made some other proposals that I rejected abruptly. "I shall write in my room," I said.

"Why not write down here?"

"I shall write in my room," I snarled like a thwarted animal, and he looked at me curiously. "Very well," he said; "then I'll make some notes and think about that order of ours out under the magnolias."

I hovered about the lounge for a time buying postcards and feverishly restless, watching the movements of the other people. Finally I went up to my room and sat down by the windows, staring out. There came a little tap at the unlocked door and in an instant, like the go of a taut bowstring, I was up and had it open.

"Here is that book," she said, and we hesitated.

"COME IN!" I whispered, trembling from head to foot.

"You're just a boy," she said in a low tone.

I did not feel a bit like a lover, I felt like a burglar with the safe-door nearly opened. "Come in," I said almost impatiently, for anyone might be in the passage, and I gripped her wrist and drew her towards me.

"What do you mean?" she answered with a faint smile on her lips, and awkward and yielding.

I shut the door behind her, still holding her with one hand, then turned upon her--she was laughing nervously--and without a word drew her to me and kissed her. And I remember that as I kissed her she made a little noise almost like the purring miaow with which a cat will greet one and her face, close to mine, became solemn and tender.

She was suddenly a different being from the discontented wife who had tapped a moment since on my door, a woman transfigured. . . .

That evening I came down to dinner a monster of pride, for behold! I was a man. I felt myself the most wonderful and unprecedented of adventurers. It was hard to believe that any one in the world before had done as much. My mistress and I met smiling, we carried things off admirably, and it seemed to me that Willersley was the dullest old dog in the world. I wanted to give him advice. I wanted to give him derisive pokes. After dinner and coffee in the lounge I was too excited and hilarious to go to bed, I made him come with me down to the cafe under the arches by the pier, and there drank beer and talked extravagant nonsense about everything under the sun, in order not to talk about the happenings of the afternoon. All the time something shouted within me: "I am a man! I am a man!" . . .

"What shall we do to-morrow?" said he.

"I'm for loafing," I said. "Let's row in the morning and spend to-

morrow afternoon just as we did to-day."

"They say the church behind the town is worth seeing."

"We'll go up about sunset; that's the best time for it. We can start about five."

We heard music, and went further along the arcade to discover a place where girls in operatic Swiss peasant costume were singing and dancing on a creaking, protesting little stage. I eyed their generous display of pink neck and arm with the seasoned eye of a man who has lived in the world. Life was perfectly simple and easy, I felt, if one took it the right way.

Next day Willersley wanted to go on, but I delayed. Altogether I kept him back four days. Then abruptly my mood changed, and we decided to start early the following morning. I remember, though a little indistinctly, the feeling of my last talk with that woman whose surname, odd as it may seem, either I never learnt or I have forgotten. (Her christian name was Milly.) She was tired and rather low-spirited, and disposed to be sentimental, and for the first time in our intercourse I found myself liking her for the sake of her own personality. There was something kindly and generous appearing behind the veil of naive and uncontrolled sensuality she had worn. There was a curious quality of motherliness in her attitude to me that something in my nature answered and approved. She didn't pretend to keep it up that she had yielded to my initiative. "I've done you no harm," she said a little doubtfully, an odd note for a man's victim! And, "we've had a good time. You have liked me, haven't you?"

She interested me in her lonely dissatisfied life; she was childless and had no hope of children, and her husband was the only son of a rich meat salesman, very mean, a mighty smoker--"he reeks of it," she said, "always"--and interested in nothing but golf, billiards

(which he played very badly), pigeon shooting, convivial Free Masonry and Stock Exchange punting. Mostly they drifted about the Riviera. Her mother had contrived her marriage when she was eighteen. They were the first samples I ever encountered of the great multitude of functionless property owners which encumbers modern civilisation--but at the time I didn't think much of that aspect of them. . . .

I tell all this business as it happened without comment, because I have no comment to make. It was all strange to me, strange rather than wonderful, and, it may be, some dream of beauty died for ever in those furtive meetings; it happened to me, and I could scarcely have been more irresponsible in the matter or controlled events less if I had been suddenly pushed over a cliff into water. I swam, of course--finding myself in it. Things tested me, and I reacted, as I have told. The bloom of my innocence, if ever there had been such a thing, was gone. And here is the remarkable thing about it; at the time and for some days I was over-weeningly proud; I have never been so proud before or since; I felt I had been promoted to virility; I was unable to conceal my exultation from Willersley. It was a mood of shining shameless ungracious self-approval. As he and I went along in the cool morning sunshine by the rice fields in the throat of the Val Maggia a silence fell between us.

"You know?" I said abruptly,--"about that woman?"

Willersley did not answer for a moment. He looked at me over the corner of his spectacles.

"Things went pretty far?" he asked.

"Oh! all the way!" and I had a twinge of fatuous pride in my unpremeditated achievement.

"She came to your room?"

I nodded.

"I heard her. I heard her whispering. . . . The whispering and rustling and so on. I was in my room yesterday. . . . Any one might have heard you."

I went on with my head in the air.

"You might have been caught, and that would have meant endless trouble. You might have incurred all sorts of consequences. What did you know about her? . . . We have wasted four days in that hot close place. When we found that League of Social Service we were talking about," he said with a determined eye upon me, "chastity will be first among the virtues prescribed."

"I shall form a rival league," I said a little damped. "I'm hanged if I give up a single desire in me until I know why."

He lifted his chin and stared before him through his glasses at nothing. "There are some things," he said, "that a man who means to work--to do great public services--MUST turn his back upon. I'm not discussing the rights or wrongs of this sort of thing. It happens to be the conditions we work under. It will probably always be so. If you want to experiment in that way, if you want even to discuss it,--out you go from political life. You must know that's so. . . . You're a strange man, Remington, with a kind of kink in you. You've a sort of force. You might happen to do immense things. . . . Only--"

He stopped. He had said all that he had forced himself to say.

"I mean to take myself as I am," I said. "I'm going to get experience for humanity out of all my talents--and bury nothing."

Willersley twisted his face to its humorous expression. "I doubt if sexual proclivities," he said drily, come within the scope of the parable."

I let that go for a little while. Then I broke out. "Sex!" said I, "is a fundamental thing in life. We went through all this at Trinity. I'm going to look at it, experience it, think about it-- and get it square with the rest of life. Career and Politics must take their chances of that. It's part of the general English slackness that they won't look this in the face. Gods! what a muffled time we're coming out of! Sex means breeding, and breeding is a necessary function in a nation. The Romans broke up upon that. The Americans fade out amidst their successes. Eugenics--"

"THAT wasn't Eugenics," said Willersley.

"It was a woman," I said after a little interval, feeling oddly that I had failed altogether to answer him, and yet had a strong dumb case against him.

BOOK THE SECOND

MARGARET

CHAPTER THE FIRST

MARGARET IN STAFFORDSHIRE

1

I must go back a little way with my story. In the previous book I have described the kind of education that happens to a man of my class nowadays, and it has been convenient to leap a phase in my experience that I must now set out at length. I want to tell in this second hook how I came to marry, and to do that I must give something of the atmosphere in which I first met my wife and some intimations of the forces that went to her making. I met her in Staffordshire while I was staying with that uncle of whom I have already spoken, the uncle who sold my father's houses and settled my mother in Penge. Margaret was twenty then and I was twenty-two.

It was just before the walking tour in Switzerland that opened up so much of the world to me. I saw her once, for an afternoon, and circumstances so threw her up in relief that I formed a very vivid memory of her. She was in the sharpest contrast with the industrial world about her; she impressed me as a dainty blue flower might do, come upon suddenly on a clinker heap. She remained in my mind at once a perplexing interrogation and a symbol. . . .

But first I must tell of my Staffordshire cousins and the world that served as a foil for her.

I first went to stay with my cousins when I was an awkward youth of sixteen, wearing deep mourning for my mother. My uncle wanted to talk things over with me, he said, and if he could, to persuade me to go into business instead of going up to Cambridge.

I remember that visit on account of all sorts of novel things, but chiefly, I think, because it was the first time I encountered anything that deserves to be spoken of as wealth. For the first time in my life I had to do with people who seemed to have endless supplies of money, unlimited good clothes, numerous servants; whose daily life was made up of things that I had hitherto considered to be treats or exceptional extravagances. My cousins of eighteen and nineteen took cabs, for instance, with the utmost freedom, and travelled first-class in the local trains that run up and down the district of the Five Towns with an entire unconsciousness of the magnificence, as it seemed to me, of such a proceeding.

The family occupied a large villa in Newcastle, with big lawns before it and behind, a shrubbery with quite a lot of shrubs, a coach house and stable, and subordinate dwelling-places for the gardener and the coachman. Every bedroom contained a gas heater and a canopied brass bedstead, and had a little bathroom attached equipped with the porcelain baths and fittings my uncle manufactured, bright and sanitary and stamped with his name, and the house was furnished throughout with chairs and tables in bright shining wood, soft and prevalently red Turkish carpets, cosy corners, curtained archways, gold-framed landscapes, overmantels, a dining-room sideboard like a palace with a large Tantalus, and electric light fittings of a gay and expensive quality. There was a fine billiard-room on the ground floor with three comfortable sofas

and a rotating bookcase containing an excellent collection of the English and American humorists from THREE MEN IN A BOAT to the penultimate Mark Twain. There was also a conservatory opening out of the dining-room, to which the gardener brought potted flowers in their season. . . .

My aunt was a little woman with a scared look and a cap that would get over one eye, not very like my mother, and nearly eight years her junior; she was very much concerned with keeping everything nice, and unmercifully bullied by my two cousins, who took after their father and followed the imaginations of their own hearts. They were tall, dark, warmly flushed girls handsome rather than pretty. Gertrude, the eldest and tallest, had eyes that were almost black; Sibyl was of a stouter build, and her eyes, of which she was shamelessly proud, were dark blue. Sibyl's hair waved, and Gertrude's was severely straight. They treated me on my first visit with all the contempt of the adolescent girl for a boy a little younger and infinitely less expert in the business of life than herself. They were very busy with the writings of notes and certain mysterious goings and comings of their own, and left me very much to my own devices. Their speech in my presence was full of unfathomable allusions. They were the sort of girls who will talk over and through an uninitiated stranger with the pleasantest sense of superiority.

I met them at breakfast and at lunch and at the half-past six o'clock high tea that formed the third chief meal of the day. I heard them rattling off the compositions of Chaminade and Moskowski, with great decision and effect, and hovered on the edge of tennis foursomes where it was manifest to the dullest intelligence that my presence was unnecessary. Then I went off to find some readable book in the place, but apart from miscellaneous popular novels, some veterinary works, a number of comic books, old bound volumes of THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS and a large, popular illustrated History of

England, there was very little to be found. My aunt talked to me in a casual feeble way, chiefly about my mother's last illness. The two had seen very little of each other for many years; she made no secret of it that the ineligible qualities of my father were the cause of the estrangement. The only other society in the house during the day was an old and rather decayed Skye terrier in constant conflict with what were no doubt imaginary fleas. I took myself off for a series of walks, and acquired a considerable knowledge of the scenery and topography of the Potteries.

It puzzled my aunt that I did not go westward, where it was countryside and often quite pretty, with hedgerows and fields and copses and flowers. But always I went eastward, where in a long valley industrialism smokes and sprawls. That was the stuff to which I turned by nature, to the human effort, and the accumulation and jar of men's activities. And in such a country as that valley social and economic relations were simple and manifest. Instead of the limitless confusion of London's population, in which no man can trace any but the most slender correlation between rich and poor, in which everyone seems disconnected and adrift from everyone, you can see here the works, the potbank or the ironworks or what not, and here close at hand the congested, meanly-housed workers, and at a little distance a small middle-class quarter, and again remoter, the big house of the employer. It was like a very simplified diagram--after the untraceable confusion of London.

I prowled alone, curious and interested, through shabby back streets of mean little homes; I followed canals, sometimes canals of mysteriously heated waters with ghostly wisps of steam rising against blackened walls or a distant prospect of dustbin-fed vegetable gardens, I saw the women pouring out from the potbanks, heard the hooters summoning the toilers to work, lost my way upon slag heaps as big as the hills of the south country, dodged trains at manifestly dangerous level crossings, and surveyed across dark intervening spaces, the flaming uproar, the gnome-like activities of

iron foundries. I heard talk of strikes and rumours of strikes, and learnt from the columns of some obscure labour paper I bought one day, of the horrors of the lead poisoning that was in those days one of the normal risks of certain sorts of pottery workers. Then back I came, by the ugly groaning and clanging steam tram of that period, to my uncle's house and lavish abundance of money and more or less furtive flirtations and the tinkle of Moskowski and Chaminade. It was, I say, diagrammatic. One saw the expropriator and the expropriated--as if Marx had arranged the picture. It was as jumbled and far more dingy and disastrous than any of the confusions of building and development that had surrounded my youth at Bromstead and Penge, but it had a novel quality of being explicable. I found great virtue in the word "exploitation."

There stuck in my mind as if it was symbolical of the whole thing the twisted figure of a man, whose face had been horribly scalded--I can't describe how, except that one eye was just expressionless white--and he ground at an organ bearing a card which told in weak and bitterly satirical phrasing that he had been scalded by the hot water from the tuyeres of the blast furnace of Lord Pandram's works. He had been scalded and quite inadequately compensated and dismissed. And Lord Pandram was worth half a million.

That upturned sightless white eye of his took possession of my imagination. I don't think that even then I was swayed by any crude melodramatic conception of injustice. I was quite prepared to believe the card wasn't a punctiliously accurate statement of fact, and that a case could be made out for Lord Pandram. Still there in the muddy gutter, painfully and dreadfully, was the man, and he was smashed and scalded and wretched, and he ground his dismal hurdygurdy with a weary arm, calling upon Heaven and the passer-by for help, for help and some sort of righting--one could not imagine quite what. There he was as a fact, as a by-product of the system that heaped my cousins with trinkets and provided the comic novels and the abundant cigars and spacious billiard-room of my uncle's

house. I couldn't disconnect him and them.

My uncle on his part did nothing to conceal the state of war that existed between himself and his workers, and the mingled contempt and animosity he felt from them.

3

Prosperity had overtaken my uncle. So quite naturally he believed that every man who was not as prosperous as he was had only himself to blame. He was rich and he had left school and gone into his father's business at fifteen, and that seemed to him the proper age at which everyone's education should terminate. He was very anxious to dissuade me from going up to Cambridge, and we argued intermittently through all my visit.

I had remembered him as a big and buoyant man, striding destructively about the nursery floor of my childhood, and saluting my existence by slaps, loud laughter, and questions about half herrings and half eggs subtly framed to puzzle and confuse my mind. I didn't see him for some years until my father's death, and then he seemed rather smaller, though still a fair size, yellow instead of red and much less radiantly aggressive. This altered effect was due not so much to my own changed perspectives, I fancy, as to the facts that he was suffering for continuous cigar smoking, and being taken in hand by his adolescent daughters who had just returned from school.

During my first visit there was a perpetual series of--the only word is rows, between them and him. Up to the age of fifteen or thereabouts, he had maintained his ascendancy over them by simple old-fashioned physical chastisement. Then after an interlude of a

year it had dawned upon them that power had mysteriously departed from him. He had tried stopping their pocket money, but they found their mother financially amenable; besides which it was fundamental to my uncle's attitude that he should give them money freely. Not to do so would seem like admitting a difficulty in making it. So that after he had stopped their allowances for the fourth time Sybil and Gertrude were prepared to face beggary without a qualm. It had been his pride to give them the largest allowance of any girls at the school, not even excepting the granddaughter of Fladden the Borax King, and his soul recoiled from this discipline as it had never recoiled from the ruder method of the earlier phase. Both girls had developed to a high pitch in their mutual recriminations a gift for damaging retort, and he found it an altogether deadlier thing than the power of the raised voice that had always cowed my aunt. Whenever he became heated with them, they frowned as if involuntarily, drew in their breath sharply, said: "Daddy, you really must not say --" and corrected his pronunciation. Then, at a great advantage, they resumed the discussion. . . .

My uncle's views about Cambridge, however, were perfectly clear and definite. It was waste of time and money. It was all damned foolery. Did they make a man a better business man? Not a bit of it. He gave instances. It spoilt a man for business by giving him "false ideas." Some men said that at college a man formed useful friendships. What use were friendships to a business man? He might get to know lords, but, as my uncle pointed out, a lord's requirements in his line of faience were little greater than a common man's. If college introduced him to hotel proprietors there might be something in it. Perhaps it helped a man into Parliament, Parliament still being a confused retrogressive corner in the world where lawyers and suchlike sheltered themselves from the onslaughts of common-sense behind a fog of Latin and Greek and twaddle and tosh; but I wasn't the sort to go into Parliament, unless I meant to be a lawyer. Did I mean to be a lawyer? It cost no end of money, and was full of uncertainties, and there were no judges nor great

solicitors among my relations. "Young chaps think they get on by themselves," said my uncle. It isn't so. Not unless they take their coats off. I took mine off before I was your age by nigh a year."

We were at cross purposes from the outset, because I did not think men lived to make money; and I was obtuse to the hints he was throwing out at the possibilities of his own potbank, not willfully obtuse, but just failing to penetrate his meaning. Whatever City Merchants had or had not done for me, Flack, Topham and old Gates had certainly barred my mistaking the profitable production and sale of lavatory basins and bathroom fittings for the highest good. It was only upon reflection that it dawned upon me that the splendid chance for a young fellow with my uncle, "me, having no son of my own," was anything but an illustration for comparison with my own chosen career.

I still remember very distinctly my uncle's talk,--he loved to speak "reet Staffordshire"--his rather flabby face with the mottled complexion that told of crude ill-regulated appetites, his clumsy gestures--he kept emphasising his points by prodding at me with his finger--the ill-worn, costly, grey tweed clothes, the watch chain of plain solid gold, and soft felt hat thrust back from his head. He tackled me first in the garden after lunch, and then tried to raise me to enthusiasm by taking me to his potbank and showing me its organisation, from the dusty grinding mills in which whitened men worked and coughed, through the highly ventilated glazing room in which strangely masked girls looked ashamed of themselves,--"They'll risk death, the fools, to show their faces to a man," said my uncle, quite audibly--to the firing kilns and the glazing kilns, and so round the whole place to the railway siding and the gratifying spectacle of three trucks laden with executed orders.

Then we went up a creaking outside staircase to his little office, and he showed off before me for a while, with one or two

subordinates and the telephone.

"None of your Gas," he said, "all this. It's Real every bit of it. Hard cash and hard glaze."

"Yes," I said, with memories of a carelessly read pamphlet in my mind, and without any satirical intention, "I suppose you MUST use lead in your glazes?"

Whereupon I found I had tapped the ruling grievance of my uncle's life. He hated leadless glazes more than he hated anything, except the benevolent people who had organised the agitation for their use. "Leadless glazes ain't only fit for buns," he said. "Let me tell you, my boy--"

He began in a voice of bland persuasiveness that presently warmed to anger, to explain the whole matter. I hadn't the rights of the matter at all. Firstly, there was practically no such thing as lead poisoning. Secondly, not everyone was liable to lead poisoning, and it would be quite easy to pick out the susceptible types--as soon as they had it--and put them to other work. Thirdly, the evil effects of lead poisoning were much exaggerated. Fourthly, and this was in a particularly confidential undertone, many of the people liked to get lead poisoning, especially the women, because it caused abortion. I might not believe it, but he knew it for a fact.

Fifthly, the work-people simply would not learn the gravity of the danger, and would eat with unwashed hands, and incur all sorts of risks, so that as my uncle put it: "the fools deserve what they get." Sixthly, he and several associated firms had organised a simple and generous insurance scheme against lead-poisoning risks. Seventhly, he never wearied in rational (as distinguished from excessive, futile and expensive) precautions against the disease. Eighthly, in the ill-equipped shops of his minor competitors lead poisoning was a frequent and virulent evil, and people had generalised from these exceptional cases. The small shops, he

hazarded, looking out of the cracked and dirty window at distant chimneys, might be advantageously closed. . . .

"But what's the good of talking?" said my uncle, getting off the table on which he had been sitting. "Seems to me there'll come a time when a master will get fined if he don't run round the works blowing his girls noses for them. That's about what it'll come to."

He walked to the black mantelpiece and stood on the threadbare rug, and urged me not to be misled by the stories of prejudiced and interested enemies of our national industries.

"They'll get a strike one of these days, of employers, and then we'll see a bit," he said. "They'll drive Capital abroad and then they'll whistle to get it back again." . . .

He led the way down the shaky wooden steps and cheered up to tell me of his way of checking his coal consumption. He exchanged a ferocious greeting with one or two workpeople, and so we came out of the factory gates into the ugly narrow streets, paved with a peculiarly hard diapered brick of an unpleasing inky-blue colour, and bordered with the mean and squalid homes of his workers. Doors stood open and showed grimy interiors, and dirty ill-clad children played in the kennel.

We passed a sickly-looking girl with a sallow face, who dragged her limbs and peered at us dimly with painful eyes. She stood back, as partly blinded people will do, to allow us to pass, although there was plenty of room for us.

I glanced back at her.

"THAT'S ploombism " said my uncle casually.

"What?" said I.

"Ploombism. And the other day I saw a fool of a girl, and what d'you think? She'd got a basin that hadn't been fired, a cracked piece of biscuit it was, up on the shelf over her head, just all over glaze, killing glaze, man, and she was putting up her hand if you please, and eating her dinner out of it. Got her dinner in it!

"Eating her dinner out of it," he repeated in loud and bitter tones, and punched me hard in the ribs.

"And then they comes to THAT--and grumbles. And the fools up in Westminster want you to put in fans here and fans there--the Longton fools have. . . . And then eating their dinners out of it all the time!" . . .

At high tea that night--my uncle was still holding out against evening dinner--Sibyl and Gertrude made what was evidently a concerted demand for a motorcar.

"You've got your mother's brougham," he said, that's good enough for you." But he seemed shaken by the fact that some Burslem rival was launching out with the new invention. "He spoils his girls," he remarked. "He's a fool," and became thoughtful.

Afterwards he asked me to come to him into his study; it was a room with a writing-desk and full of pieces of earthenware and suchlike litter, and we had our great row about Cambridge.

"Have you thought things over, Dick?" he said.

"I think I'll go to Trinity, Uncle," I said firmly. "I want to go to Trinity. It is a great college."

He was manifestly chagrined. "You're a fool," he said.

I made no answer.

"You're a damned fool," he said. "But I suppose you've got to do it. You could have come here--That don't matter, though, now. . . . You'll have your time and spend your money, and be a poor half-starved clergyman, mucking about with the women all the day and afraid to have one of your own ever, or you'll be a schoolmaster or some such fool for the rest of your life. Or some newspaper chap. That's what you'll get from Cambridge. I'm half a mind not to let you. Eh? More than half a mind. . . ."

"You've got to do the thing you can," he said, after a pause, "and likely it's what you're fitted for."

4

I paid several short visits to Staffordshire during my Cambridge days, and always these relations of mine produced the same effect of hardness. My uncle's thoughts had neither atmosphere nor mystery. He lived in a different universe from the dreams of scientific construction that filled my mind. He could as easily have understood Chinese poetry. His motives were made up of intense rivalries with other men of his class and kind, a few vindictive hates springing from real and fancied slights, a habit of acquisition that had become a second nature, a keen love both of efficiency and display in his own affairs. He seemed to me to have no sense of the state, no sense and much less any love of beauty, no charity and no sort of religious feeling whatever. He had strong bodily appetites, he ate and drank freely, smoked a great deal, and occasionally was carried off by his passions for a "bit of a spree" to Birmingham or Liverpool or Manchester. The indulgences of these occasions were usually followed by a period of reaction, when he was

urgent for the suppression of nudity in the local Art Gallery and a harsh and forcible elevation of the superficial morals of the valley. And he spoke of the ladies who ministered to the delights of his jolly-dog period, when he spoke of them at all, by the unprintable feminine equivalent. My aunt he treated with a kindly contempt and considerable financial generosity, but his daughters tore his heart; he was so proud of them, so glad to find them money to spend, so resolved to own them, so instinctively jealous of every man who came near them.

My uncle has been the clue to a great number of men for me. He was an illuminating extreme. I have learnt what not to expect from them through him, and to comprehend resentments and dangerous sudden antagonisms I should have found incomprehensible in their more complex forms, if I had not first seen them in him in their feral state.

With his soft felt hat at the back of his head, his rather heavy, rather mottled face, his rationally thick boots and slouching tweed-clad form, a little round-shouldered and very obstinate looking, he strolls through all my speculations sucking his teeth audibly, and occasionally throwing out a shrewd aphorism, the intractable unavoidable ore of the new civilisation.

Essentially he was simple. Generally speaking, he hated and despised in equal measure whatever seemed to suggest that he personally was not the most perfect human being conceivable. He hated all education after fifteen because he had had no education after fifteen, he hated all people who did not have high tea until he himself under duress gave up high tea, he hated every game except football, which he had played and could judge, he hated all people who spoke foreign languages because he knew no language but Staffordshire, he hated all foreigners because he was English, and all foreign ways because they were not his ways. Also he hated particularly, and in this order, Londoner's, Yorkshiremen, Scotch,

Welch and Irish, because they were not "reet Staffordshire," and he hated all other Staffordshire men as insufficiently "reet." He wanted to have all his own women inviolate, and to fancy he had a call upon every other woman in the world. He wanted to have the best cigars and the best brandy in the world to consume or give away magnificently, and every one else to have inferior ones. (His billiard table was an extra large size, specially made and very inconvenient.) And he hated Trade Unions because they interfered with his autocratic direction of his works, and his workpeople because they were not obedient and untiring mechanisms to do his bidding. He was, in fact, a very naive, vigorous human being. He was about as much civilised, about as much tamed to the ideas of collective action and mutual consideration as a Central African negro.

There are hordes of such men as he throughout all the modern industrial world. You will find the same type with the slightest modifications in the Pas de Calais or Rhenish Prussia or New Jersey or North Italy. No doubt you would find it in New Japan. These men have raised themselves up from the general mass of untrained, uncultured, poorish people in a hard industrious selfish struggle. To drive others they have had first to drive themselves. They have never yet had occasion nor leisure to think of the state or social life as a whole, and as for dreams or beauty, it was a condition of survival that they should ignore such cravings. All the distinctive qualities of my uncle can be thought of as dictated by his conditions; his success and harshness, the extravagances that expressed his pride in making money, the uncongenial luxury that sprang from rivalry, and his self-reliance, his contempt for broad views, his contempt for everything that he could not understand.

His daughters were the inevitable children of his life. Queer girls they were! Curiously "spirited" as people phrase it, and curiously limited. During my Cambridge days I went down to Staffordshire several times. My uncle, though he still resented my refusal to go

into his business, was also in his odd way proud of me. I was his nephew and poor relation, and yet there I was, a young gentleman learning all sorts of unremunerative things in the grandest manner, "Latin and mook," while the sons of his neighbours, not nephews merely, but sons, stayed unpolished in their native town. Every time I went down I found extensive changes and altered relations, and before I had settled down to them off I went again. I don't think I was one person to them; I was a series of visitors. There is a gulf of ages between a gaunt schoolboy of sixteen in unbecoming mourning and two vividly self-conscious girls of eighteen and nineteen, but a Cambridge "man" of two and twenty with a first and good tennis and a growing social experience, is a fair contemporary for two girls of twenty-three and twenty-four.

A motor-car appeared, I think in my second visit, a bottle-green affair that opened behind, had dark purple cushions, and was controlled mysteriously by a man in shiny black costume and a flat cap. The high tea had been shifted to seven and rechristened dinner, but my uncle would not dress nor consent to have wine; and after one painful experiment, I gathered, and a scene, he put his foot down and prohibited any but high-necked dresses.

"Daddy's perfectly impossible," Sybil told me.

The foot had descended vehemently! "My own daughters!" he had said, "dressed up like --" --and had arrested himself and fumbled and decided to say--"actresses, and showin' their fat arms for every fool to stare at!" Nor would he have any people invited to dinner. He didn't, he had explained, want strangers poking about in his house when he came home tired. So such calling as occurred went on during his absence in the afternoon.

One of the peculiarities of the life of these ascendant families of the industrial class to which wealth has come, is its tremendous insulations. There were no customs of intercourse in the Five

Towns. All the isolated prosperities of the district sprang from economising, hard driven homes, in which there was neither time nor means for hospitality. Social intercourse centred very largely upon the church or chapel, and the chapels were better at bringing people together than the Establishment to which my cousins belonged. Their chief outlet to the wider world lay therefore through the acquaintances they had formed at school, and through two much less prosperous families of relations who lived at Longton and Hanley. A number of gossiping friendships with old school mates were "kept up," and my cousins would "spend the afternoon" or even spend the day with these; such occasions led to other encounters and interlaced with the furtive correspondences and snatched meetings that formed the emotional thread of their lives. When the billiard table had been new, my uncle had taken to asking in a few approved friends for an occasional game, but mostly the billiard-room was for glory and the girls. Both of them played very well. They never, so far as I know, dined out, and when at last after bitter domestic conflicts they began to go to dances, they went with the quavering connivance of my aunt, and changed into ball frocks at friends' houses on the way. There was a tennis club that formed a convenient afternoon rendezvous, and I recall that in the period of my earlier visits the young bloods of the district found much satisfaction in taking girls for drives in dog-carts and suchlike high-wheeled vehicles, a disposition that died in tangled tandems at the apparition of motor-car's.

My aunt and uncle had conceived no plans in life for their daughters at all. In the undifferentiated industrial community from which they had sprung, girls got married somehow, and it did not occur to them that the concentration of property that had made them wealthy, had cut their children off from the general social sea in which their own awkward meeting had occurred, without necessarily opening any other world in exchange. My uncle was too much occupied with the works and his business affairs and his private vices to philosophise about his girls; he wanted them just to keep girls,

preferably about sixteen, and to be a sort of animated flowers and make home bright and be given things. He was irritated that they would not remain at this, and still more irritated that they failed to suppress altogether their natural interest in young men. The tandems would be steered by weird and devious routes to evade the bare chance of his bloodshot eye. My aunt seemed to have no ideas whatever about what was likely to happen to her children. She had indeed no ideas about anything; she took her husband and the days as they came.

I can see now the pathetic difficulty of my cousins' position in life; the absence of any guidance or instruction or provision for their development. They supplemented the silences of home by the conversation of schoolfellows and the suggestions of popular fiction. They had to make what they could out of life with such hints as these. The church was far too modest to offer them any advice. It was obtruded upon my mind upon my first visit that they were both carrying on correspondences and having little furtive passings and seeings and meetings with the mysterious owners of certain initials, S. and L. K., and, if I remember rightly, "the R. N." brothers and cousins, I suppose, of their friends. The same thing was going on, with a certain intensification, at my next visit, excepting only that the initials were different. But when I came again their methods were maturer or I was no longer a negligible quantity, and the notes and the initials were no longer flaunted quite so openly in my face.

My cousins had worked it out from the indications of their universe that the end of life is to have a "good time." They used the phrase. That and the drives in dog-carts were only the first of endless points of resemblance between them and the commoner sort of American girl. When some years ago I paid my first and only visit to America I seemed to recover my cousins' atmosphere as soon as I entered the train at Euston. There were three girls in my compartment supplied with huge decorated cases of sweets, and being

seen off by a company of friends, noisily arch and eager about the "steamer letters" they would get at Liverpool; they were the very soul-sisters of my cousins. The chief elements of a good time, as my cousins judged it, as these countless thousands of rich young women judge it, are a petty eventfulness, laughter, and to feel that you are looking well and attracting attention. Shopping is one of its leading joys. You buy things, clothes and trinkets for yourself and presents for your friends. Presents always seemed to be flying about in that circle; flowers and boxes of sweets were common currency. My cousins were always getting and giving, my uncle caressed them with parcels and cheques. They kissed him and he exuded sovereigns as a stroked APHIS exudes honey. It was like the new language of the Academy of Lagado to me, and I never learnt how to express myself in it, for nature and training make me feel encumbered to receive presents and embarrassed in giving them. But then, like my father, I hate and distrust possessions.

Of the quality of their private imagination I never learnt anything; I suppose it followed the lines of the fiction they read and was romantic and sentimental. So far as marriage went, the married state seemed at once very attractive and dreadfully serious to them, composed in equal measure of becoming important and becoming old. I don't know what they thought about children. I doubt if they thought about them at all. It was very secret if they did.

As for the poor and dingy people all about them, my cousins were always ready to take part in a Charitable Bazaar. They were unaware of any economic correlation of their own prosperity and that circumambient poverty, and they knew of Trade Unions simply as disagreeable external things that upset my uncle's temper. They knew of nothing wrong in social life at all except that there were "Agitators." It surprised them a little, I think, that Agitators were not more drastically put down. But they had a sort of instinctive dread of social discussion as of something that might breach the happiness of their ignorance. . . .

My cousins did more than illustrate Marx for me; they also undertook a stage of my emotional education. Their method in that as in everything else was extremely simple, but it took my inexperience by surprise.

It must have been on my third visit that Sybil took me in hand. Hitherto I seemed to have seen her only in profile, but now she became almost completely full face, manifestly regarded me with those violet eyes of hers. She passed me things I needed at breakfast--it was the first morning of my visit--before I asked for them.

When young men are looked at by pretty cousins, they become intensely aware of those cousins. It seemed to me that I had always admired Sybil's eyes very greatly, and that there was something in her temperament congenial to mine. It was odd I had not noted it on my previous visits.

We walked round the garden somewhen that morning, and talked about Cambridge. She asked quite a lot of questions about my work and my ambitions. She said she had always felt sure I was clever.

The conversation languished a little, and we picked some flowers for the house. Then she asked if I could run. I conceded her various starts and we raced up and down the middle garden path. Then, a little breathless, we went into the new twenty-five guinea summer-house at the end of the herbaceous border.

We sat side by side, pleasantly hidden from the house, and she

became anxious about her hair, which was slightly and prettily disarranged, and asked me to help her with the adjustment of a hairpin. I had never in my life been so near the soft curly hair and the dainty eyebrow and eyelid and warm soft cheek of a girl, and I was stirred--

It stirs me now to recall it.

I became a battleground of impulses and inhibitions.

"Thank you," said my cousin, and moved a little away from me.

She began to talk about friendship, and lost her thread and forgot the little electric stress between us in a rather meandering analysis of her principal girl friends.

But afterwards she resumed her purpose.

I went to bed that night with one proposition overshadowing everything else in my mind, namely, that kissing my cousin Sybil was a difficult, but not impossible, achievement. I do not recall any shadow of a doubt whether on the whole it was worth doing. The thing had come into my existence, disturbing and interrupting its flow exactly as a fever does. Sybil had infected me with herself.

The next day matters came to a crisis in the little upstairs sitting-room which had been assigned me as a study during my visit. I was working up there, or rather trying to work in spite of the outrageous capering of some very primitive elements in my brain, when she came up to me, under a transparent pretext of looking for a book.

I turned round and then got up at the sight of her. I quite forget what our conversation was about, but I know she led me to believe I might kiss her. Then when I attempted to do so she averted her

face.

"How COULD you?" she said; "I didn't mean that!"

That remained the state of our relations for two days. I developed a growing irritation with and resentment against cousin Sybil, combined with an intense desire to get that kiss for which I hungered and thirsted. Cousin Sybil went about in the happy persuasion that I was madly in love with her, and her game, so far as she was concerned, was played and won. It wasn't until I had fretted for two days that I realised that I was being used for the commonest form of excitement possible to a commonplace girl; that dozens perhaps of young men had played the part of Tantalus at cousin Sybil's lips. I walked about my room at nights, damning her and calling her by terms which on the whole she rather deserved, while Sybil went to sleep pitying "poor old Dick!"

"Damn it!" I said, "I WILL be equal with you."

But I never did equalise the disadvantage, and perhaps it's as well, for I fancy that sort of revenge cuts both people too much for a rational man to seek it. . . .

"Why are men so silly?" said cousin Sybil next morning, wriggling back with down-bent head to release herself from what should have been a compelling embrace.

"Confound it!" I said with a flash of clear vision. "You STARTED this game."

"Oh!"

She stood back against a hedge of roses, a little flushed and excited and interested, and ready for the delightful defensive if I should renew my attack.

"Beastly hot for scuffling," I said, white with anger. "I don't know whether I'm so keen on kissing you, Sybil, after all. I just thought you wanted me to."

I could have whipped her, and my voice stung more than my words.

Our eyes met; a real hatred in hers leaping up to meet mine.

"Let's play tennis," I said, after a moment's pause.

"No," she answered shortly, "I'm going indoors."

"Very well."

And that ended the affair with Sybil.

I was still in the full glare of this disillusionment when Gertrude awoke from some preoccupation to an interest in my existence. She developed a disposition to touch my hand by accident, and let her fingers rest in contact with it for a moment,--she had pleasant soft hands;--she began to drift into summer houses with me, to let her arm rest trustfully against mine, to ask questions about Cambridge. They were much the same questions that Sybil had asked. But I controlled myself and maintained a profile of intelligent and entirely civil indifference to her blandishments.

What Gertrude made of it came out one evening in some talk--I forget about what--with Sybil.

"Oh, Dick!" said Gertrude a little impatiently, "Dick's Pi."

And I never disillusioned her by any subsequent levity from this theory of my innate and virginal piety.

It was against this harsh and crude Staffordshire background that I think I must have seen Margaret for the first time. I say I think because it is quite possible that we had passed each other in the streets of Cambridge, no doubt with that affectation of mutual disregard which was once customary between undergraduates and Newnham girls. But if that was so I had noted nothing of the slender graciousness that shone out so pleasingly against the bleaker midland surroundings.

She was a younger schoolfellow of my cousins', and the step-daughter of Seddon, a prominent solicitor of Burslem. She was not only not in my cousins' generation but not in their set, she was one of a small hardworking group who kept immaculate note-books, and did as much as is humanly possible of that insensate pile of written work that the Girls' Public School movement has inflicted upon school-girls. She really learnt French and German admirably and thoroughly, she got as far in mathematics as an unflinching industry can carry any one with no great natural aptitude, and she went up to Bennett Hall, Newnham, after the usual conflict with her family, to work for the History Tripos.

There in her third year she made herself thoroughly ill through overwork, so ill that she had to give up Newnham altogether and go abroad with her stepmother. She made herself ill, as so many girls do in those university colleges, through the badness of her home and school training. She thought study must needs be a hard straining of the mind. She worried her work, she gave herself no leisure to see it as a whole, she felt herself not making headway and she cut her games and exercise in order to increase her hours of toil, and worked into the night. She carried a knack of laborious

thoroughness into the blind alleys and inessentials of her subject. It didn't need the badness of the food for which Bennett Hall is celebrated and the remarkable dietary of nocturnal cocoa, cakes and soft biscuits with which the girls have supplemented it, to ensure her collapse. Her mother brought her home, fretting and distressed, and then finding her hopelessly unhappy at home, took her and her half-brother, a rather ailing youngster of ten who died three years later, for a journey to Italy.

Italy did much to assuage Margaret's chagrin. I think all three of them had a very good time there. At home Mr. Seddon, her step-father, played the part of a well-meaning blight by reason of the moods that arose from nervous dyspepsia. They went to Florence, equipped with various introductions and much sound advice from sympathetic Cambridge friends, and having acquired an ease in Italy there, went on to Siena, Orvieto, and at last Rome. They returned, if I remember rightly, by Pisa, Genoa, Milan and Paris. Six months or more they had had abroad, and now Margaret was back in Burslem, in health again and consciously a very civilised person.

New ideas were abroad, it was Maytime and a spring of abundant flowers--daffodils were particularly good that year--and Mrs. Seddon celebrated her return by giving an afternoon reception at short notice, with the clear intention of letting every one out into the garden if the weather held.

The Seddons had a big old farmhouse modified to modern ideas of comfort on the road out towards Misterton, with an orchard that had been rather pleasantly subdued from use to ornament. It had rich blossoming cherry and apple trees. Large patches of grass full of nodding yellow trumpets had been left amidst the not too precisely mown grass, which was as it were grass path with an occasional lapse into lawn or glade. And Margaret, hatless, with the fair hair above her thin, delicately pink face very simply done, came to meet our rather too consciously dressed party,--we had come in the motor four

strong, with my aunt in grey silk. Margaret wore a soft flowing flowered blue dress of diaphanous material, all unconnected with the fashion and tied with pretty ribbons, like a slenderer, unbountiful Primavera.

It was one of those May days that ape the light and heat of summer, and I remember disconnectedly quite a number of brightly lit figures and groups walking about, and a white gate between orchard and garden and a large lawn with an oak tree and a red Georgian house with a verandah and open French windows, through which the tea drinking had come out upon the moss-edged flagstones even as Mrs. Seddon had planned.

The party was almost entirely feminine except for a little curate with a large head, a good voice and a radiant manner, who was obviously attracted by Margaret, and two or three young husbands still sufficiently addicted to their wives to accompany them. One of them I recall as a quite romantic figure with abundant blond curly hair on which was poised a grey felt hat encircled by a refined black band. He wore, moreover, a loose rich shot silk tie of red and purple, a long frock coat, grey trousers and brown shoes, and presently he removed his hat and carried it in one hand. There were two tennis-playing youths besides myself. There was also one father with three daughters in anxious control, a father of the old school scarcely half broken in, reluctant, rebellious and consciously and conscientiously "reet Staffordshire." The daughters were all alert to suppress the possible plungings, the undesirable humorous impulses of this almost feral guest. They nipped his very gestures in the bud. The rest of the people were mainly mothers with daughters--daughters of all ages, and a scattering of aunts, and there was a tendency to clotting, parties kept together and regarded parties suspiciously. Mr. Seddon was in hiding, I think, all the time, though not formally absent.

Matters centred upon the tea in the long room of the French windows,

where four trim maids went to and fro busily between the house and the clumps of people seated or standing before it; and tennis and croquet were intermittently visible and audible beyond a bank of rockwork rich with the spikes and cups and bells of high spring.

Mrs. Seddon presided at the tea urn, and Margaret partly assisted and partly talked to me and my cousin Sibyl--Gertrude had found a disused and faded initial and was partnering him at tennis in a state of gentle revival--while their mother exercised a divided chaperonage from a seat near Mrs. Seddon. The little curate, stirring a partially empty cup of tea, mingled with our party, and preluded, I remember, every observation he made by a vigorous resumption of stirring.

We talked of Cambridge, and Margaret kept us to it. The curate was a Selwyn man and had taken a pass degree in theology, but Margaret had come to Gaylord's lecturers in Trinity for a term before her breakdown, and understood these differences. She had the eagerness of an exile to hear the old familiar names of places and personalities. We capped familiar anecdotes and were enthusiastic about Kings' Chapel and the Backs, and the curate, addressing himself more particularly to Sibyl, told a long confused story illustrative of his disposition to reckless devilry (of a pure-minded kindly sort) about upsetting two canoes quite needlessly on the way to Grantchester.

I can still see Margaret as I saw her that afternoon, see her fresh fair face, with the little obliquity of the upper lip, and her brow always slightly knitted, and her manner as of one breathlessly shy but determined. She had rather open blue eyes, and she spoke in an even musical voice with the gentlest of stresses and the ghost of a lisp. And it was true, she gathered, that Cambridge still existed. "I went to Grantchester," she said, "last year, and had tea under the apple-blossom. I didn't think then I should have to come down." (It was that started the curate upon his anecdote.)

"I've seen a lot of pictures, and learnt a lot about them--at the Pitti and the Brera,--the Brera is wonderful--wonderful places,--but it isn't like real study," she was saying presently. . . . "We bought bales of photographs," she said.

I thought the bales a little out of keeping.

But fair-haired and quite simply and yet graciously and fancifully dressed, talking of art and beautiful things and a beautiful land, and with so much manifest regret for learning denied, she seemed a different kind of being altogether from my smart, hard, high-coloured, black-haired and resolutely hatted cousin; she seemed translucent beside Gertrude. Even the little twist and droop of her slender body was a grace to me.

I liked her from the moment I saw her, and set myself to interest and please her as well as I knew how.

We recalled a case of ragging that had rustled the shrubs of Newnham, and then Chris Robinson's visit--he had given a talk to Bennett Hall also--and our impression of him.

"He disappointed me, too," said Margaret.

I was moved to tell Margaret something of my own views in the matter of social progress, and she listened--oh! with a kind of urged attention, and her brow a little more knitted, very earnestly. The little curate desisted from the appendices and refuse heaps and general debris of his story, and made himself look very alert and intelligent.

"We did a lot of that when I was up in the eighties," he said. "I'm glad Imperialism hasn't swamped you fellows altogether."

Gertrude, looking bright and confident, came to join our talk from the shrubbery; the initial, a little flushed and evidently in a state of refreshed relationship, came with her, and a cheerful lady in pink and more particularly distinguished by a pink bonnet joined our little group. Gertrude had been sipping admiration and was not disposed to play a passive part in the talk.

"Socialism!" she cried, catching the word. "It's well Pa isn't here. He has Fits when people talk of socialism. Fits!"

The initial laughed in a general kind of way.

The curate said there was socialism AND socialism, and looked at Margaret to gauge whether he had been too bold in this utterance. But she was all, he perceived, for broad-mindedness, and he stirred himself (and incidentally his tea) to still more liberality of expression. He said the state of the poor was appalling, simply appalling; that there were times when he wanted to shatter the whole system, "only," he said, turning to me appealingly, "What have we got to put in its place?"

"The thing that exists is always the more evident alternative," I said.

The little curate looked at it for a moment. "Precisely," he said explosively, and turned stirring and with his head a little on one side, to hear what Margaret was saying.

Margaret was saying, with a swift blush and an effect of daring, that she had no doubt she was a socialist.

"And wearing a gold chain!" said Gertrude, "And drinking out of eggshell! I like that!"

I came to Margaret's rescue. "It doesn't follow that because one's

a socialist one ought to dress in sackcloth and ashes."

The initial coloured deeply, and having secured my attention by prodding me slightly with the wrist of the hand that held his teacup, cleared his throat and suggested that "one ought to be consistent."

I perceived we were embarked upon a discussion of the elements. We began an interesting little wrangle one of those crude discussions of general ideas that are dear to the heart of youth. I and Margaret supported one another as socialists, Gertrude and Sybil and the initial maintained an anti-socialist position, the curate attempted a cross-bench position with an air of intending to come down upon us presently with a casting vote. He reminded us of a number of useful principles too often overlooked in argument, that in a big question like this there was much to be said on both sides, that if every one did his or her duty to every one about them there would be no difficulty with social problems at all, that over and above all enactments we needed moral changes in people themselves. My cousin Gertrude was a difficult controversialist to manage, being unconscious of inconsistency in statement and absolutely impervious to reply. Her standpoint was essentially materialistic; she didn't see why she shouldn't have a good time because other people didn't; they would have a good time, she was sure, if she didn't. She said that if we did give up everything we had to other people, they wouldn't very likely know what to do with it. She asked if we were so fond of work-people, why we didn't go and live among them, and expressed the inflexible persuasion that if we HAD socialism, everything would be just the same again in ten years' time. She also threw upon us the imputation of ingratitude for a beautiful world by saying that so far as she was concerned she didn't want to upset everything. She was contented with things as they were, thank you.

The discussion led in some way that I don't in the least recall now,

and possibly by abrupt transitions, to a croquet foursome in which Margaret involved the curate without involving herself, and then stood beside me on the edge of the lawn while the others played. We watched silently for a moment.

"I HATE that sort of view," she said suddenly in a confidential undertone, with her delicate pink flush returning.

"It's want of imagination," I said.

"To think we are just to enjoy ourselves," she went on; "just to go on dressing and playing and having meals and spending money!" She seemed to be referring not simply to my cousins, but to the whole world of industry and property about us. "But what is one to do?" she asked. "I do wish I had not had to come down. It's all so pointless here. There seems to be nothing going forward, no ideas, no dreams. No one here seems to feel quite what I feel, the sort of need there is for MEANING in things. I hate things without meaning."

"Don't you do--local work?"

"I suppose I shall. I suppose I must find something. Do you think--if one were to attempt some sort of propaganda?"

"Could you--?" I began a little doubtfully.

"I suppose I couldn't," she answered, after a thoughtful moment. "I suppose it would come to nothing. And yet I feel there is so much to be done for the world, so much one ought to be doing. . . . I want to do something for the world."

I can see her now as she stood there with her brows nearly frowning, her blue eyes looking before her, her mouth almost petulant. "One feels that there are so many things going on--out of one's reach,"

she said.

I went back in the motor-car with my mind full of her, the quality of delicate discontent, the suggestion of exile. Even a kind of weakness in her was sympathetic. She told tremendously against her background. She was, I say, like a protesting blue flower upon a cinder heap. It is curious, too, how she connects and mingles with the furious quarrel I had with my uncle that very evening. That came absurdly. Indirectly Margaret was responsible. My mind was running on ideas she had revived and questions she had set clamouring, and quite inadvertently in my attempt to find solutions I talked so as to outrage his profoundest feelings. . . .

7

What a preposterous shindy that was!

I sat with him in the smoking-room, propounding what I considered to be the most indisputable and non-contentious propositions conceivable--until, to my infinite amazement, he exploded and called me a "damned young puppy."

It was seismic.

"Tremendously interesting time," I said, "just in the beginning of making a civilisation."

"Ah!" he said, with an averted face, and nodded, leaning forward over his cigar.

I had not the remotest thought of annoying him.

"Monstrous muddle of things we have got," I said, "jumbled streets, ugly population, ugly factories--"

"You'd do a sight better if you had to do with it," said my uncle, regarding me askance.

"Not me. But a world that had a collective plan and knew where it meant to be going would do a sight better, anyhow. We're all swimming in a flood of ill-calculated chances--"

"You'll be making out I organised that business down there--by chance--next," said my uncle, his voice thick with challenge.

I went on as though I was back in Trinity.

"There's a lot of chance in the making of all great businesses," I said.

My uncle remarked that that showed how much I knew about businesses. If chance made businesses, why was it that he always succeeded and grew while those fools Ackroyd and Sons always took second place? He showed a disposition to tell the glorious history of how once Ackroyd's overshadowed him, and how now he could buy up Ackroyd's three times over. But I wanted to get out what was in my mind.

"Oh!" I said, "as between man and man and business and business, some of course get the pull by this quality or that--but it's forces quite outside the individual case that make the big part of any success under modern conditions. YOU never invented pottery, nor any process in pottery that matters a rap in your works; it wasn't YOUR foresight that joined all England up with railways and made it possible to organise production on an altogether different scale. You really at the utmost can't take credit for much more than being the sort of man who happened to fit what happened to be the requirements of the time, and who happened to be in a position to

take advantage of them--"

It was then my uncle cried out and called me a damned young puppy, and became involved in some unexpected trouble of his own.

I woke up as it were from my analysis of the situation to discover him bent over a splendid spittoon, cursing incoherently, retching a little, and spitting out the end of his cigar which he had bitten off in his last attempt at self-control, and withal fully prepared as soon as he had cleared for action to give me just all that he considered to be the contents of his mind upon the condition of mine.

Well, why shouldn't I talk my mind to him? He'd never had an outside view of himself for years, and I resolved to stand up to him. We went at it hammer and tongs! It became clear that he supposed me to be a Socialist, a zealous, embittered hater of all ownership--and also an educated man of the vilest, most pretentiously superior description. His principal grievance was that I thought I knew everything; so that he recurred again and again. . . .

We had been maintaining an armed truce with each other since my resolve to go up to Cambridge, and now we had out all that had accumulated between us. There had been stupendous accumulations. . . .

The particular things we said and did in that bawling encounter matter nothing at all in this story. I can't now estimate how near we came to fisticuffs. It ended with my saying, after a pungent reminder of benefits conferred and remembered, that I didn't want to stay another hour in his house. I went upstairs, in a state of puerile fury, to pack and go off to the Railway Hotel, while he, with ironical civility, telephoned for a cab.

"Good riddance!" shouted my uncle, seeing me off into the night.

On the face of it our row was preposterous, but the underlying reality of our quarrel was the essential antagonism, it seemed to me, in all human affairs, the antagonism between ideas and the established method, that is to say, between ideas and the rule of thumb. The world I hate is the rule-of-thumb world, the thing I and my kind of people exist for primarily is to battle with that, to annoy it, disarrange it, reconstruct it. We question everything, disturb anything that cannot give a clear justification to our questioning, because we believe inherently that our sense of disorder implies the possibility of a better order. Of course we are detestable. My uncle was of that other vaster mass who accept everything for the thing it seems to be, hate enquiry and analysis as a tramp hates washing, dread and resist change, oppose experiment, despise science. The world is our battleground; and all history, all literature that matters, all science, deals with this conflict of the thing that is and the speculative "if" that will destroy it.

But that is why I did not see Margaret Seddon again for five years.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

MARGARET IN LONDON

1

I was twenty-seven when I met Margaret again, and the intervening five years had been years of vigorous activity for me, if not of very remarkable growth. When I saw her again, I could count myself a grown man. I think, indeed, I counted myself more completely grown than I was. At any rate, by all ordinary standards, I had "got on" very well, and my ideas, if they had not changed very greatly, had become much more definite and my ambitions clearer and bolder.

I had long since abandoned my fellowship and come to London. I had published two books that had been talked about, written several articles, and established a regular relationship with the WEEKLY REVIEW and the EVENING GAZETTE. I was a member of the Eighty Club

and learning to adapt the style of the Cambridge Union to larger uses. The London world had opened out to me very readily. I had developed a pleasant variety of social connections. I had made the acquaintance of Mr. Evesham, who had been attracted by my NEW RULER,

and who talked about it and me, and so did a very great deal to make a way for me into the company of prominent and amusing people. I dined out quite frequently. The glitter and interest of good London dinner parties became a common experience. I liked the sort of conversation one got at them extremely, the little glow of duologues burning up into more general discussions, the closing-in of the men after the going of the women, the sage, substantial masculine

gossiping, the later resumption of effective talk with some pleasant woman, graciously at her best. I had a wide range of houses; Cambridge had linked me to one or two correlated sets of artistic and literary people, and my books and Mr. Evesham and opened to me the big vague world of "society." I wasn't aggressive nor particularly snobbish nor troublesome, sometimes I talked well, and if I had nothing interesting to say I said as little as possible, and I had a youthful gravity of manner that was liked by hostesses. And the other side of my nature that first flared through the cover of restraints at Locarno, that too had had opportunity to develop along the line London renders practicable. I had had my experiences and secrets and adventures among that fringe of ill-mated or erratic or discredited women the London world possesses. The thing had long ago ceased to be a matter of magic or mystery, and had become a question of appetites and excitement, and among other things the excitement of not being found out.

I write rather doubtfully of my growing during this period. Indeed I find it hard to judge whether I can say that I grew at all in any real sense of the word, between three and twenty and twenty-seven. It seems to me now to have been rather a phase of realisation and clarification. All the broad lines of my thought were laid down, I am sure, by the date of my Locarno adventure, but in those five years I discussed things over and over again with myself and others, filled out with concrete fact forms I had at first apprehended sketchily and conversationally, measured my powers against my ideals and the forces in the world about me. It was evident that many men no better than myself and with no greater advantages than mine had raised themselves to influential and even decisive positions in the worlds of politics and thought. I was gathering the confidence and knowledge necessary to attack the world in the large manner; I found I could write, and that people would let me write if I chose, as one having authority and not as the scribes. Socially and politically and intellectually I knew myself for an honest man, and that quite without any deliberation on my part this showed and made things easy

for me. People trusted my good faith from the beginning--for all that I came from nowhere and had no better position than any adventurer.

But the growth process was arrested, I was nothing bigger at twenty-seven than at twenty-two, however much saner and stronger, and any one looking closely into my mind during that period might well have imagined growth finished altogether. It is particularly evident to me now that I came no nearer to any understanding of women during that time. That Locarno affair was infinitely more to me than I had supposed. It ended something--nipped something in the bud perhaps--took me at a stride from a vague, fine, ignorant, closed world of emotion to intrigue and a perfectly definite and limited sensuality. It ended my youth, and for a time it prevented my manhood. I had never yet even peeped at the sweetest, profoundest thing in the world, the heart and meaning of a girl, or dreamt with any quality of reality of a wife or any such thing as a friend among womanhood. My vague anticipation of such things in life had vanished altogether. I turned away from their possibility. It seemed to me I knew what had to be known about womankind. I wanted to work hard, to get on to a position in which I could develop and forward my constructive projects. Women, I thought, had nothing to do with that. It seemed clear I could not marry for some years; I was attractive to certain types of women, I had vanity enough to give me an agreeable confidence in love-making, and I went about seeking a convenient mistress quite deliberately, some one who should serve my purpose and say in the end, like that kindly first mistress of mine, "I've done you no harm," and so release me. It seemed the only wise way of disposing of urgencies that might otherwise entangle and wreck the career I was intent upon.

I don't apologise for, or defend my mental and moral phases. So it was I appraised life and prepared to take it, and so it is a thousand ambitious men see it to-day. . . .

For the rest these five years were a period of definition. My political conceptions were perfectly plain and honest. I had one constant desire ruling my thoughts. I meant to leave England and the empire better ordered than I found it, to organise and discipline, to build up a constructive and controlling State out of my world's confusions. We had, I saw, to suffuse education with public intention, to develop a new better-living generation with a collectivist habit of thought, to link now chaotic activities in every human affair, and particularly to catch that escaped, world-making, world-ruining, dangerous thing, industrial and financial enterprise, and bring it back to the service of the general good. I had then the precise image that still serves me as a symbol for all I wish to bring about, the image of an engineer building a lock in a swelling torrent--with water pressure as his only source of power. My thoughts and acts were habitually turned to that enterprise; it gave shape and direction to all my life. The problem that most engaged my mind during those years was the practical and personal problem of just where to apply myself to serve this almost innate purpose. How was I, a child of this confusion, struggling upward through the confusion, to take hold of things? Somewhere between politics and literature my grip must needs be found, but where? Always I seem to have been looking for that in those opening years, and disregarding everything else to discover it.

2

The Baileys, under whose auspices I met Margaret again, were in the sharpest contrast with the narrow industrialism of the Staffordshire world. They were indeed at the other extreme of the scale, two active self-centred people, excessively devoted to the public service. It was natural I should gravitate to them, for they seemed to stand for the maturer, more disciplined, better informed

expression of all I was then urgent to attempt to do. The bulk of their friends were politicians or public officials, they described themselves as publicists--a vague yet sufficiently significant term. They lived and worked in a hard little house in Chambers Street, Westminster, and made a centre for quite an astonishing amount of political and social activity.

Willersley took me there one evening. The place was almost pretentiously matter-of-fact and unassuming. The narrow passage-hall, papered with some ancient yellowish paper, grained to imitate wood, was choked with hats and cloaks and an occasional feminine wrap. Motioned rather than announced by a tall Scotch servant woman, the only domestic I ever remember seeing there, we made our way up a narrow staircase past the open door of a small study packed with blue-books, to discover Altiora Bailey receiving before the fireplace in her drawing-room. She was a tall commanding figure, splendid but a little untidy in black silk and red beads, with dark eyes that had no depths, with a clear hard voice that had an almost visible prominence, aquiline features and straight black hair that was apt to get astray, that was now astray like the head feathers of an eagle in a gale. She stood with her hands behind her back, and talked in a high tenor of a projected Town Planning Bill with Blupp, who was practically in those days the secretary of the local Government Board. A very short broad man with thick ears and fat white hands writhing intertwined behind him, stood with his back to us, eager to bark interruptions into Altiora's discourse. A slender girl in pale blue, manifestly a young political wife, stood with one foot on the fender listening with an expression of entirely puzzled propitiation. A tall sandy-bearded bishop with the expression of a man in a trance completed this central group.

The room was one of those long apartments once divided by folding doors, and reaching from back to front, that are common upon the first floors of London houses. Its walls were hung with two or three indifferent water colours, there was scarcely any furniture

but a sofa or so and a chair, and the floor, severely carpeted with matting, was crowded with a curious medley of people, men predominating. Several were in evening dress, but most had the morning garb of the politician; the women were either severely rational or radiantly magnificent. Willersley pointed out to me the wife of the Secretary of State for War, and I recognised the Duchess of Clynes, who at that time cultivated intellectuality. I looked round, identifying a face here or there, and stepping back trod on some one's toe, and turned to find it belonged to the Right Hon. G. B. Mottisham, dear to the PUNCH caricaturists. He received my apology with that intentional charm that is one of his most delightful traits, and resumed his discussion. Beside him was Esmeer of Trinity, whom I had not seen since my Cambridge days. . . .

Willersley found an ex-member of the School Board for whom he had affinities, and left me to exchange experiences and comments upon the company with Esmeer. Esmeer was still a don; but he was nibbling, he said, at certain negotiations with the TIMES that might bring him down to London. He wanted to come to London. "We peep at things from Cambridge," he said.

"This sort of thing," I said, "makes London necessary. It's the oddest gathering."

"Every one comes here," said Esmeer. "Mostly we hate them like poison--jealousy--and little irritations--Altiora can be a horror at times--but we HAVE to come."

"Things are being done?"

"Oh!--no doubt of it. It's one of the parts of the British machinery--that doesn't show. . . . But nobody else could do it.

"Two people," said Esmeer, "who've planned to be a power--in an original way. And by Jove! they've done it!"

I did not for some time pick out Oscar Bailey, and then Esmeer showed him to me in elaborately confidential talk in a corner with a distinguished-looking stranger wearing a ribbon. Oscar had none of the fine appearance of his wife; he was a short sturdy figure with a rounded protruding abdomen and a curious broad, flattened, clean-shaven face that seemed nearly all forehead. He was of Anglo-Hungarian extraction, and I have always fancied something Mongolian in his type. He peered up with reddish swollen-looking eyes over gilt-edged glasses that were divided horizontally into portions of different refractive power, and he talked in an ingratiating undertone, with busy thin lips, an eager lisp and nervous movements of the hand.

People say that thirty years before at Oxford he was almost exactly the same eager, clever little man he was when I first met him. He had come up to Balliol bristling with extraordinary degrees and prizes captured in provincial and Irish and Scotch universities--and had made a name for himself as the most formidable dealer in exact fact the rhetoricians of the Union had ever had to encounter. From Oxford he had gone on to a position in the Higher Division of the Civil Service, I think in the War Office, and had speedily made a place for himself as a political journalist. He was a particularly neat controversialist, and very full of political and sociological ideas. He had a quite astounding memory for facts and a mastery of detailed analysis, and the time afforded scope for these gifts. The later eighties were full of politico-social discussion, and he became a prominent name upon the contents list of the NINETEENTH CENTURY, the FORTNIGHTLY and CONTEMPORARY chiefly as a half sympathetic but frequently very damaging critic of the socialism of that period. He won the immense respect of every one specially interested in social and political questions, he soon achieved the limited distinction that is awarded such capacity, and at that I think he would have remained for the rest of his life if

he had not encountered Altiora.

But Altiora Macvitie was an altogether exceptional woman, an extraordinary mixture of qualities, the one woman in the world who could make something more out of Bailey than that. She had much of the vigour and handsomeness of a slender impudent young man, and an unscrupulousness altogether feminine. She was one of those women who are waiting in--what is the word?--muliebrity. She had courage and initiative and a philosophical way of handling questions, and she could be bored by regular work like a man. She was entirely unfitted for her sex's sphere. She was neither uncertain, coy nor hard to please, and altogether too stimulating and aggressive for any gentleman's hours of ease. Her cookery would have been about as sketchy as her handwriting, which was generally quite illegible, and she would have made, I feel sure, a shocking bad nurse. Yet you mustn't imagine she was an inelegant or unbeautiful woman, and she is inconceivable to me in high collars or any sort of masculine garment. But her soul was bony, and at the base of her was a vanity gaunt and greedy! When she wasn't in a state of personal untidiness that was partly a protest against the waste of hours exacted by the toilet and partly a natural disinclination, she had a gypsy splendour of black and red and silver all her own. And somewhen in the early nineties she met and married Bailey.

I know very little about her early years. She was the only daughter of Sir Deighton Macvitie, who applied the iodoform process to cotton, and only his subsequent unfortunate attempts to become a Cotton King prevented her being a very rich woman. As it was she had a tolerable independence. She came into prominence as one of the more able of the little shoal of young women who were led into politico-philanthropic activities by the influence of the earlier novels of Mrs. Humphry Ward--the Marcella crop. She went "slumming" with distinguished vigour, which was quite usual in those days--and returned from her experiences as an amateur flower girl with clear and original views about the problem--which is and always

had been unusual. She had not married, I suppose because her standards were high, and men are cowards and with an instinctive appetite for muliebrity. She had kept house for her father by speaking occasionally to the housekeeper, butler and cook her mother had left her, and gathering the most interesting dinner parties she could, and had married off four orphan nieces in a harsh and successful manner. After her father's smash and death she came out as a writer upon social questions and a scathing critic of the Charity Organisation Society, and she was three and thirty and a little at loose ends when she met Oscar Bailey, so to speak, in the CONTEMPORARY REVIEW. The lurking woman in her nature was fascinated

by the ease and precision with which the little man rolled over all sorts of important and authoritative people, she was the first to discover a sort of imaginative bigness in his still growing mind, the forehead perhaps carried him off physically, and she took occasion to meet and subjugate him, and, so soon as he had sufficiently recovered from his abject humility and a certain panic at her attentions, marry him.

This had opened a new phase in the lives of Bailey and herself. The two supplemented each other to an extraordinary extent. Their subsequent career was, I think, almost entirely her invention. She was aggressive, imaginative, and had a great capacity for ideas, while he was almost destitute of initiative, and could do nothing with ideas except remember and discuss them. She was, if not exact, at least indolent, with a strong disposition to save energy by sketching--even her handwriting showed that--while he was inexhaustibly industrious with a relentless invariable caligraphy that grew larger and clearer as the years passed by. She had a considerable power of charming; she could be just as nice to people--and incidentally just as nasty--as she wanted to be. He was always just the same, a little confidential and SOTTO VOCE, artlessly rude and egoistic in an undignified way. She had considerable social experience, good social connections, and considerable social

ambition, while he had none of these things. She saw in a flash her opportunity to redeem his defects, use his powers, and do large, novel, rather startling things. She ran him. Her marriage, which shocked her friends and relations beyond measure--for a time they would only speak of Bailey as "that gnome"--was a stroke of genius, and forthwith they proceeded to make themselves the most formidable and distinguished couple conceivable. P. B. P., she boasted, was engraved inside their wedding rings, Pro Bono Publico, and she meant it to be no idle threat. She had discovered very early that the last thing influential people will do is to work. Everything in their lives tends to make them dependent upon a supply of confidently administered detail. Their business is with the window and not the stock behind, and in the end they are dependent upon the stock behind for what goes into the window. She linked with that the fact that Bailey had a mind as orderly as a museum, and an invincible power over detail. She saw that if two people took the necessary pains to know the facts of government and administration with precision, to gather together knowledge that was dispersed and confused, to be able to say precisely what had to be done and what avoided in this eventuality or that, they would necessarily become a centre of reference for all sorts of legislative proposals and political expedients, and she went unhesitatingly upon that.

Bailey, under her vigorous direction, threw up his post in the Civil Service and abandoned sporadic controversies, and they devoted themselves to the elaboration and realisation of this centre of public information she had conceived as their role. They set out to study the methods and organisation and realities of government in the most elaborate manner. They did the work as no one had ever hitherto dreamt of doing it. They planned the research on a thoroughly satisfying scale, and arranged their lives almost entirely for it. They took that house in Chambers Street and furnished it with severe economy, they discovered that Scotch domestic who is destined to be the guardian and tyrant of their declining years, and they set to work. Their first book, "The

Permanent Official," fills three plump volumes, and took them and their two secretaries upwards of four years to do. It is an amazingly good book, an enduring achievement. In a hundred directions the history and the administrative treatment of the public service was clarified for all time. . . .

They worked regularly every morning from nine to twelve, they lunched lightly but severely, in the afternoon they "took exercise" or Bailey attended meetings of the London School Board, on which he served, he said, for the purposes of study--he also became a railway director for the same end. In the late afternoon Altiora was at home to various callers, and in the evening came dinner or a reception or both.

Her dinners and gatherings were a very important feature in their scheme. She got together all sorts of interesting people in or about the public service, she mixed the obscurely efficient with the ill-instructed famous and the rudderless rich, got together in one room more of the factors in our strange jumble of a public life than had ever met easily before. She fed them with a shameless austerity that kept the conversation brilliant, on a soup, a plain fish, and mutton or boiled fowl and milk pudding, with nothing to drink but whisky and soda, and hot and cold water, and milk and lemonade. Everybody was soon very glad indeed to come to that. She boasted how little her housekeeping cost her, and sought constantly for fresh economies that would enable her, she said, to sustain an additional private secretary. Secretaries were the Baileys' one extravagance, they loved to think of searches going on in the British Museum, and letters being cleared up and precis made overhead, while they sat in the little study and worked together, Bailey with a clockwork industry, and Altiora in splendid flashes between intervals of cigarettes and meditation. "All efficient public careers," said Altiora, "consist in the proper direction of secretaries."

"If everything goes well I shall have another secretary next year," Altiora told me. "I wish I could refuse people dinner napkins. Imagine what it means in washing! I dare most things. . . . But as it is, they stand a lot of hardship here."

"There's something of the miser in both these people," said Esmeer, and the thing was perfectly true. For, after all, the miser is nothing more than a man who either through want of imagination or want of suggestion misapplies to a base use a natural power of concentration upon one end. The concentration itself is neither good nor evil, but a power that can be used in either way. And the Baileys gathered and reinvested usuriously not money, but knowledge of the utmost value in human affairs. They produced an effect of having found themselves--completely. One envied them at times extraordinarily. I was attracted, I was dazzled--and at the same time there was something about Bailey's big wrinkled forehead, his lipping broad mouth, the gestures of his hands and an uncivil preoccupation I could not endure. . . .

3

Their effect upon me was from the outset very considerable.

Both of them found occasion on that first visit of mine to talk to me about my published writings and particularly about my then just published book THE NEW RULER, which had interested them very much.

It fell in indeed so closely with their own way of thinking that I doubt if they ever understood how independently I had arrived at my conclusions. It was their weakness to claim excessively. That irritation, however, came later. We discovered each other immensely; for a time it produced a tremendous sense of kindred and

cooperation.

Altiora, I remember, maintained that there existed a great army of such constructive-minded people as ourselves--as yet undiscovered by one another.

"It's like boring a tunnel through a mountain," said Oscar, "and presently hearing the tapping of the workers from the other end."

"If you didn't know of them beforehand," I said, "it might be a rather badly joined tunnel."

"Exactly," said Altiora with a high note, "and that's why we all want to find out each other. . . ."

They didn't talk like that on our first encounter, but they urged me to lunch with them next day, and then it was we went into things. A woman Factory Inspector and the Educational Minister for New Banksland and his wife were also there, but I don't remember they made any contribution to the conversation. The Baileys saw to that. They kept on at me in an urgent litigious way.

"We have read your book," each began--as though it had been a joint function. "And we consider--"

"Yes," I protested, "I think--"

That was a secondary matter.

"They did not consider," said Altiora, raising her voice and going right over me, that I had allowed sufficiently for the inevitable development of an official administrative class in the modern state."

"Nor of its importance," echoed Oscar.

That, they explained in a sort of chorus, was the cardinal idea of their lives, what they were up to, what they stood for. "We want to suggest to you," they said--and I found this was a stock opening of theirs--"that from the mere necessities of convenience elected bodies MUST avail themselves more and more of the services of expert officials. We have that very much in mind. The more complicated and technical affairs become, the less confidence will the elected official have in himself. We want to suggest that these expert officials must necessarily develop into a new class and a very powerful class in the community. We want to organise that. It may be THE power of the future. They will necessarily have to have very much of a common training. We consider ourselves as amateur unpaid precursors of such a class." . . .

The vision they displayed for my consideration as the aim of public-spirited endeavour, seemed like a harder, narrower, more specialised version of the idea of a trained and disciplined state that Willersley and I had worked out in the Alps. They wanted things more organised, more correlated with government and a collective purpose, just as we did, but they saw it not in terms of a growing collective understanding, but in terms of functionaries, legislative change, and methods of administration. . . .

It wasn't clear at first how we differed. The Baileys were very anxious to win me to co-operation, and I was quite prepared at first to identify their distinctive expressions with phrases of my own, and so we came very readily into an alliance that was to last some years, and break at last very painfully. Altiora manifestly liked me, I was soon discussing with her the perplexity I found in placing myself efficiently in the world, the problem of how to take hold of things that occupied my thoughts, and she was sketching out careers for my consideration, very much as an architect on his first visit sketches houses, considers requirements, and puts before you this example and that of the more or less similar thing already done. . . .

It is easy to see how much in common there was between the Baileys and me, and how natural it was that I should become a constant visitor at their house and an ally of theirs in many enterprises. It is not nearly so easy to define the profound antagonism of spirit that also held between us. There was a difference in texture, a difference in quality. How can I express it? The shapes of our thoughts were the same, but the substance quite different. It was as if they had made in china or cast iron what I had made in transparent living matter. (The comparison is manifestly from my point of view.) Certain things never seemed to show through their ideas that were visible, refracted perhaps and distorted, but visible always through mine.

I thought for a time the essential difference lay in our relation to beauty. With me beauty is quite primary in life; I like truth, order and goodness, wholly because they are beautiful or lead straight to beautiful consequences. The Baileys either hadn't got that or they didn't see it. They seemed at times to prefer things harsh and ugly. That puzzled me extremely. The esthetic quality of many of their proposals, the "manners" of their work, so to speak, were at times as dreadful as--well, War Office barrack architecture. A caricature by its exaggerated statements will sometimes serve to point a truth by antagonising falsity and falsity. I remember talking to a prominent museum official in need of more public funds for the work he had in hand. I mentioned the possibility of enlisting Bailey's influence.

"Oh, we don't want Philistines like that infernal Bottle-Imp running us," he said hastily, and would hear of no concerted action for the

end he had in view. "I'd rather not have the extension.

"You see," he went on to explain, "Bailey's wanting in the essentials."

"What essentials?" said I.

"Oh! he'd be like a nasty oily efficient little machine for some merely subordinate necessity among all my delicate stuff. He'd do all we wanted no doubt in the way of money and powers--and he'd do it wrong and mess the place for ever. Hands all black, you know. He's just a means. Just a very aggressive and unmanageable means. This isn't a plumber's job. . . ."

I stuck to my argument.

"I don't LIKE him," said the official conclusively, and it seemed to me at the time he was just blind prejudice speaking. . . .

I came nearer the truth of the matter as I came to realise that our philosophies differed profoundly. That isn't a very curable difference,--once people have grown up. Theirs was a philosophy devoid of FINESSE. Temperamentally the Baileys were specialised, concentrated, accurate, while I am urged either by some Inner force or some entirely assimilated influence in my training, always to round off and shadow my outlines. I hate them hard. I would sacrifice detail to modelling always, and the Baileys, it seemed to me, loved a world as flat and metallic as Sidney Cooper's cows. If they had the universe in hand I know they would take down all the trees and put up stamped tin green shades and sunlight accumulators. Altiora thought trees hopelessly irregular and sea cliffs a great mistake. . . . I got things clearer as time went on. Though it was an Hegelian mess of which I had partaken at Codger's table by way of a philosophical training, my sympathies have always been Pragmatist. I belong almost by nature to that school of Pragmatism

that, following the medieval Nominalists, bases itself upon a denial of the reality of classes, and of the validity of general laws. The Baileys classified everything. They were, in the scholastic sense-- which so oddly contradicts the modern use of the word—"Realists." They believed classes were REAL and independent of their individuals. This is the common habit of all so-called educated people who have no metaphysical aptitude and no metaphysical training. It leads them to a progressive misunderstanding of the world. It was a favourite trick of Altiora's to speak of everybody as a "type"; she saw men as samples moving; her dining-room became a chamber of representatives. It gave a tremendously scientific air to many of their generalisations, using "scientific" in its nineteenth-century uncritical Herbert Spencer sense, an air that only began to disappear when you thought them over again in terms of actuality and the people one knew. . . .

At the Baileys' one always seemed to be getting one's hands on the very strings that guided the world. You heard legislation projected to affect this "type" and that; statistics marched by you with sin and shame and injustice and misery reduced to quite manageable percentages, you found men who were to frame or amend bills in grave and intimate exchange with Bailey's omniscience, you heard Altiora canvassing approaching resignations and possible appointments that might make or mar a revolution in administrative methods, and doing it with a vigorous directness that manifestly swayed the decision; and you felt you were in a sort of signal box with levers all about you, and the world outside there, albeit a little dark and mysterious beyond the window, running on its lines in ready obedience to these unhesitating lights, true and steady to trim termini.

And then with all this administrative fizzle, this pseudo-scientific administrative chatter, dying away in your head, out you went into the limitless grimy chaos of London streets and squares, roads and avenues lined with teeming houses, each larger than the Chambers

Street house and at least equally alive, you saw the chaotic clamour of hoardings, the jumble of traffic, the coming and going of mysterious myriads, you heard the rumble of traffic like the noise of a torrent; a vague incessant murmur of cries and voices, wanton crimes and accidents bawled at you from the placards; imperative unaccountable fashions swaggered triumphant in dazzling windows of the shops; and you found yourself swaying back to the opposite conviction that the huge formless spirit of the world it was that held the strings and danced the puppets on the Bailey stage. . . .

Under the lamps you were jostled by people like my Staffordshire uncle out for a spree, you saw shy youths conversing with prostitutes, you passed young lovers pairing with an entire disregard of the social suitability of the "types" they might blend or create, you saw men leaning drunken against lamp-posts whom you knew for the "type" that will charge with fixed bayonets into the face of death, and you found yourself unable to imagine little Bailey achieving either drunkenness or the careless defiance of annihilation. You realised that quite a lot of types were underrepresented in Chambers Street, that feral and obscure and altogether monstrous forces must be at work, as yet altogether unassimilated by those neat administrative reorganisations.

5

Altiora, I remember, preluded Margaret's reappearance by announcing her as a "new type."

I was accustomed to go early to the Baileys' dinners in those days, for a preliminary gossip with Altiora in front of her drawing-room fire. One got her alone, and that early arrival was a little sign of appreciation she valued. She had every woman's need of followers

and servants.

"I'm going to send you down to-night," she said, "with a very interesting type indeed--one of the new generation of serious gals. Middle-class origin--and quite well off. Rich in fact. Her step-father was a solicitor and something of an ENTREPRENEUR towards the end, I fancy--in the Black Country. There was a little brother died, and she's lost her mother quite recently. Quite on her own, so to speak. She's never been out into society very much, and doesn't seem really very anxious to go. . . . Not exactly an intellectual person, you know, but quiet, and great force of character. Came up to London on her own and came to us--someone had told her we were the sort of people to advise her--to ask what to do. I'm sure she'll interest you."

"What CAN people of that sort do?" I asked. "Is she capable of investigation?"

Altiora compressed her lips and shook her head. She always did shake her head when you asked that of anyone.

"Of course what she ought to do," said Altiora, with her silk dress pulled back from her knee before the fire, and with a lift of her voice towards a chuckle at her daring way of putting things, "is to marry a member of Parliament and see he does his work. . . . Perhaps she will. It's a very exceptional gal who can do anything by herself--quite exceptional. The more serious they are--without being exceptional--the more we want them to marry."

Her exposition was truncated by the entry of the type in question.

"Well!" cried Altiora turning, and with a high note of welcome, "HERE you are!"

Margaret had gained in dignity and prettiness by the lapse of five

years, and she was now very beautifully and richly and simply dressed. Her fair hair had been done in some way that made it seem softer and more abundant than it was in my memory, and a gleam of purple velvet-set diamonds showed amidst its mist of little golden and brown lines. Her dress was of white and violet, the last trace of mourning for her mother, and confessed the gracious droop of her tall and slender body. She did not suggest Staffordshire at all, and I was puzzled for a moment to think where I had met her. Her sweetly shaped mouth with the slight obliquity of the lip and the little kink in her brow were extraordinarily familiar to me. But she had either been prepared by Altiora or she remembered my name. "We met," she said, "while my step-father was alive--at Misterton. You came to see us"; and instantly I recalled the sunshine between the apple blossom and a slender pale blue girlish shape among the daffodils, like something that had sprung from a bulb itself. I recalled at once that I had found her very interesting, though I did not clearly remember how it was she had interested me.

Other guests arrived--it was one of Altiora's boldly blended mixtures of people with ideas and people with influence or money who might perhaps be expected to resonate to them. Bailey came down late with an air of hurry, and was introduced to Margaret and said absolutely nothing to her--there being no information either to receive or impart and nothing to do--but stood snatching his left cheek until I rescued him and her, and left him free to congratulate the new Lady Snape on her husband's K. C. B.

I took Margaret down. We achieved no feats of mutual expression, except that it was abundantly clear we were both very pleased and interested to meet again, and that we had both kept memories of each other. We made that Misterton tea-party and the subsequent marriages of my cousins and the world of Burslem generally, matter for quite an agreeable conversation until at last Altiora, following her invariable custom, called me by name imperatively out of our duologue. "Mr. Remington," she said, "we want your opinion--" in

her entirely characteristic effort to get all the threads of conversation into her own hands for the climax that always wound up her dinners. How the other women used to hate those concluding raids of hers! I forget most of the other people at that dinner, nor can I recall what the crowning rally was about. It didn't in any way join on to my impression of Margaret.

In the drawing-room of the matting floor I rejoined her, with Altiora's manifest connivance, and in the interval I had been thinking of our former meeting.

"Do you find London," I asked, "give you more opportunity for doing things and learning things than Burslem?"

She showed at once she appreciated my allusion to her former confidences. "I was very discontented then," she said and paused. "I've really only been in London for a few months. It's so different. In Burslem, life seems all business and getting--without any reason. One went on and it didn't seem to mean anything. At least anything that mattered. . . . London seems to be so full of meanings--all mixed up together."

She knitted her brows over her words and smiled appealingly at the end as if for consideration for her inadequate expression, appealingly and almost humorously.

I looked understandingly at her. "We have all," I agreed, "to come to London."

"One sees so much distress," she added, as if she felt she had completely omitted something, and needed a codicil.

"What are you doing in London?"

"I'm thinking of studying. Some social question. I thought perhaps

I might go and study social conditions as Mrs. Bailey did, go perhaps as a work-girl or see the reality of living in, but Mrs. Bailey thought perhaps it wasn't quite my work."

"Are you studying?"

"I'm going to a good many lectures, and perhaps I shall take up a regular course at the Westminster School of Politics and Sociology. But Mrs. Bailey doesn't seem to believe very much in that either."

Her faintly whimsical smile returned. "I seem rather indefinite," she apologised, "but one does not want to get entangled in things one can't do. One--one has so many advantages, one's life seems to be such a trust and such a responsibility--"

She stopped.

"A man gets driven into work," I said.

"It must be splendid to be Mrs. Bailey," she replied with a glance of envious admiration across the room.

"SHE has no doubts, anyhow," I remarked.

"She HAD," said Margaret with the pride of one who has received great confidences.

6

"You've met before?" said Altiora, a day or so later.

I explained when.

"You find her interesting?"

I saw in a flash that Altiora meant to marry me to Margaret.

Her intention became much clearer as the year developed. Altiora was systematic even in matters that evade system. I was to marry Margaret, and freed from the need of making an income I was to come into politics--as an exponent of Baileyism. She put it down with the other excellent and advantageous things that should occupy her summer holiday. It was her pride and glory to put things down and plan them out in detail beforehand, and I'm not quite sure that she did not even mark off the day upon which the engagement was to be declared. If she did, I disappointed her. We didn't come to an engagement, in spite of the broadest hints and the glaring obviousness of everything, that summer.

Every summer the Baileys went out of London to some house they hired or borrowed, leaving their secretaries toiling behind, and they went on working hard in the mornings and evenings and taking exercise in the open air in the afternoon. They cycled assiduously and went for long walks at a trot, and raided and studied (and incidentally explained themselves to) any social "types" that lived in the neighbourhood. One invaded type, resentful under research, described them with a dreadful aptness as Donna Quixote and Sancho Panza--and himself as a harmless windmill, hurting no one and signifying nothing. She did rather tilt at things. This particular summer they were at a pleasant farmhouse in level country near Pangbourne, belonging to the Hon. Wilfrid Winchester, and they asked me to come down to rooms in the neighbourhood--Altiora took them for a month for me in August--and board with them upon extremely reasonable terms; and when I got there I found Margaret sitting in a hammock at Altiora's feet. Lots of people, I gathered, were coming and going in the neighbourhood, the Ponts were in a villa on the river, and the Rickhams' houseboat was to moor for some days; but

these irruptions did not impede a great deal of dialogue between Margaret and myself.

Altiora was efficient rather than artistic in her match-making. She sent us off for long walks together--Margaret was a fairly good walker--she exhumed some defective croquet things and incited us to croquet, not understanding that detestable game is the worst stimulant for lovers in the world. And Margaret and I were always getting left about, and finding ourselves for odd half-hours in the kitchen-garden with nothing to do except talk, or we were told with a wave of the hand to run away and amuse each other.

Altiora even tried a picnic in canoes, knowing from fiction rather than imagination or experience the conclusive nature of such excursions. But there she fumbled at the last moment, and elected at the river's brink to share a canoe with me. Bailey showed so much zeal and so little skill--his hat fell off and he became miraculously nothing but paddle-clutching hands and a vast wrinkled brow--that at last he had to be paddled ignominiously by Margaret, while Altiora, after a phase of rigid discretion, as nearly as possible drowned herself--and me no doubt into the bargain--with a sudden lateral gesture of the arm to emphasise the high note with which she dismissed the efficiency of the Charity Organisation Society. We shipped about an inch of water and sat in it for the rest of the time, an inconvenience she disregarded heroically. We had difficulties in landing Oscar from his frail craft upon the ait of our feasting,--he didn't balance sideways and was much alarmed, and afterwards, as Margaret had a pain in her back, I took him in my canoe, let him hide his shame with an ineffectual but not positively harmful paddle, and towed the other by means of the joined painters. Still it was the fault of the inadequate information supplied in the books and not of Altiora that that was not the date of my betrothal.

I find it not a little difficult to state what kept me back from proposing marriage to Margaret that summer, and what urged me

forward at last to marry her. It is so much easier to remember one's resolutions than to remember the moods and suggestions that produced them.

Marrying and getting married was, I think, a pretty simple affair to Altiora; it was something that happened to the adolescent and unmarried when you threw them together under the circumstances of health, warmth and leisure. It happened with the kindly and approving smiles of the more experienced elders who had organised these proximities. The young people married, settled down, children ensued, and father and mother turned their minds, now decently and properly disillusioned, to other things. That to Altiora was the normal sexual life, and she believed it to be the quality of the great bulk of the life about her.

One of the great barriers to human understanding is the wide temperamental difference one finds in the values of things relating to sex. It is the issue upon which people most need training in charity and imaginative sympathy. Here are no universal standards at all, and indeed for no single man nor woman does there seem to be any fixed standard, so much do the accidents of circumstances and one's physical phases affect one's interpretations. There is nothing in the whole range of sexual fact that may not seem supremely beautiful or humanly jolly or magnificently wicked or disgusting or trivial or utterly insignificant, according to the eye that sees or the mood that colours. Here is something that may fill the skies and every waking hour or be almost completely banished from a life. It may be everything on Monday and less than nothing on Saturday. And we make our laws and rules as though in these matters all men and women were commensurable one with another, with an equal steadfast passion and an equal constant duty. . . .

I don't know what dreams Altiora may have had in her schoolroom days, I always suspected her of suppressed and forgotten phases, but certainly her general effect now was of an entirely passionless

worldliness in these matters. Indeed so far as I could get at her, she regarded sexual passion as being hardly more legitimate in a civilised person than--let us say--homicidal mania. She must have forgotten--and Bailey too. I suspect she forgot before she married him. I don't suppose either of them had the slightest intimation of the dimensions sexual love can take in the thoughts of the great majority of people with whom they come in contact. They loved in their way--an intellectual way it was and a fond way--but it had no relation to beauty and physical sensation--except that there seemed a decree of exile against these things. They got their glow in high moments of altruistic ambition--and in moments of vivid worldly success. They sat at opposite ends of their dinner table with so and so "captured," and so and so, flushed with a mutual approval. They saw people in love forgetful and distraught about them, and just put it down to forgetfulness and distraction. At any rate Altiora manifestly viewed my situation and Margaret's with an abnormal and entirely misleading simplicity. There was the girl, rich, with an acceptable claim to be beautiful, shingly virtuous, quite capable of political interests, and there was I, talented, ambitious and full of political and social passion, in need of just the money, devotion and regularisation Margaret could provide. We were both unmarried--white sheets of unscribed paper. Was there ever a simpler situation? What more could we possibly want?

She was even a little offended at the inconclusiveness that did not settle things at Pangbourne. I seemed to her, I suspect, to reflect upon her judgment and good intentions.

7

I didn't see things with Altiora's simplicity.

I admired Margaret very much, I was fully aware of all that she and I might give each other; indeed so far as Altiora went we were quite in agreement. But what seemed solid ground to Altiora and the ultimate footing of her emasculated world, was to me just the superficial covering of a gulf--oh! abysses of vague and dim, and yet stupendously significant things.

I couldn't dismiss the interests and the passion of sex as Altiora did. Work, I agreed, was important; career and success; but deep unanalysable instincts told me this preoccupation was a thing quite as important; dangerous, interfering, destructive indeed, but none the less a dominating interest in life. I have told how flittingly and uninvited it came like a moth from the outer twilight into my life, how it grew in me with my manhood, how it found its way to speech and grew daring, and led me at last to experience. After that adventure at Locarno sex and the interests and desires of sex never left me for long at peace. I went on with my work and my career, and all the time it was like--like someone talking ever and again in a room while one tries to write.

There were times when I could have wished the world a world all of men, so greatly did this unassimilated series of motives and curiosities hamper me; and times when I could have wished the world all of women. I seemed always to be seeking something in women, in girls, and I was never clear what it was I was seeking. But never--even at my coarsest--was I moved by physical desire alone. Was I seeking help and fellowship? Was I seeking some intimacy with beauty? It was a thing too formless to state, that I seemed always desiring to attain and never attaining. Waves of gross sensuousness arose out of this preoccupation, carried me to a crisis of gratification or disappointment that was clearly not the needed thing; they passed and left my mind free again for a time to get on with the permanent pursuits of my life. And then presently this solicitude would have me again, an irrelevance as it seemed, and yet a constantly recurring demand.

I don't want particularly to dwell upon things that are disagreeable for others to read, but I cannot leave them out of my story and get the right proportions of the forces I am balancing. I was no abnormal man, and that world of order we desire to make must be built of such stuff as I was and am and can beget. You cannot have a world of Baileys; it would end in one orderly generation. Humanity is begotten in Desire, lives by Desire.

"Love which is lust, is the Lamp in the Tomb;
Love which is lust, is the Call from the Gloom."

I echo Henley.

I suppose the life of celibacy which the active, well-fed, well-exercised and imaginatively stirred young man of the educated classes is supposed to lead from the age of nineteen or twenty, when Nature certainly meant him to marry, to thirty or more, when civilisation permits him to do so, is the most impossible thing in the world. We deal here with facts that are kept secret and obscure, but I doubt for my own part if more than one man out of five in our class satisfies that ideal demand. The rest are even as I was, and Hatherleigh and Esmear and all the men I knew. I draw no lessons and offer no panacea; I have to tell the quality of life, and this is how it is. This is how it will remain until men and women have the courage to face the facts of life.

I was no systematic libertine, you must understand; things happened to me and desire drove me. Any young man would have served for that Locarno adventure, and after that what had been a mystic and wonderful thing passed rapidly into a gross, manifestly misdirected and complicating one. I can count a meagre tale of five illicit loves in the days of my youth, to include that first experience, and

of them all only two were sustained relationships. Besides these five "affairs," on one or two occasions I dipped so low as the inky dismal sensuality of the streets, and made one of those pairs of correlated figures, the woman in her squalid finery sailing homeward, the man modestly aloof and behind, that every night in the London year flit by the score of thousands across the sight of the observant. . . .

How ugly it is to recall; ugly and shameful now without qualification! Yet at the time there was surely something not altogether ugly in it--something that has vanished, some fine thing mortally ailing.

One such occasion I recall as if it were a vision deep down in a pit, as if it had happened in another state of existence to someone else. And yet it is the sort of thing that has happened, once or twice at least, to half the men in London who have been in a position to make it possible. Let me try and give you its peculiar effect. Man or woman, you ought to know of it.

Figure to yourself a dingy room, somewhere in that network of streets that lies about Tottenham Court Road, a dingy bedroom lit by a solitary candle and carpeted with scraps and patches, with curtains of cretonne closing the window, and a tawdry ornament of paper in the grate. I sit on a bed beside a weary-eyed, fair-haired, sturdy young woman, half undressed, who is telling me in broken German something that my knowledge of German is at first inadequate to understand. . . .

I thought she was boasting about her family, and then slowly the meaning came to me. She was a Lett from near Libau in Courland, and she was telling me--just as one tells something too strange for comment or emotion--how her father had been shot and her sister outraged and murdered before her eyes.

It was as if one had dipped into something primordial and stupendous beneath the smooth and trivial surfaces of life. There was I, you know, the promising young don from Cambridge, who wrote quite brilliantly about politics and might presently get into Parliament, with my collar and tie in my hand, and a certain sense of shameful adventure fading out of my mind.

"Ach Gott!" she sighed by way of comment, and mused deeply for a moment before she turned her face to me, as to something forgotten and remembered, and assumed the half-hearted meretricious smile.

"Bin ich eine hubsche?" she asked like one who repeats a lesson.

I was moved to crave her pardon and come away.

"Bin ich eine hubsche?" she asked a little anxiously, laying a detaining hand upon me, and evidently not understanding a word of what I was striving to say.

8

I find it extraordinarily difficult to recall the phases by which I passed from my first admiration of Margaret's earnestness and unconscious daintiness to an intimate acquaintance. The earlier encounters stand out clear and hard, but then the impressions become crowded and mingle not only with each other but with all the subsequent developments of relationship, the enormous evolutions of interpretation and comprehension between husband and wife. Dipping into my memories is like dipping into a ragbag, one brings out this memory or that, with no intimation of how they came in time or what led to them and joined them together. And they are all mixed up with subsequent associations, with sympathies and discords, habits

of intercourse, surprises and disappointments and discovered misunderstandings. I know only that always my feelings for Margaret were complicated feelings, woven of many and various strands.

It is one of the curious neglected aspects of life how at the same time and in relation to the same reality we can have in our minds streams of thought at quite different levels. We can be at the same time idealising a person and seeing and criticising that person quite coldly and clearly, and we slip unconsciously from level to level and produce all sorts of inconsistent acts. In a sense I had no illusions about Margaret; in a sense my conception of Margaret was entirely poetic illusion. I don't think I was ever blind to certain defects of hers, and quite as certainly they didn't seem to matter in the slightest degree. Her mind had a curious want of vigour, "flatness" is the only word; she never seemed to escape from her phrase; her way of thinking, her way of doing was indecisive; she remained in her attitude, it did not flow out to easy, confirmatory action.

I saw this quite clearly, and when we walked and talked together I seemed always trying for animation in her and never finding it. I would state my ideas. "I know," she would say, "I know."

I talked about myself and she listened wonderfully, but she made no answering revelations. I talked politics, and she remarked with her blue eyes wide and earnest: "Every WORD you say seems so just."

I admired her appearance tremendously but--I can only express it by saying I didn't want to touch her. Her fair hair was always delectably done. It flowed beautifully over her pretty small ears, and she would tie its fair coilings with fillets of black or blue velvet that carried pretty buckles of silver and paste. The light, the faint down on her brow and cheek was delightful. And it was clear to me that I made her happy.

My sense of her deficiencies didn't stand in the way of my falling at last very deeply in love with her. Her very shortcomings seemed to offer me something. . . .

She stood in my mind for goodness--and for things from which it seemed to me my hold was slipping.

She seemed to promise a way of escape from the deepening opposition in me between physical passions and the constructive career, the career of wide aims and human service, upon which I had embarked. All the time that I was seeing her as a beautiful, fragile, rather ineffective girl, I was also seeing her just as consciously as a shining slender figure, a radiant reconciliation, coming into my darkling disorders of lust and impulse. I could understand clearly that she was incapable of the most necessary subtleties of political thought, and yet I could contemplate praying to her and putting all the intricate troubles of my life at her feet.

Before the reappearance of Margaret in my world at all an unwonted disgust with the consequences and quality of my passions had arisen in my mind. Among other things that moment with the Lettish girl haunted me persistently. I would see myself again and again sitting amidst those sluttish surroundings, collar and tie in hand, while her heavy German words grouped themselves to a slowly apprehended meaning. I would feel again with a fresh stab of remorse, that this was not a flash of adventure, this was not seeing life in any permissible sense, but a dip into tragedy, dishonour, hideous degradation, and the pitiless cruelty of a world as yet uncontrolled by any ordered will.

"Good God!" I put it to myself, "that I should finish the work those Cossacks had begun! I who want order and justice before everything! There's no way out of it, no decent excuse! If I didn't think, I ought to have thought!" . . .

How did I get to it?" . . . I would ransack the phases of my development from the first shy unveiling of a hidden wonder to the last extremity as a man will go through muddled account books to find some disorganising error. . . .

I was also involved at that time--I find it hard to place these things in the exact order of their dates because they were so disconnected with the regular progress of my work and life--in an intrigue, a clumsy, sensuous, pretentious, artificially stimulated intrigue, with a Mrs. Larrimer, a woman living separated from her husband. I will not go into particulars of that episode, nor how we quarrelled and chafed one another. She was at once unfaithful and jealous and full of whims about our meetings; she was careless of our secret, and vulgarised our relationship by intolerable interpretations; except for some glowing moments of gratification, except for the recurrent and essentially vicious desire that drew us back to each other again, we both fretted at a vexatious and unexpectedly binding intimacy. The interim was full of the quality of work delayed, of time and energy wasted, of insecure precautions against scandal and exposure. Disappointment is almost inherent in illicit love. I had, and perhaps it was part of her recurrent irritation also, a feeling as though one had followed something fine and beautiful into a net--into bird lime! These furtive scuffles, this sneaking into shabby houses of assignation, was what we had made out of the suggestion of pagan beauty; this was the reality of our vision of nymphs and satyrs dancing for the joy of life amidst incessant sunshine. We had laid hands upon the wonder and glory of bodily love and wasted them. . . .

It was the sense of waste, of finely beautiful possibilities getting entangled and marred for ever that oppressed me. I had missed, I had lost. I did not turn from these things after the fashion of the Baileys, as one turns from something low and embarrassing. I felt that these great organic forces were still to be wrought into a harmony with my constructive passion. I felt too that I was not

doing it. I had not understood the forces in this struggle nor its nature, and as I learnt I failed. I had been started wrong, I had gone on wrong, in a world that was muddled and confused, full of false counsel and erratic shames and twisted temptations. I learnt to see it so by failures that were perhaps destroying any chance of profit in my lessons. Moods of clear keen industry alternated with moods of relapse and indulgence and moods of dubiety and remorse. I was not going on as the Baileys thought I was going on. There were times when the blindness of the Baileys irritated me intensely. Beneath the ostensible success of those years, between twenty-three and twenty-eight, this rottenness, known to scarcely any one but myself, grew and spread. My sense of the probability of a collapse intensified. I knew indeed now, even as Willersley had prophesied five years before, that I was entangling myself in something that might smother all my uses in the world. Down there among those incommunicable difficulties, I was puzzled and blundering. I was losing my hold upon things; the chaotic and adventurous element in life was spreading upward and getting the better of me, overmastering me and all my will to rule and make. . . . And the strength, the drugging urgency of the passion!

Margaret shone at times in my imagination like a radiant angel in a world of mire and disorder, in a world of cravings, hot and dull red like scars inflamed. . . .

I suppose it was because I had so great a need of such help as her whiteness proffered, that I could ascribe impossible perfections to her, a power of intellect, a moral power and patience to which she, poor fellow mortal, had indeed no claim. If only a few of us WERE angels and freed from the tangle of effort, how easy life might be! I wanted her so badly, so very badly, to be what I needed. I wanted a woman to save me. I forced myself to see her as I wished to see her. Her tepidities became infinite delicacies, her mental vagueness an atmospheric realism. The harsh precisions of the Baileys and Altiora's blunt directness threw up her fineness into

relief and made a grace of every weakness.

Mixed up with the memory of times when I talked with Margaret as one talks politely to those who are hopelessly inferior in mental quality, explaining with a false lucidity, welcoming and encouraging the feeblest response, when possible moulding and directing, are times when I did indeed, as the old phrase goes, worship the ground she trod on. I was equally honest and unconscious of inconsistency at each extreme. But in neither phase could I find it easy to make love to Margaret. For in the first I did not want to, though I talked abundantly to her of marriage and so forth, and was a little puzzled at myself for not going on to some personal application, and in the second she seemed inaccessible, I felt I must make confessions and put things before her that would be the grossest outrage upon the noble purity I attributed to her.

9

I went to Margaret at last to ask her to marry me, wrought up to the mood of one who stakes his life on a cast. Separated from her, and with the resonance of an evening of angry recriminations with Mrs. Larrimer echoing in my mind, I discovered myself to be quite passionately in love with Margaret. Last shreds of doubt vanished. It has always been a feature of our relationship that Margaret absent means more to me than Margaret present; her memory distils from its dross and purifies in me. All my criticisms and qualifications of her vanished into some dark corner of my mind. She was the lady of my salvation; I must win my way to her or perish.

I went to her at last, for all that I knew she loved me, in passionate self-abasement, white and a-tremble. She was staying

with the Rockleys at Woking, for Shena Rockley had been at Bennett Hall with her and they had resumed a close intimacy; and I went down to her on an impulse, unheralded. I was kept waiting for some minutes, I remember, in a little room upon which a conservatory opened, a conservatory full of pots of large mauve-edged, white cyclamens in flower. And there was a big lacquer cabinet, a Chinese thing, I suppose, of black and gold against the red-toned wall. To this day the thought of Margaret is inseparably bound up with the sight of a cyclamen's back-turned petals.

She came in, looking pale and drooping rather more than usual. I suddenly realised that Altiora's hint of a disappointment leading to positive illness was something more than a vindictive comment. She closed the door and came across to me and took and dropped my hand and stood still. "What is it you want with me?" she asked.

The speech I had been turning over and over in my mind on the way vanished at the sight of her.

"I want to talk to you," I answered lamely.

For some seconds neither of us said a word.

"I want to tell you things about my life," I began.

She answered with a scarcely audible "yes."

"I almost asked you to marry me at Pangbourne," I plunged. "I didn't. I didn't because--because you had too much to give me."

"Too much!" she echoed, "to give you!" She had lifted her eyes to my face and the colour was coming into her cheeks.

"Don't misunderstand me," I said hastily. "I want to tell you things, things you don't know. Don't answer me. I want to tell

you."

She stood before the fireplace with her ultimate answer shining through the quiet of her face. "Go on," she said, very softly. It was so pitilessly manifest she was resolved to idealise the situation whatever I might say. I began walking up and down the room between those cyclamens and the cabinet. There were little gold fishermen on the cabinet fishing from little islands that each had a pagoda and a tree, and there were also men in boats or something, I couldn't determine what, and some obscure sub-office in my mind concerned itself with that quite intently. Yet I seem to have been striving with all my being to get words for the truth of things. "You see," I emerged, "you make everything possible to me. You can give me help and sympathy, support, understanding. You know my political ambitions. You know all that I might do in the world. I do so intensely want to do constructive things, big things perhaps, in this wild jumble. . . . Only you don't know a bit what I am. I want to tell you what I am. I'm complex. . . . I'm streaked."

I glanced at her, and she was regarding me with an expression of blissful disregard for any meaning I was seeking to convey.

"You see," I said, "I'm a bad man."

She sounded a note of valiant incredulity.

Everything seemed to be slipping away from me. I pushed on to the ugly facts that remained over from the wreck of my interpretation. "What has held me back," I said, "is the thought that you could not possibly understand certain things in my life. Men are not pure as women are. I have had love affairs. I mean I have had affairs. Passion--desire. You see, I have had a mistress, I have been entangled--"

She seemed about to speak, but I interrupted. "I'm not telling you," I said, "what I meant to tell you. I want you to know clearly that there is another side to my life, a dirty side. Deliberately I say, dirty. It didn't seem so at first--"

I stopped blankly. "Dirty," I thought, was the most idiotic choice of words to have made.

I had never in any tolerable sense of the word been dirty.

"I drifted into this--as men do," I said after a little pause and stopped again.

She was looking at me with her wide blue eyes.

"Did you imagine," she began, "that I thought you--that I expected--"

"But how can you know?"

"I know. I do know."

"But--" I began.

"I know," she persisted, dropping her eyelids. "Of course I know," and nothing could have convinced me more completely that she did not know.

"All men--" she generalised. "A woman does not understand these temptations."

I was astonished beyond measure at her way of taking my confession.

...

"Of course," she said, hesitating a little over a transparent difficulty, "it is all over and past."

"It's all over and past," I answered.

There was a little pause.

"I don't want to know," she said. "None of that seems to matter now in the slightest degree."

She looked up and smiled as though we had exchanged some acceptable commonplaces. "Poor dear!" she said, dismissing everything, and put out her arms, and it seemed to me that I could hear the Lettish girl in the background--doomed safety valve of purity in this intolerable world--telling something in indistinguishable German--I know not what nor why. . . .

I took Margaret in my arms and kissed her. Her eyes were wet with tears. She clung to me and was near, I felt, to sobbing.

"I have loved you," she whispered presently, "Oh! ever since we met in Misterton--six years and more ago."

CHAPTER THE THIRD

MARGARET IN VENICE

1

There comes into my mind a confused memory of conversations with Margaret; we must have had dozens altogether, and they mix in now for the most part inextricably not only with one another, but with later talks and with things we discussed at Pangbourne. We had the immensest anticipations of the years and opportunities that lay before us. I was now very deeply in love with her indeed. I felt not that I had cleaned up my life but that she had. We called each other "confederate" I remember, and made during our brief engagement a series of visits to the various legislative bodies in London, the County Council, the House of Commons, where we dined with Villiers, and the St. Pancras Vestry, where we heard Shaw speaking. I was full of plans and so was she of the way in which we were to live and work. We were to pay back in public service whatever excess of wealth beyond his merits old Seddon's economic advantage had won for him from the toiling people in the potteries. The end of the Boer War was so recent that that blessed word "efficiency" echoed still in people's minds and thoughts. Lord Roseberry in a memorable oration had put it into the heads of the big outer public, but the Baileys with a certain show of justice claimed to have set it going in the channels that took it to him--if as a matter of fact it was taken to him. But then it was their habit to make claims of that sort. They certainly did their share to keep "efficient" going. Altiora's highest praise was "thoroughly efficient." We were to be a "thoroughly efficient" political couple of the "new type." She explained us to herself and Oscar, she explained us to ourselves, she explained us to the people who came to her dinners and

afternoons until the world was highly charged with explanation and expectation, and the proposal that I should be the Liberal candidate for the Kinghamstead Division seemed the most natural development in the world.

I was full of the ideal of hard restrained living and relentless activity, and throughout a beautiful November at Venice, where chiefly we spent our honeymoon, we turned over and over again and discussed in every aspect our conception of a life tremendously focussed upon the ideal of social service.

Most clearly there stands out a picture of ourselves talking in a gondola on our way to Torcella. Far away behind us the smoke of Murano forms a black stain upon an immense shining prospect of smooth water, water as unruffled and luminous as the sky above, a mirror on which rows of posts and distant black high-stemmed, swan-necked boats with their minutely clear swinging gondoliers, float aerially. Remote and low before us rises the little tower of our destination. Our men swing together and their oars swirl leisurely through the water, hump back in the rowlocks, splash sharply and go swishing back again. Margaret lies back on cushions, with her face shaded by a holland parasol, and I sit up beside her.

"You see," I say, and in spite of Margaret's note of perfect acquiescence I feel myself reasoning against an indefinable antagonism, "it is so easy to fall into a slack way with life. There may seem to be something priggish in a meticulous discipline, but otherwise it is so easy to slip into indolent habits--and to be distracted from one's purpose. The country, the world, wants men to serve its constructive needs, to work out and carry out plans. For a man who has to make a living the enemy is immediate necessity; for people like ourselves it's--it's the constant small opportunity of agreeable things."

"Frittering away," she says, "time and strength."

"That is what I feel. It's so pleasant to pretend one is simply modest, it looks so foolish at times to take one's self too seriously. We've GOT to take ourselves seriously."

She endorses my words with her eyes.

"I feel I can do great things with life."

"I KNOW you can."

"But that's only to be done by concentrating one's life upon one main end. We have to plan our days, to make everything subserve our scheme."

"I feel," she answers softly, "we ought to give--every hour."

Her face becomes dreamy. "I WANT to give every hour," she adds.

2

That holiday in Venice is set in my memory like a little artificial lake in uneven confused country, as something very bright and skylike, and discontinuous with all about it. The faded quality of the very sunshine of that season, the mellow discoloured palaces and places, the huge, time-ripened paintings of departed splendours, the whispering, nearly noiseless passage of hearse-black gondolas, for the horrible steam launch had not yet ruined Venice, the stilled magnificences of the depopulated lagoons, the universal autumn, made me feel altogether in recess from the teeming uproars of reality. There was not a dozen people all told, no Americans and scarcely any English, to dine in the big cavern of a dining-room, with its vistas

of separate tables, its distempered walls and its swathed chandeliers. We went about seeing beautiful things, accepting beauty on every hand, and taking it for granted that all was well with ourselves and the world. It was ten days or a fortnight before I became fretful and anxious for action; a long tranquillity for such a temperament as mine.

Our pleasures were curiously impersonal, a succession of shared aesthetic appreciation threads all that time. Our honeymoon was no exultant coming together, no mutual shout of "YOU!" We were almost shy with one another, and felt the relief of even a picture to help us out. It was entirely in my conception of things that I should be very watchful not to shock or distress Margaret or press the sensuous note. Our love-making had much of the tepid smoothness of the lagoons. We talked in delicate innuendo of what should be glorious freedoms. Margaret had missed Verona and Venice in her previous Italian journey--fear of the mosquito had driven her mother across Italy to the westward route--and now she could fill up her gaps and see the Titians and Paul Veroneses she already knew in colourless photographs, the Carpaccios, (the St. George series delighted her beyond measure,) the Basaitis and that great statue of Bartolomeo Colleoni that Ruskin praised.

But since I am not a man to look at pictures and architectural effects day after day, I did watch Margaret very closely and store a thousand memories of her. I can see her now, her long body drooping a little forward, her sweet face upraised to some discovered familiar masterpiece and shining with a delicate enthusiasm. I can hear again the soft cadences of her voice murmuring commonplace comments, for she had no gift of expressing the shapeless satisfaction these things gave her.

Margaret, I perceived, was a cultivated person, the first cultivated person with whom I had ever come into close contact. She was cultivated and moral, and I, I now realise, was never either of

these things. She was passive, and I am active. She did not simply and naturally look for beauty but she had been incited to look for it at school, and took perhaps a keener interest in books and lectures and all the organisation of beautiful things than she did in beauty itself; she found much of her delight in being guided to it. Now a thing ceases to be beautiful to me when some finger points me out its merits. Beauty is the salt of life, but I take my beauty as a wild beast gets its salt, as a constituent of the meal. . . .

And besides, there was that between us that should have seemed more beautiful than any picture. . . .

So we went about Venice tracking down pictures and spiral staircases and such-like things, and my brains were busy all the time with such things as a comparison of Venice and its nearest modern equivalent, New York, with the elaboration of schemes of action when we returned to London, with the development of a theory of Margaret.

Our marriage had done this much at least, that it had fused and destroyed those two independent ways of thinking about her that had gone on in my mind hitherto. Suddenly she had become very near to me, and a very big thing, a sort of comprehensive generalisation behind a thousand questions, like the sky or England. The judgments and understandings that had worked when she was, so to speak, miles away from my life, had now to be altogether revised. Trifling things began to matter enormously, that she had a weak and easily fatigued back, for example, or that when she knitted her brows and stammered a little in talking, it didn't really mean that an exquisite significance struggled for utterance.

We visited pictures in the mornings chiefly. In the afternoon, unless we were making a day-long excursion in a gondola, Margaret would rest for an hour while I prowled about in search of English newspapers, and then we would go to tea in the Piazza San Marco and watch the drift of people feeding the pigeons and going into the

little doors beneath the sunlit arches and domes of Saint Mark's. Then perhaps we would stroll on the Piazzetta, or go out into the sunset in a gondola. Margaret became very interested in the shops that abound under the colonnades and decided at last to make an extensive purchase of table glass. "These things," she said, are quite beautiful, and far cheaper than anything but the most ordinary looking English ware." I was interested in her idea, and a good deal charmed by the delightful qualities of tinted shape, slender handle and twisted stem. I suggested we should get not simply tumblers and wineglasses but bedroom waterbottles, fruit- and sweet-dishes, water-jugs, and in the end we made quite a business-like afternoon of it.

I was beginning now to long quite definitely for events. Energy was accumulating in me, and worrying me for an outlet. I found the **TIMES** and the **DAILY TELEGRAPH** and the other papers I managed to get hold of, more and more stimulating. I nearly wrote to the former paper one day in answer to a letter by Lord Grimthorpe--I forget now upon what point. I chafed secretly against this life of tranquil appreciations more and more. I found my attitudes of restrained and delicate affection for Margaret increasingly difficult to sustain. I surprised myself and her by little gusts of irritability, gusts like the catspaws before a gale. I was alarmed at these symptoms.

One night when Margaret had gone up to her room, I put on a light overcoat, went out into the night and prowled for a long time through the narrow streets, smoking and thinking. I returned and went and sat on the edge of her bed to talk to her.

"Look here, Margaret," I said; "this is all very well, but I'm restless."

"Restless! " she said with a faint surprise in her voice.

"Yes. I think I want exercise. I've got a sort of feeling--I've never had it before--as though I was getting fat."

"My dear!" she cried.

"I want to do things;--ride horses, climb mountains, take the devil out of myself."

She watched me thoughtfully.

"Couldn't we DO something?" she said.

Do what?

"I don't know. Couldn't we perhaps go away from here soon--and walk in the mountains--on our way home."

I thought. "There seems to be no exercise at all in this place."

"Isn't there some walk?"

"I wonder," I answered. "We might walk to Chioggia perhaps, along the Lido." And we tried that, but the long stretch of beach fatigued Margaret's back, and gave her blisters, and we never got beyond Malamocco. . . .

A day or so after we went out to those pleasant black-robed, bearded Armenians in their monastery at Saint Lazzaro, and returned towards sundown. We fell into silence. "PIU LENTO," said Margaret to the gondolier, and released my accumulated resolution.

"Let us go back to London," I said abruptly.

Margaret looked at me with surprised blue eyes.

"This is beautiful beyond measure, you know," I said, sticking to my point, "but I have work to do."

She was silent for some seconds. "I had forgotten," she said.

"So had I," I sympathised, and took her hand. "Suddenly I have remembered."

She remained quite still. "There is so much to be done," I said, almost apologetically.

She looked long away from me across the lagoon and at last sighed, like one who has drunk deeply, and turned to me.

"I suppose one ought not to be so happy," she said. "Everything has been so beautiful and so simple and splendid. And clean. It has been just With You--the time of my life. It's a pity such things must end. But the world is calling you, dear. . . . I ought not to have forgotten it. I thought you were resting--and thinking. But if you are rested.--Would you like us to start to-morrow?"

She looked at once so fragile and so devoted that on the spur of the moment I relented, and we stayed in Venice four more days.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

THE HOUSE IN WESTMINSTER

1

Margaret had already taken a little house in Radnor Square, Westminster, before our marriage, a house that seemed particularly adaptable to our needs as public-spirited efficient; it had been very pleasantly painted and papered under Margaret's instructions, white paint and clean open purples and green predominating, and now we set to work at once upon the interesting business of arranging and--with our Venetian glass as a beginning--furnishing it. We had been fairly fortunate with our wedding presents, and for the most part it was open to us to choose just exactly what we would have and just precisely where we would put it.

Margaret had a sense of form and colour altogether superior to mine, and so quite apart from the fact that it was her money equipped us, I stood aside from all these matters and obeyed her summons to a consultation only to endorse her judgment very readily. Until everything was settled I went every day to my old rooms in Vincent Square and worked at a series of papers that were originally intended for the FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW, the papers that afterwards became my fourth book, "New Aspects of Liberalism."

I still remember as delightful most of the circumstances of getting into 79, Radnor Square. The thin flavour of indecision about Margaret disappeared altogether in a shop; she had the precisest ideas of what she wanted, and the devices of the salesman did not sway her. It was very pleasant to find her taking things out of my hands with a certain masterfulness, and showing the distinctest

determination to make a house in which I should be able to work in that great project of "doing something for the world."

"And I do want to make things pretty about us," she said. "You don't think it wrong to have things pretty?"

"I want them so."

"Altiora has things hard."

"Altiora," I answered, "takes a pride in standing ugly and uncomfortable things. But I don't see that they help her. Anyhow they won't help me."

So Margaret went to the best shops and got everything very simple and very good. She bought some pictures very well indeed; there was a little Sussex landscape, full of wind and sunshine, by Nicholson, for my study, that hit my taste far better than if I had gone out to get some such expression for myself.

"We will buy a picture just now and then," she said, "sometimes--when we see one."

I would come back through the January mire or fog from Vincent Square to the door of 79, and reach it at last with a quite childish appreciation of the fact that its solid Georgian proportions and its fine brass furnishings belonged to MY home; I would use my latchkey and discover Margaret in the warm-lit, spacious hall with a partially opened packing-case, fatigued but happy, or go up to have tea with her out of the right tea things, "come at last," or be told to notice what was fresh there. It wasn't simply that I had never had a house before, but I had really never been, except in the most transitory way, in any house that was nearly so delightful as mine promised to be. Everything was fresh and bright, and softly and harmoniously toned. Downstairs we had a green dining-room with

gleaming silver, dark oak, and English colour-prints; above was a large drawing-room that could be made still larger by throwing open folding doors, and it was all carefully done in greys and blues, for the most part with real Sheraton supplemented by Sheraton so skilfully imitated by an expert Margaret had discovered as to be indistinguishable except to a minute scrutiny. And for me, above this and next to my bedroom, there was a roomy study, with specially thick stair-carpet outside and thick carpets in the bedroom overhead and a big old desk for me to sit at and work between fire and window, and another desk specially made for me by that expert if I chose to stand and write, and open bookshelves and bookcases and every sort of convenient fitting. There were electric heaters beside the open fire, and everything was put for me to make tea at any time--electric kettle, infuser, biscuits and fresh butter, so that I could get up and work at any hour of the day or night. I could do no work in this apartment for a long time, I was so interested in the perfection of its arrangements. And when I brought in my books and papers from Vincent Square, Margaret seized upon all the really shabby volumes and had them re-bound in a fine official-looking leather.

I can remember sitting down at that desk and looking round me and feeling with a queer effect of surprise that after all even a place in the Cabinet, though infinitely remote, was nevertheless in the same large world with these fine and quietly expensive things.

On the same floor Margaret had a "den," a very neat and pretty den with good colour-prints of Botticellis and Carpaccios, and there was a third apartment for sectarian purposes should the necessity for them arise, with a severe-looking desk equipped with patent files. And Margaret would come flitting into the room to me, or appear noiselessly standing, a tall gracefully drooping form, in the wide open doorway. "Is everything right, dear?" she would ask.

"Come in," I would say, "I'm sorting out papers."

She would come to the hearthrug.

"I mustn't disturb you," she would remark.

"I'm not busy yet."

"Things are getting into order. Then we must make out a time-table as the Baileys do, and BEGIN!"

Altiora came in to see us once or twice, and a number of serious young wives known to Altiora called and were shown over the house, and discussed its arrangements with Margaret. They were all tremendously keen on efficient arrangements.

"A little pretty," said Altiora, with the faintest disapproval, "still--"

It was clear she thought we should grow out of that. From the day of our return we found other people's houses open to us and eager for us. We went out of London for week-ends and dined out, and began discussing our projects for reciprocating these hospitalities. As a single man unattached, I had had a wide and miscellaneous social range, but now I found myself falling into place in a set. For a time I acquiesced in this. I went very little to my clubs, the Climax and the National Liberal, and participated in no bachelor dinners at all. For a time, too, I dropped out of the garrulous literary and journalistic circles I had frequented. I put up for the Reform, not so much for the use of the club as a sign of serious and substantial political standing. I didn't go up to Cambridge, I remember, for nearly a year, so occupied was I with my new adjustments.

The people we found ourselves among at this time were people, to put it roughly, of the Parliamentary candidate class, or people already

actually placed in the political world. They ranged between very considerable wealth and such a hard, bare independence as old Willersley and the sister who kept house for him possessed. There were quite a number of young couples like ourselves, a little younger and more artless, or a little older and more established. Among the younger men I had a sort of distinction because of my Cambridge reputation and my writing, and because, unlike them, I was an adventurer and had won and married my way into their circles instead of being naturally there. They couldn't quite reckon upon what I should do; they felt I had reserves of experience and incalculable traditions. Close to us were the Cramptons, Willie Crampton, who has since been Postmaster-General, rich and very important in Rockshire, and his younger brother Edward, who has specialised in history and become one of those unimaginative men of letters who are the glory of latter-day England. Then there was Lewis, further towards Kensington, where his cousins the Solomons and the Hartsteins lived, a brilliant representative of his race, able, industrious and invariably uninspired, with a wife a little in revolt against the racial tradition of feminine servitude and inclined to the suffragette point of view, and Bunting Harblow, an old blue, and with an erratic disposition well under the control of the able little cousin he had married. I had known all these men, but now (with *Altiora* floating angelically in benediction) they opened their hearts to me and took me into their order. They were all like myself, prospective Liberal candidates, with a feeling that the period of wandering in the wilderness of opposition was drawing near its close. They were all tremendously keen upon social and political service, and all greatly under the sway of the ideal of a simple, strenuous life, a life finding its satisfactions in political achievements and distinctions. The young wives were as keen about it as the young husbands, Margaret most of all, and I-- whatever elements in me didn't march with the attitudes and habits of this set were very much in the background during that time.

We would give little dinners and have evening gatherings at which

everything was very simple and very good, with a slight but perceptible austerity, and there was more good fruit and flowers and less perhaps in the way of savouries, patties and entrees than was customary. Sherry we banished, and Marsala and liqueurs, and there was always good home-made lemonade available. No men waited, but very expert parlourmaids. Our meat was usually Welsh mutton--I don't know why, unless that mountains have ever been the last refuge of the severer virtues. And we talked politics and books and ideas and Bernard Shaw (who was a department by himself and supposed in those days to be ethically sound at bottom), and mingled with the intellectuals--I myself was, as it were, a promoted intellectual.

The Cramptons had a tendency to read good things aloud on their less frequented receptions, but I have never been able to participate submissively in this hyper-digestion of written matter, and generally managed to provoke a disruptive debate. We were all very earnest to make the most of ourselves and to be and do, and I wonder still at times, with an unassuaged perplexity, how it is that in that phase of utmost earnestness I have always seemed to myself to be most remote from reality.

2

I look back now across the detaching intervention of sixteen crowded years, critically and I fancy almost impartially, to those beginnings of my married life. I try to recall something near to their proper order the developing phases of relationship. I am struck most of all by the immense unpremeditated, generous-spirited insincerities upon which Margaret and I were building.

It seems to me that here I have to tell perhaps the commonest experience of all among married educated people, the deliberate,

shy, complex effort to fill the yawning gaps in temperament as they appear, the sustained, failing attempt to bridge abysses, level barriers, evade violent pressures. I have come these latter years of my life to believe that it is possible for a man and woman to be absolutely real with one another, to stand naked souled to each other, unashamed and unafraid, because of the natural all-glorifying love between them. It is possible to love and be loved untroubling, as a bird flies through the air. But it is a rare and intricate chance that brings two people within sight of that essential union, and for the majority marriage must adjust itself on other terms. Most coupled people never really look at one another. They look a little away to preconceived ideas. And each from the first days of love-making HIDES from the other, is afraid of disappointing, afraid of offending, afraid of discoveries in either sense. They build not solidly upon the rock of truth, but upon arches and pillars and queer provisional supports that are needed to make a common foundation, and below in the imprisoned darkneses, below the fine fabric they sustain together begins for each of them a cavernous hidden life. Down there things may be prowling that scarce ever peep out to consciousness except in the grey half-light of sleepless nights, passions that flash out for an instant in an angry glance and are seen no more, starved victims and beautiful dreams bricked up to die. For the most of us there is no jail delivery of those inner depths, and the life above goes on to its honourable end.

I have told how I loved Margaret and how I came to marry her. Perhaps already unintentionally I have indicated the quality of the injustice our marriage did us both. There was no kindred between us and no understanding. We were drawn to one another by the unlikeness of our quality, by the things we misunderstood in each other. I know a score of couples who have married in that fashion.

Modern conditions and modern ideas, and in particular the intenser and subtler perceptions of modern life, press more and more heavily upon a marriage tie whose fashion comes from an earlier and less

discriminating time. When the wife was her husband's subordinate, meeting him simply and uncritically for simple ends, when marriage was a purely domestic relationship, leaving thought and the vivid things of life almost entirely to the unencumbered man, mental and temperamental incompatibilities mattered comparatively little. But now the wife, and particularly the loving childless wife, unpremeditatedly makes a relentless demand for a complete association, and the husband exacts unthought of delicacies of understanding and co-operation. These are stupendous demands. People not only think more fully and elaborately about life than they ever did before, but marriage obliges us to make that ever more accidented progress a three-legged race of carelessly assorted couples. . . .

Our very mental texture was different. I was rough-minded, to use the phrase of William James, primary and intuitive and illogical; she was tender-minded, logical, refined and secondary. She was loyal to pledge and persons, sentimental and faithful; I am loyal to ideas and instincts, emotional and scheming. My imagination moves in broad gestures; her's was delicate with a real dread of extravagance. My quality is sensuous and ruled by warm impulses; hers was discriminating and essentially inhibitory. I like the facts of the case and to mention everything; I like naked bodies and the jolly smells of things. She abounded in reservations, in circumlocutions and evasions, in keenly appreciated secondary points. Perhaps the reader knows that Tintoretto in the National Gallery, the Origin of the Milky Way. It is an admirable test of tempera-mental quality. In spite of my early training I have come to regard that picture as altogether delightful; to Margaret it has always been "needlessly offensive." In that you have our fundamental breach. She had a habit, by no means rare, of damning what she did not like or find sympathetic in me on the score that it was not my "true self," and she did not so much accept the universe as select from it and do her best to ignore the rest. And also I had far more initiative than had she. This is no catalogue of

rights and wrongs, or superiorities and inferiorities; it is a catalogue of differences between two people linked in a relationship that constantly becomes more intolerant of differences.

This is how we stood to each other, and none of it was clear to either of us at the outset. To begin with, I found myself reserving myself from her, then slowly apprehending a jarring between our minds and what seemed to me at first a queer little habit of misunderstanding in her. . . .

It did not hinder my being very fond of her. . . .

Where our system of reservation became at once most usual and most astounding was in our personal relations. It is not too much to say that in that regard we never for a moment achieved sincerity with one another during the first six years of our life together. It goes even deeper than that, for in my effort to realise the ideal of my marriage I ceased even to attempt to be sincere with myself. I would not admit my own perceptions and interpretations. I tried to fit myself to her thinner and finer determinations. There are people who will say with a note of approval that I was learning to conquer myself. I record that much without any note of approval. . . .

For some years I never deceived Margaret about any concrete fact nor, except for the silence about my earlier life that she had almost forced upon me, did I hide any concrete fact that seemed to affect her, but from the outset I was guilty of immense spiritual concealments, my very marriage was based, I see now, on a spiritual subterfuge; I hid moods from her, pretended feelings. . . .

The interest and excitement of setting-up a house, of walking about it from room to room and from floor to floor, or sitting at one's own dinner table and watching one's wife control conversation with a pretty, timid resolution, of taking a place among the secure and free people of our world, passed almost insensibly into the interest and excitement of my Parliamentary candidature for the Kinghamstead Division, that shapeless chunk of agricultural midland between the Great Western and the North Western railways. I was going to "take hold" at last, the Kinghamstead Division was my appointed handle. I was to find my place in the rather indistinctly sketched constructions that were implicit in the minds of all our circle. The precise place I had to fill and the precise functions I had to discharge were not as yet very clear, but all that, we felt sure, would become plain as things developed.

A few brief months of vague activities of "nursing" gave place to the excitements of the contest that followed the return of Mr. Campbell-Bannerman to power in 1905. So far as the Kinghamstead Division was concerned it was a depressed and tepid battle. I went about the constituency making three speeches that were soon threadbare, and an odd little collection of people worked for me; two solicitors, a cheap photographer, a democratic parson, a number of dissenting ministers, the Mayor of Kinghamstead, a Mrs. Bulger, the widow of an old Chartist who had grown rich through electric traction patents, Sir Roderick Newton, a Jew who had bought Calersham Castle, and old Sir Graham Rivers, that sturdy old soldier, were among my chief supporters. We had headquarters in each town and village, mostly there were empty shops we leased temporarily, and there at least a sort of fuss and a coming and going were maintained. The rest of the population stared in a state of suspended judgment as we went about the business. The country was supposed to be in a state of intellectual conflict and deliberate decision, in history it will no doubt figure as a momentous conflict. Yet except for an occasional flare of bill-sticking or a bill in a window or a placard-plastered motor-car or

an argumentative group of people outside a public-house or a sluggish movement towards the schoolroom or village hall, there was scarcely a sign that a great empire was revising its destinies. Now and then one saw a canvasser on a doorstep. For the most part people went about their business with an entirely irresponsible confidence in the stability of the universe. At times one felt a little absurd with one's flutter of colours and one's air of saving the country.

My opponent was a quite undistinguished Major-General who relied upon his advocacy of Protection, and was particularly anxious we should avoid "personalities" and fight the constituency in a gentlemanly spirit. He was always writing me notes, apologising for excesses on the part of his supporters, or pointing out the undesirability of some course taken by mine.

My speeches had been planned upon broad lines, but they lost touch with these as the polling approached. To begin with I made a real attempt to put what was in my mind before the people I was to supply with a political voice. I spoke of the greatness of our empire and its destinies, of the splendid projects and possibilities of life and order that lay before the world, of all that a resolute and constructive effort might do at the present time. "We are building a state," I said, "secure and splendid, we are in the dawn of the great age of mankind." Sometimes that would get a solitary "'Ear! 'ear!" Then having created, as I imagined, a fine atmosphere, I turned upon the history of the last Conservative administration and brought it into contrast with the wide occasions of the age; discussed its failure to control the grasping financiers in South Africa, its failure to release public education from sectarian squabbles, its misconduct of the Boer War, its waste of the world's resources. . . .

It soon became manifest that my opening and my general spaciousness of method bored my audiences a good deal. The richer and wider my

phrases the thinner sounded my voice in these non-resonating gatherings. Even the platform supporters grew restive unconsciously, and stirred and coughed. They did not recognise themselves as mankind. Building an empire, preparing a fresh stage in the history of humanity, had no appeal for them. They were mostly everyday, toiling people, full of small personal solitudes, and they came to my meetings, I think, very largely as a relaxation. This stuff was not relaxing. They did not think politics was a great constructive process, they thought it was a kind of dog-fight. They wanted fun, they wanted spice, they wanted hits, they wanted also a chance to say "'Ear', 'ear!'" in an intelligent and honourable manner and clap their hands and drum with their feet. The great constructive process in history gives so little scope for clapping and drumming and saying "'Ear, 'ear!'" One might as well think of hounding on the solar system.

So after one or two attempts to lift my audiences to the level of the issues involved, I began to adapt myself to them. I cut down my review of our imperial outlook and destinies more and more, and developed a series of hits and anecdotes and--what shall I call them?--"crudifications" of the issue. My helper's congratulated me on the rapid improvement of my platform style. I ceased to speak of the late Prime Minister with the respect I bore him, and began to fall in with the popular caricature of him as an artful rabbit-witted person intent only on keeping his leadership, in spite of the vigorous attempts of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain to oust him therefrom. I ceased to qualify my statement that Protection would make food dearer for the agricultural labourer. I began to speak of Mr. Alfred Lyttelton as an influence at once insane and diabolical, as a man inspired by a passionate desire to substitute manacled but still criminal Chinese for honest British labourers throughout the world. And when it came to the mention of our own kindly leader, of Mr. John Burns or any one else of any prominence at all on our side I fell more and more into the intonation of one who mentions the high gods. And I had my reward in brighter meetings and readier and

readier applause.

One goes on from phase to phase in these things.

"After all," I told myself, "if one wants to get to Westminster one must follow the road that leads there," but I found the road nevertheless rather unexpectedly distasteful. "When one gets there," I said, "then it is one begins."

But I would lie awake at nights with that sore throat and headache and fatigue which come from speaking in ill-ventilated rooms, and wondering how far it was possible to educate a whole people to great political ideals. Why should political work always rot down to personalities and personal appeals in this way? Life is, I suppose, to begin with and end with a matter of personalities, from personalities all our broader interests arise and to personalities they return. All our social and political effort, all of it, is like trying to make a crowd of people fall into formation. The broader lines appear, but then come a rush and excitement and irrelevancy, and forthwith the incipient order has vanished and the marshals must begin the work over again!

My memory of all that time is essentially confusion. There was a frightful lot of tiresome locomotion in it; for the Kinghamstead Division is extensive, abounding in ill-graded and badly metalled cross-roads and vicious little hills, and singularly unpleasing to the eye in a muddy winter. It is sufficiently near to London to have undergone the same process of ill-regulated expansion that made Bromstead the place it is. Several of its overgrown villages have developed strings of factories and sidings along the railway lines, and there is an abundance of petty villas. There seemed to be no place at which one could take hold of more than this or that element of the population. Now we met in a meeting-house, now in a Masonic Hall or Drill Hall; I also did a certain amount of open-air speaking in the dinner hour outside gas-works and groups of factories. Some

special sort of people was, as it were, secreted in response to each special appeal. One said things carefully adjusted to the distinctive limitations of each gathering. Jokes of an incredible silliness and shallowness drifted about us. Our advisers made us declare that if we were elected we would live in the district, and one hasty agent had bills printed, "If Mr. Remington is elected he will live here." The enemy obtained a number of these bills and stuck them on outhouses, pigstyes, dog-kennels; you cannot imagine how irksome the repetition of that jest became. The vast drifting indifference in between my meetings impressed me more and more. I realised the vagueness of my own plans as I had never done before I brought them to the test of this experience. I was perplexed by the riddle of just how far I was, in any sense of the word, taking hold at all, how far I wasn't myself flowing into an accepted groove.

Margaret was troubled by no such doubts. She was clear I had to go into Parliament on the side of Liberalism and the light, as against the late Government and darkness. Essential to the memory of my first contest, is the memory of her clear bright face, very resolute and grave, helping me consciously, steadfastly, with all her strength. Her quiet confidence, while I was so dissatisfied, worked curiously towards the alienation of my sympathies. I felt she had no business to be so sure of me. I had moments of vivid resentment at being thus marched towards Parliament.

I seemed now always to be discovering alien forces of character in her. Her way of taking life diverged from me more and more. She sounded amazing, independent notes. She bought some particularly costly furs for the campaign that roused enthusiasm whenever she appeared. She also made me a birthday present in November of a heavily fur-trimmed coat and this she would make me remove as I went on to the platform, and hold over her arm until I was ready to resume it. It was fearfully heavy for her and she liked it to be heavy for her. That act of servitude was in essence a towering self-assertion. I would glance sideways while some chairman

floundered through his introduction and see the clear blue eye with which she regarded the audience, which existed so far as she was concerned merely to return me to Parliament. It was a friendly eye, provided they were not silly or troublesome. But it kindled a little at the hint of a hostile question. After we had come so far and taken so much trouble!

She constituted herself the dragoman of our political travels. In hotels she was serenely resolute for the quietest and the best, she rejected all their proposals for meals and substituted a severely nourishing dietary of her own, and even in private houses she astonished me by her tranquil insistence upon special comforts and sustenance. I can see her face now as it would confront a hostess, a little intent, but sweetly resolute and assured.

Since our marriage she had read a number of political memoirs, and she had been particularly impressed by the career of Mrs. Gladstone. I don't think it occurred to her to compare and contrast my quality with that of Mrs. Gladstone's husband. I suspect her of a deliberate intention of achieving parallel results by parallel methods. I was to be Gladstonised. Gladstone it appeared used to lubricate his speeches with a mixture--if my memory serves me right--of egg beaten up in sherry, and Margaret was very anxious I should take a leaf from that celebrated book. She wanted, I know, to hold the glass in her hand while I was speaking.

But here I was firm. "No," I said, very decisively, "simply I won't stand that. It's a matter of conscience. I shouldn't feel--democratic. I'll take my chance of the common water in the carafe on the chairman's table."

"I DO wish you wouldn't," she said, distressed.

It was absurd to feel irritated; it was so admirable of her, a little childish, infinitely womanly and devoted and fine--and I see

now how pathetic. But I could not afford to succumb to her. I wanted to follow my own leading, to see things clearly, and this reassuring pose of a high destiny, of an almost terribly efficient pursuit of a fixed end when as a matter of fact I had a very doubtful end and an aim as yet by no means fixed, was all too seductive for dalliance. . . .

4

And into all these things with the manner of a trifling and casual incident comes the figure of Isabel Rivers. My first impressions of her were of a rather ugly and ungainly, extraordinarily interesting schoolgirl with a beautiful quick flush under her warm brown skin, who said and did amusing and surprising things. When first I saw her she was riding a very old bicycle downhill with her feet on the fork of the frame--it seemed to me to the public danger, but afterwards I came to understand the quality of her nerve better--and on the third occasion she was for her own private satisfaction climbing a tree. On the intervening occasion we had what seems now to have been a long sustained conversation about the political situation and the books and papers I had written.

I wonder if it was.

What a delightful mixture of child and grave woman she was at that time, and how little I reckoned on the part she would play in my life! And since she has played that part, how impossible it is to tell now of those early days! Since I wrote that opening paragraph to this section my idle pen has been, as it were, playing by itself and sketching faces on the blotting pad--one impish wizened visage is oddly like little Bailey--and I have been thinking cheek on fist amidst a limitless wealth of memories. She sits below me on the low

wall under the olive trees with our little child in her arms. She is now the central fact in my life. It still seems a little incredible that that should be so. She has destroyed me as a politician, brought me to this belated rebeginning of life. When I sit down and try to make her a girl again, I feel like the Arabian fisherman who tried to put the genius back into the pot from which it had spread gigantic across the skies. . . .

I have a very clear vision of her rush downhill past our labouring ascendant car--my colours fluttered from handle-bar and shoulder-knot--and her waving hand and the sharp note of her voice. She cried out something, I don't know what, some greeting.

"What a pretty girl!" said Margaret.

Parvill, the cheap photographer, that industrious organiser for whom by way of repayment I got those magic letters, that knighthood of the underlings, "J. P." was in the car with us and explained her to us. "One of the best workers you have," he said. . . .

And then after a toilsome troubled morning we came, rather cross from the strain of sustained amiability, to Sir Graham Rivers' house. It seemed all softness and quiet--I recall dead white panelling and oval mirrors horizontally set and a marble fireplace between white marble-blind Homer and marble-blind Virgil, very grave and fine--and how Isabel came in to lunch in a shapeless thing like a blue smock that made her bright quick-changing face seem yellow under her cloud of black hair. Her step-sister was there, Miss Gamer, to whom the house was to descend, a well-dressed lady of thirty, amiably disavowing responsibility for Isabel in every phrase and gesture. And there was a very pleasant doctor, an Oxford man, who seemed on excellent terms with every one. It was manifest that he was in the habit of sparring with the girl, but on this occasion she wasn't sparring and refused to be teased into a display in spite of the taunts of either him or her father. She was, they discovered

with rising eyebrows, shy. It seemed an opportunity too rare for them to miss. They proclaimed her enthusiasm for me in a way that brought a flush to her cheek and a look into her eye between appeal and defiance. They declared she had read my books, which I thought at the time was exaggeration, their dry political quality was so distinctly not what one was accustomed to regard as schoolgirl reading. Miss Gamer protested to protect her, "When once in a blue moon Isabel is well-behaved. . . .!"

Except for these attacks I do not remember much of the conversation at table; it was, I know, discursive and concerned with the sort of topographical and social and electioneering fact natural to such a visit. Old Rivers struck me as a delightful person, modestly unconscious of his doubly-earned V. C. and the plucky defence of Kardin-Bergat that won his baronetcy. He was that excellent type, the soldier radical, and we began that day a friendship that was only ended by his death in the hunting-field three years later. He interested Margaret into a disregard of my plate and the fact that I had secured the illegal indulgence of Moselle. After lunch we went for coffee into another low room, this time brown panelled and looking through French windows on a red-walled garden, graceful even in its winter desolation. And there the conversation suddenly picked up and became good. It had fallen to a pause, and the doctor, with an air of definitely throwing off a mask and wrecking an established tranquillity, remarked: "Very probably you Liberals will come in, though I'm not sure you'll come in so mightily as you think, but what you do when you do come in passes my comprehension."

"There's good work sometimes," said Sir Graham, "in undoing."

"You can't govern a great empire by amending and repealing the Acts of your predecessors," said the doctor.

There came that kind of pause that happens when a subject is broached too big and difficult for the gathering. Margaret's blue

eyes regarded the speaker with quiet disapproval for a moment, and then came to me in the not too confident hope that I would snub him out of existence with some prompt rhetorical stroke. A voice spoke out of the big arm-chair.

"We'll do things," said Isabel.

The doctor's eye lit with the joy of the fisherman who strikes his fish at last. "What will you do?" he asked her.

"Every one knows we're a mixed lot," said Isabel.

"Poor old chaps like me!" interjected the general.

"But that's not a programme," said the doctor.

"But Mr. Remington has published a programme," said Isabel.

The doctor cocked half an eye at me.

"In some review," the girl went on. "After all, we're not going to elect the whole Liberal party in the Kinghamstead Division. I'm a Remington-ite!"

"But the programme," said the doctor, "the programme--"

"In front of Mr. Remington!"

"Scandal always comes home at last," said the doctor. "Let him hear the worst."

"I'd like to hear," I said. "Electioneering shatters convictions and enfeebles the mind."

"Not mine," said Isabel stoutly. "I mean--Well, anyhow I take it

Mr. Remington stands for constructing a civilised state out of this muddle."

"THIS muddle," protested the doctor with an appeal of the eye to the beautiful long room and the ordered garden outside the bright clean windows.

"Well, THAT muddle, if you like! There's a slum within a mile of us already. The dust and blacks get worse and worse, Sissie?"

"They do," agreed Miss Gamer.

"Mr. Remington stands for construction, order, education, discipline."

"And you?" said the doctor.

"I'm a good Remington-ite."

"Discipline!" said the doctor.

"Oh!" said Isabel. "At times one has to be--Napoleonic. They want to libel me, Mr. Remington. A political worker can't always be in time for meals, can she? At times one has to make--splendid cuts."

Miss Gamer said something indistinctly.

"Order, education, discipline," said Sir Graham. "Excellent things! But I've a sort of memory--in my young days--we talked about something called liberty."

"Liberty under the law," I said, with an unexpected approving murmur from Margaret, and took up the defence. "The old Liberal definition of liberty was a trifle uncritical. Privilege and legal restrictions are not the only enemies of liberty. An uneducated, underbred, and underfed propertyless man is a man who has lost the

possibility of liberty. There's no liberty worth a rap for him. A man who is swimming hopelessly for life wants nothing but the liberty to get out of the water; he'll give every other liberty for it--until he gets out."

Sir Graham took me up and we fell into a discussion of the changing qualities of Liberalism. It was a good give-and-take talk, extraordinarily refreshing after the nonsense and crowding secondary issues of the electioneering outside. We all contributed more or less except Miss Gamer; Margaret followed with knitted brows and occasional interjections. "People won't SEE that," for example, and "It all seems so plain to me." The doctor showed himself clever but unsubstantial and inconsistent. Isabel sat back with her black mop of hair buried deep in the chair looking quickly from face to face. Her colour came and went with her vivid intellectual excitement; occasionally she would dart a word, usually a very apt word, like a lizard's tongue into the discussion. I remember chiefly that a chance illustration betrayed that she had read Bishop Burnet. . . .

After that it was not surprising that Isabel should ask for a lift in our car as far as the Lurky Committee Room, and that she should offer me quite sound advice EN ROUTE upon the intellectual temperament of the Lurky gasworkers.

On the third occasion that I saw Isabel she was, as I have said, climbing a tree--and a very creditable tree--for her own private satisfaction. It was a lapse from the high seriousness of politics, and I perceived she felt that I might regard it as such and attach too much importance to it. I had some difficulty in reassuring her. And it's odd to note now--it has never occurred to me before--that from that day to this I do not think I have ever reminded Isabel of that encounter.

And after that memory she seems to be flickering about always in the election, an inextinguishable flame; now she flew by on her bicycle,

now she dashed into committee rooms, now she appeared on doorsteps in animated conversation with dubious voters; I took every chance I could to talk to her--I had never met anything like her before in the world, and she interested me immensely--and before the polling day she and I had become, in the frankest simplicity, fast friends. . . .

That, I think, sets out very fairly the facts of our early relationship. But it is hard to get it true, either in form or texture, because of the bright, translucent, coloured, and refracting memories that come between. One forgets not only the tint and quality of thoughts and impressions through that intervening haze, one forgets them altogether. I don't remember now that I ever thought in those days of passionate love or the possibility of such love between us. I may have done so again and again. But I doubt it very strongly. I don't think I ever thought of such aspects. I had no more sense of any danger between us, seeing the years and things that separated us, than I could have had if she had been an intelligent bright-eyed bird. Isabel came into my life as a new sort of thing; she didn't join on at all to my previous experiences of womanhood. They were not, as I have laboured to explain, either very wide or very penetrating experiences, on the whole, "strangled dinginess" expresses them, but I do not believe they were narrower or shallower than those of many other men of my class. I thought of women as pretty things and beautiful things, pretty rather than beautiful, attractive and at times disconcertingly attractive, often bright and witty, but, because of the vast reservations that hid them from me, wanting, subtly and inevitably wanting, in understanding. My idealisation of Margaret had evaporated insensibly after our marriage. The shrine I had made for her in my private thoughts stood at last undisguisedly empty. But Isabel did not for a moment admit of either idealisation or interested contempt. She opened a new sphere of womanhood to me. With her steady amber-brown eyes, her unaffected interest in impersonal things, her upstanding waistless blue body, her energy,

decision and courage, she seemed rather some new and infinitely finer form of boyhood than a feminine creature, as I had come to measure femininity. She was my perfect friend. Could I have foreseen, had my world been more wisely planned, to this day we might have been such friends.

She seemed at that time unconscious of sex, though she has told me since how full she was of protesting curiosities and restrained emotions. She spoke, as indeed she has always spoken, simply, clearly, and vividly; schoolgirl slang mingled with words that marked ample voracious reading, and she moved quickly with the free directness of some graceful young animal. She took many of the easy freedoms a man or a sister might have done with me. She would touch my arm, lay a hand on my shoulder as I sat, adjust the lapel of a breast-pocket as she talked to me. She says now she loved me always from the beginning. I doubt if there was a suspicion of that in her mind those days. I used to find her regarding me with the clearest, steadiest gaze in the world, exactly like the gaze of some nice healthy innocent animal in a forest, interested, inquiring, speculative, but singularly untroubled. . . .

5

Polling day came after a last hoarse and dingy crescendo. The excitement was not of the sort that makes one forget one is tired out. The waiting for the end of the count has left a long blank mark on my memory, and then everyone was shaking my hand and repeating: "Nine hundred and seventy-six."

My success had been a foregone conclusion since the afternoon, but we all behaved as though we had not been anticipating this result for hours, as though any other figures but nine hundred and seventy-

six would have meant something entirely different. "Nine hundred and seventy-six!" said Margaret. "They didn't expect three hundred."

"Nine hundred and seventy-six," said a little short man with a paper. "It means a big turnover. Two dozen short of a thousand, you know."

A tremendous hullaboo began outside, and a lot of fresh people came into the room.

Isabel, flushed but not out of breath, Heaven knows where she had sprung from at that time of night! was running her hand down my sleeve almost caressingly, with the innocent bold affection of a girl. "Got you in!" she said. "It's been no end of a lark."

"And now," said I, "I must go and be constructive."

"Now you must go and be constructive," she said.

"You've got to live here," she added.

"By Jove! yes," I said. "We'll have to house hunt."

"I shall read all your speeches."

She hesitated.

"I wish I was you," she said, and said it as though it was not exactly the thing she was meaning to say.

"They want you to speak," said Margaret, with something unsaid in her face.

"You must come out with me," I answered, putting my arm through

hers, and felt someone urging me to the French windows that gave on the balcony.

"If you think--" she said, yielding gladly

"Oh, RATHER!" said I.

The Mayor of Kinghamstead, a managing little man with no great belief in my oratorical powers, was sticking his face up to mine.

"It's all over," he said, " and you've won. Say all the nice things you can and say them plainly."

I turned and handed Margaret out through the window and stood looking over the Market-place, which was more than half filled with swaying people. The crowd set up a roar of approval at the sight of us, tempered by a little booing. Down in one corner of the square a fight was going on for a flag, a fight that even the prospect of a speech could not instantly check. "Speech!" cried voices, "Speech!" and then a brief "boo-oo-oo" that was drowned in a cascade of shouts and cheers. The conflict round the flag culminated in the smashing of a pane of glass in the chemist's window and instantly sank to peace.

"Gentlemen voters of the Kinghamstead Division," I began.

"Votes for Women!" yelled a voice, amidst laughter--the first time I remember hearing that memorable war-cry.

"Three cheers for Mrs. Remington!"

"Mrs. Remington asks me to thank you," I said, amidst further uproar and reiterated cries of "Speech!"

Then silence came with a startling swiftness.

Isabel was still in my mind, I suppose. "I shall go to Westminster," I began. I sought for some compelling phrase and could not find one. "To do my share," I went on, "in building up a great and splendid civilisation."

I paused, and there was a weak gust of cheering, and then a renewal of booing.

"This election," I said, "has been the end and the beginning of much. New ideas are abroad--"

"Chinese labour," yelled a voice, and across the square swept a wildfire of booting and bawling.

It is one of the few occasions when I quite lost my hold on a speech. I glanced sideways and saw the Mayor of Kinghamstead speaking behind his hand to Parvill. By a happy chance Parvill caught my eye.

"What do they want?" I asked.

"Eh?"

"What do they want?"

"Say something about general fairness--the other side," prompted Parvill, flattered but a little surprised by my appeal. I pulled myself hastily into a more popular strain with a gross eulogy of my opponent's good taste.

"Chinese labour!" cried the voice again.

"You've given that notice to quit," I answered.

The Market-place roared delight, but whether that delight expressed hostility to Chinamen or hostility to their practical enslavement no student of the General Election of 1906 has ever been able to determine. Certainly one of the most effective posters on our side displayed a hideous yellow face, just that and nothing more. There was not even a legend to it. How it impressed the electorate we did not know, but that it impressed the electorate profoundly there can be no disputing.

6

Kinghamstead was one of the earliest constituencies fought, and we came back--it must have been Saturday--triumphant but very tired, to our house in Radnor Square. In the train we read the first intimations that the victory of our party was likely to be a sweeping one.

Then came a period when one was going about receiving and giving congratulations and watching the other men arrive, very like a boy who has returned to school with the first batch after the holidays. The London world reeked with the General Election; it had invaded the nurseries. All the children of one's friends had got big maps of England cut up into squares to represent constituencies and were busy sticking gummed blue labels over the conquered red of Unionism that had hitherto submerged the country. And there were also orange labels, if I remember rightly, to represent the new Labour party, and green for the Irish. I engaged myself to speak at one or two London meetings, and lunched at the Reform, which was fairly tepid, and dined and spent one or two tumultuous evenings at the National Liberal Club, which was in active eruption. The National Liberal became feverishly congested towards midnight as the results of the counting came dropping in. A big green-baize screen had been fixed

up at one end of the large smoking-room with the names of the constituencies that were voting that day, and directly the figures came to hand, up they went, amidst cheers that at last lost their energy through sheer repetition, whenever there was record of a Liberal gain. I don't remember what happened when there was a Liberal loss; I don't think that any were announced while I was there.

How packed and noisy the place was, and what a reek of tobacco and whisky fumes we made! Everybody was excited and talking, making waves of harsh confused sound that beat upon one's ears, and every now and then hoarse voices would shout for someone to speak. Our little set was much in evidence. Both the Cramptons were in, Lewis, Bunting Harblow. We gave brief addresses attuned to this excitement and the late hour, amidst much enthusiasm.

Now we can DO things!" I said amidst a rapture of applause. Men I did not know from Adam held up glasses and nodded to me in solemn fuddled approval as I came down past them into the crowd again.

Men were betting whether the Unionists would lose more or less than two hundred seats.

"I wonder just what we shall do with it all," I heard one sceptic speculating. . . .

After these orgies I would get home very tired and excited, and find it difficult to get to sleep. I would lie and speculate about what it was we WERE going to do. One hadn't anticipated quite such a tremendous accession to power for one's party. Liberalism was swirling in like a flood. . . .

I found the next few weeks very unsatisfactory and distressing. I don't clearly remember what it was I had expected; I suppose the fuss and strain of the General Election had built up a feeling that

my return would in some way put power into my hands, and instead I found myself a mere undistinguished unit in a vast but rather vague majority. There were moments when I felt very distinctly that a majority could be too big a crowd altogether. I had all my work still before me, I had achieved nothing as yet but opportunity, and a very crowded opportunity it was at that. Everyone about me was chatting Parliament and appointments; one breathed distracting and irritating speculations as to what would be done and who would be asked to do it. I was chiefly impressed by what was unlikely to be done and by the absence of any general plan of legislation to hold us all together. I found the talk about Parliamentary procedure and etiquette particularly trying. We dined with the elder Cramptons one evening, and old Sir Edward was lengthily sage about what the House liked, what it didn't like, what made a good impression and what a bad one. "A man shouldn't speak more than twice in his first session, and not at first on too contentious a topic," said Sir Edward. "No."

"Very much depends on manner. The House hates a lecturer. There's a sort of airy earnestness--"

He waved his cigar to eke out his words.

"Little peculiarities of costume count for a great deal. I could name one man who spent three years living down a pair of spatterdashers. On the other hand--a thing like that--if it catches the eye of the PUNCH man, for example, may be your making."

He went off into a lengthy speculation of why the House had come to like an originally unpopular Irishman named Biggar. . . .

The opening of Parliament gave me some peculiar moods. I began to feel more and more like a branded sheep. We were sworn in in batches, dozens and scores of fresh men, trying not to look too fresh under the inspection of policemen and messengers, all of us

carrying new silk hats and wearing magisterial coats. It is one of my vivid memories from this period, the sudden outbreak of silk hats in the smoking-room of the National Liberal Club. At first I thought there must have been a funeral. Familiar faces that one had grown to know under soft felt hats, under bowlers, under liberal-minded wide brims, and above artistic ties and tweed jackets, suddenly met one, staring with the stern gaze of self-consciousness, from under silk hats of incredible glossiness. There was a disposition to wear the hat much too forward, I thought, for a good Parliamentary style.

There was much play with the hats all through; a tremendous competition to get in first and put hats on coveted seats. A memory hangs about me of the House in the early afternoon, an inhumane desolation inhabited almost entirely by silk hats. The current use of cards to secure seats came later. There were yards and yards of empty green benches with hats and hats and hats distributed along them, resolute-looking top hats, lax top hats with a kind of shadowy grin under them, sensible top hats brim upward, and one scandalous incontinent that had rolled from the front Opposition bench right to the middle of the floor. A headless hat is surely the most soulless thing in the world, far worse even than a skull. . . .

At last, in a leisurely muddled manner we got to the Address; and I found myself packed in a dense elbowing crowd to the right of the Speaker's chair; while the attenuated Opposition, nearly leaderless after the massacre, tilted its brim to its nose and sprawled at its ease amidst its empty benches.

There was a tremendous hullaboo about something, and I craned to see over the shoulder of the man in front. "Order, order, order!"

"What's it about?" I asked.

The man in front of me was clearly no better informed, and then I

gathered from a slightly contemptuous Scotchman beside me that it was Chris Robinson had walked between the honourable member in possession of the house and the Speaker. I caught a glimpse of him blushing and whispering about his misadventure to a colleague. He was just that same little figure I had once assisted to entertain at Cambridge, but grey-haired now, and still it seemed with the same knitted muffler he had discarded for a reckless half-hour while he talked to us in Hatherleigh's rooms.

It dawned upon me that I wasn't particularly wanted in the House, and that I should get all I needed of the opening speeches next day from the TIMES.

I made my way out and was presently walking rather aimlessly through the outer lobby.

I caught myself regarding the shadow that spread itself out before me, multiplied itself in blue tints of various intensity, shuffled itself like a pack of cards under the many lights, the square shoulders, the silk hat, already worn with a parliamentary tilt backward; I found I was surveying this statesmanlike outline with a weak approval. "A MEMBER!" I felt the little cluster of people that were scattered about the lobby must be saying.

"Good God!" I said in hot reaction, "what am I doing here?"

It was one of those moments infinitely trivial in themselves, that yet are cardinal in a man's life. It came to me with extreme vividness that it wasn't so much that I had got hold of something as that something had got hold of me. I distinctly recall the rebound of my mind. Whatever happened in this Parliament, I at least would attempt something. "By God!" I said, "I won't be overwhelmed. I am here to do something, and do something I will!"

But I felt that for the moment I could not remain in the House.

I went out by myself with my thoughts into the night. It was a chilling night, and rare spots of rain were falling. I glanced over my shoulder at the lit windows of the Lords. I walked, I remember, westward, and presently came to the Grosvenar Embankment and followed it, watching the glittering black rush of the river and the dark, dimly lit barges round which the water swirled. Across the river was the hunched sky-line of Doulton's potteries, and a kiln flared redly. Dimly luminous trams were gliding amidst a dotted line of lamps, and two little trains crawled into Waterloo station. Mysterious black figures came by me and were suddenly changed to the commonplace at the touch of the nearer lamps. It was a big confused world, I felt, for a man to lay his hands upon.

I remember I crossed Vauxhall Bridge and stood for a time watching the huge black shapes in the darkness under the gas-works. A shoal of coal barges lay indistinctly on the darkly shining mud and water below, and a colossal crane was perpetually hauling up coal into mysterious blacknesses above, and dropping the empty clutch back to the barges. Just one or two minute black featureless figures of men toiled amidst these monster shapes. They did not seem to be controlling them but only moving about among them. These gas-works have a big chimney that belches a lurid flame into the night, a livid shivering bluish flame, shot with strange crimson streaks. . . .

On the other side of Lambeth Bridge broad stairs go down to the lapping water of the river; the lower steps are luminous under the lamps and one treads unwarned into thick soft Thames mud. They seem to be purely architectural steps, they lead nowhere, they have an air of absolute indifference to mortal ends.

Those shapes and large inhuman places--for all of mankind that one sees at night about Lambeth is minute and pitiful beside the industrial monsters that snort and toil there--mix up inextricably with my memories of my first days as a legislator. Black figures

drift by me, heavy vans clatter, a newspaper rough tears by on a motor bicycle, and presently, on the Albert Embankment, every seat has its one or two outcasts huddled together and slumbering.

"These things come, these things go," a whispering voice urged upon me, "as once those vast unmeaning Saurians whose bones encumber museums came and went rejoicing noisily in fruitless lives." . . .

Fruitless lives!--was that the truth of it all? . . .

Later I stood within sight of the Houses of Parliament in front of the colonnades of St Thomas's Hospital. I leant on the parapet close by a lamp-stand of twisted dolphins--and I prayed!

I remember the swirl of the tide upon the water, and how a string of barges presently came swinging and bumping round as high-water turned to ebb. That sudden change of position and my brief perplexity at it, sticks like a paper pin through the substance of my thoughts. It was then I was moved to prayer. I prayed that night that life might not be in vain, that in particular I might not live in vain. I prayed for strength and faith, that the monstrous blundering forces in life might not overwhelm me, might not beat me back to futility and a meaningless acquiescence in existent things. I knew myself for the weakling I was, I knew that nevertheless it was set for me to make such order as I could out of these disorders, and my task cowed me, gave me at the thought of it a sense of yielding feebleness.

"Break me, O God," I prayed at last, "disgrace me, torment me, destroy me as you will, but save me from self-complacency and little interests and little successes and the life that passes like the shadow of a dream."

BOOK THE THIRD

THE HEART OF POLITICS

CHAPTER THE FIRST

THE RIDDLE FOR THE STATESMAN

1

I have been planning and replanning, writing and rewriting, this next portion of my book for many days. I perceive I must leave it raw edged and ill joined. I have learnt something of the impossibility of History. For all I have had to tell is the story of one man's convictions and aims and how they reacted upon his life; and I find it too subtle and involved and intricate for the doing. I find it taxes all my powers to convey even the main forms and forces in that development. It is like looking through moving media of changing hue and variable refraction at something vitally unstable. Broad theories and generalisations are mingled with personal influences, with prevalent prejudices; and not only coloured but altered by phases of hopefulness and moods of depression. The web is made up of the most diverse elements, beyond treatment multitudinous. . . . For a week or so I desisted altogether, and walked over the mountains and returned to sit through the warm soft mornings among the shaded rocks above this little perched-up house of ours, discussing my difficulties with Isabel and I think on the whole complicating them further in the effort to simplify them to manageable and stateable elements.

Let me, nevertheless, attempt a rough preliminary analysis of this confused process. A main strand is quite easily traceable. This main strand is the story of my obvious life, my life as it must have looked to most of my acquaintances. It presents you with a young couple, bright, hopeful, and energetic, starting out under Altiora's auspices to make a career. You figure us well dressed and active, running about in motor-cars, visiting in great people's houses, dining amidst brilliant companies, going to the theatre, meeting in the lobby. Margaret wore hundreds of beautiful dresses. We must have had an air of succeeding meritoriously during that time.

We did very continually and faithfully serve our joint career. I thought about it a great deal, and did and refrained from doing ten thousand things for the sake of it. I kept up a solicitude for it, as it were by inertia, long after things had happened and changes occurred in me that rendered its completion impossible. Under certain very artless pretences, we wanted steadfastly to make a handsome position in the world, achieve respect, SUCCEED. Enormous unseen changes had been in progress for years in my mind and the realities of my life, before our general circle could have had any inkling of their existence, or suspected the appearances of our life. Then suddenly our proceedings began to be deflected, our outward unanimity visibly strained and marred by the insurgence of these so long-hidden developments.

That career had its own hidden side, of course; but when I write of these unseen factors I do not mean that but something altogether broader. I do not mean the everyday pettinesses which gave the cynical observer scope and told of a narrower, baser aspect of the fair but limited ambitions of my ostensible self. This "sub-careerist" element noted little things that affected the career, made me suspicious of the rivalry of so-and-so, propitiatory to so-and-so, whom, as a matter of fact, I didn't respect or feel in the least sympathetic towards; guarded with that man, who for all his charm and interest wasn't helpful, and a little touchy at the

appearance of neglect from that. No, I mean something greater and not something smaller when I write of a hidden life.

In the ostensible self who glowed under the approbation of Altiora Bailey, and was envied and discussed, praised and depreciated, in the House and in smoking-room gossip, you really have as much of a man as usually figures in a novel or an obituary notice. But I am tremendously impressed now in the retrospect by the realisation of how little that frontage represented me, and just how little such frontages do represent the complexities of the intelligent contemporary. Behind it, yet struggling to disorganise and alter it, altogether, was a far more essential reality, a self less personal, less individualised, and broader in its references. Its aims were never simply to get on; it had an altogether different system of demands and satisfactions. It was critical, curious, more than a little unfeeling--and relentlessly illuminating.

It is just the existence and development of this more generalised self-behind-the-frontage that is making modern life so much more subtle and intricate to render, and so much more hopeful in its relations to the perplexities of the universe. I see this mental and spiritual hinterland vary enormously in the people about me, from a type which seems to keep, as people say, all its goods in the window, to others who, like myself, come to regard the ostensible existence more and more as a mere experimental feeder and agent for that greater personality behind. And this back-self has its history of phases, its crises and happy accidents and irrevocable conclusions, more or less distinct from the adventures and achievements of the ostensible self. It meets persons and phrases, it assimilates the spirit of a book, it is startled into new realisations by some accident that seems altogether irrelevant to the general tenor of one's life. Its increasing independence of the ostensible career makes it the organ of corrective criticism; it accumulates disturbing energy. Then it breaks our overt promises and repudiates our pledges, coming down at last like an overbearing

mentor upon the small engagements of the pupil.

In the life of the individual it takes the role that the growth of philosophy, science, and creative literature may play in the development of mankind.

2

It is curious to recall how Britten helped shatter that obvious, lucidly explicable presentation of myself upon which I had embarked with Margaret. He returned to revive a memory of adolescent dreams and a habit of adolescent frankness; he reached through my shallow frontage as no one else seemed capable of doing, and dragged that back-self into relation with it.

I remember very distinctly a dinner and a subsequent walk with him which presents itself now as altogether typical of the quality of his influence.

I had come upon him one day while lunching with Somers and Sutton at the Playwrights' Club, and had asked him to dinner on the spur of the moment. He was oddly the same curly-headed, red-faced ventriloquist, and oddly different, rather seedy as well as untidy, and at first a little inclined to make comparisons with my sleek successfulness. But that disposition presently evaporated, and his talk was good and fresh and provocative. And something that had long been straining at its checks in my mind flapped over, and he and I found ourselves of one accord.

Altiora wasn't at this dinner. When she came matters were apt to become confusedly strenuous. There was always a slight and ineffectual struggle at the end on the part of Margaret to

anticipate Altiora's overpowering tendency to a rally and the establishment of some entirely unjustifiable conclusion by a COUP-DE-MAIN. When, however, Altiora was absent, the quieter influence of the Cramptons prevailed; temperance and information for its own sake prevailed excessively over dinner and the play of thought. . . . Good Lord! what bores the Cramptons were! I wonder I endured them as I did. They had all of them the trick of lying in wait conversationally; they had no sense of the self-exposures, the gallant experiments in statement that are necessary for good conversation. They would watch one talking with an expression exactly like peeping through bushes. Then they would, as it were, dash out, dissent succinctly, contradict some secondary fact, and back to cover. They gave one twilight nerves. Their wives were easier but still difficult at a stretch; they talked a good deal about children and servants, but with an air caught from Altiora of making observations upon sociological types. Lewis gossiped about the House in an entirely finite manner. He never raised a discussion; nobody ever raised a discussion. He would ask what we thought of Evesham's question that afternoon, and Edward would say it was good, and Mrs. Willie, who had been behind the grille, would think it was very good, and then Willie, parting the branches, would say rather conclusively that he didn't think it was very much good, and I would deny hearing the question in order to evade a profitless statement of views in that vacuum, and then we would cast about in our minds for some other topic of equal interest. . . .

On this occasion Altiora was absent, and to qualify our Young Liberal bleakness we had Mrs. Millingham, with her white hair and her fresh mind and complexion, and Esmeer. Willie Crampton was with us, but not his wife, who was having her third baby on principle; his brother Edward was present, and the Lewises, and of course the Bunting Harblows. There was also some other lady. I remember her as pale blue, but for the life of me I cannot remember her name.

Quite early there was a little breeze between Edward Crampton and

Esmeer, who had ventured an opinion about the partition of Poland. Edward was at work then upon the seventh volume of his monumental Life of Kosciusko, and a little impatient with views perhaps not altogether false but betraying a lamentable ignorance of accessible literature. At any rate, his correction of Esmeer was magisterial. After that there was a distinct and not altogether delightful pause, and then some one, it may have been the pale-blue lady, asked Mrs. Lewis whether her aunt Lady Carmixter had returned from her rest-and-sun-cure in Italy. That led to a rather anxiously sustained talk about regimen, and Willie told us how he had profited by the no-breakfast system. It had increased his power of work enormously. He could get through ten hours a day now without inconvenience.

"What do you do?" said Esmeer abruptly.

"Oh! no end of work. There's all the estate and looking after things."

"But publicly?"

"I asked three questions yesterday. And for one of them I had to consult nine books!"

We were drifting, I could see, towards Doctor Haig's system of dietary, and whether the exclusion or inclusion of fish and chicken were most conducive to high efficiency, when Britten, who had refused lemonade and claret and demanded Burgundy, broke out, and was discovered to be demanding in his throat just what we Young Liberals thought we were up to?

"I want," said Britten, repeating his challenge a little louder, "to hear just exactly what you think you are doing in Parliament?"

Lewis laughed nervously, and thought we were "Seeking the Good of the Community."

"HOW?"

"Beneficent Legislation," said Lewis.

"Beneficent in what direction?" insisted Britten. "I want to know where you think you are going."

"Amelioration of Social Conditions," said Lewis.

"That's only a phrase!"

"You wouldn't have me sketch bills at dinner?"

"I'd like you to indicate directions," said Britten, and waited.

"Upward and On," said Lewis with conscious neatness, and turned to ask Mrs. Bunting Harblow about her little boy's French.

For a time talk frothed over Britten's head, but the natural mischief in Mrs. Millingham had been stirred, and she was presently echoing his demand in lispings, quasi-confidential undertones. "What ARE we Liberals doing?" Then Esmeer fell in with the revolutionaries.

To begin with, I was a little shocked by this clamour for fundamentals--and a little disconcerted. I had the experience that I suppose comes to every one at times of discovering oneself together with two different sets of people with whom one has maintained two different sets of attitudes. It had always been, I perceived, an instinctive suppression in our circle that we shouldn't be more than vague about our political ideals. It had almost become part of my morality to respect this convention. It was understood we were all working hard, and keeping ourselves fit, tremendously fit, under Altiora's inspiration, Pro Bono Publico.

Bunting Harblow had his under-secretaryship, and Lewis was on the verge of the Cabinet, and these things we considered to be in the nature of confirmations. . . . It added to the discomfort of the situation that these plunging enquiries were being made in the presence of our wives.

The rebel section of our party forced the talk.

Edward Crampton was presently declaring--I forget in what relation: "The country is with us."

My long-controlled hatred of the Cramptons' stereotyped phrases about the Country and the House got the better of me. I showed my cloven hoof to my friends for the first time.

"We don't respect the Country as we used to do," I said. "We haven't the same belief we used to have in the will of the people. It's no good, Crampton, trying to keep that up. We Liberals know as a matter of fact--nowadays every one knows--that the monster that brought us into power has, among other deficiencies, no head. We've got to give it one--if possible with brains and a will. That lies in the future. For the present if the country is with us, it means merely that we happen to have hold of its tether."

Lewis was shocked. A "mandate" from the Country was sacred to his system of pretences.

Britten wasn't subdued by his first rebuff; presently he was at us again. There were several attempts to check his outbreak of interrogation; I remember the Cramptons asked questions about the welfare of various cousins of Lewis who were unknown to the rest of us, and Margaret tried to engage Britten in a sympathetic discussion of the Arts and Crafts exhibition. But Britten and Esmeer were persistent, Mrs. Millingham was mischievous, and in the end our rising hopes of Young Liberalism took to their thickets for good,

while we talked all over them of the prevalent vacuity of political intentions. Margaret was perplexed by me. It is only now I perceive just how perplexing I must have been. "Of course, she said with that faint stress of apprehension in her eyes, one must have aims." And, "it isn't always easy to put everything into phrases." "Don't be long," said Mrs. Edward Crampton to her husband as the wives trooped out. And afterwards when we went upstairs I had an indefinable persuasion that the ladies had been criticising Britten's share in our talk in an altogether unfavourable spirit. Mrs. Edward evidently thought him aggressive and impertinent, and Margaret with a quiet firmness that brooked no resistance, took him at once into a corner and showed him Italian photographs by Coburn. We dispersed early.

I walked with Britten along the Chelsea back streets towards Battersea Bridge--he lodged on the south side.

"Mrs. Millingham's a dear," he began.

"She's a dear."

"I liked her demand for a hansom because a four-wheeler was too safe."

"She was worked up," I said. "She's a woman of faultless character, but her instincts, as Altiora would say, are anarchistic--when she gives them a chance."

"So she takes it out in hansom cabs."

"Hansom cabs."

"She's wise," said Britten. . . .

"I hope, Remington," he went on after a pause, "I didn't rag your

other guests too much. I've a sort of feeling at moments-- Remington, those chaps are so infernally not--not bloody. It's part of a man's duty sometimes at least to eat red beef and get drunk. How is he to understand government if he doesn't? It scares me to think of your lot--by a sort of misapprehension--being in power. A kind of neuralgia in the head, by way of government. I don't understand where YOU come in. Those others--they've no lusts. Their ideal is anaemia. You and I, we had at least a lust to take hold of life and make something of it. They--they want to take hold of life and make nothing of it. They want to cut out all the stimulants. Just as though life was anything else but a reaction to stimulation!" . . .

He began to talk of his own life. He had had ill-fortune through most of it. He was poor and unsuccessful, and a girl he had been very fond of had been attacked and killed by a horse in a field in a very horrible manner. These things had wounded and tortured him, but they hadn't broken him. They had, it seemed to me, made a kind of crippled and ugly demigod of him. He was, I began to perceive, so much better than I had any right to expect. At first I had been rather struck by his unkempt look, and it made my reaction all the stronger. There was about him something, a kind of raw and bleeding faith in the deep things of life, that stirred me profoundly as he showed it. My set of people had irritated him and disappointed him. I discovered at his touch how they irritated him. He reproached me boldly. He made me feel ashamed of my easy acquiescences as I walked in my sleek tall neatness beside his rather old coat, his rather battered hat, his sturdier shorter shape, and listened to his denunciations of our self-satisfied New Liberalism and Progressivism.

"It has the same relation to progress--the reality of progress--that the things they paint on door panels in the suburbs have to art and beauty. There's a sort of filiation. . . . Your Altiora's just the political equivalent of the ladies who sell traced cloth for

embroidery; she's a dealer in Refined Social Reform for the Parlour. The real progress, Remington, is a graver thing and a painfuller thing and a slower thing altogether. Look! THAT"--and he pointed to where under a boarding in the light of a gas lamp a dingy prostitute stood lurking--" was in Babylon and Nineveh. Your little lot make believe there won't be anything of the sort after this Parliament! They're going to vanish at a few top notes from Altiora Bailey! Remington!--it's foolery. It's prigs at play. It's make-believe, make-believe! Your people there haven't got hold of things, aren't beginning to get hold of things, don't know anything of life at all, shirk life, avoid life, get in little bright clean rooms and talk big over your bumpers of lemonade while the Night goes by outside--untouched. Those Crampton fools slink by all this,"--he waved at the woman again--"pretend it doesn't exist, or is going to be banished root and branch by an Act to keep children in the wet outside public-houses. Do you think they really care, Remington? I don't. It's make-believe. What they want to do, what Lewis wants to do, what Mrs. Bunting Harblow wants her husband to do, is to sit and feel very grave and necessary and respected on the Government benches. They think of putting their feet out like statesmen, and tilting shiny hats with becoming brims down over their successful noses. Presentation portrait to a club at fifty. That's their Reality. That's their scope. They don't, it's manifest, WANT to think beyond that. The things there ARE, Remington, they'll never face! the wonder and the depth of life,--lust, and the night-sky,--pain."

"But the good intention," I pleaded, "the Good Will!"

"Sentimentality," said Britten. "No Good Will is anything but dishonesty unless it frets and burns and hurts and destroys a man. That lot of yours have nothing but a good will to think they have good will. Do you think they lie awake of nights searching their hearts as we do? Lewis? Crampton? Or those neat, admiring, satisfied little wives? See how they shrank from the probe!"

"We all," I said, "shrink from the probe."

"God help us!" said Britten. . . .

"We are but vermin at the best, Remington," he broke out, "and the greatest saint only a worm that has lifted its head for a moment from the dust. We are damned, we are meant to be damned, coral animalculae building upward, upward in a sea of damnation. But of all the damned things that ever were damned, your damned shirking, temperate, sham-efficient, self-satisfied, respectable, make-believe, Fabian-spirited Young Liberal is the utterly damnedest." He paused for a moment, and resumed in an entirely different note: "Which is why I was so surprised, Remington, to find YOU in this set!"

"You're just the old plunger you used to be, Britten," I said. " You're going too far with all your might for the sake of the damns. Like a donkey that drags its cart up a bank to get thistles. There's depths in Liberalism--"

"We were talking about Liberals."

"Liberty!"

"Liberty! What do YOOR little lot know of liberty?"

"What does any little lot know of liberty?"

"It waits outside, too big for our understanding. Like the night and the stars. And lust, Remington! lust and bitterness! Don't I know them? with all the sweetness and hope of life bitten and trampled, the dear eyes and the brain that loved and understood--and my poor mumble of a life going on! I'm within sight of being a drunkard, Remington! I'm a failure by most standards! Life has cut

me to the bone. But I'm not afraid of it any more. I've paid something of the price, I've seen something of the meaning."

He flew off at a tangent. "I'd rather die in Delirium Tremens," he cried, "than be a Crampton or a Lewis. . . ."

"Make-believe. Make-believe." The phrase and Britten's squat gestures haunted me as I walked homeward alone. I went to my room and stood before my desk and surveyed papers and files and Margaret's admirable equipment of me.

I perceived in the lurid light of Britten's suggestions that so it was Mr. George Alexander would have mounted a statesman's private room. . . .

3

I was never at any stage a loyal party man. I doubt if party will ever again be the force it was during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Men are becoming increasingly constructive and selective, less patient under tradition and the bondage of initial circumstances. As education becomes more universal and liberating, men will sort themselves more and more by their intellectual temperaments and less and less by their accidental associations. The past will rule them less; the future more. It is not simply party but school and college and county and country that lose their glamour. One does not hear nearly as much as our forefathers did of the "old Harrovian," "old Arvonian," "old Etonian" claim to this or that unfair advantage or unearned sympathy. Even the Scotch and the Devonians weaken a little in their clannishness. A widening sense of fair play destroys such things. They follow freemasonry down--freemasonry of which one is chiefly reminded nowadays in England by

propitiatory symbols outside shady public-houses. . . .

There is, of course, a type of man which clings very obstinately to party ties. These are the men with strong reproductive imaginations and no imaginative initiative, such men as Cladingbowl, for example, or Dayton. They are the scholars-at-large in life. For them the fact that the party system has been essential in the history of England for two hundred years gives it an overwhelming glamour. They have read histories and memoirs, they see the great grey pile of Westminster not so much for what it is as for what it was, rich with dramatic memories, populous with glorious ghosts, phrasing itself inevitably in anecdotes and quotations. It seems almost scandalous that new things should continue to happen, swamping with strange qualities the savour of these old associations.

That Mr. Ramsay Macdonald should walk through Westminster Hall, thrust himself, it may be, through the very piece of space that once held Charles the Martyr pleading for his life, seems horrible profanation to Dayton, a last posthumous outrage; and he would, I think, like to have the front benches left empty now for ever, or at most adorned with laureated ivory tablets: "Here Dizzy sat," and "On this Spot William Ewart Gladstone made his First Budget Speech." Failing this, he demands, if only as signs of modesty and respect on the part of the survivors, meticulous imitation. "Mr. G.," he murmurs, "would not have done that," and laments a vanished subtlety even while Mr. Evesham is speaking. He is always gloomily disposed to lapse into wonderings about what things are coming to, wonderings that have no grain of curiosity. His conception of perfect conduct is industrious persistence along the worn-down, well-marked grooves of the great recorded days. So infinitely more important to him is the documented, respected thing than the elusive present.

Cladingbowl and Dayton do not shine in the House, though Cladingbowl is a sound man on a committee, and Dayton keeps the OLD COUNTRY GAZETTE, the most gentlemanly paper in London. They prevail,

however, in their clubs at lunch time. There, with the pleasant consciousness of a morning's work free from either zeal or shirking, they mingle with permanent officials, prominent lawyers, even a few of the soberer type of business men, and relax their minds in the discussion of the morning paper, of the architecture of the West End, and of the latest public appointments, of golf, of holiday resorts, of the last judicial witticisms and forensic "crushers." The New Year and Birthday honours lists are always very sagely and exhaustively considered, and anecdotes are popular and keenly judged. They do not talk of the things that are really active in their minds, but in the formal and habitual manner they suppose to be proper to intelligent but still honourable men. Socialism, individual money matters, and religion are forbidden topics, and sex and women only in so far as they appear in the law courts. It is to me the strangest of conventions, this assumption of unreal loyalties and traditional respects, this repudiation and concealment of passionate interests. It is like wearing gloves in summer fields, or bathing in a gown, or falling in love with the heroine of a novel, or writing under a pseudonym, or becoming a masked Tuareg. . . .

It is not, I think, that men of my species are insensitive to the great past that is embodied in Westminster and its traditions; we are not so much wanting in the historical sense as alive to the greatness of our present opportunities and the still vaster future that is possible to us. London is the most interesting, beautiful, and wonderful city in the world to me, delicate in her incidental and multitudinous littleness, and stupendous in her pregnant totality; I cannot bring myself to use her as a museum or an old bookshop. When I think of Whitehall that little affair on the scaffold outside the Banqueting Hall seems trivial and remote in comparison with the possibilities that offer themselves to my imagination within the great grey Government buildings close at hand.

It gives me a qualm of nostalgia even to name those places now. I

think of St. Stephen's tower streaming upwards into the misty London night and the great wet quadrangle of New Palace Yard, from which the hansom cabs of my first experiences were ousted more and more by taxicabs as the second Parliament of King Edward the Seventh aged; I think of the Admiralty and War office with their tall Marconi masts sending out invisible threads of direction to the armies in the camps, to great fleets about the world. The crowded, darkly shining river goes flooding through my memory once again, on to those narrow seas that part us from our rival nations; I see quadrangles and corridors of spacious grey-toned offices in which undistinguished little men and little files of papers link us to islands in the tropics, to frozen wildernesses gashed for gold, to vast temple-studded plains, to forest worlds and mountain worlds, to ports and fortresses and lighthouses and watch-towers and grazing lands and corn lands all about the globe. Once more I traverse Victoria Street, grimy and dark, where the Agents of the Empire jostle one another, pass the big embassies in the West End with their flags and scutcheons, follow the broad avenue that leads to Buckingham Palace, witness the coming and going of troops and officials and guests along it from every land on earth. . . . Interwoven in the texture of it all, mocking, perplexing, stimulating beyond measure, is the gleaming consciousness, the challenging knowledge: "You and your kind might still, if you could but grasp it here, mould all the destiny of Man!"

4

My first three years in Parliament were years of active discontent. The little group of younger Liberals to which I belonged was very ignorant of the traditions and qualities of our older leaders, and quite out of touch with the mass of the party. For a time Parliament was enormously taken up with moribund issues and old

quarrels. The early Educational legislation was sectarian and unenterprising, and the Licensing Bill went little further than the attempted rectification of a Conservative mistake. I was altogether for the nationalisation of the public-houses, and of this end the Bill gave no intimations. It was just beer-baiting. I was recalcitrant almost from the beginning, and spoke against the Government so early as the second reading of the first Education Bill, the one the Lords rejected in 1906. I went a little beyond my intention in the heat of speaking,--it is a way with inexperienced man. I called the Bill timid, narrow, a mere sop to the jealousies of sects and little-minded people. I contrasted its aim and methods with the manifest needs of the time.

I am not a particularly good speaker; after the manner of a writer I worry to find my meaning too much; but this was one of my successes. I spoke after dinner and to a fairly full House, for people were already a little curious about me because of my writings. Several of the Conservative leaders were present and stayed, and Mr. Evesham, I remember, came ostentatiously to hear me, with that engaging friendliness of his, and gave me at the first chance an approving "Hear, Hear!" I can still recall quite distinctly my two futile attempts to catch the Speaker's eye before I was able to begin, the nervous quiver of my rather too prepared opening, the effect of hearing my own voice and my subconscious wonder as to what I could possibly be talking about, the realisation that I was getting on fairly well, the immense satisfaction afterwards of having on the whole brought it off, and the absurd gratitude I felt for that encouraging cheer.

Addressing the House of Commons is like no other public speaking in the world. Its semi-colloquial methods give it an air of being easy, but its shifting audience, the comings and goings and hesitations of members behind the chair--not mere audience units, but men who matter--the desolating emptiness that spreads itself round the man who fails to interest, the little compact, disciplined

crowd in the strangers' gallery, the light, elusive, flickering movements high up behind the grill, the wigged, attentive, weary Speaker, the table and the mace and the chapel-like Gothic background with its sombre shadows, conspire together, produce a confused, uncertain feeling in me, as though I was walking upon a pavement full of trap-doors and patches of uncovered morass. A misplaced, well-meant "Hear, Hear!" is apt to be extraordinarily disconcerting, and under no other circumstances have I had to speak with quite the same sideways twist that the arrangement of the House imposes. One does not recognise one's own voice threading out into the stirring brown. Unless I was excited or speaking to the mind of some particular person in the house, I was apt to lose my feeling of an auditor. I had no sense of whither my sentences were going, such as one has with a public meeting well under one's eye. And to lose one's sense of an auditor is for a man of my temperament to lose one's sense of the immediate, and to become prolix and vague with qualifications.

5

My discontents with the Liberal party and my mental exploration of the quality of party generally is curiously mixed up with certain impressions of things and people in the National Liberal Club. The National Liberal Club is Liberalism made visible in the flesh--and Doultonware. It is an extraordinary big club done in a bold, wholesale, shiny, marbled style, richly furnished with numerous paintings, steel engravings, busts, and full-length statues of the late Mr. Gladstone; and its spacious dining-rooms, its long, hazy, crowded smoking-room with innumerable little tables and groups of men in armchairs, its magazine room and library upstairs, have just that undistinguished and unconcentrated diversity which is for me the Liberal note. The pensive member sits and hears perplexing

dialects and even fragments of foreign speech, and among the clustering masses of less insistent whites his roving eye catches profiles and complexions that send his mind afield to Calcutta or Rangoon or the West Indies or Sierra Leone or the Cape. . . .

I was not infrequently that pensive member. I used to go to the Club to doubt about Liberalism.

About two o'clock in the day the great smoking-room is crowded with countless little groups. They sit about small round tables, or in circles of chairs, and the haze of tobacco seems to prolong the great narrow place, with its pillars and bays, to infinity. Some of the groups are big, as many as a dozen men talk in loud tones; some are duologues, and there is always a sprinkling of lonely, dissociated men. At first one gets an impression of men going from group to group and as it were linking them, but as one watches closely one finds that these men just visit three or four groups at the outside, and know nothing of the others. One begins to perceive more and more distinctly that one is dealing with a sort of human mosaic; that each patch in that great place is of a different quality and colour from the next and never to be mixed with it. Most clubs have a common link, a lowest common denominator in the Club Bore, who spares no one, but even the National Liberal bores are specialised and sectional. As one looks round one sees here a clump of men from the North Country or the Potteries, here an island of South London politicians, here a couple of young Jews ascendant from Whitechapel, here a circle of journalists and writers, here a group of Irish politicians, here two East Indians, here a priest or so, here a clump of old-fashioned Protestants, here a little knot of eminent Rationalists indulging in a blasphemous story SOTTO VOCE. Next them are a group of anglicised Germans and highly specialised chess-players, and then two of the oddest-looking persons--bulging with documents and intent upon extraordinary business transactions over long cigars. . . .

I would listen to a stormy sea of babblement, and try to extract some constructive intimations. Every now and then I got a whiff of politics. It was clear they were against the Lords--against plutocrats--against Cossington's newspapers--against the brewers. . . . It was tremendously clear what they were against. The trouble was to find out what on earth they were for! . . .

As I sat and thought, the streaked and mottled pillars and wall, the various views, aspects, and portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone, the partitions of polished mahogany, the yellow-vested waiters, would dissolve and vanish, and I would have a vision of this sample of miscellaneous men of limited, diverse interests and a universal littleness of imagination enlarged, unlimited, no longer a sample but a community, spreading, stretching out to infinity--all in little groups and duologues and circles, all with their special and narrow concerns, all with their backs to most of the others.

What but a common antagonism would ever keep these multitudes together? I understood why modern electioneering is more than half of it denunciation. Let us condemn, if possible, let us obstruct and deprive, but not let us do. There is no real appeal to the commonplace mind in "Let us do." That calls for the creative imagination, and few have been accustomed to respond to that call. The other merely needs jealousy and bate, of which there are great and easily accessible reservoirs in every human heart. . . .

I remember that vision of endless, narrow, jealous individuality very vividly. A seething limitlessness it became at last, like a waste place covered by crawling locusts that men sweep up by the sackload and drown by the million in ditches. . . .

Grotesquely against it came the lean features, the sidelong shy movements of Edward Crampton, seated in a circle of talkers close at hand. I had a whiff of his strained, unmusical voice, and behold! he was saying something about the "Will of the People. . . ."

The immense and wonderful disconnectednesses of human life! I forgot the smoke and jabber of the club altogether; I became a lonely spirit flung aloft by some queer accident, a stone upon a ledge in some high and rocky wilderness, and below as far as the eye could reach stretched the swarming infinitesimals of humanity, like grass upon the field, like pebbles upon unbounded beaches. Was there ever to be in human life more than that endless struggling individualism? Was there indeed some giantry, some immense valiant synthesis, still to come--or present it might be and still unseen by me, or was this the beginning and withal the last phase of mankind? . . .

I glimpsed for a while the stupendous impudence of our ambitions, the tremendous enterprise to which the modern statesman is implicitly addressed. I was as it were one of a little swarm of would-be reef builders looking back at the teeming slime upon the ocean floor. All the history of mankind, all the history of life, has been and will be the story of something struggling out of the indiscriminated abyss, struggling to exist and prevail over and comprehend individual lives--an effort of insidious attraction, an idea of invincible appeal. That something greater than ourselves, which does not so much exist as seek existence, palpitating between being and not-being, how marvellous it is! It has worn the form and visage of ten thousand different gods, sought a shape for itself in stone and ivory and music and wonderful words, spoken more and more clearly of a mystery of love, a mystery of unity, dabbling meanwhile in blood and cruelty beyond the common impulses of men. It is something that comes and goes, like a light that shines and is withdrawn, withdrawn so completely that one doubts if it has ever been. . . .

I would mark with a curious interest the stray country member of the club up in town for a night or so. My mind would be busy with speculations about him, about his home, his family, his reading, his horizons, his innumerable fellows who didn't belong and never came up. I would fill in the outline of him with memories of my uncle and his Staffordshire neighbours. He was perhaps Alderman This or Councillor That down there, a great man in his ward, J. P. within seven miles of the boundary of the borough, and a God in his home. Here he was nobody, and very shy, and either a little too arrogant or a little too meek towards our very democratic mannered but still livened waiters. Was he perhaps the backbone of England? He overate himself lest he should appear mean, went through our Special Dinner conscientiously, drank, unless he was teetotal, of unfamiliar wines, and did his best, in spite of the rules, to tip. Afterwards, in a state of flushed repletion, he would have old brandy, black coffee, and a banded cigar, or in the name of temperance omit the brandy and have rather more coffee, in the smoking-room. I would sit and watch that stiff dignity of self-indulgence, and wonder, wonder. . . .

An infernal clairvoyance would come to me. I would have visions of him in relation to his wife, checking always, sometimes bullying, sometimes being ostentatiously "kind"; I would see him glance furtively at his domestic servants upon his staircase, or stiffen his upper lip against the reluctant, protesting business employee. We imaginative people are base enough, heaven knows, but it is only in rare moods of bitter penetration that we pierce down to the baser lusts, the viler shames, the everlasting lying and muddle-headed self-justification of the dull.

I would turn my eyes down the crowded room and see others of him and others. What did he think he was up to? Did he for a moment realise that his presence under that ceramic glory of a ceiling with

me meant, if it had any rational meaning at all, that we were jointly doing something with the nation and the empire and mankind? . . . How on earth could any one get hold of him, make any noble use of him? He didn't read beyond his newspaper. He never thought, but only followed imaginings in his heart. He never discussed. At the first hint of discussion his temper gave way. He was, I knew, a deep, thinly-covered tank of resentments and quite irrational moral rages. Yet withal I would have to resist an impulse to go over to him and nudge him and say to him, "Look here! What indeed do you think we are doing with the nation and the empire and mankind? You know--MANKIND!"

I wonder what reply I should have got.

So far as any average could be struck and so far as any backbone could be located, it seemed to me that this silent, shy, replete, sub-angry, middle-class sentimentalist was in his endless species and varieties and dialects the backbone of our party. So far as I could be considered as representing anything in the House, I pretended to sit for the elements of HIM. . . .

7

For a time I turned towards the Socialists. They at least had an air of coherent intentions. At that time Socialism had come into politics again after a period of depression and obscurity, with a tremendous ECLAT. There was visibly a following of Socialist members to Chris Robinson; mysteriously uncommunicative gentlemen in soft felt hats and short coats and square-toed boots who replied to casual advances a little surprisingly in rich North Country dialects. Members became aware of a "seagreen incorruptible," as Colonel Marlow put it to me, speaking on the Address, a slender

twisted figure supporting itself on a stick and speaking with a fire that was altogether revolutionary. This was Philip Snowden, the member for Blackburn. They had come in nearly forty strong altogether, and with an air of presently meaning to come in much stronger. They were only one aspect of what seemed at that time a big national movement. Socialist societies, we gathered, were springing up all over the country, and every one was inquiring about Socialism and discussing Socialism. It had taken the Universities with particular force, and any youngster with the slightest intellectual pretension was either actively for or brilliantly against. For a time our Young Liberal group was ostentatiously sympathetic. . . .

When I think of the Socialists there comes a vivid memory of certain evening gatherings at our house. . . .

These gatherings had been organised by Margaret as the outcome of a discussion at the Baileys'. Altiora had been very emphatic and uncharitable upon the futility of the Socialist movement. It seemed that even the leaders fought shy of dinner-parties.

"They never meet each other," said Altiora, "much less people on the other side. How can they begin to understand politics until they do that?"

"Most of them have totally unpresentable wives," said Altiora, "totally!" and quoted instances, "and they WILL bring them. Or they won't come! Some of the poor creatures have scarcely learnt their table manners. They just make holes in the talk. . . ."

I thought there was a great deal of truth beneath Altiora's outburst. The presentation of the Socialist case seemed very greatly crippled by the want of a common intimacy in its leaders; the want of intimacy didn't at first appear to be more than an accident, and our talk led to Margaret's attempt to get acquaintance

and easy intercourse afoot among them and between them and the Young Liberals of our group. She gave a series of weekly dinners, planned, I think, a little too accurately upon Altiora's model, and after each we had as catholic a reception as we could contrive.

Our receptions were indeed, I should think, about as catholic as receptions could be. Margaret found herself with a weekly houseful of insoluble problems in intercourse. One did one's best, but one got a nightmare feeling as the evening wore on.

It was one of the few unanimities of these parties that every one should be a little odd in appearance, funny about the hair or the tie or the shoes or more generally, and that bursts of violent aggression should alternate with an attitude entirely defensive. A number of our guests had an air of waiting for a clue that never came, and stood and sat about silently, mildly amused but not a bit surprised that we did not discover their distinctive Open-Sesames. There was a sprinkling of manifest seers and prophetesses in shapeless garments, far too many, I thought, for really easy social intercourse, and any conversation at any moment was liable to become oracular. One was in a state of tension from first to last; the most innocent remark seemed capable of exploding resentment, and replies came out at the most unexpected angles. We Young Liberals went about puzzled but polite to the gathering we had evoked. The Young Liberals' tradition is on the whole wonderfully discreet, superfluous steam is let out far away from home in the Balkans or Africa, and the neat, stiff figures of the Cramptons, Bunting Harblow, and Lewis, either in extremely well-cut morning coats indicative of the House, or in what is sometimes written of as "faultless evening dress," stood about on those evenings, they and their very quietly and simply and expensively dressed little wives, like a datum line amidst lakes and mountains.

I didn't at first see the connection between systematic social reorganisation and arbitrary novelties in dietary and costume, just

as I didn't realise why the most comprehensive constructive projects should appear to be supported solely by odd and exceptional personalities. On one of these evenings a little group of rather jolly-looking pretty young people seated themselves for no particular reason in a large circle on the floor of my study, and engaged, so far as I could judge, in the game of Hunt the Meaning, the intellectual equivalent of Hunt the Slipper. It must have been that same evening I came upon an unbleached young gentleman before the oval mirror on the landing engaged in removing the remains of an anchovy sandwich from his protruded tongue--visible ends of cress having misled him into the belief that he was dealing with doctrinally permissible food. It was not unusual to be given hand-bills and printed matter by our guests, but there I had the advantage over Lewis, who was too tactful to refuse the stuff, too neatly dressed to pocket it, and had no writing-desk available upon which he could relieve himself in a manner flattering to the giver. So that his hands got fuller and fuller. A relentless, compact little woman in what Margaret declared to be an extremely expensive black dress has also printed herself on my memory; she had set her heart upon my contributing to a weekly periodical in the lentil interest with which she was associated, and I spent much time and care in evading her.

Mingling with the more hygienic types were a number of Anti-Puritan Socialists, bulging with bias against temperance, and breaking out against austere methods of living all over their faces. Their manner was packed with heartiness. They were apt to choke the approaches to the little buffet Margaret had set up downstairs, and there engage in discussions of Determinism--it always seemed to be Determinism--which became heartier and noisier, but never acrimonious even in the small hours. It seemed impossible to settle about this Determinism of theirs--ever. And there were worldly Socialists also. I particularly recall a large, active, buoyant, lady-killing individual with an eyeglass borne upon a broad black ribbon, who swam about us one evening. He might have been a

slightly frayed actor, in his large frock-coat, his white waistcoat, and the sort of black and white check trousers that twinkle. He had a high-pitched voice with aristocratic intonations, and he seemed to be in a perpetual state of interrogation. "What are we all he-a for?" he would ask only too audibly. "What are we doing he-a? What's the connection?"

What WAS the connection?

We made a special effort with our last assembly in June, 1907. We tried to get something like a representative collection of the parliamentary leaders of Socialism, the various exponents of Socialist thought and a number of Young Liberal thinkers into one room. Dorvil came, and Horatio Bulch; Featherstonehaugh appeared for ten minutes and talked charmingly to Margaret and then vanished again; there was Wilkins the novelist and Toomer and Dr. Tumpany. Chris Robinson stood about for a time in a new comforter, and Magdeberg and Will Pipes and five or six Labour members. And on our side we had our particular little group, Bunting Harblow, Crampton, Lewis, all looking as broad-minded and open to conviction as they possibly could, and even occasionally talking out from their bushes almost boldly. But the gathering as a whole refused either to mingle or dispute, and as an experiment in intercourse the evening was a failure. Unexpected dissociations appeared between Socialists one had supposed friendly. I could not have imagined it was possible for half so many people to turn their backs on everybody else in such small rooms as ours. But the unsaid things those backs expressed broke out, I remarked, with refreshed virulence in the various organs of the various sections of the party next week.

I talked, I remember, with Dr. Tumpany, a large young man in a still larger professional frock-coat, and with a great shock of very fair hair, who was candidate for some North Country constituency. We discussed the political outlook, and, like so many Socialists at that time, he was full of vague threatenings against the Liberal

party. I was struck by a thing in him that I had already observed less vividly in many others of these Socialist leaders, and which gave me at last a clue to the whole business. He behaved exactly like a man in possession of valuable patent rights, who wants to be dealt with. He had an air of having a corner in ideas. Then it flashed into my head that the whole Socialist movement was an attempted corner in ideas. . . .

8

Late that night I found myself alone with Margaret amid the debris of the gathering.

I sat before the fire, hands in pockets, and Margaret, looking white and weary, came and leant upon the mantel.

"Oh, Lord!" said Margaret.

I agreed. Then I resumed my meditation.

"Ideas," I said, "count for more than I thought in the world."

Margaret regarded me with that neutral expression behind which she was accustomed to wait for clues.

"When you think of the height and depth and importance and wisdom of the Socialist ideas, and see the men who are running them," I explained. . . . "A big system of ideas like Socialism grows up out of the obvious common sense of our present conditions. It's as impersonal as science. All these men--They've given nothing to it. They're just people who have pegged out claims upon a big intellectual No-Man's-Land--and don't feel quite sure of the law.

There's a sort of quarrelsome uneasiness. . . . If we professed Socialism do you think they'd welcome us? Not a man of them! They'd feel it was burglary. . . ."

"Yes," said Margaret, looking into the fire. "That is just what I felt about them all the evening. . . . Particularly Dr. Tumpany."

"We mustn't confuse Socialism with the Socialists, I said; "that's the moral of it. I suppose if God were to find He had made a mistake in dates or something, and went back and annihilated everybody from Owen onwards who was in any way known as a Socialist leader or teacher, Socialism would be exactly where it is and what it is to-day--a growing realisation of constructive needs in every man's mind, and a little corner in party politics. So, I suppose, it will always be. . . . But they WERE a damned lot, Margaret!"

I looked up at the little noise she made. "TWICE!" she said, smiling indulgently, "to-day!" (Even the smile was Altiora's.)

I returned to my thoughts. They WERE a damned human lot. It was an excellent word in that connection. . . .

But the ideas marched on, the ideas marched on, just as though men's brains were no more than stepping-stones, just as though some great brain in which we are all little cells and corpuscles was thinking them! . . .

"I don't think there is a man among them who makes me feel he is trustworthy," said Margaret; "unless it is Featherstonehaugh."

I sat taking in this proposition.

"They'll never help us, I feel," said Margaret.

"Us?"

"The Liberals."

"Oh, damn the Liberals!" I said. "They'll never even help themselves."

"I don't think I could possibly get on with any of those people," said Margaret, after a pause.

She remained for a time looking down at me and, I could feel, perplexed by me, but I wanted to go on with my thinking, and so I did not look up, and presently she stooped to my forehead and kissed me and went rustling softly to her room.

I remained in my study for a long time with my thoughts crystallising out. . . .

It was then, I think, that I first apprehended clearly how that opposition to which I have already alluded of the immediate life and the mental hinterland of a man, can be applied to public and social affairs. The ideas go on--and no person or party succeeds in embodying them. The reality of human progress never comes to the surface, it is a power in the deeps, an undertow. It goes on in silence while men think, in studies where they write self-forgetfully, in laboratories under the urgency of an impersonal curiosity, in the rare illumination of honest talk, in moments of emotional insight, in thoughtful reading, but not in everyday affairs. Everyday affairs and whatever is made an everyday affair, are transactions of the ostensible self, the being of habits, interests, usage. Temper, vanity, hasty reaction to imitation, personal feeling, are their substance. No man can abolish his immediate self and specialise in the depths; if he attempt that, he simply turns himself into something a little less than the common man. He may have an immense hinterland, but that does not absolve him from a frontage. That is the essential error of the specialist

philosopher, the specialist teacher, the specialist publicist. They repudiate frontage; claim to be pure hinterland. That is what bothered me about Codger, about those various schoolmasters who had prepared me for life, about the Baileys and their dream of an official ruling class. A human being who is a philosopher in the first place, a teacher in the first place, or a statesman in the first place, is thereby and inevitably, though he bring God-like gifts to the pretence--a quack. These are attempts to live deep-side shallow, inside out. They produce merely a new pettiness. To understand Socialism, again, is to gain a new breadth of outlook; to join a Socialist organisation is to join a narrow cult which is not even tolerably serviceable in presenting or spreading the ideas for which it stands. . . .

I perceived I had got something quite fundamental here. It had taken me some years to realise the true relation of the great constructive ideas that swayed me not only to political parties, but to myself. I had been disposed to identify the formulae of some one party with social construction, and to regard the other as necessarily anti-constructive, just as I had been inclined to follow the Baileys in the self-righteousness of supposing myself to be wholly constructive. But I saw now that every man of intellectual freedom and vigour is necessarily constructive-minded nowadays, and that no man is disinterestedly so. Each one of us repeats in himself the conflict of the race between the splendour of its possibilities and its immediate associations. We may be shaping immortal things, but we must sleep and answer the dinner gong, and have our salt of flattery and self-approval. In politics a man counts not for what he is in moments of imaginative expansion, but for his common workaday, selfish self; and political parties are held together not by a community of ultimate aims, but by the stabler bond of an accustomed life. Everybody almost is for progress in general, and nearly everybody is opposed to any change, except in so far as gross increments are change, in his particular method of living and behaviour. Every party stands essentially for

the interests and mental usages of some definite class or group of classes in the exciting community, and every party has its scientific-minded and constructive leading section, with well-defined hinterlands formulating its social functions in a public-spirited form, and its superficial-minded following confessing its meannesses and vanities and prejudices. No class will abolish itself, materially alter its way of life, or drastically reconstruct itself, albeit no class is indisposed to co-operate in the unlimited socialisation of any other class. In that capacity for aggression upon other classes lies the essential driving force of modern affairs. The instincts, the persons, the parties, and vanities sway and struggle. The ideas and understandings march on and achieve themselves for all--in spite of every one. . . .

The methods and traditions of British politics maintain the form of two great parties, with rider groups seeking to gain specific ends in the event of a small Government majority. These two main parties are more or less heterogeneous in composition. Each, however, has certain necessary characteristics. The Conservative Party has always stood quite definitely for the established propertied interests. The land-owner, the big lawyer, the Established Church, and latterly the huge private monopoly of the liquor trade which has been created by temperance legislation, are the essential Conservatives. Interwoven now with the native wealthy are the families of the great international usurers, and a vast miscellaneous mass of financial enterprise. Outside the range of resistance implied by these interests, the Conservative Party has always shown itself just as constructive and collectivist as any other party. The great landowners have been as well-disposed towards the endowment of higher education, and as willing to co-operate with the Church in protective and mildly educational legislation for children and the working class, as any political section. The financiers, too, are adventurous-spirited and eager for mechanical progress and technical efficiency. They are prepared to spend public money upon research, upon ports and harbours and

public communications, upon sanitation and hygienic organisation. A certain rude benevolence of public intention is equally characteristic of the liquor trade. Provided his comfort leads to no excesses of temperance, the liquor trade is quite eager to see the common man prosperous, happy, and with money to spend in a bar. All sections of the party are aggressively patriotic and favourably inclined to the idea of an upstanding, well-fed, and well-exercised population in uniform. Of course there are reactionary landowners and old-fashioned country clergy, full of localised self-importance, jealous even of the cottager who can read, but they have neither the power nor the ability to retard the constructive forces in the party as a whole. On the other hand, when matters point to any definitely confiscatory proposal, to the public ownership and collective control of land, for example, or state mining and manufactures, or the nationalisation of the so-called public-house or extended municipal enterprise, or even to an increase of the taxation of property, then the Conservative Party presents a nearly adamant bar. It does not stand for, it IS, the existing arrangement in these affairs.

Even more definitely a class party is the Labour Party, whose immediate interest is to raise wages, shorten hours of labor, increase employment, and make better terms for the working-man tenant and working-man purchaser. Its leaders are no doubt constructive minded, but the mass of the following is naturally suspicious of education and discipline, hostile to the higher education, and--except for an obvious antagonism to employers and property owners--almost destitute of ideas. What else can it be? It stands for the expropriated multitude, whose whole situation and difficulty arise from its individual lack of initiative and organising power. It favours the nationalisation of land and capital with no sense of the difficulties involved in the process; but, on the other hand, the equally reasonable socialisation of individuals which is implied by military service is steadily and quite naturally and quite illogically opposed by it. It is only in

recent years that Labour has emerged as a separate party from the huge hospitable caravanserai of Liberalism, and there is still a very marked tendency to step back again into that multitudinous assemblage.

For multitudinousness has always been the Liberal characteristic. Liberalism never has been nor ever can be anything but a diversified crowd. Liberalism has to voice everything that is left out by these other parties. It is the party against the predominating interests. It is at once the party of the failing and of the untried; it is the party of decadence and hope. From its nature it must be a vague and planless association in comparison with its antagonist, neither so constructive on the one hand, nor on the other so competent to hinder the inevitable constructions of the civilised state. Essentially it is the party of criticism, the "Anti" party. It is a system of hostilities and objections that somehow achieves at times an elusive common soul. It is a gathering together of all the smaller interests which find themselves at a disadvantage against the big established classes, the leasehold tenant as against the landowner, the retail tradesman as against the merchant and the moneylender, the Nonconformist as against the Churchman, the small employer as against the demoralising hospitable publican, the man without introductions and broad connections against the man who has these things. It is the party of the many small men against the fewer prevailing men. It has no more essential reason for loving the Collectivist state than the Conservatives; the small dealer is doomed to absorption in that just as much as the large owner; but it resorts to the state against its antagonists as in the middle ages common men pitted themselves against the barons by siding with the king. The Liberal Party is the party against "class privilege" because it represents no class advantages, but it is also the party that is on the whole most set against Collective control because it represents no established responsibility. It is constructive only so far as its antagonism to the great owner is more powerful than its jealousy of the state. It organises only because organisation

is forced upon it by the organisation of its adversaries. It lapses in and out of alliance with Labour as it sways between hostility to wealth and hostility to public expenditure. . . .

Every modern European state will have in some form or other these three parties: the resistent, militant, authoritative, dull, and unsympathetic party of establishment and success, the rich party; the confused, sentimental, spasmodic, numerous party of the small, struggling, various, undisciplined men, the poor man's party; and a third party sometimes detaching itself from the second and sometimes reuniting with it, the party of the altogether expropriated masses, the proletarians, Labour. Change Conservative and Liberal to Republican and Democrat, for example, and you have the conditions in the United States. The Crown or a dethroned dynasty, the Established Church or a dispossessed church, nationalist secessions, the personalities of party leaders, may break up, complicate, and confuse the self-expression of these three necessary divisions in the modern social drama, the analyst will make them out none the less for that. . . .

And then I came back as if I came back to a refrain;--the ideas go on--as though we are all no more than little cells and corpuscles in some great brain beyond our understanding. . . .

So it was I sat and thought my problem out. . . . I still remember my satisfaction at seeing things plainly at last. It was like clouds dispersing to show the sky. Constructive ideas, of course, couldn't hold a party together alone, "interests and habits, not ideas," I had that now, and so the great constructive scheme of Socialism, invading and inspiring all parties, was necessarily claimed only by this collection of odds and ends, this residuum of disconnected and exceptional people. This was true not only of the Socialist idea, but of the scientific idea, the idea of veracity--of human confidence in humanity--of all that mattered in human life outside the life of individuals. . . . The only real party that

would ever profess Socialism was the Labour Party, and that in the entirely one-sided form of an irresponsible and non-constructive attack on property. Socialism in that mutilated form, the teeth and claws without the eyes and brain, I wanted as little as I wanted anything in the world.

Perfectly clear it was, perfectly clear, and why hadn't I seen it before? . . . I looked at my watch, and it was half-past two.

I yawned, stretched, got up and went to bed.

9

My ideas about statecraft have passed through three main phases to the final convictions that remain. There was the first immediacy of my dream of ports and harbours and cities, railways, roads, and administered territories--the vision I had seen in the haze from that little church above Locarno. Slowly that had passed into a more elaborate legislative constructiveness, which had led to my uneasy association with the Baileys and the professedly constructive Young Liberals. To get that ordered life I had realised the need of organisation, knowledge, expertness, a wide movement of co-ordinated methods. On the individual side I thought that a life of urgent industry, temperance, and close attention was indicated by my perception of these ends. I married Margaret and set to work. But something in my mind refused from the outset to accept these determinations as final. There was always a doubt lurking below, always a faint resentment, a protesting criticism, a feeling of vitally important omissions.

I arrived at last at the clear realisation that my political associates, and I in my association with them, were oddly narrow,

priggish, and unreal, that the Socialists with whom we were attempting co-operation were preposterously irrelevant to their own theories, that my political life didn't in some way comprehend more than itself, that rather perplexingly I was missing the thing I was seeking. Britten's footnotes to Altiora's self-assertions, her fits of energetic planning, her quarrels and rallies and vanities, his illuminating attacks on Cramptonism and the heavy-spirited triviality of such Liberalism as the Children's Charter, served to point my way to my present conclusions. I had been trying to deal all along with human progress as something immediate in life, something to be immediately attacked by political parties and groups pointing primarily to that end. I now began to see that just as in my own being there was the rather shallow, rather vulgar, self-seeking careerist, who wore an admirable silk hat and bustled self-consciously through the lobby, and a much greater and indefinitely growing unpublished personality behind him--my hinterland, I have called it--so in human affairs generally the permanent reality is also a hinterland, which is never really immediate, which draws continually upon human experience and influences human action more and more, but which is itself never the actual player upon the stage. It is the unseen dramatist who never takes a call. Now it was just through the fact that our group about the Baileys didn't understand this, that with a sort of frantic energy they were trying to develop that sham expert officialdom of theirs to plan, regulate, and direct the affairs of humanity, that the perplexing note of silliness and shallowness that I had always felt and felt now most acutely under Britten's gibes, came in. They were neglecting human life altogether in social organisation.

In the development of intellectual modesty lies the growth of statesmanship. It has been the chronic mistake of statecraft and all organising spirits to attempt immediately to scheme and arrange and achieve. Priests, schools of thought, political schemers, leaders of men, have always slipped into the error of assuming that they can think out the whole--or at any rate completely think out

definite parts--of the purpose and future of man, clearly and finally; they have set themselves to legislate and construct on that assumption, and, experiencing the perplexing obduracy and evasions of reality, they have taken to dogma, persecution, training, pruning, secretive education; and all the stupidities of self-sufficient energy. In the passion of their good intentions they have not hesitated to conceal fact, suppress thought, crush disturbing initiatives and apparently detrimental desires. And so it is blunderingly and wastefully, destroying with the making, that any extension of social organisation is at present achieved.

Directly, however, this idea of an emancipation from immediacy is grasped, directly the dominating importance of this critical, less personal, mental hinterland in the individual and of the collective mind in the race is understood, the whole problem of the statesman and his attitude towards politics gain a new significance, and becomes accessible to a new series of solutions. He wants no longer to "fix up," as people say, human affairs, but to devote his forces to the development of that needed intellectual life without which all his shallow attempts at fixing up are futile. He ceases to build on the sands, and sets himself to gather foundations.

You see, I began in my teens by wanting to plan and build cities and harbours for mankind; I ended in the middle thirties by desiring only to serve and increase a general process of thought, a process fearless, critical, real-spirited, that would in its own time give cities, harbours, air, happiness, everything at a scale and quality and in a light altogether beyond the match-striking imaginations of a contemporary mind. I wanted freedom of speech and suggestion, vigour of thought, and the cultivation of that impulse of veracity that lurks more or less discouraged in every man. With that I felt there must go an emotion. I hit upon a phrase that became at last something of a refrain in my speech and writings, to convey the spirit that I felt was at the very heart of real human progress--love and fine thinking.

(I suppose that nowadays no newspaper in England gets through a week without the repetition of that phrase.)

My convictions crystallised more and more definitely upon this. The more of love and fine thinking the better for men, I said; the less, the worse. And upon this fresh basis I set myself to examine what I as a politician might do. I perceived I was at last finding an adequate expression for all that was in me, for those forces that had rebelled at the crude presentations of Bromstead, at the secrecies and suppressions of my youth, at the dull unrealities of City Merchants, at the conventions and timidities of the Pinky Dinkys, at the philosophical recluse of Trinity and the phrases and tradition-worship of my political associates. None of these things were half alive, and I wanted life to be intensely alive and awake. I wanted thought like an edge of steel and desire like a flame. The real work before mankind now, I realised once and for all, is the enlargement of human expression, the release and intensification of human thought, the vivider utilisation of experience and the invigoration of research--and whatever one does in human affairs has or lacks value as it helps or hinders that.

With that I had got my problem clear, and the solution, so far as I was concerned, lay in finding out the point in the ostensible life of politics at which I could most subserve these ends. I was still against the muddles of Bromstead, but I had hunted them down now to their essential form. The jerry-built slums, the roads that went nowhere, the tarred fences, litigious notice-boards and barbed wire fencing, the litter and the heaps of dump, were only the outward appearances whose ultimate realities were jerry-built conclusions, hasty purposes, aimless habits of thought, and imbecile bars and prohibitions in the thoughts and souls of men. How are we through politics to get at that confusion?

We want to invigorate and reinvigorate education. We want to create

a sustained counter effort to the perpetual tendency of all educational organisations towards classicalism, secondary issues, and the evasion of life.

We want to stimulate the expression of life through art and literature, and its exploration through research.

We want to make the best and finest thought accessible to every one, and more particularly to create and sustain an enormous free criticism, without which art, literature, and research alike degenerate into tradition or imposture.

Then all the other problems which are now so insoluble, destitution, disease, the difficulty of maintaining international peace, the scarcely faced possibility of making life generally and continually beautiful, become--EASY. . . .

It was clear to me that the most vital activities in which I could engage would be those which most directly affected the Church, public habits of thought, education, organised research, literature, and the channels of general discussion. I had to ask myself how my position as Liberal member for Kinghamstead squared with and conduced to this essential work.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

SEEKING ASSOCIATES

1

I have told of my gradual abandonment of the pretensions and habits of party Liberalism. In a sense I was moving towards aristocracy. Regarding the development of the social and individual mental hinterland as the essential thing in human progress, I passed on very naturally to the practical assumption that we wanted what I may call "hinterlanders." Of course I do not mean by aristocracy the changing unorganised medley of rich people and privileged people who dominate the civilised world of to-day, but as opposed to this, a possibility of co-ordinating the will of the finer individuals, by habit and literature, into a broad common aim. We must have an aristocracy--not of privilege, but of understanding and purpose--or mankind will fail. I find this dawning more and more clearly when I look through my various writings of the years between 1903 and 1910. I was already emerging to plain statements in 1908.

I reasoned after this fashion. The line of human improvement and the expansion of human life lies in the direction of education and finer initiatives. If humanity cannot develop an education far beyond anything that is now provided, if it cannot collectively invent devices and solve problems on a much richer, broader scale than it does at the present time, it cannot hope to achieve any very much finer order or any more general happiness than it now enjoys. We must believe, therefore, that it CAN develop such a training and education, or we must abandon secular constructive hope. And here my peculiar difficulty as against crude democracy comes in. If humanity at large is capable of that high education and those

creative freedoms our hope demands, much more must its better and more vigorous types be so capable. And if those who have power and leisure now, and freedom to respond to imaginative appeals, cannot be won to the idea of collective self-development, then the whole of humanity cannot be won to that. From that one passes to what has become my general conception in politics, the conception of the constructive imagination working upon the vast complex of powerful people, clever people, enterprising people, influential people, amidst whom power is diffused to-day, to produce that self-conscious, highly selective, open-minded, devoted aristocratic culture, which seems to me to be the necessary next phase in the development of human affairs. I see human progress, not as the spontaneous product of crowds of raw minds swayed by elementary needs, but as a natural but elaborate result of intricate human interdependencies, of human energy and curiosity liberated and acting at leisure, of human passions and motives, modified and redirected by literature and art. . . .

But now the reader will understand how it came about that, disappointed by the essential littleness of Liberalism, and disillusioned about the representative quality of the professed Socialists, I turned my mind more and more to a scrutiny of the big people, the wealthy and influential people, against whom Liberalism pits its forces. I was asking myself definitely whether, after all, it was not my particular job to work through them and not against them. Was I not altogether out of my element as an Anti-? Weren't there big bold qualities about these people that common men lack, and the possibility of far more splendid dreams? Were they really the obstacles, might they not be rather the vehicles of the possible new braveries of life?

The faults of the Imperialist movement were obvious enough. The conception of the Boer War had been clumsy and puerile, the costly errors of that struggle appalling, and the subsequent campaign of Mr. Chamberlain for Tariff Reform seemed calculated to combine the financial adventurers of the Empire in one vast conspiracy against the consumer. The cant of Imperialism was easy to learn and use; it was speedily adopted by all sorts of base enterprises and turned to all sorts of base ends. But a big child is permitted big mischief, and my mind was now continually returning to the persuasion that after all in some development of the idea of Imperial patriotism might be found that wide, rough, politically acceptable expression of a constructive dream capable of sustaining a great educational and philosophical movement such as no formula of Liberalism supplied. The fact that it readily took vulgar forms only witnessed to its strong popular appeal. Mixed in with the noisiness and humbug of the movement there appeared a real regard for social efficiency, a real spirit of animation and enterprise. There suddenly appeared in my world--I saw them first, I think, in 1908--a new sort of little boy, a most agreeable development of the slouching, cunning, cigarette-smoking, town-bred youngster, a small boy in a khaki hat, and with bare knees and athletic bearing, earnestly engaged in wholesome and invigorating games up to and occasionally a little beyond his strength--the Boy Scout. I liked the Boy Scout, and I find it difficult to express how much it mattered to me, with my growing bias in favour of deliberate national training, that Liberalism hadn't been able to produce, and had indeed never attempted to produce, anything of this kind.

3

In those days there existed a dining club called--there was some

lost allusion to the exorcism of party feeling in its title--the Pentagram Circle. It included Bailey and Dayton and myself, Sir Herbert Thorns, Lord Charles Kindling, Minns the poet, Gerbault the big railway man, Lord Gane, fresh from the settlement of Framboya, and Rumbold, who later became Home Secretary and left us. We were men of all parties and very various experiences, and our object was to discuss the welfare of the Empire in a disinterested spirit. We dined monthly at the Mermaid in Westminster, and for a couple of years we kept up an average attendance of ten out of fourteen. The dinner-time was given up to desultory conversation, and it is odd how warm and good the social atmosphere of that little gathering became as time went on; then over the dessert, so soon as the waiters had swept away the crumbs and ceased to fret us, one of us would open with perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes' exposition of some specially prepared question, and after him we would deliver ourselves in turn, each for three or four minutes. When every one present had spoken once talk became general again, and it was rare we emerged upon Hendon Street before midnight. Sometimes, as my house was conveniently near, a knot of men would come home with me and go on talking and smoking in my dining-room until two or three. We had Fred Neal, that wild Irish journalist, among us towards the end, and his stupendous flow of words materially prolonged our closing discussions and made our continuance impossible.

I learned very much and very many things at those dinners, but more particularly did I become familiarised with the habits of mind of such men as Neal, Crupp, Gane, and the one or two other New Imperialists who belonged to us. They were nearly all like Bailey Oxford men, though mostly of a younger generation, and they were all mysteriously and inexplicably advocates of Tariff Reform, as if it were the principal instead of at best a secondary aspect of constructive policy. They seemed obsessed by the idea that streams of trade could be diverted violently so as to link the parts of the Empire by common interests, and they were persuaded, I still think mistakenly, that Tariff Reform would have an immense popular appeal.

They were also very keen on military organisation, and with a curious little martinet twist in their minds that boded ill for that side of public liberty. So much against them. But they were disposed to spend money much more generously on education and research of all sorts than our formless host of Liberals seemed likely to do; and they were altogether more accessible than the Young Liberals to bold, constructive ideas affecting the universities and upper classes. The Liberals are abjectly afraid of the universities. I found myself constantly falling into line with these men in our discussions, and more and more hostile to Dayton's sentimentalising evasions of definite schemes and Minns' trust in such things as the "Spirit of our People" and the "General Trend of Progress." It wasn't that I thought them very much righter than their opponents; I believe all definite party "sides" at any time are bound to be about equally right and equally lop-sided; but that I thought I could get more out of them and what was more important to me, more out of myself if I co-operated with them. By 1908 I had already arrived at a point where I could be definitely considering a transfer of my political allegiance.

These abstract questions are inseparably interwoven with my memory of a shining long white table, and our hock bottles and burgundy bottles, and bottles of Perrier and St. Galmier and the disturbed central trophy of dessert, and scattered glasses and nut-shells and cigarette-ends and menu-cards used for memoranda. I see old Dayton sitting back and cocking his eye to the ceiling in a way he had while he threw warmth into the ancient platitudes of Liberalism, and Minns leaning forward, and a little like a cockatoo with a taste for confidences, telling us in a hushed voice of his faith in the Destiny of Mankind. Thorns lounges, rolling his round face and round eyes from speaker to speaker and sounding the visible depths of misery whenever Neal begins. Gerbault and Gane were given to conversation in undertones, and Bailey pursued mysterious purposes in lisping whispers. It was Crupp attracted me most. He had, as people say, his eye on me from the beginning. He used to speak at

me, and drifted into a custom of coming home with me very regularly for an after-talk.

He opened his heart to me.

"Neither of us," he said, "are dukes, and neither of us are horny-handed sons of toil. We want to get hold of the handles, and to do that, one must go where the power is, and give it just as constructive a twist as we can. That's MY Toryism."

"Is it Kindling's--or Gerbault's?"

"No. But theirs is soft, and mine's hard. Mine will wear theirs out. You and I and Bailey are all after the same thing, and why aren't we working together?"

"Are you a Confederate?" I asked suddenly.

"That's a secret nobody tells," he said.

"What are the Confederates after?"

"Making aristocracy work, I suppose. Just as, I gather, you want to do." . . .

The Confederates were being heard of at that time. They were at once attractive and repellent to me, an odd secret society whose membership nobody knew, pledged, it was said, to impose Tariff Reform and an ample constructive policy upon the Conservatives. In the press, at any rate, they had an air of deliberately organised power. I have no doubt the rumour of them greatly influenced my ideas. . . .

In the end I made some very rapid decisions, but for nearly two years I was hesitating. Hesitations were inevitable in such a

matter. I was not dealing with any simple question of principle, but with elusive and fluctuating estimates of the trend of diverse forces and of the nature of my own powers. All through that period I was asking over and over again: how far are these Confederates mere dreamers? How far--and this was more vital--are they rendering lip-service to social organisations? Is it true they desire war because it confirms the ascendancy of their class? How far can Conservatism be induced to plan and construct before it resists the thrust towards change. Is it really in bulk anything more than a mass of prejudice and conceit, cynical indulgence, and a hard suspicion of and hostility to the expropriated classes in the community?

That is a research which yields no statistics, an enquiry like asking what is the ruling colour of a chameleon. The shadowy answer varied with my health, varied with my mood and the conduct of the people I was watching. How fine can people be? How generous?--not incidentally, but all round? How far can you educate sons beyond the outlook of their fathers, and how far lift a rich, proud, self-indulgent class above the protests of its business agents and solicitors and its own habits and vanity? Is chivalry in a class possible?--was it ever, indeed, or will it ever indeed be possible? Is the progress that seems attainable in certain directions worth the retrogression that may be its price?

4

It was to the Pentagram Circle that I first broached the new conceptions that were developing in my mind. I count the evening of my paper the beginning of the movement that created the BLUE WEEKLY and our wing of the present New Tory party. I do that without any

excessive egotism, because my essay was no solitary man's production; it was my reaction to forces that had come to me very large through my fellow-members; its quick reception by them showed that I was, so to speak, merely the first of the chestnuts to pop. The atmospheric quality of the evening stands out very vividly in my memory. The night, I remember, was warmly foggy when after midnight we went to finish our talk at my house.

We had recently changed the rules of the club to admit visitors, and so it happened that I had brought Britten, and Crupp introduced Arnold Shoemith, my former schoolfellow at City Merchants, and now the wealthy successor of his father and elder brother. I remember his heavy, inexpressively handsome face lighting to his rare smile at the sight of me, and how little I dreamt of the tragic entanglement that was destined to involve us both. Gane was present, and Esmeer, a newly-added member, but I think Bailey was absent. Either he was absent, or he said something so entirely characteristic and undistinguished that it has left no impression on my mind.

I had broken a little from the traditions of the club even in my title, which was deliberately a challenge to the liberal idea: it was, "The World Exists for Exceptional People." It is not the title I should choose now--for since that time I have got my phrase of "mental hinterlander" into journalistic use. I should say now, "The World Exists for Mental Hinterland."

The notes I made of that opening have long since vanished with a thousand other papers, but some odd chance has preserved and brought with me to Italy the menu for the evening; its back black with the scrawled notes I made of the discussion for my reply. I found it the other day among some letters from Margaret and a copy of the 1909 Report of the Poor Law Commission, also rich with pencilled marginalia.

My opening was a criticism of the democratic idea and method, upon lines such as I have already sufficiently indicated in the preceding sections. I remember how old Dayton fretted in his chair, and tushed and pished at that, even as I gave it, and afterwards we were treated to one of his platitudinous harangues, he sitting back in his chair with that small obstinate eye of his fixed on the ceiling, and a sort of cadaverous glow upon his face, repeating--quite regardless of all my reasoning and all that had been said by others in the debate--the sacred empty phrases that were his soul's refuge from reality. "You may think it very clever," he said with a nod of his head to mark his sense of his point, "not to Trust in the People. I do." And so on. Nothing in his life or work had ever shown that he did trust in the people, but that was beside the mark. He was the party Liberal, and these were the party incantations.

After my preliminary attack on vague democracy I went on to show that all human life was virtually aristocratic; people must either recognise aristocracy in general or else follow leaders, which is aristocracy in particular, and so I came to my point that the reality of human progress lay necessarily through the establishment of freedoms for the human best and a collective receptivity and understanding. There was a disgusted grunt from Dayton, "Superman rubbish--Nietzsche. Shaw! Ugh!" I sailed on over him to my next propositions. The prime essential in a progressive civilisation was the establishment of a more effective selective process for the privilege of higher education, and the very highest educational opportunity for the educable. We were too apt to patronise scholarship winners, as though a scholarship was toffee given as a reward for virtue. It wasn't any reward at all; it was an invitation to capacity. We had no more right to drag in virtue, or any merit but quality, than we had to involve it in a search for the tallest man. We didn't want a mere process for the selection of good as distinguished from gifted and able boys--"No, you DON'T," from Dayton--we wanted all the brilliant stuff in the world concentrated upon the development of the world. Just to exasperate

Dayton further I put in a plea for gifts as against character in educational, artistic, and legislative work. "Good teaching," I said, "is better than good conduct. We are becoming idiotic about character."

Dayton was too moved to speak. He slewed round upon me an eye of agonised aversion.

I expatiated on the small proportion of the available ability that is really serving humanity to-day. "I suppose to-day all the thought, all the art, all the increments of knowledge that matter, are supplied so far as the English-speaking community is concerned by--how many?--by three or four thousand individuals. ('Less,' said Thorns.) To be more precise, by the mental hinterlands of three or four thousand individuals. We who know some of the band entertain no illusions as to their innate rarity. We know that they are just the few out of many, the few who got in our world of chance and confusion, the timely stimulus, the apt suggestion at the fortunate moment, the needed training, the leisure. The rest are lost in the crowd, fail through the defects of their qualities, become commonplace workmen and second-rate professional men, marry commonplace wives, are as much waste as the driftage of superfluous pollen in a pine forest is waste."

"Decent honest lives!" said Dayton to his bread-crumbs, with his chin in his necktie. "WASTE!"

"And the people who do get what we call opportunity get it usually in extremely limited and cramping forms. No man lives a life of intellectual productivity alone; he needs not only material and opportunity, but helpers, resonators. Round and about what I might call the REAL men, you want the sympathetic cooperators, who help by understanding. It isn't that our--SALT of three or four thousand is needlessly rare; it is sustained by far too small and undifferentiated a public. Most of the good men we know are not

really doing the very best work of their gifts; nearly all are a little adapted, most are shockingly adapted to some second-best use. Now, I take it, this is the very centre and origin of the muddle, futility, and unhappiness that distresses us; it's the cardinal problem of the state--to discover, develop, and use the exceptional gifts of men. And I see that best done--I drift more and more away from the common stuff of legislative and administrative activity--by a quite revolutionary development of the educational machinery, but by a still more unprecedented attempt to keep science going, to keep literature going, and to keep what is the necessary spur of all science and literature, an intelligent and appreciative criticism going. You know none of these things have ever been kept going hitherto; they've come unexpectedly and inexplicably."

"Hear, hear!" from Dayton, cough, nodding of the head, and an expression of mystical profundity.

"They've lit up a civilisation and vanished, to give place to darkness again. Now the modern state doesn't mean to go back to darkness again--and so it's got to keep its light burning." I went on to attack the present organisation of our schools and universities, which seemed elaborately designed to turn the well-behaved, uncritical, and uncreative men of each generation into the authoritative leaders of the next, and I suggested remedies upon lines that I have already indicated in the earlier chapters of this story. . . .

So far I had the substance of the club with me, but I opened new ground and set Crupp agog by confessing my doubt from which party or combination of groups these developments of science and literature and educational organisation could most reasonably be expected. I looked up to find Crupp's dark little eye intent upon me.

There I left it to them.

We had an astonishingly good discussion; Neal burst once, but we emerged from his flood after a time, and Dayton had his interlude. The rest was all close, keen examination of my problem.

I see Crupp now with his arm bent before him on the table in a way we had, as though it was jointed throughout its length like a lobster's antenna, his plump, short-fingered hand crushing up a walnut shell into smaller and smaller fragments. "Remington," he said, "has given us the data for a movement, a really possible movement. It's not only possible, but necessary--urgently necessary, I think, if the Empire is to go on."

"We're working altogether too much at the social basement in education and training," said Gane. "Remington is right about our neglect of the higher levels."

Britten made a good contribution with an analysis of what he called the spirit of a country and what made it. "The modern community needs its serious men to be artistic and its artists to be taken seriously," I remember his saying. "The day has gone by for either dull responsibility or merely witty art."

I remember very vividly how Shoesmith harped on an idea I had thrown out of using some sort of review or weekly to express and elaborate these conceptions of a new, severer, aristocratic culture.

"It would have to be done amazingly well," said Britten, and my mind went back to my school days and that ancient enterprise of ours, and how Cossington had rushed it. Well, Cossington had too many papers nowadays to interfere with us, and we perhaps had learnt some defensive devices.

"But this thing has to be linked to some political party," said Crupp, with his eye on me. "You can't get away from that. The Liberals," he added, "have never done anything for research or

literature."

"They had a Royal Commission on the Dramatic Censorship," said Thorns, with a note of minute fairness. "It shows what they were made of," he added.

"It's what I've told Remington again and again," said Crupp, "we've got to pick up the tradition of aristocracy, reorganise it, and make it work. But he's certainly suggested a method."

"There won't be much aristocracy to pick up," said Dayton, darkly to the ceiling, "if the House of Lords throws out the Budget."

"All the more reason for picking it up," said Neal. "For we can't do without it."

"Will they go to the bad, or will they rise from the ashes, aristocrats indeed--if the Liberals come in overwhelmingly?" said Britten.

"It's we who might decide that," said Crupp, insidiously.

"I agree," said Gane.

"No one can tell," said Thorns. "I doubt if they will get beaten."

It was an odd, fragmentary discussion that night. We were all with ideas in our minds at once fine and imperfect. We threw out suggestions that showed themselves at once far inadequate, and we tried to qualify them by minor self-contradictions. Britten, I think, got more said than any one. "You all seem to think you want to organise people, particular groups and classes of individuals," he insisted. "It isn't that. That's the standing error of politicians. You want to organise a culture. Civilisation isn't a matter of concrete groupings; it's a matter of prevailing ideas.

The problem is how to make bold, clear ideas prevail. The question for Remington and us is just what groups of people will most help this culture forward."

"Yes, but how are the Lords going to behave?" said Crupp. "You yourself were asking that a little while ago."

"If they win or if they lose," Gane maintained, "there will be a movement to reorganise aristocracy--Reform of the House of Lords, they'll call the political form of it."

"Bailey thinks that," said some one.

"The labour people want abolition," said some one. "Let 'em," said Thorns.

He became audible, sketching a possibility of action.

"Suppose all of us were able to work together. It's just one of those indeterminate, confused, eventful times ahead when a steady jet of ideas might produce enormous results."

"Leave me out of it," said Dayton, "IF you please."

"We should," said Thorns under his breath.

I took up Crupp's initiative, I remember, and expanded it.

"I believe we could do--extensive things," I insisted.

"Revivals and revisions of Toryism have been tried so often," said Thorns, "from the Young England movement onward."

"Not one but has produced its enduring effects," I said. "It's the peculiarity of English conservatism that it's persistently

progressive and rejuvenescent."

I think it must have been about that point that Dayton fled our presence, after some clumsy sentence that I decided upon reflection was intended to remind me of my duty to my party.

Then I remember Thorns firing doubts at me obliquely across the table. "You can't run a country through its spoilt children," he said. "What you call aristocrats are really spoilt children. They've had too much of everything, except bracing experience."

"Children can always be educated," said Crupp.

"I said SPOILT children," said Thorns.

"Look here, Thorns!" said I. "If this Budget row leads to a storm, and these big people get their power clipped, what's going to happen? Have you thought of that? When they go out lock, stock, and barrel, who comes in?"

"Nature abhors a Vacuum," said Crupp, supporting me.

"Bailey's trained officials," suggested Gane.

"Quacks with a certificate of approval from Altiora," said Thorns. "I admit the horrors of the alternative. There'd be a massacre in three years."

"One may go on trying possibilities for ever," I said. "One thing emerges. Whatever accidents happen, our civilisation needs, and almost consciously needs, a culture of fine creative minds, and all the necessary tolerances, opennesses, considerations, that march with that. For my own part, I think that is the Most Vital Thing. Build your ship of state as you will; get your men as you will; I concentrate on what is clearly the affair of my sort of man,--I want

to ensure the quality of the quarter deck."

"Hear, hear!" said Shoesmith, suddenly--his first remark for a long time. "A first-rate figure," said Shoesmith, gripping it.

"Our danger is in missing that," I went on. "Muddle isn't ended by transferring power from the muddle-headed few to the muddle-headed many, and then cheating the many out of it again in the interests of a bureaucracy of sham experts. But that seems the limit of the liberal imagination. There is no real progress in a country, except a rise in the level of its free intellectual activity. All other progress is secondary and dependant. If you take on Bailey's dreams of efficient machinery and a sort of fanatical discipline with no free-moving brains behind it, confused ugliness becomes rigid ugliness,--that's all. No doubt things are moving from looseness to discipline, and from irresponsible controls to organised controls--and also and rather contrariwise everything is becoming as people say, democratised; but all the more need in that, for an ark in which the living element may be saved."

"Hear, hear!" said Shoesmith, faint but pursuing.

It must have been in my house afterwards that Shoesmith became noticeable. He seemed trying to say something vague and difficult that he didn't get said at all on that occasion. "We could do immense things with a weekly," he repeated, echoing Neal, I think. And there he left off and became a mute expressiveness, and it was only afterwards, when I was in bed, that I saw we had our capitalist in our hands. . . .

We parted that night on my doorstep in a tremendous glow--but in that sort of glow one doesn't act upon without much reconsideration, and it was some months before I made my decision to follow up the indications of that opening talk.

I find my thoughts lingering about the Pentagram Circle. In my developments it played a large part, not so much by starting new trains of thought as by confirming the practicability of things I had already hesitatingly entertained. Discussion with these other men so prominently involved in current affairs endorsed views that otherwise would have seemed only a little less remote from actuality than the guardians of Plato or the labour laws of More. Among other questions that were never very distant from our discussions, that came apt to every topic, was the true significance of democracy, Tariff Reform as a method of international hostility, and the imminence of war. On the first issue I can still recall little Bailey, glib and winking, explaining that democracy was really just a dodge for getting assent to the ordinances of the expert official by means of the polling booth. "If they don't like things," said he, "they can vote for the opposition candidate and see what happens then--and that, you see, is why we don't want proportional representation to let in the wild men." I opened my eyes--the lids had dropped for a moment under the caress of those smooth sounds--to see if Bailey's artful forefinger wasn't at the side of his predominant nose.

The international situation exercised us greatly. Our meetings were pervaded by the feeling that all things moved towards a day of reckoning with Germany, and I was largely instrumental in keeping up the suggestion that India was in a state of unstable equilibrium, that sooner or later something must happen there--something very serious to our Empire. Dayton frankly detested these topics. He was full of that old Middle Victorian persuasion that whatever is inconvenient or disagreeable to the English mind could be annihilated by not thinking about it. He used to sit low in his

chair and look mulish. "Militarism," he would declare in a tone of the utmost moral fervour, is a curse. It's an unmitigated curse." Then he would cough shortly and twitch his head back and frown, and seem astonished beyond measure that after this conclusive statement we could still go on talking of war.

All our Imperialists were obsessed by the thought of international conflict, and their influence revived for a time those uneasinesses that had been aroused in me for the first time by my continental journey with Willersley and by Meredith's "One of Our Conquerors." That quite justifiable dread of a punishment for all the slackness, mental dishonesty, presumption, mercenary respectability and sentimentalised commercialism of the Victorian period, at the hands of the better organised, more vigorous, and now far more highly civilised peoples of Central Europe, seemed to me to have both a good and bad series of consequences. It seemed the only thing capable of bracing English minds to education, sustained constructive effort and research; but on the other hand it produced the quality of a panic, hasty preparation, impatience of thought, a wasteful and sometimes quite futile immediacy. In 1909, for example, there was a vast clamour for eight additional Dreadnoughts--

"We want eight
And we won't wait,"

but no clamour at all about our national waste of inventive talent, our mean standard of intellectual attainment, our disingenuous criticism, and the consequent failure to distinguish men of the quality needed to carry on the modern type of war. Almost universally we have the wrong men in our places of responsibility and the right men in no place at all, almost universally we have poorly qualified, hesitating, and resentful subordinates, because our criticism is worthless and, so habitually as to be now almost

unconsciously, dishonest. Germany is beating England in every matter upon which competition is possible, because she attended sedulously to her collective mind for sixty pregnant years, because in spite of tremendous defects she is still far more anxious for quality in achievement than we are. I remember saying that in my paper. From that, I remember, I went on to an image that had flashed into my mind. "The British Empire," I said, "is like some of those early vertebrated monsters, the Brontosaurus and the Atlantosaurus and such-like; it sacrifices intellect to character; its backbone, that is to say,--especially in the visceral region--is bigger than its cranium. It's no accident that things are so. We've worked for backbone. We brag about backbone, and if the joints are ankylosed so much the better. We're still but only half awake to our error. You can't change that suddenly."

"Turn it round and make it go backwards," interjected Thorns.

"It's trying to do that," I said, "in places."

And afterwards Crupp declared I had begotten a nightmare which haunted him of nights; he was trying desperately and belatedly to blow a brain as one blows soap-bubbles on such a mezozoic saurian as I had conjured up, while the clumsy monster's fate, all teeth and brains, crept nearer and nearer. . . .

I've grown, I think, since those days out of the urgency of that apprehension. I still think a European war, and conceivably a very humiliating war for England, may occur at no very distant date, but I do not think there is any such heroic quality in our governing class as will make that war catastrophic. The prevailing spirit in English life--it is one of the essential secrets of our imperial endurance--is one of underbred aggression in prosperity and diplomatic compromise in moments of danger; we bully haughtily where we can and assimilate where we must. It is not for nothing that our upper and middle-class youth is educated by teachers of the highest

character, scholars and gentlemen, men who can pretend quite honestly that Darwinism hasn't upset the historical fall of man, that cricket is moral training, and that Socialism is an outrage upon the teachings of Christ. A sort of dignified dexterity of evasion is the national reward. Germany, with a larger population, a vigorous and irreconcilable proletariat, a bolder intellectual training, a harsher spirit, can scarcely fail to drive us at last to a realisation of intolerable strain. So we may never fight at all. The war of preparations that has been going on for thirty years may end like a sham-fight at last in an umpire's decision. We shall proudly but very firmly take the second place. For my own part, since I love England as much as I detest her present lethargy of soul, I pray for a chastening war--I wouldn't mind her flag in the dirt if only her spirit would come out of it. So I was able to shake off that earlier fear of some final and irrevocable destruction truncating all my schemes. At the most, a European war would be a dramatic episode in the reconstruction I had in view.

In India, too, I no longer foresee, as once I was inclined to see, disaster. The English rule in India is surely one of the most extraordinary accidents that has ever happened in history. We are there like a man who has fallen off a ladder on to the neck of an elephant, and doesn't know what to do or how to get down. Until something happens he remains. Our functions in India are absurd. We English do not own that country, do not even rule it. We make nothing happen; at the most we prevent things happening. We suppress our own literature there. Most English people cannot even go to this land they possess; the authorities would prevent it. If Messrs. Perowne or Cook organised a cheap tour of Manchester operatives, it would be stopped. No one dare bring the average English voter face to face with the reality of India, or let the Indian native have a glimpse of the English voter. In my time I have talked to English statesmen, Indian officials and ex-officials, viceroys, soldiers, every one who might be supposed to know what India signifies, and I have prayed them to tell me what they thought

we were up to there. I am not writing without my book in these matters. And beyond a phrase or so about "even-handed justice"--and look at our sedition trials!--they told me nothing. Time after time I have heard of that apocryphal native ruler in the north-west, who, when asked what would happen if we left India, replied that in a week his men would be in the saddle, and in six months not a rupee nor a virgin would he left in Lower Bengal. That is always given as our conclusive justification. But is it our business to preserve the rupees and virgins of Lower Bengal in a sort of magic inconclusiveness? Better plunder than paralysis, better fire and sword than futility. Our flag is spread over the peninsula, without plans, without intentions--a vast preventive. The sum total of our policy is to arrest any discussion, any conferences that would enable the Indians to work out a tolerable scheme of the future for themselves. But that does not arrest the resentment of men held back from life. Consider what it must be for the educated Indian sitting at the feast of contemporary possibilities with his mouth gagged and his hands bound behind him! The spirit of insurrection breaks out in spite of espionage and seizures. Our conflict for inaction develops stupendous absurdities. The other day the British Empire was taking off and examining printed cotton stomach wraps for seditious emblems and inscriptions. . . .

In some manner we shall have to come out of India. We have had our chance, and we have demonstrated nothing but the appalling dulness of our national imagination. We are not good enough to do anything with India. Codger and Flack, and Gates and Dayton, Cladingbowl in the club, and the HOME CHURCHMAN in the home, cant about "character," worship of strenuous force and contempt of truth; for the sake of such men and things as these, we must abandon in fact, if not in appearance, that empty domination. Had we great schools and a powerful teaching, could we boast great men, had we the spirit of truth and creation in our lives, then indeed it might be different. But a race that bears a sceptre must carry gifts to justify it.

It does not follow that we shall be driven catastrophically from India. That was my earlier mistake. We are not proud enough in our bones to be ruined by India as Spain was by her empire. We may be able to abandon India with an air of still remaining there. It is our new method. We train our future rulers in the public schools to have a very wholesome respect for strength, and as soon as a power arises in India in spite of us, be it a man or a culture, or a native state, we shall be willing to deal with it. We may or may not have a war, but our governing class will be quick to learn when we are beaten. Then they will repeat our South African diplomacy, and arrange for some settlement that will abandon the reality, such as it is, and preserve the semblance of power. The conqueror DE FACTO will become the new "loyal Briton," and the democracy at home will be invited to celebrate our recession--triumphantly. I am no believer in the imminent dissolution of our Empire; I am less and less inclined to see in either India or Germany the probability of an abrupt truncation of those slow intellectual and moral constructions which are the essentials of statecraft.

6

I sit writing in this little loggia to the sound of dripping water--this morning we had rain, and the roof of our little casa is still not dry, there are pools in the rocks under the sweet chestnuts, and the torrent that crosses the salita is full and boastful,--and I try to recall the order of my impressions during that watching, dubious time, before I went over to the Conservative Party. I was trying--chaotic task--to gauge the possibilities inherent in the quality of the British aristocracy. There comes a broad spectacular effect of wide parks, diversified by woods and bracken valleys, and dappled with deer; of great smooth lawns shaded by ancient trees; of big

facades of sunlit buildings dominating the country side; of large fine rooms full of handsome, easy-mannered people. As a sort of representative picture to set off against those other pictures of Liberals and of Socialists I have given, I recall one of those huge assemblies the Duchess of Clynes inaugurated at Stamford House. The place itself is one of the vastest private houses in London, a huge clustering mass of white and gold saloons with polished floors and wonderful pictures, and staircases and galleries on a Gargantuan scale. And there she sought to gather all that was most representative of English activities, and did, in fact, in those brilliant nocturnal crowds, get samples of nearly every section of our social and intellectual life, with a marked predominance upon the political and social side.

I remember sitting in one of the recesses at the end of the big saloon with Mrs. Redmondson, one of those sharp-minded, beautiful rich women one meets so often in London, who seem to have done nothing and to be capable of everything, and we watched the crowd--uniforms and splendours were streaming in from a State ball--and exchanged information. I told her about the politicians and intellectuals, and she told me about the aristocrats, and we sharpened our wit on them and counted the percentage of beautiful people among the latter, and wondered if the general effect of tallness was or was not an illusion.

They were, we agreed, for the most part bigger than the average of people in London, and a handsome lot, even when they were not subtly individualised. "They look so well nurtured," I said, "well cared for. I like their quiet, well-trained movements, their pleasant consideration for each other."

"Kindly, good tempered, and at bottom utterly selfish," she said, "like big, rather carefully trained, rather pampered children. What else can you expect from them?"

"They are good tempered, anyhow," I witnessed, "and that's an achievement. I don't think I could ever be content under a bad-tempered, sentimentalism, strenuous Government. That's why I couldn't stand the Roosevelt REGIME in America. One's chief surprise when one comes across these big people for the first time is their admirable easiness and a real personal modesty. I confess I admire them. Oh! I like them. I wouldn't at all mind, I believe, giving over the country to this aristocracy--given SOMETHING--"

"Which they haven't got."

"Which they haven't got--or they'd be the finest sort of people in the world."

"That something?" she inquired.

"I don't know. I've been puzzling my wits to know. They've done all sorts of things--"

"That's Lord Wrassleton," she interrupted, "whose leg was broken--you remember?--at Spion Kop."

"It's healed very well. I like the gold lace and the white glove resting, with quite a nice awkwardness, on the sword. When I was a little boy I wanted to wear clothes like that. And the stars! He's got the V. C. Most of these people here have at any rate shown pluck, you know--brought something off."

"Not quite enough," she suggested.

"I think that's it," I said. "Not quite enough--not quite hard enough," I added.

She laughed and looked at me. "You'd like to make us," she said.

"What?"

"Hard."

"I don't think you'll go on if you don't get hard."

"We shan't be so pleasant if we do."

"Well, there my puzzled wits come in again. I don't see why an aristocracy shouldn't be rather hard trained, and yet kindly. I'm not convinced that the resources of education are exhausted. I want to better this, because it already looks so good."

"How are we to do it?" asked Mrs. Redmondson.

"Oh, there you have me! I've been spending my time lately in trying to answer that! It makes me quarrel with"--I held up my fingers and ticked the items off--"the public schools, the private tutors, the army exams, the Universities, the Church, the general attitude of the country towards science and literature--"

"We all do," said Mrs. Redmondson. "We can't begin again at the beginning," she added.

"Couldn't one," I nodded at the assembly in general, start a movement?

"There's the Confederates," she said, with a faint smile that masked a gleam of curiosity. . . . "You want," she said, "to say to the aristocracy, 'Be aristocrats. NOBLESSE OBLIGE.' Do you remember what happened to the monarch who was told to 'Be a King'?"

"Well," I said, "I want an aristocracy."

"This," she said, smiling, "is the pick of them. The backwoodsmen

are off the stage. These are the brilliant ones--the smart and the blues. . . . They cost a lot of money, you know."

So far Mrs. Redmondson, but the picture remained full of things not stated in our speech. They were on the whole handsome people, charitable minded, happy, and easy. They led spacious lives, and there was something free and fearless about their bearing that I liked extremely. The women particularly were wide-reading, fine-thinking. Mrs. Redmondson talked as fully and widely and boldly as a man, and with those flashes of intuition, those startling, sudden delicacies of perception few men display. I liked, too, the relations that held between women and men, their general tolerance, their antagonism to the harsh jealousies that are the essence of the middle-class order. . . .

After all, if one's aim resolved itself into the development of a type and culture of men, why shouldn't one begin at this end?

It is very easy indeed to generalise about a class or human beings, but much harder to produce a sample. Was old Lady Forthundred, for instance, fairly a sample? I remember her as a smiling, magnificent presence, a towering accumulation of figure and wonderful shimmering blue silk and black lace and black hair, and small fine features and chins and chins and chins, disposed in a big cane chair with wraps and cushions upon the great terrace of Champneys. Her eye was blue and hard, and her accent and intonation were exactly what you would expect from a rather commonplace dressmaker pretending to be aristocratic. I was, I am afraid, posing a little as the intelligent but respectful inquirer from below investigating the great world, and she was certainly posing as my informant. She affected a cynical coarseness. She developed a theory on the governance of England, beautifully frank and simple. "Give 'um all a peerage when they get twenty thousand a year," she maintained. "That's my remedy."

In my new role of theoretical aristocrat I felt a little abashed.

"Twenty thousand," she repeated with conviction.

It occurred to me that I was in the presence of the aristocratic theory currently working as distinguished from my as yet unformulated intentions.

"You'll get a lot of loafers and scamps among 'um," said Lady Forthundred. "You get loafers and scamps everywhere, but you'll get a lot of men who'll work hard to keep things together, and that's what we're all after, isn't ut?"

"It's not an ideal arrangement."

"Tell me anything better," said Lady Forthundred.

On the whole, and because she refused emphatically to believe in education, Lady Forthundred scored.

We had been discussing Cossington's recent peerage, for Cossington, my old schoolfellow at City Merchants', and my victor in the affair of the magazine, had clambered to an amazing wealth up a piled heap of energetically pushed penny and halfpenny magazines, and a group of daily newspapers. I had expected to find the great lady hostile to the new-comer, but she accepted him, she gloried in him.

"We're a peerage," she said, "but none of us have ever had any nonsense about nobility."

She turned and smiled down on me. "We English," she said, "are a practical people. We assimilate 'um."

"Then, I suppose, they don't give trouble?"

"Then they don't give trouble."

"They learn to shoot?"

"And all that," said Lady Forthundred. "Yes. And things go on. Sometimes better than others, but they go on--somehow. It depends very much on the sort of butler who pokes 'um about."

I suggested that it might be possible to get a secure twenty thousand a year by at least detrimental methods--socially speaking.

"We must take the bad and the good of 'um," said Lady Forthundred, courageously. . . .

Now, was she a sample? It happened she talked. What was there in the brains of the multitude of her first, second, third, fourth, and fifth cousins, who didn't talk, who shone tall, and bearing themselves finely, against a background of deft, attentive maids and valets, on every spacious social scene? How did things look to them?

7

Side by side with Lady Forthundred, it is curious to put Evesham with his tall, bent body, his little-featured almost elvish face, his unequal mild brown eyes, his gentle manner, his sweet, amazing oratory. He led all these people wonderfully. He was always curious and interested about life, wary beneath a pleasing frankness--and I tormented my brain to get to the bottom of him. For a long time he was the most powerful man in England under the throne; he had the Lords in his hand, and a great majority in the Commons, and the discontents and intrigues that are the concomitants

of an overwhelming party advantage broke against him as waves break against a cliff. He foresaw so far in these matters that it seemed he scarcely troubled to foresee. He brought political art to the last triumph of naturalness. Always for me he has been the typical aristocrat, so typical and above the mere forms of aristocracy, that he remained a commoner to the end of his days.

I had met him at the beginning of my career; he read some early papers of mine, and asked to see me, and I conceived a flattered liking for him that strengthened to a very strong feeling indeed. He seemed to me to stand alone without an equal, the greatest man in British political life. Some men one sees through and understands, some one cannot see into or round because they are of opaque clay, but about Evesham I had a sense of things hidden as it were by depth and mists, because he was so big and atmospheric a personality. No other contemporary has had that effect upon me. I've sat beside him at dinners, stayed in houses with him--he was in the big house party at Champneys--talked to him, sounded him, watching him as I sat beside him. I could talk to him with extraordinary freedom and a rare sense of being understood. Other men have to be treated in a special manner; approached through their own mental dialect, flattered by a minute regard for what they have said and done. Evesham was as widely and charitably receptive as any man I have ever met. The common politicians beside him seemed like rows of stuffy little rooms looking out upon the sea.

And what was he up to? What did HE think we were doing with Mankind? That I thought worth knowing.

I remember his talking on one occasion at the Hartsteins', at a dinner so tremendously floriferous and equipped that we were almost forced into duologues, about the possible common constructive purpose in politics.

"I feel so much," he said, "that the best people in every party

converge. We don't differ at Westminster as they do in the country towns. There's a sort of extending common policy that goes on under every government, because on the whole it's the right thing to do, and people know it. Things that used to be matters of opinion become matters of science--and cease to be party questions."

He instanced education.

"Apart," said I, "from the religious question."

"Apart from the religious question."

He dropped that aspect with an easy grace, and went on with his general theme that political conflict was the outcome of uncertainty. "Directly you get a thing established, so that people can say, 'Now this is Right,' with the same conviction that people can say water is a combination of oxygen and hydrogen, there's no more to be said. The thing has to be done. . . ."

And to put against this effect of Evesham, broad and humanely tolerant, posing as the minister of a steadily developing constructive conviction, there are other memories.

Have I not seen him in the House, persistent, persuasive, indefatigable, and by all my standards wickedly perverse, leaning over the table with those insistent movements of his hand upon it, or swaying forward with a grip upon his coat lapel, fighting with a diabolical skill to preserve what are in effect religious tests, tests he must have known would outrage and humiliate and injure the consciences of a quarter--and that perhaps the best quarter--of the youngsters who come to the work of elementary education?

In playing for points in the game of party advantage Evesham displayed at times a quite wicked unscrupulousness in the use of his subtle mind. I would sit on the Liberal benches and watch him, and

listen to his urbane voice, fascinated by him. Did he really care? Did anything matter to him? And if it really mattered nothing, why did he trouble to serve the narrowness and passion of his side? Or did he see far beyond my scope, so that this petty iniquity was justified by greater, remoter ends of which I had no intimation?

They accused him of nepotism. His friends and family were certainly well cared for. In private life he was full of an affectionate intimacy; he pleased by being charmed and pleased. One might think at times there was no more of him than a clever man happily circumstanced, and finding an interest and occupation in politics. And then came a glimpse of thought, of imagination, like the sight of a soaring eagle through a staircase skylight. Oh, beyond question he was great! No other contemporary politician had his quality. In no man have I perceived so sympathetically the great contrast between warm, personal things and the white dream of statecraft. Except that he had it seemed no hot passions, but only interests and fine affections and indolences, he paralleled the conflict of my life. He saw and thought widely and deeply; but at times it seemed to me his greatness stood over and behind the reality of his life, like some splendid servant, thinking his own thoughts, who waits behind a lesser master's chair. . . .

8

Of course, when Evesham talked of this ideal of the organised state becoming so finely true to practicability and so clearly stated as to have the compelling conviction of physical science, he spoke quite after my heart. Had he really embodied the attempt to realise that, I could have done no more than follow him blindly. But neither he nor I embodied that, and there lies the gist of my story. And when it came to a study of others among the leading Tories and

Imperialists the doubt increased, until with some at last it was possible to question whether they had any imaginative conception of constructive statecraft at all; whether they didn't opaquely accept the world for what it was, and set themselves single-mindedly to make a place for themselves and cut a figure in it.

There were some very fine personalities among them: there were the great peers who had administered Egypt, India, South Africa, Framboya--Cromer, Kitchener, Curzon, Milner, Gane, for example. So far as that easier task of holding sword and scales had gone, they had shown the finest qualities, but they had returned to the perplexing and exacting problem of the home country, a little glorious, a little too simply bold. They wanted to arm and they wanted to educate, but the habit of immediate necessity made them far more eager to arm than to educate, and their experience of heterogeneous controls made them overrate the need for obedience in a homogeneous country. They didn't understand raw men, ill-trained men, uncertain minds, and intelligent women; and these are the things that matter in England. . . . There were also the great business adventurers, from Cranber to Cossington (who was now Lord Paddockhurst). My mind remained unsettled, and went up and down the scale between a belief in their far-sighted purpose and the perception of crude vanities, coarse ambitions, vulgar competitiveness, and a mere habitual persistence in the pursuit of gain. For a time I saw a good deal of Cossington--I wish I had kept a diary of his talk and gestures, to mark how he could vary from day to day between a POSEUR, a smart tradesman, and a very bold and wide-thinking political schemer. He had a vanity of sweeping actions, motor car pounces, Napoleonic rushes, that led to violent ineffectual changes in the policy of his papers, and a haunting pursuit by parallel columns in the liberal press that never abashed him in the slightest degree. By an accident I plumbed the folly in him--but I feel I never plumbed his wisdom. I remember him one day after a lunch at the Barhams' saying suddenly, out of profound meditation over the end of a cigar, one of those sentences that seem

to light the whole interior being of a man. "Some day," he said softly, rather to himself than to me, and A PROPOS of nothing--"some day I will raise the country."

"Why not?" I said, after a pause, and leant across him for the little silver spirit-lamp, to light my cigarette. . . .

Then the Tories had for another section the ancient creations, and again there were the financial peers, men accustomed to reserve, and their big lawyers, accustomed to--well, qualified statement. And below the giant personalities of the party were the young bloods, young, adventurous men of the type of Lord Tarville, who had seen service in South Africa, who had travelled and hunted; explorers, keen motorists, interested in aviation, active in army organisation. Good, brown-faced stuff they were, but impervious to ideas outside the range of their activities, more ignorant of science than their chaffeurs, and of the quality of English people than welt-politicians; contemptuous of school and university by reason of the Gateses and Flacks and Codgers who had come their way, witty, light-hearted, patriotic at the Kipling level, with a certain aptitude for bullying. They varied in insensible gradations between the noble sportsmen on the one hand, and men like Gane and the Tories of our Pentagram club on the other. You perceive how a man might exercise his mind in the attempt to strike an average of public serviceability in this miscellany! And mixed up with these, mixed up sometimes in the same man, was the pure reactionary, whose predominant idea was that the village schools should confine themselves to teaching the catechism, hat-touching and courtesying, and be given a holiday whenever beaters were in request. . . .

I find now in my mind as a sort of counterpoise to Evesham the figure of old Lord Wardingham, asleep in the largest armchair in the library of Stamford Court after lunch. One foot rested on one of those things--I think they are called gout stools. He had been playing golf all the morning and wearied a weak instep; at lunch he

had sat at my table and talked in the overbearing manner permitted to irascible important men whose insteps are painful. Among other things he had flouted the idea that women would ever understand statecraft or be more than a nuisance in politics, denied flatly that Hindoos were capable of anything whatever except excesses in population, regretted he could not censor picture galleries and circulating libraries, and declared that dissenters were people who pretended to take theology seriously with the express purpose of upsetting the entirely satisfactory compromise of the Established Church. "No sensible people, with anything to gain or lose, argue about religion," he said. "They mean mischief." Having delivered his soul upon these points, and silenced the little conversation to the left of him from which they had arisen, he became, after an appreciative encounter with a sanguinary woodcock, more amiable, responded to some respectful initiatives of Crupp's, and related a number of classical anecdotes of those blighting snubs, vindictive retorts and scandalous miscarriages of justice that are so dear to the forensic mind. Now he reposed. He was breathing heavily with his mouth a little open and his head on one side. One whisker was turned back against the comfortable padding. His plump strong hands gripped the arms of his chair, and his frown was a little assuaged. How tremendously fed up he looked! Honours, wealth, influence, respect, he had them all. How scornful and hard it had made his unguarded expression!

I note without comment that it didn't even occur to me then to wake him up and ask him what HE was up to with mankind.

9

One countervailing influence to my drift to Toryism in those days was Margaret's quite religious faith in the Liberals. I realised

that slowly and with a mild astonishment. It set me, indeed, even then questioning my own change of opinion. We came at last incidentally, as our way was, to an exchange of views. It was as nearly a quarrel as we had before I came over to the Conservative side. It was at Champneys, and I think during the same visit that witnessed my exploration of Lady Forthundred. It arose indirectly, I think, out of some comments of mine upon our fellow-guests, but it is one of those memories of which the scene and quality remain more vivid than the things said, a memory without any very definite beginning or end. It was afternoon, in the pause between tea and the dressing bell, and we were in Margaret's big silver-adorned, chintz-bright room, looking out on the trim Italian garden. . . . Yes, the beginning of it has escaped me altogether, but I remember it as an odd exceptional little wrangle.

At first we seem to have split upon the moral quality of the aristocracy, and I had an odd sense that in some way too feminine for me to understand our hostess had aggrieved her. She said, I know, that Champneys distressed her; made her "eager for work and reality again."

"But aren't these people real?"

"They're so superficial, so extravagant!"

I said I was not shocked by their unreality. They seemed the least affected people I had ever met. "And are they really so extravagant?" I asked, and put it to her that her dresses cost quite as much as any other woman's in the house.

"It's not only their dresses," Margaret parried. "It's the scale and spirit of things."

I questioned that. "They're cynical," said Margaret, staring before her out of the window.

I challenged her, and she quoted the Brabants, about whom there had been an ancient scandal. She'd heard of it from Altiora, and it was also Altiora who'd given her a horror of Lord Carnaby, who was also with us. "You know his reputation," said Margaret. "That Normandy girl. Every one knows about it. I shiver when I look at him. He seems--oh! like something not of OUR civilisation. He WILL come and say little things to me."

"Offensive things?"

"No, politenesses and things. Of course his manners are--quite right. That only makes it worse, I think. It shows he might have helped--all that happened. I do all I can to make him see I don't like him. But none of the others make the slightest objection to him."

"Perhaps these people imagine something might be said for him."

"That's just it," said Margaret.

"Charity," I suggested.

"I don't like that sort of toleration."

I was oddly annoyed. "Like eating with publicans and sinners," I said. "No! . . .

But scandals, and the contempt for rigid standards their condonation displayed, weren't more than the sharp edge of the trouble. "It's their whole position, their selfish predominance, their class conspiracy against the mass of people," said Margaret. "When I sit at dinner in that splendid room, with its glitter and white reflections and candlelight, and its flowers and its wonderful service and its candelabra of solid gold, I seem to feel the slums

and the mines and the over-crowded cottages stuffed away under the table."

I reminded Margaret that she was not altogether innocent of unearned increment.

"But aren't we doing our best to give it back?" she said.

I was moved to question her. "Do you really think," I asked, "that the Tories and peers and rich people are to blame for social injustice as we have it to-day? Do you really see politics as a struggle of light on the Liberal side against darkness on the Tory?"

"They MUST know," said Margaret.

I found myself questioning that. I see now that to Margaret it must have seemed the perversest carping against manifest things, but at the time I was concentrated simply upon the elucidation of her view and my own; I wanted to get at her conception in the sharpest, hardest lines that were possible. It was perfectly clear that she saw Toryism as the diabolical element in affairs. The thing showed in its hopeless untruth all the clearer for the fine, clean emotion with which she gave it out to me. My sleeping peer in the library at Stamford Court and Evesham talking luminously behind the Hartstein flowers embodied the devil, and my replete citizen sucking at his cigar in the National Liberal Club, Willie Crampton discussing the care and management of the stomach over a specially hygienic lemonade, and Dr. Tumpany in his aggressive frock-coat pegging out a sort of copyright in Socialism, were the centre and wings of the angelic side. It was nonsense. But how was I to put the truth to her?

"I don't see things at all as you do," I said. "I don't see things in the same way."

"Think of the poor," said Margaret, going off at a tangent.

"Think of every one," I said. "We Liberals have done more mischief through well-intentioned benevolence than all the selfishness in the world could have done. We built up the liquor interest."

"WE!" cried Margaret. "How can you say that? It's against us."

"Naturally. But we made it a monopoly in our clumsy efforts to prevent people drinking what they liked, because it interfered with industrial regularity--"

"Oh!" cried Margaret, stung; and I could see she thought I was talking mere wickedness.

"That's it," I said.

"But would you have people drink whatever they pleased?"

"Certainly. What right have I to dictate to other men and women?"

"But think of the children!"

"Ah! there you have the folly of modern Liberalism, its half-cunning, half-silly way of getting at everything in a roundabout fashion. If neglecting children is an offence, and it IS an offence, then deal with it as such, but don't go badgering and restricting people who sell something that may possibly in some cases lead to a neglect of children. If drunkenness is an offence, punish it, but don't punish a man for selling honest drink that perhaps after all won't make any one drunk at all. Don't intensify the viciousness of the public-house by assuming the place isn't fit for women and children. That's either spite or folly. Make the public-house FIT for women and children. Make it a real public-house. If we Liberals go on as we are going, we shall presently

want to stop the sale of ink and paper because those things tempt men to forgery. We do already threaten the privacy of the post because of betting tout's letters. The drift of all that kind of thing is narrow, unimaginative, mischievous, stupid. . . ."

I stopped short and walked to the window and surveyed a pretty fountain, facsimile of one in Verona, amidst trim-cut borderings of yew. Beyond, and seen between the stems of ilex trees, was a great blaze of yellow flowers. . . .

"But prevention," I heard Margaret behind me, "is the essence of our work."

I turned. "There's no prevention but education. There's no antiseptics in life but love and fine thinking. Make people fine, make fine people. Don't be afraid. These Tory leaders are better people individually than the average; why cast them for the villains of the piece? The real villain in the piece--in the whole human drama--is the muddle-headedness, and it matters very little if it's virtuous-minded or wicked. I want to get at muddle-headedness. If I could do that I could let all that you call wickedness in the world run about and do what it jolly well pleased. It would matter about as much as a slightly neglected dog--in an otherwise well-managed home."

My thoughts had run away with me.

"I can't understand you," said Margaret, in the profoundest distress. "I can't understand how it is you are coming to see things like this."

10

The moods of a thinking man in politics are curiously evasive and

difficult to describe. Neither the public nor the historian will permit the statesman moods. He has from the first to assume he has an Aim, a definite Aim, and to pretend to an absolute consistency with that. Those subtle questionings about the very fundamentals of life which plague us all so relentlessly nowadays are supposed to be silenced. He lifts his chin and pursues his Aim explicitly in the sight of all men. Those who have no real political experience can scarcely imagine the immense mental and moral strain there is between one's everyday acts and utterances on the one hand and the "thinking-out" process on the other. It is perplexingly difficult to keep in your mind, fixed and firm, a scheme essentially complex, to keep balancing a swaying possibility while at the same time under jealous, hostile, and stupid observation you tread your part in the platitudinous, quarrelsome, ill-presented march of affairs. . . .

The most impossible of all autobiographies is an intellectual autobiography. I have thrown together in the crudest way the elements of the problem I struggled with, but I can give no record of the subtle details; I can tell nothing of the long vacillations between Protean values, the talks and re-talks, the meditations, the bleak lucidities of sleepless nights. . . .

And yet these things I have struggled with must be thought out, and, to begin with, they must be thought out in this muddled, experimenting way. To go into a study to think about statecraft is to turn your back on the realities you are constantly needing to feel and test and sound if your thinking is to remain vital; to choose an aim and pursue it in despite of all subsequent questionings is to bury the talent of your mind. It is no use dealing with the intricate as though it were simple, to leap haphazard at the first course of action that presents itself; the whole world of politicians is far too like a man who snatches a poker to a failing watch. It is easy to say he wants to "get something done," but the only sane thing to do for the moment is to put aside that poker and take thought and get a better implement. . . .

One of the results of these fundamental preoccupations of mine was a curious irritability towards Margaret that I found difficult to conceal. It was one of the incidental cruelties of our position that this should happen. I was in such doubt myself, that I had no power to phrase things for her in a form she could use. Hitherto I had stage-managed our "serious" conversations. Now I was too much in earnest and too uncertain to go on doing this. I avoided talk with her. Her serene, sustained confidence in vague formulae and sentimental aspirations exasperated me; her want of sympathetic apprehension made my few efforts to indicate my changing attitudes distressing and futile. It wasn't that I was always thinking right, and that she was always saying wrong. It was that I was struggling to get hold of a difficult thing that was, at any rate, half true, I could not gauge how true, and that Margaret's habitual phrasing ignored these elusive elements of truth, and without premeditation fitted into the weaknesses of my new intimations, as though they had nothing but weaknesses. It was, for example, obvious that these big people, who were the backbone of Imperialism and Conservatism, were temperamentally lax, much more indolent, much more sensuous, than our deliberately virtuous Young Liberals. I didn't want to be reminded of that, just when I was in full effort to realise the finer elements in their composition. Margaret classed them and disposed of them. It was our incurable differences in habits and gestures of thought coming between us again.

The desert of misunderstanding widened. I was forced back upon myself and my own secret councils. For a time I went my way alone; an unmixed evil for both of us. Except for that Pentagram evening, a series of talks with Isabel Rivers, who was now becoming more and more important in my intellectual life, and the arguments I maintained with Crupp, I never really opened my mind at all during that period of indecisions, slow abandonments, and slow acquisitions.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

SECESSION

1

At last, out of a vast accumulation of impressions, decision distilled quite suddenly. I succumbed to Evesham and that dream of the right thing triumphant through expression. I determined I would go over to the Conservatives, and use my every gift and power on the side of such forces on that side as made for educational reorganisation, scientific research, literature, criticism, and intellectual development. That was in 1909. I judged the Tories were driving straight at a conflict with the country, and I thought them bound to incur an electoral defeat. I under-estimated their strength in the counties. There would follow, I calculated, a period of profound reconstruction in method and policy alike. I was entirely at one with Crupp in perceiving in this an immense opportunity for the things we desired. An aristocracy quickened by conflict and on the defensive, and full of the idea of justification by reconstruction, might prove altogether more apt for thought and high professions than Mrs. Redmondson's spoilt children. Behind the now inevitable struggle for a reform of the House of Lords, there would be great heart searchings and educational endeavour. On that we reckoned. . . .

At last we talked it out to the practical pitch, and Crupp and Shoemith, and I and Gane, made our definite agreement together. . . .

I emerged from enormous silences upon Margaret one evening.

She was just back from the display of some new musicians at the

Hartsteins. I remember she wore a dress of golden satin, very rich-looking and splendid. About her slender neck there was a rope of gold-set amber beads. Her hair caught up and echoed and returned these golden notes. I, too, was in evening dress, but where I had been escapes me,--some forgotten dinner, I suppose. I went into her room. I remember I didn't speak for some moments. I went across to the window and pulled the blind aside, and looked out upon the railed garden of the square, with its shrubs and shadowed turf gleaming pallidly and irregularly in the light of the big electric standard in the corner.

"Margaret," I said, "I think I shall break with the party."

She made no answer. I turned presently, a movement of enquiry.

"I was afraid you meant to do that," she said.

"I'm out of touch," I explained. "Altogether."

"Oh! I know."

"It places me in a difficult position," I said.

Margaret stood at her dressing-table, looking steadfastly at herself in the glass, and with her fingers playing with a litter of stoppered bottles of tinted glass. "I was afraid it was coming to this," she said.

"In a way," I said, "we've been allies. I owe my seat to you. I couldn't have gone into Parliament. . . ."

"I don't want considerations like that to affect us," she interrupted.

There was a pause. She sat down in a chair by her dressing-table,

lifted an ivory hand-glass, and put it down again.

"I wish," she said, with something like a sob in her voice, "it were possible that you shouldn't do this." She stopped abruptly, and I did not look at her, because I could feel the effort she was making to control herself.

"I thought," she began again, "when you came into Parliament--"

There came another silence. "It's all gone so differently," she said. "Everything has gone so differently."

I had a sudden memory of her, shining triumphant after the Kinghamstead election, and for the first time I realised just how perplexing and disappointing my subsequent career must have been to her.

"I'm not doing this without consideration," I said.

"I know," she said, in a voice of despair, "I've seen it coming. But--I still don't understand it. I don't understand how you can go over."

"My ideas have changed and developed," I said.

I walked across to her bearskin hearthrug, and stood by the mantel.

"To think that you," she said; "you who might have been leader--" She could not finish it. "All the forces of reaction," she threw out.

"I don't think they are the forces of reaction," I said. "I think I can find work to do--better work on that side."

"Against us!" she said. "As if progress wasn't hard enough! As if

it didn't call upon every able man!"

"I don't think Liberalism has a monopoly of progress."

She did not answer that. She sat quite still looking in front of her. "WHY have you gone over?" she asked abruptly as though I had said nothing.

There came a silence that I was impelled to end. I began a stiff dissertation from the hearthrug. "I am going over, because I think I may join in an intellectual renaissance on the Conservative side. I think that in the coming struggle there will be a partial and altogether confused and demoralising victory for democracy, that will stir the classes which now dominate the Conservative party into an energetic revival. They will set out to win back, and win back. Even if my estimate of con-temporary forces is wrong and they win, they will still be forced to reconstruct their outlook. A war abroad will supply the chastening if home politics fail. The effort at renaissance is bound to come by either alternative. I believe I can do more in relation to that effort than in any other connexion in the world of politics at the present time. That's my case, Margaret."

She certainly did not grasp what I said. "And so you will throw aside all the beginnings, all the beliefs and pledges--" Again her sentence remained incomplete. "I doubt if even, once you have gone over, they will welcome you."

"That hardly matters."

I made an effort to resume my speech.

"I came into Parliament, Margaret," I said, "a little prematurely. Still--I suppose it was only by coming into Parliament that I could see things as I do now in terms of personality and imaginative

range. . . ." I stopped. Her stiff, unhappy, unlistening silence broke up my disquisition.

"After all," I remarked, "most of this has been implicit in my writings."

She made no sign of admission.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"Keep my seat for a time and make the reasons of my breach clear. Then either I must resign or--probably this new Budget will lead to a General Election. It's evidently meant to strain the Lords and provoke a quarrel."

"You might, I think, have stayed to fight for the Budget."

"I'm not," I said, "so keen against the Lords."

On that we halted.

"But what are you going to do?" she asked.

"I shall make my quarrel over some points in the Budget. I can't quite tell you yet where my chance will come. Then I shall either resign my seat--or if things drift to dissolution I shall stand again."

"It's political suicide."

"Not altogether."

"I can't imagine you out of Parliament again. It's just like--like undoing all we have done. What will you do?"

"Write. Make a new, more definite place for myself. You know, of course, there's already a sort of group about Crupp and Gane."

Margaret seemed lost for a time in painful thought.

"For me," she said at last, "our political work has been a religion--it has been more than a religion."

I heard in silence. I had no form of protest available against the implications of that.

"And then I find you turning against all we aimed to do--talking of going over, almost lightly--to those others." . . .

She was white-lipped as she spoke. In the most curious way she had captured the moral values of the situation. I found myself protesting ineffectually against her fixed conviction. "It's because I think my duty lies in this change that I make it," I said.

"I don't see how you can say that," she replied quietly.

There was another pause between us.

"Oh!" she said and clenched her hand upon the table. "That it should have come to this!"

She was extraordinarily dignified and extraordinarily absurd. She was hurt and thwarted beyond measure. She had no place in her ideas, I thought, for me. I could see how it appeared to her, but I could not make her see anything of the intricate process that had brought me to this divergence. The opposition of our intellectual temperaments was like a gag in my mouth. What was there for me to say? A flash of intuition told me that behind her white dignity was a passionate disappointment, a shattering of dreams that needed before everything else the relief of weeping.

"I've told you," I said awkwardly, "as soon as I could."

There was another long silence. "So that is how we stand," I said with an air of having things defined. I walked slowly to the door.

She had risen and stood now staring in front of her.

"Good-night," I said, making no movement towards our habitual kiss.

"Good-night," she answered in a tragic note. . . .

I closed the door softly. I remained for a moment or so on the big landing, hesitating between my bedroom and my study. As I did so I heard the soft rustle of her movement and the click of the key in her bedroom door. Then everything was still. . . .

She hid her tears from me. Something gripped my heart at the thought.

"Damnation!" I said wincing. "Why the devil can't people at least THINK in the same manner?"

2

And that insufficient colloquy was the beginning of a prolonged estrangement between us. It was characteristic of our relations that we never reopened the discussion. The thing had been in the air for some time; we had recognised it now; the widening breach between us was confessed. My own feelings were curiously divided. It is remarkable that my very real affection for Margaret only became evident to me with this quarrel. The changes of the heart

are very subtle changes. I am quite unaware how or when my early romantic love for her purity and beauty and high-principled devotion evaporated from my life; but I do know that quite early in my parliamentary days there had come a vague, unconfessed resentment at the tie that seemed to hold me in servitude to her standards of private living and public act. I felt I was caught, and none the less so because it had been my own act to rivet on my shackles. So long as I still held myself bound to her that resentment grew. Now, since I had broken my bonds and taken my line it withered again, and I could think of Margaret with a returning kindness.

But I still felt embarrassment with her. I felt myself dependent upon her for house room and food and social support, as it were under false pretences. I would have liked to have separated our financial affairs altogether. But I knew that to raise the issue would have seemed a last brutal indelicacy. So I tried almost furtively to keep my personal expenditure within the scope of the private income I made by writing, and we went out together in her motor brougham, dined and made appearances, met politely at breakfast--parted at night with a kiss upon her cheek. The locking of her door upon me, which at that time I quite understood, which I understand now, became for a time in my mind, through some obscure process of the soul, an offence. I never crossed the landing to her room again.

In all this matter, and, indeed, in all my relations with Margaret, I perceive now I behaved badly and foolishly. My manifest blunder is that I, who was several years older than she, much subtler and in many ways wiser, never in any measure sought to guide and control her. After our marriage I treated her always as an equal, and let her go her way; held her responsible for all the weak and ineffective and unfortunate things she said and did to me. She wasn't clever enough to justify that. It wasn't fair to expect her to sympathise, anticipate, and understand. I ought to have taken care of her, roped her to me when it came to crossing the difficult

places. If I had loved her more, and wiselier and more tenderly, if there had not been the consciousness of my financial dependence on her always stiffening my pride, I think she would have moved with me from the outset, and left the Liberals with me. But she did not get any inkling of the ends I sought in my change of sides. It must have seemed to her inexplicable perversity. She had, I knew--for surely I knew it then--an immense capacity for loyalty and devotion. There she was with these treasures untouched, neglected and perplexed. A woman who loves wants to give. It is the duty and business of the man she has married for love to help her to help and give. But I was stupid. My eyes had never been opened. I was stiff with her and difficult to her, because even on my wedding morning there had been, deep down in my soul, voiceless though present, something weakly protesting, a faint perception of wrongdoing, the infinitesimally small, slow-multiplying germs of shame.

3

I made my breach with the party on the Budget.

In many ways I was disposed to regard the 1909 Budget as a fine piece of statecraft. Its production was certainly a very unexpected display of vigour on the Liberal side. But, on the whole, this movement towards collectivist organisation on the part of the Liberals rather strengthened than weakened my resolve to cross the floor of the house. It made it more necessary, I thought, to leaven the purely obstructive and reactionary elements that were at once manifest in the opposition. I assailed the land taxation proposals in one main speech, and a series of minor speeches in committee. The line of attack I chose was that the land was a great public service that needed to be controlled on broad and far-sighted lines. I had no objection to its nationalisation, but I did object most

strenuously to the idea of leaving it in private hands, and attempting to produce beneficial social results through the pressure of taxation upon the land-owning class. That might break it up in an utterly disastrous way. The drift of the government proposals was all in the direction of sweating the landowner to get immediate values from his property, and such a course of action was bound to give us an irritated and vindictive land-owning class, the class upon which we had hitherto relied--not unjustifiably--for certain broad, patriotic services and an influence upon our collective judgments that no other class seemed prepared to exercise. Abolish landlordism if you will, I said, buy it out, but do not drive it to a defensive fight, and leave it still sufficiently strong and wealthy to become a malcontent element in your state. You have taxed and controlled the brewer and the publican until the outraged Liquor Interest has become a national danger. You now propose to do the same thing on a larger scale. You turn a class which has many fine and truly aristocratic traditions towards revolt, and there is nothing in these or any other of your proposals that shows any sense of the need for leadership to replace these traditional leaders you are ousting. This was the substance of my case, and I hammered at it not only in the House, but in the press. . . .

The Kinghampstead division remained for some time insensitive to my defection.

Then it woke up suddenly, and began, in the columns of the **KINGSHAMPSTEAD GUARDIAN**, an indignant, confused outcry. I was treated to an open letter, signed Junius Secundus," and I replied in provocative terms. There were two thinly attended public meetings at different ends of the constituency, and then I had a correspondence with my old friend Parvill, the photographer, which ended in my seeing a deputation.

My impression is that it consisted of about eighteen or twenty

people. They had had to come upstairs to me and they were manifestly full of indignation and a little short of breath. There was Parvill himself, J.P., dressed wholly in black--I think to mark his sense of the occasion--and curiously suggestive in his respect for my character and his concern for the honourableness of the KINGHAMSTEAD GUARDIAN editor, of Mark Antony at the funeral of

Cesar. There was Mrs. Bulger, also in mourning; she had never abandoned the widow's streamers since the death of her husband ten years ago, and her loyalty to Liberalism of the severest type was part as it were of her weeds. There was a nephew of Sir Roderick Newton, a bright young Hebrew of the graver type, and a couple of dissenting ministers in high collars and hats that stopped halfway between the bowler of this world and the shovel-hat of heaven. There was also a young solicitor from Lurky done in the horsey style, and there was a very little nervous man with a high brow and a face contracting below as though the jawbones and teeth had been taken out and the features compressed. The rest of the deputation, which included two other public-spirited ladies and several ministers of religion, might have been raked out of any omnibus going Strandward during the May meetings. They thrust Parvill forward as spokesman, and manifested a strong disposition to say "Hear, hear!" to his more strenuous protests provided my eye wasn't upon them at the time.

I regarded this appalling deputation as Parvill's apologetic but quite definite utterances drew to an end. I had a moment of vision. Behind them I saw the wonderful array of skeleton forces that stand for public opinion, that are as much public opinion as exists indeed at the present time. The whole process of politics which bulks so solidly in history seemed for that clairvoyant instant but a froth of petty motives above abysses of indifference. . . .

Some one had finished. I perceived I had to speak.

"Very well," I said, "I won't keep you long in replying. I'll resign if there isn't a dissolution before next February, and if there is I shan't stand again. You don't want the bother and expense of a bye-election (approving murmurs) if it can be avoided. But I may tell you plainly now that I don't think it will be necessary for me to resign, and the sooner you find my successor the better for the party. The Lords are in a corner; they've got to fight now or never, and I think they will throw out the Budget. Then they will go on fighting. It is a fight that will last for years. They have a sort of social discipline, and you haven't. You Liberals will find yourselves with a country behind you, vaguely indignant perhaps, but totally unprepared with any ideas whatever in the matter, face to face with the problem of bringing the British constitution up-to-date. Anything may happen, provided only that it is sufficiently absurd. If the King backs the Lords--and I don't see why he shouldn't--you have no Republican movement whatever to fall back upon. You lost it during the Era of Good Taste. The country, I say, is destitute of ideas, and you have no ideas to give it. I don't see what you will do. . . . For my own part, I mean to spend a year or so between a window and my writingdesk."

I paused. "I think, gentlemen," began Parvill, "that we hear all this with very great regret. . . ."

4

My estrangement from Margaret stands in my memory now as something that played itself out within the four walls of our house in Radnor Square, which was, indeed, confined to those limits. I went to and fro between my house and the House of Commons, and the dining-rooms and clubs and offices in which we were preparing our new developments, in a state of aggressive and energetic dissociation,

in the nascent state, as a chemist would say. I was free now, and greedy for fresh combination. I had a tremendous sense of released energies. I had got back to the sort of thing I could do, and to the work that had been shaping itself for so long in my imagination. Our purpose now was plain, bold, and extraordinarily congenial. We meant no less than to organise a new movement in English thought and life, to resuscitate a Public Opinion and prepare the ground for a revised and renovated ruling culture.

For a time I seemed quite wonderfully able to do whatever I wanted to do. Shoemith responded to my first advances. We decided to create a weekly paper as our nucleus, and Crupp and I set to work forthwith to collect a group of writers and speakers, including Esmeer, Britten, Lord Gane, Neal, and one or two younger men, which should constitute a more or less definite editorial council about me, and meet at a weekly lunch on Tuesday to sustain our general co-operations. We marked our claim upon Toryism even in the colour of our wrapper, and spoke of ourselves collectively as the Blue Weeklies. But our lunches were open to all sorts of guests, and our deliberations were never of a character to control me effectively in my editorial decisions. My only influential councillor at first was old Britten, who became my sub-editor. It was curious how we two had picked up our ancient intimacy again and resumed the easy give and take of our speculative dreaming schoolboy days.

For a time my life centred altogether upon this journalistic work. Britten was an experienced journalist, and I had most of the necessary instincts for the business. We meant to make the paper right and good down to the smallest detail, and we set ourselves at this with extraordinary zeal. It wasn't our intention to show our political motives too markedly at first, and through all the dust storm and tumult and stress of the political struggle of 1910, we made a little intellectual oasis of good art criticism and good writing. It was the firm belief of nearly all of us that the Lords were destined to be beaten badly in 1910, and our game was the

longer game of reconstruction that would begin when the shouting and tumult of that immediate conflict were over. Meanwhile we had to get into touch with just as many good minds as possible.

As we felt our feet, I developed slowly and carefully a broadly conceived and consistent political attitude. As I will explain later, we were feminist from the outset, though that caused Shoemith and Gane great searching of heart; we developed Esmeer's House of Lords reform scheme into a general cult of the aristocratic virtues, and we did much to humanise and liberalise the narrow excellencies of that Break-up of the Poor Law agitation, which had been organised originally by Beatrice and Sidney Webb. In addition, without any very definite explanation to any one but Esmeer and Isabel Rivers, and as if it was quite a small matter, I set myself to secure a uniform philosophical quality in our columns.

That, indeed, was the peculiar virtue and characteristic of the BLUE WEEKLY. I was now very definitely convinced that much of the confusion and futility of contemporary thought was due to the general need of metaphysical training. . . . The great mass of people--and not simply common people, but people active and influential in intellectual things--are still quite untrained in the methods of thought and absolutely innocent of any criticism of method; it is scarcely a caricature to call their thinking a crazy patchwork, discontinuous and chaotic. They arrive at conclusions by a kind of accident, and do not suspect any other way may be found to their attainment. A stage above this general condition stands that minority of people who have at some time or other discovered general terms and a certain use for generalisations. They are--to fall back on the ancient technicality--Realists of a crude sort. When I say Realist of course I mean Realist as opposed to Nominalist, and not Realist in the almost diametrically different sense of opposition to Idealist. Such are the Baileys; such, to take their great prototype, was Herbert Spencer (who couldn't read Kant); such are whole regiments of prominent and entirely self-satisfied

contemporaries. They go through queer little processes of definition and generalisation and deduction with the completest belief in the validity of the intellectual instrument they are using. They are Realists--Cocksurists--in matter of fact; sentimentalists in behaviour. The Baileys having got to this glorious stage in mental development--it is glorious because it has no doubts--were always talking about training "Experts" to apply the same simple process to all the affairs of mankind. Well, Realism isn't the last word of human wisdom. Modest-minded people, doubtful people, subtle people, and the like--the kind of people William James writes of as "tough-minded," go on beyond this methodical happiness, and are forever after critical of premises and terms. They are truer--and less confident. They have reached scepticism and the artistic method. They have emerged into the new Nominalism.

Both Isabel and I believe firmly that these differences of intellectual method matter profoundly in the affairs of mankind, that the collective mind of this intricate complex modern state can only function properly upon neo-Nominalist lines. This has always been her side of our mental co-operation rather than mine. Her mind has the light movement that goes so often with natural mental power; she has a wonderful art in illustration, and, as the reader probably knows already, she writes of metaphysical matters with a rare charm and vividness. So far there has been no collection of her papers published, but they are to be found not only in the BLUE WEEKLY columns but scattered about the monthlies; many people must be familiar with her style. It was an intention we did much to realise before our private downfall, that we would use the BLUE WEEKLY to maintain a stream of suggestion against crude thinking, and at last scarcely a week passed but some popular distinction, some large imposing generalisation, was touched to flaccidity by her pen or mine. . . .

I was at great pains to give my philosophical, political, and social matter the best literary and critical backing we could get in

London. I hunted sedulously for good descriptive writing and good criticism; I was indefatigable in my readiness to hear and consider, if not to accept advice; I watched every corner of the paper, and had a dozen men alert to get me special matter of the sort that draws in the unattached reader. The chief danger on the literary side of a weekly is that it should fall into the hands of some particular school, and this I watched for closely. It seems impossible to get vividness of apprehension and breadth of view together in the same critic. So it falls to the wise editor to secure the first and impose the second. Directly I detected the shrill partisan note in our criticism, the attempt to puff a poor thing because it was "in the right direction," or damn a vigorous piece of work because it wasn't, I tackled the man and had it out with him. Our pay was good enough for that to matter a good deal. . . .

Our distinctive little blue and white poster kept up its neat persistent appeal to the public eye, and before 1911 was out, the BLUE WEEKLY was printing twenty pages of publishers' advertisements, and went into all the clubs in London and three-quarters of the country houses where week-end parties gather together. Its sale by newsagents and bookstalls grew steadily. One got more and more the reassuring sense of being discussed, and influencing discussion.

5

Our office was at the very top of a big building near the end of Adelphi Terrace; the main window beside my desk, a big undivided window of plate glass, looked out upon Cleopatra's Needle, the corner of the Hotel Cecil, the fine arches of Waterloo Bridge, and the long sweep of south bank with its shot towers and chimneys, past Bankside to the dimly seen piers of the great bridge below the Tower. The dome of St. Paul's just floated into view on the left

against the hotel facade. By night and day, in every light and atmosphere, it was a beautiful and various view, alive as a throbbing heart; a perpetual flow of traffic ploughed and splashed the streaming silver of the river, and by night the shapes of things became velvet black and grey, and the water a shining mirror of steel, wearing coruscating gems of light. In the foreground the Embankment trams sailed glowing by, across the water advertisements flashed and flickered, trains went and came and a rolling drift of smoke reflected unseen fires. By day that spectacle was sometimes a marvel of shining wet and wind-cleared atmosphere, sometimes a mystery of drifting fog, sometimes a miracle of crowded details, minutely fine.

As I think of that view, so variously spacious in effect, I am back there, and this sunlit paper might be lamp-lit and lying on my old desk. I see it all again, feel it all again. In the foreground is a green shaded lamp and crumpled galley slips and paged proofs and letters, two or three papers in manuscript, and so forth. In the shadows are chairs and another table bearing papers and books, a rotating bookcase dimly seen, a long window seat black in the darkness, and then the cool unbroken spectacle of the window. How often I would watch some tram-car, some string of barges go from me slowly out of sight. The people were black animalculae by day, clustering, collecting, dispersing, by night, they were phantom face-specks coming, vanishing, stirring obscurely between light and shade.

I recall many hours at my desk in that room before the crisis came, hours full of the peculiar happiness of effective strenuous work. Once some piece of writing went on, holding me intent and forgetful of time until I looked up from the warm circle of my electric lamp to see the eastward sky above the pale silhouette of the Tower Bridge, flushed and banded brightly with the dawn.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

THE BESETTING OF SEX

1

Art is selection and so is most autobiography. But I am concerned with a more tangled business than selection, I want to show a contemporary man in relation to the state and social usage, and the social organism in relation to that man. To tell my story at all I have to simplify. I have given now the broad lines of my political development, and how I passed from my initial liberal-socialism to the conception of a constructive aristocracy. I have tried to set that out in the form of a man discovering himself. Incidentally that self-development led to a profound breach with my wife. One has read stories before of husband and wife speaking severally two different languages and coming to an understanding. But Margaret and I began in her dialect, and, as I came more and more to use my own, diverged.

I had thought when I married that the matter of womankind had ended for me. I have tried to tell all that sex and women had been to me up to my married life with Margaret and our fatal entanglement, tried to show the queer, crippled, embarrassed and limited way in which these interests break upon the life of a young man under contemporary conditions. I do not think my lot was a very exceptional one. I missed the chance of sisters and girl playmates, but that is not an uncommon misadventure in an age of small families; I never came to know any woman at all intimately until I was married to Margaret. My earlier love affairs were encounters of sex, under conditions of furtiveness and adventure that made them

things in themselves, restricted and unilluminating. From a boyish disposition to be mystical and worshipping towards women I had passed into a disregardful attitude, as though women were things inferior or irrelevant, disturbers in great affairs. For a time Margaret had blotted out all other women; she was so different and so near; she was like a person who stands suddenly in front of a little window through which one has been surveying a crowd. She didn't become womankind for me so much as eliminate womankind from my world. . . . And then came this secret separation. . . .

Until this estrangement and the rapid and uncontrollable development of my relations with Isabel which chanced to follow it, I seemed to have solved the problem of women by marriage and disregard. I thought these things were over. I went about my career with Margaret beside me, her brow slightly knit, her manner faintly strenuous, helping, helping; and if we had not altogether abolished sex we had at least so circumscribed and isolated it that it would not have affected the general tenor of our lives in the slightest degree if we had.

And then, clothing itself more and more in the form of Isabel and her problems, this old, this fundamental obsession of my life returned. The thing stole upon my mind so that I was unaware of its invasion and how it was changing our long intimacy. I have already compared the lot of the modern publicist to Machiavelli writing in his study; in his day women and sex were as disregarded in these high affairs as, let us say, the chemistry of air or the will of the beasts in the fields; in ours the case has altogether changed, and woman has come now to stand beside the tall candles, half in the light, half in the mystery of the shadows, besetting, interrupting, demanding unrelentingly an altogether unprecedented attention. I feel that in these matters my life has been almost typical of my time. Woman insists upon her presence. She is no longer a mere physical need, an aesthetic bye-play, a sentimental background; she is a moral and intellectual necessity in a man's life. She comes to

the politician and demands, Is she a child or a citizen? Is she a thing or a soul? She comes to the individual man, as she came to me and asks, Is she a cherished weakling or an equal mate, an unavoidable helper? Is she to be tried and trusted or guarded and controlled, bond or free? For if she is a mate, one must at once trust more and exact more, exacting toil, courage, and the hardest, most necessary thing of all, the clearest, most shameless, explicitness of understanding. . . .

2

In all my earlier imaginings of statecraft I had tacitly assumed either that the relations of the sexes were all right or that anyhow they didn't concern the state. It was a matter they, whoever "they" were, had to settle among themselves. That sort of disregard was possible then. But even before 1906 there were endless intimations that the dams holding back great reservoirs of discussion were crumbling. We political schemers were ploughing wider than any one had ploughed before in the field of social reconstruction. We had also, we realised, to plough deeper. We had to plough down at last to the passionate elements of sexual relationship and examine and decide upon them.

The signs multiplied. In a year or so half the police of the metropolis were scarce sufficient to protect the House from one clamorous aspect of the new problem. The members went about Westminster with an odd, new sense of being beset. A good proportion of us kept up the pretence that the Vote for Women was an isolated fad, and the agitation an epidemic madness that would presently pass. But it was manifest to any one who sought more than comfort in the matter that the streams of women and sympathisers and money forthcoming marked far deeper and wider things than an idle

fancy for the franchise. The existing laws and conventions of relationship between Man and Woman were just as unsatisfactory a disorder as anything else in our tumbled confusion of a world, and that also was coming to bear upon statecraft.

My first parliament was the parliament of the Suffragettes. I don't propose to tell here of that amazing campaign, with its absurdities and follies, its courage and devotion. There were aspects of that unquenchable agitation that were absolutely heroic and aspects that were absolutely pitiful. It was unreasonable, unwise, and, except for its one central insistence, astonishingly incoherent. It was amazingly effective. The very incoherence of the demand witnessed, I think, to the forces that lay behind it. It wasn't a simple argument based on a simple assumption; it was the first crude expression of a great mass and mingling of convergent feelings, of a widespread, confused persuasion among modern educated women that the conditions of their relations with men were oppressive, ugly, dishonouring, and had to be altered. They had not merely adopted the Vote as a symbol of equality; it was fairly manifest to me that, given it, they meant to use it, and to use it perhaps even vindictively and blindly, as a weapon against many things they had every reason to hate. . . .

I remember, with exceptional vividness, that great night early in the session of 1909, when--I think it was--fifty or sixty women went to prison. I had been dining at the Barham's, and Lord Barham and I came down from the direction of St. James's Park into a crowd and a confusion outside the Caxton Hall. We found ourselves drifting with an immense multitude towards Parliament Square and parallel with a silent, close-packed column of girls and women, for the most part white-faced and intent. I still remember the effect of their faces upon me. It was quite different from the general effect of staring about and divided attention one gets in a political procession of men. There was an expression of heroic tension.

There had been a pretty deliberate appeal on the part of the women's organisers to the Unemployed, who had been demonstrating throughout that winter, to join forces with the movement, and the result was shown in the quality of the crowd upon the pavement. It was an ugly, dangerous-looking crowd, but as yet good-tempered and sympathetic. When at last we got within sight of the House the square was a seething seat of excited people, and the array of police on horse and on foot might have been assembled for a revolutionary outbreak. There were dense masses of people up Whitehall, and right on to Westminster Bridge. The scuffle that ended in the arrests was the poorest explosion to follow such stupendous preparations. . . .

3

Later on in that year the women began a new attack. Day and night, and all through the long nights of the Budget sittings, at all the piers of the gates of New Palace Yard and at St. Stephen's Porch, stood women pickets, and watched us silently and reproachfully as we went to and fro. They were women of all sorts, though, of course, the independent worker-class predominated. There were grey-headed old ladies standing there, sturdily charming in the rain; battered-looking, ambiguous women, with something of the desperate bitterness of battered women showing in their eyes; north-country factory girls; cheaply-dressed suburban women; trim, comfortable mothers of families; valiant-eyed girl graduates and undergraduates; lank, hungry-looking creatures, who stirred one's imagination; one very dainty little woman in deep mourning, I recall, grave and steadfast, with eyes fixed on distant things. Some of those women looked defiant, some timidly aggressive, some full of the stir of adventure, some drooping with cold and fatigue. The supply never ceased. I had a mortal fear that somehow the supply might halt or

cease. I found that continual siege of the legislature extraordinarily impressive--infinitely more impressive than the feeble-forcible "ragging" of the more militant section. I thought of the appeal that must be going through the country, summoning the women from countless scattered homes, rooms, colleges, to Westminster.

I remember too the petty little difficulty I felt whether I should ignore these pickets altogether, or lift a hat as I hurried past with averted eyes, or look them in the face as I did so. Towards the end the House evoked an etiquette of salutation.

4

There was a tendency, even on the part of its sympathisers, to treat the whole suffrage agitation as if it were a disconnected issue, irrelevant to all other broad developments of social and political life. We struggled, all of us, to ignore the indicating finger it thrust out before us. "Your schemes, for all their bigness," it insisted to our reluctant, averted minds, "still don't go down to the essential things. . . ."

We have to go deeper, or our inadequate children's insufficient children will starve amidst harvests of earless futility. That conservatism which works in every class to preserve in its essentials the habitual daily life is all against a profounder treatment of political issues. The politician, almost as absurdly as the philosopher, tends constantly, in spite of magnificent preludes, vast intimations, to specialise himself out of the reality he has so stupendously summoned--he bolts back to littleness. The world has to be moulded anew, he continues to admit, but without, he adds, any risk of upsetting his week-end visits, his morning cup of

tea. . . .

The discussion of the relations of men and women disturbs every one. It reacts upon the private life of every one who attempts it. And at any particular time only a small minority have a personal interest in changing the established state of affairs. Habit and interest are in a constantly recruited majority against conscious change and adjustment in these matters. Drift rules us. The great mass of people, and an overwhelming proportion of influential people, are people who have banished their dreams and made their compromise. Wonderful and beautiful possibilities are no longer to be thought about. They have given up any aspirations for intense love, their splendid offspring, for keen delights, have accepted a cultivated kindness and an uncritical sense of righteousness as their compensation. It's a settled affair with them, a settled, dangerous affair. Most of them fear, and many hate, the slightest reminder of those abandoned dreams. As Dayton once said to the Pentagram Circle, when we were discussing the problem of a universal marriage and divorce law throughout the Empire, "I am for leaving all these things alone." And then, with a groan in his voice, "Leave them alone! Leave them all alone!"

That was his whole speech for the evening, in a note of suppressed passion, and presently, against all our etiquette, he got up and went out.

For some years after my marriage, I too was for leaving them alone. I developed a dread and dislike for romance, for emotional music, for the human figure in art--turning my heart to landscape. I wanted to sneer at lovers and their ecstasies, and was uncomfortable until I found the effective sneer. In matters of private morals these were my most uncharitable years. I didn't want to think of these things any more for ever. I hated the people whose talk or practice showed they were not of my opinion. I wanted to believe that their views were immoral and objectionable and contemptible,

because I had decided to treat them as at that level. I was, in fact, falling into the attitude of the normal decent man.

And yet one cannot help thinking! The sensible moralised man finds it hard to escape the stream of suggestion that there are still dreams beyond these commonplace acquiescences,--the appeal of beauty suddenly shining upon one, the mothlike stirrings of serene summer nights, the sweetness of distant music. . . .

It is one of the paradoxical factors in our public life at the present time, which penalises abandonment to love so abundantly and so heavily, that power, influence and control fall largely to unencumbered people and sterile people and people who have married for passionless purposes, people whose very deficiency in feeling has left them free to follow ambition, people beautyblind, who don't understand what it is to fall in love, what it is to desire children or have them, what it is to feel in their blood and bodies the supreme claim of good births and selective births above all other affairs in life, people almost of necessity averse from this most fundamental aspect of existence. . . .

5

It wasn't, however, my deepening sympathy with and understanding of the position of women in general, or the change in my ideas about all these intimate things my fast friendship with Isabel was bringing about, that led me to the heretical views I have in the last five years dragged from the region of academic and timid discussion into the field of practical politics. Those influences, no doubt, have converged to the same end, and given me a powerful emotional push upon my road, but it was a broader and colder view of things that first determined me in my attempt to graft the Endowment

of Motherhood in some form or other upon British Imperialism. Now that I am exiled from the political world, it is possible to estimate just how effectually that grafting has been done.

I have explained how the ideas of a trained aristocracy and a universal education grew to paramount importance in my political scheme. It is but a short step from this to the question of the quantity and quality of births in the community, and from that again to these forbidden and fear-beset topics of marriage, divorce, and the family organisation. A sporadic discussion of these aspects had been going on for years, a Eugenic society existed, and articles on the Falling Birth Rate, and the Rapid Multiplication of the Unfit were staples of the monthly magazines. But beyond an intermittent scolding of prosperous childless people in general--one never addressed them in particular--nothing was done towards arresting those adverse processes. Almost against my natural inclination, I found myself forced to go into these things. I came to the conclusion that under modern conditions the isolated private family, based on the existing marriage contract, was failing in its work. It wasn't producing enough children, and children good enough and well trained enough for the demands of the developing civilised state. Our civilisation was growing outwardly, and decaying in its intimate substance, and unless it was presently to collapse, some very extensive and courageous reorganisation was needed. The old haphazard system of pairing, qualified more and more by worldly discretions, no longer secures a young population numerous enough or good enough for the growing needs and possibilities of our Empire. Statecraft sits weaving splendid garments, no doubt, but with a puny, ugly, insufficient baby in the cradle.

No one so far has dared to take up this problem as a present question for statecraft, but it comes unheralded, unadvocated, and sits at every legislative board. Every improvement is provisional except the improvement of the race, and it became more and more doubtful to me if we were improving the race at all! Splendid and

beautiful and courageous people must come together and have children, women with their fine senses and glorious devotion must be freed from the net that compels them to be celibate, compels them to be childless and useless, or to bear children ignobly to men whom need and ignorance and the treacherous pressure of circumstances have forced upon them. We all know that, and so few dare even to whisper it for fear that they should seem, in seeking to save the family, to threaten its existence. It is as if a party of pigmies in a not too capacious room had been joined by a carnivorous giant--and decided to go on living happily by cutting him dead. . . .

The problem the developing civilised state has to solve is how it can get the best possible increase under the best possible conditions. I became more and more convinced that the independent family unit of to-day, in which the man is master of the wife and owner of the children, in which all are dependent upon him, subordinated to his enterprises and liable to follow his fortunes up or down, does not supply anything like the best conceivable conditions. We want to modernise the family footing altogether. An enormous premium both in pleasure and competitive efficiency is put upon voluntary childlessness, and enormous inducements are held out to women to subordinate instinctive and selective preferences to social and material considerations.

The practical reaction of modern conditions upon the old tradition of the family is this: that beneath the pretence that nothing is changing, secretly and with all the unwholesomeness of secrecy everything is changed. Offspring fall away, the birth rate falls and falls most among just the most efficient and active and best adapted classes in the community. The species is recruited from among its failures and from among less civilised aliens. Contemporary civilisations are in effect burning the best of their possible babies in the furnaces that run the machinery. In the United States the native Anglo-American strain has scarcely increased at all since 1830, and in most Western European countries

the same is probably true of the ablest and most energetic elements in the community. The women of these classes still remain legally and practically dependent and protected, with the only natural excuse for their dependence gone. . . .

The modern world becomes an immense spectacle of unsatisfactory groupings; here childless couples bored to death in the hopeless effort to sustain an incessant honeymoon, here homes in which a solitary child grows unsocially, here small two or three-child homes that do no more than continue the culture of the parents at a great social cost, here numbers of unhappy educated but childless married women, here careless, decivilised fecund homes, here orphanages and asylums for the heedlessly begotten. It is just the disorderly proliferation of Bromstead over again, in lives instead of in houses.

What is the good, what is the common sense, of rectifying boundaries, pushing research and discovery, building cities, improving all the facilities of life, making great fleets, waging wars, while this aimless decadence remains the quality of the biological outlook? . . .

It is difficult now to trace how I changed from my early aversion until I faced this mass of problems. But so far back as 1910 I had it clear in my mind that I would rather fail utterly than participate in all the surrenders of mind and body that are implied in Dayton's snarl of "Leave it alone; leave it all alone!" Marriage and the begetting and care of children, is the very ground substance in the life of the community. In a world in which everything changes, in which fresh methods, fresh adjustments and fresh ideas perpetually renew the circumstances of life, it is preposterous that we should not even examine into these matters, should rest content to be ruled by the uncriticised traditions of a barbaric age.

Now, it seems to me that the solution of this problem is also the

solution of the woman's individual problem. The two go together, are right and left of one question. The only conceivable way out from our IMPASSE lies in the recognition of parentage, that is to say of adequate mothering, as no longer a chance product of individual passions but a service rendered to the State. Women must become less and less subordinated to individual men, since this works out in a more or less complete limitation, waste, and sterilisation of their essentially social function; they must become more and more subordinated as individually independent citizens to the collective purpose. Or, to express the thing by a familiar phrase, the highly organised, scientific state we desire must, if it is to exist at all, base itself not upon the irresponsible man-ruled family, but upon the matriarchal family, the citizen-ship and freedom of women and the public endowment of motherhood.

After two generations of confused and experimental revolt it grows clear to modern women that a conscious, deliberate motherhood and mothering is their special function in the State, and that a personal subordination to an individual man with an unlimited power of control over this intimate and supreme duty is a degradation. No contemporary woman of education put to the test is willing to recognise any claim a man can make upon her but the claim of her freely-given devotion to him. She wants the reality of her choice and she means "family" while a man too often means only possession. This alters the spirit of the family relationships fundamentally. Their form remains just what it was when woman was esteemed a pretty, desirable, and incidentally a child-producing, chattel. Against these time-honoured ideas the new spirit of womanhood struggles in shame, astonishment, bitterness, and tears. . . .

I confess myself altogether feminist. I have no doubts in the matter. I want this coddling and browbeating of women to cease. I want to see women come in, free and fearless, to a full participation in the collective purpose of mankind. Women, I am convinced, are as fine as men; they can be as wise as men; they are

capable of far greater devotion than men. I want to see them citizens, with a marriage law framed primarily for them and for their protection and the good of the race, and not for men's satisfactions. I want to see them bearing and rearing good children in the State as a generously rewarded public duty and service, choosing their husbands freely and discerningly, and in no way enslaved by or subordinated to the men they have chosen. The social consciousness of women seems to me an unworked, an almost untouched mine of wealth for the constructive purpose of the world. I want to change the respective values of the family group altogether, and make the home indeed the women's kingdom and the mother the owner and responsible guardian of her children.

It is no use pretending that this is not novel and revolutionary; it is. The Endowment of Motherhood implies a new method of social organization, a rearrangement of the social unit, untried in human experience--as untried as electric traction was or flying in 1800. Of course, it may work out to modify men's ideas of marriage profoundly. To me that is a secondary consideration. I do not believe that particular assertion myself, because I am convinced that a practical monogamy is a psychological necessity to the mass of civilised people. But even if I did believe it I should still keep to my present line, because it is the only line that will prevent a highly organised civilisation from ending in biological decay. The public Endowment of Motherhood is the only possible way which will ensure the permanently developing civilised state at which all constructive minds are aiming. A point is reached in the life-history of a civilisation when either this reconstruction must be effected or the quality and MORALE of the population prove insufficient for the needs of the developing organisation. It is not so much moral decadence that will destroy us as moral inadaptability. The old code fails under the new needs. The only alternative to this profound reconstruction is a decay in human quality and social collapse. Either this unprecedented rearrangement must be achieved by our civilisation, or it must

presently come upon a phase of disorder and crumble and perish, as Rome perished, as France declines, as the strain of the Pilgrim Fathers dwindles out of America. Whatever hope there may be in the attempt therefore, there is no alternative to the attempt.

6

I wanted political success now dearly enough, but not at the price of constructive realities. These questions were no doubt monstrously dangerous in the political world; there wasn't a politician alive who didn't look scared at the mention of "The Family," but if raising these issues were essential to the social reconstructions on which my life was set, that did not matter. It only implied that I should take them up with deliberate caution. There was no release because of risk or difficulty.

The question of whether I should commit myself to some open project in this direction was going on in my mind concurrently with my speculations about a change of party, like bass and treble in a complex piece of music. The two drew to a conclusion together. I would not only go over to Imperialism, but I would attempt to biologise Imperialism.

I thought at first that I was undertaking a monstrous uphill task. But as I came to look into the possibilities of the matter, a strong persuasion grew up in my mind that this panic fear of legislative proposals affecting the family basis was excessive, that things were much riper for development in this direction than old-experienced people out of touch with the younger generation imagined, that to phrase the thing in a parliamentary fashion, "something might be done in the constituencies" with the Endowment of Motherhood forthwith, provided only that it was made perfectly clear that

anything a sane person could possibly intend by "morality" was left untouched by these proposals.

I went to work very carefully. I got Roper of the DAILY TELEPHONE and Burkett of the DIAL to try over a silly-season discussion of State Help for Mothers, and I put a series of articles on eugenics, upon the fall in the birth-rate, and similar topics in the BLUE WEEKLY, leading up to a tentative and generalised advocacy of the public endowment of the nation's children. I was more and more struck by the acceptance won by a sober and restrained presentation of this suggestion.

And then, in the fourth year of the BLUE WEEKLY'S career, came the Handitch election, and I was forced by the clamour of my antagonist, and very willingly forced, to put my convictions to the test. I returned triumphantly to Westminster with the Public Endowment of Motherhood as part of my open profession and with the full approval of the party press. Applauding benches of Imperialists cheered me on my way to the table between the whips.

That second time I took the oath I was not one of a crowd of new members, but salient, an event, a symbol of profound changes and new purposes in the national life.

Here it is my political book comes to an end, and in a sense my book ends altogether. For the rest is but to tell how I was swept out of this great world of political possibilities. I close this Third Book as I opened it, with an admission of difficulties and complexities, but now with a pile of manuscript before me I have to confess them unsurmounted and still entangled.

Yet my aim was a final simplicity. I have sought to show my growing realisation that the essential quality of all political and social effort is the development of a great race mind behind the interplay of individual lives. That is the collective human reality, the

basis of morality, the purpose of devotion. To that our lives must be given, from that will come the perpetual fresh release and further ennoblement of individual lives. . . .

I have wanted to make that idea of a collective mind play in this book the part United Italy plays in Machiavelli's PRINCE. I have called it the hinterland of reality, shown it accumulating a dominating truth and rightness which must force men's now sporadic motives more and more into a disciplined and understanding relation to a plan. And I have tried to indicate how I sought to serve this great clarification of our confusions. . . .

Now I come back to personality and the story of my self-betrayal, and how it is I have had to leave all that far-reaching scheme of mine, a mere project and beginning for other men to take or leave as it pleases them.

BOOK THE FOURTH

ISABEL

CHAPTER THE FIRST

LOVE AND SUCCESS

1

I come to the most evasive and difficult part of my story, which is to tell how Isabel and I have made a common wreck of our joint lives.

It is not the telling of one simple disastrous accident. There was a vein in our natures that led to this collapse, gradually and at this point and that it crept to the surface. One may indeed see our destruction--for indeed politically we could not be more extinct if we had been shot dead--in the form of a catastrophe as disconnected and conclusive as a meteoric stone falling out of heaven upon two friends and crushing them both. But I do not think that is true to our situation or ourselves. We were not taken by surprise. The thing was in us and not from without, it was akin to our way of thinking and our habitual attitudes; it had, for all its impulsive effect, a certain necessity. We might have escaped no doubt, as two men at a hundred yards may shoot at each other with pistols for a considerable time and escape. But it isn't particularly reasonable to talk of the contrariety of fate if they both get hit.

Isabel and I were dangerous to each other for several years of

friendship, and not quite unwittingly so.

In writing this, moreover, there is a very great difficulty in steering my way between two equally undesirable tones in the telling. In the first place I do not want to seem to confess my sins with a penitence I am very doubtful if I feel. Now that I have got Isabel we can no doubt count the cost of it and feel unquenchable regrets, but I am not sure whether, if we could be put back now into such circumstances as we were in a year ago, or two years ago, whether with my eyes fully open I should not do over again very much as I did. And on the other hand I do not want to justify the things we have done. We are two bad people--if there is to be any classification of good and bad at all, we have acted badly, and quite apart from any other considerations we've largely wasted our own very great possibilities. But it is part of a queer humour that underlies all this, that I find myself slipping again and again into a sentimental treatment of our case that is as unpremeditated as it is insincere. When I am a little tired after a morning's writing I find the faint suggestion getting into every other sentence that our blunders and misdeeds embodied, after the fashion of the prophet Hosea, profound moral truths. Indeed, I feel so little confidence in my ability to keep this altogether out of my book that I warn the reader here that in spite of anything he may read elsewhere in the story, intimating however shyly an esoteric and exalted virtue in our proceedings, the plain truth of this business is that Isabel and I wanted each other with a want entirely formless, inconsiderate, and overwhelming. And though I could tell you countless delightful and beautiful things about Isabel, were this a book in her praise, I cannot either analyse that want or account for its extreme intensity.

I will confess that deep in my mind there is a belief in a sort of wild rightness about any love that is fraught with beauty, but that eludes me and vanishes again, and is not, I feel, to be put with the real veracities and righteousnesses and virtues in the paddocks and

menageries of human reason. . . .

We have already a child, and Margaret was childless, and I find myself prone to insist upon that, as if it was a justification. But, indeed, when we became lovers there was small thought of Eugenics between us. Ours was a mutual and not a philoprogenitive passion. Old Nature behind us may have had such purposes with us, but it is not for us to annex her intentions by a moralising afterthought. There isn't, in fact, any decent justification for us whatever--at that the story must stand.

But if there is no justification there is at least a very effective excuse in the mental confusedness of our time. The evasion of that passionately thorough exposition of belief and of the grounds of morality, which is the outcome of the mercenary religious compromises of the late Vatican period, the stupid suppression of anything but the most timid discussion of sexual morality in our literature and drama, the pervading cultivated and protected muddle-headedness, leaves mentally vigorous people with relatively enormous possibilities of destruction and little effective help. They find themselves confronted by the habits and prejudices of manifestly commonplace people, and by that extraordinary patched-up Christianity, the cult of a "Bromsteadised" deity, diffused, scattered, and aimless, which hides from examination and any possibility of faith behind the plea of good taste. A god about whom there is delicacy is far worse than no god at all. We are FORCED to be laws unto ourselves and to live experimentally. It is inevitable that a considerable fraction of just that bolder, more initiatory section of the intellectual community, the section that can least be spared from the collective life in a period of trial and change, will drift into such emotional crises and such disaster as overtook us. Most perhaps will escape, but many will go down, many more than the world can spare. It is the unwritten law of all our public life, and the same holds true of America, that an honest open scandal ends a career. England in the last quarter of a

century has wasted half a dozen statesmen on this score; she would, I believe, reject Nelson now if he sought to serve her. Is it wonderful that to us fretting here in exile this should seem the cruellest as well as the most foolish elimination of a necessary social element? It destroys no vice; for vice hides by nature. It not only rewards dullness as if it were positive virtue, but sets an enormous premium upon hypocrisy. That is my case, and that is why I am telling this side of my story with so much explicitness.

2

Ever since the Kinghamstead election I had maintained what seemed a desultory friendship with Isabel. At first it was rather Isabel kept it up than I. Whenever Margaret and I went down to that villa, with its three or four acres of garden and shrubbery about it, which fulfilled our election promise to live at Kinghamstead, Isabel would turn up in a state of frank cheerfulness, rejoicing at us, and talk all she was reading and thinking to me, and stay for all the rest of the day. In her shameless liking for me she was as natural as a savage. She would exercise me vigorously at tennis, while Margaret lay and rested her back in the afternoon, or guide me for some long ramble that dodged the suburban and congested patches of the constituency with amazing skill. She took possession of me in that unabashed, straight-minded way a girl will sometimes adopt with a man, chose my path or criticised my game with a motherly solicitude for my welfare that was absurd and delightful. And we talked. We discussed and criticised the stories of novels, scraps of history, pictures, social questions, socialism, the policy of the Government. She was young and most unevenly informed, but she was amazingly sharp and quick and good. Never before in my life had I known a girl of her age, or a woman of her quality. I had never dreamt there was such talk in the world. Kinghamstead became a lightless

place when she went to Oxford. Heaven knows how much that may not have precipitated my abandonment of the seat!

She went to Ridout College, Oxford, and that certainly weighed with me when presently after my breach with the Liberals various little undergraduate societies began to ask for lectures and discussions. I favoured Oxford. I declared openly I did so because of her. At that time I think we neither of us suspected the possibility of passion that lay like a coiled snake in the path before us. It seemed to us that we had the quaintest, most delightful friendship in the world; she was my pupil, and I was her guide, philosopher, and friend. People smiled indulgently--even Margaret smiled indulgently--at our attraction for one another.

Such friendships are not uncommon nowadays--among easy-going, liberal-minded people. For the most part, there's no sort of harm, as people say, in them. The two persons concerned are never supposed to think of the passionate love that hovers so close to the friendship, or if they do, then they banish the thought. I think we kept the thought as permanently in exile as any one could do. If it did in odd moments come into our heads we pretended elaborately it wasn't there.

Only we were both very easily jealous of each other's attention, and tremendously insistent upon each other's preference.

I remember once during the Oxford days an intimation that should have set me thinking, and I suppose discreetly disentangling myself. It was one Sunday afternoon, and it must have been about May, for the trees and shrubs of Ridout College were gay with blossom, and fresh with the new sharp greens of spring. I had walked talking with Isabel and a couple of other girls through the wide gardens of the place, seen and criticised the new brick pond, nodded to the daughter of this friend and that in the hammocks under the trees, and picked a way among the scattered tea-parties on the lawn to our

own circle on the grass under a Siberian crab near the great bay window. There I sat and ate great quantities of cake, and discussed the tactics of the Suffragettes. I had made some comments upon the spirit of the movement in an address to the men in Pembroke, and it had got abroad, and a group of girls and women dons were now having it out with me.

I forget the drift of the conversation, or what it was made Isabel interrupt me. She did interrupt me. She had been lying prone on the ground at my right hand, chin on fists, listening thoughtfully, and I was sitting beside old Lady Evershead on a garden seat. I turned to Isabel's voice, and saw her face uplifted, and her dear cheeks and nose and forehead all splashed and barred with sunlight and the shadows of the twigs of the trees behind me. And something--an infinite tenderness, stabbed me. It was a keen physical feeling, like nothing I had ever felt before. It had a quality of tears in it. For the first time in my narrow and concentrated life another human being had really thrust into my being and gripped my very heart.

Our eyes met perplexed for an extraordinary moment. Then I turned back and addressed myself a little stiffly to the substance of her intervention. For some time I couldn't look at her again.

From that time forth I knew I loved Isabel beyond measure.

Yet it is curious that it never occurred to me for a year or so that this was likely to be a matter of passion between us. I have told how definitely I put my imagination into harness in those matters at my marriage, and I was living now in a world of big interests, where there is neither much time nor inclination for deliberate love-making. I suppose there is a large class of men who never meet a girl or a woman without thinking of sex, who meet a friend's daughter and decide: "Mustn't get friendly with her--wouldn't DO," and set invisible bars between themselves and all the wives in the

world. Perhaps that is the way to live. Perhaps there is no other method than this effectual annihilation of half--and the most sympathetic and attractive half--of the human beings in the world, so far as any frank intercourse is concerned. I am quite convinced anyhow that such a qualified intimacy as ours, such a drifting into the sense of possession, such untrammelled conversation with an invisible, implacable limit set just where the intimacy glows, it is no kind of tolerable compromise. If men and women are to go so far together, they must be free to go as far as they may want to go, without the vindictive destruction that has come upon us. On the basis of the accepted codes the jealous people are right, and the liberal-minded ones are playing with fire. If people are not to love, then they must be kept apart. If they are not to be kept apart, then we must prepare for an unprecedented toleration of lovers.

Isabel was as unforeseeing as I to begin with, but sex marches into the life of an intelligent girl with demands and challenges far more urgent than the mere call of curiosity and satiable desire that comes to a young man. No woman yet has dared to tell the story of that unfolding. She attracted men, and she encouraged them, and watched them, and tested them, and dismissed them, and concealed the substance of her thoughts about them in the way that seems instinctive in a natural-minded girl. There was even an engagement--amidst the protests and disapproval of the college authorities. I never saw the man, though she gave me a long history of the affair, to which I listened with a forced and insincere sympathy. She struck me oddly as taking the relationship for a thing in itself, and regardless of its consequences. After a time she became silent about him, and then threw him over; and by that time, I think, for all that she was so much my junior, she knew more about herself and me than I was to know for several years to come.

We didn't see each other for some months after my resignation, but we kept up a frequent correspondence. She said twice over that she

wanted to talk to me, that letters didn't convey what one wanted to say, and I went up to Oxford pretty definitely to see her--though I combined it with one or two other engagements--somewhere in February. Insensibly she had become important enough for me to make journeys for her.

But we didn't see very much of one another on that occasion. There was something in the air between us that made a faint embarrassment; the mere fact, perhaps, that she had asked me to come up.

A year before she would have dashed off with me quite unscrupulously to talk alone, carried me off to her room for an hour with a minute of chaperonage to satisfy the rules. Now there was always some one or other near us that it seemed impossible to exorcise.

We went for a walk on the Sunday afternoon with old Fortescue, K. C., who'd come up to see his two daughters, both great friends of Isabel's, and some mute inglorious don whose name I forget, but who was in a state of marked admiration for her. The six of us played a game of conversational entanglements throughout, and mostly I was impressing the Fortescue girls with the want of mental concentration possible in a rising politician. We went down Carfax, I remember, to Folly Bridge, and inspected the Barges, and then back by way of Merton to the Botanic Gardens and Magdalen Bridge. And in the Botanic Gardens she got almost her only chance with me.

"Last months at Oxford," she said.

"And then?" I asked.

"I'm coming to London," she said.

"To write?"

She was silent for a moment. Then she said abruptly, with that

quick flush of hers and a sudden boldness in her eyes: "I'm going to work with you. Why shouldn't I?"

3

Here, again, I suppose I had a fair warning of the drift of things. I seem to remember myself in the train to Paddington, sitting with a handful of papers--galley proofs for the BLUE WEEKLY, I suppose--on my lap, and thinking about her and that last sentence of hers, and all that it might mean to me.

It is very hard to recall even the main outline of anything so elusive as a meditation. I know that the idea of working with her gripped me, fascinated me. That my value in her life seemed growing filled me with pride and a kind of gratitude. I was already in no doubt that her value in my life was tremendous. It made it none the less, that in those days I was obsessed by the idea that she was transitory, and bound to go out of my life again. It is no good trying to set too fine a face upon this complex business, there is gold and clay and sunlight and savagery in every love story, and a multitude of elvish elements peeped out beneath the fine rich curtain of affection that masked our future. I've never properly weighed how immensely my vanity was gratified by her clear preference for me. Nor can I for a moment determine how much deliberate intention I hide from myself in this affair.

Certainly I think some part of me must have been saying in the train: "Leave go of her. Get away from her. End this now." I can't have been so stupid as not to have had that in my mind. . . .

If she had been only a beautiful girl in love with me, I think I could have managed the situation. Once or twice since my marriage

and before Isabel became of any significance in my life, there had been incidents with other people, flashes of temptation--no telling is possible of the thing resisted. I think that mere beauty and passion would not have taken me. But between myself and Isabel things were incurably complicated by the intellectual sympathy we had, the jolly march of our minds together. That has always mattered enormously. I should have wanted her company nearly as badly if she had been some crippled old lady; we would have hunted shoulder to shoulder, as two men. Only two men would never have had the patience and readiness for one another we two had. I had never for years met any one with whom I could be so carelessly sure of understanding or to whom I could listen so easily and fully. She gave me, with an extraordinary completeness, that rare, precious effect of always saying something fresh, and yet saying it so that it filled into and folded about all the little recesses and corners of my mind with an infinite, soft familiarity. It is impossible to explain that. It is like trying to explain why her voice, her voice heard speaking to any one--heard speaking in another room--pleased my ears.

She was the only Oxford woman who took a first that year. She spent the summer in Scotland and Yorkshire, writing to me continually of all she now meant to do, and stirring my imagination. She came to London for the autumn session. For a time she stayed with old Lady Colbeck, but she fell out with her hostess when it became clear she wanted to write, not novels, but journalism, and then she set every one talking by taking a flat near Victoria and installing as her sole protector an elderly German governess she had engaged through a scholastic agency. She began writing, not in that copious flood the undisciplined young woman of gifts is apt to produce, but in exactly the manner of an able young man, experimenting with forms, developing the phrasing of opinions, taking a definite line. She was, of course, tremendously discussed. She was disapproved of, but she was invited out to dinner. She got rather a reputation for the management of elderly distinguished men. It was an odd experience

to follow Margaret's soft rustle of silk into some big drawing-room and discover my snub-nosed girl in the blue sack transformed into a shining creature in the soft splendour of pearls and ivory-white and lace, and with a silver band about her dusky hair.

For a time we did not meet very frequently, though always she professed an unblushing preference for my company, and talked my views and sought me out. Then her usefulness upon the BLUE WEEKLY began to link us closer. She would come up to the office, and sit by the window, and talk over the proofs of the next week's articles, going through my intentions with a keen investigatory scalpel. Her talk always puts me in mind of a steel blade. Her writing became rapidly very good; she had a wit and a turn of the phrase that was all her own. We seemed to have forgotten the little shadow of embarrassment that had fallen over our last meeting at Oxford. Everything seemed natural and easy between us in those days; a little unconventional, but that made it all the brighter.

We developed something like a custom of walks, about once a week or so, and letters and notes became frequent. I won't pretend things were not keenly personal between us, but they had an air of being innocently mental. She used to call me "Master" in our talks, a monstrous and engaging flattery, and I was inordinately proud to have her as my pupil. Who wouldn't have been? And we went on at that distance for a long time--until within a year of the Handitch election.

After Lady Colbeck threw her up as altogether too "intellectual" for comfortable control, Isabel was taken up by the Balfes in a less formal and compromising manner, and week-ended with them and their cousin Leonora Sparling, and spent large portions of her summer with them in Herefordshire. There was a lover or so in that time, men who came a little timidly at this brilliant young person with the frank manner and the Amazonian mind, and, she declared, received her kindly refusals with manifest relief. And Arnold Shoesmith struck

up a sort of friendship that oddly imitated mine. She took a liking to him because he was clumsy and shy and inexpressive; she embarked upon the dangerous interest of helping him to find his soul. I had some twinges of jealousy about that. I didn't see the necessity of him. He invaded her time, and I thought that might interfere with her work. If their friendship stole some hours from Isabel's writing, it did not for a long while interfere with our walks or our talks, or the close intimacy we had together.

4

Then suddenly Isabel and I found ourselves passionately in love.

The change came so entirely without warning or intention that I find it impossible now to tell the order of its phases. What disturbed pebble started the avalanche I cannot trace. Perhaps it was simply that the barriers between us and this masked aspect of life had been wearing down unperceived.

And there came a change in Isabel. It was like some change in the cycle of nature, like the onset of spring--a sharp brightness, an uneasiness. She became restless with her work; little encounters with men began to happen, encounters not quite in the quality of the earlier proposals; and then came an odd incident of which she told me, but somehow, I felt, didn't tell me completely. She told me all she was able to tell me. She had been at a dance at the Ropers', and a man, rather well known in London, had kissed her. The thing amazed her beyond measure. It was the sort of thing immediately possible between any man and any woman, that one never expects to happen until it happens. It had the surprising effect of a judge generally known to be bald suddenly whipping off his wig in court. No absolutely unexpected revelation could have quite the same

quality of shock. She went through the whole thing to me with a remarkable detachment, told me how she had felt--and the odd things it seemed to open to her.

"I WANT to be kissed, and all that sort of thing," she avowed. "I suppose every woman does."

She added after a pause: "And I don't want any one to do it."

This struck me as queerly expressive of the woman's attitude to these things. "Some one presently will--solve that," I said.

"Some one will perhaps."

I was silent.

"Some one will," she said, almost viciously. "And then we'll have to stop these walks and talks of ours, dear Master. . . . I'll be sorry to give them up."

"It's part of the requirements of the situation," I said, "that he should be--oh, very interesting! He'll start, no doubt, all sorts of new topics, and open no end of attractive vistas. . . . You can't, you know, always go about in a state of pupillage."

"I don't think I can," said Isabel. "But it's only just recently I've begun to doubt about it."

I remember these things being said, but just how much we saw and understood, and just how far we were really keeping opaque to each other then, I cannot remember. But it must have been quite soon after this that we spent nearly a whole day together at Kew Gardens, with the curtains up and the barriers down, and the thing that had happened plain before our eyes. I don't remember we ever made any declaration. We just assumed the new footing. . . .

It was a day early in that year--I think in January, because there was thin, crisp snow on the grass, and we noted that only two other people had been to the Pagoda that day. I've a curious impression of greenish colour, hot, moist air and huge palm fronds about very much of our talk, as though we were nearly all the time in the Tropical House. But I also remember very vividly looking at certain orange and red spray-like flowers from Patagonia, which could not have been there. It is a curious thing that I do not remember we made any profession of passionate love for one another; we talked as though the fact of our intense love for each other had always been patent between us. There was so long and frank an intimacy between us that we talked far more like brother and sister or husband and wife than two people engaged in the war of the sexes. We wanted to know what we were going to do, and whatever we did we meant to do in the most perfect concert. We both felt an extraordinary accession of friendship and tenderness then, and, what again is curious, very little passion. But there was also, in spite of the perplexities we faced, an immense satisfaction about that day. It was as if we had taken off something that had hindered our view of each other, like people who unvizard to talk more easily at a masked ball.

I've had since to view our relations from the standpoint of the ordinary observer. I find that vision in the most preposterous contrast with all that really went on between us. I suppose there I should figure as a wicked seducer, while an unprotected girl succumbed to my fascinations. As a matter of fact, it didn't occur to us that there was any personal inequality between us. I knew her for my equal mentally; in so many things she was beyond comparison cleverer than I; her courage outwent mine. The quick leap of her mind evoked a flash of joy in mine like the response of an induction wire; her way of thinking was like watching sunlight reflected from little waves upon the side of a boat, it was so bright, so mobile, so variously and easily true to its law. In the back of our minds we both had a very definite belief that making love is full of

joyous, splendid, tender, and exciting possibilities, and we had to discuss why we shouldn't be to the last degree lovers.

Now, what I should like to print here, if it were possible, in all the screaming emphasis of red ink, is this: that the circumstances of my upbringing and the circumstances of Isabel's upbringing had left not a shadow of belief or feeling that the utmost passionate love between us was in itself intrinsically WRONG. I've told with the fullest particularity just all that I was taught or found out for myself in these matters, and Isabel's reading and thinking, and the fierce silences of her governesses and the breathless warnings of teachers, and all the social and religious influences that had been brought to bear upon her, had worked out to the same void of conviction. The code had failed with us altogether. We didn't for a moment consider anything but the expediency of what we both, for all our quiet faces and steady eyes, wanted most passionately to do.

Well, here you have the state of mind of whole brigades of people, and particularly of young people, nowadays. The current morality hasn't gripped them; they don't really believe in it at all. They may render it lip-service, but that is quite another thing. There are scarcely any tolerable novels to justify its prohibitions; its prohibitions do, in fact, remain unjustified amongst these ugly suppressions. You may, if you choose, silence the admission of this in literature and current discussion; you will not prevent it working out in lives. People come up to the great moments of passion crudely unaware, astoundingly unprepared as no really civilised and intelligently planned community would let any one be unprepared. They find themselves hedged about with customs that have no organic hold upon them, and mere discretions all generous spirits are disposed to despise.

Consider the infinite absurdities of it! Multitudes of us are trying to run this complex modern community on a basis of "Hush" without explaining to our children or discussing with them anything

about love and marriage at all. Doubt and knowledge creep about in enforced darkneses and silences. We are living upon an ancient tradition which everybody doubts and nobody has ever analysed. We affect a tremendous and cultivated shyness and delicacy about imperatives of the most arbitrary appearance. What ensues? What did ensue with us, for example? On the one hand was a great desire, robbed of any appearance of shame and grossness by the power of love, and on the other hand, the possible jealousy of so and so, the disapproval of so and so, material risks and dangers. It is only in the retrospect that we have been able to grasp something of the effectual case against us. The social prohibition lit by the intense glow of our passion, presented itself as preposterous, irrational, arbitrary, and ugly, a monster fit only for mockery. We might be ruined! Well, there is a phase in every love affair, a sort of heroic hysteria, when death and ruin are agreeable additions to the prospect. It gives the business a gravity, a solemnity. Timid people may hesitate and draw back with a vague instinctive terror of the immensity of the oppositions they challenge, but neither Isabel nor I are timid people.

We weighed what was against us. We decided just exactly as scores of thousands of people have decided in this very matter, that if it were possible to keep this thing to ourselves, there was nothing against it. And so we took our first step. With the hunger of love in us, it was easy to conclude we might be lovers, and still keep everything to ourselves. That cleared our minds of the one persistent obstacle that mattered to us--the haunting presence of Margaret.

And then we found, as all those scores of thousands of people scattered about us have found, that we could not keep it to ourselves. Love will out. All the rest of this story is the chronicle of that. Love with sustained secrecy cannot be love. It is just exactly the point people do not understand.

But before things came to that pass, some months and many phases and a sudden journey to America intervened.

"This thing spells disaster," I said. "You are too big and I am too big to attempt this secrecy. Think of the intolerable possibility of being found out! At any cost we have to stop--even at the cost of parting."

"Just because we may be found out!"

"Just because we may be found out."

"Master, I shouldn't in the least mind being found out with you. I'm afraid--I'd be proud."

"Wait till it happens."

There followed a struggle of immense insincerity between us. It is hard to tell who urged and who resisted.

She came to me one night to the editorial room of the BLUE WEEKLY, and argued and kissed me with wet salt lips, and wept in my arms; she told me that now passionate longing for me and my intimate life possessed her, so that she could not work, could not think, could not endure other people for the love of me. . . .

I fled absurdly. That is the secret of the futile journey to America that puzzled all my friends.

I ran away from Isabel. I took hold of the situation with all my

strength, put in Britten with sketchy, hasty instructions to edit the paper, and started headlong and with luggage, from which, among other things, my shaving things were omitted, upon a tour round the world.

Preposterous flight that was! I remember as a thing almost farcical my explanations to Margaret, and how frantically anxious I was to prevent the remote possibility of her coming with me, and how I crossed in the TUSCAN, a bad, wet boat, and mixed seasickness with ungovernable sorrow. I wept--tears. It was inexpressibly queer and ridiculous--and, good God! how I hated my fellow-passengers!

New York inflamed and excited me for a time, and when things slackened, I whirled westward to Chicago--eating and drinking, I remember, in the train from shoals of little dishes, with a sort of desperate voracity. I did the queerest things to distract myself--no novelist would dare to invent my mental and emotional muddle. Chicago also held me at first, amazing lapse from civilisation that the place is! and then abruptly, with hosts expecting me, and everything settled for some days in Denver, I found myself at the end of my renunciations, and turned and came back headlong to London.

Let me confess it wasn't any sense of perfect and incurable trust and confidence that brought me back, or any idea that now I had strength to refrain. It was a sudden realisation that after all the separation might succeed; some careless phrasing in one of her jealously read letters set that idea going in my mind--the haunting perception that I might return to London and find it empty of the Isabel who had pervaded it. Honour, discretion, the careers of both of us, became nothing at the thought. I couldn't conceive my life resuming there without Isabel. I couldn't, in short, stand it.

I don't even excuse my return. It is inexcusable. I ought to have kept upon my way westward--and held out. I couldn't. I wanted

Isabel, and I wanted her so badly now that everything else in the world was phantom-like until that want was satisfied. Perhaps you have never wanted anything like that. I went straight to her.

But here I come to untellable things. There is no describing the reality of love. The shapes of things are nothing, the actual happenings are nothing, except that somehow there falls a light upon them and a wonder. Of how we met, and the thrill of the adventure, the curious bright sense of defiance, the joy of having dared, I can't tell--I can but hint of just one aspect, of what an amazing LARK--it's the only word--it seemed to us. The beauty which was the essence of it, which justifies it so far as it will bear justification, eludes statement.

What can a record of contrived meetings, of sundering difficulties evaded and overcome, signify here? Or what can it convey to say that one looked deep into two dear, steadfast eyes, or felt a heart throb and beat, or gripped soft hair softly in a trembling hand? Robbed of encompassing love, these things are of no more value than the taste of good wine or the sight of good pictures, or the hearing of music,--just sensuality and no more. No one can tell love--we can only tell the gross facts of love and its consequences. Given love--given mutuality, and one has effected a supreme synthesis and come to a new level of life--but only those who know can know. This business has brought me more bitterness and sorrow than I had ever expected to bear, but even now I will not say that I regret that wilful home-coming altogether. We loved--to the uttermost. Neither of us could have loved any one else as we did and do love one another. It was ours, that beauty; it existed only between us when we were close together, for no one in the world ever to know save ourselves.

My return to the office sticks out in my memory with an extreme vividness, because of the wild eagle of pride that screamed within me. It was Tuesday morning, and though not a soul in London knew of

it yet except Isabel, I had been back in England a week. I came in upon Britten and stood in the doorway.

"GOD!" he said at the sight of me.

"I'm back," I said.

He looked at my excited face with those red-brown eyes of his. Silently I defied him to speak his mind.

"Where did you turn back?" he said at last.

6

I had to tell what were, so far as I can remember my first positive lies to Margaret in explaining that return. I had written to her from Chicago and again from New York, saying that I felt I ought to be on the spot in England for the new session, and that I was coming back--presently. I concealed the name of my boat from her, and made a calculated prevarication when I announced my presence in London. I telephoned before I went back for my rooms to be prepared. She was, I knew, with the Bunting Harblows in Durham, and when she came back to Radnor Square I had been at home a day.

I remember her return so well.

My going away and the vivid secret of the present had wiped out from my mind much of our long estrangement. Something, too, had changed in her. I had had some hint of it in her letters, but now I saw it plainly. I came out of my study upon the landing when I heard the turmoil of her arrival below, and she came upstairs with a quickened gladness. It was a cold March, and she was dressed in unfamiliar

dark furs that suited her extremely and reinforced the delicate flush of her sweet face. She held out both her hands to me, and drew me to her unhesitatingly and kissed me.

"So glad you are back, dear," she said. "Oh! so very glad you are back."

I returned her kiss with a queer feeling at my heart, too undifferentiated to be even a definite sense of guilt or meanness. I think it was chiefly amazement--at the universe--at myself.

"I never knew what it was to be away from you," she said.

I perceived suddenly that she had resolved to end our estrangement. She put herself so that my arm came caressingly about her.

"These are jolly furs," I said.

"I got them for you."

The parlourmaid appeared below dealing with the maid and the luggage cab.

"Tell me all about America," said Margaret. "I feel as though you'd been away six year's."

We went arm in arm into our little sitting-room, and I took off the fur's for her and sat down upon the chintz-covered sofa by the fire. She had ordered tea, and came and sat by me. I don't know what I had expected, but of all things I had certainly not expected this sudden abolition of our distances.

"I want to know all about America," she repeated, with her eyes scrutinising me. "Why did you come back?"

I repeated the substance of my letters rather lamely, and she sat listening.

"But why did you turn back--without going to Denver?"

"I wanted to come back. I was restless."

"Restlessness," she said, and thought. "You were restless in Venice. You said it was restlessness took you to America."

Again she studied me. She turned a little awkwardly to her tea things, and poured needless water from the silver kettle into the teapot. Then she sat still for some moments looking at the equipage with expressionless eyes. I saw her hand upon the edge of the table tremble slightly. I watched her closely. A vague uneasiness possessed me. What might she not know or guess?

She spoke at last with an effort. "I wish you were in Parliament again," she said. "Life doesn't give you events enough."

"If I was in Parliament again, I should be on the Conservative side."

"I know," she said, and was still more thoughtful.

"Lately," she began, and paused. "Lately I've been reading--you."

I didn't help her out with what she had to say. I waited.

"I didn't understand what you were after. I had misjudged. I didn't know. I think perhaps I was rather stupid." Her eyes were suddenly shining with tears. "You didn't give me much chance to understand."

She turned upon me suddenly with a voice full of tears.

"Husband," she said abruptly, holding her two hands out to me, "I want to begin over again!"

I took her hands, perplexed beyond measure. "My dear!" I said.

"I want to begin over again."

I bowed my head to hide my face, and found her hand in mine and kissed it.

"Ah!" she said, and slowly withdrew her hand. She leant forward with her arm on the sofa-back, and looked very intently into my face. I felt the most damnable scoundrel in the world as I returned her gaze. The thought of Isabel's darkly shining eyes seemed like a physical presence between us. . . .

"Tell me," I said presently, to break the intolerable tension, "tell me plainly what you mean by this."

I sat a little away from her, and then took my teacup in hand, with an odd effect of defending myself. "Have you been reading that old book of mine?" I asked.

"That and the paper. I took a complete set from the beginning down to Durham with me. I have read it over, thought it over. I didn't understand--what you were teaching."

There was a little pause.

"It all seems so plain to me now," she said, "and so true."

I was profoundly disconcerted. I put down my teacup, stood up in the middle of the hearthrug, and began talking. "I'm tremendously glad, Margaret, that you've come to see I'm not altogether

perverse," I began. I launched out into a rather trite and windy exposition of my views, and she sat close to me on the sofa, looking up into my face, hanging on my words, a deliberate and invincible convert.

"Yes," she said, "yes." . . .

I had never doubted my new conceptions before; now I doubted them profoundly. But I went on talking. It's the grim irony in the lives of all politicians, writers, public teachers, that once the audience is at their feet, a new loyalty has gripped them. It isn't their business to admit doubt and imperfections. They have to go on talking. And I was now so accustomed to Isabel's vivid interruptions, qualifications, restatements, and confirmations. . . .

Margaret and I dined together at home. She made me open out my political projects to her. "I have been foolish," she said. "I want to help."

And by some excuse I have forgotten she made me come to her room. I think it was some book I had to take her, some American book I had brought back with me, and mentioned in our talk. I walked in with it, and put it down on the table and turned to go.

"Husband!" she cried, and held out her slender arms to me. I was compelled to go to her and kiss her, and she twined them softly about my neck and drew me to her and kissed me. I disentangled them very gently, and took each wrist and kissed it, and the backs of her hands.

"Good-night," I said. There came a little pause. "Good-night, Margaret," I repeated, and walked very deliberately and with a kind of sham preoccupation to the door.

I did not look at her, but I could feel her standing, watching me.

If I had looked up, she would, I knew, have held out her arms to me. . . .

At the very outset that secret, which was to touch no one but Isabel and myself, had reached out to stab another human being.

7

The whole world had changed for Isabel and me; and we tried to pretend that nothing had changed except a small matter between us. We believed quite honestly at that time that it was possible to keep this thing that had happened from any reaction at all, save perhaps through some magically enhanced vigour in our work, upon the world about us! Seen in retrospect, one can realise the absurdity of this belief; within a week I realised it; but that does not alter the fact that we did believe as much, and that people who are deeply in love and unable to marry will continue to believe so to the very end of time. They will continue to believe out of existence every consideration that separates them until they have come together. Then they will count the cost, as we two had to do.

I am telling a story, and not propounding theories in this book; and chiefly I am telling of the ideas and influences and emotions that have happened to me--me as a sort of sounding board for my world. The moralist is at liberty to go over my conduct with his measure and say, "At this point or at that you went wrong, and you ought to have done"--so-and-so. The point of interest to the statesman is that it didn't for a moment occur to us to do so-and-so when the time for doing it came. It amazes me now to think how little either of us troubled about the established rights or wrongs of the situation. We hadn't an atom of respect for them, innate or acquired. The guardians of public morals will say we were very bad

people; I submit in defence that they are very bad guardians--provocative guardians. . . . And when at last there came a claim against us that had an effective validity for us, we were in the full tide of passionate intimacy.

I had a night of nearly sleepless perplexity after Margaret's return. She had suddenly presented herself to me like something dramatically recalled, fine, generous, infinitely capable of feeling. I was amazed how much I had forgotten her. In my contempt for vulgarised and conventionalised honour I had forgotten that for me there was such a reality as honour. And here it was, warm and near to me, living, breathing, unsuspecting. Margaret's pride was my honour, that I had had no right even to imperil.

I do not now remember if I thought at that time of going to Isabel and putting this new aspect of the case before her. Perhaps I did. Perhaps I may have considered even then the possibility of ending what had so freshly and passionately begun. If I did, it vanished next day at the sight of her. Whatever regrets came in the darkness, the daylight brought an obstinate confidence in our resolution again. We would, we declared, "pull the thing off." Margaret must not know. Margaret should not know. If Margaret did not know, then no harm whatever would be done. We tried to sustain that. . . .

For a brief time we had been like two people in a magic cell, magically cut off from the world and full of a light of its own, and then we began to realise that we were not in the least cut off, that the world was all about us and pressing in upon us, limiting us, threatening us, resuming possession of us. I tried to ignore the injury to Margaret of her unreciprocated advances. I tried to maintain to myself that this hidden love made no difference to the now irreparable breach between husband and wife. But I never spoke of it to Isabel or let her see that aspect of our case. How could I? The time for that had gone. . . .

Then in new shapes and relations came trouble. Distressful elements crept in by reason of our unavoidable furtiveness; we ignored them, hid them from each other, and attempted to hide them from ourselves. Successful love is a thing of abounding pride, and we had to be secret. It was delightful at first to be secret, a whispering, warm conspiracy; then presently it became irksome and a little shameful. Her essential frankness of soul was all against the masks and falsehoods that many women would have enjoyed. Together in our secrecy we relaxed, then in the presence of other people again it was tiresome to have to watch for the careless, too easy phrase, to snatch back one's hand from the limitless betrayal of a light, familiar touch.

Love becomes a poor thing, at best a poor beautiful thing, if it develops no continuing and habitual intimacy. We were always meeting, and most gloriously loving and beginning--and then we had to snatch at remorseless ticking watches, hurry to catch trains, and go back to this or that. That is all very well for the intrigues of idle people perhaps, but not for an intense personal relationship. It is like lighting a candle for the sake of lighting it, over and over again, and each time blowing it out. That, no doubt, must be very amusing to children playing with the matches, but not to people who love warm light, and want it in order to do fine and honourable things together. We had achieved--I give the ugly phrase that expresses the increasing discolouration in my mind--"illicit intercourse." To end at that, we now perceived, wasn't in our style. But where were we to end? . . .

Perhaps we might at this stage have given it up. I think if we could have seen ahead and around us we might have done so. But the glow of our cell blinded us. . . . I wonder what might have happened if at that time we had given it up. . . . We propounded it, we met again in secret to discuss it, and our overpowering passion for one another reduced that meeting to absurdity. . . .

Presently the idea of children crept between us. It came in from all our conceptions of life and public service; it was, we found, in the quality of our minds that physical love without children is a little weak, timorous, more than a little shameful. With imaginative people there very speedily comes a time when that realisation is inevitable. We hadn't thought of that before--it isn't natural to think of that before. We hadn't known. There is no literature in English dealing with such things.

There is a necessary sequence of phases in love. These came in their order, and with them, unanticipated tarnishings on the first bright perfection of our relations. For a time these developing phases were no more than a secret and private trouble between us, little shadows spreading by imperceptible degrees across that vivid and luminous cell.

8

The Handitch election flung me suddenly into prominence.

It is still only two years since that struggle, and I will not trouble the reader with a detailed history of events that must be quite sufficiently present in his mind for my purpose already. Huge stacks of journalism have dealt with Handitch and its significance. For the reader very probably, as for most people outside a comparatively small circle, it meant my emergence from obscurity. We obtruded no editor's name in the BLUE WEEKLY; I had never as yet been on the London hoardings. Before Handitch I was a journalist and writer of no great public standing; after Handitch, I was definitely a person, in the little group of persons who stood for the Young Imperialist movement. Handitch was, to a very large

extent, my affair. I realised then, as a man comes to do, how much one can still grow after seven and twenty. In the second election I was a man taking hold of things; at Kinghamstead I had been simply a young candidate, a party unit, led about the constituency, told to do this and that, and finally washed in by the great Anti-Imperialist flood, like a starfish rolling up a beach.

My feminist views had earned the mistrust of the party, and I do not think I should have got the chance of Handitch or indeed any chance at all of Parliament for a long time, if it had not been that the seat with its long record of Liberal victories and its Liberal majority of 3642 at the last election, offered a hopeless contest. The Liberal dissensions and the belated but by no means contemptible Socialist candidate were providential interpositions. I think, however, the conduct of Gane, Crupp, and Tarville in coming down to fight for me, did count tremendously in my favour. "We aren't going to win, perhaps," said Crupp, "but we are going to talk." And until the very eve of victory, we treated Handitch not so much as a battlefield as a hoarding. And so it was the Endowment of Motherhood as a practical form of Eugenics got into English politics.

Plutus, our agent, was scared out of his wits when the thing began.

"They're ascribing all sorts of queer ideas to you about the Family," he said.

"I think the Family exists for the good of the children," I said; "is that queer?"

"Not when you explain it--but they won't let you explain it. And about marriage--?"

"I'm all right about marriage--trust me."

"Of course, if YOU had children," said Plutus, rather inconsiderately. . . .

They opened fire upon me in a little electioneering rag call the HANDITCH SENTINEL, with a string of garbled quotations and misrepresentations that gave me an admirable text for a speech. I spoke for an hour and ten minutes with a more and more crumpled copy of the SENTINEL in my hand, and I made the fullest and completest exposition of the idea of endowing motherhood that I think had ever been made up to that time in England. Its effect on the press was extraordinary. The Liberal papers gave me quite unprecedented space under the impression that I had only to be given rope to hang myself; the Conservatives cut me down or tried to justify me; the whole country was talking. I had had a pamphlet in type upon the subject, and I revised this carefully and put it on the book-stalls within three days. It sold enormously and brought me bushels of letters. We issued over three thousand in Handitch alone. At meeting after meeting I was heckled upon nothing else. Long before polling day Plutus was converted.

"It's catching on like old age pensions," he said. "We've dished the Liberals! To think that such a project should come from our side!"

But it was only with the declaration of the poll that my battle was won. No one expected more than a snatch victory, and I was in by over fifteen hundred. At one bound Cossington's papers passed from apologetics varied by repudiation to triumphant praise. "A renascent England, breeding men," said the leader in his chief daily on the morning after the polling, and claimed that the Conservatives had been ever the pioneers in sanely bold constructive projects.

I came up to London with a weary but rejoicing Margaret by the night train.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

THE IMPOSSIBLE POSITION

1

To any one who did not know of that glowing secret between Isabel and myself, I might well have appeared at that time the most successful and enviable of men. I had recovered rapidly from an uncongenial start in political life; I had become a considerable force through the BLUE WEEKLY, and was shaping an increasingly influential body of opinion; I had re-entered Parliament with quite dramatic distinction, and in spite of a certain faltering on the part of the orthodox Conservatives towards the bolder elements in our propaganda, I had loyal and unenvious associates who were making me a power in the party. People were coming to our group, understandings were developing. It was clear we should play a prominent part in the next general election, and that, given a Conservative victory, I should be assured of office. The world opened out to me brightly and invitingly. Great schemes took shape in my mind, always more concrete, always more practicable; the years ahead seemed falling into order, shining with the credible promise of immense achievement.

And at the heart of it all, unseen and unsuspected, was the secret of my relations with Isabel--like a seed that germinates and thrusts, thrusts relentlessly.

From the onset of the Handitch contest onward, my meetings with her had been more and more pervaded by the discussion of our situation. It had innumerable aspects. It was very present to us that we wanted to be together as much as possible--we were beginning to long

very much for actual living together in the same house, so that one could come as it were carelessly--unawares--upon the other, busy perhaps about some trivial thing. We wanted to feel each other in the daily atmosphere. Preceding our imperatively sterile passion, you must remember, outside it, altogether greater than it so far as our individual lives were concerned, there had grown and still grew an enormous affection and intellectual sympathy between us. We brought all our impressions and all our ideas to each other, to see them in each other's light. It is hard to convey that quality of intellectual unison to any one who has not experienced it. I thought more and more in terms of conversation with Isabel; her possible comments upon things would flash into my mind, oh!--with the very sound of her voice.

I remember, too, the odd effect of seeing her in the distance going about Handitch, like any stranger canvasser; the queer emotion of her approach along the street, the greeting as she passed. The morning of the polling she vanished from the constituency. I saw her for an instant in the passage behind our Committee rooms.

"Going?" said I.

She nodded.

"Stay it out. I want you to see the fun. I remember--the other time."

She didn't answer for a moment or so, and stood with face averted.

"It's Margaret's show," she said abruptly. "If I see her smiling there like a queen by your side--! She did--last time. I remember." She caught at a sob and dashed her hand across her face impatiently. "Jealous fool, mean and petty, jealous fool! . . . Good luck, old man, to you! You're going to win. But I don't want to see the end of it all the same. . . ."

"Good-bye!" said I, clasping her hand as some supporter appeared in the passage. . . .

I came back to London victorious, and a little flushed and coarse with victory; and so soon as I could break away I went to Isabel's flat and found her white and worn, with the stain of secret weeping about her eyes. I came into the room to her and shut the door.

"You said I'd win," I said, and held out my arms.

She hugged me closely for a moment.

"My dear," I whispered, "it's nothing--without you--nothing!"

We didn't speak for some seconds. Then she slipped from my hold. "Look!" she said, smiling like winter sunshine. "I've had in all the morning papers--the pile of them, and you--resounding."

"It's more than I dared hope."

"Or I."

She stood for a moment still smiling bravely, and then she was sobbing in my arms. "The bigger you are--the more you show," she said--" the more we are parted. I know, I know--"

I held her close to me, making no answer.

Presently she became still. "Oh, well," she said, and wiped her eyes and sat down on the little sofa by the fire; and I sat down beside her.

"I didn't know all there was in love," she said, staring at the coals, "when we went love-making."

I put my arm behind her and took a handful of her dear soft hair in my hand and kissed it.

"You've done a great thing this time," she said. "Handitch will make you."

"It opens big chances," I said. "But why are you weeping, dear one?"

"Envy," she said, "and love."

"You're not lonely?"

"I've plenty to do--and lots of people."

"Well?"

"I want you."

"You've got me."

She put her arm about me and kissed me. "I want you," she said, "just as if I had nothing of you. You don't understand--how a woman wants a man. I thought once if I just gave myself to you it would be enough. It was nothing--it was just a step across the threshold. My dear, every moment you are away I ache for you--ache! I want to be about when it isn't love-making or talk. I want to be doing things for you, and watching you when you're not thinking of me. All those safe, careless, intimate things. And something else--" She stopped. "Dear, I don't want to bother you. I just want you to know I love you. . . ."

She caught my head in her hands and kissed it, then stood up abruptly.

I looked up at her, a little perplexed.

"Dear heart," said I, "isn't this enough? You're my councillor, my colleague, my right hand, the secret soul of my life--"

"And I want to darn your socks," she said, smiling back at me.

"You're insatiable."

She smiled "No," she said. "I'm not insatiable, Master. But I'm a woman in love. And I'm finding out what I want, and what is necessary to me--and what I can't have. That's all."

"We get a lot."

"We want a lot. You and I are greedy people for the things we like, Master. It's very evident we've got nearly all we can ever have of one another--and I'm not satisfied."

"What more is there?"

"For you--very little. I wonder. For me--every thing. Yes--everything. You didn't mean it, Master; you didn't know any more than I did when I began, but love between a man and a woman is sometimes very one-sided. Fearfully one-sided! That's all. . . ."

"Don't YOU ever want children?" she said abruptly.

"I suppose I do."

"You don't!"

"I haven't thought of them."

"A man doesn't, perhaps. But I have. . . . I want them--like hunger. YOUR children, and home with you. Really, continually you! That's the trouble. . . . I can't have 'em, Master, and I can't have you."

She was crying, and through her tears she laughed.

"I'm going to make a scene," she said, "and get this over. I'm so discontented and miserable; I've got to tell you. It would come between us if I didn't. I'm in love with you, with everything--with all my brains. I'll pull through all right. I'll be good, Master, never you fear. But to-day I'm crying out with all my being. This election--You're going up; you're going on. In these papers--you're a great big fact. It's suddenly come home to me. At the back of my mind I've always had the idea I was going to have you somehow presently for myself--I mean to have you to go long tramps with, to keep house for, to get meals for, to watch for of an evening. It's a sort of habitual background to my thought of you. And it's nonsense--utter nonsense!" She stopped. She was crying and choking. "And the child, you know--the child!"

I was troubled beyond measure, but Handitch and its intimations were clear and strong.

"We can't have that," I said.

"No," she said, "we can't have that."

"We've got our own things to do."

"YOUR things," she said.

"Aren't they yours too?"

"Because of you," she said.

"Aren't they your very own things?"

"Women don't have that sort of very own thing. Indeed, it's true! And think! You've been down there preaching the goodness of children, telling them the only good thing in a state is happy, hopeful children, working to free mothers and children--"

"And we give our own children to do it?" I said.

"Yes," she said. "And sometimes I think it's too much to give--too much altogether. . . . Children get into a woman's brain--when she mustn't have them, especially when she must never hope for them. Think of the child we might have now!--the little creature with soft, tender skin, and little hands and little feet! At times it haunts me. It comes and says, Why wasn't I given life? I can hear it in the night. . . . The world is full of such little ghosts, dear lover--little things that asked for life and were refused. They clamour to me. It's like a little fist beating at my heart. Love children, beautiful children. Little cold hands that tear at my heart! Oh, my heart and my lord!" She was holding my arm with both her hands and weeping against it, and now she drew herself to my shoulder and wept and sobbed in my embrace. "I shall never sit with your child on my knee and you beside me--never, and I am a woman and your lover! . . ."

2

But the profound impossibility of our relation was now becoming more and more apparent to us. We found ourselves seeking justification, clinging passionately to a situation that was coldly, pitilessly, impossible and fated. We wanted quite intensely to live together

and have a child, but also we wanted very many other things that were incompatible with these desires. It was extraordinarily difficult to weigh our political and intellectual ambitions against those intimate wishes. The weights kept altering according as one found oneself grasping this valued thing or that. It wasn't as if we could throw everything aside for our love, and have that as we wanted it. Love such as we bore one another isn't altogether, or even chiefly, a thing in itself--it is for the most part a value set upon things. Our love was interwoven with all our other interests; to go out of the world and live in isolation seemed to us like killing the best parts of each other; we loved the sight of each other engaged finely and characteristically, we knew each other best as activities. We had no delusions about material facts; we didn't want each other alive or dead, we wanted each other fully alive. We wanted to do big things together, and for us to take each other openly and desperately would leave us nothing in the world to do. We wanted children indeed passionately, but children with every helpful chance in the world, and children born in scandal would be handicapped at every turn. We wanted to share a home, and not a solitude.

And when we were at this stage of realisation, began the intimations that we were found out, and that scandal was afoot against us. . . .

I heard of it first from Esmear, who deliberately mentioned it, with that steady grey eye of his watching me, as an instance of the preposterous falsehoods people will circulate. It came to Isabel almost simultaneously through a married college friend, who made it her business to demand either confirmation or denial. It filled us both with consternation. In the surprise of the moment Isabel admitted her secret, and her friend went off "reserving her freedom of action."

Discovery broke out in every direction. Friends with grave faces and an atmosphere of infinite tact invaded us both. Other friends

ceased to invade either of us. It was manifest we had become--we knew not how--a private scandal, a subject for duologues, an amazement, a perplexity, a vivid interest. In a few brief weeks it seemed London passed from absolute unsuspectingness to a chattering exaggeration of its knowledge of our relations.

It was just the most inappropriate time for that disclosure. The long smouldering antagonism to my endowment of motherhood ideas had flared up into an active campaign in the EXPURGATOR, and it would be altogether disastrous to us if I should be convicted of any personal irregularity. It was just because of the manifest and challenging respectability of my position that I had been able to carry the thing as far as I had done. Now suddenly my fortunes had sprung a leak, and scandal was pouring in. . . . It chanced, too, that a wave of moral intolerance was sweeping through London, one of those waves in which the bitterness of the consciously just finds an ally in the panic of the undiscovered. A certain Father Blodgett had been preaching against social corruption with extraordinary force, and had roused the Church of England people to a kind of competition in denunciation. The old methods of the Anti-Socialist campaign had been renewed, and had offered far too wide a scope and too tempting an opportunity for private animosity, to be restricted to the private affairs of the Socialists. I had intimations of an extensive circulation of "private and confidential" letters. . . .

I think there can be nothing else in life quite like the unnerving realisation that rumour and scandal are afoot about one. Abruptly one's confidence in the solidity of the universe disappears. One walks silenced through a world that one feels to be full of inaudible accusations. One cannot challenge the assault, get it out into the open, separate truth and falsehood. It slinks from you, turns aside its face. Old acquaintances suddenly evaded me, made extraordinary excuses; men who had presumed on the verge of my world and pestered me with an intrusive enterprise, now took the bold step of flat repudiation. I became doubtful about the return of a nod,

retracted all those tentacles of easy civility that I had hitherto spread to the world. I still grow warm with amazed indignation when I recall that Edward Crampton, meeting me full on the steps of the Climax Club, cut me dead. "By God!" I cried, and came near catching him by the throat and wringing out of him what of all good deeds and bad, could hearten him, a younger man than I and empty beyond comparison, to dare to play the judge to me. And then I had an open slight from Mrs. Millingham, whom I had counted on as one counts upon the sunrise. I had not expected things of that sort; they were disconcerting beyond measure; it was as if the world were giving way beneath my feet, as though something failed in the essential confidence of life, as though a hand of wet ice had touched my heart. Similar things were happening to Isabel. Yet we went on working, visiting, meeting, trying to ignore this gathering of implacable forces against us.

For a time I was perplexed beyond measure to account for this campaign. Then I got a clue. The centre of diffusion was the Bailey household. The Baileys had never forgiven me my abandonment of the young Liberal group they had done so much to inspire and organise; their dinner-table had long been a scene of hostile depreciation of the BLUE WEEKLY and all its allies; week after week Altiora proclaimed that I was "doing nothing," and found other causes for our bye-election triumphs; I counted Chambers Street a dangerous place for me. Yet, nevertheless, I was astonished to find them using a private scandal against me. They did. I think Handitch had filled up the measure of their bitterness, for I had not only abandoned them, but I was succeeding beyond even their power of misrepresentation. Always I had been a wasp in their spider's web, difficult to claim as a tool, uncritical, antagonistic. I admired their work and devotion enormously, but I had never concealed my contempt for a certain childish vanity they displayed, and for the frequent puerility of their political intrigues. I suppose contempt galls more than injuries, and anyhow they had me now. They had me. Bailey, I found, was warning fathers

of girls against me as a "reckless libertine," and Altiora, flushed, roguish, and dishevelled, was sitting on her fender curb after dinner, and pledging little parties of five or six women at a time with infinite gusto not to let the matter go further. Our cell was open to the world, and a bleak, distressful daylight streaming in.

I had a gleam of a more intimate motive in Altiora from the reports that came to me. Isabel had been doing a series of five or six articles in the POLITICAL REVIEW in support of our campaign, the POLITICAL REVIEW which had hitherto been loyally Baileyite. Quite her best writing up to the present, at any rate, is in those papers, and no doubt Altiora had had not only to read her in those invaded columns, but listen to her praises in the mouths of the tactless influential. Altiora, like so many people who rely on gesture and vocal insistence in conversation, writes a poor and slovenly prose and handles an argument badly; Isabel has her University training behind her and wrote from the first with the stark power of a clear-headed man. "Now we know," said Altiora, with just a gleam of malice showing through her brightness, "now we know who helps with the writing!"

She revealed astonishing knowledge.

For a time I couldn't for the life of me discover her sources. I had, indeed, a desperate intention of challenging her, and then I bethought me of a youngster named Curmain, who had been my supplemental typist and secretary for a time, and whom I had sent on to her before the days of our breach. "Of course!" said I, "Curmain!" He was a tall, drooping, sidelong youth with sandy hair, a little forward head, and a long thin neck. He stole stamps, and, I suspected, rifled my private letter drawer, and I found him one day on a turn of the stairs looking guilty and ruffled with a pretty Irish housemaid of Margaret's manifestly in a state of hot indignation. I saw nothing, but I felt everything in the air between them. I hate this pestering of servants, but at the same

time I didn't want Curmain wiped out of existence, so I had packed him off without unnecessary discussion to Altiora. He was quick and cheap anyhow, and I thought her general austerity ought to redeem him if anything could; the Chambers Street housemaid wasn't for any man's kissing and showed it, and the stamps and private letters were looked after with an efficiency altogether surpassing mine. And Altiora, I've no doubt left now whatever, pumped this young undesirable about me, and scenting a story, had him to dinner alone one evening to get to the bottom of the matter. She got quite to the bottom of it,--it must have been a queer duologue. She read Isabel's careless, intimate letters to me, so to speak, by this proxy, and she wasn't ashamed to use this information in the service of the bitterness that had sprung up in her since our political breach. It was essentially a personal bitterness; it helped no public purpose of theirs to get rid of me. My downfall in any public sense was sheer waste,--the loss of a man. She knew she was behaving badly, and so, when it came to remonstrance, she behaved worse. She'd got names and dates and places; the efficiency of her information was irresistible. And she set to work at it marvellously. Never before, in all her pursuit of efficient ideals, had Altiora achieved such levels of efficiency. I wrote a protest that was perhaps ill-advised and angry, I went to her and tried to stop her. She wouldn't listen, she wouldn't think, she denied and lied, she behaved like a naughty child of six years old which has made up its mind to be hurtful. It wasn't only, I think, that she couldn't bear our political and social influence; she also--I realised at that interview couldn't bear our loving. It seemed to her the sickliest thing,--a thing quite unendurable. While such things were, the virtue had gone out of her world.

I've the vividest memory of that call of mine. She'd just come in and taken off her hat, and she was grey and dishevelled and tired, and in a business-like dress of black and crimson that didn't suit her and was muddy about the skirts; she'd a cold in her head and sniffed penetratingly, she avoided my eye as she talked and

interrupted everything I had to say; she kept stabbing fiercely at the cushions of her sofa with a long hat-pin and pretending she was overwhelmed with grief at the DEBACLE she was deliberately organising.

"Then part," she cried, "part. If you don't want a smashing up,-- part! You two have got to be parted. You've got never to see each other ever, never to speak." There was a zest in her voice. "We're not circulating stories," she denied. "No! And Curmain never told us anything--Curmain is an EXCELLENT young man; oh! a quite excellent young man. You misjudged him altogether." . . .

I was equally unsuccessful with Bailey. I caught the little wretch in the League Club, and he wriggled and lied. He wouldn't say where he had got his facts, he wouldn't admit he had told any one. When I gave him the names of two men who had come to me astonished and incredulous, he attempted absurdly to make me think they had told HIM. He did his horrible little best to suggest that honest old Quackett, who had just left England for the Cape, was the real scandalmonger. That struck me as mean, even for Bailey. I've still the odd vivid impression of his fluting voice, excusing the inexcusable, his big, shifty face evading me, his perspiration-beaded forehead, the shrugging shoulders, and the would-be exculpatory gestures--Houndsditch gestures--of his enormous ugly hands.

"I can assure you, my dear fellow," he said; "I can assure you we've done everything to shield you--everything." . . .

3

Isabel came after dinner one evening and talked in the office. She

made a white-robed, dusky figure against the deep blues of my big window. I sat at my desk and tore a quill pen to pieces as I talked.

"The Baileys don't intend to let this drop," I said. "They mean that every one in London is to know about it."

"I know."

"Well!" I said.

"Dear heart," said Isabel, facing it, "it's no good waiting for things to overtake us; we're at the parting of the ways."

"What are we to do?"

"They won't let us go on."

"Damn them!"

"They are ORGANISING scandal."

"It's no good waiting for things to overtake us," I echoed; "they have overtaken us." I turned on her. "What do you want to do?"

"Everything," she said. "Keep you and have our work. Aren't we Mates?"

"We can't."

"And we can't!"

"I've got to tell Margaret," I said.

"Margaret!"

"I can't bear the idea of any one else getting in front with it.
I've been wincing about Margaret secretly--"

"I know. You'll have to tell her--and make your peace with her."

She leant back against the bookcases under the window.

"We've had some good times, Master;" she said, with a sigh in her voice.

And then for a long time we stared at one another in silence.

"We haven't much time left," she said.

"Shall we bolt?" I said.

"And leave all this?" she asked, with her eyes going round the room.

"And that?" And her head indicated Westminster. "No!"

I said no more of bolting.

"We've got to screw ourselves up to surrender," she said.

"Something."

"A lot."

"Master," she said, "it isn't all sex and stuff between us?"

"No!"

"I can't give up the work. Our work's my life."

We came upon another long pause.

"No one will believe we've ceased to be lovers--if we simply do," she said.

"We shouldn't."

"We've got to do something more parting than that."

I nodded, and again we paused. She was coming to something.

"I could marry Shoemith," she said abruptly.

"But--" I objected.

"He knows. It wasn't fair. I told him."

"Oh, that explains," I said. "There's been a kind of sulkiness-- But--you told him?"

She nodded. "He's rather badly hurt," she said. "He's been a good friend to me. He's curiously loyal. But something, something he said one day--forced me to let him know. . . . That's been the beastliness of all this secrecy. That's the beastliness of all secrecy. You have to spring surprises on people. But he keeps on. He's steadfast. He'd already suspected. He wants me very badly to marry him. . . ."

"But you don't want to marry him?"

"I'm forced to think of it."

"But does he want to marry you at that? Take you as a present from the world at large?--against your will and desire? . . . I don't understand him."

"He cares for me."

"How?"

"He thinks this is a fearful mess for me. He wants to pull it straight."

We sat for a time in silence, with imaginations that obstinately refused to take up the realities of this proposition.

"I don't want you to marry Shoesmith," I said at last.

"Don't you like him?"

"Not as your husband."

"He's a very clever and sturdy person--and very generous and devoted to me."

"And me?"

"You can't expect that. He thinks you are wonderful--and, naturally, that you ought not to have started this."

"I've a curious dislike to any one thinking that but myself. I'm quite ready to think it myself."

"He'd let us be friends--and meet."

"Let us be friends!" I cried, after a long pause. "You and me!"

"He wants me to be engaged soon. Then, he says, he can go round fighting these rumours, defending us both--and force a quarrel on the Baileys."

"I don't understand him," I said, and added, "I don't understand you."

I was staring at her face. It seemed white and set in the dimness.

"Do you really mean this, Isabel?" I asked.

"What else is there to do, my dear?--what else is there to do at all? I've been thinking day and night. You can't go away with me. You can't smash yourself suddenly in the sight of all men. I'd rather die than that should happen. Look what you are becoming in the country! Look at all you've built up!--me helping. I wouldn't let you do it if you could. I wouldn't let you--if it were only for Margaret's sake. THIS . . . closes the scandal, closes everything."

"It closes all our life together," I cried.

She was silent.

"It never ought to have begun," I said.

She winced. Then abruptly she was on her knees before me, with her hands upon my shoulder and her eyes meeting mine.

"My dear," she said very earnestly, "don't misunderstand me! Don't think I'm retreating from the things we've done! Our love is the best thing I could ever have had from life. Nothing can ever equal it; nothing could ever equal the beauty and delight you and I have had together. Never! You have loved me; you do love me. . . .

No one could ever know how to love you as I have loved you; no one could ever love me as you have loved me, my king. And it's just because it's been so splendid, dear; it's just because I'd die rather than have a tithe of all this wiped out of my life again--for it's made me, it's all I am--dear, it's years since I began loving

you--it's just because of its goodness that I want not to end in wreckage now, not to end in the smashing up of all the big things I understand in you and love in you. . . .

"What is there for us if we keep on and go away?" she went on. "All the big interests in our lives will vanish--everything. We shall become specialised people--people overshadowed by a situation. We shall be an elopement, a romance--all our breadth and meaning gone! People will always think of it first when they think of us; all our work and aims will be warped by it and subordinated to it. Is it good enough, dear? Just to specialise. . . . I think of you. We've got a case, a passionate case, the best of cases, but do we want to spend all our lives defending it and justifying it? And there's that other life. I know now you care for Margaret--you care more than you think you do. You have said fine things of her. I've watched you about her. Little things have dropped from you. She's given her life for you; she's nothing without you. You feel that to your marrow all the time you are thinking about these things. Oh, I'm not jealous, dear. I love you for loving her. I love you in relation to her. But there it is, an added weight against us, another thing worth saving."

Presently, I remember, she sat back on her heels and looked up into my face. "We've done wrong--and parting's paying. It's time to pay. We needn't have paid, if we'd kept to the track. . . . You and I, Master, we've got to be men."

"Yes," I said; "we've got to be men."

4

I was driven to tell Margaret about our situation by my intolerable

dread that otherwise the thing might come to her through some stupid and clumsy informant. She might even meet Altiora, and have it from her.

I can still recall the feeling of sitting at my desk that night in that large study of mine in Radnor Square, waiting for Margaret to come home. It was oddly like the feeling of a dentist's reception-room; only it was for me to do the dentistry with clumsy, cruel hands. I had left the door open so that she would come in to me.

I heard her silken rustle on the stairs at last, and then she was in the doorway. "May I come in?" she said.

"Do," I said, and turned round to her.

"Working?" she said.

"Hard," I answered. "Where have YOU been?"

"At the Vallerys'. Mr. Evesham was talking about you. They were all talking. I don't think everybody knew who I was. Just Mrs. Mumble I'd been to them. Lord Wardenham doesn't like you."

"He doesn't."

"But they all feel you're rather big, anyhow. Then I went on to Park Lane to hear a new pianist and some other music at Eva's."

"Yes."

"Then I looked in at the Brabants' for some midnight tea before I came on here. They'd got some writers--and Grant was there."

"You HAVE been flying round. . . ."

There was a little pause between us.

I looked at her pretty, unsuspecting face, and at the slender grace of her golden-robed body. What gulfs there were between us!

"You've been amused," I said.

"It's been amusing. You've been at the House?"

"The Medical Education Bill kept me." . . .

After all, why should I tell her? She'd got to a way of living that fulfilled her requirements. Perhaps she'd never hear. But all that day and the day before I'd been making up my mind to do the thing.

"I want to tell you something," I said. "I wish you'd sit down for a moment or so." . . .

Once I had begun, it seemed to me I had to go through with it.

Something in the quality of my voice gave her an intimation of unusual gravity. She looked at me steadily for a moment and sat down slowly in my armchair.

"What is it?" she said.

I went on awkwardly. "I've got to tell you--something extraordinarily distressing," I said.

She was manifestly altogether unaware.

"There seems to be a good deal of scandal abroad--I've only recently heard of it--about myself--and Isabel."

"Isabel!"

I nodded.

"What do they say?" she asked.

It was difficult, I found, to speak.

"They say she's my mistress."

"Oh! How abominable!"

She spoke with the most natural indignation. Our eyes met.

"We've been great friends," I said.

"Yes. And to make THAT of it. My poor dear! But how can they?"
She paused and looked at me. It's so incredible. How can any one believe it? I couldn't."

She stopped, with her distressed eyes regarding me. Her expression changed to dread. There was a tense stillness for a second, perhaps.

I turned my face towards the desk, and took up and dropped a handful of paper fasteners.

"Margaret," I said, " I'm afraid you'll have to believe it."

5

Margaret sat very still. When I looked at her again, her face was very white, and her distressed eyes scrutinised me. Her lips quivered as she spoke. "You really mean--THAT?" she said.

I nodded.

"I never dreamt."

"I never meant you to dream."

"And that is why--we've been apart?"

I thought. "I suppose it is."

"Why have you told me now?"

"Those rumours. I didn't want any one else to tell you."

"Or else it wouldn't have mattered?"

"No."

She turned her eyes from me to the fire. Then for a moment she looked about the room she had made for me, and then quite silently, with a childish quivering of her lips, with a sort of dismayed distress upon her face, she was weeping. She sat weeping in her dress of cloth of gold, with her bare slender arms dropped limp over the arms of her chair, and her eyes averted from me, making no effort to stay or staunch her tears. "I am sorry, Margaret," I said. "I was in love. . . . I did not understand. . . ."

Presently she asked: "What are you going to do?"

"You see, Margaret, now it's come to be your affair--I want to know what you--what you want."

"You want to leave me?"

"If you want me to, I must."

"Leave Parliament--leave all the things you are doing,--all this fine movement of yours?"

"No." I spoke sullenly. "I don't want to leave anything. I want to stay on. I've told you, because I think we--Isabel and I, I mean--have got to drive through a storm of scandal anyhow. I don't know how far things may go, how much people may feel, and I can't, I can't have you unconscious, unarmed, open to any revelation--"

She made no answer.

"When the thing began--I knew it was stupid but I thought it was a thing that wouldn't change, wouldn't be anything but itself, wouldn't unfold--consequences. . . . People have got hold of these vague rumours. . . . Directly it reached any one else but--but us two--I saw it had to come to you."

I stopped. I had that distressful feeling I have always had with Margaret, of not being altogether sure she heard, of being doubtful if she understood. I perceived that once again I had struck at her and shattered a thousand unsubstantial pinnacles. And I couldn't get at her, to help her, or touch her mind! I stood up, and at my movement she moved. She produced a dainty little handkerchief, and made an effort to wipe her face with it, and held it to her eyes.

"Oh, my Husband!" she sobbed.

"What do you mean to do?" she said, with her voice muffled by her handkerchief.

"We're going to end it," I said.

Something gripped me tormentingly as I said that. I drew a chair beside her and sat down. "You and I, Margaret, have been partners,"

I began. "We've built up this life of ours together; I couldn't have done it without you. We've made a position, created a work--"

She shook her head. "You," she said.

"You helping. I don't want to shatter it--if you don't want it shattered. I can't leave my work. I can't leave you. I want you to have--all that you have ever had. I've never meant to rob you. I've made an immense and tragic blunder. You don't know how things took us, how different they seemed! My character and accident have conspired--We'll pay--in ourselves, not in our public service."

I halted again. Margaret remained very still.

"I want you to understand that the thing is at an end. It is definitely at an end. We--we talked--yesterday. We mean to end it altogether." I clenched my hands. "She's--she's going to marry Arnold Shoemith."

I wasn't looking now at Margaret any more, but I heard the rustle of her movement as she turned on me.

"It's all right," I said, clinging to my explanation. "We're doing nothing shabby. He knows. He will. It's all as right--as things can be now. We're not cheating any one, Margaret. We're doing things straight--now. Of course, you know. . . . We shall--we shall have to make sacrifices. Give things up pretty completely. Very completely. . . . We shall have not to see each other for a time, you know. Perhaps not a long time. Two or three years. Or write--or just any of that sort of thing ever--"

Some subconscious barrier gave way in me. I found myself crying uncontrollably--as I have never cried since I was a little child. I was amazed and horrified at myself. And wonderfully, Margaret was on her knees beside me, with her arms about me, mingling her weeping

with mine. "Oh, my Husband!" she cried, my poor Husband! Does it hurt you so? I would do anything! Oh, the fool I am! Dear, I love you. I love you over and away and above all these jealous little things!"

She drew down my head to her as a mother might draw down the head of a son. She caressed me, weeping bitterly with me. "Oh! my dear," she sobbed, "my dear! I've never seen you cry! I've never seen you cry. Ever! I didn't know you could. Oh! my dear! Can't you have her, my dear, if you want her? I can't bear it! Let me help you, dear. Oh! my Husband! My Man! I can't bear to have you cry!" For a time she held me in silence.

"I've thought this might happen, I dreamt it might happen. You two, I mean. It was dreaming put it into my head. When I've seen you together, so glad with each other. . . . Oh! Husband mine, believe me! believe me! I'm stupid, I'm cold, I'm only beginning to realise how stupid and cold, but all I want in all the world is to give my life to you." . . .

6

"We can't part in a room," said Isabel.

"We'll have one last talk together," I said, and planned that we should meet for a half a day between Dover and Walmer and talk ourselves out. I still recall that day very well, recall even the curious exaltation of grief that made our mental atmosphere distinctive and memorable. We had seen so much of one another, had become so intimate, that we talked of parting even as we parted with a sense of incredible remoteness. We went together up over the cliffs, and to a place where they fall towards the sea, past the

white, quaint-lanterned lighthouses of the South Foreland. There, in a kind of niche below the crest, we sat talking. It was a spacious day, serenely blue and warm, and on the wrinkled water remotely below a black tender and six hooded submarines came presently, and engaged in mysterious manoeuvres. Shrieking gulls and chattering jackdaws circled over us and below us, and dived and swooped; and a skerry of weedy, fallen chalk appeared, and gradually disappeared again, as the tide fell and rose.

We talked and thought that afternoon on every aspect of our relations. It seems to me now we talked so wide and far that scarcely an issue in the life between man and woman can arise that we did not at least touch upon. Lying there at Isabel's feet, I have become for myself a symbol of all this world-wide problem between duty and conscious, passionate love the world has still to solve. Because it isn't solved; there's a wrong in it either way. . . . The sky, the wide horizon, seemed to lift us out of ourselves until we were something representative and general. She was womanhood become articulate, talking to her lover.

"I ought," I said, "never to have loved you."

"It wasn't a thing planned," she said.

"I ought never to have let our talk slip to that, never to have turned back from America."

"I'm glad we did it," she said. "Don't think I repent."

I looked at her.

"I will never repent," she said. "Never!" as though she clung to her life in saying it.

I remember we talked for a long time of divorce. It seemed to us

then, and it seems to us still, that it ought to have been possible for Margaret to divorce me, and for me to marry without the scandalous and ugly publicity, the taint and ostracism that follow such a readjustment. We went on to the whole perplexing riddle of marriage. We criticised the current code, how muddled and conventionalised it had become, how modified by subterfuges and concealments and new necessities, and the increasing freedom of women. "It's all like Bromstead when the building came," I said; for I had often talked to her of that early impression of purpose dissolving again into chaotic forces. "There is no clear right in the world any more. The world is Byzantine. The justest man to-day must practise a tainted goodness."

These questions need discussion--a magnificent frankness of discussion--if any standards are again to establish an effective hold upon educated people. Discretions, as I have said already, will never hold any one worth holding--longer than they held us. Against every "shalt not" there must be a "why not" plainly put,--the "why not" largest and plainest, the law deduced from its purpose. "You and I, Isabel," I said, "have always been a little disregardful of duty, partly at least because the idea of duty comes to us so ill-clad. Oh! I know there's an extravagant insubordinate strain in us, but that wasn't all. I wish humbugs would leave duty alone. I wish all duty wasn't covered with slime. That's where the real mischief comes in. Passion can always contrive to clothe itself in beauty, strips itself splendid. That carried us. But for all its mean associations there is this duty. . . ."

"Don't we come rather late to it?"

"Not so late that it won't be atrociously hard to do."

"It's queer to think of now," said Isabel. "Who could believe we did all we have done honestly? Well, in a manner honestly. Who could believe we thought this might be hidden? Who could trace it

all step by step from the time when we found that a certain boldness in our talk was pleasing? We talked of love. . . . Master, there's not much for us to do in the way of Apologia that any one will credit. And yet if it were possible to tell the very heart of our story. . . .

"Does Margaret really want to go on with you?" she asked--"shield you--knowing of . . . THIS?"

"I'm certain. I don't understand--just as I don't understand Shoemith, but she does. These people walk on solid ground which is just thin air to us. They've got something we haven't got. Assurances? I wonder." . . .

Then it was, or later, we talked of Shoemith, and what her life might be with him.

"He's good," she said; "he's kindly. He's everything but magic. He's the very image of the decent, sober, honourable life. You can't say a thing against him or I--except that something--something in his imagination, something in the tone of his voice--fails for me. Why don't I love him?--he's a better man than you! Why don't you? IS he a better man than you? He's usage, he's honour, he's the right thing, he's the breed and the tradition,--a gentleman. You're your erring, incalculable self. I suppose we women will trust this sort and love your sort to the very end of time. . . ."

We lay side by side and nibbled at grass stalks as we talked. It seemed enormously unreasonable to us that two people who had come to the pitch of easy and confident affection and happiness that held between us should be obliged to part and shun one another, or murder half the substance of their lives. We felt ourselves crushed and beaten by an indiscriminating machine which destroys happiness in the service of jealousy. "The mass of people don't feel these things in quite the same manner as we feel them," she said. "Is it

because they're different in grain, or educated out of some primitive instinct?"

"It's because we've explored love a little, and they know no more than the gateway," I said. "Lust and then jealousy; their simple conception--and we have gone past all that and wandered hand in hand. . . ."

I remember that for a time we watched two of that larger sort of gull, whose wings are brownish-white, circle and hover against the blue. And then we lay and looked at a band of water mirror clear far out to sea, and wondered why the breeze that rippled all the rest should leave it so serene.

"And in this State of ours," I resumed.

"Eh!" said Isabel, rolling over into a sitting posture and looking out at the horizon. "Let's talk no more of things we can never see. Talk to me of the work you are doing and all we shall do--after we have parted. We've said too little of that. We've had our red life, and it's over. Thank Heaven!--though we stole it! Talk about your work, dear, and the things we'll go on doing--just as though we were still together. We'll still be together in a sense--through all these things we have in common."

And so we talked of politics and our outlook. We were interested to the pitch of self-forgetfulness. We weighed persons and forces, discussed the probabilities of the next general election, the steady drift of public opinion in the north and west away from Liberalism towards us. It was very manifest that in spite of Wardenham and the EXPURGATOR, we should come into the new Government strongly. The party had no one else, all the young men were formally or informally with us; Esmeer would have office, Lord Tarville, I . . . and very probably there would be something for Shoemith. "And for my own part," I said, "I count on backing on the Liberal side. For the

last two years we've been forcing competition in constructive legislation between the parties. The Liberals have not been long in following up our Endowment of Motherhood lead. They'll have to give votes and lip service anyhow. Half the readers of the BLUE WEEKLY, they say, are Liberals. . . .

"I remember talking about things of this sort with old Willersley," I said, "ever so many years ago. It was some place near Locarno, and we looked down the lake that shone weltering--just as now we look over the sea. And then we dreamt in an indistinct featureless way of all that you and I are doing now."

"I!" said Isabel, and laughed.

"Well, of some such thing," I said, and remained for awhile silent, thinking of Locarno.

I recalled once more the largeness, the release from small personal things that I had felt in my youth; statecraft became real and wonderful again with the memory, the gigantic handling of gigantic problems. I began to talk out my thoughts, sitting up beside her, as I could never talk of them to any one but Isabel; began to recover again the purpose that lay under all my political ambitions and adjustments and anticipations. I saw the State, splendid and wide as I had seen it in that first travel of mine, but now it was no mere distant prospect of spires and pinnacles, but populous with fine-trained, bold-thinking, bold-doing people. It was as if I had forgotten for a long time and now remembered with amazement.

At first, I told her, I had been altogether at a loss how I could do anything to battle against the aimless muddle of our world; I had wanted a clue--until she had come into my life questioning, suggesting, unconsciously illuminating. "But I have done nothing," she protested. I declared she had done everything in growing to education under my eyes, in reflecting again upon all the processes

that had made myself, so that instead of abstractions and blue-books and bills and devices, I had realised the world of mankind as a crowd needing before all things fine women and men. We'd spoilt ourselves in learning that, but anyhow we had our lesson. Before her I was in a nineteenth-century darkness, dealing with the nation as if it were a crowd of selfish men, forgetful of women and children and that shy wild thing in the hearts of men, love, which must be drawn upon as it has never been drawn upon before, if the State is to live. I saw now how it is possible to bring the loose factors of a great realm together, to create a mind of literature and thought in it, and the expression of a purpose to make it self-conscious and fine. I had it all clear before me, so that at a score of points I could presently begin. The BLUE WEEKLY was a centre of force. Already we had given Imperialism a criticism, and leavened half the press from our columns. Our movement consolidated and spread. We should presently come into power. Everything moved towards our hands. We should be able to get at the schools, the services, the universities, the church; enormously increase the endowment of research, and organise what was sorely wanted, a criticism of research; contrive a closer contact between the press and creative intellectual life; foster literature, clarify, strengthen the public consciousness, develop social organisation and a sense of the State. Men were coming to us every day, brilliant young peers like Lord Dentonhill, writers like Carnot and Cresswell. It filled me with pride to win such men. "We stand for so much more than we seem to stand for," I said. I opened my heart to her, so freely that I hesitate to open my heart even to the reader, telling of projects and ambitions I cherished, of my consciousness of great powers and widening opportunities. . . .

Isabel watched me as I talked.

She too, I think, had forgotten these things for a while. For it is curious and I think a very significant thing that since we had become lovers, we had talked very little of the broader things that

had once so strongly gripped our imaginations.

"It's good," I said, "to talk like this to you, to get back to youth and great ambitions with you. There have been times lately when politics has seemed the pettiest game played with mean tools for mean ends--and none the less so that the happiness of three hundred million people might be touched by our follies. I talk to no one else like this. . . . And now I think of parting, I think but of how much more I might have talked to you." . . .

Things drew to an end at last, but after we had spoken of a thousand things.

"We've talked away our last half day," I said, staring over my shoulder at the blazing sunset sky behind us. "Dear, it's been the last day of our lives for us. . . . It doesn't seem like the last day of our lives. Or any day."

"I wonder how it will feel?" said Isabel.

"It will be very strange at first--not to be able to tell you things."

"I've a superstition that after--after we've parted--if ever I go into my room and talk, you'll hear. You'll be--somewhere."

"I shall be in the world--yes."

"I don't feel as though these days ahead were real. Here we are, here we remain."

"Yes, I feel that. As though you and I were two immortals, who didn't live in time and space at all, who never met, who couldn't part, and here we lie on Olympus. And those two poor creatures who did meet, poor little Richard Remington and Isabel Rivers, who met

and loved too much and had to part, they part and go their ways, and we lie here and watch them, you and I. She'll cry, poor dear."

"She'll cry. She's crying now!"

"Poor little beasts! I think he'll cry too. He winces. He could-- for tuppence. I didn't know he had lachrymal glands at all until a little while ago. I suppose all love is hysterical--and a little foolish. Poor mites! Silly little pitiful creatures! How we have blundered! Think how we must look to God! Well, we'll pity them, and then we'll inspire him to stiffen up again--and do as we've determined he shall do. We'll see it through,--we who lie here on the cliff. They'll be mean at times, and horrid at times; we know them! Do you see her, a poor little fine lady in a great house,-- she sometimes goes to her room and writes."

"She writes for his BLUE WEEKLY still."

"Yes. Sometimes--I hope. And he's there in the office with a bit of her copy in his hand."

"Is it as good as if she still talked it over with him before she wrote it? Is it?"

"Better, I think. Let's play it's better--anyhow. It may be that talking over was rather mixed with love-making. After all, love-making is joy rather than magic. Don't let's pretend about that even. . . . Let's go on watching him. (I don't see why her writing shouldn't be better. Indeed I don't.) See! There he goes down along the Embankment to Westminster just like a real man, for all that he's smaller than a grain of dust. What is running round inside that speck of a head of his? Look at him going past the Policemen, specks too--selected large ones from the country. I think he's going to dinner with the Speaker--some old thing like that. Is his face harder or commoner or stronger?--I can't quite

see. . . . And now he's up and speaking in the House. Hope he'll hold on to the thread. He'll have to plan his speeches to the very end of his days--and learn the headings."

"Isn't she up in the women's gallery to hear him?"

"No. Unless it's by accident."

"She's there," she said.

"Well, by accident it happens. Not too many accidents, Isabel. Never any more adventures for us, dear, now. No! . . . They play the game, you know. They've begun late, but now they've got to. You see it's not so very hard for them since you and I, my dear, are here always, always faithfully here on this warm cliff of love accomplished, watching and helping them under high heaven. It isn't so VERY hard. Rather good in some ways. Some people HAVE to be broken a little. Can you see Altiora down there, by any chance?"

"She's too little to be seen," she said.

"Can you see the sins they once committed?"

"I can only see you here beside me, dear--for ever. For all my life, dear, till I die. Was that--the sin?" . . .

I took her to the station, and after she had gone I was to drive to Dover, and cross to Calais by the night boat. I couldn't, I felt, return to London. We walked over the crest and down to the little station of Martin Mill side by side, talking at first in broken fragments, for the most part of unimportant things.

"None of this," she said abruptly, "seems in the slightest degree real to me. I've got no sense of things ending."

"We're parting," I said.

"We're parting--as people part in a play. It's distressing. But I don't feel as though you and I were really never to see each other again for years. Do you?"

I thought. "No," I said.

"After we've parted I shall look to talk it over with you."

"So shall I."

"That's absurd."

"Absurd."

"I feel as if you'd always be there, just about where you are now. Invisible perhaps, but there. We've spent so much of our lives juggling elbows." . . .

"Yes. Yes. I don't in the least realise it. I suppose I shall begin to when the train goes out of the station. Are we wanting in imagination, Isabel?"

"I don't know. We've always assumed it was the other way about."

"Even when the train goes out of the station--! I've seen you into so many trains."

"I shall go on thinking of things to say to you--things to put in your letters. For years to come. How can I ever stop thinking in that way now? We've got into each other's brains."

"It isn't real," I said; "nothing is real. The world's no more than a fantastic dream. Why are we parting, Isabel?"

"I don't know. It seems now supremely silly. I suppose we have to. Can't we meet?--don't you think we shall meet even in dreams?"

"We'll meet a thousand times in dreams," I said.

"I wish we could dream at the same time," said Isabel. . . . "Dream walks. I can't believe, dear, I shall never have a walk with you again."

"If I'd stayed six months in America," I said, "we might have walked long walks and talked long talks for all our lives."

"Not in a world of Baileys," said Isabel. "And anyhow--"

She stopped short. I looked interrogation.

"We've loved," she said.

I took her ticket, saw to her luggage, and stood by the door of the compartment. "Good-bye," I said a little stiffly, conscious of the people upon the platform. She bent above me, white and dusky, looking at me very steadfastly.

"Come here," she whispered. "Never mind the porters. What can they know? Just one time more--I must."

She rested her hand against the door of the carriage and bent down upon me, and put her cold, moist lips to mine.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

THE BREAKING POINT

1

And then we broke down. We broke our faith with both Margaret and Shoesmith, flung career and duty out of our lives, and went away together.

It is only now, almost a year after these events, that I can begin to see what happened to me. At the time it seemed to me I was a rational, responsible creature, but indeed I had not parted from her two days before I became a monomaniac to whom nothing could matter but Isabel. Every truth had to be squared to that obsession, every duty. It astounds me to think how I forgot Margaret, forgot my work, forgot everything but that we two were parted. I still believe that with better chances we might have escaped the consequences of the emotional storm that presently seized us both. But we had no foresight of that, and no preparation for it, and our circumstances betrayed us. It was partly Shoesmith's unwisdom in delaying his marriage until after the end of the session--partly my own amazing folly in returning within four days to Westminster. But we were all of us intent upon the defeat of scandal and the complete restoration of appearances. It seemed necessary that Shoesmith's marriage should not seem to be hurried, still more necessary that I should not vanish inexplicably. I had to be visible with Margaret in London just as much as possible; we went to restaurants, we visited the theatre; we could even contemplate the possibility of my presence at the wedding. For that, however, we had schemed a weekend visit to Wales, and a fictitious sprained ankle at the last moment which would justify my absence. . . .

I cannot convey to you the intolerable wretchedness and rebellion of my separation from Isabel. It seemed that in the past two years all my thoughts had spun commisures to Isabel's brain and I could think of nothing that did not lead me surely to the need of the one intimate I had found in the world. I came back to the House and the office and my home, I filled all my days with appointments and duty, and it did not save me in the least from a lonely emptiness such as I had never felt before in all my life. I had little sleep. In the daytime I did a hundred things, I even spoke in the House on two occasions, and by my own low standards spoke well, and it seemed to me that I was going about in my own brain like a hushed survivor in a house whose owner lies dead upstairs.

I came to a crisis after that wild dinner of Tarvrille's. Something in that stripped my soul bare.

It was an occasion made absurd and strange by the odd accident that the house caught fire upstairs while we were dining below. It was a men's dinner--" A dinner of all sorts," said Tarvrille, when he invited me; "everything from Evesham and Gane to Wilkins the author, and Heaven knows what will happen!" I remember that afterwards Tarvrille was accused of having planned the fire to make his dinner a marvel and a memory. It was indeed a wonderful occasion, and I suppose if I had not been altogether drenched in misery, I should have found the same wild amusement in it that glowed in all the others. There were one or two university dons, Lord George Fester, the racing man, Panmure, the artist, two or three big City men, Weston Massinghay and another prominent Liberal whose name I can't remember, the three men Tarvrille had promised and Esmeer, Lord Wrassleton, Waulsort, the member for Monckton, Neal and several others. We began a little coldly, with duologues, but the conversation was already becoming general--so far as such a long table permitted--when the fire asserted itself.

It asserted itself first as a penetrating and emphatic smell of burning rubber,--it was caused by the fusing of an electric wire. The reek forced its way into the discussion of the Peking massacres that had sprung up between Evesham, Waulsort, and the others at the end of the table. "Something burning," said the man next to me.

"Something must be burning," said Panmure.

Tarville hated undignified interruptions. He had a particularly imperturbable butler with a cadaverous sad face and an eye of rigid disapproval. He spoke to this individual over his shoulder. "Just see, will you," he said, and caught up the pause in the talk to his left.

Wilkins was asking questions, and I, too, was curious. The story of the siege of the Legations in China in the year 1900 and all that followed upon that, is just one of those disturbing interludes in history that refuse to join on to that general scheme of protestation by which civilisation is maintained. It is a break in the general flow of experience as disconcerting to statecraft as the robbery of my knife and the scuffle that followed it had been to me when I was a boy at Penge. It is like a tear in a curtain revealing quite unexpected backgrounds. I had never given the business a thought for years; now this talk brought back a string of pictures to my mind; how the reliefs arrived and the plundering began, how section after section of the International Army was drawn into murder and pillage, how the infection spread upward until the wives of Ministers were busy looting, and the very sentinels stripped and crawled like snakes into the Palace they were set to guard. It did not stop at robbery, men were murdered, women, being plundered, were outraged, children were butchered, strong men had found themselves with arms in a lawless, defenceless city, and this had followed. Now it was all recalled.

"Respectable ladies addicted to district visiting at home were as

bad as any one," said Panmure. "Glazebrook told me of one--flushed like a woman at a bargain sale, he said--and when he pointed out to her that the silk she'd got was bloodstained, she just said, 'Oh, bother!' and threw it aside and went back. . . ."

We became aware that Tarvrille's butler had returned. We tried not to seem to listen.

"Beg pardon, m'lord," he said. "The house IS on fire, m'lord."

"Upstairs, m'lord."

"Just overhead, m'lord."

"The maids are throwing water, m'lord, and I've telephoned FIRE."

"No, m'lord, no immediate danger."

"It's all right," said Tarvrille to the table generally. Go on! It's not a general conflagration, and the fire brigade won't be five minutes. Don't see that it's our affair. The stuff's insured. They say old Lady Paskershortly was dreadful. Like a harpy. The Dowager Empress had shown her some little things of hers. Pet things--hidden away. Susan went straight for them--used to take an umbrella for the silks. Born shoplifter."

It was evident he didn't want his dinner spoilt, and we played up loyally.

"This is recorded history," said Wilkins,--" practically. It makes one wonder about unrecorded history. In India, for example."

But nobody touched that.

"Thompson," said Tarvrille to the imperturbable butler, and

indicating the table generally, "champagne. Champagne. Keep it going."

"M'lord," and Thompson marshalled his assistants.

Some man I didn't know began to remember things about Mandalay. "It's queer," he said, "how people break out at times;" and told his story of an army doctor, brave, public-spirited, and, as it happened, deeply religious, who was caught one evening by the excitement of plundering--and stole and hid, twisted the wrist of a boy until it broke, and was afterwards overcome by wild remorse.

I watched Evesham listening intently. "Strange," he said, "very strange. We are such stuff as thieves are made of. And in China, too, they murdered people--for the sake of murdering. Apart, so to speak, from mercenary considerations. I'm afraid there's no doubt of it in certain cases. No doubt at all. Young soldiers fresh from German high schools and English homes!"

"Did OUR people?" asked some patriot.

"Not so much. But I'm afraid there were cases. . . . Some of the Indian troops were pretty bad."

Gane picked up the tale with confirmations.

It is all printed in the vividest way as a picture upon my memory, so that were I a painter I think I could give the deep rich browns and warm greys beyond the brightly lit table, the various distinguished faces, strongly illuminated, interested and keen, above the black and white of evening dress, the alert menservants with their heavier, clean-shaved faces indistinctly seen in the dimness behind. Then this was coloured emotionally for me by my aching sense of loss and sacrifice, and by the chance trend of our talk to the breaches and unrealities of the civilised scheme. We

seemed a little transitory circle of light in a universe of darkness and violence; an effect to which the diminishing smell of burning rubber, the trampling of feet overhead, the swish of water, added enormously. Everybody--unless, perhaps, it was Evesham--drank rather carelessly because of the suppressed excitement of our situation, and talked the louder and more freely.

"But what a flimsy thing our civilisation is!" said Evesham; "a mere thin net of habits and associations!"

"I suppose those men came back," said Wilkins.

"Lady Paskershortly did!" chuckled Evesham.

"How do they fit it in with the rest of their lives?" Wilkins speculated. "I suppose there's Pekin-stained police officers, Pekin-stained J. P.'s--trying petty pilferers in the severest manner." . . .

Then for a time things became preposterous. There was a sudden cascade of water by the fireplace, and then absurdly the ceiling began to rain upon us, first at this point and then that. "My new suit!" cried some one. "Perrrrrr-up pe-rr"--a new vertical line of blackened water would establish itself and form a spreading pool upon the gleaming cloth. The men nearest would arrange catchment areas of plates and flower bowls. "Draw up!" said Tarvrille, "draw up. That's the bad end of the table!" He turned to the imperturbable butler. "Take round bath towels," he said; and presently the men behind us were offering--with inflexible dignity--"Port wine, Sir. Bath towel, Sir!" Waulsort, with streaks of blackened water on his forehead, was suddenly reminded of a wet year when he had followed the French army manoeuvres. An animated dispute sprang up between him and Neal about the relative efficiency of the new French and German field guns. Wrassleton joined in and a little drunken shrivelled Oxford don of some sort with a black-

splashed shirt front who presently silenced them all by the immensity and particularity of his knowledge of field artillery. Then the talk drifted to Sedan and the effect of dead horses upon drinking-water, which brought Wrassleton and Weston Massinghay into a dispute of great vigour and emphasis. "The trouble in South Africa," said Weston Massinghay, "wasn't that we didn't boil our water. It was that we didn't boil our men. The Boers drank the same stuff we did. THEY didn't get dysentery."

That argument went on for some time. I was attacked across the table by a man named Burshort about my Endowment of Motherhood schemes, but in the gaps of that debate I could still hear Weston Massinghay at intervals repeat in a rather thickened voice: "THEY didn't get dysentery."

I think Evesham went early. The rest of us clustered more and more closely towards the drier end of the room, the table was pushed along, and the area beneath the extinguished conflagration abandoned to a tinkling, splashing company of pots and pans and bowls and baths. Everybody was now disposed to be hilarious and noisy, to say startling and aggressive things; we must have sounded a queer clamour to a listener in the next room. The devil inspired them to begin baiting me. "Ours isn't the Tory party any more," said Burshort. "Remington has made it the Obstetric Party."

"That's good!" said Weston Massinghay, with all his teeth gleaming; "I shall use that against you in the House!"

"I shall denounce you for abusing private confidences if you do," said Tarvrille.

"Remington wants us to give up launching Dreadnoughts and launch babies instead," Burshort urged. "For the price of one Dreadnought--"

The little shrivelled don who had been omniscient about guns joined

in the baiting, and displayed himself a venomous creature. Something in his eyes told me he knew Isabel and hated me for it. "Love and fine thinking," he began, a little thickly, and knocking over a wine-glass with a too easy gesture. "Love and fine thinking. Two things don't go together. No philosophy worth a damn ever came out of excesses of love. Salt Lake City--Piggott--Ag--Agapemone again--no works to matter."

Everybody laughed.

"Got to rec'nise these facts," said my assailant. "Love and fine think'n pretty phrase--attractive. Suitable for p'litical dec'rations. Postcard, Christmas, gilt lets, in a wreath of white flow's. Not oth'wise valu'ble."

I made some remark, I forget what, but he overbore me.

Real things we want are Hate--Hate and COARSE think'n. I b'long to the school of Mrs. F's Aunt--"

"What?" said some one, intent.

"In 'Little Dorrit,'" explained Tarvrille; "go on!"

"Hate a fool," said my assailant.

Tarvrille glanced at me. I smiled to conceal the loss of my temper.

"Hate," said the little man, emphasising his point with a clumsy fist. "Hate's the driving force. What's m'rality?--hate of rotten goings on. What's patriotism?--hate of int'loping foreigners. What's Radicalism?--hate of lords. What's Toryism?--hate of disturbance. It's all hate--hate from top to bottom. Hate of a mess. Remington owned it the other day, said he hated a mu'll. There you are! If you couldn't get hate into an election, damn it

(hic) people wou'n't poll. Poll for love!--no' me!"

He paused, but before any one could speak he had resumed.

"Then this about fine thinking. Like going into a bear pit armed with a tagle--talgent--talgent galv'nometer. Like going to fight a mad dog with Shasepear and the Bible. Fine thinking--what we want is the thickest thinking we can get. Thinking that stands up alone. Taf Reform means work for all, thassort of thing."

The gentleman from Cambridge paused. "YOU a flag!" he said. "I'd as soon go to ba'ell und' wet tissue paper!"

My best answer on the spur of the moment was:

"The Japanese did." Which was absurd.

I went on to some other reply, I forget exactly what, and the talk of the whole table drew round me. It was an extraordinary revelation to me. Every one was unusually careless and outspoken, and it was amazing how manifestly they echoed the feeling of this old Tory spokesman. They were quite friendly to me, they regarded me and the BLUE WEEKLY as valuable party assets for Toryism, but it was clear they attached no more importance to what were my realities than they did to the remarkable therapeutic claims of Mrs. Eddy. They were flushed and amused, perhaps they went a little too far in their resolves to draw me, but they left the impression on my mind of men irrevocably set upon narrow and cynical views of political life. For them the political struggle was a game, whose counters were human hate and human credulity; their real aim was just every one's aim, the preservation of the class and way of living to which their lives were attuned. They did not know how tired I was, how exhausted mentally and morally, nor how cruel their convergent attack on me chanced to be. But my temper gave way, I became tart and fierce, perhaps my replies were a trifle absurd, and Tarville,

with that quick eye and sympathy of his, came to the rescue. Then for a time I sat silent and drank port wine while the others talked. The disorder of the room, the still dripping ceiling, the noise, the displaced ties and crumpled shirts of my companions, jarred on my tormented nerves. . . .

It was long past midnight when we dispersed. I remember Tarville coming with me into the hall, and then suggesting we should go upstairs to see the damage. A manservant carried up two flickering candles for us. One end of the room was gutted, curtains, hangings, several chairs and tables were completely burnt, the panelling was scorched and warped, three smashed windows made the candles flare and gutter, and some scraps of broken china still lay on the puddled floor.

As we surveyed this, Lady Tarville appeared, back from some party, a slender, white-cloaked, satin-footed figure with amazed blue eyes beneath her golden hair. I remember how stupidly we laughed at her surprise.

2

I parted from Panmure at the corner of Aldington Street, and went my way alone. But I did not go home, I turned westward and walked for a long way, and then struck northward aimlessly. I was too miserable to go to my house.

I wandered about that night like a man who has discovered his Gods are dead. I can look back now detached yet sympathetic upon that wild confusion of moods and impulses, and by it I think I can understand, oh! half the wrongdoing and blundering in the world.

I do not feel now the logical force of the process that must have convinced me then that I had made my sacrifice and spent my strength in vain. At no time had I been under any illusion that the Tory party had higher ideals than any other party, yet it came to me like a thing newly discovered that the men I had to work with had for the most part no such dreams, no sense of any collective purpose, no atom of the faith I held. They were just as immediately intent upon personal ends, just as limited by habits of thought, as the men in any other group or party. Perhaps I had slipped unawares for a time into the delusions of a party man--but I do not think so.

No, it was the mood of profound despondency that had followed upon the abrupt cessation of my familiar intercourse with Isabel, that gave this fact that had always been present in my mind its quality of devastating revelation. It seemed as though I had never seen before nor suspected the stupendous gap between the chaotic aims, the routine, the conventional acquiescences, the vulgarisations of the personal life, and that clearly conscious development and service of a collective thought and purpose at which my efforts aimed. I had thought them but a little way apart, and now I saw they were separated by all the distance between earth and heaven. I saw now in myself and every one around me, a concentration upon interests close at hand, an inability to detach oneself from the provocations, tenderesses, instinctive hates, dumb lusts and shy timidities that touched one at every point; and, save for rare exalted moments, a regardlessness of broader aims and remoter possibilities that made the white passion of statecraft seem as unearthly and irrelevant to human life as the story an astronomer will tell, half proven but altogether incredible, of habitable planets and answering intelligences, suns' distances uncounted across the deep. It seemed to me I had aspired too high and thought too far, had mocked my own littleness by presumption, had given the uttermost dear reality of life for a theoriser's dream.

All through that wandering agony of mine that night a dozen threads

of thought interwove; now I was a soul speaking in protest to God against a task too cold and high for it, and now I was an angry man, scorned and pointed upon, who had let life cheat him of the ultimate pride of his soul. Now I was the fool of ambition, who opened his box of gold to find blank emptiness, and now I was a spinner of flimsy thoughts, whose web tore to rags at a touch. I realised for the first time how much I had come to depend upon the mind and faith of Isabel, how she had confirmed me and sustained me, how little strength I had to go on with our purposes now that she had vanished from my life. She had been the incarnation of those great abstractions, the saving reality, the voice that answered back. There was no support that night in the things that had been. We were alone together on the cliff for ever more!--that was very pretty in its way, but it had no truth whatever that could help me now, no ounce of sustaining value. I wanted Isabel that night, no sentiment or memory of her, but Isabel alive,--to talk to me, to touch me, to hold me together. I wanted unendurably the dusky gentleness of her presence, the consolation of her voice.

We were alone together on the cliff! I startled a passing cabman into interest by laughing aloud at that magnificent and characteristic sentimentality. What a lie it was, and how satisfying it had been! That was just where we shouldn't remain. We of all people had no distinction from that humanity whose lot is to forget. We should go out to other interests, new experiences, new demands. That tall and intricate fabric of ambitious understandings we had built up together in our intimacy would be the first to go; and last perhaps to endure with us would be a few gross memories of sights and sounds, and trivial incidental excitements. . . .

I had a curious feeling that night that I had lost touch with life for a long time, and had now been reminded of its quality. That infernal little don's parody of my ruling phrase, "Hate and coarse thinking," stuck in my thoughts like a poisoned dart, a centre of inflammation. Just as a man who is debilitated has no longer the

vitality to resist an infection, so my mind, slackened by the crisis of my separation from Isabel, could find no resistance to his emphatic suggestion. It seemed to me that what he had said was overpoweringly true, not only of contemporary life, but of all possible human life. Love is the rare thing, the treasured thing; you lock it away jealously and watch, and well you may; hate and aggression and force keep the streets and rule the world. And fine thinking is, in the rough issues of life, weak thinking, is a balancing indecisive process, discovers with disloyal impartiality a justice and a defect on each disputing side. "Good honest men," as Dayton calls them, rule the world, with a way of thinking out decisions like shooting cartloads of bricks, and with a steadfast pleasure in hostility. Dayton liked to call his antagonists "blaggards and scoundrels"--it justified his opposition--the Lords were "scoundrels," all people richer than he were "scoundrels," all Socialists, all troublesome poor people; he liked to think of jails and justice being done. His public spirit was saturated with the sombre joys of conflict and the pleasant thought of condign punishment for all recalcitrant souls. That was the way of it, I perceived. That had survival value, as the biologists say. He was fool enough in politics to be a consistent and happy politician. . . .

Hate and coarse thinking; how the infernal truth of the phrase beat me down that night! I couldn't remember that I had known this all along, and that it did not really matter in the slightest degree. I had worked it all out long ago in other terms, when I had seen how all parties stood for interests inevitably, and how the purpose in life achieves itself, if it achieves itself at all, as a by-product of the war of individuals and classes. Hadn't I always known that science and philosophy elaborate themselves in spite of all the passion and narrowness of men, in spite of the vanities and weakness of their servants, in spite of all the heated disorder of contemporary things? Wasn't it my own phrase to speak of "that greater mind in men, in which we are but moments and transitorily lit cells?" Hadn't I known that the spirit of man still speaks like

a thing that struggles out of mud and slime, and that the mere effort to speak means choking and disaster? Hadn't I known that we who think without fear and speak without discretion will not come to our own for the next two thousand years?

It was the last was most forgotten of all that faith mislaid. Before mankind, in my vision that night, stretched new centuries of confusion, vast stupid wars, hastily conceived laws, foolish temporary triumphs of order, lapses, set-backs, despairs, catastrophes, new beginnings, a multitudinous wilderness of time, a night plotless drama of wrong-headed energies. In order to assuage my parting from Isabel we had set ourselves to imagine great rewards for our separation, great personal rewards; we had promised ourselves success visible and shining in our lives. To console ourselves in our separation we had made out of the BLUE WEEKLY and our young Tory movement preposterously enormous things-as though those poor fertilising touches at the soil were indeed the germinating seeds of the millennium, as though a million lives such as ours had not to contribute before the beginning of the beginning. That poor pretence had failed. That magnificent proposition shrivelled to nothing in the black loneliness of that night.

I saw that there were to be no such compensations. So far as my real services to mankind were concerned I had to live an unrecognised and unrewarded life. If I made successes it would be by the way. Our separation would alter nothing of that. My scandal would cling to me now for all my life, a thing affecting relationships, embarrassing and hampering my spirit. I should follow the common lot of those who live by the imagination, and follow it now in infinite loneliness of soul; the one good comforter, the one effectual familiar, was lost to me for ever; I should do good and evil together, no one caring to understand; I should produce much weary work, much bad-spirited work, much absolute evil; the good in me would be too often ill-expressed and missed or misinterpreted. In the end I might leave one gleaming

flake or so amidst the slag heaps for a moment of postmortem sympathy. I was afraid beyond measure of my derelict self. Because I believed with all my soul in love and fine thinking that did not mean that I should necessarily either love steadfastly or think finely. I remember how I fell talking to God--I think I talked out loud. "Why do I care for these things?" I cried, "when I can do so little! Why am I apart from the jolly thoughtless fighting life of men? These dreams fade to nothingness, and leave me bare!"

I scolded. "Why don't you speak to a man, show yourself? I thought I had a gleam of you in Isabel,--and then you take her away. Do you really think I can carry on this game alone, doing your work in darkness and silence, living in muddled conflict, half living, half dying?"

Grotesque analogies arose in my mind. I discovered a strange parallelism between my now tattered phrase of "Love and fine thinking" and the "Love and the Word" of Christian thought. Was it possible the Christian propaganda had at the outset meant just that system of attitudes I had been feeling my way towards from the very beginning of my life? Had I spent a lifetime making my way back to Christ? It mocks humanity to think how Christ has been overlaid. I went along now, recalling long-neglected phrases and sentences; I had a new vision of that great central figure preaching love with hate and coarse thinking even in the disciples about Him, rising to a tidal wave at last in that clamour for Barabbas, and the public satisfaction in His fate. . . .

It's curious to think that hopeless love and a noisy disordered dinner should lead a man to these speculations, but they did. "He DID mean that!" I said, and suddenly thought of what a bludgeon they'd made of His Christianity. Athwart that perplexing, patient enigma sitting inaudibly among publicans and sinners, danced and gibbered a long procession of the champions of orthodoxy. "He wasn't human," I said, and remembered that last despairing cry, "My

God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

"Oh, HE forsakes every one," I said, flying out as a tired mind will, with an obvious repartee. . . .

I passed at a bound from such monstrous theology to a towering rage against the Baileys. In an instant and with no sense of absurdity I wanted--in the intervals of love and fine thinking--to fling about that strenuously virtuous couple; I wanted to kick Keyhole of the PEEPSHOW into the gutter and make a common massacre of all the prosperous rascaldom that makes a trade and rule of virtue. I can still feel that transition. In a moment I had reached that phase of weakly decisive anger which is for people of my temperament the concomitant of exhaustion.

"I will have her," I cried. "By Heaven! I WILL have her! Life mocks me and cheats me. Nothing can be made good to me again. . . . Why shouldn't I save what I can? I can't save myself without her. . . ."

I remember myself--as a sort of anti-climax to that--rather tediously asking my way home. I was somewhere in the neighbourhood of Holland Park. . . .

It was then between one and two. I felt that I could go home now without any risk of meeting Margaret. It had been the thought of returning to Margaret that had sent me wandering that night. It is one of the ugliest facts I recall about that time of crisis, the intense aversion I felt for Margaret. No sense of her goodness, her injury and nobility, and the enormous generosity of her forgiveness, sufficed to mitigate that. I hope now that in this book I am able to give something of her silvery splendour, but all through this crisis I felt nothing of that. There was a triumphant kindness about her that I found intolerable. She meant to be so kind to me, to offer unstinted consolation, to meet my needs, to supply just all

she imagined Isabel had given me.

When I left Tarville's, I felt I could anticipate exactly how she would meet my homecoming. She would be perplexed by my crumpled shirt front, on which I had spilt some drops of wine; she would overlook that by an effort, explain it sentimentally, resolve it should make no difference to her. She would want to know who had been present, what we had talked about, show the alertest interest in whatever it was--it didn't matter what. . . . No, I couldn't face her.

So I did not reach my study until two o'clock.

There, I remember, stood the new and very beautiful old silver candlesticks that she had set there two days since to please me--the foolish kindness of it! But in her search for expression, Margaret heaped presents upon me. She had fitted these candlesticks with electric lights, and I must, I suppose, have lit them to write my note to Isabel. "Give me a word--the world aches without you," was all I scrawled, though I fully meant that she should come to me. I knew, though I ought not to have known, that now she had left her flat, she was with the Balfes--she was to have been married from the Balfes--and I sent my letter there. And I went out into the silent square and posted the note forthwith, because I knew quite clearly that if I left it until morning I should never post it at all.

3

I had a curious revulsion of feeling that morning of our meeting. (Of all places for such a clandestine encounter she had chosen the bridge opposite Buckingham Palace.) Overnight I had been full of self pity, and eager for the comfort of Isabel's presence. But the

ill-written scrawl in which she had replied had been full of the suggestion of her own weakness and misery. And when I saw her, my own selfish sorrows were altogether swept away by a wave of pitiful tenderness. Something had happened to her that I did not understand. She was manifestly ill. She came towards me wearily, she who had always borne herself so bravely; her shoulders seemed bent, and her eyes were tired, and her face white and drawn. All my life has been a narrow self-centred life; no brothers, no sisters or children or weak things had ever yet made any intimate appeal to me, and suddenly--I verily believe for the first time in my life!--I felt a great passion of protective ownership; I felt that here was something that I could die to shelter, something that meant more than joy or pride or splendid ambitions or splendid creation to me, a new kind of hold upon me, a new power in the world. Some sealed fountain was opened in my breast. I knew that I could love Isabel broken, Isabel beaten, Isabel ugly and in pain, more than I could love any sweet or delightful or glorious thing in life. I didn't care any more for anything in the world but Isabel, and that I should protect her. I trembled as I came near her, and could scarcely speak to her for the emotion that filled me. . . .

"I had your letter," I said.

"I had yours."

"Where can we talk?"

I remember my lame sentences. "We'll have a boat. That's best here."

I took her to the little boat-house, and there we hired a boat, and I rowed in silence under the bridge and into the shade of a tree. The square grey stone masses of the Foreign Office loomed through the twigs, I remember, and a little space of grass separated us from the pathway and the scrutiny of passers-by. And there we talked.

"I had to write to you," I said.

"I had to come."

"When are you to be married?"

"Thursday week."

"Well?" I said. "But--can we?"

She leant forward and scrutinised my face with eyes wide open.
"What do you mean?" she said at last in a whisper.

"Can we stand it? After all?"

I looked at her white face. "Can you?" I said.

She whispered. "Your career?"

Then suddenly her face was contorted,--she wept silently, exactly as
a child tormented beyond endurance might suddenly weep. . . .

"Oh! I don't care," I cried, "now. I don't care. Damn the whole
system of things! Damn all this patching of the irrevocable! I
want to take care of you, Isabel! and have you with me."

"I can't stand it," she blubbered.

"You needn't stand it. I thought it was best for you. . . . I
thought indeed it was best for you. I thought even you wanted it
like that."

"Couldn't I live alone--as I meant to do?"

"No," I said, "you couldn't. You're not strong enough. I've thought of that; I've got to shelter you."

"And I want you," I went on. "I'm not strong enough--I can't stand life without you."

She stopped weeping, she made a great effort to control herself, and looked at me steadfastly for a moment. "I was going to kill myself," she whispered. "I was going to kill myself quietly--somehow. I meant to wait a bit and have an accident. I thought--you didn't understand. You were a man, and couldn't understand. . . ."

"People can't do as we thought we could do," I said. "We've gone too far together."

"Yes," she said, and I stared into her eyes.

"The horror of it," she whispered. "The horror of being handed over. It's just only begun to dawn upon me, seeing him now as I do. He tries to be kind to me. . . . I didn't know. I felt adventurous before. . . . It makes me feel like all the women in the world who have ever been owned and subdued. . . . It's not that he isn't the best of men, it's because I'm a part of you. . . . I can't go through with it. If I go through with it, I shall be left--robbed of pride--outraged--a woman beaten. . . ."

"I know," I said, "I know."

"I want to live alone. . . . I don't care for anything now but just escape. If you can help me. . . ."

"I must take you away. There's nothing for us but to go away together."

"But your work," she said; "your career! Margaret! Our promises!"

"We've made a mess of things, Isabel--or things have made a mess of us. I don't know which. Our flags are in the mud, anyhow. It's too late to save those other things! They have to go. You can't make terms with defeat. I thought it was Margaret needed me most. But it's you. And I need you. I didn't think of that either. I haven't a doubt left in the world now. We've got to leave everything rather than leave each other. I'm sure of it. Now we have gone so far. We've got to go right down to earth and begin again. . . . Dear, I WANT disgrace with you. . . ."

So I whispered to her as she sat crumpled together on the faded cushions of the boat, this white and weary young woman who had been so valiant and careless a girl. "I don't care," I said. "I don't care for anything, if I can save you out of the wreckage we have made together."

4

The next day I went to the office of the BLUE WEEKLY in order to get as much as possible of its affairs in working order before I left London with Isabel. I just missed Shoemith in the lower office. Upstairs I found Britten amidst a pile of outside articles, methodically reading the title of each and sometimes the first half-dozen lines, and either dropping them in a growing heap on the floor for a clerk to return, or putting them aside for consideration. I interrupted him, squatted on the window-sill of the open window, and sketched out my ideas for the session.

"You're far-sighted," he remarked at something of mine which reached out ahead.

"I like to see things prepared," I answered.

"Yes," he said, and ripped open the envelope of a fresh aspirant.

I was silent while he read.

"You're going away with Isabel Rivers," he said abruptly.

"Well!" I said, amazed.

"I know," he said, and lost his breath. "Not my business. Only--"

It was queer to find Britten afraid to say a thing.

"It's not playing the game," he said.

"What do you know?"

"Everything that matters."

"Some games," I said, "are too hard to play."

There came a pause between us.

"I didn't know you were watching all this," I said.

"Yes," he answered, after a pause, "I've watched."

"Sorry--sorry you don't approve."

"It means smashing such an infernal lot of things, Remington."

I did not answer.

"You're going away then?"

"Yes."

"Soon?"

"Right away."

"There's your wife."

"I know."

"Shoemith--whom you're pledged to in a manner. You've just picked him out and made him conspicuous. Every one will know. Oh! of course--it's nothing to you. Honour--"

"I know."

"Common decency."

I nodded.

"All this movement of ours. That's what I care for most. . . .
It's come to be a big thing, Remington."

"That will go on."

"We have a use for you--no one else quite fills it. No one. . . .
I'm not sure it will go on."

"Do you think I haven't thought of all these things?"

He shrugged his shoulders, and rejected two papers unread.

"I knew," he remarked, "when you came back from America. You were alight with it." Then he let his bitterness gleam for a moment.

"But I thought you would stick to your bargain."

"It's not so much choice as you think," I said.

"There's always a choice."

"No," I said.

He scrutinised my face.

"I can't live without her--I can't work. She's all mixed up with this--and everything. And besides, there's things you can't understand. There's feelings you've never felt. . . . You don't understand how much we've been to one another."

Britten frowned and thought.

"Some things one's GOT to do," he threw out.

"Some things one can't do."

"These infernal institutions--"

"Some one must begin," I said.

He shook his head. "Not YOU," he said. "No!"

He stretched out his hands on the desk before him, and spoke again.

"Remington," he said, "I've thought of this business day and night too. It matters to me. It matters immensely to me. In a way--it's a thing one doesn't often say to a man--I've loved you. I'm the sort of man who leads a narrow life. . . . But you've been something fine and good for me, since that time, do you remember? when we talked about Mecca together."

I nodded.

"Yes. And you'll always be something fine and good for me anyhow. I know things about you,--qualities--no mere act can destroy them. . . . Well, I can tell you, you're doing wrong. You're going on now like a man who is hypnotised and can't turn round. You're piling wrong on wrong. It was wrong for you two people ever to be lovers."

He paused.

"It gripped us hard," I said.

"Yes!--but in your position! And hers! It was vile!"

"You've not been tempted."

"How do you know? Anyhow--having done that, you ought to have stood the consequences and thought of other people. You could have ended it at the first pause for reflection. You didn't. You blundered again. You kept on. You owed a certain secrecy to all of us! You didn't keep it. You were careless. You made things worse. This engagement and this publicity!--Damn it, Remington!"

"I know," I said, with smarting eyes. "Damn it ! with all my heart! It came of trying to patch. . . . You CAN'T patch."

"And now, as I care for anything under heaven, Remington, you two ought to stand these last consequences--and part. You ought to part. Other people have to stand things! Other people have to part. You ought to. You say--what do you say? It's loss of so much life to lose each other. So is losing a hand or a leg. But it's what you've incurred. Amputate. Take your punishment--After all, you chose it."

"Oh, damn!" I said, standing up and going to the window.

"Damn by all means. I never knew a topic so full of justifiable damns. But you two did choose it. You ought to stick to your undertaking."

I turned upon him with a snarl in my voice. "My dear Britten!" I cried. "Don't I KNOW I'm doing wrong? Aren't I in a net? Suppose I don't go! Is there any right in that? Do you think we're going to be much to ourselves or any one after this parting? I've been thinking all last night of this business, trying it over and over again from the beginning. How was it we went wrong? Since I came back from America--I grant you THAT--but SINCE, there's never been a step that wasn't forced, that hadn't as much right in it or more, as wrong. You talk as though I was a thing of steel that could bend this way or that and never change. You talk as though Isabel was a cat one could give to any kind of owner. . . . We two are things that change and grow and alter all the time. We're--so interwoven that being parted now will leave us just misshapen cripples. . . . You don't know the motives, you don't know the rush and feel of things, you don't know how it was with us, and how it is with us. You don't know the hunger for the mere sight of one another; you don't know anything."

Britten looked at his finger-nails closely. His red face puckered to a wry frown. "Haven't we all at times wanted the world put back?" he grunted, and looked hard and close at one particular nail.

There was a long pause.

"I want her," I said, "and I'm going to have her. I'm too tired for balancing the right or wrong of it any more. You can't separate them. I saw her yesterday. . . . She's--ill. . . . I'd take her now, if death were just outside the door waiting for us."

"Torture?"

I thought. "Yes."

"For her?"

"There isn't," I said.

"If there was?"

I made no answer.

"It's blind Want. And there's nothing ever been put into you to stand against it. What are you going to do with the rest of your lives?"

"No end of things."

"Nothing."

"I don't believe you are right," I said. "I believe we can save something--"

Britten shook his head. "Some scraps of salvage won't excuse you," he said.

His indignation rose. "In the middle of life!" he said. "No man has a right to take his hand from the plough!"

He leant forward on his desk and opened an argumentative palm. "You know, Remington," he said, "and I know, that if this could be fended off for six months--if you could be clapped in prison, or got out of the way somehow,--until this marriage was all over and settled down for a year, say--you know then you two could meet, curious, happy, as friends. Saved! You KNOW it."

I turned and stared at him. "You're wrong, Britten," I said. "And does it matter if we could?"

I found that in talking to him I could frame the apologetics I had not been able to find for myself alone.

"I am certain of one thing, Britten. It is our duty not to hush up this scandal."

He raised his eyebrows. I perceived now the element of absurdity in me, but at the time I was as serious as a man who is burning.

"It's our duty," I went on, "to smash now openly in the sight of every one. Yes! I've got that as clean and plain--as prison whitewash. I am convinced that we have got to be public to the uttermost now--I mean it--until every corner of our world knows this story, knows it fully, adds it to the Parnell story and the Ashton Dean story and the Carmel story and the Witterslea story, and all the other stories that have picked man after man out of English public life, the men with active imaginations, the men of strong initiative. To think this tottering old-woman ridden Empire should dare to waste a man on such a score! You say I ought to be penitent--"

Britten shook his head and smiled very faintly.

"I'm boiling with indignation," I said. "I lay in bed last night and went through it all. What in God's name was to be expected of us but what has happened? I went through my life bit by bit last night, I recalled all I've had to do with virtue and women, and all I was told and how I was prepared. I was born into cowardice and debasement. We all are. Our generation's grimy with hypocrisy. I came to the most beautiful things in life--like peeping Tom of Coventry. I was never given a light, never given a touch of natural

manhood by all this dingy, furtive, canting, humbugging English world. Thank God! I'll soon be out of it! The shame of it! The very savages in Australia initiate their children better than the English do to-day. Neither of us was ever given a view of what they call morality that didn't make it show as shabby subservience, as the meanest discretion, an abject submission to unreasonable prohibitions! meek surrender of mind and body to the dictation of pedants and old women and fools. We weren't taught--we were mumbled at! And when we found that the thing they called unclean, unclean, was Pagan beauty--God! it was a glory to sin, Britten, it was a pride and splendour like bathing in the sunlight after dust and grime!"

"Yes," said Britten. "That's all very well--"

I interrupted him. "I know there's a case--I'm beginning to think it a valid case against us; but we never met it! There's a steely pride in self restraint, a nobility of chastity, but only for those who see and think and act--untrammelled and unafraid. The other thing, the current thing, why! it's worth as much as the chastity of a monkey kept in a cage by itself!" I put my foot in a chair, and urged my case upon him. "This is a dirty world, Britten, simply because it is a muddled world, and the thing you call morality is dirtier now than the thing you call immorality. Why don't the moralists pick their stuff out of the slime if they care for it, and wipe it?--damn them! I am burning now to say: 'Yes, we did this and this,' to all the world. All the world! . . . I will!"

Britten rubbed the palm of his hand on the corner of his desk. "That's all very well, Remington," he said. "You mean to go."

He stopped and began again. "If you didn't know you were in the wrong you wouldn't be so damned rhetorical. You're in the wrong. It's as plain to you as it is to me. You're leaving a big work, you're leaving a wife who trusted you, to go and live with your

jolly mistress. . . . You won't see you're a statesman that matters, that no single man, maybe, might come to such influence as you in the next ten years. You're throwing yourself away and accusing your country of rejecting you."

He swung round upon his swivel at me. "Remington," he said, "have you forgotten the immense things our movement means?"

I thought. "Perhaps I am rhetorical," I said.

"But the things we might achieve! If you'd only stay now--even now! Oh! you'd suffer a little socially, but what of that? You'd be able to go on--perhaps all the better for hostility of the kind you'd get. You know, Remington--you KNOW."

I thought and went back to his earlier point. "If I am rhetorical, at any rate it's a living feeling behind it. Yes, I remember all the implications of our aims--very splendid, very remote. But just now it's rather like offering to give a freezing man the sunlit Himalayas from end to end in return for his camp-fire. When you talk of me and my jolly mistress, it isn't fair. That misrepresents everything. I'm not going out of this--for delights. That's the sort of thing men like Snuffles and Keyhole imagine--that excites them! When I think of the things these creatures think! Ugh! But YOU know better? You know that physical passion that burns like a fire--ends clean. I'm going for love, Britten--if I sinned for passion. I'm going, Britten, because when I saw her the other day she HURT me. She hurt me damnably, Britten. . . . I've been a cold man--I've led a rhetorical life--you hit me with that word!--I put things in a windy way, I know, but what has got hold of me at last is her pain. She's ill. Don't you understand? She's a sick thing--a weak thing. She's no more a goddess than I'm a god. . . . I'm not in love with her now; I'm RAW with love for her. I feel like a man that's been flayed. I have been flayed. . . . You don't begin to imagine the sort of helpless solicitude. . . . She's not going

to do things easily; she's ill. Her courage fails. . . . It's hard to put things when one isn't rhetorical, but it's this, Britten--there are distresses that matter more than all the delights or achievements in the world. . . . I made her what she is--as I never made Margaret. I've made her--I've broken her. . . . I'm going with my own woman. The rest of my life and England, and so forth, must square itself to that. . . ."

For a long time, as it seemed, we remained silent and motionless. We'd said all we had to say. My eyes caught a printed slip upon the desk before him, and I came back abruptly to the paper.

I picked up this galley proof. It was one of Winter's essays. "This man goes on doing first-rate stuff," I said. "I hope you will keep him going."

He did not answer for a moment or so. "I'll keep him going," he said at last with a sigh.

5

I have a letter Margaret wrote me within a week of our flight. I cannot resist transcribing some of it here, because it lights things as no word of mine can do. It is a string of nearly inconsecutive thoughts written in pencil in a fine, tall, sprawling hand. Its very inconsecutiveness is essential. Many words are underlined. It was in answer to one from me; but what I wrote has passed utterly from my mind. . . .

"Certainly," she says, "I want to hear from you, but I do not want to see you. There's a sort of abstract YOU that I want to go on with. Something I've made out of you. . . . I want to know things

about you--but I don't want to see or feel or imagine. When some day I have got rid of my intolerable sense of proprietorship, it may be different. Then perhaps we may meet again. I think it is even more the loss of our political work and dreams that I am feeling than the loss of your presence. Aching loss. I thought so much of the things we were DOING for the world--had given myself so unreservedly. You've left me with nothing to DO. I am suddenly at loose ends. . . .

"We women are trained to be so dependent on a man. I've got no life of my own at all. It seems now to me that I wore my clothes even for you and your schemes. . . .

"After I have told myself a hundred times why this has happened, I ask again, 'Why did he give things up? Why did he give things up?' . . .

"It is just as though you were wilfully dead. . . .

"Then I ask again and again whether this thing need have happened at all, whether if I had had a warning, if I had understood better, I might not have adapted myself to your restless mind and made this catastrophe impossible. . . .

"Oh, my dear! why hadn't you the pluck to hurt me at the beginning, and tell me what you thought of me and life? You didn't give me a chance; not a chance. I suppose you couldn't. All these things you and I stood away from. You let my first repugnances repel you. . . .

"It is strange to think after all these years that I should be asking myself, do I love you? have I loved you? In a sense I think I HATE you. I feel you have taken my life, dragged it in your wake for a time, thrown it aside. I am resentful. Unfairly resentful, for why should I exact that you should watch and understand my life, when clearly I have understood so little of yours. But I am savage--

savage at the wrecking of all you were to do.

"Oh, why--why did you give things up?

"No human being is his own to do what he likes with. You were not only pledged to my tiresome, ineffectual companionship, but to great purposes. They ARE great purposes. . . .

"If only I could take up your work as you leave it, with the strength you had--then indeed I feel I could let you go--you and your young mistress. . . . All that matters so little to me. . . .

"Yet I think I must indeed love you yourself in my slower way. At times I am mad with jealousy at the thought of all I hadn't the wit to give you. . . . I've always hidden my tears from you--and what was in my heart. It's my nature to hide--and you, you want things brought to you to see. You are so curious as to be almost cruel. You don't understand reserves. You have no mercy with restraints and reservations. You are not really a CIVILISED man at all. You hate pretences--and not only pretences but decent coverings. . . .

"It's only after one has lost love and the chance of loving that slow people like myself find what they might have done. Why wasn't I bold and reckless and abandoned? It's as reasonable to ask that, I suppose, as to ask why my hair is fair. . . .

"I go on with these perhapses over and over again here when I find myself alone. . . .

"My dear, my dear, you can't think of the desolation of things--I shall never go back to that house we furnished together, that was to have been the laboratory (do you remember calling it a laboratory?) in which you were to forge so much of the new order. . . .

"But, dear, if I can help you--even now--in any way--help both of

you, I mean. . . . It tears me when I think of you poor and discredited. You will let me help you if I can--it will be the last wrong not to let me do that. . . .

"You had better not get ill. If you do, and I hear of it--I shall come after you with a troupe of doctor's and nurses. If I am a failure as a wife, no one has ever said I was anything but a success as a district visitor. . . ."

There are other sheets, but I cannot tell whether they were written before or after the ones from which I have quoted. And most of them have little things too intimate to set down. But this oddly penetrating analysis of our differences must, I think, be given.

"There are all sorts of things I can't express about this and want to. There's this difference that has always been between us, that you like nakedness and wildness, and I, clothing and restraint. It goes through everything. You are always TALKING of order and system, and the splendid dream of the order that might replace the muddled system you hate, but by a sort of instinct you seem to want to break the law. I've watched you so closely. Now I want to obey laws, to make sacrifices, to follow rules. I don't want to make, but I do want to keep. You are at once makers and rebels, you and Isabel too. You're bad people--criminal people, I feel, and yet full of something the world must have. You're so much better than me, and so much viler. It may be there is no making without destruction, but it seems to me sometimes that it is nothing but an instinct for lawlessness that drives you. You remind me--do you remember?--of that time we went from Naples to Vesuvius, and walked over the hot new lava there. Do you remember how tired I was? I know it disappointed you that I was tired. One walked there in spite of the heat because there was a crust; like custom, like law. But directly a crust forms on things, you are restless to break down to the fire again. You talk of beauty, both of you, as something terrible, mysterious, imperative. YOUR beauty is something

altogether different from anything I know or feel. It has pain in it. Yet you always speak as though it was something I ought to feel and am dishonest not to feel. MY beauty is a quiet thing. You have always laughed at my feeling for old-fashioned chintz and blue china and Sheraton. But I like all these familiar USED things. My beauty is STILL beauty, and yours, is excitement. I know nothing of the fascination of the fire, or why one should go deliberately out of all the decent fine things of life to run dangers and be singed and tormented and destroyed. I don't understand. . . ."

6

I remember very freshly the mood of our departure from London, the platform of Charing Cross with the big illuminated clock overhead, the bustle of porters and passengers with luggage, the shouting of newsboys and boys with flowers and sweets, and the groups of friends seeing travellers off by the boat train. Isabel sat very quiet and still in the compartment, and I stood upon the platform with the door open, with a curious reluctance to take the last step that should sever me from London's ground. I showed our tickets, and bought a handful of red roses for her. At last came the guards crying: "Take your seats," and I got in and closed the door on me. We had, thank Heaven! a compartment to ourselves. I let down the window and stared out.

There was a bustle of final adieux on the platform, a cry of "Stand away, please, stand away!" and the train was gliding slowly and smoothly out of the station.

I looked out upon the river as the train rumbled with slowly gathering pace across the bridge, and the bobbing black heads of the pedestrians in the footway, and the curve of the river and the

glowing great hotels, and the lights and reflections and blacknesses of that old, familiar spectacle. Then with a common thought, we turned our eyes westward to where the pinnacles of Westminster and the shining clock tower rose hard and clear against the still, luminous sky.

"They'll be in Committee on the Reformatory Bill to-night," I said, a little stupidly.

"And so," I added, "good-bye to London!"

We said no more, but watched the south-side streets below--bright gleams of lights and movement, and the dark, dim, monstrous shapes of houses and factories. We ran through Waterloo Station, London Bridge, New Cross, St. John's. We said never a word. It seemed to me that for a time we had exhausted our emotions. We had escaped, we had cut our knot, we had accepted the last penalty of that headlong return of mine from Chicago a year and a half ago. That was all settled. That harvest of feelings we had reaped. I thought now only of London, of London as the symbol of all we were leaving and all we had lost in the world. I felt nothing now but an enormous and overwhelming regret. . . .

The train swayed and rattled on its way. We ran through old Bromstead, where once I had played with cities and armies on the nursery floor. The sprawling suburbs with their scattered lights gave way to dim tree-set country under a cloud-veiled, intermittently shining moon. We passed Cardcaster Place. Perhaps old Wardingham, that pillar of the old Conservatives, was there, fretting over his unsuccessful struggle with our young Toryism. Little he recked of this new turn of the wheel and how it would confirm his contempt of all our novelties. Perhaps some faint intimation drew him to the window to see behind the stems of the young fir trees that bordered his domain, the little string of lighted carriage windows gliding southward. . . .

Suddenly I began to realise just what it was we were doing.

And now, indeed, I knew what London had been to me, London where I had been born and educated, the slovenly mother of my mind and all my ambitions, London and the empire! It seemed to me we must be going out to a world that was utterly empty. All our significance fell from us--and before us was no meaning any more. We were leaving London; my hand, which had gripped so hungrily upon its complex life, had been forced from it, my fingers left their hold. That was over. I should never have a voice in public affairs again. The inexorable unwritten law which forbids overt scandal sentenced me. We were going out to a new life, a life that appeared in that moment to be a mere shrivelled remnant of me, a mere residuum of sheltering and feeding and seeing amidst alien scenery and the sound of unfamiliar tongues. We were going to live cheaply in a foreign place, so cut off that I meet now the merest stray tourist, the commonest tweed-clad stranger with a mixture of shyness and hunger. . . . And suddenly all the schemes I was leaving appeared fine and adventurous and hopeful as they had never done before. How great was this purpose I had relinquished, this bold and subtle remaking of the English will! I had doubted so many things, and now suddenly I doubted my unimportance, doubted my right to this suicidal abandonment. Was I not a trusted messenger, greatly trusted and favoured, who had turned aside by the way? Had I not, after all, stood for far more than I had thought; was I not filching from that dear great city of my birth and life, some vitally necessary thing, a key, a link, a reconciling clue in her political development, that now she might seek vaguely for in vain? What is one life against the State? Ought I not to have sacrificed Isabel and all my passion and sorrow for Isabel, and held to my thing--stuck to my thing?

I heard as though he had spoken it in the carriage Britten's "It WAS a good game. No end of a game. And for the first time I imagined the faces and voices of Crupp and Esmeer and Gane when they learnt

of this secret flight, this flight of which they were quite unwarned. And Shoesmith might he there in the house,--Shoesmith who was to have been married in four days--the thing might hit him full in front of any kind of people. Cruel eyes might watch him. Why the devil hadn't I written letters to warn them all? I could have posted them five minutes before the train started. I had never thought to that moment of the immense mess they would be in; how the whole edifice would clatter about their ears. I had a sudden desire to stop the train and go back for a day, for two days, to set that negligence right. My brain for a moment brightened, became animated and prolific of ideas. I thought of a brilliant line we might have taken on that confounded Reformatory Bill. . . .

That sort of thing was over. . . .

What indeed wasn't over? I passed to a vaguer, more multitudinous perception of disaster, the friends I had lost already since Altiora began her campaign, the ampler remnant whom now I must lose. I thought of people I had been merry with, people I had worked with and played with, the companions of talkative walks, the hostesses of houses that had once glowed with welcome for us both. I perceived we must lose them all. I saw life like a tree in late autumn that had once been rich and splendid with friends--and now the last brave dears would be hanging on doubtfully against the frosty chill of facts, twisting and tortured in the universal gale of indignation, trying to evade the cold blast of the truth. I had betrayed my party, my intimate friend, my wife, the wife whose devotion had made me what I was. For awhile the figure of Margaret, remote, wounded, shamed, dominated my mind, and the thought of my immense ingratitude. Damn them! they'd take it out of her too. I had a feeling that I wanted to go straight back and grip some one by the throat, some one talking ill of Margaret. They'd blame her for not keeping me, for letting things go so far. . . . I wanted the whole world to know how fine she was. I saw in imagination the busy, excited dinner tables at work upon us all, rather pleasantly

excited, brightly indignant, merciless.

Well, it's the stuff we are! . . .

Then suddenly, stabbing me to the heart, came a vision of Margaret's tears and the sound of her voice saying, "Husband mine! Oh! husband mine! To see you cry!" . . .

I came out of a cloud of thoughts to discover the narrow compartment, with its feeble lamp overhead, and our rugs and hand-baggage swaying on the rack, and Isabel, very still in front of me, gripping my wilting red roses tightly in her bare and ringless hand.

For a moment I could not understand her attitude, and then I perceived she was sitting bent together with her head averted from the light to hide the tears that were streaming down her face. She had not got her handkerchief out for fear that I should see this, but I saw her tears, dark drops of tears, upon her sleeve. . . .

I suppose she had been watching my expression, divining my thoughts.

For a time I stared at her and was motionless, in a sort of still and weary amazement. Why had we done this injury to one another? WHY? Then something stirred within me.

"ISABEL!" I whispered.

She made no sign.

"Isabel!" I repeated, and then crossed over to her and crept closely to her, put my arm about her, and drew her wet cheek to mine.

The World Set Free

by
H.G. Wells
1914

*WE ARE
ALL THINGS THAT
MAKE AND PASS,
STRIVING UPON A
HIDDEN MISSION,
OUT TO THE
OPEN
SEA.*

**TO
FREDERICK SODDY'S
'INTERPRETATION OF RADIUM'**

**THIS STORY, WHICH OWES LONG PASSAGES
TO THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER OF
THAT BOOK, ACKNOWLEDGES
AND INSCRIBES
ITSELF**

PREFACE

THE WORLD SET FREE was written in 1913 and published early in 1914, and it is the latest of a series of three fantasias of possibility, stories which all turn on the possible developments in the future of some contemporary force or group of forces. The World Set Free was written under the immediate shadow of the Great War. Every intelligent person in the world felt that disaster was impending and knew no way of averting it, but few of us realised in the earlier half of 1914 how near the crash was to us. The reader will be amused to find that here it is put off until the year 1956. He may naturally want to know the reason for what will seem now a quite extraordinary delay. As a prophet, the author must confess he has always been inclined to be rather a slow prophet. The war aeroplane in the world of reality, for example, beat the forecast in Anticipations by about twenty years or so. I suppose a desire not to shock the sceptical reader's sense of use and wont and perhaps a less creditable disposition to hedge, have something to do with this dating forward of one's main events, but in the particular case of The World Set Free there was, I think, another motive in holding the

Great War back, and that was to allow the chemist to get well forward with his discovery of the release of atomic energy. 1956--or for that matter 2056--may be none too late for that crowning revolution in human potentialities. And apart from this procrastination of over forty years, the guess at the opening phase of the war was fairly lucky; the forecast of an alliance of the Central Empires, the opening campaign through the Netherlands, and the despatch of the British Expeditionary Force were all justified before the book had been published six months. And the opening section of Chapter the Second remains now, after the reality has happened, a fairly adequate diagnosis of the essentials of the matter. One happy hit (in Chapter the Second, Section 2), on which the writer may congratulate himself, is the forecast that under modern conditions it would be quite impossible for any great general to emerge to supremacy and concentrate the enthusiasm of the armies of either side. There could be no Alexanders or Napoleons. And we soon heard the scientific corps muttering, 'These old fools,' exactly as it is here foretold.

These, however, are small details, and the misses in the story far outnumber the hits. It is the main thesis which is still of interest now; the thesis that because of the development of scientific knowledge, separate sovereign states and separate sovereign empires are no longer possible in the world, that to attempt to keep on with the old system is to heap disaster upon disaster for mankind and perhaps to destroy our race altogether. The remaining interest of this book now is the sustained validity of this thesis and the discussion of the possible ending of war on the earth. I have supposed a sort of epidemic of sanity to break out among the rulers of states and the leaders of mankind. I have represented the native common sense of the French mind and of the English mind--for manifestly King Egbert is meant to be 'God's Englishman'--leading mankind towards a bold and resolute effort of salvage and reconstruction. Instead of which, as the

school book footnotes say, compare to-day's newspaper. Instead of a frank and honourable gathering of leading men, Englishman meeting German and Frenchman Russian, brothers in their offences and in their disaster, upon the hills of Brissago, beheld in Geneva at the other end of Switzerland a poor little League of (Allied) Nations (excluding the United States, Russia, and most of the 'subject peoples' of the world), meeting obscurely amidst a world-wide disregard to make impotent gestures at the leading problems of the debacle. Either the disaster has not been vast enough yet or it has not been swift enough to inflict the necessary moral shock and achieve the necessary moral revulsion. Just as the world of 1913 was used to an increasing prosperity and thought that increase would go on for ever, so now it would seem the world is growing accustomed to a steady glide towards social disintegration, and thinks that that too can go on continually and never come to a final bump. So soon do use and wont establish themselves, and the most flaming and thunderous of lessons pale into disregard.

The question whether a Leblanc is still possible, the question whether it is still possible to bring about an outbreak of creative sanity in mankind, to avert this steady glide to destruction, is now one of the most urgent in the world. It is clear that the writer is temperamentally disposed to hope that there is such a possibility. But he has to confess that he sees few signs of any such breadth of understanding and steadfastness of will as an effectual effort to turn the rush of human affairs demands. The inertia of dead ideas and old institutions carries us on towards the rapids. Only in one direction is there any plain recognition of the idea of a human commonweal as something overriding any national and patriotic consideration, and that is in the working class movement throughout the world. And labour internationalism is closely bound up with conceptions of a profound social revolution. If world peace is to be attained through labour internationalism, it will have to be attained at

the price of the completest social and economic reconstruction and by passing through a phase of revolution that will certainly be violent, that may be very bloody, which may be prolonged through a long period, and may in the end fail to achieve anything but social destruction. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it is in the labour class, and the labour class alone, that any conception of a world rule and a world peace has so far appeared. The dream of *The World Set Free*, a dream of highly educated and highly favoured leading and ruling men, voluntarily setting themselves to the task of reshaping the world, has thus far remained a dream.

H. G. WELLS.

*EASTON GLEBE,
DUNMOW, 1921.*

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PRELUDE

THE SUN SNARERS

Section I

THE history of mankind is the history of the attainment of external power. Man is the tool-using, fire-making animal. From the outset of his terrestrial career we find him supplementing the natural strength and bodily weapons of a beast by the heat of burning and the rough implement of stone. So he passed beyond the ape. From that he expands. Presently he added to himself the power of the horse and the ox, he borrowed the carrying strength of water and the driving force of the wind, he quickened his fire by blowing, and his simple tools, pointed first with copper and then with iron, increased and varied and became more elaborate and efficient. He sheltered his heat in houses and made his way easier by paths and roads. He complicated his social relationships and increased his efficiency by the division of labour. He began to store up knowledge. Contrivance followed contrivance, each making it possible for a man to do more. Always down the lengthening record, save for a set-back ever and again, he is doing more.... A quarter of a million years ago the utmost man was a savage, a being scarcely articulate, sheltering in holes in the rocks, armed with a rough-hewn flint or a fire-pointed stick, naked, living in small family groups, killed by some younger man so soon as his first virile activity declined. Over most of the great wildernesses of earth you would have sought him in vain; only in a few temperate and sub-tropical river valleys would you have found the squatting lairs of his little herds, a male, a few females, a child or so.

He knew no future then, no kind of life except the life he led. He fled the cave-bear over the rocks full of iron ore and the promise of sword and spear; he froze to death upon a ledge of

coal; he drank water muddy with the clay that would one day make cups of porcelain; he chewed the ear of wild wheat he had plucked and gazed with a dim speculation in his eyes at the birds that soared beyond his reach. Or suddenly he became aware of the scent of another male and rose up roaring, his roars the formless precursors of moral admonitions. For he was a great individualist, that original, he suffered none other than himself.

So through the long generations, this heavy precursor, this ancestor of all of us, fought and bred and perished, changing almost imperceptibly.

Yet he changed. That keen chisel of necessity which sharpened the tiger's claw age by age and fined down the clumsy Orchippus to the swift grace of the horse, was at work upon him--is at work upon him still. The clumsier and more stupidly fierce among him were killed soonest and oftenest; the finer hand, the quicker eye, the bigger brain, the better balanced body prevailed; age by age, the implements were a little better made, the man a little more delicately adjusted to his possibilities. He became more social; his herd grew larger; no longer did each man kill or drive out his growing sons; a system of taboos made them tolerable to him, and they revered him alive and soon even after he was dead, and were his allies against the beasts and the rest of mankind. (But they were forbidden to touch the women of the tribe, they had to go out and capture women for themselves, and each son fled from his stepmother and hid from her lest the anger of the Old Man should be roused. All the world over, even to this day, these ancient inevitable taboos can be traced.) And now instead of caves came huts and hovels, and the fire was better tended and there were wrappings and garments; and so aided, the creature spread into colder climates, carrying food with him, storing food--until sometimes the neglected grass-seed sprouted again and gave a first hint of agriculture.

And already there were the beginnings of leisure and thought.

Man began to think. There were times when he was fed, when his lusts and his fears were all appeased, when the sun shone upon the squatting-place and dim stirrings of speculation lit his eyes. He scratched upon a bone and found resemblance and pursued it and began pictorial art, moulded the soft, warm clay of the river brink between his fingers, and found a pleasure in its patternings and repetitions, shaped it into the form of vessels, and found that it would hold water. He watched the streaming river, and wondered from what bountiful breast this incessant water came; he blinked at the sun and dreamt that perhaps he might snare it and spear it as it went down to its resting-place amidst the distant hills. Then he was roused to convey to his brother that once indeed he had done so--at least that some one had done so--he mixed that perhaps with another dream almost as daring, that one day a mammoth had been beset; and therewith began fiction--pointing a way to achievement--and the august prophetic procession of tales.

For scores and hundreds of centuries, for myriads of generations that life of our fathers went on. From the beginning to the ripening of that phase of human life, from the first clumsy eolith of rudely chipped flint to the first implements of polished stone, was two or three thousand centuries, ten or fifteen thousand generations. So slowly, by human standards, did humanity gather itself together out of the dim intimations of the beast. And that first glimmering of speculation, that first story of achievement, that story-teller bright-eyed and flushed under his matted hair, gesticulating to his gaping, incredulous listener, gripping his wrist to keep him attentive, was the most marvellous beginning this world has ever seen. It doomed the mammoths, and it began the setting of that snare that shall catch the sun.

Section 2

That dream was but a moment in a man's life, whose proper business it seemed was to get food and kill his fellows and beget after the manner of all that belongs to the fellowship of the beasts. About him, hidden from him by the thinnest of veils, were the untouched sources of Power, whose magnitude we scarcely do more than suspect even to-day, Power that could make his every conceivable dream come real. But the feet of the race were in the way of it, though he died blindly unknowing.

At last, in the generous levels of warm river valleys, where food is abundant and life very easy, the emerging human overcoming his earlier jealousies, becoming, as necessity persecuted him less urgently, more social and tolerant and amenable, achieved a larger community. There began a division of labour, certain of the older men specialised in knowledge and direction, a strong man took the fatherly leadership in war, and priest and king began to develop their roles in the opening drama of man's history. The priest's solicitude was seed-time and harvest and fertility, and the king ruled peace and war. In a hundred river valleys about the warm, temperate zone of the earth there were already towns and temples, a score of thousand years ago. They flourished unrecorded, ignoring the past and unsuspecting of the future, for as yet writing had still to begin.

Very slowly did man increase his demand upon the illimitable wealth of Power that offered itself on every hand to him. He tamed certain animals, he developed his primordially haphazard agriculture into a ritual, he added first one metal to his resources and then another, until he had copper and tin and iron and lead and gold and silver to supplement his stone, he hewed and carved wood, made pottery, paddled down his river until he came to the sea, discovered the wheel and made the first roads.

But his chief activity for a hundred centuries and more, was the subjugation of himself and others to larger and larger societies. The history of man is not simply the conquest of external power; it is first the conquest of those distrusts and fiercenesses, that self-concentration and intensity of animalism, that tie his hands from taking his inheritance. The ape in us still resents association. From the dawn of the age of polished stone to the achievement of the Peace of the World, man's dealings were chiefly with himself and his fellow man, trading, bargaining, law-making, propitiating, enslaving, conquering, exterminating, and every little increment in Power, he turned at once and always turns to the purposes of this confused elaborate struggle to socialise. To incorporate and comprehend his fellow men into a community of purpose became the last and greatest of his instincts. Already before the last polished phase of the stone age was over he had become a political animal. He made astonishingly far-reaching discoveries within himself, first of counting and then of writing and making records, and with that his town communities began to stretch out to dominion; in the valleys of the Nile, the Euphrates, and the great Chinese rivers, the first empires and the first written laws had their beginnings. Men specialised for fighting and rule as soldiers and knights. Later, as ships grew seaworthy, the Mediterranean which had been a barrier became a highway, and at last out of a tangle of pirate polities came the great struggle of Carthage and Rome. The history of Europe is the history of the victory and breaking up of the Roman Empire. Every ascendant monarch in Europe up to the last, aped Caesar and called himself Kaiser or Tsar or Emperor or Kasir-i-Hind. Measured by the duration of human life it is a vast space of time between that first dynasty in Egypt and the coming of the aeroplane, but by the scale that looks back to the makers of the eoliths, it is all of it a story of yesterday.

Now during this period of two hundred centuries or more, this

period of the warring states, while men's minds were chiefly preoccupied by politics and mutual aggression, their progress in the acquirement of external Power was slow--rapid in comparison with the progress of the old stone age, but slow in comparison with this new age of systematic discovery in which we live. They did not very greatly alter the weapons and tactics of warfare, the methods of agriculture, seamanship, their knowledge of the habitable globe, or the devices and utensils of domestic life between the days of the early Egyptians and the days when Christopher Columbus was a child. Of course, there were inventions and changes, but there were also retrogressions; things were found out and then forgotten again; it was, on the whole, a progress, but it contained no steps; the peasant life was the same, there were already priests and lawyers and town craftsmen and territorial lords and rulers doctors, wise women, soldiers and sailors in Egypt and China and Assyria and south-eastern Europe at the beginning of that period, and they were doing much the same things and living much the same life as they were in Europe in A.D. 1500. The English excavators of the year A.D. 1900 could delve into the remains of Babylon and Egypt and disinter legal documents, domestic accounts, and family correspondence that they could read with the completest sympathy. There were great religious and moral changes throughout the period, empires and republics replaced one another, Italy tried a vast experiment in slavery, and indeed slavery was tried again and again and failed and failed and was still to be tested again and rejected again in the New World; Christianity and Mohammedanism swept away a thousand more specialised cults, but essentially these were progressive adaptations of mankind to material conditions that must have seemed fixed for ever. The idea of revolutionary changes in the material conditions of life would have been entirely strange to human thought through all that time.

Yet the dreamer, the story-teller, was there still, waiting for

his opportunity amidst the busy preoccupations, the comings and goings, the wars and processions, the castle building and cathedral building, the arts and loves, the small diplomacies and incurable feuds, the crusades and trading journeys of the middle ages. He no longer speculated with the untrammelled freedom of the stone-age savage; authoritative explanations of everything barred his path; but he speculated with a better brain, sat idle and gazed at circling stars in the sky and mused upon the coin and crystal in his hand. Whenever there was a certain leisure for thought throughout these times, then men were to be found dissatisfied with the appearances of things, dissatisfied with the assurances of orthodox belief, uneasy with a sense of unread symbols in the world about them, questioning the finality of scholastic wisdom. Through all the ages of history there were men to whom this whisper had come of hidden things about them. They could no longer lead ordinary lives nor content themselves with the common things of this world once they had heard this voice. And mostly they believed not only that all this world was as it were a painted curtain before things unguessed at, but that these secrets were Power. Hitherto Power had come to men by chance, but now there were these seekers seeking, seeking among rare and curious and perplexing objects, sometimes finding some odd utilisable thing, sometimes deceiving themselves with fancied discovery, sometimes pretending to find. The world of every day laughed at these eccentric beings, or found them annoying and ill-treated them, or was seized with fear and made saints and sorcerers and warlocks of them, or with covetousness and entertained them hopefully; but for the greater part heeded them not at all. Yet they were of the blood of him who had first dreamt of attacking the mammoth; every one of them was of his blood and descent; and the thing they sought, all unwittingly, was the snare that will some day catch the sun.

Section 3

Such a man was that Leonardo da Vinci, who went about the court of Sforza in Milan in a state of dignified abstraction. His common-place books are full of prophetic subtlety and ingenious anticipations of the methods of the early aviators. Durer was his parallel and Roger Bacon--whom the Franciscans silenced--of his kindred. Such a man again in an earlier city was Hero of Alexandria, who knew of the power of steam nineteen hundred years before it was first brought into use. And earlier still was Archimedes of Syracuse, and still earlier the legendary Daedalus of Cnossos. All up and down the record of history whenever there was a little leisure from war and brutality the seekers appeared. And half the alchemists were of their tribe.

When Roger Bacon blew up his first batch of gunpowder one might have supposed that men would have gone at once to the explosive engine. But they could see nothing of the sort. They were not yet beginning to think of seeing things; their metallurgy was all too poor to make such engines even had they thought of them. For a time they could not make instruments sound enough to stand this new force even for so rough a purpose as hurling a missile. Their first guns had barrels of coopered timber, and the world waited for more than five hundred years before the explosive engine came.

Even when the seekers found, it was at first a long journey before the world could use their findings for any but the roughest, most obvious purposes. If man in general was not still as absolutely blind to the unconquered energies about him as his paleolithic precursor, he was at best purblind.

Section 4

The latent energy of coal and the power of steam waited long on the verge of discovery, before they began to influence human lives.

There were no doubt many such devices as Hero's toys devised and forgotten, time after time, in courts and palaces, but it needed that coal should be mined and burning with plenty of iron at hand before it dawned upon men that here was something more than a curiosity. And it is to be remarked that the first recorded suggestion for the use of steam was in war; there is an Elizabethan pamphlet in which it is proposed to fire shot out of corked iron bottles full of heated water. The mining of coal for fuel, the smelting of iron upon a larger scale than men had ever done before, the steam pumping engine, the steam-engine and the steam-boat, followed one another in an order that had a kind of logical necessity. It is the most interesting and instructive chapter in the history of the human intelligence, the history of steam from its beginning as a fact in human consciousness to the perfection of the great turbine engines that preceded the utilisation of intra-molecular power. Nearly every human being must have seen steam, seen it incuriously for many thousands of years; the women in particular were always heating water, boiling it, seeing it boil away, seeing the lids of vessels dance with its fury; millions of people at different times must have watched steam pitching rocks out of volcanoes like cricket balls and blowing pumice into foam, and yet you may search the whole human record through, letters, books, inscriptions, pictures, for any glimmer of a realisation that here was force, here was strength to borrow and use.... Then suddenly man woke up to it, the railways spread like a network over the globe, the ever enlarging iron steamships began their staggering fight against wind and wave.

Steam was the first-comer in the new powers, it was the beginning of the Age of Energy that was to close the long history of the Warring States.

But for a long time men did not realise the importance of this

novelty. They would not recognise, they were not able to recognise that anything fundamental had happened to their immemorial necessities. They called the steam-engine the 'iron horse' and pretended that they had made the most partial of substitutions. Steam machinery and factory production were visibly revolutionising the conditions of industrial production, population was streaming steadily in from the country-side and concentrating in hitherto unthought-of masses about a few city centres, food was coming to them over enormous distances upon a scale that made the one sole precedent, the corn ships of imperial Rome, a petty incident; and a huge migration of peoples between Europe and Western Asia and America was in Progress, and--nobody seems to have realised that something new had come into human life, a strange swirl different altogether from any previous circling and mutation, a swirl like the swirl when at last the lock gates begin to open after a long phase of accumulating water and eddying inactivity....

The sober Englishman at the close of the nineteenth century could sit at his breakfast-table, decide between tea from Ceylon or coffee from Brazil, devour an egg from France with some Danish ham, or eat a New Zealand chop, wind up his breakfast with a West Indian banana, glance at the latest telegrams from all the world, scrutinise the prices current of his geographically distributed investments in South Africa, Japan, and Egypt, and tell the two children he had begotten (in the place of his father's eight) that he thought the world changed very little. They must play cricket, keep their hair cut, go to the old school he had gone to, shirk the lessons he had shirked, learn a few scraps of Horace and Virgil and Homer for the confusion of cads, and all would be well with them....

Section 5

Electricity, though it was perhaps the earlier of the two to be

studied, invaded the common life of men a few decades after the exploitation of steam. To electricity also, in spite of its provocative nearness all about him, mankind had been utterly blind for incalculable ages. Could anything be more emphatic than the appeal of electricity for attention? It thundered at man's ears, it signalled to him in blinding flashes, occasionally it killed him, and he could not see it as a thing that concerned him enough to merit study. It came into the house with the cat on any dry day and crackled insinuatingly whenever he stroked her fur. It rotted his metals when he put them together.... There is no single record that any one questioned why the cat's fur crackles or why hair is so unruly to brush on a frosty day, before the sixteenth century. For endless years man seems to have done his very successful best not to think about it at all; until this new spirit of the Seeker turned itself to these things.

How often things must have been seen and dismissed as unimportant, before the speculative eye and the moment of vision came! It was Gilbert, Queen Elizabeth's court physician, who first puzzled his brains with rubbed amber and bits of glass and silk and shellac, and so began the quickening of the human mind to the existence of this universal presence. And even then the science of electricity remained a mere little group of curious facts for nearly two hundred years, connected perhaps with magnetism--a mere guess that--perhaps with the lightning. Frogs' legs must have hung by copper hooks from iron railings and twitched upon countless occasions before Galvani saw them. Except for the lightning conductor, it was 250 years after Gilbert before electricity stepped out of the cabinet of scientific curiosities into the life of the common man.... Then suddenly, in the half-century between 1880 and 1930, it ousted the steam-engine and took over traction, it ousted every other form of household heating, abolished distance with the perfected wireless telephone and the telephotograph....

Section 6

And there was an extraordinary mental resistance to discovery and invention for at least a hundred years after the scientific revolution had begun. Each new thing made its way into practice against a scepticism that amounted at times to hostility. One writer upon these subjects gives a funny little domestic conversation that happened, he says, in the year 1898, within ten years, that is to say, of the time when the first aviators were fairly on the wing. He tells us how he sat at his desk in his study and conversed with his little boy.

His little boy was in profound trouble. He felt he had to speak very seriously to his father, and as he was a kindly little boy he did not want to do it too harshly.

This is what happened.

'I wish, Daddy,' he said, coming to his point, 'that you wouldn't write all this stuff about flying. The chaps rot me.'

'Yes!' said his father.

'And old Broomie, the Head I mean, he rots me. Everybody rots me.'

'But there is going to be flying--quite soon.'

The little boy was too well bred to say what he thought of that. 'Anyhow,' he said, 'I wish you wouldn't write about it.'

'You'll fly--lots of times--before you die,' the father assured him.

The little boy looked unhappy.

The father hesitated. Then he opened a drawer and took out a blurred and under-developed photograph. 'Come and look at this,' he said.

The little boy came round to him. The photograph showed a stream and a meadow beyond, and some trees, and in the air a black, pencil-like object with flat wings on either side of it. It was the first record of the first apparatus heavier than air that ever maintained itself in the air by mechanical force. Across the margin was written: 'Here we go up, up, up--from S. P. Langley, Smithsonian Institution, Washington.'

The father watched the effect of this reassuring document upon his son. 'Well?' he said.

'That,' said the schoolboy, after reflection, 'is only a model.'

'Model to-day, man to-morrow.'

The boy seemed divided in his allegiance. Then he decided for what he believed quite firmly to be omniscience. 'But old Broomie,' he said, 'he told all the boys in his class only yesterday, "no man will ever fly." No one, he says, who has ever shot grouse or pheasants on the wing would ever believe anything of the sort....'

Yet that boy lived to fly across the Atlantic and edit his father's reminiscences.

Section 7

At the close of the nineteenth century as a multitude of passages in the literature of that time witness, it was thought that the fact that man had at last had successful and profitable dealings

with the steam that scalded him and the electricity that flashed and banged about the sky at him, was an amazing and perhaps a culminating exercise of his intelligence and his intellectual courage. The air of 'Nunc Dimittis' sounds in some of these writings. 'The great things are discovered,' wrote Gerald Brown in his summary of the nineteenth century. 'For us there remains little but the working out of detail.' The spirit of the seeker was still rare in the world; education was unskilled, unstimulating, scholarly, and but little valued, and few people even then could have realised that Science was still but the flimsiest of trial sketches and discovery scarcely beginning. No one seems to have been afraid of science and its possibilities. Yet now where there had been but a score or so of seekers, there were many thousands, and for one needle of speculation that had been probing the curtain of appearances in 1800, there were now hundreds. And already Chemistry, which had been content with her atoms and molecules for the better part of a century, was preparing herself for that vast next stride that was to revolutionise the whole life of man from top to bottom.

One realises how crude was the science of that time when one considers the case of the composition of air. This was determined by that strange genius and recluse, that man of mystery, that disembowelled intelligence, Henry Cavendish, towards the end of the eighteenth century. So far as he was concerned the work was admirably done. He separated all the known ingredients of the air with a precision altogether remarkable; he even put it upon record that he had some doubt about the purity of the nitrogen. For more than a hundred years his determination was repeated by chemists all the world over, his apparatus was treasured in London, he became, as they used to say, 'classic,' and always, at every one of the innumerable repetitions of his experiment, that sly element argon was hiding among the nitrogen (and with a little helium and traces of other substances, and indeed all the hints that might have led to the new departures of

the twentieth-century chemistry), and every time it slipped unobserved through the professorial fingers that repeated his procedure.

Is it any wonder then with this margin of inaccuracy, that up to the very dawn of the twentieth-century scientific discovery was still rather a procession of happy accidents than an orderly conquest of nature?

Yet the spirit of seeking was spreading steadily through the world. Even the schoolmaster could not check it. For the mere handful who grew up to feel wonder and curiosity about the secrets of nature in the nineteenth century, there were now, at the beginning of the twentieth, myriads escaping from the limitations of intellectual routine and the habitual life, in Europe, in America, North and South, in Japan, in China, and all about the world.

It was in 1910 that the parents of young Holsten, who was to be called by a whole generation of scientific men, 'the greatest of European chemists,' were staying in a villa near Santo Domenico, between Fiesole and Florence. He was then only fifteen, but he was already distinguished as a mathematician and possessed by a savage appetite to understand. He had been particularly attracted by the mystery of phosphorescence and its apparent unrelatedness to every other source of light. He was to tell afterwards in his reminiscences how he watched the fireflies drifting and glowing among the dark trees in the garden of the villa under the warm blue night sky of Italy; how he caught and kept them in cages, dissected them, first studying the general anatomy of insects very elaborately, and how he began to experiment with the effect of various gases and varying temperature upon their light. Then the chance present of a little scientific toy invented by Sir William Crookes, a toy called the spintharoscope, on which radium particles impinge upon sulphide of zinc and make it luminous,

induced him to associate the two sets of phenomena. It was a happy association for his inquiries. It was a rare and fortunate thing, too, that any one with the mathematical gift should have been taken by these curiosities.

Section 8

And while the boy Holsten was mooning over his fireflies at Fiesole, a certain professor of physics named Rufus was giving a course of afternoon lectures upon Radium and Radio-Activity in Edinburgh. They were lectures that had attracted a very considerable amount of attention. He gave them in a small lecture-theatre that had become more and more congested as his course proceeded. At his concluding discussion it was crowded right up to the ceiling at the back, and there people were standing, standing without any sense of fatigue, so fascinating did they find his suggestions. One youngster in particular, a chuckle-headed, scrub-haired lad from the Highlands, sat hugging his knee with great sand-red hands and drinking in every word, eyes aglow, cheeks flushed, and ears burning.

'And so,' said the professor, 'we see that this Radium, which seemed at first a fantastic exception, a mad inversion of all that was most established and fundamental in the constitution of matter, is really at one with the rest of the elements. It does noticeably and forcibly what probably all the other elements are doing with an imperceptible slowness. It is like the single voice crying aloud that betrays the silent breathing multitude in the darkness. Radium is an element that is breaking up and flying to pieces. But perhaps all elements are doing that at less perceptible rates. Uranium certainly is; thorium--the stuff of this incandescent gas mantle--certainly is; actinium. I feel that we are but beginning the list. And we know now that the atom, that once we thought hard and impenetrable, and indivisible and final and--lifeless--lifeless, is really a reservoir of

immense energy. That is the most wonderful thing about all this work. A little while ago we thought of the atoms as we thought of bricks, as solid building material, as substantial matter, as unit masses of lifeless stuff, and behold! these bricks are boxes, treasure boxes, boxes full of the intensest force. This little bottle contains about a pint of uranium oxide; that is to say, about fourteen ounces of the element uranium. It is worth about a pound. And in this bottle, ladies and gentlemen, in the atoms in this bottle there slumbers at least as much energy as we could get by burning a hundred and sixty tons of coal. If at a word, in one instant I could suddenly release that energy here and now it would blow us and everything about us to fragments; if I could turn it into the machinery that lights this city, it could keep Edinburgh brightly lit for a week. But at present no man knows, no man has an inkling of how this little lump of stuff can be made to hasten the release of its store. It does release it, as a burn trickles. Slowly the uranium changes into radium, the radium changes into a gas called the radium emanation, and that again to what we call radium A, and so the process goes on, giving out energy at every stage, until at last we reach the last stage of all, which is, so far as we can tell at present, lead. But we cannot hasten it.'

'I take ye, man,' whispered the chuckle-headed lad, with his red hands tightening like a vice upon his knee. 'I take ye, man. Go on! Oh, go on!'

The professor went on after a little pause. 'Why is the change gradual?' he asked. 'Why does only a minute fraction of the radium disintegrate in any particular second? Why does it dole itself out so slowly and so exactly? Why does not all the uranium change to radium and all the radium change to the next lowest thing at once? Why this decay by dribblets; why not a decay en masse? . . . Suppose presently we find it is possible to quicken that decay?'

The chuckle-headed lad nodded rapidly. The wonderful inevitable idea was coming. He drew his knee up towards his chin and swayed in his seat with excitement. 'Why not?' he echoed, 'why not?'

The professor lifted his forefinger.

'Given that knowledge,' he said, 'mark what we should be able to do! We should not only be able to use this uranium and thorium; not only should we have a source of power so potent that a man might carry in his hand the energy to light a city for a year, fight a fleet of battleships, or drive one of our giant liners across the Atlantic; but we should also have a clue that would enable us at last to quicken the process of disintegration in all the other elements, where decay is still so slow as to escape our finest measurements. Every scrap of solid matter in the world would become an available reservoir of concentrated force. Do you realise, ladies and gentlemen, what these things would mean for us?'

The scrub head nodded. 'Oh! go on. Go on.'

'It would mean a change in human conditions that I can only compare to the discovery of fire, that first discovery that lifted man above the brute. We stand to-day towards radio-activity as our ancestor stood towards fire before he had learnt to make it. He knew it then only as a strange thing utterly beyond his control, a flare on the crest of the volcano, a red destruction that poured through the forest. So it is that we know radio-activity to-day. This--this is the dawn of a new day in human living. At the climax of that civilisation which had its beginning in the hammered flint and the fire-stick of the savage, just when it is becoming apparent that our ever-increasing needs cannot be borne indefinitely by our present sources of energy, we discover suddenly the possibility of an

entirely new civilisation. The energy we need for our very existence, and with which Nature supplies us still so grudgingly, is in reality locked up in inconceivable quantities all about us. We cannot pick that lock at present, but----'

He paused. His voice sank so that everybody strained a little to hear him.

'----we will.'

He put up that lean finger again, his solitary gesture.

'And then,' he said. . . .

'Then that perpetual struggle for existence, that perpetual struggle to live on the bare surplus of Nature's energies will cease to be the lot of Man. Man will step from the pinnacle of this civilisation to the beginning of the next. I have no eloquence, ladies and gentlemen, to express the vision of man's material destiny that opens out before me. I see the desert continents transformed, the poles no longer wildernesses of ice, the whole world once more Eden. I see the power of man reach out among the stars....'

He stopped abruptly with a catching of the breath that many an actor or orator might have envied.

The lecture was over, the audience hung silent for a few seconds, sighed, became audible, stirred, fluttered, prepared for dispersal. More light was turned on and what had been a dim mass of figures became a bright confusion of movement. Some of the people signalled to friends, some crowded down towards the platform to examine the lecturer's apparatus and make notes of his diagrams. But the chuckle-headed lad with the scrub hair wanted no such detailed frittering away of the thoughts that had

inspired him. He wanted to be alone with them; he elbowed his way out almost fiercely, he made himself as angular and bony as a cow, fearing lest some one should speak to him, lest some one should invade his glowing sphere of enthusiasm.

He went through the streets with a rapt face, like a saint who sees visions. He had arms disproportionately long, and ridiculous big feet.

He must get alone, get somewhere high out of all this crowding of commonness, of everyday life.

He made his way to the top of Arthur's Seat, and there he sat for a long time in the golden evening sunshine, still, except that ever and again he whispered to himself some precious phrase that had stuck in his mind.

'If,' he whispered, 'if only we could pick that lock. . . .'

The sun was sinking over the distant hills. Already it was shorn of its beams, a globe of ruddy gold, hanging over the great banks of cloud that would presently engulf it.

'Eh!' said the youngster. 'Eh!'

He seemed to wake up at last out of his entrancement, and the red sun was there before his eyes. He stared at it, at first without intelligence, and then with a gathering recognition. Into his mind came a strange echo of that ancestral fancy, that fancy of a Stone Age savage, dead and scattered bones among the drift two hundred thousand years ago.

'Ye auld thing,' he said--and his eyes were shining, and he made a kind of grabbing gesture with his hand; 'ye auld red thing.... We'll have ye YET.'

CHAPTER THE FIRST

THE NEW SOURCE OF ENERGY

Section I

The problem which was already being mooted by such scientific men as Ramsay, Rutherford, and Soddy, in the very beginning of the twentieth century, the problem of inducing radio-activity in the heavier elements and so tapping the internal energy of atoms, was solved by a wonderful combination of induction, intuition, and luck by Holsten so soon as the year 1933. From the first detection of radio-activity to its first subjugation to human purpose measured little more than a quarter of a century. For twenty years after that, indeed, minor difficulties prevented any striking practical application of his success, but the essential thing was done, this new boundary in the march of human progress was crossed, in that year. He set up atomic disintegration in a minute particle of bismuth; it exploded with great violence into a heavy gas of extreme radio-activity, which disintegrated in its turn in the course of seven days, and it was only after another year's work that he was able to show practically that the last result of this rapid release of energy was gold. But the thing was done--at the cost of a blistered chest and an injured finger, and from the moment when the invisible speck of bismuth flashed into riving and rending energy, Holsten knew that he had opened a way for mankind, however narrow and dark it might still be, to worlds of limitless power. He recorded as much in the strange diary biography he left the world, a diary that was up to that particular moment a mass of speculations and calculations, and which suddenly became for a space an amazingly minute and human record of sensations and emotions that all humanity might

understand.

He gives, in broken phrases and often single words, it is true, but none the less vividly for that, a record of the twenty-four hours following the demonstration of the correctness of his intricate tracery of computations and guesses. 'I thought I should not sleep,' he writes--the words he omitted are supplied in brackets--(on account of) 'pain in (the) hand and chest and (the) wonder of what I had done.... Slept like a child.'

He felt strange and disconcerted the next morning; he had nothing to do, he was living alone in apartments in Bloomsbury, and he decided to go up to Hampstead Heath, which he had known when he was a little boy as a breezy playground. He went up by the underground tube that was then the recognised means of travel from one part of London to another, and walked up Heath Street from the tube station to the open heath. He found it a gully of planks and scaffoldings between the hoardings of house-wreckers. The spirit of the times had seized upon that narrow, steep, and winding thoroughfare, and was in the act of making it commodious and interesting, according to the remarkable ideals of Neo-Georgian aestheticism. Such is the illogical quality of humanity that Holsten, fresh from work that was like a petard under the seat of current civilisation, saw these changes with regret. He had come up Heath Street perhaps a thousand times, had known the windows of all the little shops, spent hours in the vanished cinematograph theatre, and marvelled at the high-flung early Georgian houses upon the westward bank of that old gully of a thoroughfare; he felt strange with all these familiar things gone. He escaped at last with a feeling of relief from this choked alley of trenches and holes and cranes, and emerged upon the old familiar scene about the White Stone Pond. That, at least, was very much as it used to be.

There were still the fine old red-brick houses to left and right

of him; the reservoir had been improved by a portico of marble, the white-fronted inn with the clustering flowers above its portico still stood out at the angle of the ways, and the blue view to Harrow Hill and Harrow spire, a view of hills and trees and shining waters and wind-driven cloud shadows, was like the opening of a great window to the ascending Londoner. All that was very reassuring. There was the same strolling crowd, the same perpetual miracle of motors dodging through it harmlessly, escaping headlong into the country from the Sabbatical stuffiness behind and below them. There was a band still, a women's suffrage meeting--for the suffrage women had won their way back to the tolerance, a trifle derisive, of the populace again--socialist orators, politicians, a band, and the same wild uproar of dogs, frantic with the gladness of their one blessed weekly release from the back yard and the chain. And away along the road to the Spaniards strolled a vast multitude, saying, as ever, that the view of London was exceptionally clear that day.

Young Holsten's face was white. He walked with that uneasy affectation of ease that marks an overstrained nervous system and an under-exercised body. He hesitated at the White Stone Pond whether to go to the left of it or the right, and again at the fork of the roads. He kept shifting his stick in his hand, and every now and then he would get in the way of people on the footpath or be jostled by them because of the uncertainty of his movements. He felt, he confesses, 'inadequate to ordinary existence.' He seemed to himself to be something inhuman and mischievous. All the people about him looked fairly prosperous, fairly happy, fairly well adapted to the lives they had to lead--a week of work and a Sunday of best clothes and mild promenading--and he had launched something that would disorganise the entire fabric that held their contentments and ambitions and satisfactions together. 'Felt like an imbecile who has presented a box full of loaded revolvers to a Creche,' he notes.

He met a man named Lawson, an old school-fellow, of whom history now knows only that he was red-faced and had a terrier. He and Holsten walked together and Holsten was sufficiently pale and jumpy for Lawson to tell him he overworked and needed a holiday. They sat down at a little table outside the County Council house of Golders Hill Park and sent one of the waiters to the Bull and Bush for a couple of bottles of beer, no doubt at Lawson's suggestion. The beer warmed Holsten's rather dehumanised system. He began to tell Lawson as clearly as he could to what his great discovery amounted. Lawson feigned attention, but indeed he had neither the knowledge nor the imagination to understand. 'In the end, before many years are out, this must eventually change war, transit, lighting, building, and every sort of manufacture, even agriculture, every material human concern----'

Then Holsten stopped short. Lawson had leapt to his feet. 'Damn that dog!' cried Lawson. 'Look at it now. Hi! Here! Phewoo--phewoo phewoo! Come HERE, Bobs! Come HERE!'

The young scientific man, with his bandaged hand, sat at the green table, too tired to convey the wonder of the thing he had sought so long, his friend whistled and bawled for his dog, and the Sunday people drifted about them through the spring sunshine. For a moment or so Holsten stared at Lawson in astonishment, for he had been too intent upon what he had been saying to realise how little Lawson had attended.

Then he remarked, 'WELL!' and smiled faintly, and--finished the tankard of beer before him.

Lawson sat down again. 'One must look after one's dog,' he said, with a note of apology. 'What was it you were telling me?'

Section 2

In the evening Holsten went out again. He walked to Saint Paul's Cathedral, and stood for a time near the door listening to the evening service. The candles upon the altar reminded him in some odd way of the fireflies at Fiesole. Then he walked back through the evening lights to Westminster. He was oppressed, he was indeed scared, by his sense of the immense consequences of his discovery. He had a vague idea that night that he ought not to publish his results, that they were premature, that some secret association of wise men should take care of his work and hand it on from generation to generation until the world was riper for its practical application. He felt that nobody in all the thousands of people he passed had really awakened to the fact of change, they trusted the world for what it was, not to alter too rapidly, to respect their trusts, their assurances, their habits, their little accustomed traffics and hard-won positions.

He went into those little gardens beneath the over-hanging, brightly-lit masses of the Savoy Hotel and the Hotel Cecil. He sat down on a seat and became aware of the talk of the two people next to him. It was the talk of a young couple evidently on the eve of marriage. The man was congratulating himself on having regular employment at last; 'they like me,' he said, 'and I like the job. If I work up--in'r dozen years or so I ought to be gettin' somethin' pretty comfortable. That's the plain sense of it, Hetty. There ain't no reason whatsoever why we shouldn't get along very decently--very decently indeed.'

The desire for little successes amidst conditions securely fixed! So it struck upon Holsten's mind. He added in his diary, 'I had a sense of all this globe as that....'

By that phrase he meant a kind of clairvoyant vision of this populated world as a whole, of all its cities and towns and villages, its high roads and the inns beside them, its gardens and farms and upland pastures, its boatmen and sailors, its ships

coming along the great circles of the ocean, its time-tables and appointments and payments and dues as it were one unified and progressive spectacle. Sometimes such visions came to him; his mind, accustomed to great generalisations and yet acutely sensitive to detail, saw things far more comprehensively than the minds of most of his contemporaries. Usually the teeming sphere moved on to its predestined ends and circled with a stately swiftness on its path about the sun. Usually it was all a living progress that altered under his regard. But now fatigue a little deadened him to that incessancy of life, it seemed now just an eternal circling. He lapsed to the commoner persuasion of the great fixities and recurrences of the human routine. The remoter past of wandering savagery, the inevitable changes of to-morrow were veiled, and he saw only day and night, seed-time and harvest, loving and begetting, births and deaths, walks in the summer sunlight and tales by the winter fireside, the ancient sequence of hope and acts and age perennially renewed, eddying on for ever and ever, save that now the impious hand of research was raised to overthrow this drowsy, gently humming, habitual, sunlit spinning-top of man's existence....

For a time he forgot wars and crimes and hates and persecutions, famine and pestilence, the cruelties of beasts, weariness and the bitter wind, failure and insufficiency and retrocession. He saw all mankind in terms of the humble Sunday couple upon the seat beside him, who schemed their inglorious outlook and improbable contentments. 'I had a sense of all this globe as that.'

His intelligence struggled against this mood and struggled for a time in vain. He reassured himself against the invasion of this disconcerting idea that he was something strange and inhuman, a loose wanderer from the flock returning with evil gifts from his sustained unnatural excursions amidst the darkneses and phosphorescences beneath the fair surfaces of life. Man had not been always thus; the instincts and desires of the little home,

the little plot, was not all his nature; also he was an adventurer, an experimenter, an unresting curiosity, an insatiable desire. For a few thousand generations indeed he had tilled the earth and followed the seasons, saying his prayers, grinding his corn and trampling the October winepress, yet not for so long but that he was still full of restless stirrings.

'If there have been home and routine and the field,' thought Holsten, 'there have also been wonder and the sea.'

He turned his head and looked up over the back of the seat at the great hotels above him, full of softly shaded lights and the glow and colour and stir of feasting. Might his gift to mankind mean simply more of that? . . .

He got up and walked out of the garden, surveyed a passing tram-car, laden with warm light, against the deep blues of evening, dripping and trailing long skirts of shining reflection; he crossed the Embankment and stood for a time watching the dark river and turning ever and again to the lit buildings and bridges. His mind began to scheme conceivable replacements of all those clustering arrangements. . . .

'It has begun,' he writes in the diary in which these things are recorded. 'It is not for me to reach out to consequences I cannot foresee. I am a part, not a whole; I am a little instrument in the armoury of Change. If I were to burn all these papers, before a score of years had passed, some other man would be doing this. . .

Section 3

Holsten, before he died, was destined to see atomic energy dominating every other source of power, but for some years yet a vast network of difficulties in detail and application kept the

new discovery from any effective invasion of ordinary life. The path from the laboratory to the workshop is sometimes a tortuous one; electro-magnetic radiations were known and demonstrated for twenty years before Marconi made them practically available, and in the same way it was twenty years before induced radio-activity could be brought to practical utilisation. The thing, of course, was discussed very much, more perhaps at the time of its discovery than during the interval of technical adaptation, but with very little realisation of the huge economic revolution that impended. What chiefly impressed the journalists of 1933 was the production of gold from bismuth and the realisation albeit upon unprofitable lines of the alchemist's dreams; there was a considerable amount of discussion and expectation in that more intelligent section of the educated publics of the various civilised countries which followed scientific development; but for the most part the world went about its business--as the inhabitants of those Swiss villages which live under the perpetual threat of overhanging rocks and mountains go about their business--just as though the possible was impossible, as though the inevitable was postponed for ever because it was delayed.

It was in 1953 that the first Holsten-Roberts engine brought induced radio-activity into the sphere of industrial production, and its first general use was to replace the steam-engine in electrical generating stations. Hard upon the appearance of this came the Dass-Tata engine--the invention of two among the brilliant galaxy of Bengali inventors the modernisation of Indian thought was producing at this time--which was used chiefly for automobiles, aeroplanes, waterplanes, and such-like, mobile purposes. The American Kemp engine, differing widely in principle but equally practicable, and the Krupp-Erlanger came hard upon the heels of this, and by the autumn of 1954 a gigantic replacement of industrial methods and machinery was in progress all about the habitable globe. Small wonder was this when the

cost, even of these earliest and clumsiest of atomic engines, is compared with that of the power they superseded. Allowing for lubrication the Dass-Tata engine, once it was started cost a penny to run thirty-seven miles, and added only nine and quarter pounds to the weight of the carriage it drove. It made the heavy alcohol-driven automobile of the time ridiculous in appearance as well as preposterously costly. For many years the price of coal and every form of liquid fuel had been clambering to levels that made even the revival of the draft horse seem a practicable possibility, and now with the abrupt relaxation of this stringency, the change in appearance of the traffic upon the world's roads was instantaneous. In three years the frightful armoured monsters that had hooted and smoked and thundered about the world for four awful decades were swept away to the dealers in old metal, and the highways thronged with light and clean and shimmering shapes of silvered steel. At the same time a new impetus was given to aviation by the relatively enormous power for weight of the atomic engine, it was at last possible to add Redmayne's ingenious helicopter ascent and descent engine to the vertical propeller that had hitherto been the sole driving force of the aeroplane without overweighting the machine, and men found themselves possessed of an instrument of flight that could hover or ascend or descend vertically and gently as well as rush wildly through the air. The last dread of flying vanished. As the journalists of the time phrased it, this was the epoch of the Leap into the Air. The new atomic aeroplane became indeed a mania; every one of means was frantic to possess a thing so controllable, so secure and so free from the dust and danger of the road, and in France alone in the year 1943 thirty thousand of these new aeroplanes were manufactured and licensed, and soared humming softly into the sky.

And with an equal speed atomic engines of various types invaded industrialism. The railways paid enormous premiums for priority in the delivery of atomic traction engines, atomic smelting was

embarked upon so eagerly as to lead to a number of disastrous explosions due to inexperienced handling of the new power, and the revolutionary cheapening of both materials and electricity made the entire reconstruction of domestic buildings a matter merely dependent upon a reorganisation of the methods of the builder and the house-furnisher. Viewed from the side of the new power and from the point of view of those who financed and manufactured the new engines and material it required the age of the Leap into the Air was one of astonishing prosperity.

Patent-holding companies were presently paying dividends of five or six hundred per cent. and enormous fortunes were made and fantastic wages earned by all who were concerned in the new developments. This prosperity was not a little enhanced by the fact that in both the Dass-Tata and Holsten-Roberts engines one of the recoverable waste products was gold--the former disintegrated dust of bismuth and the latter dust of lead--and that this new supply of gold led quite naturally to a rise in prices throughout the world.

This spectacle of feverish enterprise was productivity, this crowding flight of happy and fortunate rich people--every great city was as if a crawling ant-hill had suddenly taken wing--was the bright side of the opening phase of the new epoch in human history. Beneath that brightness was a gathering darkness, a deepening dismay. If there was a vast development of production there was also a huge destruction of values. These glaring factories working night and day, these glittering new vehicles swinging noiselessly along the roads, these flights of dragon-flies that swooped and soared and circled in the air, were indeed no more than the brightnesses of lamps and fires that gleam out when the world sinks towards twilight and the night. Between these high lights accumulated disaster, social catastrophe. The coal mines were manifestly doomed to closure at no very distant date, the vast amount of capital invested in oil was becoming unsaleable, millions of coal miners, steel workers

upon the old lines, vast swarms of unskilled or under-skilled labourers in innumerable occupations, were being flung out of employment by the superior efficiency of the new machinery, the rapid fall in the cost of transit was destroying high land values at every centre of population, the value of existing house property had become problematical, gold was undergoing headlong depreciation, all the securities upon which the credit of the world rested were slipping and sliding, banks were tottering, the stock exchanges were scenes of feverish panic;--this was the reverse of the spectacle, these were the black and monstrous under-consequences of the Leap into the Air.

There is a story of a demented London stockbroker running out into Threadneedle Street and tearing off his clothes as he ran. 'The Steel Trust is scrapping the whole of its plant,' he shouted. 'The State Railways are going to scrap all their engines. Everything's going to be scrapped--everything. Come and scrap the mint, you fellows, come and scrap the mint!'

In the year 1955 the suicide rate for the United States of America quadrupled any previous record. There was an enormous increase also in violent crime throughout the world. The thing had come upon an unprepared humanity; it seemed as though human society was to be smashed by its own magnificent gains.

For there had been no foresight of these things. There had been no attempt anywhere even to compute the probable dislocations this flood of inexpensive energy would produce in human affairs. The world in these days was not really governed at all, in the sense in which government came to be understood in subsequent years. Government was a treaty, not a design; it was forensic, conservative, disputatious, unseeing, unthinking, uncreative; throughout the world, except where the vestiges of absolutism still sheltered the court favourite and the trusted servant, it was in the hands of the predominant caste of lawyers, who had an

enormous advantage in being the only trained caste. Their professional education and every circumstance in the manipulation of the fantastically naive electoral methods by which they clambered to power, conspired to keep them contemptuous of facts, conscientiously unimaginative, alert to claim and seize advantages and suspicious of every generosity. Government was an obstructive business of energetic fractions, progress went on outside of and in spite of public activities, and legislation was the last crippling recognition of needs so clamorous and imperative and facts so aggressively established as to invade even the dingy seclusions of the judges and threaten the very existence of the otherwise inattentive political machine.

The world was so little governed that with the very coming of plenty, in the full tide of an incalculable abundance, when everything necessary to satisfy human needs and everything necessary to realise such will and purpose as existed then in human hearts was already at hand, one has still to tell of hardship, famine, anger, confusion, conflict, and incoherent suffering. There was no scheme for the distribution of this vast new wealth that had come at last within the reach of men; there was no clear conception that any such distribution was possible. As one attempts a comprehensive view of those opening years of the new age, as one measures it against the latent achievement that later years have demonstrated, one begins to measure the blindness, the narrowness, the insensate unimaginative individualism of the pre-atomic time. Under this tremendous dawn of power and freedom, under a sky ablaze with promise, in the very presence of science standing like some bountiful goddess over all the squat darkneses of human life, holding patiently in her strong arms, until men chose to take them, security, plenty, the solution of riddles, the key of the bravest adventures, in her very presence, and with the earnest of her gifts in court, the world was to witness such things as the squalid spectacle of the Dass-Tata patent litigation.

There in a stuffy court in London, a grimy oblong box of a room, during the exceptional heat of the May of 1956, the leading counsel of the day argued and shouted over a miserable little matter of more royalties or less and whether the Dass-Tata company might not bar the Holsten-Roberts' methods of utilising the new power. The Dass-Tata people were indeed making a strenuous attempt to secure a world monopoly in atomic engineering. The judge, after the manner of those times, sat raised above the court, wearing a preposterous gown and a foolish huge wig, the counsel also wore dirty-looking little wigs and queer black gowns over their usual costume, wigs and gowns that were held to be necessary to their pleading, and upon unclean wooden benches stirred and whispered artful-looking solicitors, busily scribbling reporters, the parties to the case, expert witnesses, interested people, and a jostling confusion of subpoenaed persons, briefless young barristers (forming a style on the most esteemed and truculent examples) and casual eccentric spectators who preferred this pit of iniquity to the free sunlight outside. Every one was damply hot, the examining King's Counsel wiped the perspiration from his huge, clean-shaven upper lip; and into this atmosphere of grasping contention and human exhalations the daylight filtered through a window that was manifestly dirty. The jury sat in a double pew to the left of the judge, looking as uncomfortable as frogs that have fallen into an ash-pit, and in the witness-box lied the would-be omnivorous Dass, under cross-examination....

Holsten had always been accustomed to publish his results so soon as they appeared to him to be sufficiently advanced to furnish a basis for further work, and to that confiding disposition and one happy flash of adaptive invention the alert Dass owed his claim....

But indeed a vast multitude of such sharp people were clutching,

patenting, pre-empting, monopolising this or that feature of the new development, seeking to subdue this gigantic winged power to the purposes of their little lusts and avarice. That trial is just one of innumerable disputes of the same kind. For a time the face of the world festered with patent legislation. It chanced, however, to have one oddly dramatic feature in the fact that Holsten, after being kept waiting about the court for two days as a beggar might have waited at a rich man's door, after being bullied by ushers and watched by policemen, was called as a witness, rather severely handled by counsel, and told not to 'quibble' by the judge when he was trying to be absolutely explicit.

The judge scratched his nose with a quill pen, and sneered at Holsten's astonishment round the corner of his monstrous wig. Holsten was a great man, was he? Well, in a law-court great men were put in their places.

'We want to know has the plaintiff added anything to this or hasn't he?' said the judge, 'we don't want to have your views whether Sir Philip Dass's improvements were merely superficial adaptations or whether they were implicit in your paper. No doubt--after the manner of inventors--you think most things that were ever likely to be discovered are implicit in your papers. No doubt also you think too that most subsequent additions and modifications are merely superficial. Inventors have a way of thinking that. The law isn't concerned with that sort of thing. The law has nothing to do with the vanity of inventors. The law is concerned with the question whether these patent rights have the novelty the plaintiff claims for them. What that admission may or may not stop, and all these other things you are saying in your overflowing zeal to answer more than the questions addressed to you--none of these things have anything whatever to do with the case in hand. It is a matter of constant astonishment to me in this court to see how you scientific men, with all your

extraordinary claims to precision and veracity, wander and wander so soon as you get into the witness-box. I know no more unsatisfactory class of witness. The plain and simple question is, has Sir Philip Dass made any real addition to existing knowledge and methods in this matter or has he not? We don't want to know whether they were large or small additions nor what the consequences of your admission may be. That you will leave to us.'

Holsten was silent.

'Surely?' said the judge, almost pityingly.

'No, he hasn't,' said Holsten, perceiving that for once in his life he must disregard infinitesimals.

'Ah!' said the judge, 'now why couldn't you say that when counsel put the question? . . .'

An entry in Holsten's diary-autobiography, dated five days later, runs: 'Still amazed. The law is the most dangerous thing in this country. It is hundreds of years old. It hasn't an idea. The oldest of old bottles and this new wine, the most explosive wine. Something will overtake them.'

Section 4

There was a certain truth in Holsten's assertion that the law was 'hundreds of years old.' It was, in relation to current thought and widely accepted ideas, an archaic thing. While almost all the material and methods of life had been changing rapidly and were now changing still more rapidly, the law-courts and the legislatures of the world were struggling desperately to meet modern demands with devices and procedures, conceptions of rights and property and authority and obligation that dated from the

rude compromises of relatively barbaric times. The horse-hair wigs and antic dresses of the British judges, their musty courts and overbearing manners, were indeed only the outward and visible intimations of profounder anachronisms. The legal and political organisation of the earth in the middle twentieth century was indeed everywhere like a complicated garment, outworn yet strong, that now fettered the governing body that once it had protected.

Yet that same spirit of free-thinking and outspoken publication that in the field of natural science had been the beginning of the conquest of nature, was at work throughout all the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries preparing the spirit of the new world within the degenerating body of the old. The idea of a greater subordination of individual interests and established institutions to the collective future, is traceable more and more clearly in the literature of those times, and movement after movement fretted itself away in criticism of and opposition to first this aspect and then that of the legal, social, and political order. Already in the early nineteenth century Shelley, with no scrap of alternative, is denouncing the established rulers of the world as Anarchs, and the entire system of ideas and suggestions that was known as Socialism, and more particularly its international side, feeble as it was in creative proposals or any method of transition, still witnesses to the growth of a conception of a modernised system of inter-relationships that should supplant the existing tangle of proprietary legal ideas.

The word 'Sociology' was invented by Herbert Spencer, a popular writer upon philosophical subjects, who flourished about the middle of the nineteenth century, but the idea of a state, planned as an electric-traction system is planned, without reference to pre-existing apparatus, upon scientific lines, did not take a very strong hold upon the popular imagination of the world until the twentieth century. Then, the growing impatience

of the American people with the monstrous and socially paralysing party systems that had sprung out of their absurd electoral arrangements, led to the appearance of what came to be called the 'Modern State' movement, and a galaxy of brilliant writers, in America, Europe, and the East, stirred up the world to the thought of bolder rearrangements of social interaction, property, employment, education, and government, than had ever been contemplated before. No doubt these Modern State ideas were very largely the reflection upon social and political thought of the vast revolution in material things that had been in progress for two hundred years, but for a long time they seemed to be having no more influence upon existing institutions than the writings of Rousseau and Voltaire seemed to have had at the time of the death of the latter. They were fermenting in men's minds, and it needed only just such social and political stresses as the coming of the atomic mechanisms brought about, to thrust them forward abruptly into crude and startling realisation.

Section 5

Frederick Barnet's *Wander Jahre* is one of those autobiographical novels that were popular throughout the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century. It was published in 1970, and one must understand *Wander Jahre* rather in a spiritual and intellectual than in a literal sense. It is indeed an allusive title, carrying the world back to the *Wilhelm Meister* of Goethe, a century and a half earlier.

Its author, Frederick Barnet, gives a minute and curious history of his life and ideas between his nineteenth and his twenty-third birthdays. He was neither a very original nor a very brilliant man, but he had a trick of circumstantial writing; and though no authentic portrait was to survive for the information of posterity, he betrays by a score of casual phrases that he was short, sturdy, inclined to be plump, with a 'rather blobby' face,

and full, rather projecting blue eyes. He belonged until the financial debacle of 1956 to the class of fairly prosperous people, he was a student in London, he aeroplaned to Italy and then had a pedestrian tour from Genoa to Rome, crossed in the air to Greece and Egypt, and came back over the Balkans and Germany. His family fortunes, which were largely invested in bank shares, coal mines, and house property, were destroyed. Reduced to penury, he sought to earn a living. He suffered great hardship, and was then caught up by the war and had a year of soldiering, first as an officer in the English infantry and then in the army of pacification. His book tells all these things so simply and at the same time so explicitly, that it remains, as it were, an eye by which future generations may have at least one man's vision of the years of the Great Change.

And he was, he tells us, a 'Modern State' man 'by instinct' from the beginning. He breathed in these ideas in the class rooms and laboratories of the Carnegie Foundation school that rose, a long and delicately beautiful facade, along the South Bank of the Thames opposite the ancient dignity of Somerset House. Such thought was interwoven with the very fabric of that pioneer school in the educational renaissance in England. After the customary exchange years in Heidelberg and Paris, he went into the classical school of London University. The older so-called 'classical' education of the British pedagogues, probably the most paralysing, ineffective, and foolish routine that ever wasted human life, had already been swept out of this great institution in favour of modern methods; and he learnt Greek and Latin as well as he had learnt German, Spanish, and French, so that he wrote and spoke them freely, and used them with an unconscious ease in his study of the foundation civilisations of the European system to which they were the key. (This change was still so recent that he mentions an encounter in Rome with an 'Oxford don' who 'spoke Latin with a Wiltshire accent and manifest discomfort, wrote Greek letters with his tongue out, and

seemed to think a Greek sentence a charm when it was a quotation and an impropriety when it wasn't.)

Barnet saw the last days of the coal-steam engines upon the English railways and the gradual cleansing of the London atmosphere as the smoke-creating sea-coal fires gave place to electric heating. The building of laboratories at Kensington was still in progress, and he took part in the students' riots that delayed the removal of the Albert Memorial. He carried a banner with 'We like Funny Statuary' on one side, and on the other 'Seats and Canopies for Statues, Why should our Great Departed Stand in the Rain?' He learnt the rather athletic aviation of those days at the University grounds at Sydenham, and he was fined for flying over the new prison for political libellers at Wormwood Scrubs, 'in a manner calculated to exhilarate the prisoners while at exercise.' That was the time of the attempted suppression of any criticism of the public judicature and the place was crowded with journalists who had ventured to call attention to the dementia of Chief Justice Abrahams. Barnet was not a very good aviator, he confesses he was always a little afraid of his machine--there was excellent reason for every one to be afraid of those clumsy early types--and he never attempted steep descents or very high flying. He also, he records, owned one of those oil-driven motor-bicycles whose clumsy complexity and extravagant filthiness still astonish the visitors to the museum of machinery at South Kensington. He mentions running over a dog and complains of the ruinous price of 'spatchcocks' in Surrey. 'Spatchcocks,' it seems, was a slang term for crushed hens.

He passed the examinations necessary to reduce his military service to a minimum, and his want of any special scientific or technical qualification and a certain precocious corpulence that handicapped his aviation indicated the infantry of the line as his sphere of training. That was the most generalised form of

soldiering. The development of the theory of war had been for some decades but little assisted by any practical experience. What fighting had occurred in recent years, had been fighting in minor or uncivilised states, with peasant or barbaric soldiers and with but a small equipment of modern contrivances, and the great powers of the world were content for the most part to maintain armies that sustained in their broader organisation the traditions of the European wars of thirty and forty years before. There was the infantry arm to which Barnett belonged and which was supposed to fight on foot with a rifle and be the main portion of the army. There were cavalry forces (horse soldiers), having a ratio to the infantry that had been determined by the experiences of the Franco-German war in 1871. There was also artillery, and for some unexplained reason much of this was still drawn by horses; though there were also in all the European armies a small number of motor-guns with wheels so constructed that they could go over broken ground. In addition there were large developments of the engineering arm, concerned with motor transport, motor-bicycle scouting, aviation, and the like.

No first-class intelligence had been sought to specialise in and work out the problem of warfare with the new appliances and under modern conditions, but a succession of able jurists, Lord Haldane, Chief Justice Briggs, and that very able King's Counsel, Philbrick, had reconstructed the army frequently and thoroughly and placed it at last, with the adoption of national service, upon a footing that would have seemed very imposing to the public of 1900. At any moment the British Empire could now put a million and a quarter of arguable soldiers upon the board of Welt-Politik. The traditions of Japan and the Central European armies were more princely and less forensic; the Chinese still refused resolutely to become a military power, and maintained a small standing army upon the American model that was said, so far as it went, to be highly efficient, and Russia, secured by a stringent administration against internal criticism, had scarcely

altered the design of a uniform or the organisation of a battery since the opening decades of the century. Barnett's opinion of his military training was manifestly a poor one, his Modern State ideas disposed him to regard it as a bore, and his common sense condemned it as useless. Moreover, his habit of body made him peculiarly sensitive to the fatigues and hardships of service.

'For three days in succession we turned out before dawn and--for no earthly reason--without breakfast,' he relates. 'I suppose that is to show us that when the Day comes the first thing will be to get us thoroughly uncomfortable and rotten. We then proceeded to Kriegspiel, according to the mysterious ideas of those in authority over us. On the last day we spent three hours under a hot if early sun getting over eight miles of country to a point we could have reached in a motor omnibus in nine minutes and a half--I did it the next day in that--and then we made a massed attack upon entrenchments that could have shot us all about three times over if only the umpires had let them. Then came a little bayonet exercise, but I doubt if I am sufficiently a barbarian to stick this long knife into anything living. Anyhow in this battle I shouldn't have had a chance. Assuming that by some miracle I hadn't been shot three times over, I was far too hot and blown when I got up to the entrenchments even to lift my beastly rifle. It was those others would have begun the sticking....

'For a time we were watched by two hostile aeroplanes; then our own came up and asked them not to, and--the practice of aerial warfare still being unknown--they very politely desisted and went away and did dives and circles of the most charming description over the Fox Hills.'

All Barnett's accounts of his military training were written in the same half-contemptuous, half-protesting tone. He was of opinion that his chances of participating in any real warfare

were very slight, and that, if after all he should participate, it was bound to be so entirely different from these peace manoeuvres that his only course as a rational man would be to keep as observantly out of danger as he could until he had learnt the tricks and possibilities of the new conditions. He states this quite frankly. Never was a man more free from sham heroics.

Section 6

Barnet welcomed the appearance of the atomic engine with the zest of masculine youth in all fresh machinery, and it is evident that for some time he failed to connect the rush of wonderful new possibilities with the financial troubles of his family. 'I knew my father was worried,' he admits. That cast the smallest of shadows upon his delighted departure for Italy and Greece and Egypt with three congenial companions in one of the new atomic models. They flew over the Channel Isles and Touraine, he mentions, and circled about Mont Blanc--'These new helicopters, we found,' he notes, 'had abolished all the danger and strain of sudden drops to which the old-time aeroplanes were liable'--and then he went on by way of Pisa, Paestum, Ghirgenti, and Athens, to visit the pyramids by moonlight, flying thither from Cairo, and to follow the Nile up to Khartum. Even by later standards, it must have been a very gleeful holiday for a young man, and it made the tragedy of his next experiences all the darker. A week after his return his father, who was a widower, announced himself ruined, and committed suicide by means of an unscheduled opiate.

At one blow Barnet found himself flung out of the possessing, spending, enjoying class to which he belonged, penniless and with no calling by which he could earn a living. He tried teaching and some journalism, but in a little while he found himself on the underside of a world in which he had always reckoned to live in the sunshine. For innumerable men such an experience has meant mental and spiritual destruction, but Barnet, in spite of

his bodily gravitation towards comfort, showed himself when put to the test, of the more valiant modern quality. He was saturated with the creative stoicism of the heroic times that were already dawning, and he took his difficulties and discomforts stoutly as his appointed material, and turned them to expression.

Indeed, in his book, he thanks fortune for them. 'I might have lived and died,' he says, 'in that neat fool's paradise of secure lavishness above there. I might never have realised the gathering wrath and sorrow of the ousted and exasperated masses. In the days of my own prosperity things had seemed to me to be very well arranged.' Now from his new point of view he was to find they were not arranged at all; that government was a compromise of aggressions and powers and lassitudes, and law a convention between interests, and that the poor and the weak, though they had many negligent masters, had few friends.

'I had thought things were looked after,' he wrote. 'It was with a kind of amazement that I tramped the roads and starved--and found that no one in particular cared.'

He was turned out of his lodging in a backward part of London.

'It was with difficulty I persuaded my landlady--she was a needy widow, poor soul, and I was already in her debt--to keep an old box for me in which I had locked a few letters, keepsakes, and the like. She lived in great fear of the Public Health and Morality Inspectors, because she was sometimes too poor to pay the customary tip to them, but at last she consented to put it in a dark tiled place under the stairs, and then I went forth into the world--to seek first the luck of a meal and then shelter.'

He wandered down into the thronging gayer parts of London, in which a year or so ago he had been numbered among the spenders.

London, under the Visible Smoke Law, by which any production of visible smoke with or without excuse was punishable by a fine, had already ceased to be the sombre smoke-darkened city of the Victorian time; it had been, and indeed was, constantly being rebuilt, and its main streets were already beginning to take on those characteristics that distinguished them throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. The insanitary horse and the plebeian bicycle had been banished from the roadway, which was now of a resilient, glass-like surface, spotlessly clean; and the foot passenger was restricted to a narrow vestige of the ancient footpath on either side of the track and forbidden at the risk of a fine, if he survived, to cross the roadway. People descended from their automobiles upon this pavement and went through the lower shops to the lifts and stairs to the new ways for pedestrians, the Rows, that ran along the front of the houses at the level of the first story, and, being joined by frequent bridges, gave the newer parts of London a curiously Venetian appearance. In some streets there were upper and even third-story Rows. For most of the day and all night the shop windows were lit by electric light, and many establishments had made, as it were, canals of public footpaths through their premises in order to increase their window space.

Barnet made his way along this night-scene rather apprehensively since the police had power to challenge and demand the Labour Card of any indigent-looking person, and if the record failed to show he was in employment, dismiss him to the traffic pavement below.

But there was still enough of his former gentility about Barnet's appearance and bearing to protect him from this; the police, too, had other things to think of that night, and he was permitted to reach the galleries about Leicester Square--that great focus of London life and pleasure.

He gives a vivid description of the scene that evening. In the centre was a garden raised on arches lit by festoons of lights and connected with the Rows by eight graceful bridges, beneath which hummed the interlacing streams of motor traffic, pulsating as the current alternated between east and west and north and south. Above rose great frontages of intricate rather than beautiful reinforced porcelain, studded with lights, barred by bold illuminated advertisements, and glowing with reflections. There were the two historical music halls of this place, the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, in which the municipal players revolved perpetually through the cycle of Shakespeare's plays, and four other great houses of refreshment and entertainment whose pinnacles streamed up into the blue obscurity of the night. The south side of the square was in dark contrast to the others; it was still being rebuilt, and a lattice of steel bars surmounted by the frozen gestures of monstrous cranes rose over the excavated sites of vanished Victorian buildings.

This framework attracted Barnet's attention for a time to the exclusion of other interests. It was absolutely still, it had a dead rigidity, a stricken inaction, no one was at work upon it and all its machinery was quiet; but the constructor's globes of vacuum light filled its every interstice with a quivering green moonshine and showed alert but motionless--soldier sentinels!

He asked a passing stroller, and was told that the men had struck that day against the use of an atomic riveter that would have doubled the individual efficiency and halved the number of steel workers.

'Shouldn't wonder if they didn't get chucking bombs,' said Barnet's informant, hovered for a moment, and then went on his way to the Alhambra music hall.

Barnet became aware of an excitement in the newspaper kiosks at

the corners of the square. Something very sensational had been flashed upon the transparencies. Forgetting for a moment his penniless condition, he made his way over a bridge to buy a paper, for in those days the papers, which were printed upon thin sheets of metallic foil, were sold at determinate points by specially licensed purveyors. Half over, he stopped short at a change in the traffic below; and was astonished to see that the police signals were restricting vehicles to the half roadway. When presently he got within sight of the transparencies that had replaced the placards of Victorian times, he read of the Great March of the Unemployed that was already in progress through the West End, and so without expenditure he was able to understand what was coming.

He watched, and his book describes this procession which the police had considered it unwise to prevent and which had been spontaneously organised in imitation of the Unemployed Processions of earlier times. He had expected a mob but there was a kind of sullen discipline about the procession when at last it arrived. What seemed for a time an unending column of men marched wearily, marched with a kind of implacable futility, along the roadway underneath him. He was, he says, moved to join them, but instead he remained watching. They were a dingy, shabby, ineffective-looking multitude, for the most part incapable of any but obsolete and superseded types of labour. They bore a few banners with the time-honoured inscription: 'Work, not Charity,' but otherwise their ranks were unadorned.

They were not singing, they were not even talking, there was nothing truculent nor aggressive in their bearing, they had no definite objective they were just marching and showing themselves in the more prosperous parts of London. They were a sample of that great mass of unskilled cheap labour which the now still cheaper mechanical powers had superseded for evermore. They were being 'scrapped'--as horses had been 'scrapped.'

Barnet leant over the parapet watching them, his mind quickened by his own precarious condition. For a time, he says, he felt nothing but despair at the sight; what should be done, what could be done for this gathering surplus of humanity? They were so manifestly useless--and incapable--and pitiful.

What were they asking for?

They had been overtaken by unexpected things. Nobody had foreseen----

It flashed suddenly into his mind just what the multitudinous shambling enigma below meant. It was an appeal against the unexpected, an appeal to those others who, more fortunate, seemed wiser and more powerful, for something--for INTELLIGENCE. This mute mass, weary footed, rank following rank, protested its persuasion that some of these others must have foreseen these dislocations--that anyhow they ought to have foreseen--and arranged.

That was what this crowd of wreckage was feeling and seeking so dumbly to assert.

'Things came to me like the turning on of a light in a darkened room,' he says. 'These men were praying to their fellow creatures as once they prayed to God! The last thing that men will realise about anything is that it is inanimate. They had transferred their animation to mankind. They still believed there was intelligence somewhere, even if it was careless or malignant.... It had only to be aroused to be conscience-stricken, to be moved to exertion.... And I saw, too, that as yet THERE WAS NO SUCH INTELLIGENCE. The world waits for intelligence. That intelligence has still to be made, that will

for good and order has still to be gathered together, out of scraps of impulse and wandering seeds of benevolence and whatever is fine and creative in our souls, into a common purpose. It's something still to come....'

It is characteristic of the widening thought of the time that this not very heroic young man who, in any previous age, might well have been altogether occupied with the problem of his own individual necessities, should be able to stand there and generalise about the needs of the race.

But upon all the stresses and conflicts of that chaotic time there was already dawning the light of a new era. The spirit of humanity was escaping, even then it was escaping, from its extreme imprisonment in individuals. Salvation from the bitter intensities of self, which had been a conscious religious end for thousands of years, which men had sought in mortifications, in the wilderness, in meditation, and by innumerable strange paths, was coming at last with the effect of naturalness into the talk of men, into the books they read, into their unconscious gestures, into their newspapers and daily purposes and everyday acts. The broad horizons, the magic possibilities that the spirit of the seeker had revealed to them, were charming them out of those ancient and instinctive preoccupations from which the very threat of hell and torment had failed to drive them. And this young man, homeless and without provision even for the immediate hours, in the presence of social disorganisation, distress, and perplexity, in a blazing wilderness of thoughtless pleasure that blotted out the stars, could think as he tells us he thought.

'I saw life plain,' he wrote. 'I saw the gigantic task before us, and the very splendour of its intricate and immeasurable difficulty filled me with exaltation. I saw that we have still to discover government, that we have still to discover education, which is the necessary reciprocal of government, and that all

this--in which my own little speck of a life was so manifestly overwhelmed--this and its yesterday in Greece and Rome and Egypt were nothing, the mere first dust swirls of the beginning, the movements and dim murmurings of a sleeper who will presently be awake....'

Section 7

And then the story tells, with an engaging simplicity, of his descent from this ecstatic vision of reality.

'Presently I found myself again, and I was beginning to feel cold and a little hungry.'

He bethought himself of the John Burns Relief Offices which stood upon the Thames Embankment. He made his way through the galleries of the booksellers and the National Gallery, which had been open continuously day and night to all decently dressed people now for more than twelve years, and across the rose-gardens of Trafalgar Square, and so by the hotel colonnade to the Embankment. He had long known of these admirable offices, which had swept the last beggars and matchsellers and all the casual indigent from the London streets, and he believed that he would, as a matter of course, be able to procure a ticket for food and a night's lodgings and some indication of possible employment.

But he had not reckoned upon the new labour troubles, and when he got to the Embankment he found the offices hopelessly congested and besieged by a large and rather unruly crowd. He hovered for a time on the outskirts of the waiting multitude, perplexed and dismayed, and then he became aware of a movement, a purposive trickling away of people, up through the arches of the great buildings that had arisen when all the railway stations were removed to the south side of the river, and so to the covered

ways of the Strand. And here, in the open glare of midnight, he found unemployed men begging, and not only begging, but begging with astonishing assurance, from the people who were emerging from the small theatres and other such places of entertainment which abounded in that thoroughfare.

This was an altogether unexampled thing. There had been no begging in London streets for a quarter of a century. But that night the police were evidently unwilling or unable to cope with the destitute who were invading those well-kept quarters of the town. They had become stonily blind to anything but manifest disorder.

Barnet walked through the crowd, unable to bring himself to ask; indeed his bearing must have been more valiant than his circumstances, for twice he says that he was begged from. Near the Trafalgar Square gardens, a girl with reddened cheeks and blackened eyebrows, who was walking alone, spoke to him with a peculiar friendliness.

'I'm starving,' he said to her abruptly.

'Oh! poor dear!' she said; and with the impulsive generosity of her kind, glanced round and slipped a silver piece into his hand....

It was a gift that, in spite of the precedent of De Quincey, might under the repressive social legislation of those times, have brought Barnet within reach of the prison lash. But he took it, he confesses, and thanked her as well as he was able, and went off very gladly to get food.

Section 8

A day or so later--and again his freedom to go as he pleased upon

the roads may be taken as a mark of increasing social disorganisation and police embarrassment--he wandered out into the open country. He speaks of the roads of that plutocratic age as being 'fenced with barbed wire against unpropertied people,' of the high-walled gardens and trespass warnings that kept him to the dusty narrowness of the public ways. In the air, happy rich people were flying, heedless of the misfortunes about them, as he himself had been flying two years ago, and along the road swept the new traffic, light and swift and wonderful. One was rarely out of earshot of its whistles and gongs and siren cries even in the field paths or over the open downs. The officials of the labour exchanges were everywhere overworked and infuriated, the casual wards were so crowded that the surplus wanderers slept in ranks under sheds or in the open air, and since giving to wayfarers had been made a punishable offence there was no longer friendship or help for a man from the rare foot passenger or the wayside cottage....

'I wasn't angry,' said Barnet. 'I saw an immense selfishness, a monstrous disregard for anything but pleasure and possession in all those people above us, but I saw how inevitable that was, how certainly if the richest had changed places with the poorest, that things would have been the same. What else can happen when men use science and every new thing that science gives, and all their available intelligence and energy to manufacture wealth and appliances, and leave government and education to the rustling traditions of hundreds of years ago? Those traditions come from the dark ages when there was really not enough for every one, when life was a fierce struggle that might be masked but could not be escaped. Of course this famine grabbing, this fierce dispossession of others, must follow from such a disharmony between material and training. Of course the rich were vulgar and the poor grew savage and every added power that came to men made the rich richer and the poor less necessary and less free. The men I met in the casual wards and the relief offices were all

smouldering for revolt, talking of justice and injustice and revenge. I saw no hope in that talk, nor in anything but patience....'

But he did not mean a passive patience. He meant that the method of social reconstruction was still a riddle, that no effectual rearrangement was possible until this riddle in all its tangled aspects was solved. 'I tried to talk to those discontented men,' he wrote, 'but it was hard for them to see things as I saw them. When I talked of patience and the larger scheme, they answered, "But then we shall all be dead"--and I could not make them see, what is so simple to my own mind, that that did not affect the question. Men who think in lifetimes are of no use to statesmanship.'

He does not seem to have seen a newspaper during those wanderings, and a chance sight of the transparency of a kiosk in the market-place at Bishop's Stortford announcing a 'Grave International Situation' did not excite him very much. There had been so many grave international situations in recent years.

This time it was talk of the Central European powers suddenly attacking the Slav Confederacy, with France and England going to the help of the Slavs.

But the next night he found a tolerable meal awaiting the vagrants in the casual ward, and learnt from the workhouse master that all serviceable trained men were to be sent back on the morrow to their mobilisation centres. The country was on the eve of war. He was to go back through London to Surrey. His first feeling, he records, was one of extreme relief that his days of 'hopeless battering at the underside of civilisation' were at an end. Here was something definite to do, something definitely provided for. But his relief was greatly modified when he found that the mobilisation arrangements had been made so hastily and

carelessly that for nearly thirty-six hours at the improvised depot at Epsom he got nothing either to eat or to drink but a cup of cold water. The depot was absolutely unprovisioned, and no one was free to leave it.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

THE LAST WAR

Section I

Viewed from the standpoint of a sane and ambitious social order, it is difficult to understand, and it would be tedious to follow, the motives that plunged mankind into the war that fills the histories of the middle decades of the twentieth century.

It must always be remembered that the political structure of the world at that time was everywhere extraordinarily behind the collective intelligence. That is the central fact of that history. For two hundred years there had been no great changes in political or legal methods and pretensions, the utmost change had been a certain shifting of boundaries and slight readjustment of procedure, while in nearly every other aspect of life there had been fundamental revolutions, gigantic releases, and an enormous enlargement of scope and outlook. The absurdities of courts and the indignities of representative parliamentary government, coupled with the opening of vast fields of opportunity in other directions, had withdrawn the best intelligences more and more from public affairs. The ostensible governments of the world in the twentieth century were following in the wake of the ostensible religions. They were ceasing to command the services of any but second-rate men. After the middle of the eighteenth century there are no more great ecclesiastics upon the world's memory, after the opening of the twentieth no more statesmen. Everywhere one finds an energetic, ambitious, short-sighted, common-place type in the seats of authority, blind to the new possibilities and litigiously reliant upon the traditions of the past.

Perhaps the most dangerous of those outworn traditions were the

boundaries of the various 'sovereign states,' and the conception of a general predominance in human affairs on the part of some one particular state. The memory of the empires of Rome and Alexander squatted, an unlaid carnivorous ghost, in the human imagination--it bored into the human brain like some grisly parasite and filled it with disordered thoughts and violent impulses. For more than a century the French system exhausted its vitality in belligerent convulsions, and then the infection passed to the German-speaking peoples who were the heart and centre of Europe, and from them onward to the Slavs. Later ages were to store and neglect the vast insane literature of this obsession, the intricate treaties, the secret agreements, the infinite knowingness of the political writer, the cunning refusals to accept plain facts, the strategic devices, the tactical manoeuvres, the records of mobilisations and counter-mobilisations. It ceased to be credible almost as soon as it ceased to happen, but in the very dawn of the new age their state craftsmen sat with their historical candles burning, and, in spite of strange, new reflections and unfamiliar lights and shadows, still wrangling and planning to rearrange the maps of Europe and the world.

It was to become a matter for subtle inquiry how far the millions of men and women outside the world of these specialists sympathised and agreed with their portentous activities. One school of psychologists inclined to minimise this participation, but the balance of evidence goes to show that there were massive responses to these suggestions of the belligerent schemer. Primitive man had been a fiercely combative animal; innumerable generations had passed their lives in tribal warfare, and the weight of tradition, the example of history, the ideals of loyalty and devotion fell in easily enough with the incitements of the international mischief-maker. The political ideas of the common man were picked up haphazard, there was practically nothing in such education as he was given that was ever intended

to fit him for citizenship as such (that conception only appeared, indeed, with the development of Modern State ideas), and it was therefore a comparatively easy matter to fill his vacant mind with the sounds and fury of exasperated suspicion and national aggression.

For example, Barnett describes the London crowd as noisily patriotic when presently his battalion came up from the depot to London, to entrain for the French frontier. He tells of children and women and lads and old men cheering and shouting, of the streets and rows hung with the flags of the Allied Powers, of a real enthusiasm even among the destitute and unemployed. The Labour Bureaux were now partially transformed into enrolment offices, and were centres of hotly patriotic excitement. At every convenient place upon the line on either side of the Channel Tunnel there were enthusiastic spectators, and the feeling in the regiment, if a little stiffened and darkened by grim anticipations, was none the less warlike.

But all this emotion was the fickle emotion of minds without established ideas; it was with most of them, Barnett says, as it was with himself, a natural response to collective movement, and to martial sounds and colours, and the exhilarating challenge of vague dangers. And people had been so long oppressed by the threat of and preparation for war that its arrival came with an effect of positive relief.

Section 2

The plan of campaign of the Allies assigned the defence of the lower Meuse to the English, and the troop-trains were run direct from the various British depots to the points in the Ardennes where they were intended to entrench themselves.

Most of the documents bearing upon the campaign were destroyed

during the war, from the first the scheme of the Allies seems to have been confused, but it is highly probable that the formation of an aerial park in this region, from which attacks could be made upon the vast industrial plant of the lower Rhine, and a flanking raid through Holland upon the German naval establishments at the mouth of the Elbe, were integral parts of the original project. Nothing of this was known to such pawns in the game as Barnet and his company, whose business it was to do what they were told by the mysterious intelligences at the direction of things in Paris, to which city the Whitehall staff had also been transferred. From first to last these directing intelligences remained mysterious to the body of the army, veiled under the name of 'Orders.' There was no Napoleon, no Caesar to embody enthusiasm. Barnet says, 'We talked of Them. THEY are sending us up into Luxembourg. THEY are going to turn the Central European right.'

Behind the veil of this vagueness the little group of more or less worthy men which constituted Headquarters was beginning to realise the enormity of the thing it was supposed to control....

In the great hall of the War Control, whose windows looked out across the Seine to the Trocadero and the palaces of the western quarter, a series of big-scale relief maps were laid out upon tables to display the whole seat of war, and the staff-officers of the control were continually busy shifting the little blocks which represented the contending troops, as the reports and intelligence came drifting in to the various telegraphic bureaux in the adjacent rooms. In other smaller apartments there were maps of a less detailed sort, upon which, for example, the reports of the British Admiralty and of the Slav commanders were recorded as they kept coming to hand. Upon these maps, as upon chessboards, Marshal Dubois, in consultation with General Viard and the Earl of Delhi, was to play the great game for world supremacy against the Central European powers. Very probably he

had a definite idea of his game; very probably he had a coherent and admirable plan.

But he had reckoned without a proper estimate either of the new strategy of aviation or of the possibilities of atomic energy that Holsten had opened for mankind. While he planned entrenchments and invasions and a frontier war, the Central European generalship was striking at the eyes and the brain. And while, with a certain diffident hesitation, he developed his gambit that night upon the lines laid down by Napoleon and Moltke, his own scientific corps in a state of mutinous activity was preparing a blow for Berlin. "These old fools!" was the key in which the scientific corps was thinking.

The War Control in Paris, on the night of July the second, was an impressive display of the paraphernalia of scientific military organisation, as the first half of the twentieth century understood it. To one human being at least the consulting commanders had the likeness of world-wielding gods.

She was a skilled typist, capable of nearly sixty words a minute, and she had been engaged in relay with other similar women to take down orders in duplicate and hand them over to the junior officers in attendance, to be forwarded and filed. There had come a lull, and she had been sent out from the dictating room to take the air upon the terrace before the great hall and to eat such scanty refreshment as she had brought with her until her services were required again.

From her position upon the terrace this young woman had a view not only of the wide sweep of the river below her, and all the eastward side of Paris from the Arc de Triomphe to Saint Cloud, great blocks and masses of black or pale darkness with pink and golden flashes of illumination and endless interlacing bands of dotted lights under a still and starless sky, but also the whole

spacious interior of the great hall with its slender pillars and gracious arching and clustering lamps was visible to her. There, over a wilderness of tables, lay the huge maps, done on so large a scale that one might fancy them small countries; the messengers and attendants went and came perpetually, altering, moving the little pieces that signified hundreds and thousands of men, and the great commander and his two consultants stood amidst all these things and near where the fighting was nearest, scheming, directing. They had but to breathe a word and presently away there, in the world of reality, the punctual myriads moved. Men rose up and went forward and died. The fate of nations lay behind the eyes of these three men. Indeed they were like gods.

Most godlike of the three was Dubois. It was for him to decide; the others at most might suggest. Her woman's soul went out to this grave, handsome, still, old man, in a passion of instinctive worship.

Once she had taken words of instruction from him direct. She had awaited them in an ecstasy of happiness--and fear. For her exaltation was made terrible by the dread that some error might dishonour her....

She watched him now through the glass with all the unpenetrating minuteness of an impassioned woman's observation.

He said little, she remarked. He looked but little at the maps. The tall Englishman beside him was manifestly troubled by a swarm of ideas, conflicting ideas; he craned his neck at every shifting of the little red, blue, black, and yellow pieces on the board, and wanted to draw the commander's attention to this and that. Dubois listened, nodded, emitted a word and became still again, brooding like the national eagle.

His eyes were so deeply sunken under his white eyebrows that she

could not see his eyes; his moustache overhung the mouth from which those words of decision came. Viard, too, said little; he was a dark man with a drooping head and melancholy, watchful eyes. He was more intent upon the French right, which was feeling its way now through Alsace to the Rhine. He was, she knew, an old colleague of Dubois; he knew him better, she decided, he trusted him more than this unfamiliar Englishman....

Not to talk, to remain impassive and as far as possible in profile; these were the lessons that old Dubois had mastered years ago. To seem to know all, to betray no surprise, to refuse to hurry--itself a confession of miscalculation; by attention to these simple rules, Dubois had built up a steady reputation from the days when he had been a promising junior officer, a still, almost abstracted young man, deliberate but ready. Even then men had looked at him and said: 'He will go far.' Through fifty years of peace he had never once been found wanting, and at manoeuvres his impassive persistence had perplexed and hypnotised and defeated many a more actively intelligent man. Deep in his soul Dubois had hidden his one profound discovery about the modern art of warfare, the key to his career. And this discovery was that **NOBODY KNEW**, that to act therefore was to blunder, that to talk was to confess; and that the man who acted slowly and steadfastly and above all silently, had the best chance of winning through. Meanwhile one fed the men. Now by this same strategy he hoped to shatter those mysterious unknowns of the Central European command. Delhi might talk of a great flank march through Holland, with all the British submarines and hydroplanes and torpedo craft pouring up the Rhine in support of it; Viard might crave for brilliance with the motor bicycles, aeroplanes, and ski-men among the Swiss mountains, and a sudden swoop upon Vienna; the thing was to listen--and wait for the other side to begin experimenting. It was all experimenting. And meanwhile he remained in profile, with an air of assurance--like a man who sits in an automobile after the chauffeur has had his directions.

And every one about him was the stronger and surer for that quiet face, that air of knowledge and unruffled confidence. The clustering lights threw a score of shadows of him upon the maps, great bunches of him, versions of a commanding presence, lighter or darker, dominated the field, and pointed in every direction. Those shadows symbolised his control. When a messenger came from the wireless room to shift this or that piece in the game, to replace under amended reports one Central European regiment by a score, to draw back or thrust out or distribute this or that force of the Allies, the Marshal would turn his head and seem not to see, or look and nod slightly, as a master nods who approves a pupil's self-correction. 'Yes, that's better.'

How wonderful he was, thought the woman at the window, how wonderful it all was. This was the brain of the western world, this was Olympus with the warring earth at its feet. And he was guiding France, France so long a resentful exile from imperialism, back to her old predominance.

It seemed to her beyond the desert of a woman that she should be privileged to participate....

It is hard to be a woman, full of the stormy impulse to personal devotion, and to have to be impersonal, abstract, exact, punctual. She must control herself....

She gave herself up to fantastic dreams, dreams of the days when the war would be over and victory enthroned. Then perhaps this harshness, this armour would be put aside and the gods might unbend. Her eyelids drooped....

She roused herself with a start. She became aware that the night outside was no longer still. That there was an excitement down below on the bridge and a running in the street and a flickering

of searchlights among the clouds from some high place away beyond the Trocadero. And then the excitement came surging up past her and invaded the hall within.

One of the sentinels from the terrace stood at the upper end of the room, gesticulating and shouting something.

And all the world had changed. A kind of throbbing. She couldn't understand. It was as if all the water-pipes and concealed machinery and cables of the ways beneath, were beating--as pulses beat. And about her blew something like a wind--a wind that was dismay.

Her eyes went to the face of the Marshal as a frightened child might look towards its mother.

He was still serene. He was frowning slightly, she thought, but that was natural enough, for the Earl of Delhi, with one hand gauntly gesticulating, had taken him by the arm and was all too manifestly disposed to drag him towards the great door that opened on the terrace. And Viard was hurrying towards the huge windows and doing so in the strangest of attitudes, bent forward and with eyes upturned.

Something up there?

And then it was as if thunder broke overhead.

The sound struck her like a blow. She crouched together against the masonry and looked up. She saw three black shapes swooping down through the torn clouds, and from a point a little below two of them, there had already started curling trails of red....

Everything else in her being was paralysed, she hung through moments that seemed infinities, watching those red missiles whirl

down towards her.

She felt torn out of the world. There was nothing else in the world but a crimson-purple glare and sound, deafening, all-embracing, continuing sound. Every other light had gone out about her and against this glare hung slanting walls, pirouetting pillars, projecting fragments of cornices, and a disorderly flight of huge angular sheets of glass. She had an impression of a great ball of crimson-purple fire like a maddened living thing that seemed to be whirling about very rapidly amidst a chaos of falling masonry, that seemed to be attacking the earth furiously, that seemed to be burrowing into it like a blazing rabbit . . .

She had all the sensations of waking up out of a dream.

She found she was lying face downward on a bank of mould and that a little rivulet of hot water was running over one foot. She tried to raise herself and found her leg was very painful. She was not clear whether it was night or day nor where she was; she made a second effort, wincing and groaning, and turned over and got into a sitting position and looked about her.

Everything seemed very silent. She was, in fact, in the midst of a vast uproar, but she did not realise this because her hearing had been destroyed.

At first she could not join on what she saw to any previous experience.

She seemed to be in a strange world, a soundless, ruinous world, a world of heaped broken things. And it was lit--and somehow this was more familiar to her mind than any other fact about her--by a flickering, purplish-crimson light. Then close to her, rising above a confusion of debris, she recognised the Trocadero; it was changed, something had gone from it, but its outline was

unmistakable. It stood out against a streaming, whirling uprush of red-lit steam. And with that she recalled Paris and the Seine and the warm, overcast evening and the beautiful, luminous organisation of the War Control....

She drew herself a little way up the slope of earth on which she lay, and examined her surroundings with an increasing understanding....

The earth on which she was lying projected like a cape into the river. Quite close to her was a brimming lake of dammed-up water, from which these warm rivulets and torrents were trickling. Wisps of vapour came into circling existence a foot or so from its mirror-surface. Near at hand and reflected exactly in the water was the upper part of a familiar-looking stone pillar. On the side of her away from the water the heaped ruins rose steeply in a confused slope up to a glaring crest. Above and reflecting this glare towered pillowed masses of steam rolling swiftly upward to the zenith. It was from this crest that the livid glow that lit the world about her proceeded, and slowly her mind connected this mound with the vanished buildings of the War Control.

'Mais!' she whispered, and remained with staring eyes quite motionless for a time, crouching close to the warm earth.

Then presently this dim, broken human thing began to look about it again. She began to feel the need of fellowship. She wanted to question, wanted to speak, wanted to relate her experience. And her foot hurt her atrociously. There ought to be an ambulance. A little gust of querulous criticisms blew across her mind. This surely was a disaster! Always after a disaster there should be ambulances and helpers moving about....

She craned her head. There was something there. But everything

was so still!

'Monsieur!' she cried. Her ears, she noted, felt queer, and she began to suspect that all was not well with them.

It was terribly lonely in this chaotic strangeness, and perhaps this man--if it was a man, for it was difficult to see--might for all his stillness be merely insensible. He might have been stunned....

The leaping glare beyond sent a ray into his corner and for a moment every little detail was distinct. It was Marshal Dubois. He was lying against a huge slab of the war map. To it there stuck and from it there dangled little wooden objects, the symbols of infantry and cavalry and guns, as they were disposed upon the frontier. He did not seem to be aware of this at his back, he had an effect of inattention, not indifferent attention, but as if he were thinking....

She could not see the eyes beneath his shaggy brows, but it was evident he frowned. He frowned slightly, he had an air of not wanting to be disturbed. His face still bore that expression of assured confidence, that conviction that if things were left to him France might obey in security....

She did not cry out to him again, but she crept a little nearer. A strange surmise made her eyes dilate. With a painful wrench she pulled herself up so that she could see completely over the intervening lumps of smashed-up masonry. Her hand touched something wet, and after one convulsive movement she became rigid.

It was not a whole man there; it was a piece of a man, the head and shoulders of a man that trailed down into a ragged darkness and a pool of shining black....

And even as she stared the mound above her swayed and crumbled, and a rush of hot water came pouring over her. Then it seemed to her that she was dragged downward....

Section 3

When the rather brutish young aviator with the bullet head and the black hair close-cropped en brosse, who was in charge of the French special scientific corps, heard presently of this disaster to the War Control, he was so wanting in imagination in any sphere but his own, that he laughed. Small matter to him that Paris was burning. His mother and father and sister lived at Caudebec; and the only sweetheart he had ever had, and it was poor love-making then, was a girl in Rouen. He slapped his second-in-command on the shoulder. 'Now,' he said, 'there's nothing on earth to stop us going to Berlin and giving them tit-for-tat.... Strategy and reasons of state--they're over.... Come along, my boy, and we'll just show these old women what we can do when they let us have our heads.'

He spent five minutes telephoning and then he went out into the courtyard of the chateau in which he had been installed and shouted for his automobile. Things would have to move quickly because there was scarcely an hour and a half before dawn. He looked at the sky and noted with satisfaction a heavy bank of clouds athwart the pallid east.

He was a young man of infinite shrewdness, and his material and aeroplanes were scattered all over the country-side, stuck away in barns, covered with hay, hidden in woods. A hawk could not have discovered any of them without coming within reach of a gun. But that night he only wanted one of the machines, and it was handy and quite prepared under a tarpaulin between two ricks not a couple of miles away; he was going to Berlin with that and just

one other man. Two men would be enough for what he meant to do....

He had in his hands the black complement to all those other gifts science was urging upon unregenerate mankind, the gift of destruction, and he was an adventurous rather than a sympathetic type....

He was a dark young man with something negroid about his gleaming face. He smiled like one who is favoured and anticipates great pleasures. There was an exotic richness, a chuckling flavour, about the voice in which he gave his orders, and he pointed his remarks with the long finger of a hand that was hairy and exceptionally big.

'We'll give them tit-for-tat,' he said. 'We'll give them tit-for-tat. No time to lose, boys....'

And presently over the cloud-banks that lay above Westphalia and Saxony the swift aeroplane, with its atomic engine as noiseless as a dancing sunbeam and its phosphorescent gyroscopic compass, flew like an arrow to the heart of the Central European hosts.

It did not soar very high; it skimmed a few hundred feet above the banked darknesses of cumulus that hid the world, ready to plunge at once into their wet obscurities should some hostile flier range into vision. The tense young steersman divided his attention between the guiding stars above and the level, tumbled surfaces of the vapour strata that hid the world below. Over great spaces those banks lay as even as a frozen lava-flow and almost as still, and then they were rent by ragged areas of translucency, pierced by clear chasms, so that dim patches of the land below gleamed remotely through abysses. Once he saw quite distinctly the plan of a big railway station outlined in lamps and signals, and once the flames of a burning rick showing livid

through a boiling drift of smoke on the side of some great hill. But if the world was masked it was alive with sounds. Up through that vapour floor came the deep roar of trains, the whistles of horns of motor-cars, a sound of rifle fire away to the south, and as he drew near his destination the crowing of cocks....

The sky above the indistinct horizons of this cloud sea was at first starry and then paler with a light that crept from north to east as the dawn came on. The Milky Way was invisible in the blue, and the lesser stars vanished. The face of the adventurer at the steering-wheel, darkly visible ever and again by the oval greenish glow of the compass face, had something of that firm beauty which all concentrated purpose gives, and something of the happiness of an idiot child that has at last got hold of the matches. His companion, a less imaginative type, sat with his legs spread wide over the long, coffin-shaped box which contained in its compartments the three atomic bombs, the new bombs that would continue to explode indefinitely and which no one so far had ever seen in action. Hitherto Carolinum, their essential substance, had been tested only in almost infinitesimal quantities within steel chambers embedded in lead. Beyond the thought of great destruction slumbering in the black spheres between his legs, and a keen resolve to follow out very exactly the instructions that had been given him, the man's mind was a blank. His aquiline profile against the starlight expressed nothing but a profound gloom.

The sky below grew clearer as the Central European capital was approached.

So far they had been singularly lucky and had been challenged by no aeroplanes at all. The frontier scouts they must have passed in the night; probably these were mostly under the clouds; the world was wide and they had had luck in not coming close to any soaring sentinel. Their machine was painted a pale gray, that

lay almost invisibly over the cloud levels below. But now the east was flushing with the near ascent of the sun, Berlin was but a score of miles ahead, and the luck of the Frenchmen held. By imperceptible degrees the clouds below dissolved....

Away to the north-eastward, in a cloudless pool of gathering light and with all its nocturnal illuminations still blazing, was Berlin. The left finger of the steersman verified roads and open spaces below upon the mica-covered square of map that was fastened by his wheel. There in a series of lake-like expansions was the Havel away to the right; over by those forests must be Spandau; there the river split about the Potsdam island; and right ahead was Charlottenburg cleft by a great thoroughfare that fell like an indicating beam of light straight to the imperial headquarters. There, plain enough, was the Thiergarten; beyond rose the imperial palace, and to the right those tall buildings, those clustering, beflagged, bemasted roofs, must be the offices in which the Central European staff was housed. It was all coldly clear and colourless in the dawn.

He looked up suddenly as a humming sound grew out of nothing and became swiftly louder. Nearly overhead a German aeroplane was circling down from an immense height to challenge him. He made a gesture with his left arm to the gloomy man behind and then gripped his little wheel with both hands, crouched over it, and twisted his neck to look upward. He was attentive, tightly strung, but quite contemptuous of their ability to hurt him. No German alive, he was assured, could outfly him, or indeed any one of the best Frenchmen. He imagined they might strike at him as a hawk strikes, but they were men coming down out of the bitter cold up there, in a hungry, spiritless, morning mood; they came slanting down like a sword swung by a lazy man, and not so rapidly but that he was able to slip away from under them and get between them and Berlin. They began challenging him in German with a megaphone when they were still perhaps a mile away. The

words came to him, rolled up into a mere blob of hoarse sound. Then, gathering alarm from his grim silence, they gave chase and swept down, a hundred yards above him perhaps, and a couple of hundred behind. They were beginning to understand what he was. He ceased to watch them and concentrated himself on the city ahead, and for a time the two aeroplanes raced....

A bullet came tearing through the air by him, as though some one was tearing paper. A second followed. Something tapped the machine.

It was time to act. The broad avenues, the park, the palaces below rushed widening out nearer and nearer to them. 'Ready!' said the steersman.

The gaunt face hardened to grimness, and with both hands the bomb-thrower lifted the big atomic bomb from the box and steadied it against the side. It was a black sphere two feet in diameter. Between its handles was a little celluloid stud, and to this he bent his head until his lips touched it. Then he had to bite in order to let the air in upon the inducive. Sure of its accessibility, he craned his neck over the side of the aeroplane and judged his pace and distance. Then very quickly he bent forward, bit the stud, and hoisted the bomb over the side.

'Round,' he whispered inaudibly.

The bomb flashed blinding scarlet in mid-air, and fell, a descending column of blaze eddying spirally in the midst of a whirlwind. Both the aeroplanes were tossed like shuttlecocks, hurled high and sideways and the steersman, with gleaming eyes and set teeth, fought in great banking curves for a balance. The gaunt man clung tight with hand and knees; his nostrils dilated, his teeth biting his lips. He was firmly strapped....

When he could look down again it was like looking down upon the crater of a small volcano. In the open garden before the Imperial castle a shuddering star of evil splendour spurted and poured up smoke and flame towards them like an accusation. They were too high to distinguish people clearly, or mark the bomb's effect upon the building until suddenly the facade tottered and crumbled before the flare as sugar dissolves in water. The man stared for a moment, showed all his long teeth, and then staggered into the cramped standing position his straps permitted, hoisted out and bit another bomb, and sent it down after its fellow.

The explosion came this time more directly underneath the aeroplane and shot it upward edgewise. The bomb box tipped to the point of disgorgement, and the bomb-thrower was pitched forward upon the third bomb with his face close to its celluloid stud. He clutched its handles, and with a sudden gust of determination that the thing should not escape him, bit its stud. Before he could hurl it over, the monoplane was slipping sideways. Everything was falling sideways. Instinctively he gave himself up to gripping, his body holding the bomb in its place.

Then that bomb had exploded also, and steersman, thrower, and aeroplane were just flying rags and splinters of metal and drops of moisture in the air, and a third column of fire rushed eddying down upon the doomed buildings below....

Section 4

Never before in the history of warfare had there been a continuing explosive; indeed, up to the middle of the twentieth century the only explosives known were combustibles whose explosiveness was due entirely to their instantaneousness; and these atomic bombs which science burst upon the world that night were strange even to the men who used them. Those used by the

Allies were lumps of pure Carolinum, painted on the outside with unoxidised cydonator inducive enclosed hermetically in a case of membranum. A little celluloid stud between the handles by which the bomb was lifted was arranged so as to be easily torn off and admit air to the inducive, which at once became active and set up radio-activity in the outer layer of the Carolinum sphere. This liberated fresh inducive, and so in a few minutes the whole bomb was a blazing continual explosion. The Central European bombs were the same, except that they were larger and had a more complicated arrangement for animating the inducive.

Always before in the development of warfare the shells and rockets fired had been but momentarily explosive, they had gone off in an instant once for all, and if there was nothing living or valuable within reach of the concussion and the flying fragments then they were spent and over. But Carolinum, which belonged to the beta group of Hyslop's so-called 'suspended degenerator' elements, once its degenerative process had been induced, continued a furious radiation of energy and nothing could arrest it. Of all Hyslop's artificial elements, Carolinum was the most heavily stored with energy and the most dangerous to make and handle. To this day it remains the most potent degenerator known. What the earlier twentieth-century chemists called its half period was seventeen days; that is to say, it poured out half of the huge store of energy in its great molecules in the space of seventeen days, the next seventeen days' emission was a half of that first period's outpouring, and so on. As with all radio-active substances this Carolinum, though every seventeen days its power is halved, though constantly it diminishes towards the imperceptible, is never entirely exhausted, and to this day the battle-fields and bomb fields of that frantic time in human history are sprinkled with radiant matter, and so centres of inconvenient rays.

What happened when the celluloid stud was opened was that the

inducive oxidised and became active. Then the surface of the Carolinum began to degenerate. This degeneration passed only slowly into the substance of the bomb. A moment or so after its explosion began it was still mainly an inert sphere exploding superficially, a big, inanimate nucleus wrapped in flame and thunder. Those that were thrown from aeroplanes fell in this state, they reached the ground still mainly solid, and, melting soil and rock in their progress, bored into the earth. There, as more and more of the Carolinum became active, the bomb spread itself out into a monstrous cavern of fiery energy at the base of what became very speedily a miniature active volcano. The Carolinum, unable to disperse, freely drove into and mixed up with a boiling confusion of molten soil and superheated steam, and so remained spinning furiously and maintaining an eruption that lasted for years or months or weeks according to the size of the bomb employed and the chances of its dispersal. Once launched, the bomb was absolutely unapproachable and uncontrollable until its forces were nearly exhausted, and from the crater that burst open above it, puffs of heavy incandescent vapour and fragments of viciously punitive rock and mud, saturated with Carolinum, and each a centre of scorching and blistering energy, were flung high and far.

Such was the crowning triumph of military science, the ultimate explosive that was to give the 'decisive touch' to war....

Section 5

A recent historical writer has described the world of that time as one that 'believed in established words and was invincibly blind to the obvious in things.' Certainly it seems now that nothing could have been more obvious to the people of the earlier twentieth century than the rapidity with which war was becoming impossible. And as certainly they did not see it. They did not see it until the atomic bombs burst in their fumbling hands. Yet

the broad facts must have glared upon any intelligent mind. All through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the amount of energy that men were able to command was continually increasing. Applied to warfare that meant that the power to inflict a blow, the power to destroy, was continually increasing. There was no increase whatever in the ability to escape. Every sort of passive defence, armour, fortifications, and so forth, was being outmastered by this tremendous increase on the destructive side. Destruction was becoming so facile that any little body of malcontents could use it; it was revolutionising the problems of police and internal rule. Before the last war began it was a matter of common knowledge that a man could carry about in a handbag an amount of latent energy sufficient to wreck half a city. These facts were before the minds of everybody; the children in the streets knew them. And yet the world still, as the Americans used to phrase it, 'fooled around' with the paraphernalia and pretensions of war.

It is only by realising this profound, this fantastic divorce between the scientific and intellectual movement on the one hand, and the world of the lawyer-politician on the other, that the men of a later time can hope to understand this preposterous state of affairs. Social organisation was still in the barbaric stage. There were already great numbers of actively intelligent men and much private and commercial civilisation, but the community, as a whole, was aimless, untrained and unorganised to the pitch of imbecility. Collective civilisation, the 'Modern State,' was still in the womb of the future....

Section 6

But let us return to Frederick Barnet's *Wander Jahre* and its account of the experiences of a common man during the war time. While these terrific disclosures of scientific possibility were happening in Paris and Berlin, Barnet and his company were

industriously entrenching themselves in Belgian Luxembourg.

He tells of the mobilisation and of his summer day's journey through the north of France and the Ardennes in a few vivid phrases. The country was browned by a warm summer, the trees a little touched with autumnal colour, and the wheat already golden. When they stopped for an hour at Hirson, men and women with tricolour badges upon the platform distributed cakes and glasses of beer to the thirsty soldiers, and there was much cheerfulness. 'Such good, cool beer it was,' he wrote. 'I had had nothing to eat nor drink since Epsom.'

A number of monoplanes, 'like giant swallows,' he notes, were scouting in the pink evening sky.

Barnet's battalion was sent through the Sedan country to a place called Virton, and thence to a point in the woods on the line to Jemelle. Here they detrained, bivouacked uneasily by the railway--trains and stores were passing along it all night--and next morning he: marched eastward through a cold, overcast dawn, and a morning, first cloudy and then blazing, over a large spacious country-side interspersed by forest towards Arlon.

There the infantry were set to work upon a line of masked entrenchments and hidden rifle pits between St Hubert and Virton that were designed to check and delay any advance from the east upon the fortified line of the Meuse. They had their orders, and for two days they worked without either a sight of the enemy or any suspicion of the disaster that had abruptly decapitated the armies of Europe, and turned the west of Paris and the centre of Berlin into blazing miniatures of the destruction of Pompeii.

And the news, when it did come, came attenuated. 'We heard there had been mischief with aeroplanes and bombs in Paris,' Barnet relates; 'but it didn't seem to follow that "They" weren't still

somewhere elaborating their plans and issuing orders. When the enemy began to emerge from the woods in front of us, we cheered and blazed away, and didn't trouble much more about anything but the battle in hand. If now and then one cocked up an eye into the sky to see what was happening there, the rip of a bullet soon brought one down to the horizontal again....

That battle went on for three days all over a great stretch of country between Louvain on the north and Longwy to the south. It was essentially a rifle and infantry struggle. The aeroplanes do not seem to have taken any decisive share in the actual fighting for some days, though no doubt they effected the strategy from the first by preventing surprise movements. They were aeroplanes with atomic engines, but they were not provided with atomic bombs, which were manifestly unsuitable for field use, nor indeed had they any very effective kind of bomb. And though they manoeuvred against each other, and there was rifle shooting at them and between them, there was little actual aerial fighting. Either the airmen were indisposed to fight or the commanders on both sides preferred to reserve these machines for scouting....

After a day or so of digging and scheming, Barnett found himself in the forefront of a battle. He had made his section of rifle pits chiefly along a line of deep dry ditch that gave a means of inter-communication, he had had the earth scattered over the adjacent field, and he had masked his preparations with tussocks of corn and poppy. The hostile advance came blindly and unsuspectingly across the fields below and would have been very cruelly handled indeed, if some one away to the right had not opened fire too soon.

'It was a queer thrill when these fellows came into sight,' he confesses; 'and not a bit like manoeuvres. They halted for a time on the edge of the wood and then came forward in an open line. They kept walking nearer to us and not looking at us, but

away to the right of us. Even when they began to be hit, and their officers' whistles woke them up, they didn't seem to see us. One or two halted to fire, and then they all went back towards the wood again. They went slowly at first, looking round at us, then the shelter of the wood seemed to draw them, and they trotted. I fired rather mechanically and missed, then I fired again, and then I became earnest to hit something, made sure of my sighting, and aimed very carefully at a blue back that was dodging about in the corn. At first I couldn't satisfy myself and didn't shoot, his movements were so spasmodic and uncertain; then I think he came to a ditch or some such obstacle and halted for a moment. "GOT you," I whispered, and pulled the trigger.

'I had the strangest sensations about that man. In the first instance, when I felt that I had hit him I was irradiated with joy and pride....

'I sent him spinning. He jumped and threw up his arms....

'Then I saw the corn tops waving and had glimpses of him flapping about. Suddenly I felt sick. I hadn't killed him....

'In some way he was disabled and smashed up and yet able to struggle about. I began to think....

'For nearly two hours that Prussian was agonising in the corn. Either he was calling out or some one was shouting to him....

'Then he jumped up--he seemed to try to get up upon his feet with one last effort; and then he fell like a sack and lay quite still and never moved again.

'He had been unendurable, and I believe some one had shot him dead. I had been wanting to do so for some time....'

The enemy began sniping the rifle pits from shelters they made for themselves in the woods below. A man was hit in the pit next to Barnet, and began cursing and crying out in a violent rage. Barnet crawled along the ditch to him and found him in great pain, covered with blood, frantic with indignation, and with the half of his right hand smashed to a pulp. 'Look at this,' he kept repeating, hugging it and then extending it. 'Damned foolery! Damned foolery! My right hand, sir! My right hand!'

For some time Barnet could do nothing with him. The man was consumed by his tortured realisation of the evil silliness of war, the realisation which had come upon him in a flash with the bullet that had destroyed his skill and use as an artificer for ever. He was looking at the vestiges with a horror that made him impenetrable to any other idea. At last the poor wretch let Barnet tie up his bleeding stump and help him along the ditch that conducted him deviously out of range....

When Barnet returned his men were already calling out for water, and all day long the line of pits suffered greatly from thirst. For food they had chocolate and bread.

'At first,' he says, 'I was extraordinarily excited by my baptism of fire. Then as the heat of the day came on I experienced an enormous tedium and discomfort. The flies became extremely troublesome, and my little grave of a rifle pit was invaded by ants. I could not get up or move about, for some one in the trees had got a mark on me. I kept thinking of the dead Prussian down among the corn, and of the bitter outcries of my own man. Damned foolery! It WAS damned foolery. But who was to blame? How had we got to this? . . .

'Early in the afternoon an aeroplane tried to dislodge us with dynamite bombs, but she was hit by bullets once or twice, and suddenly dived down over beyond the trees.

' "From Holland to the Alps this day," I thought, "there must be crouching and lying between half and a million of men, trying to inflict irreparable damage upon one another. The thing is idiotic to the pitch of impossibility. It is a dream. Presently I shall wake up." . . .

'Then the phrase changed itself in my mind. "Presently mankind will wake up."

'I lay speculating just how many thousands of men there were among these hundreds of thousands, whose spirits were in rebellion against all these ancient traditions of flag and empire. Weren't we, perhaps, already in the throes of the last crisis, in that darkest moment of a nightmare's horror before the sleeper will endure no more of it--and wakes?

'I don't know how my speculations ended. I think they were not so much ended as distracted by the distant thudding of the guns that were opening fire at long range upon Namur.'

Section 7

But as yet Barnett had seen no more than the mildest beginnings of modern warfare. So far he had taken part only in a little shooting. The bayonet attack by which the advanced line was broken was made at a place called Croix Rouge, more than twenty miles away, and that night under cover of the darkness the rifle pits were abandoned and he got his company away without further loss.

His regiment fell back unpressed behind the fortified lines between Namur and Sedan, entrained at a station called Mettet, and was sent northward by Antwerp and Rotterdam to Haarlem. Hence they marched into North Holland. It was only after the

march into Holland that he began to realise the monstrous and catastrophic nature of the struggle in which he was playing his undistinguished part.

He describes very pleasantly the journey through the hills and open land of Brabant, the repeated crossing of arms of the Rhine, and the change from the undulating scenery of Belgium to the flat, rich meadows, the sunlit dyke roads, and the countless windmills of the Dutch levels. In those days there was unbroken land from Alkmaar and Leiden to the Dollart. Three great provinces, South Holland, North Holland, and Zuiderzeeland, reclaimed at various times between the early tenth century and 1945 and all many feet below the level of the waves outside the dykes, spread out their lush polders to the northern sun and sustained a dense industrious population. An intricate web of laws and custom and tradition ensured a perpetual vigilance and a perpetual defence against the beleaguering sea. For more than two hundred and fifty miles from Walcheren to Friesland stretched a line of embankments and pumping stations that was the admiration of the world.

If some curious god had chosen to watch the course of events in those northern provinces while that flanking march of the British was in progress, he would have found a convenient and appropriate seat for his observation upon one of the great cumulus clouds that were drifting slowly across the blue sky during all these eventful days before the great catastrophe. For that was the quality of the weather, hot and clear, with something of a breeze, and underfoot dry and a little inclined to be dusty. This watching god would have looked down upon broad stretches of sunlit green, sunlit save for the creeping patches of shadow cast by the clouds, upon sky-reflecting meres, fringed and divided up by masses of willow and large areas of silvery weeds, upon white roads lying bare to the sun and upon a tracery of blue canals. The pastures were alive with cattle, the roads had a busy

traffic, of beasts and bicycles and gaily coloured peasants' automobiles, the hues of the innumerable motor barges in the canal vied with the eventfulness of the roadways; and everywhere in solitary steadings, amidst ricks and barns, in groups by the wayside, in straggling villages, each with its fine old church, or in compact towns laced with canals and abounding in bridges and clipped trees, were human habitations.

The people of this country-side were not belligerents. The interests and sympathies alike of Holland had been so divided that to the end she remained undecided and passive in the struggle of the world powers. And everywhere along the roads taken by the marching armies clustered groups and crowds of impartially observant spectators, women and children in peculiar white caps and old-fashioned sabots, and elderly, clean-shaven men quietly thoughtful over their long pipes. They had no fear of their invaders; the days when 'soldiering' meant bands of licentious looters had long since passed away....

That watcher among the clouds would have seen a great distribution of khaki-uniformed men and khaki-painted material over the whole of the sunken area of Holland. He would have marked the long trains, packed with men or piled with great guns and war material, creeping slowly, alert for train-wreckers, along the north-going lines; he would have seen the Scheldt and Rhine choked with shipping, and pouring out still more men and still more material; he would have noticed halts and provisionings and detrainments, and the long, bustling caterpillars of cavalry and infantry, the maggot-like wagons, the huge beetles of great guns, crawling under the poplars along the dykes and roads northward, along ways lined by the neutral, unmolested, ambiguously observant Dutch. All the barges and shipping upon the canals had been requisitioned for transport. In that clear, bright, warm weather, it would all have looked from above like some extravagant festival of animated toys.

As the sun sank westward the spectacle must have become a little indistinct because of a golden haze; everything must have become warmer and more glowing, and because of the lengthening of the shadows more manifestly in relief. The shadows of the tall churches grew longer and longer, until they touched the horizon and mingled in the universal shadow; and then, slow, and soft, and wrapping the world in fold after fold of deepening blue, came the night--the night at first obscurely simple, and then with faint points here and there, and then jewelled in darkling splendour with a hundred thousand lights. Out of that mingling of darkness and ambiguous glares the noise of an unceasing activity would have arisen, the louder and plainer now because there was no longer any distraction of sight.

It may be that watcher drifting in the pellucid gulf beneath the stars watched all through the night; it may be that he dozed. But if he gave way to so natural a proclivity, assuredly on the fourth night of the great flank march he was aroused, for that was the night of the battle in the air that decided the fate of Holland. The aeroplanes were fighting at last, and suddenly about him, above and below, with cries and uproar rushing out of the four quarters of heaven, striking, plunging, oversetting, soaring to the zenith and dropping to the ground, they came to assail or defend the myriads below.

Secretly the Central European power had gathered his flying machines together, and now he threw them as a giant might fling a handful of ten thousand knives over the low country. And amidst that swarming flight were five that drove headlong for the sea walls of Holland, carrying atomic bombs. From north and west and south, the allied aeroplanes rose in response and swept down upon this sudden attack. So it was that war in the air began. Men rode upon the whirlwind that night and slew and fell like archangels. The sky rained heroes upon the astonished earth.

Surely the last fights of mankind were the best. What was the heavy pounding of your Homeric swordsmen, what was the creaking charge of chariots, beside this swift rush, this crash, this giddy triumph, this headlong swoop to death?

And then athwart this whirling rush of aerial duels that swooped and locked and dropped in the void between the lamp-lights and the stars, came a great wind and a crash louder than thunder, and first one and then a score of lengthening fiery serpents plunged hungrily down upon the Dutchmen's dykes and struck between land and sea and flared up again in enormous columns of glare and crimsoned smoke and steam.

And out of the darkness leapt the little land, with its spires and trees, aghast with terror, still and distinct, and the sea, tumbled with anger, red-foaming like a sea of blood....

Over the populous country below went a strange multitudinous crying and a flurry of alarm bells... .

The surviving aeroplanes turned about and fled out of the sky, like things that suddenly know themselves to be wicked....

Through a dozen thunderously flaming gaps that no water might quench, the waves came roaring in upon the land....

Section 8

'We had cursed our luck,' says Barnet, 'that we could not get to our quarters at Alkmaar that night. There, we were told, were provisions, tobacco, and everything for which we craved. But the main canal from Zaandam and Amsterdam was hopelessly jammed with craft, and we were glad of a chance opening that enabled us to get out of the main column and lie up in a kind of little harbour very much neglected and weedgrown before a deserted house. We

broke into this and found some herrings in a barrel, a heap of cheeses, and stone bottles of gin in the cellar; and with this I cheered my starving men. We made fires and toasted the cheese and grilled our herrings. None of us had slept for nearly forty hours, and I determined to stay in this refuge until dawn and then if the traffic was still choked leave the barge and march the rest of the way into Alkmaar.

'This place we had got into was perhaps a hundred yards from the canal and underneath a little brick bridge we could see the flotilla still, and hear the voices of the soldiers. Presently five or six other barges came through and lay up in the meer near by us, and with two of these, full of men of the Antrim regiment, I shared my find of provisions. In return we got tobacco. A large expanse of water spread to the westward of us and beyond were a cluster of roofs and one or two church towers. The barge was rather cramped for so many men, and I let several squads, thirty or forty perhaps altogether, bivouac on the bank. I did not let them go into the house on account of the furniture, and I left a note of indebtedness for the food we had taken. We were particularly glad of our tobacco and fires, because of the numerous mosquitoes that rose about us.

'The gate of the house from which we had provisioned ourselves was adorned with the legend, *Vreugde bij Vrede*, "Joy with Peace," and it bore every mark of the busy retirement of a comfort-loving proprietor. I went along his garden, which was gay and delightful with big bushes of rose and sweet brier, to a quaint little summer-house, and there I sat and watched the men in groups cooking and squatting along the bank. The sun was setting in a nearly cloudless sky.

'For the last two weeks I had been a wholly occupied man, intent only upon obeying the orders that came down to me. All through this time I had been working to the very limit of my mental and

physical faculties, and my only moments of rest had been devoted to snatches of sleep. Now came this rare, unexpected interlude, and I could look detachedly upon what I was doing and feel something of its infinite wonderfulness. I was irradiated with affection for the men of my company and with admiration at their cheerful acquiescence in the subordination and needs of our positions. I watched their proceedings and heard their pleasant voices. How willing those men were! How ready to accept leadership and forget themselves in collective ends! I thought how manfully they had gone through all the strains and toil of the last two weeks, how they had toughened and shaken down to comradeship together, and how much sweetness there is after all in our foolish human blood. For they were just one casual sample of the species--their patience and readiness lay, as the energy of the atom had lain, still waiting to be properly utilised. Again it came to me with overpowering force that the supreme need of our race is leading, that the supreme task is to discover leading, to forget oneself in realising the collective purpose of the race. Once more I saw life plain....'

Very characteristic is that of the 'rather too corpulent' young officer, who was afterwards to set it all down in the *Wander Jahre*. Very characteristic, too, it is of the change in men's hearts that was even then preparing a new phase of human history.

He goes on to write of the escape from individuality in science and service, and of his discovery of this 'salvation.' All that was then, no doubt, very moving and original; now it seems only the most obvious commonplace of human life.

The glow of the sunset faded, the twilight deepened into night. The fires burnt the brighter, and some Irishmen away across the meer started singing. But Barnett's men were too weary for that sort of thing, and soon the bank and the barge were heaped with sleeping forms.

'I alone seemed unable to sleep. I suppose I was over-weary, and after a little feverish slumber by the tiller of the barge I sat up, awake and uneasy....

'That night Holland seemed all sky. There was just a little black lower rim to things, a steeple, perhaps, or a line of poplars, and then the great hemisphere swept over us. As at first the sky was empty. Yet my uneasiness referred itself in some vague way to the sky.

'And now I was melancholy. I found something strangely sorrowful and submissive in the sleepers all about me, those men who had marched so far, who had left all the established texture of their lives behind them to come upon this mad campaign, this campaign that signified nothing and consumed everything, this mere fever of fighting. I saw how little and feeble is the life of man, a thing of chances, preposterously unable to find the will to realise even the most timid of its dreams. And I wondered if always it would be so, if man was a doomed animal who would never to the last days of his time take hold of fate and change it to his will. Always, it may be, he will remain kindly but jealous, desirous but discursive, able and unwisely impulsive, until Saturn who begot him shall devour him in his turn....

'I was roused from these thoughts by the sudden realisation of the presence of a squadron of aeroplanes far away to the north-east and very high. They looked like little black dashes against the midnight blue. I remember that I looked up at them at first rather idly--as one might notice a flight of birds. Then I perceived that they were only the extreme wing of a great fleet that was advancing in a long line very swiftly from the direction of the frontier and my attention tightened.

'Directly I saw that fleet I was astonished not to have seen it

before.

'I stood up softly, undesirous of disturbing my companions, but with my heart beating now rather more rapidly with surprise and excitement. I strained my ears for any sound of guns along our front. Almost instinctively I turned about for protection to the south and west, and peered; and then I saw coming as fast and much nearer to me, as if they had sprung out of the darkness, three banks of aeroplanes; a group of squadrons very high, a main body at a height perhaps of one or two thousand feet, and a doubtful number flying low and very indistinct. The middle ones were so thick they kept putting out groups of stars. And I realised that after all there was to be fighting in the air.

'There was something extraordinarily strange in this swift, noiseless convergence of nearly invisible combatants above the sleeping hosts. Every one about me was still unconscious; there was no sign as yet of any agitation among the shipping on the main canal, whose whole course, dotted with unsuspecting lights and fringed with fires, must have been clearly perceptible from above. Then a long way off towards Alkmaar I heard bugles, and after that shots, and then a wild clamour of bells. I determined to let my men sleep on for as long as they could....

'The battle was joined with the swiftness of dreaming. I do not think it can have been five minutes from the moment when I first became aware of the Central European air fleet to the contact of the two forces. I saw it quite plainly in silhouette against the luminous blue of the northern sky. The allied aeroplanes--they were mostly French--came pouring down like a fierce shower upon the middle of the Central European fleet. They looked exactly like a coarser sort of rain. There was a crackling sound--the first sound I heard--it reminded one of the Aurora Borealis, and I supposed it was an interchange of rifle shots. There were flashes like summer lightning; and then all the sky became a

whirling confusion of battle that was still largely noiseless. Some of the Central European aeroplanes were certainly charged and upset; others seemed to collapse and fall and then flare out with so bright a light that it took the edge off one's vision and made the rest of the battle disappear as though it had been snatched back out of sight.

'And then, while I still peered and tried to shade these flames from my eyes with my hand, and while the men about me were beginning to stir, the atomic bombs were thrown at the dykes. They made a mighty thunder in the air, and fell like Lucifer in the picture, leaving a flaring trail in the sky. The night, which had been pellucid and detailed and eventful, seemed to vanish, to be replaced abruptly by a black background to these tremendous pillars of fire....

'Hard upon the sound of them came a roaring wind, and the sky was filled with flickering lightnings and rushing clouds....

'There was something discontinuous in this impact. At one moment I was a lonely watcher in a sleeping world; the next saw every one about me afoot, the whole world awake and amazed....

'And then the wind had struck me a buffet, taken my helmet and swept aside the summerhouse of Vreugde bij Vrede, as a scythe sweeps away grass. I saw the bombs fall, and then watched a great crimson flare leap responsive to each impact, and mountainous masses of red-lit steam and flying fragments clamber up towards the zenith. Against the glare I saw the country-side for miles standing black and clear, churches, trees, chimneys. And suddenly I understood. The Central Europeans had burst the dykes. Those flares meant the bursting of the dykes, and in a little while the sea-water would be upon us....'

He goes on to tell with a certain prolixity of the steps he

took--and all things considered they were very intelligent steps--to meet this amazing crisis. He got his men aboard and hailed the adjacent barges; he got the man who acted as barge engineer at his post and the engines working, he cast loose from his moorings. Then he bethought himself of food, and contrived to land five men, get in a few dozen cheeses, and ship his men again before the inundation reached them.

He is reasonably proud of this piece of coolness. His idea was to take the wave head-on and with his engines full speed ahead. And all the while he was thanking heaven he was not in the jam of traffic in the main canal. He rather, I think, overestimated the probable rush of waters; he dreaded being swept away, he explains, and smashed against houses and trees.

He does not give any estimate of the time it took between the bursting of the dykes and the arrival of the waters, but it was probably an interval of about twenty minutes or half an hour. He was working now in darkness--save for the light of his lantern--and in a great wind. He hung out head and stern lights....

Whirling torrents of steam were pouring up from the advancing waters, which had rushed, it must be remembered, through nearly incandescent gaps in the sea defences, and this vast uprush of vapour soon veiled the flaring centres of explosion altogether.

'The waters came at last, an advancing cascade. It was like a broad roller sweeping across the country. They came with a deep, roaring sound. I had expected a Niagara, but the total fall of the front could not have been much more than twelve feet. Our barge hesitated for a moment, took a dose over her bows, and then lifted. I signalled for full speed ahead and brought her head upstream, and held on like grim death to keep her there.

'There was a wind about as strong as the flood, and I found we were pounding against every conceivable buoyant object that had been between us and the sea. The only light in the world now came from our lamps, the steam became impenetrable at a score of yards from the boat, and the roar of the wind and water cut us off from all remoter sounds. The black, shining waters swirled by, coming into the light of our lamps out of an ebony blackness and vanishing again into impenetrable black. And on the waters came shapes, came things that flashed upon us for a moment, now a half-submerged boat, now a cow, now a huge fragment of a house's timberings, now a muddle of packing-cases and scaffolding. The things clapped into sight like something shown by the opening of a shutter, and then bumped shatteringly against us or rushed by us. Once I saw very clearly a man's white face....

'All the while a group of labouring, half-submerged trees remained ahead of us, drawing very slowly nearer. I steered a course to avoid them. They seemed to gesticulate a frantic despair against the black steam clouds behind. Once a great branch detached itself and tore shuddering by me. We did, on the whole, make headway. The last I saw of Vreugde bij Vrede before the night swallowed it, was almost dead astern of us....'

Section 9

Morning found Barnet still afloat. The bows of his barge had been badly strained, and his men were pumping or baling in relays. He had got about a dozen half-drowned people aboard whose boat had capsized near him, and he had three other boats in tow. He was afloat, and somewhere between Amsterdam and Alkmaar, but he could not tell where. It was a day that was still half night. Gray waters stretched in every direction under a dark gray sky, and out of the waves rose the upper parts of houses, in many cases ruined, the tops of trees, windmills, in fact the upper third of all the familiar Dutch scenery; and on it there drifted

a dimly seen flotilla of barges, small boats, many overturned, furniture, rafts, timbering, and miscellaneous objects.

The drowned were under water that morning. Only here and there did a dead cow or a stiff figure still clinging stoutly to a box or chair or such-like buoy hint at the hidden massacre. It was not till the Thursday that the dead came to the surface in any quantity. The view was bounded on every side by a gray mist that closed overhead in a gray canopy. The air cleared in the afternoon, and then, far away to the west under great banks of steam and dust, the flaming red eruption of the atomic bombs came visible across the waste of water.

They showed flat and sullen through the mist, like London sunsets. 'They sat upon the sea,' says Barnet, 'like frayed-out waterlilies of flame.'

Barnet seems to have spent the morning in rescue work along the track of the canal, in helping people who were adrift, in picking up derelict boats, and in taking people out of imperilled houses. He found other military barges similarly employed, and it was only as the day wore on and the immediate appeals for aid were satisfied that he thought of food and drink for his men, and what course he had better pursue. They had a little cheese, but no water. 'Orders,' that mysterious direction, had at last altogether disappeared. He perceived he had now to act upon his own responsibility.

'One's sense was of a destruction so far-reaching and of a world so altered that it seemed foolish to go in any direction and expect to find things as they had been before the war began. I sat on the quarter-deck with Mylius my engineer and Kemp and two others of the non-commissioned officers, and we consulted upon our line of action. We were foodless and aimless. We agreed that our fighting value was extremely small, and that our first

duty was to get ourselves in touch with food and instructions again. Whatever plan of campaign had directed our movements was manifestly smashed to bits. Mylius was of opinion that we could take a line westward and get back to England across the North Sea. He calculated that with such a motor barge as ours it would be possible to reach the Yorkshire coast within four-and-twenty hours. But this idea I overruled because of the shortness of our provisions, and more particularly because of our urgent need of water.

'Every boat we drew near now hailed us for water, and their demands did much to exasperate our thirst. I decided that if we went away to the south we should reach hilly country, or at least country that was not submerged, and then we should be able to land, find some stream, drink, and get supplies and news. Many of the barges adrift in the haze about us were filled with British soldiers and had floated up from the Nord See Canal, but none of them were any better informed than ourselves of the course of events. "Orders" had, in fact, vanished out of the sky.

' "Orders" made a temporary reappearance late that evening in the form of a megaphone hail from a British torpedo boat, announcing a truce, and giving the welcome information that food and water were being hurried down the Rhine and were to be found on the barge flotilla lying over the old Rhine above Leiden.' . . .

We will not follow Barnet, however, in the description of his strange overland voyage among trees and houses and churches by Zaandam and between Haarlem and Amsterdam, to Leiden. It was a voyage in a red-lit mist, in a world of steamy silhouette, full of strange voices and perplexity, and with every other sensation dominated by a feverish thirst. 'We sat,' he says, 'in a little huddled group, saying very little, and the men forward were mere knots of silent endurance. Our only continuing sound was the persistent mewling of a cat one of the men had rescued from a

floating hayrick near Zaandam. We kept a southward course by a watch-chain compass Mylius had produced....

'I do not think any of us felt we belonged to a defeated army, nor had we any strong sense of the war as the dominating fact about us. Our mental setting had far more of the effect of a huge natural catastrophe. The atomic bombs had dwarfed the international issues to complete insignificance. When our minds wandered from the preoccupations of our immediate needs, we speculated upon the possibility of stopping the use of these frightful explosives before the world was utterly destroyed. For to us it seemed quite plain that these bombs and the still greater power of destruction of which they were the precursors might quite easily shatter every relationship and institution of mankind.

' "What will they be doing," asked Mylius, "what will they be doing? It's plain we've got to put an end to war. It's plain things have to be run some way. THIS--all this--is impossible."

'I made no immediate answer. Something--I cannot think what--had brought back to me the figure of that man I had seen wounded on the very first day of actual fighting. I saw again his angry, tearful eyes, and that poor, dripping, bloody mess that had been a skilful human hand five minutes before, thrust out in indignant protest. "Damned foolery," he had stormed and sobbed, "damned foolery. My right hand, sir! My RIGHT hand. . . ."

'My faith had for a time gone altogether out of me. "I think we are too--too silly," I said to Mylius, "ever to stop war. If we'd had the sense to do it, we should have done it before this. I think this----" I pointed to the gaunt black outline of a smashed windmill that stuck up, ridiculous and ugly, above the blood-lit waters--"this is the end." '

Section 10

But now our history must part company with Frederick Barnet and his barge-load of hungry and starving men.

For a time in western Europe at least it was indeed as if civilisation had come to a final collapse. These crowning buds upon the tradition that Napoleon planted and Bismarck watered, opened and flared 'like waterlilies of flame' over nations destroyed, over churches smashed or submerged, towns ruined, fields lost to mankind for ever, and a million weltering bodies. Was this lesson enough for mankind, or would the flames of war still burn amidst the ruins?

Neither Barnet nor his companions, it is clear, had any assurance in their answers to that question. Already once in the history of mankind, in America, before its discovery by the whites, an organised civilisation had given way to a mere cult of warfare, specialised and cruel, and it seemed for a time to many a thoughtful man as if the whole world was but to repeat on a larger scale this ascendancy of the warrior, this triumph of the destructive instincts of the race.

The subsequent chapters of Barnet's narrative do but supply body to this tragic possibility. He gives a series of vignettes of civilisation, shattered, it seemed, almost irreparably. He found the Belgian hills swarming with refugees and desolated by cholera; the vestiges of the contending armies keeping order under a truce, without actual battles, but with the cautious hostility of habit, and a great absence of plan everywhere.

Overhead aeroplanes went on mysterious errands, and there were rumours of cannibalism and hysterical fanaticisms in the valleys of the Semoy and the forest region of the eastern Ardennes. There was the report of an attack upon Russia by the Chinese and

Japanese, and of some huge revolutionary outbreak in America. The weather was stormier than men had ever known it in those regions, with much thunder and lightning and wild cloud-bursts of rain....

CHAPTER THE THIRD

THE ENDING OF WAR

Section 1

On the mountain-side above the town of Brissago and commanding two long stretches of Lake Maggiore, looking eastward to Bellinzona, and southward to Luino, there is a shelf of grass meadows which is very beautiful in springtime with a great multitude of wild flowers. More particularly is this so in early June, when the slender asphodel Saint Bruno's lily, with its spike of white blossom, is in flower. To the westward of this delightful shelf there is a deep and densely wooded trench, a great gulf of blue some mile or so in width out of which arise great precipices very high and wild. Above the asphodel fields the mountains climb in rocky slopes to solitudes of stone and sunlight that curve round and join that wall of cliffs in one common skyline. This desolate and austere background contrasts very vividly with the glowing serenity of the great lake below, with the spacious view of fertile hills and roads and villages and islands to south and east, and with the hotly golden rice flats of the Val Maggia to the north. And because it was a remote and insignificant place, far away out of the crowding tragedies of that year of disaster, away from burning cities and starving multitudes, bracing and tranquillising and hidden, it was here that there gathered the conference of rulers that was to arrest, if possible, before it was too late, the debacle of civilisation. Here, brought together by the indefatigable energy of that impassioned humanitarian, Leblanc, the French ambassador at Washington, the chief Powers of the world were to meet in a last desperate conference to 'save humanity.'

Leblanc was one of those ingenuous men whose lot would have been insignificant in any period of security, but who have been caught

up to an immortal role in history by the sudden simplification of human affairs through some tragical crisis, to the measure of their simplicity. Such a man was Abraham Lincoln, and such was Garibaldi. And Leblanc, with his transparent childish innocence, his entire self-forgetfulness, came into this confusion of distrust and intricate disaster with an invincible appeal for the manifest sanities of the situation. His voice, when he spoke, was 'full of remonstrance.' He was a little bald, spectacled man, inspired by that intellectual idealism which has been one of the peculiar gifts of France to humanity. He was possessed of one clear persuasion, that war must end, and that the only way to end war was to have but one government for mankind. He brushed aside all other considerations. At the very outbreak of the war, so soon as the two capitals of the belligerents had been wrecked, he went to the president in the White House with this proposal. He made it as if it was a matter of course. He was fortunate to be in Washington and in touch with that gigantic childishness which was the characteristic of the American imagination. For the Americans also were among the simple peoples by whom the world was saved. He won over the American president and the American government to his general ideas; at any rate they supported him sufficiently to give him a standing with the more sceptical European governments, and with this backing he set to work--it seemed the most fantastic of enterprises--to bring together all the rulers of the world and unify them. He wrote innumerable letters, he sent messages, he went desperate journeys, he enlisted whatever support he could find; no one was too humble for an ally or too obstinate for his advances; through the terrible autumn of the last wars this persistent little visionary in spectacles must have seemed rather like a hopeful canary twittering during a thunderstorm. And no accumulation of disasters daunted his conviction that they could be ended.

For the whole world was flaring then into a monstrous phase of destruction. Power after Power about the armed globe sought to

anticipate attack by aggression. They went to war in a delirium of panic, in order to use their bombs first. China and Japan had assailed Russia and destroyed Moscow, the United States had attacked Japan, India was in anarchistic revolt with Delhi a pit of fire spouting death and flame; the redoubtable King of the Balkans was mobilising. It must have seemed plain at last to every one in those days that the world was slipping headlong to anarchy. By the spring of 1959 from nearly two hundred centres, and every week added to their number, roared the unquenchable crimson conflagrations of the atomic bombs, the flimsy fabric of the world's credit had vanished, industry was completely disorganised and every city, every thickly populated area was starving or trembled on the verge of starvation. Most of the capital cities of the world were burning; millions of people had already perished, and over great areas government was at an end. Humanity has been compared by one contemporary writer to a sleeper who handles matches in his sleep and wakes to find himself in flames.

For many months it was an open question whether there was to be found throughout all the race the will and intelligence to face these new conditions and make even an attempt to arrest the downfall of the social order. For a time the war spirit defeated every effort to rally the forces of preservation and construction. Leblanc seemed to be protesting against earthquakes, and as likely to find a spirit of reason in the crater of Etna. Even though the shattered official governments now clamoured for peace, bands of irreconcilables and invincible patriots, usurpers, adventurers, and political desperadoes, were everywhere in possession of the simple apparatus for the disengagement of atomic energy and the initiation of new centres of destruction. The stuff exercised an irresistible fascination upon a certain type of mind. Why should any one give in while he can still destroy his enemies? Surrender? While there is still a chance of blowing them to dust? The power of destruction which

had once been the ultimate privilege of government was now the only power left in the world--and it was everywhere. There were few thoughtful men during that phase of blazing waste who did not pass through such moods of despair as Barnett describes, and declare with him: 'This is the end....'

And all the while Leblanc was going to and fro with glittering glasses and an inexhaustible persuasiveness, urging the manifest reasonableness of his view upon ears that ceased presently to be inattentive. Never at any time did he betray a doubt that all this chaotic conflict would end. No nurse during a nursery uproar was ever so certain of the inevitable ultimate peace. From being treated as an amiable dreamer he came by insensible degrees to be regarded as an extravagant possibility. Then he began to seem even practicable. The people who listened to him in 1958 with a smiling impatience, were eager before 1959 was four months old to know just exactly what he thought might be done. He answered with the patience of a philosopher and the lucidity of a Frenchman. He began to receive responses of a more and more hopeful type. He came across the Atlantic to Italy, and there he gathered in the promises for this congress. He chose those high meadows above Brissago for the reasons we have stated. 'We must get away,' he said, 'from old associations.' He set to work requisitioning material for his conference with an assurance that was justified by the replies. With a slight incredulity the conference which was to begin a new order in the world, gathered itself together. Leblanc summoned it without arrogance, he controlled it by virtue of an infinite humility. Men appeared upon those upland slopes with the apparatus for wireless telegraphy; others followed with tents and provisions; a little cable was flung down to a convenient point upon the Locarno road below. Leblanc arrived, sedulously directing every detail that would affect the tone of the assembly. He might have been a courier in advance rather than the originator of the gathering. And then there arrived, some by the cable, most by aeroplane, a

few in other fashions, the men who had been called together to confer upon the state of the world. It was to be a conference without a name. Nine monarchs, the presidents of four republics, a number of ministers and ambassadors, powerful journalists, and such-like prominent and influential men, took part in it. There were even scientific men; and that world-famous old man, Holsten, came with the others to contribute his amateur statecraft to the desperate problem of the age. Only Leblanc would have dared so to summon figure heads and powers and intelligence, or have had the courage to hope for their agreement....

Section 2

And one at least of those who were called to this conference of governments came to it on foot. This was King Egbert, the young king of the most venerable kingdom in Europe. He was a rebel, and had always been of deliberate choice a rebel against the magnificence of his position. He affected long pedestrian tours and a disposition to sleep in the open air. He came now over the Pass of Sta Maria Maggiore and by boat up the lake to Brissago; thence he walked up the mountain, a pleasant path set with oaks and sweet chestnut. For provision on the walk, for he did not want to hurry, he carried with him a pocketful of bread and cheese. A certain small retinue that was necessary to his comfort and dignity upon occasions of state he sent on by the cable car, and with him walked his private secretary, Firmin, a man who had thrown up the Professorship of World Politics in the London School of Sociology, Economics, and Political Science, to take up these duties. Firmin was a man of strong rather than rapid thought, he had anticipated great influence in this new position, and after some years he was still only beginning to apprehend how largely his function was to listen. Originally he had been something of a thinker upon international politics, an authority upon tariffs and strategy, and a valued contributor to various of the higher organs of public opinion, but the atomic bombs had

taken him by surprise, and he had still to recover completely from his pre-atomic opinions and the silencing effect of those sustained explosives.

The king's freedom from the trammels of etiquette was very complete. In theory--and he abounded in theory--his manners were purely democratic. It was by sheer habit and inadvertency that he permitted Firmin, who had discovered a rucksack in a small shop in the town below, to carry both bottles of beer. The king had never, as a matter of fact, carried anything for himself in his life, and he had never noted that he did not do so.

'We will have nobody with us,' he said, 'at all. We will be perfectly simple.'

So Firmin carried the beer.

As they walked up--it was the king made the pace rather than Firmin--they talked of the conference before them, and Firmin, with a certain want of assurance that would have surprised him in himself in the days of his Professorship, sought to define the policy of his companion. 'In its broader form, sir,' said Firmin; 'I admit a certain plausibility in this project of Leblanc's, but I feel that although it may be advisable to set up some sort of general control for International affairs--a sort of Hague Court with extended powers--that is no reason whatever for losing sight of the principles of national and imperial autonomy.'

'Firmin,' said the king, 'I am going to set my brother kings a good example.'

Firmin intimated a curiosity that veiled a dread.

'By chucking all that nonsense,' said the king.

He quickened his pace as Firmin, who was already a little out of breath, betrayed a disposition to reply.

'I am going to chuck all that nonsense,' said the king, as Firmin prepared to speak. 'I am going to fling my royalty and empire on the table--and declare at once I don't mean to haggle. It's haggling--about rights--has been the devil in human affairs, for--always. I am going to stop this nonsense.'

Firmin halted abruptly. 'But, sir!' he cried.

The king stopped six yards ahead of him and looked back at his adviser's perspiring visage.

'Do you really think, Firmin, that I am here as--as an infernal politician to put my crown and my flag and my claims and so forth in the way of peace? That little Frenchman is right. You know he is right as well as I do. Those things are over. We--we kings and rulers and representatives have been at the very heart of the mischief. Of course we imply separation, and of course separation means the threat of war, and of course the threat of war means the accumulation of more and more atomic bombs. The old game's up. But, I say, we mustn't stand here, you know. The world waits. Don't you think the old game's up, Firmin?'

Firmin adjusted a strap, passed a hand over his wet forehead, and followed earnestly. 'I admit, sir,' he said to a receding back, 'that there has to be some sort of hegemony, some sort of Amphictyonic council----'

'There's got to be one simple government for all the world,' said the king over his shoulder.

'But as for a reckless, unqualified abandonment, sir----'

'BANG!' cried the king.

Firmin made no answer to this interruption. But a faint shadow of annoyance passed across his heated features.

'Yesterday,' said the king, by way of explanation, 'the Japanese very nearly got San Francisco.'

'I hadn't heard, sir.'

'The Americans ran the Japanese aeroplane down into the sea and there the bomb got busted.'

'Under the sea, sir?'

'Yes. Submarine volcano. The steam is in sight of the Californian coast. It was as near as that. And with things like this happening, you want me to go up this hill and haggle. Consider the effect of that upon my imperial cousin--and all the others!'

'HE will haggle, sir.'

'Not a bit of it,' said the king.

'But, sir.'

'Leblanc won't let him.'

Firmin halted abruptly and gave a vicious pull at the offending strap. 'Sir, he will listen to his advisers,' he said, in a tone that in some subtle way seemed to implicate his master with the trouble of the knapsack.

The king considered him.

'We will go just a little higher,' he said. 'I want to find this unoccupied village they spoke of, and then we will drink that beer. It can't be far. We will drink the beer and throw away the bottles. And then, Firmin, I shall ask you to look at things in a more generous light.... Because, you know, you must....'

He turned about and for some time the only sound they made was the noise of their boots upon the loose stones of the way and the irregular breathing of Firmin.

At length, as it seemed to Firmin, or quite soon, as it seemed to the king, the gradient of the path diminished, the way widened out, and they found themselves in a very beautiful place indeed. It was one of those upland clusters of sheds and houses that are still to be found in the mountains of North Italy, buildings that were used only in the high summer, and which it was the custom to leave locked up and deserted through all the winter and spring, and up to the middle of June. The buildings were of a soft-toned gray stone, buried in rich green grass, shadowed by chestnut trees and lit by an extraordinary blaze of yellow broom. Never had the king seen broom so glorious; he shouted at the light of it, for it seemed to give out more sunlight even than it received; he sat down impulsively on a lichenous stone, tugged out his bread and cheese, and bade Firmin thrust the beer into the shaded weeds to cool.

'The things people miss, Firmin,' he said, 'who go up into the air in ships!'

Firmin looked around him with an ungenial eye. 'You see it at its best, sir,' he said, 'before the peasants come here again and make it filthy.'

'It would be beautiful anyhow,' said the king.

'Superficially, sir,' said Firmin. 'But it stands for a social order that is fast vanishing away. Indeed, judging by the grass between the stones and in the huts, I am inclined to doubt if it is in use even now.'

'I suppose,' said the king, 'they would come up immediately the hay on this flower meadow is cut. It would be those slow, creamy-coloured beasts, I expect, one sees on the roads below, and swarthy girls with red handkerchiefs over their black hair.... It is wonderful to think how long that beautiful old life lasted. In the Roman times and long ages before ever the rumour of the Romans had come into these parts, men drove their cattle up into these places as the summer came on.... How haunted is this place! There have been quarrels here, hopes, children have played here and lived to be old crones and old gaffers, and died, and so it has gone on for thousands of lives. Lovers, innumerable lovers, have caressed amidst this golden broom....'

He meditated over a busy mouthful of bread and cheese.

'We ought to have brought a tankard for that beer,' he said.

Firmin produced a folding aluminium cup, and the king was pleased to drink.

'I wish, sir,' said Firmin suddenly, 'I could induce you at least to delay your decision----'

'It's no good talking, Firmin,' said the king. 'My mind's as clear as daylight.'

'Sire,' protested Firmin, with his voice full of bread and cheese and genuine emotion, 'have you no respect for your kingship?'

The king paused before he answered with unwonted gravity. 'It's just because I have, Firmin, that I won't be a puppet in this game of international politics.' He regarded his companion for a moment and then remarked: 'Kingship!--what do YOU know of kingship, Firmin?

'Yes,' cried the king to his astonished counsellor. 'For the first time in my life I am going to be a king. I am going to lead, and lead by my own authority. For a dozen generations my family has been a set of dummies in the hands of their advisers. Advisers! Now I am going to be a real king--and I am going to--to abolish, dispose of, finish, the crown to which I have been a slave. But what a world of paralysing shams this roaring stuff has ended! The rigid old world is in the melting-pot again, and I, who seemed to be no more than the stuffing inside a regal robe, I am a king among kings. I have to play my part at the head of things and put an end to blood and fire and idiot disorder.'

'But, sir,' protested Firmin.

'This man Leblanc is right. The whole world has got to be a Republic, one and indivisible. You know that, and my duty is to make that easy. A king should lead his people; you want me to stick on their backs like some Old Man of the Sea. To-day must be a sacrament of kings. Our trust for mankind is done with and ended. We must part our robes among them, we must part our kingship among them, and say to them all, now the king in every one must rule the world.... Have you no sense of the magnificence of this occasion? You want me, Firmin, you want me to go up there and haggle like a damned little solicitor for some price, some compensation, some qualification....'

Firmin shrugged his shoulders and assumed an expression of despair. Meanwhile, he conveyed, one must eat.

For a time neither spoke, and the king ate and turned over in his mind the phrases of the speech he intended to make to the conference. By virtue of the antiquity of his crown he was to preside, and he intended to make his presidency memorable. Reassured of his eloquence, he considered the despondent and sulky Firmin for a space.

'Firmin,' he said, 'you have idealised kingship.' 'It has been my dream, sir,' said Firmin sorrowfully, 'to serve.'

'At the levers, Firmin,' said the king.

'You are pleased to be unjust,' said Firmin, deeply hurt.

'I am pleased to be getting out of it,' said the king.

'Oh, Firmin,' he went on, 'have you no thought for me? Will you never realise that I am not only flesh and blood but an imagination--with its rights. I am a king in revolt against that fetter they put upon my head. I am a king awake. My reverend grandparents never in all their august lives had a waking moment. They loved the job that you, you advisers, gave them; they never had a doubt of it. It was like giving a doll to a woman who ought to have a child. They delighted in processions and opening things and being read addresses to, and visiting triplets and nonagenarians and all that sort of thing. Incredibly. They used to keep albums of cuttings from all the illustrated papers showing them at it, and if the press-cutting parcels grew thin they were worried. It was all that ever worried them. But there is something atavistic in me; I hark back to unconstitutional monarchs. They christened me too retrogressively, I think. I wanted to get things done. I was bored. I might have fallen into vice, most intelligent and energetic princes do, but the palace precautions were unusually thorough. I was brought up in the purest court the world has ever seen. . . . Alertly pure.... So I

read books, Firmin, and went about asking questions. The thing was bound to happen to one of us sooner or later. Perhaps, too, very likely I'm not vicious. I don't think I am.'

He reflected. 'No,' he said.

Firmin cleared his throat. 'I don't think you are, sir,' he said. 'You prefer----'

He stopped short. He had been going to say 'talking.' He substituted 'ideas.'

'That world of royalty!' the king went on. 'In a little while no one will understand it any more. It will become a riddle....'

'Among other things, it was a world of perpetual best clothes. Everything was in its best clothes for us, and usually wearing bunting. With a cinema watching to see we took it properly. If you are a king, Firmin, and you go and look at a regiment, it instantly stops whatever it is doing, changes into full uniform and presents arms. When my august parents went in a train the coal in the tender used to be whitened. It did, Firmin, and if coal had been white instead of black I have no doubt the authorities would have blackened it. That was the spirit of our treatment. People were always walking about with their faces to us. One never saw anything in profile. One got an impression of a world that was insanely focused on ourselves. And when I began to poke my little questions into the Lord Chancellor and the archbishop and all the rest of them, about what I should see if people turned round, the general effect I produced was that I wasn't by any means displaying the Royal Tact they had expected of me....'

He meditated for a time.

'And yet, you know, there is something in the kingship, Firmin. It stiffened up my august little grandfather. It gave my grandmother a kind of awkward dignity even when she was cross--and she was very often cross. They both had a profound sense of responsibility. My poor father's health was wretched during his brief career; nobody outside the circle knows just how he screwed himself up to things. "My people expect it," he used to say of this tiresome duty or that. Most of the things they made him do were silly--it was part of a bad tradition, but there was nothing silly in the way he set about them.... The spirit of kingship is a fine thing, Firmin; I feel it in my bones; I do not know what I might not be if I were not a king. I could die for my people, Firmin, and you couldn't. No, don't say you could die for me, because I know better. Don't think I forget my kingship, Firmin, don't imagine that. I am a king, a kingly king, by right divine. The fact that I am also a chattering young man makes not the slightest difference to that. But the proper text-book for kings, Firmin, is none of the court memoirs and Welt-Politik books you would have me read; it is old Fraser's Golden Bough. Have you read that, Firmin?'

Firmin had. 'Those were the authentic kings. In the end they were cut up and a bit given to everybody. They sprinkled the nations--with Kingship.'

Firmin turned himself round and faced his royal master.

'What do you intend to do, sir?' he asked. 'If you will not listen to me, what do you propose to do this afternoon?'

The king flicked crumbs from his coat.

'Manifestly war has to stop for ever, Firmin. Manifestly this can only be done by putting all the world under one government. Our crowns and flags are in the way. Manifestly they must go.'

'Yes, sir,' interrupted Firmin, 'but WHAT government? I don't see what government you get by a universal abdication!'

'Well,' said the king, with his hands about his knees, 'WE shall be the government.'

'The conference?' exclaimed Firmin.

'Who else?' asked the king simply.

'It's perfectly simple,' he added to Firmin's tremendous silence.

'But,' cried Firmin, 'you must have sanctions! Will there be no form of election, for example?'

'Why should there be?' asked the king, with intelligent curiosity.

'The consent of the governed.'

'Firmin, we are just going to lay down our differences and take over government. Without any election at all. Without any sanction. The governed will show their consent by silence. If any effective opposition arises we shall ask it to come in and help. The true sanction of kingship is the grip upon the sceptre. We aren't going to worry people to vote for us. I'm certain the mass of men does not want to be bothered with such things.... We'll contrive a way for any one interested to join in. That's quite enough in the way of democracy. Perhaps later--when things don't matter.... We shall govern all right, Firmin. Government only becomes difficult when the lawyers get hold of it, and since these troubles began the lawyers are shy. Indeed, come to think of it, I wonder where all the lawyers are.... Where are they? A lot, of course, were bagged, some of the worst ones, when they

blew up my legislature. You never knew the late Lord Chancellor.

. . .

'Necessities bury rights. And create them. Lawyers live on dead rights disinterred.... We've done with that way of living. We won't have more law than a code can cover and beyond that government will be free....

'Before the sun sets to-day, Firmin, trust me, we shall have made our abdications, all of us, and declared the World Republic, supreme and indivisible. I wonder what my august grandmother would have made of it! All my rights! . . . And then we shall go on governing. What else is there to do? All over the world we shall declare that there is no longer mine or thine, but ours. China, the United States, two-thirds of Europe, will certainly fall in and obey. They will have to do so. What else can they do? Their official rulers are here with us. They won't be able to get together any sort of idea of not obeying us.... Then we shall declare that every sort of property is held in trust for the Republic....'

'But, sir!' cried Firmin, suddenly enlightened. 'Has this been arranged already?'

'My dear Firmin, do you think we have come here, all of us, to talk at large? The talking has been done for half a century. Talking and writing. We are here to set the new thing, the simple, obvious, necessary thing, going.'

He stood up.

Firmin, forgetting the habits of a score of years, remained seated.

'WELL,' he said at last. 'And I have known nothing!'

The king smiled very cheerfully. He liked these talks with Firmin.

Section 3

That conference upon the Brissago meadows was one of the most heterogeneous collections of prominent people that has ever met together. Principalities and powers, stripped and shattered until all their pride and mystery were gone, met in a marvellous new humility. Here were kings and emperors whose capitals were lakes of flaming destruction, statesmen whose countries had become chaos, scared politicians and financial potentates. Here were leaders of thought and learned investigators dragged reluctantly to the control of affairs. Altogether there were ninety-three of them, Leblanc's conception of the head men of the world. They had all come to the realisation of the simple truths that the indefatigable Leblanc had hammered into them; and, drawing his resources from the King of Italy, he had provisioned his conference with a generous simplicity quite in accordance with the rest of his character, and so at last was able to make his astonishing and entirely rational appeal. He had appointed King Egbert the president, he believed in this young man so firmly that he completely dominated him, and he spoke himself as a secretary might speak from the president's left hand, and evidently did not realise himself that he was telling them all exactly what they had to do. He imagined he was merely recapitulating the obvious features of the situation for their convenience. He was dressed in ill-fitting white silk clothes, and he consulted a dingy little packet of notes as he spoke. They put him out. He explained that he had never spoken from notes before, but that this occasion was exceptional.

And then King Egbert spoke as he was expected to speak, and Leblanc's spectacles moistened at that flow of generous

sentiment, most amiably and lightly expressed. 'We haven't to stand on ceremony,' said the king, 'we have to govern the world. We have always pretended to govern the world and here is our opportunity.'

'Of course,' whispered Leblanc, nodding his head rapidly, 'of course.'

'The world has been smashed up, and we have to put it on its wheels again,' said King Egbert. 'And it is the simple common sense of this crisis for all to help and none to seek advantage. Is that our tone or not?'

The gathering was too old and seasoned and miscellaneous for any great displays of enthusiasm, but that was its tone, and with an astonishment that somehow became exhilarating it began to resign, repudiate, and declare its intentions. Firmin, taking notes behind his master, heard everything that had been foretold among the yellow broom, come true. With a queer feeling that he was dreaming, he assisted at the proclamation of the World State, and saw the message taken out to the wireless operators to be throbbled all round the habitable globe. 'And next,' said King Egbert, with a cheerful excitement in his voice, 'we have to get every atom of Carolinum and all the plant for making it, into our control....'

Firman was not alone in his incredulity. Not a man there who was not a very amiable, reasonable, benevolent creature at bottom; some had been born to power and some had happened upon it, some had struggled to get it, not clearly knowing what it was and what it implied, but none was irreconcilably set upon its retention at the price of cosmic disaster. Their minds had been prepared by circumstances and sedulously cultivated by Leblanc; and now they took the broad obvious road along which King Egbert was leading them, with a mingled conviction of strangeness and necessity.

Things went very smoothly; the King of Italy explained the arrangements that had been made for the protection of the camp from any fantastic attack; a couple of thousand of aeroplanes, each carrying a sharpshooter, guarded them, and there was an excellent system of relays, and at night all the sky would be searched by scores of lights, and the admirable Leblanc gave luminous reasons for their camping just where they were and going on with their administrative duties forthwith. He knew of this place, because he had happened upon it when holiday-making with Madame Leblanc twenty years and more ago. 'There is very simple fare at present,' he explained, 'on account of the disturbed state of the countries about us. But we have excellent fresh milk, good red wine, beef, bread, salad, and lemons. . . . In a few days I hope to place things in the hands of a more efficient caterer....'

The members of the new world government dined at three long tables on trestles, and down the middle of these tables Leblanc, in spite of the barrenness of his menu, had contrived to have a great multitude of beautiful roses. There was similar accommodation for the secretaries and attendants at a lower level down the mountain. The assembly dined as it had debated, in the open air, and over the dark crags to the west the glowing June sunset shone upon the banquet. There was no precedence now among the ninety-three, and King Egbert found himself between a pleasant little Japanese stranger in spectacles and his cousin of Central Europe, and opposite a great Bengali leader and the President of the United States of America. Beyond the Japanese was Holsten, the old chemist, and Leblanc was a little way down the other side.

The king was still cheerfully talkative and abounded in ideas. He fell presently into an amiable controversy with the American, who seemed to feel a lack of impressiveness in the occasion.

It was ever the Transatlantic tendency, due, no doubt, to the necessity of handling public questions in a bulky and striking manner, to over-emphasise and over-accentuate, and the president was touched by his national failing. He suggested now that there should be a new era, starting from that day as the first day of the first year.

The king demurred.

'From this day forth, sir, man enters upon his heritage,' said the American.

'Man,' said the king, 'is always entering upon his heritage. You Americans have a peculiar weakness for anniversaries--if you will forgive me saying so. Yes--I accuse you of a lust for dramatic effect. Everything is happening always, but you want to say this or this is the real instant in time and subordinate all the others to it.'

The American said something about an epoch-making day.

'But surely,' said the king, 'you don't want us to condemn all humanity to a world-wide annual Fourth of July for ever and ever more. On account of this harmless necessary day of declarations. No conceivable day could ever deserve that. Ah! you do not know, as I do, the devastations of the memorable. My poor grandparents were--RUBRICATED. The worst of these huge celebrations is that they break up the dignified succession of one's contemporary emotions. They interrupt. They set back. Suddenly out come the flags and fireworks, and the old enthusiasms are furbished up--and it's sheer destruction of the proper thing that ought to be going on. Sufficient unto the day is the celebration thereof. Let the dead past bury its dead. You see, in regard to the calendar, I am for democracy and you are for aristocracy. All things I hold, are august, and have a right to be lived through

on their merits. No day should be sacrificed on the grave of departed events. What do you think of it, Wilhelm?'

'For the noble, yes, all days should be noble.'

'Exactly my position,' said the king, and felt pleased at what he had been saying.

And then, since the American pressed his idea, the king contrived to shift the talk from the question of celebrating the epoch they were making to the question of the probabilities that lay ahead. Here every one became diffident. They could see the world unified and at peace, but what detail was to follow from that unification they seemed indisposed to discuss. This diffidence struck the king as remarkable. He plunged upon the possibilities of science. All the huge expenditure that had hitherto gone into unproductive naval and military preparations, must now, he declared, place research upon a new footing. 'Where one man worked we will have a thousand.' He appealed to Holsten. 'We have only begun to peep into these possibilities,' he said. 'You at any rate have sounded the vaults of the treasure house.'

'They are unfathomable,' smiled Holsten.

'Man,' said the American, with a manifest resolve to justify and reinstate himself after the flickering contradictions of the king, 'Man, I say, is only beginning to enter upon his heritage.'

'Tell us some of the things you believe we shall presently learn, give us an idea of the things we may presently do,' said the king to Holsten.

Holsten opened out the vistas....

'Science,' the king cried presently, 'is the new king of the

world.'

'OUR view,' said the president, 'is that sovereignty resides with the people.'

'No!' said the king, 'the sovereign is a being more subtle than that. And less arithmetical. Neither my family nor your emancipated people. It is something that floats about us, and above us, and through us. It is that common impersonal will and sense of necessity of which Science is the best understood and most typical aspect. It is the mind of the race. It is that which has brought us here, which has bowed us all to its demands....'

He paused and glanced down the table at Leblanc, and then re-opened at his former antagonist.

'There is a disposition,' said the king, 'to regard this gathering as if it were actually doing what it appears to be doing, as if we ninety-odd men of our own free will and wisdom were unifying the world. There is a temptation to consider ourselves exceptionally fine fellows, and masterful men, and all the rest of it. We are not. I doubt if we should average out as anything abler than any other casually selected body of ninety-odd men. We are no creators, we are consequences, we are salvagers--or salvagees. The thing to-day is not ourselves but the wind of conviction that has blown us hither....'

The American had to confess he could hardly agree with the king's estimate of their average.

'Holster, perhaps, and one or two others, might lift us a little,' the king conceded. 'But the rest of us?'

His eyes flitted once more towards Leblanc.

'Look at Leblanc,' he said. 'He's just a simple soul. There are hundreds and thousands like him. I admit, a certain dexterity, a certain lucidity, but there is not a country town in France where there is not a Leblanc or so to be found about two o'clock in its principal cafe. It's just that he isn't complicated or Super-Mannish, or any of those things that has made all he has done possible. But in happier times, don't you think, Wilhelm, he would have remained just what his father was, a successful epicier, very clean, very accurate, very honest. And on holidays he would have gone out with Madame Leblanc and her knitting in a punt with a jar of something gentle and have sat under a large reasonable green-lined umbrella and fished very neatly and successfully for gudgeon....'

The president and the Japanese prince in spectacles protested together.

'If I do him an injustice,' said the king, 'it is only because I want to elucidate my argument. I want to make it clear how small are men and days, and how great is man in comparison....'

Section 4

So it was King Egbert talked at Brissago after they had proclaimed the unity of the world. Every evening after that the assembly dined together and talked at their ease and grew accustomed to each other and sharpened each other's ideas, and every day they worked together, and really for a time believed that they were inventing a new government for the world. They discussed a constitution. But there were matters needing attention too urgently to wait for any constitution. They attended to these incidentally. The constitution it was that waited. It was presently found convenient to keep the constitution waiting indefinitely as King Egbert had foreseen,

and meanwhile, with an increasing self-confidence, that council went on governing....

On this first evening of all the council's gatherings, after King Egbert had talked for a long time and drunken and praised very abundantly the simple red wine of the country that Leblanc had procured for them, he fathered about him a group of congenial spirits and fell into a discourse upon simplicity, praising it above all things and declaring that the ultimate aim of art, religion, philosophy, and science alike was to simplify. He instanced himself as a devotee to simplicity. And Leblanc he instanced as a crowning instance of the splendour of this quality. Upon that they all agreed.

When at last the company about the tables broke up, the king found himself brimming over with a peculiar affection and admiration for Leblanc, he made his way to him and drew him aside and broached what he declared was a small matter. There was, he said, a certain order in his gift that, unlike all other orders and decorations in the world, had never been corrupted. It was reserved for elderly men of supreme distinction, the acuteness of whose gifts was already touched to mellowness, and it had included the greatest names of every age so far as the advisers of his family had been able to ascertain them. At present, the king admitted, these matters of stars and badges were rather obscured by more urgent affairs, for his own part he had never set any value upon them at all, but a time might come when they would be at least interesting, and in short he wished to confer the Order of Merit upon Leblanc. His sole motive in doing so, he added, was his strong desire to signalise his personal esteem. He laid his hand upon the Frenchman's shoulder as he said these things, with an almost brotherly affection. Leblanc received this proposal with a modest confusion that greatly enhanced the king's opinion of his admirable simplicity. He pointed out that eager as he was to snatch at the proffered distinction, it might at the

present stage appear invidious, and he therefore suggested that the conferring of it should be postponed until it could be made the crown and conclusion of his services. The king was unable to shake this resolution, and the two men parted with expressions of mutual esteem.

The king then summoned Firmin in order to make a short note of a number of things that he had said during the day. But after about twenty minutes' work the sweet sleepiness of the mountain air overcame him, and he dismissed Firmin and went to bed and fell asleep at once, and slept with extreme satisfaction. He had had an active, agreeable day.

Section 5

The establishment of the new order that was thus so humanly begun, was, if one measures it by the standard of any preceding age, a rapid progress. The fighting spirit of the world was exhausted. Only here or there did fierceness linger. For long decades the combative side in human affairs had been monstrously exaggerated by the accidents of political separation. This now became luminously plain. An enormous proportion of the force that sustained armaments had been nothing more aggressive than the fear of war and warlike neighbours. It is doubtful if any large section of the men actually enlisted for fighting ever at any time really hungered and thirsted for bloodshed and danger. That kind of appetite was probably never very strong in the species after the savage stage was past. The army was a profession, in which killing had become a disagreeable possibility rather than an eventful certainty. If one reads the old newspapers and periodicals of that time, which did so much to keep militarism alive, one finds very little about glory and adventure and a constant harping on the disagreeableness of invasion and subjugation. In one word, militarism was funk. The belligerent resolution of the armed Europe of the twentieth century was the

resolution of a fiercely frightened sheep to plunge. And now that its weapons were exploding in its hands, Europe was only too eager to drop them, and abandon this fancied refuge of violence.

For a time the whole world had been shocked into frankness; nearly all the clever people who had hitherto sustained the ancient belligerent separations had now been brought to realise the need for simplicity of attitude and openness of mind; and in this atmosphere of moral renaissance, there was little attempt to get negotiable advantages out of resistance to the new order. Human beings are foolish enough no doubt, but few have stopped to haggle in a fire-escape. The council had its way with them. The band of 'patriots' who seized the laboratories and arsenal just outside Osaka and tried to rouse Japan to revolt against inclusion in the Republic of Mankind, found they had miscalculated the national pride and met the swift vengeance of their own countrymen. That fight in the arsenal was a vivid incident in this closing chapter of the history of war. To the last the 'patriots' were undecided whether, in the event of a defeat, they would explode their supply of atomic bombs or not. They were fighting with swords outside the iridium doors, and the moderates of their number were at bay and on the verge of destruction, only ten, indeed, remained unwounded, when the republicans burst in to the rescue....

Section 6

One single monarch held out against the general acquiescence in the new rule, and that was that strange survival of mediaevalism, the 'Slavic Fox,' the King of the Balkans. He debated and delayed his submissions. He showed an extraordinary combination of cunning and temerity in his evasion of the repeated summonses from Brissago. He affected ill-health and a great preoccupation with his new official mistress, for his semi-barbaric court was arranged on the best romantic models. His tactics were ably

seconded by Doctor Pestovitch, his chief minister. Failing to establish his claims to complete independence, King Ferdinand Charles annoyed the conference by a proposal to be treated as a protected state. Finally he professed an unconvincing submission, and put a mass of obstacles in the way of the transfer of his national officials to the new government. In these things he was enthusiastically supported by his subjects, still for the most part an illiterate peasantry, passionately if confusedly patriotic, and so far with no practical knowledge of the effect of atomic bombs. More particularly he retained control of all the Balkan aeroplanes.

For once the extreme naivete of Leblanc seems to have been mitigated by duplicity. He went on with the general pacification of the world as if the Balkan submission was made in absolute good faith, and he announced the disbandment of the force of aeroplanes that hitherto guarded the council at Brissago upon the approaching fifteenth of July. But instead he doubled the number upon duty on that eventful day, and made various arrangements for their disposition. He consulted certain experts, and when he took King Egbert into his confidence there was something in his neat and explicit foresight that brought back to that ex-monarch's mind his half-forgotten fantasy of Leblanc as a fisherman under a green umbrella.

About five o'clock in the morning of the seventeenth of July one of the outer sentinels of the Brissago fleet, which was soaring unobtrusively over the lower end of the lake of Garda, sighted and hailed a strange aeroplane that was flying westward, and, failing to get a satisfactory reply, set its wireless apparatus talking and gave chase. A swarm of consorts appeared very promptly over the westward mountains, and before the unknown aeroplane had sighted Como, it had a dozen eager attendants closing in upon it. Its driver seems to have hesitated, dropped down among the mountains, and then turned southward in flight,

only to find an intercepting biplane sweeping across his bows. He then went round into the eye of the rising sun, and passed within a hundred yards of his original pursuer.

The sharpshooter therein opened fire at once, and showed an intelligent grasp of the situation by disabling the passenger first. The man at the wheel must have heard his companion cry out behind him, but he was too intent on getting away to waste even a glance behind. Twice after that he must have heard shots. He let his engine go, he crouched down, and for twenty minutes he must have steered in the continual expectation of a bullet. It never came, and when at last he glanced round, three great planes were close upon him, and his companion, thrice hit, lay dead across his bombs. His followers manifestly did not mean either to upset or shoot him, but inexorably they drove him down, down. At last he was curving and flying a hundred yards or less over the level fields of rice and maize. Ahead of him and dark against the morning sunrise was a village with a very tall and slender campanile and a line of cable bearing metal standards that he could not clear. He stopped his engine abruptly and dropped flat. He may have hoped to get at the bombs when he came down, but his pitiless pursuers drove right over him and shot him as he fell.

Three other aeroplanes curved down and came to rest amidst grass close by the smashed machine. Their passengers descended, and ran, holding their light rifles in their hands towards the debris and the two dead men. The coffin-shaped box that had occupied the centre of the machine had broken, and three black objects, each with two handles like the ears of a pitcher, lay peacefully amidst the litter.

These objects were so tremendously important in the eyes of their captors that they disregarded the two dead men who lay bloody and broken amidst the wreckage as they might have disregarded dead frogs by a country pathway.

'By God,' cried the first. 'Here they are!'

'And unbroken!' said the second.

'I've never seen the things before,' said the first.

'Bigger than I thought,' said the second.

The third comer arrived. He stared for a moment at the bombs and then turned his eyes to the dead man with a crushed chest who lay in a muddy place among the green stems under the centre of the machine.

'One can take no risks,' he said, with a faint suggestion of apology.

The other two now also turned to the victims. 'We must signal,' said the first man. A shadow passed between them and the sun, and they looked up to see the aeroplane that had fired the last shot. 'Shall we signal?' came a megaphone hail.

'Three bombs,' they answered together.

'Where do they come from?' asked the megaphone.

The three sharpshooters looked at each other and then moved towards the dead men. One of them had an idea. 'Signal that first,' he said, 'while we look.' They were joined by their aviators for the search, and all six men began a hunt that was necessarily brutal in its haste, for some indication of identity. They examined the men's pockets, their bloodstained clothes, the machine, the framework. They turned the bodies over and flung them aside. There was not a tattoo mark. . . . Everything was elaborately free of any indication of its origin.

'We can't find out!' they called at last.

'Not a sign?'

'Not a sign.'

'I'm coming down,' said the man overhead....

Section 7

The Slavic fox stood upon a metal balcony in his picturesque Art Nouveau palace that gave upon the precipice that overhung his bright little capital, and beside him stood Pestovitch, grizzled and cunning, and now full of an ill-suppressed excitement. Behind them the window opened into a large room, richly decorated in aluminium and crimson enamel, across which the king, as he glanced ever and again over his shoulder with a gesture of inquiry, could see through the two open doors of a little azure walled antechamber the wireless operator in the turret working at his incessant transcription. Two pompously uniformed messengers waited listlessly in this apartment. The room was furnished with a stately dignity, and had in the middle of it a big green baize-covered table with the massive white metal inkpots and antiquated sandboxes natural to a new but romantic monarchy. It was the king's council chamber and about it now, in attitudes of suspended intrigue, stood the half-dozen ministers who constituted his cabinet. They had been summoned for twelve o'clock, but still at half-past twelve the king loitered in the balcony and seemed to be waiting for some news that did not come.

The king and his minister had talked at first in whispers; they had fallen silent, for they found little now to express except a vague anxiety. Away there on the mountain side were the white metal roofs of the long farm buildings beneath which the bomb

factory and the bombs were hidden. (The chemist who had made all these for the king had died suddenly after the declaration of Brissago.) Nobody knew of that store of mischief now but the king and his adviser and three heavily faithful attendants; the aviators who waited now in the midday blaze with their bomb-carrying machines and their passenger bomb-throwers in the exercising grounds of the motor-cyclist barracks below were still in ignorance of the position of the ammunition they were presently to take up. It was time they started if the scheme was to work as Pestovitch had planned it. It was a magnificent plan. It aimed at no less than the Empire of the World. The government of idealists and professors away there at Brissago was to be blown to fragments, and then east, west, north, and south those aeroplanes would go swarming over a world that had disarmed itself, to proclaim Ferdinand Charles, the new Caesar, the Master, Lord of the Earth. It was a magnificent plan. But the tension of this waiting for news of the success of the first blow was--considerable.

The Slavic fox was of a pallid fairness, he had a remarkably long nose, a thick, short moustache, and small blue eyes that were a little too near together to be pleasant. It was his habit to worry his moustache with short, nervous tugs whenever his restless mind troubled him, and now this motion was becoming so incessant that it irked Pestovitch beyond the limits of endurance.

'I will go,' said the minister, 'and see what the trouble is with the wireless. They give us nothing, good or bad.'

Left to himself, the king could worry his moustache without stint; he leant his elbows forward on the balcony and gave both of his long white hands to the work, so that he looked like a pale dog gnawing a bone. Suppose they caught his men, what should he do? Suppose they caught his men?

The clocks in the light gold-capped belfries of the town below presently intimated the half-hour after midday.

Of course, he and Pestovitch had thought it out. Even if they had caught those men, they were pledged to secrecy.... Probably they would be killed in the catching.... One could deny anyhow, deny and deny.

And then he became aware of half a dozen little shining specks very high in the blue.... Pestovitch came out to him presently. 'The government messages, sire, have all dropped into cipher,' he said. 'I have set a man----'

'LOOK!' interrupted the king, and pointed upward with a long, lean finger.

Pestovitch followed that indication and then glanced for one questioning moment at the white face before him.

'We have to face it out, sire,' he said.

For some moments they watched the steep spirals of the descending messengers, and then they began a hasty consultation....

They decided that to be holding a council upon the details of an ultimate surrender to Brissago was as innocent-looking a thing as the king could well be doing, and so, when at last the ex-king Egbert, whom the council had sent as its envoy, arrived upon the scene, he discovered the king almost theatrically posed at the head of his councillors in the midst of his court. The door upon the wireless operators was shut.

The ex-king from Brissago came like a draught through the curtains and attendants that gave a wide margin to King

Ferdinand's state, and the familiar confidence of his manner belied a certain hardness in his eye. Firmin trotted behind him, and no one else was with him. And as Ferdinand Charles rose to greet him, there came into the heart of the Balkan king again that same chilly feeling that he had felt upon the balcony--and it passed at the careless gestures of his guest. For surely any one might outwit this foolish talker who, for a mere idea and at the command of a little French rationalist in spectacles, had thrown away the most ancient crown in all the world.

One must deny, deny....

And then slowly and quite tiresomely he realised that there was nothing to deny. His visitor, with an amiable ease, went on talking about everything in debate between himself and Brissago except----.

Could it be that they had been delayed? Could it be that they had had to drop for repairs and were still uncaptured? Could it be that even now while this fool babbled, they were over there among the mountains heaving their deadly charge over the side of the aeroplane?

Strange hopes began to lift the tail of the Slavic fox again.

What was the man saying? One must talk to him anyhow until one knew. At any moment the little brass door behind him might open with the news of Brissago blown to atoms. Then it would be a delightful relief to the present tension to arrest this chatterer forthwith. He might be killed perhaps. What?

The king was repeating his observation. 'They have a ridiculous fancy that your confidence is based on the possession of atomic bombs.'

King Ferdinand Charles pulled himself together. He protested.

'Oh, quite so,' said the ex-king, 'quite so.'

'What grounds?' The ex-king permitted himself a gesture and the ghost of a chuckle--why the devil should he chuckle? 'Practically none,' he said. 'But of course with these things one has to be so careful.'

And then again for an instant something--like the faintest shadow of derision--gleamed out of the envoy's eyes and recalled that chilly feeling to King Ferdinand's spine.

Some kindred depression had come to Pestovitch, who had been watching the drawn intensity of Firmin's face. He came to the help of his master, who, he feared, might protest too much.

'A search!' cried the king. 'An embargo on our aeroplanes.'

'Only a temporary expedient,' said the ex-king Egbert, 'while the search is going on.'

The king appealed to his council.

'The people will never permit it, sire,' said a bustling little man in a gorgeous uniform.

'You'll have to make 'em,' said the ex-king, genially addressing all the councillors.

King Ferdinand glanced at the closed brass door through which no news would come.

'When would you want to have this search?'

The ex-king was radiant. 'We couldn't possibly do it until the day after to-morrow,' he said.

'Just the capital?'

'Where else?' asked the ex-king, still more cheerfully.

'For my own part,' said the ex-king confidentially, 'I think the whole business ridiculous. Who would be such a fool as to hide atomic bombs? Nobody. Certain hanging if he's caught--certain, and almost certain blowing up if he isn't. But nowadays I have to take orders like the rest of the world. And here I am.'

The king thought he had never met such detestable geniality. He glanced at Pestovitch, who nodded almost imperceptibly. It was well, anyhow, to have a fool to deal with. They might have sent a diplomatist. 'Of course,' said the king, 'I recognise the overpowering force--and a kind of logic--in these orders from Brissago.'

'I knew you would,' said the ex-king, with an air of relief, 'and so let us arrange----'

They arranged with a certain informality. No Balkan aeroplane was to adventure into the air until the search was concluded, and meanwhile the fleets of the world government would soar and circle in the sky. The towns were to be placarded with offers of reward to any one who would help in the discovery of atomic bombs....

'You will sign that,' said the ex-king.

'Why?'

'To show that we aren't in any way hostile to you.'

Pestovitch nodded 'yes' to his master.

'And then, you see,' said the ex-king in that easy way of his, 'we'll have a lot of men here, borrow help from your police, and run through all your things. And then everything will be over. Meanwhile, if I may be your guest....' When presently Pestovitch was alone with the king again, he found him in a state of jangling emotions. His spirit was tossing like a wind-whipped sea. One moment he was exalted and full of contempt for 'that ass' and his search; the next he was down in a pit of dread. 'They will find them, Pestovitch, and then he'll hang us.'

'Hang us?'

The king put his long nose into his councillor's face. 'That grinning brute WANTS to hang us,' he said. 'And hang us he will, if we give him a shadow of a chance.'

'But all their Modern State Civilisation!'

'Do you think there's any pity in that crew of Godless, Vivisecting Prigs?' cried this last king of romance. 'Do you think, Pestovitch, they understand anything of a high ambition or a splendid dream? Do you think that our gallant and sublime adventure has any appeal to them? Here am I, the last and greatest and most romantic of the Caesars, and do you think they will miss the chance of hanging me like a dog if they can, killing me like a rat in a hole? And that renegade! He who was once an anointed king! . . .

'I hate that sort of eye that laughs and keeps hard,' said the king.

'I won't sit still here and be caught like a fascinated rabbit,'

said the king in conclusion. 'We must shift those bombs.'

'Risk it,' said Pestovitch. 'Leave them alone.'

'No,' said the king. 'Shift them near the frontier. Then while they watch us here--they will always watch us here now--we can buy an aeroplane abroad, and pick them up....'

The king was in a feverish, irritable mood all that evening, but he made his plans nevertheless with infinite cunning. They must get the bombs away; there must be a couple of atomic hay lorries, the bombs could be hidden under the hay.... Pestovitch went and came, instructing trusty servants, planning and replanning.... The king and the ex-king talked very pleasantly of a number of subjects. All the while at the back of King Ferdinand Charles's mind fretted the mystery of his vanished aeroplane. There came no news of its capture, and no news of its success. At any moment all that power at the back of his visitor might crumble away and vanish....

It was past midnight, when the king, in a cloak and slouch hat that might equally have served a small farmer, or any respectable middle-class man, slipped out from an inconspicuous service gate on the eastward side of his palace into the thickly wooded gardens that sloped in a series of terraces down to the town. Pestovitch and his guard-valet Peter, both wrapped about in a similar disguise, came out among the laurels that bordered the pathway and joined him. It was a clear, warm night, but the stars seemed unusually little and remote because of the aeroplanes, each trailing a searchlight, that drove hither and thither across the blue. One great beam seemed to rest on the king for a moment as he came out of the palace; then instantly and reassuringly it had swept away. But while they were still in the palace gardens another found them and looked at them.

'They see us,' cried the king.

'They make nothing of us,' said Pestovitch.

The king glanced up and met a calm, round eye of light, that seemed to wink at him and vanish, leaving him blinded....

The three men went on their way. Near the little gate in the garden railings that Pestovitch had caused to be unlocked, the king paused under the shadow of an arch and looked back at the place. It was very high and narrow, a twentieth-century rendering of mediaevalism, mediaevalism in steel and bronze and sham stone and opaque glass. Against the sky it splashed a confusion of pinnacles. High up in the eastward wing were the windows of the apartments of the ex-king Egbert. One of them was brightly lit now, and against the light a little black figure stood very still and looked out upon the night.

The king snarled.

'He little knows how we slip through his fingers,' said Pestovitch.

And as he spoke they saw the ex-king stretch out his arms slowly, like one who yawns, knock his eyes and turn inward--no doubt to his bed.

Down through the ancient winding back streets of his capital hurried the king, and at an appointed corner a shabby atomic-automobile waited for the three. It was a hackney carriage of the lowest grade, with dented metal panels and deflated cushions. The driver was one of the ordinary drivers of the capital, but beside him sat the young secretary of Pestovitch, who knew the way to the farm where the bombs were hidden.

The automobile made its way through the narrow streets of the old town, which were still lit and uneasy--for the fleet of airships overhead had kept the cafes open and people abroad--over the great new bridge, and so by straggling outskirts to the country. And all through his capital the king who hoped to outdo Caesar, sat back and was very still, and no one spoke. And as they got out into the dark country they became aware of the searchlights wandering over the country-side like the uneasy ghosts of giants. The king sat forward and looked at these flitting whitenesses, and every now and then peered up to see the flying ships overhead.

'I don't like them,' said the king.

Presently one of these patches of moonlight came to rest about them and seemed to be following their automobile. The king drew back.

'The things are confoundedly noiseless,' said the king. 'It's like being stalked by lean white cats.'

He peered again. 'That fellow is watching us,' he said.

And then suddenly he gave way to panic. 'Pestovitch,' he said, clutching his minister's arm, 'they are watching us. I'm not going through with this. They are watching us. I'm going back.'

Pestovitch remonstrated. 'Tell him to go back,' said the king, and tried to open the window. For a few moments there was a grim struggle in the automobile; a gripping of wrists and a blow. 'I can't go through with it,' repeated the king, 'I can't go through with it.'

'But they'll hang us,' said Pestovitch.

'Not if we were to give up now. Not if we were to surrender the bombs. It is you who brought me into this....'

At last Pestovitch compromised. There was an inn perhaps half a mile from the farm. They could alight there and the king could get brandy, and rest his nerves for a time. And if he still thought fit to go back he could go back.

'See,' said Pestovitch, 'the light has gone again.'

The king peered up. 'I believe he's following us without a light,' said the king.

In the little old dirty inn the king hung doubtful for a time, and was for going back and throwing himself on the mercy of the council. 'If there is a council,' said Pestovitch. 'By this time your bombs may have settled it.

'But if so, these infernal aeroplanes would go.'

'They may not know yet.'

'But, Pestovitch, why couldn't you do all this without me?'

Pestovitch made no answer for a moment. 'I was for leaving the bombs in their place,' he said at last, and went to the window. About their conveyance shone a circle of bright light. Pestovitch had a brilliant idea. 'I will send my secretary out to make a kind of dispute with the driver. Something that will make them watch up above there. Meanwhile you and I and Peter will go out by the back way and up by the hedges to the farm....'

It was worthy of his subtle reputation and it answered passing well.

In ten minutes they were tumbling over the wall of the farm-yard, wet, muddy, and breathless, but unobserved. But as they ran towards the barns the king gave vent to something between a groan and a curse, and all about them shone the light--and passed.

But had it passed at once or lingered for just a second?

'They didn't see us,' said Peter.

'I don't think they saw us,' said the king, and stared as the light went swooping up the mountain side, hung for a second about a hayrick, and then came pouring back.

'In the barn!' cried the king.

He bruised his shin against something, and then all three men were inside the huge steel-girdered barn in which stood the two motor hay lorries that were to take the bombs away. Kurt and Abel, the two brothers of Peter, had brought the lorries thither in daylight. They had the upper half of the loads of hay thrown off, ready to cover the bombs, so soon as the king should show the hiding-place. 'There's a sort of pit here,' said the king. 'Don't light another lantern. This key of mine releases a ring....'

For a time scarcely a word was spoken in the darkness of the barn. There was the sound of a slab being lifted and then of feet descending a ladder into a pit. Then whispering and then heavy breathing as Kurt came struggling up with the first of the hidden bombs.

'We shall do it yet,' said the king. And then he gasped. 'Curse that light. Why in the name of Heaven didn't we shut the barn door?' For the great door stood wide open and all the empty,

lifeless yard outside and the door and six feet of the floor of the barn were in the blue glare of an inquiring searchlight.

'Shut the door, Peter,' said Pestovitch.

'No,' cried the king, too late, as Peter went forward into the light. 'Don't show yourself!' cried the king. Kurt made a step forward and plucked his brother back. For a time all five men stood still. It seemed that light would never go and then abruptly it was turned off, leaving them blinded. 'Now,' said the king uneasily, 'now shut the door.'

'Not completely,' cried Pestovitch. 'Leave a chink for us to go out by....'

It was hot work shifting those bombs, and the king worked for a time like a common man. Kurt and Abel carried the great things up and Peter brought them to the carts, and the king and Pestovitch helped him to place them among the hay. They made as little noise as they could....

'Ssh!' cried the king. 'What's that?'

But Kurt and Abel did not hear, and came blundering up the ladder with the last of the load.

'Ssh!' Peter ran forward to them with a whispered remonstrance. Now they were still.

The barn door opened a little wider, and against the dim blue light outside they saw the black shape of a man.

'Any one here?' he asked, speaking with an Italian accent.

The king broke into a cold perspiration. Then Pestovitch

answered: 'Only a poor farmer loading hay,' he said, and picked up a huge hay fork and went forward softly.

'You load your hay at a very bad time and in a very bad light,' said the man at the door, peering in. 'Have you no electric light here?'

Then suddenly he turned on an electric torch, and as he did so Pestovitch sprang forward. 'Get out of my barn!' he cried, and drove the fork full at the intruder's chest. He had a vague idea that so he might stab the man to silence. But the man shouted loudly as the prongs pierced him and drove him backward, and instantly there was a sound of feet running across the yard.

'Bombs,' cried the man upon the ground, struggling with the prongs in his hand, and as Pestovitch staggered forward into view with the force of his own thrust, he was shot through the body by one of the two new-comers.

The man on the ground was badly hurt but plucky. 'Bombs,' he repeated, and struggled up into a kneeling position and held his electric torch full upon the face of the king. 'Shoot them,' he cried, coughing and spitting blood, so that the halo of light round the king's head danced about.

For a moment in that shivering circle of light the two men saw the king kneeling up in the cart and Peter on the barn floor beside him. The old fox looked at them sideways--snared, a white-faced evil thing. And then, as with a faltering suicidal heroism, he leant forward over the bomb before him, they fired together and shot him through the head.

The upper part of his face seemed to vanish.

'Shoot them,' cried the man who had been stabbed. 'Shoot them

all!

And then his light went out, and he rolled over with a groan at the feet of his comrades.

But each carried a light of his own, and in another moment everything in the barn was visible again. They shot Peter even as he held up his hands in sign of surrender.

Kurt and Abel at the head of the ladder hesitated for a moment, and then plunged backward into the pit. 'If we don't kill them,' said one of the sharpshooters, 'they'll blow us to rags. They've gone down that hatchway. Come! . . .

'Here they are. Hands up! I say. Hold your light while I shoot....'

Section 8

It was still quite dark when his valet and Firmin came together and told the ex-king Egbert that the business was settled.

He started up into a sitting position on the side of his bed.

'Did he go out?' asked the ex-king.

'He is dead,' said Firmin. 'He was shot.'

The ex-king reflected. 'That's about the best thing that could have happened,' he said. 'Where are the bombs? In that farm-house on the opposite hill-side! Why! the place is in sight! Let us go. I'll dress. Is there any one in the place, Firmin, to get us a cup of coffee?'

Through the hungry twilight of the dawn the ex-king's automobile

carried him to the farm-house where the last rebel king was lying among his bombs. The rim of the sky flashed, the east grew bright, and the sun was just rising over the hills when King Egbert reached the farm-yard. There he found the hay lorries drawn out from the barn with the dreadful bombs still packed upon them. A couple of score of aviators held the yard, and outside a few peasants stood in a little group and stared, ignorant as yet of what had happened. Against the stone wall of the farm-yard five bodies were lying neatly side by side, and Pestovitch had an expression of surprise on his face and the king was chiefly identifiable by his long white hands and his blonde moustache. The wounded aeronaut had been carried down to the inn. And after the ex-king had given directions in what manner the bombs were to be taken to the new special laboratories above Zurich, where they could be unpacked in an atmosphere of chlorine, he turned to these five still shapes.

Their five pairs of feet stuck out with a curious stiff unanimity....

'What else was there to do?' he said in answer to some internal protest.

'I wonder, Firmin, if there are any more of them?'

'Bombs, sir?' asked Firmin.

'No, such kings....

'The pitiful folly of it!' said the ex-king, following his thoughts. 'Firmin,' as an ex-professor of International Politics, I think it falls to you to bury them. There? . . . No, don't put them near the well. People will have to drink from that well. Bury them over there, some way off in the field.'

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

THE NEW PHASE

Section 1

The task that lay before the Assembly of Brissago, viewed as we may view it now from the clarifying standpoint of things accomplished, was in its broad issues a simple one. Essentially it was to place social organisation upon the new footing that the swift, accelerated advance of human knowledge had rendered necessary. The council was gathered together with the haste of a salvage expedition, and it was confronted with wreckage; but the wreckage was irreparable wreckage, and the only possibilities of the case were either the relapse of mankind to the agricultural barbarism from which it had emerged so painfully or the acceptance of achieved science as the basis of a new social order. The old tendencies of human nature, suspicion, jealousy, particularism, and belligerency, were incompatible with the monstrous destructive power of the new appliances the inhuman logic of science had produced. The equilibrium could be restored only by civilisation destroying itself down to a level at which modern apparatus could no longer be produced, or by human nature adapting itself in its institutions to the new conditions. It was for the latter alternative that the assembly existed.

Sooner or later this choice would have confronted mankind. The sudden development of atomic science did but precipitate and render rapid and dramatic a clash between the new and the customary that had been gathering since ever the first flint was chipped or the first fire built together. From the day when man contrived himself a tool and suffered another male to draw near him, he ceased to be altogether a thing of instinct and

untroubled convictions. From that day forth a widening breach can be traced between his egotistical passions and the social need. Slowly he adapted himself to the life of the homestead, and his passionate impulses widened out to the demands of the clan and the tribe. But widen though his impulses might, the latent hunter and wanderer and wonderer in his imagination outstripped their development. He was never quite subdued to the soil nor quite tamed to the home. Everywhere it needed teaching and the priest to keep him within the bounds of the plough-life and the beast-tending. Slowly a vast system of traditional imperatives superposed itself upon his instincts, imperatives that were admirably fitted to make him that cultivator, that cattle-mincer, who was for twice ten thousand years the normal man.

And, unpremeditated, undesired, out of the accumulations of his tilling came civilisation. Civilisation was the agricultural surplus. It appeared as trade and tracks and roads, it pushed boats out upon the rivers and presently invaded the seas, and within its primitive courts, within temples grown rich and leisurely and amidst the gathering medley of the seaport towns rose speculation and philosophy and science, and the beginning of the new order that has at last established itself as human life. Slowly at first, as we traced it, and then with an accumulating velocity, the new powers were fabricated. Man as a whole did not seek them nor desire them; they were thrust into his hand. For a time men took up and used these new things and the new powers inadvertently as they came to him, recking nothing of the consequences. For endless generations change led him very gently. But when he had been led far enough, change quickened the pace. It was with a series of shocks that he realised at last that he was living the old life less and less and a new life more and more.

Already before the release of atomic energy the tensions between the old way of living and the new were intense. They were far

intenser than they had been even at the collapse of the Roman imperial system. On the one hand was the ancient life of the family and the small community and the petty industry, on the other was a new life on a larger scale, with remoter horizons and a strange sense of purpose. Already it was growing clear that men must live on one side or the other. One could not have little tradespeople and syndicated businesses in the same market, sleeping carters and motor trolleys on the same road, bows and arrows and aeroplane sharpshooters in the same army, or illiterate peasant industries and power-driven factories in the same world. And still less it was possible that one could have the ideas and ambitions and greed and jealousy of peasants equipped with the vast appliances of the new age. If there had been no atomic bombs to bring together most of the directing intelligence of the world to that hasty conference at Brissago, there would still have been, extended over great areas and a considerable space of time perhaps, a less formal conference of responsible and understanding people upon the perplexities of this world-wide opposition. If the work of Holsten had been spread over centuries and imparted to the world by imperceptible degrees, it would nevertheless have made it necessary for men to take counsel upon and set a plan for the future. Indeed already there had been accumulating for a hundred years before the crisis a literature of foresight; there was a whole mass of 'Modern State' scheming available for the conference to go upon. These bombs did but accentuate and dramatise an already developing problem.

Section 2

This assembly was no leap of exceptional minds and super-intelligences into the control of affairs. It was teachable, its members trailed ideas with them to the gathering, but these were the consequences of the 'moral shock' the bombs had given humanity, and there is no reason for supposing its

individual personalities were greatly above the average. It would be possible to cite a thousand instances of error and inefficiency in its proceedings due to the forgetfulness, irritability, or fatigue of its members. It experimented considerably and blundered often. Excepting Holsten, whose gift was highly specialised, it is questionable whether there was a single man of the first order of human quality in the gathering. But it had a modest fear of itself, and a consequent directness that gave it a general distinction. There was, of course, a noble simplicity about Leblanc, but even of him it may be asked whether he was not rather good and honest-minded than in the fuller sense great.

The ex-king had wisdom and a certain romantic dash, he was a man among thousands, even if he was not a man among millions, but his memoirs, and indeed his decision to write memoirs, give the quality of himself and his associates. The book makes admirable but astonishing reading. Therein he takes the great work the council was doing for granted as a little child takes God. It is as if he had no sense of it at all. He tells amusing trivialities about his cousin Wilhelm and his secretary Firmin, he pokes fun at the American president, who was, indeed, rather a little accident of the political machine than a representative American, and he gives a long description of how he was lost for three days in the mountains in the company of the only Japanese member, a loss that seems to have caused no serious interruption of the work of the council....

The Brissago conference has been written about time after time, as though it were a gathering of the very flower of humanity. Perched up there by the freak or wisdom of Leblanc, it had a certain Olympian quality, and the natural tendency of the human mind to elaborate such a resemblance would have us give its members the likenesses of gods. It would be equally reasonable to compare it to one of those enforced meetings upon the

mountain-tops that must have occurred in the opening phases of the Deluge. The strength of the council lay not in itself but in the circumstances that had quickened its intelligence, dispelled its vanities, and emancipated it from traditional ambitions and antagonisms. It was stripped of the accumulation of centuries, a naked government with all that freedom of action that nakedness affords. And its problems were set before it with a plainness that was out of all comparison with the complicated and perplexing intimations of the former time.

Section 3

The world on which the council looked did indeed present a task quite sufficiently immense and altogether too urgent for any wanton indulgence in internal dissension. It may be interesting to sketch in a few phrases the condition of mankind at the close of the period of warring states, in the year of crisis that followed the release of atomic power. It was a world extraordinarily limited when one measures it by later standards, and it was now in a state of the direst confusion and distress.

It must be remembered that at this time men had still to spread into enormous areas of the land surface of the globe. There were vast mountain wildernesses, forest wildernesses, sandy deserts, and frozen lands. Men still clung closely to water and arable soil in temperate or sub-tropical climates, they lived abundantly only in river valleys, and all their great cities had grown upon large navigable rivers or close to ports upon the sea. Over great areas even of this suitable land flies and mosquitoes, armed with infection, had so far defeated human invasion, and under their protection the virgin forests remained untouched. Indeed, the whole world even in its most crowded districts was filthy with flies and swarming with needless insect life to an extent which is now almost incredible. A population map of the world in 1950 would have followed seashore and river course so closely in its

darker shading as to give an impression that homo sapiens was an amphibious animal. His roads and railways lay also along the lower contours, only here and there to pierce some mountain barrier or reach some holiday resort did they clamber above 3000 feet. And across the ocean his traffic passed in definite lines; there were hundreds of thousands of square miles of ocean no ship ever traversed except by mischance.

Into the mysteries of the solid globe under his feet he had not yet pierced for five miles, and it was still not forty years since, with a tragic pertinacity, he had clambered to the poles of the earth. The limitless mineral wealth of the Arctic and Antarctic circles was still buried beneath vast accumulations of immemorial ice, and the secret riches of the inner zones of the crust were untapped and indeed unsuspected. The higher mountain regions were known only to a sprinkling of guide-led climbers and the frequenters of a few gaunt hotels, and the vast rainless belts of land that lay across the continental masses, from Gobi to Sahara and along the backbone of America, with their perfect air, their daily baths of blazing sunshine, their nights of cool serenity and glowing stars, and their reservoirs of deep-lying water, were as yet only desolations of fear and death to the common imagination.

And now under the shock of the atomic bombs, the great masses of population which had gathered into the enormous dingy town centres of that period were dispossessed and scattered disastrously over the surrounding rural areas. It was as if some brutal force, grown impatient at last at man's blindness, had with the deliberate intention of a rearrangement of population upon more wholesome lines, shaken the world. The great industrial regions and the large cities that had escaped the bombs were, because of their complete economic collapse, in almost as tragic plight as those that blazed, and the country-side was disordered by a multitude of wandering and

lawless strangers. In some parts of the world famine raged, and in many regions there was plague.... The plains of north India, which had become more and more dependent for the general welfare on the railways and that great system of irrigation canals which the malignant section of the patriots had destroyed, were in a state of peculiar distress, whole villages lay dead together, no man heeding, and the very tigers and panthers that preyed upon the emaciated survivors crawled back infected into the jungle to perish. Large areas of China were a prey to brigand bands....

It is a remarkable thing that no complete contemporary account of the explosion of the atomic bombs survives. There are, of course, innumerable allusions and partial records, and it is from these that subsequent ages must piece together the image of these devastations.

The phenomena, it must be remembered, changed greatly from day to day, and even from hour to hour, as the exploding bomb shifted its position, threw off fragments or came into contact with water or a fresh texture of soil. Barnet, who came within forty miles of Paris early in October, is concerned chiefly with his account of the social confusion of the country-side and the problems of his command, but he speaks of heaped cloud masses of steam. 'All along the sky to the south-west' and of a red glare beneath these at night. Parts of Paris were still burning, and numbers of people were camped in the fields even at this distance watching over treasured heaps of salvaged loot. He speaks too of the distant rumbling of the explosion--'like trains going over iron bridges.'

Other descriptions agree with this; they all speak of the 'continuous reverberations,' or of the 'thudding and hammering,' or some such phrase; and they all testify to a huge pall of steam, from which rain would fall suddenly in torrents and amidst which lightning played. Drawing nearer to Paris an observer

would have found the salvage camps increasing in number and blocking up the villages, and large numbers of people, often starving and ailing, camping under improvised tents because there was no place for them to go. The sky became more and more densely overcast until at last it blotted out the light of day and left nothing but a dull red glare 'extraordinarily depressing to the spirit.' In this dull glare, great numbers of people were still living, clinging to their houses and in many cases subsisting in a state of partial famine upon the produce in their gardens and the stores in the shops of the provision dealers.

Coming in still closer, the investigator would have reached the police cordon, which was trying to check the desperate enterprise of those who would return to their homes or rescue their more valuable possessions within the 'zone of imminent danger.'

That zone was rather arbitrarily defined. If our spectator could have got permission to enter it, he would have entered also a zone of uproar, a zone of perpetual thunderings, lit by a strange purplish-red light, and quivering and swaying with the incessant explosion of the radio-active substance. Whole blocks of buildings were alight and burning fiercely, the trembling, ragged flames looking pale and ghastly and attenuated in comparison with the full-bodied crimson glare beyond. The shells of other edifices already burnt rose, pierced by rows of window sockets against the red-lit mist.

Every step farther would have been as dangerous as a descent within the crater of an active volcano. These spinning, boiling bomb centres would shift or break unexpectedly into new regions, great fragments of earth or drain or masonry suddenly caught by a jet of disruptive force might come flying by the explorer's head, or the ground yawn a fiery grave beneath his feet. Few who adventured into these areas of destruction and survived attempted any repetition of their experiences. There are stories of puffs

of luminous, radio-active vapour drifting sometimes scores of miles from the bomb centre and killing and scorching all they overtook. And the first conflagrations from the Paris centre spread westward half-way to the sea.

Moreover, the air in this infernal inner circle of red-lit ruins had a peculiar dryness and a blistering quality, so that it set up a soreness of the skin and lungs that was very difficult to heal....

Such was the last state of Paris, and such on a larger scale was the condition of affairs in Chicago, and the same fate had overtaken Berlin, Moscow, Tokio, the eastern half of London, Toulon, Kiel, and two hundred and eighteen other centres of population or armament. Each was a flaming centre of radiant destruction that only time could quench, that indeed in many instances time has still to quench. To this day, though indeed with a constantly diminishing uproar and vigour, these explosions continue. In the map of nearly every country of the world three or four or more red circles, a score of miles in diameter, mark the position of the dying atomic bombs and the death areas that men have been forced to abandon around them. Within these areas perished museums, cathedrals, palaces, libraries, galleries of masterpieces, and a vast accumulation of human achievement, whose charred remains lie buried, a legacy of curious material that only future generations may hope to examine....

Section 4

The state of mind of the dispossessed urban population which swarmed and perished so abundantly over the country-side during the dark days of the autumnal months that followed the Last War, was one of blank despair. Barnet gives sketch after sketch of groups of these people, camped among the vineyards of Champagne, as he saw them during his period of service with the army of

pacification.

There was, for example, that 'man-milliner' who came out from a field beside the road that rises up eastward out of Epernay, and asked how things were going in Paris. He was, says Barnet, a round-faced man, dressed very neatly in black--so neatly that it was amazing to discover he was living close at hand in a tent made of carpets--and he had 'an urbane but insistent manner,' a carefully trimmed moustache and beard, expressive eyebrows, and hair very neatly brushed.

'No one goes into Paris,' said Barnet.

'But, Monsieur, that is very unenterprising,' the man by the wayside submitted.

'The danger is too great. The radiations eat into people's skins.'

The eyebrows protested. 'But is nothing to be done?'

'Nothing can be done.'

'But, Monsieur, it is extraordinarily inconvenient, this living in exile and waiting. My wife and my little boy suffer extremely. There is a lack of amenity. And the season advances. I say nothing of the expense and difficulty in obtaining provisions. . . . When does Monsieur think that something will be done to render Paris--possible?'

Barnet considered his interlocutor.

'I'm told,' said Barnet, 'that Paris is not likely to be possible again for several generations.'

'Oh! but this is preposterous! Consider, Monsieur! What are people like ourselves to do in the meanwhile? I am a costumier. All my connections and interests, above all my style, demand Paris. . . .'

Barnet considered the sky, from which a light rain was beginning to fall, the wide fields about them from which the harvest had been taken, the trimmed poplars by the wayside.

'Naturally,' he agreed, 'you want to go to Paris. But Paris is over.'

'Over!'

'Finished.'

'But then, Monsieur--what is to become--of ME?'

Barnet turned his face westward, whither the white road led.

'Where else, for example, may I hope to find--opportunity?'

Barnet made no reply.

'Perhaps on the Riviera. Or at some such place as Homburg. Or some plague perhaps.'

'All that,' said Barnet, accepting for the first time facts that had lain evident in his mind for weeks; 'all that must be over, too.'

There was a pause. Then the voice beside him broke out. 'But, Monsieur, it is impossible! It leaves--nothing.'

'No. Not very much.'

'One cannot suddenly begin to grow potatoes!'

'It would be good if Monsieur could bring himself----'

'To the life of a peasant! And my wife----You do not know the distinguished delicacy of my wife, a refined helplessness, a peculiar dependent charm. Like some slender tropical creeper--with great white flowers.... But all this is foolish talk. It is impossible that Paris, which has survived so many misfortunes, should not presently revive.'

'I do not think it will ever revive. Paris is finished. London, too, I am told--Berlin. All the great capitals were stricken....'

'But----! Monsieur must permit me to differ.'

'It is so.'

'It is impossible. Civilisations do not end in this manner. Mankind will insist.'

'On Paris?'

'On Paris.'

'Monsieur, you might as well hope to go down the Maelstrom and resume business there.'

'I am content, Monsieur, with my own faith.'

'The winter comes on. Would not Monsieur be wiser to seek a house?'

'Farther from Paris? No, Monsieur. But it is not possible, Monsieur, what you say, and you are under a tremendous mistake.... Indeed you are in error.... I asked merely for information....'

'When last I saw him,' said Barnet, 'he was standing under the signpost at the crest of the hill, gazing wistfully, yet it seemed to me a little doubtfully, now towards Paris, and altogether heedless of a drizzling rain that was wetting him through and through....'

Section 5

This effect of chill dismay, of a doom as yet imperfectly apprehended deepens as Barnet's record passes on to tell of the approach of winter. It was too much for the great mass of those unwilling and incompetent nomads to realise that an age had ended, that the old help and guidance existed no longer, that times would not mend again, however patiently they held out. They were still in many cases looking to Paris when the first snowflakes of that pitiless January came swirling about them. The story grows grimmer....

If it is less monstrously tragic after Barnet's return to England, it is, if anything, harder. England was a spectacle of fear-embittered householders, hiding food, crushing out robbery, driving the starving wanderers from every faltering place upon the roads lest they should die inconveniently and reproachfully on the doorsteps of those who had failed to urge them onward....

The remnants of the British troops left France finally in March, after urgent representations from the provisional government at Orleans that they could be supported no longer. They seem to have been a fairly well-behaved, but highly parasitic force throughout, though Barnet is clearly of opinion that they did

much to suppress sporadic brigandage and maintain social order. He came home to a famine-stricken country, and his picture of the England of that spring is one of miserable patience and desperate expedients. The country was suffering much more than France, because of the cessation of the overseas supplies on which it had hitherto relied. His troops were given bread, dried fish, and boiled nettles at Dover, and marched inland to Ashford and paid off. On the way thither they saw four men hanging from the telegraph posts by the roadside, who had been hung for stealing swedes. The labour refuges of Kent, he discovered, were feeding their crowds of casual wanderers on bread into which clay and sawdust had been mixed. In Surrey there was a shortage of even such fare as that. He himself struck across country to Winchester, fearing to approach the bomb-poisoned district round London, and at Winchester he had the luck to be taken on as one of the wireless assistants at the central station and given regular rations. The station stood in a commanding position on the chalk hill that overlooks the town from the east....

Thence he must have assisted in the transmission of the endless cipher messages that preceded the gathering at Brissago, and there it was that the Brissago proclamation of the end of the war and the establishment of a world government came under his hands.

He was feeling ill and apathetic that day, and he did not realise what it was he was transcribing. He did it mechanically, as a part of his tedious duty.

Afterwards there came a rush of messages arising out of the declaration that strained him very much, and in the evening when he was relieved, he ate his scanty supper and then went out upon the little balcony before the station, to smoke and rest his brains after this sudden and as yet inexplicable press of duty. It was a very beautiful, still evening. He fell talking to a fellow operator, and for the first time, he declares, 'I began to

understand what it was all about. I began to see just what enormous issues had been under my hands for the past four hours. But I became incredulous after my first stimulation. "This is some sort of Bunkum," I said very sagely.

'My colleague was more hopeful. "It means an end to bomb-throwing and destruction," he said. "It means that presently corn will come from America."

' "Who is going to send corn when there is no more value in money?" I asked.

'Suddenly we were startled by a clashing from the town below. The cathedral bells, which had been silent ever since I had come into the district, were beginning, with a sort of rheumatic difficulty, to ring. Presently they warmed a little to the work, and we realised what was going on. They were ringing a peal. We listened with an unbelieving astonishment and looking into each other's yellow faces.

' "They mean it," said my colleague.

' "But what can they do now?" I asked. "Everything is broken down...." '

And on that sentence, with an unexpected artistry, Barnet abruptly ends his story.

Section 6

From the first the new government handled affairs with a certain greatness of spirit. Indeed, it was inevitable that they should act greatly. From the first they had to see the round globe as one problem; it was impossible any longer to deal with it piece by piece. They had to secure it universally from any fresh

outbreak of atomic destruction, and they had to ensure a permanent and universal pacification. On this capacity to grasp and wield the whole round globe their existence depended. There was no scope for any further performance.

So soon as the seizure of the existing supplies of atomic ammunition and the apparatus for synthesising Carolinum was assured, the disbanding or social utilisation of the various masses of troops still under arms had to be arranged, the salvation of the year's harvests, and the feeding, housing, and employment of the drifting millions of homeless people. In Canada, in South America, and Asiatic Russia there were vast accumulations of provision that was immovable only because of the breakdown of the monetary and credit systems. These had to be brought into the famine districts very speedily if entire depopulation was to be avoided, and their transportation and the revival of communications generally absorbed a certain proportion of the soldiery and more able unemployed. The task of housing assumed gigantic dimensions, and from building camps the housing committee of the council speedily passed to constructions of a more permanent type. They found far less friction than might have been expected in turning the loose population on their hands to these things. People were extraordinarily tamed by that year of suffering and death; they were disillusioned of their traditions, bereft of once obstinate prejudices; they felt foreign in a strange world, and ready to follow any confident leadership. The orders of the new government came with the best of all credentials, rations. The people everywhere were as easy to control, one of the old labour experts who had survived until the new time witnesses, 'as gangs of emigrant workers in a new land.' And now it was that the social possibilities of the atomic energy began to appear. The new machinery that had come into existence before the last wars increased and multiplied, and the council found itself not only with millions of hands at its disposal but with power and apparatus that made its first conceptions of the

work it had to do seem pitifully timid. The camps that were planned in iron and deal were built in stone and brass; the roads that were to have been mere iron tracks became spacious ways that insisted upon architecture; the cultivations of foodstuffs that were to have supplied emergency rations, were presently, with synthesisers, fertilisers, actinic light, and scientific direction, in excess of every human need.

The government had begun with the idea of temporarily reconstituting the social and economic system that had prevailed before the first coming of the atomic engine, because it was to this system that the ideas and habits of the great mass of the world's dispossessed population was adapted. Subsequent rearrangement it had hoped to leave to its successors--whoever they might be. But this, it became more and more manifest, was absolutely impossible. As well might the council have proposed a revival of slavery. The capitalist system had already been smashed beyond repair by the onset of limitless gold and energy; it fell to pieces at the first endeavour to stand it up again. Already before the war half of the industrial class had been out of work, the attempt to put them back into wages employment on the old lines was futile from the outset--the absolute shattering of the currency system alone would have been sufficient to prevent that, and it was necessary therefore to take over the housing, feeding, and clothing of this worldwide multitude without exacting any return in labour whatever. In a little while the mere absence of occupation for so great a multitude of people everywhere became an evident social danger, and the government was obliged to resort to such devices as simple decorative work in wood and stone, the manufacture of hand-woven textiles, fruit-growing, flower-growing, and landscape gardening on a grand scale to keep the less adaptable out of mischief, and of paying wages to the younger adults for attendance at schools that would equip them to use the new atomic machinery.... So quite insensibly the council drifted into a complete reorganisation of

urban and industrial life, and indeed of the entire social system.

Ideas that are unhampered by political intrigue or financial considerations have a sweeping way with them, and before a year was out the records of the council show clearly that it was rising to its enormous opportunity, and partly through its own direct control and partly through a series of specific committees, it was planning a new common social order for the entire population of the earth. 'There can be no real social stability or any general human happiness while large areas of the world and large classes of people are in a phase of civilisation different from the prevailing mass. It is impossible now to have great blocks of population misunderstanding the generally accepted social purpose or at an economic disadvantage to the rest.' So the council expressed its conception of the problem it had to solve. The peasant, the field-worker, and all barbaric cultivators were at an 'economic disadvantage' to the more mobile and educated classes, and the logic of the situation compelled the council to take up systematically the supersession of this stratum by a more efficient organisation of production. It developed a scheme for the progressive establishment throughout the world of the 'modern system' in agriculture, a system that should give the full advantages of a civilised life to every agricultural worker, and this replacement has been going on right up to the present day. The central idea of the modern system is the substitution of cultivating guilds for the individual cultivator, and for cottage and village life altogether. These guilds are associations of men and women who take over areas of arable or pasture land, and make themselves responsible for a certain average produce. They are bodies small enough as a rule to be run on a strictly democratic basis, and large enough to supply all the labour, except for a certain assistance from townspeople during the harvest, needed upon the land farmed. They have watchers' bungalows or chalets on the ground cultivated, but

the ease and the costlessness of modern locomotion enables them to maintain a group of residences in the nearest town with a common dining-room and club house, and usually also a guild house in the national or provincial capital. Already this system has abolished a distinctively 'rustic' population throughout vast areas of the old world, where it has prevailed immemorially. That shy, unstimulated life of the lonely hovel, the narrow scandals and petty spites and persecutions of the small village, that hoarding, half inanimate existence away from books, thought, or social participation and in constant contact with cattle, pigs, poultry, and their excrement, is passing away out of human experience. In a little while it will be gone altogether. In the nineteenth century it had already ceased to be a necessary human state, and only the absence of any collective intelligence and an imagined need for tough and unintelligent soldiers and for a prolific class at a low level, prevented its systematic replacement at that time....

And while this settlement of the country was in progress, the urban camps of the first phase of the council's activities were rapidly developing, partly through the inherent forces of the situation and partly through the council's direction, into a modern type of town....

Section 7

It is characteristic of the manner in which large enterprises forced themselves upon the Brissago council, that it was not until the end of the first year of their administration and then only with extreme reluctance that they would take up the manifest need for a lingua franca for the world. They seem to have given little attention to the various theoretical universal languages which were proposed to them. They wished to give as little trouble to hasty and simple people as possible, and the world-wide distribution of English gave them a bias for it from

the beginning. The extreme simplicity of its grammar was also in its favour.

It was not without some sacrifices that the English-speaking peoples were permitted the satisfaction of hearing their speech used universally. The language was shorn of a number of grammatical peculiarities, the distinctive forms for the subjunctive mood for example and most of its irregular plurals were abolished; its spelling was systematised and adapted to the vowel sounds in use upon the continent of Europe, and a process of incorporating foreign nouns and verbs commenced that speedily reached enormous proportions. Within ten years from the establishment of the World Republic the New English Dictionary had swelled to include a vocabulary of 250,000 words, and a man of 1900 would have found considerable difficulty in reading an ordinary newspaper. On the other hand, the men of the new time could still appreciate the older English literature.... Certain minor acts of uniformity accompanied this larger one. The idea of a common understanding and a general simplification of intercourse once it was accepted led very naturally to the universal establishment of the metric system of weights and measures, and to the disappearance of the various makeshift calendars that had hitherto confused chronology. The year was divided into thirteen months of four weeks each, and New Year's Day and Leap Year's Day were made holidays, and did not count at all in the ordinary week. So the weeks and the months were brought into correspondence. And moreover, as the king put it to Firmin, it was decided to 'nail down Easter.' . . . In these matters, as in so many matters, the new civilisation came as a simplification of ancient complications; the history of the calendar throughout the world is a history of inadequate adjustments, of attempts to fix seed-time and midwinter that go back into the very beginning of human society; and this final rectification had a symbolic value quite beyond its practical convenience. But the council would have no rash nor harsh

innovations, no strange names for the months, and no alteration in the numbering of the years.

The world had already been put upon one universal monetary basis. For some months after the accession of the council, the world's affairs had been carried on without any sound currency at all. Over great regions money was still in use, but with the most extravagant variations in price and the most disconcerting fluctuations of public confidence. The ancient rarity of gold upon which the entire system rested was gone. Gold was now a waste product in the release of atomic energy, and it was plain that no metal could be the basis of the monetary system again. Henceforth all coins must be token coins. Yet the whole world was accustomed to metallic money, and a vast proportion of existing human relationships had grown up upon a cash basis, and were almost inconceivable without that convenient liquidating factor. It seemed absolutely necessary to the life of the social organisation to have some sort of currency, and the council had therefore to discover some real value upon which to rest it. Various such apparently stable values as land and hours of work were considered. Ultimately the government, which was now in possession of most of the supplies of energy-releasing material, fixed a certain number of units of energy as the value of a gold sovereign, declared a sovereign to be worth exactly twenty marks, twenty-five francs, five dollars, and so forth, with the other current units of the world, and undertook, under various qualifications and conditions, to deliver energy upon demand as payment for every sovereign presented. On the whole, this worked satisfactorily. They saved the face of the pound sterling. Coin was rehabilitated, and after a phase of price fluctuations, began to settle down to definite equivalents and uses again, with names and everyday values familiar to the common run of people....

Section 8

As the Brissago council came to realise that what it had supposed to be temporary camps of refugees were rapidly developing into great towns of a new type, and that it was remoulding the world in spite of itself, it decided to place this work of redistributing the non-agricultural population in the hands of a compactor and better qualified special committee. That committee is now, far more than the council of any other of its delegated committees, the active government of the world. Developed from an almost invisible germ of 'town-planning' that came obscurely into existence in Europe or America (the question is still in dispute) somewhere in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, its work, the continual active planning and replanning of the world as a place of human habitation, is now so to speak the collective material activity of the race. The spontaneous, disorderly spreadings and recessions of populations, as aimless and mechanical as the trickling of spilt water, which was the substance of history for endless years, giving rise here to congestions, here to chronic devastating wars, and everywhere to a discomfort and disorderliness that was at its best only picturesque, is at an end. Men spread now, with the whole power of the race to aid them, into every available region of the earth. Their cities are no longer tethered to running water and the proximity of cultivation, their plans are no longer affected by strategic considerations or thoughts of social insecurity. The aeroplane and the nearly costless mobile car have abolished trade routes; a common language and a universal law have abolished a thousand restraining inconveniences, and so an astonishing dispersal of habitations has begun. One may live anywhere. And so it is that our cities now are true social gatherings, each with a character of its own and distinctive interests of its own, and most of them with a common occupation. They lie out in the former deserts, these long wasted sun-baths of the race, they tower amidst eternal snows, they hide in remote islands, and bask on broad lagoons. For a time the whole tendency of mankind was to desert the river valleys in which the race had been cradled for

half a million years, but now that the War against Flies has been waged so successfully that this pestilential branch of life is nearly extinct, they are returning thither with a renewed appetite for gardens laced by watercourses, for pleasant living amidst islands and houseboats and bridges, and for nocturnal lanterns reflected by the sea.

Man who is ceasing to be an agricultural animal becomes more and more a builder, a traveller, and a maker. How much he ceases to be a cultivator of the soil the returns of the Redistribution Committee showed. Every year the work of our scientific laboratories increases the productivity and simplifies the labour of those who work upon the soil, and the food now of the whole world is produced by less than one per cent. of its population, a percentage which still tends to decrease. Far fewer people are needed upon the land than training and proclivity dispose towards it, and as a consequence of this excess of human attention, the garden side of life, the creation of groves and lawns and vast regions of beautiful flowers, has expanded enormously and continues to expand. For, as agricultural method intensifies and the quota is raised, one farm association after another, availing itself of the 1975 regulations, elects to produce a public garden and pleasaunce in the place of its former fields, and the area of freedom and beauty is increased. And the chemists' triumphs of synthesis, which could now give us an entirely artificial food, remain largely in abeyance because it is so much more pleasant and interesting to eat natural produce and to grow such things upon the soil. Each year adds to the variety of our fruits and the delightfulness of our flowers.

Section 9

The early years of the World Republic witnessed a certain recrudescence of political adventure. There was, it is rather curious to note, no revival of separatism after the face of King

Ferdinand Charles had vanished from the sight of men, but in a number of countries, as the first urgent physical needs were met, there appeared a variety of personalities having this in common, that they sought to revive political trouble and clamber by its aid to positions of importance and satisfaction. In no case did they speak in the name of kings, and it is clear that monarchy must have been far gone in obsolescence before the twentieth century began, but they made appeals to the large survivals of nationalist and racial feeling that were everywhere to be found, they alleged with considerable justice that the council was overriding racial and national customs and disregarding religious rules. The great plain of India was particularly prolific in such agitators. The revival of newspapers, which had largely ceased during the terrible year because of the dislocation of the coinage, gave a vehicle and a method of organisation to these complaints. At first the council disregarded this developing opposition, and then it recognised it with an entirely devastating frankness.

Never, of course, had there been so provisional a government. It was of an extravagant illegality. It was, indeed, hardly more than a club, a club of about a hundred persons. At the outset there were ninety-three, and these were increased afterwards by the issue of invitations which more than balanced its deaths, to as many at one time as one hundred and nineteen. Always its constitution has been miscellaneous. At no time were these invitations issued with an admission that they recognised a right. The old institution or monarchy had come out unexpectedly well in the light of the new regime. Nine of the original members of the first government were crowned heads who had resigned their separate sovereignty, and at no time afterwards did the number of its royal members sink below six. In their case there was perhaps a kind of attenuated claim to rule, but except for them and the still more infinitesimal pretensions of one or two ex-presidents of republics, no member of the council had even the shade of a

right to his participation in its power. It was natural, therefore, that its opponents should find a common ground in a clamour for representative government, and build high hopes upon a return, to parliamentary institutions.

The council decided to give them everything they wanted, but in a form that suited ill with their aspirations. It became at one stroke a representative body. It became, indeed, magnificently representative. It became so representative that the politicians were drowned in a deluge of votes. Every adult of either sex from pole to pole was given a vote, and the world was divided into ten constituencies, which voted on the same day by means of a simple modification of the world post. Membership of the government, it was decided, must be for life, save in the exceptional case of a recall; but the elections, which were held quinquennially, were arranged to add fifty members on each occasion. The method of proportional representation with one transferable vote was adopted, and the voter might also write upon his voting paper in a specially marked space, the name of any of his representatives that he wished to recall. A ruler was recallable by as many votes as the quota by which he had been elected, and the original members by as many votes in any constituency as the returning quotas in the first election.

Upon these conditions the council submitted itself very cheerfully to the suffrages of the world. None of its members were recalled, and its fifty new associates, which included twenty-seven which it had seen fit to recommend, were of an altogether too miscellaneous quality to disturb the broad trend of its policy. Its freedom from rules or formalities prevented any obstructive proceedings, and when one of the two newly arrived Home Rule members for India sought for information how to bring in a bill, they learnt simply that bills were not brought in. They asked for the speaker, and were privileged to hear much ripe wisdom from the ex-king Egbert, who was now consciously

among the seniors of the gathering. Thereafter they were baffled men....

But already by that time the work of the council was drawing to an end. It was concerned not so much for the continuation of its construction as for the preservation of its accomplished work from the dramatic instincts of the politician.

The life of the race becomes indeed more and more independent of the formal government. The council, in its opening phase, was heroic in spirit; a dragon-slaying body, it slashed out of existence a vast, knotted tangle of obsolete ideas and clumsy and jealous proprietorships; it secured by a noble system of institutional precautions, freedom of inquiry, freedom of criticism, free communications, a common basis of education and understanding, and freedom from economic oppression. With that its creative task was accomplished. It became more and more an established security and less and less an active intervention. There is nothing in our time to correspond with the continual petty making and entangling of laws in an atmosphere of contention that is perhaps the most perplexing aspect of constitutional history in the nineteenth century. In that age they seem to have been perpetually making laws when we should alter regulations. The work of change which we delegate to these scientific committees of specific general direction which have the special knowledge needed, and which are themselves dominated by the broad intellectual process of the community, was in those days inextricably mixed up with legislation. They fought over the details; we should as soon think of fighting over the arrangement of the parts of a machine. We know nowadays that such things go on best within laws, as life goes on between earth and sky. And so it is that government gathers now for a day or so in each year under the sunshine of Brissago when Saint Bruno's lilies are in flower, and does little more than bless the work of its committees. And even these committees are less originaive and

more expressive of the general thought than they were at first. It becomes difficult to mark out the particular directive personalities of the world. Continually we are less personal. Every good thought contributes now, and every able brain falls within that informal and dispersed kingship which gathers together into one purpose the energies of the race.

Section 10

It is doubtful if we shall ever see again a phase of human existence in which 'politics,' that is to say a partisan interference with the ruling sanities of the world, will be the dominant interest among serious men. We seem to have entered upon an entirely new phase in history in which contention as distinguished from rivalry, has almost abruptly ceased to be the usual occupation, and has become at most a subdued and hidden and discredited thing. Contentious professions cease to be an honourable employment for men. The peace between nations is also a peace between individuals. We live in a world that comes of age. Man the warrior, man the lawyer, and all the bickering aspects of life, pass into obscurity; the grave dreamers, man the curious learner, and man the creative artist, come forward to replace these barbaric aspects of existence by a less ignoble adventure.

There is no natural life of man. He is, and always has been, a sheath of varied and even incompatible possibilities, a palimpsest of inherited dispositions. It was the habit of many writers in the early twentieth century to speak of competition and the narrow, private life of trade and saving and suspicious isolation as though such things were in some exceptional way proper to the human constitution, and as though openness of mind and a preference for achievement over possession were abnormal and rather unsubstantial qualities. How wrong that was the history of the decades immediately following the establishment of

the world republic witnesses. Once the world was released from the hardening insecurities of a needless struggle for life that was collectively planless and individually absorbing, it became apparent that there was in the vast mass of people a long, smothered passion to make things. The world broke out into making, and at first mainly into aesthetic making. This phase of history, which has been not inaptly termed the 'Efflorescence,' is still, to a large extent, with us. The majority of our population consists of artists, and the bulk of activity in the world lies no longer with necessities but with their elaboration, decoration, and refinement. There has been an evident change in the quality of this making during recent years. It becomes more purposeful than it was, losing something of its first elegance and prettiness and gaining in intensity; but that is a change rather of hue than of nature. That comes with a deepening philosophy and a sounder education. For the first joyous exercises of fancy we perceive now the deliberation of a more constructive imagination. There is a natural order in these things, and art comes before science as the satisfaction of more elemental needs must come before art, and as play and pleasure come in a human life before the development of a settled purpose....

For thousands of years this gathering impulse to creative work must have struggled in man against the limitations imposed upon him by his social ineptitude. It was a long smouldering fire that flamed out at last in all these things. The evidence of a pathetic, perpetually thwarted urgency to make something, is one of the most touching aspects of the relics and records of our immediate ancestors. There exists still in the death area about the London bombs, a region of deserted small homes that furnish the most illuminating comment on the old state of affairs. These homes are entirely horrible, uniform, square, squat, hideously proportioned, uncomfortable, dingy, and in some respects quite filthy, only people in complete despair of anything better could

have lived in them, but to each is attached a ridiculous little rectangle of land called 'the garden,' containing usually a prop for drying clothes and a loathsome box of offal, the dustbin, full of egg-shells, cinders, and such-like refuse. Now that one may go about this region in comparative security--for the London radiations have dwindled to inconsiderable proportions--it is possible to trace in nearly every one of these gardens some effort to make. Here it is a poor little plank summer-house, here it is a 'fountain' of bricks and oyster-shells, here a 'rockery,' here a 'workshop.' And in the houses everywhere there are pitiful little decorations, clumsy models, feeble drawings. These efforts are almost incredibly inept, like the drawings of blindfolded men, they are only one shade less harrowing to a sympathetic observer than the scratchings one finds upon the walls of the old prisons, but there they are, witnessing to the poor buried instincts that struggled up towards the light. That god of joyous expression our poor fathers ignorantly sought, our freedom has declared to us....

In the old days the common ambition of every simple soul was to possess a little property, a patch of land, a house uncontrolled by others, an 'independence' as the English used to put it. And what made this desire for freedom and prosperity so strong, was very evidently the dream of self-expression, of doing something with it, of playing with it, of making a personal delightfulness, a distinctiveness. Property was never more than a means to an end, nor avarice more than a perversion. Men owned in order to do freely. Now that every one has his own apartments and his own privacy secure, this disposition to own has found its release in a new direction. Men study and save and strive that they may leave behind them a series of panels in some public arcade, a row of carven figures along a terrace, a grove, a pavilion. Or they give themselves to the penetration of some still opaque riddle in phenomena as once men gave themselves to the accumulation of riches. The work that was once the whole substance of social

existence--for most men spent all their lives in earning a living--is now no more than was the burden upon one of those old climbers who carried knapsacks of provisions on their backs in order that they might ascend mountains. It matters little to the easy charities of our emancipated time that most people who have made their labour contribution produce neither new beauty nor new wisdom, but are simply busy about those pleasant activities and enjoyments that reassure them that they are alive. They help, it may be, by reception and reverberation, and they hinder nothing.
...

Section 11

Now all this phase of gigantic change in the contours and appearances of human life which is going on about us, a change as rapid and as wonderful as the swift ripening of adolescence to manhood after the barbaric boyish years, is correlated with moral and mental changes at least as unprecedented. It is not as if old things were going out of life and new things coming in, it is rather that the altered circumstances of men are making an appeal to elements in his nature that have hitherto been suppressed, and checking tendencies that have hitherto been over-stimulated and over-developed. He has not so much grown and altered his essential being as turned new aspects to the light. Such turnings round into a new attitude the world has seen on a less extensive scale before. The Highlanders of the seventeenth century, for example, were cruel and bloodthirsty robbers, in the nineteenth their descendants were conspicuously trusty and honourable men. There was not a people in Western Europe in the early twentieth century that seemed capable of hideous massacres, and none that had not been guilty of them within the previous two centuries. The free, frank, kindly, gentle life of the prosperous classes in any European country before the years of the last wars was in a different world of thought and feeling from that of the dingy, suspicious, secretive, and uncharitable existence of the

respectable poor, or the constant personal violence, the squalor and naive passions of the lowest stratum. Yet there were no real differences of blood and inherent quality between these worlds; their differences were all in circumstances, suggestion, and habits of mind. And turning to more individual instances the constantly observed difference between one portion of a life and another consequent upon a religious conversion, were a standing example of the versatile possibilities of human nature.

The catastrophe of the atomic bombs which shook men out of cities and businesses and economic relations shook them also out of their old established habits of thought, and out of the lightly held beliefs and prejudices that came down to them from the past. To borrow a word from the old-fashioned chemists, men were made nascent; they were released from old ties; for good or evil they were ready for new associations. The council carried them forward for good; perhaps if his bombs had reached their destination King Ferdinand Charles might have carried them back to an endless chain of evils. But his task would have been a harder one than the council's. The moral shock of the atomic bombs had been a profound one, and for a while the cunning side of the human animal was overpowered by its sincere realisation of the vital necessity for reconstruction. The litigious and trading spirits cowered together, scared at their own consequences; men thought twice before they sought mean advantages in the face of the unusual eagerness to realise new aspirations, and when at last the weeds revived again and 'claims' began to sprout, they sprouted upon the stony soil of law-courts reformed, of laws that pointed to the future instead of the past, and under the blazing sunshine of a transforming world. A new literature, a new interpretation of history were springing into existence, a new teaching was already in the schools, a new faith in the young. The worthy man who forestalled the building of a research city for the English upon the Sussex downs by buying up a series of estates, was dispossessed and laughed out of court when he made

his demand for some preposterous compensation; the owner of the discredited Dass patents makes his last appearance upon the scroll of history as the insolvent proprietor of a paper called *The Cry for Justice*, in which he duns the world for a hundred million pounds. That was the ingenuous Dass's idea of justice, that he ought to be paid about five million pounds annually because he had annexed the selvage of one of Holsten's discoveries. Dass came at last to believe quite firmly in his right, and he died a victim of conspiracy mania in a private hospital at Nice. Both of these men would probably have ended their days enormously wealthy, and of course ennobled in the England of the opening twentieth century, and it is just this novelty of their fates that marks the quality of the new age.

The new government early discovered the need of a universal education to fit men to the great conceptions of its universal rule. It made no wrangling attacks on the local, racial, and sectarian forms of religious profession that at that time divided the earth into a patchwork of hatreds and distrusts; it left these organisations to make their peace with God in their own time; but it proclaimed as if it were a mere secular truth that sacrifice was expected from all, that respect had to be shown to all; it revived schools or set them up afresh all around the world, and everywhere these schools taught the history of war and the consequences and moral of the Last War; everywhere it was taught not as a sentiment but as a matter of fact that the salvation of the world from waste and contention was the common duty and occupation of all men and women. These things which are now the elementary commonplaces of human intercourse seemed to the councillors of Brissago, when first they dared to proclaim them, marvellously daring discoveries, not untouched by doubt, that flushed the cheek and fired the eye.

The council placed all this educational reconstruction in the hands of a committee of men and women, which did its work during

the next few decades with remarkable breadth and effectiveness. This educational committee was, and is, the correlative upon the mental and spiritual side of the redistribution committee. And prominent upon it, and indeed for a time quite dominating it, was a Russian named Karenin, who was singular in being a congenital cripple. His body was bent so that he walked with difficulty, suffered much pain as he grew older, and had at last to undergo two operations. The second killed him. Already malformation, which was to be seen in every crowd during the middle ages so that the crippled beggar was, as it were, an essential feature of the human spectacle, was becoming a strange thing in the world. It had a curious effect upon Karenin's colleagues; their feeling towards him was mingled with pity and a sense of inhumanity that it needed usage rather than reason to overcome. He had a strong face, with little bright brown eyes rather deeply sunken and a large resolute thin-lipped mouth. His skin was very yellow and wrinkled, and his hair iron gray. He was at all times an impatient and sometimes an angry man, but this was forgiven him because of the hot wire of suffering that was manifestly thrust through his being. At the end of his life his personal prestige was very great. To him far more than to any contemporary is it due that self-abnegation, self-identification with the world spirit, was made the basis of universal education. That general memorandum to the teachers which is the key-note of the modern educational system, was probably entirely his work.

'Whosoever would save his soul shall lose it,' he wrote. 'That is the device upon the seal of this document, and the starting point of all we have to do. It is a mistake to regard it as anything but a plain statement of fact. It is the basis for your work. You have to teach self-forgetfulness, and everything else that you have to teach is contributory and subordinate to that end. Education is the release of man from self. You have to widen the horizons of your children, encourage and intensify their curiosity and their creative impulses, and cultivate and enlarge

their sympathies. That is what you are for. Under your guidance and the suggestions you will bring to bear on them, they have to shed the old Adam of instinctive suspicions, hostilities, and passions, and to find themselves again in the great being of the universe. The little circles of their egotisms have to be opened out until they become arcs in the sweep of the racial purpose. And this that you teach to others you must learn also sedulously yourselves. Philosophy, discovery, art, every sort of skill, every sort of service, love: these are the means of salvation from that narrow loneliness of desire, that brooding preoccupation with self and egotistical relationships, which is hell for the individual, treason to the race, and exile from God....'

Section 12

As things round themselves off and accomplish themselves, one begins for the first time to see them clearly. From the perspectives of a new age one can look back upon the great and widening stream of literature with a complete understanding. Things link up that seemed disconnected, and things that were once condemned as harsh and aimless are seen to be but factors in the statement of a gigantic problem. An enormous bulk of the sincerer writing of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries falls together now into an unanticipated unanimity; one sees it as a huge tissue of variations upon one theme, the conflict of human egotism and personal passion and narrow imaginations on the one hand, against the growing sense of wider necessities and a possible, more spacious life.

That conflict is in evidence in so early a work as Voltaire's *Candide*, for example, in which the desire for justice as well as happiness beats against human contrariety and takes refuge at last in a forced and inconclusive contentment with little things. *Candide* was but one of the pioneers of a literature of uneasy

complaint that was presently an innumerable multitude of books. The novels more particularly of the nineteenth century, if one excludes the mere story-tellers from our consideration, witness to this uneasy realisation of changes that call for effort and of the lack of that effort. In a thousand aspects, now tragically, now comically, now with a funny affectation of divine detachment, a countless host of witnesses tell their story of lives fretting between dreams and limitations. Now one laughs, now one weeps, now one reads with a blank astonishment at this huge and almost unpremeditated record of how the growing human spirit, now warily, now eagerly, now furiously, and always, as it seems, unsuccessfully, tried to adapt itself to the maddening misfit of its patched and ancient garments. And always in these books as one draws nearer to the heart of the matter there comes a disconcerting evasion. It was the fantastic convention of the time that a writer should not touch upon religion. To do so was to rouse the jealous fury of the great multitude of professional religious teachers. It was permitted to state the discord, but it was forbidden to glance at any possible reconciliation. Religion was the privilege of the pulpit....

It was not only from the novels that religion was omitted. It was ignored by the newspapers; it was pedantically disregarded in the discussion of business questions, it played a trivial and apologetic part in public affairs. And this was done not out of contempt but respect. The hold of the old religious organisations upon men's respect was still enormous, so enormous that there seemed to be a quality of irreverence in applying religion to the developments of every day. This strange suspension of religion lasted over into the beginnings of the new age. It was the clear vision of Marcus Karenin much more than any other contemporary influence which brought it back into the texture of human life. He saw religion without hallucinations, without superstitious reverence, as a common thing as necessary as food and air, as land and energy to the life of man and the well-being of the

Republic. He saw that indeed it had already percolated away from the temples and hierarchies and symbols in which men had sought to imprison it, that it was already at work anonymously and obscurely in the universal acceptance of the greater state. He gave it clearer expression, rephrased it to the lights and perspectives of the new dawn....

But if we return to our novels for our evidence of the spirit of the times it becomes evident as one reads them in their chronological order, so far as that is now ascertainable, that as one comes to the latter nineteenth and the earlier twentieth century the writers are much more acutely aware of secular change than their predecessors were. The earlier novelists tried to show 'life as it is,' the latter showed life as it changes. More and more of their characters are engaged in adaptation to change or suffering from the effects of world changes. And as we come up to the time of the Last Wars, this newer conception of the everyday life as a reaction to an accelerated development is continually more manifest. Barnet's book, which has served us so well, is frankly a picture of the world coming about like a ship that sails into the wind. Our later novelists give a vast gallery of individual conflicts in which old habits and customs, limited ideas, ungenerous temperaments, and innate obsessions are pitted against this great opening out of life that has happened to us. They tell us of the feelings of old people who have been wrenched away from familiar surroundings, and how they have had to make peace with uncomfortable comforts and conveniences that are still strange to them. They give us the discord between the opening egotisms of youths and the ill-defined limitations of a changing social life. They tell of the universal struggle of jealousy to capture and cripple our souls, of romantic failures and tragical misconceptions of the trend of the world, of the spirit of adventure, and the urgency of curiosity, and how these serve the universal drift. And all their stories lead in the end either to happiness missed or happiness won, to disaster or salvation. The

clearer their vision and the subtler their art, the more certainly do these novels tell of the possibility of salvation for all the world. For any road in life leads to religion for those upon it who will follow it far enough....

It would have seemed a strange thing to the men of the former time that it should be an open question as it is to-day whether the world is wholly Christian or not Christian at all. But assuredly we have the spirit, and as surely have we left many temporary forms behind. Christianity was the first expression of world religion, the first complete repudiation of tribalism and war and disputation. That it fell presently into the ways of more ancient rituals cannot alter that. The common sense of mankind has toiled through two thousand years of chastening experience to find at last how sound a meaning attaches to the familiar phrases of the Christian faith. The scientific thinker as he widens out to the moral problems of the collective life, comes inevitably upon the words of Christ, and as inevitably does the Christian, as his thought grows clearer, arrive at the world republic. As for the claims of the sects, as for the use of a name and successions, we live in a time that has shaken itself free from such claims and consistencies.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

THE LAST DAYS OF MARCUS KARENIN

Section 1

The second operation upon Marcus Karenin was performed at the new station for surgical work at Paran, high in the Himalayas above the Sutlej Gorge, where it comes down out of Thibet.

It is a place of such wildness and beauty as no other scenery in the world affords. The granite terrace which runs round the four sides of the low block of laboratories looks out in every direction upon mountains. Far below in the hidden depths of a shadowy blue cleft, the river pours down in its tumultuous passage to the swarming plains of India. No sound of its roaring haste comes up to those serenities. Beyond that blue gulf, in which whole forests of giant deodars seem no more than small patches of moss, rise vast precipices of many-coloured rock, fretted above, lined by snowfalls, and jagged into pinnacles. These are the northward wall of a towering wilderness of ice and snow which clambers southward higher and wilder and vaster to the culminating summits of our globe, to Dhaulagiri and Everest. Here are cliffs of which no other land can show the like, and deep chasms in which Mt. Blanc might be plunged and hidden. Here are icefields as big as inland seas on which the tumbled boulders lie so thickly that strange little flowers can bloom among them under the untempered sunshine. To the northward, and blocking out any vision of the uplands of Thibet, rises that citadel of porcelain, that gothic pile, the Lio Porgyul, walls, towers, and peaks, a clear twelve thousand feet of veined and splintered rock above the river. And beyond it and eastward and westward rise peaks behind peaks, against the dark blue Himalayan sky. Far away below to the south the clouds of the Indian rains pile up abruptly and are stayed by an invisible hand.

Hither it was that with a dreamlike swiftness Karenin flew high over the irrigations of Rajputana and the towers and cupolas of the ultimate Delhi; and the little group of buildings, albeit the southward wall dropped nearly five hundred feet, seemed to him as he soared down to it like a toy lost among these mountain wildernesses. No road came up to this place; it was reached only by flight.

His pilot descended to the great courtyard, and Karenin assisted by his secretary clambered down through the wing fabric and made his way to the officials who came out to receive him.

In this place, beyond infections and noise and any distractions, surgery had made for itself a house of research and a healing fastness. The building itself would have seemed very wonderful to eyes accustomed to the flimsy architecture of an age when power was precious. It was made of granite, already a little roughened on the outside by frost, but polished within and of a tremendous solidity. And in a honeycomb of subtly lit apartments, were the spotless research benches, the operating tables, the instruments of brass, and fine glass and platinum and gold. Men and women came from all parts of the world for study or experimental research. They wore a common uniform of white and ate at long tables together, but the patients lived in an upper part of the buildings, and were cared for by nurses and skilled attendants....

The first man to greet Karenin was Ciana, the scientific director of the institution. Beside him was Rachel Borken, the chief organiser. 'You are tired?' she asked, and old Karenin shook his head.

'Cramped,' he said. 'I have wanted to visit such a place as this.'

He spoke as if he had no other business with them.

There was a little pause.

'How many scientific people have you got here now?' he asked.

'Just three hundred and ninety-two,' said Rachel Borken.

'And the patients and attendants and so on?'

'Two thousand and thirty.'

'I shall be a patient,' said Karenin. 'I shall have to be a patient. But I should like to see things first. Presently I will be a patient.'

'You will come to my rooms?' suggested Ciana.

'And then I must talk to this doctor of yours,' said Karenin. 'But I would like to see a bit of this place and talk to some of your people before it comes to that.'

He winced and moved forward.

'I have left most of my work in order,' he said.

'You have been working hard up to now?' asked Rachel Borken.

'Yes. And now I have nothing more to do--and it seems strange.... And it's a bother, this illness and having to come down to oneself. This doorway and the row of windows is well done; the gray granite and just the line of gold, and then those mountains beyond through that arch. It's very well done....'

Section 2

Karenin lay on the bed with a soft white rug about him, and Fowler, who was to be his surgeon sat on the edge of the bed and talked to him. An assistant was seated quietly in the shadow behind the bed. The examination had been made, and Karenin knew what was before him. He was tired but serene.

'So I shall die,' he said, 'unless you operate?'

Fowler assented. 'And then,' said Karenin, smiling, 'probably I shall die.'

'Not certainly.'

'Even if I do not die; shall I be able to work?'

'There is just a chance....'

'So firstly I shall probably die, and if I do not, then perhaps I shall be a useless invalid?'

'I think if you live, you may be able to go on--as you do now.'

'Well, then, I suppose I must take the risk of it. Yet couldn't you, Fowler, couldn't you drug me and patch me instead of all this--vivisection? A few days of drugged and active life--and then the end?'

Fowler thought. 'We are not sure enough yet to do things like that,' he said.

'But a day is coming when you will be certain.'

Fowler nodded.

'You make me feel as though I was the last of deformity--Deformity is uncertainty--inaccuracy. My body works doubtfully, it is not even sure that it will die or live. I suppose the time is not far off when such bodies as mine will no longer be born into the world.'

'You see,' said Fowler, after a little pause, 'it is necessary that spirits such as yours should be born into the world.'

'I suppose,' said Karenin, 'that my spirit has had its use. But if you think that is because my body is as it is I think you are mistaken. There is no peculiar virtue in defect. I have always chafed against--all this. If I could have moved more freely and lived a larger life in health I could have done more. But some day perhaps you will be able to put a body that is wrong altogether right again. Your science is only beginning. It's a subtler thing than physics and chemistry, and it takes longer to produce its miracles. And meanwhile a few more of us must die in patience.'

'Fine work is being done and much of it,' said Fowler. 'I can say as much because I have nothing to do with it. I can understand a lesson, appreciate the discoveries of abler men and use my hands, but those others, Pigou, Masterton, Lie, and the others, they are clearing the ground fast for the knowledge to come. Have you had time to follow their work?'

Karenin shook his head. 'But I can imagine the scope of it,' he said.

'We have so many men working now,' said Fowler. 'I suppose at present there must be at least a thousand thinking hard, observing, experimenting, for one who did so in nineteen hundred.'

'Not counting those who keep the records?'

'Not counting those. Of course, the present indexing of research is in itself a very big work, and it is only now that we are getting it properly done. But already we are feeling the benefit of that. Since it ceased to be a paid employment and became a devotion we have had only those people who obeyed the call of an aptitude at work upon these things. Here--I must show you it to-day, because it will interest you--we have our copy of the encyclopaedic index--every week sheets are taken out and replaced by fresh sheets with new results that are brought to us by the aeroplanes of the Research Department. It is an index of knowledge that grows continually, an index that becomes continually truer. There was never anything like it before.'

'When I came into the education committee,' said Karenin, 'that index of human knowledge seemed an impossible thing. Research had produced a chaotic mountain of results, in a hundred languages and a thousand different types of publication. . . .' He smiled at his memories. 'How we groaned at the job!'

'Already the ordering of that chaos is nearly done. You shall see.'

'I have been so busy with my own work----Yes, I shall be glad to see.'

The patient regarded the surgeon for a time with interested eyes.

'You work here always?' he asked abruptly.

'No,' said Fowler.

'But mostly you work here?'

'I have worked about seven years out of the past ten. At times I go away--down there. One has to. At least I have to. There is a sort of grayness comes over all this, one feels hungry for life, real, personal passionate life, love-making, eating and drinking for the fun of the thing, jostling crowds, having adventures, laughter--above all laughter----'

'Yes,' said Karenin understandingly.

'And then one day, suddenly one thinks of these high mountains again....'

'That is how I would have lived, if it had not been for my--defects,' said Karenin. 'Nobody knows but those who have borne it the exasperation of abnormality. It will be good when you have nobody alive whose body cannot live the wholesome everyday life, whose spirit cannot come up into these high places as it wills.'

'We shall manage that soon,' said Fowler.

'For endless generations man has struggled upward against the indignities of his body--and the indignities of his soul. Pains, incapacities, vile fears, black moods, despairs. How well I've known them. They've taken more time than all your holidays. It is true, is it not, that every man is something of a cripple and something of a beast? I've dipped a little deeper than most; that's all. It's only now when he has fully learnt the truth of that, that he can take hold of himself to be neither beast nor cripple. Now that he overcomes his servitude to his body, he can for the first time think of living the full life of his body.... Before another generation dies you'll have the thing in hand. You'll do as you please with the old Adam and all the vestiges from the brutes and reptiles that lurk in his body and spirit.'

Isn't that so?'

'You put it boldly,' said Fowler.

Karenin laughed cheerfully at his caution.... 'When,' asked Karenin suddenly, 'when will you operate?'

'The day after to-morrow,' said Fowler. 'For a day I want you to drink and eat as I shall prescribe. And you may think and talk as you please.'

'I should like to see this place.'

'You shall go through it this afternoon. I will have two men carry you in a litter. And to-morrow you shall lie out upon the terrace. Our mountains here are the most beautiful in the world....'

Section 3

The next morning Karenin got up early and watched the sun rise over the mountains, and breakfasted lightly, and then young Gardener, his secretary, came to consult him upon the spending of his day. Would he care to see people? Or was this gnawing pain within him too much to permit him to do that?

'I'd like to talk,' said Karenin. 'There must be all sorts of lively-minded people here. Let them come and gossip with me. It will distract me--and I can't tell you how interesting it makes everything that is going on to have seen the dawn of one's own last day.'

'Your last day!'

'Fowler will kill me.'

'But he thinks not.'

'Fowler will kill me. If he does not he will not leave very much of me. So that this is my last day anyhow, the days afterwards if they come at all to me, will be refuse. I know....'

Gardener was about to speak when Karenin went on again.

'I hope he kills me, Gardener. Don't be--old-fashioned. The thing I am most afraid of is that last rag of life. I may just go on--a scarred salvage of suffering stuff. And then--all the things I have hidden and kept down or discounted or set right afterwards will get the better of me. I shall be peevish. I may lose my grip upon my own egotism. It's never been a very firm grip. No, no, Gardener, don't say that! You know better, you've had glimpses of it. Suppose I came through on the other side of this affair, belittled, vain, and spiteful, using the prestige I have got among men by my good work in the past just to serve some small invalid purpose....'

He was silent for a time, watching the mists among the distant precipices change to clouds of light, and drift and dissolve before the searching rays of the sunrise.

'Yes,' he said at last, 'I am afraid of these anaesthetics and these fag ends of life. It's life we are all afraid of. Death!--nobody minds just death. Fowler is clever--but some day surgery will know its duty better and not be so anxious just to save something . . . provided only that it quivers. I've tried to hold my end up properly and do my work. After Fowler has done with me I am certain I shall be unfit for work--and what else is there for me? . . . I know I shall not be fit for work....'

'I do not see why life should be judged by its last trailing

thread of vitality.... I know it for the splendid thing it is--I who have been a diseased creature from the beginning. I know it well enough not to confuse it with its husks. Remember that, Gardener, if presently my heart fails me and I despair, and if I go through a little phase of pain and ingratitude and dark forgetfulness before the end.... Don't believe what I may say at the last.... If the fabric is good enough the selvage doesn't matter. It can't matter. So long as you are alive you are just the moment, perhaps, but when you are dead then you are all your life from the first moment to the last....'

Section 4

Presently, in accordance with his wish, people came to talk to him, and he could forget himself again. Rachel Borken sat for a long time with him and talked chiefly of women in the world, and with her was a girl named Edith Haydon who was already very well known as a cytologist. And several of the younger men who were working in the place and a patient named Kahn, a poet, and Edwards, a designer of plays and shows, spent some time with him. The talk wandered from point to point and came back upon itself, and became now earnest and now trivial as the chance suggestions determined. But soon afterwards Gardener wrote down notes of things he remembered, and it is possible to put together again the outlook of Karenin upon the world and how he thought and felt about many of the principal things in life.

'Our age,' he said, 'has been so far an age of scene-shifting. We have been preparing a stage, clearing away the setting of a drama that was played out and growing tiresome.... If I could but sit out the first few scenes of the new spectacle....'

'How encumbered the world had become! It was ailing as I am ailing with a growth of unmeaning things. It was entangled, feverish, confused. It was in sore need of release, and I suppose

that nothing less than the violence of those bombs could have released it and made it a healthy world again. I suppose they were necessary. Just as everything turns to evil in a fevered body so everything seemed turning to evil in those last years of the old time. Everywhere there were obsolete organisations seizing upon all the new fine things that science was giving to the world, nationalities, all sorts of political bodies, the churches and sects, proprietorship, seizing upon those treat powers and limitless possibilities and turning them to evil uses. And they would not suffer open speech, they would not permit of education, they would let no one be educated to the needs of the new time.... You who are younger cannot imagine the mixture of desperate hope and protesting despair in which we who could believe in the possibilities of science lived in those years before atomic energy came....

'It was not only that the mass of people would not attend, would not understand, but that those who did understand lacked the power of real belief. They said the things, they saw the things, and the things meant nothing to them....

'I have been reading some old papers lately. It is wonderful how our fathers bore themselves towards science. They hated it. They feared it. They permitted a few scientific men to exist and work--a pitiful handful.... "Don't find out anything about us," they said to them; "don't inflict vision upon us, spare our little ways of life from the fearful shaft of understanding. But do tricks for us, little limited tricks. Give us cheap lighting. And cure us of certain disagreeable things, cure us of cancer, cure us of consumption, cure our colds and relieve us after repletion...." We have changed all that, Gardener. Science is no longer our servant. We know it for something greater than our little individual selves. It is the awakening mind of the race, and in a little while----In a little while----I wish indeed I could watch for that little while, now that the curtain has

risen....

'While I lie here they are clearing up what is left of the bombs in London,' he said. 'Then they are going to repair the ruins and make it all as like as possible to its former condition before the bombs fell. Perhaps they will dig out the old house in St John's Wood to which my father went after his expulsion from Russia.... That London of my memories seems to me like a place in another world. For you younger people it must seem like a place that could never have existed.'

'Is there much left standing?' asked Edith Haydon.

'Square miles that are scarcely shaken in the south and north-west, they say; and most of the bridges and large areas of dock. Westminster, which held most of the government offices, suffered badly from the small bomb that destroyed the Parliament, there are very few traces of the old thoroughfare of Whitehall or the Government region thereabout, but there are plentiful drawings to scale of its buildings, and the great hole in the east of London scarcely matters. That was a poor district and very like the north and the south. . . . It will be possible to reconstruct most of it. . . . It is wanted. Already it becomes difficult to recall the old time--even for us who saw it.'

'It seems very distant to me,' said the girl.

'It was an unwholesome world,' reflected Karenin. 'I seem to remember everybody about my childhood as if they were ill. They were ill. They were sick with confusion. Everybody was anxious about money and everybody was doing uncongenial things. They ate a queer mixture of foods, either too much or too little, and at odd hours. One sees how ill they were by their advertisements. All this new region of London they are opening up now is plastered with advertisements of pills. Everybody must have been

taking pills. In one of the hotel rooms in the Strand they have found the luggage of a lady covered up by falling rubble and unburnt, and she was equipped with nine different sorts of pill and tabloid. The pill-carrying age followed the weapon-carrying age. They are equally strange to us. People's skins must have been in a vile state. Very few people were properly washed; they carried the filth of months on their clothes. All the clothes they wore were old clothes; our way of pulping our clothes again after a week or so of wear would have seemed fantastic to them. Their clothing hardly bears thinking about. And the congestion of them! Everybody was jostling against everybody in those awful towns. In an uproar. People were run over and crushed by the hundred; every year in London the cars and omnibuses alone killed or disabled twenty thousand people, in Paris it was worse; people used to fall dead for want of air in the crowded ways. The irritation of London, internal and external, must have been maddening. It was a maddened world. It is like thinking of a sick child. One has the same effect of feverish urgencies and acute irrational disappointments.

'All history,' he said, 'is a record of a childhood....'

'And yet not exactly a childhood. There is something clean and keen about even a sick child--and something touching. But so much of the old times makes one angry. So much they did seems grossly stupid, obstinately, outrageously stupid, which is the very opposite to being fresh and young.'

'I was reading only the other day about Bismarck, that hero of nineteenth-century politics, that sequel to Napoleon, that god of blood and iron. And he was just a beery, obstinate, dull man. Indeed, that is what he was, the commonest, coarsest man, who ever became great. I looked at his portraits, a heavy, almost froggish face, with projecting eyes and a thick moustache to hide a poor mouth. He aimed at nothing but Germany, Germany

emphasised, indurated, enlarged; Germany and his class in Germany; beyond that he had no ideas, he was inaccessible to ideas; his mind never rose for a recorded instant above a bumpkin's elaborate cunning. And he was the most influential man in the world, in the whole world, no man ever left so deep a mark on it, because everywhere there were gross men to resonate to the heavy notes he emitted. He trampled on ten thousand lovely things, and a kind of malice in these louts made it pleasant to them to see him trample. No--he was no child; the dull, national aggressiveness he stood for, no childishness. Childhood is promise. He was survival.

'All Europe offered its children to him, it sacrificed education, art, happiness and all its hopes of future welfare to follow the clatter of his sabre. The monstrous worship of that old fool's "blood and iron" passed all round the earth. Until the atomic bombs burnt our way to freedom again. . . .'

'One thinks of him now as one thinks of the megatherium,' said one of the young men.

'From first to last mankind made three million big guns and a hundred thousand complicated great ships for no other purpose but war.'

'Were there no sane men in those days,' asked the young man, 'to stand against that idolatry?'

'In a state of despair,' said Edith Haydon.

'He is so far off--and there are men alive still who were alive when Bismarck died!' . . . said the young man....

Section 5

'And yet it may be I am unjust to Bismarck,' said Karenin, following his own thoughts. 'You see, men belong to their own age; we stand upon a common stock of thought and we fancy we stand upon the ground. I met a pleasant man the other day, a Maori, whose great-grandfather was a cannibal. It chanced he had a daguerreotype of the old sinner, and the two were marvellously alike. One felt that a little juggling with time and either might have been the other. People are cruel and stupid in a stupid age who might be gentle and splendid in a gracious one. The world also has its moods. Think of the mental food of Bismarck's childhood; the humiliations of Napoleon's victories, the crowded, crowning victory of the Battle of the Nations.... Everybody in those days, wise or foolish, believed that the division of the world under a multitude of governments was inevitable, and that it was going on for thousands of years more. It WAS inevitable until it was impossible. Any one who had denied that inevitability publicly would have been counted--oh! a SILLY fellow. Old Bismarck was only just a little--forcible, on the lines of the accepted ideas. That is all. He thought that since there had to be national governments he would make one that was strong at home and invincible abroad. Because he had fed with a kind of rough appetite upon what we can see now were very stupid ideas, that does not make him a stupid man. We've had advantages; we've had unity and collectivism blasted into our brains. Where should we be now but for the grace of science? I should have been an embittered, spiteful, downtrodden member of the Russian Intelligenza, a conspirator, a prisoner, or an assassin. You, my dear, would have been breaking dingy windows as a suffragette.'

'NEVER,' said Edith stoutly....

For a time the talk broke into humorous personalities, and the young people giped at each other across the smiling old administrator, and then presently one of the young scientific men gave things a new turn. He spoke like one who was full to the

brim.

'You know, sir, I've a fancy--it is hard to prove such things--that civilisation was very near disaster when the atomic bombs came banging into it, that if there had been no Holsten and no induced radio-activity, the world would have--smashed--much as it did. Only instead of its being a smash that opened a way to better things, it might have been a smash without a recovery. It is part of my business to understand economics, and from that point of view the century before Holsten was just a hundred years' crescendo of waste. Only the extreme individualism of that period, only its utter want of any collective understanding or purpose can explain that waste. Mankind used up material--insanely. They had got through three-quarters of all the coal in the planet, they had used up most of the oil, they had swept away their forests, and they were running short of tin and copper. Their wheat areas were getting weary and populous, and many of the big towns had so lowered the water level of their available hills that they suffered a drought every summer. The whole system was rushing towards bankruptcy. And they were spending every year vaster and vaster amounts of power and energy upon military preparations, and continually expanding the debt of industry to capital. The system was already staggering when Holsten began his researches. So far as the world in general went there was no sense of danger and no desire for inquiry. They had no belief that science could save them, nor any idea that there was a need to be saved. They could not, they would not, see the gulf beneath their feet. It was pure good luck for mankind at large that any research at all was in progress. And as I say, sir, if that line of escape hadn't opened, before now there might have been a crash, revolution, panic, social disintegration, famine, and--it is conceivable--complete disorder. . . . The rails might have rusted on the disused railways by now, the telephone poles have rotted and fallen, the big liners dropped into sheet-iron in the ports; the burnt, deserted cities become

the ruinous hiding-places of gangs of robbers. We might have been brigands in a shattered and attenuated world. Ah, you may smile, but that had happened before in human history. The world is still studded with the ruins of broken-down civilisations. Barbaric bands made their fastness upon the Acropolis, and the tomb of Hadrian became a fortress that warred across the ruins of Rome against the Colosseum.... Had all that possibility of reaction ended so certainly in 1940? Is it all so very far away even now?'

'It seems far enough away now,' said Edith Haydon.

'But forty years ago?'

'No,' said Karenin with his eyes upon the mountains, 'I think you underrate the available intelligence in those early decades of the twentieth century. Officially, I know, politically, that intelligence didn't tell--but it was there. And I question your hypothesis. I doubt if that discovery could have been delayed. There is a kind of inevitable logic now in the progress of research. For a hundred years and more thought and science have been going their own way regardless of the common events of life. You see--they have got loose. If there had been no Holsten there would have been some similar man. If atomic energy had not come in one year it would have come in another. In decadent Rome the march of science had scarcely begun.... Nineveh, Babylon, Athens, Syracuse, Alexandria, these were the first rough experiments in association that made a security, a breathing-space, in which inquiry was born. Man had to experiment before he found out the way to begin. But already two hundred years ago he had fairly begun.... The politics and dignities and wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were only the last phoenix blaze of the former civilisation flaring up about the beginnings of the new. Which we serve.... 'Man lives in the dawn for ever,' said Karenin. 'Life is beginning and nothing else but beginning. It

begins everlastingly. Each step seems vaster than the last, and does but gather us together for the nest. This Modern State of ours, which would have been a Utopian marvel a hundred years ago, is already the commonplace of life. But as I sit here and dream of the possibilities in the mind of man that now gather to a head beneath the shelter of its peace, these great mountains here seem but little things....'

Section 6

About eleven Karenin had his midday meal, and afterwards he slept among his artificial furs and pillows for two hours. Then he awoke and some tea was brought to him, and he attended to a small difficulty in connection with the Moravian schools in the Labrador country and in Greenland that Gardener knew would interest him. He remained alone for a little while after that, and then the two women came to him again. Afterwards Edwards and Kahn joined the group, and the talk fell upon love and the place of women in the renascent world. The cloudbanks of India lay under a quivering haze, and the blaze of the sun fell full upon the eastward precipices. Ever and again as they talked, some vast splinter of rock would crack and come away from these, or a wild rush of snow and ice and stone, pour down in thunder, hang like a wet thread into the gulfs below, and cease....

Section 7

For a time Karenin said very little, and Kahn, the popular poet, talked of passionate love. He said that passionate, personal love had been the abiding desire of humanity since ever humanity had begun, and now only was it becoming a possible experience. It had been a dream that generation after generation had pursued, that always men had lost on the verge of attainment. To most of those who had sought it obstinately it had brought tragedy. Now, lifted above sordid distresses, men and women might hope for

realised and triumphant love. This age was the Dawn of Love....

Karenin remained downcast and thoughtful while Kahn said these things. Against that continued silence Kahn's voice presently seemed to beat and fail. He had begun by addressing Karenin, but presently he was including Edith Haydon and Rachel Borken in his appeal. Rachel listened silently; Edith watched Karenin and very deliberately avoided Kahn's eyes.

'I know,' said Karenin at last, 'that many people are saying this sort of thing. I know that there is a vast release of love-making in the world. This great wave of decoration and elaboration that has gone about the world, this Efflorescence, has of course laid hold of that. I know that when you say that the world is set free, you interpret that to mean that the world is set free for love-making. Down there,--under the clouds, the lovers foregather. I know your songs, Kahn, your half-mystical songs, in which you represent this old hard world dissolving into a luminous haze of love--sexual love.... I don't think you are right or true in that. You are a young, imaginative man, and you see life--ardently--with the eyes of youth. But the power that has brought man into these high places under this blue-veiled blackness of the sky and which beckons us on towards the immense and awful future of our race, is riper and deeper and greater than any such emotions....

'All through my life--it has been a necessary part of my work--I have had to think of this release of sexual love and the riddles that perfect freedom and almost limitless power will put to the soul of our race. I can see now, all over the world, a beautiful ecstasy of waste; "Let us sing and rejoice and be lovely and wonderful." . . . The orgy is only beginning, Kahn.... It was inevitable--but it is not the end of mankind....

'Think what we are. It is but a yesterday in the endlessness of

time that life was a dreaming thing, dreaming so deeply that it forgot itself as it dreamt, its lives, its individual instincts, its moments, were born and wondered and played and desired and hungered and grew weary and died. Incalculable successions of vision, visions of sunlit jungle, river wilderness, wild forest, eager desire, beating hearts, soaring wings and creeping terror flamed hotly and then were as though they had never been. Life was an uneasiness across which lights played and vanished. And then we came, man came, and opened eyes that were a question and hands that were a demand and began a mind and memory that dies not when men die, but lives and increases for ever, an over-mind, a dominating will, a question and an aspiration that reaches to the stars.... Hunger and fear and this that you make so much of, this sex, are but the elementals of life out of which we have arisen. All these elementals, I grant you, have to be provided for, dealt with, satisfied, but all these things have to be left behind.'

'But Love,' said Kahn.

'I speak of sexual love and the love of intimate persons. And that is what you mean, Kahn.'

Karenin shook his head. 'You cannot stay at the roots and climb the tree,' he said....

'No,' he said after a pause, 'this sexual excitement, this love story, is just a part of growing up and we grow out of it. So far literature and art and sentiment and all our emotional forms have been almost altogether adolescent, plays and stories, delights and hopes, they have all turned on that marvellous discovery of the love interest, but life lengthens out now and the mind of adult humanity detaches itself. Poets who used to die at thirty live now to eighty-five. You, too, Kahn! There are endless years yet for you--and all full of learning.... We carry an excessive

burden of sex and sexual tradition still, and we have to free ourselves from it. We do free ourselves from it. We have learnt in a thousand different ways to hold back death, and this sex, which in the old barbaric days was just sufficient to balance our dying, is now like a hammer that has lost its anvil, it plunges through human life. You poets, you young people want to turn it to delight. Turn it to delight. That may be one way out. In a little while, if you have any brains worth thinking about, you will be satisfied, and then you will come up here to the greater things. The old religions and their new offsets want still, I see, to suppress all these things. Let them suppress. If they can suppress. In their own people. Either road will bring you here at last to the eternal search for knowledge and the great adventure of power.'

'But incidentally,' said Rachel Borken; 'incidentally you have half of humanity, you have womankind, very much specialised for--for this love and reproduction that is so much less needed than it was.'

'Both sexes are specialised for love and reproduction,' said Karenin.

'But the women carry the heavier burden.'

'Not in their imaginations,' said Edwards.

'And surely,' said Kahn, 'when you speak of love as a phase--isn't it a necessary phase? Quite apart from reproduction the love of the sexes is necessary. Isn't it love, sexual love, which has released the imagination? Without that stir, without that impulse to go out from ourselves, to be reckless of ourselves and wonderful, would our lives be anything more than the contentment of the stalled ox?'

'The key that opens the door,' said Karenin, 'is not the goal of the journey.'

'But women!' cried Rachel. 'Here we are! What is our future--as women? Is it only that we have unlocked the doors of the imagination for you men? Let us speak of this question now. It is a thing constantly in my thoughts, Karenin. What do you think of us? You who must have thought so much of these perplexities.'

Karenin seemed to weigh his words. He spoke very deliberately. 'I do not care a rap about your future--as women. I do not care a rap about the future of men--as males. I want to destroy these peculiar futures. I care for your future as intelligences, as parts of and contribution to the universal mind of the race. Humanity is not only naturally over-specialised in these matters, but all its institutions, its customs, everything, exaggerate, intensify this difference. I want to unspecialise women. No new idea. Plato wanted exactly that. I do not want to go on as we go now, emphasising this natural difference; I do not deny it, but I want to reduce it and overcome it.'

'And--we remain women,' said Rachel Borken. 'Need you remain thinking of yourselves as women?'

'It is forced upon us,' said Edith Haydon.

'I do not think a woman becomes less of a woman because she dresses and works like a man,' said Edwards. 'You women here, I mean you scientific women, wear white clothing like the men, twist up your hair in the simplest fashion, go about your work as though there was only one sex in the world. You are just as much women, even if you are not so feminine, as the fine ladies down below there in the plains who dress for excitement and display, whose only thoughts are of lovers, who exaggerate every difference.... Indeed we love you more.'

'But we go about our work,' said Edith Haydon.

'So does it matter?' asked Rachel.

'If you go about your work and if the men go about their work then for Heaven's sake be as much woman as you wish,' said Karenin. 'When I ask you to unspecialise, I am thinking not of the abolition of sex, but the abolition of the irksome, restricting, obstructive obsession with sex. It may be true that sex made society, that the first society was the sex-cemented family, the first state a confederacy of blood relations, the first laws sexual taboos. Until a few years ago morality meant proper sexual behaviour. Up to within a few years of us the chief interest and motive of an ordinary man was to keep and rule a woman and her children and the chief concern of a woman was to get a man to do that. That was the drama, that was life. And the jealousy of these demands was the master motive in the world. You said, Kahn, a little while ago that sexual love was the key that let one out from the solitude of self, but I tell you that so far it has only done so in order to lock us all up again in a solitude of two.... All that may have been necessary but it is necessary no longer. All that has changed and changes still very swiftly. Your future, Rachel, AS WOMEN, is a diminishing future.'

'Karenin?' asked Rachel, 'do you mean that women are to become men?'

'Men and women have to become human beings.'

'You would abolish women? But, Karenin, listen! There is more than sex in this. Apart from sex we are different from you. We take up life differently. Forget we are--females, Karenin, and still we are a different sort of human being with a different use. In some things we are amazingly secondary. Here am I in

this place because of my trick of management, and Edith is here because of her patient, subtle hands. That does not alter the fact that nearly the whole body of science is man made; that does not alter the fact that men do so predominately make history, that you could nearly write a complete history of the world without mentioning a woman's name. And on the other hand we have a gift of devotion, of inspiration, a distinctive power for truly loving beautiful things, a care for life and a peculiar keen close eye for behaviour. You know men are blind beside us in these last matters. You know they are restless--and fitful. We have a steadfastness. We may never draw the broad outlines nor discover the new paths, but in the future isn't there a confirming and sustaining and supplying role for us? As important, perhaps, as yours? Equally important. We hold the world up, Karenin, though you may have raised it.'

'You know very well, Rachel, that I believe as you believe. I am not thinking of the abolition of woman. But I do want to abolish--the heroine, the sexual heroine. I want to abolish the woman whose support is jealousy and whose gift possession. I want to abolish the woman who can be won as a prize or locked up as a delicious treasure. And away down there the heroine flares like a divinity.'

'In America,' said Edwards, 'men are fighting duels over the praises of women and holding tournaments before Queens of Beauty.'

'I saw a beautiful girl in Lahore,' said Kahn, 'she sat under a golden canopy like a goddess, and three fine men, armed and dressed like the ancient paintings, sat on steps below her to show their devotion. And they wanted only her permission to fight for her.'

'That is the men's doing,' said Edith Haydon.

'I SAID,' cried Edwards, 'that man's imagination was more specialised for sex than the whole being of woman. What woman would do a thing like that? Women do but submit to it or take advantage of it.'

'There is no evil between men and women that is not a common evil,' said Karenin. 'It is you poets, Kahn, with your love songs which turn the sweet fellowship of comrades into this woman-centred excitement. But there is something in women, in many women, which responds to these provocations; they succumb to a peculiarly self-cultivating egotism. They become the subjects of their own artistry. They develop and elaborate themselves as scarcely any man would ever do. They LOOK for golden canopies. And even when they seem to react against that, they may do it still. I have been reading in the old papers of the movements to emancipate women that were going on before the discovery of atomic force. These things which began with a desire to escape from the limitations and servitude of sex, ended in an inflamed assertion of sex, and women more heroines than ever. Helen of Holloway was at last as big a nuisance in her way as Helen of Troy, and so long as you think of yourselves as women'--he held out a finger at Rachel and smiled gently--'instead of thinking of yourselves as intelligent beings, you will be in danger of--Helenism. To think of yourselves as women is to think of yourselves in relation to men. You can't escape that consequence. You have to learn to think of yourselves--for our sakes and your own sakes--in relation to the sun and stars. You have to cease to be our adventure, Rachel, and come with us upon our adventures. ...' He waved his hand towards the dark sky above the mountain crests.

Section 8

'These questions are the next questions to which research will

bring us answers,' said Karenin. 'While we sit here and talk idly and inexactly of what is needed and what may be, there are hundreds of keen-witted men and women who are working these things out, dispassionately and certainly, for the love of knowledge. The next sciences to yield great harvests now will be psychology and neural physiology. These perplexities of the situation between man and woman and the trouble with the obstinacy of egotism, these are temporary troubles, the issue of our own times. Suddenly all these differences that seem so fixed will dissolve, all these incompatibles will run together, and we shall go on to mould our bodies and our bodily feelings and personal reactions as boldly as we begin now to carve mountains and set the seas in their places and change the currents of the wind.'

'It is the next wave,' said Fowler, who had come out upon the terrace and seated himself silently behind Karenin's chair.

'Of course, in the old days,' said Edwards, 'men were tied to their city or their country, tied to the homes they owned or the work they did....'

'I do not see,' said Karenin, 'that there is any final limit to man's power of self-modification.'

'There is none,' said Fowler, walking forward and sitting down upon the parapet in front of Karenin so that he could see his face. 'There is no absolute limit to either knowledge or power.... I hope you do not tire yourself talking.'

'I am interested,' said Karenin. 'I suppose in a little while men will cease to be tired. I suppose in a little time you will give us something that will hurry away the fatigue products and restore our jaded tissues almost at once. This old machine may be made to run without slacking or cessation.'

'That is possible, Karenin. But there is much to learn.'

'And all the hours we give to digestion and half living; don't you think there will be some way of saving these?'

Fowler nodded assent.

'And then sleep again. When man with his blazing lights made an end to night in his towns and houses--it is only a hundred years or so ago that that was done--then it followed he would presently resent his eight hours of uselessness. Shan't we presently take a tabloid or lie in some field of force that will enable us to do with an hour or so of slumber and rise refreshed again?'

'Frobisher and Ameer Ali have done work in that direction.'

'And then the inconveniences of age and those diseases of the system that come with years; steadily you drive them back and you lengthen and lengthen the years that stretch between the passionate tumults of youth and the contractions of senility. Man who used to weaken and die as his teeth decayed now looks forward to a continually lengthening, continually fuller term of years. And all those parts of him that once gathered evil against him, the vestigial structures and odd, treacherous corners of his body, you know better and better how to deal with. You carve his body about and leave it re-modelled and unscarred. The psychologists are learning how to mould minds, to reduce and remove bad complexes of thought and motive, to relieve pressures and broaden ideas. So that we are becoming more and more capable of transmitting what we have learnt and preserving it for the race. The race, the racial wisdom, science, gather power continually to subdue the individual man to its own end. Is that not so?'

Fowler said that it was, and for a time he was telling Karenin of new work that was in progress in India and Russia. 'And how is it with heredity?' asked Karenin.

Fowler told them of the mass of inquiry accumulated and arranged by the genius of Tchen, who was beginning to define clearly the laws of inheritance and how the sex of children and the complexions and many of the parental qualities could be determined.

'He can actually DO----?'

'It is still, so to speak, a mere laboratory triumph,' said Fowler, 'but to-morrow it will be practicable.'

'You see,' cried Karenin, turning a laughing face to Rachel and Edith, 'while we have been theorising about men and women, here is science getting the power for us to end that old dispute for ever. If woman is too much for us, we'll reduce her to a minority, and if we do not like any type of men and women, we'll have no more of it. These old bodies, these old animal limitations, all this earthly inheritance of gross inevitabilities falls from the spirit of man like the shrivelled cocoon from an imago. And for my own part, when I hear of these things I feel like that--like a wet, crawling new moth that still fears to spread its wings. Because where do these things take us?'

'Beyond humanity,' said Kahn.

'No,' said Karenin. 'We can still keep our feet upon the earth that made us. But the air no longer imprisons us, this round planet is no longer chained to us like the ball of a galley slave....'

'In a little while men who will know how to bear the strange gravitations, the altered pressures, the attenuated, unfamiliar gases and all the fearful strangenesses of space will be venturing out from this earth. This ball will be no longer enough for us; our spirit will reach out.... Cannot you see how that little argosy will go glittering up into the sky, twinkling and glittering smaller and smaller until the blue swallows it up. They may succeed out there; they may perish, but other men will follow them....

'It is as if a great window opened,' said Karenin.

Section 9

As the evening drew on Karenin and those who were about him went up upon the roof of the buildings, so that they might the better watch the sunset and the flushing of the mountains and the coming of the afterglow. They were joined by two of the surgeons from the laboratories below, and presently by a nurse who brought Karenin refreshment in a thin glass cup. It was a cloudless, windless evening under the deep blue sky, and far away to the north glittered two biplanes on the way to the observatories on Everest, two hundred miles distant over the precipices to the east. The little group of people watched them pass over the mountains and vanish into the blue, and then for a time they talked of the work that the observatory was doing. From that they passed to the whole process of research about the world, and so Karenin's thoughts returned again to the mind of the world and the great future that was opening upon man's imagination. He asked the surgeons many questions upon the detailed possibilities of their science, and he was keenly interested and excited by the things they told him. And as they talked the sun touched the mountains, and became very swiftly a blazing and indented hemisphere of liquid flame and sank.

Karenin looked blinking at the last quivering rim of incandescence, and shaded his eyes and became silent.

Presently he gave a little start.

'What?' asked Rachel Borken.

'I had forgotten,' he said.

'What had you forgotten?'

'I had forgotten about the operation to-morrow. I have been so interested as Man to-day that I have nearly forgotten Marcus Karenin. Marcus Karenin must go under your knife to-morrow, Fowler, and very probably Marcus Karenin will die.' He raised his slightly shrivelled hand. 'It does not matter, Fowler. It scarcely matters even to me. For indeed is it Karenin who has been sitting here and talking; is it not rather a common mind, Fowler, that has played about between us? You and I and all of us have added thought to thought, but the thread is neither you nor me. What is true we all have; when the individual has altogether brought himself to the test and winnowing of expression, then the individual is done. I feel as though I had already been emptied out of that little vessel, that Marcus Karenin, which in my youth held me so tightly and completely. Your beauty, dear Edith, and your broad brow, dear Rachel, and you, Fowler, with your firm and skilful hands, are now almost as much to me as this hand that beats the arm of my chair. And as little me. And the spirit that desires to know, the spirit that resolves to do, that spirit that lives and has talked in us to-day, lived in Athens, lived in Florence, lives on, I know, for ever....

'And you, old Sun, with your sword of flame searing these poor eyes of Marcus for the last time of all, beware of me! You think

I die--and indeed I am only taking off one more coat to get at you. I have threatened you for ten thousand years, and soon I warn you I shall be coming. When I am altogether stripped and my disguises thrown away. Very soon now, old Sun, I shall launch myself at you, and I shall reach you and I shall put my foot on your spotted face and tug you about by your fiery locks. One step I shall take to the moon, and then I shall leap at you. I've talked to you before, old Sun, I've talked to you a million times, and now I am beginning to remember. Yes--long ago, long ago, before I had stripped off a few thousand generations, dust now and forgotten, I was a hairy savage and I pointed my hand at you and--clearly I remember it!--I saw you in a net. Have you forgotten that, old Sun? . . .

'Old Sun, I gather myself together out of the pools of the individual that have held me dispersed so long. I gather my billion thoughts into science and my million wills into a common purpose. Well may you slink down behind the mountains from me, well may you cower....'

Section 10

Karenin desired that he might dream alone for a little while before he returned to the cell in which he was to sleep. He was given relief for a pain that began to trouble him and wrapped warmly about with furs, for a great coldness was creeping over all things, and so they left him, and he sat for a long time watching the afterglow give place to the darkness of night.

It seemed to those who had to watch over him unobtrusively lest he should be in want of any attention, that he mused very deeply.

The white and purple peaks against the golden sky sank down into cold, blue remoteness, glowed out again and faded again, and the burning cressets of the Indian stars, that even the moonrise

cannot altogether quench, began their vigil. The moon rose behind the towering screen of dark precipices to the east, and long before it emerged above these, its slanting beams had filled the deep gorges below with luminous mist and turned the towers and pinnacles of Lio Porgyul to a magic dreamcastle of radiance and wonder....

Came a great uprush of ghostly light above the black rim of rocks, and then like a bubble that is blown and detaches itself the moon floated off clear into the unfathomable dark sky....

And then Karenin stood up. He walked a few paces along the terrace and remained for a time gazing up at that great silver disc, that silvery shield that must needs be man's first conquest in outer space....

Presently he turned about and stood with his hands folded behind him, looking at the northward stars. . . .

At length he went to his own cell. He lay down there and slept peacefully till the morning. And early in the morning they came to him and the anaesthetic was given him and the operation performed.

It was altogether successful, but Karenin was weak and he had to lie very still; and about seven days later a blood clot detached itself from the healing scar and travelled to his heart, and he died in an instant in the night.

THE RESEARCH MAGNIFICENT

by
H. G. Wells
1915

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THE PRELUDE

ON FEAR AND ARISTOCRACY

1

The story of William Porphyry Benham is the story of a man who was led into adventure by an idea. It was an idea that took possession of his imagination quite early in life, it grew with him and changed with him, it interwove at last completely with his being. His story is its story. It was traceably germinating in the schoolboy; it was manifestly present in his mind at the very last moment of his adventurous life. He belonged to that fortunate minority who are independent of daily necessities, so that he was free to go about the world under its direction. It led him far. It led him into situations that bordered upon the fantastic, it made him ridiculous, it came near to making him sublime. And this idea of his was of such a nature that in several aspects he could document it. Its logic forced him to introspection and to the making of a record.

An idea that can play so large a part in a life must necessarily have something of the complication and protean quality of life itself. It is not to be stated justly in any formula, it is not to be rendered by an epigram. As well one might show a man's skeleton for his portrait. Yet, essentially, Benham's idea was simple. He had an incurable, an almost innate persuasion that he had to live life nobly and thoroughly. His commoner expression for that thorough living is "the aristocratic life." But by "aristocratic" he meant something very different from the quality of a Russian prince, let us say, or an English peer. He meant an intensity, a

clearness. . . . Nobility for him was to get something out of his individual existence, a flame, a jewel, a splendour--it is a thing easier to understand than to say.

One might hesitate to call this idea "innate," and yet it comes soon into a life when it comes at all. In Benham's case we might trace it back to the Day Nursery at Seagate, we might detect it stirring already at the petticoat stage, in various private struttings and valiant dreamings with a helmet of pasteboard and a white-metal sword. We have most of us been at least as far as that with Benham. And we have died like Horatius, slaying our thousands for our country, or we have perished at the stake or faced the levelled muskets of the firing party--"No, do not bandage my eyes"--because we would not betray the secret path that meant destruction to our city. But with Benham the vein was stronger, and it increased instead of fading out as he grew to manhood. It was less obscured by those earthy acquiescences, those discretions, that saving sense of proportion, which have made most of us so satisfactorily what we are. "Porphyry," his mother had discovered before he was seventeen, "is an excellent boy, a brilliant boy, but, I begin to see, just a little unbalanced."

The interest of him, the absurdity of him, the story of him, is that.

Most of us are--balanced; in spite of occasional reveries we do come to terms with the limitations of life, with those desires and dreams and discretions that, to say the least of it, qualify our nobility, we take refuge in our sense of humour and congratulate ourselves on a certain amiable freedom from priggishness or presumption, but for Benham that easy declension to a humorous acceptance of life as it is did not occur. He found his limitations soon enough; he was perpetually rediscovering them, but out of these interments of the spirit he rose again--remarkably. When we others have decided that, to be plain about it, we are not going to lead the noble life at

all, that the thing is too ambitious and expensive even to attempt, we have done so because there were other conceptions of existence that were good enough for us, we decided that instead of that glorious impossible being of ourselves, we would figure in our own eyes as jolly fellows, or sly dogs, or sane, sound, capable men or brilliant successes, and so forth--practicable things. For Benham, exceptionally, there were not these practicable things. He blundered, he fell short of himself, he had--as you will be told--some astonishing rebuffs, but they never turned him aside for long. He went by nature for this preposterous idea of nobility as a linnet hatched in a cage will try to fly.

And when he discovered--and in this he was assisted not a little by his friend at his elbow--when he discovered that Nobility was not the simple thing he had at first supposed it to be, he set himself in a mood only slightly disconcerted to the discovery of Nobility. When it dawned upon him, as it did, that one cannot be noble, so to speak, IN VACUO, he set himself to discover a Noble Society. He began with simple beliefs and fine attitudes and ended in a conscious research. If he could not get through by a stride, then it followed that he must get through by a climb. He spent the greater part of his life studying and experimenting in the noble possibilities of man. He never lost his absurd faith in that conceivable splendour. At first it was always just round the corner or just through the wood; to the last it seemed still but a little way beyond the distant mountains.

For this reason this story has been called THE RESEARCH MAGNIFICENT.

It was a real research, it was documented. In the rooms in Westhaven Street that at last were as much as one could call his home, he had accumulated material for--one hesitates to call it a book--let us say it was an analysis of, a guide to the noble life. There after his tragic death came his old friend White, the journalist and novelist, under a promise, and found these papers; he

found them to the extent of a crammed bureau, half a score of patent files quite distended and a writing-table drawer-full, and he was greatly exercised to find them. They were, White declares, they are still after much experienced handling, an indigestible aggregation. On this point White is very assured. When Benham thought he was gathering together a book he was dreaming, White says. There is no book in it. . . .

Perhaps too, one might hazard, Benham was dreaming when he thought the noble life a human possibility. Perhaps man, like the ape and the hyaena and the tapeworm and many other of God's necessary but less attractive creatures, is not for such exalted ends. That doubt never seems to have got a lodgment in Benham's skull; though at times one might suppose it the basis of White's thought. You will find in all Benham's story, if only it can be properly told, now subdued, now loud and amazed and distressed, but always traceable, this startled, protesting question, "BUT WHY THE DEVIL AREN'T WE?"

As though necessarily we ought to be. He never faltered in his persuasion that behind the dingy face of this world, the earthy stubbornness, the baseness and dulness of himself and all of us, lurked the living jewels of heaven, the light of glory, things unspeakable. At first it seemed to him that one had only just to hammer and will, and at the end, after a life of willing and hammering, he was still convinced there was something, something in the nature of an Open Sesame, perhaps a little more intricate than one had supposed at first, a little more difficult to secure, but still in that nature, which would suddenly roll open for mankind the magic cave of the universe, that precious cave at the heart of all things, in which one must believe.

And then life--life would be the wonder it so perplexingly just isn't. . . .

Benham did not go about the world telling people of this consuming research. He was not the prophet or preacher of his idea. It was too living and intricate and uncertain a part of him to speak freely about. It was his secret self; to expose it casually would have shamed him. He drew all sorts of reserves about him, he wore his manifest imperfections turned up about him like an overcoat in bitter wind. He was content to be inexplicable. His thoughts led him to the conviction that this magnificent research could not be, any more than any other research can be, a solitary enterprise, but he delayed expression; in a mighty writing and stowing away of these papers he found a relief from the unpleasant urgency to confess and explain himself prematurely. So that White, though he knew Benham with the intimacy of an old schoolfellow who had renewed his friendship, and had shared his last days and been a witness of his death, read the sheets of manuscript often with surprise and with a sense of added elucidation.

And, being also a trained maker of books, White as he read was more and more distressed that an accumulation so interesting should be so entirely unshaped for publication. "But this will never make a book," said White with a note of personal grievance. His hasty promise in their last moments together had bound him, it seemed, to a task he now found impossible. He would have to work upon it tremendously; and even then he did not see how it could be done.

This collection of papers was not a story, not an essay, not a confession, not a diary. It was--nothing definable. It went into no conceivable covers. It was just, White decided, a proliferation. A vast proliferation. It wanted even a title. There were signs that Benham had intended to call it **THE ARISTOCRATIC LIFE**, and that he had tried at some other time the title of **AN ESSAY ON**

ARISTOCRACY. Moreover, it would seem that towards the end he had been disposed to drop the word "aristocratic" altogether, and adopt some such phrase as THE LARGER LIFE. Once it was LIFE SET FREE. He

had fallen away more and more from nearly everything that one associates with aristocracy--at the end only its ideals of fearlessness and generosity remained.

Of all these titles THE ARISTOCRATIC LIFE seemed at first most like a clue to White. Benham's erratic movements, his sudden impulses, his angers, his unaccountable patiences, his journeys to strange places, and his lapses into what had seemed to be pure adventurousness, could all be put into system with that. Before White had turned over three pages of the great fascicle of manuscript that was called Book Two, he had found the word "Bushido" written with a particularly flourishing capital letter and twice repeated. "That was inevitable," said White with the comforting regret one feels for a friend's banalities. "And it dates . . . [unreadable] this was early. . . ."

"Modern aristocracy, the new aristocracy," he read presently, "has still to be discovered and understood. This is the necessary next step for mankind. As far as possible I will discover and understand it, and as far as I know it I will be it. This is the essential disposition of my mind. God knows I have appetites and sloths and habits and blindnesses, but so far as it is in my power to release myself I will escape to this. . . ."

3

White sat far into the night and for several nights turning over papers and rummaging in untidy drawers. Memories came back to him

of his dead friend and pieced themselves together with other memories and joined on to scraps in this writing. Bold yet convincing guesses began to leap across the gaps. A story shaped itself. . . .

The story began with the schoolfellow he had known at Minchinghampton School.

Benham had come up from his father's preparatory school at Seagate. He had been a boy reserved rather than florid in his acts and manners, a boy with a pale face, incorrigible hair and brown eyes that went dark and deep with excitement. Several times White had seen him excited, and when he was excited Benham was capable of tensely daring things. On one occasion he had insisted upon walking across a field in which was an aggressive bull. It had been put there to prevent the boys taking a short cut to the swimming place. It had bellowed tremendously and finally charged him. He had dodged it and got away; at the time it had seemed an immense feat to White and the others who were safely up the field. He had walked to the fence, risking a second charge by his deliberation. Then he had sat on the fence and declared his intention of always crossing the field so long as the bull remained there. He had said this with white intensity, he had stopped abruptly in mid-sentence, and then suddenly he had dropped to the ground, clutched the fence, struggled with heaving shoulders, and been sick.

The combination of apparently stout heart and manifestly weak stomach had exercised the Minchinghampton intelligence profoundly.

On one or two other occasions Benham had shown courage of the same rather screwed-up sort. He showed it not only in physical but in mental things. A boy named Prothero set a fashion of religious discussion in the school, and Benham, after some self-examination, professed an atheistical republicanism rather in the manner of Shelley. This brought him into open conflict with Roddles, the

History Master. Roddles had discovered these theological controversies in some mysterious way, and he took upon himself to talk at Benham and Prothero. He treated them to the common misapplication of that fool who "hath said in his heart there is no God." He did not perceive there was any difference between the fool who says a thing in his heart and one who says it in the dormitory. He revived that delectable anecdote of the Eton boy who professed disbelief and was at once "soundly flogged" by his head master. "Years afterwards that boy came back to thank ----"

"Gurr," said Prothero softly. "STEW--ard!"

"Your turn next, Benham," whispered an orthodox controversialist.

"Good Lord! I'd like to see him," said Benham with a forced loudness that could scarcely be ignored.

The subsequent controversy led to an interview with the head. From it Benham emerged more whitely strung up than ever. "He said he would certainly swish me if I deserved it, and I said I would certainly kill him if he did."

"And then?"

"He told me to go away and think it over. Said he would preach about it next Sunday. . . . Well, a swishing isn't a likely thing anyhow. But I would. . . . There isn't a master here I'd stand a thrashing from--not one. . . . And because I choose to say what I think! . . . I'd run amuck."

For a week or so the school was exhilarated by a vain and ill-concealed hope that the head might try it just to see if Benham would. It was tantalizingly within the bounds of possibility. . . .

These incidents came back to White's mind as he turned over the

newspapers in the upper drawer of the bureau. The drawer was labelled "Fear--the First Limitation," and the material in it was evidently designed for the opening volume of the great unfinished book. Indeed, a portion of it was already arranged and written up.

As White read through this manuscript he was reminded of a score of schoolboy discussions Benham and he and Prothero had had together. Here was the same old toughness of mind, a kind of intellectual hardihood, that had sometimes shocked his schoolfellows. Benham had been one of those boys who do not originate ideas very freely, but who go out to them with a fierce sincerity. He believed and disbelieved with emphasis. Prothero had first set him doubting, but it was Benham's own temperament took him on to denial. His youthful atheism had been a matter for secret consternation in White. White did not believe very much in God even then, but this positive disbelieving frightened him. It was going too far. There had been a terrible moment in the dormitory, during a thunderstorm, a thunderstorm so vehement that it had awakened them all, when Latham, the humourist and a quietly devout boy, had suddenly challenged Benham to deny his Maker.

"NOW say you don't believe in God?"

Benham sat up in bed and repeated his negative faith, while little Hopkins, the Bishop's son, being less certain about the accuracy of Providence than His aim, edged as far as he could away from Benham's cubicle and rolled his head in his bedclothes.

"And anyhow," said Benham, when it was clear that he was not to be struck dead forthwith, "you show a poor idea of your God to think he'd kill a schoolboy for honest doubt. Even old Roddles--"

"I can't listen to you," cried Latham the humourist, "I can't listen to you. It's--HORRIBLE."

"Well, who began it?" asked Benham.

A flash of lightning lit the dormitory and showed him to White white-faced and ablaze with excitement, sitting up with the bedclothes about him. "Oh WOW!" wailed the muffled voice of little Hopkins as the thunder burst like a giant pistol overhead, and he buried his head still deeper in the bedclothes and gave way to unappeasable grief.

Latham's voice came out of the darkness. "This ATHEISM that you and Billy Prothero have brought into the school--"

He started violently at another vivid flash, and every one remained silent, waiting for the thunder. . . .

But White remembered no more of the controversy because he had made a frightful discovery that filled and blocked his mind. Every time the lightning flashed, there was a red light in Benham's eyes. . . .

It was only three days after when Prothero discovered exactly the same phenomenon in the School House boothole and talked of cats and cattle, that White's confidence in their friend was partially restored. . . .

4

"Fear, the First Limitation"--his title indicated the spirit of Benham's opening book very clearly. His struggle with fear was the very beginning of his soul's history. It continued to the end. He had hardly decided to lead the noble life before he came bump against the fact that he was a physical coward. He felt fear acutely. "Fear," he wrote, "is the foremost and most persistent of

the shepherding powers that keep us in the safe fold, that drive us back to the beaten track and comfort and--futility. The beginning of all aristocracy is the subjugation of fear."

At first the struggle was so great that he hated fear without any qualification; he wanted to abolish it altogether.

"When I was a boy," he writes, "I thought I would conquer fear for good and all, and never more be troubled by it. But it is not to be done in that way. One might as well dream of having dinner for the rest of one's life. Each time and always I have found that it has to be conquered afresh. To this day I fear, little things as well as big things. I have to grapple with some little dread every day--urge myself. . . . Just as I have to wash and shave myself every day. . . . I believe it is so with every one, but it is difficult to be sure; few men who go into dangers care very much to talk about fear. . . ."

Later Benham found some excuses for fear, came even to dealings with fear. He never, however, admits that this universal instinct is any better than a kindly but unintelligent nurse from whose fostering restraints it is man's duty to escape. Discretion, he declared, must remain; a sense of proportion, an "adequacy of enterprise," but the discretion of an aristocrat is in his head, a tactical detail, it has nothing to do with this visceral sinking, this ebb in the nerves. "From top to bottom, the whole spectrum of fear is bad, from panic fear at one extremity down to that mere disinclination for enterprise, that reluctance and indolence which is its lowest phase. These are things of the beast, these are for creatures that have a settled environment, a life history, that spin in a cage of instincts. But man is a beast of that kind no longer, he has left his habitat, he goes out to limitless living. . . ."

This idea of man going out into new things, leaving securities, habits, customs, leaving his normal life altogether behind him,

underlay all Benham's aristocratic conceptions. And it was natural that he should consider fear as entirely inconvenient, treat it indeed with ingratitude, and dwell upon the immense liberations that lie beyond for those who will force themselves through its remonstrances. . . .

Benham confessed his liability to fear quite freely in these notes. His fear of animals was ineradicable. He had had an overwhelming dread of bears until he was twelve or thirteen, the child's irrational dread of impossible bears, bears lurking under the bed and in the evening shadows. He confesses that even up to manhood he could not cross a field containing cattle without keeping a wary eye upon them--his bull adventure rather increased than diminished that disposition--he hated a strange dog at his heels and would manoeuvre himself as soon as possible out of reach of the teeth or heels of a horse. But the peculiar dread of his childhood was tigers. Some gaping nursemaid confronted him suddenly with a tiger in a cage in the menagerie annexe of a circus. "My small mind was overwhelmed."

"I had never thought," White read, "that a tiger was much larger than a St. Bernard dog. . . . This great creature! . . . I could not believe any hunter would attack such a monster except by stealth and with weapons of enormous power. . . .

"He jerked himself to and fro across his cramped, rickety cage and looked over my head with yellow eyes--at some phantom far away. Every now and then he snarled. The contempt of his detestable indifference sank deeper and deeper into my soul. I knew that were the cage to vanish I should stand there motionless, his helpless prey. I knew that were he at large in the same building with me I should be too terror-stricken to escape him. At the foot of a ladder leading clear to escape I should have awaited him paralyzed. At last I gripped my nurse's hand. 'Take me away,' I whispered.

"In my dreams that night he stalked me. I made my frozen flight

from him, I slammed a door on him, and he thrust his paw through a panel as though it had been paper and clawed for me. The paw got longer and longer. . . .

"I screamed so loudly that my father came up from his study.

"I remember that he took me in his arms.

"'It's only a big sort of pussy, Poff,' he said. FELIS TIGRIS. FELIS, you know, means cat.'

"But I knew better. I was in no mood then for my father's insatiable pedagoguery.

"'And my little son mustn't be a coward.' . . .

"After that I understood I must keep silence and bear my tigers alone.

"For years the thought of that tiger's immensity haunted my mind. In my dreams I cowered before it a thousand times; in the dusk it rarely failed me. On the landing on my way to bed there was a patch of darkness beyond a chest that became a lurking horror for me, and sometimes the door of my father's bedroom would stand open and there was a long buff and crimson-striped shape, by day indeed an ottoman, but by night--. Could an ottoman crouch and stir in the flicker of a passing candle? Could an ottoman come after you noiselessly, and so close that you could not even turn round upon it? No!"

5

When Benham was already seventeen and, as he supposed, hardened

against his fear of beasts, his friend Prothero gave him an account of the killing of an old labouring man by a stallion which had escaped out of its stable. The beast had careered across a field, leapt a hedge and come upon its victim suddenly. He had run a few paces and stopped, trying to defend his head with the horse rearing over him. It beat him down with two swift blows of its fore hoofs, one, two, lifted him up in its long yellow teeth and worried him as a terrier does a rat--the poor old wretch was still able to make a bleating sound at that--dropped him, trampled and kicked him as he tried to crawl away, and went on trampling and battering him until he was no more than a bloody inhuman bundle of clothes and mire. For more than half an hour this continued, and then its animal rage was exhausted and it desisted, and went and grazed at a little distance from this misshapen, hoof-marked, torn, and muddy remnant of a man. No one it seems but a horror-stricken child knew what was happening. . . .

This picture of human indignity tortured Benham's imagination much more than it tortured the teller of the tale. It filled him with shame and horror. For three or four years every detail of that circumstantial narrative seemed unforgettable. A little lapse from perfect health and the obsession returned. He could not endure the neighing of horses: when he saw horses galloping in a field with him his heart stood still. And all his life thereafter he hated horses.

6

A different sort of fear that also greatly afflicted Benham was due to a certain clumsiness and insecurity he felt in giddy and unstable places. There he was more definitely balanced between the hopelessly rash and the pitifully discreet.

He had written an account of a private struggle between himself and a certain path of planks and rock edges called the Bisse of Leysin. This happened in his adolescence. He had had a bad attack of influenza and his doctor had sent him to a little hotel--the only hotel it was in those days--at Montana in Valais. There, later, when he had picked up his strength, his father was to join him and take him mountaineering, that second-rate mountaineering which is so dear to dons and schoolmasters. When the time came he was ready for that, but he had had his experiences. He had gone through a phase of real cowardice. He was afraid, he confessed, before even he reached Montana; he was afraid of the steepness of the mountains. He had to drive ten or twelve miles up and up the mountain-side, a road of innumerable hairpin bends and precipitous banks, the horse was gaunt and ugly with a disposition to shy, and he confesses he clutched the side of the vehicle and speculated how he should jump if presently the whole turnout went tumbling over. . . .

"And afterwards I dreamt dreams of precipices. I made strides over precipices, I fell and fell with a floating swiftness towards remote valleys, I was assailed by eagles upon a perilous ledge that crumbled away and left me clinging by my nails to nothing."

The Bisse of Leysin is one of those artificial water-courses which bring water from some distant source to pastures that have an insufficient or uncertain supply. It is a little better known than most because of a certain exceptional boldness in its construction; for a distance of a few score yards it runs supported by iron staples across the front of a sheer precipice, and for perhaps half a mile it hangs like an eyebrow over nearly or quite vertical walls of pine-set rock. Beside it, on the outer side of it, runs a path, which becomes an offhand gangway of planking at the overhanging places. At one corner, which gives the favourite picture postcard from Montana, the rocks project so sharply above the water that the passenger on the gangway must crouch down upon the bending plank as he walks. There is no hand-hold at all.

A path from Montana takes one over a pine-clad spur and down a precipitous zig-zag upon the middle of the Bisse, and thither Benham came, fascinated by the very fact that here was something of which the mere report frightened him. He had to walk across the cold clear rush of the Bisse upon a pine log, and then he found himself upon one of the gentler interludes of the Bisse track. It was a scrambling path nearly two feet wide, and below it were slopes, but not so steep as to terrify. At a vast distance below he saw through tree-stems and blue haze a twisted strand of bright whiteness, the river that joins the Rhone at Sion. It looped about and passed out of sight remotely beneath his feet. He turned to the right, and came to a corner that overhung a precipice. He craned his head round this corner and saw the evil place of the picture-postcards.

He remained for a long time trying to screw himself up to walk along the jagged six-inch edge of rock between cliff and torrent into which the path has shrunk, to the sagging plank under the overhanging rock beyond.

He could not bring himself to do that.

"It happened that close to the corner a large lump of rock and earth was breaking away, a cleft was opening, so that presently, it seemed possible at any moment, the mass would fall headlong into the blue deeps below. This impending avalanche was not in my path along the Bisse, it was no sort of danger to me, but in some way its insecurity gave a final touch to my cowardice. I could not get myself round that corner."

He turned away. He went and examined the planks in the other direction, and these he found less forbidding. He crossed one precipitous place, with a fall of twoscore feet or less beneath him, and found worse ahead. There also he managed. A third place was still more disagreeable. The plank was worn and thin, and sagged

under him. He went along it supporting himself against the rock above the Bisse with an extended hand. Halfway the rock fell back, so that there was nothing whatever to hold. He stopped, hesitating whether he should go back--but on this plank there was no going back because no turning round seemed practicable. While he was still hesitating there came a helpful intervention. Behind him he saw a peasant appearing and disappearing behind trees and projecting rock masses, and coming across the previous plank at a vigorous trot. . . .

Under the stimulus of a spectator Benham got to the end of this third place without much trouble. Then very politely he stood aside for the expert to go ahead so that he could follow at his own pace.

There were, however, more difficulties yet to come, and a disagreeable humiliation. That confounded peasant developed a parental solicitude. After each crossing he waited, and presently began to offer advice and encouragement. At last came a place where everything was overhanging, where the Bisse was leaking, and the plank wet and slippery. The water ran out of the leak near the brim of the wooden channel and fell in a long shivering thread of silver. **THERE WAS NO SOUND OF ITS FALL.** It just fell--into a void.

Benham

wished he had not noted that. He groaned, but faced the plank; he knew this would be the slowest affair of all.

The peasant surveyed him from the further side.

"Don't be afraid!" cried the peasant in his clumsy Valaisian French, and returned, returning along the plank that seemed quite sufficiently loaded without him, extending a charitable hand.

"Damn!" whispered Benham, but he took the hand.

Afterwards, rather ignobly, he tried to explain in his public-school French. "Pas de peur," he said. "Pas de peur. Mais la tete, n'a

pas l'habitude."

The peasant, failing to understand, assured him again that there was no danger.

("Damn!")

Benham was led over all the other planks, he was led as if he was an old lady crossing a glacier. He was led into absolute safety, and shamefacedly he rewarded his guide. Then he went a little way and sat down, swore softly, and watched the honest man go striding and plunging down towards Lens until he was out of sight.

"Now," said Benham to himself, "if I do not go back along the planks my secret honour is gone for ever."

He told himself that he had not a good head, that he was not well, that the sun was setting and the light no longer good, that he had a very good chance indeed of getting killed. Then it came to him suddenly as a clear and simple truth, as something luminously plain, that it is better to get killed than go away defeated by such fears and unsteadiness as his. The change came into his mind as if a white light were suddenly turned on--where there had been nothing but shadows and darkness. He rose to his feet and went swiftly and intently the whole way back, going with a kind of temperate recklessness, and, because he was no longer careful, easily. He went on beyond his starting place toward the corner, and did that supreme bit, to and fro, that bit where the lump was falling away, and he had to crouch, as gaily as the rest. Then he recrossed the Bisse upon the pine log, clambered up through the pines to the crest, and returned through the meadows to his own hotel.

After that he should have slept the sleep of contentment, but instead he had quite dreadful nightmares, of hanging in frozen fear above incredible declivities, of ill-aimed leaps across chasms to

slippery footholds, of planks that swayed and broke suddenly in the middle and headed him down and down. . . .

The next day in the sunshine he walked the Bisse again with those dreams like trailing mists in his mind, and by comparison the path of the Bisse was nothing, it was like walking along a kerbstone, it was an exercise for young ladies. . . .

7

In his younger days Benham had regarded Fear as a shameful secret and as a thing to be got rid of altogether. It seemed to him that to feel fear was to fall short of aristocracy, and in spite of the deep dreads and disgusts that haunted his mind, he set about the business of its subjugation as if it were a spiritual amputation. But as he emerged from the egotism of adolescence he came to realize that this was too comprehensive an operation; every one feels fear, and your true aristocrat is not one who has eliminated, but one who controls or ignores it. Brave men are men who do things when they are afraid to do them, just as Nelson, even when he was seasick, and he was frequently seasick, was still master of the sea. Benham developed two leading ideas about fear; one that it is worse at the first onset, and far worse than any real experience, and the other that fear is essentially a social instinct. He set himself upon these lines to study--what can we call it?--the taming of fear, the nature, care, and management of fear. . . .

"Fear is very like pain in this, that it is a deterrent thing. It is superficial. Just as a man's skin is infinitely more sensitive than anything inside. . . . Once you have forced yourself or have been forced through the outward fear into vivid action or experience, you feel very little. The worst moment is before things

happen. Rowe, the African sportsman, told me that he had seen cowardice often enough in the presence of lions, but he had never seen any one actually charged by a lion who did not behave well. I have heard the same thing of many sorts of dangers.

"I began to suspect this first in the case of falling or jumping down. Giddiness may be an almost intolerable torture, and falling nothing of the sort. I once saw the face of an old man who had flung himself out of a high window in Rome, and who had been killed instantly on the pavement; it was not simply a serene face, it was glad, exalted. I suspect that when we have broken the shell of fear, falling may be delightful. Jumping down is, after all, only a steeper tobogganing, and tobogganing a milder jumping down. Always I used to funk at the top of the Cresta run. I suffered sometimes almost intolerably; I found it almost impossible to get away. The first ten yards was like being slashed open with a sharp sword. But afterwards there was nothing but joyful thrills. All instinct, too, fought against me when I tried high diving. I managed it, and began to like it. I had to give it up because of my ears, but not until I had established the habit of stepping through that moment of disinclination.

"I was Challoner's passenger when he was killed at Sheerness. That was a queer unexpected experience, you may have supposed it an agony of terror, but indeed there was no fear in it at all. At any rate, I do not remember a moment of fear; it has gone clean out of my memory if ever it was there. We were swimming high and fast, three thousand feet or so, in a clear, sweet air over the town of Sheerness. The river, with a string of battleships, was far away to the west of us, and the endless grey-blue flats of the Thames to the north. The sun was low behind a bank of cloud. I was watching a motor-car, which seemed to be crawling slowly enough, though, no doubt, it was making a respectable pace, between two hedges down below. It is extraordinary how slowly everything seems to be going when one sees it from such an height.

"Then the left wing of the monoplane came up like a door that slams, some wires whistled past my head, and one whipped off my helmet, and then, with the seat slipping away from me, down we went. I snatched unavailingly for the helmet, and then gripped the sides. It was like dropping in a boat suddenly into the trough of a wave--and going on dropping. We were both strapped, and I got my feet against the side and clung to the locked second wheel.

"The sensation was as though something like an intermittent electric current was pouring through me. It's a ridiculous image to use, I can't justify it, but it was as if I was having cold blue light squirted through every pore of my being. There was an astonishment, a feeling of confirmation. 'Of course these things do happen sometimes,' I told myself. I don't remember that Challoner looked round or said anything at all. I am not sure that I looked at him. . . .

"There seemed to be a long interval of intensely excited curiosity, and I remember thinking, 'Lord, but we shall come a smash in a minute!' Far ahead I saw the grey sheds of Eastchurch and people strolling about apparently unaware of our disaster. There was a sudden silence as Challoner stopped the engine. . . .

"But the point I want to insist upon is that I did not feel afraid. I was simply enormously, terribly INTERESTED. . . .

"There came a tremendous jolt and a lunge, and we were both tipped forward, so that we were hanging forehead down by our straps, and it looked as if the sheds were in the sky, then I saw nothing but sky, then came another vast swerve, and we were falling sideways, sideways. . . .

"I was altogether out of breath and PHYSICALLY astonished, and I remember noting quite intelligently as we hit the ground how the

green grass had an effect of POURING OUT in every direction from below us. . . .

"Then I remember a jerk and a feeling that I was flying up again. I was astonished by a tremendous popping--fabric, wires, everything seemed going pop, pop, pop, like a machine-gun, and then came a flash of intense pain as my arm crumpled up. It was quite impersonal pain. As impersonal as seeing intense colour. SPLINTERS! I remember the word came into my head instantly. I remember that very definitely.

"I thought, I suppose, my arm was in splinters. Or perhaps of the scraps and ends of rods and wires flying about us. It is curious that while I remember the word I cannot recall the idea. . . .

"When I became conscious again the chief thing present in my mind was that all those fellows round were young soldiers who wouldn't at all understand bad behaviour. My arm was--orchestral, but still far from being real suffering IN me. Also I wanted to know what Challoner had got. They wouldn't understand my questions, and then I twisted round and saw from the negligent way his feet came out from under the engine that he must be dead. And dark red stains with bright red froth--

"Of course!

"There again the chief feeling was a sense of oddity. I wasn't sorry for him any more than I was for myself.

"It seemed to me that it was all right with us both, remarkable, vivid, but all right. . . ."

"But though there is little or no fear in an aeroplane, even when it is smashing up, there is fear about aeroplanes. There is something that says very urgently, 'Don't,' to the man who looks up into the sky. It is very interesting to note how at a place like Eastchurch or Brooklands the necessary discretion trails the old visceral feeling with it, and how men will hang about, ready to go up, resolved to go up, but delaying. Men of indisputable courage will get into a state between dread and laziness, and waste whole hours of flying weather on any excuse or no excuse. Once they are up that inhibition vanishes. The man who was delaying and delaying half an hour ago will now be cutting the most venturesome capers in the air. Few men are in a hurry to get down again. I mean that quite apart from the hesitation of landing, they like being up there."

Then, abruptly, Benham comes back to his theory.

"Fear, you see, is the inevitable janitor, but it is not the ruler of experience. That is what I am driving at in all this. The bark of danger is worse than its bite. Inside the portals there may be events and destruction, but terror stays defeated at the door. It may be that when that old man was killed by a horse the child who watched suffered more than he did. . . .

"I am sure that was so. . . ."

9

As White read Benham's notes and saw how his argument drove on, he was reminded again and again of those schoolboy days and Benham's hardihood, and his own instinctive unreasonable reluctance to follow

those gallant intellectual leads. If fear is an ancient instinctive boundary that the modern life, the aristocratic life, is bound to ignore and transcend, may this not also be the case with pain? We do a little adventure into the "life beyond fear"; may we not also think of adventuring into the life beyond pain? Is pain any saner a warning than fear? May not pain just as much as fear keep us from possible and splendid things? But why ask a question that is already answered in principle in every dentist's chair? Benham's idea, however, went much further than that, he was clearly suggesting that in pain itself, pain endured beyond a certain pitch, there might come pleasure again, an intensity of sensation that might have the colour of delight. He betrayed a real anxiety to demonstrate this possibility, he had the earnestness of a man who is sensible of dissentient elements within. He hated the thought of pain even more than he hated fear. His arguments did not in the least convince White, who stopped to poke the fire and assure himself of his own comfort in the midst of his reading.

Young people and unseasoned people, Benham argued, are apt to imagine that if fear is increased and carried to an extreme pitch it becomes unbearable, one will faint or die; given a weak heart, a weak artery or any such structural defect and that may well happen, but it is just as possible that as the stimulation increases one passes through a brief ecstasy of terror to a new sane world, exalted but as sane as normal existence. There is the calmness of despair. Benham had made some notes to enforce this view, of the observed calm behaviour of men already hopelessly lost, men on sinking ships, men going to execution, men already maimed and awaiting the final stroke, but for the most part these were merely references to books and periodicals. In exactly the same way, he argued, we exaggerate the range of pain as if it were limitless. We think if we are unthinking that it passes into agony and so beyond endurance to destruction. It probably does nothing of the kind. Benham compared pain to the death range of the electric current. At a certain voltage it thrills, at a greater it torments and

convulses, at a still greater it kills. But at enormous voltages, as Tesla was the first to demonstrate, it does no injury. And following on this came memoranda on the recorded behaviour of martyrs, on the self-torture of Hindoo ascetics, of the defiance of Red Indian prisoners.

"These things," Benham had written, "are much more horrible when one considers them from the point of view of an easy-chair";--White gave an assenting nod--"ARE THEY REALLY HORRIBLE AT ALL? Is it possible

that these charred and slashed and splintered persons, those Indians hanging from hooks, those walkers in the fiery furnace, have had glimpses through great windows that were worth the price they paid for them? Haven't we allowed those checks and barriers that are so important a restraint upon childish enterprise, to creep up into and distress and distort adult life? . . .

"The modern world thinks too much as though painlessness and freedom from danger were ultimate ends. It is fear-haunted, it is troubled by the thoughts of pain and death, which it has never met except as well-guarded children meet these things, in exaggerated and untestable forms, in the menagerie or in nightmares. And so it thinks the discovery of anaesthetics the crowning triumph of civilization, and cosiness and innocent amusement, those ideals of the nursery, the whole purpose of mankind. . . ."

"Mm," said White, and pressed his lips together and knotted his brows and shook his head.

But the bulk of Benham's discussion of fear was not concerned with

this perverse and overstrained suggestion of pleasure reached through torture, this exaggeration of the man resolved not to shrink at anything; it was an examination of the present range and use of fear that led gradually to something like a theory of control and discipline. The second of his two dominating ideas was that fear is an instinct arising only in isolation, that in a crowd there may be a collective panic, but that there is no real individual fear.

Fear, Benham held, drives the man back to the crowd, the dog to its master, the wolf to the pack, and when it is felt that the danger is pooled, then fear leaves us. He was quite prepared to meet the objection that animals of a solitary habit do nevertheless exhibit fear. Some of this apparent fear, he argued, was merely discretion, and what is not discretion is the survival of an infantile characteristic. The fear felt by a tiger cub is certainly a social emotion, that drives it back to the other cubs, to its mother and the dark hiding of the lair. The fear of a fully grown tiger sends it into the reeds and the shadows, to a refuge, that must be "still reminiscent of the maternal lair." But fear has very little hold upon the adult solitary animal, it changes with extreme readiness to resentment and rage.

"Like most inexperienced people," ran his notes, "I was astonished at the reported feats of men in war; I believed they were exaggerated, and that there was a kind of unpremeditated conspiracy of silence about their real behaviour. But when on my way to visit India for the third time I turned off to see what I could of the fighting before Adrianople, I discovered at once that a thousand casually selected conscripts will, every one of them, do things together that not one of them could by any means be induced to do alone. I saw men not merely obey orders that gave them the nearly certain prospect of death, but I saw them exceeding orders; I saw men leap out of cover for the mere sake of defiance, and fall shot through and smashed by a score of bullets. I saw a number of Bulgarians in the hands of the surgeon, several quite frightfully wounded, refuse chloroform merely to impress the English onlooker,

some of their injuries I could scarcely endure to see, and I watched a line of infantry men go on up a hill and keep on quite manifestly cheerful with men dropping out and wriggling, and men dropping out and lying still until every other man was down. . . . Not one man would have gone up that hill alone, without onlookers. . . ."

Rowe, the lion hunter, told Benham that only on one occasion in his life had he given way to ungovernable fear, and that was when he was alone. Many times he had been in fearful situations in the face of charging lions and elephants, and once he had been bowled over and carried some distance by a lion, but on none of these occasions had fear demoralized him. There was no question of his general pluck. But on one occasion he was lost in rocky waterless country in Somaliland. He strayed out in the early morning while his camels were being loaded, followed some antelope too far, and lost his bearings. He looked up expecting to see the sun on his right hand and found it on his left. He became bewildered. He wandered some time and then fired three signal shots and got no reply. Then losing his head he began shouting. He had only four or five more cartridges and no water-bottle. His men were accustomed to his going on alone, and might not begin to remark upon his absence until sundown. . . . It chanced, however, that one of the shikari noted the water-bottle he had left behind and organized a hunt for him.

Long before they found him he had passed to an extremity of terror. The world had become hideous and threatening, the sun was a pitiless glare, each rocky ridge he clambered became more dreadful than the last, each new valley into which he looked more hateful and desolate, the cramped thorn bushes threatened him gauntly, the rocks had a sinister lustre, and in every blue shadow about him the night and death lurked and waited. There was no hurry for them, presently they would spread out again and join and submerge him, presently in the confederated darkness he could be stalked and seized and slain. Yes, this he admitted was real fear. He had cracked his voice, yelling as a child yells. And then he had become afraid of his own

voice. . . .

"Now this excess of fear in isolation, this comfort in a crowd, in support and in a refuge, even when support or refuge is quite illusory, is just exactly what one would expect of fear if one believed it to be an instinct which has become a misfit. In the case of the soldier fear is so much a misfit that instead of saving him for the most part it destroys him. Raw soldiers under fire bunch together and armies fight in masses, men are mowed down in swathes, because only so is the courage of the common men sustained, only so can they be brave, albeit spread out and handling their weapons as men of unqualified daring would handle them they would be infinitely safer and more effective. . . .

"And all of us, it may be, are restrained by this misfit fear from a thousand bold successful gestures of mind and body, we are held back from the attainment of mighty securities in pitiful temporary shelters that are perhaps in the end no better than traps. . . ."

From such considerations Benham went on to speculate how far the crowd can be replaced in a man's imagination, how far some substitute for that social backing can be made to serve the same purpose in neutralizing fear. He wrote with the calm of a man who weighs the probabilities of a riddle, and with the zeal of a man lost to every material consideration. His writing, it seemed to White, had something of the enthusiastic whiteness of his face, the enthusiastic brightness of his eyes. We can no more banish fear from our being at present than we can carve out the fleshy pillars of the heart or the pineal gland in the brain. It is deep in our inheritance. As deep as hunger. And just as we have to satisfy hunger in order that it should leave us free, so we have to satisfy the unconquerable importunity of fear. We have to reassure our faltering instincts. There must be something to take the place of lair and familiars, something not ourselves but general, that we must carry with us into the lonely places. For it is true that man

has now not only to learn to fight in open order instead of in a phalanx, but he has to think and plan and act in open order, to live in open order. . . .

Then with one of his abrupt transitions Benham had written, "This brings me to God."

"The devil it does!" said White, roused to a keener attention.

"By no feat of intention can we achieve courage in loneliness so long as we feel indeed alone. An isolated man, an egoist, an Epicurean man, will always fail himself in the solitary place. There must be something more with us to sustain us against this vast universe than the spark of life that began yesterday and must be extinguished to-morrow. There can be no courage beyond social courage, the sustaining confidence of the herd, until there is in us the sense of God. But God is a word that covers a multitude of meanings. When I was a boy I was a passionate atheist, I defied God, and so far as God is the mere sanction of social traditions and pressures, a mere dressing up of the crowd's will in canonicals, I do still deny him and repudiate him. That God I heard of first from my nursemaid, and in very truth he is the proper God of all the nursemaids of mankind. But there is another God than that God of obedience, God the immortal adventurer in me, God who calls men from home and country, God scourged and crowned with thorns, who rose in a nail-pierced body out of death and came not to bring peace but a sword."

With something bordering upon intellectual consternation, White, who was a decent self-respecting sceptic, read these last clamberings of Benham's spirit. They were written in pencil; they were unfinished when he died.

(Surely the man was not a Christian!)

"You may be heedless of death and suffering because you think you cannot suffer and die, or you may be heedless of death and pain because you have identified your life with the honour of mankind and the insatiable adventurousness of man's imagination, so that the possible death is negligible and the possible achievement altogether outweighs it." . . .

White shook his head over these pencilled fragments.

He was a member of the Rationalist Press Association, and he had always taken it for granted that Benham was an orthodox unbeliever. But this was hopelessly unsound, heresy, perilous stuff; almost, it seemed to him, a posthumous betrayal. . . .

11

One night when he was in India the spirit of adventure came upon Benham. He had gone with Kepple, of the forestry department, into the jungle country in the hills above the Tapti. He had been very anxious to see something of that aspect of Indian life, and he had snatched at the chance Kepple had given him. But they had scarcely started before the expedition was brought to an end by an accident, Kepple was thrown by a pony and his ankle broken. He and Benham bandaged it as well as they could, and a litter was sent for, and meanwhile they had to wait in the camp that was to have been the centre of their jungle raids. The second day of this waiting was worse for Kepple than the first, and he suffered much from the pressure of this amateurish bandaging. In the evening Benham got cool water from the well and rearranged things better; the two men dined and smoked under their thatched roof beneath the big banyan, and then Kepple, tired out by his day of pain, was carried to his tent. Presently he fell asleep and Benham was left to himself.

Now that the heat was over he found himself quite indisposed to sleep. He felt full of life and anxious for happenings.

He went back and sat down upon the iron bedstead beneath the banyan, that Kepple had lain upon through the day, and he watched the soft immensity of the Indian night swallow up the last lingering colours of the world. It left the outlines, it obliterated nothing, but it stripped off the superficial reality of things. The moon was full and high overhead, and the light had not so much gone as changed from definition and the blazing glitter and reflections of solidity to a translucent and unsubstantial clearness. The jungle that bordered the little encampment north, south, and west seemed to have crept a little nearer, enriched itself with blackness, taken to itself voices.

(Surely it had been silent during the day.)

A warm, faintly-scented breeze just stirred the dead grass and the leaves. In the day the air had been still.

Immediately after the sunset there had been a great crying of peacocks in the distance, but that was over now; the crickets, however, were still noisy, and a persistent sound had become predominant, an industrious unmistakable sound, a sound that took his mind back to England, in midsummer. It was like a watchman's rattle--a nightjar!

So there were nightjars here in India, too! One might have expected something less familiar. And then came another cry from far away over the heat-stripped tree-tops, a less familiar cry. It was repeated. Was that perhaps some craving leopard, a tiger cat, a panther?--

"HUNT, HUNT"; that might be a deer.

Then suddenly an angry chattering came from the dark trees quite close at hand. A monkey? . . .

These great, scarce visible, sweeping movements through the air were bats. . . .

Of course, the day jungle is the jungle asleep. This was its waking hour. Now the deer were arising from their forms, the bears creeping out of their dens amidst the rocks and blundering down the gullies, the tigers and panthers and jungle cats stalking noiselessly from their lairs in the grass. Countless creatures that had hidden from the heat and pitiless exposure of the day stood now awake and alertly intent upon their purposes, grazed or sought water, flitting delicately through the moonlight and shadows. The jungle was awakening. Again Benham heard that sound like the belling of a stag. . . .

This was the real life of the jungle, this night life, into which man did not go. Here he was on the verge of a world that for all the stuffed trophies of the sportsman and the specimens of the naturalist is still almost as unknown as if it was upon another planet. What intruders men are, what foreigners in the life of this ancient system!

He looked over his shoulder, and there were the two little tents, one that sheltered Kepple and one that awaited him, and beyond, in an irregular line, glowed the ruddy smoky fires of the men. One or two turbaned figures still flitted about, and there was a voice--low, monotonous--it must have been telling a tale. Further, sighing and stirring ever and again, were tethered beasts, and then a great pale space of moonlight and the clumsy outlines of the village well. The clustering village itself slept in darkness beyond the mango trees, and still remoter the black encircling jungle closed in. One might have fancied this was the encampment of newly-come invaders,

were it not for the larger villages that are overgrown with thickets and altogether swallowed up again in the wilderness, and for the deserted temples that are found rent asunder by the roots of trees and the ancient embankments that hold water only for the drinking of the sambur deer. . . .

Benham turned his face to the dim jungle again. . . .

He had come far out of his way to visit this strange world of the ancient life, that now recedes and dwindles before our new civilization, that seems fated to shrivel up and pass altogether before the dry advance of physical science and material organization. He was full of unsatisfied curiosities about its fierce hungers and passions, its fears and cruelties, its instincts and its well-nigh incommunicable and yet most precious understandings. He had long ceased to believe that the wild beast is wholly evil, and safety and plenty the ultimate good for men. . . .

Perhaps he would never get nearer to this mysterious jungle life than he was now.

It was intolerably tantalizing that it should be so close at hand and so inaccessible. . . .

As Benham sat brooding over his disappointment the moon, swimming on through the still circle of the hours, passed slowly over him. The lights and shadows about him changed by imperceptible gradations and a long pale alley where the native cart track drove into the forest, opened slowly out of the darkness, slowly broadened, slowly lengthened. It opened out to him with a quality of invitation. . . .

There was the jungle before him. Was it after all so inaccessible?

"Come!" the road said to him.

Benham rose and walked out a few paces into the moonlight and stood motionless.

Was he afraid?

Even now some hungry watchful monster might lurk in yonder shadows, watching with infinite still patience. Kepple had told him how they would sit still for hours--staring unblinkingly as cats stare at a fire--and then crouch to advance. Beneath the shrill overtone of the nightjars, what noiseless grey shapes, what deep breathings and cracklings and creepings might there not be? . . .

Was he afraid?

That question determined him to go.

He hesitated whether he should take a gun. A stick? A gun, he knew, was a dangerous thing to an inexperienced man. No! He would go now, even as he was with empty hands. At least he would go as far as the end of that band of moonlight. If for no other reason than because he was afraid. NOW!

For a moment it seemed to him as though his feet were too heavy to lift and then, hands in pockets, khaki-clad, an almost invisible figure, he strolled towards the cart-track.

Come to that, he halted for a moment to regard the distant fires of the men. No one would miss him. They would think he was in his tent. He faced the stirring quiet ahead. The cart-track was a rutted path of soft, warm sand, on which he went almost noiselessly. A bird squabbled for an instant in a thicket. A great white owl floated like a flake of moonlight across the track and vanished without a sound among the trees.

Along the moonlit path went Benham, and when he passed near trees

his footsteps became noisy with the rustle and crash of dead leaves. The jungle was full of moonlight; twigs, branches, creepers, grass-clumps came out acutely vivid. The trees and bushes stood in pools of darkness, and beyond were pale stretches of misty moonshine and big rocks shining with an unearthly lustre. Things seemed to be clear and yet uncertain. It was as if they dissolved or retired a little and then returned to solidity.

A sudden chattering broke out overhead, and black across the great stars soared a flying squirrel and caught a twig, and ran for shelter. A second hesitated in a tree-top and pursued. They chased each other and vanished abruptly. He forgot his sense of insecurity in the interest of these active little silhouettes. And he noted how much bigger and more wonderful the stars can look when one sees them through interlacing branches.

Ahead was darkness; but not so dark when he came to it that the track was invisible. He was at the limit of his intention, but now he saw that that had been a childish project. He would go on, he would walk right into the jungle. His first disinclination was conquered, and the soft intoxication of the subtropical moonshine was in his blood. . . . But he wished he could walk as a spirit walks, without this noise of leaves. . . .

Yes, this was very wonderful and beautiful, and there must always be jungles for men to walk in. Always there must be jungles. . . .

Some small beast snarled and bolted from under his feet. He stopped sharply. He had come into a darkness under great boughs, and now he stood still as the little creature scuttled away. Beyond the track emerged into a dazzling whiteness. . . .

In the stillness he could hear the deer belling again in the distance, and then came a fuss of monkeys in a group of trees near at hand. He remained still until this had died away into

mutterings.

Then on the verge of movement he was startled by a ripe mango that slipped from its stalk and fell out of the tree and struck his hand. It took a little time to understand that, and then he laughed, and his muscles relaxed, and he went on again.

A thorn caught at him and he disentangled himself.

He crossed the open space, and the moon was like a great shield of light spread out above him. All the world seemed swimming in its radiance. The stars were like lamps in a mist of silvery blue.

The track led him on across white open spaces of shrivelled grass and sand, amidst trees where shadows made black patternings upon the silver, and then it plunged into obscurities. For a time it lifted, and then on one hand the bush fell away, and he saw across a vast moonlit valley wide undulations of open cultivation, belts of jungle, copses, and a great lake as black as ebony. For a time the path ran thus open, and then the jungle closed in again and there were more thickets, more levels of grass, and in one place far overhead among the branches he heard and stood for a time perplexed at a vast deep humming of bees. . . .

Presently a black monster with a hunched back went across his path heedless of him and making a great noise in the leaves. He stood quite still until it had gone. He could not tell whether it was a boar or hyaena; most probably, he thought, a boar because of the heaviness of its rush.

The path dropped downhill for a time, crossed a ravine, ascended. He passed a great leafless tree on which there were white flowers. On the ground also, in the darkness under the tree, there were these flowers; they were dropping noiselessly, and since they were visible in the shadows, it seemed to him that they must be phosphorescent.

And they emitted a sweetish scent that lay heavily athwart the path. Presently he passed another such tree. Then he became aware of a tumult ahead of him, a smashing of leaves, a snorting and slobbering, grunting and sucking, a whole series of bestial sounds. He halted for a little while, and then drew nearer, picking his steps to avoid too great a noise. Here were more of those white-blossomed trees, and beneath, in the darkness, something very black and big was going to and fro, eating greedily. Then he found that there were two and then more of these black things, three or four of them.

Curiosity made Benham draw nearer, very softly.

Presently one showed in a patch of moonlight, startlingly big, a huge, black hairy monster with a long white nose on a grotesque face, and he was stuffing armfuls of white blossom into his mouth with his curved fore claws. He took not the slightest notice of the still man, who stood perhaps twenty yards away from him. He was too blind and careless. He snorted and smacked his slobbering lips, and plunged into the shadows again. Benham heard him root among the leaves and grunt appreciatively. The air was heavy with the reek of the crushed flowers.

For some time Benham remained listening to and peering at these preoccupied gluttons. At last he shrugged his shoulders, and left them and went on his way. For a long time he could hear them, then just as he was on the verge of forgetting them altogether, some dispute arose among them, and there began a vast uproar, squeals, protests, comments, one voice ridiculously replete and authoritative, ridiculously suggestive of a drunken judge with his mouth full, and a shrill voice of grievance high above the others. . . .

The uproar of the bears died away at last, almost abruptly, and left the jungle to the incessant night-jars. . . .

For what end was this life of the jungle?

All Benham's senses were alert to the sounds and appearances about him, and at the same time his mind was busy with the perplexities of that riddle. Was the jungle just an aimless pool of life that man must drain and clear away? Or is it to have a use in the greater life of our race that now begins? Will man value the jungle as he values the precipice, for the sake of his manhood? Will he preserve it?

Man must keep hard, man must also keep fierce. Will the jungle keep him fierce?

For life, thought Benham, there must be insecurity. . . .

He had missed the track. . . .

He was now in a second ravine. He was going downward, walking on silvery sand amidst great boulders, and now there was a new sound in the air--. It was the croaking of frogs. Ahead was a solitary gleam. He was approaching a jungle pool. . . .

Suddenly the stillness was alive, in a panic uproar. "HONK!" cried a great voice, and "HONK!" There was a clatter of hoofs, a wild rush--a rush as it seemed towards him. Was he being charged? He backed against a rock. A great pale shape leaped by him, an antlered shape. It was a herd of big deer bolting suddenly out of the stillness. He heard the swish and smash of their retreat grow distant, disperse. He remained standing with his back to the rock.

Slowly the strophe and antistrophe of frogs and goat-suckers resumed possession of his consciousness. But now some primitive instinct perhaps or some subconscious intimation of danger made him meticulously noiseless.

He went on down a winding sound-deadening path of sand towards the drinking-place. He came to a wide white place that was almost level, and beyond it under clustering pale-stemmed trees shone the mirror surface of some ancient tank, and, sharp and black, a dog-like beast sat on its tail in the midst of this space, started convulsively and went slinking into the undergrowth. Benham paused for a moment and then walked out softly into the light, and, behold! as if it were to meet him, came a monster, a vast dark shape drawing itself lengthily out of the blackness, and stopped with a start as if it had been instantly changed to stone.

It had stopped with one paw advanced. Its striped mask was light and dark grey in the moonlight, grey but faintly tinged with ruddiness; its mouth was a little open, its fangs and a pendant of viscous saliva shone vivid. Its great round-pupilled eyes regarded him stedfastly. At last the nightmare of Benham's childhood had come true, and he was face to face with a tiger, uncaged, uncontrolled.

For some moments neither moved, neither the beast nor the man. They stood face to face, each perhaps with an equal astonishment, motionless and soundless, in that mad Indian moonlight that makes all things like a dream.

Benham stood quite motionless, and body and mind had halted together. That confrontation had an interminableness that had nothing to do with the actual passage of time. Then some trickle of his previous thoughts stirred in the frozen quiet of his mind.

He spoke hoarsely. "I am Man," he said, and lifted a hand as he spoke. "The Thought of the world."

His heart leapt within him as the tiger moved. But the great beast went sideways, gardant, only that its head was low, three noiseless instantaneous strides it made, and stood again watching him.

"Man," he said, in a voice that had no sound, and took a step forward.

"Wough!" With two bounds the monster had become a great grey streak that crackled and rustled in the shadows of the trees. And then it had vanished, become invisible and inaudible with a kind of instantaneousness.

For some seconds or some minutes Benham stood rigid, fearlessly expectant, and then far away up the ravine he heard the deer repeat their cry of alarm, and understood with a new wisdom that the tiger had passed among them and was gone. . . .

He walked on towards the deserted tank and now he was talking aloud.

"I understand the jungle. I understand. . . . If a few men die here, what matter? There are worse deaths than being killed. . . .

"What is this fool's trap of security?

"Every time in my life that I have fled from security I have fled from death. . . .

"Let men stew in their cities if they will. It is in the lonely places, in jungles and mountains, in snows and fires, in the still observatories and the silent laboratories, in those secret and dangerous places where life probes into life, it is there that the masters of the world, the lords of the beast, the rebel sons of Fate come to their own. . . .

"You sleeping away there in the cities! Do you know what it means for you that I am here to-night?

"Do you know what it means to you?

"I am just one--just the precursor.

"Presently, if you will not budge, those hot cities must be burnt about you. You must come out of them. . . ."

He wandered now uttering his thoughts as they came to him, and he saw no more living creatures because they fled and hid before the sound of his voice. He wandered until the moon, larger now and yellow tinged, was low between the black bars of the tree stems. And then it sank very suddenly behind a hilly spur and the light failed swiftly.

He stumbled and went with difficulty. He could go no further among these rocks and ravines, and he sat down at the foot of a tree to wait for day.

He sat very still indeed.

A great stillness came over the world, a velvet silence that wrapped about him, as the velvet shadows wrapped about him. The corncrakes had ceased, all the sounds and stir of animal life had died away, the breeze had fallen. A drowsing comfort took possession of him. He grew more placid and more placid still. He was enormously content to find that fear had fled before him and was gone. He drifted into that state of mind when one thinks without ideas, when one's mind is like a starless sky, serene and empty.

12

Some hours later Benham found that the trees and rocks were growing visible again, and he saw a very bright star that he knew must be

Lucifer rising amidst the black branches. He was sitting upon a rock at the foot of a slender-stemmed leafless tree. He had been asleep, and it was daybreak. Everything was coldly clear and colourless.

He must have slept soundly.

He heard a cock crow, and another answer--jungle fowl these must be, because there could be no village within earshot--and then far away and bringing back memories of terraced houses and ripe walled gardens, was the scream of peacocks. And some invisible bird was making a hollow beating sound among the trees near at hand. TUNK. . . . TUNK, and out of the dry grass came a twittering.

There was a green light in the east that grew stronger, and the stars after their magnitudes were dissolving in the blue; only a few remained faintly visible. The sound of birds increased. Through the trees he saw towering up a great mauve thing like the back of a monster,--but that was nonsense, it was the crest of a steep hillside covered with woods of teak.

He stood up and stretched himself, and wondered whether he had dreamed of a tiger.

He tried to remember and retrace the course of his over-night wanderings.

A flight of emerald parakeets tore screaming through the trees, and then far away uphill he heard the creaking of a cart.

He followed the hint of a footmark, and went back up the glen slowly and thoughtfully.

Presently he came to a familiar place, a group of trees, a sheet of water, and the ruins of an old embankment. It was the ancient tank

of his overnight encounter. The pool of his dream?

With doubt still in his mind, he walked round its margin to the sandy level beyond, and cast about and sought intently, and at last found, and then found clearly, imposed upon the tracks of several sorts of deer and the footprints of many biggish birds, first the great spoor of the tiger and then his own. Here the beast had halted, and here it had leapt aside. Here his own footmarks stopped. Here his heels had come together.

It had been no dream.

There was a white mist upon the water of the old tank like the bloom upon a plum, and the trees about it seemed smaller and the sand-space wider and rougher than they had seemed in the moonshine. Then the ground had looked like a floor of frosted silver.

And thence he went on upward through the fresh morning, until just as the east grew red with sunrise, he reached the cart-track from which he had strayed overnight. It was, he found, a longer way back to the camp than he remembered it to be. Perhaps he had struck the path further along. It curved about and went up and down and crossed three ravines. At last he came to that trampled place of littered white blossom under great trees where he had seen the bears.

The sunlight went before him in a sheaf of golden spears, and his shadow, that was at first limitless, crept towards his feet. The dew had gone from the dead grass and the sand was hot to his dry boots before he came back into the open space about the great banyan and the tents. And Kepple, refreshed by a night's rest and coffee, was wondering loudly where the devil he had gone.

THE STORY

CHAPTER THE FIRST

THE BOY GROWS UP

1

Benham was the son of a schoolmaster. His father was assistant first at Cheltenham, and subsequently at Minchinghampton, and then he became head and later on sole proprietor of Martindale House, a high-class preparatory school at Seagate. He was extremely successful for some years, as success goes in the scholastic profession, and then disaster overtook him in the shape of a divorce. His wife, William Porphyry's mother, made the acquaintance of a rich young man named Nolan, who was recuperating at Seagate from the sequelae of snake-bite, malaria, and a gun accident in Brazil. She ran away with him, and she was divorced. She was, however, unable to marry him because he died at Wiesbaden only three days after the Reverend Harold Benham obtained his decree absolute. Instead, therefore, being a woman of great spirit, enterprise and sweetness, she married Godfrey Marayne, afterwards Sir Godfrey Marayne, the great London surgeon.

Nolan was a dark, rather melancholy and sentimental young man, and he left about a third of his very large fortune entirely to Mrs. Benham and the rest to her in trust for her son, whom he deemed himself to have injured. With this and a husband already distinguished, she returned presently to London, and was on the whole fairly well received there.

It was upon the reverend gentleman at Seagate that the brunt of this divorce fell. There is perhaps a certain injustice in the fact that a schoolmaster who has lost his wife should also lose the more valuable proportion of his pupils, but the tone of thought in England is against any association of a schoolmaster with matrimonial irregularity. And also Mr. Benham remarried. It would certainly have been better for him if he could have produced a sister. His school declined and his efforts to resuscitate it only hastened its decay. Conceiving that he could now only appeal to the broader-minded, more progressive type of parent, he became an educational reformer, and wrote upon modernizing the curriculum with increasing frequency to the TIMES. He expended a considerable fraction of his dwindling capital upon a science laboratory and a fives court; he added a London Bachelor of Science with a Teaching Diploma to the school staff, and a library of about a thousand volumes, including the Hundred Best Books as selected by the late Lord Avebury, to the school equipment. None of these things did anything but enhance the suspicion of laxity his wife's escapade had created in the limited opulent and discreet class to which his establishment appealed. One boy who, under the influence of the Hundred Best Books, had quoted the ZEND-AVESTA to an irascible but influential grandfather, was withdrawn without notice or compensation in the middle of the term. It intensifies the tragedy of the Reverend Harold Benham's failure that in no essential respect did his school depart from the pattern of all other properly-conducted preparatory schools.

In appearance he was near the average of scholastic English gentlemen. He displayed a manifest handsomeness somewhat weakened by disregard and disuse, a large moustache and a narrow high forehead. His rather tired brown eyes were magnified by glasses. He was an active man in unimportant things, with a love for the phrase "ship-shape," and he played cricket better than any one else on the staff. He walked in wide strides, and would sometimes use the tail of his gown on the blackboard. Like so many clergymen and

schoolmasters, he had early distrusted his natural impulse in conversation, and had adopted the defensive precaution of a rather formal and sonorous speech, which habit had made a part of him. His general effect was of one who is earnestly keeping up things that might otherwise give way, keeping them up by act and voice, keeping up an atmosphere of vigour and success in a school that was only too manifestly attenuated, keeping up a pretentious economy of administration in a school that must not be too manifestly impoverished, keeping up a claim to be in the scientific van and rather a flutterer of dovecots--with its method of manual training for example--keeping up ESPRIT DE CORPS and the manliness of himself

and every one about him, keeping up his affection for his faithful second wife and his complete forgetfulness of and indifference to that spirit of distracting impulse and insubordination away there in London, who had once been his delight and insurmountable difficulty. "After my visits to her," wrote Benham, "he would show by a hundred little expressions and poses and acts how intensely he wasn't noting that anything of the sort had occurred."

But one thing that from the outset the father seemed to have failed to keep up thoroughly was his intention to mould and dominate his son.

The advent of his boy had been a tremendous event in the reverend gentleman's life. It is not improbable that his disposition to monopolize the pride of this event contributed to the ultimate disruption of his family. It left so few initiatives within the home to his wife. He had been an early victim to that wave of philoprogenitive and educational enthusiasm which distinguished the closing decade of the nineteenth century. He was full of plans in those days for the education of his boy, and the thought of the youngster played a large part in the series of complicated emotional crises with which he celebrated the departure of his wife, crises in which a number of old school and college friends very generously

assisted--spending weekends at Seagate for this purpose, and mingling tobacco, impassioned handclasps and suchlike consolation with much patient sympathetic listening to his carefully balanced analysis of his feelings. He declared that his son was now his one living purpose in life, and he sketched out a scheme of moral and intellectual training that he subsequently embodied in five very stimulating and intimate articles for the SCHOOL WORLD, but never put into more than partial operation.

"I have read my father's articles upon this subject," wrote Benham, "and I am still perplexed to measure just what I owe to him. Did he ever attempt this moral training he contemplated so freely? I don't think he did. I know now, I knew then, that he had something in his mind. . . . There were one or two special walks we had together, he invited me to accompany him with a certain portentousness, and we would go out pregnantly making superficial remarks about the school cricket and return, discussing botany, with nothing said.

"His heart failed him.

"Once or twice, too, he seemed to be reaching out at me from the school pulpit.

"I think that my father did manage to convey to me his belief that there were these fine things, honour, high aims, nobilities. If I did not get this belief from him then I do not know how I got it. But it was as if he hinted at a treasure that had got very dusty in an attic, a treasure which he hadn't himself been able to spend. . . ."

The father who had intended to mould his son ended by watching him grow, not always with sympathy or understanding. He was an overworked man assailed by many futile anxieties. One sees him striding about the establishment with his gown streaming out behind him urging on the groundsman or the gardener, or dignified, expounding the particular advantages of Seagate to enquiring

parents, one sees him unnaturally cheerful and facetious at the midday dinner table, one imagines him keeping up high aspirations in a rather too hastily scribbled sermon in the school pulpit, or keeping up an enthusiasm for beautiful language in a badly-prepared lesson on Virgil, or expressing unreal indignation and unjustifiably exalted sentiments to evil doers, and one realizes his disadvantage against the quiet youngster whose retentive memory was storing up all these impressions for an ultimate judgment, and one understands, too, a certain relief that mingled with his undeniable emotion when at last the time came for young Benham, "the one living purpose" of his life, to be off to Minchinghampton and the next step in the mysterious ascent of the English educational system.

Three times at least, and with an increased interval, the father wrote fine fatherly letters that would have stood the test of publication. Then his communications became comparatively hurried and matter-of-fact. His boy's return home for the holidays was always rather a stirring time for his private feelings, but he became more and more inexpressive. He would sometimes lay a hand on those growing shoulders and then withdraw it. They felt braced-up shoulders, stiffly inflexible or--they would wince. And when one has let the habit of indefinite feelings grow upon one, what is there left to say? If one did say anything one might be asked questions. . . .

One or two of the long vacations they spent abroad together. The last of these occasions followed Benham's convalescence at Montana and his struggle with the Bisse; the two went to Zermatt and did several peaks and crossed the Theodule, and it was clear that their joint expeditions were a strain upon both of them. The father thought the son reckless, unskilful, and impatient; the son found the father's insistence upon guides, ropes, precautions, the recognized way, the highest point and back again before you get a chill, and talk about it sagely but very, very modestly over pipes, tiresome. He wanted to wander in deserts of ice and see over the

mountains, and discover what it is to be benighted on a precipice. And gradually he was becoming familiar with his father's repertory of Greek quotations. There was no breach between them, but each knew that holiday was the last they would ever spend together. . . .

The court had given the custody of young William Porphyry into his father's hands, but by a generous concession it was arranged that his mother should have him to see her for an hour or so five times a year. The Nolan legacy, however, coming upon the top of this, introduced a peculiar complication that provided much work for tactful intermediaries, and gave great and increasing scope for painful delicacies on the part of Mr. Benham as the boy grew up.

"I see," said the father over his study pipe and with his glasses fixed on remote distances above the head of the current sympathizer, "I see more and more clearly that the tale of my sacrifices is not yet at an end. . . . In many respects he is like her. . . . Quick. Too quick. . . . He must choose. But I know his choice. Yes, yes,--I'm not blind. She's worked upon him. . . . I have done what I could to bring out the manhood in him. Perhaps it will bear the strain. . . . It will be a wrench, old man--God knows."

He did his very best to make it a wrench.

2

Benham's mother, whom he saw quarterly and also on the first of May, because it was her birthday, touched and coloured his imagination far more than his father did. She was now Lady Marayne, and a prominent, successful, and happy little lady. Her dereliction had been forgiven quite soon, and whatever whisper of it remained was very completely forgotten during the brief period of moral

kindliness which followed the accession of King Edward the Seventh. It no doubt contributed to her social reinstatement that her former husband was entirely devoid of social importance, while, on the other hand, Sir Godfrey Marayne's temporary monopoly of the caecal operation which became so fashionable in the last decade of Queen Victoria's reign as to be practically epidemic, created a strong feeling in her favour.

She was blue-eyed and very delicately complexioned, quick-moving, witty, given to little storms of clean enthusiasm; she loved handsome things, brave things, successful things, and the respect and affection of all the world. She did quite what she liked upon impulse, and nobody ever thought ill of her.

Her family were the Mantons of Blent, quite good west-country people. She had broken away from them before she was twenty to marry Benham, whom she had idealized at a tennis party. He had talked of his work and she had seen it in a flash, the noblest work in the world, him at his daily divine toil and herself a Madonna surrounded by a troupe of Blessed Boys--all of good family, some of quite the best. For a time she had kept it up even more than he had, and then Nolan had distracted her with a realization of the heroism that goes to the ends of the earth. She became sick with desire for the forests of Brazil, and the Pacific, and--a peak in Darien. Immediately the school was frowsty beyond endurance, and for the first time she let herself perceive how dreadfully a gentleman and a scholar can smell of pipes and tobacco. Only one course lay open to a woman of spirit. . . .

For a year she did indeed live like a woman of spirit, and it was at Nolan's bedside that Marayne was first moved to admiration. She was plucky. All men love a plucky woman.

Sir Godfrey Marayne smelt a good deal of antiseptic soap, but he talked in a way that amused her, and he trusted as well as adored

her. She did what she liked with his money, her own money, and her son's trust money, and she did very well. From the earliest Benham's visits were to a gracious presence amidst wealthy surroundings. The transit from the moral blamelessness of Seagate had an entirely misleading effect of ascent.

Their earlier encounters became rather misty in his memory; they occurred at various hotels in Seagate. Afterwards he would go, first taken by a governess, and later going alone, to Charing Cross, where he would be met, in earlier times by a maid and afterwards by a deferential manservant who called him "Sir," and conveyed, sometimes in a hansom cab and later in a smart brougham, by Trafalgar Square, Lower Regent Street, Piccadilly, and streets of increasing wealth and sublimity to Sir Godfrey's house in Desborough Street. Very naturally he fell into thinking of these discreet and well-governed West End streets as a part of his mother's atmosphere.

The house had a dignified portico, and always before he had got down to the pavement the door opened agreeably and a second respectful manservant stood ready. Then came the large hall, with its noiseless carpets and great Chinese jars, its lacquered cabinets and the wide staircase, and floating down the wide staircase, impatient to greet him, light and shining as a flower petal, sweet and welcoming, radiating a joyfulness as cool and clear as a dewy morning, came his mother. "WELL, little man, my son," she would cry in her happy singing voice, "WELL?"

So he thought she must always be, but indeed these meetings meant very much to her, she dressed for them and staged them, she perceived the bright advantages of her rarity and she was quite determined to have her son when the time came to possess him. She kissed him but not oppressively, she caressed him cleverly; it was only on these rare occasions that he was ever kissed or caressed, and she talked to his shy boyishness until it felt a more spirited variety of manhood. "What have you been doing?" she asked, "since I

saw you last."

She never said he had grown, but she told him he looked tall; and though the tea was a marvellous display it was never an obtrusive tea, it wasn't poked at a fellow; a various plenty flowed well within reach of one's arm, like an agreeable accompaniment to their conversation.

"What have you done? All sorts of brave things? Do you swim now? I can swim. Oh! I can swim half a mile. Some day we will swim races together. Why not? And you ride? . . ."

"The horse bolted--and you stuck on? Did you squeak? I stick on, but I HAVE to squeak. But you--of course, No! you mustn't. I'm just a little woman. And I ride big horses. . . ."

And for the end she had invented a characteristic little ceremony.

She would stand up in front of him and put her hands on his shoulders and look into his face.

"Clean eyes?" she would say. "--still?"

Then she would take his ears in her little firm hands and kiss very methodically his eyes and his forehead and his cheeks and at last his lips. Her own eyes would suddenly brim bright with tears.

"GO," she would say.

That was the end.

It seemed to Benham as though he was being let down out of a sunlit fairyland to this grey world again.

The contrast between Lady Marayne's pretty amenities and the good woman at Seagate who urged herself almost hourly to forget that William Porphyry was not her own son, was entirely unfair. The second Mrs. Benham's conscientious spirit and a certain handsome ability about her fitted her far more than her predecessor for the onerous duties of a schoolmaster's wife, but whatever natural buoyancy she possessed was outweighed by an irrepressible conviction derived from an episcopal grandparent that the remarriage of divorced persons is sinful, and by a secret but well-founded doubt whether her husband loved her with a truly romantic passion. She might perhaps have borne either of these troubles singly, but the two crushed her spirit.

Her temperament was not one that goes out to meet happiness. She had reluctant affections and suspected rather than welcomed the facility of other people's. Her susceptibility to disagreeable impressions was however very ample, and life was fenced about with protections for her "feelings." It filled young Benham with inexpressible indignations that his sweet own mother, so gay, so brightly cheerful that even her tears were stars, was never to be mentioned in his stepmother's presence, and it was not until he had fully come to years of reflection that he began to realize with what honesty, kindness and patience this naturally not very happy lady had nursed, protected, mended for and generally mothered him.

As Benham grew to look manly and bear himself with pride, his

mother's affection for him blossomed into a passion. She made him come down to London from Cambridge as often as she could; she went about with him; she made him squire her to theatres and take her out to dinners and sup with her at the Carlton, and in the summer she had him with her at Chexington Manor, the Hertfordshire house Sir Godfrey had given her. And always when they parted she looked into his eyes to see if they were still clean--whatever she meant by that--and she kissed his forehead and cheeks and eyes and lips. She began to make schemes for his career, she contrived introductions she judged would be useful to him later.

Everybody found the relationship charming. Some of the more conscientious people, it is true, pretended to think that the Reverend Harold Benham was a first husband and long since dead, but that was all. As a matter of fact, in his increasingly futile way he wasn't, either at Seagate or in the Educational Supplement of the TIMES. But even the most conscientious of us are not obliged to go to Seagate or read the Educational Supplement of the TIMES.

Lady Marayne's plans for her son's future varied very pleasantly. She was an industrious reader of biographies, and more particularly of the large fair biographies of the recently contemporary; they mentioned people she knew, they recalled scenes, each sowed its imaginative crop upon her mind, a crop that flourished and flowered until a newer growth came to oust it. She saw her son a diplomat, a prancing pro-consul, an empire builder, a trusted friend of the august, the bold leader of new movements, the saviour of ancient institutions, the youngest, brightest, modernest of prime ministers--or a tremendously popular poet. As a rule she saw him unmarried--with a wonderful little mother at his elbow. Sometimes in romantic flashes he was adored by German princesses or eloped with Russian grand-duchesses! But such fancies were HORS D'OEUVRE. The modern biography deals with the career. Every project was bright, every project had GO--tremendous go. And they all demanded a hero, debonnaire and balanced. And Benham, as she began to perceive,

wasn't balanced. Something of his father had crept into him, a touch of moral stiffness. She knew the flavour of that so well. It was a stumbling, an elaboration, a spoil-sport and weakness. She tried not to admit to herself that even in the faintest degree it was there. But it was there.

"Tell me all that you are doing NOW," she said to him one afternoon when she had got him to herself during his first visit to Chexington Manor. "How do you like Cambridge? Are you making friends? Have you joined that thing--the Union, is it?--and delivered your maiden speech? If you're for politics, Poff, that's your game. Have you begun it?"

She lay among splashes of sunshine on the red cushions in the punt, a little curled-up figure of white, with her sweet pale animated face warmed by the reflection of her red sunshade, and her eyes like little friendly heavens. And he, lean, and unconsciously graceful, sat at her feet and admired her beyond measure, and rejoiced that now at last they were going to be ever so much together, and doubted if it would be possible ever to love any other woman so much as he did her.

He tried to tell her of Cambridge and his friends and the undergraduate life he was leading, but he found it difficult. All sorts of things that seemed right and good at Trinity seemed out of drawing in the peculiar atmosphere she created about her. All sorts of clumsiness and youthfulness in himself and his associates he felt she wouldn't accept, couldn't accept, that it would be wrong of her to accept. Before they could come before her they must wear a bravery. He couldn't, for instance, tell her how Billy Prothero, renouncing vanity and all social pretension, had worn a straw hat into November and the last stages of decay, and how it had been burnt by a special commission ceremonially in the great court. He couldn't convey to her the long sessions of beer and tobacco and high thinking that went on in Prothero's rooms into the small hours.

A certain Gothic greyness and flatness and muddiness through which the Cambridge spirit struggles to its destiny, he concealed from her. What remained to tell was--attenuated. He could not romance. So she tried to fill in his jejune outlines. She tried to inspire a son who seemed most unaccountably up to nothing.

"You must make good friends," she said. "Isn't young Lord Breeze at your college? His mother the other day told me he was. And Sir Freddy Quenton's boy. And there are both the young Baptons at Cambridge."

He knew one of the Baptons.

"Poff," she said suddenly, "has it ever occurred to you what you are going to do afterwards. Do you know you are going to be quite well off?"

Benham looked up with a faint embarrassment. "My father said something. He was rather vague. It wasn't his affair--that kind of thing."

"You will be quite well off," she repeated, without any complicating particulars. "You will be so well off that it will be possible for you to do anything almost that you like in the world. Nothing will tie you. Nothing. . . ."

"But--HOW well off?"

"You will have several thousands a year."

"Thousands?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"But--Mother, this is rather astounding. . . . Does this mean there

are estates somewhere, responsibilities?"

"It is just money. Investments."

"You know, I've imagined--. I've thought always I should have to DO something."

"You MUST do something, Poff. But it needn't be for a living. The world is yours without that. And so you see you've got to make plans. You've got to know the sort of people who'll have things in their hands. You've got to keep out of--holes and corners. You've got to think of Parliament and abroad. There's the army, there's diplomacy. There's the Empire. You can be a Cecil Rhodes if you like. You can be a Winston. . . ."

5

Perhaps it was only the innate eagerness of Lady Marayne which made her feel disappointed in her son's outlook upon life. He did not choose among his glittering possibilities, he did not say what he was going to be, proconsul, ambassador, statesman, for days. And he talked VAGUELY of wanting to do something fine, but all in a fog. A boy of nearly nineteen ought to have at least the beginnings of SAVOIR FAIRE.

Was he in the right set? Was he indeed in the right college? Trinity, by his account, seemed a huge featureless place--and might he not conceivably be LOST in it? In those big crowds one had to insist upon oneself. Poff never insisted upon himself--except quite at the wrong moment. And there was this Billy Prswer if it had not been for
the clash of their minds, was the chief topic of their conversation

for many months. From Why be brave? it spread readily enough to Why be honest? Why be clean?--all the great whys of life. . . . Because one believes. . . . But why believe it? Left to himself Benham would have felt the mere asking of this question was a thing ignoble, not to be tolerated. It was, as it were, treason to nobility. But Prothero putothero. BILLY! Like a goat or something. People called William don't get their Christian name insisted upon unless they are vulnerable somewhere. Any form of William stamps a weakness, Willie, Willy, Will, Billy, Bill; it's a fearful handle for one's friends. At any rate Poff had escaped that. But this Prothero!

"But who IS this Billy Prothero?" she asked one evening in the walled garden.

"He was at Minchinghampton."

"But who IS he? Who is his father? Where does he come from?"

Benham sought in his mind for a space. "I don't know," he said at last. Billy had always been rather reticent about his people. She demanded descriptions. She demanded an account of Billy's furniture, Billy's clothes, Billy's form of exercise. It dawned upon Benham that for some inexplicable reason she was hostile to Billy. It was like the unmasking of an ambush. He had talked a lot about Prothero's ideas and the discussions of social reform and social service that went on in his rooms, for Billy read at unknown times, and was open at all hours to any argumentative caller. To Lady Marayne all ideas were obnoxious, a form of fogging; all ideas, she held, were queer ideas. "And does he call himself a Socialist?" she asked. "I THOUGHT he would."

"Poff," she cried suddenly, "you're not a SOCIALIST?"

"Such a vague term."

"But these friends of yours--they seem to be ALL Socialists. Red ties and everything complete."

"They have ideas," he evaded. He tried to express it better. "They give one something to take hold of."

She sat up stiffly on the garden-seat. She lifted her finger at him, very seriously. "I hope," she said with all her heart, "that you will have nothing to do with such ideas. Nothing. SOCIALISM!"

"They make a case."

"Pooh! Any one can make a case."

"But--"

"There's no sense in them. What is the good of talking about upsetting everything? Just disorder. How can one do anything then? You mustn't. You mustn't. No. It's nonsense, little Poff. It's absurd. And you may spoil so much. . . . I HATE the way you talk of it. . . . As if it wasn't all--absolutely--RUBBISH. . . ."

She was earnest almost to the intonation of tears.

Why couldn't her son go straight for his ends, clear tangible ends, as she had always done? This thinking about everything! She had never thought about anything in all her life for more than half an hour--and it had always turned out remarkably well.

Benham felt baffled. There was a pause. How on earth could he go on telling her his ideas if this was how they were to be taken?

"I wish sometimes," his mother said abruptly, with an unusually sharp note in her voice, "that you wouldn't look quite so like your

father."

"But I'm NOT like my father!" said Benham puzzled.

"No," she insisted, and with an air of appealing to his soberer reason, "so why should you go LOOKING like him? That CONCERNED expression. . . .

She jumped to her feet. "Poff," she said, "I want to go and see the evening primroses pop. You and I are talking nonsense. THEY don't have ideas anyhow. They just pop--as God meant them to do. What stupid things we human beings are!"

Her philosophical moments were perhaps the most baffling of all.

6

Billy Prothero became the symbol in the mind of Lady Marayne for all that disappointed her in Benham. He had to become the symbol, because she could not think of complicated or abstract things, she had to make things personal, and he was the only personality available. She fretted over his existence for some days therefore (once she awakened and thought about him in the night), and then suddenly she determined to grasp her nettle. She decided to seize and obliterate this Prothero. He must come to Chexington and be thoroughly and conclusively led on, examined, ransacked, shown up, and disposed of for ever. At once. She was not quite clear how she meant to do this, but she was quite resolved that it had to be done. Anything is better than inaction.

There was a little difficulty about dates and engagements, but he came, and through the season of expectation Benham, who was now for

the first time in contact with the feminine nature, was delighted at the apparent change to cordiality. So that he talked of Billy to his mother much more than he had ever done before.

Billy had been his particular friend at Minchinghampton, at least during the closing two years of his school life. Billy had fallen into friendship with Benham, as some of us fall in love, quite suddenly, when he saw Benham get down from the fence and be sick after his encounter with the bull. Already Billy was excited by admiration, but it was the incongruity of the sickness conquered him. He went back to the school with his hands more than usually in his pockets, and no eyes for anything but this remarkable strung-up fellow-creature. He felt he had never observed Benham before, and he was astonished that he had not done so.

Billy Prothero was a sturdy sort of boy, generously wanting in good looks. His hair was rough, and his complexion muddy, and he walked about with his hands in his pockets, long flexible lips protruded in a whistle, and a rather shapeless nose well up to show he didn't care. Providence had sought to console him by giving him a keen eye for the absurdity of other people. He had a suggestive tongue, and he professed and practised cowardice to the scandal of all his acquaintances. He was said never to wash behind his ears, but this report wronged him. There had been a time when he did not do so, but his mother had won him to a promise, and now that operation was often the sum of his simple hasty toilet. His desire to associate himself with Benham was so strong that it triumphed over a defensive reserve. It enabled him to detect accessible moments, do inobtrusive friendly services, and above all amuse his quarry. He not only amused Benham, he stimulated him. They came to do quite a number of things together. In the language of schoolboy stories they became "inseparables."

Prothero's first desire, so soon as they were on a footing that enabled him to formulate desires, was to know exactly what Benham

thought he was up to in crossing a field with a bull in it instead of going round, and by the time he began to understand that, he had conceived an affection for him that was to last a lifetime.

"I wasn't going to be bullied by a beast," said Benham.

"Suppose it had been an elephant?" Prothero cried. . . . "A mad elephant? . . . A pack of wolves?"

Benham was too honest not to see that he was entangled. "Well, suppose in YOUR case it had been a wild cat? . . . A fierce mastiff? . . . A mastiff? . . . A terrier? . . . A lap dog?"

"Yes, but my case is that there are limits."

Benham was impatient at the idea of limits. With a faintly malicious pleasure Prothero lugged him back to that idea.

"We both admit there are limits," Prothero concluded. "But between the absolutely impossible and the altogether possible there's the region of risk. You think a man ought to take that risk--" He reflected. "I think--no--I think NOT."

"If he feels afraid," cried Benham, seeing his one point. "If he feels afraid. Then he ought to take it. . . ."

After a digestive interval, Prothero asked, "WHY? Why should he?"

The discussion of that momentous question, that Why? which Benham perhaps might never have dared ask himself, and which Prothero perhaps might never have attempted to anit one afternoon in a way that permitted

no high dismissal of their doubts. "You can't build your honour on fudge, Benham. Like committing sacrilege--in order to buy a cloth for the altar."

By that Benham was slipped from the recognized code and launched upon speculations which became the magnificent research.

It was not only in complexion and stature and ways of thinking that Billy and Benham contrasted. Benham inclined a little to eloquence, he liked very clean hands, he had a dread of ridiculous outlines. Prothero lapsed readily into ostentatious slovenliness, when his hands were dirty he pitied them sooner than scrubbed them, he would have worn an overcoat with one tail torn off rather than have gone cold. Moreover, Prothero had an earthy liking for animals, he could stroke and tickle strange cats until they wanted to leave father and mother and all earthly possessions and follow after him, and he mortgaged a term's pocket money and bought and kept a small terrier in the school house against all law and tradition, under the baseless pretence that it was a stray animal of unknown origin. Benham, on the other hand, was shy with small animals and faintly hostile to big ones. Beasts he thought were just beasts. And Prothero had a gift for caricature, while Benham's aptitude was for music.

It was Prothero's eyes and pencil that first directed Benham to the poor indolences and evasions and insincerities of the masters. It was Prothero's wicked pictures that made him see the shrivelled absurdity of the vulgar theology. But it was Benham who stood between Prothero and that rather coarsely conceived epicureanism that seemed his logical destiny. When quite early in their Cambridge days Prothero's revolt against foppery reached a nadir of personal neglect, and two philanthropists from the rooms below him, goaded beyond the normal tolerance of Trinity, and assisted by two sportsmen from Trinity Hall, burnt his misshapen straw hat (after partly filling it with gunpowder and iron filings) and sought to duck him in the fountain in the court, it was Benham, in a state between distress and madness, and armed with a horn-handled cane of exceptional size, who intervened, turned the business into a blend

of wrangle and scuffle, introduced the degrading topic of duelling into a simple wholesome rag of four against one, carried him off under the cloud of horror created by this impropriety and so saved him, still only slightly wetted, not only from this indignity but from the experiment in rationalism that had provoked it.

Because Benham made it perfectly clear what he had thought and felt about this hat.

Such was the illuminating young man whom Lady Marayne decided to invite to Chexington, into the neighbourhood of herself, Sir Godfrey, and her circle of friends.

7

He was quite anxious to satisfy the requirements of Benham's people and to do his friend credit. He was still in the phase of being a penitent pig, and he inquired carefully into the needs and duties of a summer guest in a country house. He knew it was quite a considerable country house, and that Sir Godfrey wasn't Benham's father, but like most people, he was persuaded that Lady Marayne had divorced the parental Benham. He arrived dressed very neatly in a brown suit that had only one fault, it had not the remotest suggestion of having been made for him. It fitted his body fairly well, it did annex his body with only a few slight incompatibilities, but it repudiated his hands and face. He had a conspicuously old Gladstone bag and a conspicuously new despatch case, and he had forgotten black ties and dress socks and a hair brush. He arrived in the late afternoon, was met by Benham, in tennis flannels, looking smartened up and a little unfamiliar, and taken off in a spirited dog-cart driven by a typical groom. He met his host and hostess at dinner.

Sir Godfrey was a rationalist and a residuum. Very much of him, too much perhaps, had gone into the acquirement and perfect performance of the caecal operation; the man one met in the social world was what was left over. It had the effect of being quiet, but in its unobtrusive way knobby. He had a knobby brow, with an air about it of having recently been intent, and his conversation was curiously spotted with little knobby arrested anecdotes. If any one of any distinction was named, he would reflect and say, "Of course,--ah, yes, I know him, I know him. Yes, I did him a little service--in '96."

And something in his manner would suggest a satisfaction, or a dissatisfaction with confidential mysteries.

He welcomed Billy Prothero in a colourless manner, and made conversation about Cambridge. He had known one or two of the higher dons. One he had done at Cambridge quite recently. "The inns are better than they are at Oxford, which is not saying very much, but the place struck me as being changed. The men seemed younger. . . ."

The burden of the conversation fell upon Lady Marayne. She looked extraordinarily like a flower to Billy, a little diamond buckle on a black velvet band glittered between the two masses of butter-coloured hair that flowed back from her forehead, her head was poised on the prettiest neck conceivable, and her shapely little shoulders and her shapely little arms came decidedly but pleasantly out of a softness and sparkle of white and silver and old rose. She talked what sounded like innocent commonplaces a little spiced by whim, though indeed each remark had an exploratory quality, and her soft blue eyes rested ever and again upon Billy's white tie. It seemed she did so by the merest inadvertency, but it made the young man wish he had after all borrowed a black one from Benham. But the manservant who had put his things out had put it out, and he hadn't been quite sure. Also she noted all the little things he did with

fork and spoon and glass. She gave him an unusual sense of being brightly, accurately and completely visible.

Chexington, it seemed to Billy, was done with a large and costly and easy completeness. The table with its silver and flowers was much more beautifully done than any table he had sat at before, and in the dimness beyond the brightness there were two men to wait on the four of them. The old grey butler was really wonderfully good. . . .

"You shoot, Mr. Prothero?"

"You hunt, Mr. Prothero?"

"You know Scotland well, Mr. Prothero?"

These questions disturbed Prothero. He did not shoot, he did not hunt, he did not go to Scotland for the grouse, he did not belong, and Lady Marayne ought to have seen that he did not belong to the class that does these things.

"You ride much, Mr. Prothero?"

Billy conceived a suspicion that these innocent inquiries were designed to emphasize a contrast in his social quality. But he could not be sure. One never could be sure with Lady Marayne. It might be just that she did not understand the sort of man he was. And in that case ought he to maintain the smooth social surface unbroken by pretending as far as possible to be this kind of person, or ought he to make a sudden gap in it by telling his realities. He evaded the shooting question anyhow. He left it open for Lady Marayne and the venerable butler and Sir Godfrey and every one to suppose he just happened to be the sort of gentleman of leisure who doesn't shoot. He disavowed hunting, he made it appear he travelled when he travelled in directions other than Scotland. But the fourth question brought him to bay. He regarded his questioner with his

small rufous eye.

"I have never been across a horse in my life, Lady Marayne."

"Tut, tut," said Sir Godfrey. "Why!--it's the best of exercise. Every man ought to ride. Good for the health. Keeps him fit. Prevents lodgments. Most trouble due to lodgments."

"I've never had a chance of riding. And I think I'm afraid of horses."

"That's only an excuse," said Lady Marayne. "Everybody's afraid of horses and nobody's really afraid of horses."

"But I'm not used to horses. You see--I live on my mother. And she can't afford to keep a stable."

His hostess did not see his expression of discomfort. Her pretty eyes were intent upon the peas with which she was being served.

"Does your mother live in the country?" she asked, and took her peas with fastidious exactness.

Prothero coloured brightly. "She lives in London."

"All the year?"

"All the year."

"But isn't it dreadfully hot in town in the summer?"

Prothero had an uncomfortable sense of being very red in the face. This kept him red. "We're suburban people," he said.

"But I thought--isn't there the seaside?"

"My mother has a business," said Prothero, redder than ever.

"O-oh!" said Lady Marayne. "What fun that must be for her?"

"It's a real business, and she has to live by it. Sometimes it's a worry."

"But a business of her own!" She surveyed the confusion of his visage with a sweet intelligence. "Is it an amusing sort of business, Mr. Prothero?"

Prothero looked mulish. "My mother is a dressmaker," he said. "In Brixton. She doesn't do particularly badly--or well. I live on my scholarship. I have lived on scholarships since I was thirteen. And you see, Lady Marayne, Brixton is a poor hunting country."

Lady Marayne felt she had unmasked Prothero almost indecently. Whatever happened there must be no pause. There must be no sign of a hitch.

"But it's good at tennis," she said. "You DO play tennis, Mr. Prothero?"

"I--I gesticulate," said Prothero.

Lady Marayne, still in flight from that pause, went off at a tangent.

"Poff, my dear," she said, "I've had a diving-board put at the deep end of the pond."

The remark hung unanswered for a moment. The transition had been too quick for Benham's state of mind.

"Do you swim, Mr. Prothero?" the lady asked, though a moment before she had determined that she would never ask him a question again. But this time it was a lucky question.

"Prothero mopped up the lot of us at Minchinghampton with his diving and swimming," Benham explained, and the tension was relaxed.

Lady Marayne spoke of her own swimming, and became daring and amusing at her difficulties with local feeling when first she swam in the pond. The high road ran along the far side of the pond--"And it didn't wear a hedge or anything," said Lady Marayne. "That was what they didn't quite like. Swimming in an undraped pond. . . ."

Prothero had been examined enough. Now he must be entertained. She told stories about the village people in her brightest manner. The third story she regretted as soon as she was fairly launched upon it; it was how she had interviewed the village dressmaker, when Sir Godfrey insisted upon her supporting local industries. It was very amusing but technical. The devil had put it into her head. She had to go through with it. She infused an extreme innocence into her eyes and fixed them on Prothero, although she felt a certain deepening pinkness in her cheeks was betraying her, and she did not look at Benham until her unhappy, but otherwise quite amusing anecdote, was dead and gone and safely buried under another. . . .

But people ought not to go about having dressmakers for mothers. . . .

And coming into other people's houses and influencing their sons. . . .

8

That night when everything was over Billy sat at the writing-table

of his sumptuous bedroom--the bed was gilt wood, the curtains of the three great windows were tremendous, and there was a cheval glass that showed the full length of him and seemed to look over his head for more,--and meditated upon this visit of his. It was more than he had been prepared for. It was going to be a great strain. The sleek young manservant in an alpaca jacket, who said "Sir" whenever you looked at him, and who had seized upon and unpacked Billy's most private Gladstone bag without even asking if he might do so, and put away and displayed Billy's things in a way that struck Billy as faintly ironical, was unexpected. And it was unexpected that the brown suit, with its pockets stuffed with Billy's personal and confidential sundries, had vanished. And apparently a bath in a bathroom far down the corridor was prescribed for him in the morning; he hadn't thought of a dressing-gown. And after one had dressed, what did one do? Did one go down and wander about the house looking for the breakfast-room or wait for a gong? Would Sir Godfrey read Family Prayers? And afterwards did one go out or hang about to be entertained? He knew now quite clearly that those wicked blue eyes would mark his every slip. She did not like him. She did not like him, he supposed, because he was common stuff. He didn't play up to her world and her. He was a discord in this rich, cleverly elaborate household. You could see it in the servants' attitudes. And he was committed to a week of this.

Billy puffed out his cheeks to blow a sigh, and then decided to be angry and say "Damn!"

This way of living which made him uncomfortable was clearly an irrational and objectionable way of living. It was, in a cumbersome way, luxurious. But the waste of life of it, the servants, the observances, all concentrated on the mere detail of existence? There came a rap at the door. Benham appeared, wearing an expensive-looking dressing-jacket which Lady Marayne had bought for him. He asked if he might talk for a bit and smoke. He sat down in a capacious chintz-covered easy chair beside Prothero, lit a

cigarette, and came to the point after only a trivial hesitation.

"Prothero," he said, "you know what my father is."

"I thought he ran a preparatory school."

There was the profoundest resentment in Prothero's voice.

"And, all the same, I'm going to be a rich man."

"I don't understand," said Prothero, without any shadow of congratulation.

Benham told Prothero as much as his mother had conveyed to him of the resources of his wealth. Her version had been adapted to his tender years and the delicacies of her position. The departed Nolan had become an eccentric godfather. Benham's manner was apologetic, and he made it clear that only recently had these facts come to him. He had never suspected that he had had this eccentric godfather. It altered the outlook tremendously. It was one of the reasons that made Benham glad to have Prothero there, one wanted a man of one's own age, who understood things a little, to try over one's new ideas. Prothero listened with an unamiable expression.

"What would you do, Prothero, if you found yourself saddled with some thousands a year?"

"Godfathers don't grow in Brixton," said Prothero concisely.

"Well, what am I to do, Prothero?"

"Does all THIS belong to you?"

"No, this is my mother's."

"Godfather too?"

"I've not thought. . . . I suppose so. Or her own."

Prothero meditated.

"THIS life," he said at last, "this large expensiveness-- . . ."

He left his criticism unfinished.

"I agree. It suits my mother somehow. I can't understand her living in any other way. But--for me. . . ."

"What can one do with several thousands a year?"

Prothero's interest in this question presently swamped his petty personal resentments. "I suppose," he said, "one might have rather a lark with money like that. One would be free to go anywhere. To set all sorts of things going. . . . It's clear you can't sell all you have and give it to the poor. That is pauperization nowadays. You might run a tremendously revolutionary paper. A real upsetting paper. How many thousands is it?"

"I don't know. SOME."

Prothero's interest was growing as he faced the possibilities.

"I've dreamt of a paper," he said, "a paper that should tell the brute truth about things."

"I don't know that I'm particularly built to be a journalist," Benham objected.

"You're not," said Billy. . . . "You might go into Parliament as a perfectly independent member. . . . Only you wouldn't get in. . . ."

"I'm not a speaker," said Benham.

"Of course," said Billy, "if you don't decide on a game, you'll just go on like this. You'll fall into a groove, you'll--you'll hunt. You'll go to Scotland for the grouse."

For the moment Prothero had no further suggestions.

Benham waited for a second or so before he broached his own idea.

"Why, first of all, at any rate, Billy, shouldn't one use one's money to make the best of oneself? To learn things that men without money and leisure find it difficult to learn? By an accident, however unjust it is, one is in the position of a leader and a privileged person. Why not do one's best to give value as that?"

"Benham, that's the thin end of aristocracy!"

"Why not?"

"I hate aristocracy. For you it means doing what you like. While you are energetic you will kick about and then you will come back to this."

"That's one's own look-out," said Benham, after reflection.

"No, it's bound to happen."

Benham retreated a little from the immediate question.

"Well, we can't suddenly at a blow change the world. If it isn't to be plutocracy to-day it has to be aristocracy."

Prothero frowned over this, and then he made a sweeping proposition.

"YOU CANNOT HAVE ARISTOCRACY," he said, "BECAUSE, YOU SEE--ALL MEN ARE RIDICULOUS. Democracy has to fight its way out from under plutocracy. There is nothing else to be done."

"But a man in my position--?"

"It's a ridiculous position. You may try to escape being ridiculous. You won't succeed."

It seemed to Benham for a moment as though Prothero had got to the bottom of the question, and then he perceived that he had only got to the bottom of himself. Benham was pacing the floor.

He turned at the open window, held out a long forefinger, and uttered his countervailing faith.

"Even if he is ridiculous, Prothero, a man may still be an aristocrat. A man may anyhow be as much of an aristocrat as he can be."

Prothero reflected. "No," he said, "it sounds all right, but it's wrong. I hate all these advantages and differences and distinctions. A man's a man. What you say sounds well, but it's the beginning of pretension, of pride--"

He stopped short.

"Better, pride than dishonour," said Benham, "better the pretentious life than the sordid life. What else is there?"

"A life isn't necessarily sordid because it isn't pretentious," said Prothero, his voice betraying a defensive disposition.

"But a life with a large income MUST be sordid unless it makes some sort of attempt to be fine. . . ."

9

By transitions that were as natural as they were complicated and untraceable Prothero found his visit to Chexington developing into a tangle of discussions that all ultimately resolved themselves into an antagonism of the democratic and the aristocratic idea. And his part was, he found, to be the exponent of the democratic idea. The next day he came down early, his talk with Benham still running through his head, and after a turn or so in the garden he was attracted to the front door by a sound of voices, and found Lady Marayne had been up still earlier and was dismounting from a large effective black horse. This extorted an unwilling admiration from him. She greeted him very pleasantly and made a kind of introduction of her steed. There had been trouble at a gate, he was a young horse and fidgeted at gates; the dispute was still bright in her. Benham she declared was still in bed. "Wait till I have a mount for him." She reappeared fitfully in the breakfast-room, and then he was left to Benham until just before lunch. They read and afterwards, as the summer day grew hot, they swam in the nude pond. She joined them in the water, splashing about in a costume of some elaboration and being very careful not to wet her hair. Then she came and sat with them on the seat under the big cedar and talked with them in a wrap that was pretty rather than prudish and entirely unmotherly. And she began a fresh attack upon him by asking him if he wasn't a Socialist and whether he didn't want to pull down Chexington and grow potatoes all over the park.

This struck Prothero as an inadequate statement of the Socialist project and he made an unsuccessful attempt to get it amended.

The engagement thus opened was renewed with great energy at lunch. Sir Godfrey had returned to London and the inmost aspect of his fellow-creatures, but the party of three was supplemented by a vague young lady from the village and an alert agent from the neighbouring Tentington estate who had intentions about a cottage. Lady Marayne insisted upon regarding Socialism as a proposal to reinaugurate the first French Revolution, as an inversion of society so that it would be bottom upward, as an attack upon rule, order, direction. "And what good are all these proposals? If you had the poor dear king beheaded, you'd only get a Napoleon. If you divided all the property up between everybody, you'd have rich and poor again in a year."

Billy perceived no way of explaining away this version of his Socialism that would not involve uncivil contradictions--and nobody ever contradicted Lady Marayne.

"But, Lady Marayne, don't you think there is a lot of disorder and injustice in the world?" he protested.

"There would be ever so much more if your Socialists had their way."

"But still, don't you think-- . . ."

It is unnecessary even to recapitulate these universal controversies of our time. The lunch-table and the dinner-table and the general talk of the house drifted more and more definitely at its own level in the same direction as the private talk of Prothero and Benham, towards the antagonism of the privileged few and the many, of the trained and traditioned against the natural and undisciplined, of aristocracy against democracy. At the week-end Sir Godfrey returned to bring fresh elements. He said that democracy was unscientific. "To deny aristocracy is to deny the existence of the fittest. It is on the existence of the fittest that progress depends."

"But do our social conditions exalt the fittest?" asked Prothero.

"That is another question," said Benham.

"Exactly," said Sir Godfrey. "That is another question. But speaking with some special knowledge, I should say that on the whole the people who are on the top of things OUGHT to be on the top of things. I agree with Aristotle that there is such a thing as a natural inferior."

"So far as I can understand Mr. Prothero," said Lady Marayne, "he thinks that all the inferiors are the superiors and all the superiors inferior. It's quite simple. . . ."

It made Prothero none the less indignant with this, that there was indeed a grain of truth in it. He hated superiors, he felt for inferiors.

10

At last came the hour of tipping. An embarrassed and miserable Prothero went slinking about the house distributing unexpected gold.

It was stupid, it was damnable; he had had to borrow the money from his mother. . . .

Lady Marayne felt he had escaped her. The controversy that should have split these two young men apart had given them a new interest in each other. When afterwards she sounded her son, very delicately, to see if indeed he was aware of the clumsiness, the social ignorance and uneasiness, the complete unsuitability of his

friend, she could get no more from him than that exasperating phrase, "He has ideas!"

What are ideas? England may yet be ruined by ideas.

He ought never to have gone to Trinity, that monster packet of everything. He ought to have gone to some little GOOD college, good all through. She ought to have asked some one who KNEW.

11

One glowing afternoon in October, as these two young men came over Magdalen Bridge after a long disputatious and rather tiring walk to Drayton--they had been talking of Eugenics and the "family"--Benham was almost knocked down by an American trotter driven by Lord Breeze. "Whup there!" said Lord Breeze in a voice deliberately brutal, and Benham, roused from that abstraction which is partly fatigue, had to jump aside and stumbled against the parapet as the gaunt pacer went pounding by.

Lord Breeze grinned the sort of grin a man remembers. And passed.

"Damnation!" said Benham with a face that had become suddenly very white.

Then presently. "Any fool can do that who cares to go to the trouble."

"That," said Prothero, taking up their unquenchable issue, "that is the feeling of democracy."

"I walk because I choose to," said Benham.

The thing rankled.

"This equestrianism," he began, "is a matter of time and money--time even more than money. I want to read. I want to deal with ideas. . . ."

"Any fool can drive. . . ."

"Exactly," said Prothero.

"As for riding, it means no more than the elaborate study and cultivation of your horse. You have to know him. All horses are individuals. A made horse perhaps goes its round like an omnibus, but for the rest. . . ."

Prothero made a noise of sympathetic assent.

"In a country where equestrianism is assertion I suppose one must be equestrian. . . ."

That night some malignant spirit kept Benham awake, and great American trotters with vast wide-striding feet and long yellow teeth, uncontrollable, hard-mouthed American trotters, pounded over his angry soul.

"Prothero," he said in hall next day, "we are going to drive tomorrow."

Next day, so soon as they had lunched, he led the way towards Maltby's, in Crosshampton Lane. Something in his bearing put a question into Prothero's mind. "Benham," he asked, "have you ever driven before?"

"NEVER," said Benham.

"Well?"

"I'm going to now."

Something between pleasure and alarm came into Prothero's eyes. He quickened his pace so as to get alongside his friend and scrutinize his pale determination. "Why are you doing this?" he asked.

"I want to do it."

"Benham, is it--EQUESTRIAN?"

Benham made no audible reply. They proceeded resolutely in silence.

An air of expectation prevailed in Maltby's yard. In the shafts of a high, bleak-looking vehicle with vast side wheels, a throne-like vehicle that impressed Billy Prothero as being a gig, a very large angular black horse was being harnessed.

"This is mine," said Benham compactly.

"This is yours, sir," said an ostler.

"He looks--QUIET."

"You'll find him fresh enough, sir."

Benham made a complicated ascent to the driver's seat and was handed the reins. "Come on," he said, and Prothero followed to a less exalted seat at Benham's side. They seemed to be at a very great height indeed. The horse was then led out into Crosshampton Lane, faced towards Trinity Street and discharged. "Check," said Benham, and touched the steed with his whip. They started quite well, and the ostlers went back into the yard, visibly unanxious. It struck Prothero that perhaps driving was less difficult than he had

supposed.

They went along Crosshampton Lane, that high-walled gulley, with dignity, with only a slight suggestion of the inaccuracy that was presently to become apparent, until they met a little old bearded don on a bicycle. Then some misunderstanding arose between Benham and the horse, and the little bearded don was driven into the narrow pavement and had to get off hastily. He made no comment, but his face became like a gargoyle. "Sorry," said Benham, and gave his mind to the corner. There was some difficulty about whether they were to turn to the right or the left, but at last Benham, it seemed, carried his point, and they went along the narrow street, past the grey splendours of King's, and rather in the middle of the way.

Prothero considered the beast in front of him, and how proud and disrespectful a horse in a dogcart can seem to those behind it! Moreover, unaccustomed as he was to horses, he was struck by the strong resemblance a bird's-eye view of a horse bears to a fiddle, a fiddle with devil's ears.

"Of course," said Prothero, "this isn't a trotter."

"I couldn't get a trotter," said Benham.

"I thought I would try this sort of thing before I tried a trotter," he added.

And then suddenly came disaster.

There was a butcher's cart on the right, and Benham, mistrusting the intelligence of his steed, insisted upon an excessive amplitude of clearance. He did not reckon with the hand-barrow on his left, piled up with dirty plates from the lunch of Trinity Hall. It had been left there; its custodian was away upon some mysterious errand.

Heaven knows why Trinity Hall exhibited the treasures of its crockery thus stained and deified in the Cambridge streets. But it did--for Benham's and Prothero's undoing. Prothero saw the great wheel over which he was poised entangle itself with the little wheel of the barrow. "God!" he whispered, and craned, fascinated. The little wheel was manifestly intrigued beyond all self-control by the great wheel; it clung to it, it went before it, heedless of the barrow, of which it was an inseparable part. The barrow came about with an appearance of unwillingness, it locked against the great wheel; it reared itself towards Prothero and began, smash, smash, smash, to shed its higher plates. It was clear that Benham was grappling with a crisis upon a basis of inadequate experience. A number of people shouted haphazard things. Then, too late, the barrow had persuaded the little wheel to give up its fancy for the great wheel, and there was an enormous crash.

"Whoa!" cried Benham. "Whoa!" but also, unfortunately, he sawed hard at the horse's mouth.

The animal, being in some perplexity, danced a little in the narrow street, and then it had come about and it was backing, backing, on the narrow pavement and towards the plate-glass window of a book and newspaper shop. Benham tugged at its mouth much harder than ever. Prothero saw the window bending under the pressure of the wheel. A sense of the profound seriousness of life and of the folly of this expedition came upon him. With extreme nimbleness he got down just as the window burst. It went with an explosion like a pistol shot, and then a clatter of falling glass. People sprang, it seemed, from nowhere, and jostled about Prothero, so that he became a peripheral figure in the discussion. He perceived that a man in a green apron was holding the horse, and that various people were engaged in simultaneous conversation with Benham, who with a pale serenity of face and an awful calm of manner, dealt with each of them in turn.

"I'm sorry," he was saying. "Somebody ought to have been in charge

of the barrow. Here are my cards. I am ready to pay for any damage. . . .

"The barrow ought not to have been there. . . .

"Yes, I am going on. Of course I'm going on. Thank you."

He beckoned to the man who had held the horse and handed him half-a-crown. He glanced at Prothero as one might glance at a stranger. "Check!" he said. The horse went on gravely. Benham lifted out his whip. He appeared to have clean forgotten Prothero. Perhaps presently he would miss him. He went on past Trinity, past the ruddy brick of St. John's. The curve of the street hid him from Prothero's eyes.

Prothero started in pursuit. He glimpsed the dog-cart turning into Bridge Street. He had an impression that Benham used the whip at the corner, and that the dog-cart went forward out of sight with a startled jerk. Prothero quickened his pace.

But when he got to the fork between the Huntingdon Road and the Cottenham Road, both roads were clear.

He spent some time in hesitation. Then he went along the Huntingdon Road until he came upon a road-mender, and learnt that Benham had passed that way. "Going pretty fast 'e was," said the road-mender, "and whipping 'is 'orse. Else you might 'a thought 'e was a boltin' with 'im." Prothero decided that if Benham came back at all he would return by way of Cottenham, and it was on the Cottenham Road that at last he encountered his friend again.

Benham was coming along at that good pace which all experienced horses when they are fairly turned back towards Cambridge display. And there was something odd about Benham, as though he had a large circular halo with a thick rim. This, it seemed, had replaced his

hat. He was certainly hatless. The warm light of the sinking sun shone upon the horse and upon Benham's erect figure and upon his face, and gleams of fire kept flashing from his head to this rim, like the gleam of drawn swords seen from afar. As he drew nearer this halo detached itself from him and became a wheel sticking up behind him. A large, clumsy-looking bicycle was attached to the dog-cart behind. The expression of Benham's golden face was still a stony expression; he regarded his friend with hard eyes.

"You all right, Benham?" cried Prothero, advancing into the road.

His eye examined the horse. It looked all right, if anything it was a trifle subdued; there was a little foam about its mouth, but not very much.

"Whoa!" said Benham, and the horse stopped. "Are you coming up, Prothero?"

Prothero clambered up beside him. "I was anxious," he said.

"There was no need to be."

"You've broken your whip."

"Yes. It broke. . . . GET up!"

They proceeded on their way to Cambridge.

"Something has happened to the wheel," said Prothero, trying to be at his ease.

"Merely a splinter or so. And a spoke perhaps."

"And what is this behind?"

Benham made a half-turn of the head. "It's a motor-bicycle."

Prothero took in details.

"Some of it is missing."

"No, the front wheel is under the seat."

"Oh!"

"Did you find it?" Prothero asked, after an interval.

"You mean?"

"He ran into a motor-car--as I was passing. I was perhaps a little to blame. He asked me to bring his machine to Cambridge. He went on in the car. . . . It is all perfectly simple."

Prothero glanced at the splinters in the wheel with a renewed interest.

"Did your wheel get into it?" he asked. Benham affected not to hear. He was evidently in no mood for story-telling.

"Why did you get down, Prothero?" he asked abruptly, with the note of suppressed anger thickening his voice.

Prothero became vividly red. "I don't know," he said, after an interval.

"I DO," said Benham, and they went on in a rich and active silence to Cambridge, and the bicycle repair shop in Bridge Street, and Trinity College. At the gate of Trinity Benham stopped, and conveyed rather by acts than words that Prothero was to descend. He got down meekly enough, although he felt that the return to Maltby's

yard might have many points of interest. But the spirit had gone out of him.

12

For three days the two friends avoided each other, and then Prothero went to Benham's room. Benham was smoking cigarettes--Lady Marayne, in the first warmth of his filial devotion, had prohibited his pipe--and reading Webb's INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY. "Hello!" he said coldly, scarcely looking up, and continued to read that absorbing work.

"I keep on thinking how I jumped down from that damned dog-cart," said Prothero, without any preface.

"It didn't matter in the least," said Benham distantly.

"Oh! ROT," said Prothero. "I behaved like a coward."

Benham shut his book.

"Benham," said Prothero. "You are right about aristocracy, and I am wrong. I've been thinking about it night and day."

Benham betrayed no emotion. But his tone changed. "Billy," he said, "there are cigarettes and whiskey in the corner. Don't make a fuss about a trifle."

"No whiskey," said Billy, and lit a cigarette. "And it isn't a trifle."

He came to Benham's hearthrug. "That business," he said, "has

changed all my views. No--don't say something polite! I see that if one hasn't the habit of pride one is bound to get off a dogcart when it seems likely to smash. You have the habit of pride, and I haven't. So far as the habit of pride goes, I come over to the theory of aristocracy."

Benham said nothing, but he put down Sidney and Beatrice Webb, and reached out for and got and lit a cigarette.

"I give up 'Go as you please.' I give up the natural man. I admit training. I perceive I am lax and flabby, unguarded, I funk too much, I eat too much, and I drink too much. And, yet, what I have always liked in you, Benham, is just this--that you don't."

"I do," said Benham.

"Do what?"

"Funk."

"Benham, I believe that naturally you funk as much as I do. You're more a thing of nerves than I am, far more. But you keep yourself up to the mark, and I have let myself get flabby. You're so right. You're so utterly right. These last nights I've confessed it--aloud. I had an inkling of it--after that rag. But now it's as clear as daylight. I don't know if you mean to go on with me, after what's happened, but anyhow I want you to know, whether you end our friendship or not "

"Billy, don't be an old ass," said Benham.

Both young men paused for a moment. They made no demonstrations. But the strain was at an end between them.

"I've thought it all out," Billy went on with a sudden buoyancy.

"We two are both of the same kind of men. Only you see, Benham, you have a natural pride and I haven't. You have pride. But we are both intellectuals. We both belong to what the Russians call the *Intelligentsia*. We have ideas, we have imagination, that is our strength. And that is our weakness. That makes us moral light-weights. We are flimsy and uncertain people. All intellectuals are flimsy and uncertain people. It's not only that they are critical and fastidious; they are weak-handed. They look about them; their attention wanders. Unless they have got a habit of controlling themselves and forcing themselves and holding themselves together."

"The habit of pride."

"Yes. And then--then we are lords of the world."

"All this, Billy," said Benham, "I steadfastly believe."

"I've seen it all now," said Prothero. "Lord! how clearly I see it! The intellectual is either a prince or he is a Greek slave in a Roman household. He's got to hold his chin up or else he becomes--even as these dons we see about us--a thing that talks appointments, a toady, a port-wine bibber, a mass of detail, a conscious maker of neat sayings, a growing belly under a dwindling brain. Their gladness is drink or gratified vanity or gratified malice, their sorrow is indigestion or--old maid's melancholy. They are the lords of the world who will not take the sceptre. . . . And what I want to say to you, Benham, more than anything else is, YOU go on--YOU make yourself equestrian. You drive your horse against Breeze's, and go through the fire and swim in the ice-cold water and climb the precipice and drink little and sleep hard. And--I wish I could do so too."

"But why not?"

"Because I can't. Now I admit I've got shame in my heart and pride

in my head, and I'm strung up. I might do something--this afternoon. But it won't last. YOU--you have pride in your bones. My pride will vanish at a laugh. My honour will go at a laugh. I'm just exalted by a crisis. That's all. I'm an animal of intelligence. Soul and pride are weak in me. My mouth waters, my cheek brightens, at the sight of good things. And I've got a lickerish tail, Benham. You don't know. You don't begin to imagine. I'm secretive. But I quiver with hot and stirring desires. And I'm indolent--dirty indolent. Benham, there are days when I splash my bath about without getting into it. There are days when I turn back from a walk because there's a cow in the field. . . . But, I spare you the viler details. . . . And it's that makes me hate fine people and try so earnestly to persuade myself that any man is as good as any man, if not a trifle better. Because I know it isn't so. . . ."

"Billy," said Benham, "you've the boldest mind that ever I met."

Prothero's face lit with satisfaction. Then his countenance fell again. "I know I'm better there," he said, "and yet, see how I let in a whole system of lies to cover my secret humiliations. There, at least, I will cling to pride. I will at least THINK free and clean and high. But you can climb higher than I can. You've got the grit to try and LIVE high. There you are, Benham."

Benham stuck one leg over the arm of his chair. "Billy," he said, "come and be--equestrian and stop this nonsense."

"No."

"Damn it--you DIVE!"

"You'd go in before me if a woman was drowning."

"Nonsense. I'm going to ride. Come and ride too. You've a

cleverer way with animals than I have. Why! that horse I was driving the other day would have gone better alone. I didn't drive it. I just fussed it. I interfered. If I ride for ever, I shall never have decent hands, I shall always hang on my horse's mouth at a gallop, I shall never be sure at a jump. But at any rate I shall get hard. Come and get hard too."

"You can," said Billy, "you can. But not I! Heavens, the TROUBLE of it! The riding-school! The getting up early! No!--for me the Trumpington Road on foot in the afternoon. Four miles an hour and panting. And my fellowship and the combination-room port. And, besides, Benham, there's the expense. I can't afford the equestrian order."

"It's not so great."

"Not so great! I don't mean the essential expense. But--the incidentals. I don't know whether any one can realize how a poor man is hampered by the dread of minor catastrophes. It isn't so much that he is afraid of breaking his neck, Benham, as that he is afraid of breaking something he will have to pay for. For instance--. Benham! how much did your little expedition the other day--?"

He stopped short and regarded his friend with round eyes and raised eyebrows.

A reluctant grin overspread Benham's face. He was beginning to see the humour of the affair.

"The claim for the motor-bicycle isn't sent in yet. The repair of the mudguards of the car is in dispute. Trinity Hall's crockery, the plate-glass window, the whip-lash and wheel and so forth, the hire of the horse and trap, sundry gratuities. . . . I doubt if the total will come very much under fifty pounds. And I seem to have lost a hat somewhere."

Billy regarded his toes and cleared his throat.

"Depending as I do on a widowed mother in Brixton for all the expenditure that isn't covered by my pot-hunting--"

"Of course," said Benham, "it wasn't a fair sample afternoon."

"Still--"

"There's footer," said Benham, "we might both play footer."

"Or boxing."

"And, anyhow, you must come with me when I drive again. I'm going to start a trotter."

"If I miss another drive may I be--lost for ever," said Billy, with the utmost sincerity. "Never more will I get down, Benham, wherever you may take me. Short of muffing my fellowship I'm with you always. . . . Will it be an American trotter?"

"It will be the rawest, gauntest, ungainliest brute that ever scared the motor-bicycles on the Northampton Road. It will have the legs and stride of an ostrich. It will throw its feet out like dealing cards. It will lift its head and look the sun in the eye like a vulture. It will have teeth like the English spinster in a French comic paper. . . . And we will fly. . . ."

"I shall enjoy it very much," said Prothero in a small voice after an interval for reflection. "I wonder where we shall fly. It will do us both a lot of good. And I shall insure my life for a small amount in my mother's interest. . . . Benham, I think I will, after all, take a whiskey. . . . Life is short. . . ."

He did so and Benham strolled to the window and stood looking out upon the great court.

"We might do something this afternoon," said Benham.

"Splendid idea," reflected Billy over his whiskey. "Living hard and thinking hard. A sort of Intelligentsia that is BLOODED. . . . I shall, of course, come as far as I can with you."

13

In one of the bureau drawers that White in this capacity of literary executor was examining, there were two documents that carried back right to these early days. They were both products of this long wide undergraduate argumentation that had played so large a part in the making of Benham. One recorded the phase of maximum opposition, and one was the outcome of the concluding approach of the antagonists. They were debating club essays. One had been read to a club in Pembroke, a club called the ENQUIRERS, of which White also had been a member, and as he turned it over he found the circumstances of its reading coming back to his memory. He had been present, and Carnac's share in the discussion with his shrill voice and stumpy gestures would alone have sufficed to have made it a memorable occasion. The later one had been read to the daughter club of the ENQUIRERS, the SOCIAL ENQUIRERS, in the year after White had gone down, and it was new to him.

Both these papers were folded flat and neatly docketed; they were rather yellow and a little dog-eared, and with the outer sheet pencilled over with puzzling or illegible scribblings, Benham's memoranda for his reply. White took the earlier essay in his hand.

At the head of the first page was written in large letters, "Go slowly, speak to the man at the back." It brought up memories of his own experiences, of rows of gaslit faces, and of a friendly helpful voice that said, "Speak up?"

Of course this was what happened to every intelligent contemporary, this encounter with ideas, this restatement and ventilation of the old truths and the old heresies. Only in this way does a man make a view his own, only so does he incorporate it. These are our real turning points. The significant, the essential moments in the life of any one worth consideration are surely these moments when for the first time he faces towards certain broad ideas and certain broad facts. Life nowadays consists of adventures among generalizations. In class-rooms after the lecture, in studies in the small hours, among books or during solitary walks, the drama of the modern career begins. Suddenly a man sees his line, his intention. Yet though we are all of us writing long novels--White's world was the literary world, and that is how it looked to him--which profess to set out the lives of men, this part of the journey, this crucial passage among the Sphinxes, is still done--when it is done at all--slightly, evasively. Why?

White fell back on his professionalism. "It does not make a book. It makes a novel into a treatise, it turns it into a dissertation."

But even as White said this to himself he knew it was wrong, and it slid out of his thoughts again. Was not this objection to the play of ideas merely the expression of that conservative instinct which fights for every old convention? The traditional novel is a love story and takes ideas for granted, it professes a hero but presents a heroine. And to begin with at least, novels were written for the reading of heroines. Miss Lydia Languish sets no great store upon the contents of a man's head. That is just the stuffing of the doll. Eyes and heart are her game. And so there is never any more sphinx in the story than a lady may impersonate. And as inevitably

the heroine meets a man. In his own first success, White reflected, the hero, before he had gone a dozen pages, met a very pleasant young woman very pleasantly in a sunlit thicket; the second opened at once with a bicycle accident that brought two young people together so that they were never afterwards disentangled; the third, failing to produce its heroine in thirty pages, had to be rearranged. The next--

White returned from an unprofitable digression to the matter before him.

14

The first of Benham's early essays was written in an almost boyish hand, it was youthfully amateurish in its nervous disposition to definitions and distinctions, and in the elaborate linking of part to part. It was called TRUE DEMOCRACY. Manifestly it was written before the incident of the Trinity Hall plates, and most of it had been done after Prothero's visit to Chexington. White could feel that now inaudible interlocutor. And there were even traces of Sir Godfrey Marayne's assertion that democracy was contrary to biology. From the outset it was clear that whatever else it meant, True Democracy, following the analogy of True Politeness, True Courage, True Honesty and True Marriage, did not mean democracy at all. Benham was, in fact, taking Prothero's word, and trying to impose upon it his own solidifying and crystallizing opinion of life.

They were not as yet very large or well-formed crystals. The proposition he struggled to develop was this, that True Democracy did not mean an equal share in the government, it meant an equal opportunity to share in the government. Men were by nature and in the most various ways unequal. True Democracy aimed only at the

removal of artificial inequalities. . . .

It was on the truth of this statement, that men were by nature unequal, that the debate had turned. Prothero was passionately against the idea at that time. It was, he felt, separating himself from Benham more and more. He spoke with a personal bitterness. And he found his chief ally in a rigorous and voluble Frenchman named Carnac, an aggressive Roman Catholic, who opened his speech by saying that the first aristocrat was the devil, and shocked Prothero by claiming him as probably the only other sound Christian in the room. Several biologists were present, and one tall, fair youth with a wearisome forefinger tried to pin Carnac with questions.

"But you must admit some men are taller than others?"

"Then the others are broader."

"Some are smaller altogether."

"Nimble--it's notorious."

"Some of the smaller are less nimble than the others."

"Then they have better nightmares. How can you tell?"

The biologist was temporarily incapacitated, and the talk went on over his prostrate attempts to rally and protest.

A second biologist seemed to Benham to come nearer the gist of the dispute when he said that they were not discussing the importance of men, but their relative inequalities. Nobody was denying the equal importance of everybody. But there was a virtue of this man and a virtue of that. Nobody could dispute the equal importance of every wheel in a machine, of every atom in the universe. Prothero and Carnac were angry because they thought the denial of absolute

equality was a denial of equal importance. That was not so. Every man mattered in his place. But politically, or economically, or intellectually that might be a lowly place. . . .

At this point Carnac interrupted with a whooping and great violence, and a volley of obscure French colloquialisms.

He was understood to convey that the speaker was a Jew, and did not in the least mean what he was saying. . . .

15

The second paper was an altogether maturer and more characteristic production. It was no longer necessary to answer Prothero. Prothero had been incorporated. And Benham had fairly got away with his great idea. It was evident to White that this paper had been worked over on several occasions since its first composition and that Benham had intended to make it a part of his book. There were corrections in pencil and corrections in a different shade of ink, and there was an unfinished new peroration, that was clearly the latest addition of all. Yet its substance had been there always. It gave the youth just grown to manhood, but anyhow fully grown. It presented the far-dreaming intellectualist shaped.

Benham had called it ARISTOCRACY. But he was far away by now from political aristocracy.

This time he had not begun with definitions and generalizations, but with a curiously subjective appeal. He had not pretended to be theorizing at large any longer, he was manifestly thinking of his own life and as manifestly he was thinking of life as a matter of difficulty and unexpected thwartings.

"We see life," he wrote, "not only life in the world outside us, but life in our own selves, as an immense choice of possibilities; indeed, for us in particular who have come up here, who are not under any urgent necessity to take this line or that, life is apparently pure choice. It is quite easy to think we are all going to choose the pattern of life we like best and work it out in our own way. . . . And, meanwhile, there is no great hurry. . . .

"I want to begin by saying that choice isn't so easy and so necessary as it seems. We think we are going to choose presently, and in the end we may never choose at all. Choice needs perhaps more energy than we think. The great multitude of older people we can observe in the world outside there, haven't chosen either in the matter of the world outside, where they shall go, what they shall do, what part they shall play, or in the matter of the world within, what they will be and what they are determined they will never be. They are still in much the same state of suspended choice as we seem to be in, but in the meanwhile **THINGS HAPPEN TO THEM**. And things are happening to us, things will happen to us, while we still suppose ourselves in the wings waiting to be consulted about the casting of the piece. . . .

"Nevertheless this immense appearance of choice which we get in the undergraduate community here, is not altogether illusion; it is more reality than illusion even if it has not the stable and complete reality it appears to have. And it is more a reality for us than it was for our fathers, and much more a reality now than it was a few centuries ago. The world is more confused and multitudinous than ever it was, the practicable world far wider, and ourselves far less under the pressure of inflexible moulding forces and inevitable necessities than any preceding generations. I want to put very clearly how I see the new world, the present world, the world of novel choice to which our youth and inexperience faces, and I want to define to you a certain selection of choices which I am going to

call aristocratic, and to which it is our manifest duty and destiny as the elect and favoured sons of our race to direct ourselves.

"It isn't any choice of Hercules I mean, any mere alternative whether we will be, how shall I put it?--the bridegrooms of pleasure or the bridegrooms of duty. It is infinitely vaster and more subtly moral than that. There are a thousand good lives possible, of which we may have one, lives which are soundly good, or a thousand bad lives, if you like, lives which are thoroughly bad--that's the old and perpetual choice, that has always been--but what is more evident to me and more remarkable and disconcerting is that there are nowadays ten thousand muddled lives lacking even so much moral definition, even so much consistency as is necessary for us to call them either good or bad, there are planless indeterminate lives, more and more of them, opening out as the possible lives before us, a perfect wilderness between salvation and damnation, a wilderness so vast and crowded that at last it seems as though the way to either hell or heaven would be lost in its interminable futility. Such planless indeterminate lives, plebeian lives, mere lives, fill the world, and the spectacle of whole nations, our whole civilization, seems to me to re-echo this planlessness, this indeterminate confusion of purpose. Plain issues are harder and harder to find, it is as if they had disappeared. Simple living is the countryman come to town. We are deafened and jostled and perplexed. There are so many things afoot that we get nothing. . . .

"That is what is in my mind when I tell you that we have to gather ourselves together much more than we think. We have to clench ourselves upon a chosen end. We have to gather ourselves together out of the swill of this brimming world.

"Or--we are lost. . . ."

("Swill of this brimming world," said White. "Some of this sounds uncommonly like Prothero." He mused for a moment and then resumed

his reading.)

"That is what I was getting at when, three years ago, I made an attack upon Democracy to the mother society of this society, an attack that I expressed ill and failed to drive home. That is what I have come down now to do my best to make plainer. This age of confusion is Democracy; it is all that Democracy can ever give us. Democracy, if it means anything, means the rule of the planless man, the rule of the unkempt mind. It means as a necessary consequence this vast boiling up of collectively meaningless things.

"What is the quality of the common man, I mean of the man that is common to all of us, the man who is the Standard for such men as Carnac, the man who seems to be the ideal of the Catholic Democrat? He is the creature of a few fundamental impulses. He begins in blind imitation of the life about him. He lusts and takes a wife, he hungers and tills a field or toils in some other way to earn a living, a mere aimless living, he fears and so he does not wander, he is jealous and stays by his wife and his job, is fiercely yet often stupidly and injuriously defensive of his children and his possessions, and so until he wearies. Then he dies and needs a cemetery. He needs a cemetery because he is so afraid of dissolution that even when he has ceased to be, he still wants a place and a grave to hold him together and prevent his returning to the All that made him. Our chief impression of long ages of mankind comes from its cemeteries. And this is the life of man, as the common man conceives and lives it. Beyond that he does not go, he never comprehends himself collectively at all, the state happens about him; his passion for security, his gregarious self-defensiveness, makes him accumulate upon himself until he congests in cities that have no sense of citizenship and states that have no structure; the clumsy, inconsecutive lying and chatter of his newspapers, his hoardings and music-halls gives the measure of his congested intelligences, the confusion of ugly, half empty churches and chapels and meeting-halls gauge the intensity of his congested

souls, the tricks and slow blundering dishonesties of Diet and Congress and Parliament are his statecraft and his wisdom. . . .

"I do not care if this instant I am stricken dead for pride. I say here now to you and to High Heaven that **THIS LIFE IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH**

FOR ME. I know there is a better life than this muddle about us, a better life possible now. I know it. A better individual life and a better public life. If I had no other assurances, if I were blind to the glorious intimations of art, to the perpetually widening promise of science, to the mysterious beckonings of beauty in form and colour and the inaccessible mockery of the stars, I should still know this from the insurgent spirit within me. . . .

"Now this better life is what I mean when I talk of Aristocracy. This idea of a life breaking away from the common life to something better, is the consuming idea in my mind.

"Constantly, recurrently, struggling out of the life of the farm and the shop, the inn and the market, the street and the crowd, is something that is not of the common life. Its way of thinking is Science, its dreaming is Art, its will is the purpose of mankind. It is not the common thing. But also it is not an unnatural thing. It is not as common as a rat, but it is no less natural than a panther.

"For it is as natural to be an explorer as it is to be a potato grower, it is rarer but it is as natural; it is as natural to seek explanations and arrange facts as it is to make love, or adorn a hut, or show kindness to a child. It is a folly I will not even dispute about, that man's only natural implement is the spade. Imagination, pride, exalted desire are just as much Man, as are hunger and thirst and sexual curiosities and the panic dread of unknown things. . . .

"Now you see better what I mean about choice. Now you see what I am driving at. We have to choose each one for himself and also each one for the race, whether we will accept the muddle of the common life, whether we ourselves will be muddled, weakly nothings, children of luck, steering our artful courses for mean success and tawdry honours, or whether we will be aristocrats, for that is what it amounts to, each one in the measure of his personal quality an aristocrat, refusing to be restrained by fear, refusing to be restrained by pain, resolved to know and understand up to the hilt of his understanding, resolved to sacrifice all the common stuff of his life to the perfection of his peculiar gift, a purged man, a trained, selected, artificial man, not simply free, but lordly free, filled and sustained by pride. Whether you or I make that choice and whether you or I succeed in realizing ourselves, though a great matter to ourselves, is, I admit, a small matter to the world. But the great matter is this, that **THE CHOICE IS BEING MADE**, that it will continue to be made, and that all around us, so that it can never be arrested and darkened again, is the dawn of human possibility. . . ."

(White could also see his dead friend's face with its enthusiastic paleness, its disordered hair and the glowing darknesses in the eyes. On such occasions Benham always had an expression of **ESCAPE**. Temporary escape. And thus would his hand have clutched the reading-desk; thus would his long fingers have rustled these dry papers.)

"Man has reached a point when a new life opens before him. . . .

"The old habitual life of man is breaking up all about us, and for the new life our minds, our imaginations, our habits and customs are all unprepared. . . .

"It is only now, after some years of study and living, that I begin to realize what this tremendous beginning we call Science means to

mankind. Every condition that once justified the rules and imperatives, the manners and customs, the sentiments, the morality, the laws and limitations which make up the common life, has been or is being destroyed. . . . Two or three hundred years more and all that life will be as much a thing past and done with as the life that was lived in the age of unpolished stone. . . .

"Man is leaving his ancestral shelters and going out upon the greatest adventure that ever was in space or time, he is doing it now, he is doing it in us as I stand here and read to you."

CHAPTER THE SECOND

THE YOUNG MAN ABOUT TOWN

1

The oldest novel in the world at any rate, White reflected, was a story with a hero and no love interest worth talking about. It was the story of Tobias and how he came out from the shelters of his youth into this magic and intricate world. Its heroine was incidental, part of the spoil, a seven times relict. . . .

White had not read the book of Tobit for many years, and what he was really thinking of was not that ancient story at all, but Botticelli's picture, that picture of the sunlit morning of life. When you say "Tobias" that is what most intelligent people will recall. Perhaps you will remember how gaily and confidently the young man strides along with the armoured angel by his side. Absurdly enough, Benham and his dream of high aristocracy reminded

White of that. . . .

"We have all been Tobias in our time," said White.

If White had been writing this chapter he would have in all probability called it THE TOBIAS STAGE, forgetful that there was no Tobit behind Benham and an entirely different Sara in front of him.

2

From Cambridge Benham came to London. For the first time he was to live in London. Never before had he been in London for more than a few days at a time. But now, guided by his mother's advice, he was to have a flat in Finacue street, just round the corner from Desborough Street, a flat very completely and delightfully furnished under her supervision. It had an admirable study, in which she had arranged not only his books, but a number of others in beautiful old leather bindings that it had amused her extremely to buy; it had a splendid bureau and business-like letter-filing cabinets, a neat little drawing-room and a dining-room, well-placed abundant electric lights, and a man called Merkle whom she had selected very carefully and who she felt would not only see to Benham's comfort but keep him, if necessary, up to the mark.

This man Merkle seemed quite unaware that humanity "here and now"--even as he was engaged in meticulously putting out Benham's clothes--was "leaving its ancestral shelters and going out upon the greatest adventure that ever was in space or time." If he had been told as much by Benham he would probably have said, "Indeed, sir," and proceeded accurately with his duties. And if Benham's voice had seemed to call for any additional remark, he would probably have added, "It's 'igh time, sir, something of the sort was done. Will

you have the white wesket as before, sir, or a fresh one this evening? . . . Unless it's a very special occasion, sir. . . . Exactly, sir. THANK you, sir."

And when her son was properly installed in his apartments Lady Marayne came round one morning with a large experienced-looking portfolio and rendered an account of her stewardship of his estate that was already some months overdue. It was all very confused and confusing, and there were inexplicable incidents, a heavy overdraft at the bank for example, but this was Sir Godfrey's fault, she explained. "He never would help me with any of this business," she said. "I've had to add sometimes for HOURS. But, of course, you are a man, and when you've looked through it all, I know you'll understand."

He did look through it enough to see that it was undesirable that he should understand too explicitly, and, anyhow, he was manifestly very well off indeed, and the circumstances of the case, even as he understood them, would have made any businesslike book-keeping ungracious. The bankers submitted the corroborating account of securities, and he found himself possessed of his unconditional six thousand a year, with, as she put it, "the world at his feet." On the whole it seemed more wonderful to him now than when he had first heard of it. He kissed her and thanked her, and left the portfolio open for Merkle's entirely honest and respectful but very exact inspection, and walked back with her to Desborough Street, and all the while he was craving to ask the one tremendous question he knew he would never ask, which was just how exactly this beneficent Nolan came in. . . .

Once or twice in the small hours, and on a number of other occasions, this unspeakable riddle assumed a portentous predominance in his mind. He was forced back upon his inner consciousness for its consideration. He could discuss it with nobody else, because that would have been discussing his mother.

Probably most young men who find themselves with riches at large in the world have some such perplexity as this mixed in with the gift. Such men as the Cecils perhaps not, because they are in the order of things, the rich young Jews perhaps not, because acquisition is their principle, but for most other intelligent inheritors there must be this twinge of conscientious doubt. "Why particularly am I picked out for so tremendous an advantage?" If the riddle is not Nolan, then it is rent, or it is the social mischief of the business, or the particular speculative COUP that established their fortune.

"PECUNIA NON OLET," Benham wrote, "and it is just as well. Or the west-ends of the world would reek with deodorizers. Restitution is inconceivable; how and to whom? And in the meanwhile here we are lifted up by our advantage to a fantastic appearance of opportunity. Whether the world looks to us or not to do tremendous things, it ought to look to us. And above all we ought to look to ourselves. RICHESSE OBLIGE."

3

It is not to be supposed that Benham came to town only with a general theory of aristocracy. He had made plans for a career. Indeed, he had plans for several careers. None of them when brought into contrast with the great spectacle of London retained all the attractiveness that had saturated them at their inception.

They were all more or less political careers. Whatever a democratic man may be, Prothero and he had decided that an aristocratic man is a public man. He is made and protected in what he is by laws and the state and his honour goes out to the state. The aristocrat has

no right to be a voluptuary or a mere artist or a respectable nonentity, or any such purely personal things. Responsibility for the aim and ordering of the world is demanded from him as imperatively as courage.

Benham's deliberate assumption of the equestrian role brought him into contact with a new set of acquaintances, conscious of political destinies. They were amiable, hard young men, almost affectedly unaffected; they breakfasted before dawn to get in a day's hunting, and they saw to it that Benham's manifest determination not to discredit himself did not lead to his breaking his neck. Their bodies were beautifully tempered, and their minds were as flabby as Prothero's body. Among them were such men as Lord Breeze and Peter Westerton, and that current set of Corinthians who supposed themselves to be resuscitating the Young England movement and Tory Democracy. Poor movements which indeed have never so much lived as suffered chronic resuscitation. These were days when Tariff Reform was only an inglorious possibility for the Tory Party, and Young England had yet to demonstrate its mental quality in an anti-socialist campaign. Seen from the perspectives of Cambridge and Chexington, the Tory party was still a credible basis for the adventure of a young man with an aristocratic theory in his mind.

These were the days when the strain and extremity of a dangerous colonial war were fresh in people's minds, when the quality of the public consciousness was braced up by its recent response to unanticipated demands. The conflict of stupidities that had caused the war was overlaid and forgotten by a hundred thousand devotions, by countless heroic deaths and sufferings, by a pacification largely conceived and broadly handled. The nation had displayed a belated regard for its honour and a sustained passion for great unities. It was still possible for Benham to regard the empire as a splendid opportunity, and London as the conceivable heart of the world. He could think of Parliament as a career, and of a mingling of aristocratic socialism based on universal service with a civilizing

imperialism as a purpose. . . .

But his thoughts had gone wider and deeper than that. . . .

Already when Benham came to London he had begun to dream of possibilities that went beyond the accidental states and empires of to-day. Prothero's mind, replete with historical detail, could find nothing but absurdity in the alliances and dynasties and loyalties of our time. "Patched up things, Benham, temporary, pretentious. All very well for the undignified man, the democratic man, to take shelter under, all very well for the humourist to grin and bear, all very well for the crowd and the quack, but not for the aristocrat--No!--his mind cuts like steel and burns like fire. Lousy sheds they are, plastered hoardings . . . and such a damned nuisance too! For any one who wants to do honourable things! With their wars and their diplomacies, their tariffs and their encroachments; all their humbugging struggles, their bloody and monstrous struggles, that finally work out to no end at all. . . . If you are going for the handsome thing in life then the world has to be a united world, Benham, as a matter of course. That was settled when the railways and the telegraph came. Telephones, wireless telegraphy, aeroplanes insist on it. We've got to mediatise all this stuff, all these little crowns and boundaries and creeds, and so on, that stand in the way. Just as Italy had to be united in spite of all the rotten little dukes and princes and republics, just as Germany had to be united in spite of its scores of kingdoms and duchies and liberties, so now the world. Things as they are may be fun for lawyers and politicians and court people and--douaniers; they may suit the loan-mongers and the armaments shareholders, they may even be more comfortable for the middle-aged, but what, except as an inconvenience, does that matter to you or me?

Prothero always pleased Benham when he swept away empires. There was always a point when the rhetoric broke into gesture.

"We've got to sweep them away, Benham," he said, with a wide gesture of his arm. "We've got to sweep them all away."

Prothero helped himself to some more whiskey, and spoke hastily, because he was afraid some one else might begin. He was never safe from interruption in his own room. The other young men present sucked at their pipes and regarded him doubtfully. They were never quite certain whether Prothero was a prophet or a fool. They could not understand a mixed type, and he was so manifestly both.

"The only sane political work for an intelligent man is to get the world-state ready. For that we have to prepare an aristocracy--"

"Your world-state will be aristocratic?" some one interpolated.

"Of course it will be aristocratic. How can uninformed men think all round the globe? Democracy dies five miles from the parish pump. It will be an aristocratic republic of all the capable men in the world. . . ."

"Of course," he added, pipe in mouth, as he poured out his whiskey, "it's a big undertaking. It's an affair of centuries. . . ."

And then, as a further afterthought: "All the more reason for getting to work at it. . . ."

In his moods of inspiration Prothero would discourse through the tobacco smoke until that great world-state seemed imminent--and Part Two in the Tripos a thing relatively remote. He would talk until the dimly-lit room about him became impalpable, and the young men squatting about it in elaborately careless attitudes caught glimpses of cities that are still to be, bridges in wild places, deserts tamed and oceans conquered, mankind no longer wasted by bickerings, going forward to the conquest of the stars. . . .

An aristocratic world-state; this political dream had already taken hold of Benham's imagination when he came to town. But it was a dream, something that had never existed, something that indeed may never materialize, and such dreams, though they are vivid enough in a study at night, fade and vanish at the rustle of a daily newspaper or the sound of a passing band. To come back again. . . . So it was with Benham. Sometimes he was set clearly towards this world-state that Prothero had talked into possibility. Sometimes he was simply abreast of the patriotic and socially constructive British Imperialism of Breeze and Westerton. And there were moods when the two things were confused in his mind, and the glamour of world dominion rested wonderfully on the slack and straggling British Empire of Edward the Seventh--and Mr. Rudyard Kipling and Mr. Chamberlain. He did go on for a time honestly entertaining both these projects in his mind, each at its different level, the greater impalpable one and the lesser concrete one within it. In some unimaginable way he could suppose that the one by some miracle of ennoblement--and neglecting the Frenchman, the Russian, the German, the American, the Indian, the Chinaman, and, indeed, the greater part of mankind from the problem--might become the other. . . .

All of which is recorded here, without excess of comment, as it happened, and as, in a mood of astonished reminiscences, he came finally to perceive it, and set it down for White's meditative perusal.

4

But to the enthusiasm of the young, dreams have something of the substance of reality and realities, something of the magic of dreams. The London to which Benham came from Cambridge and the disquisitions of Prothero was not the London of a mature and

disillusioned vision. It was London seen magnified and distorted through the young man's crystalline intentions. It had for him a quality of multitudinous, unquenchable activity. Himself filled with an immense appetite for life, he was unable to conceive of London as fatigued. He could not suspect these statesmen he now began to meet and watch, of jaded wills and petty spites, he imagined that all the important and influential persons in this large world of affairs were as frank in their private lives and as unembarrassed in their financial relationships as his untainted self. And he had still to reckon with stupidity. He believed in the statecraft of leader-writers and the sincerity of political programmes. And so regarded, what an avenue to Empire was Whitehall! How momentous was the sunrise in St. James's Park, and how significant the clustering knot of listeners and speakers beneath the tall column that lifts our Nelson to the windy sky!

For a time Benham was in love with the idea of London. He got maps of London and books about London. He made plans to explore its various regions. He tried to grasp it all, from the conscious picturesqueness of its garden suburbs to the factories of Croydon, from the clerk-villadoms of Ealing to the inky streams of Bow. In those days there were passenger steamboats that would take one from the meadows of Hampton Court past the whole spectacle of London out to the shipping at Greenwich and the towed liners, the incessant tugs, the heaving portals of the sea. . . . His time was far too occupied for him to carry out a tithe of these expeditions he had planned, but he had many walks that bristled with impressions. Northward and southward, eastward and westward a dreaming young man could wander into a wilderness of population, polite or sombre, poor, rich, or middle-class, but all ceaselessly active, all urgently pressing, as it seemed, to their part in the drama of the coming years. He loved the late afternoon, when every artery is injected and gorged with the multitudinous home-going of the daily workers, he loved the time of lighting up, and the clustering excitements of the late hours. And he went out southward and

eastward into gaunt regions of reeking toil. As yet he knew nothing of the realities of industrialism. He saw only the beauty of the great chimneys that rose against the sullen smoke-barred sunsets, and he felt only the romance of the lurid shuddering flares that burst out from squat stacks of brickwork and lit the emptiness of strange and slovenly streets. . . .

And this London was only the foreground of the great scene upon which he, as a prosperous, well-befriended young Englishman, was free to play whatever part he could. This narrow turbid tidal river by which he walked ran out under the bridges eastward beneath the grey-blue clouds towards Germany, towards Russia, and towards Asia, which still seemed in those days so largely the Englishman's Asia. And when you turned about at Blackfriars Bridge this sense of the round world was so upon you that you faced not merely Westminster, but the icy Atlantic and America, which one could yet fancy was a land of Englishmen--Englishmen a little estranged. At any rate they assimilated, they kept the tongue. The shipping in the lower reaches below the Tower there carried the flags of every country under the sky. . . . As he went along the riverside he met a group of dusky students, Chinese or Japanese. Cambridge had abounded in Indians; and beneath that tall clock tower at Westminster it seemed as though the world might centre. The background of the Englishman's world reached indeed to either pole, it went about the earth, his background it was--for all that he was capable of doing. All this had awaited him. . . .

Is it any wonder if a young man with an excitable imagination came at times to the pitch of audible threats? If the extreme indulgence of his opportunity and his sense of ability and vigour lifted his vanity at moments to the kingly pitch? If he ejaculated and made a gesture or so as he went along the Embankment?

In the disquisition upon choice that opened Benham's paper on ARISTOCRACY, he showed himself momentarily wiser than his day-dreams. For in these day-dreams he did seem to himself to be choosing among unlimited possibilities. Yet while he dreamt other influences were directing his movements. There were for instance his mother, Lady Marayne, who saw a very different London from what he did, and his mother Dame Nature, who cannot see London at all. She was busy in his blood as she is busy in the blood of most healthy young men; common experience must fill the gaps for us; and patiently and thoroughly she was preparing for the entrance of that heroine, whom not the most self-centred of heroes can altogether avoid. . . .

And then there was the power of every day. Benham imagined himself at large on his liberating steed of property while indeed he was mounted on the made horse of Civilization; while he was speculating whither he should go, he was already starting out upon the round. One hesitates upon the magnificent plan and devotion of one's lifetime and meanwhile there is usage, there are engagements. Every morning came Merkle, the embodiment of the established routine, the herald of all that the world expected and required Benham to be and do. Usually he awakened Benham with the opening of his door and the soft tinkle of the curtain rings as he let in the morning light. He moved softly about the room, gathering up and removing the crumpled hulls of yesterday; that done he reappeared at the bedside with a cup of admirable tea and one thin slice of bread-and-butter, reported on the day's weather, stood deferential for instructions. "You will be going out for lunch, sir. Very good, sir. White slips of course, sir. You will go down into the country in the afternoon? Will that be the serge suit, sir, or the brown?"

These matters settled, the new aristocrat could yawn and stretch

like any aristocrat under the old dispensation, and then as the sound of running water from the bathroom ceased, stick his toes out of bed.

The day was tremendously indicated. World-states and aristocracies of steel and fire, things that were as real as coal-scuttles in Billy's rooms away there at Cambridge, were now remoter than Sirius.

He was expected to shave, expected to bath, expected to go in to the bright warmth and white linen and silver and china of his breakfast-table. And there he found letters and invitations, loaded with expectation. And beyond the coffee-pot, neatly folded, lay the TIMES, and the DAILY NEWS and the TELEGRAPH all with an air of requiring his attention. There had been more fighting in Thibet and Mr. Ritchie had made a Free Trade speech at Croydon. The Japanese had torpedoed another Russian ironclad and a British cruiser was ashore in the East Indies. A man had been found murdered in an empty house in Hoxton and the King had had a conversation with General Booth. Tadpole was in for North Winchelsea, beating Taper by nine votes, and there had been a new cut in the Atlantic passenger rates. He was expected to be interested and excited by these things.

Presently the telephone bell would ring and he would hear the clear little voice of his mother full of imperative expectations. He would be round for lunch? Yes, he would be round to lunch. And the afternoon, had he arranged to do anything with his afternoon? No!-- put off Chexington until tomorrow. There was this new pianist, it was really an EXPERIENCE, and one might not get tickets again. And then tea at Panton's. It was rather fun at Panton's. . . . Oh!-- Weston Massinghay was coming to lunch. He was a useful man to know. So CLEVER. . . . So long, my dear little Son, till I see you. . . .

So life puts out its Merkle threads, as the poacher puts his hair noose about the pheasant's neck, and while we theorize takes hold of

us. . . .

It came presently home to Benham that he had been down from Cambridge for ten months, and that he was still not a step forward with the realization of the new aristocracy. His political career waited. He had done a quantity of things, but their net effect was incoherence. He had not been merely passive, but his efforts to break away into creative realities had added to rather than diminished his accumulating sense of futility.

The natural development of his position under the influence of Lady Marayne had enormously enlarged the circle of his acquaintances. He had taken part in all sorts of social occasions, and sat and listened to a representative selection of political and literary and social personages, he had been several times to the opera and to a great number and variety of plays, he had been attentively inconspicuous in several really good week-end parties. He had spent a golden October in North Italy with his mother, and escaped from the glowing lassitude of Venice for some days of climbing in the Eastern Alps. In January, in an outbreak of enquiry, he had gone with Lionel Maxim to St. Petersburg and had eaten zakuska, brightened his eyes with vodka, talked with a number of charming people of the war that was then imminent, listened to gipsy singers until dawn, careered in sledges about the most silent and stately of capitals, and returned with Lionel, discoursing upon autocracy and assassination, Japan, the Russian destiny, and the government of Peter the Great. That excursion was the most after his heart of all the dispersed employments of his first year. Through the rest of the winter he kept himself very fit, and still further qualified that nervous dislike for the horse that he had acquired from Prothero by hunting once a week in Essex. He was incurably a bad horseman; he rode without sympathy, he was unready and convulsive at hedges and ditches, and he judged distances badly. His white face and rigid seat and a certain joylessness of bearing in the saddle earned him the singular nickname, which never reached his ears, of

the "Galvanized Corpse." He got through, however, at the cost of four quite trifling spills and without damaging either of the horses he rode. And his physical self-respect increased.

On his writing-desk appeared a few sheets of manuscript that increased only very slowly. He was trying to express his Cambridge view of aristocracy in terms of Finacue Street, West.

The artistic and intellectual movements of London had made their various demands upon his time and energies. Art came to him with a noble assumption of his interest and an intention that presently became unpleasantly obvious to sell him pictures that he did not want to buy and explain away pictures that he did. He bought one or two modern achievements, and began to doubt if art and aristocracy had any necessary connection. At first he had accepted the assumption that they had. After all, he reflected, one lives rather for life and things than for pictures of life and things or pictures arising out of life and things. This Art had an air of saying something, but when one came to grips with it what had it to say? Unless it was Yah! The drama, and more particularly the intellectual drama, challenged his attention. In the hands of Shaw, Barker, Masefield, Galsworthy, and Hankin, it, too, had an air of saying something, but he found it extremely difficult to join on to his own demands upon life anything whatever that the intellectual drama had the air of having said. He would sit forward in the front row of the dress-circle with his cheek on his hand and his brow slightly knit. His intentness amused observant people. The drama that did not profess to be intellectual he went to with Lady Marayne, and usually on first nights. Lady Marayne loved a big first night at St. James's Theatre or His Majesty's. Afterwards, perhaps, Sir Godfrey would join them at a supper party, and all sorts of clever and amusing people would be there saying keen intimate things about each other. He met Yeats, who told amusing stories about George Moore, and afterwards he met George Moore, who told amusing stories about Yeats, and it was all, he felt, great fun

for the people who were in it. But he was not in it, and he had no very keen desire to be in it. It wasn't his stuff. He had, though they were nowadays rather at the back of his mind, quite other intentions. In the meanwhile all these things took up his time and distracted his attention.

There was, as yet, no practicable aviation to beguile a young man of spirit, but there were times when Benham found himself wondering whether there might not be something rather creditable in the possession and control of a motor-car of exceptional power. Only one might smash people up. Should an aristocrat be deterred by the fear of smashing people up? If it is a selfish fear of smashing people up, if it is nerves rather than pity? At any rate it did not come to the car.

6

Among other things that delayed Benham very greatly in the development of his aristocratic experiments was the advice that was coming to him from every quarter. It came in extraordinary variety and volume, but always it had one unvarying feature. It ignored and tacitly contradicted his private intentions.

We are all of us disposed to be propagandists of our way of living, and the spectacle of a wealthy young man quite at large is enough to excite the most temperate of us without distinction of age or sex. "If I were you," came to be a familiar phrase in his ear. This was particularly the case with political people; and they did it not only from the natural infirmity of humanity, but because, when they seemed reluctant or satisfied with him as he was, Lady Marayne egged them on.

There was a general assumption that he was to go into Parliament, and most of his counsellors assumed further that on the whole his natural sympathies would take him into the Conservative party. But it was pointed out to him that just at present the Liberal party was the party of a young man's opportunity; sooner or later the swing of the pendulum which would weed the Conservatives and proliferate Liberals was bound to come, there was always more demand and opportunity for candidates on the Liberal side, the Tariff Reformers were straining their ministerial majority to the splitting point, and most of the old Liberal leaders had died off during the years of exile. The party was no longer dominated; it would tolerate ideas. A young man who took a distinctive line--provided it was not from the party point of view a vexatious or impossible line--might go very rapidly far and high. On the other hand, it was urged upon him that the Tariff Reform adventure called also for youth and energy. But there, perhaps, there was less scope for the distinctive line--and already they had Garvin. Quite a number of Benham's friends pointed out to him the value of working out some special aspect of our national political interests. A very useful speciality was the Balkans. Mr. Pope, the well-known publicist, whose very sound and considerable reputation was based on the East Purblow Labour Experiment, met Benham at lunch and proposed to go with him in a spirit of instructive association to the Balkans, rub up their Greek together, and settle the problem of Albania. He wanted, he said, a foreign speciality to balance his East Purblow interest. But Lady Beach Mandarin warned Benham against the Balkans; the Balkans were getting to be too handy for Easter and summer holidays, and now that there were several good hotels in Servia and Montenegro and Sofia, they were being overdone. Everybody went to the Balkans and came back with a pet nationality. She loathed pet nationalities. She believed most people loathed them nowadays. It was stale: it was GLADSTONIAN. She was all for specialization in social reform. She thought Benham ought to join the Fabian Society and consult the Webbs. Quite a number of able young men had been placed with the assistance of the Webbs. They were, she said, "a perfect fount. . . ."

Two other people, independently of each other, pointed out to Benham the helpfulness of a few articles in the half-crown monthlies. . . .

"What are the assumptions underlying all this?" Benham asked himself in a phase of lucidity.

And after reflection. "Good God! The assumptions! What do they think will satisfy me? . . ."

Everybody, however, did not point to Parliament. Several people seemed to think Travel, with a large T, was indicated. One distant cousin of Sir Godfrey's, the kind of man of the world who has long moustaches, was for big game shooting. "Get right out of all this while you are young," he said. "There's nothing to compare with stopping a charging lion at twenty yards. I've done it, my boy. You can come back for all this pow-wow afterwards." He gave the diplomatic service as a second choice. "There you are," he said, "first-rate social position, nothing to do, theatres, operas, pretty women, colour, life. The best of good times. Barring Washington, that is. But Washington, they say, isn't as bad as it used to be--since Teddy has Europeanized 'em. . . ."

Even the Reverend Harold Benham took a subdued but thoughtful share in his son's admonition. He came up to the flat--due precautions were taken to prevent a painful encounter--he lunched at his son's new club, and he was visibly oppressed by the contrast between the young man's youthful fortunes and his own. As visibly he bore up bravely. "There are few men, Poff, who would not envy you your opportunities," he said. "You have the Feast of Life spread out at your feet. . . . I hope you have had yourself put up for the Athenaeum. They say it takes years. When I was a young man--and ambitious--I thought that some day I might belong to the Athenaeum. . . . One has to learn. . . ."

And with an effect of detachment, just as though it didn't belong to the rest of him at all, there was beginning a sort of backstairs and underside to Benham's life. There is no need to discuss how inevitable that may or may not be in the case of a young man of spirit and large means, nor to embark upon the discussion of the temptations and opportunities of large cities. Several ladies, of various positions and qualities, had reflected upon his manifest need of education. There was in particular Mrs. Skelmersdale, a very pretty little widow with hazel eyes, black hair, a mobile mouth, and a pathetic history, who talked of old music to him and took him to a Dolmetsch concert in Clifford's Inn, and expanded that common interest to a general participation in his indefinite outlook. She advised him about his probable politics--everybody did that--but when he broke through his usual reserve and suggested views of his own, she was extraordinarily sympathetic. She was so sympathetic and in such a caressing way that she created a temporary belief in her understanding, and it was quite imperceptibly that he was drawn into the discussion of modern ethical problems. She herself was a rather stimulating instance of modern ethical problems. She told him something of her own story, and then their common topics narrowed down very abruptly. He found he could help her in several ways. There is, unhappily, a disposition on the part of many people, who ought to know better, to regard a role played by Joseph during his earlier days in Egypt as a ridiculous one. This point of view became very inopportunistly dominant in Benham's mind when he was lunching TETE A TETE with Mrs. Skelmersdale at her flat. . . .

The ensuing intimacy was of an entirely concealed and respectable nature, but a certain increased preoccupation in his manner set Lady

Marayne thinking. He had as a matter of fact been taken by surprise.

Still he perceived that it is no excuse for a man that he has been taken by surprise. Surprises in one's own conduct ought not to happen. When they do happen then an aristocrat ought to stick to what he had done. He was now in a subtle and complicated relationship to Mrs. Skelmersdale, a relationship in which her pride had become suddenly a matter of tremendous importance. Once he had launched himself upon this affair, it was clear to him that he owed it to her never to humiliate her. And to go back upon himself now would be a tremendous humiliation for her. You see, he had helped her a little financially. And she looked to him, she wanted him. . . .

She wasn't, he knew, altogether respectable. Indeed, poor dear, her ethical problems, already a little worn, made her seem at times anything but respectable. He had met her first one evening at Jimmy Gluckstein's when he was forming his opinion of Art. Her manifest want of interest in pictures had attracted him. And that had led to music. And to the mention of a Clementi piano, that short, gentle, sad, old, little sort of piano people will insist upon calling a spinet, in her flat.

And so to this. . . .

It was very wonderful and delicious, this first indulgence of sense.

It was shabby and underhand.

The great god Pan is a glorious god. (And so was Swinburne.) And what can compare with the warmth of blood and the sheen of sunlit limbs?

But Priapus. . . .

She was the most subtle, delightful and tender of created beings.

She had amazing streaks of vulgarity.

And some astonishing friends.

Once she had seemed to lead the talk deliberately to money matters.

She loved him and desired him. There was no doubt of it.

There was a curious effect about her as though when she went round the corner she would become somebody else. And a curious recurrent feeling that round the corner there was somebody else.

He had an extraordinary feeling that his mother knew about this business. This feeling came from nothing in her words or acts, but from some indefinable change in her eyes and bearing towards him. But how could she know?

It was unlikely that she and Mrs. Skelmersdale would ever meet, and it seemed to him that it would be a particularly offensive incident for them to meet.

There were times now when life took on a grey and boring quality such as it had never had before he met Mrs. Skelmersdale, and the only remedy was to go to her. She could restore his nervous tranquillity, his feeling of solidity and reality, his pride in himself. For a time, that is.

Nevertheless his mind was as a whole pervaded by the feeling that he ought not to have been taken by surprise.

And he had the clearest conviction in his mind that if now he could be put back again to the day before that lunch. . . .

No! he should not have gone there to lunch.

He had gone there to see her Clementi piano.

Had he or had he not thought beforehand of any other possibility?

On a point so vital his memory was curiously unsure.

8

The worry and disorganization of Benham's life and thoughts increased as the spring advanced. His need in some way to pull things together became overpowering. He began to think of Billy Prothero, more and more did it seem desirable to have a big talk with Billy and place everything that had got disturbed. Benham thought of going to Cambridge for a week of exhaustive evenings. Small engagements delayed that expedition. . . .

Then came a day in April when all the world seemed wrong to Benham. He was irritable; his will was unstable; whatever presented itself to be done presented itself as undesirable; he could settle to nothing. He had been keeping away from Mrs. Skelmersdale and in the morning there came a little note from her designed to correct this abstention. She understood the art of the attractive note. But he would not decide to go to her. He left the note unanswered.

Then came his mother at the telephone and it became instantly certain to Benham that he could not play the dutiful son that evening. He answered her that he could not come to dinner. He had engaged himself. "Where?"

"With some men."

There was a pause and then his mother's voice came, flattened by disappointment. "Very well then, little Poff. Perhaps I shall see you to-morrow."

He replaced the receiver and fretted back into his study, where the notes on aristocracy lay upon his desk, the notes he had been pretending to work over all the morning.

"Damned liar!" he said, and then, "Dirty liar!" He decided to lunch at the club, and in the afternoon he was moved to telephone an appointment with his siren. And having done that he was bound to keep it.

About one o'clock in the morning he found himself walking back to Finacue Street. He was no longer a fretful conflict of nerves, but if anything he was less happy than he had been before. It seemed to him that London was a desolate and inglorious growth.

London ten years ago was much less nocturnal than it is now. And not so brightly lit. Down the long streets came no traffic but an occasional hansom. Here and there a cat halted or bolted in the road. Near Piccadilly a policeman hovered artfully in a doorway, and then came a few belated prostitutes waylaying the passers-by, and a few youths and men, wearily lust driven.

As he turned up New Bond Street he saw a figure that struck him as familiar. Surely!--it was Billy Prothero! Or at any rate it was astonishingly like Billy Prothero. He glanced again and the likeness was more doubtful. The man had his back to Benham, he was halting and looking back at a woman.

By some queer flash of intuition it came to Benham that even if this was not Prothero, still Prothero did these things. It might very well be Prothero even, though, as he now saw, it wasn't. Everybody did these things. . . .

It came into Benham's head for the first time that life could be tiresome.

This Bond Street was a tiresome place; with its shops all shut and muffled, its shops where in the crowded daytime one bought costly furniture, costly clothes, costly scent, sweets, bibelots, pictures, jewellery, presents of all sorts, clothes for Mrs. Skelmersdale, sweets for Mrs. Skelmersdale, presents for Mrs. Skelmersdale, all the elaborate fittings and equipage of--THAT!

"Good night, dear," a woman drifted by him.

"I've SAID good night," he cried, "I've SAID good night," and so went on to his flat. The unquenchable demand, the wearisome insatiability of sex! When everything else has gone, then it shows itself bare in the bleak small hours. And at first it had seemed so light a matter! He went to bed, feeling dog-tired, he went to bed at an hour and with a finished completeness that Merkle would have regarded as entirely becoming in a young gentleman of his position.

And a little past three o'clock in the morning he awoke to a mood of indescribable desolation. He awoke with a start to an agony of remorse and self-reproach.

9

For a time he lay quite still staring at the darkness, then he groaned and turned over. Then, suddenly, like one who fancies he hears a strange noise, he sat up in bed and listened. "Oh, God!" he said at last.

And then: "Oh! The DIRTINESS of life! The dirty muddle of life!

"What are we doing with life? What are we all doing with life?"

"It isn't only this poor Milly business. This only brings it to a head. Of course she wants money. . . ."

His thoughts came on again.

"But the ugliness!

"Why did I begin it?"

He put his hands upon his knees and pressed his eyes against the backs of his hands and so remained very still, a blankness beneath his own question.

After a long interval his mind moved again.

And now it was as if he looked upon his whole existence, he seemed to see in a large, clear, cold comprehensiveness, all the wasted days, the fruitless activities, the futilities, the perpetual postponements that had followed his coming to London. He saw it all as a joyless indulgence, as a confusion of playthings and undisciplined desires, as a succession of days that began amiably and weakly, that became steadily more crowded with ignoble and trivial occupations, that had sunken now to indignity and uncleanness. He was overwhelmed by that persuasion, which only freshly soiled youth can feel in its extreme intensity, that life was slipping away from him, that the sands were running out, that in a little while his existence would be irretrievably lost.

By some trick of the imagination he saw life as an interminable Bond Street, lit up by night lamps, desolate, full of rubbish, full of the very best rubbish, trappings, temptations, and down it all he

drove, as the damned drive, wearily, inexplicably.

WHAT ARE WE UP TO WITH LIFE! WHAT ARE WE MAKING OF LIFE!

But hadn't he intended to make something tremendous of life? Hadn't he come to London trailing a glory? . . .

He began to remember it as a project. It was the project of a great World-State sustained by an aristocracy of noble men. He was to have been one of those men, too fine and far-reaching for the dull manoeuvres of such politics as rule the world to-day. The project seemed still large, still whitely noble, but now it was unlit and dead, and in the foreground he sat in the flat of Mrs. Skelmersdale, feeling dissipated and fumbling with his white tie. And she was looking tired. "God!" he said. "How did I get there?"

And then suddenly he reached out his arms in the darkness and prayed aloud to the silences.

"Oh, God! Give me back my visions! Give me back my visions!"

He could have imagined he heard a voice calling upon him to come out into life, to escape from the body of this death. But it was his own voice that called to him. . . .

10

The need for action became so urgent in him, that he got right out of his bed and sat on the edge of it. Something had to be done at once. He did not know what it was but he felt that there could be no more sleep, no more rest, no dressing nor eating nor going forth

before he came to decisions. Christian before his pilgrimage began was not more certain of this need of flight from the life of routine and vanities.

What was to be done?

In the first place he must get away and think about it all, think himself clear of all these--these immediacies, these associations and relations and holds and habits. He must get back to his vision, get back to the God in his vision. And to do that he must go alone.

He was clear he must go alone. It was useless to go to Prothero, one weak man going to a weaker. Prothero he was convinced could help him not at all, and the strange thing is that this conviction had come to him and had established itself incontestably because of that figure at the street corner, which had for just one moment resembled Prothero. By some fantastic intuition Benham knew that Prothero would not only participate but excuse. And he knew that he himself could endure no excuses. He must cut clear of any possibility of qualification. This thing had to be stopped. He must get away, he must get free, he must get clean. In the extravagance of his reaction Benham felt that he could endure nothing but solitary places and to sleep under the open sky.

He wanted to get right away from London and everybody and lie in the quiet darkness and stare up at the stars.

His plans grew so definite that presently he was in his dressing-gown and turning out the maps in the lower drawer of his study bureau. He would go down into Surrey with a knapsack, wander along the North Downs until the Guildford gap was reached, strike across the Weald country to the South Downs and then beat eastward. The very thought of it brought a coolness to his mind. He knew that over those southern hills one could be as lonely as in the wilderness and as free to talk to God. And there he would settle

something. He would make a plan for his life and end this torment.

When Merkle came in to him in the morning he was fast asleep.

The familiar curtain rings awakened Benham. He turned his head over, stared for a moment and then remembered.

"Merkle," he said, "I am going for a walking tour. I am going off this morning. Haven't I a rucksack?"

"You 'ave a sort of canvas bag, sir, with pockets to it," said Merkle. "Will you be needing the VERY 'eavy boots with 'obnails-- Swiss, I fancy, sir--or your ordinary shooting boots?"

"And when may I expect you back, sir?" asked Merkle as the moment for departure drew near.

"God knows," said Benham, "I don't."

"Then will there be any address for forwarding letters, sir?"

Benham hadn't thought of that. For a moment he regarded Merkle's scrupulous respect with a transient perplexity.

"I'll let you know, Merkle," he said. "I'll let you know."

For some days at least, notes, telephone messages, engagements, all this fuss and clamour about nothing, should clamour for him in vain. . . .

"But how closely," cried White, in a mood of cultivated enthusiasm; "how closely must all the poor little stories that we tell to-day follow in the footsteps of the Great Exemplars! A little while ago and the springtime freshness of Tobias irradiated the page. Now see! it is Christian--."

Indeed it looked extremely like Christian as Benham went up across the springy turf from Epsom Downs station towards the crest of the hill. Was he not also fleeing in the morning sunlight from the City of Destruction? Was he not also seeking that better city whose name is Peace? And there was a bundle on his back. It was the bundle, I think, that seized most firmly upon the too literary imagination of White.

But the analogy of the bundle was a superficial one. Benham had not the slightest desire to lose it from his shoulders. It would have inconvenienced him very greatly if he had done so. It did not contain his sins. Our sins nowadays are not so easily separated. It contained a light, warm cape-coat he had bought in Switzerland and which he intended to wrap about him when he slept under the stars, and in addition Merkle had packed it with his silk pyjamas, an extra pair of stockings, tooth-brush, brush and comb, a safety razor. . . . And there were several sheets of the Ordnance map.

12

The urgency of getting away from something dominated Benham to the exclusion of any thought of what he might be getting to. That muddle of his London life had to be left behind. First, escape. . .

.

Over the downs great numbers of larks were singing. It was warm

April that year and early. All the cloud stuff in the sky was gathered into great towering slow-sailing masses, and the rest was blue of the intensest. The air was so clean that Benham felt it clean in the substance of his body. The chestnuts down the hill to the right were flowering, the beeches were luminously green, and the oaks in the valley foaming gold. And sometimes it was one lark filled his ears, and sometimes he seemed to be hearing all the larks for miles about him. Presently over the crest he would be out of sight of the grand stand and the men exercising horses, and that brace of red-jacketed golfers. . . .

What was he to do?

For a time he could think of nothing to do except to keep up and out of the valley. His whole being seemed to have come to his surfaces to look out at the budding of the year and hear the noise of the birds. And then he got into a long road from which he had to escape, and trespassing southward through plantations he reached the steep edge of the hills and sat down over above a great chalk pit somewhere near Dorking and surveyed all the tumbled wooded spaces of the Weald. . . . It is after all not so great a country this Sussex, nor so hilly, from deepest valley to highest crest is not six hundred feet, yet what a greatness of effect it can achieve! There is something in those downland views which, like sea views, lifts a mind out to the skies. All England it seemed was there to Benham's vision, and the purpose of the English, and his own purpose in the world. For a long time he surveyed the large delicacy of the detail before him, the crests, the tree-protected houses, the fields and farmsteads, the distant gleams of water. And then he became interested in the men who were working in the chalk pit down below.

They at any rate were not troubled with the problem of what to do with their lives.

Benham found his mind was now running clear, and so abundantly that he could scarcely, he felt, keep pace with it. As he thought his flow of ideas was tinged with a fear that he might forget what he was thinking. In an instant, for the first time in his mental existence, he could have imagined he had discovered Labour and seen it plain. A little while ago and he had seemed a lonely man among the hills, but indeed he was not lonely, these men had been with him all the time, and he was free to wander, to sit here, to think and choose simply because those men down there were not free. HE WAS SPENDING THEIR LEISURE. . . . Not once but many times with Prothero

had he used the phrase RICHESSE OBLIGE. Now he remembered it. He began to remember a mass of ideas that had been overlaid and stifling within him. This was what Merkle and the club servants and the entertainments and engagements and his mother and the artistic touts and the theatrical touts and the hunting and the elaboration of games and--Mrs. Skelmersdale and all that had clustered thickly round him in London had been hiding from him. Those men below there had not been trusted to choose their work; they had been given it. And he had been trusted. . . .

And now to grapple with it! Now to get it clear! What work was he going to do? That settled, he would deal with his distractions readily enough. Until that was settled he was lax and exposed to every passing breeze of invitation.

"What work am I going to do? What work am I going to do?" He repeated it.

It is the only question for the aristocrat. What amusement? That for a footman on holiday. That for a silly child, for any creature

that is kept or led or driven. That perhaps for a tired invalid, for a toiler worked to a rag. But able-bodied amusement! The arms of Mrs. Skelmersdale were no worse than the solemn aimlessness of hunting, and an evening of dalliance not an atom more reprehensible than an evening of chatter. It was the waste of him that made the sin. His life in London had been of a piece together. It was well that his intrigue had set a light on it, put a point to it, given him this saving crisis of the nerves. That, indeed, is the chief superiority of idle love-making over other more prevalent forms of idleness and self-indulgence; it does at least bear its proper label. It is reprehensible. It brings your careless honour to the challenge of concealment and shabby evasions and lies. . . .

But in this pellucid air things took their proper proportions again.

And now what was he to do?

"Politics," he said aloud to the turf and the sky.

Is there any other work for an aristocratic man? . . . Science? One could admit science in that larger sense that sweeps in History, or Philosophy. Beyond that whatever work there is is work for which men are paid. Art? Art is nothing aristocratic except when it is a means of scientific or philosophical expression. Art that does not argue nor demonstrate nor discover is merely the craftsman's impudence.

He pulled up at this and reflected for a time with some distinguished instances in his mind. They were so distinguished, so dignified, they took their various arts with so admirable a gravity that the soul of this young man recoiled from the verdicts to which his reasoning drove him. "It's not for me to judge them," he decided, "except in relation to myself. For them there may be tremendous significances in Art. But if these do not appear to me, then so far as I am concerned they do not exist for me. They are

not in my world. So far as they attempt to invade me and control my attitudes or my outlook, or to judge me in any way, there is no question of their impudence. Impudence is the word for it. My world is real. I want to be really aristocratic, really brave, really paying for the privilege of not being a driven worker. The things the artist makes are like the things my private dream-artist makes, relaxing, distracting. What can Art at its greatest be, pure Art that is, but a more splendid, more permanent, transmissible reverie! The very essence of what I am after is NOT to be an artist. . . ."

After a large and serious movement through his mind he came back to Science, Philosophy or Politics as the sole three justifications for the usurpation of leisure.

So far as devotion to science went, he knew he had no specific aptitude for any departmentalized subject, and equally he felt no natural call to philosophy. He was left with politics. . . .

"Or else, why shouldn't I go down there and pick up a shovel and set to work? To make leisure for my betters. . . ."

And now it was that he could take up the real trouble that more than anything else had been keeping him ineffective and the prey of every chance demand and temptation during the last ten months. He had not been able to get himself into politics, and the reason why he had not been able to do so was that he could not induce himself to fit in. Statecraft was a remote and faded thing in the political life of the time; politics was a choice of two sides in a game, and either side he found equally unattractive. Since he had come down from Cambridge the Tariff Reform people had gone far to capture the Conservative party. There was little chance of a candidature for him without an adhesion to that. And he could find nothing he could imagine himself working for in the declarations of the Tariff Reform people. He distrusted them, he disliked them. They took all the

light and pride out of imperialism, they reduced it to a shabby conspiracy of the British and their colonies against foreign industrialism. They were violent for armaments and hostile to education. They could give him no assurance of any scheme of growth and unification, and no guarantees against the manifest dangers of economic disturbance and political corruption a tariff involves. Imperialism without noble imaginations, it seemed to him, was simply nationalism with megalomania. It was swaggering, it was greed, it was German; its enthusiasm was forced, its nobility a vulgar lie. No. And when he turned to the opposite party he found little that was more attractive. They were prepared, it seemed, if they came into office, to pull the legislature of the British Isles to pieces in obedience to the Irish demand for Home Rule, and they were totally unprepared with any scheme for doing this that had even a chance of success. In the twenty years that had elapsed since Gladstone's hasty and disastrous essay in political surgery they had studied nothing, learnt nothing, produced no ideas whatever in the matter. They had not had the time. They had just negotiated, like the mere politicians they were, for the Nationalist vote. They seemed to hope that by a marvel God would pacify Ulster. Lord Dunraven, Plunkett, were voices crying in the wilderness. The sides in the party game would as soon have heeded a poet. . . . But unless Benham was prepared to subscribe either to Home Rule or Tariff Reform there was no way whatever open to him into public life. He had had some decisive conversations. He had no illusions left upon that score. . . .

Here was the real barrier that had kept him inactive for ten months. Here was the problem he had to solve. This was how he had been left out of active things, a prey to distractions, excitements, idle temptations--and Mrs. Skelmersdale.

Running away to shoot big game or explore wildernesses was no remedy. That was just running away. Aristocrats do not run away. What of his debt to those men down there in the quarry? What of his

debt to the unseen men in the mines away in the north? What of his debt to the stokers on the liners, and to the clerks in the city? He reiterated the cardinal article of his creed: The aristocrat is a privileged man in order that he may be a public and political man.

But how is one to be a political man when one is not in politics?

Benham frowned at the Weald. His ideas were running thin.

He might hammer at politics from the outside. And then again how? He would make a list of all the things that he might do. For example he might write. He rested one hand on his knee and lifted one finger and regarded it. COULD he write? There were one or two men who ran papers and seemed to have a sort of independent influence. Strachey, for example, with his SPECTATOR; Maxse, with his NATIONAL REVIEW. But they were grown up, they had formed their ideas. He had to learn first.

He lifted a second finger. How to learn? For it was learning that he had to do.

When one comes down from Oxford or Cambridge one falls into the mistake of thinking that learning is over and action must begin. But until one perceives clearly just where one stands action is impossible.

How is one with no experience of affairs to get an experience of affairs when the door of affairs is closed to one by one's own convictions? Outside of affairs how can one escape being flimsy? How can one escape becoming merely an intellectual like those wordy Fabians, those writers, poseurs, and sham publicists whose wrangles he had attended? And, moreover, there is danger in the leisure of your intellectual. One cannot be always reading and thinking and

discussing and inquiring. . . . WOULD IT NOT BE BETTER AFTER ALL TO MAKE A CONCESSION, SWALLOW HOME RULE OR TARIFF REFORM, AND SO AT LEAST GET HIS HANDS ON THINGS?

And then in a little while the party conflict would swallow him up?

Still it would engage him, it would hold him. If, perhaps, he did not let it swallow him up. If he worked with an eye open for opportunities of self-assertion. . . .

The party game had not altogether swallowed "Mr. Arthur." . . .

But every one is not a Balfour. . . .

He reflected profoundly. On his left knee his left hand rested with two fingers held up. By some rapid mental alchemy these fingers had now become Home Rule and Tariff Reform. His right hand which had hitherto taken no part in the controversy, had raised its index finger by imperceptible degrees. It had been raised almost subconsciously. And by still obscurer processes this finger had become Mrs. Skelmersdale. He recognized her sudden reappearance above the threshold of consciousness with mild surprise. He had almost forgotten her share in these problems. He had supposed her dismissed to an entirely subordinate position. . . .

Then he perceived that the workmen in the chalk pit far below had knocked off and were engaged upon their midday meal. He understood why his mind was no longer moving forward with any alacrity.

Food?

The question where he should eat arose abruptly and dismissed all other problems from his mind. He unfolded a map. Here must be the

chalk pit, here was Dorking. That village was Brockham Green. Should he go down to Dorking or this way over Box Hill to the little inn at Burford Bridge. He would try the latter.

14

The April sunset found our young man talking to himself for greater emphasis, and wandering along a turfy cart-track through a wilderness mysteriously planted with great bushes of rhododendra on the Downs above Shere. He had eaten a belated lunch at Burford Bridge, he had got some tea at a little inn near a church with a splendid yew tree, and for the rest of the time he had wandered and thought. He had travelled perhaps a dozen or fifteen miles, and a good way from his first meditations above the Dorking chalk pit.

He had recovered long ago from that remarkable conception of an active if dishonest political career as a means of escaping Mrs. Skelmersdale and all that Mrs. Skelmersdale symbolized. That would be just louting from one bad thing to another. He had to settle Mrs. Skelmersdale clean and right, and he had to do as exquisitely right in politics as he could devise. If the public life of the country had got itself into a stupid antagonism of two undesirable things, the only course for a sane man of honour was to stand out from the parties and try and get them back to sound issues again. There must be endless people of a mind with himself in this matter. And even if there were not, if he was the only man in the world, he still had to follow his lights and do the right. And his business was to find out the right. . . .

He came back from these imaginative excursions into contemporary politics with one idea confirmed in his mind, an idea that had been indeed already in his mind during his Cambridge days. This was the

idea of working out for himself, thoroughly and completely, a political scheme, a theory of his work and duty in the world, a plan of the world's future that should give a rule for his life. The Research Magnificent was emerging. It was an alarmingly vast proposal, but he could see no alternative but submission, a plebeian's submission to the currents of life about him.

Little pictures began to flit before his imagination of the way in which he might build up this tremendous inquiry. He would begin by hunting up people, everybody who seemed to have ideas and promise ideas he would get at. He would travel far--and exhaustively. He would, so soon as the ideas seemed to indicate it, hunt out facts. He would learn how the world was governed. He would learn how it did its thinking. He would live sparingly. ("Not TOO sparingly," something interpolated.) He would work ten or twelve hours a day. Such a course of investigation must pass almost of its own accord into action and realization. He need not trouble now how it would bring him into politics. Inevitably somewhere it would bring him into politics. And he would travel. Almost at once he would travel. It is the manifest duty of every young aristocrat to travel. Here he was, ruling India. At any rate, passively, through the mere fact of being English, he was ruling India. And he knew nothing of India. He knew nothing indeed of Asia. So soon as he returned to London his preparations for this travel must begin, he must plot out the men to whom he would go, and so contrive that also he would go round the world. Perhaps he would get Lionel Maxim to go with him. Or if Maxim could not come, then possibly Prothero. Some one surely could be found, some one thinking and talking of statecraft and the larger idea of life. All the world is not swallowed up in every day. . . .

His mind shifted very suddenly from these large proposals to an entirely different theme. These mental landslips are not unusual when men are thinking hard and wandering. He found himself holding a trial upon himself for Presumptuousness, for setting himself up against the wisdom of the ages, and the decisions of all the established men in the world, for being in short a Presumptuous Sort of Ass. He was judge and jury and prosecutor, but rather inexplicably the defence was conducted in an irregular and undignified way by some inferior stratum of his being.

At first the defence contented itself with arguments that did at least aim to rebut the indictment. The decisions of all the established men in the world were notoriously in conflict. However great was the gross wisdom of the ages the net wisdom was remarkably small. Was it after all so very immodest to believe that the Liberals were right in what they said about Tariff Reform, and the Tories right in their criticism of Home Rule?

And then suddenly the defence threw aside its mask and insisted that Benham had to take this presumptuous line because there was no other tolerable line possible for him.

"Better die with the Excelsior chap up the mountains," the defence interjected.

Than what?

Consider the quality Benham had already betrayed. He was manifestly incapable of a decent modest mediocre existence. Already he had ceased to be--if one may use so fine a word for genteel abstinence--virtuous. He didn't ride well, he hadn't good hands, and he hadn't good hands for life. He must go hard and harsh, high or low. He was a man who needed BITE in his life. He was exceptionally capable of boredom. He had been bored by London. Social occasions

irritated him, several times he had come near to gross incivilities, art annoyed him, sport was an effort, wholesome perhaps, but unattractive, music he loved, but it excited him. The defendant broke the sunset calm by uttering amazing and improper phrases.

"I can't smug about in a state of falsified righteousness like these Crampton chaps.

"I shall roll in women. I shall rollick in women. If, that is, I stay in London with nothing more to do than I have had this year past.

"I've been sliding fast to it. . . .

"NO! I'M DAMNED IF I DO! . . .

16

For some time he had been bothered by a sense of something, something else, awaiting his attention. Now it came swimming up into his consciousness. He had forgotten. He was, of course, going to sleep out under the stars.

He had settled that overnight, that was why he had this cloak in his rucksack, but he had settled none of the details. Now he must find some place where he could lie down. Here, perhaps, in this strange forgotten wilderness of rhododendra.

He turned off from the track and wandered among the bushes. One might lie down anywhere here. But not yet; it was as yet barely twilight. He consulted his watch. HALF-PAST SEVEN.

Nearly dinner-time. . . .

No doubt Christian during the earlier stages of his pilgrimage noticed the recurrence of the old familiar hours of his life of emptiness and vanity. Or rather of vanity--simply. Why drag in the thought of emptiness just at this point? . . .

It was very early to go to bed.

He might perhaps sit and think for a time. Here for example was a mossy bank, a seat, and presently a bed. So far there were only three stars visible but more would come. He dropped into a reclining attitude. DAMP!

When one thinks of sleeping out under the stars one is apt to forget the dew.

He spread his Swiss cloak out on the soft thick carpeting of herbs and moss, and arranged his knapsack as a pillow. Here he would lie and recapitulate the thoughts of the day. (That squealing might be a young fox.) At the club at present men would be sitting about holding themselves back from dinner. Excellent the clear soup always was at the club! Then perhaps a Chateaubriand. That--what was that? Soft and large and quite near and noiseless. An owl!

The damp feeling was coming through his cloak. And this April night air had a knife edge. Early ice coming down the Atlantic perhaps. It was wonderful to be here on the top of the round world and feel the icebergs away there. Or did this wind come from Russia? He wasn't quite clear just how he was oriented, he had turned about so much. Which was east? Anyhow it was an extremely cold wind.

What had he been thinking? Suppose after all that ending with Mrs. Skelmersdale was simply a beginning. So far he had never looked sex in the face. . . .

He sat up and sneezed violently.

It would be ridiculous to start out seeking the clue to one's life and be driven home by rheumatic fever. One should not therefore incur the risk of rheumatic fever.

Something squealed in the bushes.

It was impossible to collect one's thoughts in this place. He stood up. The night was going to be bitterly cold, savagely, cruelly cold. . . .

No. There was no thinking to be done here, no thinking at all. He would go on along the track and presently he would strike a road and so come to an inn. One can solve no problems when one is engaged in a struggle with the elements. The thing to do now was to find that track again. . . .

It took Benham two hours of stumbling and walking, with a little fence climbing and some barbed wire thrown in, before he got down into Shere to the shelter of a friendly little inn. And then he negotiated a satisfying meal, with beef-steak as its central fact, and stipulated for a fire in his bedroom.

The landlord was a pleasant-faced man; he attended to Benham himself and displayed a fine sense of comfort. He could produce wine, a half-bottle of Australian hock, Big Tree brand No. 8, a virile wine, he thought of sardines to precede the meal, he provided a substantial Welsh rarebit by way of a savoury, he did not mind in the least that it was nearly ten o'clock. He ended by suggesting coffee. "And a liqueur?"

Benham had some Benedictine!

One could not slight such sympathetic helpfulness. The Benedictine was genuine. And then came the coffee.

The cup of coffee was generously conceived and honestly made.

A night of clear melancholy ensued. . . .

17

Hitherto Benham had not faced in any detail the problem of how to break with Mrs. Skelmersdale. Now he faced it pessimistically. She would, he knew, be difficult to break with. (He ought never to have gone there to lunch.) There would be something ridiculous in breaking off. In all sorts of ways she might resist. And face to face with her he might find himself a man divided against himself. That opened preposterous possibilities. On the other hand it was out of the question to do the business by letter. A letter hits too hard; it lies too heavy on the wound it has made. And in money matters he could be generous. He must be generous. At least financial worries need not complicate her distresses of desertion. But to suggest such generousities on paper, in cold ink, would be outrageous. And, in brief--he ought not to have gone there to lunch. After that he began composing letters at a great rate. Delicate--explanatory. Was it on the whole best to be explanatory? . . .

It was going to be a tremendous job, this breaking with her. And it had begun so easily. . . .

There was, he remembered with amazing vividness, a little hollow he had found under her ear, and how when he kissed her there it always made her forget her worries and ethical problems for a time and turn

to him. . . .

"No," he said grimly, "it must end," and rolled over and stared at the black. . . .

Like an insidious pedlar, that old rascal whom young literary gentlemen call the Great God Pan, began to spread his wares in the young man's memory. . . .

After long and feverish wanderings of the mind, and some talking to himself and walking about the room, he did at last get a little away from Mrs. Skelmersdale.

He perceived that when he came to tell his mother about this journey around the world there would be great difficulties. She would object very strongly, and if that did not do then she would become extremely abusive, compare him to his father, cry bitterly, and banish him suddenly and heartbrokenly from her presence for ever. She had done that twice already--once about going to the opera instead of listening to a lecture on Indian ethnology and once about a week-end in Kent. . . . He hated hurting his mother, and he was beginning to know now how easily she was hurt. It is an abominable thing to hurt one's mother--whether one has a justification or whether one hasn't.

Recoiling from this, he was at once resumed by Mrs. Skelmersdale. Who had in fact an effect of really never having been out of the room. But now he became penitent about her. His penitence expanded until it was on a nightmare scale. At last it blotted out the heavens. He felt like one of those unfortunate victims of religious mania who are convinced they have committed the Sin against the Holy Ghost. (Why had he gone there to lunch? That was the key to it. WHY had he gone there to lunch?) . . . He began to have remorse for everything, for everything he had ever done, for everything he he give in to

sex.

It's the same thing really. The misleading of instinct."

This set the key of his thought throughout the afternoon--until Amanda happened to him.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

AMANDA

1

Amanda happened to Benham very suddenly.

From Haslemere he had gone on to further heaths and gorse beyond Liphook, and thence he had wandered into a pretty district beset with Hartings. He had foh socialistic art as bookbinding. They were clearly 'advanced' people. And Amanda was tremendously important to them, she was their light, their pride, their most living thing. They focussed on her. When he talked to them all in general he talked to her in particular. He felt that some introduction of himself was due to these welcoming people. He tried to give it mixed with an itinerary and a sketch of his experiences. He praised the heather country and Harting Coombe and the Hartings. He told them that London had suddenly become intolerable--"In the spring sunshine."

"You live in London?" said Mrs. Wilder.

Yes. ad

ever not done, for everything in the world. In a moment of lucidity he even had remorse for drinking that stout honest cup of black coffee. . . .

And so on and so on and so on. . . .

When daylight came it found Benham still wide awake. Things crept mournfully out of the darkness into a reproachful clearness. The sound of birds that had been so delightful on the yesterday was now no longer agreeable. The thrushes, he thought, repeated themselves a great deal.

He fell asleep as it seemed only a few minutes before the landlord, accompanied by a great smell of frying bacon, came to call him.

18

The second day opened rather dully for Benham. There was not an idea left in his head about anything in the world. It was--SOLID. He walked through Bramley and Godalming and Witley and so came out upon the purple waste of Hindhead. He strayed away from the road and found a sunny place of turf amidst the heather and lay down and slept for an hour or so. He arose refreshed. He got some food at the Huts Inn on the Hindhead crest and went on across sunlit heathery wildernesses variegated by patches of spruce and fir and silver birch. And then suddenly his mental inanition was at an end and his thoughts were wide and brave again. He was astonished that for a moment he could have forgotten that he was vowed to the splendid life.

"Contenance by preoccupation;" he tried the phrase. . . .

"A man must not give in to fear; neither must he hunt himself upon a sandy ridge

looking very

beautifully into a sudden steep valley that he learnt was Harting Coombe; he had been through a West Harting and a South Harting and read finger-posts pointing to others of the clan; and in the evening, at the foot of a steep hill where two roads met, he sat down to consider whether he should go back and spend the night in one of the two kindly-looking inns of the latter place or push on over the South Downs towards the unknown luck of Singleton or Chichester. As he sat down two big retrievers, black and brown, came headlong down the road. The black carried a stick, the brown disputed and pursued. As they came abreast of him the foremost a little relaxed his hold, the pursuer grabbed at it, and in an instant the rivalry had flared to rage and a first-class dogfight was in progress.

Benham detested dog-fights. He stood up, pale and distressed. "Lie down!" he cried. "Shut up, you brutes!" and was at a loss for further action.

Then it was Amanda leapt into his world, a light, tall figure of a girl, fluttering a short petticoat. Hatless she was, brown, flushed, and her dark hair tossing loose, and in a moment she had the snarling furious dogs apart, each gripped firmly by its collar. Then with a wriggle black was loose and had closed again. Inspired by the best traditions of chivalry Benham came to her assistance. He was not expert with dogs. He grasped the black dog under its ear. He was bitten in the wrist, rather in excitement than malice, and with a certain excess of zeal he was strangling the brute before you could count ten.

Amanda seized the fallen stick and whacked the dog she held, reasonably but effectively until its yelps satisfied her. "There!" she said pitching her victim from her, and stood erect again. She

surveyed the proceedings of her helper for the first time.

"You needn't," she said, "choke Sultan anymore."

"Ugh!" she said, as though that was enough for Sultan. And peace was restored.

"I'm obliged to you. But-- . . . I say! He didn't bite you, did he? Oh, SULTAN!"

Sultan tried to express his disgust at the affair. Rotten business. When a fellow is fighting one can't be meticulous. And if people come interfering. Still--SORRY! So Sultan by his code of eye and tail.

"May I see? . . . Something ought to be done to this. . . ."

She took his wrist in her hand, and her cheek and eyelashes came within a foot of his face.

Some observant element in his composition guessed, and guessed quite accurately, that she was nineteen. . . .

2

She had an eyebrow like a quick stroke of a camel's-hair brush, she had a glowing face, half childish imp, half woman, she had honest hazel eyes, a voice all music, a manifest decision of character. And he must have this bite seen to at once. She lived not five minutes away. He must come with her.

She had an aunt who behaved like a mother and a mother who behaved

like a genteel visitor, and they both agreed with Amanda that although Mr. Walter Long and his dreadful muzzles and everything did seem to have stamped out rabies, yet you couldn't be too careful with a dog bite. A dog bite might be injurious in all sorts of ways--particularly Sultan's bite. He was, they had to confess, a dog without refinement, a coarse-minded omnivorous dog. Both the elder ladies insisted upon regarding Benham's wound as clear evidence of some gallant rescue of Aman And he had wanted to think things out.

In London one could do
no thinking--

"Here we do nothing else," said Amanda.

"Except dog-fights," said the elder cousin.

"I thought I would just wander and think and sleep in the open air. Have you ever tried to sleep in the open air?"

"In the summer we all do," said the younger cousin. "Amanda makes us. We go out on to the little lawn at the back."

"You see Amanda has some friends at Limpsfield. And there they all go out from imminent danger--

"she's always so RECKLESS with those dogs," as though Amanda was not manifestly capable of taking care of herself; and when he had been Listerined and bandaged, they would have it that he should join them at their supper-dinner, which was already prepared and waiting. They treated him as if he were still an undergraduate, they took his arrangements in hand as though he was a favourite nephew. He must stay in Harting that night. Both the Ship and the Coach and Horses were excellent inns, and over the Downs there would be nothing for miles and miles. . . .

The house was a little long house with a verandah and a garden in

front of it with flint-edged paths; the room in which they sat and ate was long and low and equipped with pieces of misfitting good furniture, an accidental-looking gilt tarnished mirror, and a sprinkling of old and middle-aged books. Some one had lit a fire, which cracked and spurted about cheerfully in a motherly fireplace, and a lamp and some candles got lit. Mrs. Wilder, Amanda's aunt, a comfortable dark broad-browed woman, directed things, and sat at the end of the table and placed Benham on her right hand between herself and Amanda. Amanda's mother remained undeveloped, a watchful little woman with at least an eyebrow like her daughter's. Her name, it seemed, was Morris. No servant appeared, but two cousins of a vague dark picturesqueness and with a stamp of thirty upon them, the first young women Benham had ever seen dressed in djibbahs, sat at the table or moved about and attended to the simple needs of the service. The reconciled dogs were in the room and shifted inquiring noses from one human being to another.

Amanda's people were so easy and intelligent and friendly, and Benham after his thirty hours of silence so freshly ready for human association, that in a very little while he could have imagined he had known and trusted this household for years. He had never met such people before, and yet there was something about them that seemed familiar--and then it occurred to him that something of their easy-going freedom was to be found in Russian novels. A photographic enlargement of somebody with a vegetarian expression of face and a special kind of slouch hat gave the atmosphere a flavour of Socialism, and a press and tools and stamps and pigments on an oak table in the corner suggested some suct and camp and sleep in the woods."

"Of course," reflected Mrs. Wilder, "in April it must be different."

"It IS different," said Benham with feeling; "the night comes five hours too soon. And it comes wet." He described his experiences and his flight to Shere and the kindly landlord and the cup of

coffee. "And after that I thought with a vengeance."

"Do you write things?" asked Amanda abruptly, and it seemed to him with a note of hope.

"No. No, it was just a private puzzle. It was something I couldn't get straight."

"And you have got it straight?" asked Amanda.

"I think so."

"You were making up your mind about something?"

"Amanda DEAR!" cried her mother.

"Oh! I don't mind telling you," said Benham.

They seemed such unusual people that he was moved to unusual confidences. They had that effect one gets at times with strangers freshly met as though they were not really in the world. And there was something about Amanda that made him want to explain himself to her completely.

"What I wanted to think about was what I should do with my life."

"Haven't you any WORK--?" asked the elder cousin.

"None that I'm obliged to do."

"That's where a man has the advantage," said Amanda with the tone of profound reflection. "You can choose. And what are you going to do with your life?"

"Amanda," her mother protested, "really you mustn't!"

"I'm going round the world to think about it," Benham told her.

"I'd give my soul to travel," said Amanda.

She addressed her remark to the salad in front of her.

"But have you no ties?" asked Mrs. Wilder.

"None that hold me," said Benham. "I'm one of those unfortunates who needn't do anything at all. I'm independent. You see my riddles. East and west and north and south, it's all my way for the taking. There's not an indication."

"If I were you," said Amanda, and reflected. Then she half turned herself to him. "I should go first to India," she said, "and I should shoot, one, two, three, yes, three tigers. And then I would see Farukhabad Sikri--I was reading in a book about it yesterday--where the jungle grows in the palaces; and then I would go right up the Himalayas, and then, then I would have a walking tour in Japan, and then I would sail in a sailing ship down to Borneo and Java and set myself up as a Ranee-- . . . And then I would think what I would do next."

"All alone, Amanda?" asked Mrs. Wilder.

"Only when I shoot tigers. You and mother should certainly come to Japan."

"But Mr. Benham perhaps doesn't intend to shoot tigers, Amanda?" said Amanda's mother.

"Not at once. My way will be a little different. I think I shall go first through Germany. And then down to Constantinople. And then I've some idea of getting across Asia Minor and Persia to

India. That would take some time. One must ride."

"Asia Minor ought to be fun," said Amanda. "But I should prefer India because of the tigers. It would be so jolly to begin with the tigers right away."

"It is the towns and governments and peoples I want to see rather than tigers," said Benham. "Tigers if they are in the programme. But I want to find out about--other things."

"Don't you think there's something to be found out at home?" said the elder cousin, blushing very brightly and speaking with the effort of one who speaks for conscience' sake.

"Betty's a Socialist," Amanda said to Benham with a suspicion of apology.

"Well, we're all rather that," Mrs. Wilder protested.

"If you are free, if you are independent, then don't you owe something to the workers?" Betty went on, getting graver and redder with each word.

"It's just because of that," said Benham, "that I am going round the world."

3

He was as free with these odd people as if he had been talking to Prothero. They were--alert. And he had been alone and silent and full of thinking for two clear days. He tried to explain why he found Socialism at once obvious and inadequate. . . .

Presently the supper things got themselves put away and the talk moved into a smaller room with several armchairs and a fire. Mrs. Wilder and the cousins and Amanda each smoked a cigarette as if it were symbolical, and they were joined by a grave grey-bearded man with a hyphenated name and slightly Socratic manner, dressed in a very blue linen shirt and collar, a very woolly mustard-coloured suit and loose tie, and manifestly devoted to one of those branches of exemplary domestic decoration that grow upon Socialist soil in England. He joined Betty in the opinion that the duty of a free and wealthy young man was to remain in England and give himself to democratic Socialism and the abolition of "profiteering." "Consider that chair," he said. But Benham had little feeling for the craftsmanship of chairs.

Under cross-examination Mr. Rathbone-Sanders became entangled and prophetic. It was evident he had never thought out his "democratic," he had rested in some vague tangle of idealism from which Benham now set himself with the zeal of a specialist to rout him. Such an argument sprang up as one meets with rarely beyond the happy undergraduate's range. Everybody lived in the discussion, even Amanda's mother listened visibly. Betty said she herself was certainly democratic and Mrs. Wilder had always thought herself to be so, and outside the circle round the fire Amanda hovered impatiently, not quite sure of her side as yet, but eager to come down with emphasis at the first flash of intimation.

She came down vehemently on Benham's.

And being a very clear-cutting personality with an instinct for the material rendering of things, she also came and sat beside him on by the lamp and read the REPUBLIC very intently and very thoughtfully, occasionally turning over a page.

When Benham got back to London he experienced an unwonted desire to perform his social obligations to the utmost.

So soon as he had had some dinner at his club he wrote his South Harting friends a most agreeable letter of thanks for their kindness to him. In a little while he hoped he should see them again. His mother, too, was most desirous to meet them. . . . That done, he went on to his flat and to various aspects of life for which he was quite unprepared.

But here we may note that Amanda answered him. Her reply came some four days later. It was written in a square schoolgirl hand, it covered three sheets of notepaper, and it was a very intelligent essay upon the REPUBLIC of Plato. "Of course," she wrote, "the Guardians are inhumanthe little square-cornered sofa.

"Of course, Mr. Rathbone-Sanders," she said, "of course the world must belong to the people who dare. Of course people aren't all alike, and dull people, as Mr. Benham says, and spiteful people, and narrow people have no right to any voice at all in things. . . .

In saying this she did but echo Benham's very words, and all she said and did that evening was in quick response to Benham's earnest expression of his views. She found Benham a delightful novelty. She liked to argue because there was no other talk so lively, and

she had perhaps a lurking intellectual grudge against Mr. Rathbone-Sanders that made her welcome an ally. Everything from her that night that even verges upon the notable has been told, and yet it sufficed, together with something in the clear, long line of her limbs, in her voice, in her general physical quality, to convince Benham that she was the freest, finest, bravest spirit that he had ever encountered.

In the papers he left behind him was to be found his perplexed endeavours to explain this mental leap, that after all his efforts still remained unexplained. He had been vividly impressed by the decision and courage of her treatment of the dogs; it was just the sort of thing he could not do. And there was a certain contagiousness in the petting admiration with which her family treated her. But she was young and healthy and so was he, and in a second mystery lies the key of the first. He had fallen in love with her, and that being so whatever he needed that instantly she was. He needed a companion, clean and brave and understanding. . . .

In his bed in the Ship that night he thought of nothing but her before he went to sleep, and when next morning he walked on his way over the South Downs to Chichester his mind was full of her image and of a hundred pleasant things about her. In his confessions he wrote, "I felt there was a sword in her spirit. I felt she was as clean as the wind."

Love is the most chastening of powers, and he did not even remember now that two days before he had told the wind and the twilight that he would certainly "roll and rollick in women" unless there was work for him to do. She had a peculiarly swift and easy stride that went with him in his thoughts along the turf by the wayside halfway and more to Chichester. He thought always of the two of them as being side by side. His imagination became childishly romantic. The open down about him with its scrub of thorn and yew became the wilderness of the world, and through it they went--in armour, weightless

armour--and they wore long swords. There was a breeze blowing and larks were singing and something, something dark and tortuous dashed suddenly in headlong flight from before their feet. It was an ethical problem such as those Mrs. Skelmersdale nursed in her bosom. But at the sight of Amanda it had straightened out--and fled. . . .

And interweaving with such imaginings, he was some day to record, there were others. She had brought back to his memory the fancies that had been aroused in his first reading of Plato's REPUBLIC; she made him think of those women Guardians, who were the friends and mates of men. He wanted now to re-read that book and the LAWS. He could not remember if the Guardians were done in the LAWS as well as in the REPUBLIC. He wished he had both these books in his rucksack, but as he had not, he decided he would hunt for them in Chichester. When would he see Amanda again? He would ask his mother to make the acquaintance of these very interesting people, but as they did not come to London very much it might be some time before he had a chance of seeing her again. And, besides, he was going to America and India. The prospect of an exploration of the world was still noble and attractive; but he realized it would stand very much in the way of his seeing more of Amanda. Would it be a startling and unforgivable thing if presently he began to write to her? Girls of that age and spirit living in out-of-the-way villages have been known to marry. . . .

Marriage didn't at this stage strike Benham as an agreeable aspect of Amanda's possibilities; it was an inconvenience; his mind was running in the direction of pedestrian tours in armour of no particular weight, amidst scenery of a romantic wildness. . . .

When he had gone to the house and taken his leave that morning it had seemed quite in the vein of the establishment that he should be received by Amanda alone and taken up the long garden before anybody else appeared, to see the daffodils and the early apple-trees in blossom and the pear-trees white and delicious.

Then he had taken his leave of them all and made his social tentatives. Did they ever come to London? When they did they must let his people know. He would so like them to know his mother, Lady Marayne. And so on with much gratitude.

Amanda had said that she and the dogs would come with him up the hill,, but it was a glorious sort of inhumanity.

They had a spirit--like sharp knives cutting through life."

It was her best bit of phrasing and it pleased Benham very much. But, indeed, it was not her own phrasing, she had culled it from a disquisition into which she had led Mr. Rathbone-me from going to pieces--and wasting existence. It's rather difficult sometimes to tell what one thinks and feels--"

She had not really listened to him.

"Who is that woman," she interrupted sudd she had said it exactly as a boy might have said it, she had brought him up to the corner of Up Park and had sat down there on a heap of stones and watched him until he was out of sight, waving to him when he looked back. "Come back again," she had cried.

In Chichester he found a little green-bound REPUBLIC in a second-hand book-shop near the Cathedral, but there was no copy of the LAWS to be found in the place. Then he was taken with the brilliant idea of sleeping the night in Chichester and going back next day via Harting to Petersfield station and London. He carried out this scheme and got to South Harting neatly about four o'clock in the afternoon. He found Mrs. Wilder and Mrs. Morris and Amanda and the dogs entertaining Mr. Rathbone-Sanders at tea, and they all seemed a little surprised, and, except Mr. Rathbone-Sanders, they all seemed

pleased to see him again so soon. His explanation of why he hadn't gone back to London from Chichester struck him as a little unconvincing in the cold light of Mr. Rathbone-Sanders' eye. But Amanda was manifestly excited by his return, and he told them his impressions of Chichester and described the entertainment of the evening guest at a country inn and suddenly produced his copy of the REPUBLIC. "I found this in a book-shop," he said, "and I brought it for you, because it describes one of the best dreams of aristocracy there has ever been dreamt."

At first she praised it as a pretty book in the dearest little binding, and then realized that there were deeper implications, and became grave and said she would read it through and through, she loved such speculative reading.

She came to the door with the others and stayed at the door after they had gone in again. When he looked back at the corner of the road to Petersfield she was still at the door and waved farewell to him.

He only saw a light slender figure, but when she came back into the sitting-room Mr. Rathbone-Sanders noted the faint flush in her cheek and an unwonted abstraction in her eye.

And in the evening she tucked her feet up in the armchair Sanders, and she had sent it to Benham as she might have sent him a flower.

6

Benham re-entered the flat from which he had fled so precipitately with three very definite plans in his mind. The first was to set out upon his grand tour of the world with as little delay as

possible, to shut up this Finacue Street establishment for a long time, and get rid of the soul-destroying perfections ofenly, "Mrs. Fly-by-Night, or some such name, who rings you up on the telephone?"

Benham hesitaon't start saying things like a moral windmill in a whirlwind. It's all a muddle. I suppose every one in London is getting in or out of these entanglements--or something of the sort. And this seems a comparatively slight one. I wish it hadn't happened. They do happen."

An expression of perplexity came into her face. She looked at him. "Why do you want to throw her over?"

"I WANT to throw her over," said Benham.

He stood up and went to the hearthrug, and his mother reflected that this was exactly what all men did at just this phase of a discussion. Then things ceased to be sensible.

From overhead he said to her: "I want to get away from this complication, this servitude. I want to do some--some work. I want to get my mind clear and my hands clear. I want to study government and the big business of the world."

"And she's in the way?"

He assented.

"You men!" said Lady Marayne after a little pause. "What queer beasts you are! Here is a woman who is kind to you. She's fond of you. I could tell she's fond of you directly I heard her. And you amuse yourself with her. And then it's Gobble, Gobble, Gobble, Great Work, Hands Clear, Big Business of the World. Why couldn't you think of that before, Poff? Why did you begin with her Merkle. The

second was to end his ill-advised intimacy with little Mrs. Skelmersdale as generously and cheerfully as possible. The third was to bring Lady Marayne into social relations with the Wilder and Morris MENAGE at South Harting. It did not strike him that there was any incompatibility among these projects or any insurmountable difficulty in any of them until he was back in his flat.

The accumulation of letters, packages and telephone memoranda upon his desk included a number of notes and slips to remind him that both Mrs. Skelmersdale and his mother were ladies of some determination. Even as he stood turning over the pile of documents the mechanical vehemence of the telephone filled him with a restored sense of the adverse will in things. "Yes, mam," he heard Merkle's voice, "yes, mam. I will tell him, mam. Will you keep possession, mam." And then in the doorway of the study, "Mrs. Skelmersdale, sir. Upon the telephone, sir."

Benham reflected with various notes in his hand. Then he went to the telephone.

"You Wicked Boy, where have you been hiding?"

"I've been away. I may have to go away again."

"Not before you have seen me. Come round and tell me all about it."

Benham lied about an engagement.

"Then to-morrow in the morning." . . . Impossible.

"In the afternoon. You don't WANT to see me." Benham did want to see her.

"Come round and have a jolly little evening to-morrow night. I've got some more of that harpsichord music. And I'm dying to see you.

Don't you understand?"

Further lies. "Look here," said Benham, "can you come and have a talk in Kensington Gardens? You know the place, near that Chinese garden. Paddington Gate. . . ."

The lady's voice fell to flatness. She agreed. "But why not come to see me HERE?" she asked.

Benham hung up the receiver abruptly.

He walked slowly back to his study. "Phew!" he whispered to himself. It was like hitting her in the face. He didn't want to be a brute, but short of being a brute there was no way out for him from this entanglement. Why, oh! why the devil had he gone there to lunch? . . .

He resumed his examination of the waiting letters with a ruffled mind. The most urgent thing about them was the clear evidence of gathering anger on the part of his mother. He had missed a lunch party at Sir Godfrey's on Tuesday and a dinner engagement at Philip Magnet's, quite an important dinner in its way, with various promising young Liberals, on Wednesday evening. And she was furious at "this stupid mystery. Of course you're bound to be found out, and of course there will be a scandal." . . . He perceived that this last note was written on his own paper. "Merkle!" he cried sharply.

"Yessir!"

Merkle had been just outside, on call.

"Did my mother write any of these notes here?" he asked.

"Two, sir. Her ladyship was round here three times, sir."

"Did she see all these letters?"

"Not the telephone calls, sir. I 'ad put them on one side. But. . . . It's a little thing, sir."

He paused and came a step nearer. "You see, sir," he explained with the faintest flavour of the confidential softening his mechanical respect, "yesterday, when 'er ladyship was 'ere, sir, some one rang up on the telephone--"

"But you, Merkle--"

"Exactly, sir. But 'er ladyship said 'I'll go to that, Merkle,' and just for a moment I couldn't exactly think 'ow I could manage it, sir, and there 'er ladyship was, at the telephone. What passed, sir, I couldn't 'ear. I 'eard her say, 'Any message?' And I FANCY, sir, I 'eard 'er say, 'I'm the 'ousemaid,' but that, sir, I think must have been a mistake, sir."

"Must have been," said Benham. "Certainly--must have been. And the call you think came from--?"

"There again, sir, I'm quite in the dark. But of course, sir, it's usually Mrs. Skelmersdale, sir. Just about her time in the afternoon. On an average, sir. . . ."

7

"I went out of London to think about my life."

It was manifest that Lady Marayne did not believe him.

"Alone?" she asked.

"Of course alone."

"STUFF!" said Lady Marayne.

She had taken him into her own little sitting-room, she had thrown aside gloves and fan and theatre wrap, curled herself comfortably into the abundantly cushioned corner by the fire, and proceeded to a mixture of cross-examination and tirade that he found it difficult to make head against. She was vibrating between distressed solicitude and resentful anger. She was infuriated at his going away and deeply concerned at what could have taken him away. "I was worried," he said. "London is too crowded to think in. I wanted to get myself alone."

"And there I was while you were getting yourself alone, as you call it, wearing my poor little brains out to think of some story to tell people. I had to stuff them up you had a sprained knee at Chexington, and for all I knew any of them might have been seeing you that morning. Besides what has a boy like you to worry about? It's all nonsense, Poff."

She awaited his explanations. Benham looked for a moment like his father.

"I'm not getting on, mother," he said. "I'm scattering myself. I'm getting no grip. I want to get a better hold upon life, or else I do not see what is to keep ted, blushed, and regretted it.

"Mrs. Skelmersdale," he said after a little pause.

"It's all the same. Who is she?"

"She's a woman I met at a studio somewhere, and I went with her to one of those Dolmetsch concerts."

He stopped.

Lady Marayne considered him in silence for a little while. "All men," she said at last, "are alike. Husbands, sons and brothers, they are all alike. Sons! One expects them to be different. They aren't different. Why should they be? I suppose I ought to be shocked, Poff. But I'm not. She seems to be very fond of you."

"She's--she's very good--in her way. She's had a difficult life. . . ."

"You can't leave a man about for a moment," Lady Marayne reflected. "Poff, I wish you'd fetch me a glass of water."

When he returned she was looking very fixedly into the fire. "Put it down," she said, "anywhere. Poff! is this Mrs. Helter-Skelter a discreet sort of woman? Do you like her?" She asked a few additional particulars and Benham made his grudging admission of facts. "What I still don't understand, Poff, is why you have been away."

"I went away," said Benham, "because I want to clear things up."

"But why? Is there some one else?"

"No."

"You went alone? All the time?"

"I've told you I went alone. Do you think I tell you lies, mother?"

"Everybody tells lies somehow," said Lady Marayne. "Easy lies or stiff ones. Don't FLOURISH, Poff. D?"

"It was unexpected. . . ."

"STUFF!" said Lady Marayne for a second time. "Well," she said, "well. Your Mrs. Fly-by-Night,--oh it doesn't matter!--whatever she calls herself, must look after herself. I can't do anything for her. I'm not supposed even to know about her. I daresay she'll find her consolations. I suppose you want to go out of London and get away from it all. I can help you there, perhaps. I'm tired of London too. It's been a tiresome season. Oh! tiresome and disappointing! I want to go over to Ireland and travel about a little. The Pothercareys want us to come. They've asked us twice. . . ."

Benham braced himself to face fresh difficulties. It was amazing how different the world could look from his mother's little parlour and from the crest of the North Downs.

"But I want to start round the world," he cried with a note of acute distress. "I want to go to Egypt and India and see what is happening in the East, all this wonderful waking up of the East, I know nothing of the way the world is going-- . . ."

"India!" cried Lady Marayne. "The East. Poff, what is the MATTER with you? Has something happened--something else? Have you been having a love affair? --a REAL love affair?"

"Oh, DAMN love affairs!" cried Benham. "Mother!--I'm sorry, mother! But don't you see there's other things in the world for a man than having a good time and making love. I'm for something else than that. You've given me the splndidest time-- . . ."

"I see," cried Lady Marayne, "I see. I've bored you. I might have known I should have bored you."

"You've NOT bored me!" cried Benham.

He threw himself on the rug at her feet. "Oh, mother!" he said, "little, dear, gallant mother, don't make life too hard for me. I've got to do my job, I've got to find my job."

"I've bored you," she wept.

Suddenly she was weeping with all the unconcealed distressing grief of a disappointed child. She put her pretty be-ringed little hands in front of her face and recited the accumulation of her woes.

"I've done all I can for you, planned for you, given all my time for you and I've BORED you."

"Mother!"

"Don't come near me, Poff! Don't TOUCH me! All my plans. All my ambitions. Friends--every one. You don't know all I've given up for you. . . ."

He had never seen his mother weep before. Her self-abandonment amazed him. Her words were distorted by her tears. It was the most terrible and distressing of crises. . . .

"Go away from me! How can you help me? All I've done has been a failure! Failure! Failure!"

8

That night the silences of Finacue Street heard Benham's voice again. "I must do my job," he was repeating, "I must do my job."

Anyhow. . . ."

And then after a long pause, like a watchword and just a little unsurely: "Aristocracy. . . ."

The next day his resolution had to bear the brunt of a second ordeal. Mrs. Skelmersdale behaved beautifully and this made everything tormentingly touching and difficult. She convinced him she was really in love with him, and indeed if he could have seen his freshness and simplicity through her experienced eyes he would have known there was sound reason why she should have found him exceptional. And when his clumsy hints of compensation could no longer be ignored she treated him with a soft indignation, a tender resentment, that left him soft and tender. She looked at him with pained eyes and a quiver of the lips. What did he think she was? And then a little less credibly, did he think she would have given herself to him if she hadn't been in love with him? Perhaps that was not altogether true, but at any rate it was altogether true to her when she said it, and it was manifest that she did not for a moment intend him to have the cheap consolation of giving her money. But, and that seemed odd to Benham, she would not believe, just as Lady Marayne would not believe, that there was not some other woman in the case. He assured her and she seemed reassured, and then presently she was back at exactly the same question. Would no woman ever understand the call of Asia, the pride of duty, the desire for the world?

One sort of woman perhaps. . . .

It was odd that for the first time now, in the sunshine of Kensington Gardens, he saw the little gossamer lines that tell that thirty years and more have passed over a face, a little wrinkling of the eyelids, a little hardening of the mouth. How slight it is, how invisible it has been, how suddenly it appears! And the sunshine of the warm April afternoon, heightened it may be by her determined

unmercenary pose, betrayed too the faintest hint of shabbiness in her dress. He had never noticed these shadows upon her or her setting before and their effect was to fill him with a strange regretful tenderness. . . .

Perhaps men only begin to love when they cease to be dazzled and admire. He had thought she might reproach him, he had felt and feared she might set herself to stir his senses, and both these expectations had been unjust to her he saw, now that he saw her beside him, a brave, rather ill-advised and unlucky little struggler, stung and shamed. He forgot the particulars of that first lunch of theirs together and he remembered his mother's second contemptuous "STUFF!"

Indeed he knew now it had not been unexpected. Why hadn't he left this little sensitive soul and this little sensitive body alone? And since he hadn't done so, what right had he now to back out of their common adventure? He felt a sudden wild impulse to marry Mrs. Skelmersdale, in a mood between remorse and love and self-immolation, and then a sunlit young woman with a leaping stride in her paces, passed across his heavens, pointing to Asia and Utopia and forbidding even another thought of the banns. . . .

"You will kiss me good-bye, dear, won't you?" said Mrs. Skelmersdale, brimming over. "You will do that."

He couldn't keep his arm from her little shoulders. And as their lips touched he suddenly found himself weeping also. . . .

His spirit went limping from that interview. She chose to stay behind in her chair and think, she said, and each time he turned back she was sitting in the same attitude looking at him as he receded, and she had one hand on the chair back and her arm drawn up to it. The third time he waved his hat clumsily, and she started and then answered with her hand. Then the trees hid her. . . .

This sex business was a damnable business. If only because it made one hurt women. . . .

He had trampled on Mrs. Skelmersdale, he had hurt and disappointed his mother. Was he a brute? Was he a cold-blooded prig? What was this aristocracy? Was his belief anything more than a theory? Was he only dreaming of a debt to the men in the quarry, to the miners, to the men in the stokeholes, to the drudges on the fields? And while he dreamt he wounded and distressed real living creatures in the sleep-walk of his dreaming. . . .

So long as he stuck to his dream he must at any rate set his face absolutely against the establishment of any further relations with women.

Unless they were women of an entirely different type, women hardened and tempered, who would understand.

9

So Benham was able to convert the unfortunate Mrs. Skelmersdale into a tender but for a long time an entirely painful memory. But mothers are not so easily disposed of, and more particularly a mother whose conduct is coloured deeply by an extraordinary persuasion of having paid for her offspring twice over. Nolan was inexplicable; he was, Benham understood quite clearly, never to be mentioned again; but somehow from the past his shadow and his legacy cast a peculiar and perplexing shadow of undefined obligation upon Benham's outlook. His resolution to go round the world carried on his preparations rapidly and steadily, but at the same time his mother's thwarted and angry bearing produced a torture of remorse in

him. It was constantly in his mind, like the suit of the importunate widow, that he ought to devote his life to the little lady's happiness and pride, and his reason told him that even if he wanted to make this sacrifice he couldn't; the mere act of making it would produce so entirely catastrophic a revulsion. He could as soon have become a croquet champion or the curate of Chexington church, lines of endeavour which for him would have led straightly and simply to sacrilegious scandal or manslaughter with a mallet.

There is so little measure in the wild atonements of the young that it was perhaps as well for the Research Magnificent that the remorse of this period of Benham's life were too complicated and scattered for a cumulative effect. In the background of his mind and less subdued than its importance could seem to warrant was his promise to bring the Wilder-Morris people into relations with Lady Marayne. They had been so delightful to him that he felt quite acutely the slight he was putting upon them by this delay. Lady Marayne's moods, however, had been so uncertain that he had found no occasion to broach this trifling matter, and when at last the occasion came he perceived in the same instant the fullest reasons for regretting it.

"Ah!" she said, hanging only for a moment, and then: "you told me you were alone!" . . .

Her mind leapt at once to the personification of these people as all that had puzzled and baffled her in her son since his flight from London. They were the enemy, they had got hold of him.

"When I asked you if you were alone you pretended to be angry," she remembered with a flash. "You said, 'Do I tell lies?'"

"I WAS alone. Until-- It was an accident. On my walk I was alone."

But he flinched before her accusing, her almost triumphant, forefinger.

From the instant she heard of them she hated these South Harting people unrestrainedly. She made no attempt to conceal it. Her valiant bantam spirit caught at this quarrel as a refuge from the rare and uncongenial ache of his secession. "And who are they? What are they? What sort of people can they be to drag in a passing young man? I suppose this girl of theirs goes out every evening-- Was she painted, Poff?"

She whipped him with her questions as though she was slashing his face. He became dead-white and grimly civil, answering every question as though it was the sanest, most justifiable inquiry.

"Of course I don't know who they are. How should I know? What need is there to know?"

"There are ways of finding out," she insisted. "If I am to go down and make myself pleasant to these people because of you."

"But I implore you not to."

"And five minutes ago you were imploring me to! Of course I shall."

"Oh well!--well!"

"One has to know SOMETHING of the people to whom one commits oneself, surely."

"They are decent people; they are well-behaved people."

"Oh!--I'll behave well. Don't think I'll disgrace your casual acquaintances. But who they are, what they are, I WILL know. . . ."

On that point Lady Marayne was to score beyond her utmost expectations.

"Come round," she said over the telephone, two mornings later. "I've something to tell you."

She was so triumphant that she was sorry for him. When it came to telling him, she failed from her fierceness.

"Poff, my little son," she said, "I'm so sorry I hardly know how to tell you. Poff, I'm sorry. I have to tell you--and it's utterly beastly."

"But what?" he asked.

"These people are dreadful people."

"But how?"

"You've heard of the great Kent and Eastern Bank smash and the Marlborough Building Society frauds eight or nine years ago?"

"Vaguely. But what has that to do with them?"

"That man Morris."

She stopped short, and Benham nodded for her to go on.

"Her father," said Lady Marayne.

"But who was Morris? Really, mother, I don't remember."

"He was sentenced to seven years--ten years--I forget. He had done all sorts of dreadful things. He was a swindler. And when he went out of the dock into the waiting-room-- He had a signet ring with

prussic acid in it-- . . ."

"I remember now," he said.

A silence fell between them.

Benham stood quite motionless on the hearthrug and stared very hard at the little volume of Henley's poetry that lay upon the table.

He cleared his throat presently.

"You can't go and see them then," he said. "After all--since I am going abroad so soon-- . . . It doesn't so very much matter."

10

To Benham it did not seem to be of the slightest importance that Amanda's father was a convicted swindler who had committed suicide. Never was a resolved and conscious aristocrat so free from the hereditary delusion. Good parents, he was convinced, are only an advantage in so far as they have made you good stuff, and bad parents are no discredit to a son or daughter of good quality. Conceivably he had a bias against too close an examination of origins, and he held that the honour of the children should atone for the sins of the fathers and the questionable achievements of any intervening testator. Not half a dozen rich and established families in all England could stand even the most conventional inquiry into the foundations of their pride, and only a universal amnesty could prevent ridiculous distinctions. But he brought no accusation of inconsistency agt of you I knew that. . . ."

They embraced--alertly furtive.

Then they stood a little apart. Some one was coming towards them. Amanda's bearing changed swiftly. She put up her little face to his, confidently and intimately.

"Don't TELL any one," she whispered eagerly shaking his arm to emphasize her words. "Don't tell any one--not yet. Not for a few days. . . ."

She pushed him from her quickly as the shadowy form of Betty appeared in a little path between the artichokes and raspberry canes.

"Listening to the nightingales?" cried Betty.

"Yes, aren't they?" said Amanda inconsecutively.

"That's our very own nightingale!" cried Betty advancing. "Do you hear it, Mr. Benham? No, not that one. That is a quite inferior bird that performs in the vicarage trees. . . ."

11

When a man has found and won his mate then the best traditions demainst his mother. She looked at things with a lighter logic and a kind of genius for the acceptance of superficial values. She was condoned and forgiven, a rescued lamb, re-established, notoriously bright and nice, and the Morrises were damned. That was their status, exclusion, damnation, as fixed as colour in Georgia or caste in Bengal. But if his mother's mind worked in that way there was no reason why his should. So far as he was concerned, he told himself, it did not matter whether Amanda was

the daughter of a swindler or the daughter of a god. He had no doubt that she herself had the spirit and quality of divinity. He had seen it.

So there was nothing for it in the failure of his mother's civilities but to increase his own. He would go down to Harting and take his leave of these amiable outcasts himself. With a certain effusion. He would do this soon because he was now within sight of the beginning of his world tour. He had made his plans and prepared most of his equipment. Little remained to do but the release of Merkle, the wrappering and locking up of Finacue Street, which could await him indefinitely, and the buying of tickets. He decided to take the opportunity afforded by a visit of Sir Godfrey and Lady Marayne to the Blights, big iron people in the North of England of so austere a morality that even Benham was ignored by it. He announced his invasion in a little note to Mrs. Wilder. He parted from his mother on Friday afternoon; she was already, he perceived, a little reconciled to his project of going abroad; and contrived his arrival at South Harting for that sunset hour which was for his imagination the natural halo of Amanda.

"I'm going round the world," he told them simply. "I may be away for two years, and I thought I would like to see you all again before I started."

That was quite the way they did things.

The supper-party included Mr. Rathbone-Sanders, who displayed a curious tendency to drift in between Benham and Amanda, a literary youth with a Byronic visage, very dark curly hair, and a number of extraordinarily mature chins, a girl-friend of Betty's who had cycled down from London, and who it appeared maintained herself at large in London by drawing for advertisements, and a silent colourless friend of Mr. Rathbone-Sanders. The talk lit by Amanda's enthusiasm circled actively round Benham's expedition. It was clear

that the idea of giving some years to thinking out one's possible work in the world was for some reason that remained obscure highly irritating to both Mr. Rathbone-Sanders and the Byronic youth. Betty too regarded it as levity when there was "so much to be done," and the topic whacked about and rose to something like a wrangle, and sat down and rested and got up again reinvigorated, with a continuity of interest that Benham had never yet encountered in any London gathering. He made a good case for his modern version of the Grand Tour, and he gave them something of his intellectual enthusiasm for the distances and views, the cities and seas, the multitudinous wide spectacle of the world he was to experience. He had been reading about Benares and North China. As he talked Amanda, who had been animated at first, fell thoughtful and silent. And then it was discovered that the night was wonderfully warm and the moon shining. They drifted out into the garden, but Mr. Rathbone-Sanders was suddenly entangled and drawn back by Mrs. Wilder and the young woman from London upon some technical point, and taken to the work-table in the corner of the dining-room to explain. He was never able to get to the garden.

Benham found himself with Amanda upon a side path, a little isolated by some swaggering artichokes and a couple of apple trees and so forth from the general conversation. They cut themselves off from the continuation of that by a little silence, and then she spoke abruptly and with the quickness of a speaker who has thought out something to say and fears interruption: "Why did you come down here?"

"I wanted to see you before I went."

"You disturb me. You fill me with envy."

"I didn't think of that. I wanted to see you again."

"And then you will go off round the world, you will see the Tropics,

you will see India, you will go into Chinese cities all hung with vermilion, you will climb mountains. Oh! men can do all the splendid things. Wnd a lyrical interlude. It should be possible to tell, in that

ecstatic manner which melts words into moonshine, makes prose almost uncomfortably rhythmic, and brings all the freshness of every spring that ever was across the page, of the joyous exaltation of the happy lover. This at any rate was what White had always done in his novels hitherto, and what he hy do you come here to remind me of it? I have

never been anywhere, anywhere at all. I never shall go anywhere. Never in my life have I seen a mountain. Those Downs there--look at them!--are my highest. And while you are travelling I shall think of you--and think of you. . . ."

"Would YOU like to travel?" he asked as though that was an extraordinary idea.

"Do you think EVERY girl wants to sit at home and rock a cradle?"

"I never thought YOU did."

"Then what did you think I wanted?"

"What DO you want?"

She held her arms out widely, and the moonlight shone in her eyes as she turned her face to him.

"Just what you want," she said; "--THE WHOLE WORLD!"

"Life is like a feast," she went on; "it is spread before everybody and nobody must touch it. What am I? Just a prisoner. In a cottage garden. Looking for ever over a hedge. I should be happier if I couldn't look. I remember once, only a little time ago, there

was a cheap excursion to London. Our only servant went. She had to get up at an unearthly hour, and I--I got up too. I helped her to get off. And when she was gone I went up to my bedroom again and cried. I cried with envy for any one, any one who could go away. I've been nowhere--except to school at Chichester and three or four times to Emsworth and Bognor--for eight years. When you go"--the tears glittered in the moonlight--"I shall cry. It will be worse than the excursion to London. . . . Ever since you were here before I've been thinking of it."

It seemed to Benham that here indeed was the very sister of his spirit. His words sprang into his mind as one thinks of a repartee. "But why shouldn't you come too?" he said.

She stared at him in silence. The two white-lit faces examined each other. Both she and Benham were trembling.

"COME TOO?" she repeated.

"Yes, with me."

"But--HOW?"

Then suddenly she was weeping like a child that is teased; her troubled eyes looked out from under puckered brows. "You don't mean it," she said. "You don't mean it."

And then indeed he meant it.

"Marry me," he said very quickly, glancing towards the dark group at the end of the garden. "And we will go together."

He seized her arm and drew her to him. "I love you," he said. "I love your spirit. You are not like any one else."

There was a moment's hesitation.

Both he and she looked to see how far they were still alone.

Then they turned their dusky faces to each other. He drew her still closer.

"Oh!" she said, and yielded herself to be kissed. Their lips touched, and for a moment he held her lithe body against his own.

"I wantn you," he whispered close to her. "You are my mate. From the first sighawould certainly have done at this point had he had the telling of Benham's story uncontrolledly in his hands. But, indeed, indeed, in real life, in very truth, the heart has not this simplicity. Only the heroes of romance, and a few strong simple clean-shaven Americans have that much emotional integrity. (And even the Americans do at times seem to an observant eye to be putting in work at the job and keeping up their gladness.) Benham was excited that night, but not in the proper bright-eyed, red-cheeked way; he did not dance down the village street of Harting to his harbour at the Ship, and the expression in his eyes as he sat on the edge of his bed was not the deep elemental wonder one could have wished there, but amazement. Do not suppose that he did not love Amanda, that a rich majority of his being was not triumphantly glad to have won her, that the image of the two armour-clad lovers was not still striding and flourishing through the lit wilderness of his imagination. For three weeks things had pointed him to this. They would do everything together now, he and his mate, they would scale mountains together and ride side by side towards ruined cities across the deserts of the World. He could have wished no better thing. But at the same time, even as he felt and admitted this and rejoiced at it, the sky of his mind was black with consternation. . . .

It is remarkable, White reflected, as he turned over the abundant but confused notes upon this perplexing phase of Benham's

development that lay in the third drawer devoted to the Second Limitation, how dependent human beings are upon statement. Man is the animal that states a case. He lives not in things but in expressed ideas, and what was troubling Benham inordinately that night, a night that should have been devoted to purely blissful and exalted expectations, was the sheer impossibility of stating what had happened in any terms that would be tolerable either to Mrs. Skelmersdale or Lady Marayne. The thing had happened with the suddenness of a revelation. Whatever had been going on in the less illuminated parts of his mind, his manifest resolution had been merely to bid South Harting good-bye-- And in short they would never understand. They would accuse him of the meanest treachery. He could see his mother's face, he could hear her voice saying, "And so because of this sudden infatuation for a swindler's daughter, a girl who runs about the roads with a couple of retrievers hunting for a man, you must spoil all my plans, ruin my year, tell me a lot of pretentious stuffy lies. . . ." And Mrs. Skelmersdale too would say, "Of course he just talked of the world and duty and all that rubbish to save my face. . . ."

It wasn't so at all.

But it looked so frightfully like it!

Couldn't they realize that he had fled out of London before ever he had seen Amanda? They might be able to do it perhaps, but they never would. It just happened that in the very moment when the edifice of his noble resolutions had been ready, she had stepped into it--out of nothingness and nowhere. She wasn't an accident; that was just the point upon which they were bound to misjudge her; she was an embodiment. If only he could show her to them as she had first shown herself to him, swift, light, a little flushed from running but not in the least out of breath, quick as a leopard upon the dogs. . . . But even if the improbable opportunity arose, he perceived it might still be impossible to produce the Amanda he

loved, the Amanda of the fluttering short skirt and the clear enthusiastic voice. Because, already he knew she was not the only Amanda. There was another, there might be others, there was this perplexing person who had flashed into being at the very moment of their mutual confession, who had produced the entirely disconcerting demand that nobody must be told. Then Betty had intervened. But that sub-Amanda and her carneying note had to be dealt with on the first occasion, because when aristocrats love they don't care a rap who is told and who is not told. They just step out into the light side by side. . . .

"Don't tell any one," she had said, "not for a few days. . . ."

This sub-Amanda was perceptible next morning again, flitting about in the background of a glad and loving adventuress, a pre-occupied Amanda who had put her head down while the real Amanda flung her chin up and contemplated things on the Asiatic scale, and who was apparently engaged in disentangling something obscure connected with Mr. Rathbone-Sanders that ought never to have been entangled. . . .

"A human being," White read, "the simplest human being, is a clustering mass of aspects. No man will judge another justly who judges everything about him. And of love in particular is this true. We love not persons but revelations. The woman one loves is like a goddess hidden in a shrine; for her sake we live on hope and suffer the kindred priestesses that make up herself. The art of love is patience till the gleam returns. . . ."

Sunday and Monday did much to develop this idea of the intricate complexity of humanity in Benham's mind. On Monday morning he went up from the Ship again to get Amanda alone and deliver his ultimatum against a further secrecy, so that he could own her openly and have no more of the interventions and separations that had barred him from any intimate talk with her throughout the whole of Sunday. The front door stood open, the passage hall was empty, but as he

hesitated whether he should proclaim himself with the knocker or walk through, the door of the little drawing-room flew open and a black-clad cylindrical clerical person entirely unknown to Benham stumbled over the threshold, blundered blindly against him, made a sound like "MOO" and a pitiful gesture with his arm, and fled forth. . . .

It was a curate and he was weeping bitterly. . . .

Benham stood in the doorway and watched a clumsy broken-hearted flight down the village street.

He had been partly told and partly left to infer, and anyhow he was beginning to understand about Mr. Rathbone-Sanders. That he could dismiss. But--why was the curate in tears?

12

He found Amanda standing alone in the room from which this young man had fled. She had a handful of daffodils in her hand, and others were scattered over the table. She had been arranging the big bowl of flowers in the centre. He left the door open behind him and stopped short with the table between them. She looked up at him--intelligently and calmly. Her pose had a divine dignity.

"I want to tell them now," said Benham without a word of greeting.

"Yes," she said, "tell them now."

They heard steps in the passage outside. "Betty!" cried Amanda.

Her mother's voice answered, "Do you want Betty?"

"We want you all," answered Amanda. "We have something to tell you. . . ."

"Carrie!" they heard Mrs. Morris call her sister after an interval, and her voice sounded faint and flat and unusual. There was the soft hissing of some whispered words outside and a muffled exclamation. Then Mrs. Wilder and Mrs. Morris and Betty came into the room. Mrs. Wilder came first, and Mrs. Morris with an alarmed face as if sheltering behind her. "We want to tell you something," said Amanda.

"Amanda and I are going to marry each other," said Benham, standing in front of her.

For an instant the others made no answer; they looked at each other.

"BUT DOES HE KNOW?" Mrs. Morris said in a low voice.

Amanda turned her eyes to her lover. She was about to speak, she seemed to gather herself for an effort, and then he knew that he did not want to hear her explanation. He checked her by a gesture.

"I KNOW," he said, and then, "I do not see that it matters to us in the least."

He went to her holding out both his hands to her.

She took them and stood shyly for a moment, and then the watchful gravity of her face broke into soft emotion. "Oh!" she cried and seized his face between her hands in a passion of triumphant love and kissed him.

And then he found himself being kissed by Mrs. Morris.

She kissed him thrice, with solemnity, with thankfulness, with relief, as if in the act of kissing she transferred to him precious and entirely incalculable treasures.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

THE SPIRITED HONEYMOON

1

It was a little after sunrise one bright morning in September that Benham came up on to the deck of the sturdy Austrian steamboat that was churning its way with a sedulous deliberation from Spalato to Cattaro, and lit himself a cigarette and seated himself upon a deck chair. Save for a yawning Greek sailor busy with a mop the first-class deck was empty.

Benham surveyed the haggard beauty of the Illyrian coast. The mountains rose gaunt and enormous and barren to a jagged fantastic silhouette against the sun; their almost vertical slopes still plunged in blue shadow, broke only into a little cold green and white edge of olive terraces and vegetation and houses before they touched the clear blue water. An occasional church or a house perched high upon some seemingly inaccessible ledge did but accentuate the vast barrenness of the land. It was a land desolated and destroyed. At Ragusa, at Salona, at Spalato and Zara and Pola Benham had seen only variations upon one persistent theme, a dwindled and uncreative human life living amidst the giant ruins of preceding times, as worms live in the sockets of a skull. Forward an unsavoury group of passengers still slumbered amidst fruit-peel

and expectorations, a few soldiers, some squalid brigands armed with preposterous red umbrellas, a group of curled-up human lumps brooded over by an aquiline individual caparisoned with brass like a horse, his head wrapped picturesquely in a shawl. Benham surveyed these last products of the "life force" and resumed his pensive survey of the coast. The sea was deserted save for a couple of little lateen craft with suns painted on their gaudy sails, sea butterflies that hung motionless as if unawakened close inshore. . . .

The travel of the last few weeks had impressed Benham's imagination profoundly. For the first time in his life he had come face to face with civilization in defeat. From Venice hitherward he had marked with cumulative effect the clustering evidences of effort spent and power crumbled to nothingness. He had landed upon the marble quay of Pola and visited its deserted amphitheatre, he had seen a weak provincial life going about ignoble ends under the walls of the great Venetian fortress and the still more magnificent cathedral of Zara; he had visited Spalato, clustered in sweltering grime within the ample compass of the walls of Diocletian's villa, and a few troublesome sellers of coins and iridescent glass and fragments of tessellated pavement and such-like loot was all the population he had found amidst the fallen walls and broken friezes and columns of Salona. Down this coast there ebbed and flowed a mean residual life, a life of violence and dishonesty, peddling trades, vendettas and war. For a while the unstable Austrian ruled this land and made a sort of order that the incalculable chances of international politics might at any time shatter. Benham was drawing near now to the utmost limit of that extended peace. Ahead beyond the mountain capes was Montenegro and, further, Albania and Macedonia, lands of lawlessness and confusion. Amanda and he had been warned of the impossibility of decent travel beyond Cattaro and Cettinje but this had but whetted her adventurousness and challenged his spirit. They were going to see Albania for themselves.

The three months of honeymoon they had been spending together had

developed many remarkable divergences of their minds that had not been in the least apparent to Benham before their marriage. Then their common resolve to be as spirited as possible had obliterated all minor considerations. But that was the limit of their unanimity. Amanda loved wild and picturesque things, and Benham strong and clear things; the vines and brushwood amidst the ruins of Salona that had delighted her had filled him with a sense of tragic retrogression. Salona had revived again in the acutest form a dispute that had been smouldering between them throughout a fitful and lengthy exploration of north and central Italy. She could not understand his disgust with the mediaeval colour and confusion that had swamped the pride and state of the Roman empire, and he could not make her feel the ambition of the ruler, the essential discipline and responsibilities of his aristocratic idea. While his adventurousness was conquest, hers, it was only too manifest, was brigandage. His thoughts ran now into the form of an imaginary discourse, that he would never deliver to her, on the decay of states, on the triumphs of barbarians over rulers who will not rule, on the relaxation of patrician orders and the return of the robber and assassin as lordship decays. This coast was no theatrical scenery for him; it was a shattered empire. And it was shattered because no men had been found, united enough, magnificent and steadfast enough, to hold the cities, and maintain the roads, keep the peace and subdue the brutish hates and suspicions and cruelties that devastated the world.

And as these thoughts came back into his mind, Amanda flickered up from below, light and noiseless as a sunbeam, and stood behind his chair.

Freedom and the sight of the world had if possible brightened and invigorated her. Her costume and bearing were subtly touched by the romance of the Adriatic. There was a flavour of the pirate in the cloak about her shoulders and the light knitted cap of scarlet she had stuck upon her head. She surveyed his preoccupation for a

moment, glanced forward, and then covered his eyes with her hands. In almost the same movement she had bent down and nipped the tip of his ear between her teeth.

"Confound you, Amanda!"

"You'd forgotten my existence, you star-gazing Cheetah. And then, you see, these things happen to you!"

"I was thinking."

"Well--DON'T. . . . I distrust your thinking. This coast is wilder and grimmer than yesterday. It's glorious. . . ."

She sat down on the chair he unfolded for her.

"Is there nothing to eat?" she asked abruptly.

"It is too early."

2

"This coast is magnificent," she said presently.

"It's hideous," he answered. "It's as ugly as a heap of slag."

"It's nature at its wildest."

"That's Amanda at her wildest."

"Well, isn't it?"

"No! This land isn't nature. It's waste. Not wilderness. It's the other end. Those hills were covered with forests; this was a busy civilized coast just a little thousand years ago. The Venetians wasted it. They cut down the forests; they filled the cities with a mixed mud of population, THAT stuff. Look at it!"--he indicated the sleepers forward by a movement of his head.

"I suppose they WERE rather feeble people," said Amanda.

"Who?"

"The Venetians."

"They were traders--and nothing more. Just as we are. And when they were rich they got splendid clothes and feasted and rested. Much as we do."

Amanda surveyed him. "We don't rest."

"We idle."

"We are seeing things."

"Don't be a humbug, Amanda. We are making love. Just as they did. And it has been--ripping. In Salona they made love tremendously. They did nothing else until the barbarians came over the mountains. . . ."

"Well," said Amanda virtuously, "we will do something else."

He made no answer and her expression became profoundly thoughtful. Of course this wandering must end. He had been growing impatient for some time. But it was difficult, she perceived, to decide just what to do with him. . . .

Benham picked up the thread of his musing.

He was seeing more and more clearly that all civilization was an effort, and so far always an inadequate and very partially successful effort. Always it had been aristocratic, aristocratic in the sense that it was the work of minorities, who took power, who had a common resolution against the inertia, the indifference, the insubordination and instinctive hostility of the mass of mankind. And always the set-backs, the disasters of civilization, had been failures of the aristocratic spirit. Why had the Roman purpose faltered and shrivelled? Every order, every brotherhood, every organization carried with it the seeds of its own destruction. Must the idea of statecraft and rule perpetually reappear, reclothe itself in new forms, age, die, even as life does--making each time its almost infinitesimal addition to human achievement? Now the world is crying aloud for a renaissance of the spirit that orders and controls. Human affairs sway at a dizzy height of opportunity. Will they keep their footing there, or stagger? We have got back at last to a time as big with opportunity as the early empire. Given only the will in men and it would be possible now to turn the dazzling accidents of science, the chancy attainments of the nineteenth century, into a sane and permanent possession, a new starting point. . . . What a magnificence might be made of life!

He was aroused by Amanda's voice.

"When we go back to London, old Cheetah," she said, "we must take a house."

For some moments he stared at her, trying to get back to their point of divergence.

"Why?" he asked at length.

"We must have a house," she said.

He looked at her face. Her expression was profoundly thoughtful, her eyes were fixed on the slumbering ships poised upon the transparent water under the mountain shadows.

"You see," she thought it out, "you've got to TELL in London. You can't just sneak back there. You've got to strike a note of your own. With all these things of yours."

"But how?"

"There's a sort of little house, I used to see them when I was a girl and my father lived in London, about Brook Street and that part. Not too far north. . . . You see going back to London for us is just another adventure. We've got to capture London. We've got to scale it. We've got advantages of all sorts. But at present we're outside. We've got to march in."

Her clear hazel eyes contemplated conflicts and triumphs.

She was roused by Benham's voice.

"What the deuce are you thinking of, Amanda?"

She turned her level eyes to his. "London," she said. "For you."

"I don't want London," he said.

"I thought you did. You ought to. I do."

"But to take a house! Make an invasion of London!"

"You dear old Cheetah, you can't be always frisking about in the wilderness, staring at the stars."

"But I'm not going back to live in London in the old way, theatres, dinner-parties, chatter--"

"Oh no! We aren't going to do that sort of thing. We aren't going to join the ruck. We'll go about in holiday times all over the world. I want to see Fusi-yama. I mean to swim in the South Seas. With you. We'll dodge the sharks. But all the same we shall have to have a house in London. We have to be FELT there."

She met his consternation fairly. She lifted her fine eyebrows. Her little face conveyed a protesting reasonableness.

"Well, MUSTN'T we?"

She added, "If we want to alter the world we ought to live in the world."

Since last they had disputed the question she had thought out these new phrases.

"Amanda," he said, "I think sometimes you haven't the remotest idea of what I am after. I don't believe you begin to suspect what I am up to."

She put her elbows on her knees, dropped her chin between her hands and regarded him impudently. She had a characteristic trick of looking up with her face downcast that never failed to soften his regard.

"Look here, Cheetah, don't you give way to your early morning habit of calling your own true love a fool," she said.

"Simply I tell you I will not go back to London."

"You will go back with me, Cheetah."

"I will go back as far as my work calls me there."

"It calls you through the voice of your mate and slave and doormat to just exactly the sort of house you ought to have. . . . It is the privilege and duty of the female to choose the lair."

For a space Benham made no reply. This controversy had been gathering for some time and he wanted to state his view as vividly as possible. The Benham style of connubial conversation had long since decided for emphasis rather than delicacy.

"I think," he said slowly, "that this wanting to take London by storm is a beastly VULGAR thing to want to do."

Amanda compressed her lips.

"I want to work out things in my mind," he went on. "I do not want to be distracted by social things, and I do not want to be distracted by picturesque things. This life--it's all very well on the surface, but it isn't real. I'm not getting hold of reality. Things slip away from me. God! but how they slip away from me!"

He got up and walked to the side of the boat.

She surveyed his back for some moments. Then she went and leant over the rail beside him.

"I want to go to London," she said.

"I don't."

"Where do you want to go?"

"Where I can see into the things that hold the world together."

"I have loved this wandering--I could wander always. But . . .
Cheetah! I tell you I WANT to go to London."

He looked over his shoulder into her warm face. "NO," he said.

"But, I ask you."

He shook his head.

She put her face closer and whispered. "Cheetah! big beast of my heart. Do you hear your mate asking for something?"

He turned his eyes back to the mountains. "I must go my own way."

"Haven't I, so far, invented things, made life amusing, Cheetah?
Can't you trust the leopard's wisdom?"

He stared at the coast inexorably.

"I wonder," she whispered.

"What?"

"You ARE that, Cheetah, that lank, long, EAGER beast--."

Suddenly with a nimble hand she had unbuttoned and rolled up the sleeve of her blouse. She stuck her pretty blue-veined arm before his eyes. "Look here, sir, it was you, wasn't it? It was your powerful jaw inflicted this bite upon the arm of a defenceless young leopardess--"

"Amanda!"

"Well." She wrinkled her brows.

He turned about and stood over her, he shook a finger in her face and there was a restrained intensity in his voice as he spoke.

"Look here, Amanda!" he said, "if you think that you are going to make me agree to any sort of project about London, to any sort of complication of our lives with houses in smart streets and a campaign of social assertion--by THAT, then may I be damned for an uxorious fool!"

Her eyes met his and there was mockery in her eyes.

"This, Cheetah, is the morning mood," she remarked.

"This is the essential mood. Listen, Amanda--"

He stopped short. He looked towards the gangway, they both looked. The magic word "Breakfast" came simultaneously from them.

"Eggs," she said ravenously, and led the way.

A smell of coffee as insistent as an herald's trumpet had called a truce between them.

3

Their marriage had been a comparatively inconspicuous one, but since that time they had been engaged upon a honeymoon of great extent and variety. Their wedding had taken place at South Harting church in the marked absence of Lady Marayne, and it had been marred by only one untoward event. The Reverend Amos Pugh who, in spite of the earnest advice of several friends had insisted upon sharing in the

ceremony, had suddenly covered his face with the sleeves of his surplice and fled with a swift rustle to the vestry, whence an uproar of inadequately smothered sorrow came as an obligato accompaniment to the more crucial passages of the service. Amanda appeared unaware of the incident at the time, but afterwards she explained things to Benham. "Curates," she said, "are such pent-up men. One ought, I suppose, to remember that. But he never had anything to go upon at all--not anything--except his own imaginations."

"I suppose when you met him you were nice to him."

"I was nice to him, of course. . . ."

They drove away from Harting, as it were, over the weeping remains of this infatuated divine. His sorrow made them thoughtful for a time, and then Amanda nestled closer to her lover and they forgot about him, and their honeymoon became so active and entertaining that only very rarely and transitorily did they ever think of him again.

The original conception of their honeymoon had been identical with the plans Benham had made for the survey and study of the world, and it was through a series of modifications, replacements and additions that it became at last a prolonged and very picturesque tour in Switzerland, the Austrian Tyrol, North Italy, and down the Adriatic coast. Amanda had never seen mountains, and longed, she said, to climb. This took them first to Switzerland. Then, in spite of their exalted aims, the devotion of their lives to noble purposes, it was evident that Amanda had no intention of scamping the detail of love, and for that what background is so richly beautiful as Italy? An important aspect of the grand tour round the world as Benham had planned it, had been interviews, inquiries and conversations with every sort of representative and understanding person he could reach. An unembarrassed young man who wants to know

and does not promise to bore may reach almost any one in that way, he is as impersonal as pure reason and as mobile as a letter, but the presence of a lady in his train leaves him no longer unembarrassed. His approach has become a social event. The wife of a great or significant personage must take notice or decide not to take notice. Of course Amanda was prepared to go anywhere, just as Benham's shadow; it was the world that was unprepared. And a second leading aspect of his original scheme had been the examination of the ways of government in cities and the shifting and mixture of nations and races. It would have led to back streets, and involved and complicated details, and there was something in the fine flame of girlhood beside him that he felt was incompatible with those shadows and that dust. And also they were lovers and very deeply in love. It was amazing how swiftly that draggled shameful London sparrow-gamin, Eros, took heart from Amanda, and became wonderful, beautiful, glowing, life-giving, confident, clear-eyed; how he changed from flesh to sweet fire, and grew until he filled the sky. So that you see they went to Switzerland and Italy at last very like two ordinary young people who were not aristocrats at all, had no theory about the world or their destiny, but were simply just ardently delighted with the discovery of one another.

Nevertheless Benham was for some time under a vague impression that in a sort of way still he was going round the world and working out his destinies.

It was part of the fascination of Amanda that she was never what he had supposed her to be, and that nothing that he set out to do with her ever turned out as they had planned it. Her appreciations marched before her achievement, and when it came to climbing it seemed foolish to toil to summits over which her spirit had flitted days before. Their Swiss expeditions which she had foreseen as glorious wanderings amidst the blue ice of crevasses and nights of exalted hardihood became a walking tour of fitful vigour and abundant fun and delight. They spent a long day on the ice of the

Aletsch glacier, but they reached the inn on its eastward side with magnificent appetites a little late for dinner.

Amanda had revealed an unexpected gift for nicknames and pretty fancies. She named herself the Leopard, the spotless Leopard; in some obscure way she intimated that the colour was black, but that was never to be admitted openly, there was supposed to be some lurking traces of a rusty brown but the word was spotless and the implication white, a dazzling white, she would play a thousand variations on the theme; in moments of despondency she was only a black cat, a common lean black cat, and sacks and half-bricks almost too good for her. But Benham was always a Cheetah. That had come to her as a revelation from heaven. But so clearly he was a Cheetah. He was a Hunting Leopard; the only beast that has an up-cast face and dreams and looks at you with absent-minded eyes like a man. She laced their journeys with a fantastic monologue telling in the third person what the Leopard and the Cheetah were thinking and seeing and doing. And so they walked up mountains and over passes and swam in the warm clear water of romantic lakes and loved each other mightily always, in chestnut woods and olive orchards and flower-starred alps and pine forests and awning-covered boats, and by sunset and moonlight and starshine; and out of these agreeable solitudes they came brown and dusty, striding side by side into sunlit entertaining fruit-piled market-places and envious hotels. For days and weeks together it did not seem to Benham that there was anything that mattered in life but Amanda and the elemental joys of living. And then the Research Magnificent began to stir in him again. He perceived that Italy was not India, that the clue to the questions he must answer lay in the crowded new towns that they avoided, in the packed bookshops and the talk of men, and not in the picturesque and flowery solitudes to which their lovemaking carried them.

Moods began in which he seemed to forget Amanda altogether.

This happened first in the Certosa di Pavia whither they had gone one afternoon from Milan. That was quite soon after they were married. They had a bumping journey thither in a motor-car, a little doubtful if the excursion was worth while, and they found a great amazement in the lavish beauty and decorative wealth of that vast church and its associated cloisters, set far away from any population as it seemed in a flat wilderness of reedy ditches and patchy cultivation. The distilleries and outbuildings were deserted--their white walls were covered by one monstrously great and old wisteria in flower--the soaring marvellous church was in possession of a knot of unattractive guides. One of these conducted them through the painted treasures of the gold and marble chapels; he was an elderly but animated person who evidently found Amanda more wonderful than any church. He poured out great accumulations of information and compliments before her. Benham dropped behind, went astray and was presently recovered dreaming in the great cloister. The guide showed them over two of the cells that opened thereupon, each a delightful house for a solitary, bookish and clean, and each with a little secret walled garden of its own. He was covertly tipped against all regulations and departed regretfully with a beaming dismissal from Amanda. She found Benham wondering why the Carthusians had failed to produce anything better in the world than a liqueur. "One might have imagined that men would have done something in this beautiful quiet; that there would have come thought from here or will from here."

"In these dear little nests they ought to have put lovers," said Amanda.

"Oh, of course, YOU would have made the place Thelema. . . ."

But as they went shaking and bumping back along the evil road to Milan, he fell into a deep musing. Suddenly he said, "Work has to be done. Because this order or that has failed, there is no reason why we should fail. And look at those ragged children in the road

ahead of us, and those dirty women sitting in the doorways, and the foul ugliness of these gaunt nameless towns through which we go! They are what they are, because we are what we are--idlers, excursionists. In a world we ought to rule. . . .

"Amanda, we've got to get to work. . . ."

That was his first display of this new mood, which presently became a common one. He was less and less content to let the happy hours slip by, more and more sensitive to the reminders in giant ruin and deserted cell, in a chance encounter with a string of guns and soldiers on their way to manoeuvres or in the sight of a stale newspaper, of a great world process going on in which he was now playing no part at all. And a curious irritability manifested itself more and more plainly, whenever human pettiness obtruded upon his attention, whenever some trivial dishonesty, some manifest slovenliness, some spiritless failure, a cheating waiter or a wayside beggar brought before him the shiftless, selfish, aimless elements in humanity that war against the great dream of life made glorious. "Accursed things," he would say, as he flung some importunate cripple at a church door a ten-centime piece; "why were they born? Why do they consent to live? They are no better than some chance fungus that is because it must."

"It takes all sorts to make a world," said Amanda.

"Nonsense," said Benham. "Where is the megatherium? That sort of creature has to go. Our sort of creature has to end it."

"Then why did you give it money?"

"Because-- I don't want the thing to be more wretched than it is. But if I could prevent more of them-- . . . What am I doing to prevent them?"

"These beggars annoy you," said Amanda after a pause. "They do me. Let us go back into the mountains."

But he fretted in the mountains.

They made a ten days' tour from Macugnaga over the Monte Moro to Sass, and thence to Zermatt and back by the Theodule to Macugnaga. The sudden apparition of douaniers upon the Monte Moro annoyed Benham, and he was also irritated by the solemn English mountain climbers at Saas Fee. They were as bad as golfers, he said, and reflected momentarily upon his father. Amanda fell in love with Monte Rosa, she wanted to kiss its snowy forehead, she danced like a young goat down the path to Mattmark, and rolled on the turf when she came to gentians and purple primulas. Benham was tremendously in love with her most of the time, but one day when they were sitting over the Findelen glacier his perceptions blundered for the first time upon the fundamental antagonism of their quality. She was sketching out jolly things that they were to do together, expeditions, entertainments, amusements, and adventures, with a voluble swiftness, and suddenly in a flash his eyes were opened, and he saw that she would never for a moment feel the quality that made life worth while for him. He saw it in a flash, and in that flash he made his urgent resolve not to see it. From that moment forth his bearing was poisoned by his secret determination not to think of this, not to admit it to his mind. And forbidden to come into his presence in its proper form, this conflict of intellectual temperaments took on strange disguises, and the gathering tension of his mind sought to relieve itself along grotesque irrelevant channels.

There was, for example, the remarkable affair of the drive from Macugnaga to Piedimulera.

They had decided to walk down in a leisurely fashion, but with the fatigues of the precipitous clamber down from Switzerland still upon

them they found the white road between rock above and gorge below wearisome, and the valley hot in the late morning sunshine, and already before they reached the inn they had marked for lunch Amanda had suggested driving the rest of the way. The inn had a number of brigand-like customers consuming such sustenance as garlic and salami and wine; it received them with an indifference that bordered on disrespect, until the landlord, who seemed to be something of a beauty himself, discovered the merits of Amanda. Then he became markedly attentive. He was a large, fat, curly-headed person with beautiful eyes, a cherished moustache, and an air of great gentility, and when he had welcomed his guests and driven off the slatternly waiting-maid, and given them his best table, and consented, at Amanda's request, to open a window, he went away and put on a tie and collar. It was an attention so conspicuous that even the group of men in the far corner noticed and commented on it, and then they commented on Amanda and Benham, assuming an ignorance of Italian in the visitors that was only partly justifiable. "Bellissima," "bravissima," "signorina," "Inglese," one need not be born in Italy to understand such words as these. Also they addressed sly comments and encouragements to the landlord as he went to and fro.

Benham was rather still and stiff during the meal, but it ill becomes an English aristocrat to discuss the manners of an alien population, and Amanda was amused by the effusion of the landlord and a little disposed to experiment upon him. She sat radiating light amidst the shadows.

The question of the vehicle was broached. The landlord was doubtful, then an idea, it was manifestly a questionable idea, occurred to him. He went to consult an obscure brown-faced individual in the corner, disappeared, and the world without became eloquent. Presently he returned and announced that a carozza was practicable. It had been difficult, but he had contrived it. And

he remained hovering over the conclusion of their meal, asking questions about Amanda's mountaineering and expressing incredulous admiration.

His bill, which he presented with an uneasy flourish, was large and included the carozza.

He ushered them out to the carriage with civilities and compliments. It had manifestly been difficult and contrived. It was dusty and blistered, there had been a hasty effort to conceal its recent use as a hen-roost, the harness was mended with string. The horse was gaunt and scandalous, a dirty white, and carried its head apprehensively. The driver had but one eye, through which there gleamed a concentrated hatred of God and man.

"No wonder he charged for it before we saw it," said Benham.

"It's better than walking," said Amanda.

The company in the inn gathered behind the landlord and scrutinized Amanda and Benham intelligently. The young couple got in. "Avanti," said Benham, and Amanda bestowed one last ineradicable memory on the bowing landlord.

Benham did not speak until just after they turned the first corner, and then something portentous happened, considering the precipitous position of the road they were upon. A small boy appeared sitting in the grass by the wayside, and at the sight of him the white horse shied extravagantly. The driver rose in his seat ready to jump. But the crisis passed without a smash. "Cheetah!" cried Amanda suddenly. "This isn't safe." "Ah!" said Benham, and began to act with the vigour of one who has long accumulated force. He rose in his place and gripped the one-eyed driver by the collar. "ASPETTO," he said, but he meant "Stop!" The driver understood that he meant "Stop," and obeyed.

Benham wasted no time in parleying with the driver. He indicated to him and to Amanda by a comprehensive gesture that he had business with the landlord, and with a gleaming appetite upon his face went running back towards the inn.

The landlord was sitting down to a little game of dominoes with his friends when Benham reappeared in the sunlight of the doorway. There was no misunderstanding Benham's expression.

For a moment the landlord was disposed to be defiant. Then he changed his mind. Benham's earnest face was within a yard of his own, and a threatening forefinger was almost touching his nose.

"Albergo cattivissimo," said Benham. "Cattivissimo! Pranzo cattivissimo 'orrido. Cavallo cattivissimo, dangerousissimo. Gioco abominablissimo, damnissimo. Capisce. Eh?" *

* This is vile Italian. It may--with a certain charity to Benham--be rendered: "The beastliest inn! The beastliest! The beastliest, most awful lunch! The vilest horse! Most dangerous! Abominable trick! Understand?"

The landlord made deprecatory gestures.

"YOU understand all right," said Benham. "Da me il argento per il carrozzo. Subito?" *

* "Give me back the money for the carriage. QUICKLY!"

The landlord was understood to ask whether the signor no longer

wished for the carriage.

"SUBITO!" cried Benham, and giving way to a long-restrained impulse seized the padrone by the collar of his coat and shook him vigorously.

There were dissuasive noises from the company, but no attempt at rescue. Benham released his hold.

"Adesso!" said Benham. *

* "NOW!"

The landlord decided to disgorge. It was at any rate a comfort that the beautiful lady was not seeing anything of this. And he could explain afterwards to his friends that the Englishman was clearly a lunatic, deserving pity rather than punishment. He made some sound of protest, but attempted no delay in refunding the money Benham had prepaid. Outside sounded the wheels of the returning carriage. They stopped. Amanda appeared in the doorway and discovered Benham dominant.

He was a little short of breath, and as she came in he was addressing the landlord with much earnestness in the following compact sentences.

"Attendez! Ecco! Adesso noi andiamo con questa cattivissimo cavallo a Piedimulera. Si noi arrivero in safety, sicuro that is, pagaremo. Non altro. Si noi abbiamo accidento Dio--Dio have mercy on your sinful soul. See! Capisce? That's all." *

* "Now we will go with this beastly horse to Piedimulera. If we get

there safely I will pay. If we have an accident, then--"

He turned to Amanda. "Get back into the thing," he said. "We won't have these stinking beasts think we are afraid of the job. I've just made sure he won't have a profit by it if we smash up. That's all. I might have known what he was up to when he wanted the money beforehand." He came to the doorway and with a magnificent gesture commanded the perplexed driver to turn the carriage.

While that was being done he discoursed upon his adjacent fellow-creatures. "A man who pays beforehand for anything in this filthy sort of life is a fool. You see the standards of the beast. They think of nothing but their dirty little tricks to get profit, their garlic, their sour wine, their games of dominoes, their moments of lust. They crawl in this place like cockroaches in a warm corner of the fireplace until they die. Look at the scabby frontage of the house. Look at the men's faces. . . . Yes. So! Adequato. Aspettate. . . . Get back into the carriage, Amanda."

"You know it's dangerous, Cheetah. The horse is a shier. That man is blind in one eye."

"Get back into the carriage," said Benham, whitely angry. "I AM GOING TO DRIVE!"

"But--!"

Just for a moment Amanda looked scared. Then with a queer little laugh she jumped in again.

Amanda was never a coward when there was excitement afoot. "We'll smash!" she cried, by no means woefully.

"Get up beside me," said Benham speaking in English to the driver

but with a gesture that translated him. Power over men radiated from Benham in this angry mood. He took the driver's seat. The little driver ascended and then with a grim calmness that brooked no resistance Benham reached over, took and fastened the apron over their knees to prevent any repetition of the jumping out tactics.

The recovering landlord became voluble in the doorway.

"In Piedimulera pagero," said Benham over his shoulder and brought the whip across the white outstanding ribs. "Get up!" said Benham.

Amanda gripped the sides of the seat as the carriage started into motion.

He laid the whip on again with such vigour that the horse forgot altogether to shy at the urchin that had scared it before.

"Amanda," said Benham leaning back. "If we do happen to go over on THAT side, jump out. It's all clear and wide for you. This side won't matter so--"

"MIND!" screamed Amanda and recalled him to his duties. He was off the road and he had narrowly missed an outstanding chestnut tree.

"No, you don't," said Benham presently, and again their career became erratic for a time as after a slight struggle he replaced the apron over the knees of the deposed driver. It had been furtively released. After that Benham kept an eye on it that might have been better devoted to the road.

The road went down in a series of curves and corners. Now and then there were pacific interludes when it might have been almost any road. Then, again, it became specifically an Italian mountain road. Now and then only a row of all too infrequent granite stumps separated them from a sheer precipice. Some of the corners were

miraculous, and once they had a wheel in a ditch for a time, they shaved the parapet of a bridge over a gorge and they drove a cyclist into a patch of maize, they narrowly missed a goat and jumped three gullies, thrice the horse stumbled and was jerked up in time, there were sickening moments, and withal they got down to Piedimulera unbroken and unspilt. It helped perhaps that the brake, with its handle like a barrel organ, had been screwed up before Benham took control. And when they were fairly on the level outside the town Benham suddenly pulled up, relinquished the driving into the proper hands and came into the carriage with Amanda.

"Safe now," he said compactly.

The driver appeared to be murmuring prayers very softly as he examined the brake.

Amanda was struggling with profound problems. "Why didn't you drive down in the first place?" she asked. "Without going back."

"The landlord annoyed me," he said. "I had to go back. . . . I wish I had kicked him. Hairy beast! If anything had happened, you see, he would have had his mean money. I couldn't bear to leave him."

"And why didn't you let HIM drive?" She indicated the driver by a motion of the head.

"I was angry," said Benham. "I was angry at the whole thing."

"Still--"

"You see I think I did that because he might have jumped off if I hadn't been up there to prevent him--I mean if we had had a smash. I didn't want him to get out of it."

"But you too--"

"You see I was angry. . . ."

"It's been as good as a switchback," said Amanda after reflection.

"But weren't you a little careless about me, Cheetah?"

"I never thought of you," said Benham, and then as if he felt that inadequate: "You see--I was so annoyed. It's odd at times how annoyed one gets. Suddenly when that horse shied I realized what a beastly business life was--as those brutes up there live it. I want to clear out the whole hot, dirty, little aimless nest of them. . . ."

"No, I'm sure," he repeated after a pause as though he had been digesting something "I wasn't thinking about you at all."

4

The suppression of his discovery that his honeymoon was not in the least the great journey of world exploration he had intended, but merely an impulsive pleasure hunt, was by no means the only obscured and repudiated conflict that disturbed the mind and broke out upon the behaviour of Benham. Beneath that issue he was keeping down a far more intimate conflict. It was in those lower, still less recognized depths that the volcanic fire arose and the earthquakes gathered strength. The Amanda he had loved, the Amanda of the gallant stride and fluttering skirt was with him still, she marched rejoicing over the passes, and a dearer Amanda, a soft whispering creature with dusky hair, who took possession of him when she chose, a soft creature who was nevertheless a fierce creature, was also interwoven with his life. But-- But there was now also a multitude of other Amandas who had this in common that they roused him to

opposition, that they crossed his moods and jarred upon his spirit. And particularly there was the Conquering Amanda not so much proud of her beauty as eager to test it, so that she was not unmindful of the stir she made in hotel lounges, nor of the magic that may shine memorably through the most commonplace incidental conversation. This Amanda was only too manifestly pleased to think that she made peasant lovers discontented and hotel porters unmercenary; she let her light shine before men. We lovers, who had deemed our own subjugation a profound privilege, love not this further expansiveness of our lady's empire. But Benham knew that no aristocrat can be jealous; jealousy he held to be the vice of the hovel and farmstead and suburban villa, and at an enormous expenditure of will he ignored Amanda's waving flags and roving glances. So, too, he denied that Amanda who was sharp and shrewd about money matters, that flash of an Amanda who was greedy for presents and possessions, that restless Amanda who fretted at any cessation of excitement, and that darkly thoughtful Amanda whom chance observations and questions showed to be still considering an account she had to settle with Lady Marayne. He resisted these impressions, he shut them out of his mind, but still they worked into his thoughts, and presently he could find himself asking, even as he and she went in step striding side by side through the red-scarred pinewoods in the most perfect outward harmony, whether after all he was so happily mated as he declared himself to be a score of times a day, whether he wasn't catching glimpses of reality through a veil of delusion that grew thinner and thinner and might leave him disillusioned in the face of a relationship--

Sometimes a man may be struck by a thought as though he had been struck in the face, and when the name of Mrs. Skelmersdale came into his head, he glanced at his wife by his side as if it were something that she might well have heard. Was this indeed the same thing as that? Wonderful, fresh as the day of Creation, clean as flame, yet the same! Was Amanda indeed the sister of Mrs. Skelmersdale--wrought of clean fire, but her sister? . . .

But also beside the inimical aspects which could set such doubts afoot there were in her infinite variety yet other Amandas neither very dear nor very annoying, but for the most part delightful, who entertained him as strangers might, Amandas with an odd twist which made them amusing to watch, jolly Amandas who were simply irrelevant. There was for example Amanda the Dog Mistress, with an astonishing tact and understanding of dogs, who could explain dogs and the cock of their ears and the droop of their tails and their vanity and their fidelity, and why they looked up and why they suddenly went off round the corner, and their pride in the sound of their voices and their dastardly thoughts and sniffing satisfactions, so that for the first time dogs had souls for Benham to see. And there was an Amanda with a striking passion for the sleekness and soft noses of horses. And there was an Amanda extremely garrulous, who was a biographical dictionary and critical handbook to all the girls in the school she had attended at Chichester--they seemed a very girlish lot of girls; and an Amanda who was very knowing--knowing was the only word for it--about pictures and architecture. And these and all the other Amandas agreed together to develop and share this one quality in common, that altogether they pointed to no end, they converged on nothing. She was, it grew more and more apparent, a miscellany bound in a body. She was an animated discursiveness. That passion to get all things together into one aristocratic aim, that restraint of purpose, that imperative to focus, which was the structural essential of Benham's spirit, was altogether foreign to her composition.

There were so many Amandas, they were as innumerable as the Venuses--Cytherea, Cypria, Paphia, Popularia, Euploea, Area, Verticordia, Etaira, Basilea, Myrtea, Libertina, Freya, Astarte, Philommedis, Telessigamma, Anadyomene, and a thousand others to whom men have bowed and built temples, a thousand and the same, and yet it seemed to Benham there was still one wanting.

The Amanda he had loved most wonderfully was that Amanda in armour who had walked with him through the wilderness of the world along the road to Chichester--and that Amanda came back to him no more.

5

Amanda too was making her observations and discoveries.

These moods of his perplexed her; she was astonished to find he was becoming irritable; she felt that he needed a firm but gentle discipline in his deportment as a lover. At first he had been perfect. . . .

But Amanda was more prepared for human inconsecutiveness than Benham, because she herself was inconsecutive, and her dissatisfaction with his irritations and preoccupation broadened to no general discontent. He had seemed perfect and he wasn't. So nothing was perfect. And he had to be managed, just as one must manage a dog or a cousin or a mother or a horse. Anyhow she had got him, she had no doubt that she held him by a thousand ties, the spotless leopard had him between her teeth, he was a prisoner in the dusk of her hair, and the world was all one vast promise of entertainment.

6

But the raid into the Balkans was not the tremendous success she had expected it to be. They had adventures, but they were not the

richly coloured, mediaeval affairs she had anticipated. For the most part until Benham broke loose beyond Ochrida they were adventures in discomfort. In those remote parts of Europe inns die away and cease, and it had never occurred to Amanda that inns could die away anywhere. She had thought that they just became very simple and natural and quaint. And she had thought that when benighted people knocked at a door it would presently open hospitably. She had not expected shots at random from the window. And it is not usual in Albania generally for women, whether they are Christian or Moslem, to go about unveiled; when they do so it leads to singular manifestations. The moral sense of the men is shocked and staggered, and they show it in many homely ways. Small boys at that age when feminine beauty does not yet prevail with them, pelt. Also in Mahometan districts they pelt men who do not wear fezzes, while occasionally Christians of the shawl-headed or skull-cap persuasions will pelt a fez. Sketching is always a peltable or mobable offence, as being contrary to the Koran, and sitting down tempts the pelter. Generally they pelt. The dogs of Albania are numerous, big, dirty, white dogs, large and hostile, and they attack with little hesitation. The women of Albania are secluded and remote, and indisposed to be of service to an alien sister. Roads are infrequent and most bridges have broken down. No bridge has been repaired since the later seventeenth century, and no new bridge has been made since the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. There are no shops at all. The scenery is magnificent but precipitous, and many of the high roads are difficult to trace. And there is rain. In Albania there is sometimes very heavy rain.

Yet in spite of these drawbacks they spent some splendid hours in their exploration of that wild lost country beyond the Adriatic headlands. There was the approach to Cattaro for example, through an arm of the sea, amazingly beautiful on either shore, that wound its way into the wild mountains and ended in a deep blue bay under the tremendous declivity of Montenegro. The quay, with its trees and lateen craft, ran along under the towers and portcullised gate

of the old Venetian wall, within clustered the town, and then the fortifications zigzagged up steeply to a monstrous fantastic fortress perched upon a great mountain headland that overhung the town. Behind it the rocks, slashed to and fro with the road to Cettinje, continued to ascend into blue haze, upward and upward until they became a purple curtain that filled half the heavens. The paved still town was squalid by day, but in the evening it became theatrically incredible, with an outdoor cafe amidst flowers and creepers, a Hungarian military band, a rabble of promenaders like a stage chorus in gorgeous costumes and a great gibbous yellow moon.

And there was Kroia, which Benham and Amanda saw first through the branches of the great trees that bordered the broad green track they were following. The town and its castle were poised at a tremendous height, sunlit and brilliant against a sombre mass of storm cloud, over vast cliffs and ravines. Kroia continued to be beautiful through a steep laborious approach up to the very place itself, a clustering group of houses and bazaars crowned with a tower and a minaret, and from a painted corridor upon this crest they had a wonderful view of the great seaward levels, and even far away the blue sea itself stretching between Scutari and Durazzo. The eye fell in succession down the stages of a vast and various descent, on the bazaars and tall minarets of the town, on jagged rocks and precipices, on slopes of oak forest and slopes of olive woods, on blue hills dropping away beyond blue hills to the coast. And behind them when they turned they saw great mountains, sullenly magnificent, cleft into vast irregular masses, dense with woods below and grim and desolate above. . . .

These were unforgettable scenes, and so too was the wild lonely valley through which they rode to Ochrida amidst walnut and chestnut trees and scattered rocks, and the first vision of that place itself, with its fertile levels dotted with sheep and cattle, its castle and clustering mosques, its spacious blue lake and the great

mountains rising up towards Olympus under the sun. And there was the first view of the blue Lake of Presba seen between silvery beech stems, and that too had Olympus in the far background, plain now and clear and unexpectedly snowy. And there were midday moments when they sat and ate under vines and heard voices singing very pleasantly, and there were forest glades and forest tracks in a great variety of beauty with mountains appearing through their parted branches, there were ilex woods, chestnut woods, beech woods, and there were strings of heavily-laden mules staggering up torrent-worn tracks, and strings of blue-swathed mysterious-eyed women with burthens on their heads passing silently, and white remote houses and ruins and deep gorges and precipices and ancient half-ruinous bridges over unruly streams. And if there was rain there was also the ending of rain, rainbows, and the piercing of clouds by the sun's incandescence, and sunsets and the moon, first full, then new and then growing full again as the holiday wore on.

They found tolerable accommodation at Cattaro and at Cetinje and at a place halfway between them. It was only when they had secured a guide and horses, and pushed on into the south-east of Montenegro that they began to realize the real difficulties of their journey. They aimed for a place called Podgoritza, which had a partially justifiable reputation for an inn, they missed the road and spent the night in the open beside a fire, rolled in the blankets they had very fortunately bought in Cetinje. They supped on biscuits and Benham's brandy flask. It chanced to be a fine night, and, drawn like moths by the fire, four heavily-armed mountaineers came out of nowhere, sat down beside Benham and Amanda, rolled cigarettes, achieved conversation in bad Italian through the muleteer and awaited refreshment. They approved of the brandy highly, they finished it, and towards dawn warmed to song. They did not sing badly, singing in chorus, but it appeared to Amanda that the hour might have been better chosen. In the morning they were agreeably surprised to find one of the Englishmen was an Englishwoman, and followed every accessible detail of her toilette with great

interest. They were quite helpful about breakfast when the trouble was put to them; two vanished over a crest and reappeared with some sour milk, a slabby kind of bread, goat's cheese young but hardened, and coffee and the means of making coffee, and they joined spiritedly in the ensuing meal. It ought to have been extraordinarily good fun, this camp under the vast heavens and these wild visitors, but it was not such fun as it ought to have been because both Amanda and Benham were extremely cold, stiff, sleepy, grubby and cross, and when at last they were back in the way to Podgoritza and had parted, after some present-giving from their chance friends, they halted in a sunlit grassy place, rolled themselves up in their blankets and recovered their arrears of sleep.

Podgoritza was their first experience of a khan, those oriental substitutes for hotels, and it was a deceptively good khan, indeed it was not a khan at all, it was an inn; it provided meals, it had a kind of bar, or at any rate a row of bottles and glasses, it possessed an upper floor with rooms, separate rooms, opening on to a gallery. The room had no beds but it had a shelf about it on which Amanda and Benham rolled up in their blankets and slept. "We can do this sort of thing all right," said Amanda and Benham. "But we mustn't lose the way again."

"In Scutari," said Benham, "we will get an extra horse and a tent."

The way presently became a lake and they reached Scutari by boat towards the dawn of the next day. . . .

The extra horse involved the addition of its owner, a small suspicious Latin Christian, to the company, and of another horse for him and an ugly almost hairless boy attendant. Moreover the British consul prevailed with Benham to accept the services of a picturesque Arnaut CAVASSE, complete with a rifle, knives, and other implements and the name of Giorgio. And as they got up into the highlands

beyond Scutari they began to realize the deceitfulness of Podgoritza and the real truth about khans. Their next one they reached after a rainy evening, and it was a cavernous room with a floor of indurated mud and full of eye-stinging wood-smoke and wind and the smell of beasts, unpartitioned, with a weakly hostile custodian from whom no food could be got but a little goat's flesh and bread. The meat Giorgio stuck upon a skewer in gobbets like cats-meat and cooked before the fire. For drink there was coffee and raw spirits. Against the wall in one corner was a slab of wood rather like the draining board in a scullery, and on this the guests were expected to sleep. The horses and the rest of the party camped loosely about the adjacent corner after a bitter dispute upon some unknown point between the horse owner and the custodian.

Amanda and Benham were already rolled up on their slanting board like a couple of chrysalids when other company began to arrive through the open door out of the moonlight, drawn thither by the report of a travelling Englishwoman.

They were sturdy men in light coloured garments adorned ostentatiously with weapons, they moved mysteriously about in the firelit darknesses and conversed in undertones with Giorgio. Giorgio seemed to have considerable powers of exposition and a gift for social organization. Presently he came to Benham and explained that raki was available and that hospitality would do no harm; Benham and Amanda sat up and various romantic figures with splendid moustaches came forward and shook hands with him, modestly ignoring Amanda. There was drinking, in which Benham shared, incomprehensible compliments, much ineffective saying of "BUONA NOTTE," and at last Amanda and Benham counterfeited sleep. This seemed to remove a check on the conversation and a heated discussion in tense undertones went on, it seemed interminably. . . . Probably very few aspects of Benham and Amanda were ignored. . . . Towards morning the twanging of a string proclaimed the arrival of a querulous-faced minstrel with a sort of embryonic one-stringed horse-headed fiddle,

and after a brief parley singing began, a long high-pitched solo. The fiddle squealed pitifully under the persuasion of a semicircular bow. Two heads were lifted enquiringly.

The singer had taken up his position at their feet and faced them. It was a compliment.

"OH!" said Amanda, rolling over.

The soloist obliged with three songs, and then, just as day was breaking, stopped abruptly and sprawled suddenly on the floor as if he had been struck asleep. He was vocal even in his sleep. A cock in the far corner began crowing and was answered by another outside. . . .

But this does not give a full account of the animation of the khan. "OH!" said Amanda, rolling over again with the suddenness of accumulated anger.

"They're worse than in Scutari," said Benham, understanding her trouble instantly.

"It isn't days and nights we are having," said Benham a few days later, "it's days and nightmares."

But both he and Amanda had one quality in common. The deeper their discomfort the less possible it was to speak of turning back from the itinerary they had planned. . . .

They met no robbers, though an excited little English Levantine in Scutari had assured them they would do so and told a vivid story of a ride to Ipek, a delay on the road due to a sudden inexplicable lameness of his horse after a halt for refreshment, a political discussion that delayed him, his hurry through the still twilight to make up for lost time, the coming on of night and the sudden silent

apparition out of the darkness of the woods about the road of a dozen armed men each protruding a gun barrel. "Sometimes they will wait for you at a ford or a broken bridge," he said. "In the mountains they rob for arms. They assassinate the Turkish soldiers even. It is better to go unarmed unless you mean to fight for it. . . . Have you got arms?"

"Just a revolver," said Benham.

But it was after that that he closed with Giorgio.

If they found no robbers in Albania, they met soon enough with bloodshed. They came to a village where a friend of a friend of Giorgio's was discovered, and they slept at his house in preference to the unclean and crowded khan. Here for the first time Amanda made the acquaintance of Albanian women and was carried off to the woman's region at the top of the house, permitted to wash, closely examined, shown a baby and confided in as generously as gesture and some fragments of Italian would permit. Benham slept on a rug on the first floor in a corner of honour beside the wood fire. There had been much confused conversation and some singing, he was dog-tired and slept heavily, and when presently he was awakened by piercing screams he sat up in a darkness that seemed to belong neither to time nor place. . . .

Near his feet was an ashen glow that gave no light.

His first perplexity gave way to dismay at finding no Amanda by his side. "Amanda!" he cried. . . .

Her voice floated down through a chink in the floor above. "What can it be, Cheetah?"

Then: "It's coming nearer."

The screaming continued, heart-rending, eviscerating shrieks. Benham, still confused, lit a match. All the men about him were stirring or sitting up and listening, their faces showing distorted and ugly in the flicker of his light. "CHE E?" he tried. No one answered. Then one by one they stood up and went softly to the ladder that led to the stable-room below. Benham struck a second match and a third.

"Giorgio!" he called.

The cavasse made an arresting gesture and followed discreetly and noiselessly after the others, leaving Benham alone in the dark.

Benham heard their shuffling patten, one after the other, down the ladder, the sounds of a door being unbarred softly, and then no other sound but that incessant shrieking in the darkness.

Had they gone out? Were they standing at the door looking out into the night and listening?

Amanda had found the chink and her voice sounded nearer.

"It's a woman," she said.

The shrieking came nearer and nearer, long, repeated, throat-tearing shrieks. Far off there was a great clamour of dogs. And there was another sound, a whisper--?

"RAIN!"

The shrieks seemed to turn into a side street and receded. The tension of listening relaxed. Men's voices sounded below in question and answer. Dogs close at hand barked shortly and then stopped enquiringly.

Benham seemed to himself to be sitting alone for an interminable time. He lit another match and consulted his watch. It was four o'clock and nearly dawn. . . .

Then slowly and stumbling up the ladder the men began to return to Benham's room.

"Ask them what it is," urged Amanda.

But for a time not even Giorgio would understand Benham's questions. There seemed to be a doubt whether he ought to know. The shrieking approached again and then receded. Giorgio came and stood, a vague thoughtful figure, by the embers of the fire. Explanation dropped from him reluctantly. It was nothing. Some one had been killed: that was all. It was a vendetta. A man had been missing overnight, and this morning his brother who had been prowling and searching with some dogs had found him, or rather his head. It was on this side of the ravine, thrown over from the other bank on which the body sprawled stiffly, wet through, and now growing visible in the gathering daylight. Yes--the voice was the man's wife. It was raining hard. . . . There would be shrieking for nine days. Yes, nine days. Confirmation with the fingers when Benham still fought against the facts. Her friends and relatives would come and shriek too. Two of the dead man's aunts were among the best keeners in the whole land. They could keen marvellously. It was raining too hard to go on. . . . The road would be impossible in rain. . . . Yes it was very melancholy. Her house was close at hand. Perhaps twenty or thirty women would join her. It was impossible to go on until it had stopped raining. It would be tiresome, but what could one do? . . .

As they sat upon the parapet of a broken bridge on the road between Elbassan and Ochrida Benham was moved to a dissertation upon the condition of Albania and the politics of the Balkan peninsula.

"Here we are," he said, "not a week from London, and you see the sort of life that men live when the forces of civilization fail. We have been close to two murders--"

"Two?"

"That little crowd in the square at Scutari-- That was a murder. I didn't tell you at the time."

"But I knew it was," said Amanda.

"And you see the filth of it all, the toiling discomfort of it all. There is scarcely a house here in all the land that is not filthier and viler than the worst slum in London. No man ventures far from his village without arms, everywhere there is fear. The hills are impassable because of the shepherd's dogs. Over those hills a little while ago a stranger was torn to pieces by dogs--and partially eaten. Amanda, these dogs madden me. I shall let fly at the beasts. The infernal indignity of it! But that is by the way. You see how all this magnificent country lies waste with nothing but this crawling, ugly mockery of human life."

"They sing," said Amanda.

"Yes," said Benham and reflected, "they do sing. I suppose singing is the last thing left to men. When there is nothing else you can still sit about and sing. Miners who have been buried in mines will sing, people going down in ships."

"The Sussex labourers don't sing," said Amanda. "These people sing well."

"They would probably sing as well if they were civilized. Even if they didn't I shouldn't care. All the rest of their lives is muddle and cruelty and misery. Look at the women. There was that party of bent creatures we met yesterday, carrying great bundles, carrying even the men's cloaks and pipes, while their rascal husbands and brothers swaggered behind. Look at the cripples we have seen and the mutilated men. If we have met one man without a nose, we have met a dozen. And stunted people. All these people are like evil schoolboys; they do nothing but malicious mischief; there is nothing adult about them but their voices; they are like the heroic dreams of young ruffians in a penitentiary. You saw that man at Scutari in the corner of the bazaar, the gorgeous brute, you admired him--."

"The man with the gold inlaid pistols and the diamonds on his yataghan. He wanted to show them to us."

"Yes. You let him see you admired him."

"I liked the things on his stall."

"Well, he has killed nearly thirty people."

"In duels?"

"Good Lord! NO! Assassinations. His shoemaker annoyed him by sending in a bill. He went to the man's stall, found him standing with his child in his arms and blew out his brains. He blundered against a passer-by in the road and shot him. Those are his feats. Sometimes his pistols go off in the bazaar just by accident."

"Does nobody kill him?"

"I wanted to," said Benham and became thoughtful for a time. "I think I ought to have made some sort of quarrel. But then as I am

an Englishman he might have hesitated. He would have funk'd a strange beast like me. And I couldn't have shot him if he had hesitated. And if he hadn't--"

"But doesn't a blood feud come down on him?"

"It only comes down on his family. The shoemaker's son thought the matter over and squared accounts by putting the muzzle of a gun into the small of the back of our bully's uncle. It was easier that way. . . . You see you're dealing with men of thirteen years old or thereabouts, the boy who doesn't grow up."

"But doesn't the law--?"

"There's no law. Only custom and the Turkish tax collector."

"You see this is what men are where there is no power, no discipline, no ruler, no responsibility. This is a masterless world. This is pure democracy. This is the natural state of men. This is the world of the bully and the brigand and assassin, the world of the mud-pelter and brawler, the world of the bent woman, the world of the flea and the fly, the open drain and the baying dog. This is what the British sentimentalist thinks a noble state for men."

"They fight for freedom."

"They fight among each other. There are their private feuds and their village feuds and above all that great feud religion. In Albania there is only one religion and that is hate. But there are three churches for the better cultivation of hate and cruelty, the Latin, the Greek and the Mahometan."

"But no one has ever conquered these people."

"Any one could, the Servians, the Bulgarians, the Greeks, the Italians, the Austrians. Why, they can't even shoot! It's just the balance of power and all that foolery keeps this country a roadless wilderness. Good God, how I tire of it! These men who swagger and stink, their brawling dogs, their greasy priests and dervishes, the down-at-heel soldiers, the bribery and robbery, the cheating over the money. . . ."

He slipped off the parapet, too impatient to sit any longer, and began to pace up and down in the road.

"One marvels that no one comes to clear up this country, one itches to be at the job, and then one realizes that before one can begin here, one must get to work back there, where the fools and pedants of WELT POLITIK scheme mischief one against another. This country frets me. I can't see any fun in it, can't see the humour of it. And the people away there know no better than to play off tribe against tribe, sect against sect, one peasant prejudice against another. Over this pass the foolery grows grimmer and viler. We shall come to where the Servian plots against the Bulgarian and the Greek against both, and the Turk, with spasmodic massacres and indulgences, broods over the brew. Every division is subdivided. There are two sorts of Greek church, Exarchic, Patriarchic, both teaching by threat and massacre. And there is no one, no one, with the sense to over-ride all these squalid hostilities. All those fools away there in London and Vienna and St. Petersburg and Rome take sides as though these beastly tribes and leagues and superstitions meant anything but blank, black, damnable ignorance. One fool stands up for the Catholic Albanians, another finds heroes in the Servians, another talks of Brave Little Montenegro, or the Sturdy Bulgarian, or the Heroic Turk. There isn't a religion in the whole Balkan peninsula, there isn't a tribal or national sentiment that deserves a moment's respect from a sane man. They're things like niggers' nose-rings and Chinese secret societies; childish things, idiot things that have to go. Yet there is no one who will

preach the only possible peace, which is the peace of the world-state, the open conspiracy of all the sane men in the world against the things that break us up into wars and futilities. And here am I--who have the light--WANDERING! Just wandering!"

He shrugged his shoulders and came to stare at the torrent under the bridge.

"You're getting ripe for London, Cheetah," said Amanda softly.

"I want somehow to get to work, to get my hands on definite things."

"How can we get back?"

She had to repeat her question presently.

"We can go on. Over the hills is Ochrida and then over another pass is Presba, and from there we go down into Monastir and reach a railway and get back to the world of our own times again."

8

But before they reached the world of their own times Macedonia was to show them something grimmer than Albania.

They were riding through a sunlit walnut wood beyond Ochrida when they came upon the thing.

The first they saw of it looked like a man lying asleep on a grassy bank. But he lay very still indeed, he did not look up, he did not stir as they passed, the pose of his hand was stiff, and when Benham glanced back at him, he stifled a little cry of horror. For this

man had no face and the flies had been busy upon him. . . .

Benham caught Amanda's bridle so that she had to give her attention to her steed.

"Ahead!" he said, "Ahead! Look, a village!"

(Why the devil didn't they bury the man? Why?

And that fool Giorgio and the others were pulling up and beginning to chatter. After all she might look back.)

Through the trees now they could see houses. He quickened his pace and jerked Amanda's horse forward. . . .

But the village was a still one. Not a dog barked.

Here was an incredible village without even a dog!

And then, then they saw some more people lying about. A woman lay in a doorway. Near her was something muddy that might have been a child, beyond were six men all spread out very neatly in a row with their faces to the sky.

"Cheetah!" cried Amanda, with her voice going up. "They've been killed. Some one has killed them."

Benham halted beside her and stared stupidly. "It's a band," he said. "It's--propaganda. Greeks or Turks or Bulgarians."

"But their feet and hands are fastened! And-- . . . WHAT HAVE THEY BEEN DOING TO THEM? . . ."

"I want to kill," cried Benham. "Oh! I want to kill people. Come on, Amanda! It blisters one's eyes. Come away. Come away! Come!"

Her face was white and her eyes terror-stricken. She obeyed him mechanically. She gave one last look at those bodies. . . .

Down the deep-rutted soil of the village street they clattered. They came to houses that had been set on fire. . . .

"What is that hanging from a tree?" cried Amanda. "Oh, oh!"

"Come on. . . ."

Behind them rode the others scared and hurrying.

The sunlight had become the light of hell. There was no air but horror. Across Benham's skies these fly-blown trophies of devilry dangled mockingly in the place of God. He had no thought but to get away.

Presently they encountered a detachment of Turkish soldiers, very greasy and ragged, with worn-out boots and yellow faces, toiling up the stony road belatedly to the village. Amanda and Benham riding one behind the other in a stricken silence passed this labouring column without a gesture, but presently they heard the commander stopping and questioning Giorgio. . . .

Then Giorgio and the others came clattering to overtake them.

Giorgio was too full to wait for questions. He talked eagerly to Benham's silence.

It must have happened yesterday, he explained. They were Bulgarians--traitors. They had been converted to the Patriarchists by the Greeks--by a Greek band, that is to say. They had betrayed one of their own people. Now a Bulgarian band had descended upon them. Bulgarian bands it seemed were always particularly rough on

Bulgarian-speaking Patriarchists. . . .

9

That night they slept in a dirty little room in a peasant's house in Resnia, and in the middle of the night Amanda woke up with a start and heard Benham talking. He seemed to be sitting up as he talked. But he was not talking to her and his voice sounded strange.

"Flies," he said, "in the sunlight!"

He was silent for a time and then he repeated the same words.

Then suddenly he began to declaim. "Oh! Brutes together. Apes. Apes with knives. Have they no lord, no master, to save them from such things? This is the life of men when no man rules. . . . When no man rules. . . . Not even himself. . . . It is because we are idle, because we keep our wits slack and our wills weak that these poor devils live in hell. These things happen here and everywhere when the hand that rules grows weak. Away in China now they are happening. Persia. Africa. . . . Russia staggers. And I who should serve the law, I who should keep order, wander and make love. . . . My God! may I never forget! May I never forget! Flies in the sunlight! That man's face. And those six men!

"Grip the savage by the throat.

"The weak savage in the foreign office, the weak savage at the party headquarters, feud and indolence and folly. It is all one world. This and that are all one thing. The spites of London and the mutilations of Macedonia. The maggots that eat men's faces and the maggots that rot their minds. Rot their minds. Rot their minds.

Rot their minds. . . ."

To Amanda it sounded like delirium.

"CHEETAH!" she said suddenly between remonstrance and a cry of terror.

The darkness suddenly became quite still. He did not move.

She was afraid. "Cheetah!" she said again.

"What is it, Amanda?"

"I thought--. Are you all right?"

"Quite."

"But do you feel well?"

"I've got this cold I caught in Ochrida. I suppose I'm feverish. But--yes, I'm well."

"You were talking."

Silence for a time.

"I was thinking," he said.

"You talked."

"I'm sorry," he said after another long pause.

The next morning Benham had a pink spot on either cheek, his eyes were feverishly bright, he would touch no food and instead of coffee he wanted water. "In Monastir there will be a doctor," he said. "Monastir is a big place. In Monastir I will see a doctor. I want a doctor."

They rode out of the village in the freshness before sunrise and up long hills, and sometimes they went in the shade of woods and sometimes in a flooding sunshine. Benham now rode in front, preoccupied, intent, regardless of Amanda, a stranger, and she rode close behind him wondering.

"When you get to Monastir, young man," she told him, inaudibly, "you will go straight to bed and we'll see what has to be done with you."

"AMMALATO," said Giorgio confidentially, coming abreast of her.

"MEDICO IN MONASTIR," said Amanda.

"SI,--MOLTI MEDICI, MONASTIR," Giorgio agreed.

Then came the inevitable dogs, big white brutes, three in full cry charging hard at Benham and a younger less enterprising beast running along the high bank above yapping and making feints to descend.

The goatherd, reclining under the shadow of a rock, awaited Benham's embarrassment with an indolent malice.

"You UNCIVILIZED Beasts!" cried Benham, and before Amanda could realize what he was up to, she heard the crack of his revolver and saw a puff of blue smoke drift away above his right shoulder. The foremost beast rolled over and the goatherd had sprung to his feet.

He shouted with something between anger and dismay as Benham, regardless of the fact that the other dogs had turned and were running back, let fly a second time. Then the goatherd had clutched at the gun that lay on the grass near at hand, Giorgio was bawling in noisy remonstrance and also getting ready to shoot, and the horse-owner and his boy were clattering back to a position of neutrality up the stony road. "BANG!" came a flight of lead within a yard of Benham, and then the goatherd was in retreat behind a rock and Giorgio was shouting "AVANTI, AVANTI!" to Amanda.

She grasped his intention and in another moment she had Benham's horse by the bridle and was leading the retreat. Giorgio followed close, driving the two baggage mules before him.

"I am tired of dogs," Benham said. "Tired to death of dogs. All savage dogs must be shot. All through the world. I am tired--"

Their road carried them down through the rocky pass and then up a long slope in the open. Far away on the left they saw the goatherd running and shouting and other armed goatherds appearing among the rocks. Behind them the horse-owner and his boy came riding headlong across the zone of danger.

"Dogs must be shot," said Benham, exalted. "Dogs must be shot."

"Unless they are GOOD dogs," said Amanda, keeping beside him with an eye on his revolver.

"Unless they are good dogs to every one," said Benham.

They rushed along the road in a turbulent dusty huddle of horses and mules and riders. The horse-owner, voluble in Albanian, was trying to get past them. His boy pressed behind him. Giorgio in the rear had unslung his rifle and got it across the front of his saddle. Far away they heard the sound of a shot, and a kind of shudder in

the air overhead witnessed to the flight of the bullet. They crested a rise and suddenly between the tree boughs Monastir was in view, a wide stretch of white town, with many cypress and plane trees, a winding river with many wooden bridges, clustering minarets of pink and white, a hilly cemetery, and scattered patches of soldiers' tents like some queer white crop to supplement its extensive barracks.

As they hurried down towards this city of refuge a long string of mules burthened with great bales of green stuff appeared upon a convergent track to the left. Besides the customary muleteers there were, by way of an escort, a couple of tattered Turkish soldiers. All these men watched the headlong approach of Benham's party with apprehensive inquiry. Giorgio shouted some sort of information that made the soldiers brighten up and stare up the hill, and set the muleteers whacking and shouting at their convoy. It struck Amanda that Giorgio must be telling lies about a Bulgarian band. In another moment Benham and Amanda found themselves swimming in a torrent of mules. Presently they overtook a small flock of fortunately nimble sheep, and picked up several dogs, dogs that happily disregarded Benham in the general confusion. They also comprehended a small springless cart, two old women with bundles and an elderly Greek priest, before their dusty, barking, shouting cavalcade reached the outskirts of Monastir. The two soldiers had halted behind to cover the retreat.

Benham's ghastly face was now bedewed with sweat and he swayed in his saddle as he rode. "This is NOT civilization, Amanda," he said, "this is NOT civilization."

And then suddenly with extraordinary pathos:

"Oh! I want to go to BED! I want to go to BED! A bed with sheets. . . ."

To ride into Monastir is to ride into a maze. The streets go nowhere in particular. At least that was the effect on Amanda and Benham. It was as if Monastir too had a temperature and was slightly delirious. But at last they found an hotel--quite a civilized hotel. . . .

The doctor in Monastir was an Armenian with an ambition that outran his capacity to speak English. He had evidently studied the language chiefly from books. He thought THESE was pronounced "theser" and THOSE was pronounced "thoser," and that every English sentence should be taken at a rush. He diagnosed Benham's complaint in various languages and failed to make his meaning clear to Amanda. One combination of words he clung to obstinately, having clearly the utmost faith in its expressiveness. To Amanda it sounded like, "May, Ah! Slays," and it seemed to her that he sought to intimate a probable fatal termination of Benham's fever. But it was clear that the doctor was not satisfied that she understood. He came again with a queer little worn book, a parallel vocabulary of half-a-dozen European languages.

He turned over the pages and pointed to a word. "May! Ah! Slays!" he repeated, reproachfully, almost bitterly.

"Oh, MEASLES!" cried Amanda. . . .

So the spirited honeymoon passed its zenith.

11

The Benhams went as soon as possible down to Smyrna and thence by way of Uskub tortuously back to Italy. They recuperated at the best hotel of Locarno in golden November weather, and just before

Christmas they turned their faces back to England.

Benham's plans were comprehensive but entirely vague; Amanda had not so much plans as intentions. . . .

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

THE ASSIZE OF JEALOUSY

1

It was very manifest in the disorder of papers amidst which White spent so many evenings of interested perplexity before this novel began to be written that Benham had never made any systematic attempt at editing or revising his accumulation at all. There were not only overlapping documents, in which he had returned again to old ideas and restated them in the light of fresh facts and an apparent unconsciousness of his earlier effort, but there were mutually destructive papers, new views quite ousting the old had been tossed in upon the old, and the very definition of the second limitation, as it had first presented itself to the writer, had been abandoned. To begin with, this second division had been labelled "Sex," in places the heading remained, no effective substitute had been chosen for some time, but there was d many appetites that are not sexual yet turn to bodily pleasure, and on the other there are elements of pride arising out of sex and passing into other regions, all the elements of rivalry for example, that have strained my first definition to the utmost. And I conceive it, marches to its end. It saves itself for the truth rather than sacrifices itself

romantically for a friend. It justifies vivisection if thereby knowledge is won for ever. It upholds that Brutus who killed his sons. It forbids devotion to women, courts of love and all such decay of the chivalry closely-written memorandum, very much erased and written over and amended, which showed Benham's early dissatisfaction with that crude rendering of what he had in mind. This memorandum was tacked to an interrupted fragment of autobiography, a manuscript soliloquy in which Benham had been discussing his married life.

"It was not until I had been married for the better part of a year, and had spent more than six months in London, that I faced the plain issue between the aims I had set before myself and the claims and immediate necessities of my personal life. For all that time I struggled not so much to reconcile them as to serve them simultaneously. . . ."

At that the autobiography stopped short, and the intercalary note began.

This intercalary note ran as follows:

"I suppose a mind of my sort cannot help but tend towards simplification, towards making all life turn upon some one dominant idea, complex perhaps in its reality but reducible at last to one consistent simple statement, a dominant idea which is essential as nothing else is essential, which makes and sustains and justifies. This is perhaps the innate disposition of the human mind, at least of the European mind--for I have some doubts about the Chinese. Theology drives obstinately towards an ultimate unity in God, science towards an ultimate unity in law, towards a fundamental element and a universal material truth from which all material truths evolve, and in matters of conduct there is the same tendency to refer to a universal moral law. Now this may be a simplification due to the need of the human mind to comprehend, and its inability

to do so until the load is lightened by neglecting factors. William James has suggested that on account of this, theology may be obstinately working away from the truth, that the truth may be that there are several or many in compatible and incommensurable gods; science, in the same search for unity, may follow divergent methods of inquiry into ultimately uninterchangeable generalizations; and there may be not only not one universal moral law, but no effective reconciliation of the various rights and duties of a single individual. At any rate I find myself doubtful to this day about my own personal systems of right and wrong. I can never get all my life into one focus. It is exactly like examining a rather thick section with a microscope of small penetration; sometimes one level is clear and the rest foggy and monstrous, and sometimes another.

"Now the ruling ME, I do not doubt, is the man who has set his face to this research after aristocracy, and from the standpoint of this research it is my duty to subordinate all other considerations to this work of clearing up the conception of rule and nobility in human affairs. This is my aristocratic self. What I did not grasp for a long time, and which now grows clearer and clearer to me, is firstly that this aristocratic self is not the whole of me, it has absolutely nothing to do with a pain in my ear or in my heart, with a scar on my hand or my memory, and secondly that it is not altogether mine. Whatever knowledge I have of the quality of science, whatever will I have towards right, is of it; but if from without, from the reasoning or demonstration or reproof of some one else, there comes to me clear knowledge, clarified will, that also is as it were a part of my aristocratic self coming home to me from the outside. How often have I not found my own mind in Prothero after I have failed to find it in myself? It is, to be paradoxical, my impersonal personality, this Being that I have in common with all scientific-spirited and aristocratic-spirited men. This it is that I am trying to get clear from the great limitations of humanity. When I assert a truth for the sake of truth to my own discomfort or injury, there again is this incompatibility of the aristocratic self

and the accepted, confused, conglomerate self of the unanalyzed man. The two have a separate system of obligations. One's affections, compounded as they are in the strangest way of physical reactions and emotional associations, one's implicit pledges to particular people, one's involuntary reactions, one's pride and jealousy, all that one might call the dramatic side of one's life, may be in conflict with the definitely seen rightnesses of one's higher use. . . ."

The writing changed at this point.

"All this seems to me at once as old as the hills and too new to be true. This is like the conflict of the Superior Man of Confucius to control himself, it is like the Christian battle of the spirit with the flesh, it savours of that eternal wrangle between the general and the particular which is metaphysics, it was for this aristocratic self, for righteousness' sake, that men have hungered and thirsted, and on this point men have left father and mother and child and wife and followed after salvation. This world-wide, ever-returning antagonism has filled the world in every age with hermits and lamas, recluses and teachers, devoted and segregated lives. It is a perpetual effort to get above the simplicity of barbarism. Whenever men have emerged from the primitive barbarism of the farm and the tribe, then straightway there has emerged this conception of a specialized life a little lifted off the earth; often, for the sake of freedom, celibate, usually disciplined, sometimes directed, having a generalized aim, beyond personal successes and bodily desires. So it is that the philosopher, the scientifically concentrated man, has appeared, often, I admit, quite ridiculously at first, setting out upon the long journey that will end only when the philosopher is king. . . .

"At first I called my Second Limitation, Sex. But from the outset I meant more than mere sexual desire, lust and lustful imaginings, more than personal reactions to beauty and spirited living, more

even than what is called love. On the one hand I had in mind now that this Second Limitation as I first imagined it spreads out without any definite boundary, to include one's rivalries with old schoolfellows, for example, one's generousities to beggars and dependents, one's desire to avenge an injured friend, one's point of honour, one's regard for the good opinion of an aunt and one's concern for the health of a pet cat. All these things may enrich, but they may also impede and limit the aristocratic scheme. I thought for a time I would call this ill-defined and miscellaneous wilderness of limitation the Personal Life. But at last I have decided to divide this vast territory of difficulties into two subdivisions and make one of these Indulgence, meaning thereby pleasurable indulgence of sense or feeling, and the other a great mass of self-regarding motives that will go with a little stretching under the heading of Jealousy. I admit motives are continually playing across the boundary of these two divisions, I should find it difficult to argue a case for my classification, but in practice these two groupings have a quite definite meaning for me. There is pride in the latter group of impulses and not in the former; the former are always a little apologetic. Fear, Indulgence, Jealousy, these are the First Three Limitations of the soul of man. And the greatest of these is Jealousy, because it can use pride. Over them the Life Aristocratic, as I have my idea. And it resigns--so many things that no common Man of Spirit will resign. Its intention transcends these things. Over all the world it would maintain justice, order, a noble peace, and it would do this without indignation, without resentment, without mawkish tenderness or individualized enthusiasm or any queen of beauty. It is of a cold austere quality, commanding sometimes admiration but having small hold upon the affections of men. So that it is among its foremost distinctions that its heart is steeled. . . ."

There this odd fragment ended and White was left to resume the interrupted autobiography.

What moods, what passions, what nights of despair and gathering storms of anger, what sudden cruelties and amazing tendernesses are buried and hidden and implied in every love story! What a waste is there of exquisite things! So each spring sees a million glorious beginnings, a sunlit heaven in every opening leaf, warm perfection in every stirring egg, hope and fear and beauty beyond computation in every forest tree; and in the autumn before the snows come they have all gone, of all that incalculable abundance of life, of all that hope and adventure, excitement and deliciousness, there is scarcely more to be found than a soiled twig, a dirty seed, a dead leaf, black mould or a rotting feather. . . .

White held the ten or twelve pencilled pages that told how Benham and Amanda drifted into antagonism and estrangement and as he held it he thought of the laughter and delight they must have had together, the exquisite excitements of her eye, the racing colour of her cheek, the gleams of light upon her skin, the flashes of wit between them, the sense of discovery, the high rare paths they had followed, the pools in which they had swum together. And now it was all gone into nothingness, there was nothing left of it, nothing at all, but just those sheets of statement, and it may be, stored away in one single mind, like things forgotten in an attic, a few neglected faded memories. . . .

And even those few sheets of statement were more than most love leaves behind it. For a time White would not read them. They lay neglected on his knee as he sat back in Benham's most comfortable chair and enjoyed an entirely beautiful melancholy.

White too had seen and mourned the spring.

Indeed, poor dear! he had seen and mourned several springs. . . .

With a sigh he took up the manuscript and read Benham's desiccated story of intellectual estrangement, and how in the end he had decided to leave his wife and go out alone upon that journey of inquiry he had been planning when first he met her.

3

Amanda had come back to England in a state of extravagantly vigorous womanhood. Benham's illness, though it lasted only two or three weeks, gave her a sense of power and leadership for which she had been struggling instinctively ever since they came together. For a time at Locarno he was lax-minded and indolent, and in that time she formed her bright and limited plans for London. Benham had no plans as yet but only a sense of divergence, as though he was being pulled in opposite directions by two irresistible forces. To her it was plain that he needed occupation, some distinguished occupation, and she could imagine nothing better for him than a political career. She perceived he had personality, that he stood out among men so that his very silences were effective. She loved him immensely, and she had tremendous ambitions for him and through him.

And also London, the very thought of London, filled her with appetite. Her soul thirsted for London. It was like some enormous juicy fruit waiting for her pretty white teeth, a place almost large enough to give her avidity the sense of enough. She felt it waiting for her, household, servants, a carriage, shops and the jolly delight of buying and possessing things, the opera, first-nights, picture exhibitions, great dinner-parties, brilliant lunch parties, crowds seen from a point of vantage, the carriage in a long string

of fine carriages with the lamplit multitude peering, Amanda in a thousand bright settings, in a thousand various dresses. She had had love; it had been glorious, it was still glorious, but her love-making became now at times almost perfunctory in the contemplation of these approaching delights and splendours and excitements.

She knew, indeed, that ideas were at work in Benham's head; but she was a realist. She did not see why ideas should stand in the way of a career. Ideas are a brightness, the good looks of the mind. One talks ideas, but **THE THING THAT IS, IS THE THING THAT IS.** And though she believed that Benham had a certain strength of character of his own, she had that sort of confidence in his love for her and in the power of her endearments that has in it the assurance of a faint contempt. She had mingled pride and sense in the glorious realization of the power over him that her wit and beauty gave her. She had held him faint with her divinity, intoxicated with the pride of her complete possession, and she did not dream that the moment when he should see clearly that she could deliberately use these ultimate delights to rule and influence him, would be the end of their splendour and her power. Her nature, which was just a nest of vigorous appetites, was incapable of suspecting his gathering disillusionment until it burst upon her.

Now with her attention set upon London ahead he could observe her. In the beginning he had never seemed to be observing her at all, they dazzled one another; it seemed extraordinary now to him to note how much he had been able to disregard. There were countless times still when he would have dropped his observation and resumed that mutual exaltation very gladly, but always now other things possessed her mind. . . .

There was still an immense pleasure for him in her vigour; there was something delightful in her pounce, even when she was pouncing on things superficial, vulgar or destructive. She made him understand and share the excitement of a big night at the opera, the glitter

and prettiness of a smart restaurant, the clustering little acute adventures of a great reception of gay people, just as she had already made him understand and sympathize with dogs. She picked up the art world where he had laid it down, and she forced him to feel dense and slow before he rebelled against her multitudinous enthusiasms and admirations. South Harting had had its little group of artistic people; it is not one of your sleepy villages, and she slipped back at once into the movement. Those were the great days of John, the days before the Post Impressionist outbreak. John, Orpen, Tonks, she bought them with vigour. Artistic circles began to revolve about her. Very rapidly she was in possession. . . . And among other desirable things she had, it seemed, pounced upon and captured Lady Marayne.

At any rate it was clear that that awful hostile silence and aloofness was to end. Benham never quite mastered how it was done. But Amanda had gone in one morning to Desborough Street, very sweetly and chastely dressed, had abased herself and announced a possible (though subsequently disproved) grandchild. And she had appreciated the little lady so highly and openly, she had so instantly caught and reproduced her tone, that her success, though only temporary in its completeness, was immediate. In the afternoon Benham was amazed by the apparition of his mother amidst the scattered unsettled furnishings of the new home Amanda had chosen in Lancaster Gate. He was in the hall, the door stood open awaiting packing-cases from a van without. In the open doorway she shone, looking the smallest of dainty things. There was no effect of her coming but only of her having arrived there, as a little blue butterfly will suddenly alight on a flower.

"Well, Poff!" said Lady Marayne, ignoring abysses, "What are you up to now, Poff? Come and embrace me. . . ."

"No, not so," she said, "stiffest of sons. . . ."

She laid hold of his ears in the old fashion and kissed one eye.

"Congratulations, dear little Poff. Oh! congratulations! In heaps. I'm so GLAD."

Now what was that for?

And then Amanda came out upon the landing upstairs, saw the encounter with an involuntary cry of joy, and came downstairs with arms wide open. It was the first intimation he had of their previous meeting. He was for some minutes a stunned, entirely inadequate Benham. . . .

4

At first Amanda knew nobody in London, except a few people in the Hampstead Garden suburb that she had not the slightest wish to know, and then very quickly she seemed to know quite a lot of people. The artistic circle brought in people, Lady Marayne brought in people; they spread. It was manifest the Benhams were a very bright young couple; he would certainly do something considerable presently, and she was bright and daring, jolly to look at and excellent fun, and, when you came to talk to her, astonishingly well informed. They passed from one hostess's hand to another: they reciprocated. The Clynes people and the Rushtones took her up; Mr. Evesham was amused by her, Lady Beach Mandarin proclaimed her charm like a trumpet, the Young Liberal people made jealous advances, Lord Moggeridge found she listened well, she lit one of the brightest weekend parties Lady Marayne had ever gathered at Chexington. And her descriptions of recent danger and adventure in Albania not only entertained her hearers but gave her just that flavour of personal courage which completes the fascination of a young woman. People in the gaps of a

halting dinner-table conversation would ask: "Have you met Mrs. Benham?"

Meanwhile Benham appeared to be talking. A smiling and successful young woman, who a year ago had been nothing more than a leggy girl with a good lot of miscellaneous reading in her head, and vaguely engaged, or at least friendly to the pitch of engagement, to Mr. Rathbone-Sanders, may be forgiven if in the full tide of her success she does not altogether grasp the intention of her husband's discourse. It seemed to her that he was obsessed by a responsibility for civilization and the idea that he was aristocratic. (Secretly she was inclined to doubt whether he was justified in calling himself aristocratic; at the best his mother was county-stuff; but still if he did there was no great harm in it nowadays.) Clearly his line was Tory-Democracy, social reform through the House of Lords and friendly intimacy with the more spirited young peers. And it was only very slowly and reluctantly that she was forced to abandon this satisfactory solution of his problem. She reproduced all the equipment and comforts of his Finacue Street study in their new home, she declared constantly that she would rather forego any old social thing than interfere with his work, she never made him go anywhere with her without first asking if his work permitted it. To relieve him of the burthen of such social attentions she even made a fag or so. The making of fags out of manifestly stricken men, the keeping of tamed and hopeless admirers, seemed to her to be the most natural and reasonable of feminine privileges. They did their useful little services until it pleased the Lord Cheetah to come to his own. That was how she put it. . . .

But at last he was talking to her in tones that could no longer be ignored. He was manifestly losing his temper with her. There was a novel austerity in his voice and a peculiar whiteness about his face on certain occasions that lingered in her memory.

He was indeed making elaborate explanations. He said that what he wanted to do was to understand "the collective life of the world," and that this was not to be done in a West-End study. He had an extraordinary contempt, it seemed, for both sides in the drama of British politics. He had extravagant ideas of beginning in some much more fundamental way. He wanted to understand this "collective life of the world," because ultimately he wanted to help control it. (Was there ever such nonsense?) The practical side of this was serious enough, however; he was back at his old idea of going round the earth. Later on that might be rather a jolly thing to do, but not until they had struck root a little more surely in London.

And then with amazement, with incredulity, with indignation, she began to realize that he was proposing to go off by himself upon this vague extravagant research, that all this work she had been doing to make a social place for him in London was as nothing to him, that he was thinking of himself as separable from her. . . .

"But, Cheetah! How can you leave your spotless leopard? You would howl in the lonely jungle!"

"Possibly I shall. But I am going."

"Then I shall come."

"No." He considered her reasons. "You see you are not interested."

"But I am."

"Not as I am. You would turn it all into a jolly holiday. You don't want to see things as I want to do. You want romance. All the world is a show for you. As a show I can't endure it. I want to lay hands on it."

"But, Cheetah!" she said, "this is separation."

"You will have your life here. And I shall come back."

"But, Cheetah! How can we be separated?"

"We are separated," he said.

Her eyes became round with astonishment. Then her face puckered.

"Cheetah!" she cried in a voice of soft distress, "I love you. What do you mean?"

And she staggered forward, tear-blinded, and felt for his neck and shoulders, so that she might weep in his arms. . . .

5

"Don't say we are separated," she whispered, putting her still wet face close to his.

"No. We're mates," he answered softly, with his arm about her.

"How could we ever keep away from each uvver?" she whispered.

He was silent.

"How COULD we?"

He answered aloud. "Amanda," he said, "I mean to go round the world."

She disentangled herself from his arm and sat up beside him.

"What is to become of me," she asked suddenly in a voice of despair, "while you go round the world? If you desert me in London," she said, "if you shame me by deserting me in London-- If you leave me, I will never forgive you, Cheetah! Never." Then in an almost breathless voice, and as if she spoke to herself, "Never in all my days."

6

It was after that that Amanda began to talk about children. There was nothing involuntary about Amanda. "Soon," she said, "we must begin to think of children. Not just now, but a little later. It's good to travel and have our fun, but life is unreal until there are children in the background. No woman is really content until she is a mother. . . ." And for nearly a fortnight nothing more was said about that solitary journey round the world.

But children were not the only new topic in Amanda's talk. She set herself with an ingenious subtlety to remind her husband that there were other men in the world. The convenient fags, sometimes a little embarrassed, found their inobtrusive services being brought into the light before Benham's eyes. Most of them were much older men than himself, elderly philanderers of whom it seemed to him no sane man need be jealous, men often of forty or more, but one was a contemporary, Sir Philip Easton, a man with a touch of Spanish blood and a suggestion of Spanish fire, who quite manifestly was very much in love with Amanda and of whom she spoke with a slight perceptible difference of manner that made Benham faintly uneasy. He was ashamed of the feeling. Easton it seemed was a man of a peculiarly fine honour, so that Amanda could trust herself with him to an extent that would have been inadvisable with men of a commoner

substance, and he had a gift of understanding and sympathy that was almost feminine; he could cheer one up when one was lonely and despondent. For Amanda was so methodical in the arrangement of her time that even in the full rush of a London season she could find an hour now and then for being lonely and despondent. And he was a liberal and understanding purchaser of the ascendant painters; he understood that side of Amanda's interests, a side upon which Benham was notably deficient. . . .

"Amanda seems to like that dark boy, Poff; what is his name?--Sir Philip Easton?" said Lady Marayne.

Benham looked at her with a slightly hostile intelligence, and said nothing.

"When a man takes a wife, he has to keep her," said Lady Marayne.

"No," said Benham after consideration. "I don't intend to be a wife-herd."

"What?"

"Wife-herd--same as goat-herd."

"Coarse, you are sometimes, Poff--nowadays."

"It's exactly what I mean. I can understand the kind of curator's interest an Oriental finds in shepherding a large establishment, but to spend my days looking after one person who ought to be able to look after herself--"

"She's very young."

"She's quite grown up. Anyhow I'm not a moral nursemaid."

"If you leave her about and go abroad--"

"Has she been talking to you, mother?"

"The thing shows."

"But about my going abroad?"

"She said something, my little Poff."

Lady Marayne suddenly perceived that beneath Benham's indifference was something strung very tight, as though he had been thinking inordinately. He weighed his words before he spoke again. "If Amanda chooses to threaten me with a sort of conditional infidelity, I don't see that it ought to change the plans I have made for my life. . . ."

7

"No aristocrat has any right to be jealous," Benham wrote. "If he chances to be mated with a woman who does not see his vision or naturally go his way, he has no right to expect her, much less to compel her to go his way. What is the use of dragging an unwilling companion through morasses of uncongenial thought to unsought ends? What is the use of dragging even a willing pretender, who has no inherent will to seek and live the aristocratic life?"

"But that does not excuse him from obedience to his own call. . . ."

He wrote that very early in his examination of the Third Limitation. Already he had thought out and judged Amanda. The very charm of her, the sweetness, the nearness and magic of her, was making him

more grimly resolute to break away. All the elaborate process of thinking her over had gone on behind the mask of his silences while she had been preoccupied with her housing and establishment in London; it was with a sense of extraordinary injustice, of having had a march stolen upon her, of being unfairly trapped, that Amanda found herself faced by foregone conclusions. He was ready now even with the details of his project. She should go on with her life in London exactly as she had planned it. He would take fifteen hundred a year for himself and all the rest she might spend without check or stint as it pleased her. He was going round the world for one or two years. It was even possible he would not go alone. There was a man at Cambridge he might persuade to come with him, a don called Prothero who was peculiarly useful in helping him to hammer out his ideas. . . .

To her it became commandingly necessary that none of these things should happen.

She tried to play upon his jealousy, but her quick instinct speedily told her that this only hardened his heart. She perceived that she must make a softer appeal. Now of a set intention she began to revive and imitate the spontaneous passion of the honeymoon; she perceived for the first time clearly how wise and righteous a thing it is for a woman to bear a child. "He cannot go if I am going to have a child," she told herself. But that would mean illness, and for illness in herself or others Amanda had the intense disgust natural to her youth. Yet even illness would be better than this intolerable publication of her husband's ability to leave her side. . . .

She had a wonderful facility of enthusiasm and she set herself forthwith to cultivate a philoprogenitive ambition, to communicate it to him. Her dread of illness disappeared; her desire for offspring grew.

"Yes," he said, "I want to have children, but I must go round the world none the less."

She argued with all the concentrated subtlety of her fine keen mind. She argued with persistence and repetition. And then suddenly so that she was astonished at herself, there came a moment when she ceased to argue.

She stood in the dusk in a window that looked out upon the park, and she was now so intent upon her purpose as to be still and self-forgetful; she was dressed in a dinner-dress of white and pale green, that set off her slim erect body and the strong clear lines of her neck and shoulders very beautifully, some greenish stones caught a light from without and flashed soft whispering gleams from amidst the misty darkness of her hair. She was going to Lady Marayne and the opera, and he was bound for a dinner at the House with some young Liberals at which he was to meet two representative Indians with a grievance from Bengal. Husband and wife had but a few moments together. She asked about his company and he told her.

"They will tell you about India."

"Yes."

She stood for a moment looking out across the lights and the dark green trees, and then she turned to him.

"Why cannot I come with you?" she asked with sudden passion. "Why cannot I see the things you want to see?"

"I tell you you are not interested. You would only be interested through me. That would not help me. I should just be dealing out my premature ideas to you. If you cared as I care, if you wanted to know as I want to know, it would be different. But you don't. It isn't your fault that you don't. It happens so. And there is no

good in forced interest, in prescribed discovery."

"Cheetah," she asked, "what is it that you want to know--that I don't care for?"

"I want to know about the world. I want to rule the world."

"So do I."

"No, you want to have the world."

"Isn't it the same?"

"No. You're a greedier thing than I am, you Black Leopard you--standing there in the dusk. You're a stronger thing. Don't you know you're stronger? When I am with you, you carry your point, because you are more concentrated, more definite, less scrupulous. When you run beside me you push me out of my path. . . . You've made me afraid of you. . . . And so I won't go with you, Leopard. I go alone. It isn't because I don't love you. I love you too well. It isn't because you aren't beautiful and wonderful. . . ."

"But, Cheetah! nevertheless you care more for this that you want than you care for me."

Benham thought of it. "I suppose I do," he said.

"What is it that you want? Still I don't understand."

Her voice had the break of one who would keep reasonable in spite of pain.

"I ought to tell you."

"Yes, you ought to tell me."

"I wonder if I can tell you," he said very thoughtfully, and rested his hands on his hips. "I shall seem ridiculous to you."

"You ought to tell me."

"I think what I want is to be king of the world."

She stood quite still staring at him.

"I do not know how I can tell you of it. Amanda, do you remember those bodies--you saw those bodies--those mutilated men?"

"I saw them," said Amanda.

"Well. Is it nothing to you that those things happen?"

"They must happen."

"No. They happen because there are no kings but pitiful kings. They happen because the kings love their Amandas and do not care."

"But what can YOU do, Cheetah?"

"Very little. But I can give my life and all my strength. I can give all I can give."

"But how? How can you help it--help things like that massacre?"

"I can do my utmost to find out what is wrong with my world and rule it and set it right."

"YOU! Alone."

"Other men do as much. Every one who does so helps others to do so."

You see-- . . . In this world one may wake in the night and one may resolve to be a king, and directly one has resolved one is a king. Does that sound foolishness to you? Anyhow, it's fair that I should tell you, though you count me a fool. This--this kingship--this dream of the night--is my life. It is the very core of me. Much more than you are. More than anything else can be. I mean to be a king in this earth. KING. I'm not mad. . . . I see the world staggering from misery to misery and there is little wisdom, less rule, folly, prejudice, limitation, the good things come by chance and the evil things recover and slay them, and it is my world and I am responsible. Every man to whom this light has come is responsible. As soon as this light comes to you, as soon as your kingship is plain to you, there is no more rest, no peace, no delight, except in work, in service, in utmost effort. As far as I can do it I will rule my world. I cannot abide in this smug city, I cannot endure its self-complacency, its routine, its gloss of success, its rottenness. . . . I shall do little, perhaps I shall do nothing, but what I can understand and what I can do I will do. Think of that wild beautiful country we saw, and the mean misery, the filth and the warring cruelty of the life that lives there, tragedy, tragedy without dignity; and think, too, of the limitless ugliness here, and of Russia slipping from disorder to massacre, and China, that sea of human beings, sliding steadily to disaster. Do you think these are only things in the newspapers? To me at any rate they are not things in newspapers; they are pain and failure, they are torment, they are blood and dust and misery. They haunt me day and night. Even if it is utterly absurd I will still do my utmost. It IS absurd. I'm a madman and you and my mother are sensible people. . . . And I will go my way. . . . I don't care for the absurdity. I don't care a rap."

He stopped abruptly.

"There you have it, Amanda. It's rant, perhaps. Sometimes I feel it's rant. And yet it's the breath of life to me. . . . There you

are. . . . At last I've been able to break silence and tell you. . . ."

He stopped with something like a sob and stood regarding the dusky mystery of her face. She stood quite still, she was just a beautiful outline in the twilight, her face was an indistinctness under the black shadow of her hair, with eyes that were two patches of darkness.

He looked at his watch, lifting it close to his face to see the time. His voice changed. "Well--if you provoke a man enough, you see he makes speeches. Let it be a lesson to you, Amanda. Here we are talking instead of going to our dinners. The car has been waiting ten minutes."

Amanda, so still, was the most disconcerting of all Amandas. . . .

A strange exaltation seized upon her very suddenly. In an instant she had ceased to plot against him. A vast wave of emotion swept her forward to a resolution that astonished her.

"Cheetah!" she said, and the very quality of her voice had changed, "give me one thing. Stay until June with me."

"Why?" he asked.

Her answer came in a voice so low that it was almost a whisper.

"Because--now--no, I don't want to keep you any more--I am not trying to hold you any more. . . . I want. . . ."

She came forward to him and looked up closely at his face.

"Cheetah," she whispered almost inaudibly, "Cheetah--I didn't understand. But now--. I want to bear your child."

He was astonished. "Old Leopard!" he said.

"No," she answered, putting her hands upon his shoulders and drawing very close to him, "Queen---if I can be--to your King."

"You want to bear me a child!" he whispered, profoundly moved.

8

The Hindu agitators at the cavernous dinner under the House of Commons came to the conclusion that Benham was a dreamer. And over against Amanda at her dinner-party sat Sir Sidney Umber, one of those men who know that their judgments are quoted.

"Who is the beautiful young woman who is seeing visions?" he asked of his neighbour in confidential undertones. . . .

He tittered. "I think, you know, she ought to seem just SLIGHTLY aware that the man to her left is talking to her. . . ."

9

A few days later Benham went down to Cambridge, where Prothero was now a fellow of Trinity and Brissenden Trust Lecturer. . . .

All through Benham's writing there was manifest a persuasion that in some way Prothero was necessary to his mind. It was as if he looked to Prothero to keep him real. He suspected even while he obeyed

that upward flourish which was his own essential characteristic. He had a peculiar feeling that somehow that upward bias would betray him; that from exaltation he might presently float off, into the higher, the better, and so to complete unreality. He fled from priggishness and the terror of such sublimity alike to Prothero. Moreover, in relation to so many things Prothero in a peculiar distinctive manner SAW. He had less self-control than Benham, less integrity of purpose, less concentration, and things that were before his eyes were by the very virtue of these defects invariably visible to him. Things were able to insist upon themselves with him. Benham, on the other hand, when facts contradicted his purpose too stoutly, had a way of becoming blind to them. He repudiated inconvenient facts. He mastered and made his world; Prothero accepted and recorded his. Benham was a will towards the universe where Prothero was a perception and Amanda a confusing responsive activity. And it was because of his realization of this profound difference between them that he was possessed by the idea of taking Prothero with him about the world, as a detachable kind of vision--rather like that eye the Graiae used to hand one another. . . .

After the busy sunlit streets of Maytime Cambridge, Prothero's rooms in Trinity, their windows full of Gothic perspectives and light-soaked blue sky, seemed cool and quiet. A flavour of scholarship pervaded them--a little blended with the flavour of innumerable breakfasts nearly but not completely forgotten. Prothero's door had been locked against the world, and he had appeared after a slight delay looking a little puffy and only apprehending who his visitor was after a resentful stare for the better part of a second. He might have been asleep, he might have been doing anything but the examination papers he appeared to be doing. The two men exchanged personal details; they had not met since some months before Benham's marriage, and the visitor's eye went meanwhile from his host to the room and back to his host's face as though they were all aspects of the thing he was after, the Prothero humour, the earthly touch, the distinctive Prothero flavour. Then his eye was caught by a

large red, incongruous, meretricious-looking volume upon the couch that had an air of having been flung aside, VENUS IN GEM AND MARBLE, its cover proclaimed. . . .

His host followed that glance and blushed. "They send me all sorts of inappropriate stuff to review," he remarked.

And then he was denouncing celibacy.

The transition wasn't very clear to Benham. His mind had been preoccupied by the problem of how to open his own large project. Meanwhile Prothero got, as it were, the conversational bit between his teeth and bolted. He began to say the most shocking things right away, so that Benham's attention was caught in spite of himself.

"Inflammatory classics."

"What's that?"

"Celibacy, my dear Benham, is maddening me," said Prothero. "I can't stand it any longer."

It seemed to Benham that somewhere, very far away, in another world, such a statement might have been credible. Even in his own life,-- it was now indeed a remote, forgotten stage--there had been something distantly akin. . . .

"You're going to marry?"

"I must."

"Who's the lady, Billy?"

"I don't know. Venus."

His little red-brown eye met his friend's defiantly. "So far as I know, it is Venus Anadyomene." A flash of laughter passed across his face and left it still angrier, still more indecorously defiant. "I like her best, anyhow. I do, indeed. But, Lord! I feel that almost any of them--"

"Tut, tut!" said Benham.

Prothero flushed deeply but stuck to his discourse.

"Wasn't it always your principle, Benham, to look facts in the face? I am not pronouncing an immoral principle. Your manner suggests I am. I am telling you exactly how I feel. That is how I feel. I want--Venus. I don't want her to talk to or anything of that sort. . . . I have been studying that book, yes, that large, vulgar, red book, all the morning, instead of doing any work. Would you like to see it? . . . NO! . . .

"This spring, Benham, I tell you, is driving me mad. It is a peculiarly erotic spring. I cannot sleep, I cannot fix my mind, I cannot attend to ordinary conversation. These feelings, I understand, are by no means peculiar to myself. . . . No, don't interrupt me, Benham; let me talk now that the spirit of speech is upon me. When you came in you said, 'How are you?' I am telling you how I am. You brought it on yourself. Well--I am--inflamed. I have no strong moral or religious convictions to assist me either to endure or deny this--this urgency. And so why should I deny it? It's one of our chief problems here. The majority of my fellow dons who look at me with secretive faces in hall and court and combination-room are in just the same case as myself. The fever in oneself detects the fever in others. I know their hidden thoughts. Their fishy eyes defy me to challenge their hidden thoughts. Each covers his miserable secret under the cloak of a wholesome manly

indifference. A tattered cloak. . . . Each tries to hide his abandonment to this horrible vice of continence--"

"Billy, what's the matter with you?"

Prothero grimaced impatience. "Shall I NEVER teach you not to be a humbug, Benham?" he screamed, and in screaming became calmer. "Nature taunts me, maddens me. My life is becoming a hell of shame. 'Get out from all these books,' says Nature, 'and serve the Flesh.' The Flesh, Benham. Yes--I insist--the Flesh. Do I look like a pure spirit? Is any man a pure spirit? And here am I at Cambridge like a lark in a cage, with too much port and no Aspasia. Not that I should have liked Aspasia."

"Mutual, perhaps, Billy."

"Oh! you can sneer!"

"Well, clearly--Saint Paul is my authority--it's marriage, Billy."

Prothero had walked to the window. He turned round.

"I CAN'T marry," he said. "The trouble has gone too far. I've lost my nerve in the presence of women. I don't like them any more. They come at one--done up in a lot of ridiculous clothes, and chattering about all sorts of things that don't matter. . . . He surveyed his friend's thoughtful attitude. "I'm getting to hate women, Benham. I'm beginning now to understand the bitterness of spinsters against men. I'm beginning to grasp the unkindliness of priests. The perpetual denial. To you, happily married, a woman is just a human being. You can talk to her, like her, you can even admire her calmly; you've got, you see, no grudge against her. . . ."

He sat down abruptly.

Benham, upon the hearthrug before the empty fireplace, considered him.

"Billy! this is delusion," he said. "What's come over you?"

"I'm telling you," said Prothero.

"No," said Benham.

Prothero awaited some further utterance.

"I'm looking for the cause of it. It's feeding, Billy. It's port and stimulants where there is no scope for action. It's idleness. I begin to see now how much fatter you are, how much coarser."

"Idleness! Look at this pile of examination answers. Look at that filing system like an arsenal of wisdom. Useless wisdom, I admit, but anyhow not idleness."

"There's still bodily idleness. No. That's your trouble. You're stuffy. You've enlarged your liver. You sit in this room of a warm morning after an extravagant breakfast--. And peep and covet."

"Just eggs and bacon!"

"Think of it! Coffee and toast it ought to be. Come out of it, Billy, and get aired."

"How can one?"

"Easily. Come out of it now. Come for a walk, you Pig!"

"It's an infernally warm morning.

"Walk with me to Grantchester."

"We might go by boat. You could row."

"WALK."

"I ought to do these papers."

"You weren't doing them."

"No. . . ."

"Walk with me to Grantchester. All this affliction of yours is--horrid--and just nothing at all. Come out of it! I want you to come with me to Russia and about the world. I'm going to leave my wife--"

"Leave your wife!"

"Why not? And I came here hoping to find you clear-headed, and instead you are in this disgusting state. I've never met anything in my life so hot and red and shiny and shameless. Come out of it, man! How can one talk to you?"

10

"You pull things down to your own level," said Benham as they went through the heat to Grantchester.

"I pull them down to truth," panted Prothero.

"Truth! As though being full of gross appetites was truth, and discipline and training some sort of falsity!"

"Artificiality. And begetting pride, Benham, begetting a prig's pride."

For a time there was more than the heat of the day between them. . . .

The things that Benham had come down to discuss were thrust into the background by the impassioned materialism of Prothero.

"I'm not talking of Love," he said, remaining persistently outrageous. "I'm talking of physical needs. That first. What is the good of arranging systems of morality and sentiment before you know what is physically possible. . . .

"But how can one disentangle physical and moral necessities?"

"Then why don't we up and find out?" said Billy.

He had no patience with the secrecy, the ignorance, the emotion that surrounded these questions. We didn't worship our ancestors when it came to building bridges or working metals or curing disease or studying our indigestion, and why should we become breathless or wordless with awe and terror when it came to this fundamental affair? Why here in particular should we give way to Holy Fear and stifled submission to traditional suppressions and the wisdom of the ages? "What is the wisdom of the ages?" said Prothero. "Think of the corners where that wisdom was born. . . . Flea-bitten sages in stone-age hovels. . . . Wandering wise man with a rolling eye, a fakir under a tree, a Jewish sheik, an Arab epileptic. . . ."

"Would you sweep away the experience of mankind?" protested Benham.

The experience of mankind in these matters had always been bitter experience. Most of it was better forgotten. It didn't convince. It had never worked things out. In this matter just as in every

other matter that really signified things had still to be worked out. Nothing had been worked out hitherto. The wisdom of the ages was a Cant. People had been too busy quarrelling, fighting and running away. There wasn't any digested experience of the ages at all. Only the mis-remembered hankey-pankey of the Dead Old Man.

"Is this love-making a physical necessity for most men and women or isn't it?" Prothero demanded. "There's a simple question enough, and is there anything whatever in your confounded wisdom of the ages to tell me yes or no? Can an ordinary celibate be as healthy and vigorous as a mated man? Is a spinster of thirty-eight a healthy human being? Can she be? I don't believe so. Then why in thunder do we let her be? Here am I at a centre of learning and wisdom and I don't believe so; and there is nothing in all our colleges, libraries and roomsfull of wiseacres here, to settle that plain question for me, plainly and finally. My life is a grubby torment of cravings because it isn't settled. If sexual activity IS a part of the balance of life, if it IS a necessity, well let's set about making it accessible and harmless and have done with it. Swedish exercises. That sort of thing. If it isn't, if it can be reduced and done without, then let us set about teaching people HOW to control themselves and reduce and get rid of this vehement passion. But all this muffled mystery, this pompous sneak's way we take with it!"

"But, Billy! How can one settle these things? It's a matter of idiosyncrasy. What is true for one man isn't true for another. There's infinite difference of temperaments!"

"Then why haven't we a classification of temperaments and a moral code for each sort? Why am I ruled by the way of life that is convenient for Rigdon the vegetarian and fits Bowler the saint like a glove? It isn't convenient for me. It fits me like a hair-shirt. Of course there are temperaments, but why can't we formulate them and exercise the elementary charity of recognizing that one man's

health in these matters is another man's death? Some want love and gratification and some don't. There are people who want children and people who don't want to be bothered by children but who are full of vivid desires. There are people whose only happiness is chastity, and women who would rather be courtesans than mothers. Some of us would concentrate upon a single passion or a single idea; others overflow with a miscellaneous--tenderness. Yes,--and you smile! Why spit upon and insult a miscellaneous tenderness, Benham? Why grin at it? Why try every one by the standards that suit oneself? We're savages, Benham, shamefaced savages, still. Shamefaced and persecuting.

"I was angry about sex by seventeen," he went on. "Every year I live I grow angrier."

His voice rose to a squeal of indignation as he talked.

"Think," he said, "of the amount of thinking and feeling about sex that is going on in Cambridge this morning. The hundreds out of these thousands full of it. A vast tank of cerebration. And we put none of it together; we work nothing out from that but poor little couplings and casual stories, patchings up of situations, misbehaviours, blunders, disease, trouble, escapes; and the next generation will start, and the next generation after that will start with nothing but your wisdom of the ages, which isn't wisdom at all, which is just awe and funk, taboos and mystery and the secretive cunning of the savage. . . ."

"What I really want to do is my work," said Prothero, going off quite unexpectedly again. "That is why all this business, this incessant craving and the shame of it and all makes me so infernally angry. . . ."

"There I'm with you," cried Benham, struggling out of the thick torrent of Prothero's prepossessions. "What we want to do is our work."

He clung to his idea. He raised his voice to prevent Prothero getting the word again.

"It's this, that you call Work, that I call--what do I call it?--living the aristocratic life, which takes all the coarse simplicity out of this business. If it was only submission. . . . YOU think it is only submission--giving way. . . . It isn't only submission. We'd manage sex all right, we'd be the happy swine our senses would make us, if we didn't know all the time that there was something else to live for, something far more important. And different. Absolutely different and contradictory. So different that it cuts right across all these considerations. It won't fit in. . . . I don't know what this other thing is; it's what I want to talk about with you. But I know that it IS, in all my bones. . . . YOU know. . . . It demands control, it demands continence, it insists upon disregard."

But the ideas of continence and disregard were unpleasant ideas to Prothero that day.

"Mankind," said Benham, "is overcharged with this sex. It suffocates us. It gives life only to consume it. We struggle out of the urgent necessities of a mere animal existence. We are not so much living as being married and given in marriage. All life is swamped in the love story. . . ."

"Man is only overcharged because he is unsatisfied," said Prothero, sticking stoutly to his own view.

It was only as they sat at a little table in the orchard at Grantchester after their lunch that Benham could make head against Prothero and recover that largeness of outlook which had so easily touched the imagination of Amanda. And then he did not so much dispose of Prothero's troubles as soar over them. It is the last triumph of the human understanding to sympathize with desires we do not share, and to Benham who now believed himself to be loved beyond the chances of life, who was satisfied and tranquil and austerely content, it was impossible that Prothero's demands should seem anything more than the grotesque and squalid squealings of the beast that has to be overridden and rejected altogether. It is a freakish fact of our composition that these most intense feelings in life are just those that are most rapidly and completely forgotten; hate one may recall for years, but the magic of love and the flame of desire serve their purpose in our lives and vanish, leaving no trace, like the snows of Venice. Benham was still not a year and a half from the meretricious delights of Mrs. Skelmersdale, and he looked at Prothero as a marble angel might look at a swine in its sty. . . .

What he had now in mind was an expedition to Russia. When at last he could sufficiently release Prothero's attention, he unfolded the project that had been developing steadily in him since his honeymoon experience.

He had discovered a new reason for travelling. The last country we can see clearly, he had discovered, is our own country. It is as hard to see one's own country as it is to see the back of one's head. It is too much behind us, too much ourselves. But Russia is like England with everything larger, more vivid, cruder; one felt

that directly one walked about St. Petersburg. St. Petersburg upon its Neva was like a savage untamed London on a larger Thames; they were seagull-haunted tidal cities, like no other capitals in Europe. The shipping and buildings mingled in their effects. Like London it looked over the heads of its own people to a limitless polyglot empire. And Russia was an aristocratic land, with a middle-class that had no pride in itself as a class; it had a British toughness and incompetence, a British disregard of logic and meticulous care. Russia, like England, was outside Catholic Christendom, it had a state church and the opposition to that church was not secularism but dissent. One could draw a score of such contrasted parallels. And now it was in a state of intolerable stress, that laid bare the elemental facts of a great social organization. It was having its South African war, its war at the other end of the earth, with a certain defeat instead of a dubious victory. . . .

"There is far more freedom for the personal life in Russia than in England," said Prothero, a little irrelevantly.

Benham went on with his discourse about Russia. . . .

"At the college of Troitzka," said Prothero, "which I understand is a kind of monster Trinity unencumbered by a University, Binns tells me that although there is a profession of celibacy within the walls, the arrangements of the town and more particularly of the various hotels are conceived in a spirit of extreme liberality."

Benham hardly attended at all to these interruptions.

He went on to point out the elemental quality of the Russian situation. He led up to the assertion that to go to Russia, to see Russia, to try to grasp the broad outline of the Russian process, was the manifest duty of every responsible intelligence that was free to do as much. And so he was going, and if Prothero cared to come too--

"Yes," said Prothero, "I should like to go to Russia."

13

But throughout all their travel together that summer Benham was never able to lift Prothero away from his obsession. It was the substance of their talk as the Holland boat stood out past waiting destroyers and winking beacons and the lights of Harwich, into the smoothly undulating darkness of the North Sea; it rose upon them again as they sat over the cakes and cheese of a Dutch breakfast in the express for Berlin. Prothero filled the Sieges Allee with his complaints against nature and society, and distracted Benham in his contemplation of Polish agriculture from the windows of the train with turgid sexual liberalism. So that Benham, during this period until Prothero left him and until the tragic enormous spectacle of Russia in revolution took complete possession of him, was as it were thinking upon two floors. Upon the one he was thinking of the vast problems of a society of a hundred million people staggering on the verge of anarchy, and upon the other he was perplexed by the feverish inattention of Prothero to the tremendous things that were going on all about them. It was only presently when the serenity of his own private life began to be ruffled by disillusionment, that he began to realize the intimate connexion of these two systems of thought. Yet Prothero put it to him plainly enough.

"Inattentive," said Prothero, "of course I am inattentive. What is really the matter with all this--this social mess people are in here, is that nearly everybody is inattentive. These Big Things of yours, nobody is thinking of them really. Everybody is thinking about the Near Things that concern himself."

"The bombs they threw yesterday? The Cossacks and the whips?"

"Nudges. Gestures of inattention. If everybody was thinking of the Res Publica would there be any need for bombs?"

He pursued his advantage. "It's all nonsense to suppose people think of politics because they are in 'em. As well suppose that the passengers on a liner understand the engines, or soldiers a war. Before men can think of to-morrow, they must think of to-day. Before they can think of others, they must be sure about themselves. First of all, food; the private, the personal economic worry. Am I safe for food? Then sex, and until one is tranquil and not ashamed, not irritated and dissatisfied, how can one care for other people, or for next year or the Order of the World? How can one, Benham?"

He seized the illustration at hand. "Here we are in Warsaw--not a month after bomb-throwing and Cossack charging. Windows have still to be mended, smashed doors restored. There's blood-stains still on some of the houses. There are hundreds of people in the Citadel and in the Ochrana prison. This morning there were executions. Is it anything more than an eddy in the real life of the place? Watch the customers in the shops, the crowd in the streets, the men in the cafes who stare at the passing women. They are all swallowed up again in their own business. They just looked up as the Cossacks galloped past; they just shifted a bit when the bullets spat. . . ."

And when the streets of Moscow were agog with the grotesque amazing adventure of the Potemkin mutineers, Prothero was in the full tide of the private romance that severed him from Benham and sent him back to Cambridge--changed.

Before they reached Moscow Benham was already becoming accustomed to

disregard Prothero. He was looking over him at the vast heaving trouble of Russia, which now was like a sea that tumbles under the

hurrying darkesses of an approaching storm. In those days it looked as though it must be an overwhelming storm. He was drinking in the wide and massive Russian effects, the drifting crowds in the entangling streets, the houses with their strange lettering in black and gold, the innumerable barbaric churches, the wildly driven droshkys, the sombre red fortress of the Kremlin, with its bulbous churches clustering up into the sky, the crosses, the innumerable gold crosses, the mad church of St. Basil, carrying the Russian note beyond the pitch of permissible caricature, and in this setting the obscure drama of clustering, staring, sash-wearing peasants, long-haired students, sane-eyed women, a thousand varieties of uniform, a running and galloping to and fro of messengers, a flutter of little papers, whispers, shouts, shots, a drama elusive and portentous, a gathering of forces, an accumulation of tension going on to a perpetual clash and clamour of bells. Benham had brought letters of introduction to a variety of people, some had vanished, it seemed. They were "away," the porters said, and they continued to be "away,"--it was the formula, he learnt, for arrest; others were evasive, a few showed themselves extraordinarily anxious to inform him about things, to explain themselves and things about them exhaustively. One young student took him to various meetings and showed him in great detail the scene of the recent murder of the Grand Duke Sergius. The buildings opposite the old French cannons were still under repair. "The assassin stood just here. The bomb fell there, look! right down there towards the gate; that was where they found his arm. He was torn to fragments. He was scraped up. He was mixed with the horses. . . ."

Every one who talked spoke of the outbreak of revolution as a matter of days or at the utmost weeks. And whatever question Benham chose to ask these talkers were prepared to answer. Except one. "And after the revolution," he asked, "what then? . . ." Then they waved their hands, and failed to convey meanings by reassuring gestures.

He was absorbed in his effort to understand this universal ominous

drift towards a conflict. He was trying to piece together a process, if it was one and the same process, which involved riots in Lodz, fighting at Libau, wild disorder at Odessa, remote colossal battlings in Manchuria, the obscure movements of a disastrous fleet lost somewhere now in the Indian seas, steaming clumsily to its fate, he was trying to rationalize it all in his mind, to comprehend its direction. He was struggling strenuously with the obscurities of the language in which these things were being discussed about him, a most difficult language demanding new sets of visual images because of its strange alphabet. Is it any wonder that for a time he failed to observe that Prothero was involved in some entirely disconnected affair.

They were staying at the big Cosmopolis bazaar in the Theatre Square. Thither, through the doors that are opened by distraught-looking men with peacocks' feathers round their caps, came Benham's friends and guides to take him out and show him this and that. At first Prothero always accompanied Benham on these expeditions; then he began to make excuses. He would stay behind in the hotel. Then when Benham returned Prothero would have disappeared. When the porter was questioned about Prothero his nescience was profound.

One night no Prothero was discoverable at any hour, and Benham, who wanted to discuss a project for going on to Kieff and Odessa, was alarmed.

"Moscow is a late place," said Benham's student friend. "You need not be anxious until after four or five in the morning. It will be quite time--**QUITE** time to be anxious to-morrow. He may be--close at hand."

When Benham hunted up Prothero in his room next morning he found him sleepy and irritable.

"I don't trouble if **YOU** are late," said Prothero, sitting up in his

bed with a red resentful face and crumpled hair. "I wasn't born yesterday."

"I wanted to talk about leaving Moscow."

"I don't want to leave Moscow."

"But Odessa--Odessa is the centre of interest just now."

"I want to stay in Moscow."

Benham looked baffled.

Prothero stuck up his knees and rested his night-shirted arms upon them. "I don't want to leave Moscow," he said, "and I'm not going to do so."

"But haven't we done--"

Prothero interrupted. "You may. But I haven't. We're not after the same things. Things that interest you, Benham, don't interest me. I've found--different things."

His expression was extraordinarily defiant.

"I want," he went on, "to put our affairs on a different footing. Now you've opened the matter we may as well go into it. You were good enough to bring me here. . . . There was a sort of understanding we were working together. . . . We aren't. . . . The long and short of it is, Benham, I want to pay you for my journey here and go on my own--independently."

His eye and voice achieved a fierceness that Benham found nearly incredible in him.

Something that had got itself overlooked in the press of other matters jerked back into Benham's memory. It popped back so suddenly that for an instant he wanted to laugh. He turned towards the window, picked his way among Prothero's carelessly dropped garments, and stood for a moment staring into the square, with its drifting, assembling and dispersing fleet of trains and its long line of blue-coated IZVOSHTCHIKS. Then he turned.

"Billy," he said, "didn't I see you the other evening driving towards the Hermitage?"

"Yes," said Prothero, and added, "that's it."

"You were with a lady."

"And she IS a lady," said Prothero, so deeply moved that his face twitched as though he was going to weep.

"She's a Russian?"

"She had an English mother. Oh, you needn't stand there and look so damned ironical! She's--she's a woman. She's a thing of kindness. . . ."

He was too full to go on.

"Billy, old boy," said Benham, distressed, "I don't want to be ironical--"

Prothero had got his voice again.

"You'd better know," he said, "you'd better know. She's one of those women who live in this hotel."

"Live in this hotel!"

"On the fourth floor. Didn't you know? It's the way in most of these big Russian hotels. They come down and sit about after lunch and dinner. A woman with a yellow ticket. Oh! I don't care. I don't care a rap. She's been kind to me; she's--she's dear to me. How are you to understand? I shall stop in Moscow. I shall take her to England. I can't live without her, Benham. And then-- And then you come worrying me to come to your damned Odessa!"

And suddenly this extraordinary young man put his hands to his face as though he feared to lose it and would hold it on, and after an apoplectic moment burst noisily into tears. They ran between his fingers. "Get out of my room," he shouted, suffocatingly. "What business have you to come prying on me?"

Benham sat down on a chair in the middle of the room and stared round-eyed at his friend. His hands were in his pockets. For a time he said nothing.

"Billy," he began at last, and stopped again. "Billy, in this country somehow one wants to talk like a Russian. Billy, my dear-- I'm not your father, I'm not your judge. I'm--unreasonably fond of you. It's not my business to settle what is right or wrong for you. If you want to stay in Moscow, stay in Moscow. Stay here, and stay as my guest. . . ."

He stopped and remained staring at his friend for a little space.

"I didn't know," said Prothero brokenly; "I didn't know it was possible to get so fond of a person. . . ."

Benham stood up. He had never found Prothero so attractive and so abominable in his life before.

"I shall go to Odessa alone, Billy. I'll make things all right here

before I go. . . ."

He closed the door behind him and went in a state of profound thought to his own room. . . .

Presently Prothero came to him with a vague inopportune desire to explain what so evidently did not need explaining. He walked about the room trying ways of putting it, while Benham packed.

In an unaccountable way Prothero's bristling little mind seemed to have shrunken to something sleek and small.

"I wish," he said, "you could stay for a later train and have lunch and meet her. She's not the ordinary thing. She's--different."

Benham plumbed depths of wisdom. "Billy," he said, "no woman IS the ordinary thing. They are all--different. . . ."

14

For a time this affair of Prothero's seemed to be a matter as disconnected from the Research Magnificent as one could imagine any matter to be. While Benham went from Moscow and returned, and travelled hither and thither, and involved himself more and more in the endless tangled threads of the revolutionary movement in Russia, Prothero was lost to all those large issues in the development of his personal situation. He contributed nothing to Benham's thought except attempts at discouragement. He reiterated his declaration that all the vast stress and change of Russian national life was going on because it was universally disregarded. "I tell you, as I told you before, that nobody is attending. You think because all Moscow, all Russia, is in the picture, that everybody is concerned.

Nobody is concerned. Nobody cares what is happening. Even the men who write in newspapers and talk at meetings about it don't care. They are thinking of their dinners, of their clothes, of their money, of their wives. They hurry home. . . ."

That was his excuse.

Manifestly it was an excuse.

His situation developed into remarkable complications of jealousy and divided counsels that Benham found altogether incomprehensible. To Benham in those days everything was very simple in this business of love. The aristocrat had to love ideally; that was all. He had to love Amanda. He and Amanda were now very deeply in love again, more in love, he felt, than they had ever been before. They were now writing love-letters to each other and enjoying a separation that was almost voluptuous. She found in the epistolatory treatment of her surrender to him and to the natural fate of women, a delightful exercise for her very considerable powers of expression. Life pointed now wonderfully to the great time ahead when there would be a Cheetah cub in the world, and meanwhile the Cheetah loped about the wild world upon a mighty quest. In such terms she put it. Such foolishness written in her invincibly square and youthful hand went daily from London to Russia, and stacked up against his return in the porter's office at the Cosmopolis Bazaar or pursued him down through the jarring disorders of south-west Russia, or waited for him at ill-chosen post-offices that deflected his journeyings wastefully or in several instances went altogether astray. Perhaps they supplied self-educating young strikers in the postal service with useful exercises in the deciphering of manuscript English. He wrote back five hundred different ways of saying that he loved her extravagantly. . . .

It seemed to Benham in those days that he had found the remedy and solution of all those sexual perplexities that distressed the world;

Heroic Love to its highest note--and then you go about your business. It seemed impossible not to be happy and lift one's chin high and diffuse a bracing kindliness among the unfortunate multitudes who stewed in affliction and hate because they had failed as yet to find this simple, culminating elucidation. And Prothero-- Prothero, too, was now achieving the same grand elementariness, out of his lusts and protests and general physical squalor he had flowered into love. For a time it is true it made rather an ineffective companion of him, but this was the mere goose-stepping for the triumphal march; this way ultimately lay exaltation. Benham had had as yet but a passing glimpse of this Anglo-Russian, who was a lady and altogether unlike her fellows; he had seen her for a doubtful second or so as she and Prothero drove past him, and his impression was of a rather little creature, white-faced with dusky hair under a red cap, paler and smaller but with something in her, a quiet alertness, that gave her a touch of kinship with Amanda. And if she liked old Prothero-- And, indeed, she must like old Prothero or could she possibly have made him so deeply in love with her?

They must stick to each other, and then, presently, Prothero's soul would wake up and face the world again. What did it matter what she had been?

Through stray shots and red conflict, long tediums of strained anxiety and the physical dangers of a barbaric country staggering towards revolution, Benham went with his own love like a lamp within him and this affair of Prothero's reflecting its light, and he was quite prepared for the most sympathetic and liberal behaviour when he came back to Moscow to make the lady's acquaintance. He intended to help Prothero to marry and take her back to Cambridge, and to assist by every possible means in destroying and forgetting the official yellow ticket that defined her status in Moscow. But he reckoned without either Prothero or the young lady in this expectation.

It only got to him slowly through his political preoccupations that there were obscure obstacles to this manifest course. Prothero hesitated; the lady expressed doubts.

On closer acquaintance her resemblance to Amanda diminished. It was chiefly a similarity of complexion. She had a more delicate face than Amanda, and its youthful brightness was deadened; she had none of Amanda's glow, and she spoke her mother's language with a pretty halting limp that was very different from Amanda's clear decisions.

She put her case compactly.

"I would not DO in Cambridge," she said with an infinitesimal glance at Prothero.

"Mr. Benham," she said, and her manner had the gravity of a woman of affairs," now do you see me in Cambridge? Now do you see me? Kept outside the walls? In a little DATCHA? With no occupation? Just to amuse him."

And on another occasion when Prothero was not with her she achieved still completer lucidity.

"I would come if I thought he wanted me to come," she said. "But you see if I came he would not want me to come. Because then he would have me and so he wouldn't want me. He would just have the trouble. And I am not sure if I should be happy in Cambridge. I am not sure I should be happy enough to make him happy. It is a very learned and intelligent and charming society, of course; but here, THINGS HAPPEN. At Cambridge nothing happens--there is only education. There is no revolution in Cambridge; there are not even sinful people to be sorry for. . . . And he says himself that Cambridge people are particular. He says they are liberal but very, very particular, and perhaps I could not always act my part well. Sometimes I am not always well behaved. When there is music I

behave badly sometimes, or when I am bored. He says the Cambridge people are so liberal that they do not mind what you are, but he says they are so particular that they mind dreadfully how you are what you are. . . . So that it comes to exactly the same thing. . . ."

"Anna Alexievna," said Benham suddenly, "are you in love with Prothero?"

Her manner became conscientiously scientific.

"He is very kind and very generous--too generous. He keeps sending for more money--hundreds of roubles, I try to prevent him."

"Were you EVER in love?"

"Of course. But it's all gone long ago. It was like being hungry. Only very fine hungry. Exquisite hungry. . . . And then being disgusted. . . ."

"He is in love with you."

"What is love?" said Anna. "He is grateful. He is by nature grateful." She smiled a smile, like the smile of a pale Madonna who looks down on her bambino.

"And you love nothing?"

"I love Russia--and being alone, being completely alone. When I am dead perhaps I shall be alone. Not even my own body will touch me then."

Then she added, "But I shall be sorry when he goes."

Afterwards Benham talked to Prothero alone. "Your Anna," he said,

"is rather wonderful. At first, I tell you now frankly I did not like her very much, I thought she looked 'used,' she drank vodka at lunch, she was gay, uneasily; she seemed a sham thing. All that was prejudice. She thinks; she's generous, she's fine."

"She's tragic," said Prothero as though it was the same thing.

He spoke as though he noted an objection. His next remark confirmed this impression. "That's why I can't take her back to Cambridge," he said.

"You see, Benham," he went on, "she's human. She's not really feminine. I mean, she's--unsexed. She isn't fitted to be a wife or a mother any more. We've talked about the possible life in England, very plainly. I've explained what a household in Cambridge would mean. . . . It doesn't attract her. . . . In a way she's been let out from womanhood, forced out of womanhood, and I see now that when women are let out from womanhood there's no putting them back. I could give a lecture on Anna. I see now that if women are going to be wives and mothers and homekeepers and ladies, they must be got ready for it from the beginning, sheltered, never really let out into the wild chances of life. She has been. Bitterly. She's REALLY emancipated. And it's let her out into a sort of nothingness. She's no longer a woman, and she isn't a man. She ought to be able to go on her own--like a man. But I can't take her back to Cambridge. Even for her sake."

His perplexed eyes regarded Benham.

"You won't be happy in Cambridge--alone," said Benham.

"Oh, damnably not! But what can I do? I had at first some idea of coming to Moscow for good--teaching."

He paused. "Impossible. I'm worth nothing here. I couldn't have

kept her."

"Then what are you going to do, Billy?"

"I don't KNOW what I'm going to do, I tell you. I live for the moment. To-morrow we are going out into the country."

"I don't understand," said Benham with a gesture of resignation. "It seems to me that if a man and woman love each other--well, they insist upon each other. What is to happen to her if you leave her in Moscow?"

"Damnation! Is there any need to ask that?"

"Take her to Cambridge, man. And if Cambridge objects, teach Cambridge better manners."

Prothero's face was suddenly transfigured with rage.

"I tell you she won't come!" he said.

"Billy!" said Benham, "you should make her!"

"I can't."

"If a man loves a woman he can make her do anything--"

"But I don't love her like that," said Prothero, shrill with anger. "I tell you I don't love her like that."

Then he lunged into further deeps. "It's the other men," he said, "it's the things that have been. Don't you understand? Can't you understand? The memories--she must have memories--they come between us. It's something deeper than reason. It's in one's spine and under one's nails. One could do anything, I perceive, for one's

very own woman. . . ."

"MAKE her your very own woman, said the exponent of heroic love.

"I shirk deeds, Benham, but you shirk facts. How could any man make her his very own woman now? You--you don't seem to understand-- ANYTHING. She's nobody's woman--for ever. That--that might-have-been has gone for ever. . . . It's nerves--a passion of the nerves. There's a cruelty in life and-- She's KIND to me. She's so kind to me. . . ."

And then again Prothero was weeping like a vexed child.

15

The end of Prothero's first love affair came to Benham in broken fragments in letters. When he looked for Anna Alexievna in December--he never learnt her surname--he found she had left the Cosmopolis Bazaar soon after Prothero's departure and he could not find whither she had gone. He never found her again. Moscow and Russia had swallowed her up.

Of course she and Prothero parted; that was a foregone conclusion. But Prothero's manner of parting succeeded in being at every phase a shock to Benham's ideas. It was clear he went off almost callously; it would seem there was very little crying. Towards the end it was evident that the two had quarrelled. The tears only came at the very end of all. It was almost as if he had got through the passion and was glad to go. Then came regret, a regret that increased in geometrical proportion with every mile of distance.

In Warsaw it was that grief really came to Prothero. He had some

hours there and he prowled the crowded streets, seeing girls and women happy with their lovers, abroad upon bright expeditions and full of delicious secrets, girls and women who ever and again flashed out some instant resemblance to Anna. . . .

In Berlin he stopped a night and almost decided that he would go back. "But now I had the damned frontier," he wrote, "between us."

It was so entirely in the spirit of Prothero, Benham thought, to let the "damned frontier" tip the balance against him.

Then came a scrawl of passionate confession, so passionate that it seemed as if Prothero had been transfigured. "I can't stand this business," he wrote. "It has things in it, possibilities of emotional disturbance--you can have no idea! In the train--luckily I was alone in the compartment--I sat and thought, and suddenly, I could not help it, I was weeping--noisy weeping, an uproar! A beastly German came and stood in the corridor to stare. I had to get out of the train. It is disgraceful, it is monstrous we should be made like this. . . .

"Here I am stranded in Hanover with nothing to do but to write to you about my dismal feelings. . . ."

After that surely there was nothing before a broken-hearted Prothero but to go on with his trailing wing to Trinity and a life of inappeasable regrets; but again Benham reckoned without the invincible earthliness of his friend. Prothero stayed three nights in Paris.

"There is an extraordinary excitement about Paris," he wrote. "A levity. I suspect the gypsum in the subsoil--some as yet undescribed radiations. Suddenly the world looks brightly cynical. . . . None of those tear-compelling German emanations. . . .

"And, Benham, I have found a friend.

"A woman. Of course you will laugh, you will sneer. You do not understand these things. . . . Yet they are so simple. It was the strangest accident brought us together. There was something that drew us together. A sort of instinct. Near the Boulevard Poissoniere. . . ."

"Good heavens!" said Benham. "A sort of instinct!"

"I told her all about Anna!"

"Good Lord!" cried Benham.

"She understood. Perfectly. None of your so-called 'respectable' women could have understood. . . . At first I intended merely to talk to her. . . ."

Benham crumpled the letter in his hand.

"Little Anna Alexievna!" he said, "you were too clean for him."

16

Benham had a vision of Prothero returning from all this foreign travel meekly, pensively, a little sadly, and yet not without a kind of relief, to the grey mildness of Trinity. He saw him, capped and gowned, and restored to academic dignity again, nodding greetings, resuming friendships.

The little man merged again into his rare company of discreet Benedicts and restrained celibates at the high tables. They ate on

in their mature wisdom long after the undergraduates had fled. Presently they would withdraw processionally to the combination room. . . .

There would be much to talk about over the wine.

Benham speculated what account Prothero would give of Moscow. . . .

He laughed abruptly.

And with that laugh Prothero dropped out of Benham's world for a space of years. There may have been other letters, but if so they were lost in the heaving troubles of a revolution-strained post-office. Perhaps to this day they linger sere and yellow in some forgotten pigeon-hole in Kishinev or Ekaterinoslav. . . .

17

In November, after an adventure in the trader's quarter of Kieff which had brought him within an inch of death, and because an emotional wave had swept across him and across his correspondence with Amanda, Benham went back suddenly to England and her. He wanted very greatly to see her and also he wanted to make certain arrangements about his property. He returned by way of Hungary, and sent telegrams like shouts of excitement whenever the train stopped for a sufficient time. "Old Leopard, I am coming, I am coming," he telegraphed, announcing his coming for the fourth time. It was to be the briefest of visits, very passionate, the mutual refreshment of two noble lovers, and then he was returning to Russia again.

Amanda was at Chexington, and there he found her installed in the utmost dignity of expectant maternity. Like many other people he

had been a little disposed to regard the bearing of children as a common human experience; at Chexington he came to think of it as a rare and sacramental function. Amanda had become very beautiful in quiet, grey, dove-like tones; her sun-touched, boy's complexion had given way to a soft glow of the utmost loveliness, her brisk little neck that had always reminded him of the stalk of a flower was now softened and rounded; her eyes were tender, and she moved about the place in the manner of one who is vowed to a great sacrifice. She dominated the scene, and Lady Marayne, with a certain astonishment in her eyes and a smouldering disposition to irony, was the half-sympathetic, half-resentful priestess of her daughter-in-law's unparalleled immolation. The MOTIF of motherhood was everywhere, and at his bedside he found--it had been put there for him by Amanda--among much other exaltation of woman's mission, that most wonderful of all philoprogenitive stories, Hudson's CRYSTAL AGE.

Everybody at Chexington had an air of being grouped about the impending fact. An epidemic of internal troubles, it is true, kept Sir Godfrey in the depths of London society, but to make up for his absence Mrs. Morris had taken a little cottage down by the river and the Wilder girls were with her, both afire with fine and subtle feelings and both, it seemed, and more particularly Betty, prepared to be keenly critical of Benham's attitude.

He did a little miss his cue in these exaltations, because he had returned in a rather different vein of exaltation.

In missing it he was assisted by Amanda herself, who had at moments an effect upon him of a priestess confidentially disrobed. It was as if she put aside for him something official, something sincerely maintained, necessary, but at times a little irksome. It was as if she was glad to take him into her confidence and unbend. Within the pre-natal Amanda an impish Amanda still lingered.

There were aspects of Amanda that it was manifest dear Betty must

never know. . . .

But the real Amanda of that November visit even in her most unpontifical moods did not quite come up to the imagined Amanda who had drawn him home across Europe. At times she was extraordinarily jolly. They had two or three happy walks about the Chexington woods; that year the golden weather of October had flowed over into November, and except for a carpet of green and gold under the horse-chestnuts most of the leaves were still on the trees. Gleams of her old wanton humour shone on him. And then would come something else, something like a shadow across the world, something he had quite forgotten since his idea of heroic love had flooded him, something that reminded him of those long explanations with Mr. Rathbone-Sanders that had never been explained, and of the curate in the doorway of the cottage and his unaccountable tears.

On the afternoon of his arrival at Chexington he was a little surprised to find Sir Philip Easton coming through the house into the garden, with an accustomed familiarity. Sir Philip perceived him with a start that was instantly controlled, and greeted him with unnatural ease.

Sir Philip, it seemed, was fishing and reading and playing cricket in the neighbourhood, which struck Benham as a poor way of spending the summer, the sort of soft holiday a man learns to take from scholars and literary men. A man like Sir Philip, he thought, ought to have been aviating or travelling.

Moreover, when Sir Philip greeted Amanda it seemed to Benham that there was a flavour of established association in their manner. But then Sir Philip was also very assiduous with Lady Marayne. She called him "Pip," and afterwards Amanda called across the tennis-court to him, "Pip!" And then he called her "Amanda." When the Wilder girls came up to join the tennis he was just as brotherly. . . .

The next day he came to lunch.

During that meal Benham became more aware than he had ever been before of the peculiar deep expressiveness of this young man's eyes. They watched him and they watched Amanda with a solicitude that seemed at once pained and tender. And there was something about Amanda, a kind of hard brightness, an impartiality and an air of something undefinably suspended, that gave Benham an intuitive certitude that that afternoon Sir Philip would be spoken to privately, and that then he would pack up and go away in a state of illumination from Chexington. But before he could be spoken to he contrived to speak to Benham.

They were left to smoke after lunch, and then it was he took advantage of a pause to commit his little indiscretion.

"Mrs. Benham," he said, "looks amazingly well--extraordinarily well, don't you think?"

"Yes," said Benham, startled. "Yes. She certainly keeps very well."

"She misses you terribly," said Sir Philip; "it is a time when a woman misses her husband. But, of course, she does not want to hamper your work. . . ."

Benham felt it was very kind of him to take so intimate an interest in these matters, but on the spur of the moment he could find no better expression for this than a grunt.

"You don't mind," said the young man with a slight catch in the breath that might have been apprehensive, "that I sometimes bring her books and flowers and things? Do what little I can to keep life interesting down here? It's not very congenial. . . . She's so wonderful--I think she is the most wonderful woman in the world."

Benham perceived that so far from being a modern aristocrat he was really a primitive barbarian in these matters.

"I've no doubt," he said, "that my wife has every reason to be grateful for your attentions."

In the little pause that followed Benham had a feeling that Sir Philip was engendering something still more personal. If so, he might be constrained to invert very gently but very firmly the bowl of chrysanthemums over Sir Philip's head, or kick him in an improving manner. He had a ridiculous belief that Sir Philip would probably take anything of the sort very touchingly. He scrambled in his mind for some remark that would avert this possibility.

"Have you ever been in Russia?" he asked hastily. "It is the most wonderful country in Europe. I had an odd adventure near Kiev. During a pogrom."

And he drowned the developing situation in a flood of description. . . .

But it was not so easy to drown the little things that were presently thrown out by Lady Marayne. They were so much more in the air. . . .

18

Sir Philip suddenly got out of the picture even as Benham had foreseen.

"Easton has gone away," he remarked three days later to Amanda.

"I told him to go. He is a bore with you about. But otherwise he is rather a comfort, Cheetah." She meditated upon Sir Philip. "And he's an HONOURABLE man," she said. "He's safe. . . ."

19

After that visit it was that the notes upon love and sex began in earnest. The scattered memoranda upon the perfectness of heroic love for the modern aristocrat ended abruptly. Instead there came the first draft for a study of jealousy. The note was written in pencil on Chexington notepaper and manifestly that had been supported on the ribbed cover of a book. There was a little computation in the corner, converting forty-five degrees Reaumur into degrees Fahrenheit, which made White guess it had been written in the Red Sea. But, indeed, it had been written in a rather amateurishly stoked corridor-train on Benham's journey to the gathering revolt in Moscow. . . .

"I think I have been disposed to underrate the force of sexual jealousy. . . . I thought it was something essentially contemptible, something that one dismissed and put behind oneself in the mere effort to be aristocratic, but I begin to realize that it is not quite so easily settled with. . . .

"One likes to know. . . . Possibly one wants to know too much. . . . In phases of fatigue, and particularly in phases of sleeplessness, when one is leaving all that one cares for behind, it becomes an irrational torment. . . .

"And it is not only in oneself that I am astonished by the power of this base motive. I see, too, in the queer business of Prothero how strongly jealousy, how strongly the sense of proprietorship, weighs

with a man. . . .

"There is no clear reason why one should insist upon another human being being one's ownest own--utterly one's own. . . .

"There is, of course, no clear reason for most human motives. . . .

"One does. . . .

"There is something dishonouring in distrust--to both the distrusted and the one who distrusts. . . ."

After that, apparently, it had been too hot and stuffy to continue.

20

Benham did not see Amanda again until after the birth of their child. He spent his Christmas in Moscow, watching the outbreak, the fitful fighting and the subsequent break-up, of the revolution, and taking care of a lost and helpless English family whose father had gone astray temporarily on the way home from Baku. Then he went southward to Rostov and thence to Astrakhan. Here he really began his travels. He determined to get to India by way of Herat and for the first time in his life rode out into an altogether lawless wilderness. He went on obstinately because he found himself disposed to funk the journey, and because discouragements were put in his way. He was soon quite cut off from all the ways of living he had known. He learnt what it is to be flea-bitten, saddle-sore, hungry and, above all, thirsty. He was haunted by a dread of fever, and so contrived strange torments for himself with overdoses of quinine. He ceased to be traceable from Chexington in March, and he reappeared in the form of a telegram from Karachi demanding news in

May. He learnt he was the father of a man-child and that all was well with Amanda.

He had not expected to be so long away from any communication with the outer world, and something in the nature of a stricken conscience took him back to England. He found a second William Porphyry in the world, dominating Chexington, and Amanda tenderly triumphant and passionate, the Madonna enthroned. For William Porphyry he could feel no emotion. William Porphyry was very red and ugly and protesting, feeble and aggressive, a matter for a skilled nurse. To see him was to ignore him and dispel a dream. It was to Amanda Benham turned again.

For some days he was content to adore his Madonna and listen to the familiar flatteries of her love. He was a leaner, riper man, Amanda said, and wiser, so that she was afraid of him. . . .

And then he became aware that she was requiring him to stay at her side. "We have both had our adventures," she said, which struck him as an odd phrase.

It forced itself upon his obstinate incredulity that all those conceptions of heroic love and faithfulness he had supposed to be so clearly understood between them had vanished from her mind. She had absolutely forgotten that twilight moment at the window which had seemed to him the crowning instant, the real marriage of their lives. It had gone, it had left no recoverable trace in her. And upon his interpretations of that he had loved her passionately for a year. She was back at exactly the ideas and intentions that ruled her during their first settlement in London. She wanted a joint life in the social world of London, she demanded his presence, his attention, the daily practical evidences of love. It was all very well for him to be away when the child was coming, but now everything was different. Now he must stay by her.

This time he argued no case. These issues he had settled for ever. Even an indignant dissertation from Lady Marayne, a dissertation that began with appeals and ended in taunts, did not move him. Behind these things now was India. The huge problems of India had laid an unshakeable hold upon his imagination. He had seen Russia, and he wanted to balance that picture by a vision of the east. . . .

He saw Easton only once during a week-end at Chexington. The young man displayed no further disposition to be confidentially sentimental. But he seemed to have something on his mind. And Amanda said not a word about him. He was a young man above suspicion, Benham felt. . . .

And from his departure the quality of the correspondence of these two larger carnivores began to change. Except for the repetition of accustomed endearments, they ceased to be love letters in any sense of the word. They dealt chiefly with the "Cub," and even there Benham felt presently that the enthusiasm diminished. A new amazing quality for Amanda appeared--triteness. The very writing of her letters changed as though it had suddenly lost backbone. Her habitual liveliness of phrasing lost its point. Had she lost her animation? Was she ill unknowingly? Where had the light gone? It was as if her attention was distracted. . . . As if every day when she wrote her mind was busy about something else.

Abruptly at last he understood. A fact that had never been stated, never formulated, never in any way admitted, was suddenly pointed to convergently by a thousand indicating fingers, and beyond question perceived to be THERE. . . .

He left a record of that moment of realization.

"Suddenly one night I woke up and lay still, and it was as if I had never seen Amanda before. Now I saw her plainly, I saw her with that same dreadful clearness that sometimes comes at dawn, a

pitiless, a scientific distinctness that has neither light nor shadow. . . .

"Of course," I said, and then presently I got up very softly. . . .

"I wanted to get out of my intolerable, close, personal cabin. I wanted to feel the largeness of the sky. I went out upon the deck. We were off the coast of Madras, and when I think of that moment, there comes back to me also the faint flavour of spice in the air, the low line of the coast, the cool flooding abundance of the Indian moonlight, the swish of the black water against the side of the ship. And a perception of infinite loss, as if the limitless heavens above this earth and below to the very uttermost star were just one boundless cavity from which delight had fled. . . .

"Of course I had lost her. I knew it with absolute certainty. I knew it from her insecure temperament, her adventurousness, her needs. I knew it from every line she had written me in the last three months. I knew it intuitively. She had been unfaithful. She must have been unfaithful.

"What had I been dreaming about to think that it would not be so?"

21

"Now let me write down plainly what I think of these matters. Let me be at least honest with myself, whatever self-contradictions I may have been led into by force of my passions. Always I have despised jealousy. . . .

"Only by the conquest of four natural limitations is the aristocratic life to be achieved. They come in a certain order, and

in that order the spirit of man is armed against them less and less efficiently. Of fear and my struggle against fear I have told already. I am fearful. I am a physical coward until I can bring shame and anger to my assistance, but in overcoming fear I have been helped by the whole body of human tradition. Every one, the basest creatures, every Hottentot, every stunted creature that ever breathed poison in a slum, knows that the instinctive constitution of man is at fault here and that fear is shameful and must be subdued. The race is on one's side. And so there is a vast traditional support for a man against the Second Limitation, the limitation of physical indulgence. It is not so universal as the first, there is a grinning bawling humour on the side of grossness, but common pride is against it. And in this matter my temperament has been my help: I am fastidious, I eat little, drink little, and feel a shivering recoil from excess. It is no great virtue; it happens so; it is something in the nerves of my skin. I cannot endure myself unshaven or in any way unclean; I am tormented by dirty hands or dirty blood or dirty memories, and after I had once loved Amanda I could not--unless some irrational impulse to get equal with her had caught me--have broken my faith to her, whatever breach there was in her faith to me. . . .

"I see that in these matters I am cleaner than most men and more easily clean; and it may be that it is in the vein of just that distinctive virtue that I fell so readily into a passion of resentment and anger.

"I despised a jealous man. There is a traditional discredit of jealousy, not so strong as that against cowardice, but still very strong. But the general contempt of jealousy is curiously wrapped up with the supposition that there is no cause for jealousy, that it is unreasonable suspicion. Given a cause then tradition speaks with an uncertain voice. . . .

"I see now that I despised jealousy because I assumed that it was

impossible for Amanda to love any one but me; it was intolerable to imagine anything else, I insisted upon believing that she was as fastidious as myself and as faithful as myself, made indeed after my image, and I went on disregarding the most obvious intimations that she was not, until that still moment in the Indian Ocean, when silently, gently as a drowned body might rise out of the depths of a pool, that knowledge of love dead and honour gone for ever floated up into my consciousness.

"And then I felt that Amanda had cheated me! Outrageously. Abominably.

"Now, so far as my intelligence goes, there is not a cloud upon this question. My demand upon Amanda was outrageous and I had no right whatever to her love or loyalty. I must have that very clear. . . .

"This aristocratic life, as I conceive it, must be, except accidentally here and there, incompatible with the domestic life. It means going hither and thither in the universe of thought as much as in the universe of matter, it means adventure, it means movement and adventure that must needs be hopelessly encumbered by an inseparable associate, it means self-imposed responsibilities that will not fit into the welfare of a family. In all ages, directly society had risen above the level of a barbaric tribal village, this need of a release from the family for certain necessary types of people has been recognized. It was met sometimes informally, sometimes formally, by the growth and establishment of special classes and orders, of priests, monks, nuns, of pledged knights, of a great variety of non-family people, whose concern was the larger collective life that opens out beyond the simple necessities and duties and loyalties of the steading and of the craftsman's house. Sometimes, but not always, that release took the form of celibacy; but besides that there have been a hundred institutional variations of the common life to meet the need of the special man, the man who must go deep and the man who must go far. A vowed celibacy ceased

to be a tolerable rule for an aristocracy directly the eugenic idea entered the mind of man, because a celibate aristocracy means the abandonment of the racial future to a proletariat of base unleaderly men. That was plain to Plato. It was plain to Campanella. It was plain to the Protestant reformers. But the world has never yet gone on to the next step beyond that recognition, to the recognition of feminine aristocrats, rulers and the mates of rulers, as untrammelled by domestic servitudes and family relationships as the men of their kind. That I see has always been my idea since in my undergraduate days I came under the spell of Plato. It was a matter of course that my first gift to Amanda should be his REPUBLIC. I loved Amanda transfigured in that dream. . . .

"There are no such women. . . .

"It is no excuse for me that I thought she was like-minded with myself. I had no sound reason for supposing that. I did suppose that. I did not perceive that not only was she younger than myself, but that while I had been going through a mill of steely education, kept close, severely exercised, polished by discussion, she had but the weak training of a not very good school, some scrappy reading, the vague discussions of village artists, and the draped and decorated novelties of the 'advanced.' It all went to nothing on the impact of the world. . . . She showed herself the woman the world has always known, no miracle, and the alternative was for me to give myself to her in the ancient way, to serve her happiness, to control her and delight and companion her, or to let her go.

"The normal woman centres upon herself; her mission is her own charm and her own beauty and her own setting; her place is her home. She demands the concentration of a man. Not to be able to command that is her failure. Not to give her that is to shame her. As I had shamed Amanda. . . ."

"There are no such women." He had written this in and struck it out, and then at some later time written it in again. There it stayed now as his last persuasion, but it set White thinking and doubting. And, indeed, there was another sheet of pencilled broken stuff that seemed to glance at quite another type of womanhood.

"It is clear that the women aristocrats who must come to the remaking of the world will do so in spite of limitations at least as great as those from which the aristocratic spirit of man escapes. These women must become aristocratic through their own innate impulse, they must be self-called to their lives, exactly as men must be; there is no making an aristocrat without a predisposition for rule and nobility. And they have to discover and struggle against just exactly the limitations that we have to struggle against. They have to conquer not only fear but indulgence, indulgence of a softer, more insidious quality, and jealousy--proprietorship. . . .

"It is as natural to want a mate as to want bread, and a thousand times in my work and in my wanderings I have thought of a mate and desired a mate. A mate--not a possession. It is a need almost naively simple. If only one could have a woman who thought of one and with one! Though she were on the other side of the world and busied about a thousand things. . . .

"'WITH one,' I see it must be rather than 'OF one.' That 'of one'

is just the unexpurgated egotistical demand coming back again. . . .

"Man is a mating creature. It is not good to be alone. But mating means a mate. . . .

"We should be lovers, of course; that goes without saying. . . .

"And yet not specialized lovers, not devoted, ATTENDING lovers. 'Dancing attendance'--as they used to say. We should meet upon our ways as the great carnivores do. . . .

"That at any rate was a sound idea. Though we only played with it.

"But that mate desire is just a longing that can have no possible satisfaction now for me. What is the good of dreaming? Life and chance have played a trick upon my body and soul. I am mated, though I am mated to a phantom. I loved and I love Arnanda, not Easton's Amanda, but Amanda in armour, the Amanda of my dreams. Sense, and particularly the sense of beauty, lies deeper than reason in us. There can be no mate for me now unless she comes with Amanda's voice and Amanda's face and Amanda's quick movements and her clever hands. . . ."

24

"Why am I so ungrateful to her still for all the happiness she gave me?

"There were things between us two as lovers,--love, things more beautiful than anything else in the world, things that set the mind hunting among ineffectual images in a search for impossible expression, images of sunlight shining through blood-red petals,

images of moonlight in a scented garden, of marble gleaming in the shade, of far-off wonderful music heard at dusk in a great stillness, of fairies dancing softly, of floating happiness and stirring delights, of joys as keen and sudden as the knife of an assassin, assassin's knives made out of tears, tears that are happiness, wordless things; and surprises, expectations, gratitudes, sudden moments of contemplation, the sight of a soft eyelid closed in sleep, shadowy tones in the sound of a voice heard unexpectedly; sweet, dear magical things that I can find no words for. . . .

"If she was a goddess to me, should it be any affair of mine that she was not a goddess to herself; that she could hold all this that has been between us more cheaply than I did? It does not change one jot of it for me. At the time she did not hold it cheaply. She forgets where I do not forget. . . ."

25

Such were the things that Benham could think and set down.

Yet for whole days he was possessed by the thought of killing Amanda and himself.

He did not at once turn homeward. It was in Ceylon that he dropped his work and came home. At Colombo he found a heap of letters awaiting him, and there were two of these that had started at the same time. They had been posted in London on one eventful afternoon. Lady Marayne and Amanda had quarrelled violently. Two earnest, flushed, quick-breathing women, full of neat but belated repartee, separated to write their simultaneous letters. Each letter trailed the atmosphere of that truncated encounter. Lady Marayne told her story ruthlessly. Amanda, on the other hand,

generalized, and explained. Sir Philip's adoration of her was a love-friendship, it was beautiful, it was pure. Was there no trust nor courage in the world? She would defy all jealous scandal. She would not even banish him from her side. Surely the Cheetah could trust her. But the pitiless facts of Lady Marayne went beyond Amanda's explaining. The little lady's dignity had been stricken. "I have been used as a cloak," she wrote.

Her phrases were vivid. She quoted the very words of Amanda, words she had overheard at Chexington in the twilight. They were no invention. They were the very essence of Amanda, the lover. It was as sure as if Benham had heard the sound of her voice, as if he had peeped and seen, as if she had crept by him, stooping and rustling softly. It brought back the living sense of her, excited, flushed, reckless; his wild-haired Amanda of infinite delight. . . . All day those words of hers pursued him. All night they flared across the black universe. He buried his face in the pillows and they whispered softly in his ear.

He walked his room in the darkness longing to smash and tear.

He went out from the house and shook his ineffectual fists at the stirring quiet of the stars.

He sent no notice of his coming back. Nor did he come back with a definite plan. But he wanted to get at Amanda.

26

It was with Amanda he had to reckon. Towards Easton he felt scarcely any anger at all. Easton he felt only existed for him because Amanda willed to have it so.

Such anger as Easton did arouse in him was a contemptuous anger. His devotion filled Benham with scorn. His determination to serve Amanda at any price, to bear the grossest humiliations and slights for her, his humility, his service and tenderness, his care for her moods and happiness, seemed to Benham a treachery to human nobility. That rage against Easton was like the rage of a trade-unionist against a blackleg. Are all the women to fall to the men who will be their master-slaves and keepers? But it was not simply that Benham felt men must be freed from this incessant attendance; women too must free themselves from their almost instinctive demand for an attendant. . . .

His innate disposition was to treat women as responsible beings. Never in his life had he thought of a woman as a pretty thing to be fooled and won and competed for and fought over. So that it was Amanda he wanted to reach and reckon with now, Amanda who had mated and ruled his senses only to fling him into this intolerable pit of shame and jealous fury. But the forces that were driving him home now were the forces below the level of reason and ideas, organic forces compounded of hate and desire, profound aboriginal urgencies. He thought, indeed, very little as he lay in his berth or sulked on deck; his mind lay waste under a pitiless invasion of exasperating images that ever and again would so wring him that his muscles would tighten and his hands clench or he would find himself restraining a snarl, the threat of the beast, in his throat.

Amanda grew upon his imagination until she overshadowed the whole world. She filled the skies. She bent over him and mocked him. She became a mystery of passion and dark beauty. She was the sin of the world. One breathed her in the winds of the sea. She had taken to herself the greatness of elemental things. . . .

So that when at last he saw her he was amazed to see her, and see

that she was just a creature of common size and quality, a rather tired and very frightened-looking white-faced young woman, in an evening-dress of unfamiliar fashion, with little common trinkets of gold and colour about her wrists and neck.

In that instant's confrontation he forgot all that had brought him homeward. He stared at her as one stares at a stranger whom one has greeted in mistake for an intimate friend.

For he saw that she was no more the Amanda he hated and desired to kill than she had ever been the Amanda he had loved.

27

He took them by surprise. It had been his intention to take them by surprise. Such is the inelegance of the jealous state.

He reached London in the afternoon and put up at a hotel near Charing Cross. In the evening about ten he appeared at the house in Lancaster Gate. The butler was deferentially amazed. Mrs. Benham was, he said, at a theatre with Sir Philip Easton, and he thought some other people also. He did not know when she would be back. She might go on to supper. It was not the custom for the servants to wait up for her.

Benham went into the study that reduplicated his former rooms in Finacue Street and sat down before the fire the butler lit for him. He sent the man to bed, and fell into profound meditation.

It was nearly two o'clock when he heard the sound of her latchkey and went out at once upon the landing.

The half-door stood open and Easton's car was outside. She stood in the middle of the hall and relieved Easton of the gloves and fan he was carrying.

"Good-night," she said, "I am so tired."

"My wonderful goddess," he said.

She yielded herself to his accustomed embrace, then started, stared, and wrenched herself out of his arms.

Benham stood at the top of the stairs looking down upon them, white-faced and inexpressive. Easton dropped back a pace. For a moment no one moved nor spoke, and then very quietly Easton shut the half-door and shut out the noises of the road.

For some seconds Benham regarded them, and as he did so his spirit changed. . . .

Everything he had thought of saying and doing vanished out of his mind.

He stuck his hands into his pockets and descended the staircase. When he was five or six steps above them, he spoke. "Just sit down here," he said, with a gesture of one hand, and sat down himself upon the stairs. "DO sit down," he said with a sudden testiness as they continued standing. "I know all about this affair. Do please sit down and let us talk. . . . Everybody's gone to bed long ago."

"Cheetah!" she said. "Why have you come back like this?"

Then at his mute gesture she sat down at his feet.

"I wish you would sit down, Easton," he said in a voice of subdued savagery.

"Why have you come back?" Sir Philip Easton found his voice to ask.

"SIT down," Benham spat, and Easton obeyed unwillingly.

"I came back," Benham went on, "to see to all this. Why else? I don't--now I see you--feel very fierce about it. But it has distressed me. You look changed, Amanda, and fagged. And your hair is untidy. It's as if something had happened to you and made you a stranger. . . . You two people are lovers. Very natural and simple, but I want to get out of it. Yes, I want to get out of it. That wasn't quite my idea, but now I see it is. It's queer, but on the whole I feel sorry for you. All of us, poor humans--. There's reason to be sorry for all of us. We're full of lusts and uneasiness and resentments that we haven't the will to control. What do you two people want me to do to you? Would you like a divorce, Amanda? It's the clean, straight thing, isn't it? Or would the scandal hurt you?"

Amanda sat crouched together, with her eyes on Benham.

"Give us a divorce," said Easton, looking to her to confirm him.

Amanda shook her head.

"I don't want a divorce," she said.

"Then what do you want?" asked Benham with sudden asperity.

"I don't want a divorce," she repeated. "Why do you, after a long silence, come home like this, abruptly, with no notice?"

"It was the way it took me," said Benham, after a little interval.

"You have left me for long months."

"Yes. I was angry. And it was ridiculous to be angry. I thought I wanted to kill you, and now I see you I see that all I want to do is to help you out of this miserable mess--and then get away from you. You two would like to marry. You ought to be married."

"I would die to make Amanda happy," said Easton.

"Your business, it seems to me, is to live to make her happy. That you may find more of a strain. Less tragic and more tiresome. I, on the other hand, want neither to die nor live for her." Amanda moved sharply. "It's extraordinary what amazing vapours a lonely man may get into his head. If you don't want a divorce then I suppose things might go on as they are now."

"I hate things as they are now," said Easton. "I hate this falsehood and deception."

"You would hate the scandal just as much," said Amanda.

"I would not care what the scandal was unless it hurt you."

"It would be only a temporary inconvenience," said Benham. "Every one would sympathize with you. . . . The whole thing is so natural. . . . People would be glad to forget very soon. They did with my mother."

"No," said Amanda, "it isn't so easy as that."

She seemed to come to a decision.

"Pip," she said. "I want to talk to--HIM--alone."

Easton's brown eyes were filled with distress and perplexity. "But why?" he asked.

"I do," she said.

"But this is a thing for US."

"Pip, I want to talk to him alone. There is something--something I can't say before you. . . ."

Sir Philip rose slowly to his feet.

"Shall I wait outside?"

"No, Pip. Go home. Yes,--there are some things you must leave to me."

She stood up too and turned so that she and Benham both faced the younger man. The strangest uneasiness mingled with his resolve to be at any cost splendid. He felt--and it was a most unexpected and disconcerting feeling--that he was no longer confederated with Amanda; that prior, more fundamental and greater associations prevailed over his little new grip upon her mind and senses. He stared at husband and wife aghast in this realization. Then his resolute romanticism came to his help. "I would trust you--" he began. "If you tell me to go--"

Amanda seemed to measure her hold upon him.

She laid her hand upon his arm. "Go, my dear Pip," she said. "Go."

He had a moment of hesitation, of anguish, and it seemed to Benham as though he eked himself out with unreality, as though somewhere, somewhere, he had seen something of the sort in a play and filled in a gap that otherwise he could not have supplied.

Then the door had closed upon him, and Amanda, pale and darkly

dishevelled, faced her husband, silently and intensely.

"WELL?" said Benham.

She held out her arms to him.

"Why did you leave me, Cheetah? Why did you leave me?"

28

Benham affected to ignore those proffered arms. But they recalled in a swift rush the animal anger that had brought him back to England. To remind him of desire now was to revive an anger stronger than any desire. He spoke seeking to hurt her.

"I am wondering now," he said, "why the devil I came back."

"You had to come back to me."

"I could have written just as well about these things."

"CHEETAH," she said softly, and came towards him slowly, stooping forward and looking into his eyes, "you had to come back to see your old Leopard. Your wretched Leopard. Who has rolled in the dirt. And is still yours."

"Do you want a divorce? How are we to fix things, Amanda?"

"Cheetah, I will tell you how we will fix things."

She dropped upon the step below him. She laid her hands with a deliberate softness upon him, she gave a toss so that her disordered

hair was a little more disordered, and brought her soft chin down to touch his knees. Her eyes implored him.

"Cheetah," she said. "You are going to forgive."

He sat rigid, meeting her eyes.

"Amanda," he said at last, "you would be astonished if I kicked you away from me and trampled over you to the door. That is what I want to do."

"Do it," she said, and the grip of her hands tightened. "Cheetah, dear! I would love you to kill me."

"I don't want to kill you."

Her eyes dilated. "Beat me."

"And I haven't the remotest intention of making love to you," he said, and pushed her soft face and hands away from him as if he would stand up.

She caught hold of him again. "Stay with me," she said.

He made no effort to shake off her grip. He looked at the dark cloud of her hair that had ruled him so magically, and the memory of old delights made him grip a great handful almost inadvertently as he spoke. "Dear Leopard," he said, "we humans are the most streaky of conceivable things. I thought I hated you. I do. I hate you like poison. And also I do not hate you at all."

Then abruptly he was standing over her.

She rose to her knees.

"Stay here, old Cheetah!" she said. "This is your house. I am your wife."

He went towards the unfastened front door.

"Cheetah!" she cried with a note of despair.

He halted at the door.

"Amanda, I will come to-morrow. I will come in the morning, in the sober London daylight, and then we will settle things."

He stared at her, and to her amazement he smiled. He spoke as one who remarks upon a quite unexpected fact. . . .

"Never in my life, Amanda, have I seen a human being that I wanted so little to kill."

29

White found a fragment that might have been written within a week of those last encounters of Benham and Amanda.

"The thing that astonished me most in Amanda was the change in her mental quality.

"With me in the old days she had always been a sincere person; she had deceived me about facts, but she had never deceived me about herself. Her personal, stark frankness had been her essential strength. And it was gone. I came back to find Amanda an accomplished actress, a thing of poses and calculated effects. She was a surface, a sham, a Lorelei. Beneath that surface I could not

discover anything individual at all. Fear and a grasping quality, such as God gave us all when he gave us hands; but the individual I knew, the humorous wilful Spotless Leopard was gone. Whither, I cannot imagine. An amazing disappearance. Clean out of space and time like a soul lost for ever.

"When I went to see her in the morning, she was made up for a scene, she acted an intricate part, never for a moment was she there in reality. . . .

"I have got a remarkable persuasion that she lost herself in this way, by cheapening love, by making base love to a lover she despised. . . . There can be no inequality in love. Give and take must balance. One must be one's natural self or the whole business is an indecent trick, a vile use of life! To use inferiors in love one must needs talk down to them, interpret oneself in their insufficient phrases, pretend, sentimentalize. And it is clear that unless oneself is to be lost, one must be content to leave alone all those people that one can reach only by sentimentalizing. But Amanda--and yet somehow I love her for it still--could not leave any one alone. So she was always feverishly weaving nets of false relationship. Until her very self was forgotten. So she will go on until the end. With Easton it had been necessary for her to key herself to a simple exalted romanticism that was entirely insincere. She had so accustomed herself to these poses that her innate gestures were forgotten. She could not recover them; she could not even reinvent them. Between us there were momentary gleams as though presently we should be our frank former selves again. They were never more than momentary. . . ."

And that was all that this astonishing man had seen fit to tell of his last parting from his wife.

Perhaps he did Amanda injustice. Perhaps there was a stronger thread of reality in her desire to recover him than he supposed.

Clearly he believed that under the circumstances Amanda would have tried to recover anybody.

She had dressed for that morning's encounter in a very becoming and intimate wrap of soft mauve and white silk, and she had washed and dried her dark hair so that it was a vapour about her face. She set herself with a single mind to persuade herself and Benham that they were inseparable lovers, and she would not be deflected by his grim determination to discuss the conditions of their separation. When he asked her whether she wanted a divorce, she offered to throw over Sir Philip and banish him for ever as lightly as a great lady might sacrifice an objectionable poodle to her connubial peace.

Benham passed through perplexing phases, so that she herself began to feel that her practice with Easton had spoilt her hands. His initial grimness she could understand, and partially its breakdown into irritability. But she was puzzled by his laughter. For he laughed abruptly.

"You know, Amanda, I came home in a mood of tremendous tragedy. And really,--you are a Lark."

And then overriding her altogether, he told her what he meant to do about their future and the future of their little son.

"You don't want a divorce and a fuss. Then I'll leave things. I perceive I've no intention of marrying any more. But you'd better do the straight thing. People forget and forgive. Especially when there is no one about making a fuss against you.

"Perhaps, after all, there is something to be said for shirking it. We'll both be able to get at the boy then. You'll not hurt him, and I shall want to see him. It's better for the boy anyhow not to have a divorce.

"I'll not stand in your way. I'll get a little flat and I shan't come too much to London, and when I do, you can get out of town. You must be discreet about Easton, and if people say anything about him, send them to me. After all, this is our private affair.

"We'll go on about money matters as we have been going. I trust to you not to run me into overwhelming debts. And, of course, if at any time, you do want to marry--on account of children or anything--if nobody knows of this conversation we can be divorced then. . . ."

Benham threw out these decisions in little dry sentences while Amanda gathered her forces for her last appeal.

It was an unsuccessful appeal, and at the end she flung herself down before him and clung to his knees. He struggled ridiculously to get himself clear, and when at last he succeeded she dropped prostrate on the floor with her dishevelled hair about her.

She heard the door close behind him, and still she lay there, a dark Guinevere, until with a start she heard a step upon the thick carpet without. He had come back. The door reopened. There was a slight pause, and then she raised her face and met the blank stare of the second housemaid. There are moments, suspended fragments of time rather than links in its succession, when the human eye is more intelligible than any words.

The housemaid made a rapid apologetic noise and vanished with a click of the door.

"DAMN!" said Amanda.

Then slowly she rose to her knees.

She meditated through vast moments.

"It's a cursed thing to be a woman," said Amanda. She stood up. She put her hand on the telephone in the corner and then she forgot about it. After another long interval of thought she spoke.

"Cheetah!" she said, "Old Cheetah! . . ."

"I didn't THINK it of you. . . ."

Then presently with the even joyless movements of one who does a reasonable business, with something indeed of the manner of one who packs a trunk, she rang up Sir Philip Easton.

30

The head chambermaid on the first floor of the Westwood Hotel in Danebury Street had a curious and perplexing glimpse of Benham's private processes the morning after this affair.

Benham had taken Room 27 on the afternoon of his return to London. She had seen him twice or three times, and he had struck her as a coldly decorous person, tall, white-faced, slow speaking; the last man to behave violently or surprise a head chambermaid in any way. On the morning of his departure she was told by the first-floor waiter that the occupant of Room 26 had complained of an uproar in the night, and almost immediately she was summoned to see Benham.

He was standing facing the door and in a position which did a little obscure the condition of the room behind him. He was carefully dressed, and his manner was more cold and decorous than ever. But one of his hands was tied up in a white bandage.

"I am going this morning," he said, "I am going down now to breakfast. I have had a few little accidents with some of the things in the room and I have cut my hand. I want you to tell the manager and see that they are properly charged for on the bill. . . . Thank you."

The head chambermaid was left to consider the accidents.

Benham's things were all packed up and the room had an air of having been straightened up neatly and methodically after a destructive cataclysm. One or two items that the chambermaid might possibly have overlooked in the normal course of things were carefully exhibited. For example, the sheet had been torn into half a dozen strips and they were lying side by side on the bed. The clock on the mantelpiece had been knocked into the fireplace and then pounded to pieces. All the looking-glasses in the room were smashed, apparently the electric lamp that stood on the night table by the bedside had been wrenched off and flung or hammered about amidst the other breakables. And there was a considerable amount of blood splashed about the room. The head chambermaid felt unequal to the perplexities of the spectacle and summoned her most convenient friend, the head chambermaid on the third floor, to her aid. The first-floor waiter joined their deliberations and several housemaids displayed a respectful interest in the maful to Martindale House and the thing was rankling almost unendurably. It seemed to be a relief to him to show his son very fully the essentially illogical position of his assailant. He was entirely inattentive to Benham's carefully made conversational opportunities. He would be silent at times while Benham talked and then he would break out suddenly with: "What seems to me so unreasonable, so ridiculous, in the whole of that fellow's second argument--if one can call it an argument--. . . . A man who reasons as he does is bound to get laughed at. If people will only see it. . . ."

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

THE NEW HAROUN AL RASCHID

1

Benham corresponded with Amanda until the summer of 1913. Sometimes the two wrote coldly to one another, sometimes with warm affection, sometimes with great bitterness. When he met White in Johannesburg durtter. Finally they invoked the manager. He was still contemplating the scene of the disorder when the precipitate retreat of his subordinates warned him of Benham's return.

Benham was smoking a cigarette and his bearing was reassuringly tranquil.

"I had a kind of nightmare," he said. "I am fearfully sorry to have disarranged your room. You must charge me for the inconvenience as well as for the damage.

31

"An aristocrat cannot be a lover."

"One cannot serve at once the intricacies of the wider issues of life and the intricacies of another human being. I do not mean that

one may not love. One loves the more because one does not concentrate one's love. One loves nations, the people passing in the street, beasts hurt by the wayside, troubled scoundrels and university dons in tears. . . .

"But if one does not give one's whole love and life into a woman's hands I do not think one can expect to be loved.

"An aristocrat must do without close personal love. . . ."

This much was written at the top of a sheet of paper. The writing ended halfway down the page. Manifestly it was an abandoned beginning. And it was, it seemed to White, the last page of all this confusion of matter that dealt with the Second and Third Limitations. Its incompleteness made its expression perfect. . . .

There Benham's love experience ended. He turned to the great business of the world. Desire and Jealousy should deflect his life no more; like Fear they were to be dismissed as far as possible and subdued when they could not be altogether dismissed. Whatever stirrings of blood or imagination there were in him after that parting, whatever failures from this resolution, they left no trace on the rest of his research, which was concerned with the hates of peoples and classes and war and peace and the possibilities science unveils and starry speculations of what mankind may do.

32

But Benham did not leave England again until he had had an encounter with Lady Marayne.

The little lady came to her son in a state of extraordinary anger

and distress. Never had she seemed quite so resolute nor quite so hopelessly dispersed and mixed. And when for a moment it seemed to him that she was not as a matter of fact dispersed and mixed at all, then with an instant eagerness he dismissed that one elucidatory gleam. "What are you doing in England, Poff?" she demanded. "And what are you going to do?"

"Nothing! And you are going to leave her in your house, with your property and a lover. If that's it, Poff, why did you ever come back? And why did you ever marry her? You might have known; her father was a swindler. She's begotten of deceit. She'll tell her own story while you are away, and a pretty story she'll make of it."

"Do you want me to divorce her and make a scandal?"

"I never wanted you to go away from her. If you'd stayed and watched her as a man should, as I begged you and implored you to do. Didn't I tell you, Poff? Didn't I warn you?"

"But now what am I to do?"

"There you are! That's just a man's way. You get yourself into this trouble, you follow your passions and your fancies and fads and then you turn to me! How can I help you now, Poff? If you'd listened to me before!"

Her blue eyes were demonstratively round.

"Yes, but--"

"I warned you," she interrupted. "I warned you. I've done all I could for you. It isn't that I haven't seen through her. When she came to me at first with that made-up story of a baby! And all about loving me like her own mother. But I did what I could. I thought we might still make the best of a bad job. And then--. I

might have known she couldn't leave Pip alone. . . . But for weeks I didn't dream. I wouldn't dream. Right under my nose. The impudence of it!"

Her voice broke. "Such a horrid mess! Such a hopeless, horrid mess!"

She wiped away a bright little tear. . . .

"It's all alike. It's your way with us. All of you. There isn't a man in the world deserves to have a woman in the world. We do all we can for you. We do all we can to amuse you, we dress for you and we talk for you. All the sweet, warm little women there are! And then you go away from us! There never was a woman yet who pleased and satisfied a man, who did not lose him. Give you everything and off you must go! Lovers, mothers. . . ."

It dawned upon Benham dimly that his mother's troubles did not deal exclusively with himself.

"But Amanda," he began.

"If you'd looked after her properly, it would hing the strike period of 1913, he was on his way to see her in London and to settle their relationship upon a new and more definite footing. It was her suggestion that they should meet.

About her he felt an enormous, inexorable, dissatisfaction. He could not persuade himself that his treatmee evil between different kinds of men is due to uncultivated feeling, to natural bad feeling, but far more is it due to bad thinking." At times he seemed on the verge of the persuasion that most human trouble is really due to bad metaphysics. It was, one must remark, an extraordinary journey he had made; he had started from chivalry and arrived at metaphysics; every knight he held must be a logician, and ultimate bravery is

courage of the mind. One thinks of his coming to this conclusion with knit brows and balancing intentness above whole gulfs of bathos--very much as he had once walked the Leysin Bisse. . . .

"Men do not know how to think," he insisted--getting along the planks; "and they will not realize that they do not know how to think. Nine-tenths of the wars in the world have arisen out of misconceptions. . . . Misconception is the sin and dishonour of the mind, and muddled thinking as ignoble as dirty conduct. . . . Infinitely more disastrous."

And again he wrote: "Man, I see, is an over-practical creature, too eager to get into action. There is our deepest trouble. He takes conclusions ready-made, or he makes them have been right enough. Pip was as good as gold until she undermined him. . . . A woman can't wait about like an umbrella in a stand. . . . He was just a boy. . . . Only of course there she was--a novelty. It is perfectly easy to understand. She flattered him. . . . Men are such fools."

"Still--it's no good saying that now."

"But she'll spend all your money, Poff! She'll break your back with debts. What's to prevent her? With him living on her! For that's what it comes to practically."

"Well, what am I to do?"

"You aren't going back without tying her up, Poff? You ought to stop every farthing of her money--every farthing. It's your duty."

"I can't do things like that."

"But have you no Shame? To let that sort of thing go on!"

"If I don't feel the Shame of it-- And I don't."

"And that money--. I got you that money, Poff! It was my money."

Benham stared at her perplexed. "What am I to do?" he asked.

"Cut her off, you silly boy! Tie her up! Pay her through a solicitor. Say that if she sees him ONCE again--"

He reflected. "No," he said at last.

"Poff!" she cried, "every time I see you, you are more and more like your father. You're going off--just as he did. That baffled, MULISH look--priggish--solemn! Oh! it's strange the stuff a poor woman has to bring into the world. But you'll do nothing. I know you'll do nothing. You'll stand everything. You--you Cuckold! And she'll drive by me, she'll pass me in theatres with the money that ought to have been mine! Oh! Oh!"

She dabbed her handkerchief from one swimming eye to the other. But she went on talking. Faster and faster, less and less coherently; more and more wildly abusive. Presently in a brief pause of the storm Benham sighed profoundly. . . .

It brought the scene to a painful end. . . .

For weeks her distress pursued and perplexed him.

He had an extraordinary persuasion that in some obscure way he was in default, that he was to blame for her distress, that he owed her-- he could never define what he owed her.

And yet, what on earth was one to do?

And something his mother had said gave him the odd idea that he had

misjudged his father, that he had missed depths of perplexed and kindred goodwill. He went down to see him before he returned to India. But if there was a hidden well of feeling in Mr. Benham senior, it had been very carefully boarded over. The parental mind and attention were entirely engaged in a dispute in the SCHOOL WORLD about the heuristic method. Somebody had been disrespectful of her and that

his

relations to her squared with any of his preconceptions of nobility, and yet at no precise point could he detect where he had definitely taken an ignoble step. Through Amanda he was coming to the full experience of life. Like all of us he had been prepared, he had prepared himself, to take life in a certain way, and life had taken him, as it takes all of us, in an entirely different and unexpected way. . . . He had been ready for noble deeds and villainies, for achievements and failures, and here as the dominant fact of his personal life was a perplexing riddle. He could not hate and condemn her for ten minutes at a time without a flow of exoneration; he could not think of her tolerantly or lovingly without immediate shame and resentment, and with the utmost will in the world he could not banish her from his mind.

During the intervening years he had never ceased to have her in his mind; he would not think of her it is true if he could help it, but often he could not help it, and as a negative presence, as a thing denied, she was almost more potent than she had been as a thing accepted. Meanwhile he worked. His nervous irritability increased, but it did not hinder the steady development of his Research.

Long before his final parting from Amanda he had worked out his idea and method for all the more personal problems in life; the problems he put together under his headings of the first three "Limitations." He had resolved to emancipate himself from fear, indulgence, and that instinctive preoccupation with the interests and dignity of self which he chose to term Jealousy, and with the one tremendous

exception of Amanda he had to a large extent succeeded. Amanda. Amanda. Amanda. He stuck the more grimly to his Research to drown that beating in his brain.

Emancipation from all these personal things he held now to be a mere prelude to the real work of a man's life, which was to serve this dream of a larger human purpose. The bulk of his work was to discover and define that purpose, that purpose which must be the directing and comprehending form of all the activities of the noble life. One cannot be noble, he had come to perceive, at large; one must be noble to an end. To make human life, collectively and in detail, a thing more comprehensive, more beautiful, more generous and coherent than it is to-day seemed to him the fundamental intention of all nobility. He believed more and more firmly that the impulses to make and help and subserve great purposes are abundantly present in the world, that they are inhibited by hasty thinking, limited thinking and bad thinking, and that the real ennoblement of human life was not so much a creation as a release. He lumped the preventive and destructive forces that keep men dispersed, unhappy, and ignoble under the heading of Prejudice, and he made this Prejudice his fourth and greatest and most difficult limitation. In one place he had written it, "Prejudice or Divisions." That being subdued in oneself and in the world, then in the measure of its subjugation, the new life of our race, the great age, the noble age, would begin.

So he set himself to examine his own mind and the mind of the world about him for prejudice, for hampering follies, disguised disloyalties and mischievous distrusts, and the great bulk of the papers that White struggled with at Westhaven Street were devoted to various aspects of this search for "Prejudice." It seemed to White to be at once the most magnificent and the most preposterous of enterprises. It was indeed no less than an enquiry into all the preventable sources of human failure and disorder. . . . And it was all too manifest to White also that the last place in which Benham

was capable of detecting a prejudice was at the back of his own head.

Under this Fourth Limitation he put the most remarkable array of influences, race-hatred, national suspicion, the evil side of patriotism, religious and social intolerance, every social consequence of muddle headedness, every dividing force indeed except the purely personal dissensions between man and man. And he developed a metaphysical interpretation of these troubles. "No doubt," he wrote in one place, "much of th in a hurry. Life is so short that he thinks it better to err than wait. He has no patience, no faith in anything but himself. He thinks he is a being when in reality he is only a link in a being, and so he is more anxious to be complete than right. The last devotion of which he is capable is that devotion of the mind which suffers partial performance, but insists upon exhaustive thought. He scamps his thought and finishes his performance, and before he is dead it is already being abandoned and begun all over again by some one else in the same egotistical haste. . . ."

It is, I suppose, a part of the general humour of life that these words should have been written by a man who walked the plank to fresh ideas with the dizziest difficulty unless he had Prothero to drag him forward, and who acted time after time with an altogether disastrous hastiness.

2

Yet there was a kind of necessity in this journey of Benham's from the cocked hat and wooden sword of Seagate and his early shame at cowardice and baseness to the spiritual megalomania of his complete Research Magnificent. You can no more resolve to live a life of

honour nowadays and abstain from social and political scheming on a world-wide scale, than you can profess religion and refuse to think about God. In the past it was possible to take all sorts of things for granted and be loyal to unexamined things. One could be loyal to unexamined things because they were unchallenged things. But now everything is challenged. By the time of his second visit to Russia, Benham's ideas of conscious and deliberate aristocracy reaching out to an idea of universal responsibility had already grown into the extraordinary fantasy that he was, as it were, an uncrowned king in the world. To be noble is to be aristocratic, that is to say, a ruler. Thence it follows that aristocracy is multiple kingship, and to be an aristocrat is to partake both of the nature of philosopher and king. . . .

Yet it is manifest that the powerful people of this world are by no means necessarily noble, and that most modern kings, poor in quality, petty in spirit, conventional in outlook, controlled and limited, fall far short of kingship. Nevertheless, there IS nobility, there IS kingship, or this earth is a dustbin and mankind but a kind of skin-disease upon a planet. From that it is an easy step to this idea, the idea whose first expression had already so touched the imagination of Amanda, of a sort of diffused and voluntary kingship scattered throughout mankind. The aristocrats are not at the high table, the kings are not enthroned, those who are enthroned are but pretenders and SIMULACRA, kings of the vulgar; the real king and ruler is every man who sets aside the naive passions and self-interest of the common life for the rule and service of the world.

This is an idea that is now to be found in much contemporary writing. It is one of those ideas that seem to appear simultaneously at many points in the world, and it is impossible to say now how far Benham was an originator of this idea, and how far he simply resonated to its expression by others. It was far more likely that Prothero, getting it heaven knows where, had spluttered

it out and forgotten it, leaving it to germinate in the mind of his friend. . . .

This lordly, this kingly dream became more and more essential to Benham as his life went on. When Benham walked the Bisse he was just a youngster resolved to be individually brave; when he prowled in the jungle by night he was there for all mankind. With every year he became more and more definitely to himself a consecrated man as kings are consecrated. Only that he was self-consecrated, and anointed only in his heart. At last he was, so to speak, Haroun al Raschid again, going unsuspected about the world, because the palace of his security would not tell him the secrets of men's disorders. He was no longer a creature of circumstances, he was kingly, unknown, Alfred in the Camp of the Danes. In the great later accumulations of his Research the personal matter, the introspection, the intimate discussion of motive, becomes less and less. He forgets himself in the exaltation of kingliness. He worries less and less over the particular rightness of his definite acts. In these later papers White found Benham abstracted, self-forgetful, trying to find out with an ever increased self-detachment, with an ever deepening regal solicitude, why there are massacres, wars, tyrannies and persecutions, why we let famine, disease and beasts assail us, and want dwarf and cripple vast multitudes in the midst of possible plenty. And when he foundrejudice. His examination of the social and political condition of Russiaty and swarming with naked black children, and yet all the time they seemed to be in a wilderness. They forded rivers, they had at times to force themselves through thickets, once or twice they lost their way, and always ahead of them, purple and sullen, the great mountain peak with La Ferriere upon its crest rose slowly out of the background until it domina out and as far as he found out, he meant quite simply and earnestly to apply his knowledge. . . .

The intellectualism of Benham intensified to the end. His definition of Prejudice impressed White as being the most bloodless and philosophical formula that ever dominated the mind of a man.

"Prejudice," Benham had written, "is that common incapacity of the human mind to understand that a difference in any respect is not a difference in all respects, reinforced and rendered malignant by an instinctive hostility to what is unlike ourselves. We exaggerate classification and then charge it with mischievous emotion by referring it to ourselves." And under this comprehensive formula he proceeded to study and attack Family Prejudice, National Prejudice, Race Prejudice, War, Class Prejudice, Professional Prejudice, Sex Prejudice, in the most industrious and elaborate manner. Whether one regards one's self or others he held that these prejudices are evil things. "From the point of view of human welfare they break men up into wars and conflicts, make them an easy prey to those who trade upon suspicion and hostility, prevent sane collective co-operations, cripple and embitter life. From the point of view of personal aristocracy they make men vulgar, violent, unjust and futile. All the conscious life of the aristocrat must be a constant struggle against false generalizations; it is as much his duty to free himself from that as from fear, indulgence, and jealousy; it is a larger and more elaborate task, but it is none the less cardinal and essential. Indeed it is more cardinal and essential. The true knight has to be not only no coward, no self-pamperer, no egotist. He has to be a philosopher. He has to be no hasty or foolish thinker. His judgment no more than his courage is to be taken by surprise.

"To subdue fear, desire and jealousy, is the aristocrat's personal affair, it is his ritual and discipline, like a knight watching his arms; but the destruction of division and prejudice and all their forms and establishments, is his real task, that is the common work of knighthood. It is a task to be done in a thousand ways; one man working by persuasion, another by example, this one overthrowing some crippling restraint upon the freedom of speech and the spread of knowledge, and that preparing himself for a war that will shatter a tyrannous presumption. Most imaginative literature, all scientific investigation, all sound criticism, all good building, all good manufacture, all sound politics, every honesty and every reasoned kindness contribute to this release of men from the heat and confusions of our present world."

It was clear to White that as Benham progressed with this major part of his research, he was more and more possessed by the idea that he was not making his own personal research alone, but, side by side with a vast, masked, hidden and once unsuspected multitude of others; that this great idea of his was under kindred forms the great idea of thousands, that it was breaking as the dawn breaks, simultaneously to great numbers of people, and that the time was not far off when the new aristocracy, the disguised rulers of the world, would begin to realize their common bent and effort. Into these latter papers there creeps more and more frequently a new phraseology, such expressions as the "Invisible King" and the "Spirit of Kingship," so that as Benham became personally more and more solitary, his thoughts became more and more public and social.

Benham was not content to define and denounce the prejudices of mankind. He set himself to study just exactly how these prejudices worked, to get at the nature and habits and strengths of each kind of prejudice, and to devise means for its treatment, destruction or neutralization. He had no great faith in the power of pure reasonableness; his psychological ideas were modern, and he had grasped the fact that the power of most of the great prejudices that

strain humanity lies deeper than the intellectual level. Consequently he sought to bring himself into the closest contact with prejudices in action and prejudices in conflict in order to discover their sub-rational springs.

A large proportion of that larger moiety of the material at Westhaven Street which White from his extensive experience of the public patience decided could not possibly "make a book," consisted of notes and discussions upon the first-hand observations Benham had made in this or that part of the world. He began in Russia during the revolutionary trouble of 1906, he went thence to Odessa, and from place to place in Bessarabia and Kieff, where during a pogrom he had his first really illuminating encounter with race and culture p seems to have left him much more hopeful than was the common feeling of liberal-minded people during the years of depression that followed the revolution of 1906, and it was upon the race question that his attention concentrated.

The Swadeshi outbreak drew him from Russia to India. Here in an entirely different environment was another discord of race and culture, and he found in his study of it much that illuminated and corrected his impressions of the Russian issue. A whole drawer was devoted to a comparatively finished and very thorough enquiry into human dissensions in lower Bengal. Here there were not only race but culture conflicts, and he could work particularly upon the differences between men of the same race who were Hindus, Christians and Mahometans respectively. He could compare the Bengali Mahometan not only with the Bengali Brahminist, but also with the Mahometan from the north-west. "If one could scrape off all the creed and training, would one find much the same thing at the bottom, or something fundamentally so different that no close homogeneous social life and not even perhaps a life of just compromise is possible between the different races of mankind?"

His answer to that was a confident one. "There are no such natural

and unalterable differences in character and quality between any two sorts of men whatever, as would make their peaceful and kindly co-operation in the world impossible," he wrote.

But he was not satisfied with his observations in India. He found the prevalence of caste ideas antipathetic and complicating. He went on after his last parting from Amanda into China, it was the first of several visits to China, and thence he crossed to America. White found a number of American press-cuttings of a vehemently anti-Japanese quality still awaiting digestion in a drawer, and it was clear to him that Benham had given a considerable amount of attention to the development of the "white" and "yellow" race hostility on the Pacific slope; but his chief interest at that time had been the negro. He went to Washington and thence south; he visited Tuskegee and Atlanta, and then went off at a tangent to Hayti. He was drawn to Hayti by Hesketh Pritchard's vivid book, **WHERE BLACK RULES WHITE**, and like Hesketh Pritchard he was able to visit that wonderful monument to kingship, the hidden fastness of La Ferriere, the citadel built a century ago by the "Black Napoleon," the Emperor Christophe. He went with a young American demonstrator from Harvard.

4

It was a memorable excursion. They rode from Cap Haytien for a day's journey along dusty uneven tracks through a steaming plain of luxurious vegetation, that presented the strangest mixture of unbridled jungle with populous country. They passed countless villages of thatched huts alive with curiosities of the landscape. Long after dark they blundered upon rather than came to the village at its foot where they were to

pass the night. They were interrogated under a flaring torch by peering ragged black soldiers, and passed through a firelit crowd into the presence of the local commandant to dispute volubly about their right to go further. They might have been in some remote corner of Nigeria. Their papers, laboriously got in order, were vitiated by the fact, which only became apparent by degrees, that the commandant could not read. They carried their point with difficulty.

But they carried their point, and, watched and guarded by a hungry half-naked negro in a kepi and the remains of a sky-blue pair of trousers, they explored one of the most exemplary memorials of imperialism that humanity has ever made. The roads and parks and prospects constructed by this vanished Emperor of Hayti, had long since disappeared, and the three men clambered for hours up ravines and precipitous jungle tracks, occasionally crossing the winding traces of a choked and ruined road that had once been the lordly approach to his fastness. Below they passed an abandoned palace of vast extent, a palace with great terraces and the still traceable outline of gardens, though there were green things pushing between the terrace steps, and trees thrust out of the empty windows. Here from a belvedere of which the skull-like vestige still remained, the negro Emperor Christophe, after fourteen years of absolute rule, had watched for a time the smoke of the burning of his cane-fields in the plain below, and then, learning that his bodyguard had deserted him, had gone in and blown out his brains.

He had christened the place after the best of examples, "Sans Souci."

But the citadel above, which was to have been his last defence, he never used. The defection of his guards made him abandon that. To build it, they say, cost Hayti thirty thousand lives. He had the true Imperial lavishness. So high it was, so lost in a wilderness of trees and bush, looking out over a land relapsed now altogether

to a barbarism of patch and hovel, so solitary and chill under the tropical sky--for even the guards who still watched over its suspected treasures feared to live in its ghostly galleries and had made hovels outside its walls--and at the same time so huge and grandiose--there were walls thirty feet thick, galleries with scores of rust-eaten cannon, circular dining-halls, king's apartments and queen's apartments, towering battlements and great arched doorways--that it seemed to Benham to embody the power and passing of that miracle of human history, tyranny, the helpless bowing of multitudes before one man and the transitoriness of such glories, more completely than anything he had ever seen or imagined in the world before. Beneath the battlements--they are choked above with jungle grass and tamarinds and many flowery weeds--the precipice fell away a sheer two thousand feet, and below spread a vast rich green plain populous and diversified, bounded at last by the blue sea, like an amethystine wall. Over this precipice Christophe was wont to fling his victims, and below this terrace were bottle-shaped dungeons where men, broken and torn, thrust in at the neck-like hole above, starved and died: it was his headquarters here, here he had his torture chambers and the means for nameless cruelties. . . .

"Not a hundred years ago," said Benham's companion, and told the story of the disgraced favourite, the youth who had offended.

"Leap," said his master, and the poor hypnotized wretch, after one questioning glance at the conceivable alternatives, made his last gesture of servility, and then stood out against the sky, swayed, and with a convulsion of resolve, leapt and shot headlong down through the shimmering air.

Came presently the little faint sound of his fall.

The Emperor satisfied turned away, unmindful of the fact that this projectile he had launched had caught among the bushes below, and presently struggled and found itself still a living man. It could

scramble down to the road and, what is more wonderful, hope for mercy. An hour and it stood before Christophe again, with an arm broken and bloody and a face torn, a battered thing now but with a faint flavour of pride in its bearing. "Your bidding has been done, Sire," it said.

"So," said the Emperor, unappeased. "And you live? Well-- Leap again. . . ."

And then came other stories. The young man told them as he had heard them, stories of ferocious wholesale butcheries, of men standing along the walls of the banqueting chamber to be shot one by one as the feast went on, of exquisite and terrifying cruelties, and his one note of wonder, his refrain was, "HERE! Not a hundred years ago. . . . It makes one almost believe that somewhere things of this sort are being done now."

They ate their lunch together amidst the weedy flowery ruins. The lizards which had fled their coming crept out again to bask in the sunshine. The soldier-guide and guard scrabbled about with his black fingers in the ruinous and rifled tomb of Christophe in a search for some saleable memento. . . .

Benham sat musing in silence. The thought of deliberate cruelty was always an actual physical distress to him. He sat bathed in the dreamy afternoon sunlight and struggled against the pictures that crowded into his mind, pictures of men aghast at death, and of fear-driven men toiling in agony, and of the shame of extorted obedience and of cringing and crawling black figures, and the defiance of righteous hate beaten down under blow and anguish. He saw eyes alight with terror and lips rolled back in agony, he saw weary hopeless flight before striding proud destruction, he saw the poor trampled mangled dead, and he shivered in his soul. . . .

He hated Christophe and all that made Christophe; he hated pride,

and then the idea came to him that it is not pride that makes Christophes but humility.

There is in the medley of man's composition, deeper far than his superficial working delusion that he is a separated self-seeking individual, an instinct for cooperation and obedience. Every natural sane man wants, though he may want it unwittingly, kingly guidance, a definite direction for his own partial life. At the bottom of his heart he feels, even if he does not know it definitely, that his life is partial. He is driven to join himself on. He obeys decision and the appearance of strength as a horse obeys its rider's voice. One thinks of the pride, the uncontrolled frantic will of this black ape of all Emperors, and one forgets the universal docility that made him possible. Usurpation is a crime to which men are tempted by human dirigibility. It is the orderly peoples who create tyrants, and it is not so much restraint above as stiff insubordination below that has to be taught to men. There are kings and tyrannies and imperialisms, simply because of the unkingliness of men.

And as he sat upon the battlements of La Ferriere, Benham cast off from his mind his last tolerance for earthly kings and existing States, and expounded to another human being for the first time this long-cherished doctrine of his of the Invisible King who is the lord of human destiny, the spirit of nobility, who will one day take the sceptre and rule the earth. . . . To the young American's naive American response to any simply felt emotion, he seemed with his white earnestness and his glowing eyes a veritable prophet. . . .

"This is the root idea of aristocracy," said Benham.

"I have never heard the underlying spirit of democracy, the real true Thing in democracy, so thoroughly expressed," said the young American.

Benham's notes on race and racial cultures gave White tantalizing glimpses of a number of picturesque experiences. The adventure in Kieff had first roused Benham to the reality of racial quality. He was caught in the wheels of a pogrom.

"Before that time I had been disposed to minimize and deny race. I still think it need not prevent men from the completest social co-operation, but I see now better than I did how difficult it is for any man to purge from his mind the idea that he is not primarily a Jew, a Teuton, or a Kelt, but a man. You can persuade any one in five minutes that he or she belongs to some special and blessed and privileged sort of human being; it takes a lifetime to destroy that persuasion. There are these confounded differences of colour, of eye and brow, of nose or hair, small differences in themselves except that they give a foothold and foundation for tremendous fortifications of prejudice and tradition, in which hostilities and hatreds may gather. When I think of a Jew's nose, a Chinaman's eyes or a negro's colour I am reminded of that fatal little pit which nature has left in the vermiform appendix, a thing no use in itself and of no significance, but a gathering-place for mischief. The extremest case of race-feeling is the Jewish case, and even here, I am convinced, it is the Bible and the Talmud and the exertions of those inevitable professional champions who live upon racial feeling, far more than their common distinction of blood, which holds this people together banded against mankind."

Between the lines of such general propositions as this White read little scraps of intimation that linked with the things Benham let fall in Johannesburg to reconstruct the Kieff adventure.

Benham had been visiting a friend in the country on the further side of the Dnieper. As they drove back along dusty stretches of road amidst fields of corn and sunflower and through bright little villages, they saw against the evening blue under the full moon a smoky red glare rising from amidst the white houses and dark trees of the town. "The pogrom's begun," said Benham's friend, and was surprised when Benham wanted to end a pleasant day by going to see what happens after the beginning of a pogrom.

He was to have several surprises before at last he left Benham in disgust and went home by himself.

For Benham, with that hastiness that so flouted his exalted theories, passed rapidly from an attitude of impartial enquiry to active intervention. The two men left their carriage and plunged into the network of unlovely dark streets in which the Jews and traders harboured. . . . Benham's first intervention was on behalf of a crouching and yelping bundle of humanity that was being dragged about and kicked at a street corner. The bundle resolved itself into a filthy little old man, and made off with extraordinary rapidity, while Benham remonstrated with the kickers. Benham's tallness, his very Gentile face, his good clothes, and an air of tense authority about him had its effect, and the kickers shuffled off with remarks that were partly apologies. But Benham's friend revolted. This was no business of theirs.

Benham went on unaccompanied towards the glare of the burning houses.

For a time he watched. Black figures moved between him and the glare, and he tried to find out the exact nature of the conflict by enquiries in clumsy Russian. He was told that the Jews had insulted a religious procession, that a Jew had spat at an ikon, that the shop of a cheating Jew trader had been set on fire, and that the blaze had spread to the adjacent group of houses. He gathered that

the Jews were running out of the burning block on the other side "like rats." The crowd was mostly composed of town roughs with a sprinkling of peasants. They were mischievous but undecided. Among them were a number of soldiers, and he was surprised to see a policeman, brightly lit from head to foot, watching the looting of a shop that was still untouched by the flames.

He held back some men who had discovered a couple of women's figures slinking along in the shadow beneath a wall. Behind his remonstrances the Jewesses escaped. His anger against disorder was growing upon him. . . .

Late that night Benham found himself the leading figure amidst a party of Jews who had made a counter attack upon a gang of roughs in a court that had become the refuge of a crowd of fugitives. Some of the young Jewish men had already been making a fight, rather a poor and hopeless fight, from the windows of the house near the entrance of the court, but it is doubtful if they would have made an effective resistance if it had not been for this tall excited stranger who was suddenly shouting directions to them in sympathetically murdered Russian. It was not that he brought powerful blows or subtle strategy to their assistance, but that he put heart into them and perplexity into his adversaries because he was so manifestly non-partizan. Nobody could ever have mistaken Benham for a Jew. When at last towards dawn a not too zealous governor called out the troops and began to clear the streets of rioters, Benham and a band of Jews were still keeping the gateway of that court behind a hasty but adequate barricade of furniture and handbarrows.

The ghetto could not understand him, nobody could understand him, but it was clear a rare and precious visitor had come to their rescue, and he was implored by a number of elderly, dirty, but very intelligent-looking old men to stay with them and preserve them until their safety was assured.

They could not understand him, but they did their utmost to entertain him and assure him of their gratitude. They seemed to consider him as a representative of the British Government, and foreign intervention on their behalf is one of those unfortunate fixed ideas that no persecuted Jews seem able to abandon.

Benham found himself, refreshed and tended, sitting beside a wood fire in an inner chamber richly flavoured by humanity and listening to a discourse in evil but understandable German. It was a discourse upon the wrongs and the greatness of the Jewish people-- and it was delivered by a compact middle-aged man with a big black beard and long-lashed but animated eyes. Beside him a very old man dozed and nodded approval. A number of other men crowded the apartment, including several who had helped to hold off the rioters from the court. Some could follow the talk and ever again endorsed the speaker in Yiddish or Russian; others listened with tantalized expressions, their brows knit, their lips moving.

It was a discourse Benham had provoked. For now he was at the very heart of the Jewish question, and he could get some light upon the mystery of this great hatred at first hand. He did not want to hear tales of outrages, of such things he knew, but he wanted to understand what was the irritation that caused these things.

So he listened. The Jew dilated at first on the harmlessness and usefulness of the Jews.

"But do you never take a certain advantage?" Benham threw out.

"The Jews are cleverer than the Russians. Must we suffer for that?"

The spokesman went on to the more positive virtues of his race. Benham suddenly had that uncomfortable feeling of the Gentile who finds a bill being made against him. Did the world owe Israel

nothing for Philo, Aron ben Asher, Solomon Gabriol, Halevy, Mendelssohn, Heine, Meyerbeer, Rubinstein, Joachim, Zangwill? Does Britain owe nothing to Lord Beaconsfield, Montefiore or the Rothschilds? Can France repudiate her debt to Fould, Gaudahaux, Oppert, or Germany to Furst, Steinschneider, Herxheimer, Lasker, Auerbach, Traube and Lazarus and Benfey? . . .

Benham admitted under the pressure of urgent tones and gestures that these names did undoubtedly include the cream of humanity, but was it not true that the Jews did press a little financially upon the inferior peoples whose lands they honoured in their exile?

The man with the black beard took up the challenge bravely.

"They are merciful creditors," he said. "And it is their genius to possess and control. What better stewards could you find for the wealth of nations than the Jews? And for the honours? That always had been the role of the Jews--stewardship. Since the days of Joseph in Egypt. . . ."

Then in a lower voice he went on to speak of the deficiencies of the Gentile population. He wished to be just and generous but the truth was the truth. The Christian Russians loved drink and laziness; they had no sense of property; were it not for unjust laws even now the Jews would possess all the land of South Russia. . . .

Benham listened with a kind of fascination. "But," he said.

It was so. And with a confidence that aroused a protest or so from the onlookers, the Jewish apologist suddenly rose up, opened a safe close beside the fire and produced an armful of documents.

"Look!" he said, "all over South Russia there are these!"

Benham was a little slow to understand, until half a dozen of these

papers had been thrust into his hand. Eager fingers pointed, and several voices spoke. These things were illegalities that might some day be legal; there were the records of loans and hidden transactions that might at any time put all the surrounding soil into the hands of the Jew. All South Russia was mortgaged. . . .

"But is it so?" asked Benham, and for a time ceased to listen and stared into the fire.

Then he held up the papers in his hand to secure silence and, feeling his way in unaccustomed German, began to speak and continued to speak in spite of a constant insurgent undertone of interruption from the Jewish spokesman.

All men, Benham said, were brothers. Did they not remember Nathan the Wise?

"I did not claim him," said the spokesman, misunderstanding. "He is a character in fiction."

But all men are brothers, Benham maintained. They had to be merciful to one another and give their gifts freely to one another. Also they had to consider each other's weaknesses. The Jews were probably justified in securing and administering the property of every community into which they came, they were no doubt right in claiming to be best fitted for that task, but also they had to consider, perhaps more than they did, the feelings and vanities of the host population into which they brought these beneficent activities. What was said of the ignorance, incapacity and vice of the Roumanians and Russians was very generally believed and accepted, but it did not alter the fact that the peasant, for all his incapacity, did like to imagine he owned his own patch and hovel and did have a curious irrational hatred of debt. . . .

The faces about Benham looked perplexed.

"THIS," said Benham, tapping the papers in his hand. "They will not understand the ultimate benefit of it. It will be a source of anger and fresh hostility. It does not follow because your race has supreme financial genius that you must always follow its dictates to the exclusion of other considerations. . . ."

The perplexity increased.

Benham felt he must be more general. He went on to emphasize the brotherhood of man, the right to equal opportunity, equal privilege, freedom to develop their idiosyncrasies as far as possible, unhindered by the idiosyncrasies of others. He could feel the sympathy and understanding of his hearers returning. "You see," said Benham, "you must have generosity. You must forget ancient scores. Do you not see the world must make a fresh beginning?"

He was entirely convinced he had them with him. The heads nodded assent, the bright eyes and lips followed the slow disentanglement of his bad German.

"Free yourselves and the world," he said.

Applause.

"And so," he said breaking unconsciously into English, "let us begin by burning these BEASTLY mortgages!"

And with a noble and dramatic gesture Benham cast his handful on the fire. The assenting faces became masks of horror. A score of hands clutched at those precious papers, and a yell of dismay and anger filled the room. Some one caught at his throat from behind. "Don't kill him!" cried some one. "He fought for us!"

6

An hour later Benham returned in an extraordinarily dishevelled and battered condition to his hotel. He found his friend in anxious consultation with the hotel proprietor.

"We were afraid that something had happened to you," said his friend.

"I got a little involved," said Benham.

"Hasn't some one clawed your cheek?"

"Very probably," said Benham.

"And torn your coat? And hit you rather heavily upon the neck?"

"It was a complicated misunderstanding," said Benham. "Oh! pardon! I'm rather badly bruised upon that arm you're holding."

7

Benham told the story to White as a jest against himself.

"I see now of course that they could not possibly understand my point of view," he said. . . .

"I'm not sure if they quite followed my German. . . .

"It's odd, too, that I remember saying, 'Let's burn these

mortgages,' and at the time I'm almost sure I didn't know the German for mortgage. . . ."

It was not the only occasion on which other people had failed to grasp the full intention behind Benham's proceedings. His aristocratic impulses were apt to run away with his conceptions of brotherhood, and time after time it was only too manifest to White that Benham's pallid flash of anger had astonished the subjects of his disinterested observations extremely. His explorations in Hayti had been terminated abruptly by an affair with a native policeman that had necessitated the intervention of the British Consul. It was begun with that suddenness that was too often characteristic of Benham, by his hitting the policeman. It was in the main street of Cap Haytit of representative men. I went about that Westphalian country after that, with the conviction that headless, soulless, blood-drinking metal monsters were breeding all about me. I felt that science was producing a poisonous swarm, a nest of black dragons. They were crouching here and away there in France and England, they were crouching like beasts that bide their time, mewed up in forts, kennelled in arsenals, hooded in tarpaulins as hawks are hooded. . . . And I had never thought very much about them before, and there they were, waiting until some human fool like that frock-coated thing of spite, and fools like him multiplied by a million, saw fit to call them out to action. Just out of hatred and nationalism and faction. . . ."

Then came a queer fancy.

"Great guns, mines, battleships, all that cruelty-apparatus; I see it more and more as the gathering revenge of dead joyless matter for the happiness of life. It is a conspiracy of the lifeless, an enormous plot of the rebel metals against sensation. That is why in particular half-living people seem to love these things. La Ferriere was a fastness of the kind of tyranny that passes out of human experience, the tyranny of the strong man over men. Essen

comes, the new thing, the tyranny of the strong machine. . . .

"Science is either slave or master. These people--I mean the German people and militarist people generally--have no real mastery over the scientific and economic forces on which they seem to rest, and the policeman had just clubbed an unfortunate youth over the head with the heavily loaded wooden club which is the normal instrument of Haytian discipline. His blow was a repartee, part of a triangular altercation in which a large, voluble, mahogany-coloured lady whose head was tied up in a blue handkerchief played a conspicuous part, but it seemed to Benham an entirely unjustifiable blow.

He allowed an indignation with negro policemen in general that had been gathering from the very moment of his arrival at Port-au-Prince to carry him away. He advanced with the kind of shout one would hurl at a dog, and smote the policeman to the earth with the stout stick that the peculiar social atmosphere of Hayti had disposed him to carry. By the local standard his blow was probably a trivial one, but the moral effect of his indignant pallor and a sort of rearing tallness about him on these occasions was always very considerable. Unhappily these characteristics could have no effect on a second negro policeman who was approaching the affray from behind, and he felled Benham by a blow on the shoulder that was meant for the head, and with the assistance of his colleague overpowered him, while the youth and the woman vanished.

The two officials dragged Benham in a state of vehement protest to the lock-up, and only there, in the light of a superior officer's superior knowledge, did they begin to realize the grave fact of his British citizenship.

The memory of the destruction of the Haytian fleet by a German gunboat was still vivid in Port-au-Prince, and to that Benham owed it that in spite of his blank refusal to compensate the man he had

knocked over, he was after two days of anger, two days of extreme insanitary experience, and much meditation upon his unphilosophical hastiness, released.

Quite a number of trivial incidents of a kindred sort diversified his enquiries into Indian conditions. They too turned for the most part on his facile exasperation at any defiance of his deep-felt desire for human brotherhood. At last indeed came an affair that refused ultimately to remain trivial, and tangled him up in a coil that invoked newspaper articles and heated controversies.

The effect of India upon Benham's mind was a peculiar mixture of attraction and irritation. He was attracted by the Hindu spirit of intellectualism and the Hindu repudiation of brutality, and he was infuriated by the spirit of caste that cuts the great world of India into a thousand futile little worlds, all aloof and hostile one to the other. "I came to see India," he wrote, "and there is no India. There is a great number of Indias, and each goes about with its chin in the air, quietly scorning everybody else."

His Indian adventures and his great public controversy on caste began with a tremendous row with an Indian civil servant who had turned an Indian gentleman out of his first-class compartment, and culminated in a disgraceful fracas with a squatting brown holiness at Benares, who had thrown aside his little brass bowlful of dinner because Benham's shadow had fallen upon it.

"You unendurable snob!" said Benham, and then lapsing into the forceful and inadvisable: "By Heaven, you SHALL eat it! . . ."

Benham's detestation of human divisions and hostilities was so deep in his character as to seem almost instinctive. But he had too a very clear reason for his hostility to all these amazing breaks in human continuity in his sense of the gathering dangers they now involve. They had always, he was convinced, meant conflict, hatred, misery and the destruction of human dignity, but the new conditions of life that have been brought about by modern science were making them far more dangerous than they had ever been before. He believed that the evil and horror of war was becoming more and more tremendous with every decade, and that the free play of national prejudice and that stupid filching ambitiousness that seems to be inseparable from monarchy, were bound to precipitate catastrophe, unless a real international aristocracy could be brought into being to prevent it.

In the drawer full of papers labelled "Politics," White found a paper called "The Metal Beast." It showed that for a time Benham had been greatly obsessed by the thought of the armaments that were in those days piling up in every country in Europe. He had gone to Essen, and at Essen he had met a German who had boasted of Zeppelins and the great guns that were presently to smash the effete British fleet and open the Imperial way to London.

"I could not sleep," he wrote, "on account of this man and his talk and the streak of hatred in his talk. He distressed me not because he seemed exceptional, but because he seemed ordinary. I realized that he was more human than I was, and that only killing and killing could come out of such humanity. I thought of the great ugly guns I had seen, and of the still greater guns he had talked about, and how gloatingly he thought of the destruction they could do. I felt as I used to feel about that infernal stallion that had killed a man with its teeth and feet, a despairing fear, a sense of monstrosity in life. And this creature who had so disturbed me was only a beastly snuffy little man in an ill-fitting frock-coat, who laid his knife and fork by their tips on the edge of his plate, and picked his

teeth with gusto and breathed into my face as he talked to me. The commoneside. The monster of steel and iron carries Kaiser and Germany and all Europe captive. It has persuaded them to mount upon its back and now they must follow the logic of its path. Whither? . . . Only kingship will ever master that beast of steel which has got loose into the world. Nothing but the sense of unconquerable kingship in us all will ever dare withstand it. . . . Men must be kingly aristocrats-- it isn't MAY be now, it is MUST be--or, these confederated metals, these things of chemistry and metallurgy, these explosives and mechanisms, will trample the blood and life out of our race into mere red-streaked froth and filth. . . ."

Then he turned to the question of this metallic beast's release. Would it ever be given blood?

"Men of my generation have been brought up in this threat of a great war that never comes; for forty years we have had it, so that it is with a note of incredulity that one tells oneself, "After all this war may happen. But can it happen?"

He proceeded to speculate upon the probability whether a great war would ever devastate western Europe again, and it was very evident to White that he wanted very much to persuade himself against that idea. It was too disagreeable for him to think it probable. The paper was dated 1910. It was in October, 1914, that White, who was still working upon the laborious uncertain account of Benham's life and thought he has recently published, read what Benham had written. Benham concluded that the common-sense of the world would hold up this danger until reason could get "to the head of things."

"There are already mighty forces in Germany," Benham wrote, "that will struggle very powerfully to avoid a war. And these forces increase. Behind the coarseness and the threatenings, the melodrama and the display of the vulgarer sort there arises a great and noble

people. . . . I have talked with Germans of the better kind. . . .
You cannot have a whole nation of Christophes. . . . There also the
true knighthood discovers itself. . . . I do not believe this war
will overtake us."

"WELL!" said White.

"I must go back to Germany and understand Germany better," the notes
went on.

But other things were to hold Benham back from that resolve. Other
things were to hold many men back from similar resolves until it was
too late for them. . . .

"It is preposterous that these monstrous dangers should lower over
Europe, because a certain threatening vanity has crept into the
blood of a people, because a few crude ideas go inadequately
controlled. . . . Does no one see what that metallic beast will do
if they once let it loose? It will trample cities; it will devour
nations. . . ."

White read this on the 9th of October, 1914. One crumpled evening
paper at his feet proclaimed in startled headlines: "Rain of
Incendiary Shells. Antwerp Ablaze." Another declared untruthfully
but impressively: "Six Zeppelins drop Bombs over the Doomed City."

He had bought all the evening papers, and had read and re-read them
and turned up maps and worried over strategic problems for which he
had no data at all--as every one did at that time--before he was
able to go on with Benham's manuscripts.

These pacific reassurances seemed to White's war-troubled mind like
finding a flattened and faded flower, a girl's love token, between
the pages of some torn and scorched and blood-stained book picked
out from a heap of loot after rapine and murder had had their

fill. . . .

"How can we ever begin over again?" said White, and sat for a long time staring gloomily into the fire, forgetting forgetting, forgetting too that men who are tired and weary die, and that new men are born to succeed them. . . .

"We have to begin over again," said White at last, and took up Benham's papers where he had laid them down. . . .

9

One considerable section of Benham's treatment of the Fourth Limitation was devoted to what he called the Prejudices of Social Position. This section alone was manifestly expanding into a large treatise upon the psychology of economic organization. . . .

It was only very slowly that he had come to realize the important part played by economic and class hostilities in the disordering of human affairs. This was a very natural result of his peculiar social circumstances. Most people born to wealth and ease take the established industrial system as the natural method in human affairs; it is only very reluctantly and by real feats of sympathy and disinterestedness that they can be brought to realize that it is natural only in the sense that it has grown up and come about, and necessary only because nobody is strong and clever enough to rearrange it. Their experience of it is a satisfactory experience. On the other hand, the better off one is, the wider is one's outlook and the more alert one is to see the risks and dangers of international dissensions. Travel and talk to foreigners open one's eyes to aggressive possibilities; history and its warnings become conceivable. It is in the nature of things that socialists and

labour parties should minimize international obligations and necessities, and equally so that autocracies and aristocracies and plutocracies should be negligent of and impatient about social reform.

But Benham did come to realize this broader conflict between worker and director, between poor man and possessor, between resentful humanity and enterprise, between unwilling toil and unearned opportunity. It is a far profounder and subtler conflict than any other in human affairs. "I can foresee a time," he wrote, "when the greater national and racial hatreds may all be so weakened as to be no longer a considerable source of human limitation and misery, when the suspicions of complexion and language and social habit are allayed, and when the element of hatred and aggression may be clean washed out of most religious cults, but I do not begin to imagine a time, because I cannot imagine a method, when there will not be great friction between those who employ, those who direct collective action, and those whose part it is to be the rank and file in industrialism. This, I know, is a limitation upon my confidence due very largely to the restricted nature of my knowledge of this sort of organization. Very probably resentment and suspicion in the mass and self-seeking and dishonesty in the fortunate few are not so deeply seated, so necessary as they seem to be, and if men can be cheerfully obedient and modestly directive in war time, there is no reason why ultimately they should not be so in the business of peace. But I do not understand the elements of the methods by which this state of affairs can be brought about.

"If I were to confess this much to an intelligent working man I know that at once he would answer 'Socialism,' but Socialism is no more a solution of this problem than eating is a solution when one is lost in the wilderness and hungry. Of course everybody with any intelligence wants Socialism, everybody, that is to say, wants to see all human efforts directed to the common good and a common end, but brought face to face with practical problems Socialism betrays a

vast insufficiency of practical suggestions. I do not say that Socialism would not work, but I do say that so far Socialists have failed to convince me that they could work it. The substitution of a stupid official for a greedy proprietor may mean a vanished dividend, a limited output and no other human advantage whatever. Socialism is in itself a mere eloquent gesture, inspiring, encouraging, perhaps, but beyond that not very helpful, towards the vast problem of moral and material adjustment before the race. That problem is incurably miscellaneous and intricate, and only by great multitudes of generous workers, one working at this point and one at that, secretly devoted knights of humanity, hidden and dispersed kings, unaware of one another, doubting each his right to count himself among those who do these kingly services, is this elaborate rightening of work and guidance to be done."

So from these most fundamental social difficulties he came back to his panacea. All paths and all enquiries led him back to his conception of aristocracy, conscious, self-disciplined, devoted, self-examining yet secret, making no personal nor class pretences, as the supreme need not only of the individual but the world.

10

It was the Labour trouble in the Transvaal which had brought the two schoolfellows together again. White had been on his way to Zimbabwe. An emotional disturbance of unusual intensity had driven him to seek consolations in strange scenery and mysterious desolations. It was as if Zimbabwe called to him. Benham had come to South Africa to see into the question of Indian immigration, and he was now on his way to meet Amanda in London. Neither man had given much heed to the gathering social conflict on the Rand until the storm burst about them. There had been a few paragraphs in the

papers about a dispute upon a point of labour etiquette, a question of the recognition of Trade Union officials, a thing that impressed them both as technical, and then suddenly a long incubated quarrel flared out in rioting and violence, the burning of houses and furniture, attacks on mines, attempts to dynamite trains. White stayed in Johannesburg because he did not want to be stranded up country by the railway strike that was among the possibilities of the situation. Benham stayed because he was going to London very reluctantly, and he was glad of this justification for a few days' delay. The two men found themselves occupying adjacent tables in the Sherborough Hotel, and White was the first to recognize the other. They came together with a warmth and readiness of intimacy that neither would have displayed in London.

White had not seen Benham since the social days of Amanda at Lancaster Gate, and he was astonished at the change a few years had made in him. The peculiar contrast of his pallor and his dark hair had become more marked, his skin was deader, his features seemed more prominent and his expression intenser. His eyes were very bright and more sunken under his brows. He had suffered from yellow fever in the West Indies, and these it seemed were the marks left by that illness. And he was much more detached from the people about him; less attentive to the small incidents of life, more occupied with inner things. He greeted White with a confidence that White was one day to remember as pathetic.

"It is good to meet an old friend," Benham said. "I have lost friends. And I do not make fresh ones. I go about too much by myself, and I do not follow the same tracks that other people are following. . . ."

What track was he following? It was now that White first heard of the Research Magnificent. He wanted to know what Benham was doing, and Benham after some partial and unsatisfactory explanation of his interest in insurgent Hindoos, embarked upon larger expositions.

"It is, of course, a part of something else," he amplified. He was writing a book, "an enormous sort of book." He laughed with a touch of shyness. It was about "everything," about how to live and how not to live. And "aristocracy, and all sorts of things." White was always curious about other people's books. Benham became earnest and more explicit under encouragement, and to talk about his book was soon to talk about himself. In various ways, intentionally and inadvertently, he told White much. These chance encounters, these intimacies of the train and hotel, will lead men at times to a stark frankness of statement they would never permit themselves with habitual friends.

About the Johannesburg labour trouble they talked very little, considering how insistent it was becoming. But the wide propositions of the Research Magnificent, with its large indifference to immediate occurrences, its vast patience, its tremendous expectations, contrasted very sharply in White's memory with the bitterness, narrowness and resentment of the events about them. For him the thought of that first discussion of this vast inchoate book into which Benham's life was flowering, and which he was ultimately to summarize, trailed with it a fringe of vivid little pictures; pictures of crowds of men hurrying on bicycles and afoot under a lowering twilight sky towards murmuring centres of disorder, of startling flares seen suddenly afar off, of the muffled galloping of troops through the broad dusty street in the night, of groups of men standing and watching down straight broad roads, roads that ended in groups of chimneys and squat buildings of corrugated iron. And once there was a marching body of white men in the foreground and a complicated wire fence, and a clustering mass of Kaffirs watching them over this fence and talking eagerly amongst themselves.

"All this affair here is little more than a hitch in the machinery," said Benham, and went back to his large preoccupation. . . .

But White, who had not seen so much human disorder as Benham, felt that it was more than that. Always he kept the tail of his eye upon that eventful background while Benham talked to him.

When the firearms went off he may for the moment have even given the background the greater share of his attention. . . .

11

It was only as White burrowed through his legacy of documents that the full values came to very many things that Benham said during these last conversations. The papers fitted in with his memories of their long talks like text with commentary; so much of Benham's talk had repeated the private writings in which he had first digested his ideas that it was presently almost impossible to disentangle what had been said and understood at Johannesburg from the fuller statement of those patched and corrected manuscripts. The two things merged in White's mind as he read. The written text took upon itself a resonance of Benham's voice; it eked out the hints and broken sentences of his remembered conversation.

But some things that Benham did not talk about at all, left by their mere marked absence an impression on White's mind. And occasionally after Benham had been talking for a long time there would be an occasional aphasia, such as is often apparent in the speech of men who restrain themselves from betraying a preoccupation. He would say nothing about Amanda or about women in general, he was reluctant to speak of Prothero, and another peculiarity was that he referred perhaps half a dozen times or more to the idea that he was a "prig." He seemed to be defending himself against some inner accusation, some unconquerable doubt of the entire adventure of his life. These half hints and hints by omission exercised the quick intuitions of

White's mind very keenly, and he drew far closer to an understanding of Benham's reserves than Benham ever suspected. . . .

At first after his parting from Amanda in London Benham had felt completely justified in his treatment of her. She had betrayed him and he had behaved, he felt, with dignity and self-control. He had no doubt that he had punished her very effectively, and it was only after he had been travelling in China with Prothero for some time and in the light of one or two chance phrases in her letters that he began to have doubts whether he ought to have punished her at all. And one night at Shanghai he had a dream in which she stood before him, dishevelled and tearful, his Amanda, very intensely his Amanda, and said that she was dirty and shameful and spoilt for ever, because he had gone away from her. Afterwards the dream became absurd: she showed him the black leopard's fur as though it was a rug, and it was now moth-eaten and mangey, the leopard skin that had been so bright and wonderful such a little time ago, and he awoke before he could answer her, and for a long time he was full of unspoken answers explaining that in view of her deliberate unfaithfulness the position she took up was absurd. She had spoilt her own fur. But what was more penetrating and distressing in this dream was not so much the case Amanda stated as the atmosphere of unconquerable intimacy between them, as though they still belonged to each other, soul to soul, as though nothing that had happened afterwards could have destroyed their common responsibility and the common interest of their first unstinted union. She was hurt, and of course he was hurt. He began to see that his marriage to Amanda was still infinitely more than a technical bond.

And having perceived that much he presently began to doubt whether she realized anything of the sort. Her letters fluctuated very much in tone, but at times they were as detached and guarded as a schoolgirl writing to a cousin. Then it seemed to Benham an extraordinary fraud on her part that she should presume to come into his dream with an entirely deceptive closeness and confidence. She

began to sound him in these latter letters upon the possibility of divorce. This, which he had been quite disposed to concede in London, now struck him as an outrageous suggestion. He wrote to ask her why, and she responded exasperatingly that she thought it was "better." But, again, why better? It is remarkable that although his mind had habituated itself to the idea that Easton was her lover in London, her thought of being divorced, no doubt to marry again, filled him with jealous rage. She asked him to take the blame in the divorce proceedings. There, again, he found himself ungenerous. He did not want to do that. Why should he do that? As a matter of fact he was by no means reconciled to the price he had paid for his Research Magnificent; he regretted his Amanda acutely. He was regretting her with a regret that grew when by all the rules of life it ought to be diminishing.

It was in consequence of that regret and his controversies with Prothero while they travelled together in China that his concern about what he called priggishness arose. It is a concern that one may suppose has a little afflicted every reasonably self-conscious man who has turned from the natural passionate personal life to religion or to public service or any abstract devotion. These things that are at least more extensive than the interests of flesh and blood have a trick of becoming unsubstantial, they shine gloriously and inspiringly upon the imagination, they capture one and isolate one and then they vanish out of sight. It is far easier to be entirely faithful to friend or lover than it is to be faithful to a cause or to one's country or to a religion. In the glow of one's first service that larger idea may be as closely spontaneous as a handclasp, but in the darkness that comes as the glow dies away there is a fearful sense of unreality. It was in such dark moments that Benham was most persecuted by his memories of Amanda and most distressed by this suspicion that the Research Magnificent was a priggishness, a pretentious logomachy. Prothero could indeed hint as much so skilfully that at times the dream of nobility seemed an insult to the sunshine, to the careless laughter of children, to the

good light in wine and all the warm happiness of existence. And then Amanda would peep out of the dusk and whisper, "Of course if you could leave me--! Was I not LIFE? Even now if you cared to come back to me-- For I loved you best and loved you still, old Cheetah, long after you had left me to follow your dreams. . . . Even now I am drifting further into lies and the last shreds of dignity drop from me; a dirty, lost, and shameful leopard I am now, who was once clean and bright. . . . You could come back, Cheetah, and you could save me yet. If you would love me. . . ."

In certain moods she could wring his heart by such imagined speeches, the very quality of her voice was in them, a softness that his ear had loved, and not only could she distress him, but when Benham was in this heartache mood, when once she had set him going, then his little mother also would rise against him, touchingly indignant, with her blue eyes bright with tears; and his frowsty father would back towards him and sit down complaining that he was neglected, and even little Mrs. Skelmersdale would reappear, bravely tearful on her chair looking after him as he slunk away from her through Kensington Gardens; indeed every personal link he had ever had to life could in certain moods pull him back through the door of self-reproach Amanda opened and set him aching and accusing himself of harshness and self-concentration. The very kittens of his childhood revived forgotten moments of long-repenting hardness. For a year before Prothero was killed there were these heartaches. That tragedy gave them their crowning justification. All these people said in this form or that, "You owed a debt to us, you evaded it, you betrayed us, you owed us life out of yourself, love and services, and you have gone off from us all with this life that was ours, to live by yourself in dreams about the rule of the world, and with empty phantoms of power and destiny. All this was intellectualization. You sacrificed us to the thin things of the mind. There is no rule of the world at all, or none that a man like you may lay hold upon. The rule of the world is a fortuitous result of incalculably multitudinous forces. But all of us you could have

made happier. You could have spared us distresses. Prothero died because of you. Presently it will be the turn of your father, your mother--Amanda perhaps. . . ."

He made no written note of his heartaches, but he made several memoranda about priggishness that White read and came near to understanding. In spite of the tugging at his heart-strings, Benham was making up his mind to be a prig. He weighed the cold uningratiating virtues of priggishness against his smouldering passion for Amanda, and against his obstinate sympathy for Prothero's grossness and his mother's personal pride, and he made his choice. But it was a reluctant choice.

One fragment began in the air. "Of course I had made myself responsible for her life. But it was, you see, such a confoundedly energetic life, as vigorous and as slippery as an eel. . . . Only by giving all my strength to her could I have held Amanda. . . . So what was the good of trying to hold Amanda? . . .

"All one's people have this sort of claim upon one. Claims made by their pride and their self-respect, and their weaknesses and dependences. You've no right to hurt them, to kick about and demand freedom when it means snapping and tearing the silly suffering tendrils they have wrapped about you. The true aristocrat I think will have enough grasp, enough steadiness, to be kind and right to every human being and still do the work that ought to be his essential life. I see that now. It's one of the things this last year or so of loneliness has made me realize; that in so far as I have set out to live the aristocratic life I have failed. Instead I've discovered it--and found myself out. I'm an overstrung man. I go harshly and continuously for one idea. I live as I ride. I blunder through my fences, I take off too soon. I've no natural ease of mind or conduct or body. I am straining to keep hold of a thing too big for me and do a thing beyond my ability. Only after Prothero's death was it possible for me to realize the prig I have

always been, first as regards him and then as regards Amanda and my mother and every one. A necessary unavoidable priggishness. . . ."I do not see how certain things can be done without prigs, people, that is to say, so concentrated and specialized in interest as to be a trifle inhuman, so resolved as to be rather rhetorical and forced. . . . All things must begin with clumsiness, there is no assurance about pioneers. . . .

"Some one has to talk about aristocracy, some one has to explain aristocracy. . . . But the very essence of aristocracy, as I conceive it, is that it does not explain nor talk about itself. . . .

"After all it doesn't matter what I am. . . . It's just a private vexation that I haven't got where I meant to get. That does not affect the truth I have to tell. . . .

"If one has to speak the truth with the voice of a prig, still one must speak the truth. I have worked out some very considerable things in my research, and the time has come when I must set them out clearly and plainly. That is my job anyhow. My journey to London to release Amanda will be just the end of my adolescence and the beginning of my real life. It will release me from my last entanglement with the fellow creatures I have always failed to make happy. . . . It's a detail in the work. . . . And I shall go on.

But I shall feel very like a man who goes back for a surgical operation.

"It's very like that. A surgical operation, and when it is over perhaps I shall think no more about it.

"And beyond these things there are great masses of work to be done. So far I have but cleared up for myself a project and outline of living. I must begin upon these masses now, I must do what I can upon the details, and, presently, I shall see more clearly where

other men are working to the same ends. . . ."

12

Benham's expedition to China with Prothero was essentially a wrestle between his high resolve to work out his conception of the noble life to the utmost limit and his curiously invincible affection and sympathy for the earthliness of that inglorious little don. Although Benham insisted upon the dominance of life by noble imaginations and relentless reasonableness, he would never altogether abandon the materialism of life. Prothero had once said to him, "You are the advocate of the brain and I of the belly. Only, only we respect each other." And at another time, "You fear emotions and distrust sensations. I invite them. You do not drink gin because you think it would make you weep. But if I could not weep in any other way I would drink gin." And it was under the influence of Prothero that Benham turned from the haughty intellectualism, the systematized superiorities and refinements, the caste marks and defensive dignities of India to China, that great teeming stinking tank of humorous yellow humanity.

Benham had gone to Prothero again after a bout of elevated idealism. It was only very slowly that he reconciled his mind to the idea of an entirely solitary pursuit of his aristocratic dream. For some time as he went about the world he was trying to bring himself into relationship with the advanced thinkers, the liberal-minded people who seemed to promise at least a mental and moral co-operation. Yet it is difficult to see what co-operation was possible unless it was some sort of agreement that presently they should all shout together. And it was after a certain pursuit of Rabindranath Tagore, whom he met in Hampstead, that a horror of perfect manners and perfect finish came upon him, and he fled from that starry calm

to the rich uncleanness of the most undignified fellow of Trinity. And as an advocate and exponent of the richness of the lower levels of life, as the declared antagonist of caste and of the uttermost refinements of pride, Prothero went with Benham by way of Siberia to the Chinese scene.

Their controversy was perceptible at every dinner-table in their choice of food and drink. Benham was always wary and Prothero always appreciative. It peeped out in the distribution of their time, in the direction of their glances. Whenever women walked about, Prothero gave way to a sort of ethnological excitement. "That girl--a wonderful racial type." But in Moscow he was sentimental. He insisted on going again to the Cosmopolis Bazaar, and when he had ascertained that Anna Alexievna had vanished and left no trace he prowled the streets until the small hours.

In the eastward train he talked intermittently of her. "I should have defied Cambridge," he said.

But at every stopping station he got out upon the platform ethnologically alert. . . .

Theoretically Benham was disgusted with Prothero. Really he was not disgusted at all. There was something about Prothero like a sparrow, like a starling, like a Scotch terrier. . . . These, too, are morally objectionable creatures that do not disgust. . . .

Prothero discoursed much upon the essential goodness of Russians. He said they were a people of genius, that they showed it in their faults and failures just as much as in their virtues and achievements. He extolled the "germinating disorder" of Moscow far above the "implacable discipline" of Berlin. Only a people of inferior imagination, a base materialist people, could so maintain its attention upon precision and cleanliness. Benham was roused to defence against this paradox. "But all exaltation neglects," said

Prothero. "No religion has ever boasted that its saints were spick and span." This controversy raged between them in the streets of Irkutsk. It was still burning while they picked their way through the indescribable filth of Peking.

"You say that all this is a fine disdain for material things," said Benham. "But look out there!"

Apart to their argument a couple of sturdy young women came shuffling along, cleaving the crowd in the narrow street by virtue of a single word and two brace of pails of human ordure.

"That is not a fine disdain for material things," said Benham. "That is merely individualism and unsystematic living."

"A mere phase of frankness. Only frankness is left to them now. The Manchus crippled them, spoilt their roads and broke their waterways. European intervention paralyses every attempt they make to establish order on their own lines. In the Ming days China did not reek. . . . And, anyhow, Benham, it's better than the silly waste of London. . . ."

And in a little while Prothero discovered that China had tried Benham and found him wanting, centuries and dynasties ago.

What was this new-fangled aristocratic man, he asked, but the ideal of Confucius, the superior person, "the son of the King"? There you had the very essence of Benham, the idea of self-examination, self-preparation under a vague Theocracy. ("Vaguer," said Benham, "for the Confucian Heaven could punish and reward.") Even the elaborate sham modesty of the two dreams was the same. Benham interrupted and protested with heat. And this Confucian idea of the son of the King, Prothero insisted, had been the cause of China's paralysis. "My idea of nobility is not traditional but expectant," said Benham. "After all, Confucianism has held together a great pacific state far

longer than any other polity has ever lasted. I'll accept your Confucianism. I've not the slightest objection to finding China nearer salvation than any other land. Do but turn it round so that it looks to the future and not to the past, and it will be the best social and political culture in the world. That, indeed, is what is happening. Mix Chinese culture with American enterprise and you will have made a new lead for mankind."

From that Benham drove on to discoveries. "When a man thinks of the past he concentrates on self; when he thinks of the future he radiates from self. Call me a neo-Confucian; with the cone opening forward away from me, instead of focussing on me. . . ."

"You make me think of an extinguisher," said Prothero.

"You know I am thinking of a focus," said Benham. "But all your thought now has become caricature. . . . You have stopped thinking. You are fighting after making up your mind. . . ."

Prothero was a little disconcerted by Benham's prompt endorsement of his Chinese identification. He had hoped it would be exasperating. He tried to barb his offence. He amplified the indictment. All cultures must be judged by their reaction and fatigue products, and Confucianism had produced formalism, priggishness, humbug. . . . No doubt its ideals had had their successes; they had unified China, stamped the idea of universal peace and good manners upon the greatest mass of population in the world, paved the way for much beautiful art and literature and living. "But in the end, all your stern orderliness, Benham," said Prothero, "only leads to me. The human spirit rebels against this everlasting armour on the soul. After Han came T'ang. Have you never read Ling Po? There's scraps of him in English in that little book you have--what is it?--the LUTE OF JADE? He was the inevitable Epicurean; the Omar Khayyam after the Prophet. Life must relax at last. . . ."

"No!" cried Benham. "If it is traditional, I admit, yes; but if it is creative, no. . . ."

Under the stimulation of their undying controversy Benham was driven to closer enquiries into Chinese thought. He tried particularly to get to mental grips with English-speaking Chinese. "We still know nothing of China," said Prothero. "Most of the stuff we have been told about this country is mere middle-class tourists' twaddle. We send merchants from Brixton and missionaries from Glasgow, and what doesn't remind them of these delectable standards seems either funny to them or wicked. I admit the thing is slightly pot-bound, so to speak, in the ancient characters and the ancient traditions, but for all that, they KNOW, they HAVE, what all the rest of the world has still to find and get. When they begin to speak and write in a modern way and handle modern things and break into the soil they have scarcely touched, the rest of the world will find just how much it is behind. . . . Oh! not soldiering; the Chinese are not such fools as that, but LIFE. . . ."

Benham was won to a half belief in these assertions.

He came to realize more and more clearly that while India dreams or wrestles weakly in its sleep, while Europe is still hopelessly and foolishly given over to militant monarchies, racial vanities, delirious religious feuds and an altogether imbecile fumbling with loaded guns, China, even more than America, develops steadily into a massive possibility of ordered and aristocratic liberalism. . . .

The two men followed their associated and disconnected paths. Through Benham's chance speeches and notes, White caught glimpses, as one might catch glimpses through a moving trellis, of that bilateral adventure. He saw Benham in conversation with liberal-minded mandarins, grave-faced, bald-browed persons with disciplined movements, who sat with their hands thrust into their sleeves talking excellent English; while Prothero pursued enquiries of an

intenser, more recondite sort with gentlemen of a more confidential type. And, presently, Prothero began to discover and discuss the merits of opium.

For if one is to disavow all pride and priggishness, if one is to find the solution of life's problem in the rational enjoyment of one's sensations, why should one not use opium? It is art materialized. It gives tremendous experiences with a minimum of exertion, and if presently its gifts diminish one need but increase the quantity. Moreover, it quickens the garrulous mind, and steadies the happiness of love. Across the varied adventures of Benham's journey in China fell the shadow first of a suspicion and then of a certainty. . . .

The perfected and ancient vices of China wrapped about Prothero like some tainted but scented robe, and all too late Benham sought to drag him away. And then in a passion of disgust turned from him.

"To this," cried Benham, "one comes! Save for pride and fierceness!"

"Better this than cruelty," said Prothero talking quickly and clearly because of the evil thing in his veins. "You think that you are the only explorer of life, Benham, but while you toil up the mountains I board the house-boat and float down the stream. For you the stars, for me the music and the lanterns. You are the son of a mountaineering don, and I am a Chinese philosopher of the riper school. You force yourself beyond fear of pain, and I force myself beyond fear of consequences. What are we either of us but children groping under the black cloak of our Maker?--who will not blind us with his light. Did he not give us also these lusts, the keen knife and the sweetness, these sensations that are like pineapple smeared with saltpetre, like salted olives from heaven, like being flayed with delight. . . . And did he not give us dreams fantastic beyond any lust whatever? What is the good of talking? Speak to your own

kind. I have gone, Benham. I am lost already. There is no resisting any more, since I have drugged away resistance. Why then should I come back? I know now the symphonies of the exalted nerves; I can judge; and I say better lie and hear them to the end than come back again to my old life, to my little tin-whistle solo, my--effort! My EFFORT! . . . I ruin my body. I know. But what of that? . . . I shall soon be thin and filthy. What of the grape-skin when one has had the pulp?"

"But," said Benham, "the cleanness of life!"

"While I perish," said Prothero still more wickedly, "I say good things. . . ."

13

White had a vision of a great city with narrow crowded streets, hung with lank banners and gay with vertical vermilion labels, and of a pleasant large low house that stood in a garden on a hillside, a garden set with artificial stones and with beasts and men and lanterns of white porcelain, a garden which overlooked this city. Here it was that Benham stayed and talked with his host, a man robed in marvellous silks and subtle of speech even in the European languages he used, and meanwhile Prothero, it seemed, had gone down into the wickedness of the town below. It was a very great town indeed, spreading for miles along the banks of a huge river, a river that divided itself indolently into three shining branches so as to make islands of the central portion of the place. And on this river swarmed for ever a vast flotilla of ships and boats, boats in which people lived, boats in which they sought pleasure, moored places of assembly, high-pooped junks, steamboats, passenger sampans, cargo craft, such a water town in streets and lanes, endless miles of it,

as no other part of the world save China can display. In the daylight it was gay with countless sunlit colours embroidered upon a fabric of yellow and brown, at night it glittered with a hundred thousand lights that swayed and quivered and were reflected quiveringly upon the black flowing waters.

And while Benham sat and talked in the garden above came a messenger who was for some reason very vividly realized by White's imagination. He was a tall man with lack-lustre eyes and sunken cheeks that made his cheek bones very prominent, and gave his thin-lipped mouth something of the geniality of a skull, and the arm he thrust out of his yellow robe to hand Prothero's message to Benham was lean as a pole. So he stood out in White's imagination, against the warm afternoon sky and the brown roofs and blue haze of the great town below, and was with one exception the distinctest thing in the story. The message he bore was scribbled by Prothero himself in a nerveless scrawl: "Send a hundred dollars by this man. I am in a frightful fix."

Now Benham's host had been twitting him with the European patronage of opium, and something in this message stirred his facile indignation. Twice before he had had similar demands. And on the whole they had seemed to him to be unreasonable demands. He was astonished that while he was sitting and talking of the great world-republic of the future and the secret self-directed aristocracy that would make it possible, his own friend, his chosen companion, should thus, by this inglorious request and this ungainly messenger, disavow him. He felt a wave of intense irritation.

"No," he said, "I will not."

And he was too angry to express himself in any language understandable by his messenger.

His host intervened and explained after a few questions that the

occasion was serious. Prothero, it seemed, had been gambling.

"No," said Benham. "He is shameless. Let him do what he can."

The messenger was still reluctant to go.

And scarcely had he gone before misgivings seized Benham.

"Where IS your friend?" asked the mandarin.

"I don't know," said Benham.

"But they will keep him! They may do all sorts of things when they find he is lying to them."

"Lying to them?"

"About your help."

"Stop that man," cried Benham suddenly realizing his mistake. But when the servants went to stop the messenger their intentions were misunderstood, and the man dashed through the open gate of the f pulling down and trying again. Hope and disappointments and much need for philosophy. . . . I see myself now for the little workman I am upon this tremendous undertaking. And all my life hereafter goes to serve it. . . ."

He turned his sombre eyes upon his friend. He spoke with a grim enthusiasm. "I'm a prig. I'm a fanatic, White. But I have something clear, something better worth going on with than any adventure of personal relationship could possibly be. . . ."

And suddenly he began to tell White as plainly as he could of the faith that had grown up in his mind. He spoke with a touch of defiance, with the tense force of a man who shrinks but overcomes

his shame. "I will tell you what I believe."

He told of his early dread of fear and baseness, and of the slow development, expansion and complication of his idea of self-respect until he saw that garden and made off down the winding road.

"Stop him!" cried Benham, and started in pursuit, suddenly afraid for Prothero.

The Chinese are a people of great curiosity, and a small pebble sometimes starts an avalanche. . . .

White pieced together his conception of the circles of disturbance that spread out from Benham's pursuit of Prothero's flying messenger.

For weeks and months the great town had been uneasy in all its ways because of the insurgent spirits from the south and the disorder from the north, because of endless rumours and incessant intrigue. The stupid manoeuvres of one European "power" against another, the tactlessness of missionaries, the growing Chinese disposition to meet violence and force with violence and force, had fermented and brewed the possibility of an outbreak. The sudden resolve of Benham to get at once to Prothero was like the firing of a mine. This tall, pale-faced, incomprehensible stranger charging through the narrow streets that led to the pleasure-boats in the south river seemed to many a blue-clad citizen like the White Peril embodied. Behind him came the attendants of the rich man up the hill; but they surely were traitors to help this stranger.

Before Benham could at all realize what was happening he found his way to the river-boat on which he supposed Prothero to be detained, barred by a vigorous street fight. Explanations were impossible; he joined in the fight.

For three days that fight developed round the mystery of Prothero's disappearance.

It was a complicated struggle into which the local foreign traders on the river-front and a detachment of modern drilled troops from the up-river barracks were presently drawn. It was a struggle that was never clearly explained, and at the end of it they found Prothero's body flung out upon a waste place near a little temple on the river bank, stabbed while he was asleep. . . .

And from the broken fragments of description that Benham let fall, White had an impression of him hunting for all those three days through the strange places of a Chinese city, along narrow passages, over queer Venetian-like bridges, through the vast spaces of empty warehouses, in the incense-scented darkness of temple yards, along planks that passed to the dark hulls of secret barges, in quick-flying boats that slipped noiselessly among the larger craft, and sometimes he hunted alone, sometimes in company, sometimes black figures struggled in the darkness against dim-lit backgrounds and sometimes a swarm of shining yellow faces screamed and shouted through the torn paper windows. . . . And then at the end of this confused effect of struggle, this Chinese kinematograph film, one last picture jerked into place and stopped and stood still, a white wall in the sunshine come upon suddenly round a corner, a dirty flagged passage and a stiff crumpled body that had for the first time an inexpressive face. . . .

14

Benham sat at a table in the smoking-room of the Sherborough Hotel at Johannesburg and told of these things. White watched him from an armchair. And as he listened he noted again the intensification of

Benham's face, the darkness under his brows, the pallor of his skin, the touch of red in his eyes. For there was still that red gleam in Benham's eyes; it shone when he looked out of a darkness into a light. And he sat forward with his arms folded under him, or moved his long lean hand about over the things on the table.

"You see," he said, "this is a sort of horror in my mind. Things like this stick in my mind. I am always seeing Prothero now, and it will take years to get this scar off my memory again. Once before--about a horse, I had the same kind of distress. And it makes me tender, sore-minded about everything. It will go, of course, in the long run, and it's just like any other ache that lays hold of one. One can't cure it. One has to get along with it. . . .

"I know, White, I ought to have sent that money, but how was I to know then that it was so imperative to send that money? . . .

"At the time it seemed just pandering to his vices. . . .

"I was angry. I shall never subdue that kind of hastiness altogether. It takes me by surprise. Before the messenger was out of sight I had repented. . . .

"I failed him. I have gone about in the world dreaming of tremendous things and failing most people. My wife too. . . ."

He stopped talking for a little time and folded his arms tight and stared hard in front of himself, his lips compressed.

"You see, White," he said, with a kind of setting of the teeth, "this is the sort of thing one has to stand. Life is imperfect. Nothing can be done perfectly. And on the whole--" He spoke still more slowly, "I would go through again with the very same things that have hurt my people. If I had to live over again. I would try to do the things without hurting the people, but I would do the

things anyhow. Because I'm raw with remorse, it does not follow that on the whole I am not doing right. Right doing isn't balm. If I could have contrived not to hurt these people as I have done, it would have been better, just as it would be better to win a battle without any killed or wounded. I was clumsy with them and they suffered, I suffer for their suffering, but still I have to stick to the way I have taken. One's blunders are accidents. If one thing is clearer than another it is that the world isn't accident-proof. . . .

But I wish I had sent those dollars to Prothero. . . . God! White, but I lie awake at night thinking of that messenger as he turned away. . . . Trying to stop him. . . .

"I didn't send those dollars. So fifty or sixty people were killed and many wounded. . . . There for all practical purposes the thing ends. Perhaps it will serve to give me a little charity for some other fool's haste and blundering. . . .

"I couldn't help it, White. I couldn't help it. . . .

"The main thing, the impersonal thing, goes on. One thinks, one learns, one adds one's contribution of experience and understanding. The spirit of the race goes on to light and comprehension. In spite of accidents. In spite of individual blundering.

"It would be absurd anyhow to suppose that nobility is so easy as to come slick and true on every occasion. . . .

"If one gives oneself to any long aim one must reckon with minor disasters. This Research I undertook grows and grows. I believe in it more and more. The more it asks from me the more I give to it. When I was a youngster I thought the thing I wanted was just round the corner. I fancied I would find out the noble life in a year or two, just what it was, just where it took one, and for the rest of my life I would live it. Finely. But I am just one of a multitude

of men, each one going a little wrong, each one achieving a little right. And the noble life is a long, long way ahead. . . . We are working out a new way of life there is no honour nor pride for a man until he refers his life to ends and purposes beyond himself. An airtight rise instantly out of all

this squalor and evil temper. . . . What does all this struggle here amount to? On one side unintelligent greed, unintelligent resentment on the other; suspicion everywhere. . . .

"And you know, White, at bottom THEY ALL WANT TO BE DECENT!"

"If only they had light enough in their brains to show them how." It's such a plain job they have here too, a new city, the simplest industries, freedom from war, everything to make a good life for men, prosperity, glorious sunshine, a kind of happiness in the air. And mismanagement, fear, indulgence, jealousy, prejudice, stupidity, poison it all. A squabble about working on a Saturday afternoon, a squabble embittered by this universal shadow of miner's phthving for mankind, a new rule, a new conscience. It's no small job for all of us. There must be lifetimes of building up and lifetimes of aristocrat must be loyal. So it has ever been, but a modern aristocrat must also be lucid; there it is that one has at once the demand for kingship and the repudiation of all existing states and kings. In this manner he had come to his idea of a great world republic that must replace the little warring kingdoms of the present, to the conception of an unseen kingship ruling the whole globe, to his King Invisible, who is the Lord of Truth and all sane loyalty. "There," he said, "is the link of our order, the new knighthood, the new aristocracy, that must at last rule the earth. There is our Prince. He is in me, he is in you; he is latent in all mankind. I have worked this out and tried it and lived it, and I know that outwardly and inwardly this is the way a man must live, or else be a poor thing and a base one. On great occasions and small occasions I have failed myself a thousand times, but no failure lasts if your faith

lasts. What I have learnt, what I have thought out and made sure, I want now to tell the world. Somehow I will tell it, as a book I suppose, though I do not know if I shall ever be able to make a book. But I have away there in London or with me here all the masses of notes I have made in my search for the life that is worth while living. . . . We who are self-appointed aristocrats, who are not ashamed of kingship, must speak to one another. . . .

"We can have no organization because organizations corrupt. . . .

"No recognition. . . .

"But we can speak plainly. . . ."

(As he talked his voice was for a space drowned by the jingle and voices of mounted police riding past the hotel.)

"But on one side your aristocracy means revolution," said White. "It becomes a political conspiracy."

"Manifestly. An open conspiracy. It denies the king upon the stamps and the flag upon the wall. It is the continual proclamation of the Republic of Mankind."

15

The earlier phases of violence in the Rand outbreak in 1913 were manifest rather in the outskirts of Johannesburg than at the centre. "Pulling out" was going on first at this mine and then that, there were riots in Benoni, attacks on strike breakers and the smashing up of a number of houses. It was not until July the 4th that, with the suppression of a public meeting in the market-place, Johannesburg

itself became the storm centre.

Benham and White were present at this marketplace affair, a confused crowded occasion, in which a little leaven of active men stirred throisis that the masters were too incapable and too mean to prevent.

"Oh, God!" cried Benham, "when will men be princes and take hugh a large uncertain multitude of decently dressed onlookers.

The whole big square was astir, a swaying crowd of men. A ramshackle platform improvised upon a trolley struggled through the swarming straw hats to a street corner, and there was some speaking. At first it seemed as though military men were using this platform, and then it was manifestly in possession of an excited knot of labour leaders with red rosettes. The military men had said their say and got down. They came close by Benham, pushing their way across the square. "We've warned them," said one. A red flag, like some misunderstood remark at a tea-party, was fitfully visible and incomprehensible behind the platform. Somebody was either pitched or fell off the platform. One could hear nothing from the speakers except a minute bleating. . . .

Then there were shouts that the police were charging. A number of mounted men trotted into the square. The crowd began a series of short rushes that opened lanes for the passage of the mounted police as they rode to and fro. These men trotted through the crowd, scattering knots of people. They carried pick-handles, but they did not seem to be hitting with them. It became clear that they aimed at the capture of the trolley. There was only a feeble struggle for the trolley; it was captured and hauled through the scattered spectators in the square to the protection of a small impassive body of regular cavalry at the opposite corner. Then quite a number of people seemed to be getting excited and fighting. They appeared to be vaguely fighting the foot-police, and the police seemed to be

vaguely pushing through them and dispersing them. The roof of a little one-story shop became prominent as a centre of vigorous stone-throwing.

It was no sort of battle. Merely the normal inconsecutiveness of human affairs had become exaggerated and pugnacious. A meeting was being prevented, and the police engaged in the operation were being pelted or obstructed. Mostly people were just looking on.

"It amounts to nothing," said Benham. "Even if they held a meeting, what could happen? Why does the Government try to stop it?"

The drifting and charging and a little booing went on for some time. Every now and then some one clambered to a point of vantage, began a speech and was pulled down by policemen. And at last across the confusion came an idea, like a wind across a pond.

The strikers were to go to the Power Station.

That had the effect of a distinct move in the game. The Power Station was the centre of Johannesburg's light and energy. There if anywhere it would be possible to express one's disapproval of the administration, one's desire to embarrass and confute it. One could stop all sorts of things from the Power Station. At any rate it was a repartee to the suppression of the meeting. Everything will be soon--when one comes to death then everything is at one's fingertips--I can feel that greater wback of a number of Everybody seemed gladdened by a definite project.

Benham and White went with the crowd.

At the intersection of two streets they were held up for a time; the scattered drift of people became congested. Gliding slowly across the mass came an electric tram, an entirely unbattered tram with even its glass undamaged, and then another and another. Strikers,

with the happy expression of men who have found something expressive to do, were escorting the trams off the street. They were being meticulously careful with them. Never was there less mob violence in a riot. They walked by the captured cars almost deferentially, like rough men honoured by a real lady's company. And when White and Benham reached the Power House the marvel grew. The rioters were already in possession and going freely over the whole place, and they had injured nothing. They had stopped the engines, but they had not even disabled them. Here too manifestly a majority of the people were, like White and Benham, merely lookers-on.

"But this is the most civilized rioting," said Benham. "It isn't rioting; it's drifting. Just as things drifted in Moscow. Because nobody has the rudder. . . ."

"What maddens me," he said, "is the democracy of the whole thing. White! I HATE this modern democracy. Democracy and inequality! Was there ever an absurder combination? What is the good of a social order in which the men at the top are commoner, meaner stuff than the men underneath, the same stuff, just spoilt, spoilt by prosperity and opportunity and the conceit that comes with advantage? This trouble wants so little, just a touch of aristocracy, just a little cultivated magnanimity, just an inkling of responsibility, and the place migold of life? When will the kingship in us wake up and come to its own? . . . Look at this place! Look at this place! . . . The easy, accessible happiness! The manifest prosperity. The newness and the sunshine. And the silly bitterness, the rage, the mischief and miseries! . . ."

And then: "It's not our quarrel. . . ."

"It's amazing how every human quarrel draws one in to take sides. Life is one long struggle against the incidental. I can feel my anger gathering against the Government here in spite of my reason.

I want to go and expostulate. I have a ridiculous idea that I ought to go off to Lord Glindividuals into the roadway and then a derisive shouting. Nobody had been hit. The soldiers had fired in the air.

"But thiadstone or Botha and expostulate. . . . What good would it do? They move in the magic circles of their own limitations, an official, a politician--how would they put it?-- 'with many things to consider. . . .'

"It's my weakness to be drawn into quarrels. It's a thing I have to guard against. . . .

"What does it all amount to? It is like a fight between navvies in a tunnel to settle the position of the Pole star. It doesn't concern us. . . . Oh! it doesn't indeed concern us. It's a scuffle in the darkness, and our business, the business of all brains, the only permanent good work is to light up the world. . . . There will be mischief and hatred here and suppression and then forgetfulness, and then things will go on again, a little better or a little worse. . . ."

"I'm tired of this place, White, and of all such places. I'm tired of the shouting and running, the beating and shooting. I'm sick of all the confusions of life's experience, which tells only of one need amidst an endless multitude of distresses. I've seen my fill of wars and disputes and struggles. I see now how a man may grow weary at last of life and its disorders, its unreal exacting disorders, its blunders and its remorse. No! I want to begin upon the realities I have made for myself. For they are the realities. I want to go now to some quiet corner where I can polish what I have learnt, sort out my accumulations, be undisturbed by these transitory symptomatic things. . . .

"What was that boy saying? They are burning the STAR office. . . .

Well, let them. . . ."

And as if to emphasize his detachment, his aversion, from the things that hurried through the night about them, from the red flare in the sky and the distant shouts and revolver shots and scuffling flights down side streets, he began to talk again of aristocracy and the making of greatness and a new great spirit in men. All the rest of his life, he said, must be given to that. He would say his thing plainly and honestly and afterwards other men would say it clearly and beautifully; here it would touch a man and there it would touch a man; the Invisible King in us all would find himself and know himself a little in this and a little in that, and at last a day would come, when fair things and fine things would rule the world and such squalor as this about them would be red and strange to his face with both hands; above them his eyes were round and anxious. Blood came out between his fingers. He shouted out something about "Foolery!"

Haroun al Raschid was flinging aside all this sublime indifference to current things. . . .

But the carbines spoke again.

Benham seemed to run unexpectedly against something invisible. He spun right round and fell down into a sitting position. He sat looking surprised.

After one moment of blank funk White drew out his pocket handkerchief, held it arm high by way of a white flag, and ran out from the piazza of the hotel.

"Are you hit?" cried White dropping to his knees and making himself as compact as possible. "Benham!"

Benham, after a moment of perplexed thought answered in a strange voice, a whisper into which a whistling note had been mixed.

"It was stupid of me to come out here. Not my quarrel. Faults on both sides. And now I can't go as impossible any more for men as a Stone Age Corroboree. . . .

Late or soon?

Benham sought for some loose large measure of time.

"Before those constellations above us have changed their shapes. . . .

"Does it matter if we work at something that will take a hundred years or ten thousand years? It will never come in our lives, White. Not soon enough for that. But after that evorld I shall never see as one feels the dawn coming through the last darkness. . . ."

16

The attack on the Rand Club began while Benham and White were at lunch in the dining-room at the Sherborough on the day following the burning of the STAR office. The Sherborough dining-room was on the first floor, and the Venetian window beside their table opened on to a verandah above a piazza. As they talked they became aware of an excitement in the street below, shouting and running and then a sound of wheels and the tramp of a body of soldiers marching

quickly. White stood up and looked. "They're seizing the stuff in the gunshops," he said, sitting down again. "It's amazing they haven't done it before."

They went on eating and discussing the work of a medical mission at Mukden that had won Benham's admiration. . . .

A revolver cracked in the street and there was a sound of glass smashing. Then more revolver shots. "That's at the big club at the corner, I think," said Benham and went out upon the verandah.

Up and down the street mischief was afoot. Outside the Rand Club in the cross street a considerable mass of people had accumulated, and was being hustled by a handful of khaki-clad soldiers. Down the street people were looking in the direction of the market-place and then suddenly a rush of figures flooded round the corner, first a froth of scattered individuals and then a mass, a column, marching with an appearance of order and waving a flag. It was a poorly disciplined body, it fringed out into a swarm of sympathizers and spectators upon the side walk, and at the head of it two men disputed. They seemed to be differing about the direction of the whole crowd. Suddenly one smote the other with his fist, a blow that hurled him sideways, and then turned with a triumphant gesture to the following ranks, waving his arms in the air. He was a tall lean man, hatless and collarless, greyhaired and wild-eyed. On he came, gesticulating gauntly, past the hotel.

And then up the street something happened. Benham's attention was turned round to it by a checking, by a kind of catch in the breath, on the part of the advancing procession under the verandah.

The roadway beyond the club had suddenly become clear. Across it a dozen soldiers had appeared and dismounted methodically and lined out, with their carbines in readiness. The mounted men at the club corner had vanished, and the people there had swayed about towards

this new threat. Quite abruptly the miscellaneous noises of the crowd ceased. Understanding seized upon every one.

These soldiers were going to fire. . . .

The brown uniformed figures moved like automata; the rifle shots rang out almost in one report. . . .

There was a rush in the crowd towards doorways and side streets, an enquiring pause, the darting s is a stupid game," said Benham. "Why did they fire at all?"

The tall man who had led the mob had run out into the middle of the road. His commando was a little disposed to assume a marginal position, and it had to be reassured. He was near enough for Benham to see his face. For a time it looked anxious and thoughtful. Then he seemed to jump to his decision. He unbuttoned and opened his coat wide as if defying the soldiers. "Shoot," he bawled, "Shoot, if you dare!"

A little uniform movement of the soldiers answered him. The small figure of the officer away there was inaudible. The coat of the man below flapped like the wings of a crowing cock before a breast of dirty shirt, the hoarse voice cracked with excitement, "Shoot, if you dare. Shoot, if you dare! See!"

Came the metallic bang of the carbines again, and in the instant the leader collapsed in the road, a sprawl of clothes, hit by half a dozen bullets. It was an extraordinary effect. As though the figure had been deflated. It was incredible that a moment before this thing had been a man, an individual, a hesitating complicated purpose.

"Good God!" cried Benham, "but--this is horrible!"

The heap of garments lay still. The red hand that stretched out towards the soldiers never twitched.

The spectacular silence broke into a confusion of sounds, women shrieked, men cursed, some fled, some sought a corner from which they might still see, others pressed forward. "Go for the swine!" bawled a voice, a third volley rattled over the heads of the people, and in the road below a man with a rifle halted, took aim, and answered the soldiers' fire. "Look out!" cried White who was watching the soldiers, and ducked. "This isn't in the air!"

Came a straggling volley again, like a man running a metal hammer very rapidly along iron corrugations, and this time people were dropping all over the road. One white-faced man not a score of yards away fell with a curse and a sob, struggled up, staggered for some yards with blood running abundantly from his neck, and fell and never stirred again. Another went down upon his back clumsily in the roadway and lay wringing his hands faster and faster until suddenly with a movement like a sigh they dropped inert by his side. A straw-hatted youth in a flannel suit ran and stopped and ran again. He seemed to be holding something in his fingers. He went right past the hotel

and stumbled and suddenly sprawled headlong at the opposite corner. The majority of the crowd had already vanished into doorways and side streets. But there was still shouting and there was still a remnant of amazed and angry men in the roadway--and one or two angry women. They were not fighting. Indeed they were unarmed, but if they had had weapons now they would certainly have used them.

"But this is preposterous!" cried Benham. "Preposterous. Those soldiers are never going to shoot again! This must stop."

He stood hesitating for a moment and then turned about and dashed for the staircase. "Good Heaven!" cried White. "What are you going to do?"

Benham was going to stop that conflict very much as a man might go to stop a clock that is striking unwarrantably and amazingly. He was going to stop it because it annoyed his sense of human dignity.

White hesitated for a moment and then followed, crying "Benham!"

But there was no arresting this last outbreak of Benham's all too impatient kingship. He pushed aside a ducking German waiter who was peeping through the glass doors, and rushed out of the hotel. With a gesture of authority he ran forward into the middle of the street, holding up his hand, in which he still held his dinner napkin clenched like a bomb. White believes firmly that Benham thought he would be able to dominate everytt up. I will sit here a moment and pull myself together. Perhaps I'm--I must be shot. But it seemed to come--inside me. . . . If I should be hurt. Am I hurt? . . . Will you see to that book of mine, White? It's odd. A kind of faintness. . . . What?"

"I will see after your book," said White and glanced at his hand because it felt wet, and was astonished to discover it bright red. He forgot about himself then, and the fresh flight of bullets down the street.

The immediate effect of this blood was that he said something more about the book, a promise, a definite promise. He could never recall his exact words, but their intention was binding. He conveyed his absolute acquiescence with Benham's wishes whatever they were. His life for that moment was unreservedly at his friend's disposal. . . .

White never knew if his promise was heard. Benham had stopped

speaking quite abruptly with that "What?"

He stared in front of him with a doubtful expression, like a man who is going to be sick, and then, in an instant, every muscle seemed to give way, he shuddered, his head flopped, and White held a dead man in his arms.

GOD THE INVISIBLE KING

**by
H. G. Wells
1917**

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THE ENVOY

PREFACE

This book sets out as forcibly and exactly as possible the religious belief of the writer. That belief is not orthodox Christianity; it is not, indeed, Christianity at all; its core nevertheless is a profound belief in a personal and intimate God. There is nothing in its statements that need shock or offend anyone who is prepared for the expression of a faith different from and perhaps in several particulars opposed to his own. The writer will be found to be sympathetic with all sincere religious feeling. Nevertheless it is well to prepare the prospective reader for statements that may jar harshly against deeply rooted mental habits. It is well to warn him at the outset that the departure from accepted beliefs is here no vague scepticism, but a quite sharply defined objection to dogmas very widely revered. Let the writer state the most probable occasion of trouble forthwith. An issue upon which this book will be found particularly uncompromising is the dogma of the Trinity. The writer is of opinion that the Council of Nicaea, which forcibly crystallised the controversies of two centuries and formulated the creed upon which all the existing Christian churches are based, was one of the most disastrous and one of the least venerable of all religious gatherings, and he holds that the Alexandrine speculations which were then conclusively imposed upon Christianity merit only disrespectful attention at the present time. There you have a chief possibility of offence. He is quite unable to pretend any awe for what he considers the spiritual monstrosities established by that undignified gathering. He makes no attempt to be obscure or propitiatory in this connection. He criticises the creeds explicitly and frankly, because he believes it is particularly necessary to clear them out of the way of those who are seeking religious consolation at this present time of exceptional religious need. He does little to conceal his indignation at the role played by these dogmas in obscuring, perverting, and preventing the religious life of mankind. After this warning such readers from

among the various Christian churches and sects as are accessible to storms of theological fear or passion to whom the Trinity is an ineffable mystery and the name of God almost unspeakably awful, read on at their own risk. This is a religious book written by a believer, but so far as their beliefs and religion go it may seem to them more sceptical and more antagonistic than blank atheism. That the writer cannot tell. He is not simply denying their God. He is declaring that there is a living God, different altogether from that Triune God and nearer to the heart of man. The spirit of this book is like that of a missionary who would only too gladly overthrow and smash some Polynesian divinity of shark's teeth and painted wood and mother-of-pearl. To the writer such elaborations as "begotten of the Father before all worlds" are no better than intellectual shark's teeth and oyster shells. His purpose, like the purpose of that missionary, is not primarily to shock and insult; but he is zealous to liberate, and he is impatient with a reverence that stands between man and God. He gives this fair warning and proceeds with his matter.

His matter is modern religion as he sees it. It is only incidentally and because it is unavoidable that he attacks doctrinal Christianity.

In a previous book, "First and Last Things" (Constable and Co.), he has stated his convictions upon certain general ideas of life and thought as clearly as he could. All of philosophy, all of metaphysics that is, seems to him to be a discussion of the relations of class and individual. The antagonism of the Nominalist and the Realist, the opposition of the One and the Many, the contrast of the Ideal and the Actual, all these oppositions express a certain structural and essential duality in the activity of the human mind. From an imperfect recognition of that duality ensue great masses of misconception. That was the substance of "First and Last Things." In this present book there is no further attack on philosophical or metaphysical questions. Here we work at a less

fundamental level and deal with religious feeling and religious ideas. But just as the writer was inclined to attribute a whole world of disputation and inexactitudes to confused thinking about the exact value of classes and terms, so here he is disposed to think that interminable controversies and conflicts arise out of a confusion of intention due to a double meaning of the word "God"; that the word "God" conveys not one idea or set of ideas, but several essentially different ideas, incompatible one with another, and falling mainly into one or other of two divergent groups; and that people slip carelessly from one to the other of these groups of ideas and so get into ultimately inextricable confusions.

The writer believes that the centuries of fluid religious thought that preceded the violent ultimate crystallisation of Nicaea, was essentially a struggle--obscured, of course, by many complexities--to reconcile and get into a relationship these two separate main series of God-ideas.

Putting the leading id a part against evil.

The writer believes that these dogmas of relationship are not merely extraneous to religion, but an impediment to religion. His aim in this book is to give a statement of religion which is no longer entangled in such speculations and disputes.

Let him add only one other note of explanation in this preface, and that is to remark that except for one incidental passage (in Chapter IV., 1), nowhere does he discuss the question of personal immortality. [It is discussed in "First and Last Things," Book IV, 4.] He omits this question because he does not consider that it has any more bearing upon the essentials of religion, than have the theories we may hold about the relation of God and the moral law to the starry universe. The latter is a question for the theologian,

the former for the psychologist. Whether we are mortal or immortal of this book very roughly, these two antagonistic typical conceptions of God may be best contrasted by speaking of one of them as God-as-Nature or the Creator, and of the other as God-as-Christ or the Redeemer. One is the great Outward God; the other is the Inmost God. The first idea was perhaps developed most highly and completely in the God of Spinoza. It is a conception of God tending to pantheism, to an idea of a comprehensive God as ruling with justice rather than affection, to a conception of aloofness and awe-inspiring worshipfulness. The second idea, which is opposed to this idea of an absolute God, is the God of the human heart. The writer would suggest that the great outline of the theological struggles of that phase of civilisation and world unity which produced Christianity, was a persistent but unsuccessful attempt to get these two different ideas of God into one focus. It was an attempt to make the God of Nature accessible and the God of the Heart invincible, to bring the former into a conception of love and to vest the latter with the beauty of stars and flowers and the dignity of inexorable justice. There could be no finer metaphor for such a correlation than Fatherhood and Sonship. But the trouble is that it seems impossible to most people to continue to regard the relations of the Father to the Son as being simply a mystical metaphor. Presently some materialistic bias swings them in a moment of intellectual carelessness back to the idea of sexual filiation.

And it may further be suggested that the extreme aloofness and inhumanity, which is logically necessary in the idea of a Creator God, of an Infinite God, was the reason, so to speak, for the invention of a Holy Spirit, as something proceeding from him, as something bridging the great gulf, a Comforter, a mediator descending into the sphere of the human understanding. That, and the suggestive influence of the Egyptian Trinity that was then being worshipped at the Serapeum, and which had saturated the thought of Alexandria with the conception of a trinity in unity, are probably the realities that account for the Third Person of the Christian

Trinity. At any rate the present writer believes that the discussions that shaped the Christian theology we know were dominated by such natural and fundamental thoughts. These discussions were, of course, complicated from the outset; and particularly were they complicated by the identification of the man Jesus with the theological Christ, by materialistic expectations of his second coming, by materialistic inventions about his "miraculous" begetting, and by the morbid speculations about virginity and the like that arose out of such grossness. They were still further complicated by the idea of the textual inspiration of the scriptures, which presently swamped thought in textual interpretation. That swamping came very early in the development of Christianity. The writer of St. John's gospel appears still to be thinking with a considerable freedom, but Origen is already hopelessly in the net of the texts. The writer of St. John's gospel was a free man, but Origen was a superstitious man. He was emasculated mentally as well as bodily through his bibliolatry. He quotes; his predecessor thinks.

But the writer throws out these guesses at the probable intentions of early Christian thought in passing. His business here is the definition of a position. The writer's position here in this book is, firstly, complete Agnosticism in the matter of God the Creator, and secondly, entire faith in the matter of God the Redeemer. That, so to speak, is the key of his book. He cannot bring the two ideas under the same term God. He uses the word God therefore for the God in our hearts only, and he uses the term the Veiled Being for the ultimate mysteries of the universe, and he declares that we do not know and perhaps cannot know in any comprehensible terms the relation of the Veiled Being to that living reality in our lives who is, in his terminology, the true God. Speaking from the point of view of practical religion, he is restricting and defining the word God, as meaning only the personal God of mankind, he is restricting it so as to exclude all cosmogony and ideas of providence from our religious thought and leave nothing but the essentials of the

religious life.

Many people, whom one would class as rather liberal Christians of an Arian or Arminian complexion, may find the larger part of this book acceptable to them if they will read "the Christ God" where the writer has written "God." They will then differ from him upon little more than the question whether there is an essential identity in aim and quality between the Christ God and the Veiled Being, who answer to their Creator God. This the orthodox post Nicaean Christians assert, and many pre-Nicaeans and many heretics (as the Cathars) contradicted with its exact contrary. The Cathars, Paulicians, Albigenses and so on held, with the Manichaeans, that the God of Nature, God the Father, was evil. The Christ God was his antagonist. This was the idea of the poet Shelley. And passing beyond Christian theology altogether a clue can still be found to many problems in comparative theology in this distinction between the Being of Nature (cf. Kant's "starry vault above") and the God of the heart (Kant's "moral law within"). The idea of an antagonism seems to have been cardinal in the thought of the Essenes and the Orphic cult and in the Persian dualism. So, too, Buddhism seems to be "antagonistic." On the other hand, the Moslem teaching and modern Judaism seem absolutely to combine and identify the two; God the creator is altogether and without distinction also God the King of Mankind. Christianity stands somewhere between such complete identification and complete antagonism. It admits a difference in attitude between Father and Son in its distinction between the Old Dispensation (of the Old Testament) and the New. Every possible change is rung in the great religions of the world between identification, complete separation, equality, and disproportion of these Beings; but it will be found that these two ideas are, so to speak, the basal elements of all theology in the world. The writer is chary of assertion or denial in these matters. He believes that they are speculations not at all necessary to salvation. He believes that men may differ profoundly in their opinions upon these points and still be in perfect agreement upon the essentials of

religion. The reality of religion he believes deals wholly and exclusively with the God of the Heart. He declares as his own opinion, and as the opinion which seems most expressive of modern thought, that there is no reason to suppose the Veiled Being either benevolent or malignant towards men. But if the reader believes that God is Almighty and in every way Infinite the practical outcome is not very different. For the purposes of human relationship it is impossible to deny that God PRESENTS HIMSELF AS FINITE, as struggling and takingl, whether the God in our hearts is the Son of or a rebel against the Universe, the reality of religion, the fact of salvation, is still our self-identification with God, irrespective of consequences, and the achievement of his kingdom, in our hearts and in the world. Whether we live forever or die tomorrow does not affect righteousness. Many people seem to find the prospect of a final personal death unendurable. This impresses me as egotism. I have no such appetite for a separate immortality. God is my immortality; what, of me, is identified with God, is God; what is not is of no more permanent value than the snows of yester-year.

H. G. W.

Dunmow,
May, 1917.

GOD THE INVISIBLE KING

CHAPTER THE FIRST

THE COSMOGONY OF MODERN RELIGION

1. MODERN RELIGION HAS NO FOUNDER

Perhaps all religions, unless the flaming onset of Mohammedanism be an exception, have dawned imperceptibly upon the world. A little while ago and the thing was not; and then suddenly it has been found in existence, and already in a state of diffusion. People have begun to hear of the new belief first here and then there. It is interesting, for example, to trace how Christianity drifted into the consciousness of the Roman world. But when a religion has been interrogated it has always had hitherto a tale of beginnings, the name and story of a founder. The renascent religion that is now taking shape, it seems, had no founder; it points to no origins. It is the Truth, its believers declare; it has always been here; it has always been visible to those who had eyes to see. It is perhaps plainer than it was and to more people--that is all.

It is as if it still did not realise its own difference. Many of those who hold it still think of it as if it were a kind of Christianity. Some, catching at a phrase of Huxley's, speak of it as Christianity without Theology. They do not know the creed they are carrying. It has, as a matter of fact, a very fine and subtle theology, flatly opposed to any belief that could, except by great stretching of charity and the imagination, be called Christianity. One might find, perhaps, a parallelism with the system ascribed to some Gnostics, but that is far more probably an accidental rather than a sympathetic coincidence. Of that the reader shall presently

have an opportunity of judging.

This indefiniteness of statement and relationship is probably only the opening phase of the new faith. Christianity also began with an extreme neglect of definition. It was not at first anything more than a sect of Judaism. It was only after three centuries, amidst the uproar and emotions of the council of Nicaea, when the more enthusiastic Trinitarians stuffed their fingers in their ears in affected horror at the arguments of old Arius, that the cardinal mystery of the Trinity was established as the essential fact of Christianity. Throughout those three centuries, the centuries of its greatest achievements and noblest martyrdoms, Christianity had not defined its God. And even to-day it has to be noted that a large majority of those who possess and repeat the Christian creeds have come into the practice so insensibly from unthinking childhood, that only in the slightest way do they realise the nature of the statements to which they subscribe. They will speak and think of both Christ and God in ways flatly incompatible with the doctrine of the Triune deity upon which, theoretically, the entire fabric of all the churches rests. They will show themselves as frankly Arians as though that damnable heresy had not been washed out of the world forever after centuries of persecution in torrents of blood. But whatever the present state of Christendom in these matters may be, there can be no doubt of the enormous pains taken in the past to give Christian beliefs the exactest, least ambiguous statement possible. Christianity knew itself clearly for what it was in its maturity, whatever the indecisions of its childhood or the confusions of its decay. The renascent religion that one finds now, a thing active and sufficient in many minds, has still scarcely come to self-consciousness. But it is so coming, and this present book is very largely an attempt to state the shape it is assuming and to compare it with the beliefs and imperatives and usages of the various Christian, pseudo-Christian, philosophical, and agnostic cults amidst which it has appeared.

The writer's sympathies and convictions are entirely with this that he speaks of as renascent or modern religion; he is neither atheist nor Buddhist nor Mohammedan nor Christian. He will make no pretence, therefore, to impartiality and detachment. He will do his best to be as fair as possible and as candid as possible, but the reader must reckon with this bias. He has found this faith growing up in himself; he has found it, or something very difficult to distinguish from it, growing independently in the minds of men and women he has met. They have been people of very various origins; English, Americans, Bengalis, Russians, French, people brought up in a "Catholic atmosphere," Positivists, Baptists, Sikhs, Mohammedans. Their diversity of source is as remarkable as their convergence of tendency. A miscellany of minds thinking upon parallel lines has come out to the same light. The new teaching is also traceable in many professedly Christian religious books and it is to be heard from Christian pulpits. The phase of definition is manifestly at hand.

2. MODERN RELIGION HAS A FINITE GOD

Perhaps the most fundamental difference between this new faith and any recognised form of Christianity is that, knowingly or unknowingly, it worships A FINITE GOD. Directly the believer is fairly confronted with the plain questions of the case, the vague identifications that are still carelessly made with one or all of the persons of the Trinity dissolve away. He will admit that his God is neither all-wise, nor all-powerful, nor omnipresent; that he is neither the maker of heaven nor earth, and that he has little to identify him with that hereditary God of the Jews who became the "Father" in the Christian system. On the other hand he will assert that his God is a god of salvation, that he is a spirit, a person, a strongly marked and knowable personality, loving, inspiring, and lovable, who exists or strives to exist in every human soul. He will be much less certain in his denials that his God has a close resemblance to the Pauline (as distinguished from the Trinitarian) "Christ." . . .

The modern religious man will almost certainly profess a kind of universalism; he will assert that whensoever men have called upon any God and have found fellowship and comfort and courage and that sense of God within them, that inner light which is the quintessence of the religious experience, it was the True God that answered them. For the True God is a generous God, not a jealous God; the very antithesis of that bickering monopolist who "will have none other gods but Me"; and when a human heart cries out--to what name it matters not--for a larger spirit and a stronger help than the visible things of life can give, straightway the nameless Helper is with it and the God of Man answers to the call. The True God has no scorn nor hate for those who have accepted the many-handed symbols of the Hindu or the lacquered idols of China. Where there is faith, where there is need, there is the True God ready to clasp the hands that stretch out seeking for him into the darkness behind the ivory

and gold.

The fact that God is FINITE is one upon which those who think clearly among the new believers are very insistent. He is, above everything else, a personality, and to be a personality is to have characteristics, to be limited by characteristics; he is a Being, not us but dealing with us and through us, he has an aim and that means he has a past and future; he is within time and not outside it. And they point out that this is really what everyone who prays sincerely to God or gets help from God, feels and believes. Our practice with God is better than our theory. None of us really pray to that fantastic, unqualified *danse a trois*, the Trinity, which the wranglings and disputes of the worthies of Alexandria and Syria declared to be God. We pray to one single understanding person. But so far the tactics of those Trinitarians at Nicaea, who stuck their fingers in their ears, have prevailed in this world; this was no matter for discussion, they declared, it was a Holy Mystery full of magical terror, and few religious people have thought it worth while to revive these terrors by a definite contradiction. The truly religious have been content to lapse quietly into the comparative sanity of an unformulated Arianism, they have left it to the scoffing Atheist to mock at the patent absurdities of the official creed. But one magnificent protest against this theological fantasy must have been the work of a sincerely religious man, the cold superb humour of that burlesque creed, ascribed, at first no doubt facetiously and then quite seriously, to Saint Athanasius the Great, which, by an irony far beyond its original intention, has become at last the accepted creed of the church.

The long truce in the criticism of Trinitarian theology is drawing to its end. It is when men most urgently need God that they become least patient with foolish presentations and dogmas. The new believers are very definitely set upon a thorough analysis of the nature and growth of the Christian creeds and ideas. There has grown up a practice of assuming that, when God is spoken of, the

Hebrew-Christian God of Nicaea is meant. But that God trails with him a thousand misconceptions and bad associations; his alleged infinite nature, his jealousy, his strange preferences, his vindictive Old Testament past. These things do not even make a caricature of the True God; they compose an altogether different and antagonistic figure.

It is a very childish and unphilosophical set of impulses that has led the theologians of nearly every faith to claim infinite qualities for their deity. One has to remember the poorness of the mental and moral quality of the churchmen of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries who saddled Christendom with its characteristic dogmas, and the extreme poverty and confusion of the circle of ideas within which they thought. Many of these makers of Christianity, like Saint Ambrose of Milan (who had even to be baptised after his election to his bishopric), had been pitchforked into the church from civil life; they lived in a time of pitiless factions and personal feuds; they had to conduct their disputations amidst the struggles of would-be emperors; court eunuchs and favourites swayed their counsels, and popular rioting clinched their decisions. There was less freedom of discussion then in the Christian world than there is at present (1916) in Belgium, and the whole audience of educated opinion by which a theory could be judged did not equal, either in numbers or accuracy of information, the present population of Constantinople. To these conditions we owe the claim that the Christian God is a magic god, very great medicine in battle, "in hoc signo vinces," and the argument so natural to the minds of those days and so absurd to ours, that since he had ALL power, all knowledge, and existed for ever and ever, it was no use whatever to set up any other god against him. . . .

By the fifth century Christianity had adopted as its fundamental belief, without which everyone was to be "damned everlastingly," a conception of God and of Christ's relation to God, of which even by the Christian account of his teaching, Jesus was either totally

unaware or so negligent and careless of the future comfort of his disciples as scarcely to make mention. The doctrine of the Trinity, so far as the relationship of the Third Person goes, hangs almost entirely upon one ambiguous and disputed utterance in St. John's gospel (XV. 26). Most of the teachings of Christian orthodoxy resolve themselves to the attentive student into assertions of the nature of contradiction and repartee. Someone floats an opinion in some matter that has been hitherto vague, in regard, for example, to the sonship of Christ or to the method of his birth. The new opinion arouses the hostility and alarm of minds unaccustomed to so definite a statement, and in the zeal of their recoil they fly to a contrary proposition. The Christians would neither admit that they worshipped more gods than one because of the Greeks, nor deny the divinity of Christ because of the Jews. They dreaded to be polytheistic; equally did they dread the least apparent detraction from the power and importance of their Saviour. They were forced into the theory of the Trinity by the necessity of those contrary assertions, and they had to make it a mystery protected by curses to save it from a *reductio ad absurdum*. The entire history of the growth of the Christian doctrine in those disordered early centuries is a history of theology by committee; a history of furious wrangling, of hasty compromises, and still more hasty attempts to clinch matters by anathema. When the muddle was at its very worst, the church was confronted by enormous political opportunities. In order that it should seize these one chief thing appeared imperative: doctrinal uniformity. The emperor himself, albeit unbaptised and very ignorant of Greek, came and seated himself in the midst of Christian thought upon a golden throne. At the end of it all Eusebius, that supreme Trimmer, was prepared to damn everlastingly all those who doubted that consubstantiality he himself had doubted at the beginning of the conference. It is quite clear that Constantine did not care who was damned or for what period, so long as the Christians ceased to wrangle among themselves. The practical unanimity of Nicaea was secured by threats, and then, turning upon the victors, he sought by threats to

restore Arius to communion. The imperial aim was a common faith to unite the empire. The crushing out of the Arians and of the Paulicians and suchlike heretics, and more particularly the systematic destruction by the orthodox of all heretical writings, had about it none of that quality of honest conviction which comes to those who have a real knowledge of God; it was a bawling down of dissensions that, left to work themselves out, would have spoilt good business; it was the fist of Nicolas of Myra over again, except that after the days of Ambrose the sword of the executioner and the fires of the book-burner were added to the weapon of the human voice. Priscillian was the first human sacrifice formally offered up under these improved conditions to the greater glory of the reinforced Trinity. Thereafter the blood of the heretics was the cement of Christian unity.

It is with these things in mind that those who profess the new faith are becoming so markedly anxious to distinguish God from the Trinitarian's deity. At present if anyone who has left the Christian communion declares himself a believer in God, priest and parson swell with self-complacency. There is no reason why they should do so. That many of us have gone from them and found God is no concern of theirs. It is not that we who went out into the wilderness which we thought to be a desert, away from their creeds and dogmas, have turned back and are returning. It is that we have gone on still further, and are beyond that desolation. Never more shall we return to those who gather under the cross. By faith we disbelieved and denied. By faith we said of that stuffed scarecrow of divinity, that incoherent accumulation of antique theological notions, the Nicene deity, "This is certainly no God." And by faith we have found God. . . .

3. THE INFINITE BEING IS NOT GOD

There has always been a demand upon the theological teacher that he should supply a cosmogony. It has always been an effective propagandist thing to say: "OUR God made the whole universe. Don't you think that it would be wise to abandon YOUR deity, who did not, as you admit, do anything of the sort?"

The attentive reader of the lives of the Saints will find that this style of argument did in the past bring many tribes and nations into the Christian fold. It was second only to the claim of magic advantages, demonstrated by a free use of miracles. Only one great religious system, the Buddhist, seems to have resisted the temptation to secure for its divinity the honour and title of Creator. Modern religion is like Buddhism in that respect. It offers no theory whatever about the origin of the universe. It does not reach behind the appearances of space and time. It sees only a featureless presumption in that playing with superlatives which has entertained so many minds from Plotinus to the Hegelians with the delusion that such negative terms as the Absolute or the Unconditioned, can assert anything at all. At the back of all known things there is an impenetrable curtain; the ultimate of existence is a Veiled Being, which seems to know nothing of life or death or good or ill. Of that Being, whether it is simple or complex or divine, we know nothing; to us it is no more than the limit of understanding, the unknown beyond. It may be of practically limitless intricacy and possibility. The new religion does not pretend that the God of its life is that Being, or that he has any relation of control or association with that Being. It does not even assert that God knows all or much more than we do about that ultimate Being.

For us life is a matter of our personalities in space and time. Human analysis probing with philosophy and science towards the

Veiled Being reveals nothing of God, reveals space and time only as necessary forms of consciousness, glimpses a dance of atoms, of whirls in the ether. Some day in the endless future there may be a knowledge, an understanding of relationship, a power and courage that will pierce into those black wrappings. To that it may be our God, the Captain of Mankind will take us.

That now is a mere speculation. The veil of the unknown is set with the stars; its outer texture is ether and atom and crystal. The Veiled Being, enigmatical and incomprehensible, broods over the mirror upon which the busy shapes of life are moving. It is as if it waited in a great stillness. Our lives do not deal with it, and cannot deal with it. It may be that they may never be able to deal with it.

4. THE LIFE FORCE IS NOT GOD

So it is that comprehensive setting of the universe presents itself to the modern mind. It is altogether outside good and evil and love and hate. It is outside God, who is love and goodness. And coming out of this veiled being, proceeding out of it in a manner altogether inconceivable, is another lesser being, an impulse thrusting through matter and clothing itself in continually changing material forms, the maker of our world, Life, the Will to Be. It comes out of that inscrutable being as a wave comes rolling to us from beyond the horizon. It is as it were a great wave rushing through matter and possessed by a spirit. It is a breeding, fighting thing; it pants through the jungle track as the tiger and lifts itself towards heaven as the tree; it is the rabbit bolting for its life and the dove calling to her mate; it crawls, it flies, it dives, it lusts and devours, it pursues and eats itself in order to live still more eagerly and hastily; it is every living thing, of it are our passions and desires and fears. And it is aware of itself not as a whole, but dispersedly as individual self-consciousness, starting out dispersedly from every one of the sentient creatures it has called into being. They look out for their little moments, red-eyed and fierce, full of greed, full of the passions of acquisition and assimilation and reproduction, submitting only to brief fellowships of defence or aggression. They are beings of strain and conflict and competition. They are living substance still mingled painfully with the dust. The forms in which this being clothes itself bear thorns and fangs and claws, are soaked with poison and bright with threats or allurements, prey slyly or openly on one another, hold their own for a little while, breed savagely and resentfully, and pass. . . .

This second Being men have called the Life Force, the Will to Live, the Struggle for Existence. They have figured it too as Mother Nature. We may speculate whether it is not what the wiser among the

Gnostics meant by the Demiurge, but since the Christians destroyed all the Gnostic books that must remain a mere curious guess. We may speculate whether this heat and haste and wrath of life about us is the Dark God of the Manichees, the evil spirit of the sun worshippers. But in contemporary thought there is no conviction apparent that this Demiurge is either good or evil; it is conceived of as both good and evil. If it gives all the pain and conflict of life, it gives also the joy of the sunshine, the delight and hope of youth, the pleasures. If it has elaborated a hundred thousand sorts of parasite, it has also moulded the beautiful limbs of man and woman; it has shaped the slug and the flower. And in it, as part of it, taking its rewards, responding to its goads, struggling against the final abandonment to death, do we all live, as the beasts live, glad, angry, sorry, revengeful, hopeful, weary, disgusted, forgetful, lustful, happy, excited, bored, in pain, mood after mood but always fearing death, with no certainty and no coherence within us, until we find God. And God comes to us neither out of the stars nor out of the pride of life, but as a still small voice within.

5. GOD IS WITHIN

God comes we know not whence, into the conflict of life. He works in men and through men. He is a spirit, a single spirit and a single person; he has begun and he will never end. He is the immortal part and leader of mankind. He has motives, he has characteristics, he has an aim. He is by our poor scales of measurement boundless love, boundless courage, boundless generosity. He is thought and a steadfast will. He is our friend and brother and the light of the world. That briefly is the belief of the modern mind with regard to God. There is no very novel idea about this God, unless it be the idea that he had a beginning. This is the God that men have sought and found in all ages, as God or as the Messiah or the Saviour. The finding of him is salvation from the purposelessness of life. The new religion has but disentangled the idea of him from the absolutes and infinities and mysteries of the Christian theologians; from mythological virgin births and the cosmogonies and intellectual pretentiousness of a vanished age.

Modern religion appeals to no revelation, no authoritative teaching, no mystery. The statement it makes is, it declares, a mere statement of what we may all perceive and experience. We all live in the storm of life, we all find our understandings limited by the Veiled Being; if we seek salvation and search within for God, presently we find him. All this is in the nature of things. If every one who perceives and states it were to be instantly killed and blotted out, presently other people would find their way to the same conclusions; and so on again and again. To this all true religion, casting aside its hulls of misconception, must ultimately come. To it indeed much religion is already coming. Christian thought struggles towards it, with the millstones of Syrian theology and an outrageous mythology of incarnation and resurrection about its neck. When at last our present bench of bishops join the early fathers of the church in heaven there will be, I fear, a note of

reproach in their greeting of the ingenious person who saddled them with OMNIPOTENS. Still more disastrous for them has been the virgin birth, with the terrible fascination of its detail for unpoetic minds. How rich is the literature of authoritative Christianity with decisions upon the continuing virginity of Mary and the virginity of Joseph--ideas that first arose in Arabia as a Moslem gloss upon Christianity--and how little have these peepings and prying to do with the needs of the heart and the finding of God!

Within the last few years there have been a score or so of such volumes as that recently compiled by Dr. Foakes Jackson, entitled "The Faith and the War," a volume in which the curious reader may contemplate deans and canons, divines and church dignitaries, men intelligent and enquiring and religiously disposed, all lying like overladen camels, panting under this load of obsolete theological responsibility, groaning great articles, outside the needle's eye that leads to God.

6. THE COMING OF GOD

Modern religion bases its knowledge of God and its account of God entirely upon experience. It has encountered God. It does not argue about God; it relates. It relates without any of those wrappings of awe and reverence that fold so necessarily about imposture, it relates as one tells of a friend and his assistance, of a happy adventure, of a beautiful thing found and picked up by the wayside.

So far as its psychological phases go the new account of personal salvation tallies very closely with the account of "conversion" as it is given by other religions. It has little to tell that is not already familiar to the reader of William James's "Varieties of Religious Experience." It describes an initial state of distress with the aimlessness and cruelties of life, and particularly with the futility of the individual life, a state of helpless self-disgust, of inability to form any satisfactory plan of living. This is the common prelude known to many sorts of Christian as "conviction of sin"; it is, at any rate, a conviction of hopeless confusion. . . . Then in some way the idea of God comes into the distressed mind, at first simply as an idea, without substance or belief. It is read about or it is remembered; it is expounded by some teacher or some happy convert. In the case of all those of the new faith with whose personal experience I have any intimacy, the idea of God has remained for some time simply as an idea floating about in a mind still dissatisfied. God is not believed in, but it is realised that if there were such a being he would supply the needed consolation and direction, his continuing purpose would knit together the scattered effort of life, his immortality would take the sting from death. Under this realisation the idea is pursued and elaborated. For a time there is a curious resistance to the suggestion that God is truly a person; he is spoken of preferably by such phrases as the Purpose in Things, as the Racial Consciousness,

as the Collective Mind.

I believe that this resistance in so many contemporary minds to the idea of God as a person is due very largely to the enormous prejudice against divine personality created by the absurdities of the Christian teaching and the habitual monopoly of the Christian idea. The picture of Christ as the Good Shepherd thrusts itself before minds unaccustomed to the idea that they are lambs. The cross in the twilight bars the way. It is a novelty and an enormous relief to such people to realise that one may think of God without being committed to think of either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost, or of all of them at once. That freedom had not seemed possible to them. They had been hypnotised and obsessed by the idea that the Christian God is the only thinkable God. They had heard so much about that God and so little of any other. With that release their minds become, as it were, nascent and ready for the coming of God.

Then suddenly, in a little while, in his own time, God comes. This cardinal experience is an undoubting, immediate sense of God. It is the attainment of an absolute certainty that one is not alone in oneself. It is as if one was touched at every point by a being akin to oneself, sympathetic, beyond measure wiser, steadfast and pure in aim. It is completer and more intimate, but it is like standing side by side with and touching someone that we love very dearly and trust completely. It is as if this being bridged a thousand misunderstandings and brought us into fellowship with a great multitude of other people. . . .

"Closer he is than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

The moment may come while we are alone in the darkness, under the stars, or while we walk by ourselves or in a crowd, or while we sit and muse. It may come upon the sinking ship or in the tumult of the battle. There is no saying when it may not come to us. . . . But

after it has come our lives are changed, God is with us and there is no more doubt of God. Thereafter one goes about the world like one who was lonely and has found a lover, like one who was perplexed and has found a solution. One is assured that there is a Power that fights with us against the confusion and evil within us and without. There comes into the heart an essential and enduring happiness and courage.

There is but one God, there is but one true religious experience, but under a multitude of names, under veils and darkneses, God has in this manner come into countless lives. There is scarcely a faith, however mean and preposterous, that has not been a way to holiness. God who is himself finite, who himself struggles in his great effort from strength to strength, has no spite against error. Far beyond halfway he hastens to meet the purblind. But God is against the darkness in their eyes. The faith which is returning to men girds at veils and shadows, and would see God plainly. It has little respect for mysteries. It rends the veil of the temple in rags and tatters. It has no superstitious fear of this huge friendliness, of this great brother and leader of our little beings. To find God is but the beginning of wisdom, because then for all our days we have to learn his purpose with us and to live our lives with him.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

HERESIES; OR THE THINGS THAT GOD IS NOT

1. HERESIES ARE MISCONCEPTIONS OF GOD

Religion is not a plant that has grown from one seed; it is like a lake that has been fed by countless springs. It is a great pool of living water, mingled from many sources and tainted with much impurity. It is synthetic in its nature; it becomes simpler from original complexities; the sediment subsides.

A life perfectly adjusted to its surroundings is a life without mentality; no judgment is called for, no inhibition, no disturbance of the instinctive flow of perfect reactions. Such a life is bliss, or nirvana. It is unconsciousness below dreaming. Consciousness is discord evoking the will to adjust; it is inseparable from need. At every need consciousness breaks into being. Imperfect adjustments, needs, are the rents and tatters in the smooth dark veil of being through which the light of consciousness shines--the light of consciousness and will of which God is the sun.

So that every need of human life, every disappointment and dissatisfaction and call for help and effort, is a means whereby men may and do come to the realisation of God.

There is no cardinal need, there is no sort of experience in human life from which there does not come or has not come a contribution to men's religious ideas. At every challenge men have to put forth effort, feel doubt of adequacy, be thwarted, perceive the chill shadow of their mortality. At every challenge comes the possibility of help from without, the idea of eluding frustration, the aspiration towards immortality. It is possible to classify the

appeals men make for God under the headings of their chief system of effort, their efforts to understand, their fear and their struggles for safety and happiness, the craving of their restlessness for peace, their angers against disorder and their desire for the avenger; their sexual passions and perplexities. . . .

Each of these great systems of needs and efforts brings its own sort of sediment into religion. Each, that is to say, has its own kind of heresy, its distinctive misapprehension of God. It is only in the synthesis and mutual correction of many divergent ideas that the idea of God grows clear. The effort to understand completely, for example, leads to the endless Heresies of Theory. Men trip over the inherent infirmities of the human mind. But in these days one does not argue greatly about dogma. Almost every conceivable error about unity, about personality, about time and quantity and genus and species, about begetting and beginning and limitation and similarity and every kink in the difficult mind of man, has been thrust forward in some form of dogma. Beside the errors of thought are the errors of emotion. Fear and feebleness go straight to the Heresies that God is Magic or that God is Providence; restless egotism at leisure and unchallenged by urgent elementary realities breeds the Heresies of Mysticism, anger and hate call for God's Judgments, and the stormy emotions of sex gave mankind the Phallic God. Those who find themselves possessed by the new spirit in religion, realise very speedily the necessity of clearing the mind of all these exaggerations, transferences, and overflows of feeling. The search for divine truth is like gold washing; nothing is of any value until most has been swept away.

2. HERESIES OF SPECULATION

One sort of heresies stands apart from the rest. It is infinitely the most various sort. It includes all those heresies which result from wrong-headed mental elaboration, as distinguished from those which are the result of hasty and imperfect apprehension, the heresies of the clever rather than the heresies of the obtuse. The former are of endless variety and complexity; the latter are in comparison natural, simple confusions. The former are the errors of the study, the latter the superstitions that spring by the wayside, or are brought down to us in our social structure out of a barbaric past.

To the heresies of thought and speculation belong the elaborate doctrine of the Trinity, dogmas about God's absolute qualities, such odd deductions as the accepted Christian teachings about the virginity of Mary and Joseph, and the like. All these things are parts of orthodox Christianity. Yet none of them did Christ, even by the Christian account, expound or recommend. He treated them as negligible. It was left for the Alexandrians, for Alexander, for little, red-haired, busy, wire-pulling Athanasius to find out exactly what their Master was driving at, three centuries after their Master was dead. . . .

Men still sit at little desks remote from God or life, and rack their inadequate brains to meet fancied difficulties and state unnecessary perfections. They seek God by logic, ignoring the marginal error that creeps into every syllogism. Their conceit blinds them to the limitations upon their thinking. They weave spider-like webs of muddle and disputation across the path by which men come to God. It would not matter very much if it were not that simpler souls are caught in these webs. Every great religious system in the world is choked by such webs; each system has its own. Of all the blood-stained tangled heresies which make up doctrinal

Christianity and imprison the mind of the western world to-day, not one seems to have been known to the nominal founder of Christianity. Jesus Christ never certainly claimed to be the Messiah; never spoke clearly of the Trinity; was vague upon the scheme of salvation and the significance of his martyrdom. We are asked to suppose that he left his apostles without instructions, that were necessary to their eternal happiness, that he could give them the Lord's Prayer but leave them to guess at the all-important Creed,* and that the Church staggered along blindly, putting its foot in and out of damnation, until the "experts" of Nicaea, that "garland of priests," marshalled by Constantine's officials, came to its rescue. . . . From the conversion of Paul onward, the heresies of the intellect multiplied about Christ's memory and hid him from the sight of men. We are no longer clear about the doctrine he taught nor about the things he said and did. . . .

* Even the "Apostles' Creed" is not traceable earlier than the fourth century. It is manifestly an old, patched formulary. Rutinius explains that it was not written down for a long time, but transmitted orally, kept secret, and used as a sort of password among the elect.

We are all so weary of this theology of the Christians, we are all at heart so sceptical about their Triune God, that it is needless here to spend any time or space upon the twenty thousand different formulae in which the orthodox have attempted to believe in something of the sort. There are several useful encyclopaedias of sects and heresies, compact, but still bulky, to which the curious may go. There are ten thousand different expositions of orthodoxy. No one who really seeks God thinks of the Trinity, either the Trinity of the Trinitarian or the Trinity of the Sabellian or the Trinity of the Arian, any more than one thinks of those theories made stone, those gods with three heads and seven hands, who sit on lotus leaves and flourish lingams and what not, in the temples of India. Let us leave, therefore, these morbid elaborations of the

human intelligence to drift to limbo, and come rather to the natural heresies that spring from fundamental weaknesses of the human character, and which are common to all religions. Against these it is necessary to keep constant watch. They return very insidiously.

3. GOD IS NOT MAGIC

One of the most universal of these natural misconceptions of God is to consider him as something magic serving the ends of men.

It is not easy for us to grasp at first the full meaning of giving our souls to God. The missionary and teacher of any creed is all too apt to hawk God for what he will fetch; he is greedy for the poor triumph of acquiescence; and so it comes about that many people who have been led to believe themselves religious, are in reality still keeping back their own souls and trying to use God for their own purposes. God is nothing more for them as yet than a magnificent Fetish. They did not really want him, but they have heard that he is potent stuff; their unripe souls think to make use of him. They call upon his name, they do certain things that are supposed to be peculiarly influential with him, such as saying prayers and repeating gross praises of him, or reading in a blind, industrious way that strange miscellany of Jewish and early Christian literature, the Bible, and suchlike mental mortification, or making the Sabbath dull and uncomfortable. In return for these fetishistic propitiations God is supposed to interfere with the normal course of causation in their favour. He becomes a celestial log-roller. He remedies unfavourable accidents, cures petty ailments, contrives unexpected gifts of medicine, money, or the like, he averts bankruptcies, arranges profitable transactions, and does a thousand such services for his little clique of faithful people. The pious are represented as being constantly delighted by these little surprises, these bouquets and chocolate boxes from the divinity. Or contrawise he contrives spiteful turns for those who fail in their religious attentions. He murders Sabbath-breaking children, or disorganises the careful business schemes of the ungodly. He is represented as going Sabbath-breaking on Sunday morning as a Staffordshire worker goes ratting. Ordinary everyday Christianity is saturated with this fetishistic conception of God.

It may be disowned in THE HIBBERT JOURNAL, but it is unblushingly advocated in the parish magazine. It is an idea taken over by Christianity with the rest of the qualities of the Hebrew God. It is natural enough in minds so self-centred that their recognition of weakness and need brings with it no real self-surrender, but it is entirely inconsistent with the modern conception of the true God.

There has dropped upon the table as I write a modest periodical called THE NORTHERN BRITISH ISRAEL REVIEW, illustrated with portraits of various clergymen of the Church of England, and of ladies and gentlemen who belong to the little school of thought which this magazine represents; it is, I should judge, a sub-sect entirely within the Established Church of England, that is to say within the Anglican communion of the Trinitarian Christians. It contains among other papers a very entertaining summary by a gentleman entitled--I cite the unusual title-page of the periodical--"Landseer Mackenzie, Esq.," of the views of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Obadiah upon the Kaiser William. They are distinctly hostile views. Mr. Landseer Mackenzie discourses not only upon these anticipatory condemnations but also upon the relations of the weather to this war. He is convinced quite simply and honestly that God has been persistently rigging the weather against the Germans. He points out that the absence of mist on the North Sea was of great help to the British in the autumn of 1914, and declares that it was the wet state of the country that really held up the Germans in Flanders in the winter of 1914-15. He ignores the part played by the weather in delaying the relief of Kut-el-Amara, and he has not thought of the difficult question why the Deity, having once decided upon intervention, did not, instead of this comparatively trivial meteorological assistance, adopt the more effective course of, for example, exploding or spoiling the German stores of ammunition by some simple atomic miracle, or misdirecting their gunfire by a sudden local modification of the laws of refraction or gravitation.

Since these views of God come from Anglican vicarages I can only

conclude that this kind of belief is quite orthodox and permissible in the established church, and that I am charging orthodox Christianity here with nothing that has ever been officially repudiated. I find indeed the essential assumptions of Mr. Landseer Mackenzie repeated in endless official Christian utterances on the part of German and British and Russian divines. The Bishop of Chelmsford, for example, has recently ascribed our difficulties in the war to our impatience with long sermons--among other similar causes. Such Christians are manifestly convinced that God can be invoked by ritual--for example by special days of national prayer or an increased observance of Sunday--or made malignant by neglect or levity. It is almost fundamental in their idea of him. The ordinary Mohammedan seems as confident of this magic pettiness of God, and the belief of China in the magic propitiations and resentments of "Heaven" is at least equally strong.

But the true God as those of the new religion know him is no such God of luck and intervention. He is not to serve men's ends or the ends of nations or associations of men; he is careless of our ceremonies and invocations. He does not lose his temper with our follies and weaknesses. It is for us to serve Him. He captains us, he does not coddle us. He has his own ends for which he needs us. . . .

4. GOD IS NOT PROVIDENCE

Closely related to this heresy that God is magic, is the heresy that calls him Providence, that declares the apparent adequacy of cause and effect to be a sham, and that all the time, incalculably, he is pulling about the order of events for our personal advantages.

The idea of Providence was very gaily travestied by Daudet in "Tartarin in the Alps." You will remember how Tartarin's friend assured him that all Switzerland was one great Trust, intent upon attracting tourists and far too wise and kind to permit them to venture into real danger, that all the precipices were netted invisibly, and all the loose rocks guarded against falling, that avalanches were prearranged spectacles and the crevasses at their worst slippery ways down into kindly catchment bags. If the mountaineer tried to get into real danger he was turned back by specious excuses. Inspired by this persuasion Tartarin behaved with incredible daring. . . . That is exactly the Providence theory of the whole world. There can be no doubt that it does enable many a timid soul to get through life with a certain recklessness. And provided there is no slip into a crevasse, the Providence theory works well. It would work altogether well if there were no crevasses.

Tartarin was reckless because of his faith in Providence, and escaped. But what would have happened to him if he had fallen into a crevasse?

There exists a very touching and remarkable book by Sir Francis Younghusband called "Within." [Williams and Norgate, 1912.] It is the confession of a man who lived with a complete confidence in Providence until he was already well advanced in years. He went through battles and campaigns, he filled positions of great honour and responsibility, he saw much of the life of men, without

altogether losing his faith. The loss of a child, an Indian famine, could shake it but not overthrow it. Then coming back one day from some races in France, he was knocked down by an automobile and hurt very cruelly. He suffered terribly in body and mind. His sufferings caused much suffering to others. He did his utmost to see the hand of a loving Providence in his and their disaster and the torment it inflicted, and being a man of sterling honesty and a fine essential simplicity of mind, he confessed at last that he could not do so. His confidence in the benevolent intervention of God was altogether destroyed. His book tells of this shattering, and how labouriously he reconstructed his religion upon less confident lines. It is a book typical of an age and of a very English sort of mind, a book well worth reading.

That he came to a full sense of the true God cannot be asserted, but how near he came to God, let one quotation witness.

"The existence of an outside Providence," he writes, "who created us, who watches over us, and who guides our lives like a Merciful Father, we have found impossible longer to believe in. But of the existence of a Holy Spirit radiating upward through all animate beings, and finding its fullest expression, in man in love, and in the flowers in beauty, we can be as certain as of anything in the world. This fiery spiritual impulsion at the centre and the source of things, ever burning in us, is the supremely important factor in our existence. It does not always attain to light. In many directions it fails; the conditions are too hard and it is utterly blocked. In others it only partially succeeds. But in a few it bursts forth into radiant light. There are few who in some heavenly moment of their lives have not been conscious of its presence. We may not be able to give it outward expression, but we know that it is there." . . .

God does not guide our feet. He is no sedulous governess restraining and correcting the wayward steps of men. If you would fly into the air, there is no God to bank your aeroplane correctly for you or keep an ill-tended engine going; if you would cross a glacier, no God nor angel guides your steps amidst the slippery places. He will not even mind your innocent children for you if you leave them before an unguarded fire. Cherish no delusions; for yourself and others you challenge danger and chance on your own strength; no talisman, no God, can help you or those you care for. Nothing of such things will God do; it is an idle dream. But God will be with you nevertheless. In the reeling aeroplane or the dark ice-cave God will be your courage. Though you suffer or are killed, it is not an end. He will be with you as you face death; he will die with you as he has died already countless myriads of brave deaths. He will come so close to you that at the last you will not know whether it is you or he who dies, and the present death will be swallowed up in his victory.

5. THE HERESY OF QUIETISM

God comes to us within and takes us for his own. He releases us from ourselves; he incorporates us with his own undying experience and adventure; he receives us and gives himself. He is a stimulant; he makes us live immortally and more abundantly. I have compared him to the sensation of a dear, strong friend who comes and stands quietly beside one, shoulder to shoulder.

The finding of God is the beginning of service. It is not an escape from life and action; it is the release of life and action from the prison of the mortal self. Not to realise that, is the heresy of Quietism, of many mystics. Commonly such people are people of some wealth, able to command services for all their everyday needs. They make religion a method of indolence. They turn their backs on the toil and stresses of existence and give themselves up to a delicious reverie in which they flirt with the divinity. They will recount their privileges and ecstasies, and how ingeniously and wonderfully God has tried and proved them. But indeed the true God was not the lover of Madame Guyon. The true God is not a spiritual troubadour wooing the hearts of men and women to no purpose. The true God goes through the world like fifes and drums and flags, calling for recruits along the street. We must go out to him. We must accept his discipline and fight his battle. The peace of God comes not by thinking about it but by forgetting oneself in him.

6. GOD DOES NOT PUNISH

Man is a social animal, and there is in him a great faculty for moral indignation. Many of the early Gods were mainly Gods of Fear. They were more often "wrath" than not. Such was the temperament of the Semitic deity who, as the Hebrew Jehovah, proliferated, perhaps under the influence of the Alexandrian Serapeum, into the Christian Trinity and who became also the Moslem God.* The natural hatred of unregenerate men against everything that is unlike themselves, against strange people and cheerful people, against unfamiliar usages and things they do not understand, embodied itself in this conception of a malignant and partisan Deity, perpetually "upset" by the little things people did, and contriving murder and vengeance. Now this God would be drowning everybody in the world, now he would be burning Sodom and Gomorrah, now he would be inciting his congenial Israelites to the most terrific pogroms. This divine "frightfulness" is of course the natural human dislike and distrust for queer practices or for too sunny a carelessness, a dislike reinforced by the latent fierceness of the ape in us, liberating the latent fierceness of the ape in us, giving it an excuse and pressing permission upon it, handing the thing hated and feared over to its secular arm. . . .

* It is not so generally understood as it should be among English and American readers that a very large proportion of early Christians before the creeds established and regularised the doctrine of the Trinity, denied absolutely that Jehovah was God; they regarded Christ as a rebel against Jehovah and a rescuer of humanity from him, just as Prometheus was a rebel against Jove. These beliefs survived for a thousand years throughout Christendom: they were held by a great multitude of persecuted sects, from the Albigenses and Cathars to the eastern Paulicians. The catholic church found it necessary to prohibit the circulation of the Old Testament among laymen very largely on account of the polemics of

the Cathars against the Hebrew God. But in this book, be it noted, the word Christian, when it is not otherwise defined, is used to indicate only the Trinitarians who accept the official creeds.

It is a human paradox that the desire for seemliness, the instinct for restraints and fair disciplines, and the impulse to cherish sweet familiar things, that these things of the True God should so readily liberate cruelty and tyranny. It is like a woman going with a light to tend and protect her sleeping child, and setting the house on fire. None the less, right down to to-day, the heresy of God the Revengeful, God the Persecutor and Avenger, haunts religion. It is only in quite recent years that the growing gentleness of everyday life has begun to make men a little ashamed of a Deity less tolerant and gentle than themselves. The recent literature of the Anglicans abounds in the evidence of this trouble.

Bishop Colenso of Natal was prosecuted and condemned in 1863 for denying the irascibility of his God and teaching "the Kaffirs of Natal" the dangerous heresy that God is all mercy. "We cannot allow it to be said," the Dean of Cape Town insisted, "that God was not angry and was not appeased by punishment." He was angry "on account of Sin, which is a great evil and a great insult to His Majesty." The case of the Rev. Charles Voysey, which occurred in 1870, was a second assertion of the Church's insistence upon the fierceness of her God. This case is not to be found in the ordinary church histories nor is it even mentioned in the latest edition of the *ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA*; nevertheless it appears to have been a very illuminating case. It is doubtful if the church would prosecute or condemn either Bishop Colenso or Mr. Voysey to-day.

7. GOD AND THE NURSERY-MAID

Closely related to the Heresy of God the Avenger, is that kind of miniature God the Avenger, to whom the nursery-maid and the overtaxed parent are so apt to appeal. You stab your children with such a God and he poisons all their lives. For many of us the word "God" first came into our lives to denote a wanton, irrational restraint, as Bogey, as the All-Seeing and quite ungenerous Eye. God Bogey is a great convenience to the nursery-maid who wants to leave Fear to mind her charges and enforce her disciplines, while she goes off upon her own aims. But indeed, the teaching of God Bogey is an outrage upon the soul of a child scarcely less dreadful than an indecent assault. The reason rebels and is crushed under this horrible and pursuing suggestion. Many minds never rise again from their injury. They remain for the rest of life spiritually crippled and debased, haunted by a fear, stained with a persuasion of relentless cruelty in the ultimate cause of all things.

I, who write, was so set against God, thus rendered. He and his Hell were the nightmare of my childhood; I hated him while I still believed in him, and who could help but hate? I thought of him as a fantastic monster, perpetually spying, perpetually listening, perpetually waiting to condemn and to "strike me dead"; his flames as ready as a grill-room fire. He was over me and about my feebleness and silliness and forgetfulness as the sky and sea would be about a child drowning in mid-Atlantic. When I was still only a child of thirteen, by the grace of the true God in me, I flung this Lie out of my mind, and for many years, until I came to see that God himself had done this thing for me, the name of God meant nothing to me but the hideous scar in my heart where a fearful demon had been.

I see about me to-day many dreadful moral and mental cripples with this bogey God of the nursery-maid, with his black, insane revenges, still living like a horrible parasite in their hearts in the place

where God should be. They are afraid, afraid, afraid; they dare not be kindly to formal sinners, they dare not abandon a hundred foolish observances; they dare not look at the causes of things. They are afraid of sunshine, of nakedness, of health, of adventure, of science, lest that old watching spider take offence. The voice of the true God whispers in their hearts, echoes in speech and writing, but they avert themselves, fear-driven. For the true God has no lash of fear. And how the foul-minded bigot, with his ill-shaven face, his greasy skin, his thick, gesticulating hands, his bellowings and threatenings, loves to reap this harvest of fear the ignorant cunning of the nursery girl has sown for him! How he loves the importance of denunciation, and, himself a malignant cripple, to rally the company of these crippled souls to persecute and destroy the happy children of God! . . .

Christian priestcraft turns a dreadful face to children. There is a real wickedness of the priest that is different from other wickedness, and that affects a reasonable mind just as cruelty and strange perversions of instinct affect it. Let a former Archbishop of Canterbury speak for me. This that follows is the account given by Archbishop Tait in a debate in the Upper House of Convocation (July 3rd, 1877) of one of the publications of a certain SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CROSS:

"I take this book, as its contents show, to be meant for the instruction of very young children. I find, in one of the pages of it, the statement that between the ages of six and six and a half years would be the proper time for the inculcation of the teaching which is to be found in the book. Now, six to six and a half is certainly a very tender age, and to these children I find these statements addressed in the book:

"It is to the priest, and to the priest only, that the child must

acknowledge his sins, if he desires that God should forgive him.'

"I hope and trust the person, the three clergymen, or however many there were, did not exactly realise what they were writing; that they did not mean to say that a child was not to confess its sins to God direct; that it was not to confess its sins, at the age of six, to its mother, or to its father, but was only to have recourse to the priest. But the words, to say the least of them, are rash. Then comes the very obvious question:

"Do you know why? It is because God, when he was on earth, gave to his priests, and to them alone, the Divine Power of forgiving men their sins. It was to priests alone that Jesus said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." . . . Those who will not confess will not be cured. Sin is a terrible sickness, and casts souls into hell.'

"That is addressed to a child six years of age.

"I have known,' the book continues, 'poor children who concealed their sins in confession for years; they were very unhappy, were tormented with remorse, and if they had died in that state they would certainly have gone to the everlasting fires of hell.'" . . .

Now here is something against nature, something that I have seen time after time in the faces and bearing of priests and heard in their preaching. It is a distinct lust. Much nobility and devotion there are among priests, saintly lives and kindly lives, lives of real worship, lives no man may better; this that I write is not of all, perhaps not of many priests. But there has been in all ages that have known sacerdotalism this terrible type of the priest;

priestcraft and priestly power release an aggressive and narrow disposition to a recklessness of suffering and a hatred of liberty that surely exceeds the badness of any other sort of men.

8. THE CHILDREN'S GOD

Children do not naturally love God. They have no great capacity for an idea so subtle and mature as the idea of God. While they are still children in a home and cared for, life is too kind and easy for them to feel any great need of God. All things are still something God-like. . . .

The true God, our modern minds insist upon believing, can have no appetite for unnatural praise and adoration. He does not clamour for the attention of children. He is not like one of those senile uncles who dream of glory in the nursery, who love to hear it said, "The children adore him." If children are loved and trained to truth, justice, and mutual forbearance, they will be ready for the true God as their needs bring them within his scope. They should be left to their innocence, and to their trust in the innocence of the world, as long as they can be. They should be told only of God as a Great Friend whom some day they will need more and understand and know better. That is as much as most children need. The phrases of religion put too early into their mouths may become a cant, something worse than blasphemy.

Yet children are sometimes very near to God. Creative passion stirs in their play. At times they display a divine simplicity. But it does not follow that therefore they should be afflicted with theological formulae or inducted into ceremonies and rites that they may dislike or misinterpret. If by any accident, by the death of a friend or a distressing story, the thought of death afflicts a child, then he may begin to hear of God, who takes those that serve him out of their slain bodies into his shining immortality. Or if by some menial treachery, through some prowling priest, the whisper of Old Bogey reaches our children, then we may set their minds at ease by the assurance of his limitless charity. . . .

With adolescence comes the desire for God and to know more of God, and that is the most suitable time for religious talk and teaching.

9. GOD IS NOT SEXUAL

In the last two or three hundred years there has been a very considerable disentanglement of the idea of God from the complex of sexual thought and feeling. But in the early days of religion the two things were inseparably bound together; the fury of the Hebrew prophets, for example, is continually proclaiming the extraordinary "wrath" of their God at this or that little dirtiness or irregularity or breach of the sexual tabus. The ceremony of circumcision is clearly indicative of the original nature of the Semitic deity who developed into the Trinitarian God. So far as Christianity dropped this rite, so far Christianity disavowed the old associations. But to this day the representative Christian churches still make marriage into a mystical sacrament, and, with some exceptions, the Roman communion exacts the sacrifice of celibacy from its priesthood, regardless of the mischievousness and maliciousness that so often ensue. Nearly every Christian church inflicts as much discredit and injustice as it can contrive upon the illegitimate child. They do not treat illegitimate children as unfortunate children, but as children with a mystical and an incurable taint of SIN. Kindly easy-going Christians may resent this statement because it does not tally with their own attitudes, but let them consult their orthodox authorities.

One must distinguish clearly here between what is held to be sacred or sinful in itself and what is held to be one's duty or a nation's duty because it is in itself the wisest, cleanest, clearest, best thing to do. By the latter tests and reasonable arguments most or all of our institutions regulating the relations of the sexes may be justifiable. But my case is not whether they can be justified by these tests but that it is not by these tests that they are judged even to-day, by the professors of the chief religions of the world. It is the temper and not the conclusions of the religious bodies that I would criticise. These sexual questions are guarded by a

holy irascibility, and the most violent efforts are made--with a sense of complete righteousness--to prohibit their discussion. That fury about sexual things is only to be explained on the hypothesis that the Christian God remains a sex God in the minds of great numbers of his exponents. His disentanglement from that plexus is incomplete. Sexual things are still to the orthodox Christian, sacred things.

Now the God whom those of the new faith are finding is only mediately concerned with the relations of men and women. He is no more sexual essentially than he is essentially dietetic or hygienic. The God of Leviticus was all these things. He is represented as prescribing the most petty and intimate of observances--many of which are now habitually disregarded by the Christians who profess him. . . . It is part of the evolution of the idea of God that we have now so largely disentangled our conception of him from the dietary and regimen and meticulous sexual rules that were once inseparably bound up with his majesty. Christ himself was one of the chief forces in this disentanglement, there is the clearest evidence in several instances of his disregard of the rule and his insistence that his disciples should seek for the spirit underlying and often masked by the rule. His Church, being made of baser matter, has followed him as reluctantly as possible and no further than it was obliged. But it has followed him far enough to admit his principle that in all these matters there is no need for superstitious fear, that the interpretation of the divine purpose is left to the unembarrassed intelligence of men. The church has followed him far enough to make the harsh threatenings of priests and ecclesiastics against what they are pleased to consider impurity or sexual impiety, a profound inconsistency. One seems to hear their distant protests when one reads of Christ and the Magdalen, or of Christ eating with publicans and sinners. The clergy of our own days play the part of the New Testament Pharisees with the utmost exactness and complete unconsciousness. One cannot imagine a modern ecclesiastic conversing with a Magdalen in terms of ordinary

civility, unless she was in a very high social position indeed, or blending with disreputable characters without a dramatic sense of condescension and much explanatory by-play. Those who profess modern religion do but follow in these matters a course entirely compatible with what has survived of the authentic teachings of Christ, when they declare that God is not sexual, and that religious passion and insult and persecution upon the score of sexual things are a barbaric inheritance.

But lest anyone should fling off here with some hasty assumption that those who profess the religion of the true God are sexually anarchistic, let stress be laid at once upon the opening sentence of the preceding paragraph, and let me a little anticipate a section which follows. We would free men and women from exact and superstitious rules and observances, not to make them less the instruments of God but more wholly his. The claim of modern religion is that one should give oneself unreservedly to God, that there is no other salvation. The believer owes all his being and every moment of his life to God, to keep mind and body as clean, fine, wholesome, active and completely at God's service as he can. There is no scope for indulgence or dissipation in such a consecrated life. It is a matter between the individual and his conscience or his doctor or his social understanding what exactly he may do or not do, what he may eat or drink or so forth, upon any occasion. Nothing can exonerate him from doing his utmost to determine and perform the right act. Nothing can excuse his failure to do so. But what is here being insisted upon is that none of these things has immediately to do with God or religious emotion, except only the general will to do right in God's service. The detailed interpretation of that "right" is for the dispassionate consideration of the human intelligence.

All this is set down here as distinctly as possible. Because of the emotional reservoirs of sex, sexual dogmas are among the most obstinately recurrent of all heresies, and sexual excitement is

always tending to leak back into religious feeling. Amongst the sex-tormented priesthood of the Roman communion in particular, ignorant of the extreme practices of the Essenes and of the Orphic cult and suchlike predecessors of Christianity, there seems to be an extraordinary belief that chastity was not invented until Christianity came, and that the religious life is largely the propitiation of God by feats of sexual abstinence. But a superstitious abstinence that scars and embitters the mind, distorts the imagination, makes the body gross and keeps it unclean, is just as offensive to God as any positive depravity.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

THE LIKENESS OF GOD

1. GOD IS COURAGE

Now having set down what those who profess the new religion regard as the chief misconceptions of God, having put these systems of ideas aside from our explanations, the path is cleared for the statement of what God is. Since language springs entirely from material, spatial things, there is always an element of metaphor in theological statement. So that I have not called this chapter the Nature of God, but the Likeness of God.

And firstly, GOD IS COURAGE.

2. GOD IS A PERSON

And next GOD IS A PERSON.

Upon this point those who are beginning to profess modern religion are very insistent. It is, they declare, the central article, the axis, of their religion. God is a person who can be known as one knows a friend, who can be served and who receives service, who partakes of our nature; who is, like us, a being in conflict with the unknown and the limitless and the forces of death; who values much that we value and is against much that we are pitted against. He is our king to whom we must be loyal; he is our captain, and to know him is to have a direction in our lives. He feels us and knows us; he is helped and gladdened by us. He hopes and attempts. . . . God is no abstraction nor trick of words, no Infinite. He is as real as a bayonet thrust or an embrace.

Now this is where those who have left the old creeds and come asking about the new realisations find their chief difficulty. They say, Show us this person; let us hear him. (If they listen to the silences within, presently they will hear him.) But when one argues, one finds oneself suddenly in the net of those ancient controversies between species and individual, between the one and the many, which arise out of the necessarily imperfect methods of the human mind. Upon these matters there has been much pregnant writing during the last half century. Such ideas as this writer has to offer are to be found in a previous little book of his, "First and Last Things," in which, writing as one without authority or specialisation in logic and philosophy, as an ordinary man vividly interested, for others in a like case, he was at some pains to elucidate the imperfections of this instrument of ours, this mind, by which we must seek and explain and reach up to God. Suffice it here to say that theological discussion may very easily become like the vision of a man with cataract, a mere projection of inherent

imperfections. If we do not use our phraseology with a certain courage, and take that of those who are trying to convey their ideas to us with a certain politeness and charity, there is no end possible to any discussion in so subtle and intimate a matter as theology but assertions, denials, and wranglings. And about this word "person" it is necessary to be as clear and explicit as possible, though perfect clearness, a definition of mathematical sharpness, is by the very nature of the case impossible.

Now when we speak of a person or an individual we think typically of a man, and we forget that he was once an embryo and will presently decay; we forget that he came of two people and may beget many, that he has forgotten much and will forget more, that he can be confused, divided against himself, delirious, drunken, drugged, or asleep. On the contrary we are, in our hasty way of thinking of him, apt to suppose him continuous, definite, acting consistently and never forgetting. But only abstract and theoretical persons are like that. We couple with him the idea of a body. Indeed, in the common use of the word "person" there is more thought of body than of mind. We speak of a lover possessing the person of his mistress. We speak of offences against the person as opposed to insults, libels, or offences against property. And the gods of primitive men and the earlier civilisations were quite of that quality of person. They were thought of as living in very splendid bodies and as acting consistently. If they were invisible in the ordinary world it was because they were aloof or because their "persons" were too splendid for weak human eyes. Moses was permitted a mitigated view of the person of the Hebrew God on Mount Horeb; and Semele, who insisted upon seeing Zeus in the glories that were sacred to Juno, was utterly consumed. The early Islamic conception of God, like the conception of most honest, simple Christians to-day, was clearly, in spite of the theologians, of a very exalted anthropomorphic personality away somewhere in Heaven. The personal appearance of the Christian God is described in The Revelation, and however much that description may be explained away by commentators as

symbolical, it is certainly taken by most straightforward believers as a statement of concrete reality. Now if we are going to insist upon this primary meaning of person and individual, then certainly God as he is now conceived is not a person and not an individual. The true God will never promenade an Eden or a Heaven, nor sit upon a throne.

But current Christianity, modern developments of Islam, much Indian theological thought--that, for instance, which has found such delicate and attractive expression in the devotional poetry of Rabindranath Tagore--has long since abandoned this anthropomorphic insistence upon a body. From the earliest ages man's mind has found little or no difficulty in the idea of something essential to the personality, a soul or a spirit or both, existing apart from the body and continuing after the destruction of the body, and being still a person and an individual. From this it is a small step to the thought of a person existing independently of any existing or pre-existing body. That is the idea of theological Christianity, as distinguished from the Christianity of simple faith. The Triune Persons--omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent--exist for all time, superior to and independent of matter. They are supremely disembodied. One became incarnate--as a wind eddy might take up a whirl of dust. . . . Those who profess modern religion conceive that this is an excessive abstraction of the idea of spirituality, a disembodiment of the idea of personality beyond the limits of the conceivable; nevertheless they accept the conception that a person, a spiritual individual, may be without an ordinary mortal body. . . . They declare that God is without any specific body, that he is immaterial, that he can affect the material universe--and that means that he can only reach our sight, our hearing, our touch--through the bodies of those who believe in him and serve him.

His nature is of the nature of thought and will. Not only has he, in his essence, nothing to do with matter, but nothing to do with space. He is not of matter nor of space. He comes into them.

Since the period when all the great theologies that prevail to-day were developed, there have been great changes in the ideas of men towards the dimensions of time and space. We owe to Kant the release from the rule of these ideas as essential ideas. Our modern psychology is alive to the possibility of Being that has no extension in space at all, even as our speculative geometry can entertain the possibility of dimensions--fourth, fifth, Nth dimensions--outside the three-dimensional universe of our experience. And God being non-spatial is not thereby banished to an infinite remoteness, but brought nearer to us; he is everywhere immediately at hand, even as a fourth dimension would be everywhere immediately at hand. He is a Being of the minds and in the minds of men. He is in immediate contact with all who apprehend him. . . .

But modern religion declares that though he does not exist in matter or space, he exists in time just as a current of thought may do; that he changes and becomes more even as a man's purpose gathers itself together; that somewhere in the dawning of mankind he had a beginning, an awakening, and that as mankind grows he grows. With our eyes he looks out upon the universe he invades; with our hands, he lays hands upon it. All our truth, all our intentions and achievements, he gathers to himself. He is the undying human memory, the increasing human will.

But this, you may object, is no more than saying that God is the collective mind and purpose of the human race. You may declare that this is no God, but merely the sum of mankind. But those who believe in the new ideas very steadfastly deny that. God is, they say, not an aggregate but a synthesis. He is not merely the best of all of us, but a Being in himself, composed of that but more than that, as a temple is more than a gathering of stones, or a regiment is more than an accumulation of men. They point out that a man is made up of a great multitude of cells, each equivalent to a unicellular organism. Not one of those cells is he, nor is he simply just the addition of all of them. He is more than all of

them. You can take away these and these and these, and he still remains. And he can detach part of himself and treat it as if it were not himself, just as a man may beat his breast or, as Cranmer the martyr did, thrust his hand into the flames. A man is none the less himself because his hair is cut or his appendix removed or his leg amputated.

And take another image. . . . Who bears affection for this or that spadeful of mud in my garden? Who cares a throb of the heart for all the tons of chalk in Kent or all the lumps of limestone in Yorkshire? But men love England, which is made up of such things.

And so we think of God as a synthetic reality, though he has neither body nor material parts. And so too we may obey him and listen to him, though we think but lightly of the men whose hands or voices he sometimes uses. And we may think of him as having moods and aspects--as a man has--and a consistency we call his character.

These are theorisings about God. These are statements to convey this modern idea of God. This, we say, is the nature of the person whose will and thoughts we serve. No one, however, who understands the religious life seeks conversion by argument. First one must feel the need of God, then one must form or receive an acceptable idea of God. That much is no more than turning one's face to the east to see the coming of the sun. One may still doubt if that direction is the east or whether the sun will rise. The real coming of God is not that. It is a change, an irradiation of the mind. Everything is there as it was before, only now it is aflame. Suddenly the light fills one's eyes, and one knows that God has risen and that doubt has fled for ever.

3. GOD IS YOUTH

The third thing to be told of the true God is that GOD IS YOUTH.

God, we hold, began and is always beginning. He looks forever into the future.

Most of the old religions derive from a patriarchal phase. God is in those systems the Ancient of Days. I know of no Christian attempt to represent or symbolise God the Father which is not a bearded, aged man. White hair, beard, bearing, wrinkles, a hundred such symptoms of senile decay are there. These marks of senility do not astonish our modern minds in the picture of God, only because tradition and usage have blinded our eyes to the absurdity of a time-worn immortal. Jove too and Wotan are figures far past the prime of their vigour. These are gods after the ancient habit of the human mind, that turned perpetually backward for causes and reasons and saw all things to come as no more than the working out of Fate,--

"Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woe."

But the God of this new age, we repeat, looks not to our past but our future, and if a figure may represent him it must be the figure of a beautiful youth, already brave and wise, but hardly come to his strength. He should stand lightly on his feet in the morning time, eager to go forward, as though he had but newly arisen to a day that was still but a promise; he should bear a sword, that clean, discriminating weapon, his eyes should be as bright as swords; his lips should fall apart with eagerness for the great adventure before him, and he should be in very fresh and golden harness, reflecting the rising sun. Death should still hang like mists and cloud banks

and shadows in the valleys of the wide landscape about him. There should be dew upon the threads of gossamer and little leaves and blades of the turf at his feet. . . .

4. WHEN WE SAY GOD IS LOVE

One of the sayings about God that have grown at the same time most trite and most sacred, is that God is Love. This is a saying that deserves careful examination. Love is a word very loosely used; there are people who will say they love new potatoes; there are a multitude of loves of different colours and values. There is the love of a mother for her child, there is the love of brothers, there is the love of youth and maiden, and the love of husband and wife, there is illicit love and the love one bears one's home or one's country, there are dog-lovers and the loves of the Olympians, and love which is a passion of jealousy. Love is frequently a mere blend of appetite and preference; it may be almost pure greed; it may have scarcely any devotion nor be a whit self-forgetful nor generous. It is possible so to phrase things that the furtive craving of a man for another man's wife may be made out to be a light from God. Yet about all the better sorts of love, the sorts of love that people will call "true love," there is something of that same exaltation out of the narrow self that is the essential quality of the knowledge of God.

Only while the exaltation of the love passion comes and goes, the exaltation of religious passion comes to remain. Lovers are the windows by which we may look out of the prison of self, but God is the open door by which we freely go. And God never dies, nor disappoints, nor betrays.

The love of a woman and a man has usually, and particularly in its earlier phases of excitement, far too much desire, far too much possessiveness and exclusiveness, far too much distrust or forced trust, and far too great a kindred with jealousy to be like the love of God. The former is a dramatic relationship that drifts to a climax, and then again seeks presently a climax, and that may be satiated or fatigued. But the latter is far more like the love of

comrades, or like the love of a man and a woman who have loved and been through much trouble together, who have hurt one another and forgiven, and come to a complete and generous fellowship. There is a strange and beautiful love that men tell of that will spring up on battlefields between sorely wounded men, and often they are men who have fought together, so that they will do almost incredibly brave and tender things for one another, though but recently they have been trying to kill each other. There is often a pure exaltation of feeling between those who stand side by side manfully in any great stress. These are the forms of love that perhaps come nearest to what we mean when we speak of the love of God.

That is man's love of God, but there is also something else; there is the love God bears for man in the individual believer. Now this is not an indulgent, instinctive, and sacrificing love like the love of a woman for her baby. It is the love of the captain for his men; God must love his followers as a great captain loves his men, who are so foolish, so helpless in themselves, so confiding, and yet whose faith alone makes him possible. It is an austere love. The spirit of God will not hesitate to send us to torment and bodily death. . . .

And God waits for us, for all of us who have the quality to reach him. He has need of us as we of him. He desires us and desires to make himself known to us. When at last the individual breaks through the limiting darkneses to him, the irradiation of that moment, the smile and soul clasp, is in God as well as in man. He has won us from his enemy. We come staggering through into the golden light of his kingdom, to fight for his kingdom henceforth, until at last we are altogether taken up into his being.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

THE RELIGION OF ATHEISTS

1. THE SCIENTIFIC ATHEIST

It is a curious thing that while most organised religions seem to drape about and conceal and smother the statement of the true God, the honest Atheist, with his passionate impulse to strip the truth bare, is constantly and unwittingly reproducing the divine likeness. It will be interesting here to call a witness or so to the extreme instability of absolute negation.

Here, for example, is a deliverance from Professor Metchnikoff, who was a very typical antagonist of all religion. He died only the other day. He was a very great physiologist indeed; he was a man almost of the rank and quality of Pasteur or Charles Darwin. A decade or more ago he wrote a book called "The Nature of Man," in which he set out very plainly a number of illuminating facts about life. They are facts so illuminating that presently, in our discussion of sin, they will be referred to again. But it is not Professor Metchnikoff's intention to provide material for a religious discussion. He sets out his facts in order to overthrow theology as he conceives it. The remarkable thing about his book, the thing upon which I would now lay stress, is that he betrays no inkling of the fact that he has no longer the right to conceive theology as he conceives it. The development of his science has destroyed that right.

He does not realise how profoundly modern biology has affected our ideas of individuality and species, and how the import of theology is modified through these changes. When he comes from his own world

of modern biology to religion and philosophy he goes back in time. He attacks religion as he understood it when first he fell out with it fifty years or more ago.

Let us state as compactly as possible the nature of these changes that biological science has wrought almost imperceptibly in the general scheme and method of our thinking.

The influence of biology upon thought in general consists essentially in diminishing the importance of the individual and developing the realisation of the species, as if it were a kind of super-individual, a modifying and immortal super-individual, maintaining itself against the outer universe by the birth and death of its constituent individuals. Natural History, which began by putting individuals into species as if the latter were mere classificatory divisions, has come to see that the species has its adventures, its history and drama, far exceeding in interest and importance the individual adventure. "The Origin of Species" was for countless minds the discovery of a new romance in life.

The contrast of the individual life and this specific life may be stated plainly and compactly as follows. A little while ago we current individuals, we who are alive now, were each of us distributed between two parents, then between four grandparents, and so on backward, we are temporarily assembled, as it were, out of an ancestral diffusion; we stand our trial, and presently our individuality is dispersed and mixed again with other individualities in an uncertain multitude of descendants. But the species is not like this; it goes on steadily from newness to newness, remaining still a unity. The drama of the individual life is a mere episode, beneficial or abandoned, in this continuing adventure of the species. And Metchnikoff finds most of the trouble of life and the distresses of life in the fact that the species is still very painfully adjusting itself to the fluctuating conditions under which it lives. The conflict of life is a continual pursuit

of adjustment, and the "ills of life," of the individual life that is, are due to its "disharmonies." Man, acutely aware of himself as an individual adventure and unawakened to himself as a species, finds life jangling and distressful, finds death frustration. He fails and falls as a person in what may be the success and triumph of his kind. He does not apprehend the struggle or the nature of victory, but only his own gravitation to death and personal extinction.

Now Professor Metchnikoff is anti-religious, and he is anti-religious because to him as to so many Europeans religion is confused with priest-craft and dogmas, is associated with disagreeable early impressions of irrational repression and misguidance. How completely he misconceives the quality of religion, how completely he sees it as an individual's affair, his own words may witness:

"Religion is still occupied with the problem of death. The solutions which as yet it has offered cannot be regarded as satisfactory. A future life has no single argument to support it, and the non-existence of life after death is in consonance with the whole range of human knowledge. On the other hand, resignation as preached by Buddha will fail to satisfy humanity, which has a longing for life, and is overcome by the thought of the inevitability of death."

Now here it is clear that by death he means the individual death, and by a future life the prolongation of individuality. But Buddhism does not in truth appear ever to have been concerned with that, and modern religious developments are certainly not under that preoccupation with the narrower self. Buddhism indeed so far from "preaching resignation" to death, seeks as its greater good a death so complete as to be absolute release from the individual's burthen

of KARMA. Buddhism seeks an ESCAPE FROM INDIVIDUAL IMMORTALITY.

The deeper one pursues religious thought the more nearly it approximates to a search for escape from the self-centred life and over-individuation, and the more it diverges from Professor Metchnikoff's assertion of its aims. Salvation is indeed to lose one's self. But Professor Metchnikoff having roundly denied that this is so, is then left free to take the very essentials of the religious life as they are here conceived and present them as if they were the antithesis of the religious life. His book, when it is analysed, resolves itself into just that research for an escape from the painful accidents and chagrins of individuation, which is the ultimate of religion.

At times, indeed, he seems almost wilfully blind to the true solution round and about which his writing goes. He suggests as his most hopeful satisfaction for the cravings of the human heart, such a scientific prolongation of life that the instinct for self-preservation will be at last extinct. If that is not the very "resignation" he imputes to the Buddhist I do not know what it is. He believes that an individual which has lived fully and completely may at last welcome death with the same instinctive readiness as, in the days of its strength, it shows for the embraces of its mate. We are to be gluttoned by living to six score and ten. We are to rise from the table at last as gladly as we sat down. We shall go to death as unresistingly as tired children go to bed. Men are to have a life far beyond the range of what is now considered their prime, and their last period (won by scientific self-control) will be a period of ripe wisdom (from seventy to eighty to a hundred and twenty or thereabouts) and public service!

(But why, one asks, public service? Why not book-collecting or the simple pleasure of reminiscence so dear to aged egotists? Metchnikoff never faces that question. And again, what of the man who is challenged to die for right at the age of thirty? What does

the prolongation of life do for him? And where are the consolations for accidental misfortune, for the tormenting disease or the lost limb?)

But in his peroration Professor Metchnikoff lapses into pure religiosity. The prolongation of life gives place to sheer self-sacrifice as the fundamental "remedy." And indeed what other remedy has ever been conceived for the general evil of life?

"On the other hand," he writes, "the knowledge that the goal of human life can be attained only by the development of a high degree of solidarity amongst men will restrain actual egotism. The mere fact that the enjoyment of life according to the precepts of Solomon (Ecclesiastes ix. 7-10)* is opposed to the goal of human life, will lessen luxury and the evil that comes from luxury. Conviction that science alone is able to redress the disharmonies of the human constitution will lead directly to the improvement of education and to the solidarity of mankind.

* Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun. whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

"In progress towards the goal, nature will have to be consulted continuously. Already, in the case of the ephemerids, nature has produced a complete cycle of normal life ending in natural death. In the problem of his own fate, man must not be content with the gifts of nature; he must direct them by his own efforts. Just as he

has been able to modify the nature of animals and plants, man must attempt to modify his own constitution, so as to readjust its disharmonies. . . .

"To modify the human constitution, it will be necessary first, to frame the ideal, and thereafter to set to work with all the resources of science.

"If there can be formed an ideal able to unite men in a kind of religion of the future, this ideal must be founded on scientific principles. And if it be true, as has been asserted so often, that man can live by faith alone, the faith must be in the power of science."

Now this, after all the flat repudiations that have preceded it of "religion" and "philosophy" as remedies for human ills, is nothing less than the fundamental proposition of the religious life translated into terms of materialistic science, the proposition that damnation is really over-individuation and that salvation is escape from self into the larger being of life. . . .

What can this "religion of the future" be but that devotion to the racial adventure under the captaincy of God which we have already found, like gold in the bottom of the vessel, when we have washed away the confusions and impurities of dogmatic religion? By an inquiry setting out from a purely religious starting-point we have already reached conclusions identical with this ultimate refuge of an extreme materialist.

This altar to the Future of his, we can claim as an altar to our God--an altar rather indistinctly inscribed.

2. SACRIFICE IMPLIES GOD

Almost all Agnostic and Atheistical writings that show any fineness and generosity of spirit, have this tendency to become as it were the statement of an anonymous God. Everything is said that a religious writer would say--except that God is not named. Religious metaphors abound. It is as if they accepted the living body of religion but denied the bones that held it together--as they might deny the bones of a friend. It is true, they would admit, the body moves in a way that implies bones in its every movement, but --WE HAVE NEVER SEEN THOSE BONES.

The disputes in theory--I do not say the difference in reality--between the modern believer and the atheist or agnostic--becomes at times almost as impalpable as that subtle discussion dear to students of physics, whether the scientific "ether" is real or a formula. Every material phenomenon is consonant with and helps to define this ether, which permeates and sustains and is all things, which nevertheless is perceptible to no sense, which is reached only by an intellectual process. Most minds are disposed to treat this ether as a reality. But the acutely critical mind insists that what is only so attainable by inference is not real; it is no more than "a formula that satisfies all phenomena."

But if it comes to that, am I anything more than the formula that satisfies all my forms of consciousness?

Intellectually there is hardly anything more than a certain will to believe, to divide the religious man who knows God to be utterly real, from the man who says that God is merely a formula to satisfy moral and spiritual phenomena. The former has encountered him, the other has as yet felt only unassigned impulses. One says God's will is so; the other that Right is so. One says God moves me to do this

or that; the other the Good Will in me which I share with you and all well-disposed men, moves me to do this or that. But the former makes an exterior reference and escapes a risk of self-righteousness.

I have recently been reading a book by Mr. Joseph McCabe called "The Tyranny of Shams," in which he displays very typically this curious tendency to a sort of religion with God "blacked out." His is an extremely interesting case. He is a writer who was formerly a Roman Catholic priest, and in his reaction from Catholicism he displays a resolution even sterner than Professor Metchnikoff's, to deny that anything religious or divine can exist, that there can be any aim in life except happiness, or any guide but "science." But--and here immediately he turns east again--he is careful not to say "individual happiness." And he says "Pleasure is, as Epicureans insisted, only a part of a large ideal of happiness." So he lets the happiness of devotion and sacrifice creep in. So he opens indefinite possibilities of getting away from any merely materialistic rule of life. And he writes:

"In every civilised nation the mass of the people are inert and indifferent. Some even make a pretence of justifying their inertness. Why, they ask, should we stir at all? Is there such a thing as a duty to improve the earth? What is the meaning or purpose of life? Or has it a purpose?"

"One generally finds that this kind of reasoning is merely a piece of controversial athletics or a thin excuse for idleness. People tell you that the conflict of science and religion--it would be better to say, the conflict of modern culture and ancient traditions--has robbed life of its plain significance. The men who, like Tolstoi, seriously urge this point fail to appreciate the modern outlook on life. Certainly modern culture--science, history, philosophy, and art--finds no purpose in life: that is to say, no

purpose eternally fixed and to be discovered by man. A great chemist said a few years ago that he could imagine 'a series of lucky accidents'--the chance blowing by the wind of certain chemicals into pools on the primitive earth--accounting for the first appearance of life; and one might not unjustly sum up the influences which have lifted those early germs to the level of conscious beings as a similar series of lucky accidents.

"But it is sheer affectation to say that this demoralises us. If there is no purpose impressed on the universe, or prefixed to the development of humanity, it follows only that humanity may choose its own purpose and set up its own goal; and the most elementary sense of order will teach us that this choice must be social, not merely individual. In whatever measure ill-controlled individuals may yield to personal impulses or attractions, the aim of the race must be a collective aim. I do not mean an austere demand of self-sacrifice from the individual, but an adjustment--as genial and generous as possible--of individual variations for common good. Otherwise life becomes discordant and futile, and the pain and waste react on each individual. So we raise again, in the twentieth century, the old question of 'the greatest good,' which men discussed in the Stoa Poikile and the suburban groves of Athens, in the cool atria of patrician mansions on the Palatine and the Pincian, in the Museum at Alexandria, and the schools which Omar Khayyam frequented, in the straw-strewn schools of the Middle Ages and the opulent chambers of Cosimo dei Medici."

And again:

"The old dream of a co-operative effort to improve life, to bring happiness to as many minds of mortals as we can reach, shines above all the mists of the day. Through the ruins of creeds and philosophies, which have for ages disdained it, we are retracing our

steps toward that height--just as the Athenians did two thousand years ago. It rests on no metaphysic, no sacred legend, no disputable tradition--nothing that scepticism can corrode or advancing knowledge undermine. Its foundations are the fundamental and unchanging impulses of our nature."

And again:

"The revolt which burns in so much of the abler literature of our time is an unselfish revolt, or non-selfish revolt: it is an outcome of that larger spirit which conceives the self to be a part of the general social organism, and it is therefore neither egoistic nor altruistic. It finds a sanction in the new intelligence, and an inspiration in the finer sentiments of our generation, but the glow which chiefly illumines it is the glow of the great vision of a happier earth. It speaks of the claims of truth and justice, and assails untruth and injustice, for these are elemental principles of social life; but it appeals more confidently to the warmer sympathy which is linking the scattered children of the race, and it urges all to co-operate in the restriction of suffering and the creation of happiness. The advance guard of the race, the men and women in whom mental alertness is associated with fine feeling, cry that they have reached Pisgah's slope and in increasing numbers men and women are pressing on to see if it be really the Promised Land."

"Pisgah--the Promised Land!" Mr. McCabe in that passage sounds as if he were half-way to "Oh! Beulah Land!" and the tambourine.

That "larger spirit," we maintain, is God; those "impulses" are the power of God, and Mr. McCabe serves a Master he denies. He has but to realise fully that God is not necessarily the Triune God of the Catholic Church, and banish his intense suspicion that he may yet be

lured back to that altar he abandoned, he has but to look up from that preoccupation, and immediately he will begin to realise the presence of Divinity.

3. GOD IS AN EXTERNAL REALITY

It may be argued that if atheists and agnostics when they set themselves to express the good will that is in them, do shape out God, that if their conception of right living falls in so completely with the conception of God's service as to be broadly identical, then indeed God, like the ether of scientific speculation, is no more than a theory, no more than an imaginative externalisation of man's inherent good will. Why trouble about God then? Is not the declaration of a good disposition a sufficient evidence of salvation? What is the difference between such benevolent unbelievers as Professor Metchnikoff or Mr. McCabe and those who have found God?

The difference is this, that the benevolent atheist stands alone upon his own good will, without a reference, without a standard, trusting to his own impulse to goodness, relying upon his own moral strength. A certain immodesty, a certain self-righteousness, hangs like a precipice above him; incalculable temptations open like gulfs beneath his feet. He has not really given himself or got away from himself. He has no one to whom he can give himself. He is still a masterless man. His exaltation is self-centred, is priggishness, his fall is unrestrained by any exterior obligation. His devotion is only the good will in himself, a disposition; it is a mood that may change. At any moment it may change. He may have pledged himself to his own pride and honour, but who will hold him to his bargain? He has no source of strength beyond his own amiable sentiments, his conscience speaks with an unsupported voice, and no one watches while he sleeps. He cannot pray; he can but ejaculate. He has no real and living link with other men of good will.

And those whose acquiescence in the idea of God is merely intellectual are in no better case than those who deny God altogether. They may have all the forms of truth and not divinity.

The religion of the atheist with a God-shaped blank at its heart and the persuasion of the unconverted theologian, are both like lamps unlit. The lit lamp has no difference in form from the lamp unlit. But the lit lamp is alive and the lamp unlit is asleep or dead.

The difference between the unconverted and the unbeliever and the servant of the true God is this; it is that the latter has experienced a complete turning away from self. This only difference is all the difference in the world. It is the realisation that this goodness that I thought was within me and of myself and upon which I rather prided myself, is without me and above myself, and infinitely greater and stronger than I. It is the immortal and I am mortal. It is invincible and steadfast in its purpose, and I am weak and insecure. It is no longer that I, out of my inherent and remarkable goodness, out of the excellence of my quality and the benevolence of my heart, give a considerable amount of time and attention to the happiness and welfare of others--because I choose to do so. On the contrary I have come under a divine imperative, I am obeying an irresistible call, I am a humble and willing servant of the righteousness of God. That altruism which Professor Metchnikoff and Mr. McCabe would have us regard as the goal and refuge of a broad and free intelligence, is really the first simple commandment in the religious life.

4. ANOTHER RELIGIOUS MATERIALIST

Now here is a passage from a book, "Evolution and the War," by Professor Metchnikoff's translator, Dr. Chalmers Mitchell, which comes even closer to our conception of God as an immortal being arising out of man, and external to the individual man. He has been discussing that well-known passage of Kant's: "Two things fill my mind with ever-renewed wonder and awe the more often and deeper I dwell on them--the starry vault above me, and the moral law within me."

From that discussion, Dr. Chalmers Mitchell presently comes to this most definite and interesting statement:

"Writing as a hard-shell Darwinian evolutionist, a lover of the scalpel and microscope, and of patient, empirical observation, as one who dislikes all forms of supernaturalism, and who does not shrink from the implications even of the phrase that thought is a secretion of the brain as bile is a secretion of the liver, I assert as a biological fact that the moral law is as real and as external to man as the starry vault. It has no secure seat in any single man or in any single nation. It is the work of the blood and tears of long generations of men. It is not in man, inborn or innate, but is enshrined in his traditions, in his customs, in his literature and his religion. Its creation and sustenance are the crowning glory of man, and his consciousness of it puts him in a high place above the animal world. Men live and die; nations rise and fall, but the struggle of individual lives and of individual nations must be measured not by their immediate needs, but as they tend to the debasement or perfection of man's great achievement."

This is the same reality. This is the same Link and Captain that

this book asserts. It seems to me a secondary matter whether we call Him "Man's Great Achievement" or "The Son of Man" or the "God of Mankind" or "God." So far as the practical and moral ends of life are concerned, it does not matter how we explain or refuse to explain His presence in our lives.

There is but one possible gap left between the position of Dr. Chalmers Mitchell and the position of this book. In this book it is asserted that GOD RESPONDS, that he GIVES courage and the power of self-suppression to our weakness.

5. A NOTE ON A LECTURE BY PROFESSOR GILBERT MURRAY

Let me now quote and discuss a very beautiful passage from a lecture upon Stoicism by Professor Gilbert Murray, which also displays the same characteristic of an involuntary shaping out of God in the forms of denial. It is a passage remarkable for its conscientious and resolute Agnosticism. And it is remarkable too for its blindness to the possibility of separating quite completely the idea of the Infinite Being from the idea of God. It is another striking instance of that obsession of modern minds by merely Christian theology of which I have already complained. Professor Murray has quoted Mr. Bevan's phrase for God, "the Friend behind phenomena," and he does not seem to realise that that phrase carries with it no obligation whatever to believe that this Friend is in control of the phenomena. He assumes that he is supposed to be in control as if it were a matter of course:

"We do seem to find," Professor Murray writes, "not only in all religions, but in practically all philosophies, some belief that man is not quite alone in the universe, but is met in his endeavours towards the good by some external help or sympathy. We find it everywhere in the unsophisticated man. We find it in the unguarded self-revelations of the most severe and conscientious Atheists. Now, the Stoics, like many other schools of thought, drew an argument from this consensus of all mankind. It was not an absolute proof of the existence of the Gods or Providence, but it was a strong indication. The existence of a common instinctive belief in the mind of man gives at least a presumption that there must be a good cause for that belief.

"This is a reasonable position. There must be some such cause. But it does not follow that the only valid cause is the truth of the content of the belief. I cannot help suspecting that this is

precisely one of those points on which Stoicism, in company with almost all philosophy up to the present time, has gone astray through not sufficiently realising its dependence on the human mind as a natural biological product. For it is very important in this matter to realise that the so-called belief is not really an intellectual judgment so much as a craving of the whole nature.

"It is only of very late years that psychologists have begun to realise the enormous dominion of those forces in man of which he is normally unconscious. We cannot escape as easily as these brave men dreamed from the grip of the blind powers beneath the threshold. Indeed, as I see philosophy after philosophy falling into this unproven belief in the Friend behind phenomena, as I find that I myself cannot, except for a moment and by an effort, refrain from making the same assumption, it seems to me that perhaps here too we are under the spell of a very old ineradicable instinct. We are gregarious animals; our ancestors have been such for countless ages. We cannot help looking out on the world as gregarious animals do; we see it in terms of humanity and of fellowship. Students of animals under domestication have shown us how the habits of a gregarious creature, taken away from his kind, are shaped in a thousand details by reference to the lost pack which is no longer there--the pack which a dog tries to smell his way back to all the time he is out walking, the pack he calls to for help when danger threatens. It is a strange and touching thing, this eternal hunger of the gregarious animal for the herd of friends who are not there. And it may be, it may very possibly be, that, in the matter of this Friend behind phenomena our own yearning and our own almost ineradicable instinctive conviction, since they are certainly not founded on either reason or observation, are in origin the groping of a lonely-souled gregarious animal to find its herd or its herd-leader in the great spaces between the stars.

"At any rate, it is a belief very difficult to get rid of."

There the passage and the lecture end.

I would urge that here again is an inadvertent witness to the reality of God.

Professor Murray writes of gregarious animals as though there existed solitary animals that are not gregarious, pure individualists, "atheists" so to speak, and as though this appeal to a life beyond one's own was not the universal disposition of living things. His classical training disposes him to a realistic exaggeration of individual difference. But nearly every animal, and certainly every mentally considerable animal, begins under parental care, in a nest or a litter, mates to breed, and is associated for much of its life. Even the great carnivores do not go alone except when they are old and have done with the most of life. Every pack, every herd, begins at some point in a couple, it is the equivalent of the tiger's litter if that were to remain undispersed. And it is within the memory of men still living that in many districts the African lion has with a change of game and conditions lapsed from a "solitary" to a gregarious, that is to say a prolonged family habit of life.

Man too, if in his ape-like phase he resembled the other higher apes, is an animal becoming more gregarious and not less. He has passed within the historical period from a tribal gregariousness to a nearly cosmopolitan tolerance. And he has his tribe about him. He is not, as Professor Murray seems to suggest, a solitary LOST gregarious beast. Why should his desire for God be regarded as the overflow of an unsatisfied gregarious instinct, when he has home, town, society, companionship, trade union, state, INCREASINGLY at hand to glut it? Why should gregariousness drive a man to God rather than to the third-class carriage and the public-house? Why should gregariousness drive men out of crowded Egyptian cities into the cells of the Thebaid? Schopenhauer in a memorable passage

(about the hedgehogs who assembled for warmth) is flatly opposed to Professor Murray, and seems far more plausible when he declares that the nature of man is insufficiently gregarious. The parallel with the dog is not a valid one.

Does not the truth lie rather in the supposition that it is not the Friend that is the instinctive delusion but the isolation? Is not the real deception, our belief that we are completely individualised, and is it not possible that this that Professor Murray calls "instinct" is really not a vestige but a new thing arising out of our increasing understanding, an intellectual penetration to that greater being of the species, that vine, of which we are the branches? Why should not the soul of the species, many faceted indeed, be nevertheless a soul like our own?

Here, as in the case of Professor Metchnikoff, and in many other cases of atheism, it seems to me that nothing but an inadequate understanding of individuation bars the way to at least the intellectual recognition of the true God.

6. RELIGION AS ETHICS

And while I am dealing with rationalists, let me note certain recent interesting utterances of Sir Harry Johnston's. You will note that while in this book we use the word "God" to indicate the God of the Heart, Sir Harry uses "God" for that idea of God-of-the-Universe, which we have spoken of as the Infinite Being. This use of the word "God" is of late theological origin; the original identity of the words "good" and "god" and all the stories of the gods are against him. But Sir Harry takes up God only to define him away into incomprehensible necessity. Thus:

"We know absolutely nothing concerning the Force we call God; and, assuming such an intelligent ruling force to be in existence, permeating this universe of millions of stars and (no doubt) tens of millions of planets, we do not know under what conditions and limitations It works. We are quite entitled to assume that the end of such an influence is intended to be order out of chaos, happiness and perfection out of incompleteness and misery; and we are entitled to identify the reactionary forces of brute Nature with the anthropomorphic Devil of primitive religions, the power of darkness resisting the power of light. But in these conjectures we must surely come to the conclusion that the theoretical potency we call 'God' makes endless experiments, and scrap-heaps the failures. Think of the Dinosaurs and the expenditure of creative energy that went to their differentiation and their wellnigh incredible physical development. . . .

"To such a Divine Force as we postulate, the whole development and perfecting of life on this planet, the whole production of man, may seem little more than to any one of us would be the chipping out, the cutting, the carving, and the polishing of a gem; and we should feel as little remorse or pity for the scattered dust and fragments

as must the Creative Force of the immeasurably vast universe feel for the DISJECTA MEMBRA of perfected life on this planet. . . ."

But thence he goes on to a curiously imperfect treatment of the God of man as if he consisted in nothing more than some vague sort of humanitarianism. Sir Harry's ideas are much less thoroughly thought out than those of any other of these sceptical writers I have quoted. On that account they are perhaps more typical. He speaks as though Christ were simply an eminent but illreported and abominably served teacher of ethics--and yet of the only right ideal and ethics. He speaks as though religions were nothing more than ethical movements, and as though Christianity were merely someone remarking with a bright impulsiveness that everything was simply horrid, and so, "Let us instal loving kindness as a cardinal axiom. He ignores altogether the fundamental essential of religion, which is THE DEVELOPMENT AND SYNTHESIS OF THE DIVERGENT AND CONFLICTING MOTIVES OF THE UNCONVERTED LIFE, AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL LIFE WITH THE IMMORTAL PURPOSE OF GOD. He presents a conception of religion relieved of its "nonsense" as the cheerful self-determination of a number of bright little individuals (much stirred but by no means overcome by Cosmic Pity) to the Service of Man. As he seems to present it, it is as outward a thing, it goes as little into the intimacy of their lives, as though they had after proper consideration agreed to send a subscription to a Red Cross Ambulance or take part in a public demonstration against the Armenian Massacres, or do any other rather nice-spirited exterior thing. This is what he says:

"I hope that the religion of the future will devote itself wholly to the Service of Man. It can do so without departing from the

Christian ideal and Christian ethics. It need only drop all that is silly and disputable, and 'mattering not neither here nor there,' of Christian theology--a theology virtually absent from the direct teaching of Christ--and all of Judaistic literature or prescriptions not made immortal in their application by unassailable truth and by the confirmation of science. An excellent remedy for the nonsense which still clings about religion may be found in two books: Cotter Monson's 'Service of Man,' which was published as long ago as 1887, and has since been re-issued by the Rationalist Press Association in its well-known sixpenny series, and J. Allanson Picton's 'Man and the Bible.' Similarly, those who wish to acquire a sane view of the relations between man and God would do well to read Winwood Reade's 'Martyrdom of Man.'"

Sir Harry in fact clears the ground for God very ably, and then makes a well-meaning gesture in the vacant space. There is no help nor strength in his gesture unless God is there. Without God, the "Service of Man" is no better than a hobby or a sentimentality or an hypocrisy in the undisciplined prison of the mortal life.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

THE INVISIBLE KING

1. MODERN RELIGION A POLITICAL RELIGION

The conception of a young and energetic God, an Invisible Prince growing in strength and wisdom, who calls men and women to his service and who gives salvation from self and mortality only through self-abandonment to his service, necessarily involves a demand for a complete revision and fresh orientation of the life of the convert.

God faces the blackness of the Unknown and the blind joys and confusions and cruelties of Life, as one who leads mankind through a dark jungle to a great conquest. He brings mankind not rest but a sword. It is plain that he can admit no divided control of the world he claims. He concedes nothing to Caesar. In our philosophy there are no human things that are God's and others that are Caesar's. Those of the new thought cannot render unto God the things that are God's, and to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Whatever claim Caesar may make to rule men's lives and direct their destinies outside the will of God, is a usurpation. No king nor Caesar has any right to tax or to service or to tolerance, except he claim as one who holds for and under God. And he must make good his claim. The steps of the altar of the God of Youth are no safe place for the sacrilegious figure of a king. Who claims "divine right" plays with the lightning.

The new conceptions do not tolerate either kings or aristocracies or democracies. Its implicit command to all its adherents is to make plain the way to the world theocracy. Its rule of life is the discovery and service of the will of God, which dwells in the hearts of men, and the performance of that will, not only in the private

life of the believer but in the acts and order of the state and nation of which he is a part. I give myself to God not only because I am so and so but because I am mankind. I become in a measure responsible for every evil in the world of men. I become a knight in God's service. I become my brother's keeper. I become a responsible minister of my King. I take sides against injustice, disorder, and against all those temporal kings, emperors, princes, landlords, and owners, who set themselves up against God's rule and worship. Kings, owners, and all who claim rule and decisions in the world's affairs, must either show themselves clearly the fellow-servants of the believer or become the objects of his steadfast antagonism.

2. THE WILL OF GOD

It is here that those who explain this modern religiosity will seem most arbitrary to the inquirer. For they relate of God, as men will relate of a close friend, his dispositions, his apparent intentions, the aims of his kingship. And just as they advance no proof whatever of the existence of God but their realisation of him, so with regard to these qualities and dispositions they have little argument but profound conviction. What they say is this; that if you do not feel God then there is no persuading you of him; we cannot win over the incredulous. And what they say of his qualities is this; that if you feel God then you will know, you will realise more and more clearly, that thus and thus and no other is his method and intention.

It comes as no great shock to those who have grasped the full implications of the statement that God is Finite, to hear it asserted that the first purpose of God is the attainment of clear knowledge, of knowledge as a means to more knowledge, and of knowledge as a means to power. For that he must use human eyes and hands and brains.

And as God gathers power he uses it to an end that he is only beginning to apprehend, and that he will apprehend more fully as time goes on. But it is possible to define the broad outlines of the attainment he seeks. It is the conquest of death.

It is the conquest of death; first the overcoming of death in the individual by the incorporation of the motives of his life into an undying purpose, and then the defeat of that death that seems to threaten our species upon a cooling planet beneath a cooling sun. God fights against death in every form, against the great death of the race, against the petty death of indolence, insufficiency, baseness, misconception, and perversion. He it is and no other who

can deliver us "from the body of this death." This is the battle that grows plainer; this is the purpose to which he calls us out of the animal's round of eating, drinking, lusting, quarrelling and laughing and weeping, fearing and failing, and presently of wearying and dying, which is the whole life that living without God can give us. And from these great propositions there follow many very definite maxims and rules of life for those who serve God. These we will immediately consider.

3. THE CRUCIFIX

But first let me write a few words here about those who hold a kind of intermediate faith between the worship of the God of Youth and the vaguer sort of Christianity. There are a number of people closely in touch with those who have found the new religion who, biased probably by a dread of too complete a break with Christianity, have adopted a theogony which is very reminiscent of Gnosticism and of the Paulician, Catharist, and kindred sects to which allusion has already been made. He, who is called in this book God, they would call God-the-Son or Christ, or the Logos; and what is here called the Darkness or the Veiled Being, they would call God-the-Father. And what we speak of here as Life, they would call, with a certain disregard of the poor brutes that perish, Man. And they would assert, what we of the new belief, pleading our profound ignorance, would neither assert nor deny, that that Darkness, out of which came Life and God, since it produced them must be ultimately sympathetic and of like nature with them. And that ultimately Man, being redeemed and led by Christ and saved from death by him, would be reconciled with God the Father.* And this great adventurer out of the hearts of man that we here call God, they would present as the same with that teacher from Galilee who was crucified at Jerusalem.

* This probably was the conception of Spinoza. Christ for him is the wisdom of God manifested in all things, and chiefly in the mind of man. Through him we reach the blessedness of an intuitive knowledge of God. Salvation is an escape from the "inadequate" ideas of the mortal human personality to the "adequate" and timeless ideas of God.

Now we of the modern way would offer the following criticisms upon this apparent compromise between our faith and the current religion. Firstly, we do not presume to theorise about the nature of the

veiled being nor about that being's relations to God and to Life. We do not recognise any consistent sympathetic possibilities between these outer beings and our God. Our God is, we feel, like Prometheus, a rebel. He is unfilial. And the accepted figure of Jesus, instinct with meek submission, is not in the tone of our worship. It is not by suffering that God conquers death, but by fighting. Incidentally our God dies a million deaths, but the thing that matters is not the deaths but the immortality. It may be he cannot escape in this person or that person being nailed to a cross or chained to be torn by vultures on a rock. These may be necessary sufferings, like hunger and thirst in a campaign; they do not in themselves bring victory. They may be necessary, but they are not glorious. The symbol of the crucifixion, the drooping, pain-drenched figure of Christ, the sorrowful cry to his Father, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" these things jar with our spirit. We little men may well fail and repent, but it is our faith that our God does not fail us nor himself. We cannot accept the Christian's crucifix, or pray to a pitiful God. We cannot accept the Resurrection as though it were an after-thought to a bitterly felt death. Our crucifix, if you must have a crucifix, would show God with a hand or a foot already torn away from its nail, and with eyes not downcast but resolute against the sky; a face without pain, pain lost and forgotten in the surpassing glory of the struggle and the inflexible will to live and prevail. . . .

But we do not care how long the thorns are drawn, nor how terrible the wounds, so long as he does not droop. God is courage. God is courage beyond any conceivable suffering.

But when all this has been said, it is well to add that it concerns the figure of Christ only in so far as that professes to be the figure of God, and the crucifix only so far as that stands for divine action. The figure of Christ crucified, so soon as we think of it as being no more than the tragic memorial of Jesus, of the man who proclaimed the loving-kindness of God and the supremacy of God's

kingdom over the individual life, and who, in the extreme agony of his pain and exhaustion, cried out that he was deserted, becomes something altogether distinct from a theological symbol.

Immediately that we cease to worship, we can begin to love and pity. Here was a being of extreme gentleness and delicacy and of great courage, of the utmost tolerance and the subtlest sympathy, a saint of non-resistance. . . .

We of the new faith repudiate the teaching of non-resistance. We are the militant followers of and participators in a militant God. We can appreciate and admire the greatness of Christ, this gentle being upon whose nobility the theologians trade. But submission is the remotest quality of all from our God, and a moribund figure is the completest inversion of his likeness as we know him. A Christianity which shows, for its daily symbol, Christ risen and trampling victoriously upon a broken cross, would be far more in the spirit of our worship.*

* It is curious, after writing the above, to find in a letter written by Foss Westcott, Bishop of Durham, to that pertinacious correspondent, the late Lady Victoria Welby, almost exactly the same sentiments I have here expressed. "If I could fill the Crucifix with life as you do," he says, "I would gladly look on it, but the fallen Head and the closed Eye exclude from my thought the idea of glorified humanity. The Christ to whom we are led is One who 'hath been crucified,' who hath passed the trial victoriously and borne the fruits to heaven. I dare not then rest on this side of the glory."

I find, too, a still more remarkable expression of the modern spirit in a tract, "The Call of the Kingdom," by that very able and subtle, Anglican theologian, the Rev. W. Temple, who declares that under the vitalising stresses of the war we are winning "faith in Christ as an heroic leader. We have thought of Him so much as meek and gentle that there is no ground in our picture of Him, for the vision which

His disciple had of Him: 'His head and His hair were white, as white wool, white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire: and His feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and His voice was as the voice of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword; and His countenance was as the sun shineth in its strength.'

These are both exceptional utterances, interesting as showing how clearly parallel are the tendencies within and without Christianity.

4. THE PRIMARY DUTIES

Now it follows very directly from the conception of God as a finite intelligence of boundless courage and limitless possibilities of growth and victory, who has pitted himself against death, who stands close to our inmost beings ready to receive us and use us, to rescue us from the chagrins of egotism and take us into his immortal adventure, that we who have realised him and given ourselves joyfully to him, must needs be equally ready and willing to give our energies to the task we share with him, to do our utmost to increase knowledge, to increase order and clearness, to fight against indolence, waste, disorder, cruelty, vice, and every form of his and our enemy, death, first and chiefest in ourselves but also in all mankind, and to bring about the establishment of his real and visible kingdom throughout the world.

And that idea of God as the Invisible King of the whole world means not merely that God is to be made and declared the head of the world, but that the kingdom of God is to be present throughout the whole fabric of the world, that the Kingdom of God is to be in the teaching at the village school, in the planning of the railway siding of the market town, in the mixing of the mortar at the building of the workman's house. It means that ultimately no effigy of intrusive king or emperor is to disfigure our coins and stamps any more; God himself and no delegate is to be represented wherever men buy or sell, on our letters and our receipts, a perpetual witness, a perpetual reminder. There is no act altogether without significance, no power so humble that it may not be used for or against God, no life but can orient itself to him. To realise God in one's heart is to be filled with the desire to serve him, and the way of his service is neither to pull up one's life by the roots nor to continue it in all its essentials unchanged, but to turn it about, to turn everything that there is in it round into his way.

The outward duty of those who serve God must vary greatly with the abilities they possess and the positions in which they find themselves, but for all there are certain fundamental duties; a constant attempt to be utterly truthful with oneself, a constant sedulousness to keep oneself fit and bright for God's service, and to increase one's knowledge and powers, and a hidden persistent watchfulness of one's baser motives, a watch against fear and indolence, against vanity, against greed and lust, against envy, malice, and uncharitableness. To have found God truly does in itself make God's service one's essential motive, but these evils lurk in the shadows, in the lassitudes and unwary moments. No one escapes them altogether, there is no need for tragic moods on account of imperfections. We can no more serve God without blunders and set-backs than we can win battles without losing men. But the less of such loss the better. The servant of God must keep his mind as wide and sound and his motives as clean as he can, just as an operating surgeon must keep his nerves and muscles as fit and his hands as clean as he can. Neither may righteously evade exercise and regular washing--of mind as of hands. An incessant watchfulness of one's self and one's thoughts and the soundness of one's thoughts; cleanliness, clearness, a wariness against indolence and prejudice, careful truth, habitual frankness, fitness and steadfast work; these are the daily fundamental duties that every one who truly comes to God will, as a matter of course, set before himself.

5. THE INCREASING KINGDOM

Now of the more intimate and personal life of the believer it will be more convenient to write a little later. Let us for the present pursue the idea of this world-kingdom of God, to whose establishment he calls us. This kingdom is to be a peaceful and co-ordinated activity of all mankind upon certain divine ends. These, we conceive, are first, the maintenance of the racial life; secondly, the exploration of the external being of nature as it is and as it has been, that is to say history and science; thirdly, that exploration of inherent human possibility which is art; fourthly, that clarification of thought and knowledge which is philosophy; and finally, the progressive enlargement and development of the racial life under these lights, so that God may work through a continually better body of humanity and through better and better equipped minds, that he and our race may increase for ever, working unendingly upon the development of the powers of life and the mastery of the blind forces of matter throughout the deeps of space. He sets out with us, we are persuaded, to conquer ourselves and our world and the stars. And beyond the stars our eyes can as yet see nothing, our imaginations reach and fail. Beyond the limits of our understanding is the veiled Being of Fate, whose face is hidden from us. . . .

It may be that minds will presently appear among us of such a quality that the face of that Unknown will not be altogether hidden. . . .

But the business of such ordinary lives as ours is the setting up of this earthly kingdom of God. That is the form into which our lives must fall and our consciences adapt themselves.

Belief in God as the Invisible King brings with it almost necessarily a conception of this coming kingdom of God on earth.

Each believer as he grasps this natural and immediate consequence of the faith that has come into his life will form at the same time a Utopian conception of this world changed in the direction of God's purpose. The vision will follow the realisation of God's true nature and purpose as a necessary second step. And he will begin to develop the latent citizen of this world-state in himself. He will fall in with the idea of the world-wide sanities of this new order being drawn over the warring outlines of the present, and of men falling out of relationship with the old order and into relationship with the new. Many men and women are already working to-day at tasks that belong essentially to God's kingdom, tasks that would be of the same essential nature if the world were now a theocracy; for example, they are doing or sustaining scientific research or education or creative art; they are making roads to bring men together, they are doctors working for the world's health, they are building homes, they are constructing machinery to save and increase the powers of men. . . .

Such men and women need only to change their orientation as men will change about at a work-table when the light that was coming in a little while ago from the southern windows, begins presently to come in chiefly from the west, to become open and confessed servants of God. This work that they were doing for ambition, or the love of men or the love of knowledge or what seemed the inherent impulse to the work itself, or for money or honour or country or king, they will realise they are doing for God and by the power of God. Self-transformation into a citizen of God's kingdom and a new realisation of all earthly politics as no more than the struggle to define and achieve the kingdom of God in the earth, follow on, without any need for a fresh spiritual impulse, from the moment when God and the believer meet and clasp one another.

This transfiguration of the world into a theocracy may seem a merely fantastic idea to anyone who comes to it freshly without such general theological preparation as the preceding pages have made.

But to anyone who has been at the pains to clear his mind even a little from the obsession of existing but transitory things, it ceases to be a mere suggestion and becomes more and more manifestly the real future of mankind. From the phase of "so things should be," the mind will pass very rapidly to the realisation that "so things will be." Towards this the directive wills among men have been drifting more and more steadily and perceptibly and with fewer eddyings and retardations, for many centuries. The purpose of mankind will not be always thus confused and fragmentary. This dissemination of will-power is a phase. The age of the warring tribes and kingdoms and empires that began a hundred centuries or so ago, draws to its close. The kingdom of God on earth is not a metaphor, not a mere spiritual state, not a dream, not an uncertain project; it is the thing before us, it is the close and inevitable destiny of mankind.

In a few score years the faith of the true God will be spreading about the world. The few halting confessions of God that one hears here and there to-day, like that little twittering of birds which comes before the dawn, will have swollen to a choral unanimity. In but a few centuries the whole world will be openly, confessedly, preparing for the kingdom. In but a few centuries God will have led us out of the dark forest of these present wars and confusions into the open brotherhood of his rule.

6. WHAT IS MY PLACE IN THE KINGDOM?

This conception of the general life of mankind as a transformation at thousands of points of the confused, egotistical, proprietary, partisan, nationalist, life-wasting chaos of human life to-day into the coherent development of the world kingdom of God, provides the form into which everyone who comes to the knowledge of God will naturally seek to fit his every thought and activity. The material greeds, the avarice, fear, rivalries, and ignoble ambitions of a disordered world will be challenged and examined under one general question: "What am I in the kingdom of God?"

It has already been suggested that there is a great and growing number of occupations that belong already to God's kingdom, research, teaching, creative art, creative administration, cultivation, construction, maintenance, and the honest satisfaction of honest practical human needs. For such people conversion to the intimacy of God means at most a change in the spirit of their work, a refreshed energy, a clearer understanding, a new zeal, a complete disregard of gains and praises and promotion. Pay, honours, and the like cease to be the inducement of effort. Service, and service alone, is the criterion that the quickened conscience will recognise.

Most of such people will find themselves in positions in which service is mingled with activities of a baser sort, in which service is a little warped and deflected by old traditions and usage, by mercenary and commercial considerations, by some inherent or special degradation of purpose. The spirit of God will not let the believer rest until his life is readjusted and as far as possible freed from the waste of these base diversions. For example a scientific investigator, lit and inspired by great inquiries, may be hampered by the conditions of his professorship or research fellowship, which exact an appearance of "practical" results. Or he may be obliged to

lecture or conduct classes. He may be able to give but half his possible gift to the work of his real aptitude, and that at a sacrifice of money and reputation among short-sighted but influential contemporaries. Well, if he is by nature an investigator he will know that the research is what God needs of him. He cannot continue it at all if he leaves his position, and so he must needs waste something of his gift to save the rest. But should a poorer or a humbler post offer him better opportunity, there lies his work for God. There one has a very common and simple type of the problems that will arise in the lives of men when they are lit by sudden realisation of the immediacy of God.

Akin to that case is the perplexity of any successful physician between the increase of knowledge and the public welfare on the one hand, and the lucrative possibilities of his practice among wealthy people on the other. He belongs to a profession that is crippled by a mediaeval code, a profession which was blind to the common interest of the Public Health and regarded its members merely as skilled practitioners employed to "cure" individual ailments. Very slowly and tortuously do the methods of the profession adapt themselves to the modern conception of an army of devoted men working as a whole under God for the health of mankind as a whole, broadening out from the frowsy den of the "leech," with its crocodile and bottles and hieroglyphic prescriptions, to a skilled and illuminating co-operation with those who deal with the food and housing and economic life of the community.

And again quite parallel with these personal problems is the trouble of the artist between the market and vulgar fame on the one hand and his divine impulse on the other.

The presence of God will be a continual light and help in every decision that must be made by men and women in these more or less vitiated, but still fundamentally useful and righteous, positions.

The trouble becomes more marked and more difficult in the case of a man who is a manufacturer or a trader, the financier of business enterprise or the proprietor of great estates. The world is in need of manufactures and that goods should be distributed; land must be administered and new economic possibilities developed. The drift of things is in the direction of state ownership and control, but in a great number of cases the state is not ripe for such undertakings, it commands neither sufficient integrity nor sufficient ability, and the proprietor of factory, store, credit or land, must continue in possession, holding as a trustee for God and, so far as lies in his power, preparing for his supersession by some more public administration. Modern religion admits of no facile flights from responsibility. It permits no headlong resort to the wilderness and sterile virtue. It counts the recluse who fasts among scorpions in a cave as no better than a deserter in hiding. It unhesitatingly forbids any rich young man to sell all that he has and give to the poor. Himself and all that he has must be alike dedicated to God.

The plain duty that will be understood by the proprietor of land and of every sort of general need and service, so soon as he becomes aware of God, is so to administer his possessions as to achieve the maximum of possible efficiency, the most generous output, and the least private profit. He may set aside a salary for his maintenance; the rest he must deal with like a zealous public official. And if he perceives that the affair could be better administered by other hands than his own, then it is his business to get it into those hands with the smallest delay and the least profit to himself. . . .

The rights and wrongs of human equity are very different from right and wrong in the sight of God. In the sight of God no landlord has a **RIGHT** to his rent, no usurer has a **RIGHT** to his interest. A man is not justified in drawing the profits from an advantageous agreement nor free to spend the profits of a speculation as he will. God takes no heed of savings nor of abstinence. He recognises no

right to the "rewards of abstinence," no right to any rewards. Those profits and comforts and consolations are the inducements that dangle before the eyes of the spiritually blind. Wealth is an embarrassment to the religious, for God calls them to account for it. The servant of God has no business with wealth or power except to use them immediately in the service of God. Finding these things in his hands he is bound to administer them in the service of God.

The tendency of modern religion goes far beyond the alleged communism of the early Christians, and far beyond the tithes of the scribes and Pharisees. God takes all. He takes you, blood and bones and house and acres, he takes skill and influence and expectations. For all the rest of your life you are nothing but God's agent. If you are not prepared for so complete a surrender, then you are infinitely remote from God. You must go your way. Here you are merely a curious interloper. Perhaps you have been desiring God as an experience, or coveting him as a possession. You have not begun to understand. This that we are discussing in this book is as yet nothing for you.

7. ADJUSTING LIFE

This picturing of a human world more to the mind of God than this present world and the discovery and realisation of one's own place and work in and for that kingdom of God, is the natural next phase in the development of the believer. He will set about revising and adjusting his scheme of life, his ways of living, his habits and his relationships in the light of his new convictions.

Most men and women who come to God will have already a certain righteousness in their lives; these things happen like a thunderclap only in strange exceptional cases, and the same movements of the mind that have brought them to God will already have brought their lives into a certain rightness of direction and conduct. Yet occasionally there will be someone to whom the self-examination that follows conversion will reveal an entirely wrong and evil way of living. It may be that the light has come to some rich idler doing nothing but follow a pleasurable routine. Or to someone following some highly profitable and amusing, but socially useless or socially mischievous occupation. One may be an advocate at the disposal of any man's purpose, or an actor or actress ready to fall in with any theatrical enterprise. Or a woman may find herself a prostitute or a pet wife, a mere kept instrument of indulgence. These are lives of prey, these are lives of futility; the light of God will not tolerate such lives. Here religion can bring nothing but a severance from the old way of life altogether, a break and a struggle towards use and service and dignity.

But even here it does not follow that because a life has been wrong the new life that begins must be far as the poles asunder from the old. Every sort of experience that has ever come to a human being is in the self that he brings to God, and there is no reason why a knowledge of evil ways should not determine the path of duty. No one can better devise protections against vices than those who have

practised them; none know temptations better than those who have fallen. If a man has followed an evil trade, it becomes him to use his knowledge of the tricks of that trade to help end it. He knows the charities it may claim and the remedies it needs. . . .

A very interesting case to discuss in relation to this question of adjustment is that of the barrister. A practising barrister under contemporary conditions does indeed give most typically the opportunity for examining the relation of an ordinary self-respecting wordly life, to life under the dispensation of God discovered. A barrister is usually a man of some energy and ambition, his honour is moulded by the traditions of an ancient and antiquated profession, instinctively self-preserving and yet with a real desire for consistency and respect. As a profession it has been greedy and defensively conservative, but it has never been shameless nor has it ever broken faith with its own large and selfish, but quite definite, propositions. It has never for instance had the shamelessness of such a traditionless and undisciplined class as the early factory organisers. It has never had the dull incoherent wickedness of the sort of men who exploit drunkenness and the turf. It offends within limits. Barristers can be, and are, disbarred. But it is now a profession extraordinarily out of date; its code of honour derives from a time of cruder and lower conceptions of human relationship. It apprehends the State as a mere "ring" kept about private disputations; it has not begun to move towards the modern conception of the collective enterprise as the determining criterion of human conduct. It sees its business as a mere play upon the rules of a game between man and man, or between men and men. They haggle, they dispute, they inflict and suffer wrongs, they evade dues, and are liable or entitled to penalties and compensations. The primary business of the law is held to be decision in these wrangles, and as wrangling is subject to artistic elaboration, the business of the barrister is the business of a professional wrangler; he is a bravo in wig and gown who fights the duels of ordinary men because they are incapable, very largely on

account of the complexities of legal procedure, of fighting for themselves. His business is never to explore any fundamental right in the matter. His business is to say all that can be said for his client, and to conceal or minimise whatever can be said against his client. The successful promoted advocate, who in Britain and the United States of America is the judge, and whose habits and interests all incline him to disregard the realities of the case in favour of the points in the forensic game, then adjudicates upon the contest. . . .

Now this condition of things is clearly incompatible with the modern conception of the world as becoming a divine kingdom. When the world is openly and confessedly the kingdom of God, the law court will exist only to adjust the differing views of men as to the manner of their service to God; the only right of action one man will have against another will be that he has been prevented or hampered or distressed by the other in serving God. The idea of the law court will have changed entirely from a place of dispute, exaction and vengeance, to a place of adjustment. The individual or some state organisation will plead **ON BEHALF OF THE COMMON GOOD**

either against some state official or state regulation, or against the actions or inaction of another individual. This is the only sort of legal proceedings compatible with the broad beliefs of the new faith. . . . Every religion that becomes ascendant, in so far as it is not otherworldly, must necessarily set its stamp upon the methods and administration of the law. That this was not the case with Christianity is one of the many contributory aspects that lead one to the conviction that it was not Christianity that took possession of the Roman empire, but an imperial adventurer who took possession of an all too complaisant Christianity.

Reverting now from these generalisations to the problem of the religious from which they arose, it will have become evident that the essential work of anyone who is conversant with the existing

practice and literature of the law and whose natural abilities are forensic, will lie in the direction of reconstructing the theory and practice of the law in harmony with modern conceptions, of making that theory and practice clear and plain to ordinary men, of reforming the abuses of the profession by working for the separation of bar and judiciary, for the amalgamation of the solicitors and the barristers, and the like needed reforms. These are matters that will probably only be properly set right by a quickening of conscience among lawyers themselves. Of no class of men is the help and service so necessary to the practical establishment of God's kingdom, as of men learned and experienced in the law. And there is no reason why for the present an advocate should not continue to plead in the courts, provided he does his utmost only to handle cases in which he believes he can serve the right. Few righteous cases are ill-served by a frank disposition on the part of lawyer and client to put everything before the court. Thereby of course there arises a difficult case of conscience. What if a lawyer, believing his client to be in the right, discovers him to be in the wrong? He cannot throw up the case unless he has been scandalously deceived, because so he would betray the confidence his client has put in him to "see him through." He has a right to "give himself away," but not to "give away" his client in this fashion. If he has a chance of a private consultation I think he ought to do his best to make his client admit the truth of the case and give in, but failing this he has no right to be virtuous on behalf of another. No man may play God to another; he may remonstrate, but that is the limit of his right. He must respect a confidence, even if it is purely implicit and involuntary. I admit that here the barrister is in a cleft stick, and that he must see the business through according to the confidence his client has put in him--and afterwards be as sorry as he may be if an injustice ensues. And also I would suggest a lawyer may with a fairly good conscience defend a guilty man as if he were innocent, to save him from unjustly heavy penalties. . . .

This comparatively full discussion of the barrister's problem has been embarked upon because it does bring in, in a very typical fashion, just those uncertainties and imperfections that abound in real life. Religious conviction gives us a general direction, but it stands aside from many of these entangled struggles in the jungle of conscience. Practice is often easier than a rule. In practice a lawyer will know far more accurately than a hypothetical case can indicate, how far he is bound to see his client through, and how far he may play the keeper of his client's conscience. And nearly every day there happens instances where the most subtle casuistry will fail and the finger of conscience point unhesitatingly. One may have worried long in the preparation and preliminaries of the issue, one may bring the case at last into the final court of conscience in an apparently hopeless tangle. Then suddenly comes decision.

The procedure of that silent, lit, and empty court in which a man states his case to God, is very simple and perfect. The excuses and the special pleading shrivel and vanish. In a little while the case lies bare and plain.

8. THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

The question of oaths of allegiance, acts of acquiescence in existing governments, and the like, is one that arises at once with the acceptance of God as the supreme and real King of the Earth. At the worst Caesar is a usurper, a satrap claiming to be sovereign; at the best he is provisional. Modern casuistry makes no great trouble for the believing public official. The chief business of any believer is to do the work for which he is best fitted, and since all state affairs are to become the affairs of God's kingdom it is of primary importance that they should come into the hands of God's servants. It is scarcely less necessary to a believing man with administrative gifts that he should be in the public administration, than that he should breathe and eat. And whatever oath or the like to usurper church or usurper king has been set up to bar access to service, is an oath imposed under duress. If it cannot be avoided it must be taken rather than that a man should become unserviceable. All such oaths are unfair and foolish things. They exclude no scoundrels; they are appeals to superstition. Whenever an opportunity occurs for the abolition of an oath, the servant of God will seize it, but where the oath is unavoidable he will take it.

The service of God is not to achieve a delicate consistency of statement; it is to do as much as one can of God's work.

9. THE PRIEST AND THE CREED

It may be doubted if this line of reasoning regarding the official and his oath can be extended to excuse the priest or pledged minister of religion who finds that faith in the true God has ousted his formal beliefs.

This has been a frequent and subtle moral problem in the intellectual life of the last hundred years. It has been increasingly difficult for any class of reading, talking, and discussing people such as are the bulk of the priesthoods of the Christian churches to escape hearing and reading the accumulated criticism of the Trinitarian theology and of the popularly accepted story of man's fall and salvation. Some have no doubt defeated this universal and insidious critical attack entirely, and honestly established themselves in a right-down acceptance of the articles and disciplines to which they have subscribed and of the creeds they profess and repeat. Some have recanted and abandoned their positions in the priesthood. But a great number have neither resisted the bacillus of criticism nor left the churches to which they are attached. They have adopted compromises, they have qualified their creeds with modifying footnotes of essential repudiation; they have decided that plain statements are metaphors and have undercut, transposed, and inverted the most vital points of the vulgarly accepted beliefs. One may find within the Anglican communion, Arians, Unitarians, Atheists, disbelievers in immortality, attenuators of miracles; there is scarcely a doubt or a cavil that has not found a lodgment within the ample charity of the English Establishment. I have been interested to hear one distinguished Canon deplore that "they" did not identify the Logos with the third instead of the second Person of the Trinity, and another distinguished Catholic apologist declare his indifference to the "historical Jesus." Within most of the Christian communions one may believe anything or nothing, provided only that one does not

call too public an attention to one's eccentricity. The late Rev. Charles Voysey, for example, preached plainly in his church at Healaugh against the divinity of Christ, unhindered. It was only when he published his sermons under the provocative title of "The Sling and the Stone," and caused an outcry beyond the limits of his congregation, that he was indicted and deprived.

Now the reasons why these men do not leave the ministry or priesthood in which they find themselves are often very plausible. It is probable that in very few cases is the retention of stipend or incumbency a conscious dishonesty. At the worst it is mitigated by thought for wife or child. It has only been during very exceptional phases of religious development and controversy that beliefs have been really sharp. A creed, like a coin, it may be argued, loses little in practical value because it is worn, or bears the image of a vanished king. The religious life is a reality that has clothed itself in many garments, and the concern of the priest or minister is with the religious life and not with the poor symbols that may indeed pretend to express, but do as a matter of fact no more than indicate, its direction. It is quite possible to maintain that the church and not the creed is the real and valuable instrument of religion, that the religious life is sustained not by its propositions but by its routines. Anyone who seeks the intimate discussion of spiritual things with professional divines, will find this is the substance of the case for the ecclesiastical sceptic. His church, he will admit, mumbles its statement of truth, but where else is truth? What better formulae are to be found for ineffable things? And meanwhile--he does good.

That may be a valid defence before a man finds God. But we who profess the worship and fellowship of the living God deny that religion is a matter of ineffable things. The way of God is plain and simple and easy to understand.

Therewith the whole position of the conforming sceptic is changed.

If a professional religious has any justification at all for his professionalism it is surely that he proclaims the nearness and greatness of God. And these creeds and articles and orthodoxies are not proclamations but curtains, they are a darkening and confusion of what should be crystal clear. What compensatory good can a priest pretend to do when his primary business is the truth and his method a lie? The oaths and incidental conformities of men who wish to serve God in the state are on a different footing altogether from the falsehood and mischief of one who knows the true God and yet recites to a trustful congregation, foists upon a trustful congregation, a misleading and ill-phrased Levantine creed.

Such is the line of thought which will impose the renunciation of his temporalities and a complete cessation of services upon every ordained priest and minister as his first act of faith. Once that he has truly realised God, it becomes impossible for him ever to repeat his creed again. His course seems plain and clear. It becomes him to stand up before the flock he has led in error, and to proclaim the being and nature of the one true God. He must be explicit to the utmost of his powers. Then he may await his expulsion. It may be doubted whether it is sufficient for him to go away silently, making false excuses or none at all for his retreat. He has to atone for the implicit acquiescences of his conforming years.

10. THE UNIVERSALISM OF GOD

Are any sorts of people shut off as if by inherent necessity from God?

This is, so to speak, one of the standing questions of theology; it reappears with slight changes of form at every period of religious interest, it is for example the chief issue between the Arminian and the Calvinist. From its very opening proposition modern religion sweeps past and far ahead of the old Arminian teachings of Wesleyans and Methodists, in its insistence upon the entirely finite nature of God. Arminians seem merely to have insisted that God has conditioned himself, and by his own free act left men free to accept or reject salvation. To the realist type of mind--here as always I use "realist" in its proper sense as the opposite of nominalist--to the old-fashioned, over-exact and over-accentuating type of mind, such ways of thinking seem vague and unsatisfying. Just as it distresses the more downright kind of intelligence with a feeling of disloyalty to admit that God is not Almighty, so it troubles the same sort of intelligence to hear that there is no clear line to be drawn between the saved and the lost. Realists like an exclusive flavour in their faith. Moreover, it is a natural weakness of humanity to be forced into extreme positions by argument. It is probable, as I have already suggested, that the absolute attributes of God were forced upon Christianity under the stresses of propaganda, and it is probable that the theory of a super-human obstinacy beyond salvation arose out of the irritations natural to theological debate. It is but a step from the realisation that there are people absolutely unable or absolutely unwilling to see God as we see him, to the conviction that they are therefore shut off from God by an invincible soul blindness.

It is very easy to believe that other people are essentially damned.

Beyond the little world of our sympathies and comprehension there are those who seem inaccessible to God by any means within our experience. They are people answering to the "hard-hearted," to the "stiff-necked generation" of the Hebrew prophets. They betray and even confess to standards that seem hopelessly base to us. They show themselves incapable of any disinterested enthusiasm for beauty or truth or goodness. They are altogether remote from intelligent sacrifice. To every test they betray vileness of texture; they are mean, cold, wicked. There are people who seem to cheat with a private self-approval, who are ever ready to do harsh and cruel things, whose use for social feeling is the malignant boycott, and for prosperity, monopolisation and humiliating display; who seize upon religion and turn it into persecution, and upon beauty to torment it on the altars of some joyless vice. We cannot do with such souls; we have no use for them, and it is very easy indeed to step from that persuasion to the belief that God has no use for them.

And besides these base people there are the stupid people and the people with minds so poor in texture that they cannot even grasp the few broad and simple ideas that seem necessary to the salvation we experience, who lapse helplessly into fetishistic and fearful conceptions of God, and are apparently quite incapable of distinguishing between what is practically and what is spiritually good.

It is an easy thing to conclude that the only way to God is our way to God, that he is the privilege of a finer and better sort to which we of course belong; that he is no more the God of the card-sharper or the pickpocket or the "smart" woman or the loan-monger or the village oaf than he is of the swine in the sty. But are we justified in thus limiting God to the measure of our moral and intellectual understandings? Because some people seem to me steadfastly and consistently base or hopelessly and incurably dull and confused, does it follow that there are not phases, albeit I

have never chanced to see them, of exaltation in the one case and illumination in the other? And may I not be a little restricting my perception of Good? While I have been ready enough to pronounce this or that person as being, so far as I was concerned, thoroughly damnable or utterly dull, I find a curious reluctance to admit the general proposition which is necessary for these instances. It is possible that the difference between Arminian and Calvinist is a difference of essential intellectual temperament rather than of theoretical conviction. I am temperamentally Arminian as I am temperamentally Nominalist. I feel that it must be in the nature of God to attempt all souls. There must be accessibilities I can only suspect, and accessibilities of which I know nothing.

Yet here is a consideration pointing rather the other way. If you think, as you must think, that you yourself can be lost to God and damned, then I cannot see how you can avoid thinking that other people can be damned. But that is not to believe that there are people damned at the outset by their moral and intellectual insufficiency; that is not to make out that there is a class of essential and incurable spiritual defectives. The religious life preceded clear religious understanding and extends far beyond its range.

In my own case I perceive that in spite of the value I attach to true belief, the reality of religion is not an intellectual thing. The essential religious fact is in another than the mental sphere. I am passionately anxious to have the idea of God clear in my own mind, and to make my beliefs plain and clear to other people, and particularly to other people who may seem to be feeling with me; I do perceive that error is evil if only because a faith based on confused conceptions and partial understandings may suffer irreparable injury through the collapse of its substratum of ideas. I doubt if faith can be complete and enduring if it is not secured by the definite knowledge of the true God. Yet I have also to admit that I find the form of my own religious emotion paralleled by

people with whom I have no intellectual sympathy and no agreement in phrase or formula at all.

There is for example this practical identity of religious feeling and this discrepancy of interpretation between such an inquirer as myself and a convert of the Salvation Army. Here, clothing itself in phrases and images of barbaric sacrifice, of slaughtered lambs and fountains of precious blood, a most repulsive and incomprehensible idiom to me, and expressing itself by shouts, clangour, trumpeting, gesticulations, and rhythmic pacings that stun and dismay my nerves, I find, the same object sought, release from self, and the same end, the end of identification with the immortal, successfully if perhaps rather insecurely achieved. I see God indubitably present in these excitements, and I see personalities I could easily have misjudged as too base or too dense for spiritual understandings, lit by the manifest reflection of divinity. One may be led into the absurdest underestimates of religious possibilities if one estimates people only coldly and in the light of everyday life. There is a sub-intellectual religious life which, very conceivably, when its utmost range can be examined, excludes nothing human from religious cooperation, which will use any words to its tune, which takes its phrasing ready-made from the world about it, as it takes the street for its temple, and yet which may be at its inner point in the directest contact with God. Religion may suffer from aphasia and still be religion; it may utter misleading or nonsensical words and yet intend and convey the truth. The methods of the Salvation Army are older than doctrinal Christianity, and may long survive it. Men and women may still chant of Beulah Land and cry out in the ecstasy of salvation; the tambourine, that modern revival of the thrilling Alexandrine sistrum, may still stir dull nerves to a first apprehension of powers and a call beyond the immediate material compulsion of life, when the creeds of Christianity are as dead as the lore of the Druids.

The emancipation of mankind from obsolete theories and formularies

may be accompanied by great tides of moral and emotional release among types and strata that by the standards of a trained and explicit intellectual, may seem spiritually hopeless. It is not necessary to imagine the whole world critical and lucid in order to imagine the whole world unified in religious sentiment, comprehending the same phrases and coming together regardless of class and race and quality, in the worship and service of the true God. The coming kingship of God if it is to be more than hieratic tyranny must have this universality of appeal. As the head grows clear the body will turn in the right direction. To the mass of men modern religion says, "This is the God it has always been in your nature to apprehend."

11. GOD AND THE LOVE AND STATUS OF WOMEN

Now that we are discussing the general question of individual conduct, it will be convenient to take up again and restate in that relationship, propositions already made very plainly in the second and third chapters. Here there are several excellent reasons for a certain amount of deliberate repetition. . . .

All the mystical relations of chastity, virginity, and the like with religion, those questions of physical status that play so large a part in most contemporary religions, have disappeared from modern faith. Let us be as clear as possible upon this. God is concerned by the health and fitness and vigour of his servants; we owe him our best and utmost; but he has no special concern and no special preferences or commandments regarding sexual things.

Christ, it is manifest, was of the modern faith in these matters, he welcomed the Magdalen, neither would he condemn the woman taken in adultery. Manifestly corruption and disease were not to stand between him and those who sought God in him. But the Christianity of the creeds, in this as in so many respects, does not rise to the level of its founder, and it is as necessary to repeat to-day as though the name of Christ had not been ascendant for nineteen centuries, that sex is a secondary thing to religion, and sexual status of no account in the presence of God. It follows quite logically that God does not discriminate between man and woman in any essential things. We leave our individuality behind us when we come into the presence of God. Sex is not disavowed but forgotten. Just as one's last meal is forgotten--which also is a difference between the religious moment of modern faith and certain Christian sacraments. You are a believer and God is at hand to you; heed not your state; reach out to him and he is there. In the moment of religion you are human; it matters not what else you are, male or female, clean or unclean, Hebrew or Gentile, bond or free. It is

AFTER the moment of religion that we become concerned about our state and the manner in which we use ourselves.

We have to follow our reason as our sole guide in our individual treatment of all such things as food and health and sex. God is the king of the whole world, he is the owner of our souls and bodies and all things. He is not particularly concerned about any aspect, because he is concerned about every aspect. We have to make the best use of ourselves for his kingdom; that is our rule of life.

That rule means neither painful nor frantic abstinences nor any forced way of living. Purity, cleanliness, health, none of these things are for themselves, they are for use; none are magic, all are means. The sword must be sharp and clean. That does not mean that we are perpetually to sharpen and clean it--which would weaken and waste the blade. The sword must neither be drawn constantly nor always rusting in its sheath. Those who have had the wits and soul to come to God, will have the wits and soul to find out and know what is waste, what is vanity, what is the happiness that begets strength of body and spirit, what is error, where vice begins, and to avoid and repent and recoil from all those things that degrade. These are matters not of the rule of life but of the application of life. They must neither be neglected nor made disproportionately important.

To the believer, relationship with God is the supreme relationship. It is difficult to imagine how the association of lovers and friends can be very fine and close and good unless the two who love are each also linked to God, so that through their moods and fluctuations and the changes of years they can be held steadfast by his undying steadfastness. But it has been felt by many deep-feeling people that there is so much kindred between the love and trust of husband and wife and the feeling we have for God, that it is reasonable to consider the former also as a sacred thing. They do so value that close love of mated man and woman, they are so intent upon its permanence and completeness and to lift the dear relationship out of

the ruck of casual and transitory things, that they want to bring it, as it were, into the very presence and assent of God. There are many who dream and desire that they are as deeply and completely mated as this, many more who would fain be so, and some who are. And from this comes the earnest desire to make marriage sacramental and the attempt to impose upon all the world the outward appearance, the restrictions, the pretence at least of such a sacramental union.

There may be such a quasi-sacramental union in many cases, but only after years can one be sure of it; it is not to be brought about by vows and promises but by an essential kindred and cleaving of body and spirit; and it concerns only the two who can dare to say they have it, and God. And the divine thing in marriage, the thing that is most like the love of God, is, even then, not the relationship of the man and woman as man and woman but the comradeship and trust and mutual help and pity that joins them. No doubt that from the mutual necessities of bodily love and the common adventure, the necessary honesties and helps of a joint life, there springs the stoutest, nearest, most enduring and best of human companionship; perhaps only upon that root can the best of mortal comradeship be got; but it does not follow that the mere ordinary coming together and pairing off of men and women is in itself divine or sacramental or anything of the sort. Being in love is a condition that may have its moments of sublime exaltation, but it is for the most part an experience far down the scale below divine experience; it is often love only in so far as it shares the name with better things; it is greed, it is admiration, it is desire, it is the itch for excitement, it is the instinct for competition, it is lust, it is curiosity, it is adventure, it is jealousy, it is hate. On a hundred scores 'lovers' meet and part. Thereby some few find true love and the spirit of God in themselves or others.

Lovers may love God in one another; I do not deny it. That is no reason why the imitation and outward form of this great happiness should be made an obligation upon all men and women who are

attracted by one another, nor why it should be woven into the essentials of religion. For women much more than for men is this confusion dangerous, lest a personal love should shape and dominate their lives instead of God. "He for God only; she for God in him," phrases the idea of Milton and of ancient Islam; it is the formula of sexual infatuation, a formula quite easily inverted, as the end of Goethe's Faust ("The woman soul leadeth us upward and on") may witness. The whole drift of modern religious feeling is against this exaggeration of sexual feeling, these moods of sexual slavishness, in spiritual things. Between the healthy love of ordinary mortal lovers in love and the love of God, there is an essential contrast and opposition in this, that preference, exclusiveness, and jealousy seem to be in the very nature of the former and are absolutely incompatible with the latter. The former is the intensest realisation of which our individualities are capable; the latter is the way of escape from the limitations of individuality. It may be true that a few men and more women do achieve the completest unselfishness and self-abandonment in earthly love. So the poets and romancers tell us. If so, it is that by an imaginative perversion they have given to some attractive person a worship that should be reserved for God and a devotion that is normally evoked only by little children in their mother's heart. It is not the way between most of the men and women one meets in this world.

But between God and the believer there is no other way, there is nothing else, but self-surrender and the ending of self.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

MODERN IDEAS OF SIN AND DAMNATION

1. THE BIOLOGICAL EQUIVALENT OF SIN

If the reader who is unfamiliar with scientific things will obtain and read Metchnikoff's "Nature of Man," he will find there an interesting summary of the biological facts that bear upon and destroy the delusion that there is such a thing as individual perfection, that there is even ideal perfection for humanity. With an abundance of convincing instances Professor Metchnikoff demonstrates that life is a system of "disharmonies," capable of no perfect way, that there is no "perfect" dieting, no "perfect" sexual life, no "perfect" happiness, no "perfect" conduct. He releases one from the arbitrary but all too easy assumption that there is even an ideal "perfection" in organic life. He sweeps out of the mind with all the confidence and conviction of a physiological specialist, any idea that there is a perfect man or a conceivable perfect man. It is in the nature of every man to fall short at every point from perfection. From the biological point of view we are as individuals a series of involuntary "tries" on the part of an imperfect species towards an unknown end.

Our spiritual nature follows our bodily as a glove follows a hand. We are disharmonious beings and salvation no more makes an end to the defects of our souls than it makes an end to the decay of our teeth or to those vestigial structures of our body that endanger our physical welfare. Salvation leaves us still disharmonious, and adds not an inch to our spiritual and moral stature.

2. WHAT IS DAMNATION?

Let us now take up the question of what is Sin? and what we mean by the term "damnation," in the light of this view of human reality.

Most of the great world religions are as clear as Professor Metchnikoff that life in the world is a tangle of disharmonies, and in most cases they supply a more or less myth-like explanation, they declare that evil is one side of the conflict between Ahriman and Ormazd, or that it is the punishment of an act of disobedience, of the fall of man and world alike from a state of harmony. Their case, like his, is that THIS world is damned.

We do not find the belief that superposed upon the miseries of this world there are the still bitterer miseries of punishments after death, so nearly universal. The endless punishments of hell appear to be an exploit of theory; they have a superadded appearance even in the Christian system; the same common tendency to superlatives and absolutes that makes men ashamed to admit that God is finite, makes them seek to enhance the merits of their Saviour by the device of everlasting fire. Conquest over the sorrow of life and the fear of death do not seem to them sufficient for Christ's glory.

Now the turning round of the modern mind from a conception of the universe as something derived deductively from the past to a conception of it as something gathering itself adventurously towards the future, involves a release from the supposed necessity to tell a story and explain why. Instead comes the inquiry, "To what end?" We can say without mental discomfort, these disharmonies are here, this damnation is here--inexplicably. We can, without any distressful inquiry into ultimate origins, bring our minds to the conception of a spontaneous and developing God arising out of those stresses in our hearts and in the universe, and arising to overcome them. Salvation for the individual is escape from the individual

distress at disharmony and the individual defeat by death, into the Kingdom of God. And damnation can be nothing more and nothing less than the failure or inability or disinclination to make that escape.

Something of that idea of damnation as a lack of the will for salvation has crept at a number of points into contemporary religious thought. It was the fine fancy of Swedenborg that the damned go to their own hells of their own accord. It underlies a queer poem, "Simpson," by that interesting essayist upon modern Christianity, Mr. Clutton Brock, which I have recently read. Simpson dies and goes to hell--it is rather like the Cromwell Road--and approves of it very highly, and then and then only is he completely damned. Not to realise that one can be damned is certainly to be damned; such is Mr. Brock's idea. It is his definition of damnation. Satisfaction with existing things is damnation. It is surrender to limitation; it is acquiescence in "disharmony"; it is making peace with that enemy against whom God fights for ever.

(But whether there are indeed Simpsons who acquiesce always and for ever remains for me, as I have already confessed in the previous chapter, a quite open question. My Arminian temperament turns me from the Calvinistic conclusion of Mr. Brock's satire.)

3. SIN IS NOT DAMNATION

Now the question of sin will hardly concern those damned and lost by nature, if such there be. Sin is not the same thing as damnation, as we have just defined damnation. Damnation is a state, but sin is an incident. One is an essential and the other an incidental separation from God. It is possible to sin without being damned; and to be damned is to be in a state when sin scarcely matters, like ink upon a blackamoor. You cannot have questions of more or less among absolute things.

It is the amazing and distressful discovery of every believer so soon as the first exaltation of belief is past, that one does not remain always in touch with God. At first it seems incredible that one should ever have any motive again that is not also God's motive. Then one finds oneself caught unawares by a base impulse. We discover that discontinuousness of our apparently homogeneous selves, the unincorporated and warring elements that seemed at first altogether absent from the synthesis of conversion. We are tripped up by forgetfulness, by distraction, by old habits, by tricks of appearance. There come dull patches of existence; those mysterious obliterations of one's finer sense that are due at times to the little minor poisons one eats or drinks, to phases of fatigue, ill-health and bodily disorder, or one is betrayed by some unanticipated storm of emotion, brewed deep in the animal being and released by any trifling accident, such as personal jealousy or lust, or one is relaxed by contentment into vanity. All these rebel forces of our ill-coordinated selves, all these "disharmonies," of the inner being, snatch us away from our devotion to God's service, carry us off to follies, offences, unkindness, waste, and leave us compromised, involved, and regretful, perplexed by a hundred difficulties we have put in our own way back to God.

This is the personal problem of Sin. Here prayer avails; here God

can help us. From God comes the strength to repent and make such reparation as we can, to begin the battle again further back and lower down. From God comes the power to anticipate the struggle with one's rebel self, and to resist and prevail over it.

4. THE SINS OF THE INSANE

An extreme case is very serviceable in such a discussion as this.

It happens that the author carries on a correspondence with several lunatics in asylums. There is a considerable freedom of notepaper in these institutions; the outgoing letters are no doubt censored or selected in some way, but a proportion at any rate are allowed to go out to their addresses. As a journalist who signs his articles and as the author of various books of fiction, as a frequent NAME, that is, to any one much forced back upon reading, the writer is particularly accessible to this type of correspondent. The letters come, some manifesting a hopeless disorder that permits of no reply, but some being the expression of minds overlaid not at all offensively by a web of fantasy, and some (and these are the more touching ones and the ones that most concern us now) as sanely conceived and expressed as any letters could be. They are written by people living lives very like the lives of us who are called "sane," except that they lift to a higher excitement and fall to a lower depression, and that these extremer phases of mania or melancholia slip the leash of mental consistency altogether and take abnormal forms. They tap deep founts of impulse, such as we of the safer ways of mediocrity do but glimpse under the influence of drugs, or in dreams and rare moments of controllable extravagance. Then the insane become "glorious," or they become murderous, or they become suicidal. All these letter-writers in confinement have convinced their fellow-creatures by some extravagance that they are a danger to themselves or others.

The letters that come from such types written during their sane intervals, are entirely sane. Some, who are probably unaware--I think they should know--of the offences or possibilities that justify their incarceration, write with a certain resentment at their position; others are entirely acquiescent, but one or two

complain of the neglect of friends and relations. But all are as manifestly capable of religion and of the religious life as any other intelligent persons during the lucid interludes that make up nine-tenths perhaps of their lives. . . . Suppose now one of these cases, and suppose that the infirmity takes the form of some cruel, disgusting, or destructive disposition that may become at times overwhelming, and you have our universal trouble with sinful tendency, as it were magnified for examination. It is clear that the mania which defines his position must be the primary if not the cardinal business in the life of a lunatic, but his problem with that is different not in kind but merely in degree from the problem of lusts, vanities, and weaknesses in what we call normal lives. It is an unconquered tract, a great rebel province in his being, which refuses to serve God and tries to prevent him serving God, and succeeds at times in wresting his capital out of his control. But his relationship to that is the same relationship as ours to the backward and insubordinate parishes, criminal slums, and disorderly houses in our own private texture.

It is clear that the believer who is a lunatic is, as it were, only the better part of himself. He serves God with this unconquered disposition in him, like a man who, whatever else he is and does, is obliged to be the keeper of an untrustworthy and wicked animal. His beast gets loose. His only resort is to warn those about him when he feels that jangling or excitement of the nerves which precedes its escapes, to limit its range, to place weapons beyond its reach. And there are plenty of human beings very much in his case, whose beasts have never got loose or have got caught back before their essential insanity was apparent. And there are those uncertifiable lunatics we call men and women of "impulse" and "strong passions." If perhaps they have more self-control than the really mad, yet it happens oftener with them that the whole intelligent being falls under the dominion of evil. The passion scarcely less than the obsession may darken the whole moral sky. Repentance and atonement; nothing less will avail them after the storm has passed, and the

sedulous preparation of defences and palliatives against the return of the storm.

This discussion of the lunatic's case gives us indeed, usefully coarse and large, the lines for the treatment of every human weakness by the servants of God. A "weakness," just like the lunatic's mania, becomes a particular charge under God, a special duty for the person it affects. He has to minimise it, to isolate it, to keep it out of mischief. If he can he must adopt preventive measures. . . .

These passions and weaknesses that get control of us hamper our usefulness to God, they are an incessant anxiety and distress to us, they wound our self-respect and make us incomprehensible to many who would trust us, they discredit the faith we profess. If they break through and break through again it is natural and proper that men and women should cease to believe in our faith, cease to work with us or to meet us frankly. . . . Our sins do everything evil to us and through us except separate us from God.

Yet let there be no mistake about one thing. Here prayer is a power. Here God can indeed work miracles. A man with the light of God in his heart can defeat vicious habits, rise again combative and undaunted after a hundred falls, escape from the grip of lusts and revenges, make head against despair, thrust back the very onset of madness. He is still the same man he was before he came to God, still with his libidinous, vindictive, boastful, or indolent vein; but now his will to prevail over those qualities can refer to an exterior standard and an external interest, he can draw upon a strength, almost boundless, beyond his own.

5. BELIEVE, AND YOU ARE SAVED

But be a sin great or small, it cannot damn a man once he has found God. You may kill and hang for it, you may rob or rape; the moment you truly repent and set yourself to such atonement and reparation as is possible there remains no barrier between you and God.

Directly you cease to hide or deny or escape, and turn manfully towards the consequences and the setting of things right, you take hold again of the hand of God. Though you sin seventy times seven times, God will still forgive the poor rest of you. Nothing but utter blindness of the spirit can shut a man off from God.

There is nothing one can suffer, no situation so unfortunate, that it can shut off one who has the thought of God, from God. If you but lift up your head for a moment out of a stormy chaos of madness and cry to him, God is there, God will not fail you. A convicted criminal, frankly penitent, and neither obdurate nor abject, whatever the evil of his yesterdays, may still die well and bravely on the gallows to the glory of God. He may step straight from that death into the immortal being of God.

This persuasion is the very essence of the religion of the true God. There is no sin, no state that, being regretted and repented of, can stand between God and man.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

THE IDEA OF A CHURCH

1. THE WORLD DAWN

As yet those who may be counted as belonging definitely to the new religion are few and scattered and unconfessed, their realisations are still uncertain and incomplete. But that is no augury for the continuance of this state of affairs even for the next few decades. There are many signs that the revival is coming very swiftly, it may be coming as swiftly as the morning comes after a tropical night. It may seem at present as though nothing very much were happening, except for the fact that the old familiar constellations of theology have become a little pallid and lost something of their multitude of points. But nothing fades of itself. The deep stillness of the late night is broken by a stirring, and the morning star of creedless faith, the last and brightest of the stars, the star that owes its light to the coming sun is in the sky.

There is a stirring and a movement. There is a stir, like the stir before a breeze. Men are beginning to speak of religion without the bluster of the Christian formulae; they have begun to speak of God without any reference to Omnipresence, Omniscience, Omnipotence. The Deists and Theists of an older generation, be it noted, never did that. Their "Supreme Being" repudiated nothing. He was merely the whittled stump of the Trinity. It is in the last few decades that the western mind has slipped loose from this absolutist conception of God that has dominated the intelligence of Christendom at least, for many centuries. Almost unconsciously the new thought is taking a course that will lead it far away from the moorings of Omnipotence. It is like a ship that has slipped its anchors and

drifts, still sleeping, under the pale and vanishing stars, out to
the open sea. . . .

2. CONVERGENT RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

In quite a little while the whole world may be alive with this renascent faith.

For emancipation from the Trinitarian formularies and from a belief in an infinite God means not merely a great revivification of minds trained under the decadence of orthodox Christianity, minds which have hitherto been hopelessly embarrassed by the choice between pseudo-Christian religion or denial, but also it opens the way towards the completest understanding and sympathy and participation with the kindred movements for release and for an intensification of the religious life, that are going on outside the sphere of the Christian tradition and influence altogether. Allusion has already been made to the sympathetic devotional poetry of Rabindranath Tagore; he stands for a movement in Brahminism parallel with and assimilable to the worship of the true God of mankind.

It is too often supposed that the religious tendency of the East is entirely towards other-worldness, to a treatment of this life as an evil entanglement and of death as a release and a blessing. It is too easily assumed that Eastern teaching is wholly concerned with renunciation, not merely of self but of being, with the escape from all effort of any sort into an exalted vacuity. This is indeed neither the spirit of China nor of Islam nor of the every-day life of any people in the world. It is not the spirit of the Sikh nor of these newer developments of Hindu thought. It has never been the spirit of Japan. To-day less than ever does Asia seem disposed to give up life and the effort of life. Just as readily as Europeans, do the Asiatics reach out their arms to that fuller life we can live, that greater intensity of existence, to which we can attain by escaping from ourselves. All mankind is seeking God. There is not a nation nor a city in the globe where men are not being urged at this moment by the spirit of God in them towards the discovery of

God. This is not an age of despair but an age of hope in Asia as in all the world besides.

Islam is undergoing a process of revision closely parallel to that which ransacks Christianity. Tradition and mediaeval doctrines are being thrust aside in a similar way. There is much probing into the spirit and intention of the Founder. The time is almost ripe for a heart-searching Dialogue of the Dead, "How we settled our religions for ever and ever," between, let us say, Eusebius of Caesarea and one of Nizam-al-Mulk's tame theologians. They would be drawn together by the same tribulations; they would be in the closest sympathy against the temerity of the moderns; they would have a common courtliness. The Quran is but little read by Europeans; it is ignorantly supposed to contain many things that it does not contain; there is much confusion in people's minds between its text and the ancient Semitic traditions and usages retained by its followers; in places it may seem formless and barbaric; but what it has chiefly to tell of is the leadership of one individualised militant God who claims the rule of the whole world, who favours neither rank nor race, who would lead men to righteousness. It is much more free from sacramentalism, from vestiges of the ancient blood sacrifice, and its associated sacerdotalism, than Christianity. The religion that will presently sway mankind can be reached more easily from that starting-point than from the confused mysteries of Trinitarian theology. Islam was never saddled with a creed. With the very name "Islam" (submission to God) there is no quarrel for those who hold the new faith. . . .

All the world over there is this stirring in the dry bones of the old beliefs. There is scarcely a religion that has not its Bahaimism, its Modernists, its Brahma Somaj, its "religion without theology," its attempts to escape from old forms and hampering associations to that living and world-wide spiritual reality upon which the human mind almost instinctively insists. . . .

It is the same God we all seek; he becomes more and more plainly the same God.

So that all this religious stir, which seems so multifold and incidental and disconnected and confused and entirely ineffective to-day, may be and most probably will be, in quite a few years a great flood of religious unanimity pouring over and changing all human affairs, sweeping away the old priesthoods and tabernacles and symbols and shrines, the last crumb of the Orphic victim and the last rag of the Serapeum, and turning all men about into one direction, as the ships and houseboats swing round together in some great river with the uprush of the tide. . . .

3. CAN THERE BE A TRUE CHURCH?

Among those who are beginning to realise the differences and identities of the revived religion that has returned to them, certain questions of organisation and assembly are being discussed. Every new religious development is haunted by the precedents of the religion it replaces, and it was only to be expected that among those who have recovered their faith there should be a search for apostles and disciples, an attempt to determine sources and to form original congregations, especially among people with European traditions.

These dispositions mark a relapse from understanding. They are imitative. This time there has been no revelation here or there; there is no claim to a revelation but simply that God has become visible. Men have thought and sought until insensibly the fog of obsolete theology has cleared away. There seems no need therefore for special teachers or a special propaganda, or any ritual or observances that will seem to insist upon differences. The Christian precedent of a church is particularly misleading. The church with its sacraments and its sacerdotalism is the disease of Christianity. Save for a few doubtful interpolations there is no evidence that Christ tolerated either blood sacrifices or the mysteries of priesthood. All these antique grossnesses were superadded after his martyrdom. He preached not a cult but a gospel; he sent out not medicine men but apostles.

No doubt all who believe owe an apostolic service to God. They become naturally apostolic. As men perceive and realise God, each will be disposed in his own fashion to call his neighbour's attention to what he sees. The necessary elements of religion could be written on a post card; this book, small as it is, bulks large not by what it tells positively but because it deals with misconceptions. We may (little doubt have I that we do) need

special propagandas and organisations to discuss errors and keep back the jungle of false ideas, to maintain free speech and restrain the enterprise of the persecutor, but we do not want a church to keep our faith for us. We want our faith spread, but for that there is no need for orthodoxies and controlling organisations of statement. It is for each man to follow his own impulse, and to speak to his like in his own fashion.

Whatever religious congregations men may form henceforth in the name of the true God must be for their own sakes and not to take charge of religion.

The history of Christianity, with its encrustation and suffocation in dogmas and usages, its dire persecutions of the faithful by the unfaithful, its desiccation and its unlovely decay, its invasion by robes and rites and all the tricks and vices of the Pharisees whom Christ detested and denounced, is full of warning against the dangers of a church. Organisation is an excellent thing for the material needs of men, for the draining of towns, the marshalling of traffic, the collecting of eggs, and the carrying of letters, the distribution of bread, the notification of measles, for hygiene and economics and suchlike affairs. The better we organise such things, the freer and better equipped we leave men's minds for nobler purposes, for those adventures and experiments towards God's purpose which are the reality of life. But all organisations must be watched, for whatever is organised can be "captured" and misused. Repentance, moreover, is the beginning and essential of the religious life, and organisations (acting through their secretaries and officials) never repent. God deals only with the individual for the individual's surrender. He takes no cognisance of committees.

Those who are most alive to the realities of living religion are most mistrustful of this congregating tendency. To gather together is to purchase a benefit at the price of a greater loss, to strengthen one's sense of brotherhood by excluding the majority of

mankind. Before you know where you are you will have exchanged the spirit of God for ESPRIT DE CORPS. You will have reinvented the SYMBOL; you will have begun to keep anniversaries and establish sacramental ceremonies. The disposition to form cliques and exclude and conspire against unlike people is all too strong in humanity, to permit of its formal encouragement. Even such organisation as is implied by a creed is to be avoided, for all living faith coagulates as you phrase it. In this book I have not given so much as a definite name to the faith of the true God. Organisation for worship and collective exaltation also, it may be urged, is of little manifest good. You cannot appoint beforehand a time and place for God to irradiate your soul.

All these are very valid objections to the church-forming disposition.

4. ORGANISATIONS UNDER GOD

Yet still this leaves many dissatisfied. They want to shout out about God. They want to share this great thing with all mankind.

Why should they not shout and share?

Let them express all that they desire to express in their own fashion by themselves or grouped with their friends as they will. Let them shout chorally if they are so disposed. Let them work in a gang if so they can work the better. But let them guard themselves against the idea that they can have God particularly or exclusively with them in any such undertaking. Or that so they can express God rather than themselves.

That I think states the attitude of the modern spirit towards the idea of a church. Mankind passes for ever out of the idolatry of altars, away from the obscene rites of circumcision and symbolical cannibalism, beyond the sway of the ceremonial priest. But if the modern spirit holds that religion cannot be organised or any intermediary thrust between God and man, that does not preclude infinite possibilities of organisation and collective action UNDER God and within the compass of religion. There is no reason why religious men should not band themselves the better to attain specific ends. To borrow a term from British politics, there is no objection to AD HOC organisations. The objection lies not against subsidiary organisations for service but against organisations that may claim to be comprehensive.

For example there is no reason why one should not--and in many cases there are good reasons why one should--organise or join associations for the criticism of religious ideas, an employment that may pass very readily into propaganda.

Many people feel the need of prayer to resist the evil in themselves and to keep them in mind of divine emotion. And many want not merely prayer but formal prayer and the support of others, praying in unison. The writer does not understand this desire or need for collective prayer very well, but there are people who appear to do so and there is no reason why they should not assemble for that purpose. And there is no doubt that divine poetry, divine maxims, religious thought finely expressed, may be heard, rehearsed, collected, published, and distributed by associations. The desire for expression implies a sort of assembly, a hearer at least as well as a speaker. And expression has many forms. People with a strong artistic impulse will necessarily want to express themselves by art when religion touches them, and many arts, architecture and the drama for example, are collective undertakings. I do not see why there should not be, under God, associations for building cathedrals and suchlike great still places urgent with beauty, into which men and women may go to rest from the clamour of the day's confusions; I do not see why men should not make great shrines and pictures expressing their sense of divine things, and why they should not combine in such enterprises rather than work to fill heterogeneous and chaotic art galleries. A wave of religious revival and religious clarification, such as I foresee, will most certainly bring with it a great revival of art, religious art, music, songs, and writings of all sorts, drama, the making of shrines, praying places, tempies and retreats, the creation of pictures and sculptures. It is not necessary to have priestcraft and an organised church for such ends. Such enrichments of feeling and thought are part of the service of God.

And again, under God, there may be associations and fraternities for research in pure science; associations for the teaching and simplification of languages; associations for promoting and watching education; associations for the discussion of political problems and the determination of right policies. In all these ways men may multiply their use by union. Only when associations seek to control

things of belief, to dictate formulae, restrict religious activities or the freedom of religious thought and teaching, when they tend to subdivide those who believe and to set up jealousies or exclusions, do they become antagonistic to the spirit of modern religion.

5. THE STATE IS GOD'S INSTRUMENT

Because religion cannot be organised, because God is everywhere and immediately accessible to every human being, it does not follow that religion cannot organise every other human affair. It is indeed essential to the idea that God is the Invisible King of this round world and all mankind, that we should see in every government, great and small, from the council of the world-state that is presently coming, down to the village assembly, the instrument of God's practical control. Religion which is free, speaking freely through whom it will, subject to a perpetual unlimited criticism, will be the life and driving power of the whole organised world. So that if you prefer not to say that there will be no church, if you choose rather to declare that the world-state is God's church, you may have it so if you will. Provided that you leave conscience and speech and writing and teaching about divine things absolutely free, and that you try to set no nets about God.

The world is God's and he takes it. But he himself remains freedom, and we find our freedom in him.

THE ENVOY

So I end this compact statement of the renascent religion which I believe to be crystallising out of the intellectual, social, and spiritual confusions of this time. It is an account rendered. It is a statement and record; not a theory. There is nothing in all this that has been invented or constructed by the writer; I have been but scribe to the spirit of my generation; I have at most assembled and put together things and thoughts that I have come upon, have transferred the statements of "science" into religious terminology, rejected obsolescent definitions, and re-coordinated propositions that had drifted into opposition. Thus, I see, ideas are developing, and thus have I written them down. It is a secondary matter that I am convinced that this trend of intelligent opinion is a discovery of truth. The reader is told of my own belief merely to avoid an affectation of impartiality and aloofness.

The theogony here set forth is ancient; one can trace it appearing and disappearing and recurring in the mutilated records of many different schools of speculation; the conception of God as finite is one that has been discussed very illuminatingly in recent years in the work of one I am happy to write of as my friend and master, that very great American, the late William James. It was an idea that became increasingly important to him towards the end of his life. And it is the most releasing idea in the system.

Only in the most general terms can I trace the other origins of these present views. I do not think modern religion owes much to what is called Deism or Theism. The rather abstract and futile Deism of the eighteenth century, of "votre Etre supreme" who bored the friends of Robespierre, was a sterile thing, it has little relation to these modern developments, it conceived of God as an infinite Being of no particular character whereas God is a finite being of a very especial character. On the other hand men and women

who have set themselves, with unavoidable theological preconceptions, it is true, to speculate upon the actual teachings and quality of Christ, have produced interpretations that have interwoven insensibly with thoughts more apparently new. There is a curious modernity about very many of Christ's recorded sayings. Revived religion has also, no doubt, been the receiver of many religious bankruptcies, of Positivism for example, which failed through its bleak abstraction and an unspiritual texture. Religion, thus restated, must, I think, presently incorporate great sections of thought that are still attached to formal Christianity. The time is at hand when many of the organised Christian churches will be forced to define their positions, either in terms that will identify them with this renaissance, or that will lead to the release of their more liberal adherents. Its probable obligations to Eastern thought are less readily estimated by a European writer.

Modern religion has no revelation and no founder; it is the privilege and possession of no coterie of disciples or exponents; it is appearing simultaneously round and about the world exactly as a crystallising substance appears here and there in a super-saturated solution. It is a process of truth, guided by the divinity in men. It needs no other guidance, and no protection. It needs nothing but freedom, free speech, and honest statement. Out of the most mixed and impure solutions a growing crystal is infallibly able to select its substance. The diamond arises bright, definite, and pure out of a dark matrix of structureless confusion.

This metaphor of crystallisation is perhaps the best symbol of the advent and growth of the new understanding. It has no church, no authorities, no teachers, no orthodoxy. It does not even thrust and struggle among the other things; simply it grows clear. There will be no putting an end to it. It arrives inevitably, and it will continue to separate itself out from confusing ideas. It becomes, as it were the Koh-i-noor; it is a Mountain of Light, growing and increasing. It is an all-pervading lucidity, a brightness and

clearness. It has no head to smite, no body you can destroy; it overleaps all barriers; it breaks out in despite of every enclosure. It will compel all things to orient themselves to it.

It comes as the dawn comes, through whatever clouds and mists may be here or whatever smoke and curtains may be there. It comes as the day comes to the ships that put to sea.

It is the Kingdom of God at hand.

**THE
SOUL OF A BISHOP**

**BY
H. G. WELLS
1917**

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"Man's true Environment is God"
J. H. OLDHAM in "The Christian Gospel"
(Tract of the N. M. R. and H.)

CHAPTER THE FIRST - THE DREAM

(1)

IT was a scene of bitter disputation. A hawk-nosed young man with a pointing finger was prominent. His face worked violently, his lips moved very rapidly, but what he said was inaudible.

Behind him the little rufous man with the big eyes twitched at his robe and offered suggestions.

And behind these two clustered a great multitude of heated, excited, swarthy faces....

The emperor sat on his golden throne in the midst of the gathering, commanding silence by gestures, speaking inaudibly to them in a tongue the majority did not use, and then prevailing. They ceased their interruptions, and the old man, Arius, took up the debate. For a time all those impassioned faces were intent upon him; they listened as though they sought occasion, and suddenly as if by a preconcerted arrangement they were all thrusting their fingers into their ears and knitting their brows in assumed horror; some were crying aloud and making as if to fly. Some indeed tucked up their garments and fled. They spread out into a pattern. They were like the little monks who run from St. Jerome's lion in the picture by Carpaccio. Then one zealot rushed forward and smote the old man heavily upon the mouth....

The hall seemed to grow vaster and vaster, the disputing, infuriated figures multiplied to an innumerable assembly, they drove about like snowflakes in a gale, they whirled in argumentative couples, they spun in eddies of contradiction, they

made extraordinary patterns, and then amidst the cloudy darkness of the unfathomable dome above them there appeared and increased a radiant triangle in which shone an eye. The eye and the triangle filled the heavens, sent out flickering rays, glowed to a blinding incandescence, seemed to be speaking words of thunder that were nevertheless inaudible. It was as if that thunder filled the heavens, it was as if it were nothing but the beating artery in the sleeper's ear. The attention strained to hear and comprehend, and on the very verge of comprehension snapped like a fiddle-string.

"Nicoea!"

The word remained like a little ash after a flare.

The sleeper had awakened and lay very still, oppressed by a sense of intellectual effort that had survived the dream in which it had arisen. Was it so that things had happened? The slumber-shadowed mind, moving obscurely, could not determine whether it was so or not. Had they indeed behaved in this manner when the great mystery was established? Who said they stopped their ears with their fingers and fled, shouting with horror? Shouting? Was it Eusebius or Athanasius? Or Sozomen.... Some letter or apology by Athanasius?... And surely it was impossible that the Trinity could have appeared visibly as a triangle and an eye. Above such an assembly.

That was mere dreaming, of course. Was it dreaming after Raphael? After Raphael? The drowsy mind wandered into a side issue. Was the picture that had suggested this dream the one in the Vatican where all the Fathers of the Church are shown disputing together? But there surely God and the Son themselves were painted with a symbol--some symbol--also? But was that disputation about the Trinity at all? Wasn't it rather about a chalice and a dove? Of course it was a chalice and a dove! Then

where did one see the triangle and the eye? And men disputing?
Some such picture there was....

What a lot of disputing there had been! What endless disputing!
Which had gone on. Until last night. When this very disagreeable
young man with the hawk nose and the pointing finger had tackled
one when one was sorely fagged, and disputed; disputed. Rebuked
and disputed. "Answer me this," he had said.... And still one's
poor brains disputed and would not rest.... About the Trinity....

The brain upon the pillow was now wearily awake. It was at once
hopelessly awake and active and hopelessly unprogressive. It was
like some floating stick that had got caught in an eddy in a
river, going round and round and round. And round. Eternally--
eternally--eternally begotten.

"But what possible meaning do you attach then to such a phrase
as eternally begotten?"

The brain upon the pillow stared hopelessly at this question,
without an answer, without an escape. The three repetitions spun
round and round, became a swiftly revolving triangle, like some
electric sign that had got beyond control, in the midst of which
stared an unwinking and resentful eye.

(2)

Every one knows that expedient of the sleepless, the counting
of sheep.

You lie quite still, you breathe regularly, you imagine sheep
jumping over a gate, one after another, you count them quietly
and slowly until you count yourself off through a fading string
of phantom numbers to number Nod....

But sheep, alas! suggest an episcopal crook.

And presently a black sheep had got into the succession and was struggling violently with the crook about its leg, a hawk-nosed black sheep full of reproof, with disordered hair and a pointing finger. A young man with a most disagreeable voice.

At which the other sheep took heart and, deserting the numbered succession, came and sat about the fire in a big drawing-room and argued also. In particular there was Lady Sunderbund, a pretty fragile tall woman in the corner, richly jewelled, who sat with her pretty eyes watching and her lips compressed. What had she thought of it? She had said very little.

It is an unusual thing for a mixed gathering of this sort to argue about the Trinity. Simply because a tired bishop had fallen into their party. It was not fair to him to pretend that the atmosphere was a liberal and inquiring one, when the young man who had sat still and dormant by the table was in reality a keen and bitter Irish Roman Catholic. Then the question, a question-begging question, was put quite suddenly, without preparation or prelude, by surprise. "Why, Bishop, was the Spermaticos Logos identified with the Second and not the Third Person of the Trinity?"

It was indiscreet, it was silly, to turn upon the speaker and affect an air of disengagement and modernity and to say: "Ah, that indeed is the unfortunate aspect of the whole affair."

Whereupon the fierce young man had exploded with:
"To that, is it, that you Anglicans have come?"

The whole gathering had given itself up to the disputation, Lady Sunderbund, an actress, a dancer--though she, it is true,

did not say very much--a novelist, a mechanical expert of some sort, a railway peer, geniuses, hairy and Celtic, people of no clearly definable position, but all quite unequal to the task of maintaining that air of reverent vagueness, that tenderness of touch, which is by all Anglican standards imperative in so deep, so mysterious, and, nowadays, in mixed society at least, so infrequent a discussion.

It was like animals breaking down a fence about some sacred spot. Within a couple of minutes the affair had become highly improper. They had raised their voices, they had spoken with the utmost familiarity of almost unspeakable things. There had been even attempts at epigram. Athanasian epigrams. Bent the novelist had doubted if originally there had been a Third Person in the Trinity at all. He suggested a reaction from a too-Manichaeian dualism at some date after the time of St. John's Gospel. He maintained obstinately that that Gospel was dualistic.

The unpleasant quality of the talk was far more manifest in the retrospect than it had been at the time. It had seemed then bold and strange, but not impossible; now in the cold darkness it seemed sacrilegious. And the bishop's share, which was indeed only the weak yielding of a tired man to an atmosphere he had misjudged, became a disgraceful display of levity and bad faith. They had baited him. Some one had said that nowadays every one was an Arian, knowingly or unknowingly. They had not concealed their conviction that the bishop did not really believe in the Creeds he uttered.

And that unfortunate first admission stuck terribly in his throat.

Oh! Why had he made it?

(3)

Sleep had gone.

The awakened sleeper groaned, sat up in the darkness, and felt gropingly in this unaccustomed bed and bedroom first for the edge of the bed and then for the electric light that was possibly on the little bedside table.

The searching hand touched something. A water-bottle. The hand resumed its exploration. Here was something metallic and smooth, a stem. Either above or below there must be a switch....

The switch was found, grasped, and turned.

The darkness fled.

In a mirror the sleeper saw the reflection of his face and a corner of the bed in which he lay. The lamp had a tilted shade that threw a slanting bar of shadow across the field of reflection, lighting a right-angled triangle very brightly and leaving the rest obscure. The bed was a very great one, a bed for the Anakim. It had a canopy with yellow silk curtains, surmounted by a gilded crown of carved wood. Between the curtains was a man's face, clean-shaven, pale, with disordered brown hair and weary, pale-blue eyes. He was clad in purple pyjamas, and the hand that now ran its fingers through the brown hair was long and lean and shapely.

Beside the bed was a convenient little table bearing the light, a water-bottle and glass, a bunch of keys, a congested pocket-book, a gold-banded fountain pen, and a gold watch that indicated a quarter past three. On the lower edge of the picture in the mirror appeared the back of a gilt chair, over which a garment of peculiar construction had been carelessly thrown. It was in the

form of that sleeveless cassock of purple, opening at the side, whose lower flap is called a bishop's apron; the corner of the frogged coat showed behind the chair-back, and the sash lay crumpled on the floor. Black doeskin breeches, still warmly lined with their pants, lay where they had been thrust off at the corner of the bed, partly covering black hose and silver-buckled shoes.

For a moment the tired gaze of the man in the bed rested upon these evidences of his episcopal dignity. Then he turned from them to the watch at the bedside.

He groaned helplessly.

(4)

These country doctors were no good. There wasn't a physician in the diocese. He must go to London.

He looked into the weary eyes of his reflection and said, as one makes a reassuring promise, "London."

He was being worried. He was being intolerably worried, and he was ill and unable to sustain his positions. This doubt, this sudden discovery of controversial unsoundness, was only one aspect of his general neurasthenia. It had been creeping into his mind since the "Light Under the Altar" controversy. Now suddenly it had leapt upon him from his own unwary lips.

The immediate trouble arose from his loyalty. He had followed the King's example; he had become a total abstainer and, in addition, on his own account he had ceased to smoke. And his digestion, which Princhester had first made sensitive, was deranged. He was suffering chemically, suffering one of those

nameless sequences of maladjustments that still defy our ordinary medical science. It was afflicting him with a general malaise, it was affecting his energy, his temper, all the balance and comfort of his nerves. All day he was weary; all night he was wakeful. He was estranged from his body. He was distressed by a sense of detachment from the things about him, by a curious intimation of unreality in everything he experienced. And with that went this levity of conscience, a heaviness of soul and a levity of conscience, that could make him talk as though the Creeds did not matter--as though nothing mattered....

If only he could smoke!

He was persuaded that a couple of Egyptian cigarettes, or three at the outside, a day, would do wonders in restoring his nervous calm. That, and just a weak whisky and soda at lunch and dinner. Suppose now--!

His conscience, his sense of honour, deserted him. Latterly he had had several of these conscience-blanks; it was only when they were over that he realized that they had occurred.

One might smoke up the chimney, he reflected. But he had no cigarettes! Perhaps if he were to slip downstairs....

Why had he given up smoking?

He groaned aloud. He and his reflection eyed one another in mutual despair.

There came before his memory the image of a boy's face, a swarthy little boy, grinning, grinning with a horrible knowingness and pointing his finger--an accusing finger. It had been the most exasperating, humiliating, and shameful incident in the bishop's career. It was the afternoon for his fortnightly

address to the Shop-girls' Church Association, and he had been seized with a panic fear, entirely irrational and unjustifiable, that he would not be able to deliver the address. The fear had arisen after lunch, had gripped his mind, and then as now had come the thought, "If only I could smoke!" And he had smoked. It seemed better to break a vow than fail the Association. He had fallen to the temptation with a completeness that now filled him with shame and horror. He had stalked Dunk, his valet-butler, out of the dining-room, had affected to need a book from the book-case

beyond the sideboard, had gone insincerely to the sideboard humming "From Greenland's icy mountains," and then, glancing over his shoulder, had stolen one of his own cigarettes, one of the fatter sort. With this and his bedroom matches he had gone off to the bottom of the garden among the laurels, looked everywhere except above the wall to be sure that he was alone, and at last lit up, only as he raised his eyes in gratitude for the first blissful inhalation to discover that dreadful little boy peeping at him from the crotch in the yew-tree in the next garden. As though God had sent him to be a witness!

Their eyes had met. The bishop recalled with an agonized distinctness every moment, every error, of that shameful encounter. He had been too surprised to conceal the state of affairs from the pitiless scrutiny of those youthful eyes. He had instantly made as if to put the cigarette behind his back, and then as frankly dropped it....

His soul would not be more naked at the resurrection. The little boy had stared, realized the state of affairs slowly but surely, pointed his finger....

Never had two human beings understood each other more completely.

A dirty little boy! Capable no doubt of a thousand kindred scoundrelisms.

It seemed ages before the conscience-stricken bishop could tear himself from the spot and walk back, with such a pretence of dignity as he could muster, to the house.

And instead of the discourse he had prepared for the Shop-girls' Church Association, he had preached on temptation and falling, and how he knew they had all fallen, and how he understood and could sympathize with the bitterness of a secret shame, a moving but unsuitable discourse that had already been subjected to misconstruction and severe reproof in the local press of Princhester.

But the haunting thing in the bishop's memory was the face and gesture of the little boy. That grubby little finger stabbed him to the heart.

"Oh, God!" he groaned. "The meanness of it! How did I bring myself--?"

He turned out the light convulsively, and rolled over in the bed, making a sort of cocoon of himself. He bored his head into the pillow and groaned, and then struggled impatiently to throw the bed-clothes off himself. Then he sat up and talked aloud.

"I must go to Brighton-Pomfrey," he said. "And get a medical dispensation. If I do not smoke--"

He paused for a long time.

Then his voice sounded again in the darkness, speaking quietly, speaking with a note almost of satisfaction.

"I shall go mad. I must smoke or I shall go mad."

For a long time he sat up in the great bed with his arms about his knees.

(5)

Fearful things came to him; things at once dreadfully blasphemous and entirely weak-minded.

The triangle and the eye became almost visible upon the black background of night. They were very angry. They were spinning round and round faster and faster. Because he was a bishop and because really he did not believe fully and completely in the Trinity. At one and the same time he did not believe in the Trinity and was terrified by the anger of the Trinity at his unbelief.... He was afraid. He was aghast.... And oh! he was weary....

He rubbed his eyes.

"If I could have a cup of tea!" he said.

Then he perceived with surprise that he had not thought of praying. What should he say? To what could he pray?

He tried not to think of that whizzing Triangle, that seemed now to be nailed like a Catherine wheel to the very centre of his forehead, and yet at the same time to be at the apex of the universe. Against that--for protection against that--he was praying. It was by a great effort that at last he pronounced the words:

"Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord"

Presently he had turned up his light, and was prowling about the room. The clear inky dinginess that comes before the raw dawn of a spring morning, found his white face at the window, looking out upon the great terrace and the park.

CHAPTER THE SECOND - THE WEAR AND TEAR OF EPISCOPACY

(1)

IT was only in the last few years that the bishop had experienced these nervous and mental crises. He was a belated doubter. Whatever questionings had marked his intellectual adolescence had either been very slight or had been too adequately answered to leave any serious scars upon his convictions.

And even now he felt that he was afflicted physically rather than mentally, that some protective padding of nerve-sheath or brain-case had worn thin and weak, and left him a prey to strange disturbances, rather than that any new process of thought was eating into his mind. These doubts in his mind were still not really doubts; they were rather alien and, for the first time, uncontrolled movements of his intelligence. He had had a sheltered upbringing; he was the well-connected son of a comfortable rectory, the only son and sole survivor of a family of three; he had been carefully instructed and he had been a willing learner; it had been easy and natural to take many things for granted. It had been very easy and pleasant for him to take the world as he found it and God as he found Him. Indeed for all his years up to manhood he had been able to take life exactly as in his infancy he took his carefully warmed and prepared bottle --unquestioningly and beneficially.

And indeed that has been the way with most bishops since bishops began.

It is a busy continuous process that turns boys into bishops, and it will stand few jars or discords. The student of

ecclesiastical biography will find that an early vocation has in every age been almost universal among them; few are there among these lives that do not display the incipient bishop from the tenderest years. Bishop How of Wakefield composed hymns before he was eleven, and Archbishop Benson when scarcely older possessed a little oratory in which he conducted services and--a pleasant touch of the more secular boy--which he protected from a too inquisitive sister by means of a booby trap. It is rare that those marked for episcopal dignities go so far into the outer world as Archbishop Lang of York, who began as a barrister. This early predestination has always been the common episcopal experience. Archbishop Benson's early attempts at religious services remind one both of St. Thomas a Becket, the "boy bishop," and those early ceremonies of St. Athanasius which were observed and inquired upon by the good bishop Alexander. (For though still a tender infant, St. Athanasius with perfect correctness and validity was baptizing a number of his innocent playmates, and the bishop who "had paused to contemplate the sports of the child remained to confirm the zeal of the missionary.") And as with the bishop of the past, so with the bishop of the future; the Rev. H. J. Campbell, in his story of his soul's pilgrimage, has given us a pleasant picture of himself as a child stealing out into the woods to build himself a little altar.

Such minds as these, settled as it were from the outset, are either incapable of real scepticism or become sceptical only after catastrophic changes. They understand the sceptical mind with difficulty, and their beliefs are regarded by the sceptical mind with incredulity. They have determined their forms of belief before their years of discretion, and once those forms are determined they are not very easily changed. Within the shell it has adopted the intelligence may be active and lively enough, may indeed be extraordinarily active and lively, but only within the shell.

There is an entire difference in the mental quality of those who are converts to a faith and those who are brought up in it. The former know it from outside as well as from within. They know not only that it is, but also that it is not. The latter have a confidence in their creed that is one with their apprehension of sky or air or gravitation. It is a primary mental structure, and they not only do not doubt but they doubt the good faith of those who do. They think that the Atheist and Agnostic really believe but are impelled by a mysterious obstinacy to deny. So it had been with the Bishop of Princhester; not of cunning or design but in simple good faith he had accepted all the inherited assurances of his native rectory, and held by Church, Crown, Empire, decorum, respectability, solvency--and compulsory Greek at the Little Go--as his father had done before him. If in his undergraduate days he had said a thing or two in the modern vein, affected the socialism of William Morris and learnt some Swinburne by heart, it was out of a conscious wildness. He did not wish to be a prig. He had taken a far more genuine interest in the artistry of ritual.

Through all the time of his incumbency of the church of the Holy Innocents, St. John's Wood, and of his career as the bishop suffragan of Pinner, he had never faltered from his profound confidence in those standards of his home. He had been kind, popular, and endlessly active. His undergraduate socialism had expanded simply and sincerely into a theory of administrative philanthropy. He knew the Webbs. He was as successful with working-class audiences as with fashionable congregations. His home life with Lady Ella (she was the daughter of the fifth Earl of Birkenholme) and his five little girls was simple, beautiful, and happy as few homes are in these days of confusion. Until he became Bishop of Princhester--he followed Hood, the first bishop, as the reign of his Majesty King Edward the Peacemaker drew to its close--no anticipation of his coming distress fell

across his path.

(2)

He came to Princhester an innocent and trustful man. The home life at the old rectory of Otteringham was still his standard of truth and reality. London had not disillusioned him. It was a strange waste of people, it made him feel like a missionary in infidel parts, but it was a kindly waste. It was neither antagonistic nor malicious. He had always felt there that if he searched his Londoner to the bottom, he would find the completest recognition of the old rectory and all its data and implications.

But Princhester was different.

Princhester made one think that recently there had been a second and much more serious Fall.

Princhester was industrial and unashamed. It was a countryside savagely invaded by forges and mine shafts and gaunt black things. It was scarred and impeded and discoloured. Even before that invasion, when the heather was not in flower it must have been a black country. Its people were dour uncandid individuals, who slanted their heads and knitted their brows to look at you. Occasionally one saw woods brown and blistered by the gases from chemical works. Here and there remained old rectories, closely reminiscent of the dear old home at Otteringham, jostled and elbowed and overshadowed by horrible iron cylinders belching smoke and flame. The fine old abbey church of Princhester, which was the cathedral of the new diocese, looked when first he saw it like a lady Abbess who had taken to drink and slept in a coal truck. She minced apologetically upon the market-place; the parvenu Town Hall patronized and protected her as if she were a poor relation....

The old aristocracy of the countryside was unpicturesquely decayed. The branch of the Walshinghams, Lady Ella's cousins, who lived near Pringle, was poor, proud and ignoble. And extremely unpopular. The rich people of the country were self-made and inclined to nonconformity, the working-people were not strictly speaking a "poor," they were highly paid, badly housed, and deeply resentful. They went in vast droves to football matches, and did not care a rap if it rained. The prevailing wind was sarcastic. To come here from London was to come from atmospheric blue-greys to ashen-greys, from smoke and soft smut to grime and black grimness.

The bishop had been charmed by the historical associations of Princhester when first the see was put before his mind. His realization of his diocese was a profound shock.

Only one hint had he had of what was coming. He had met during his season of congratulations Lord Gatling dining unusually at the Athenaeum. Lord Gatling and he did not talk frequently, but on this occasion the great racing peer came over to him. "You will feel like a cherub in a stokehole," Lord Gatling had said....

"They used to heave lumps of slag at old Hood's gaiters," said Lord Gatling.

"In London a bishop's a lord and a lark and nobody minds him," said Lord Gatling, "but Princhester is different. It isn't used to bishops.... Well,--I hope you'll get to like 'em."

(3)

Trouble began with a fearful row about the position of the

bishop's palace. Hood had always evaded this question, and a number of strong-willed self-made men of wealth and influence, full of local patriotism and that competitive spirit which has made England what it is, already intensely irritated by Hood's prevarications, were resolved to pin his successor to an immediate decision. Of this the new bishop was unaware. Mindful of a bishop's constant need to travel, he was disposed to seek a home within easy reach of Pringle Junction, from which nearly every point in the diocese could be simply and easily reached. This fell in with Lady Ella's liking for the rare rural quiet of the Kibe valley and the neighbourhood of her cousins the Walshinghams. Unhappily it did not fall in with the inflexible resolution of each and every one of the six leading towns of the see to put up, own, obtrude, boast, and swagger about the biggest and showiest thing in episcopal palaces in all industrial England, and the new bishop had already taken a short lease and gone some way towards the acquisition of Ganford House, two miles from Pringle, before he realized the strength and fury of these local ambitions.

At first the magnates and influences seemed to be fighting only among themselves, and he was so ill-advised as to broach the Ganford House project as a compromise that would glorify no one unfairly, and leave the erection of an episcopal palace for some future date when he perhaps would have the good fortune to have passed to "where beyond these voices there is peace," forgetting altogether among other oversights the importance of architects and builders in local affairs. His proposal seemed for a time to concentrate the rich passions of the whole countryside upon himself and his wife.

Because they did not leave Lady Ella alone. The Walshinghams were already unpopular in their county on account of a poverty and shyness that made them seem "stuck up" to successful captains of industry only too ready with the hand of friendship, the iron

grip indeed of friendship, consciously hospitable and eager for admission and endorsements. And Princhester in particular was under the sway of that enterprising weekly, *The White Blackbird*, which was illustrated by, which indeed monopolized the gifts of, that brilliant young caricaturist "The Snicker."

It had seemed natural for Lady Ella to acquiesce in the proposals of the leading Princhester photographer. She had always helped where she could in her husband's public work, and she had been popular upon her own merits in Wealdstone. The portrait was abominable enough in itself; it dwelt on her chin, doubled her age, and denied her gentleness, but it was a mere starting-point for the subtle extravagance of *The Snicker's* poisonous gift.... The thing came upon the bishop suddenly from the book-stall at Pringle Junction.

He kept it carefully from Lady Ella.... It was only later that he found that a copy of *The White Blackbird* had been sent to her, and that she was keeping the horror from him. It was in her vein that she should reproach herself for being a vulnerable side to him.

Even when the bishop capitulated in favour of Princhester, that decision only opened a fresh trouble for him. Princhester wanted the palace to be a palace; it wanted to combine all the best points of Lambeth and Fulham with the marble splendours of a good modern bank. The bishop's architectural tastes, on the other hand, were rationalistic. He was all for building a useful palace in undertones, with a green slate roof and long horizontal lines. What he wanted more than anything else was a quite remote wing with a lot of bright little bedrooms and a sitting-room and so on, complete in itself, examination hall and everything, with a long intricate connecting passage and several doors, to prevent the ordination candidates straying all over the place and getting into the talk and the tea. But the diocese wanted a proud archway

--and turrets, and did not care a rap if the ordination candidates slept about on the carpets in the bishop's bedroom. Ordination candidates were quite outside the sphere of its imagination.

And he disappointed Princhester with his equipage. Princhester had a feeling that it deserved more for coming over to the church from nonconformity as it was doing. It wanted a bishop in a mitre and a gilt coach. It wanted a pastoral crook. It wanted something to go with its mace and its mayor. And (obsessed by The Snicker) it wanted less of Lady Ella. The cruelty and unreason of these attacks upon his wife distressed the bishop beyond measure, and baffled him hopelessly. He could not see any means of checking them nor of defending or justifying her against them.

The palace was awaiting its tenant, but the controversies and bitternesses were still swinging and swaying and developing when King George was being crowned. Close upon that event came a wave of social discontent, the great railway strike, a curious sense of social and political instability, and the first beginnings of the bishop's ill health.

(4)

There came a day of exceptional fatigue and significance.

The industrial trouble was a very real distress to the bishop. He had a firm belief that it is a function of the church to act as mediator between employer and employed. It was a common saying of his that the aim of socialism--the right sort of socialism --was to Christianize employment. Regardless of suspicion on either hand, regardless of very distinct hints that he should "mind his own business," he exerted himself in a search for methods of reconciliation. He sought out every one who seemed

likely to be influential on either side, and did his utmost to discover the conditions of a settlement. As far as possible and with the help of a not very efficient chaplain he tried to combine such interviews with his more normal visiting.

At times, and this was particularly the case on this day, he seemed to be discovering nothing but the incurable perversity and militancy of human nature. It was a day under an east wind, when a steely-blue sky full of colourless light filled a stiff-necked world with whitish high lights and inky shadows. These bright harsh days of barometric high pressure in England rouse and thwart every expectation of the happiness of spring. And as the bishop drove through the afternoon in a hired fly along a rutted road of slag between fields that were bitterly wired against the Sunday trespasser, he fell into a despondent meditation upon the political and social outlook.

His thoughts were of a sort not uncommon in those days. The world was strangely restless. Since the passing of Victoria the Great there had been an accumulating uneasiness in the national life. It was as if some compact and dignified paper-weight had been lifted from people's ideas, and as if at once they had begun to blow about anyhow. Not that Queen Victoria had really been a paper-weight or any weight at all, but it happened that she died as an epoch closed, an epoch of tremendous stabilities. Her son, already elderly, had followed as the selvedge follows the piece, he had passed and left the new age stripped bare. In nearly every department of economic and social life now there was upheaval, and it was an upheaval very different in character from the radicalism and liberalism of the Victorian days. There were not only doubt and denial, but now there were also impatience and unreason. People argued less and acted quicker. There was a pride in rebellion for its own sake, an indiscipline and disposition to sporadic violence that made it extremely hard to negotiate any reconciliations or compromises. Behind every extremist it seemed

stood a further extremist prepared to go one better....

The bishop had spent most of the morning with one of the big employers, a tall dark man, lean and nervous, and obviously tired and worried by the struggle. He did not conceal his opinion that the church was meddling with matters quite outside its sphere. Never had it been conveyed to the bishop before how remote a rich and established Englishman could consider the church from reality.

"You've got no hold on them," he said. "It isn't your sphere."

And again: "They'll listen to you--if you speak well. But they don't believe you know anything about it, and they don't trust your good intentions. They won't mind a bit what you say unless you drop something they can use against us."

The bishop tried a few phrases. He thought there might be something in co-operation, in profit-sharing, in some more permanent relationship between the business and the employee.

"There isn't," said the employer compactly. "It's just the malice of being inferior against the man in control. It's just the spirit of insubordination and boredom with duty. This trouble's as old as the Devil."

"But that is exactly the business of the church," said the bishop brightly, "to reconcile men to their duty."

"By chanting the Athanasian creed at 'em, I suppose," said the big employer, betraying the sneer he had been hiding hitherto.

"This thing is a fight," said the big employer, carrying on before the bishop could reply. "Religion had better get out of the streets until this thing is over. The men won't listen to

reason. They don't mean to. They're bit by Syndicalism. They're setting out, I tell you, to be unreasonable and impossible. It isn't an argument; it's a fight. They don't want to make friends with the employer. They want to make an end to the employer. Whatever we give them they'll take and press us for more. Directly we make terms with the leaders the men go behind it... It's a raid on the whole system. They don't mean to work the system--anyhow. I'm the capitalist, and the capitalist has to go. I'm to be bundled out of my works, and some--some "--he seemed to be rejecting unsuitable words--" confounded politician put in. Much good it would do them. But before that happens I'm going to fight. You would."

The bishop walked to the window and stood staring at the brilliant spring bulbs in the big employer's garden, and at a long vista of newly-mown lawn under great shapely trees just budding into green.

"I can't admit," he said, "that these troubles lie outside the sphere of the church."

The employer came and stood beside him. He felt he was being a little hard on the bishop, but he could not see any way of making things easier.

"One doesn't want Sacred Things," he tried, "in a scrap like this.

"We've got to mend things or end things," continued the big employer. "Nothing goes on for ever. Things can't last as they are going on now...."

Then he went on abruptly to something that for a time he had been keeping back.

"Of course just at present the church may do a confounded lot of harm. Some of you clerical gentlemen are rather too fond of talking socialism and even preaching socialism. Don't think I want to be overcritical. I admit there's no end of things to be said for a proper sort of socialism, Ruskin, and all that. We're all Socialists nowadays. Ideals--excellent. But--it gets misunderstood. It gives the men a sense of moral support. It makes them fancy that they are It. Encourages them to forget duties and set up preposterous claims. Class war and all that sort of thing. You gentlemen of the clergy don't quite realize that socialism may begin with Ruskin and end with Karl Marx. And that from the Class War to the Commune is just one step."

(5)

From this conversation the bishop had made his way to the vicarage of Mogham Banks. The vicar of Mogham Banks was a sacerdotal socialist of the most advanced type, with the reputation of being closely in touch with the labour extremists. He was a man addicted to banners, prohibited ornaments, special services at unusual hours, and processions in the streets. His taste in chasubles was loud, he gardened in a cassock and, it was said, he slept in his biretta; he certainly slept in a hair shirt, and he littered his church with flowers, candles, side altars, confessional boxes, requests for prayers for the departed, and the like. There had already been two Kensitite demonstrations at his services, and altogether he was a source of considerable anxiety to the bishop. The bishop did his best not to know too exactly what was going on at Mogham Banks. Sooner or later he felt he would be forced to do something--and the longer he could put that off the better. But the Rev. Morrice Deans had promised to get together three or four prominent labour leaders for tea and a frank talk, and the opportunity was one not to be missed. So the bishop, after a hasty and not too digestible

lunch in the refreshment room at Pringle, was now in a fly that smelt of straw and suggested infectious hospital patients, on his way through the industry-scarred countryside to this second conversation.

The countryside had never seemed so scarred to him as it did that day.

It was probably the bright hard spring sunshine that emphasized the contrast between that dear England of hedges and homes and the south-west wind in which his imagination lived, and the crude presences of a mechanical age. Never before had the cuttings and heapings, the smashing down of trees, the obtrusion of corrugated iron and tar, the belchings of smoke and the haste, seemed so harsh and disregarding of all the bishop's world. Across the fields a line of gaunt iron standards, abominably designed, carried an electric cable to some unknown end. The curve of the hill made them seem a little out of the straight, as if they hurried and bent forward furtively.

"Where are they going?" asked the bishop, leaning forward to look out of the window of the fly, and then: "Where is it all going?"

And presently the road was under repair, and was being done at a great pace with a huge steam-roller, mechanically smashed granite, and kettles of stinking stuff, asphalt or something of that sort, that looked and smelt like Milton's hell. Beyond, a gaunt hoarding advertised extensively the Princhester Music Hall, a mean beastly place that corrupted boys and girls; and also it clamoured of tyres and potted meats....

The afternoon's conference gave him no reassuring answer to his question, "Where is it all going?"

The afternoon's conference did no more than intensify the new and strange sense of alienation from the world that the morning's talk had evoked.

The three labour extremists that Morrice Deans had assembled obviously liked the bishop and found him picturesque, and were not above a certain snobbish gratification at the purple-trimmed company they were in, but it was clear that they regarded his intervention in the great dispute as if it were a feeble waving from the bank across the waters of a great river.

"There's an incurable misunderstanding between the modern employer and the modern employed," the chief labour spokesman said, speaking in a broad accent that completely hid from him and the bishop and every one the fact that he was by far the best-read man of the party. "Disraeli called them the Two Nations, but that was long ago. Now it's a case of two species. Machinery has made them into different species. The employer lives away from his work-people, marries a wife foreign, out of a county family or suchlike, trains his children from their very birth in a different manner. Why, the growth curve is different for the two species. They haven't even a common speech between them. One looks east and the other looks west. How can you expect them to agree? Of course they won't agree. We've got to fight it out. They say we're their slaves for ever. Have you ever read Lady Bell's 'At the Works'? A well-intentioned woman, but she gives the whole thing away. We say, No! It's our sort and not your sort. We'll do without you. We'll get a little more education and then we'll do without you. We're pressing for all we can get, and when we've got that we'll take breath and press for more. We're the Morlocks. Coming up. It isn't our fault that we've differentiated."

"But you haven't understood the drift of Christianity," said the bishop. "It's just to assert that men are One community and

not two."

"There's not much of that in the Creeds," said a second labour leader who was a rationalist. "There's not much of that in the services of the church."

The vicar spoke before his bishop, and indeed he had plenty of time to speak before his bishop. "Because you will not set yourselves to understand the symbolism of her ritual," he said.

"If the church chooses to speak in riddles," said the rationalist.

"Symbols," said Morrice Deans, "need not be riddles," and for a time the talk eddied about this minor issue and the chief labour spokesman and the bishop looked at one another. The vicar instanced and explained certain apparently insignificant observances, his antagonist was contemptuously polite to these explanations. "That's all very pratty," he said....

The bishop wished that fine points of ceremonial might have been left out of the discussion.

Something much bigger than that was laying hold of his intelligence, the realization of a world extravagantly out of hand. The sky, the wind, the telegraph poles, had been jabbing in the harsh lesson of these men's voices, that the church, as people say, "wasn't in it." And that at the same time the church held the one remedy for all this ugliness and contention in its teaching of the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of men. Only for some reason he hadn't the phrases and he hadn't the voice to assert this over their wrangling and their stiff resolution. He wanted to think the whole business out thoroughly, for the moment he had nothing to say, and there was the labour leader opposite waiting smilingly to hear what he had

to say so soon as the bout between the vicar and the rationalist was over.

(6)

That morning in the long galleries of the bishop's imagination a fresh painting had been added. It was a big wall painting rather in the manner of Puvis de Chavannes. And the central figure had been the bishop of Princhester himself. He had been standing upon the steps of the great door of the cathedral that looks upon the marketplace where the tram-lines meet, and he had been dressed very magnificently and rather after the older use. He had been wearing a tunic and dalmatic under a chasuble, a pectoral cross, purple gloves, sandals and buskins, a mitre and his presentation ring. In his hand he had borne his pastoral staff. And the clustering pillars and arches of the great doorway were painted with a loving flat particularity that omitted nothing but the sooty tinge of the later discolourations.

On his right hand had stood a group of employers very richly dressed in the fashion of the fifteenth century, and on the left a rather more numerous group of less decorative artisans. With them their wives and children had been shown, all greatly impressed by the canonicals. Every one had been extremely respectful.

He had been reconciling the people and blessing them and calling them his "sheep" and his "little children."

But all this was so different.

Neither party resembled sheep or little children in the least degree. .

The labour leader became impatient with the ritualistic controversy; he set his tea-cup aside out of danger and leant across the corner of the table to the bishop and spoke in a sawing undertone. "You see," he said, "the church does not talk our language. I doubt if it understands our language. I doubt if we understand clearly where we are ourselves. These things have to be fought out and hammered out. It's a big dusty dirty noisy job. It may be a bloody job before it's through. You can't suddenly call a halt in the middle of the scrap and have a sort of millennium just because you want it...."

"Of course if the church had a plan," he said, "if it had a proposal to make, if it had anything more than a few pious palliatives to suggest, that might be different. But has it?"

The bishop had a bankrupt feeling. On the spur of the moment he could say no more than: "It offers its mediation."

(7)

Full as he was with the preoccupation of these things and so a little slow and inattentive in his movements, the bishop had his usual luck at Pringle Junction and just missed the 7.27 for Princhester. He might perhaps have got it by running through the subway and pushing past people, but bishops must not run through subways and push past people. His mind swore at the mischance, even if his lips refrained.

He was hungry and, tired; he would not get to the palace now until long after nine; dinner would be over and Lady Ella would naturally suppose he had dined early with the Rev. Morrice Deans. Very probably there would be nothing ready for him at all.

He tried to think he was exercising self-control, but indeed

all his sub-conscious self was busy in a manner that would not have disgraced Tertullian with the eternal welfare of those city fathers whose obstinacy had fixed the palace at Princhester. He walked up and down the platform, gripping his hands very tightly behind him, and maintaining a serene upcast countenance by a steadfast effort. It seemed a small matter to him that the placards of the local evening papers should proclaim "Lloyd George's Reconciliation Meeting at Wombash Broken up by Suffragettes." For a year now he had observed a strict rule against buying the products of the local press, and he saw no reason for varying this protective regulation.

His mind was full of angry helplessness.

Was he to blame, was the church to blame, for its powerlessness in these social disputes? Could an abler man with a readier eloquence have done more?

He envied the cleverness of Cardinal Manning. Manning would have got right into the front of this affair. He would have accumulated credit for his church and himself...

But would he have done much?...

The bishop wandered along the platform to its end, and stood contemplating the convergent ways that gather together beyond the station and plunge into the hillside and the wilderness of sidings and trucks, signal-boxes, huts, coal-pits, electric standards, goods sheds, turntables, and engine-houses, that ends in a bluish bricked-up cliff against the hill. A train rushed with a roar and clatter into the throat of the great tunnel and was immediately silenced; its rear lights twinkled and vanished, and then out of that huge black throat came wisps of white steam and curled slowly upward like lazy snakes until they caught the slanting sunshine. For the first time the day betrayed a softness

and touched this scene of black energy to gold. All late afternoons are beautiful, whatever the day has been--if only there is a gleam of sun. And now a kind of mechanical greatness took the place of mere black disorder in the bishop's perception of his see. It was harsh, it was vast and strong, it was no lamb he had to rule but a dragon. Would it ever be given to him to overcome his dragon, to lead it home, and bless it?

He stood at the very end of the platform, with his gaitered legs wide apart and his hands folded behind him, staring beyond all visible things.

Should he do something very bold and striking? Should he invite both men and masters to the cathedral, and preach tremendous sermons to them upon these living issues?

Short sermons, of course.

But stating the church's attitude with a new and convincing vigour.

He had a vision of the great aisle strangely full and alive and astir. The organ notes still echoed in the fretted vaulting, as the preacher made his way from the chancel to the pulpit. The congregation was tense with expectation, and for some reason his mind dwelt for a long time upon the figure of the preacher ascending the steps of the pulpit. Outside the day was dark and stormy, so that the stained-glass windows looked absolutely dead. For a little while the preacher prayed. Then in the attentive silence the tenor of the preacher would begin, a thin jet of sound, a ray of light in the darkness, speaking to all these men as they had never been spoken to before....

Surely so one might call a halt to all these harsh conflicts. So one might lay hands afresh upon these stubborn minds, one

might win them round to look at Christ the Master and Servant....

That, he thought, would be a good phrase: "Christ the Master and Servant."

"Members of one Body," that should be his text... At last it was finished. The big congregation, which had kept so still, sighed and stirred. The task of reconciliation was as good as done. "And now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost...."

Outside the day had become suddenly bright, the threatening storm had drifted away, and great shafts of coloured light from the pictured windows were smiting like arrows amidst his hearers....

This idea of a great sermon upon capital and labour did so powerfully grip the bishop's imagination that he came near to losing the 8.27 train also.

He discovered it when it was already in the station. He had to walk down the platform very quickly. He did not run, but his gaiters, he felt, twinkled more than a bishop's should.

(8)

Directly he met his wife he realized that he had to hear something important and unpleasant.

She stood waiting for him in the inner hall, looking very grave and still. The light fell upon her pale face and her dark hair and her long white silken dress, making her seem more delicate and unworldly than usual and making the bishop feel grimy and sordid.

"I must have a wash," he said, though before he had thought of nothing but food. "I have had nothing to eat since tea-time-- and that was mostly talk."

Lady Ella considered. "There are cold things.... You shall have a tray in the study. Not in the dining-room. Eleanor is there. I want to tell you something. But go upstairs first and wash your poor tired face."

"Nothing serious, I hope?" he asked, struck by an unusual quality in her voice.

"I will tell you," she evaded, and after a moment of mutual scrutiny he went past her upstairs.

Since they had come to Princhester Lady Ella had changed very markedly. She seemed to her husband to have gained in dignity; she was stiller and more restrained; a certain faint arrogance, a touch of the "ruling class" manner had dwindled almost to the vanishing point. There had been a time when she had inclined to an authoritative hauteur, when she had seemed likely to develop into one of those aggressive and interfering old ladies who play so overwhelming a part in British public affairs. She had been known to initiate adverse judgments, to exercise the snub, to cut and humiliate. Princhester had done much to purge her of such tendencies. Princhester had made her think abundantly, and had put a new and subtler quality into her beauty. It had taken away the least little disposition to rustle as she moved, and it had softened her voice.

Now, when presently she stood in the study, she showed a new circumspection in her treatment of her husband. She surveyed the tray before him.

"You ought not to drink that Burgundy," she said. "I can see you are dog-tired. It was uncorked yesterday, and anyhow it is not very digestible. This cold meat is bad enough. You ought to have one of those quarter bottles of champagne you got for my last convalescence. There's more than a dozen left over."

The bishop felt that this was a pretty return of his own kindly thoughts "after many days," and soon Dunk, his valet-butler, was pouring out the precious and refreshing glassful....

"And now, dear?" said the bishop, feeling already much better.

Lady Ella had come round to the marble fireplace. The mantel-piece was a handsome work by a Princhester artist in the Gill style--with contemplative ascetics as supporters.

"I am worried about Eleanor," said Lady Ella.

"She is in the dining-room now," she said, "having some dinner. She came in about a quarter past eight, half way through dinner."

"Where had she been?" asked the bishop.

"Her dress was torn--in two places. Her wrist had been twisted and a little sprained."

"My dear!"

"Her face--Grubby! And she had been crying."

"But, my dear, what had happened to her? You don't mean--?"

Husband and wife stared at one another aghast. Neither of them said the horrid word that flamed between them.

"Merciful heaven!" said the bishop, and assumed an attitude of despair.

"I didn't know she knew any of them. But it seems it is the second Walshingham girl--Phoebe. It's impossible to trace a girl's thoughts and friends. She persuaded her to go."

"But did she understand?"

"That's the serious thing," said Lady Ella.

She seemed to consider whether he could bear the blow.

"She understands all sorts of things. She argues... I am quite unable to argue with her."

"About this vote business?"

"About all sorts of things. Things I didn't imagine she had heard of. I knew she had been reading books. But I never imagined that she could have understood...."

The bishop laid down his knife and fork.

"One may read in books, one may even talk of things, without fully understanding," he said.

Lady Ella tried to entertain this comforting thought. "It isn't like that," she said at last. "She talks like a grown-up person. This--this escapade is just an accident. But things have gone further than that. She seems to think--that she is not being educated properly here, that she ought to go to a College. As if we were keeping things from her...."

The bishop reconsidered his plate.

"But what things?" he said.

"She says we get all round her," said Lady Ella, and left the implications of that phrase to unfold.

(9)

For a time the bishop said very little.

Lady Ella had found it necessary to make her first announcement standing behind him upon the hearthrug, but now she sat upon the arm of the great armchair as close to him as possible, and spoke in a more familiar tone.

The thing, she said, had come to her as a complete surprise. Everything had seemed so safe. Eleanor had been thoughtful, it was true, but it had never occurred to her mother that she had really been thinking--about such things as she had been thinking about. She had ranged in the library, and displayed a disposition to read the weekly papers and the monthly reviews. But never a sign of discontent.

"But I don't understand," said the bishop. "Why is she discontented? What is there that she wants different?"

"Exactly," said Lady Ella.

"She has got this idea that life here is secluded in some way," she expanded. "She used words like 'secluded' and 'artificial' and--what was it?--'cloistered.' And she said--"

Lady Ella paused with an effect of exact retrospection.

"'Out there,' she said, 'things are alive. Real things are happening.' It is almost as if she did not fully believe--"

Lady Ella paused again.

The bishop sat with his arm over the back of his chair, and his face downcast.

"The ferment of youth," he said at last. "The ferment of youth. Who has given her these ideas?"

Lady Ella did not know. She could have thought a school like St. Aubyns would have been safe, but nowadays nothing was safe. It was clear the girls who went there talked as girls a generation ago did not talk. Their people at home encouraged them to talk and profess opinions about everything. It seemed that Phoebe Walshingham and Lady Kitty Kingdom were the leaders in these premature mental excursions. Phoebe aired religious doubts.

"But little Phoebe!" said the bishop.

"Kitty," said Lady Ella, "has written a novel."

"Already! "

"With elopements in it--and all sorts of things. She's had it typed. You'd think Mary Crosshampton would know better than to let her daughter go flourishing the family imagination about in that way."

"Eleanor told you?"

"By way of showing that they think of--things in general."

The bishop reflected. "She wants to go to College."

"They want to go in a set."

"I wonder if college can be much worse than school.... She's eighteen--? But I will talk to her...."

(10)

All our children are changelings. They are perpetually fresh strangers. Every day they vanish and a new person masquerades as yesterday's child until some unexpected development betrays the cheat.

The bishop had still to learn this perennial newness of the young. He learnt it in half an hour at the end of a fatiguing day.

He went into the dining-room. He went in as carelessly as possible and smoking a cigarette. He had an honourable dread of being portentous in his family; almost ostentatiously he laid the bishop aside. Eleanor had finished her meal, and was sitting in the arm-chair by the fire with one hand holding her sprained wrist.

"Well," he said, and strolled to the hearthrug. He had had an odd idea that he would find her still dirty, torn, and tearful, as her mother had described her, a little girl in a scrape. But she had changed into her best white evening frock and put up her hair, and became in the firelight more of a lady, a very young lady but still a lady, than she had ever been to him before. She was dark like her mother, but not of the same willowy type; she had more of her father's sturdy build, and she had developed her shoulders at hockey and tennis. The firelight brought out the gracious reposeful lines of a body that ripened in adolescence.

And though there was a vibration of resolution in her voice she spoke like one who is under her own control.

"Mother has told you that I have disgraced myself," she began.

"No," said the bishop, weighing it. "No. But you seem to have been indiscreet, little Norah."

"I got excited," she said. "They began turning out the other women--roughly. I was indignant."

"You didn't go to interrupt?" he asked.

She considered. "No," she said. "But I went."

He liked her disposition to get it right. "On that side," he assisted.

"It isn't the same thing as really meaning, Daddy," she said.

"And then things happened?"

"Yes," she said to the fire.

A pause followed. If they had been in a law-court, her barrister would have said, "That is my case, my lord." The bishop prepared to open the next stage in the proceedings.

"I think, Norah, you shouldn't have been there at all," he said.

"Mother says that."

"A man in my position is apt to be judged by his family. You commit more than yourself when you commit an indiscretion. Apart

from that, it wasn't the place for a girl to be at. You are not a child now. We give you freedom--more freedom than most girls get--because we think you will use it wisely. You knew--enough to know that there was likely to be trouble."

The girl looked into the fire and spoke very carefully. "I don't think that I oughtn't to know the things that are going on."

The bishop studied her face for an instant. It struck him that they had reached something very fundamental as between parent and child. His modernity showed itself in the temperance of his reply.

"Don't you think, my dear, that on the whole your mother and I, who have lived longer and know more, are more likely to know when it is best that you should begin to know--this or that?"

The girl knitted her brows and seemed to be reading her answer out of the depths of the coals. She was on the verge of speaking, altered her mind and tried a different beginning.

"I think that every one must do their thinking--his thinking --for--oneself," she said awkwardly.

"You mean you can't trust--?"

"It isn't trusting. But one knows best for oneself when one is hungry."

"And you find yourself hungry?"

"I want to find out for myself what all this trouble about votes and things means."

"And we starve you--intellectually?"

"You know I don't think that. But you are busy...."

"Aren't you being perhaps a little impatient, Eleanor? After all--you are barely eighteen.... We have given you all sorts of liberties."

Her silence admitted it. "But still," she said after a long pause, "there are other girls, younger than I am, in these things. They talk about--oh, all sorts of things. Freely...."

"You've been awfully good to me," she said irrelevantly. "And of course this meeting was all pure accident."

Father and daughter remained silent for awhile, seeking a better grip.

"What exactly do you want, Eleanor?" he asked.

She looked up at him. "Generally?" she asked.

"Your mother has the impression that you are discontented."

"Discontented is a horrid word."

"Well--unsatisfied."

She remained still for a time. She felt the moment had come to make her demand.

"I would like to go to Newnham or Somerville--and work. I feel--so horribly ignorant. Of all sorts of things. If I were a son I should go--"

"Ye--es," said the bishop and reflected.

He had gone rather far in the direction of the Woman Suffrage people; he had advocated equality of standard in all sorts of matters, and the memory of these utterances hampered him.

"You could read here," he tried.

"If I were a son, you wouldn't say that."

His reply was vague. "But in this home," he said, "we have a certain atmosphere. .

He left her to imply her differences in sensibility and response from the hardier male.

Her hesitation marked the full gravity of her reply. "It's just that," she said. "One feels--" She considered it further. "As if we were living in a kind of magic world--not really real. Out there--" she glanced over her shoulder at the drawn blind that hid the night. "One meets with different sorts of minds and different--atmospheres. All this is very beautiful. I've had the most wonderful home. But there's a sort of feeling as though it couldn't really go on, as though all these strikes and doubts and questionings--"

She stopped short at questionings, for the thing was said.

The bishop took her meaning gallantly and honestly.

"The church of Christ, little Norah, is built upon a rock."

She made no answer. She moved her head very slightly so that he could not see her face, and remained sitting rather stiffly and awkwardly with her eyes upon the fire.

Her silence was the third and greatest blow the bishop received that day....

It seemed very long indeed before either of them spoke. At last he said: "We must talk about these things again, Norah, when we are less tired and have more time.... You have been reading books.... When Caxton set up his printing-press he thrust a new power between church and disciple and father and child.... And I am tired. We must talk it over a little later."

The girl stood up. She took her father's hands. "Dear, dear Daddy," she said, "I am so sorry to be a bother. I am so sorry I went to that meeting.... You look tired out."

"We must talk--properly," said the bishop, patting one hand, then discovering from her wincing face that it was the sprained one. "Your poor wrist," he said.

"It's so hard to talk, but I want to talk to you, Daddy. It isn't that I have hidden things...."

She kissed him, and the bishop had the odd fancy that she kissed him as though she was sorry for him....

It occurred to him that really there could be no time like the present for discussing these "questionings" of hers, and then his fatigue and shyness had the better of him again.

(11)

The papers got hold of Eleanor's share in the suffragette disturbance. The White Blackbird said things about her.

It did not attack her. It did worse. It admired her
...impudently.

It spoke of her once as "Norah," and once as "the Scrope
Flapper."

Its headline proclaimed: "Plucky Flappers Hold Up L. G."

CHAPTER THE THIRD - INSOMNIA

(1)

THE night after his conversation with Eleanor was the first night of the bishop's insomnia. It was the definite beginning of a new phase in his life.

Doctors explain to us that the immediate cause of insomnia is always some poisoned or depleted state of the body, and no doubt the fatigues and hasty meals of the day had left the bishop in a state of unprecedented chemical disorder, with his nerves irritated by strange compounds and unsoothed by familiar lubricants. But chemical disorders follow mental disturbances, and the core and essence of his trouble was an intellectual distress. For the first time in his life he was really in doubt, about himself, about his way of living, about all his persuasions. It was a general doubt. It was not a specific suspicion upon this point or that. It was a feeling of detachment and unreality at once extraordinarily vague and extraordinarily oppressive. It was as if he discovered himself flimsy and transparent in a world of minatory solidity and opacity. It was as if he found himself made not of flesh and blood but of tissue paper.

But this intellectual insecurity extended into his physical sensations. It affected his feeling in his skin, as if it were not absolutely his own skin.

And as he lay there, a weak phantom mentally and bodily, an endless succession and recurrence of anxieties for which he could find no reassurance besieged him.

Chief of this was his distress for Eleanor.

She was the central figure in this new sense of illusion in familiar and trusted things. It was not only that the world of his existence which had seemed to be the whole universe had become diaphanous and betrayed vast and uncontrollable realities beyond it, but his daughter had as it were suddenly opened a door in this glassy sphere of insecurity that had been his abiding refuge, a door upon the stormy rebel outer world, and she stood there, young, ignorant, confident, adventurous, ready to step out.

"Could it be possible that she did not believe?"

He saw her very vividly as he had seen her in the dining-room, slender and upright, half child, half woman, so fragile and so fearless. And the door she opened thus carelessly gave upon a stormy background like one of the stormy backgrounds that were popular behind portrait Dianas in eighteenth century paintings. Did she believe that all he had taught her, all the life he led was--what was her phrase?--a kind of magic world, not really real?

He groaned and turned over and repeated the words:
"A kind of magic world--not really real!"

The wind blew through the door she opened, and scattered everything in the room. And still she held the door open.

He was astonished at himself. He started up in swift indignation. Had he not taught the child? Had he not brought her up in an atmosphere of faith? What right had she to turn upon him in this matter? It was--indeed it was--a sort of insolence, a lack of reverence....

It was strange he had not perceived this at the time.

But indeed at the first mention of "questionings" he ought to have thundered. He saw that quite clearly now. He ought to have cried out and said, "On your knees, my Norah, and ask pardon of God!"

Because after all faith is an emotional thing....

He began to think very rapidly and copiously of things he ought to have said to Eleanor. And now the eloquence of reverie was upon him. In a little time he was also addressing the tea-party at Morrice Deans'. Upon them too he ought to have thundered. And he knew now also all that he should have said to the recalcitrant employer. Thunder also. Thunder is surely the privilege of the higher clergy--under Jove.

But why hadn't he thundered?

He gesticulated in the darkness, thrust out a clutching hand.

There are situations that must be gripped--gripped firmly. And without delay. In the middle ages there had been grip enough in a purple glove.

(2)

From these belated seizures of the day's lost opportunities the bishop passed to such a pessimistic estimate of the church as had never entered his mind before.

It was as if he had fallen suddenly out of a spiritual balloon into a world of bleak realism. He found himself asking unprecedented and devastating questions, questions that implied the most fundamental shiftings of opinion. Why was the church

such a failure? Why had it no grip upon either masters or men amidst this vigorous life of modern industrialism, and why had it no grip upon the questioning young? It was a tolerated thing, he felt, just as sometimes he had felt that the Crown was a tolerated thing. He too was a tolerated thing; a curious survival....

This was not as things should be. He struggled to recover a proper attitude. But he remained enormously dissatisfied....

The church was no Levite to pass by on the other side away from the struggles and wrongs of the social conflict. It had no right when the children asked for the bread of life to offer them Gothic stone....

He began to make interminable weak plans for fulfilling his duty to his diocese and his daughter.

What could he do to revivify his clergy? He wished he had more personal magnetism, he wished he had a darker and a larger presence. He wished he had not been saddled with Whippham's rather futile son as his chaplain. He wished he had a dean instead of being his own dean. With an unsympathetic rector. He wished he had it in him to make some resounding appeal. He might of course preach a series of thumping addresses and sermons, rather on the lines of "Fors Clavigera," to masters and men, in the Cathedral. Only it was so difficult to get either masters or men into the Cathedral.

Well, if the people will not come to the bishop the bishop must go out to the people. Should he go outside the Cathedral--to the place where the trains met?

Interweaving with such thoughts the problem of Eleanor rose again into his consciousness.

Weren't there books she ought to read? Weren't there books she ought to be made to read? And books--and friends--that ought to be imperatively forbidden? Imperatively!

But how to define the forbidden?

He began to compose an address on Modern Literature (so-called).

It became acrimonious.

Before dawn the birds began to sing.

His mind had seemed to be a little tranquillized, there had been a distinct feeling of subsidence sleepwards, when first one and then another little creature roused itself and the bishop to greet the gathering daylight.

It became a little clamour, a misty sea of sound in which individuality appeared and disappeared. For a time a distant cuckoo was very perceptible, like a landmark looming up over a fog, like the cuckoo in the Pastoral Symphony.

The bishop tried not to heed these sounds, but they were by their very nature insistent sounds. He lay disregarding them acutely.

Presently he pulled the coverlet over his ears.

A little later he sat up in bed.

Again in a slight detail he marked his strange and novel detachment from the world of his upbringing. His hallucination of disillusionment had spread from himself and his church and his

faith to the whole animate creation. He knew that these were the voices of "our feathered songsters," that this was "a joyous chorus" greeting the day. He knew that a wakeful bishop ought to bless these happy creatures, and join with them by reciting Ken's morning hymn. He made an effort that was more than half habit, to repeat and he repeated with a scowling face and the voice of a schoolmaster:

"Awake my soul, and with the sun

Thy daily stage of duty run...."

He got no further. He stopped short, sat still, thinking what utterly detestable things singing birds were. A blackbird had gripped his attention. Never had he heard such vain repetitions. He struggled against the dark mood of criticism. "He prayeth best who loveth best--"

No, he did not love the birds. It was useless to pretend. Whatever one may say about other birds a cuckoo is a low detestable cad of a bird.

Then the bishop began to be particularly tormented by a bird that made a short, insistent, wheezing sound at regular intervals of perhaps twenty seconds. If a bird could have whooping-cough, that, he thought, was the sort of whoop it would have. But even if it had whooping-cough he could not pity it. He hung in its intervals waiting for the return of the wheeze.

And then that blackbird reasserted itself. It had a rich boastful note; it seemed proud of its noisy reiteration of simple self-assertion. For some obscure reason the phrase "oleographic sounds" drifted into the bishop's thoughts. This bird produced

the peculiar and irrational impression that it had recently made a considerable sum of money by shrewd industrialism. It was, he thought grimly, a genuine Princhester blackbird.

This wickedly uncharitable reference to his diocese ran all unchallenged through the bishop's mind. And others no less wicked followed it.

Once during his summer holidays in Florence he and Lady Ella had subscribed to an association for the protection of song-birds. He recalled this now with a mild wonder. It seemed to him that perhaps after all it was as well to let fruit-growers and Italians deal with singing-birds in their own way. Perhaps after all they had a wisdom....

He passed his hands over his face. The world after all is not made entirely for singing-birds; there is such a thing as proportion. Singing-birds may become a luxury, an indulgence, an excess.

Did the birds eat the fruit in Paradise?

Perhaps there they worked for some collective musical effect, had some sort of conductor in the place of this--hullabaloo....

He decided to walk about the room for a time and then remake his bed....

The sunrise found the bishop with his head and shoulders out of the window trying to see that blackbird. He just wanted to look at it. He was persuaded it was a quite exceptional blackbird.

Again came that oppressive sense of the futility of the contemporary church, but this time it came in the most grotesque form. For hanging half out of the casement he was suddenly

reminded of St. Francis of Assisi, and how at his rebuke the wheeling swallow stilled their cries.

But it was all so different then.

(3)

It was only after he had passed four similar nights, with intervening days of lassitude and afternoon siestas, that the bishop realized that he was in the grip of insomnia.

He did not go at once to a doctor, but he told his trouble to every one he met and received much tentative advice. He had meant to have his talk with Eleanor on the morning next after their conversation in the dining-room, but his bodily and spiritual anaemia prevented him.

The fifth night was the beginning of the Whitsuntide Ember week, and he wore a red cassock and had a distracting and rather interesting day welcoming his ordination candidates. They had a good effect upon him; we spiritualize ourselves when we seek to spiritualize others, and he went to bed in a happier frame of mind than he had done since the day of the shock. He woke in the night, but he woke much more himself than he had been since the trouble began. He repeated that verse of Ken's:

"When in the night I sleepless lie,
My soul with heavenly thoughts supply;
Let no ill dreams disturb my rest,
No powers of darkness me molest."

Almost immediately after these there floated into his mind, as if it were a message, the dear familiar words:

"He giveth his Beloved sleep."

These words irradiated and soothed him quite miraculously, the clouds of doubt seemed to dissolve and vanish and leave him safe and calm under a clear sky; he knew those words were a promise, and very speedily he fell asleep and slept until he was called.

But the next day was a troubled one. Whippham had muddled his timetable and crowded his afternoon; the strike of the transport workers had begun, and the ugly noises they made at the tramway depot, where they were booing some one, penetrated into the palace. He had to snatch a meal between services, and the sense of hurry invaded his afternoon lectures to the candidates. He hated hurry in Ember week. His ideal was one of quiet serenity, of grave things said slowly, of still, kneeling figures, of a sort of dark cool spiritual germination. But what sort of dark cool spiritual germination is possible with an ass like Whippham about?

In the fresh courage of the morning the bishop had arranged for that talk with Eleanor he had already deferred too long, and this had proved less satisfactory than he had intended it to be.

The bishop's experience with the ordination candidates was following the usual course. Before they came there was something bordering upon distaste for the coming invasion; then always there was an effect of surprise at the youth and faith of the neophytes and a real response of the spirit to the occasion. Throughout the first twenty-four hours they were all simply neophytes, without individuality to break up their uniformity of self-devotion. Then afterwards they began to develop little personal traits, and scarcely ever were these pleasing traits. Always one or two of them would begin haunting the bishop, giving

way to an appetite for special words, special recognitions. He knew the expression of that craving on their faces. He knew the way-laying movements in room and passage that presently began.

This time in particular there was a freckled underbred young man who handed in what was evidently a carefully prepared memorandum upon what he called "my positions." Apparently he had a muddle of doubts about the early fathers and the dates of the earlier authentic copies of the gospels, things of no conceivable significance.

The bishop glanced through this bale of papers--it had of course no index and no synopsis, and some of the pages were not numbered--handed it over to Whippham, and when he proved, as usual, a broken reed, the bishop had the brilliant idea of referring the young man to Canon Bliss (of Pringle), "who has a special knowledge quite beyond my own in this field."

But he knew from the young man's eye even as he said this that it was not going to put him off for more than a day or so.

The immediate result of glancing over these papers was, however, to enhance in the bishop's mind a growing disposition to minimize the importance of all dated and explicit evidences and arguments for orthodox beliefs, and to resort to vague symbolic and liberal interpretations, and it was in this state that he came to his talk with Eleanor.

He did not give her much time to develop her objections. He met her half way and stated them for her, and overwhelmed her with sympathy and understanding. She had been "too literal." "Too literal" was his keynote. He was a little astonished at the liberality of his own views. He had been getting along now for some years without looking into his own opinions too closely and he was by no means prepared to discover how far he had come to

meet his daughter's scepticisms. But he did meet them. He met them so thoroughly that he almost conveyed that hers was a needlessly conservative and oldfashioned attitude.

Occasionally he felt he was being a little evasive, but she did not seem to notice it. As she took his drift, her relief and happiness were manifest. And he had never noticed before how clear and pretty her eyes were; they were the most honest eyes he had ever seen. She looked at him very steadily as he explained, and lit up at his points. She brightened wonderfully as she realized that after all they were not apart, they had not differed; simply they had misunderstood....

And before he knew where he was, and in a mere parenthetical declaration of liberality, he surprised himself by conceding her demand for Newnham even before she had repeated it. It helped his case wonderfully.

"Call in every exterior witness you can. The church will welcome them.... No, I want you to go, my dear...."

But his mind was stirred again to its depths by this discussion. And in particular he was surprised and a little puzzled by this Newnham concession and the necessity of making his new attitude clear to Lady Ella....

It was with a sense of fatality that he found himself awake again that night, like some one lying drowned and still and yet perfectly conscious at the bottom of deep cold water.

He repeated, "He giveth his Beloved sleep," but all the conviction had gone out of the words.

(4)

Neither the bishop's insomnia nor his uncertainties about himself and his faith developed in a simple and orderly manner. There were periods of sustained suffering and periods of recovery; it was not for a year or so that he regarded these troubles as more than acute incidental interruptions of his general tranquillity or realized that he was passing into a new phase of life and into a new quality of thought. He told every one of the insomnia and no one of his doubts; these he betrayed only by an increasing tendency towards vagueness, symbolism, poetry and toleration. Eleanor seemed satisfied with his exposition; she did not press for further enlightenment. She continued all her outward conformities except that after a time she ceased to communicate; and in September she went away to Newnham. Her doubts had not visibly affected Clementina or her other sisters, and the bishop made no further attempts to explore the spiritual life of his family below the surface of its formal acquiescence.

As a matter of fact his own spiritual wrestlings were almost exclusively nocturnal. During his spells of insomnia he led a curiously double existence. In the daytime he was largely the self he had always been, able, assured, ecclesiastical, except that he was a little jaded and irritable or sleepy instead of being quick and bright; he believed in God and the church and the Royal Family and himself securely; in the wakeful night time he experienced a different and novel self, a bare-minded self, bleakly fearless at its best, shamelessly weak at its worst, critical, sceptical, joyless, anxious. The anxiety was quite the worst element of all. Something sat by his pillow asking grey questions: "What are you doing? Where are you going? Is it really well with the children? Is it really well with the church? Is it really well with the country? Are you indeed doing anything at all? Are you anything more than an actor wearing a costume in an archaic play? The people turn their backs on you."

He would twist over on his pillow. He would whisper hymns and prayers that had the quality of charms.

"He giveth his Beloved sleep"; that answered many times, and many times it failed.

The labour troubles of 1912 eased off as the year wore on, and the bitterness of the local press over the palace abated very considerably. Indeed there was something like a watery gleam of popularity when he brought down his consistent friend, the dear old Princess Christiana of Hoch and Unter, black bonnet, deafness, and all, to open a new wing of the children's hospital. The Princhester conservative paper took the occasion to inform the diocese that he was a fluent German scholar and consequently a persona grata with the royal aunts, and that the Princess Christiana was merely just one of a number of royalties now practically at the beck and call of Princhester. It was not true, but it was very effective locally, and seemed to justify a little the hauteur of which Lady Ella was so unjustly suspected. Yet it involved a possibility of disappointments in the future.

He went to Brighton-Pomfrey too upon the score of his general health, and Brighton-Pomfrey revised his general regimen, discouraged indiscreet fasting, and suggested a complete abstinence from red wine except white port, if indeed that can be called a red wine, and a moderate use of Egyptian cigarettes.

But 1913 was a strenuous year. The labour troubles revived, the suffragette movement increased greatly in violence and aggressiveness, and there sprang up no less than three ecclesiastical scandals in the diocese. First, the Kensitites set themselves firmly to make presentations and prosecutions against Morrice Deans, who was reserving the sacrament, wearing, they said, "Babylonish garments," going beyond all reason in the

matter of infant confession, and generally brightening up Mogham Banks; next, a popular preacher in Wombash, published a book under the exasperating title, "The Light Under the Altar," in which he showed himself as something between an Arian and a Pantheist, and treated the dogma of the Trinity with as little respect as one would show to an intrusive cat; while thirdly, an obscure but overworked missionary of a tin mission church in the new working-class district at Pringle, being discovered in some sort of polygamous relationship, had seen fit to publish in pamphlet form a scandalous admission and defence, a pamphlet entitled "Marriage True and False," taking the public needlessly into his completest confidence and quoting the affairs of Abraham and Hosea, reviving many points that are better forgotten about Luther, and appealing also to such uncanonical authorities as Milton, Plato, and John Humphrey Noyes. This abnormal concurrence of indiscipline was extremely unlucky for the bishop. It plunged him into strenuous controversy upon three fronts, so to speak, and involved a great number of personal encounters far too vivid for his mental serenity.

The Pringle polygamist was the most moving as Morrice Deans was the most exacting and troublesome and the Wombash Pantheist the most insidiously destructive figure in these three toilsome disputes. The Pringle man's soul had apparently missed the normal distribution of fig-leaves; he was an illiterate, open-eyed, hard-voiced, freckled, rational-minded creature, with large expository hands, who had come by a side way into the church because he was an indefatigable worker, and he insisted upon telling the bishop with an irrepressible candour and completeness just exactly what was the matter with his intimate life. The bishop very earnestly did not want these details, and did his utmost to avoid the controversial questions that the honest man pressed respectfully but obstinately upon him.

"Even St. Paul, my lord, admitted that it is better to marry

than burn," said the Pringle misdemeanant, "and here was I, my lord, married and still burning!" and, "I think you would find, my lord, considering all Charlotte's peculiarities, that the situation was really much more trying than the absolute celibacy St. Paul had in view." ...

The bishop listened to these arguments as little as possible, and did not answer them at all. But afterwards the offender came and wept and said he was ruined and heartbroken and unfairly treated because he wasn't a gentleman, and that was distressing. It was so exactly true--and so inevitable. He had been deprived, rather on account of his voice and apologetics than of his offence, and public opinion was solidly with the sentence. He made a gallant effort to found what he called a Labour Church in Pringle, and after some financial misunderstandings departed with his unambiguous menage to join the advanced movement on the Clyde.

The Morrice Deans enquiry however demanded an amount of erudition that greatly fatigued the bishop. He had a very fair general knowledge of vestments, but he had never really cared for anything but the poetry of ornaments, and he had to work strenuously to master the legal side of the question. Whippham, his chaplain, was worse than useless as a helper. The bishop wanted to end the matter as quickly, quietly, and favourably to Morrice Deans as possible; he thought Morrice Deans a thoroughly good man in his parish, and he believed that the substitution of a low churchman would mean a very complete collapse of church influence in Mogham Banks, where people were now thoroughly accustomed to a highly ornate service. But Morrice Deans was intractable and his pursuers indefatigable, and on several occasions the bishop sat far into the night devising compromises and equivocations that should make the Kensitites think that Morrice Deans wasn't wearing vestments when he was, and that should make Morrice Deans think he was wearing vestments when he

wasn't. And it was Whippham who first suggested green tea as a substitute for coffee, which gave the bishop indigestion, as his stimulant for these nocturnal bouts.

Now green tea is the most lucid of poisons.

And while all this extra activity about Morrice Deans, these vigils and crammings and writings down, were using all and more energy than the bishop could well spare, he was also doing his quiet utmost to keep "The Light under the Altar" ease from coming to a head.

This man he hated.

And he dreaded him as well as hated him. Chasters, the author of "The Light under the Altar," was a man who not only reasoned closely but indelicately. There was a demonstrating, jeering, air about his preaching and writing, and everything he said and did was saturated by the spirit of challenge. He did not so much imitate as exaggerate the style of Matthew Arnold. And whatever was done publicly against him would have to be done very publicly because his book had got him a London reputation.

From the bishop's point of view Chasters was one of nature's ignoblemen. He seemed to have subscribed to the Thirty-Nine Articles and passed all the tests and taken all the pledges that stand on the way to ordination, chiefly for the pleasure of attacking them more successfully from the rear; he had been given the living of Wombash by a cousin, and filled it very largely because it was not only more piquant but more remunerative and respectable to be a rationalist lecturer in a surplice. And in a hard kind of ultra-Protestant way his social and parochial work was not badly done. But his sermons were terrible. "He takes a text," said one informant, "and he goes on firstly, secondly, thirdly, fourthly, like somebody tearing the petals from a

flower. 'Finally,' he says, and throws the bare stalk into the dustbin."

The bishop avoided "The Light under the Altar" for nearly a year. It was only when a second book was announced with the winning title of "The Core of Truth in Christianity" that he perceived he must take action. He sat up late one night with a marked copy, a very indignantly marked copy, of the former work that an elderly colonel, a Wombash parishioner, an orthodox Layman of the most virulent type, had sent him. He perceived that he had to deal with a dialectician of exceptional ability, who had concentrated a quite considerable weight of scholarship upon the task of explaining away every scrap of spiritual significance in the Eucharist. From Chasters the bishop was driven by reference to the works of Legge and Frazer, and for the first time he began to measure the dimensions and power of the modern criticism of church doctrine and observance. Green tea should have lit his way to refutation; instead it lit up the whole inquiry with a light of melancholy confirmation. Neither by night nor by day could the bishop find a proper method of opening a counter attack upon Chasters, who was indisputably an intellectually abler man and a very ruthless beast indeed to assail, and meanwhile the demand that action should be taken increased.

The literature of church history and the controversies arising out of doctrinal development became the employment of the bishop's leisure and a commanding preoccupation. He would have liked to discuss with some one else the network of perplexities in which he was entangling himself, and more particularly with Canon Bliss, but his own positions were becoming so insecure that he feared to betray them by argument. He had grown up with a kind of intellectual modesty. Some things he had never yet talked about; it made his mind blench to think of talking about them. And his great aching gaps of wakefulness began now, thanks to the

green tea, to be interspersed with theological dreams and visions of an extravagant vividness. He would see Frazer's sacrificial kings butchered picturesquely and terribly amidst strange and grotesque rituals; he would survey long and elaborate processions and ceremonials in which the most remarkable symbols were borne high in the sight of all men; he would cower before a gigantic and threatening Heaven. These green-tea dreams and visions were not so much phases of sleep as an intensification and vivid furnishing forth of insomnia. It added greatly to his disturbance that--exceeding the instructions of Brighton-Pomfrey--he had now experimented ignorantly and planlessly with one or two narcotics and sleeping mixtures that friends and acquaintances had mentioned in his hearing. For the first time in his life he became secretive from his wife. He knew he ought not to take these things, he knew they were physically and morally evil, but a tormenting craving drove him to them. Subtly and insensibly his character was being undermined by the growing nervous trouble.

He astonished himself by the cunning and the hypocritical dignity he could display in procuring these drugs. He arranged to have a tea-making set in his bedroom, and secretly substituted green tea, for which he developed a powerful craving, in the place of the delicate China tea Lady Ella procured him.

(5)

These doctrinal and physical anxieties and distresses were at their worst in the spring and early summer of 1914. That was a time of great mental and moral disturbance. There was premonition in the air of those days. It was like the uneasiness sensitive people experience before a thunderstorm. The moral atmosphere was sullen and close. The whole world seemed irritable and mischievous. The suffragettes became extraordinarily malignant; the democratic movement went rotten with sabotage and with a cant

of being "rebels"; the reactionary Tories and a crew of noisy old peeresses set themselves to create incurable confusion again in the healing wounds of Ireland, and feuds and frantic folly broke out at every point of the social and political edifice. And then a bomb burst at Sarajevo that silenced all this tumult. The unstable polity of Europe heeled over like a ship that founders.

Through the swiftest, tensest week in history Europe capsized into war.

(6)

The first effect of the war upon the mind of the bishop, as upon most imaginative minds, was to steady and exalt it. Trivialities and exasperations seemed swept out of existence. Men lifted up their eyes from disputes that had seemed incurable and wrangling that promised to be interminable, and discovered a plain and tragic issue that involved every one in a common call for devotion. For a great number of men and women who had been born and bred in security, the August and September of 1914 were the supremely heroic period of their lives. Myriads of souls were born again to ideas of service and sacrifice in those tremendous days.

Black and evil thing as the war was, it was at any rate a great thing; it did this much for countless minds that for the first time they realized the epic quality of history and their own relationship to the destinies of the race. The flimsy roof under which we had been living our lives of comedy fell and shattered the floor under our feet; we saw the stars above and the abyss below. We perceived that life was insecure and adventurous, part of one vast adventure in space and time....

Presently the smoke and dust of battle hid the great distances

again, but they could not altogether destroy the memories of this revelation.

For the first two months the bishop's attention was so detached from his immediate surroundings and employments, so absorbed by great events, that his history if it were told in detail would differ scarcely at all from the histories of most comparatively unemployed minds during those first dramatic days, the days when the Germans made their great rush upon Paris and it seemed that France was down, France and the whole fabric of liberal civilization. He emerged from these stunning apprehensions after the Battle of the Marne, to find himself busy upon a score of dispersed and disconnected war jobs, and trying to get all the new appearances and forces and urgencies of the war into relations with himself. One thing became very vivid indeed, that he wasn't being used in any real and effective way in the war. There was a mighty going to and fro upon Red Cross work and various war committees, a vast preparation for wounded men and for the succour of dislocated families; a preparation, that proved to be needless, for catastrophic unemployment. The war problem and the puzzle of German psychology ousted for a time all other intellectual interests; like every one else the bishop swam deep in Nietzsche, Bernhardt, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and the like; he preached several sermons upon German materialism and the astonishing decay of the German character. He also read every newspaper he could lay his hands on--like any secular man. He signed an address to the Russian Orthodox church, beginning "Brethren," and he revised his impressions of the Filioque controversy. The idea of a reunion of the two great state churches of Russia and England had always attracted him. But hitherto it had been a thing quite out of scale, visionary, utopian. Now in this strange time of altered perspectives it seemed the most practicable of suggestions. The mayor and corporation and a detachment of the special reserve in uniform came to a great intercession service, and in the palace there

were two conferences of local influential people, people of the most various types, people who had never met tolerantly before, expressing now opinions of unprecedented breadth and liberality.

All this sort of thing was fresh and exciting at first, and then it began to fall into a routine and became habitual, and as it became habitual he found that old sense of detachment and futility was creeping back again. One day he realized that indeed the whole flood and tumult of the war would be going on almost exactly as it was going on now if there had been neither cathedral nor bishop in Princhester. It came to him that if archbishops were rolled into patriarchs and patriarchs into archbishops, it would matter scarcely more in the world process that was afoot than if two men shook hands while their house was afire. At times all of us have inappropriate thoughts. The unfortunate thought that struck the bishop as a bullet might strike a man in an exposed trench, as he was hurrying through the cloisters to a special service and address upon that doubly glorious day in our English history, the day of St. Crispin, was of Diogenes rolling his tub.

It was a poisonous thought.

It arose perhaps out of an article in a weekly paper at which he had glanced after lunch, an article written by one of those sceptical spirits who find all too abundant expression in our periodical literature. The writer boldly charged the "Christian churches" with absolute ineffectiveness. This war, he declared, was above all other wars a war of ideas, of material organization against rational freedom, of violence against law; it was a war more copiously discussed than any war had ever been before, the air was thick with apologetics. And what was the voice of the church amidst these elemental issues? Bishops and divines who were patriots one heard discordantly enough, but where were the bishops and divines who spoke for the Prince of Peace? Where was

the blessing of the church, where was the veto of the church?
When it came to that one discovered only a broad preoccupied back
busied in supplementing the Army Medical Corps with Red Cross
activities, good work in its way--except that the canonicals
seemed superfluous. Who indeed looked to the church for any voice
at all? And so to Diogenes.

The bishop's mind went hunting for an answer to that
indictment. And came back and came back to the image of Diogenes.

It was with that image dangling like a barbed arrow from his
mind that the bishop went into the pulpit to preach upon St.
Crispin's day, and looked down upon a thin and scattered
congregation in which the elderly, the childless, and the
unoccupied predominated.

That night insomnia resumed its sway.

Of course the church ought to be controlling this great storm,
the greatest storm of war that had ever stirred mankind. It ought
to be standing fearlessly between the combatants like a figure in
a wall painting, with the cross of Christ uplifted and the
restored memory of Christendom softening the eyes of the armed
nations. "Put down those weapons and listen to me," so the church
should speak in irresistible tones, in a voice of silver
trumpets.

Instead it kept a long way from the fighting, tucked up its
vestments, and was rolling its local tubs quite briskly.

(7)

And then came the aggravation of all these distresses by an
abrupt abandonment of smoking and alcohol. Alcoholic relaxation,

a necessary mitigation of the unreality of peacetime politics, becomes a grave danger in war, and it was with an understandable desire to forward the interests of his realm that the King decided to set his statesmen an example--which unhappily was not very widely followed--by abstaining from alcohol during the continuance of the struggle. It did however swing over the Bishop of Princhester to an immediate and complete abandonment of both drink and tobacco. At that time he was finding comfort for his nerves in Manila cheroots, and a particularly big and heavy type of Egyptian cigarette with a considerable amount of opium, and his disorganized system seized upon this sudden change as a grievance, and set all his jangling being crying aloud for one cigarette--just one cigarette.

The cheroots, it seemed, he could better spare, but a cigarette became his symbol for his lost steadiness and ease.

It brought him low.

The reader has already been told the lamentable incident of the stolen cigarette and the small boy, and how the bishop, tormented by that shameful memory, cried aloud in the night.

The bishop rolled his tub, and is there any tub-rolling in the world more busy and exacting than a bishop's? He rolled in it spite of ill-health and insomnia, and all the while he was tormented by the enormous background of the world war, by his ineffective realization of vast national needs, by his passionate desire, for himself and his church, not to be ineffective.

The distressful alternation between nights of lucid doubt and days of dull acquiescence was resumed with an intensification of its contrasts. The brief phase of hope that followed the turn of the fighting upon the Maine, the hope that after all the war would end swiftly, dramatically, and justly, and everything be as

it had been before--but pleasanter, gave place to a phase that bordered upon despair. The fall of Antwerp and the doubts and uncertainties of the Flanders situation weighed terribly upon the bishop. He was haunted for a time by nightmares of Zeppelins presently raining fire upon London. These visions became Apocalyptic. The Zeppelins came to England with the new year, and with the close of the year came the struggle for Ypres that was so near to being a collapse of the allied defensive. The events of the early spring, the bloody failure of British generalship at Neuve Chapelle, the naval disaster in the Dardanelles, the sinking of the Falaba, the Russian defeat in the Masurian Lakes, all deepened the bishop's impression of the immensity of the nation's difficulties and of his own unhelpfulness. He was ashamed that the church should hold back its curates from enlistment while the French priests were wearing their uniforms in the trenches; the expedition of the Bishop of London to hold open-air services at the front seemed merely to accentuate the tub-rolling. It was rolling the tub just where it was most in the way.

What was wrong? What was wanting?

The Westminster Gazette, The Spectator, and several other of the most trusted organs of public opinion were intermittently discussing the same question. Their discussions implied at once the extreme need that was felt for religion by all sorts of representative people, and the universal conviction that the church was in some way muddling and masking her revelation. "What is wrong with the Churches?" was, for example, the general heading of The Westminster Gazette's correspondence.

One day the bishop skimmed a brief incisive utterance by Sir Harry Johnston that pierced to the marrow of his own shrinking convictions. Sir Harry is one of those people who seem to write as well as speak in a quick tenor. "Instead of propounding

plainly and without the accreted mythology of Asia Minor, Greece and Rome, the pure Gospel of Christ.... they present it overloaded with unbelievable myths (such as, among a thousand others, that Massacre of the Innocents which never took place).... bore their listeners by a Tibetan repetition of creeds that have ceased to be credible.... Mutually contradictory propositions.... Prayers and litanies composed in Byzantine and mediaeval times.... the want of actuality, the curious silliness which has, ever since the destruction of Jerusalem, hung about the exposition of Christianity.... But if the Bishops continue to fuss about the trappings of religion.... the maintenance of codes compiled by people who lived sixteen hundred or two thousand five hundred years ago.... the increasingly educated and practical-minded working classes will not come to church, weekday or Sunday."

The bishop held the paper in his hand, and with a mind that he felt to be terribly open, asked himself how true that sharp indictment might be, and, granting its general truth, what was the duty of the church, that is to say of the bishops, for as Cyprian says, *ecclesia est in episcopo*. We say the creeds; how far may we unsay them?

So far he had taken no open action against Chasters. Suppose now he were to side with Chasters and let the whole diocese, the church of Princhester, drift as far as it chose under his inaction towards an extreme modernism, risking a conflict with, and if necessary fighting, the archbishop.... It was but for a moment that his mind swung to this possibility and then recoiled. The Laymen, that band of bigots, would fight. He could not contemplate litigation and wrangling about the teaching of the church. Besides, what were the "trappings of religion" and what the essentials? What after all was "the pure gospel of Christ" of which this writer wrote so glibly? He put the paper down and took a New Testament from his desk and opened it haphazard. He felt a

curious wish that he could read it for the first time. It was over-familiar. Everything latterly in his theology and beliefs had become over-familiar. It had all become mechanical and dead and unmeaning to his tired mind....

Whippam came with a reminder of more tub-rolling, and the bishop's speculations were broken off.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH - THE SYMPATHY OF LADY SUNDERBUND

(1)

THAT night when he cried aloud at the memory of his furtive cigarette, the bishop was staying with a rich man named Garstein Fellows. These Garstein Fellows people were steel people with a financial side to them; young Garstein Fellows had his fingers in various chemical businesses, and the real life of the firm was in various minor partners called Hartstein and Blumenhart and so forth, who had acquired a considerable amount of ungentlemanly science and energy in Germany and German Switzerland. But the Fellows element was good old Princhester stuff. There had been a Fellows firm in Princhester in 1819. They were not people the bishop liked and it was not a house the bishop liked staying at, but it had become part of his policy to visit and keep in touch with as many of the local plutocracy as he could, to give and take with them, in order to make the presence of the church a reality to them. It had been not least among the negligences and evasions of the sainted but indolent Hood that he had invariably refused overnight hospitality whenever it was possible for him to get back to his home. The morning was his working time. His books and hymns had profited at the cost of missing many a generous after-dinner subscription, and at the expense of social unity. From the outset Scrope had set himself to alter this. A certain lack of enthusiasm on Lady Ella's part had merely provoked him to greater effort on his own. His ideal of what was needed with the people was something rather jolly and familiar, something like a very good and successful French or Irish priest, something that came easily and readily into their homes and laid a friendly hand on their shoulders. The less he liked these rich people naturally the more familiar his resolution to be successfully intimate made him. He put down the names and brief characteristics of their

sons and daughters in a little note-book and consulted it before every visit so as to get his most casual enquiries right. And he invited himself to the Garstein Fellows house on this occasion by telegram.

"A special mission and some business in Wombash may I have a scrap of supper and a bed?"

Now Mrs. Garstein Fellows was a thoroughly London woman; she was one of the banking Grunenbaums, the fair tall sort, and she had a very decided tendency to smartness. She had a little party in the house, a sort of long week-end party, that made her hesitate for a minute or so before she framed a reply to the bishop's request.

It was the intention of Mrs. Garstein Fellows to succeed very conspicuously in the British world, and the British world she felt was a complicated one; it is really not one world but several, and if you would surely succeed you must keep your peace with all the systems and be a source of satisfaction to all of them. So at least Mrs. Garstein Fellows saw it, and her method was to classify her acquaintances according to their systems, to keep them in their proper bundles, and to give every one the treatment he or she was accustomed to receive. And since all things British are now changing and passing away, it may not be uninteresting to record the classification Mrs. Garstein Fellows adopted. First she set apart as most precious and desirable, and requiring the most careful treatment, the "court dowdies"--for so it was that the dignity and quiet good taste that radiated from Buckingham Palace impressed her restless, shallow mind--the sort of people who prefer pair horse carriages to automobiles, have quiet friendships in the highest quarters,

quietly do not know any one else, busy themselves with charities, dress richly rather than impressively, and have either little water-colour accomplishments or none at all, and no other relations with "art." At the skirts of this crowning British world Mrs. Garstein Fellows tugged industriously and expensively. She did not keep a carriage and pair and an old family coachman because that, she felt, would be considered pushing and presumptuous; she had the sense to stick to her common unpretending 80 h.p. Daimler; but she wore a special sort of blackish hat-bonnet for such occasions as brought her near the centre of honour, which she got from a little good shop known only to very few outside the inner ring, which hat-bonnet she was always careful to sit on for a few minutes before wearing. And it was to this first and highest and best section of her social scheme that she considered that bishops properly belonged. But some bishops, and in particular such a comparatively bright bishop as the Bishop of Princhester, she also thought of as being just as comfortably accommodated in her second system, the "serious liberal lot," which was more fatiguing and less boring, which talked of books and things, visited the Bells, went to all first-nights when Granville Barker was the producer, and knew and valued people in the grey and earnest plains between the Cecils and the Sidney Webbs. And thirdly there were the smart intellectual lot, again not very well marked off, and on the whole practicable to bishops, of whom fewer particulars are needed because theirs is a perennial species, and then finally there was that fourth world which was paradoxically at once very brilliant and a little shady, which had its Night Club side, and seemed to set no limit to its eccentricities. It seemed at times to be aiming to shock and yet it had its standards, but here it was that the dancers and actresses and forgiven divorcees came in --and the bishops as a rule, a rule hitherto always respected, didn't. This was the ultimate world of Mrs. Garstein Fellows; she had no use for merely sporting people and the merely correct smart and the duller county families, sets that led nowhere, and

it was from her fourth system of the Glittering Doubtfuls that this party which made her hesitate over the bishop's telegram, was derived.

She ran over their names as she sat considering her reply.

What was there for a bishop to object to? There was that admirable American widow, Lady Sunderbund. She was enormously rich, she was enthusiastic. She was really on probation for higher levels; it was her décolletage delayed her. If only she kept off theosophy and the Keltic renaissance and her disposition to profess wild intellectual passions, there would be no harm in her. Provided she didn't come down to dinner in anything too fantastically scanty--but a word in season was possible. No! there was no harm in Lady Sunderbund. Then there were Ridgeway Kelso and this dark excitable Catholic friend of his, Paidraig O'Gorman. Mrs. Garstein Fellows saw no harm in them. Then one had to consider Lord Gatling and Lizzie Barusetter. But nothing showed, nothing was likely to show even if there was anything. And besides, wasn't there a Church and Stage Guild?

Except for those people there seemed little reason for alarm. Mrs. Garstein Fellows did not know that Professor Hoppart, who so amusingly combined a professorship of political economy with the writing of music-hall lyrics, was a keen amateur theologian, nor that Bent, the sentimental novelist, had a similar passion. She did not know that her own eldest son, a dark, romantic-looking youngster from Eton, had also come to the theological stage of development. She did however weigh the possibilities of too liberal opinions on what are called social questions on the part of Miss Sharsper, the novelist, and decided that if that lady was watched nothing so terrible could be said even in an undertone; and as for the Mariposa, the dancer, she had nothing but Spanish and bad French, she looked all right, and it wasn't very likely she would go out of her way to startle an Anglican bishop. Simply

she needn't dance. Besides which even if a man does get a glimpse of a little something--it isn't as if it was a woman.

But of course if the party mustn't annoy the bishop, the bishop must do his duty by the party. There must be the usual purple and the silver buckles.

She wired back:

"A little party but it won't put you out send your man with your change."

(2)

In making that promise Mrs. Garstein Fellows reckoned without the morbid sensibility of the bishop's disorganized nervous system and the unsuspected theological stirrings beneath the apparent worldliness of Hoppart and Bent.

The trouble began in the drawing-room after dinner. Out of deference to the bishop's abstinence the men did not remain to smoke, but came in to find the Mariposa and Lady Sunderbund smoking cigarettes, which these ladies continued to do a little defiantly. They had hoped to finish them before the bishop came up. The night was chilly, and a cheerful wood fire cracking and banging on the fireplace emphasized the ordinary heating. Mrs. Garstein Fellows, who had not expected so prompt an appearance of the men, had arranged her chairs in a semicircle for a little womanly gossip, and before she could intervene she found her party, with the exception of Lord Gatling, who had drifted just a little too noticeably with Miss Barnsetter into a window, sitting round with a conscious air, that was perhaps just a trifle too apparent, of being "good."

And Mr. Bent plunged boldly into general conversation.

"Are you reading anything now, Mrs. Garstein Fellows?" he asked. "I'm an interested party."

She was standing at the side of the fireplace. She bit her lip and looked at the cornice and meditated with a girlish expression. "Yes," she said. "I am reading again. I didn't think I should but I am."

"For a time," said Hoppart, "I read nothing but the papers. I bought from a dozen to twenty a day."

"That is wearing off," said the bishop.

"The first thing I began to read again," said Mrs. Garstein Fellows, "--I'm not saying it for your sake, Bishop--was the Bible."

"I went to the Bible," said Bent as if he was surprised.

"I've heard that before," said Ridgeway Kelso, in that slightly explosive manner of his. "All sorts of people who don't usually read the Bible--"

"But Mr. Kelso!" protested their hostess with raised eyebrows.

"I was thinking of Bent. But anyhow there's been a great wave of seriousness, a sudden turning to religion and religious things. I don't know if it comes your way, Bishop...."

"I've had no rows of penitents yet."

"We may be coming," said Hoppart.

He turned sideways to face the bishop. "I think we should be coming if--if it wasn't for old entangled difficulties. I don't know if you will mind my saying it to you, but...."

The bishop returned his frank glance. "I'd like to know above all things," he said. "If Mrs. Garstein Fellow will permit us. It's my business to know."

"We all want to know," said Lady Sunderbund, speaking from the low chair on the other side of the fireplace. There was a vibration in her voice and a sudden gleam of enthusiasm in her face. "Why shouldn't people talk seriously sometimes?"

"Well, take my own case," said Hoppart. "In the last few weeks, I've been reading not only in the Bible but in the Fathers. I've read most of Athanasius, most of Eusebius, and--I'll confess it --Gibbon. I find all my old wonder come back. Why are we pinned to--to the amount of creed we are pinned to? Why for instance must you insist on the Trinity?"

"Yes," said the Eton boy explosively, and flushed darkly to find he had spoken.

"Here is a time when men ask for God," said Hoppart. "And you give them three!" cried Bent rather cheaply. "I confess I find the way encumbered by these Alexandrian elaborations," Hoppart completed.

"Need it be?" whispered Lady Sunderbund very softly.

"Well," said the bishop, and leant back in his armchair and knitted his brow at the fire. "I do not think," he said, "that men coming to God think very much of the nature of God. Nevertheless," he spoke slowly and patted the arm of his chair,

"nevertheless the church insists that certain vitally important truths have to be conveyed, certain mortal errors are best guarded against, by these symbols."

"You admit they are symbols."

"So the church has always called them."

Hoppart showed by a little movement and grimace that he thought the bishop quibbled.

"In every sense of the word," the bishop hastened to explain, "the creeds are symbolical. It is clear they seek to express ineffable things by at least an extended use of familiar words. I suppose we are all agreed nowadays that when we speak of the Father and of the Son we mean something only in a very remote and exalted way parallel with--with biological fatherhood and sonship."

Lady Sunderbund nodded eagerly. "Yes," she said, "oh, yes," and held up an expectant face for more.

"Our utmost words, our most elaborately phrased creeds, can at the best be no better than the shadow of something unseen thrown upon the screen of experience."

He raised his rather weary eyes to Hoppart as if he would know what else needed explanation. He was gratified by Lady Sunderbund's approval, but he affected not to see or hear it. But it was Bent who spoke.

He spoke in the most casual way. He made the thing seem the most incidental of observations.

"What puzzles me," he said, "is why the early Christians

identified the Spermaticos Logos of the Stoics with the second and not with the third person of the Trinity."

To which the bishop, rising artlessly to the bait, replied, "Ah! that indeed is the unfortunate aspect of the whole affair."

And then the Irish Catholic came down on him....

(3)

How the bishop awakened in the night after this dispute has been told already in the opening section of this story. To that night of discomfort we now return after this comprehensive digression. He awoke from nightmares of eyes and triangles to bottomless remorse and perplexity. For the first time he fully measured the vast distances he had travelled from the beliefs and attitudes of his early training, since his coming to Princhester. Travelled--or rather slipped and fallen down the long slopes of doubt.

That clear inky dimness that comes before dawn found his white face at the window looking out upon the great terrace and the park.

(4)

After a bout of mental distress and sleeplessness the bishop would sometimes wake in the morning not so much exhausted as in a state of thin mental and bodily activity. This was more particularly so if the night had produced anything in the nature of a purpose. So it was on this occasion. The day was clear before him; at least it could be cleared by sending three telegrams; his man could go back to Princhester and so leave him

perfectly free to go to Brighton-Pomfrey in London and secure that friendly dispensation to smoke again which seemed the only alternative to a serious mental breakdown. He would take his bag, stay the night in London, smoke, sleep well, and return the next morning. Dunk, his valet-butler, found him already bathed and ready for a cup of tea and a Bradshaw at half-past seven. He went on dressing although the good train for London did not start until 10.45.

Mrs. Garstein Fellows was by nature and principle a late riser; the breakfast-room showed small promise yet of the repast, though the table was set and bright with silver and fresh flowers, and a wood fire popped and spurted to greet and encourage the March sunshine. But standing in the doorway that led to the promise and daffodils and crocuses of Mrs. Garstein Fellows' garden stood Lady Sunderbund, almost with an effect of waiting, and she greeted the bishop very cheerfully, doubted the immediate appearance of any one else, and led him in the most natural manner into the new but already very pleasant shrubbery.

In some indefinable special way the bishop had been aware of Lady Sunderbund's presence since first he had met her, but it was only now that he could observe her with any particularity. She was tall like his own Lady Ella but not calm and quiet; she was electric, her eyes, her smiles, her complexion had as it were an established brightness that exceeded the common lustre of things. This morning she was dressed in grey that was nevertheless not grey but had an effect of colour, and there was a thread of black along the lines of her body and a gleam of gold. She carried her head back with less dignity than pride; there was a little frozen movement in her dark hair as if it flamed up out of her head. There were silver ornaments in her hair. She spoke with a pretty little weakness of the r's that had probably been acquired abroad. And she lost no time in telling him, she was eager to tell him, that she had been waylaying him. "I did so want to talk

to you some maw," she said. "I was shy last night and they we' all so noisy and eaga'. I p'ayed that you might come down early.

"It's an oppo'tunity I've longed for," she said.

She did her very pretty best to convey what it was had been troubling her. 'iligion bad been worrying her for years. Life was --oh--just ornaments and games and so wea'isome, so wea'isome, unless it was 'iligious. And she couldn't get it 'iligious.

The bishop nodded his head gravely.

"You unde'stand?" she pressed.

"I understand too well--the attempt to get hold--and keep hold."

"I knew you would!" she cried.

She went on with an impulsive rapidity. O'thodoxy had always 'ipelled her,--always. She had felt herself confronted by the most insurmountable difficulties, and yet whenever she had gone away from Christianity--she had gone away from Christianity, to the Theosophists and the Christian Scientists--she had felt she was only "st'aying fu'tha." And then suddenly when he was speaking last night, she had felt he knew. It was so wonderful to hear the "k'eed was only a symbol."

"Symbol is the proper name for it," said the bishop. "It wasn't for centuries it was called the Creed."

Yes, and so what it really meant was something quite different from what it did mean.

The bishop felt that this sentence also was only a symbol, and

nodded encouragingly--but gravely, warily.

And there she was, and the point was there were thousands and thousands and thousands of educated people like her who were dying to get through these old-fashioned symbols to the true faith that lay behind them. That they knew lay behind them. She didn't know if he had read "The Light under the Altar"?

"He's vicar of Wombash--in my diocese," said the bishop with restraint.

"It's wonde'ful stuff," said Lady Sunderbund. "It's spi'tually cold, but it's intellectually wonde'ful. But we want that with spi'tuality. We want it so badly. If some one--"

She became daring. She bit her under lip and flashed her spirit at him.

"If you--" she said and paused.

"Could think aloud," said the bishop.

"Yes," she said, nodding rapidly, and became breathless to hear.

It would certainly be an astonishing end to the Chasters difficulty if the bishop went over to the heretic, the bishop reflected.

"My dear lady, I won't disguise," he began; "in fact I don't see how I could, that for some years I have been growing more and more discontented with some of our most fundamental formulae. But it's been very largely a shapeless discontent--hitherto. I don't think I've said a word to a single soul. No, not a word. You are the first person to whom I've ever made the admission

that even my feelings are at times unorthodox."

She lit up marvellously at his words. "Go on," she whispered.

But she did not need to tell him to go on. Now that he had once broached the casket of his reserves he was only too glad of a listener. He talked as if they were intimate and loving friends, and so it seemed to both of them they were. It was a wonderful release from a long and painful solitude.

To certain types it is never quite clear what has happened to them until they tell it. So that now the bishop, punctuated very prettily by Lady Sunderbund, began to measure for the first time the extent of his departure from the old innate convictions of Otteringham Rectory. He said that it was strange to find doubt coming so late in life, but perhaps it was only in recent years that his faith had been put to any really severe tests. It had been sheltered and unchallenged.

"This fearful wa'," Lady Sunderbund interjected.

But Princhester had been a critical and trying change, and "The Light under the Altar" case had ploughed him deeply. It was curious that his doubts always seemed to have a double strand; there was a moral objection based on the church's practical futility and an intellectual strand subordinated to this which traced that futility largely to its unconvincing formulae.

"And yet you know," said the bishop, "I find I can't go with Chasters. He beats at the church; he treats her as though she were wrong. I feel like a son, growing up, who finds his mother isn't quite so clear-spoken nor quite so energetic as she seemed to be once. She's right, I feel sure. I've never doubted her fundamental goodness."

"Yes," said Lady Sunderbund, very eagerly, "yes."

"And yet there's this futility.... You know, my dear lady, I don't know what to do. One feels on the one hand, that here is a cloud of witnesses, great men, sainted men, subtle men, figures permanently historical, before whom one can do nothing but bow down in the utmost humility, here is a great instrument and organization--what would the world be without the witness of the church?--and on the other hand here are our masses out of hand and hostile, our industrial leaders equally hostile; there is a failure to grip, and that failure to grip is so clearly traceable to the fact that our ideas are not modern ideas, that when we come to profess our faith we find nothing in our mouths but antiquated Alexandrian subtleties and phrases and ideas that may have been quite alive, quite significant, quite adequate in Asia Minor or Egypt, among men essentially orientals, fifteen hundred years ago, but which now--Ä

He expressed just what they came to now by a gesture.

She echoed his gesture.

"Probably I'm not alone among my brethren," he went on, and then: "But what is one to do?"

With her hands she acted her sense of his difficulty.

"One may be precipitate," he said. "There's a kind of loyalty and discipline that requires one to keep the ranks until one's course of action is perfectly clear. One owes so much to so many. One has to consider how one may affect--oh! people one has never seen."

He was lugging things now into speech that so far had been scarcely above the threshold of his conscious thought. He went on

to discuss the entire position of the disbelieving cleric. He discovered a fine point.

"If there was something else, an alternative, another religion, another Church, to which one could go, the whole case would be different. But to go from the church to nothingness isn't to go from falsehood to truth. It's to go from truth, rather badly expressed, rather conservatively hidden by its protections, truth in an antiquated costume, to the blackest lie--in the world."

She took that point very brightly.

"One must hold fast to 'iligion," she said, and looked earnestly at him and gripped fiercely, pink thumbs out, with her beautiful hands held up.

That was it, exactly. He too was gripping. But while on the outside the Midianites of denial were prowling for these clinging souls, within the camp they were assailed by a meticulous orthodoxy that was only too eager to cast them forth. The bishop dwelt for a time upon the curious fierceness orthodoxy would sometimes display. Nowadays atheism can be civil, can be generous; it is orthodoxy that trails a scurrilous fringe.

"Who was that young man with a strong Irish accent--who contradicted me so suddenly?" he asked.

"The dark young man?"

"The noisy young man."

"That was Mist' Pat'ick O'Go'man. He is a Kelt and all that. Spells Pat'ick with eva so many letters. You know. They say he spends ouas and ouas lea'ning E'se. He wo'ies about it. They all t'y to lea'n E'se, and it wo'ies them and makes them hate England

moa and moa."

"He is orthodox. He--is what I call orthodox to the ridiculous extent."

"idiculous."

A deep-toned gong proclaimed breakfast over a square mile or so of territory, and Lady Sunderbund turned about mechanically towards the house. But they continued their discussion.

She started indeed a new topic. "Shall we eva, do 'ou think, have a new 'iligion--t'ua and betta?"

That was a revolutionary idea to him.

He was still fending it off from him when a gap in the shrubs brought them within sight of the house and of Mrs. Garstein Fellows on the portico waving a handkerchief and crying "Break-fast."

"I wish we could talk for houas," said Lady Sunderbund.

"I've been glad of this talk," said the bishop. "Very glad."

She lifted her soft abundant skirts and trotted briskly across the still dewy lawn towards the house door. The bishop followed gravely and slowly with his hands behind his back and an unusually peaceful expression upon his face. He was thinking how rare and precious a thing it is to find intelligent friendship in women. More particularly when they were dazzlingly charming and pretty. It was strange, but this was really his first woman friend. If, as he hoped, she became his friend.

Lady Sunderbund entered the breakfast room in a gusty abundance

like Botticelli's Primavera, and kissed Mrs. Garstein Fellows good-morning. She exhaled a glowing happiness. "He is wondrous," she panted. "He is most wondrous."

"Mr. Higeway Kelso?"

"No, the dee' bishop! I love him. Are those the little sausages I like? May I take th'ee? I've been up houas."

The dee' bishop appeared in the sunlit doorway.

(5)

The bishop felt more contentment in the London train than he had felt for many weeks. He had taken two decisive and relieving steps. One was that he had stated his case to another human being, and that a very charming and sympathetic human being, he was no longer a prey to a current of secret and concealed thoughts running counter to all the appearances of his outward life; and the other was that he was now within an hour or so of Brighton-Pomfrey and a cigarette. He would lunch on the train, get to London about two, take a taxi at once to the wise old doctor, catch him over his coffee in a charitable and understanding mood, and perhaps be smoking a cigarette publicly and honourably and altogether satisfyingly before three.

So far as Brighton-Pomfrey's door this program was fulfilled without a hitch. The day was fine and he had his taxi opened, and noted with a patriotic satisfaction as he rattled through the streets, the glare of the recruiting posters on every vacant piece of wall and the increasing number of men in khaki in the streets. But at the door he had a disappointment. Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey was away at the front--of all places; he had gone for some weeks; would the bishop like to see Dr. Dale?

The bishop hesitated. He had never set eyes on this Dr. Dale.

Indeed, he had never heard of Dr. Dale.

Seeing his old friend Brighton-Pomfrey and being gently and tactfully told to do exactly what he was longing to do was one thing; facing some strange doctor and going slowly and elaborately through the whole story of his illness, his vow and his breakdown, and perhaps having his reaction time tested and all sorts of stripping and soundings done, was quite another. He was within an ace of turning away.

If he had turned away his whole subsequent life would have been different. It was the very slightest thing in the world tipped the beam. It was the thought that, after all, whatever inconvenience and unpleasantness there might be in this interview, there was at the end of it a very reasonable prospect of a restored and legitimate cigarette.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH - THE FIRST VISION

(1)

Dr. DALE exceeded the bishop's worst apprehensions. He was a lean, lank, dark young man with long black hair and irregular, rather prolonged features; his chin was right over to the left; he looked constantly at the bishop's face with a distinctly sceptical grey eye; he could not have looked harder if he had been a photographer or a portrait painter. And his voice was harsh, and the bishop was particularly sensitive to voices.

He began by understanding far too much of the bishop's illness, and he insisted on various familiarities with the bishop's heart and tongue and eye and knee that ruffled the bishop's soul.

"Brighton-Pomfrey talked of neurasthenia?" he asked. "That was his diagnosis," said the bishop. "Neurasthenia," said the young man as though he despised the word.

The bishop went on buttoning up his coat.

"You don't of course want to break your vows about drinking and smoking," said the young man with the very faintest suggestion of derision in his voice.

"Not if it can possibly be avoided," the bishop asserted. "Without a loss, that is, of practical efficiency," he added. "For I have much to do."

"I think that it is possible to keep your vow," said the young man, and the bishop could have sworn at him. "I think we can manage that all right."

(2)

The bishop sat at the table resting his arm upon it and awaiting the next development of this unsatisfactory interview. He was on the verge of asking as unpleasantly as possible when Brighton-Pomfrey would return.

The young man stood upon Brighton-Pomfrey's hearth-rug and was evidently contemplating dissertations.

"Of course," he said, as though he discussed a problem with himself, "you must have some sort of comfort. You must get out of this state, one way or another."

The bishop nodded assent. He had faint hopes of this young man's ideas of comfort.

Dr. Dale reflected. Then he went off away from the question of comfort altogether. "You see, the trouble in such a case as this is peculiarly difficult to trace to its sources because it comes just upon the border-line of bodily and mental things. You may take a drug or alter your regimen and it disturbs your thoughts, you may take an idea and it disturbs your health. It is easy enough to say, as some do, that all ideas have a physical substratum; it is almost as easy to say with the Christian Scientist that all bodily states are amenable to our ideas. The truth doesn't, I think, follow the border between those opposite opinions very exactly on either side. I can't, for instance, tell you to go home and pray against these uncertainties and despairs, because it is just these uncertainties and despairs that rob you of the power of efficient prayer."

He did not seem to expect anything from the bishop.

"I don't see that because a case brings one suddenly right up against the frontier of metaphysics, why a doctor should necessarily pull up short at that, why one shouldn't go on into either metaphysics or psychology if such an extension is necessary for the understanding of the case. At any rate if you'll permit it in this consultation...."

"Go on," said the bishop, holding on to that promise of comfort. "The best thing is to thrash out the case in your own way. And then come to what is practical."

"What is really the matter here--the matter with you that is --is a disorganization of your tests of reality. It's one of a group of states hitherto confused. Neurasthenia, that comprehensive phrase--well, it is one of the neurasthenias. Here, I confess, I begin to talk of work I am doing, work still to be published, finished first and then published.... But I go off from the idea that every living being lives in a state not differing essentially from a state of hallucination concerning the things about it. Truth, essential truth, is hidden. Always. Of course there must be a measure of truth in our working illusions, a working measure of truth, or the creature would smash itself up and end itself, but beyond that discretion of the fire and the pitfall lies a wide margin of error about which we may be deceived for years. So long as it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter. I don't know if I make myself clear."

"I follow you," said the bishop a little wearily, "I follow you. Phenomena and noumena and so on and so on. Kant and so forth. Pragmatism. Yes."

With a sigh.

"And all that," completed Dr. Dale in a voice that suggested mockery. "But you see we grow into a way of life, we settle down

among habits and conventions, we say 'This is all right' and 'That is always so.' We get more and more settled into our life as a whole and more and more confident. Unless something happens to shake us out of our sphere of illusion. That may be some violent contradictory fact, some accident, or it may be some subtle change in one's health and nerves that makes us feel doubtful. Or a change of habits. Or, as I believe, some subtle quickening of the critical faculty. Then suddenly comes the feeling as though we were lost in a strange world, as though we had never really seen the world before."

He paused.

The bishop was reluctantly interested. "That does describe something--of the mental side," he admitted. "I never believe in concealing my own thoughts from an intelligent patient," said Dr. Dale, with a quiet offensiveness. "That sort of thing belongs to the dark ages of the 'pothecary's art. I will tell you exactly my guesses and suppositions about you. At the base of it all is a slight and subtle kidney trouble, due I suggest to your going to Princhester and drinking the local water--"

"But it's excellent water. They boast of it."

"By all the established tests. As a matter of fact many of our best drinking waters have all sorts of unspecified qualities. Burton water, for example, is radioactive by Beetham's standards up to the ninth degree. But that is by the way. My theory about your case is that this produced a change in your blood, that quickened your sensibilities and your critical faculties just at a time when a good many bothers--I don't of course know what they were, but I can, so to speak, see the marks all over you--came into your life."

The bishop nodded.

"You were uprooted. You moved from house to house, and failed to get that curled up safe feeling one has in a real home in any of them."

"If you saw the fireplaces and the general decoration of the new palace!" admitted the bishop. "I had practically no control."

"That confirms me," said Dr. Dale. "Insomnia followed, and increased the feeling of physical strangeness by increasing the bodily disturbance. I suspect an intellectual disturbance."

He paused.

"There was," said the bishop.

"You were no longer at home anywhere. You were no longer at home in your diocese, in your palace, in your body, in your convictions. And then came the war. Quite apart from everything else the mind of the whole world is suffering profoundly from the shock of this war--much more than is generally admitted. One thing you did that you probably did not observe yourself doing, you drank rather more at your meals, you smoked a lot more. That was your natural and proper response to the shock."

"Ah!" said the bishop, and brightened up.

"It was remarked by Tolstoy, I think, that few intellectual men would really tolerate the world as it is if it were not for smoking and drinking. Even novelists have their moments of lucidity. Certainly these things soothe the restlessness in men's minds, deaden their sceptical sensibilities. And just at the time when you were getting most dislodged--you gave them up."

"And the sooner I go back to them the better," said the bishop

brightly. "I quite see that."

"I wouldn't say that," said Dr. Dale....

(3)

"That," said Dr. Dale, "is just where my treatment of this case differs from the treatment of "--he spoke the name reluctantly as if he disliked the mere sound of it--"Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey."

"Hitherto, of course," said the bishop, "I've been in his hands."

"He," said Dr. Dale, "would certainly set about trying to restore your old sphere of illusion, your old familiar sensations and ideas and confidences. He would in fact turn you back. He would restore all your habits. He would order you a rest. He would send you off to some holiday resort, fresh in fact but familiar in character, the High lands, North Italy, or Switzerland for example. He would forbid you newspapers and order you to botanize and prescribe tranquillizing reading; Trollope's novels, the Life of Gladstone, the works of Mr. A. C. Benson, memoirs and so on. You'd go somewhere where there was a good Anglican chaplain, and you'd take some of the services yourself. And we'd wash out the effects of the Princhester water with Contrexeville, and afterwards put you on Salutaris or Perrier. I don't know whether I shouldn't have inclined to some such treatment before the war began. Only--"

He paused.

"You think--?"

Dr. Dale's face betrayed a sudden sombre passion. "It won't do

now," he said in a voice of quiet intensity. "It won't do now."

He remained darkly silent for so long that at last the bishop spoke. "Then what," he asked, "do you suggest?"

"Suppose we don't try to go back," said Dr. Dale. "Suppose we go on and go through."

"Where?"

"To reality.

"I know it's doubtful, I know it's dangerous," he went on, "but I am convinced that now we can no longer keep men's minds and souls in these feathered nests, these spheres of illusion. Behind these veils there is either God or the Darkness.... Why should we not go on?"

The bishop was profoundly perplexed. He heard himself speaking. "It would be unworthy of my cloth," he was saying.

Dr. Dale completed the sentence: "to go back."

"Let me explain a little more," he said, "what I mean by 'going on.' I think that this loosening of the ties of association that bind a man to his everyday life and his everyday self is in nine cases out of ten a loosening of the ties that bind him to everyday sanity. One common form of this detachment is the form you have in those cases of people who are found wandering unaware of their names, unaware of their places of residence, lost altogether from themselves. They have not only lost their sense of identity with themselves, but all the circumstances of their lives have faded out of their minds like an idle story in a book that has been read and put aside. I have looked into hundreds of such cases. I don't think that loss of identity is a necessary

thing; it's just another side of the general weakening of the grip upon reality, a kind of anaemia of the brain so that interest fades and fails. There is no reason why you should forget a story because you do not believe it--if your brain is strong enough to hold it. But if your brain is tired and weak, then so soon as you lose faith in your records, your mind is glad to let them go. When you see these lost identity people that is always your first impression, a tired brain that has let go."

The bishop felt extremely like letting go.

"But how does this apply to my case?"

"I come to that," said Dr. Dale, holding up a long large hand. "What if we treat this case of yours in a new way? What if we give you not narcotics but stimulants and tonics? What if we so touch the blood that we increase your sense of physical detachment while at the same time feeding up your senses to a new and more vivid apprehension of things about you?" He looked at his patient's hesitation and added: "You'd lose all that craving feeling, that you fancy at present is just the need of a smoke. The world might grow a trifle--transparent, but you'd keep real. Instead of drugging oneself back to the old contentment--"

"You'd drug me on to the new," said the bishop.

"But just one word more!" said Dr. Dale. "Hear why I would do this! It was easy and successful to rest and drug people back to their old states of mind when the world wasn't changing, wasn't spinning round in the wildest tornado of change that it has ever been in. But now--Where can I send you for a rest? Where can I send you to get you out of sight and hearing of the Catastrophe? Of course old Brighton-Pomfrey would go on sending people away for rest and a nice little soothing change if the Day of Judgment was coming in the sky and the earth was opening and the sea was

giving up its dead. He'd send 'em to the seaside. Such things as that wouldn't shake his faith in the Channel crossing. My idea is that it's not only right for you to go through with this, but that it's the only thing to do. If you go right on and right through with these doubts and intimations--"

He paused.

"You may die like a madman," he said, "but you won't die like a tame rabbit."

(4)

The bishop sat reflecting. What fascinated and attracted him was the ending of all the cravings and uneasinesses and restlessness that had distressed his life for over four years; what deterred him was the personality of this gaunt young man with his long grey face, his excited manner, his shock of black hair. He wanted that tonic--with grave misgivings. "If you think this tonic is the wiser course," he began. "I'd give it you if you were my father," said Dr. Dale. "I've got everything for it," he added.

"You mean you can make it up--without a prescription."

"I can't give you a prescription. The essence of it--It's a distillate I have been trying. It isn't in the Pharmacopeia."

Again the bishop had a twinge of misgiving.

But in the end he succumbed. He didn't want to take the stuff, but also he did not want to go without his promised comfort.

Presently Dale had given him a little phial--and was holding

up to the window a small medicine glass into which he was pouring very carefully twenty drops of the precious fluid. "Take it only," he said, "when you feel you must."

"It is the most golden of liquids," said the bishop, peering at it.

"When you want more I will make you more. Later of course, it will be possible to write a prescription. Now add the water--so.

"It becomes opalescent. How beautifully the light plays in it!

"Take it."

The bishop dismissed his last discretion and drank.

"Well?" said Dr. Dale.

"I am still here," said the bishop, smiling, and feeling a joyous tingling throughout his body. "It stirs me."

(5)

The bishop stood on the pavement outside Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey's house. The massive door had closed behind him.

It had been an act of courage, of rashness if you will, to take this draught. He was acutely introspective, ready for anything, for the most disagreeable or the most bizarre sensations. He was asking himself, Were his feet steady? Was his head swimming?

His doubts glowed into assurance.

Suddenly he perceived that he was sure of God.

Not perhaps of the God of Nicaea, but what did these poor little quibblings and definitions of the theologians matter? He had been worrying about these definitions and quibblings for four long restless years. Now they were just failures to express-- what surely every one knew--and no one would ever express exactly. Because here was God, and the kingdom of God was manifestly at hand. The visible world hung before him as a mist might hang before the rising sun. He stood proudly and masterfully facing a universe that had heretofore bullied him into doubt and apologetics, a universe that had hitherto been opaque and was now betrayed translucent.

That was the first effect of the new tonic, complete reassurance, complete courage. He turned to walk towards Mount Street and Berkeley Square as a sultan might turn to walk among his slaves.

But the tonic was only beginning.

Before he had gone a dozen steps he was aware that he seemed more solid and larger than the people about him. They had all a curious miniature effect, as though he was looking at them through the wrong end of an opera glass. The houses on either side of the street and the traffic shared this quality in an equal measure. It was as if he was looking at the world through apertures in a miniature cinematograph peep-show. This surprised him and a little dashed his first glow of satisfaction.

He passed a man in khaki who, he fancied, looked at him with an odd expression. He observed the next passers-by narrowly and suspiciously, a couple of smartish young men, a lady with a poodle, a grocer's boy with a basket, but none seemed to observe anything remarkable about him. Then he caught the eye of a taxi-

driver and became doubtful again.

He had a feeling that this tonic was still coming in like a tide. It seemed to be filling him and distending him, in spite of the fact that he was already full. After four years of flaccidity it was pleasant to be distended again, but already he felt more filled than he had ever been before. At present nothing was showing, but all his body seemed braced and uplifted. He must be careful not to become inflated in his bearing.

And yet it was difficult not to betray a little inflation. He was so filled with assurance that things were right with him and that God was there with him. After all it was not mere fancy; he was looking through the peepholes of his eyes at the world of illusion and appearance. The world that was so intent upon its immediate business, so regardless of eternal things, that had so dominated him but a little while ago, was after all a thing more mortal than himself.

Another man in khaki passed him.

For the first time he saw the war as something measurable, as something with a beginning and an end, as something less than the immortal spirit in man. He had been too much oppressed by it. He perceived all these people in the street were too much oppressed by it. He wanted to tell them as much, tell them that all was well with them, bid them be of good cheer. He wanted to bless them. He found his arm floating up towards gestures of benediction. Self-control became increasingly difficult.

All the way down Berkeley Square the bishop was in full-bodied struggle with himself. He was trying to control himself, trying to keep within bounds. He felt that he was stepping too high, that his feet were not properly reaching the ground, that he was walking upon cushions of air.

The feeling of largeness increased, and the feeling of transparency in things about him. He avoided collision with passers-by--excessively. And he felt his attention was being drawn more and more to something that was going on beyond the veil of visible things. He was in Piccadilly now, but at the same time Piccadilly was very small and he was walking in the presence of God.

He had a feeling that God was there though he could not see him. And at the same time he was in this transitory world, with people going to and fro, men with umbrellas tucked dangerously under their arms, men in a hurry, policemen, young women rattling Red Cross collecting boxes, smart people, loafers. They distracted one from God.

He set out to cross the road just opposite Prince's, and jumping needlessly to give way to an omnibus had the narrowest escape from a taxicab.

He paused on the pavement edge to recover himself. The shock of his near escape had, as people say, pulled him together.

What was he to do? Manifestly this opalescent draught was overpowering him. He ought never to have taken it. He ought to have listened to the voice of his misgivings. It was clear that he was not in a fit state to walk about the streets. He was-- what had been Dr. Dale's term?--losing his sense of reality. What was he to do? He was alarmed but not dismayed. His thoughts were as full-bodied as the rest of his being, they came throbbing and bumping into his mind. What was he to do?

Brighton-Pomfrey ought never to have left his practice in the hands of this wild-eyed experimenter.

Strange that after a lifetime of discretion and men's respect one should be standing on the Piccadilly pavement--intoxicated!

It came into his head that he was not so very far from the Athenaeum, and surely there if anywhere a bishop may recover his sense of being--ordinary.

And behind everything, behind the tall buildings and the swarming people there was still the sense of a wide illuminated space, of a light of wonder and a Presence. But he must not give way to that again! He had already given way altogether too much. He repeated to himself in a whisper, "I am in Piccadilly."

If he kept tight hold upon himself he felt he might get to the Athenaeum before--before anything more happened.

He murmured directions to himself. "Keep along the pavement. Turn to the right at the Circus. Now down the hill. Easily down the hill. Don't float! Junior Army and Navy Stores. And the bookseller."

And presently he had a doubt of his name and began to repeat it.

"Edward Princhester. Edward Scrope, Lord Bishop of Princhester."

And all the while voices within him were asserting, "You are in the kingdom of Heaven. You are in the presence of God. Place and time are a texture of illusion and dreamland. Even now, you are with God."

(6)

The porter of the Athenaeum saw him come in, looking well--flushed indeed--but queer in expression; his blue eyes were wide open and unusually vague and blue.

He wandered across towards the dining-room, hesitated, went to look at the news, seemed in doubt whether he would not go into the smoking-room, and then went very slowly upstairs, past the golden angel up to the great drawing-room.

In the drawing-room he found only Sir James Mounce, the man who knew the novels of Sir Walter Scott by heart and had the minutest and most unsparing knowledge of every detail in the life of that supreme giant of English literature. He had even, it was said, acquired a Scotch burr in the enthusiasm of his hero-worship. It was usually sufficient only to turn an ear towards him for him to talk for an hour or so. He was now studying Bradshaw.

The bishop snatched at him desperately. He felt that if he went away there would be no hold left upon the ordinary things of life.

"Sir James," he said, "I was wondering the other day when was the exact date of the earliest public ascription of Waverley to Scott."

"Eh!" said Sir James, "but I'd like to talk that over with ye. Indeed I would. It would be depending very largely on what ye called 'public.' But--"

He explained something about an engagement in Birmingham that night, a train to catch. Reluctantly but relentlessly he abandoned the proffered ear. But he promised that the next time they met in the club he would go into the matter "exhaustevely."

The door closed upon him. The bishop was alone. He was flooded

with the light of the world that is beyond this world. The things about him became very small and indistinct.

He would take himself into a quiet corner in the library of this doll's house, and sit his little body down in one of the miniature armchairs. Then if he was going to faint or if the trancelike feeling was to become altogether a trance--well, a bishop asleep in an armchair in the library of the Athenaeum is nothing to startle any one.

He thought of that convenient hidden room, the North Library, in which is the bust of Croker. There often one can be quite alone.... It was empty, and he went across to the window that looks out upon Pall Mall and sat down in the little uncomfortable easy chair by the desk with its back to the Benvenuto Cellini.

And as he sat down, something snapped--like the snapping of a lute string--in his brain.

(7)

With a sigh of deep relief the bishop realized that this world had vanished.

He was in a golden light.

He perceived it as a place, but it was a place without buildings or trees or any very definite features. There was a cloudy suggestion of distant hills, and beneath his feet were little gem-like flowers, and a feeling of divinity and infinite friendliness pervaded his being. His impressions grew more definite. His feet seemed to be bare. He was no longer a bishop nor clad as a bishop. That had gone with the rest of the world. He was seated on a slab of starry rock.

This he knew quite clearly was the place of God.

He was unable to disentangle thoughts from words. He seemed to be speaking in his mind.

"I have been very foolish and confused and perplexed. I have been like a creature caught among thorns."

"You served the purpose of God among those thorns." It seemed to him at first that the answer also was among his thoughts.

"I seemed so silly and so little. My wits were clay."

"Clay full of desires."

"Such desires!"

"Blind desires. That will presently come to the light."

"Shall we come to the light?"

"But here it is, and you see it!"

(8)

It became clearer in the mind of the bishop that a figure sat beside him, a figure of great strength and beauty, with a smiling face and kindly eyes. A strange thought and a strange courage came to the bishop.

"Tell me," he whispered, "are you God?"

"I am the Angel of God."

The bishop thought over that for some moments.

"I want," he said, "to know about God.

"I want," he said, with a deepening passion of the soul, "to know about God. Slowly through four long years I have been awakening to the need of God. Body and soul I am sick for the want of God and the knowledge of God. I did not know what was the matter with me, why my life had become so disordered and confused that my very appetites and habits are all astray. But I am perishing for God as a waterless man upon a raft perishes for drink, and there is nothing but madness if I touch the seas about me. Not only in my thoughts but in my under thoughts and in my nerves and bones and arteries I have need of God. You see I grew up in the delusion that I knew God, I did not know that I was unprovisioned and unprovided against the tests and strains and hardships of life. I thought that I was secure and safe. I was told that we men--who were apes not a quarter of a million years ago, who still have hair upon our arms and ape's teeth in our jaws--had come to the full and perfect knowledge of God. It was all put into a creed. Not a word of it was to be altered, not a sentence was to be doubted any more. They made me a teacher of this creed. They seemed to explain it to me. And when I came to look into it, when my need came and I turned to my creed, it was old and shrivelled up, it was the patched-up speculations of vanished Greeks and Egyptians, it was a mummy of ancient disputes, old and dry, that fell to dust as I unwrapped it. And I was dressed up in the dress of old dead times and put before an altar of forgotten sacrifices, and I went through ceremonies as old as the first seedtime; and suddenly I knew clearly that God was not there, God was not in my Creed, not in my cathedral, not in my ceremonies, nowhere in my life. And at the same time I knew, I knew as I had never known before, that certainly there was God."

He paused. "Tell me," said the friend at his side; "tell me."

"It was as if a child running beside its mother, looked up and saw that he had never seen her face before, that she was not his mother, and that the words he had seemed to understand were--now that he listened--words in an unknown tongue.

"You see, I am but a common sort of man, dear God; I have neither lived nor thought in any way greatly, I have gone from one day to the next day without looking very much farther than the end of the day, I have gone on as life has befallen; if no great trouble had come into my life, so I should have lived to the end of my days. But life which began for me easily and safely has become constantly more difficult and strange. I could have held my services and given my benedictions, I could have believed I believed in what I thought I believed.... But now I am lost and astray--crying out for God...."

(9)

"Let us talk a little about your troubles," said the Angel.
"Let us talk about God and this creed that worries you and this church of yours."

"I feel as though I had been struggling to this talk through all the years--since my doubts began."

"The story your Creed is trying to tell is much the same story that all religions try to tell. In your heart there is God, beyond the stars there is God. Is it the same God?"

"I don't know," said the bishop.

"Does any one know?"

"I thought I knew."

"Your creed is full of Levantine phrases and images, full of the patched contradictions of the human intelligence utterly puzzled. It is about those two Gods, the God beyond the stars and the God in your heart. It says that they are the same God, but different. It says that they have existed together for all time, and that one is the Son of the other. It has added a third Person --but we won't go into that."

The bishop was reminded suddenly of the dispute at Mrs. Garstein Fellows'. "We won't go into that," he agreed. "No!"

"Other religions have told the story in a different way. The Cathars and Gnostics did. They said that the God in your heart is a rebel against the God beyond the stars, that the Christ in your heart is like Prometheus--or Hiawatha--or any other of the sacrificial gods, a rebel. He arises out of man. He rebels against that high God of the stars and crystals and poisons and monsters and of the dead emptiness of space.... The Manicheans and the Persians made out our God to be fighting eternally against that Being of silence and darkness beyond the stars. The Buddhists made the Lord Buddha the leader of men out of the futility and confusion of material existence to the great peace beyond. But it is all one story really, the story of the two essential Beings, always the same story and the same perplexity cropping up under different names, the story of one being who stirs us, calls to us, and leads us, and of another who is above and outside and in and beneath all things, inaccessible and incomprehensible. All these religions are trying to tell something they do not clearly know--of a relationship between these two, that eludes them, that eludes the human mind, as water escapes from the hand. It is unity and opposition they have to

declare at the same time; it is agreement and propitiation, it is infinity and effort."

"And the truth?" said the bishop in an eager whisper. "You can tell me the truth."

The Angel's answer was a gross familiarity. He thrust his hand through the bishop's hair and ruffled it affectionately, and rested for a moment holding the bishop's cranium in his great palm.

"But can this hold it?" he said....

"Not with this little box of brains," said the Angel. "You could as soon make a meal of the stars and pack them into your belly. You haven't the things to do it with inside this."

He gave the bishop's head a little shake and relinquished it.

He began to argue as an elder brother might.

"Isn't it enough for you to know something of the God that comes down to the human scale, who has been born on your planet and arisen out of Man, who is Man and God, your leader? He's more than enough to fill your mind and use up every faculty of your being. He is courage, he is adventure, he is the King, he fights for you and with you against death...."

"And he is not infinite? He is not the Creator?" asked the bishop.

"So far as you are concerned, no," said the Angel.

"So far as I am concerned?"

"What have you to do with creation?"

And at that question it seemed that a great hand swept carelessly across the blackness of the farther sky, and smeared it with stars and suns and shining nebulas as a brush might smear dry paint across a canvas.

The bishop stared in front of him. Then slowly he bowed his head, and covered his face with his hands.

"And I have been in orders," he murmured; "I have been teaching people the only orthodox and perfect truth about these things for seven and twenty years."

And suddenly he was back in his gaiters and his apron and his shovel hat, a little black figure exceedingly small in a very great space....

(10)

It was a very great space indeed because it was all space, and the roof was the ebony of limitless space from which the stars swung flaming, held by invisible ties, and the soil beneath his feet was a dust of atoms and the little beginnings of life. And long before the bishop bared his face again, he knew that he was to see his God.

He looked up slowly, fearing to be dazzled.

But he was not dazzled. He knew that he saw only the likeness and bodying forth of a being inconceivable, of One who is greater than the earth and stars and yet no greater than a man. He saw a being for ever young, for ever beginning, for ever triumphant. The quality and texture of this being was a warm and living light

like the effulgence at sunrise; He was hope and courage like a sunlit morning in spring. He was adventure for ever, and His courage and adventure flowed into and submerged and possessed the being of the man who beheld him. And this presence of God stood over the bishop, and seemed to speak to him in a wordless speech.

He bade him surrender himself. He bade him come out upon the Adventure of Life, the great Adventure of the earth that will make the atoms our bond-slaves and subdue the stars, that will build up the white fires of ecstasy to submerge pain for ever, that will overcome death. In Him the spirit of creation had become incarnate, had joined itself to men, summoning men to Him, having need of them, having need of them, having need of their service, even as great kings and generals and leaders need and use men. For a moment, for an endless age, the bishop bowed himself in the being and glory of God, felt the glow of the divine courage and confidence in his marrow, felt himself one with God.

For a timeless interval....

Never had the bishop had so intense a sense of reality. It seemed that never before had he known anything real. He knew certainly that God was his King and master, and that his unworthy service could be acceptable to God. His mind embraced that idea with an absolute conviction that was also absolute happiness.

(11)

The thoughts and sensations of the bishop seemed to have lifted for a time clean away from the condition of time, and then through a vast orbit to be returning to that limitation.

He was aware presently that things were changing, that the

light was losing its diviner rays, that in some indescribable manner the glory and the assurance diminished.

The onset of the new phase was by imperceptible degrees. From a glowing, serene, and static realization of God, everything relapsed towards change and activity. He was in time again and things were happening, it was as if the quicksands of time poured by him, and it was as if God was passing away from him. He fell swiftly down from the heaven of self-forgetfulness to a grotesque, pathetic and earthly self-consciousness.

He became acutely aware of his episcopal livery. And that God was passing away from him.

It was as if God was passing, and as if the bishop was unable to rise up and follow him.

Then it was as if God had passed, and as if the bishop was in headlong pursuit of him and in a great terror lest he should be left behind. And he was surely being left behind.

He discovered that in some unaccountable way his gaiters were loose; most of their buttons seemed to have flown off, and his episcopal sash had slipped down about his feet. He was sorely impeded. He kept snatching at these things as he ran, in clumsy attempts to get them off.

At last he had to stop altogether and kneel down and fumble with the last obstinate button.

"Oh God!" he cried, "God my captain! Wait for me! Be patient with me!"

And as he did so God turned back and reached out his hand. It was indeed as if he stood and smiled. He stood and smiled as a

kind man might do; he dazzled and blinded his worshipper, and yet it was manifest that he had a hand a man might clasp.

Unspeakable love and joy irradiated the whole being of the bishop as he seized God's hand and clasped it desperately with both his own. It was as if his nerves and arteries and all his substance were inundated with golden light....

It was again as if he merged with God and became God....

CHAPTER THE SIXTH - EXEGETICAL

(1)

WITHOUT any sense of transition the bishop found himself seated in the little North Library of the Athenaeum club and staring at the bust of John Wilson Croker. He was sitting motionless and musing deeply. He was questioning with a cool and steady mind whether he had seen a vision or whether he had had a dream. If it had been a dream it had been an extraordinarily vivid and convincing dream. He still seemed to be in the presence of God, and it perplexed him not at all that he should also be in the presence of Croker. The feeling of mental rottenness and insecurity that had weakened his thought through the period of his illness, had gone. He was secure again within himself.

It did not seem to matter fundamentally whether it was an experience of things without or of things within him that had happened to him. It was clear to him that much that he had seen was at most expressive, that some was altogether symbolical. For example, there was that sudden absurd realization of his sash and gaiters, and his perception of them as encumbrances in his pursuit of God. But the setting and essential of the whole thing remained in his mind neither expressive nor symbolical, but as real and immediately perceived, and that was the presence and kingship of God. God was still with him and about him and over him and sustaining him. He was back again in his world and his ordinary life, in his clothing and his body and his club, but God had been made and remained altogether plain and manifest.

Whether an actual vision had made his conviction, or whether the conviction of his own subconscious mind had made the dream, seemed but a small matter beside the conviction that this was indeed the God he had desired and the God who must rule his life.

"The stuff? The stuff had little to do with it. It just cleared my head.... I have seen. I have seen really. I know."

(2)

For a long time as it seemed the bishop remained wrapped in clouds of luminous meditation. Dream or vision it did not matter; the essential thing was that he had made up his mind about God, he had found God. Moreover, he perceived that his theological perplexities had gone. God was higher and simpler and nearer than any theological God, than the God of the Three Creeds. Those creeds lay about in his mind now like garments flung aside, no trace nor suspicion of divinity sustained them any longer. And now--Now he would go out into the world.

The little Library of the Athenaeum has no visible door. He went to the book-masked entrance in the corner, and felt among the bookshelves for the hidden latch. Then he paused, held by a curious thought. What exactly was the intention of that symbolical struggle with his sash and gaiters, and why had they impeded his pursuit of God?

To what particularly significant action was he going out?

The Three Creeds were like garments flung aside. But he was still wearing the uniform of a priest in the service of those three creeds.

After a long interval he walked into the big reading-room. He ordered some tea and dry toast and butter, and sat down very thoughtfully in a corner. He was still sitting and thinking at half-past eight.

It may seem strange to the reader that this bishop who had been doubting and criticizing the church and his system of beliefs for four long years had never before faced the possibility of a severance from his ecclesiastical dignity. But he had grown up in the church, his life had been so entirely clerical and Anglican, that the widest separation he had hitherto been able to imagine from this past had left him still a bishop, heretical perhaps, innovating in the broadening of beliefs and the liberalizing of practice, defensive even as Chasters was defensive, but still with the palace and his dignities, differing in opinion rather than in any tangible reality from his previous self. For a bishop, disbelief in the Church is a far profounder scepticism than mere disbelief in God. God is unseen, and in daily things unfelt; but the Church is with the predestined bishop always. His concept of the extremest possible departure from orthodoxy had been something that Chasters had phrased as "a restatement of Christ." It was a new idea, an idea that had come with an immense effect of severance and novelty, that God could be other than the God of the Creed, could present himself to the imagination as a figure totally unlike the white, gentle, and compromising Redeemer of an Anglican's thought. That the bishop should treat the whole teaching of the church and the church itself as wrong, was an idea so new that it fell upon him now like a thunderbolt out of a cloudless sky. But here, clear in his mind now, was a feeling, amounting to conviction, that it was the purpose and gesture of the true God that he should come right out of the church and all his professions.

And in the first glow of his vision he felt this gesture imperative. He must step right out.... Whither? how? And when?

To begin with it seemed to him that an immediate renunciation was demanded. But it was a momentous step. He wanted to think. And to go on thinking. Rather than to act precipitately. Although the imperative seemed absolute, some delaying and arresting

instinct insisted that he must "think" If he went back to Princhester, the everyday duties of his position would confront him at once with an effect of a definite challenge. He decided to take one of the Reform club bedrooms for two or three days, and wire to Princhester that he was "unavoidably delayed in town," without further explanations. Then perhaps this inhibitory force would give way.

It did not, however, give way. His mind sat down for two days in a blank amazement at the course before him, and at the end of that time this reasonless and formless institution was as strong as ever. During that time, except for some incidental exchanges at his clubs, he talked to no one. At first he did not want to talk to any one. He remained mentally and practically active, with a still intensely vivid sense that God, the true God, stood watching him and waiting for him to follow. And to follow meant slipping right out of all the world he had ever known. To thrust his foot right over the edge of a cliff would scarcely have demanded more from the bishop's store of resolution. He stood on the very verge. The chief secretion of his mind was a shadowy experiment or so in explanation of why he did not follow.

(3)

Insensibly the extreme vividness of his sense of God's nearness decreased. But he still retained a persuasion of the reality of an immediate listener waiting, and of the need of satisfying him.

On the third day he found his mind still further changed. He no longer felt that God was in Pall Mall or St. James's Park, whither he resorted to walk and muse. He felt now that God was somewhere about the horizon....

He felt too no longer that he thought straight into the mind of

God. He thought now of what he would presently say to God. He turned over and rehearsed phrases. With that came a desire to try them first on some other hearer. And from that to the attentive head of Lady Sunderbund, prettily bent towards him, was no great leap. She would understand, if any one could understand, the great change that had happened in his mind.

He found her address in the telephone book. She could be quite alone to him if he wouldn't mind "just me." It was, he said, exactly what he desired.

But when he got to her great airy flat overlooking Hyde Park, with its Omega Workshop furniture and its arresting decoration, he was not so sure whether this encounter was so exactly the thing he had desired as he had supposed.

The world had become opaque and real again as he walked up St. James's Street and past the Ritz. He had a feeling that he was taking an afternoon off from God. The adventurous modernity of the room in which he waited intensified that. One whole white wall was devoted to a small picture by Wyndham Lewis. It was like a picture of an earthquake in a city of aniline pink and grey and keen green cardboard, and he wished it had never existed.

He turned his back upon it and stared out of the window over the trees and greenery. The balcony was decorated with white and pink geraniums in pots painted black and gold, and the railings of the balcony were black and gold with crimson shape like squares wildly out of drawing.

Lady Sunderbund kept him waiting perhaps five minutes. Then she came sailing in to him.

She was dressed in a way and moved across the room in a way that was more reminiscent of Botticelli's Spring than ever--

only with a kind of superadded stiffish polonaise of lace--and he did not want to be reminded of Botticelli's Spring or wonder why she had taken to stiff lace polonaises. He did not enquire whether he had met Lady Sunderbund to better advantage at Mrs. Garstein Fellows' or whether his memory had overrated her or whether anything had happened to his standard of taste, but his feeling now was decidedly one of disappointment, and all the talk and self-examination he had promised himself seemed to wither and hide away within him. For a time he talked of her view, and then admired her room and its arrangement, which he thought really were quite unbecomingly flippant and undignified for a room. Then came the black tea-things on their orange tray, and he searched in his mind for small talk to sustain their interview.

But he had already betrayed his disposition to "go on with our talk" in his telephone enquiry, and Lady Sunderbund, perceiving his shyness, began to make openings for him, at first just little hinting openings, and then larger and larger ones, until at last one got him.

"I'm so glad," she said, "to see you again. I'm so glad to go on with our talk. I've thought about it and thought about it."

She beamed at him happily.

"I've thought ova ev'y wo'd you said," she went on, when she had finished conveying her pretty bliss to him. "I've been so helped by thinking the k'eeds are symbols. And all you said. And I've felt time after time, you couldn't stay whe' you we'. That what you we' saying to me, would have to be said 'ight out."

That brought him in. He could not very well evade that opening without incivility. After all he had asked to see her, and it was a foolish thing to let little decorative accidentals put him off his friendly purpose. A woman may have flower-pots painted gold

with black checkers and still be deeply understanding. He determined to tell her what was in his mind. But he found something barred him from telling that he had had an actual vision of God. It was as if that had been a private and confidential meeting. It wasn't, he felt, for him either to boast a privilege or tell others of things that God had not chosen to show them.

"Since I saw you," he said, "I have thought a great deal--of the subject of our conversation."

"I have been t'ying to think," she said in a confirmatory tone, as if she had co-operated.

"My faith in God grows," he said.

She glowed. Her lips fell apart. She flamed attention.

"But it grows less like the faith of the church, less and less. I was born and trained in Anglicanism, and it is with a sort of astonishment I find myself passing now out of every sort of Catholicism--seeing it from the outside...."

"Just as one might see Buddhism," she supplied.

"And yet feeling nearer Ä infinitely nearer to God," he said.

"Yes," she panted; "yes."

"I thought if one went out, one went out just to doubt and darkness."

"And you don't?"

"No."

"You have gone at one step to a new 'iligion!"

He stared for a moment at the phrase.

"To religion," he said.

"It is so wondyful," she said, with her hands straight down upon the couch upon which she was sitting, and leaning forward at him, so as to seem almost as much out of drawing as a modern picture.

"It seems," he reflected; "--as if it were a natural thing."

She came back to earth very slowly. She turned to the tea-things with hushed and solemn movements as though she administered a ceremony of peculiar significance. The bishop too rose slowly out of the profundity of his confession. "No sugar please," he said, arresting the lump in mid air.

It was only when they were embarked upon cups of tea and had a little refreshed themselves, that she carried the talk further.

"Does it mean that you must leave the church?" she asked.

"It seemed so at first," he said. "But now I do not know. I do not know what I ought to do."

She awaited his next thought.

"It is as if one had lived in a room all one's life and thought it the world--and then suddenly walked out through a door and discovered the sea and the mountains and stars. So it was with me and the Anglican Church. It seems so extraordinary now--and it would have seemed the most natural thing a year ago--to think

that I ever believed that the Anglican Compromise was the final truth of religion, that nothing more until the end of the world could ever be known that Cosmo Gordon Lang did not know, that there could be no conception of God and his quality that Randall Davidson did not possess."

He paused.

"I did," he said.

"I did," she responded with round blue eyes of wonder.

"At the utmost the Church of England is a tabernacle on a road."

"A 'oad that goes whe'?" she rhetorized.

"Exactly," said the bishop, and put down his cup.

"You see, my dear Lady Sunderbund," he resumed, "I am exactly in the same position of that man at the door."

She quoted aptly and softly: "The wo'ld was all befo' them whe' to choose."

He was struck by the aptness of the words.

"I feel I have to come right out into the bare truth. What exactly then do I become? Do I lose my priestly function because I discover how great God is? But what am I to do?"

He opened a new layer of his thoughts to her.

"There is a saying," he remarked, "once a priest, always a priest. I cannot imagine myself as other than what I am."

"But o'thodox no maw," she said.

"Orthodox--self-satisfied, no longer. A priest who seeks, an exploring priest."

"In a Chu'ch of P'og'ess and B'othe'hood," she carried him on.

"At any rate, in a progressive and learning church."

She flashed and glowed assent.

"I have been haunted," he said, "by those words spoken at Athens. 'Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.' That comes to me with an effect of--guidance is an old-fashioned word--shall I say suggestion? To stand by the altar bearing strange names and ancient symbols, speaking plainly to all mankind of the one true God--!"

(4)

He did not get much beyond this point at the time, though he remained talking with Lady Sunderbund for nearly an hour longer. The rest was merely a beating out of what had already been said. But insensibly she renewed her original charm, and as he became accustomed to her he forgot a certain artificiality in her manner and the extreme modernity of her costume and furniture. She was a wonderful listener; nobody else could have helped him to expression in quite the same way, and when he left her he felt that now he was capable of stating his case in a coherent and acceptable form to almost any intelligent hearer. He had a point of view now that was no longer embarrassed by the immediate golden presence of God; he was no longer dazzled nor ecstatic; his problem had diminished to the scale of any other great human

problem, to the scale of political problems and problems of integrity and moral principle, problems about which there is no such urgency as there is about a house on fire, for example.

And now the desire for expression was running strong. He wanted to state his situation; if he did not state he would have to act; and as he walked back to the club dinner he turned over possible interlocutors in his thoughts. Lord Rampound sat with him at dinner, and he came near broaching the subject with him. But Lord Rampound that evening had that morbid running of bluish legal anecdotes which is so common an affliction with lawyers, and theology sinks and dies in that turbid stream.

But as he lay in bed that night he thought of his old friend and helper Bishop Likeman, and it was borne in upon him that he should consult him. And this he did next day.

Since the days when the bishop had been only plain Mr. Scrope, the youngest and most helpful of Likeman's historical band of curates, their friendship had continued. Likeman had been a second father to him; in particular his tact and helpfulness had shone during those days of doubt and anxiety when dear old Queen Victoria, God's representative on earth, had obstinately refused, at the eleventh hour, to make him a bishop. She had those pigheaded fits, and she was touchy about the bishops. She had liked Scrope on account of the excellence of his German pronunciation, but she had been irritated by newspaper paragraphs --nobody could ever find out who wrote them and nobody could ever find out who showed them to the old lady--anticipating his elevation. She had gone very red in the face and stiffened in the Guelphic manner whenever Scrope was mentioned, and so a rich harvest of spiritual life had remained untilled for some months. Likeman had brought her round.

It seemed arguable that Scrope owed some explanation to Likeman

before he came to any open breach with the Establishment.

He found Likeman perceptibly older and more shrivelled on account of the war, but still as sweet and lucid and subtle as ever. His voice sounded more than ever like a kind old woman's.

He sat buried in his cushions--for "nowadays I must save every scrap of vitality"--and for a time contented himself with drawing out his visitor's story.

Of course, one does not talk to Likeman of visions or intuitions. "I am disturbed, I find myself getting out of touch;" that was the bishop's tone.

Occasionally Likeman nodded slowly, as a physician might do at the recital of familiar symptoms. "Yes," he said, "I have been through most of this.... A little different in the inessentials.... How clear you are!"

"You leave our stupid old Trinities--as I left them long ago," said old Likeman, with his lean hand feeling and clawing at the arm of his chair.

"But--!"

The old man raised his hand and dropped it. "You go away from it all--straight as a line. I did. You take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth. And there you find--"

He held up a lean finger, and inclined it to tick off each point.

"Fate--which is God the Father, the Power of the Heart, which is God the Son, and that Light which comes in upon us from the

inaccessible Godhead, which is God the Holy Spirit."

"But I know of no God the Holy Spirit, and Fate is not God at all. I saw in my vision one sole God, uncrucified, militant--conquering and to conquer."

Old Likeman stared. "You saw!"

The Bishop of Princhester had not meant to go so far. But he stuck to his words. "As if I saw with my eyes. A God of light and courage."

"You have had visions, Scrope?"

"I seemed to see."

"No, you have just been dreaming dreams."

"But why should one not see?"

"See! The things of the spirit. These symbols as realities! These metaphors as men walking!"

"You talk like an agnostic."

"We are all agnostics. Our creeds are expressions of ourselves and our attitude and relationship to the unknown. The triune God is just the form of our need and disposition. I have always assumed that you took that for granted. Who has ever really seen or heard or felt God? God is neither of the senses nor of the mind; he is of the soul. You are realistic, you are materialistic...."

His voice expostulated.

The Bishop of Princhester reflected. The vision of God was far off among his memories now, and difficult to recall. But he said at last: "I believe there is a God and that he is as real a person as you or I. And he is not the theological God we set out before the world."

"Personification," said Likeman. "In the eighteenth century they used to draw beautiful female figures as Science and Mathematics. Young men have loved Science--and Freedom--as Pygmalion loved Galatea. Have it so if you will. Have a visible person for your Deity. But let me keep up my--spirituality."

"Your spirituality seems as thin as a mist. Do you really believe--anything?"

"Everything!" said Likeman emphatically, sitting up with a transitory vigour. "Everything we two have ever professed together. I believe that the creeds of my church do express all that can possibly be expressed in the relationship of--That "--he made a comprehensive gesture with a twist of his hand upon its wrist--"to the human soul. I believe that they express it as well as the human mind can express it. Where they seem to be contradictory or absurd, it is merely that the mystery is paradoxical. I believe that the story of the Fall and of the Redemption is a complete symbol, that to add to it or to subtract from it or to alter it is to diminish its truth; if it seems incredible at this point or that, then simply I admit my own mental defect. And I believe in our Church, Scrope, as the embodied truth of religion, the divine instrument in human affairs. I believe in the security of its tradition, in the complete and entire soundness of its teaching, in its essential authority and divinity."

He paused, and put his head a little on one side and smiled sweetly. "And now can you say I do not believe?"

"But the historical Christ, the man Jesus?"

"A life may be a metaphor. Why not? Yes, I believe it all. All."

The Bishop of Princhester was staggered by this complete acceptance. "I see you believe all you profess," he said, and remained for a moment or so rallying his forces.

"Your vision--if it was a vision--I put it to you, was just some single aspect of divinity," said Likeman. "We make a mistake in supposing that Heresy has no truth in it. Most heresies are only a disproportionate apprehension of some essential truth. Most heretics are men who have suddenly caught a glimpse through the veil of some particular verity.... They are dazzled by that aspect. All the rest has vanished.... They are obsessed. You are obsessed clearly by this discovery of the militancy of God. God the Son--as Hero. And you want to go out to the simple worship of that one aspect. You want to go out to a Dissenter's tent in the wilderness, instead of staying in the Great Temple of the Ages."

Was that true?

For some moments it sounded true.

The Bishop of Princhester sat frowning and looking at that. Very far away was the vision now of that golden Captain who bade him come. Then at a thought the bishop smiled.

"The Great Temple of the Ages," he repeated. "But do you remember the trouble we had when the little old Queen was so pigheaded?"

"Oh! I remember, I remember," said Likeman, smiling with unshaken confidence. "Why not?"

"For sixty years all we bishops in what you call the Great Temple of the Ages, were appointed and bullied and kept in our places by that pink irascible bit of dignity. I remember how at the time I didn't dare betray my boiling indignation even to you --I scarcely dared admit it to myself...."

He paused.

"It doesn't matter at all," and old Likeman waved it aside.

"Not at all," he confirmed, waving again.

"I spoke of the whole church of Christ on earth," he went on. "These things, these Victorias and Edwards and so on, are temporary accidents--just as the severance of an Anglican from a Roman communion and a Greek orthodox communion are temporary accidents. You will remark that wise men in all ages have been able to surmount the difficulty of these things. Why? Because they knew that in spite of all these splits and irregularities and defacements--like the cracks and crannies and lichens on a cathedral wall--the building held good, that it was shelter and security. There is no other shelter and security. And so I come to your problem. Suppose it is true that you have this incidental vision of the militant aspect of God, and he isn't, as you see him now that is,--he isn't like the Trinity, he isn't like the Creed, he doesn't seem to be related to the Church, then comes the question, are you going out for that? And whither do you go if you do go out? The Church remains. We alter doctrines not by changing the words but by shifting the accent. We can underÄaccentuate below the threshold of consciousness."

"But can we?"

"We do. Where's Hell now? Eighty years ago it warmed the whole Church. It was--as some atheist or other put it the other day --the central heating of the soul. But never mind that point now. Consider the essential question, the question of breaking with the church. Ask yourself, whither would you go? To become an oddity! A Dissenter. A Negative. Self emasculated. The spirit that denies. You would just go out. You would just cease to serve Religion. That would be all. You wouldn't do anything. The Church would go on; everything else would go on. Only you would be lost in the outer wilderness.

"But then--"

Old Likeman leant forward and pointed a bony finger. "Stay in the Church and modify it. Bring this new light of yours to the altar."

There was a little pause.

"No man," the bishop thought aloud, "putteth new wine into old bottles."

Old Likeman began to speak and had a fit of coughing. "Some of these texts--whuff, whuff--like a conjuror's hat--whuff--make 'em--fit anything."

A man-servant appeared and handed a silver box of lozenges into which the old bishop dipped with a trembling hand.

"Tricks of that sort," he said, "won't do, Scrope--among professionals.

"And besides," he was inspired; "true religion is old wine--as old as the soul.

"You are a bishop in the Church of Christ on Earth," he summed it up. "And you want to become a detached and wandering Ancient Mariner from your shipwreck of faith with something to explain--that nobody wants to hear. You are going out I suppose you have means?"

The old man awaited the answer to his abrupt enquiry with a handful of lozenges.

"No," said the Bishop of Princhester, "practically--I haven't."

"My dear boy!" it was as if they were once more rector and curate. "My dear brother! do you know what the value of an ex-bishop is in the ordinary labour market?"

"I have never thought of that."

"Evidently. You have a wife and children?"

"Five daughters."

"And your wife married you--I remember, she married you soon after you got that living in St. John's Wood. I suppose she took it for granted that you were fixed in an ecclesiastical career. That was implicit in the transaction."

"I haven't looked very much at that side of the matter yet," said the Bishop of Princhester.

"It shouldn't be a decisive factor," said Bishop Likeman, "not decisive. But it will weigh. It should weigh...."

The old man opened out fresh aspects of the case. His argument

was for delay, for deliberation. He went on to a wider set of considerations. A man who has held the position of a bishop for some years is, he held, no longer a free man in matters of opinion. He has become an official part of a great edifice which supports the faith of multitudes of simple and dependant believers. He has no right to indulge recklessly in intellectual and moral integrities. He may understand, but how is the flock to understand? He may get his own soul clear, but what will happen to them? He will just break away their supports, astonish them, puzzle them, distress them, deprive them of confidence, convince them of nothing.

"Intellectual egotism may be as grave a sin," said Bishop Likeman, "as physical selfishness.

"Assuming even that you are absolutely right," said Bishop Likeman, "aren't you still rather in the position of a man who insists upon Swedish exercises and a strengthening dietary on a raft?"

"I think you have made out a case for delay," said his hearer.

"Three months."

The Bishop of Princhester conceded three months.

"Including every sort of service. Because, after all, even supposing it is damnable to repeat prayers and creeds you do not believe in, and administer sacraments you think superstition, nobody can be damned but yourself. On the other hand if you express doubts that are not yet perfectly digested--you experiment with the souls of others...."

(5)

The bishop found much to ponder in his old friend's counsels. They were discursive and many-fronted, and whenever he seemed to be penetrating or defeating the particular considerations under examination the others in the background had a way of appearing invincible. He had a strong persuasion that Likeman was wrong--and unanswerable. And the true God now was no more than the memory of a very vividly realized idea. It was clear to the bishop that he was no longer a churchman or in the generally accepted sense of the word a Christian, and that he was bound to come out of the church. But all sense of urgency had gone. It was a matter demanding deliberation and very great consideration for others.

He took no more of Dale's stuff because he felt bodily sound and slept well. And he was now a little shy of this potent fluid. He went down to Princhester the next day, for his compromise of an interval of three months made it seem possible to face his episcopal routine again. It was only when he was back in his own palace that the full weight of his domestic responsibilities in the discussion of the course he had to take, became apparent.

Lady Ella met him with affection and solicitude.

"I was tired and mentally fagged," he said. "A day or so in London had an effect of change."

She agreed that he looked much better, and remained for a moment or so scrutinizing him with the faint anxiety of one resolved to be completely helpful.

He regarded her with a renewed sense of her grace and dignity and kindness. She was wearing a grey dress of soft silky material, touched with blue and covered with what seemed to him very rich and beautiful lace; her hair flowed back very

graciously from her broad brow, and about her wrist and neck were delicate lines of gold. She seemed tremendously at home and right just where she was, in that big hospitable room, cultured but Anglican, without pretensions or novelties, with a glow of bound books, with the grand piano that Miriam, his third daughter, was beginning to play so well, with the tea equipage of shining silver and fine porcelain.

He sat down contentedly in the low armchair beside her.

It wasn't a setting that one would rashly destroy....

And that evening at dinner this sense of his home as a complex of finely adjusted things not to be rashly disturbed was still more in the mind of the bishop. At dinner he had all his domesticities about him. It was the family time, from eight until ten, at which latter hour he would usually go back from the drawing-room to his study. He surveyed the table. Eleanor was at home for a few days, looking a little thin and bright but very keen and happy. She had taken a first in the first part of the Moral Science Tripos, and she was working hard now for part two. Clementina was to go back to Newnham with her next September. She aspired to history. Miriam's bent was musical. She and Phoebe and Daphne and Clementina were under the care of skilful Mademoiselle Lafarge, most tactful of Protestant French-women, Protestant and yet not too Protestant, one of those rare French Protestants in whom a touch of Bergson and the Pasteur Monod

"scarce suspected, animates the whole."

And also they had lessons, so high are our modern standards of education, from Mr. Blent, a brilliant young mathematician in orders, who sat now next to Lady Ella. Mr. Whippham, the chaplain, was at the bishop's right hand, ready for any chance of

making arrangements to clear off the small arrears of duty the little holiday in London had accumulated. The bishop surveyed all these bright young people between himself and the calm beauty of his wife. He spoke first to one and then another upon the things that interested them. It rejoiced his heart to be able to give them education and opportunity, it pleased him to see them in clothes that he knew were none the less expensive because of their complete simplicity. Miriam and Mr. Blent wrangled pleasantly about Debussy, and old Dunk waited as though in orders of some rare and special sort that qualified him for this service.

All these people, the bishop reflected, counted upon him that this would go on....

Eleanor was answering some question of her mother's. They were so oddly alike and so curiously different, and both in their several ways so fine. Eleanor was dark like his own mother. Perhaps she did a little lack Lady Ella's fine reserves; she could express more, she could feel more acutely, she might easily be very unhappy or very happy....

All these people counted on him. It was indeed acutely true, as Likeman had said, that any sudden breach with his position would be a breach of faith--so far as they were concerned.

And just then his eye fell upon the epergne, a very old and beautiful piece of silver, that graced the dinner-table. It had been given him, together with an episcopal ring, by his curates and choristers at the Church of the Holy Innocents, when he became bishop of Pinner. When they gave it him, had any one of them dreamt that some day he might be moved to strike an ungracious blow at the mother church that had reared them all?

It was his custom to join the family in the drawing-room after

dinner. To-night he was a little delayed by Whippham, with some trivialities about next month's confirmations in Pringle and Princhester. When he came in he found Miriam playing, and playing very beautifully one of those later sonatas of Beethoven, he could never remember whether it was Of. 109 or Of. 111, but he knew that he liked it very much; it was solemn and sombre with phases of indescribable sweetness--while Clementina, Daphne and Mademoiselle Lafarge went on with their war knitting and Phoebe and Mr. Blent bent their brows over chess. Eleanor was reading the evening paper. Lady Ella sat on a high chair by the coffee things, and he stood in the doorway surveying the peaceful scene for a moment or so, before he went across the room and sat down on the couch close to her.

"You look tired," she whispered softly.

"Worries."

"That Chasters case?"

"Things developing out of that. I must tell you later." It would be, he felt, a good way of breaking the matter to her.

"Is the Chasters case coming on again, Daddy?" asked Eleanor.

He nodded.

"It's a pity," she said.

"What ?

"That he can't be left alone."

"It's Sir Reginald Phipps. The Church would be much more tolerant if it wasn't for the House of Laymen. But they--they

feel they must do something."

He seized the opportunity of the music ceasing to get away from the subject. "Miriam dear," he asked, raising his voice; "is that 109 or 111? I can never tell."

"That is always 111, Daddy," said Miriam. "It's the other one is 109." And then evidently feeling that she had been pert: "Would you like me to play you 109, Daddy?"

"I should love it, my dear." And he leant back and prepared to listen in such a thorough way that Eleanor would have no chance of discussing the Chasters' heresies. But this was interrupted by the consummation of the coffee, and Mr. Blent, breaking a long silence with "Mate in three, if I'm not mistaken," leapt to his feet to be of service. Eleanor, with the rough seriousness of youth, would not leave the Chasters case alone.

"But need you take action against Mr. Chasters?" she asked at once.

"It's a very complicated subject, my dear," he said.

"His arguments?"

"The practical considerations."

"But what are practical considerations in such a case?"

"That's a post-graduate subject, Norah," her father said with a smile and a sigh.

"But," began Eleanor, gathering fresh forces.

"Daddy is tired," Lady Ella intervened, patting him on the

head.

"Oh, terribly!--of that," he said, and so escaped Eleanor for the evening.

But he knew that before very long he would have to tell his wife of the changes that hung over their lives; it would be shabby to let the avalanche fall without giving the longest possible warning; and before they parted that night he took her hands in his and said: "There is much I have to tell you, dear. Things change, the whole world changes. The church must not live in a dream...."

"No," she whispered. "I hope you will sleep to-night," and held up her grave sweet face to be kissed.

(6)

But he did not sleep perfectly that night.

He did not sleep indeed very badly, but he lay for some time thinking, thinking not onward but as if he pressed his mind against very strong barriers that had closed again. His vision of God which had filled the heavens, had become now gem-like, a minute, hard, clear-cut conviction in his mind that he had to disentangle himself from the enormous complications of symbolism and statement and organization and misunderstanding in the church and achieve again a simple and living worship of a simple and living God. Likeman had puzzled and silenced him, only upon reflection to convince him that amidst such intricacies of explanation the spirit cannot live. Creeds may be symbolical, but symbols must not prevaricate. A church that can symbolize everything and anything means nothing.

It followed from this that he ought to leave the church. But there came the other side of this perplexing situation. His feelings as he lay in his bed were exactly like those one has in a dream when one wishes to run or leap or shout and one can achieve no movement, no sound. He could not conceive how he could possibly leave the church.

His wife became as it were the representative of all that held him helpless. She and he had never kept secret from one another any plan of action, any motive, that affected the other. It was clear to him that any movement towards the disavowal of doctrinal Christianity and the renunciation of his see must be first discussed with her. He must tell her before he told the world.

And he could not imagine his telling her except as an incredibly shattering act.

So he left things from day to day, and went about his episcopal routines. He preached and delivered addresses in such phrases as he knew people expected, and wondered profoundly why it was that it should be impossible for him to discuss theological points with Lady Ella. And one afternoon he went for a walk with Eleanor along the banks of the Prin, and found himself, in response to certain openings of hers, talking to her in almost exactly the same terms as Likeman had used to him.

Then suddenly the problem of this theological eclaireissement was complicated in an unexpected fashion.

He had just been taking his Every Second Thursday Talk with Diocesan Men Helpers. He had been trying to be plain and simple upon the needless narrowness of enthusiastic laymen. He was still in the Bishop Andrews cap and purple cassock he affected on these occasions; the Men Helpers loved purple; and he was disentangling himself from two or three resolute bores--for our loyal laymen

can be at times quite superlative bores--when Miriam came to him.

"Mummy says, 'Come to the drawing-room if you can.' There is a Lady Sunderbund who seems particularly to want to see you."

He hesitated for a moment, and then decided that this was a conversation he ought to control.

He found Lady Sunderbund looking very tall and radiantly beautiful in a sheathlike dress of bright crimson trimmed with snow-white fur and a white fur toque. She held out a long white-gloved hand to him and cried in a tone of comradeship and profound understanding: "I've come, Bishop!"

"You've come to see me?" he said without any sincerity in his polite pleasure.

"I've come to P'inchesta to stay!" she cried with a bright triumphant rising note.

She evidently considered Lady Ella a mere conversational stop-gap, to be dropped now that the real business could be commenced. She turned her pretty profile to that lady, and obliged the bishop with a compact summary of all that had preceded his arrival. "I have been telling Lady Ella," she said, "I've taken a house, fu'nitua and all! Hea. In P'inchesta! I've made up my mind to sit unda you--as they say in Clapham. I've come 'ight down he' fo' good. I've taken a little house--oh! a sweet little house that will be all over 'oses next month. I'm living f'om 'oom to 'oom and having the othas done up. It's in that little quiet st'eet behind you' ga'den wall. And he' I am!"

"Is it the old doctor's house?" asked Lady Ella.

"Was it an old docta?" cried Lady Sunderbund. "How delightful! And now I shall be a patient!"

She concentrated upon the bishop.

"Oh, I've been thinking all the time of all the things you told me. Ova and ova. It's all so wondrous and so--so like a Gate Daw opening. New light. As if it was all just beginning."

She clasped her hands.

The bishop felt that there were a great number of points to this situation, and that it was extremely difficult to grasp them all at once. But one that seemed of supreme importance to his whirling intelligence was that Lady Ella should not know that he had gone to relieve his soul by talking to Lady Sunderbund in London. It had never occurred to him at the time that there was any shadow of disloyalty to Lady Ella in his going to Lady Sunderbund, but now he realized that this was a thing that would annoy Lady Ella extremely. The conversation had in the first place to be kept away from that. And in the second place it had to be kept away from the abrupt exploitation of the new theological developments.

He felt that something of the general tension would be relieved if they could all three be got to sit down.

"I've been talking for just upon two hours," he said to Lady Ella. "It's good to see the water boiling for tea."

He put a chair for Lady Sunderbund to the right of Lady Ella, got her into it by infusing an ecclesiastical insistence into his manner, and then went and sat upon the music-stool on his wife's left, so as to establish a screen of tea-things and cakes and so forth against her more intimate enthusiasm. Meanwhile he began to

see his way clearer and to develop his line.

"Well, Lady Sunderbund," he said, "I can assure you that I think you will be no small addition to the church life of Princhester. But I warn you this is a hard-working and exacting diocese. We shall take your money, all we can get of it, we shall take your time, we shall work you hard."

"Wo'k me hard!" cried Lady Sunderbund with passion.

"We will, we will," said the bishop in a tone that ignored her passionate note.

"I am sure Lady Sunderbund will be a great help to us," said Lady Ella. "We want brightening. There's a dinginess...."

Lady Sunderbund beamed an acknowledgment. "I shall exact a 'eturn," she said. "I don't mind wo'king, but I shall wo'k like the poo' students in the Middle Ages did, to get my teaching. I've got my own soul to save as well as help saving othas. Since oua last talk--"

She found the bishop handing her bread and butter. For a time the bishop fought a delaying action with the tea-things, while he sought eagerly and vainly in his mind for some good practical topic in which he could entangle and suppress Lady Sunderbund's enthusiasms. From this she broke away by turning suddenly to Lady Ella.

"Youa husband's views," she said, "we'e a 'eal 'evelation to me. It was like not being blind--all at once."

Lady Ella was always pleased to hear her husband praised. Her colour brightened a little. "They seem very ordinary views," she said modestly.

"You share them?" cried Lady Sunderbund.

"But of course," said Lady Ella.

"Wondrous!" cried Lady Sunderbund.

"Tell me, Lady Sunderbund," said the bishop, "are you going to alter the outer appearance of the old doctor's house?" And found that at last he had discovered the saving topic.

"Hardly at all," she said. "I shall just have it pointed white and do the door--I'm not sure how I shall do the door. Whether I shall do the door gold or a very, very 'itch blue."

For a time she and Lady Ella, to whom these ideas were novel, discussed the animation of grey and sombre towns by house painting. In such matter Lady Sunderbund had a Russian mind. "I can't bear grey," she said. "Not in my surroundings, not in my kitchen, nowhere." She turned to the bishop. "If I had my way I would paint your cathedral inside and out."

"They used to be painted," said the bishop. "I don't know if you have seen Ely. There the old painting has been largely restored...."

From that to the end there was no real danger, and at last the bishop found himself alone with his wife again.

"Remarkable person," he said tentatively. "I never met any one whose faults were more visible. I met her at Wimbush House."

He glanced at his watch.

"What did she mean," asked Lady Ella abruptly, "by talking of

your new views? And about revelations?"

"She probably misunderstood something I said at the Garstein Fellows'," he said. "She has rather a leaping mind."

He turned to the window, looked at his nails, and appeared to be suddenly reminded of duties elsewhere....

It was chiefly manifest to him that the difficulties in explaining the changes of his outlook to Lady Ella had now increased enormously.

(7)

A day or so after Lady Sunderbund's arrival in Princhester the bishop had a letter from Likeman. The old man was manifestly in doubt about the effect of their recent conversation.

"My dear Scrope," it began. "I find myself thinking continually about our interview and the difficulties you laid bare so frankly to me. We touched upon many things in that talk, and I find myself full of afterthoughts, and not perfectly sure either quite of what I said or of what I failed to say. I feel that in many ways I was not perhaps so clear and convincing as the justice of my case should have made me, and you are one of my own particular little company, you were one of the best workers in that band of good workers, your life and your career are very much my concern. I know you will forgive me if I still mingle something of the paternal with my fraternal admonitions. I watched you closely. I have still my old diaries of the St. Matthew's days, and I have been looking at them to remind me of what you once were. It was my custom to note my early impressions of all the men who worked with me, because I have a firm belief in the soundness of first impressions and the considerable risk one runs of having them

obscured by the accidents and habitations of constant intercourse. I found that quite early in your days at St. Matthew's I wrote against your name 'enthusiastic, but a saving delicacy.' After all our life-long friendship I would not write anything truer. I would say of you to-day, 'This man might have been a revivalist, if he were not a gentleman.' There is the enthusiast, there is the revivalist, in you. It seems to me that the stresses and questions of this great crisis in the world's history have brought it nearer to the surface than I had ever expected it to come.

"I quite understand and I sympathize with your impatience with the church at the present time; we present a spectacle of pompous insignificance hard to bear with. We are doing very little, and we are giving ourselves preposterous airs. There seems to be an opinion abroad that in some quasi-automatic way the country is going to collapse after the war into the arms of the church and the High Tories; a possibility I don't accept for a moment. Why should it? These forcible-feeble reactionaries are much more likely to explode a revolution that will disestablish us. And I quite understand your theological difficulties--quite. The creeds, if their entire symbolism is for a moment forgotten, if they are taken as opaque statements of fact, are inconsistent, incredible. So incredible that no one believes them; not even the most devout. The utmost they do is to avert their minds--reverentially. Credo quia impossibile. That is offensive to a Western mind. I can quite understand the disposition to cry out at such things, 'This is not the Church of God!'--to run out from it--

"You have some dream, I suspect, of a dramatic dissidence.

"Now, my dear Brother and erstwhile pupil, I ask you not to do this thing. Wait, I implore you. Give me--and some others, a little time. I have your promise for three months, but even after

that, I ask you to wait. Let the reform come from within the church. The church is something more than either its creeds, its clergy, or its laymen. Look at your cathedral rising out of and dominating Princhester. It stands not simply for Athanasius; it stands but incidentally for Athanasius; it stands for all religion. Within that fabric--let me be as frank here as in our private conversation--doctrine has altered again and again. To-day two distinct religions worship there side by side; one that fades and one that grows brighter. There is the old quasi-materialistic belief of the barbarians, the belief in such things, for example, as that Christ the physical Son of God descended into hell and stayed there, seeing the sights I suppose like any tourist and being treated with diplomatic civilities for three terrestrial days; and on the other hand there is the truly spiritual belief that you and I share, which is absolutely intolerant of such grotesque ideas. My argument to you is that the new faith, the clearer vision, gains ground; that the only thing that can prevent or delay the church from being altogether possessed by what you call and I admit is, the true God, is that such men as yourself, as the light breaks upon you, should be hasty and leave the church. You see my point of view, do you not? It is not one that has been assumed for our discussion; it is one I came to long years ago, that I was already feeling my way to in my St. Matthew's Lenton sermons.

"A word for your private ear. I am working. I cannot tell you fully because I am not working alone. But there are movements afoot in which I hope very shortly to be able to ask you to share. That much at least I may say at this stage. Obscure but very powerful influences are at work for the liberalizing of the church, for release from many narrow limitations, for the establishment of a modus vivendi with the nonconformist and dissentient bodies in Britain and America, and with the churches of the East. But of that no more now.

"And in conclusion, my dear Scrope, let me insist again upon the eternal persistence of the essential Religious Fact:

(Greek Letters Here)

(Rev. i. 18. "Fear not. I am the First and Last thing, the Living thing.")

And these promises which, even if we are not to take them as promises in the exact sense in which, let us say, the payment of five sovereigns is promised by a five-pound note, are yet assertions of practically inevitable veracity:

(Greek Letters Here)

(Phil. i. 6. "He who began... will perfect."
Eph. v. 14. "He will illuminate.")

The old man had written his Greek tags in shakily resolute capitals. It was his custom always to quote the Greek Testament in his letters, never the English version. It is a practice not uncommon with the more scholarly of our bishops. It is as if some eminent scientific man were to insist upon writing H₂O instead of "water," and "sodium chloride" instead of "table salt" in his private correspondence. Or upon hanging up a stuffed crocodile in his hall to give the place tone. The Bishop of Princhester construed these brief dicta without serious exertion, he found them very congenial texts, but there were insuperable difficulties in the problem why Likeman should suppose they had the slightest weight upon his side of their discussion. The more he thought the less they seemed to be on Likeman's side, until at last they began to take on a complexion entirely opposed to the

old man's insidious arguments, until indeed they began to bear the extraordinary interpretation of a special message, unwittingly delivered.

(8)

The bishop was still thinking over this communication when he was interrupted by Lady Ella. She came with a letter in her hand to ask him whether she might send five-and-twenty pounds to a poor cousin of his, a teacher in a girls' school, who had been incapacitated from work by a dislocation of the cartilage of her knee. If she could go to that unorthodox but successful practitioner, Mr. Barker, the bone-setter, she was convinced she could be restored to efficiency. But she had no ready money. The bishop agreed without hesitation. His only doubt was the certainty of the cure, but upon that point Lady Ella was convinced; there had been a great experience in the Walshingham family.

"It is pleasant to be able to do things like this," said Lady Ella, standing over him when this matter was settled.

"Yes," the bishop agreed; "it is pleasant to be in a position to do things like this...."

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH - THE SECOND VISION

(1)

A MONTH later found the bishop's original state of perplexity and insomnia returned and intensified. He had done none of all the things that had seemed so manifestly needing to be done after his vision in the Athenaeum. All the relief and benefit of his experience in London had vanished out of his life. He was afraid of Dr. Dale's drug; he knew certainly that it would precipitate matters; and all his instincts in the state of moral enfeeblement to which he had relapsed, were to temporize.

Although he had said nothing further about his changed beliefs to Lady Ella, yet he perceived clearly that a shadow had fallen between them. She had a wife's extreme sensitiveness to fine shades of expression and bearing, and manifestly she knew that something was different. Meanwhile Lady Sunderbund had become a frequent worshipper in the cathedral, she was a figure as conspicuous in sombre Princhester as a bird of paradise would have been; common people stood outside her very very rich blue door on the chance of seeing her; she never missed an opportunity of hearing the bishop preach or speak, she wrote him several long and thoughtful letters with which he did not bother Lady Ella, she communicated persistently, and manifestly intended to become a very active worker in diocesan affairs.

It was inevitable that she and the bishop should meet and talk occasionally in the cathedral precincts, and it was inevitable that he should contrast the flexibility of her rapid and very responsive mind with a certain defensiveness, a stoniness, in the intellectual bearing of Lady Ella.

If it had been Lady Sunderbund he had had to explain to,

instead of Lady Ella, he could have explained a dozen times a day.

And since his mind was rehearsing explanations it was not unnatural they should overflow into this eagerly receptive channel, and that the less he told Lady Ella the fuller became his spiritual confidences to Lady Sunderbund.

She was clever in realizing that they were confidences and treating them as such, more particularly when it chanced that she and Lady Ella and the bishop found themselves in the same conversation.

She made great friends with Miriam, and initiated her by a whole collection of pretty costume plates into the mysteries of the "Ussian Ballet" and the works of Moussorgski and "Imsky Ko'zakof."

The bishop liked a certain religiosity in the texture of Moussorgski's music, but failed to see the "significance"--of many of the costumes.

(2)

It was on a Sunday night--the fourth Sunday after Easter--that the supreme crisis of the bishop's life began. He had had a feeling all day of extreme dulness and stupidity; he felt his ministrations unreal, his ceremonies absurd and undignified. In the night he became bleakly and painfully awake. His mind occupied itself at first chiefly with the tortuousness and weakness of his own character. Every day he perceived that the difficulty of telling Lady Ella of the change in his faith became more mountainous. And every day he procrastinated. If he had told her naturally and simply on the evening of his return from London

--before anything material intervened--everything would have been different, everything would have been simpler....

He groaned and rolled over in his bed.

There came upon him the acutest remorse and misery. For he saw that amidst these petty immediacies he had lost touch with God. The last month became incredible. He had seen God. He had touched God's hand. God had been given to him, and he had neglected the gift. He was still lost amidst the darkness and loneliness, the chaotic ends and mean shifts, of an Erastian world. For a month now and more, after a vision of God so vivid and real and reassuring that surely no saint nor prophet had ever had a better, he had made no more than vague responsive movements; he had allowed himself to be persuaded into an unreasonable and cowardly delay, and the fetters of association and usage and minor interests were as unbroken as they had been before ever the vision shone. Was it credible that there had ever been such a vision in a life so entirely dictated by immediacy and instinct as his? We are all creatures of the dark stream, we swim in needs and bodily impulses and small vanities; if ever and again a bubble of spiritual imaginativeness glows out of us, it breaks and leaves us where we were.

"Louse that I am!" he cried.

He still believed in God, without a shadow of doubt; he believed in the God that he had seen, the high courage, the golden intention, the light that had for a moment touched him. But what had he to do with God, he, the loiterer, the little thing?

He was little, he was funny. His prevarications with his wife, for example, were comic. There was no other word for him but "funny."

He rolled back again and lay staring.

"Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" What right has a little bishop in a purple stock and doeskin breeches, who hangs back in his palace from the very call of God, to a phrase so fine and tragic as "the body of this death?"

He was the most unreal thing in the universe. He was a base insect giving himself airs. What advantage has a bishop over the Praying Mantis, that cricket which apes the attitude of piety? Does he matter more--to God?

"To the God of the Universe, who can tell? To the God of man,--yes."

He sat up in bed struck by his own answer, and full of an indescribable hunger for God and an indescribable sense of his complete want of courage to make the one simple appeal that would satisfy that hunger. He tried to pray. "O God!" he cried, "forgive me! Take me!" It seemed to him that he was not really praying but only making believe to pray. It seemed to him that he was not really existing but only seeming to exist. He seemed to himself to be one with figures on a china plate, with figures painted on walls, with the flimsy imagined lives of men in stories of forgotten times. "O God!" he said, "O God," acting a gesture, mimicking appeal.

"Anaemic," he said, and was given an idea.

He got out of bed, he took his keys from the night-table at the bed head and went to his bureau.

He stood with Dale's tonic in his hand. He remained for some time holding it, and feeling a curious indisposition to go on

with the thing in his mind.

He turned at last with an effort. He carried the little phial to his bedside, and into the tumbler of his water-bottle he let the drops fall, drop by drop, until he had counted twenty. Then holding it to the bulb of his reading lamp he added the water and stood watching the slow pearly eddies in the mixture mingle into an opalescent uniformity. He replaced the water-bottle and stood with the glass in his hand. But he did not drink.

He was afraid.

He knew that he had only to drink and this world of confusion would grow transparent, would roll back and reveal the great simplicities behind. And he was afraid.

He was afraid of that greatness. He was afraid of the great imperatives that he knew would at once take hold of his life. He wanted to muddle on for just a little longer. He wanted to stay just where he was, in his familiar prison-house, with the key of escape in his hand. Before he took the last step into the very presence of truth, he would--think.

He put down the glass and lay down upon his bed....

(3)

He awoke in a mood of great depression out of a dream of wandering interminably in an endless building of innumerable pillars, pillars so vast and high that the ceiling was lost in darkness. By the scale of these pillars he felt himself scarcely larger than an ant. He was always alone in these wanderings, and always missing something that passed along distant passages, something desirable, something in the nature of a procession or

of a ceremony, something of which he was in futile pursuit, of which he heard faint echoes, something luminous of which he seemed at times to see the last fading reflection, across vast halls and wildernesses of shining pavement and through Cyclopaean archways. At last there was neither sound nor gleam, but the utmost solitude, and a darkness and silence and the uttermost profundity of sorrow....

It was bright day. Dunk had just come into the room with his tea, and the tumbler of Dr. Dale's tonic stood untouched upon the night-table. The bishop sat up in bed. He had missed his opportunity. To-day was a busy day, he knew.

"No," he said, as Dunk hesitated whether to remove or leave the tumbler. "Leave that."

Dunk found room for it upon the tea-tray, and vanished softly with the bishop's evening clothes.

The bishop remained motionless facing the day. There stood the draught of decision that he had lacked the decision even to touch.

From his bed he could just read the larger items that figured upon the engagement tablet which it was Whippham's business to fill over-night and place upon his table. He had two confirmation services, first the big one in the cathedral and then a second one in the evening at Pringle, various committees and an interview with Chasters. He had not yet finished his addresses for these confirmation services....

The task seemed mountainous--overwhelming.

With a gesture of desperation he seized the tumblerful of tonic and drank it off at a gulp.

(4)

For some moments nothing seemed to happen.

Then he began to feel stronger and less wretched, and then came a throbbing and tingling of artery and nerve.

He had a sense of adventure, a pleasant fear in the thing that he had done. He got out of bed, leaving his cup of tea untasted, and began to dress. He had the sensation of relief a prisoner may feel who suddenly tries his cell door and finds it open upon sunshine, the outside world and freedom.

He went on dressing although he was certain that in a few minutes the world of delusion about him would dissolve, and that he would find himself again in the great freedom of the place of God.

This time the transition came much sooner and much more rapidly. This time the phases and quality of the experience were different. He felt once again that luminous confusion between the world in which a human life is imprisoned and a circumambient and interpenetrating world, but this phase passed very rapidly; it did not spread out over nearly half an hour as it had done before, and almost immediately he seemed to plunge away from everything in this life altogether into that outer freedom he sought. And this time there was not even the elemental scenery of the former vision. He stood on nothing; there was nothing below and nothing above him. There was no sense of falling, no terror, but a feeling as though he floated released. There was no light, but as it were a clear darkness about him. Then it was manifest to him that he was not alone, but that with him was that same being that in his former vision had called himself the Angel of

God. He knew this without knowing why he knew this, and either he spoke and was answered, or he thought and his thought answered him back. His state of mind on this occasion was altogether different from the first vision of God; before it had been spectacular, but now his perception was altogether super-sensuous.

(And nevertheless and all the time it seemed that very faintly he was still in his room.)

It was he who was the first to speak. The great Angel whom he felt rather than saw seemed to be waiting for him to speak.

"I have come," he said, "because once more I desire to see God."

"But you have seen God."

"I saw God. God was light, God was truth. And I went back to my life, and God was hidden. God seemed to call me. He called. I heard him, I sought him and I touched his hand. When I went back to my life I was presently lost in perplexity. I could not tell why God had called me nor what I had to do."

"And why did you not come here before?"

"Doubt and fear. Brother, will you not lay your hand on mine?"

The figure in the darkness became distincter. But nothing touched the bishop's seeking hands.

"I want to see God and to understand him. I want reassurance. I want conviction. I want to understand all that God asks me to do. The world is full of conflict and confusion and the spirit of war. It is dark and dreadful now with suffering and bloodshed. I

want to serve God who could save it, and I do not know how."

It seemed to the bishop that now he could distinguish dimly but surely the form and features of the great Angel to whom he talked. For a little while there was silence, and then the Angel spoke.

"It was necessary first," said the Angel, "that you should apprehend God and desire him. That was the purport of your first vision. Now, since you require it, I will tell you and show you certain things about him, things that it seems you need to know, things that all men need to know. Know then first that the time is at hand when God will come into the world and rule it, and when men will know what is required of them. This time is close at hand. In a little while God will be made manifest throughout the earth. Men will know him and know that he is King. To you this truth is to be shown--that you may tell it to others."

"This is no vision?" said the bishop, "no dream that will pass away?"

"Am I not here beside you?"

(5)

The bishop was anxious to be very clear. Things that had been shapelessly present in his mind now took form and found words for themselves.

"The God I saw in my vision--He is not yet manifest in the world?"

"He comes. He is in the world, but he is not yet manifested. He whom you saw in your vision will speedily be manifest in the

world. To you this vision is given of the things that come. The world is already glowing with God. Mankind is like a smouldering fire that will presently, in quite a little time, burst out into flame.

"In your former vision I showed you God," said the Angel. "This time I will show you certain signs of the coming of God. And then you will understand the place you hold in the world and the task that is required of you."

(6)

And as the Angel spoke he lifted up his hands with the palms upward, and there appeared above them a little round cloud, that grew denser until it had the likeness of a silver sphere. It was a mirror in the form of a ball, but a mirror not shining uniformly; it was discoloured with greyish patches that had a familiar shape. It circled slowly upon the Angel's hands. It seemed no greater than the compass of a human skull, and yet it was as great as the earth. Indeed it showed the whole earth. It was the earth. The hands of the Angel vanished out of sight, dissolved and vanished, and the spinning world hung free. All about the bishop the velvet darkness broke into glittering points that shaped out the constellations, and nearest to them, so near as to seem only a few million miles away in the great emptiness into which everything had resolved itself, shone the sun, a ball of red-tongued fires. The Angel was but a voice now; the bishop and the Angel were somewhere aloof from and yet accessible to the circling silver sphere.

At the time all that happened seemed to happen quite naturally, as things happen in a dream. It was only later, when all this was a matter of memory, that the bishop realized how strange and incomprehensible his vision had been. The sphere was the earth

with all its continents and seas, its ships and cities, its country-sides and mountain ranges. It was so small that he could see it all at once, and so great and full that he could see everything in it. He could see great countries like little patches upon it, and at the same time he could see the faces of the men upon the highways, he could see the feelings in men's hearts and the thoughts in their minds. But it did not seem in any way wonderful to the bishop that so he should see those things, or that it was to him that these things were shown.

"This is the whole world," he said.

"This is the vision of the world," the Angel answered.

"It is very wonderful," said the bishop, and stood for a moment marvelling at the compass of his vision. For here was India, here was Samarkand, in the light of the late afternoon; and China and the swarming cities upon her silvery rivers sinking through twilight to the night and throwing a spray and tracery of lantern spots upon the dark; here was Russia under the noontide, and so great a battle of artillery raging on the Dunajec as no man had ever seen before; whole lines of trenches dissolved into clouds of dust and heaps of blood-streaked earth; here close to the waiting streets of Constantinople were the hills of Gallipoli, the grave of British Imperialism, streaming to heaven with the dust and smoke of bursting shells and rifle fire and the smoke and flame of burning brushwood. In the sea of Marmora a big ship crowded with Turkish troops was sinking; and, purple under the clear water, he could see the shape of the British submarine which had torpedoed her and had submerged and was going away. Berlin prepared its frugal meals, still far from famine. He saw the war in Europe as if he saw it on a map, yet every human detail showed. Over hundreds of miles of trenches east and west of Germany he could see shells bursting and the men below dropping, and the stretcher-bearers going back with the wounded.

The roads to every front were crowded with reserves and munitions. For a moment a little group of men indifferent to all this struggle, who were landing amidst the Antarctic wilderness, held his attention; and then his eyes went westward to the dark rolling Atlantic across which, as the edge of the night was drawn like a curtain, more and still more ships became visible beating upon their courses eastward or westward under the overtaking day.

The wonder increased; the wonder of the single and infinitely multitudinous adventure of mankind.

"So God perhaps sees it," he whispered.

(7)

"Look at this man," said the Angel, and the black shadow of a hand seemed to point.

It was a Chinaman sitting with two others in a little low room separated by translucent paper windows from a noisy street of shrill-voiced people. The three had been talking of the ultimatum that Japan had sent that day to China, claiming a priority in many matters over European influences they were by no means sure whether it was a wrong or a benefit that had been done to their country. From that topic they had passed to the discussion of the war, and then of wars and national aggressions and the perpetual thrusting and quarrelling of mankind. The older man had said that so life would always be; it was the will of Heaven. The little, very yellow-faced, emaciated man had agreed with him. But now this younger man, to whose thoughts the Angel had so particularly directed the bishop's attention, was speaking. He did not agree with his companion.

"War is not the will of Heaven," he said; "it is the blindness

of men."

"Man changes," he said, "from day to day and from age to age. The science of the West has taught us that. Man changes and war changes and all things change. China has been the land of flowery peace, and she may yet give peace to all the world. She has put aside that puppet Emperor at Peking, she turns her face to the new learning of the West as a man lays aside his heavy robes, in order that her task may be achieved."

The older man spoke, his manner was more than a little incredulous, and yet not altogether contemptuous. "You believe that someday there will be no more war in the world, that a time will come when men will no longer plot and plan against the welfare of men?"

"Even that last," said the younger man. "Did any of us dream twenty-five years ago that here in China we should live to see a republic? The age of the republics draws near, when men in every country of the world will look straight up to the rule of Right and the empire of Heaven."

(" And God will be King of the World," said the Angel. "Is not that faith exactly the faith that is coming to you? ")

The two other Chinamen questioned their companion, but without hostility.

"This war," said the Chinaman, "will end in a great harvesting of kings."

"But Japan--" the older man began.

The bishop would have liked to hear more of that conversation, but the dark hand of the Angel motioned him to another part of

the world. "Listen to this," said the Angel.

He pointed the bishop to where the armies of Britain and Turkey lay in the heat of Mesopotamia. Along the sandy bank of a wide, slow-flowing river rode two horsemen, an Englishman and a Turk. They were returning from the Turkish lines, whither the Englishman had been with a flag of truce. When Englishmen and Turks are thrown together they soon become friends, and in this case matters had been facilitated by the Englishman's command of the Turkish language. He was quite an exceptional Englishman. The Turk had just been remarking cheerfully that it wouldn't please the Germans if they were to discover how amiably he and his charge had got on. "It's a pity we ever ceased to be friends," he said.

"You Englishmen aren't like our Christians," he went on.

The Englishmen wanted to know why.

"You haven't priests in robes. You don't chant and worship crosses and pictures, and quarrel among yourselves."

"We worship the same God as you do," said the Englishman.

"Then why do we fight?"

"That's what we want to know."

"Why do you call yourselves Christians? And take part against us? All who worship the One God are brothers."

"They ought to be," said the Englishman, and thought. He was struck by what seemed to him an amazingly novel idea.

"If it weren't for religions all men would serve God together,"

he said. "And then there would be no wars--only now and then perhaps just a little honest fighting...."

"And see here," said the Angel. "Here close behind this frightful battle, where the German phalanx of guns pounds its way through the Russian hosts. Here is a young German talking to two wounded Russian prisoners, who have stopped to rest by the roadside. He is a German of East Prussia; he knows and thinks a little Russian. And they too are saying, all three of them, that the war is not God's will, but the confusion of mankind.

"Here," he said, and the shadow of his hand hovered over the burning-ghats of Benares, where a Brahmin of the new persuasion watched the straight spires of funereal smoke ascend into the glow of the late afternoon, while he talked to an English painter, his friend, of the blind intolerance of race and caste and custom in India.

"Or here."

The Angel pointed to a group of people who had gathered upon a little beach at the head of a Norwegian fiord. There were three lads, an old man and two women, and they stood about the body of a drowned German sailor which had been washed up that day. For a time they had talked in whispers, but now suddenly the old man spoke aloud.

"This is the fourth that has come ashore," he said. "Poor drowned souls! Because men will not serve God."

"But folks go to church and pray enough," said one of the women.

"They do not serve God," said the old man. "They just pray to him as one nods to a beggar. They do not serve God who is their

King. They set up their false kings and emperors, and so all Europe is covered with dead, and the seas wash up these dead to us. Why does the world suffer these things? Why did we Norwegians, who are a free-spirited people, permit the Germans and the Swedes and the English to set up a king over us? Because we lack faith. Kings mean secret counsels, and secret counsels bring war. Sooner or later war will come to us also if we give the soul of our nation in trust to a king.... But things will not always be thus with men. God will not suffer them for ever. A day comes, and it is no distant day, when God himself will rule the earth, and when men will do, not what the king wishes nor what is expedient nor what is customary, but what is manifestly right."....

"But men are saying that now in a thousand places," said the Angel. "Here is something that goes a little beyond that."

His pointing hand went southward until they saw the Africanders riding down to Windhuk. Two men, Boer farmers both, rode side by side and talked of the German officer they brought prisoner with them. He had put sheep-dip in the wells of drinking-water; his life was fairly forfeit, and he was not to be killed. "We want no more hate in South Africa," they agreed. "Dutch and English and German must live here now side by side. Men cannot always be killing."

"And see his thoughts," said the Angel.

The German's mind was one amazement. He had been sure of being shot, he had meant to make a good end, fierce and scornful, a relentless fighter to the last; and these men who might have shot him like a man were going to spare him like a dog. His mind was a tumbled muddle of old and new ideas. He had been brought up in an atmosphere of the foulest and fiercest militarism; he had been trained to relentlessness, ruthlessness and so forth; war was war

and the bitterer the better, frightfulness was your way to victory over every enemy. But these people had found a better way. Here were Dutch and English side by side; sixteen years ago they had been at war together and now they wore the same uniform and rode together, and laughed at him for a queer fellow because he was for spitting at them and defying them, and folding his arms and looking level at the executioners' rifles. There were to be no executioners' rifles.... If it was so with Dutch and English, why shouldn't it be so presently with French and Germans? Why someday shouldn't French, German, Dutch and English, Russian and Pole, ride together under this new star of mankind, the Southern Cross, to catch whatever last mischief-maker was left to poison the wells of goodwill?

His mind resisted and struggled against these ideas. "Austere," he whispered. "The ennobling tests of war." A trooner rode up alongside, and offered him a drink of water

"Just a mouthful," he said apologetically. "We've had to go rather short."...

"There's another brain busy here with the same idea," the Angel interrupted. And the bishop found himself looking into the bedroom of a young German attache in Washington, sleepless in the small hours.

"Ach!" cried the young man, and sat up in bed and ran his hands through his fair hair.

He had been working late upon this detestable business of the Lusitania; the news of her sinking had come to hand two days before, and all America was aflame with it. It might mean war. His task had been to pour out explanations and justifications to the press; to show that it was an act of necessity, to pretend a conviction that the great ship was loaded with munitions, to

fight down the hostility and anger that blazed across a continent. He had worked to his limit. He had taken cup after cup of coffee, and had come to bed worked out not two hours ago. Now here he was awake after a nightmare of drowning women and children, trying to comfort his soul by recalling his own arguments. Never once since the war began had he doubted the rightness of the German cause. It seemed only a proof of his nervous exhaustion that he could doubt it now. Germany was the best organized, most cultivated, scientific and liberal nation the earth had ever seen, it was for the good of mankind that she should be the dominant power in the world; his patriotism had had the passion of a mission. The English were indolent, the French decadent, the Russians barbaric, the Americans basely democratic; the rest of the world was the "White man's Burthen"; the clear destiny of mankind was subservience to the good Prussian eagle. Nevertheless--those wet draggled bodies that swirled down in the eddies of the sinking Titan--Ach! He wished it could have been otherwise. He nursed his knees and prayed that there need not be much more of these things before the spirit of the enemy was broken and the great Peace of Germany came upon the world.

And suddenly he stopped short in his prayer.

Suddenly out of the nothingness and darkness about him came the conviction that God did not listen to his prayers....

Was there any other way?

It was the most awful doubt he had ever had, for it smote at the training of all his life. "Could it be possible that after all our old German God is not the proper style and title of the true God? Is our old German God perhaps only the last of a long succession of bloodstained tribal effigies--and not God at all?"

For a long time it seemed that the bishop watched the thoughts that gathered in the young attache's mind. Until suddenly he broke into a quotation, into that last cry of the dying Goethe, for "Light. More Light!"...

"Leave him at that," said the Angel. "I want you to hear these two young women."

The hand came back to England and pointed to where Southend at the mouth of the Thames was all agog with the excitement of an overnight Zeppelin raid. People had got up hours before their usual time in order to look at the wrecked houses before they went up to their work in town. Everybody seemed abroad. Two nurses, not very well trained as nurses go nor very well-educated women, were snatching a little sea air upon the front after an eventful night. They were too excited still to sleep. They were talking of the horror of the moment when they saw the nasty thing "up there," and felt helpless as it dropped its bombs. They had both hated it.

"There didn't ought to be such things," said one.

"They don't seem needed," said her companion.

"Men won't always go on like this--making wars and all such wickedness."

"It's 'ow to stop them?"

"Science is going to stop them."

"Science?"

"Yes, science. My young brother--oh, he's a clever one--he says such things! He says that it's science that they won't

always go on like this. There's more sense coming into the world and more--my young brother says so. Says it stands to reason; it's Evolution. It's science that men are all brothers; you can prove it. It's science that there oughtn't to be war. Science is ending war now by making it horrible like this, and making it so that no one is safe. Showing it up. Only when nobody is safe will everybody want to set up peace, he says. He says it's proved there could easily be peace all over the world now if it wasn't for flags and kings and capitalists and priests. They still manage to keep safe and out of it. He says the world ought to be just one state. The World State, he says it ought to be."

("Under God," said the bishop, "under God.")

"He says science ought to be King of the whole world."

"Call it Science if you will," said the bishop. "God is wisdom."

"Out of the mouths of babes and elementary science students," said the Angel. "The very children in the board schools are turning against this narrowness and nonsense and mischief of nations and creeds and kings. You see it at a thousand points, at ten thousand points, look, the world is all flashing and flickering; it is like a spintharoscope; it is aquiver with the light that is coming to mankind. It is on the verge of blazing even now."

"Into a light."

"Into the one Kingdom of God. See here! See here! And here! This brave little French priest in a helmet of steel who is daring to think for the first time in his life; this gentle-mannered emir from Morocco looking at the grave-diggers on the battlefield; this mother who has lost her son....

"You see they all turn in one direction, although none of them seem to dream yet that they are all turning in the same direction. They turn, every one, to the rule of righteousness, which is the rule of God. They turn to that communism of effort in the world which alone permits men to serve God in state and city and their economic lives.... They are all coming to the verge of the same salvation, the salvation of one human brotherhood under the rule of one Righteousness, one Divine will.... Is that the salvation your church offers?"

(8)

"And now that we have seen how religion grows and spreads in men's hearts, now that the fields are white with harvest, I want you to look also and see what the teachers of religion are doing," said the Angel.

He smiled. His presence became more definite, and the earthly globe about them and the sun and the stars grew less distinct and less immediately there. The silence invited the bishop to speak.

"In the light of this vision, I see my church plainly for the little thing it is," he said.

He wanted to be perfectly clear with the Angel and himself.

"This church of which I am a bishop is just a part of our poor human struggle, small and pitiful as one thinks of it here in the light of the advent of God's Kingdom, but very great, very great indeed, ancient and high and venerable, in comparison with me. But mostly it is human. It is most human. For my story is the church's story, and the church's story is mine. Here I could almost believe myself the church itself. The world saw a light,

the nations that were sitting in darkness saw a great light. Even as I saw God. And then the church began to forget and lose itself among secondary things. As I have done.... It tried to express the truth and lost itself in a maze of theology. It tried to bring order into the world and sold its faith to Constantine. These men who had professed the Invisible King of the World, shirked his service. It is a most terrible disaster that Christianity has sold itself to emperors and kings. They forged a saying of the Master's that we should render unto Ceasar the things that are Ceasar's and unto God the things that are God's....

"Who is this Ceasar to set himself up to share mankind with God? Nothing that is Ceasar's can be any the less God's. But Constantine Caesar sat in the midst of the council, his guards were all about it, and the poor fanatics and trimmers and schemers disputed nervously with their eyes on him, disputed about homoousian and homoiousian, and grimaced and pretended to be very very fierce and exact to hide how much they were frightened and how little they knew, and because they did not dare to lay violent hands upon that usurper of the empire of the world....

"And from that day forth the Christian churches have been damned and lost. Kept churches. Lackey churches. Roman, Russian, Anglican; it matters not. My church indeed was twice sold, for it doubled the sin of Nicaea and gave itself over to Henry and Elizabeth while it shammed a dispute about the sacraments. No one cared really about transubstantiation any more than the earlier betrayers cared about consubstantiality; that dispute did but serve to mask the betrayal."

He turned to the listening Angel. "What can you show me of my church that I do not know? Why! we Anglican bishops get our sees as footmen get a job. For months Victoria, that old German Frau,

delayed me--because of some tittle-tattle.... The things we are! Snape, who afterwards became Bishop of Burnham, used to waylay the Prince Consort when he was riding in Hyde Park and give him, he boasts, 'a good loud cheer,' and then he would run very fast across the park so as to catch him as he came round, and do it again.... It is to that sort of thing we bearers of the light have sunken....

"I have always despised that poor toady," the bishop went on. "And yet here am I, and God has called me and shown me the light of his countenance, and for a month I have faltered. That is the mystery of the human heart, that it can and does sin against the light. What right have I, who have seen the light--and failed, what right have I--to despise any other human being? I seem to have been held back by a sort of paralysis.

"Men are so small, so small still, that they cannot keep hold of the vision of God. That is why I want to see God again.... But if it were not for this strange drug that seems for a little while to lift my mind above the confusion and personal entanglements of every day, I doubt if even now I could be here. I am here, passionate to hold this moment and keep the light. As this inspiration passes, I shall go back, I know, to my home and my place and my limitations. The littleness of men! The forgetfulness of men! I want to know what my chief duty is, to have it plain, in terms so plain that I can never forget.

"See in this world," he said, turning to the globe, "while Chinese merchants and Turkish troopers, school-board boys and Norwegian fishermen, half-trained nurses and Boer farmers are full of the spirit of God, see how the priests of the churches of Nicaea spend their time."

And now it was the bishop whose dark hands ran over the great silver globe, and it was the Angel who stood over him and

listened, as a teacher might stand over a child who is learning a lesson. The bishop's hand rested for a second on a cardinal who was planning a political intrigue to produce a reaction in France, then for a moment on a Pomeranian pastor who was going out to his well-tilled fields with his Sunday sermon, full of fierce hatred of England, still echoing in his head. Then he paused at a Mollah preaching the Jihad, in doubt whether he too wasn't a German pastor, and then at an Anglican clergyman still lying abed and thinking out a great mission of Repentance and Hope that should restore the authority of the established church --by incoherent missioning--without any definite sin indicated for repentance nor any clear hope for anything in particular arising out of such activities. The bishop's hand went seeking to and fro, but nowhere could he find any religious teacher, any religious body rousing itself to meet the new dawn of faith in the world. Some few men indeed seemed thoughtful, but within the limitation of their vows. Everywhere it was church and creed and nation and king and property and partisanship, and nowhere was it the True God that the priests and teachers were upholding. It was always the common unhampered man through whom the light of God was breaking; it was always the creed and the organization of the religious professionals that stood in the way to God....

"God is putting the priests aside," he cried, "and reaching out to common men. The churches do not serve God. They stand between man and God. They are like great barricades on the way to God."

The bishop's hand brushed over Archbishop Pontifex, who was just coming down to breakfast in his palace. This pompous old man was dressed in a purple garment that set off his tall figure very finely, and he was holding out his episcopal ring for his guests to kiss, that being the customary morning greeting of Archbishop Pontifex. The thought of that ring-kissing had made much hard work at lower levels "worth while" to Archbishop Pontifex. And seventy miles away from him old Likeman breakfasted in bed on

Benger's food, and searched his Greek Testament for tags to put to his letters. And here was the familiar palace at Princhester, and in an armchair in his bed-room sat Bishop Scrope insensible and motionless, in a trance in which he was dreaming of the coming of God.

"I see my futility. I see my vanity. But what am I to do?" he said, turning to the darkness that now wrapped about the Angel again, fold upon fold. "The implications of yesterday bind me for the morrow. This is my world. This is what I am and what I am in. How can I save myself? How can I turn from these habits and customs and obligations to the service of the one true God? When I see myself, then I understand how it is with the others. All we priests and teachers are men caught in nets. I would serve God. Easily said! But how am I to serve God? How am I to help and forward His coming, to make myself part of His coming?"

He perceived that he was returning into himself, and that the vision of the sphere and of the starry spaces was fading into non-existence.

He struggled against this return. He felt that his demand was still unanswered. His wife's face had suddenly come very close to him, and he realized she intervened between him and that solution.

What was she doing here?

(9)

The great Angel seemed still to be near at hand, limitless space was all about him, and yet the bishop perceived that he was now sitting in the arm-chair in his bedroom in the palace of Princhester. He was both there and not there. It seemed now as if

he had two distinct yet kindred selves, and that the former watched the latter. The latter was now awakening to the things about him; the former marked his gestures and listened with an entire detachment to the words he was saying. These words he was saying to Lady Ella: "God is coming to rule the world, I tell you. We must leave the church."

Close to him sat Lady Ella, watching him with an expression in which dismay and resolution mingled. Upon the other side of him, upon a little occasional table, was a tray with breakfast things. He was no longer the watcher now, but the watched.

Lady Ella bent towards him as he spoke. She seemed to struggle with and dismiss his astonishing statement.

"Edward," she said, "you have been taking a drug." He looked round at his night table to see the little phial. It had gone. Then he saw that Lady Ella held it very firmly in her hand.

"Dunk came to me in great distress. He said you were insensible and breathing heavily. I came. I realized. I told him to say nothing to any one, but to fetch me a tray with your breakfast. I have kept all the other servants away and I have waited here by you.... Dunk I think is safe.... You have been muttering and moving your head from side to side...."

The bishop's mind was confused. He felt as though God must be standing just outside the room. "I have failed in my duty," he said. "But I am very near to God." He laid his hand on her arm. "You know, Ella, He is very close to us...."

She looked perplexed.

He sat up in his chair.

"For some months now," he said, "there have been new forces at work in my mind. I have been invaded by strange doubts and still stranger realizations. This old church of ours is an empty mask. God is not specially concerned in it."

"Edward!" she cried, "what are you saying?"

"I have been hesitating to tell you. But I see now I must tell you plainly. Our church is a cast hull. It is like the empty skin of a snake. God has gone out of it."

She rose to her feet. She was so horrified that she staggered backward, pushing her chair behind her. "But you are mad," she said.

He was astonished at her distress. He stood up also.

"My dear," he said, "I can assure you I am not mad. I should have prepared you, I know...."

She looked at him wild-eyed. Then she glanced at the phial, gripped in her hand.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, and going swiftly to the window emptied out the contents of the little bottle. He realized what she was doing too late to prevent her.

"Don't waste that!" he cried, and stepping forward caught hold of her wrist. The phial fell from her white fingers, and crashed upon the rough paved garden path below.

"My dear," he cried, "my dear. You do not understand."

They stood face to face. "It was a tonic," he said. "I have been ill. I need it."

"It is a drug," she answered. "You have been uttering blasphemies."

He dropped her arm and walked half-way across the room. Then he turned and faced her.

"They are not blasphemies," he said. "But I ought not to have surprised you and shocked you as I have done. I want to tell you of changes that have happened to my mind."

"Now!" she exclaimed, and then: "I will not hear them now. Until you are better. Until these fumes--"

Her manner changed. "Oh, Edward!" she cried, "why have you done this? Why have you taken things secretly? I know you have been sleepless, but I have been so ready to help you. I have been willing--you know I have been willing--for any help. My life is all to be of use to you...."

"Is there any reason," she pleaded, "why you should have hidden things from me?"

He stood remorseful and distressed. "I should have talked to you," he said lamely.

"Edward," she said, laying her hands on his shoulders, "will you do one thing for me? Will you try to eat a little breakfast? And stay here? I will go down to Mr. Whippham and arrange whatever is urgent with him. Perhaps if you rest--There is nothing really imperative until the confirmation in the afternoon.... I do not understand all this. For some time--I have felt it was going on. But of that we can talk. The thing now is that people should not know, that nothing should be seen.... Suppose for instance that horrible White Blackbird were to hear

of it.... I implore you. If you rest here--And if I were to send for that young doctor who attended Miriam."

"I don't want a doctor," said the bishop.

"But you ought to have a doctor."

"I won't have a doctor," said the bishop.

It was with a perplexed but powerless dissent that the externalized perceptions of the bishop witnessed his agreement with the rest of Lady Ella's proposals so soon as this point about the doctor was conceded.

(10)

For the rest of that day until his breakdown in the cathedral the sense of being in two places at the same time haunted the bishop's mind. He stood beside the Angel in the great space amidst the stars, and at the same time he was back in his ordinary life, he was in his palace at Princhester, first resting in his bedroom and talking to his wife and presently taking up the routines of his duties again in his study downstairs.

His chief task was to finish his two addresses for the confirmation services of the day. He read over his notes, and threw them aside and remained for a time thinking deeply. The Greek tags at the end of Likeman's letter came into his thoughts; they assumed a quality of peculiar relevance to this present occasion. He repeated the words: "Epitelesei. Epiphausei."

He took his little Testament to verify them. After some slight trouble he located the two texts. The first, from Philippians, ran in the old version, "He that hath begun a good work in you

will perform it"; the second was expressed thus: "Christ shall give thee light." He was dissatisfied with these renderings and resorted to the revised version, which gave "perfect" instead of "perform," and "shall shine upon you" for "give thee light." He reflected profoundly for a time.

Then suddenly his addresses began to take shape in his mind, and these little points lost any significance. He began to write rapidly, and as he wrote he felt the Angel stood by his right hand and read and approved what he was writing. There were moments when his mind seemed to be working entirely beyond his control. He had a transitory questioning whether this curious intellectual automatism was not perhaps what people meant by "inspiration."

(11)

The bishop had always been sensitive to the secret fount of pathos that is hidden in the spectacle of youth. Long years ago when he and Lady Ella had been in Florence he had been moved to tears by the beauty of the fresh-faced eager Tobit who runs beside the great angel in the picture of Botticelli. And suddenly and almost as uncontrollably, that feeling returned at the sight of the young congregation below him, of all these scores of neophytes who were gathered to make a public acknowledgment of God. The war has invested all youth now with the shadow of tragedy; before it came many of us were a little envious of youth and a little too assured of its certainty of happiness. All that has changed. Fear and a certain tender solicitude mingle in our regard for every child; not a lad we pass in the street but may presently be called to face such pain and stress and danger as no ancient hero ever knew. The patronage, the insolent condescension of age, has vanished out of the world. It is dreadful to look upon the young.

He stood surveying the faces of the young people as the rector read the Preface to the confirmation service. How simple they were, how innocent! Some were a little flushed by the excitement of the occasion; some a little pallid. But they were all such tender faces, so soft in outline, so fresh and delicate in texture and colour. They had soft credulous mouths. Some glanced sideways at one another; some listened with a forced intentness. The expression of one good-looking boy, sitting in a corner seat, struck the bishop as being curiously defiant. He stood very erect, he blinked his eyes as though they smarted, his lips were compressed bitterly. And then it seemed to the bishop that the Angel stood beside him and gave him understanding.

"He is here," the bishop knew, "because he could not avoid coming. He tried to excuse himself. His mother wept. What could he do? But the church's teaching nowadays fails even to grip the minds of boys."

The rector came to the end of his Preface: "They will evermore endeavour themselves faithfully to observe such things as they by their own confession have assented unto."

"Like a smart solicitor pinning them down," said the bishop to himself, and then roused himself, unrolled the little paper in his hand, leant forward, and straightway began his first address.

Nowadays it is possible to say very unorthodox things indeed in an Anglican pulpit unchallenged. There remains no alert doctrinal criticism in the church congregations. It was possible, therefore, for the bishop to say all that follows without either hindrance or disturbance. The only opposition, indeed, came from within, from a sense of dreamlike incongruity between the place and the occasion and the things that he found himself delivering.

"All ceremonies," he began, "grow old. All ceremonies are tainted even from the first by things less worthy than their first intention, and you, my dear sons and daughters, who have gathered to-day in this worn and ancient building, beneath these monuments to ancient vanities and these symbols of forgotten or abandoned theories about the mystery of God, will do well to distinguish in your minds between what is essential and what is superfluous and confusing in this dedication you make of yourselves to God our Master and King. For that is the real thing you seek to do today, to give yourselves to God. This is your spiritual coming of age, in which you set aside your childish dependence upon teachers and upon taught phrases, upon rote and direction, and stand up to look your Master in the face. You profess a great brotherhood when you do that, a brotherhood that goes round the earth, that numbers men of every race and nation and country, that aims to bring God into all the affairs of this world and make him not only the king of your individual lives but the king--in place of all the upstarts, usurpers, accidents, and absurdities who bear crowns and sceptres today--of an united mankind."

He paused, and in the pause he heard a little rustle as though the congregation before him was sitting up in its places, a sound that always nerves and reassures an experienced preacher.

"This, my dear children, is the reality of this grave business to-day, as indeed it is the real and practical end of all true religion. This is your sacrament urn, your soldier's oath. You salute and give your fealty to the coming Kingdom of God. And upon that I would have you fix your minds to the exclusion of much that, I know only too well, has been narrow and evil and sectarian in your preparation for this solemn rite. God is like a precious jewel found among much rubble; you must cast the rubble from you. The crowning triumph of the human mind is simplicity; the supreme significance of God lies in his unity and

universality. The God you salute to-day is the God of the Jews and Gentiles alike, the God of Islam, the God of the Brahmo Somaj, the unknown God of many a righteous unbeliever. He is not the God of those felted theologies and inexplicable doctrines with which your teachers may have confused your minds. I would have it very clear in your minds that having drunken the draught you should not reverence unduly the cracked old vessel that has brought it to your lips. I should be falling short of my duty if I did not make that and everything I mean by that altogether plain to you."

He saw the lad whose face of dull defiance he had marked before, sitting now with a startled interest in his eyes. The bishop leant over the desk before him, and continued in the persuasive tone of a man who speaks of things too manifest for laboured argument.

"In all ages religion has come from God through broad-minded creative men, and in all ages it has fallen very quickly into the hands of intense and conservative men. These last--narrow, fearful, and suspicious--have sought in every age to save the precious gift of religion by putting it into a prison of formulae and asseverations. Bear that in mind when you are pressed to definition. It is as if you made a box hermetically sealed to save the treasure of a fresh breeze from the sea. But they have sought out exact statements and tortuous explanations of the plain truth of God, they have tried to take down God in writing, to commit him to documents, to embalm his living faith as though it would otherwise corrupt. So they have lost God and fallen into endless differences, disputes, violence, and darkness about insignificant things. They have divided religion between this creed and teacher and that. The corruption of the best is the worst, said Aristotle; and the great religions of the world, and especially this Christianity of ours, are the ones most darkened and divided and wasted by the fussings and false exactitudes of

the creed-monger and the sectary. There is no lie so bad as a stale disfigured truth. There is no heresy so damnable as a narrow orthodoxy. All religious associations carry this danger of the over-statement that misstates and the over-emphasis that divides and betrays. Beware of that danger. Do not imagine, because you are gathered in this queerly beautiful old building today, because I preside here in this odd raiment of an odder compromise, because you see about you in coloured glass and carven stone the emblems of much vain disputation, that thereby you cut yourselves off and come apart from the great world of faith, Catholic, Islamic, Brahministic, Buddhistic, that grows now to a common consciousness of the near Advent of God our King. You enter that waiting world fraternity now, you do not leave it. This place, this church of ours, should be to you not a seclusion and a fastness but a door.

"I could quote you a score of instances to establish that this simple universalism was also the teaching of Christ. But now I will only remind you that it was Mary who went to her lord simply, who was commended, and not Martha who troubled about many things. Learn from the Mary of Faith and not from these Marthas of the Creeds. Let us abandon the presumptions of an ignorant past. The perfection of doctrine is not for finite men. Give yourselves to God. Give yourselves to God. Not to churches and uses, but to God. To God simply. He is the first word of religion and the last. He is Alpha; he is Omega. Epitelesei; it is He who will finish the good work begun."

The bishop ended his address in a vivid silence. Then he began his interrogation.

"Do you here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your Baptism; ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons, and acknowledging yourselves--"

He stopped short. The next words were: "bound to believe and do all those things, which your Godfathers and Godmothers then undertook for you."

He could not stand those words. He hesitated, and then substituted: "acknowledge yourselves to be the true servants of the one God, who is the Lord of Mankind?"

For a moment silence hung in the cathedral. Then one voice, a boy's voice, led a ragged response. "I do."

Then the bishop: "Our help is in the Name of the Lord."

The congregation answered doubtfully, with a glance at its prayer books: "Who hath made heaven and earth."

The bishop: "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

The congregation said with returning confidence: "Henceforth, world without end."

(12)

Before his second address the bishop had to listen to *Veni Creator Spiritus*, in its English form, and it seemed to him the worst of all possible hymns. Its defects became monstrously exaggerated to his hypersensitive mind. It impressed him in its Englished travesty as a grotesque, as a veritable Charlie Chaplin among hymns, and in truth it does stick out most awkward feet, it misses its accusatives, it catches absurdly upon points of abstruse doctrine. The great Angel stood motionless and ironical at the bishop's elbow while it was being sung. "Your church," he seemed to say.

"We must end this sort of thing," whispered the bishop. "We must end this sort of thing--absolutely." He glanced at the faces of the singers, and it became beyond all other things urgent, that he should lift them once for all above the sectarian dogmatism of that hymn to a simple vision of God's light....

He roused himself to the touching business of the laying on of hands. While he did so the prepared substance of his second address was running through his mind. The following prayer and collects he read without difficulty, and so came to his second address. His disposition at first was explanatory.

"When I spoke to you just now," he began, "I fell unintentionally into the use of a Greek word, epitelesei. It was written to me in a letter from a friend with another word that also I am now going to quote to you. This letter touched very closely upon the things I want to say to you now, and so these two words are very much in my mind. The former one was taken from the Epistle to the Philippians; it signifies, 'He will complete the work begun'; the one I have now in mind comes from the Epistle to the Ephesians; it is Epiphausei--or, to be fuller, epiphausei soi ho Christos, which signifies that He will shine upon us. And this is very much in my thoughts now because I do believe that this world, which seemed so very far from God a little while ago, draws near now to an unexampled dawn. God is at hand.

"It is your privilege, it is your grave and terrible position, that you have been born at the very end and collapse of a negligent age, of an age of sham kingship, sham freedom, relaxation, evasion, greed, waste, falsehood, and sinister preparation. Your lives open out in the midst of the breakdown for which that age prepared. To you negligence is no longer possible. There is cold and darkness, there is the heat of the

furnace before you; you will live amidst extremes such as our youth never knew; whatever betide, you of your generation will have small chance of living untempered lives. Our country is at war and half mankind is at war; death and destruction trample through the world; men rot and die by the million, food diminishes and fails, there is a wasting away of all the hoarded resources, of all the accumulated well-being of mankind; and there is no clear prospect yet of any end to this enormous and frightful conflict. Why did it ever arise? What made it possible? It arose because men had forgotten God. It was possible because they worshipped simulacra, were loyal to phantoms of race and empire, permitted themselves to be ruled and misled by idiot princes and usurper kings. Their minds were turned from God, who alone can rule and unite mankind, and so they have passed from the glare and follies of those former years into the darkness and anguish of the present day. And in darkness and anguish they will remain until they turn to that King who comes to rule them, until the sword and indignation of God have overthrown their misleaders and oppressors, and the Justice of God, the Kingdom of God set high over the republics of mankind, has brought peace for ever to the world. It is to this militant and imminent God, to this immortal Captain, this undying Law-giver, that you devote yourselves to-day.

"For he is imminent now. He comes. I have seen in the east and in the west, the hearts and the minds and the wills of men turning to him as surely as when a needle is magnetized it turns towards the north. Even now as I preach to you here, God stands over us all, ready to receive us...."

And as he said these words, the long nave of the cathedral, the shadows of its fretted roof, the brown choir with its golden screen, the rows of seated figures, became like some picture cast upon a flimsy and translucent curtain. Once more it seemed to the bishop that he saw God plain. Once more the glorious effulgence

poured about him, and the beautiful and wonderful conquest of men's hearts and lives was manifest to him.

He lifted up his hands and cried to God, and with an emotion so profound, an earnestness so commanding, that very many of those who were present turned their faces to see the figure to which he looked and spoke. And some of the children had a strange persuasion of a presence there, as of a divine figure militant, armed, and serene....

"Oh God our Leader and our Master and our Friend," the bishop prayed, "forgive our imperfection and our little motives, take us and make us one with thy great purpose, use us and do not reject us, make us all here servants of thy kingdom, weave our lives into thy struggle to conquer and to bring peace and union to the world. We are small and feeble creatures, we are feeble in speech, feebler still in action, nevertheless let but thy light shine upon us and there is not one of us who cannot be lit by thy fire, and who cannot lose himself in thy salvation. Take us into thy purpose, O God. Let thy kingdom come into our hearts and into this world."

His voice ceased, and he stood for a measurable time with his arms extended and his face upturned....

The golden clouds that whirled and eddied so splendidly in his brain thinned out, his sense of God's immediacy faded and passed, and he was left aware of the cathedral pulpit in which he stood so strangely posed, and of the astonished congregation below him. His arms sank to his side. His eyes fell upon the book in front of him and he felt for and gripped the two upper corners of it and, regardless of the common order and practice, read out the Benediction, changing the words involuntarily as he read:

"The Blessing of God who is the Father, the Son, the Spirit and

the King of all Mankind, be upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen."

Then he looked again, as if to look once more upon that radiant vision of God, but now he saw only the clear cool space of the cathedral vault and the coloured glass and tracery of the great rose window. And then, as the first notes of the organ came pealing above the departing stir of the congregation, he turned about and descended slowly, like one who is still half dreaming, from the pulpit.

(13)

In the vestry he found Canon Bliss. "Help me to take off these garments," the bishop said. "I shall never wear them again."

"You are ill," said the canon, scrutinizing his face.

"Not ill. But the word was taken out of my mouth. I perceive now that I have been in a trance, a trance in which the truth is real. It is a fearful thing to find oneself among realities. It is a dreadful thing when God begins to haunt a priest.... I can never minister in the church again."

Whippham thrust forward a chair for the bishop to sit down. The bishop felt now extraordinarily fatigued. He sat down heavily, and rested his wrists on the arms of the chair. "Already," he resumed presently, "I begin to forget what it was I said."

"You became excited," said Bliss, "and spoke very loudly and clearly."

"What did I say?"

"I don't know what you said; I have forgotten. I never want to remember. Things about the Second Advent. Dreadful things. You said God was close at hand. Happily you spoke partly in Greek. I doubt if any of those children understood. And you had a kind of lapse--an aphasia. You mutilated the interrogation and you did not pronounce the benediction properly. You changed words and you put in words. One sat frozen--waiting for what would happen next."

"We must postpone the Pringle confirmation," said Whippham. "I wonder to whom I could telephone."

Lady Ella appeared, and came and knelt down by the bishop's chair. "I never ought to have let this happen," she said, taking his wrists in her hands. "You are in a fever, dear."

"It seemed entirely natural to say what I did," the bishop declared.

Lady Ella looked up at Bliss.

"A doctor has been sent for," said the canon to Lady Ella.

"I must speak to the doctor," said Lady Ella as if her husband could not hear her. "There is something that will make things clearer to the doctor. I must speak to the doctor for a moment before he sees him."

Came a gust of pretty sounds and a flash of bright colour that shamed the rich vestments at hand. Over the shoulder of the rector and quite at the back, appeared Lady Sunderbund resolutely invading the vestry. The rector intercepted her, stood broad with extended arms.

"I must come in and speak to him. If it is only fo' a moment."

The bishop looked up and saw Lady Ella's expression. Lady Ella was sitting up very stiffly, listening but not looking round.

A vague horror and a passionate desire to prevent the entry of Lady Sunderbund at any cost, seized upon the bishop. She would, he felt, be the last overwhelming complication. He descended to a base subterfuge. He lay back in his chair slowly as though he unfolded himself, he covered his eyes with his hand and then groaned aloud.

"Leave me alone!" he cried in a voice of agony. "Leave me alone! I can see no one.... I can--no more."

There was a momentous silence, and then the tumult of Lady Sunderbund receded.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH - THE NEW WORLD

(1)

THAT night the bishop had a temperature of a hundred and a half. The doctor pronounced him to be in a state of intense mental excitement, aggravated by some drug. He was a doctor modern and clear-minded enough to admit that he could not identify the drug. He overruled, every one overruled, the bishop's declaration that he had done with the church, that he could never mock God with his episcopal ministrations again, that he must proceed at once with his resignation. "Don't think of these things," said the doctor. "Banish them from your mind until your temperature is down to ninety-eight. Then after a rest you may go into them."

Lady Ella insisted upon his keeping his room. It was with difficulty that he got her to admit Whippham, and Whippham was exasperatingly in order. "You need not trouble about anything now, my lord," he said. "Everything will keep until you are ready to attend to it. It's well we're through with Easter. Bishop Buncombe of Eastern Blowdesia was coming here anyhow. And there is Canon Bliss. There's only two ordination candidates because of the war. We'll get on swimmingly."

The bishop thought he would like to talk to those two ordination candidates, but they prevailed upon him not to do so. He lay for the best part of one night confiding remarkable things to two imaginary ordination candidates.

He developed a marked liking for Eleanor's company. She was home again now after a visit to some friends. It was decided that the best thing to do with him would be to send him away in her charge. A journey abroad was impossible. France would remind him

too dreadfully of the war. His own mind turned suddenly to the sweet air of Hunstanton. He had gone there at times to read, in the old Cambridge days. "It is a terribly ugly place," he said, "but it is wine in the veins."

Lady Ella was doubtful about Zeppelins. Thrice they had been right over Hunstanton already. They came in by the easy landmark of the Wash.

"It will interest him," said Eleanor, who knew her father better.

(2)

One warm and still and sunny afternoon the bishop found himself looking out upon the waters of the Wash. He sat where the highest pebble layers of the beach reached up to a little cliff of sandy earth perhaps a foot high, and he looked upon sands and sea and sky and saw that they were beautiful.

He was a little black-gaitered object in a scene of the most exquisite and delicate colour. Right and left of him stretched the low grey salted shore, pale banks of marly earth surmounted by green-grey wiry grass that held and was half buried in fine blown sand. Above, the heavens made a complete hemisphere of blue in which a series of remote cumulus clouds floated and dissolved. Before him spread the long levels of the sands, and far away at its utmost ebb was the sea. Eleanor had gone to explore the black ribs of a wrecked fishing-boat that lay at the edge of a shallow lagoon. She was a little pink-footed figure, very bright and apparently transparent. She had reverted for a time to shameless childishness; she had hidden her stockings among the reeds of the bank, and she was running to and fro, from star-fish to razor shell and from cockle to weed. The shingle was pale drab and

purple close at hand, but to the westward, towards Hunstanton, the sands became brown and purple, and were presently broken up into endless skerries of low flat weed-covered boulders and little intensely blue pools. The sea was a band of sapphire that became silver to the west; it met the silver shining sands in one delicate breathing edge of intensely white foam. Remote to the west, very small and black and clear against the afternoon sky, was a cart, and about it was a score or so of mussel-gatherers. A little nearer, on an apparently empty stretch of shining wet sand, a multitude of gulls was mysteriously busy. These two groups of activities and Eleanor's flitting translucent movements did but set off and emphasize the immense and soothing tranquillity.

For a long time the bishop sat passively receptive to this healing beauty. Then a little flow of thought began and gathered in his mind. He had come out to think over two letters that he had brought with him. He drew these now rather reluctantly from his pocket, and after a long pause over the envelopes began to read them.

He reread Likeman's letter first.

Likeman could not forgive him.

"My dear Scrope," he wrote, "your explanation explains nothing. This sensational declaration of infidelity to our mother church, made under the most damning and distressing circumstances in the presence of young and tender minds entrusted to your ministrations, and in defiance of the honourable engagements implied in the confirmation service, confirms my worst apprehensions of the weaknesses of your character. I have always felt the touch of theatricality in your temperament, the peculiar craving to be pseudo-deeper, pseudo-simpler than us all, the need of personal excitement. I know that you were never quite

contented to believe in God at second-hand. You wanted to be taken notice of--personally. Except for some few hints to you, I have never breathed a word of these doubts to any human being; I have always hoped that the ripening that comes with years and experience would give you an increasing strength against the dangers of emotionalism and against your strong, deep, quiet sense of your exceptional personal importance...."

The bishop read thus far, and then sat reflecting.

Was it just?

He had many weaknesses, but had he this egotism? No; that wasn't the justice of the case. The old man, bitterly disappointed, was endeavouring to wound. Scrope asked himself whether he was to blame for that disappointment. That was a more difficult question....

He dismissed the charge at last, crumpled up the letter in his hand, and after a moment's hesitation flung it away.... But he remained acutely sorry, not so much for himself as for the revelation of Likeman this letter made. He had had a great affection for Likeman and suddenly it was turned into a wound.

(3)

The second letter was from Lady Sunderbund, and it was an altogether more remarkable document. Lady Sunderbund wrote on a notepaper that was evidently the result of a perverse research, but she wrote a letter far more coherent than her speech, and without that curious falling away of the r's that flavoured even her gravest observations with an unjust faint aroma of absurdity. She wrote with a thin pen in a rounded boyish handwriting. She italicized with slashes of the pen.

He held this letter in both hands between his knees, and considered it now with an expression that brought his eyebrows forward until they almost met, and that tucked in the corners of his mouth.

"My dear Bishop," it began.

"I keep thinking and thinking and thinking of that wonderful service, of the wonderful, wonderful things you said, and the wonderful choice you made of the moment to say them--when all those young lives were coming to the great serious thing in life. It was most beautifully done. At any rate, dear Bishop and Teacher, it was most beautifully begun. And now we all stand to you like creditors because you have given us so much that you owe us ever so much more. You have started us and you have to go on with us. You have broken the shell of the old church, and here we are running about with nowhere to go. You have to make the shelter of a new church now for us, purged of errors, looking straight to God. The King of Mankind!--what a wonderful, wonderful phrase that is. It says everything. Tell us more of him and more. Count me first--not foremost, but just the little one that runs in first--among your disciples. They say you are resigning your position in the church. Of course that must be true. You are coming out of it--what did you call it?--coming out of the cracked old vessel from which you have poured the living waters. I called on Lady Ella yesterday. She did not tell me very much; I think she is a very reserved as well as a very dignified woman, but she said that you intended to go to London. In London then I suppose you will set up the first altar to the Divine King. I want to help.

"Dear Bishop and Teacher, I want to help tremendously--with all my heart and all my soul. I want to be let do things for you." (The "you" was erased by three or four rapid slashes, and

"our King" substituted.) "I want to be privileged to help build that First Church of the World Unified under God. It is a dreadful thing to say but, you see, I am very rich; this dreadful war has made me ever so much richer--steel and shipping and things--it is my trustees have done it. I am ashamed to be so rich. I want to give. I want to give and help this great beginning of yours. I want you to let me help on the temporal side, to make it easy for you to stand forth and deliver your message, amidst suitable surroundings and without any horrid worries on account of the sacrifices you have made. Please do not turn my offering aside. I have never wanted anything so much in all my life as I want to make this gift. Unless I can make it I feel that for me there is no salvation! I shall stick with my loads and loads of stocks and shares and horrid possessions outside the Needle's Eye. But if I could build a temple for God, and just live somewhere near it so as to be the poor woman who sweeps out the chapels, and die perhaps and be buried under its floor! Don't smile at me. I mean every word of it. Years ago I thought of such a thing. After I had visited the Certosa di Pavia --do you know it? So beautiful, and those two still alabaster figures--recumbent. But until now I could never see my way to any such service. Now I do. I am all afire to do it. Help me! Tell me! Let me stand behind you and make your mission possible. I feel I have come to the most wonderful phase in my life. I feel my call has come....

"I have written this letter over three times, and torn each of them up. I do so want to say all this, and it is so desperately hard to say. I am full of fears that you despise me. I know there is a sort of high colour about me. My passion for brightness. I am absurd. But inside of me is a soul, a real, living, breathing soul. Crying out to you: 'Oh, let me help! Let me help!' I will do anything, I will endure anything if only I can keep hold of the vision splendid you gave me in the cathedral. I see it now

day and night, the dream of the place I can make for you--and you preaching! My fingers itch to begin. The day before yesterday I said to myself, 'I am quite unworthy, I am a worldly woman, a rich, smart, decorated woman. He will never accept me as I am.' I took off all my jewels, every one, I looked through all my clothes, and at last I decided I would have made for me a very simple straight grey dress, just simple and straight and grey. Perhaps you will think that too is absurd of me, too self-conscious. I would not tell of it to you if I did not want you to understand how alive I am to my utter impossibilities, how resolved I am to do anything so that I may be able to serve. But never mind about silly me; let me tell you how I see the new church.

"I think you ought to have some place near the centre of London; not too west, for you might easily become fashionable, not too east because you might easily be swallowed up in merely philanthropic work, but somewhere between the two. There must be vacant sites still to be got round about Kingsway. And there we must set up your tabernacle, a very plain, very simple, very beautifully proportioned building in which you can give your message. I know a young man, just the very young man to do something of the sort, something quite new, quite modern, and yet solemn and serious. Lady Ella seemed to think you wanted to live somewhere in the north-west of London--but she would tell me very little. I seem to see you not there at all, not in anything between west-end and suburb, but yourself as central as your mind, in a kind of clergy house that will be part of the building. That is how it is in my dream anyhow. All that though can be settled afterwards. My imagination and my desire is running away with me. It is no time yet for premature plans. Not that I am not planning day and night. This letter is simply to offer. I just want to offer. Here I am and all my worldly goods. Take me, I pray you. And not only pray you. Take me, I demand of

you, in the name of God our king. I have a right to be used. And you have no right to refuse me. You have to go on with your message, and it is your duty to take me--just as you are obliged to step on any steppingstone that lies on your way to do God service.... And so I am waiting. I shall be waiting--on thorns. I know you will take your time and think. But do not take too much time. Think of me waiting.

"Your servant, your most humble helper in God (your God),

"AGATHA SUNDERBUND."

And then scrawled along the margin of the last sheet:

"If, when you know--a telegram. Even if you cannot say so much as 'Agreed,' still such a word as 'Favourable.' I just hang over the Void until I hear.

"AGATHA S."

A letter demanding enormous deliberation. She argued closely in spite of her italics. It had never dawned upon the bishop before how light is the servitude of the disciple in comparison with the servitude of the master. In many ways this proposal repelled and troubled him, in many ways it attracted him. And the argument of his clear obligation to accept her co-operation gripped him; it was a good argument.

And besides it worked in very conveniently with certain other difficulties that perplexed him.

(4)

The bishop became aware that Eleanor was returning to him across the sands. She had made an end to her paddling, she had put on her shoes and stockings and become once more the grave and responsible young woman who had been taking care of him since his flight from Princhester. He replaced the two letters in his pocket, and sat ready to smile as she drew near; he admired her open brow, the toss of her hair, and the poise of her head upon her neck. It was good to note that her hard reading at Cambridge hadn't bent her shoulders in the least....

"Well, old Dad! " she said as she drew near. "You've got back a colour."

"I've got back everything. It's time I returned to Princhester."

"Not in this weather. Not for a day or so." She flung herself at his feet. "Consider your overworked little daughter. Oh,how good this is!"

"No," said the bishop in a grave tone that made her look up into his face. "I must go hack."

He met her clear gaze. "What do you think of all this business, Eleanor?" he asked abruptly. "Do you think I had a sort of fit in the cathedral?"

He winced as he asked the question.

"Daddy," she said, after a little pause; "the things you said and did that afternoon were the noblest you ever did in your life. I wish I had been there. It must have been splendid to be

there. I've not told you before--I've been dying to.... I'd promised not to say a word--not to remind you. I promised the doctor. But now you ask me, now you are well again, I can tell you. Kitty Kingdom has told me all about it, how it felt. It was like light and order coming into a hopeless dark muddle. What you said was like what we have all been trying to think--I mean all of us young people. Suddenly it was all clear."

She stopped short. She was breathless with the excitement of her confession.

Her father too remained silent for a little while. He was reminded of his weakness; he was, he perceived, still a little hysterical. He felt that he might weep at her youthful enthusiasm if he did not restrain himself.

"I'm glad," he said, and patted her shoulder. "I'm glad, Norah."

She looked away from him out across the lank brown sands and water pools to the sea. "It was what we have all been feeling our way towards, the absolute simplification of religion, the absolute simplification of politics and social duty; just God, just God the King."

"But should I have said that--in the cathedral?"

She felt no scruples. "You had to," she said.

"But now think what it means," he said. "I must leave the church."

"As a man strips off his coat for a fight."

"That doesn't dismay you?"

She shook her head, and smiled confidently to sea and sky.

"I'm glad if you're with me," he said. "Sometimes--I think--I'm not a very self-reliant man."

"You'll have all the world with you," she was convinced, "in a little time."

"Perhaps rather a longer time than you think, Norah. In the meantime--"

She turned to him once more.

"In the meantime there are a great many things to consider. Young people, they say, never think of the transport that is needed to win a battle. I have it in my mind that I should leave the church. But I can't just walk out into the marketplace and begin preaching there. I see the family furniture being carried out of the palace and put into vans. It has to go somewhere...."

"I suppose you will go to London."

"Possibly. In fact certainly. I have a plan. Or at least an opportunity.... But that isn't what I have most in mind. These things are not done without emotion and a considerable strain upon one's personal relationships. I do not think this--I do not think your mother sees things as we do."

"She will," said young enthusiasm, "when she understands."

"I wish she did. But I have been unlucky in the circumstances of my explanations to her. And of course you understand all this means risks--poverty perhaps--going without things--travel, opportunity, nice possessions--for all of us. A loss of position too. All this sort of thing," he stuck out a gaitered

calf and smiled, "will have to go. People, some of them, may be disagreeable to us...."

"After all, Daddy," she said, smiling, "it isn't so bad as the cross and the lions and burning pitch. And you have the Truth."

"You do believe--?" He left his sentence unfinished.

She nodded, her face aglow. "We know you have the Truth."

"Of course in my own mind now it is very clear. I had a kind of illumination...." He would have tried to tell her of his vision, and he was too shy. "It came to me suddenly that the whole world was in confusion because men followed after a thousand different immediate aims, when really it was quite easy, if only one could be simple it was quite easy, to show that nearly all men could only be fully satisfied and made happy in themselves by one single aim, which was also the aim that would make the whole world one great order, and that aim was to make God King of one's heart and the whole world. I saw that all this world, except for a few base monstrous spirits, was suffering hideous things because of this war, and before the war it was full of folly, waste, social injustice and suspicion for the same reason, because it had not realized the kingship of God. And that is so simple; the essence of God is simplicity. The sin of this war lies with men like myself, men who set up to tell people about God, more than it lies with any other class--"

"Kings?" she interjected. "Diplomatists? Finance?"

"Yes. Those men could only work mischief in the world because the priests and teachers let them. All things human lie at last at the door of the priest and teacher. Who differentiate, who qualify and complicate, who make mean unnecessary elaborations, and so divide mankind. If it were not for the weakness and

wickedness of the priests, every one would know and understand God. Every one who was modest enough not to set up for particular knowledge. Men disputed whether God is Finite or Infinite, whether he has a triple or a single aspect. How should they know? All we need to know is the face he turns to us. They impose their horrible creeds and distinctions. None of those things matter. Call him Christ the God or call him simply God, Allah, Heaven; it does not matter. He comes to us, we know, like a Helper and Friend; that is all we want to know. You may speculate further if you like, but it is not religion. They dispute whether he can set aside nature. But that is superstition. He is either master of nature and he knows that it is good, or he is part of nature and must obey. That is an argument for hair-splitting metaphysicians. Either answer means the same for us. It does not matter which way we come to believe that he does not idly set the course of things aside. Obviously he does not set the course of things aside. What he does do for certain is to give us courage and save us from our selfishness and the bitter hell it makes for us. And every one knows too what sort of things we want, and for what end we want to escape from ourselves. We want to do right. And right, if you think clearly, is just truth within and service without, the service of God's kingdom, which is mankind, the service of human needs and the increase of human power and experience. It is all perfectly plain, it is all quite easy for any one to understand, who isn't misled and chattered at and threatened and poisoned by evil priests and teachers."

"And you are going to preach that, Daddy?"

"If I can. When I am free--you know I have still to resign and give up--I shall make that my message."

"And so God comes."

"God comes as men perceive him in his simplicity.... Let men

but see God simply, and forthwith God and his kingdom possess the world."

She looked out to sea in silence for awhile.

Then she turned to her father. "And you think that His Kingdom will come--perhaps in quite a little time--perhaps in our lifetimes? And that all these ridiculous or wicked little kings and emperors, and these political parties, and these policies and conspiracies, and this nationalist nonsense and all the patriotism and rowdyism, all the private profit-seeking and every baseness in life, all the things that it is so horrible and disgusting to be young among and powerless among, you think they will fade before him?"

The bishop pulled his faith together.

"They will fade before him--but whether it will take a lifetime or a hundred lifetimes or a thousand lifetimes, my Norah --"

He smiled and left his sentence unfinished, and she smiled back at him to show she understood.

And then he confessed further, because he did not want to seem merely sentimentally hopeful.

"When I was in the cathedral, Norah--and just before that service, it seemed to me--it was very real.... It seemed that perhaps the Kingdom of God is nearer than we suppose, that it needs but the faith and courage of a few, and it may be that we may even live to see the dawning of his kingdom, even--who knows?--the sunrise. I am so full of faith and hope that I fear to be hopeful with you. But whether it is near or far--"

"We work for it," said Eleanor.

Eleanor thought, eyes downcast for a little while, and then looked up.

"It is so wonderful to talk to you like this, Daddy. In the old days, I didn't dream--Before I went to Newnham. I misjudged you. I thought Never mind what I thought. It was silly. But now I am so proud of you. And so happy to be back with you, Daddy, and find that your religion is after all just the same religion that I have been wanting."

CHAPTER THE NINTH - THE THIRD VISION

(1)

ONE afternoon in October, four months and more after that previous conversation, the card of Mr. Edward Scrope was brought up to Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey. The name awakened no memories. The doctor descended to discover a man so obviously in unaccustomed plain clothes that he had a momentary disagreeable idea that he was facing a detective. Then he saw that this secular disguise draped the familiar form of his old friend, the former Bishop of Princhester. Scrope was pale and a little untidy; he had already acquired something of the peculiar, slightly faded quality one finds in a don who has gone to Hampstead and fallen amongst advanced thinkers and got mixed up with the Fabian Society. His anxious eyes and faintly propitiatory manner suggested an impending appeal.

Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey had the savoir-faire of a successful consultant; he prided himself on being all things to all men; but just for an instant he was at a loss what sort of thing he had to be here. Then he adopted the genial, kindly, but by no means lavishly generous tone advisable in the case of a man who has suffered considerable social deterioration without being very seriously to blame.

Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey was a little round-faced man with defective eyesight and an unsuitable nose for the glasses he wore, and he flaunted--God knows why--enormous side-whiskers.

"Well," he said, balancing the glasses skilfully by throwing back his head, "and how are you? And what can I do for you? There's no external evidence of trouble. You're looking lean and a little pale, but thoroughly fit."

"Yes," said the late bishop, "I'm fairly fit--"

"Only--?" said the doctor, smiling his teeth, with something of the manner of an old bathing woman who tells a child to jump.

"Well, I'm run down and--worried."

"We'd better sit down," said the great doctor professionally, and looked hard at him. Then he pulled at the arm of a chair.

The ex-bishop sat down, and the doctor placed himself between his patient and the light.

"This business of resigning my bishopric and so forth has involved very considerable strains," Scrope began. "That I think is the essence of the trouble. One cuts so many associations.... I did not realize how much feeling there would be.... Difficulties too of readjusting one's position."

"Zactly. Zactly. Zactly," said the doctor, snapping his face and making his glasses vibrate. "Run down. Want a tonic or a change?"

"Yes. In fact--I want a particular tonic."

Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey made his eyes and mouth round and interrogative.

"While you were away last spring--"

"Had to go," said the doctor, "unavoidable. Gas gangrene. Certain enquiries. These young investigators all very well in their way. But we older reputations--Experience. Maturity of judgment. Can't do without us. Yes?"

"Well, I came here last spring and saw, an assistant I suppose he was, or a supply,--do you call them supplies in your profession?--named, I think--Let me see--D--?"

"Dale!"

The doctor as he uttered this word set his face to the unaccustomed exercise of expressing malignity. His round blue eyes sought to blaze, small cherubic muscles exerted themselves to pucker his brows. His colour became a violent pink. "Lunatic!" he said. "Dangerous Lunatic! He didn't do anything--anything bad in your case, did he?"

He was evidently highly charged with grievance in this matter. "That man was sent to me from Cambridge with the highest testimonials. The very highest. I had to go at twenty-four hours' notice. Enquiry--gas gangrene. There was nothing for it but to leave things in his hands."

Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey disavowed responsibility with an open, stumpy-fingered hand.

"He did me no particular harm," said Scrope.

"You are the first he spared," said Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey.

"Did he--? Was he unskilful?"

"Unskilful is hardly the word."

"Were his methods peculiar?"

The little doctor sprang to his feet and began to pace about the room. "Peculiar!" he said. "It was abominable that they

should send him to me. Abominable!"

He turned, with all the round knobs that constituted his face, aglow. His side-whiskers waved apart like wings about to flap. He protruded his face towards his seated patient. "I am glad that he has been killed," he said. "Glad! There!"

His glasses fell off--shocked beyond measure. He did not heed them. They swung about in front of him as if they sought to escape while he poured out his feelings.

"Fool!" he spluttered with demonstrative gestures. "Dangerous fool! His one idea--to upset everybody. Drugs, Sir! The most terrible drugs! I come back. Find ladies. High social position. Morphine-maniacs. Others. Reckless use of the most dangerous expedients.... Cocaine not in it. Stimulants--violent stimulants. In the highest quarters. Terrible. Exalted persons. Royalty! Anxious to be given war work and become anonymous.... Horrible! He's been a terrible influence. One idea--to disturb soul and body. Minds unhinged. Personal relations deranged. Shattered the practice of years. The harm he has done! The harm!"

He looked as though he was trying to burst--as a final expression of wrath. He failed. His hands felt trembling to recover his pince-nez. Then from his tail pocket he produced a large silk handkerchief and wiped the glasses. Replaced them. Wriggled his head in his collar, running his fingers round his neck. Patted his tie.

"Excuse this outbreak!" he said. "But Dr. Dale has inflicted injuries "

Scrope got up, walked slowly to the window, clasping his hands behind his back, and turned. His manner still retained much of his episcopal dignity. "I am sorry. But still you can no doubt

tell from your books what it was he gave me. It was a tonic that had a very great effect on me. And I need it badly now."

Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey was quietly malignant. "He kept no diary at all," he said. "No diary at all."

"But

"If he did," said Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey, holding up a flat hand and wagging it from side to side, "I wouldn't follow his treatment." He intensified with the hand going faster. "I wouldn't follow his treatment. Not under any circumstances."

"Naturally," said Scrope, "if the results are what you say. But in my case it wasn't a treatment. I was sleepless, confused in my mind, wretched and demoralized; I came here, and he just produced the stuff--It clears the head, it clears the mind. One seems to get away from the cloud of things, to get through to essentials and fundamentals. It straightened me out.... You must know such a stuff. Just now, confronted with all sorts of problems arising out of my resignation, I want that tonic effect again. I must have it. I have matters to decide--and I can't decide. I find myself uncertain, changeable from hour to hour. I don't ask you to take up anything of this man Dale's. This is a new occasion. But I want that drug."

At the beginning of this speech Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey's hands had fallen to his hips. As Scrope went on the doctor's pose had stiffened. His head had gone a little on one side; he had begun to play with his glasses. At the end he gave vent to one or two short coughs, and then pointed his words with his glasses held out.

"Tell me," he said, "tell me." (Cough.) "Had this drug that cleared your head--anything to do with your resignation?"

And he put on his glasses disconcertingly, and threw his head back to watch the reply.

"It did help to clear up the situation."

"Exactly," said Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey in a tone that defined his own position with remorseless clearness. "Exactly." And he held up a flat, arresting hand. .

"My dear Sir," he said. "How can you expect me to help you to a drug so disastrous?--even if I could tell you what it is."

"But it was not disastrous to me," said Scrope.

"Your extraordinary resignation--your still more extraordinary way of proclaiming it!"

"I don't think those were disasters."

"But my dear Sir!"

"You don't want to discuss theology with me, I know. So let me tell you simply that from my point of view the illumination that came to me--this drug of Dr. Dale's helping--has been the great release of my life. It crystallized my mind. It swept aside the confusing commonplace things about me. Just for a time I saw truth clearly.... I want to do so again."

"Why?"

"There is a crisis in my affairs--never mind what. But I cannot see my way clear."

Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey was meditating now with his eyes on his

carpet and the corners of his mouth tucked in. He was swinging his glasses pendulum-wise. "Tell me," he said, looking sideways at Scrope, "what were the effects of this drug? It may have been anything. How did it give you this--this vision of the truth--that led to your resignation?"

Scrope felt a sudden shyness. But he wanted Dale's drug again so badly that he obliged himself to describe his previous experiences to the best of his ability.

"It was," he said in a matter-of-fact tone, "a golden, transparent liquid. Very golden, like a warm-tinted Chablis. When water was added it became streaked and opalescent, with a kind of living quiver in it. I held it up to the light."

"Yes? And when you took it?"

"I felt suddenly clearer. My mind--I had a kind of exaltation and assurance."

"Your mind," Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey assisted, "began to go twenty-nine to the dozen."

"It felt stronger and clearer," said Scrope, sticking to his quest.

"And did things look as usual?" asked the doctor, protruding his knobby little face like a clenched fist.

"No," said Scrope and regarded him. How much was it possible to tell a man of this type?

"They differed?" said the doctor, relaxing.

"Yes.... Well, to be plain.... I had an immediate sense of God.

I saw the world--as if it were a transparent curtain, and then God became--evident.... Is it possible for that to determine the drug?"

"God became--evident," the doctor said with some distaste, and shook his head slowly. Then in a sudden sharp cross-examining tone: "You mean you had a vision? Actually saw 'um?"

"It was in the form of a vision." Scrope was now mentally very uncomfortable indeed.

The doctor's lips repeated these words noiselessly, with an effect of contempt. "He must have given you something--It's a little like morphia. But golden--opalescent? And it was this vision made you astonish us all with your resignation?"

"That was part of a larger process," said Scrope patiently. "I had been drifting into a complete repudiation of the Anglican positions long before that. All that this drug did was to make clear what was already in my mind. And give it value. Act as a developer."

The doctor suddenly gave way to a botryoidal hilarity. "To think that one should be consulted about visions of God--in Mount Street!" he said. "And you know, you know you half want to believe that vision was real. You know you do."

So far Scrope had been resisting his realization of failure. Now he gave way to an exasperation that made him reckless of Brighton-Pomfrey's opinion. "I do think," he said, "that that drug did in some way make God real to me. I think I saw God."

Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey shook his head in a way that made Scrope want to hit him.

"I think I saw God," he repeated more firmly. "I had a sudden realization of how great he was and how great life was, and how timid and mean and sordid were all our genteel, professional lives. I was seized upon, for a time I was altogether possessed by a passion to serve him fitly and recklessly, to make an end to compromises with comfort and self-love and secondary things. And I want to hold to that. I want to get back to that. I am given to lassitudes. I relax. I am by temperament an easy-going man. I want to buck myself up, I want to get on with my larger purposes, and I find myself tired, muddled, entangled.... The drug was a good thing. For me it was a good thing. I want its help again."

"I know no more than you do what it was."

"Are there no other drugs that you do know, that have a kindred effect? If for example I tried morphia in some form?"

"You'd get visions. They wouldn't be divine visions. If you took small quantities very discreetly you might get a temporary quickening. But the swift result of all repeated drug-taking is, I can assure you, moral decay--rapid moral decay. To touch drugs habitually is to become hopelessly unpunctual, untruthful, callously selfish and insincere. I am talking mere textbook, mere everyday common-places, to you when I tell you that."

"I had an idea. I had a hope...."

"You've a stiff enough fight before you," said the doctor, "without such a handicap as that."

"You won't help me?"

The doctor walked up and down his hearthrug, and then delivered himself with an extended hand and wagging fingers.

"I wouldn't if I could. For your good I wouldn't. And even if I would I couldn't, for I don't know the drug. One of his infernal brews, no doubt. Something--accidental. It's lost--for good--for your good, anyhow...."

(2)

Scrope halted outside the stucco portals of the doctor's house. He hesitated whether he should turn to the east or the west.

"That door closes," he said. "There's no getting back that way."...

He stood for a time on the kerb. He turned at last towards Park Lane and Hyde Park. He walked along thoughtfully, inattentively steering a course for his new home in Pembury Road, Notting Hill.

(3)

At the outset of this new phase in Scrope's life that had followed the crisis of the confirmation service, everything had seemed very clear before him. He believed firmly that he had been shown God, that he had himself stood in the presence of God, and that there had been a plain call to him to proclaim God to the world. He had realized God, and it was the task of every one who had realized God to help all mankind to the same realization. The proposal of Lady Sunderbund had fallen in with that idea. He had been steeling himself to a prospect of struggle and dire poverty, but her prompt loyalty had come as an immense relief to his anxiety for his wife and family. When he had talked to Eleanor upon the beach at Hunstanton it had seemed to him that his course was manifest, perhaps a little severe but by no means impossible. They had sat together in the sunshine, exalted by a sense of fine

adventure and confident of success, they had looked out upon the future, upon the great near future in which the idea of God was to inspire and reconstruct the world.

It was only very slowly that this pristine clearness became clouded and confused. It had not been so easy as Eleanor had supposed to win over the sympathy of Lady Ella with his resignation. Indeed it had not been won over. She had become a stern and chilling companion, mute now upon the issue of his resignation, but manifestly resentful. He was secretly disappointed and disconcerted by her tone. And the same hesitation of the mind, instinctive rather than reasoned, that had prevented a frank explanation of his earlier doubts to her, now restrained him from telling her naturally and at once of the part that Lady Sunderbund was to play in his future ministry. In his own mind he felt assured about that part, but in order to excuse his delay in being frank with his wife, he told himself that he was not as yet definitely committed to Lady Sunderbund's project. And in accordance with that idea he set up housekeeping in London upon a scale that implied a very complete cessation of income. "As yet," he told Lady Ella, "we do not know where we stand. For a time we must not so much house ourselves as camp. We must take some quite small and modest house in some less expensive district. If possible I would like to take it for a year, until we know better how things are with us."

He reviewed a choice of London districts.

Lady Ella said her bitterest thing. "Does it matter where we hide our heads?"

That wrung him to: "We are not hiding our heads."

She repented at once. "I am sorry, Ted," she said. "It slipped from me."...

He called it camping, but the house they had found in Pembury Road, Notting Hill, was more darkened and less airy than any camp. Neither he nor his wife had ever had any experience of middle-class house-hunting or middle-class housekeeping before, and they spent three of the most desolating days of their lives in looking for this cheap and modest shelter for their household possessions. Hitherto life had moved them from one established and comfortable home to another; their worst affliction had been the modern decorations of the Palace at Princeschester, and it was altogether a revelation to them to visit house after house, ill-lit, ill-planned, with dingy paint and peeling wallpaper, kitchens for the most part underground, and either without bathrooms or with built-out bathrooms that were manifestly grudging afterthoughts, such as harbour the respectable middle classes of London. The house agents perceived intimations of helplessness in their manner, adopted a "rushing" method with them strange to people who had hitherto lived in a glowing halo of episcopal dignity. "Take it or leave it," was the note of those gentlemen; "there are always people ready for houses." The line that property in land and houses takes in England, the ex-bishop realized, is always to hold up and look scornful. The position of the land-owning, house-owning class in a crowded country like England is ultra-regal. It is under no obligation to be of use, and people are obliged to get down to the land somewhere. They cannot conduct business and rear families in the air. England's necessity is the landlord's opportunity....

Scrope began to generalize about this, and develop a new and sincerer streak of socialism in his ideas. "The church has been very remiss," he said, as he and Lady Ella stared at the basement "breakfast room" of their twenty-seventh dismal possibility. "It should have insisted far more than it has done upon the landlord's responsibility. No one should tolerate the offer of such a house as this--at such a rent--to decent people. It is

unrighteous."

At the house agent's he asked in a cold, intelligent ruling-class voice, the name of the offending landlord.

"It's all the property of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners that side of the railway," said the agent, picking his teeth with a pin. "Lazy lot. Dreadfully hard to get 'em to do anything. Own some of the worst properties in London."

Lady Ella saw things differently again. "If you had stayed in the church," she said afterwards, "you might have helped to alter such things as that."

At the time he had no answer.

"But," he said presently as they went back in the tube to their modest Bloomsbury hotel, "if I had stayed in the church I should never have realized things like that."

(4)

But it does no justice to Lady Ella to record these two unavoidable expressions of regret without telling also of the rallying courage with which she presently took over the task of resettling herself and her stricken family. Her husband's change of opinion had fallen upon her out of a clear sky, without any premonition, in one tremendous day. In one day there had come clamouring upon her, with an effect of revelation after revelation, the ideas of drugs, of heresy and blasphemy, of an alien feminine influence, of the entire moral and material breakdown of the man who had been the centre of her life. Never was the whole world of a woman so swiftly and comprehensively smashed. All the previous troubles of her life seemed

infinitesimal in comparison with any single item in this dismaying debacle. She tried to consolidate it in the idea that he was ill, "disordered." She assured herself that he would return from Hunstanton restored to health and orthodoxy, with all his threatenings of a resignation recalled; the man she had loved and trusted to succeed in the world and to do right always according to her ideas. It was only with extreme reluctance that she faced the fact that with the fumes of the drug dispelled and all signs of nervous exhaustion gone, he still pressed quietly but resolutely toward a severance from the church. She tried to argue with him and she found she could not argue. The church was a crystal sphere in which her life was wholly contained, her mind could not go outside it even to consider a dissentient proposition.

While he was at Hunstanton, every day she had prayed for an hour, some days she had prayed for several hours, in the cathedral, kneeling upon a harsh hassock that hurt her knees. Even in her prayers she could not argue nor vary. She prayed over and over again many hundreds of times: "Bring him back, dear Lord. Bring him back again."

In the past he had always been a very kind and friendly mate to her, but sometimes he had been irritable about small things, especially during his seasons of insomnia; now he came back changed, a much graver man, rather older in his manner, carefully attentive to her, kinder and more watchful, at times astonishingly apologetic, but rigidly set upon his purpose of leaving the church. "I know you do not think with me in this," he said. "I have to pray you to be patient with me. I have struggled with my conscience.... For a time it means hardship, I know. Poverty. But if you will trust me I think I shall be able to pull through. There are ways of doing my work. Perhaps we shall not have to undergo this cramping in this house for very long...."

"It is not the poverty I fear," said Lady Ella.

And she did face the worldly situation, if a little sadly, at any rate with the courage of practical energy. It was she who stood in one ungainly house after another and schemed how to make discomforts tolerable, while Scrope raged unhelpfully at landlordism and the responsibility of the church for economic disorder. It was she who at last took decisions into her hands when he was too jaded to do anything but generalize weakly, and settled upon the house in Pembury Road which became their London home. She got him to visit Hunstanton again for half a week while she and Miriam, who was the practical genius of the family, moved in and made the new home presentable. At the best it was barely presentable. There were many plain hardships. The girls had to share one of the chief bedrooms in common instead of their jolly little individual dens at Princhester.... One little room was all that could be squeezed out as a study for "father"; it was not really a separate room, it was merely cut off by closed folding doors from the dining-room, folding doors that slowly transmitted the dinner flavours to a sensitive worker, and its window looked out upon a blackened and uneventful yard and the skylights of a populous, conversational, and high-spirited millinery establishment that had been built over the corresponding garden of the house in Restharrow Street. Lady Ella had this room lined with open shelves, and Clementina (in the absence of Eleanor at Newuham) arranged the pick of her father's books. It is to be noted as a fact of psychological interest that this cramped, ill-lit little room distressed Lady Ella more than any other of the discomforts of their new quarters. The bishop's writing-desk filled a whole side of it. Parsimony ruled her mind, but she could not resist the impulse to get him at least a seemingly reading-lamp.

He came back from Hunstanton full of ideas for work in London. He was, he thought, going to "write something" about his views.

He was very grateful and much surprised at what she had done to that forbidding house, and full of hints and intimations that it would not be long before they moved to something roomier. She was disposed to seek some sort of salaried employment for Clementina and Miriam at least, but he would not hear of that. "They must go on and get educated," he said, "if I have to give up smoking to do it. Perhaps I may manage even without that." Eleanor, it seemed, had a good prospect of a scholarship at the London School of Economics that would practically keep her. There would be no Cambridge for Clementina, but London University might still be possible with a little pinching, and the move to London had really improved the prospects of a good musical training for Miriam. Phoebe and Daphne, Lady Ella believed, might get in on special terms at the Notting Hill High School.

Scrope found it difficult to guess at what was going on in the heads of his younger daughters. None displayed such sympathy as Eleanor had confessed. He had a feeling that his wife had schooled them to say nothing about the change in their fortunes to him. But they quarrelled a good deal, he could hear, about the use of the one bathroom--there was never enough hot water after the second bath. And Miriam did not seem to enjoy playing the new upright piano in the drawing-room as much as she had done the Princhester grand it replaced. Though she was always willing to play that thing he liked; he knew now that it was the Adagio of Of. 111; whenever he asked for it.

London servants, Lady Ella found, were now much more difficult to get than they had been in the Holy Innocents' days in St. John's Wood. And more difficult to manage when they were got. The households of the more prosperous clergy are much sought after by domestics of a serious and excellent type; an unfrocked clergyman's household is by no means so attractive. The first comers were young women of unfortunate dispositions; the first cook was reluctant and insolent, she went before her month was

up; the second careless; she made burnt potatoes and cindered chops, underboiled and overboiled eggs; a "dropped" look about everything, harsh coffee and bitter tea seemed to be a natural aspect of the state of being no longer a bishop. He would often after a struggle with his nerves in the bedroom come humming cheerfully to breakfast, to find that Phoebe, who was a delicate eater, had pushed her plate away scarcely touched, while Lady Ella sat at the end of the table in a state of dangerous calm, framing comments for delivering downstairs that would be sure to sting and yet leave no opening for repartee, and trying at the same time to believe that a third cook, if the chances were risked again, would certainly be "all right."

The drawing-room was papered with a morose wallpaper that the landlord, in view of the fact that Scrope in his optimism would only take the house on a yearly agreement, had refused to replace; it was a design of very dark green leaves and grey gothic arches; and the apartment was lit by a chandelier, which spilt a pool of light in the centre of the room and splashed useless weak patches elsewhere. Lady Ella had to interfere to prevent the monopolization of this centre by Phoebe and Daphne for their home work. This light trouble was difficult to arrange; the plain truth was that there was not enough illumination to go round. In the Princhester drawing-room there had been a number of obliging little electric pushes. The size of the dining-room, now that the study was cut off from it, forbade hospitality. As it was, with only the family at home, the housemaid made it a grievance that she could scarcely squeeze by on the sideboard side to wait.

The house vibrated to the trains in the adjacent underground railway. There was a lady next door but one who was very pluckily training a contralto voice that most people would have gladly thrown away. At the end of Restharrow Street was a garage, and a yard where chauffeurs were accustomed to "tune up" their engines.

All these facts were persistently audible to any one sitting down in the little back study to think out this project of "writing something," about a change in the government of the whole world. Petty inconveniences no doubt all these inconveniences were, but they distressed a rather oversensitive mind which was also acutely aware that even upon this scale living would cost certainly two hundred and fifty pounds if not more in excess of the little private income available.

(5)

These domestic details, irrelevant as they may seem in a spiritual history, need to be given because they added an intimate keenness to Scrope's readiness for this private chapel enterprise that he was discussing with Lady Sunderbund. Along that line and along that line alone, he saw the way of escape from the great sea of London dinginess that threatened to submerge his family. And it was also, he felt, the line of his duty; it was his "call."

At least that was how he felt at first. And then matters began to grow complicated again.

Things had gone far between himself and Lady Sunderbund since that letter he had read upon the beach at Old Hunstanton. The blinds of the house with the very very blue door in Princhester had been drawn from the day when the first vanload of the renegade bishop's private possessions had departed from the palace. The lady had returned to the brightly decorated flat overlooking Hyde Park. He had seen her repeatedly since then, and always with a fairly clear understanding that she was to provide the chapel and pulpit in which he was to proclaim to London the gospel of the Simplicity and Universality of God. He

was to be the prophet of a reconsidered faith, calling the whole world from creeds and sects, from egotisms and vain loyalties, from prejudices of race and custom, to the worship and service of the Divine King of all mankind. That in fact had been the ruling resolve in his mind, the resolve determining his relations not only with Lady Sunderbund but with Lady Ella and his family, his friends, enemies and associates. He had set out upon this course unchecked by any doubt, and overriding the manifest disapproval of his wife and his younger daughters. Lady Sunderbund's enthusiasm had been enormous and sustaining....

Almost imperceptibly that resolve had weakened. Imperceptibly at first. Then the decline had been perceived as one sometimes perceives a thing in the background out of the corner of one's eye.

In all his early anticipations of the chapel enterprise, he had imagined himself in the likeness of a small but eloquent figure standing in a large exposed place and calling this lost misled world back to God. Lady Sunderbund, he assumed, was to provide the large exposed place (which was dimly paved with pews) and guarantee that little matter which was to relieve him of sordid anxieties for his family, the stipend. He had agreed in an inattentive way that this was to be eight hundred a year, with a certain proportion of the subscriptions. "At fl'st, I shall be the chief subsc'iber," she said. "Before the 'ush comes." He had been so content to take all this for granted and think no more about it--more particularly to think no more about it--that for a time he entirely disregarded the intense decorative activities into which Lady Sunderbund incontinently plunged. Had he been inclined to remark them he certainly might have done so, even though a considerable proportion was being thoughtfully veiled for a time from his eyes.

For example, there was the young architect with the wonderful

tie whom he met once or twice at lunch in the Hyde Park flat. This young man pulled the conversation again and again, Lady Sunderbund aiding and abetting, in the direction of the "ideal church." It was his ambition, he said, someday, to build an ideal church, "divorced from tradition."

Scrope had been drawn at last into a dissertation. He said that hitherto all temples and places of worship had been conditioned by orientation due to the seasonal aspects of religion, they pointed to the west or--as in the case of the Egyptian temples --to some particular star, and by sacramentalism, which centred everything on a highly lit sacrificial altar. It was almost impossible to think of a church built upon other lines than that. The architect would be so free that--"

"Absolutely free," interrupted the young architect. "He might, for example, build a temple like a star."

"Or like some wondrous casket," said Lady Sunderbund....

And also there was a musician with fuzzy hair and an impulsive way of taking the salted almonds, who wanted to know about religious music.

Scrope hazarded the idea that a chanting people was a religious people. He said, moreover, that there was a fine religiosity about Moussorgski, but that the most beautiful single piece of music in the world was Beethoven's sonata, Opus 111,--he was thinking, he said, more particularly of the Adagio at the end, *molto semplice e cantabile*. It had a real quality of divinity.

The musician betrayed impatience at the name of Beethoven, and thought, with his mouth appreciatively full of salted almonds, that nowadays we had got a little beyond that anyhow.

"We shall be superhuman before we get beyond either Purcell or Beethoven," said Scrope.

Nor did he attach sufficient importance to Lady Sunderbund's disposition to invite Positivists, members of the Brotherhood Church, leaders among the Christian Scientists, old followers of the Rev. Charles Voysey, Swedenborgians, Moslem converts, Indian Theosophists, psychic phenomena and so forth, to meet him. Nevertheless it began to drift into his mind that he was by no means so completely in control of the new departure as he had supposed at first. Both he and Lady Sunderbund professed universalism; but while his was the universalism of one who would simplify to the bare fundamentals of a common faith, hers was the universalism of the collector. Religion to him was something that illuminated the soul, to her it was something that illuminated prayer-books. For a considerable time they followed their divergent inclinations without any realization of their divergence. None the less a vague doubt and dissatisfaction with the prospect before him arose to cloud his confidence.

At first there was little or no doubt of his own faith. He was still altogether convinced that he had to confess and proclaim God in his life. He was as sure that God was the necessary king and saviour of mankind and of a man's life, as he was of the truth of the Binomial Theorem. But what began first to fade was the idea that he had been specially called to proclaim the True God to all the world. He would have the most amiable conference with Lady Sunderbund, and then as he walked back to Notting Hill he would suddenly find stuck into his mind like a challenge, Heaven knows how: "Another prophet?" Even if he succeeded in this mission enterprise, he found himself asking, what would he be but just a little West-end Mahomet? He would have founded another sect, and we have to make an end to all sects. How is there to be an end to sects, if there are still to be chapels--richly decorated chapels--and congregations, and salaried specialists

in God?

That was a very disconcerting idea. It was particularly active at night. He did his best to consider it with a cool detachment, regardless of the facts that his private income was just under three hundred pounds a year, and that his experiments in cultured journalism made it extremely improbable that the most sedulous literary work would do more than double this scanty sum. Yet for all that these nasty, ugly, sordid facts were entirely disregarded, they did somehow persist in coming in and squatting down, shapeless in a black corner of his mind--from which their eyes shone out, so to speak--whenever his doubt whether he ought to set up as a prophet at all was under consideration.

(6)

Then very suddenly on this October afternoon the situation had come to a crisis.

He had gone to Lady Sunderbund's flat to see the plans and drawings for the new church in which he was to give his message to the world. They had brought home to him the complete realization of Lady Sunderbund's impossibility. He had attempted upon the spur of the moment an explanation of just how much they differed, and he had precipitated a storm of extravagantly perplexing emotions....

She kept him waiting for perhaps ten minutes before she brought the plans to him. He waited in the little room with the Wyndham Lewis picture that opened upon the balcony painted with crazy squares of livid pink. On a golden table by the window a number of recently bought books were lying, and he went and stood over these, taking them up one after another. The first was "The Countess of Huntingdon and Her Circle," that bearded of

lightminded archbishops, that formidable harbourer of Wesleyan chaplains. For some minutes he studied the grim portrait of this inspired lady standing with one foot ostentatiously on her coronet and then turned to the next volume. This was a life of Saint Teresa, that energetic organizer of Spanish nunneries. The third dealt with Madame Guyon. It was difficult not to feel that Lady Sunderbund was reading for a part.

She entered.

She was wearing a long simple dress of spangled white with a very high waist; she had a bracelet of green jade, a waistband of green silk, and her hair was held by a wreath of artificial laurel, very stiff and green. Her arms were full of big rolls of cartridge paper and tracing paper. "I'm so pleased," she said. "It's 'eady at last and I can show you."

She banged the whole armful down upon a vivid little table of inlaid black and white wood. He rescued one or two rolls and a sheet of tracing paper from the floor.

"It's the Temple," she panted in a significant whisper. "It's the Temple of the One T'ue God!"

She scabbled among the papers, and held up the elevation of a strange square building to his startled eyes. "Iszi't it just pe'fect?" she demanded.

He took the drawing from her. It represented a building, manifestly an enormous building, consisting largely of two great, deeply fluted towers flanking a vast archway approached by a long flight of steps. Between the towers appeared a dome. It was as if the Mosque of Saint Sophia had produced this offspring in a mesalliance with the cathedral of Wells. Its enormity was made manifest by the minuteness of the large automobiles that were

driving away in the foreground after "setting down." "Here is the plan," she said, thrusting another sheet upon him before he could fully take in the quality of the design. "The g'eat Hall is to be pe'fectly 'ound, no aisle, no altar, and in lettas of sapphiah, 'God is ev'ywhe'."

She added with a note of solemnity, "It will hold th'ee thousand people sitting down."

"But--!" said Scrope.

"The'e's a sort of g'andeur," she said. "It's young Venable's wo'k. It's his fl'st g'ate oppo'tunity."

"But--is this to go on that little site in Aldwych?"

"He says the' isn't 'oom the'!" she explained. "He wants to put it out at Golda's G'een."

"But--if it is to be this little simple chapel we proposed, then wasn't our idea to be central?"

"But if the' isn't 'oem! "she said--conclusively. "And isn't this--isn't it rather a costly undertaking, rather more costly--"

"That docsn't matta. I'm making heaps and heaps of money. Half my p'ope'ty is in shipping and a lot of the 'eat in munitions. I'm 'icher than eva. Isn't the' a sort of g'andeur?" she pressed.

He put the elevation down. He took the plan from her hands and seemed to study it. But he was really staring blankly at the whole situation.

"Lady Sunderbund," he said at last, with an effort, "I am afraid all this won't do."

"Won't do!"

"No. It isn't in the spirit of my intention. It isn't in a great building of this sort--so--so ornate and imposing, that the simple gospel of God's Universal Kingdom can be preached."

"But oughtn't so gate a message to have as g'ate a pulpit?"

And then as if she would seize him before he could go on to further repudiations, she sought hastily among the drawings again.

"But look," she said. "It has ev'ything! It's not only a p'eaching place; it's a headquarters for ev'ything."

With the rapid movements of an excited child she began to thrust the remarkable features and merits of the great project upon him. The preaching dome was only the heart of it. There were to be a library, "'efecto'ies," consultation rooms, classrooms, a publication department, a big underground printing establishment. "Nowadays," she said, "ev'y gate movement must p'int." There was to be music, she said, "a gate invisible o'gan," hidden amidst the architectural details, and pouring out its sounds into the dome, and then she glanced in passing at possible "p'ocessions" round the preaching dome. This preaching dome was not a mere shut-in drum for spiritual reverberations, around it ran great open corridors, and in these corridors there were to be "chapels."

"But what for?" he asked, stemming the torrent. "What need is there for chapels? There are to be no altars, no masses, no sacraments?"

"No," she said, "but they are to be chapels for special

int'ests; a chapel for science, a chapel for healing, a chapel for gov'ment. Places for peoples to sit and think about those things--with paintings and symbols."

"I see your intention," he admitted. "I see your intention."

"The' is to be a gate da'k blue 'ound chapel for sta's and atoms and the myst'ry of matta." Her voice grew solemn. "All still and deep and high. Like a k'ystal in a da'k place. You will go down steps to it. Th'ough a da'k 'ounded a'ch ma'ked with mathematical symbols and balances and scientific app'atus.... And the ve'y next to it, the ve'y next, is to be a little b'ight chapel for bi'ds and flowas!"

"Yes," he said, "it is all very fine and expressive. It is, I see, a symbolical building, a great artistic possibility. But is it the place for me? What I have to say is something very simple, that God is the king of the whole world, king of the ha'penny newspaper and the omnibus and the vulgar everyday things, and that they have to worship him and serve him as their leader in every moment of their lives. This isn't that. This is the old religions over again. This is taking God apart. This is putting him into a fresh casket instead of the old one. And.... I don't like it."

"Don't like it," she cried, and stood apart from him with her chin in the air, a tall astonishment and dismay.

"I can't do the work I want to do with this."

"But--Isn't it you' idea?"

"No. It is not in the least my idea. I want to tell the whole world of the one God that can alone unite it and save it--and you make this extravagant toy."

He felt as if he had struck her directly he uttered that last word.

"Toy!" she echoed, taking it in, "you call it a Toy!"

A note in her voice reminded him that there were two people who might feel strongly in this affair.

"My dear Lady Sunderbund," he said with a sudden change of manner, "I must needs follow the light of my own mind. I have had a vision of God, I have seen him as a great leader towering over the little lives of men, demanding the little lives of men, prepared to take them and guide them to the salvation of mankind and the conquest of pain and death. I have seen him as the God of the human affair, a God of politics, a God of such muddy and bloody wars as this war, a God of economics, a God of railway junctions and clinics and factories and evening schools, a God in fact of men. This God--this God here, that you want to worship, is a God of artists and poets--of elegant poets, a God of bric-a-brac, a God of choice allusions. Oh, it has its grandeur! I don't want you to think that what you are doing may not be altogether fine and right for you to do. But it is not what I have to do.... I cannot--indeed I cannot--go on with this project--upon these lines."

He paused, flushed and breathless. Lady Sunderbund had heard him to the end. Her bright face was brightly flushed, and there were tears in her eyes. It was like her that they should seem tears of the largest, most expensive sort, tears of the first water.

"But," she cried, and her red delicate mouth went awry with dismay and disappointment, and her expression was the half incredulous expression of a child suddenly and cruelly

disappointed: "You won't go on with all this?"

"No," he said. "My dear Lady Sunderbund--"

"Oh! don't Lady Sunderbund me!" she cried with a novel rudeness. "Don't you see I've done it all for you?"

He winced and felt boorish. He had never liked and disapproved of Lady Sunderbund so much as he did at that moment. And he had no words for her.

"How can I stop it all at once like this?"

And still he had no answer.

She pursued her advantage. "What am I to do?" she cried.

She turned upon him passionately. "Look what you've done!" She marked her points with finger upheld, and gave odd suggestions in her face of an angry coster girl. "Eva' since I met you, I've wo'shipped you. I've been 'eady to follow you anywhe'--to do anything. Eva' since that night when you sat so calm and dignified, and they baited you and wo'id you. When they we' all vain and cleva, and you--you thought only of God and 'iligion and didn't mind fo' you'self.... Up to then--I'd been living--oh! the emptiest life..."

The tears ran. "Pe'haps I shall live it again...." She dashed her grief away with a hand beringed with stones as big as beetles.

"I said to myself, this man knows something I don't know. He's got the seeds of ete'nal life su'ely. I made up my mind then and the' I'd follow you and back you and do all I could fo' you. I've lived fo' you. Eve' since. Lived fo' you. And now when all my

little plans are 'ipe, you--! Oh!"

She made a quaint little gesture with pink fists upraised, and then stood with her hand held up, staring at the plans and drawings that were littered over the inlaid table. "I've planned and planned. I said, I will build him a temple. I will be his temple se'vant.... Just a me' se'vant...."

She could not go on.

"But it is just these temples that have confused mankind," he said.

"Not my temple," she said presently, now openly weeping over the gay rejected drawings. "You could have explained...."

"Oh!" she said petulantly, and thrust them away from her so that they went sliding one after the other on to the floor. For some long-drawn moments there was no sound in the room but the slowly accelerated slide and flop of one sheet of cartridge paper after another.

"We could have been so happy," she wailed, "se'ving oua God."

And then this disconcerting lady did a still more disconcerting thing. She staggered a step towards Scrape, seized the lapels of his coat, bowed her head upon his shoulder, put her black hair against his cheek, and began sobbing and weeping.

"My dear lady! " he expostulated, trying weakly to disengage her.

"Let me k'y," she insisted, gripping more resolutely, and following his backward pace. "You must let me k'y. You must let me k'y."

His resistance ceased. One hand supported her, the other patted her shining hair. "My dear child!" he said. "My dear child! I had no idea. That you would take it like this...."

(7)

That was but the opening of an enormous interview. Presently he had contrived in a helpful and sympathetic manner to seat the unhappy lady on a sofa, and when after some cramped discourse she stood up before him, wiping her eyes with a wet wonder of lace, to deliver herself the better, a newborn appreciation of the tactics of the situation made him walk to the other side of the table under colour of picking up a drawing.

In the retrospect he tried to disentangle the threads of a discussion that went to and fro and contradicted itself and began again far back among things that had seemed forgotten and disposed of. Lady Sunderbund's mind was extravagantly untrained, a wild-grown mental thicket. At times she reproached him as if he were a heartless God; at times she talked as if he were a recalcitrant servant. Her mingling of utter devotion and the completest disregard for his thoughts and wishes dazzled and distressed his mind. It was clear that for half a year her clear, bold, absurd will had been crystallized upon the idea of giving him exactly what she wanted him to want. The crystal sphere of those ambitions lay now shattered between them.

She was trying to reconstruct it before his eyes.

She was, she declared, prepared to alter her plans in any way that would meet his wishes. She had not understood. "If it is a Toy," she cried, "show me how to make it not a Toy! Make it 'eal!"

He said it was the bare idea of a temple that made it impossible. And there was this drawing here; what did it mean? He held it out to her. It represented a figure, distressingly like himself, robed as a priest in vestments.

She snatched the offending drawing from him and tore it to shreds.

"If you don't want a Temple, have a meeting-house. You wanted a meeting-house anyhow."

"Just any old meeting-house," he said. "Not that special one. A place without choirs and clergy."

"If you won't have music," she responded, "don't have music. If God doesn't want music it can go. I can't think God does not approve of music, but--that is for you to settle. If you don't like the' being o'naments, we'll make it all plain. Some g'ate g'ey Dome--all g'ey and black. If it isn't to be beautiful, it can be ugly. Yes, ugly. It can be as ugly "--she sobbed--" as the City Temple. We will get some otha a'chitect--some City a'chitect. Some man who has built B'anch Banks or 'ailway stations. That's if you think it pleases God.... B'eak young Venable's hea't.... Only why should you not let me make a place fo' you' message? Why shouldn't it be me? You must have a place. You've got 'to p'each somewhe'."

"As a man, not as a priest."

"Then p'each as a man. You must still wea' something."

"Just ordinary clothes."

"O'dina'y clothes a' clothes in the fashion," she said. "You

would have to go to you' taila for a new p'eaching coat with b'aid put on dif'ently, or two buttons instead of th'ee...."

"One needn't be fashionable."

"Ev'ybody is fash'nable. How can you help it? Some people wea' old fashions; that's all.... A cassock's an old fashion. There's nothing so plain as a cassock."

"Except that it's a clerical fashion. I want to be just as I am now."

"If you think that--that owoble suit is o'dina'y clothes!" she said, and stared at him and gave way to tears of real tenderness.

"A cassock," she cried with passion. "Just a pe'fectly plain cassock. Fo' deecency!... Oh, if you won't--not even that!"

(8)

As he walked now after his unsuccessful quest of Dr. Brighton-Pomfrey towards the Serpentine he acted that stormy interview with Lady Sunderbund over again. At the end, as a condition indeed of his departure, he had left things open. He had assented to certain promises. He was to make her understand better what it was he needed. He was not to let anything that had happened affect that "spi'tual f'enship." She was to abandon all her plans, she was to begin again "at the ve'y beginning." But he knew that indeed there should be no more beginning again with her. He knew that quite beyond these questions of the organization of a purified religion, it was time their association ended. She had wept upon him; she had clasped both his hands at parting and prayed to be forgiven. She was drawing

him closer to her by their very dissension. She had infected him with the softness of remorse; from being a bright and spirited person, she had converted herself into a warm and touching person. Her fine, bright black hair against his cheek and the clasp of her hand on his shoulder was now inextricably in the business. The perplexing, the astonishing thing in his situation was that there was still a reluctance to make a conclusive breach.

He was not the first of men who have tried to find in vain how and when a relationship becomes an entanglement. He ought to break off now, and the riddle was just why he should feel this compunction in breaking off now. He had disappointed her, and he ought not to have disappointed her; that was the essential feeling. He had never realized before as he realized now this peculiar quality of his own mind and the gulf into which it was leading him. It came as an illuminating discovery.

He was a social animal. He had an instinctive disposition to act according to the expectations of the people about him, whether they were reasonable or congenial expectations or whether they were not. That, he saw for the first time, had been the ruling motive of his life; it was the clue to him. Man is not a reasonable creature; he is a socially responsive creature trying to be reasonable in spite of that fact. From the days in the rectory nursery when Scrope had tried to be a good boy on the whole and just a little naughty sometimes until they stopped smiling, through all his life of school, university, curacy, vicarage and episcopacy up to this present moment, he perceived now that he had acted upon no authentic and independent impulse. His impulse had always been to fall in with people and satisfy them. And all the painful conflicts of those last few years had been due to a growing realization of jarring criticisms, of antagonized forces that required from him incompatible things. From which he had now taken refuge--or at any rate sought

refuge--in God. It was paradoxical, but manifestly in God he not only sank his individuality but discovered it.

It was wonderful how much he had thought and still thought of the feelings and desires of Lady Sunderbund, and how little he thought of God. Her he had been assiduously propitiating, managing, accepting, for three months now. Why? Partly because she demanded it, and there was a quality in her demand that had touched some hidden spring--of vanity perhaps it was--in him, that made him respond. But partly also it was because after the evacuation of the palace at Princhester he had felt more and more, felt but never dared to look squarely in the face, the catastrophic change in the worldly circumstances of his family. Only this chapel adventure seemed likely to restore those fallen and bedraggled fortunes. He had not anticipated a tithe of the dire quality of that change. They were not simply uncomfortable in the Notting Hill home. They were miserable. He fancied they looked to him with something between reproach and urgency. Why had he brought them here? What next did he propose to do? He wished at times they would say it out instead of merely looking it. Phoebe's failing appetite chilled his heart.

That concern for his family, he believed, had been his chief motive in clinging to Lady Sunderbund's projects long after he had realized how little they would forward the true service of God. No doubt there had been moments of flattery, moments of something, something rather in the nature of an excited affection; some touch of the magnificent in her, some touch of the infantile,--both appealed magnetically to his imagination; but the real effective cause was his habitual solicitude for his wife and children and his consequent desire to prosper materially. As his first dream of being something between Mohammed and Peter the Hermit in a new proclamation of God to the world lost colour and life in his mind, he realized more and more clearly that there was no way of living in a state of material

prosperity and at the same time in a state of active service to God. The Church of the One True God (by favour of Lady Sunderbund) was a gaily-coloured lure.

And yet he wanted to go on with it. All his imagination and intelligence was busy now with the possibility of in some way subjugating Lady Sunderbund, and modifying her and qualifying her to an endurable proposition. Why?

Why?

There could be but one answer, he thought. Brought to the test of action, he did not really believe in God! He did not believe in God as he believed in his family. He did not believe in the reality of either his first or his second vision; they had been dreams, autogenous revelations, exaltations of his own imaginations. These beliefs were upon different grades of reality. Put to the test, his faith in God gave way; a sword of plaster against a reality of steel.

And yet he did believe in God. He was as persuaded that there was a God as he was that there was another side to the moon. His intellectual conviction was complete. Only, beside the living, breathing--occasionally coughing--reality of Phoebe, God was something as unsubstantial as the Binomial Theorem....

Very like the Binomial Theorem as one thought over that comparison.

By this time he had reached the banks of the Serpentine and was approaching the grey stone bridge that crosses just where Hyde Park ends and Kensington Gardens begins. Following upon his doubts of his religious faith had come another still more extraordinary question: "Although there is a God, does he indeed matter more in our ordinary lives than that same demonstrable

Binomial Theorem? Isn't one's duty to Phoebe plain and clear?" Old Likeman's argument came back to him with novel and enhanced powers. Wasn't he after all selfishly putting his own salvation in front of his plain duty to those about him? What did it matter if he told lies, taught a false faith, perjured and damned himself, if after all those others were thereby saved and comforted?

"But that is just where the whole of this state of mind is false and wrong," he told himself. "God is something more than a priggish devotion, an intellectual formula. He has a hold and a claim--he should have a hold and a claim--exceeding all the claims of Phoebe, Miriam, Daphne, Clementina--all of them....

But he hasn't!...

It was to that he had got after he had left Lady Sunderbund, and to that he now returned. It was the thinness and unreality of his thought of God that had driven him post-haste to Brighton-Pomfrey in search for that drug that had touched his soul to belief.

Was God so insignificant in comparison with his family that after all with a good conscience he might preach him every Sunday in Lady Sunderbund's church, wearing Lady Sunderbund's vestments?

Before him he saw an empty seat. The question was so immense and conclusive, it was so clearly a choice for all the rest of his life between God and the dear things of this world, that he felt he could not decide it upon his legs. He sat down, threw an arm along the back of the seat and drummed with his fingers.

If the answer was "yes" then it was decidedly a pity that he had not stayed in the church. It was ridiculous to strain at the cathedral gnat and then swallow Lady Sunderbund's decorative

Pantechnicon.

For the first time, Scrope definitely regretted his apostasy.

A trivial matter, as it may seem to the reader, intensified that regret. Three weeks ago Borrowdale, the bishop of Howeaster, had died, and Scrope would have been the next in rotation to succeed him on the bench of bishops. He had always looked forward to the House of Lords, intending to take rather a new line, to speak more, and to speak more plainly and fully upon social questions than had hitherto been the practice of his brethren. Well, that had gone....

(9)

Regrets were plain now. The question before his mind was growing clear; whether he was to persist in this self-imposed martyrdom of himself and his family or whether he was to go back upon his outbreak of visionary fanaticism and close with this last opportunity that Lady Sunderbund offered of saving at least the substance of the comfort and social status of his wife and daughters. In which case it was clear to him he would have to go to great lengths and exercise very considerable subtlety--and magnetism--in the management of Lady Sunderbund....

He found himself composing a peculiar speech to her, very frank and revealing, and one that he felt would dominate her thoughts.... She attracted him oddly.... At least this afternoon she had attracted him....

And repelled him....

A wholesome gust of moral impatience stirred him. He smacked the back of the seat hard, as though he smacked himself.

No. He did not like it....

A torn sunset of purple and crimson streamed raggedly up above and through the half stripped trees of Kensington Gardens, and he found himself wishing that Heaven would give us fewer sublimities in sky and mountain and more in our hearts. Against the background of darkling trees and stormily flaming sky a girl was approaching him. There was little to be seen of her but her outline. Something in her movement caught his eye and carried his memory back to a sundown at Hunstanton. Then as she came nearer he saw that it was Eleanor.

It was odd to see her here. He had thought she was at Newnham.

But anyhow it was very pleasant to see her. And there was something in Eleanor that promised an answer to his necessity. The girl had a kind of instinctive wisdom. She would understand the quality of his situation better perhaps than any one. He would put the essentials of that situation as fully and plainly as he could to her. Perhaps she, with that clear young idealism of hers, would give him just the lift and the light of which he stood in need. She would comprehend both sides of it, the points about Phoebe as well as the points about God.

When first he saw her she seemed to be hurrying, but now she had fallen to a loitering pace. She looked once or twice behind her and then ahead, almost as though she expected some one and was not sure whether this person would approach from east or west. She did not observe her father until she was close upon him.

Then she was so astonished that for a moment she stood motionless, regarding him. She made an odd movement, almost as if she would have walked on, that she checked in its inception. Then

she came up to him and stood before him. "It's Dad," she said.

"I didn't know you were in London, Norah," he began.

"I came up suddenly."

"Have you been home?"

"No. I wasn't going home. At least--not until afterwards."

Then she looked away from him, east and then west, and then met his eye again.

"Won't you sit down, Norah?"

"I don't know whether I can."

She consulted the view again and seemed to come to a decision.

"At least, I will for a minute."

She sat down. For a moment neither of them spoke....

"What are you doing here, little Norah?"

She gathered her wits. Then she spoke rather volubly. "I know it looks bad, Daddy. I came up to meet a boy I know, who is going to France to-morrow. I had to make excuses--up there. I hardly remember what excuses I made."

"A boy you know?"

"Yes."

"Do we know him? "

"Not yet."

For a time Scrope forgot the Church of the One True God altogether. "Who is this boy?" he asked.

With a perceptible effort Eleanor assumed a tone of commonsense conventionality. "He's a boy I met first when we were skating last year. His sister has the study next to mine."

Father looked at daughter, and she met his eyes. "Well? "

"It's all happened so quickly, Daddy," she said, answering all that was implicit in that "Well?" She went on, "I would have told you about him if he had seemed to matter. But it was just a friendship. It didn't seem to matter in any serious way. Of course we'd been good friends--and talked about all sorts of things. And then suddenly you see,"--her tone was offhand and matter-of-fact--" he has to go to France."

She stared at her father with the expression of a hostess who talks about the weather. And then the tears gathered and ran down her cheek.

She turned her face to the Serpentine and clenched her fist.

But she was now fairly weeping. "I didn't know he cared. I didn't know I cared."

His next question took a little time in coming.

"And it's love, little Norah?" he asked.

She was comfortably crying now, the defensive altogether abandoned. "It's love, Daddy.... Oh! love!.... He's going tomorrow." For a minute or so neither spoke. Scrope's mind was

entirely made up in the matter. He approved altogether of his daughter. But the traditions of parentage, his habit of restrained decision, made him act a judicial part. "I'd like just to see this boy," he said, and added: "If it isn't rather interfering...."

"Dear Daddy!" she said. "Dear Daddy!" and touched his hand. "He'll be coming here...."

"If you could tell me a few things about him," said Scrope. "Is he an undergraduate?"

"You see," began Eleanor and paused to marshal her facts. "He graduated this year. Then he's been in training at Cambridge. Properly he'd have a fellowship. He took the Natural Science tripos, zoology chiefly. He's good at philosophy, but of course our Cambridge philosophy is so silly--McTaggart blowing bubbles.... His father's a doctor, Sir Hedley Riverton."

As she spoke her eyes had been roving up the path and down. "He's coming," she interrupted. She hesitated. "Would you mind if I went and spoke to him first, Daddy?"

"Of course go to him. Go and warn him I'm here," said Scrope.

Eleanor got up, and was immediately greeted with joyful gestures by an approaching figure in khaki. The two young people quickened their paces as they drew nearer one another. There was a rapid greeting; they stood close together and spoke eagerly. Scrope could tell by their movements when he became the subject of their talk. He saw the young man start and look over Eleanor's shoulder, and he assumed an attitude of philosophical contemplation of the water, so as to give the young man the liberty of his profile.

He did not look up until they were quite close to him, and when he did he saw a pleasant, slightly freckled fair face a little agitated, and very honest blue eyes. "I hope you don't think, Sir, that it's bad form of me to ask Eleanor to come up and see me as I've done. I telegraphed to her on an impulse, and it's been very kind of her to come up to me."

"Sit down," said Scrope, "sit down. You're Mr. Riverton?"

"Yes, Sir," said the young man. He had the frequent "Sir" of the subaltern. Scrope was in the centre of the seat, and the young officer sat down on one side of him while Eleanor took up a watching position on her father's other hand. "You see, Sir, we've hardly known each other--I mean we've been associated over a philosophical society and all that sort of thing, but in a more familiar way, I mean...."

He hung for a moment, just a little short of breath. Scrope helped him with a grave but sympathetic movement of the head. "It's a little difficult to explain," the young man apologized.

"We hadn't understood, I think, either of us very much. We'd just been friendly--and liked each other. And so it went on even when I was training. And then when I found I had to go out--I'm going out a little earlier than I expected--I thought suddenly I wouldn't ever go to Cambridge again at all perhaps--and there was something in one of her letters.... I thought of it a lot, Sir, I thought it all over, and I thought it wasn't right for me to do anything and I didn't do anything until this morning. And then I sort of had to telegraph. I know it was frightful cheek and bad form and all that, Sir. It is. It would be worse if she wasn't different--I mean, Sir, if she was just an ordinary girl.... But I had a sort of feeling--just wanting to see her. I don't suppose you've ever felt anything, Sir, as I felt I wanted to see her--and just hear her speak to me...."

He glanced across Scrope at Eleanor. It was as if he justified himself to them both.

Scrope glanced furtively at his daughter who was leaning forward with tender eyes on her lover, and his heart went out to her. But his manner remained judicial.

"All this is very sudden," he said.

"Or you would have heard all about it, Sir," said young Riverton. "It's just the hurry that has made this seem furtive. All that there is between us, Sir, is just the two telegrams we've sent, hers and mine. I hope you won't mind our having a little time together. We won't do anything very committal. It's as much friendship as anything. I go by the evening train to-morrow."

"Mm," said Scrope with his eye on Eleanor.

"In these uncertain times," he began.

"Why shouldn't I take a risk too, Daddy?" said Eleanor sharply.

"I know there's that side of it," said the young man. "I oughtn't to have telegraphed," he said.

"Can't I take a risk?" exclaimed Eleanor. "I'm not a doll. I don't want to live in wadding until all the world is safe for me."

Scrope looked at the glowing face of the young man.

"Is this taking care of her?" he asked.

"If you hadn't telegraphed--!" she cried with a threat in her voice, and left it at that.

"Perhaps I feel about her--rather as if she was as strong as I am--in those ways. Perhaps I shouldn't. I could hardly endure myself, Sir--cut off from her. And a sort of blank. Nothing said."

"You want to work out your own salvation," said Scrope to his daughter.

"No one else can," she answered. "I'm--I'm grown up."

"Even if it hurts?"

"To live is to be hurt somehow," she said. "This--This--" She flashed her love. She intimated by a gesture that it is better to be stabbed with a clean knife than to be suffocated or poisoned or to decay....

Scrope turned his eyes to the young man again. He liked him. He liked the modelling of his mouth and chin and the line of his brows. He liked him altogether. He pronounced his verdict slowly. "I suppose, after all," he said, "that this is better than the tender solicitude of a safe and prosperous middleaged man. Eleanor, my dear, I've been thinking to-day that a father who stands between his children and hardship, by doing wrong, may really be doing them a wrong. You are a dear girl to me.

"I won't stand between you two. Find your own salvation." He got up. "I go west," he said, "presently. You, I think, go east."

"I can assure you, Sir," the young man began.

Scrope held his hand out. "Take your life in your own way," he

said.

He turned to Eleanor. "Talk as you will," he said.

She clasped his hand with emotion. Then she turned to the waiting young man, who saluted.

"You'll come back to supper?" Scrope said, without thinking out the implications of that invitation.

She assented as carelessly. The fact that she and her lover were to go, with their meeting legalized and blessed, excluded all other considerations. The two young people turned to each other.

Scrope stood for a moment or so and then sat down again.

For a time he could think only of Eleanor.... He watched the two young people as they went eastward. As they walked their shoulders and elbows bumped amicably together.

(10)

Presently he sought to resume the interrupted thread of his thoughts. He knew that he had been dealing with some very tremendous and urgent problem when Eleanor had appeared. Then he remembered that Eleanor at the time of her approach had seemed to be a solution rather than an interruption. Well, she had her own life. She was making her own life. Instead of solving his problems she was solving her own. God bless those dear grave children! They were nearer the elemental things than he was. That eastward path led to Victoria--and thence to a very probable death. The lad was in the infantry and going straight into the trenches.

Love, death, God; this war was bringing the whole world back to elemental things, to heroic things. The years of comedy and comfort were at an end in Europe; the age of steel and want was here. And he had been thinking--What had he been thinking?

He mused, and the scheme of his perplexities reshaped itself in his mind. But at that time he did not realize that a powerful new light was falling upon it now, cast by the tragic illumination of these young lovers whose love began with a parting. He did not see how reality had come to all things through that one intense reality. He reverted to the question as he had put it to himself, before first he recognized Eleanor. Did he believe in God? Should he go on with this Sunderbund adventure in which he no longer believed? Should he play for safety and comfort, trusting to God's toleration? Or go back to his family and warn them of the years of struggle and poverty his renunciation cast upon them?

Somehow Lady Sunderbund's chapel was very remote and flimsy now, and the hardships of poverty seemed less black than the hardship of a youthful death.

Did he believe in God? Again he put that fundamental question to himself.

He sat very still in the sunset peace, with his eyes upon the steel mirror of the waters. The question seemed to fill the whole scene, to wait, even as the water and sky and the windless trees were waiting....

And then by imperceptible degrees there grew in Scrope's mind the persuasion that he was in the presence of the living God. This time there was no vision of angels nor stars, no snapping of bow-strings, no throbbing of the heart nor change of scene, no magic and melodramatic drawing back of the curtain from the

mysteries; the water and the bridge, the ragged black trees, and a distant boat that broke the silvery calm with an arrow of black ripples, all these things were still before him. But God was there too. God was everywhere about him. This persuasion was over him and about him; a dome of protection, a power in his nerves, a peace in his heart. It was an exalting beauty; it was a perfected conviction.... This indeed was the coming of God, the real coming of God. For the first time Scrope was absolutely sure that for the rest of his life he would possess God. Everything that had so perplexed him seemed to be clear now, and his troubles lay at the foot of this last complete realization like a litter of dust and leaves in the foreground of a sunlit, snowy mountain range.

It was a little incredible that he could ever have doubted.

(11)

It was a phase of extreme intellectual clairvoyance. A multitude of things that hitherto had been higgledy-piggledy, contradictory and incongruous in his mind became lucid, serene, full and assured. He seemed to see all things plainly as one sees things plainly through perfectly clear still water in the shadows of a summer noon. His doubts about God, his periods of complete forgetfulness and disregard of God, this conflict of his instincts and the habits and affections of his daily life with the service of God, ceased to be perplexing incompatibilities and were manifest as necessary, understandable aspects of the business of living.

It was no longer a riddle that little immediate things should seem of more importance than great and final things. For man is a creature thrusting his way up from the beast to divinity, from the blindness of individuality to the knowledge of a common end. We stand deep in the engagements of our individual lives looking

up to God, and only realizing in our moments of exaltation that through God we can escape from and rule and alter the whole world-wide scheme of individual lives. Only in phases of illumination do we realize the creative powers that lie ready to man's hand. Personal affections, immediate obligations, ambitions, self-seeking, these are among the natural and essential things of our individual lives, as intimate almost as our primordial lusts and needs; God, the true God, is a later revelation, a newer, less natural thing in us; a knowledge still remote, uncertain, and confused with superstition; an apprehension as yet entangled with barbaric traditions of fear and with ceremonial surgeries, blood sacrifices, and the maddest barbarities of thought. We are only beginning to realize that God is here; so far as our minds go he is still not here continually; we perceive him and then again we are blind to him. God is the last thing added to the completeness of human life. To most His presence is imperceptible throughout their lives; they know as little of him as a savage knows of the electric waves that beat through us for ever from the sun. All this appeared now so clear and necessary to Scrope that he was astonished he had ever found the quality of contradiction in these manifest facts.

In this unprecedented lucidity that had now come to him, Scrope saw as a clear and simple necessity that there can be no such thing as a continuous living presence of God in our lives. That is an unreasonable desire. There is no permanent exaltation of belief. It is contrary to the nature of life. One cannot keep actively believing in and realizing God round all the twenty-four hours any more than one can keep awake through the whole cycle of night and day, day after day. If it were possible so to apprehend God without cessation, life would dissolve in religious ecstasy. But nothing human has ever had the power to hold the curtain of sense continually aside and retain the light of God always. We must get along by remembering our moments of assurance. Even Jesus himself, leader of all those who have hailed the coming

kingdom of God, had cried upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The business of life on earth, life itself, is a thing curtained off, as it were, from such immediate convictions. That is in the constitution of life. Our ordinary state of belief, even when we are free from doubt, is necessarily far removed from the intuitive certainty of sight and hearing. It is a persuasion, it falls far short of perception....

"We don't know directly," Scrope said to himself with a checking gesture of the hand, "we don't see. We can't. We hold on to the remembered glimpse, we go over our reasons."...

And it was clear too just because God is thus manifest like the momentary drawing of a curtain, sometimes to this man for a time and sometimes to that, but never continuously to any, and because the perception of him depends upon the ability and quality of the perceiver, because to the intellectual man God is necessarily a formula, to the active man a will and a commandment, and to the emotional man love, there can be no creed defining him for all men, and no ritual and special forms of service to justify a priesthood. "God is God," he whispered to himself, and the phrase seemed to him the discovery of a sufficient creed. God is his own definition; there is no other definition of God. Scrope had troubled himself with endless arguments whether God was a person, whether he was concerned with personal troubles, whether he loved, whether he was finite. It were as reasonable to argue whether God was a frog or a rock or a tree. He had imagined God as a figure of youth and courage, had perceived him as an effulgence of leadership, a captain like the sun. The vision of his drug-quickenened mind had but symbolized what was otherwise inexpressible. Of that he was now sure. He had not seen the invisible but only its sign and visible likeness. He knew now that all such presentations were true and that all such presentations were false. Just as much and just as little was God the darkness and the brightness of the ripples under the bows of

the distant boat, the black beauty of the leaves and twigs of those trees now acid-clear against the flushed and deepening sky. These riddles of the profundities were beyond the compass of common living. They were beyond the needs of common living. He was but a little earth parasite, sitting idle in the darkling day, trying to understand his infinitesimal functions on a minor planet. Within the compass of terrestrial living God showed himself in its own terms. The life of man on earth was a struggle for unity of spirit and for unity with his kind, and the aspect of God that alone mattered to man was a unifying kingship without and within. So long as men were men, so would they see God. Only when they reached the crest could they begin to look beyond. So we knew God, so God was to us; since we struggled, he led our struggle, since we were finite and mortal he defined an aim, his personality was the answer to our personality; but God, except in so far as he was to us, remained inaccessible, inexplicable, wonderful, shining through beauty, shining beyond research, greater than time or space, above good and evil and pain and pleasure.

(12)

Serape's mind was saturated as it had never been before by his sense of the immediate presence of God. He floated in that realization. He was not so much thinking now as conversing starkly with the divine interlocutor, who penetrated all things and saw into and illuminated every recess of his mind. He spread out his ideas to the test of this presence; he brought out his hazards and interpretations that this light might judge them.

There came back to his mind the substance of his two former visions; they assumed now a reciprocal quality, they explained one another and the riddle before him. The first had shown him the personal human aspect of God, he had seen God as the unifying

captain calling for his personal service, the second had set the stage for that service in the spectacle of mankind's adventure. He had been shown a great multitude of human spirits reaching up at countless points towards the conception of the racial unity under a divine leadership, he had seen mankind on the verge of awakening to the kingdom of God. "That solves no mystery," he whispered, gripping the seat and frowning at the water; "mysteries remain mysteries; but that is the reality of religion. And now, now, what is my place? What have I to do? That is the question I have been asking always; the question that this moment now will answer; what have I to do?..."

God was coming into the life of all mankind in the likeness of a captain and a king; all the governments of men, all the leagues of men, their debts and claims and possessions, must give way to the world republic under God the king. For five troubled years he had been staring religion in the face, and now he saw that it must mean this--or be no more than fetishism, Obi, Orphic mysteries or ceremonies of Demeter, a legacy of mental dirtiness, a residue of self-mutilation and superstitious sacrifices from the cunning, fear-haunted, ape-dog phase of human development.

But

it did mean this. And every one who apprehended as much was called by that very apprehension to the service of God's kingdom. To live and serve God's kingdom on earth, to help to bring it about, to propagate the idea of it, to establish the method of it, to incorporate all that one made and all that one did into its growing reality, was the only possible life that could be lived, once that God was known.

He sat with his hands gripping his knees, as if he were holding on to his idea. "And now for my part," he whispered, brows knit, "now for my part."

Ever since he had given his confirmation addresses he had been

clear that his task, or at least a considerable portion of his task, was to tell of this faith in God and of this conception of service in his kingdom as the form and rule of human life and human society. But up to now he had been floundering hopelessly in his search for a method and means of telling. That, he saw, still needed to be thought out. For example, one cannot run through the world crying, "The Kingdom of God is at hand." Men's minds were still so filled with old theological ideas that for the most part they would understand by that only a fantasy of some great coming of angels and fiery chariots and judgments, and hardly a soul but would doubt one's sanity and turn scornfully away. But one must proclaim God not to confuse but to convince men's minds. It was that and the habit of his priestly calling that had disposed him towards a pulpit. There he could reason and explain. The decorative genius of Lady Sunderbund had turned that intention into a vast iridescent absurdity.

This sense he had of thinking openly in the sight of God, enabled him to see the adventure of Lady Sunderbund without illusion and without shame. He saw himself at once honest and disingenuous, divided between two aims. He had no doubt now of the path he had to pursue. A stronger man of permanently clear aims might possibly turn Lady Sunderbund into a useful opportunity, oblige her to provide the rostrum he needed; but for himself, he knew he had neither the needed strength nor clearness; she would smother him in decoration, overcome him by her picturesque persistence. It might be ridiculous to run away from her, but it was necessary. And he was equally clear now that for him there must be no idea of any pulpit, of any sustained mission. He was a man of intellectual moods; only at times, he realized, had he the inspiration of truth; upon such uncertain snatches and glimpses he must live; to make his life a ministry would be to face phases when he would simply be "carrying on," with his mind blank and his faith asleep.

His thought spread out from this perennial decision to more general things again. Had God any need of organized priests at all? Wasn't that just what had been the matter with religion for the last three thousand years?

His vision and his sense of access to God had given a new courage to his mind; in these moods of enlightenment he could see the world as a comprehensible ball, he could see history as an understandable drama. He had always been on the verge of realizing before, he realized now, the two entirely different and antagonistic strands that interweave in the twisted rope of contemporary religion; the old strand of the priest, the fetishistic element of the blood sacrifice and the obscene rite, the element of ritual and tradition, of the cult, the caste, the consecrated tribe; and interwoven with this so closely as to be scarcely separable in any existing religion was the new strand, the religion of the prophets, the unidolatrous universal worship of the one true God. Priest religion is the antithesis to prophet religion. He saw that the founders of all the great existing religions of the world had been like himself--only that he was a weak and commonplace man with no creative force, and they had been great men of enormous initiative--men reaching out, and never with a complete definition, from the old kind of religion to the new. The Hebrew prophets, Jesus, whom the priests killed when Pilate would have spared him, Mohammed, Buddha, had this much in common that they had sought to lead men from temple worship, idol worship, from rites and ceremonies and the rule of priests, from anniversaryism and sacramentalism, into a direct and simple relation to the simplicity of God. Religious progress had always been liberation and simplification. But none of these efforts had got altogether clear. The organizing temper in men, the disposition to dogmatic theorizing, the distrust of the discretion of the young by the wisdom of age, the fear of indiscipline which is so just in warfare and so foolish in education, the tremendous power of the propitiatory tradition,

had always caught and crippled every new gospel before it had run a score of years. Jesus for example gave man neither a theology nor a church organization; His sacrament was an innocent feast of memorial; but the fearful, limited, imitative men he left to carry on his work speedily restored all these three abominations of the antiquated religion, theology, priest, and sacrifice. Jesus indeed, caught into identification with the ancient victim of the harvest sacrifice and turned from a plain teacher into a horrible blood bath and a mock cannibal meal, was surely the supreme feat of the ironies of chance....

"It is curious how I drift back to Jesus," said Scrope. "I have never seen how much truth and good there was in his teaching until I broke away from Christianity and began to see him plain. If I go on as I am going, I shall end a Nazarene...."

He thought on. He had a feeling of temerity, but then it seemed as if God within him bade him be of good courage.

Already in a glow of inspiration he had said practically as much as he was now thinking in his confirmation address, but now he realized completely what it was he had then said. There could be no priests, no specialized ministers of the one true God, because every man to the utmost measure of his capacity was bound to be God's priest and minister. Many things one may leave to specialists: surgery, detailed administration, chemistry, for example; but it is for every man to think his own philosophy and think out his own religion. One man may tell another, but no man may take charge of another. A man may avail himself of electrician or gardener or what not, but he must stand directly before God; he may suffer neither priest nor king. These other things are incidental, but God, the kingdom of God, is what he is for.

"Good," he said, checking his reasoning. "So I must bear

witness to God--but neither as priest nor pastor. I must write and talk about him as I can. No reason why I should not live by such writing and talking if it does not hamper my message to do so. But there must be no high place, no ordered congregation. I begin to see my way....

The evening was growing dark and chill about him now, the sky was barred with deep bluish purple bands drawn across a chilly brightness that had already forgotten the sun, the trees were black and dim, but his understanding of his place and duty was growing very definite.

"And this duty to bear witness to God's kingdom and serve it is so plain that I must not deflect my witness even by a little, though to do so means comfort and security for my wife and children. God comes first...."

"They must not come between God and me...."

"But there is more in it than that."

He had come round at last through the long clearing-up of his mind, to his fundamental problem again. He sat darkly reluctant.

"I must not play priest or providence to them," he admitted at last. "I must not even stand between God and them."

He saw now what he had been doing; it had been the flaw in his faith that he would not trust his family to God. And he saw too that this distrust has been the flaw in the faith of all religious systems hitherto....

In this strange voyage of the spirit which was now drawing to its end, in which Scrope had travelled from the confused, unanalyzed formulas and assumptions and implications of his rectory upbringing to his present stark and simple realization of God, he had at times made some remarkable self-identifications. He was naturally much given to analogy; every train of thought in his mind set up induced parallel currents. He had likened himself to the Anglican church, to the whole Christian body, as, for example, in his imagined second conversation with the angel of God. But now he found himself associating himself with a still more far-reaching section of mankind. This excess of solicitude was traceable perhaps in nearly every one in all the past of mankind who had ever had the vision of God. An excessive solicitude to shield those others from one's own trials and hardships, to preserve the exact quality of the revelation, for example, had been the fruitful cause of crippling errors, spiritual tyrannies, dogmatisms, dissensions, and futilities. "Suffer little children to come unto me"; the text came into his head with an effect of contribution. The parent in us all flares out at the thought of the younger and weaker minds; we hide difficulties, seek to spare them from the fires that temper the spirit, the sharp edge of the truth that shapes the soul. Christian is always trying to have a carriage sent back from the Celestial City for his family. Why, we ask, should they flounder dangerously in the morasses that we escaped, or wander in the forest in which we lost ourselves? Catch these souls young, therefore, save them before they know they exist, kidnap them to heaven; vaccinate them with a catechism they may never understand, lull them into comfort and routine. Instinct plays us false here as it plays the savage mother false when she snatches her fevered child from the doctor's hands. The last act of faith is to trust those we love to God....

Hitherto he had seen the great nets of theological overstatement and dogma that kept mankind from God as if they

were the work of purely evil things in man, of pride, of self-assertion, of a desire to possess and dominate the minds and souls of others. It was only now that he saw how large a share in the obstruction of God's Kingdom had been played by the love of the elder and the parent, by the carefulness, the fussy care, of good men and women. He had wandered in wildernesses of unbelief, in dangerous places of doubt and questioning, but he had left his wife and children safe and secure in the self-satisfaction of orthodoxy. To none of them except to Eleanor had he ever talked with any freedom of his new apprehensions of religious reality. And that had been at Eleanor's initiative. There was, he saw now, something of insolence and something of treachery in this concealment. His ruling disposition throughout the crisis had been to force comfort and worldly well-being upon all those dependants even at the price of his own spiritual integrity. In no way had he consulted them upon the bargain.... While we have pottered, each for the little good of his own family, each for the lessons and clothes and leisure of his own children, assenting to this injustice, conforming to that dishonest custom, being myopically benevolent and fundamentally treacherous, our accumulated folly has achieved this catastrophe. It is not so much human wickedness as human weakness that has permitted the youth of the world to go through this hell of blood and mud and fire. The way to the kingdom of God is the only way to the true safety, the true wellbeing of the children of men....

It wasn't fair to them. But now he saw how unfair it was to them in a light that has only shone plainly upon European life since the great interlude of the armed peace came to an end in August, 1914. Until that time it had been the fashion to ignore death and evade poverty and necessity for the young. We can shield our young no longer, death has broken through our precautions and tender evasions--and his eyes went eastward into the twilight that had swallowed up his daughter and her lover.

The tumbled darkling sky, monstrous masses of frowning blue, with icy gaps of cold light, was like the great confusions of the war. All our youth has had to go into that terrible and destructive chaos--because of the kings and churches and nationalities sturdier-souled men would have set aside.

Everything was sharp and clear in his mind now. Eleanor after all had brought him his solution.

He sat quite still for a little while, and then stood up and turned northward towards Notting Hill.

The keepers were closing Kensington Gardens, and he would have to skirt the Park to Victoria Gate and go home by the Bayswater Road....

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As he walked he rearranged in his mind this long-overdue apology for his faith that he was presently to make to his family. There was no one to interrupt him and nothing to embarrass him, and so he was able to set out everything very clearly and convincingly. There was perhaps a disposition to digress into rather voluminous subordinate explanations, on such themes, for instance, as sacramentalism, whereon he found himself summarizing Frazer's *Golden Bough*, which the Chasters' controversy had first obliged him to read, and upon the irrelevance of the question of immortality to the process of salvation. But the reality of his *eclaircissement* was very different from anything he prepared in these anticipations.

Tea had been finished and put away, and the family was disposed about the dining-room engaged in various evening occupations;

Phoebe sat at the table working at some mathematical problem, Clementina was reading with her chin on her fist and a frown on her brow; Lady Ella, Miriam and Daphne were busy making soft washing cloths for the wounded; Lady Ella had brought home the demand for them from the Red Cross centre in Burlington House. The family was all downstairs in the dining-room because the evening was chilly, and there were no fires upstairs yet in the drawing-room. He came into the room and exchanged greetings with Lady Ella. Then he stood for a time surveying his children. Phoebe, he noted, was a little flushed; she put passion into her work; on the whole she was more like Eleanor than any other of them. Miriam knitted with a steady skill. Clementina's face too expressed a tussle. He took up one of the rough-knit washing-cloths upon the side-table, and asked how many could be made in an hour. Then he asked some idle obvious question about the fire upstairs. Clementina made an involuntary movement; he was disturbing her. He hovered for a moment longer. He wanted to catch his wife's eye and speak to her first. She looked up, but before he could convey his wish for a private conference with her, she smiled at him and then bent over her work again.

He went into the back study and lit his gas fire. Hitherto he had always made a considerable explosion when he did so, but this time by taking thought and lighting his match before he turned on the gas he did it with only a gentle thud. Then he lit his reading-lamp and pulled down the blind--pausing for a time to look at the lit dressmaker's opposite. Then he sat down thoughtfully before the fire. Presently Ella would come in and he would talk to her. He waited a long time, thinking only weakly and inconsecutively, and then he became restless. Should he call her?

But he wanted their talk to begin in a natural-seeming way. He did not want the portentousness of "wanting to speak" to her and calling her out to him. He got up at last and went back into the

other room. Clementina had gone upstairs, and the book she had been reading was lying closed on the sideboard. He saw it was one of Chasters' books, he took it up, it was "The Core of Truth in Christianity," and he felt an irrational shock at the idea of Clementina reading it. In spite of his own immense changes of opinion he had still to revise his conception of the polemical Chasters as an evil influence in religion. He fidgeted past his wife to the mantel in search of an imaginary mislaid pencil. Clementina came down with some bandage linen she was cutting out. He hung over his wife in a way that he felt must convey his desire for a conversation. Then he picked up Chasters' book again. "Does any one want this?" he asked.

"Not if I may have it again," consented Clementina.

He took it back with him and began to read again those familiar controversial pages. He read for the best part of an hour with his knees drying until they smoked over the gas. What curious stuff it was! How it wrangled! Was Chasters a religious man? Why did he write these books? Had he really a passion for truth or only a Swift-like hatred of weakly-thinking people? None of this stuff in his books was really wrong, provided it was religious-spirited. Much of it had been indeed destructively illuminating to its reader. It let daylight through all sorts of walls.

Indeed, the more one read the more vividly true its acid-bit lines became.... And yet, and yet, there was something hateful in the man's tone. Scrope held the book and thought. He had seen Chasters once or twice. Chasters had the sort of face, the sort of voice, the sort of bearing that made one think of his possibly saying upon occasion, rudely and rejoicing, "More fool you!" Nevertheless Scrope perceived now with an effort of discovery that it was from Chasters that he had taken all the leading ideas of the new faith that was in him. Here was the stuff of it. He had forgotten how much of it was here. During those months of worried study while the threat of a Chasters prosecution hung

over him his mind had assimilated almost unknowingly every assimilable element of the Chasters doctrine; he had either assimilated and transmuted it by the alchemy of his own temperament, or he had reacted obviously and filled in Chasters' gaps and pauses. Chasters could beat a road to the Holy of Holies, and shy at entering it. But in spite of all the man's roughness, in spite of a curious flavour of baseness and malice about him, the spirit of truth had spoken through him. God has a use for harsh ministers. In one man God lights the heart, in another the reason becomes a consuming fire. God takes his own where he finds it. He does not limit himself to nice people. In these matters of evidence and argument, in his contempt for amiable, demoralizing compromise, Chasters served God as Scrope could never hope to serve him. Scrope's new faith had perhaps been altogether impossible if the Chasters controversy had not ploughed his mind.

For a time Scrope dwelt upon this remarkable realization. Then as he turned over the pages his eyes rested on a passage of uncivil and ungenerous sarcasm. Against old Likeman of all people!...

What did a girl like Clementina make of all this? How had she got the book? From Eleanor? The stuff had not hurt Eleanor. Eleanor had been able to take the good that Chasters taught, and reject the evil of his spirit....

He thought of Eleanor, gallantly working out her own salvation. The world was moving fast to a phase of great freedom--for the young and the bold.... He liked that boy....

His thoughts came back with a start to his wife. The evening was slipping by and he had momentous things to say to her. He went and just opened the door.

"Ella!" he said.

"Did you want me?"

"Presently."

She put a liberal interpretation upon that "presently," so that after what seemed to him a long interval he had to call again, "Ella!"

"Just a minute," she answered.

(15)

Lady Ella was still, so to speak, a little in the other room when she came to him.

"Shut that door, please," he said, and felt the request had just that flavour of portentousness he wished to avoid.

"What is it? " she asked.

"I wanted to talk to you--about some things. I've done something rather serious to-day. I've made an important decision."

Her face became anxious. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"You see," he said, leaning upon the mantelshelf and looking down at the gas flames, "I've never thought that we should all have to live in this crowded house for long."

"All!" she interrupted in a voice that made him look up sharply. "You're not going away, Ted?"

"Oh, no. But I hoped we should all be going away in a little time. It isn't so."

"I never quite understood why you hoped that."

"It was plain enough."

"How? "

"I thought I should have found something to do that would have enabled us to live in better style. I'd had a plan."

"What plan?"

"It's fallen through."

"But what plan was it?"

"I thought I should be able to set up a sort of broad church chapel. I had a promise."

Her voice was rich with indignation. "And she has betrayed you?"

"No," he said, "I have betrayed her."

Lady Ella's face showed them still at cross purposes. He looked down again and frowned. "I can't do that chapel business," he said. "I've had to let her down. I've got to let you all down. There's no help for it. It isn't the way. I can't have anything to do with Lady Sunderbund and her chapel."

"But," Lady Ella was still perplexed.

"It's too great a sacrifice."

"Of us?"

"No, of myself. I can't get into her pulpit and do as she wants and keep my conscience. It's been a horrible riddle for me. It means plunging into all this poverty for good. But I can't work with her, Ella. She's impossible."

"You mean--you're going to break with Lady Sunderbund?"

"I must."

"Then, Teddy!"--she was a woman groping for flight amidst intolerable perplexities--"why did you ever leave the church?"

"Because I have ceased to believe--"

"But had it nothing to do with Lady Sunderbund?"

He stared at her in astonishment.

"If it means breaking with that woman," she said.

"You mean," he said, beginning for the first time to comprehend her, "that you don't mind the poverty?"

"Poverty!" she cried. "I cared for nothing but the disgrace."

"Disgrace?"

"Oh, never mind, Ted! If it isn't true, if I've been dreaming...."

Instead of a woman stunned by a life sentence of poverty, he

saw his wife rejoicing as if she had heard good news.

Their minds were held for a minute by the sound of some one knocking at the house door; one of the girls opened the door, there was a brief hubbub in the passage and then they heard a cry of "Eleanor!" through the folding doors.

"There's Eleanor," he said, realizing he had told his wife nothing of the encounter in Hyde Park.

They heard Eleanor's clear voice: "Where's Mummy? Or Daddy?" and then: "Can't stay now, dears. Where's Mummy or Daddy?"

"I ought to have told you," said Scrope quickly. "I met Eleanor in the Park. By accident. She's come up unexpectedly. To meet a boy going to the front. Quite a nice boy. Son of Riverton the doctor. The parting had made them understand one another. It's all right, Ella. It's a little irregular, but I'd stake my life on the boy. She's very lucky."

Eleanor appeared through the folding doors. She came to business at once.

"I promised you I'd come back to supper here, Daddy," she said. "But I don't want to have supper here. I want to stay out late."

She saw her mother look perplexed. "Hasn't Daddy told you?"

"But where is young Riverton?"

"He's outside."

Eleanor became aware of a broad chink in the folding doors that was making the dining-room an auditorium for their dialogue. She shut them deftly.

"I have told Mummy," Scrope explained. "Bring him in to supper. We ought to see him."

Eleanor hesitated. She indicated her sisters beyond the folding doors. "They'll all be watching us, Mummy," she said. "We'd be uncomfortable. And besides

"But you can't go out and dine with him alone!"

"Oh, Mummy! It's our only chance."

"Customs are changing," said Scrope.

"But can they?" asked Lady Ella.

"I don't see why not."

The mother was still doubtful, but she was in no mood to cross her husband that night. "It's an exceptional occasion," said Scrope, and Eleanor knew her point was won. She became radiant. "I can be late?"

Scrope handed her his latch-key without a word.

"You dear kind things," she said, and went to the door. Then turned and came back and kissed her father. Then she kissed her mother. "It is so kind of you," she said, and was gone. They listened to her passage through a storm of questions in the dining-room.

"Three months ago that would have shocked me," said Lady Ella.

"You haven't seen the boy," said Scrope.

"But the appearances!"

"Aren't we rather breaking with appearances?" he said.

"And he goes to-morrow--perhaps to get killed," he added. "A lad like a schoolboy. A young thing. Because of the political foolery that we priests and teachers have suffered in the place of the Kingdom of God, because we have allowed the religion of Europe to become a lie; because no man spoke the word of God. You see--when I see that--see those two, those children of one-and-twenty, wrenched by tragedy, beginning with a parting.... It's like a knife slashing at all our appearances and discretions.... Think of our lovemaking...."

The front door banged.

He had some idea of resuming their talk. But his was a scattered mind now.

"It's a quarter to eight," he said as if in explanation.

"I must see to the supper," said Lady Ella.

(16)

There was an air of tension at supper as though the whole family felt that momentous words impended. But Phoebe had emerged victorious from her mathematical struggle, and she seemed to eat with better appetite than she had shown for some time. It was a cold meat supper; Lady Ella had found it impossible to keep up the regular practice of a cooked dinner in the evening, and now it was only on Thursdays that the Scropes, to preserve their social tradition, dressed and dined; the rest of the week they supped. Lady Ella never talked very much at supper; this evening

was no exception. Clementina talked of London University and Bedford College; she had been making enquiries; Daphne described some of the mistresses at her new school. The feeling that something was expected had got upon Scrope's nerves. He talked a little in a flat and obvious way, and lapsed into thoughtful silences. While supper was being cleared away he went back into his study.

Thence he returned to the dining-room hearthrug as his family resumed their various occupations.

He tried to speak in a casual conversational tone.

"I want to tell you all," he said, "of something that has happened to-day."

He waited. Phoebe had begun to figure at a fresh sheet of computations. Miriam bent her head closer over her work, as though she winced at what was coming. Daphne and Clementina looked at one another. Their eyes said "Eleanor!" But he was too full of his own intention to read that glance. Only his wife regarded him attentively.

"It concerns you all," he said.

He looked at Phoebe. He saw Lady Ella's hand go out and touch the girl's hand gently to make her desist. Phoebe obeyed, with a little sigh.

"I want to tell you that to-day I refused an income that would certainly have exceeded fifteen hundred pounds a year."

Clementina looked up now. This was not what she expected. Her expression conveyed protesting enquiry.

"I want you all to understand why I did that and why we are in the position we are in, and what lies before us. I want you to know what has been going on in my mind."

He looked down at the hearthrug, and tried to throw off a memory of his Princhester classes for young women, that oppressed him. His manner he forced to a more familiar note. He stuck his hands into his trouser pockets.

"You know, my dears, I had to give up the church. I just simply didn't believe any more in orthodox Church teaching. And I feel I've never explained that properly to you. Not at all clearly. I want to explain that now. It's a queer thing, I know, for me to say to you, but I want you to understand that I am a religious man. I believe that God matters more than wealth or comfort or position or the respect of men, that he also matters more than your comfort and prosperity. God knows I have cared for your comfort and prosperity. I don't want you to think that in all these changes we have been through lately, I haven't been aware of all the discomfort into which you have come--the relative discomfort. Compared with Princhester this is dark and crowded and poverty-stricken. I have never felt crowded before, but in this house I know you are horribly crowded. It is a house that seems almost contrived for small discomforts. This narrow passage outside; the incessant going up and down stairs. And there are other things. There is the blankness of our London Sundays. What is the good of pretending? They are desolating. There's the impossibility too of getting good servants to come into our dug-out kitchen. I'm not blind to all these sordid consequences. But all the same, God has to be served first. I had to come to this. I felt I could not serve God any longer as a bishop in the established church, because I did not believe that the established church was serving God. I struggled against that conviction--and I struggled against it largely for your sakes. But I had to obey my conviction.... I haven't talked to you about

these things as much as I should have done, but partly at least that is due to the fact that my own mind has been changing and reconsidering, going forward and going back, and in that fluid state it didn't seem fair to tell you things that I might presently find mistaken. But now I begin to feel that I have really thought out things, and that they are definite enough to tell you....

He paused and resumed. "A number of things have helped to change the opinions in which I grew up and in which you have grown up. There were worries at Princhester; I didn't let you know much about them, but there were. There was something harsh and cruel in that atmosphere. I saw for the first time--it's a lesson I'm still only learning--how harsh and greedy rich people and employing people are to poor people and working people, and how ineffective our church was to make things better. That struck me. There were religious disputes in the diocese too, and they shook me. I thought my faith was built on a rock, and I found it was built on sand. It was slipping and sliding long before the war. But the war brought it down. Before the war such a lot of things in England and Europe seemed like a comedy or a farce, a bad joke that one tolerated. One tried half consciously, half avoiding the knowledge of what one was doing, to keep one's own little circle and life civilized. The war shook all those ideas of isolation, all that sort of evasion, down. The world is the rightful kingdom of God; we had left its affairs to kings and emperors and suchlike impostors, to priests and profit-seekers and greedy men. We were genteel condoners. The war has ended that. It thrusts into all our lives. It brings death so close-- A fortnight ago twenty-seven people were killed and injured within a mile of this by Zeppelin bombs.... Every one loses some one.... Because through all that time men like myself were going through our priestly mummeries, abasing ourselves to kings and politicians, when we ought to have been crying out: 'No! No! There is no righteousness in the world, there is no right

government, except it be the kingdom of God."

He paused and looked at them. They were all listening to him now. But he was still haunted by a dread of preaching in his own family. He dropped to the conversational note again.

"You see what I had in mind. I saw I must come out of this, and preach the kingdom of God. That was my idea. I don't want to force it upon you, but I want you to understand why I acted as I did. But let me come to the particular thing that has happened to-day. I did not think when I made my final decision to leave the church that it meant such poverty as this we are living in-- permanently. That is what I want to make clear to you. I thought there would be a temporary dip into dinginess, but that was all. There was a plan; at the time it seemed a right and reasonable plan; for setting up a chapel in London, a very plain and simple undenominational chapel, for the simple preaching of the world kingdom of God. There was some one who seemed prepared to meet all the immediate demands for such a chapel."

"Was it Lady Sunderbund?" asked Clementina.

Scrope was pulled up abruptly. "Yes," he said. "It seemed at first a quite hopeful project."

"We'd have hated that," said Clementina, with a glance as if for assent, at her mother. "We should all have hated that."

"Anyhow it has fallen through."

"We don't mind that," said Clementina, and Daphne echoed her words.

"I don't see that there is any necessity to import this note of --hostility to Lady Sunderbund into this matter." He addressed

himself rather more definitely to Lady Ella. "She's a woman of a very extraordinary character, highly emotional, energetic, generous to an extraordinary extent...."

Daphne made a little noise like a comment.

A faint acerbity in her father's voice responded.

"Anyhow you make a mistake if you think that the personality of Lady Sunderbund has very much to do with this thing now. Her quality may have brought out certain aspects of the situation rather more sharply than they might have been brought out under other circumstances, but if this chapel enterprise had been suggested by quite a different sort of person, by a man, or by a committee, in the end I think I should have come to the same conclusion. Leave Lady Sunderbund out. Any chapel was impossible. It is just this specialization that has been the trouble with religion. It is just this tendency to make it the business of a special sort of man, in a special sort of building, on a special day--Every man, every building, every day belongs equally to God. That is my conviction. I think that the only possible existing sort of religions meeting is something after the fashion of the Quaker meeting. In that there is no professional religious man at all; not a trace of the sacrifices to the ancient gods.... And no room for a professional religions man...." He felt his argument did a little escape him. He snatched, "That is what I want to make clear to you. God is not a speciality; he is a universal interest."

He stopped. Both Daphne and Clementina seemed disposed to say something and did not say anything.

Miriam was the first to speak. "Daddy," she said, "I know I'm stupid. But are we still Christians?"

"I want you to think for yourselves."

"But I mean," said Miriam, "are we--something like Quakers--a sort of very broad Christians?"

"You are what you choose to be. If you want to keep in the church, then you must keep in the church. If you feel that the Christian doctrine is alive, then it is alive so far as you are concerned."

"But the creeds?" asked Clementina.

He shook his head. "So far as Christianity is defined by its creeds, I am not a Christian. If we are going to call any sort of religious feeling that has a respect for Jesus, Christianity, then no doubt I am a Christian. But so was Mohammed at that rate. Let me tell you what I believe. I believe in God, I believe in the immediate presence of God in every human life, I believe that our lives have to serve the Kingdom of God...."

"That practically is what Mr. Chasters calls 'The Core of Truth in Christianity.'"

"You have been reading him?"

"Eleanor lent me the book. But Mr. Chasters keeps his living."

"I am not Chasters," said Scrope stiffly, and then relenting: "What he does may be right for him. But I could not do as he does."

Lady Ella had said no word for some time.

"I would be ashamed," she said quietly, "if you had not done as you have done. I don't mind--The girls don't mind--all this...."

Not when we understand--as we do now.

That was the limit of her eloquence.

"Not now that we understand, Daddy," said Clementina, and a faint flavour of Lady Sunderbund seemed to pass and vanish.

There was a queer little pause. He stood rather distressed and perplexed, because the talk had not gone quite as he had intended it to go. It had deteriorated towards personal issues. Phoebe broke the awkwardness by jumping up and coming to her father. "Dear Daddy," she said, and kissed him.

"We didn't understand properly," said Clementina, in the tone of one who explains away much--that had never been spoken....

"Daddy," said Miriam with an inspiration, "may I play something to you presently?"

"But the fire!" interjected Lady Ella, disposing of that idea.

"I want you to know, all of you, the faith I have," he said.

Daphne had remained seated at the table.

"Are we never to go to church again?" she asked, as if at a loss.

(17)

Scrope went back into his little study. He felt shy and awkward with his daughters now. He felt it would be difficult to get back to usualness with them. To-night it would be impossible. To-morrow he must come down to breakfast as though their talk had

never occurred.... In his rehearsal of this deliverance during his walk home he had spoken much more plainly of his sense of the coming of God to rule the world and end the long age of the warring nations and competing traders, and he had intended to speak with equal plainness of the passionate subordination of the individual life to this great common purpose of God and man, an aspect he had scarcely mentioned at all. But in that little room, in the presence of those dear familiar people, those great horizons of life had vanished. The room with its folding doors had fixed the scale. The wallpaper had smothered the Kingdom of God; he had been, he felt, domestic; it had been an after-supper talk. He had been put out, too, by the mention of Lady Sunderbund and the case of Chasters....

In his study he consoled himself for this diminution of his intention. It had taken him five years, he reflected, to get to his present real sense of God's presence and to his personal subordination to God's purpose. It had been a little absurd, he perceived, to expect these girls to leap at once to a complete understanding of the halting hints, the allusive indications of the thoughts that now possessed his soul. He tried like some maiden speaker to recall exactly what it was he had said and what it was he had forgotten to say.... This was merely a beginning, merely a beginning.

After the girls had gone to bed, Lady Ella came to him and she was glowing and tender; she was in love again as she had not been since the shadow had first fallen between them. "I was so glad you spoke to them," she said. "They had been puzzled. But they are dear loyal girls."

He tried to tell her rather more plainly what he felt about the whole question of religion in their lives, but eloquence had departed from him.

"You see, Ella, life cannot get out of tragedy--and sordid tragedy--until we bring about the Kingdom of God. It's no unreality that has made me come out of the church."

"No, dear. No," she said soothingly and reassuringly. "With all these mere boys going to the most dreadful deaths in the trenches, with death, hardship and separation running amok in the world--"

"One has to do something," she agreed.

"I know, dear," he said, "that all this year of doubt and change has been a dreadful year for you."

"It was stupid of me," she said, "but I have been so unhappy. It's over now--but I was wretched. And there was nothing I could say.... I prayed.... It isn't the poverty I feared ever, but the disgrace. Now--I'm happy. I'm happy again.

"But how far do you come with me?"

"I'm with you."

"But," he said, "you are still a churchwoman?"

"I don't know," she said. "I don't mind."

He stared at her.

"But I thought always that was what hurt you most, my breach with the church."

"Things are so different now," she said.

Her heart dissolved within her into tender possessiveness.

There came flooding into her mind the old phrases of an ancient story: "Whither thou goest I will go... thy people shall be my people and thy God my God.... The Lord do so to me and more also if aught but death part thee and me."

Just those words would Lady Ella have said to her husband now, but she was capable of no such rhetoric.

"Whither thou goest," she whispered almost inaudibly, and she could get no further. "My dear," she said.

(18)

At two o'clock the next morning Scrope was still up. He was sitting over the snoring gas fire in his study. He did not want to go to bed. His mind was too excited, he knew, for any hope of sleep. In the last twelve hours, since he had gone out across the park to his momentous talk with Lady Sunderbund, it seemed to him that his life had passed through its cardinal crisis and come to its crown and decision. The spiritual voyage that had begun five years ago amidst a stormy succession of theological nightmares had reached harbour at last. He was established now in the sure conviction of God's reality, and of his advent to unify the lives of men and to save mankind. Some unobserved process in his mind had perfected that conviction, behind the cloudy veil of his vacillations and moods. Surely that work was finished now, and the day's experience had drawn the veil and discovered God established for ever.

He contrasted this simple and overruling knowledge of God as the supreme fact in a practical world with that vague and ineffective subject for sentiment who had been the "God" of his Anglican days. Some theologian once spoke of God as "the friend behind phenomena"; that Anglican deity had been rather a vague

flummery behind court and society, wealth, "respectability," and the comfortable life. And even while he had lived in lipservice to that complaisant compromise, this true God had been here, this God he now certainly professed, waiting for his allegiance, waiting to take up the kingship of this distraught and bloodstained earth. The finding of God is but the stripping of bandages from the eyes. Seek and ye shall find....

He whispered four words very softly: "The Kingdom of God!"

He was quite sure he had that now, quite sure.

The Kingdom of God!

That now was the form into which all his life must fall. He recalled his vision of the silver sphere and of ten thousand diverse minds about the world all making their ways to the same one conclusion. Here at last was a king and emperor for mankind for whom one need have neither contempt nor resentment; here was an aim for which man might forge the steel and wield the scalpel, write and paint and till and teach. Upon this conception he must model all his life. Upon this basis he must found friendships and co-operations. All the great religions, Christianity, Islam, in the days of their power and honesty, had proclaimed the advent of this kingdom of God. It had been their common inspiration. A religion surrenders when it abandons the promise of its Millennium. He had recovered that ancient and immortal hope. All men must achieve it, and with their achievement the rule of God begins. He muttered his faith. It made it more definite to put it into words and utter it. "It comes. It surely comes. To-morrow I begin. I will do no work that goes not Godward. Always now it shall be the truth as near as I can put it. Always now it shall be the service of the commonweal as well as I can do it. I will live for the ending of all false kingship and priestcraft, for the eternal growth of the spirit of man...."

He was, he knew clearly, only one common soldier in a great army that was finding its way to enlistment round and about the earth. He was not alone. While the kings of this world fought for dominion these others gathered and found themselves and one another, these others of the faith that grows plain, these men who have resolved to end the bloodstained chronicles of the Dynasts and the miseries of a world that trades in life, for ever. They were many men, speaking divers tongues. He was but one who obeyed the worldwide impulse. He could smile at the artless vanity that had blinded him to the import of his earlier visions, that had made him imagine himself a sole discoverer, a new Prophet, that had brought him so near to founding a new sect. Every soldier in the new host was a recruiting sergeant according to his opportunity.... And none was leader. Only God was leader....

"The achievement of the Kingdom of God;" this was his calling. Henceforth this was his business in life....

For a time he indulged in vague dreams of that kingdom of God on earth of which he would be one of the makers; it was a dream of a shadowy splendour of cities, of great scientific achievements, of a universal beauty, of beautiful people living in the light of God, of a splendid adventure, thrusting out at last among the stars. But neither his natural bent nor his mental training inclined him to mechanical or administrative explicitness. Much more was his dream a vision of men inwardly ennobled and united in spirit. He saw history growing reasonable and life visibly noble as mankind realized the divine aim. All the outward peace and order, the joy of physical existence finely conceived, the mounting power and widening aim were but the expression and verification of the growth of God within. Then we would bear children for finer ends than the blood and mud of battlefields. Life would tower up like a great flame. By faith we

reached forward to that. The vision grew more splendid as it grew more metaphorical. And the price one paid for that; one gave sham dignities, false honour, a Levitical righteousness, immediate peace, one bartered kings and churches for God.... He looked at the mean, poverty-struck room, he marked the dinginess and tawdriness of its detail and all the sordid evidences of ungracious bargaining and grudging service in its appointments. For all his life now he would have to live in such rooms. He who had been one of the lucky ones.... Well, men were living in dug-outs and dying gaily in muddy trenches, they had given limbs and lives, eyes and the joy of movement, prosperity and pride, for a smaller cause and a feebler assurance than this that he had found....

(19)

Presently his thoughts were brought back to his family by the sounds of Eleanor's return. He heard her key in the outer door; he heard her move about in the hall and then slip lightly up to bed. He did not go out to speak to her, and she did not note the light under his door.

He would talk to her later when this discovery of her own emotions no longer dominated her mind. He recalled her departing figure and how she had walked, touching and looking up to her young mate, and he a little leaning to her....

"God bless them and save them," he said....

He thought of her sisters. They had said but little to his clumsy explanations. He thought of the years and experience that they must needs pass through before they could think the fulness of his present thoughts, and so he tempered his disappointment. They were a gallant group, he felt. He had to thank Ella and good

fortune that so they were. There was Clementina with her odd quick combatant sharpness, a harder being than Eleanor, but nevertheless a finespirited and even more independent. There was Miriam, indefatigably kind. Phoebe too had a real passion of the intellect and Daphne an innate disposition to service. But it was strange how they had taken his proclamation of a conclusive breach with the church as though it was a command they must, at least outwardly, obey. He had expected them to be more deeply shocked; he had thought he would have to argue against objections and convert them to his views. Their acquiescence was strange. They were content he should think all this great issue out and give his results to them. And his wife, well as he knew her, had surprised him. He thought of her words: "Whither thou goest--"

He was dissatisfied with this unconditional agreement. Why could not his wife meet God as he had met God? Why must Miriam put the fantastic question--as though it was not for her to decide: "Are we still Christians?" And pursuing this thought, why couldn't Lady Sunderbund set up in religion for herself without going about the world seeking for a priest and prophet. Were women Undines who must get their souls from mortal men? And who was it tempted men to set themselves up as priests? It was the wife, the disciple, the lover, who was the last, the most fatal pitfall on the way to God.

He began to pray, still sitting as he prayed.

"Oh God!" he prayed. "Thou who has shown thyself to me, let me never forget thee again. Save me from forgetfulness. And show thyself to those I love; show thyself to all mankind. Use me, O God, use me; but keep my soul alive. Save me from the presumption of the trusted servant; save me from the vanity of authority...."

"And let thy light shine upon all those who are so dear to me.... Save them from me. Take their dear loyalty...."

He paused. A flushed, childishly miserable face that stared indignantly through glittering tears, rose before his eyes. He forgot that he had been addressing God.

"How can I help you, you silly thing?" he said. "I would give my own soul to know that God had given his peace to you. I could not do as you wished. And I have hurt you!... You hurt yourself.... But all the time you would have hampered me and tempted me--and wasted yourself. It was impossible.... And yet you are so fine!"

He was struck by another aspect.

"Ella was happy--partly because Lady Sunderbund was hurt and left desolated...."

"Both of them are still living upon nothings. Living for nothings. A phantom way of living...."

He stared blankly at the humming blue gas jets amidst the incandescent asbestos for a space.

"Make them understand," he pleaded, as though he spoke confidentially of some desirable and reasonable thing to a friend who sat beside him. "You see it is so hard for them until they understand. It is easy enough when one understands. Easy--" He reflected for some moments--" It is as if they could not exist - - except in relationship to other definite people. I want them to exist--as now I exist--in relationship to God. Knowing God...."

But now he was talking to himself again.

"So far as one can know God," he said presently.

For a while he remained frowning at the fire. Then he bent forward, turned out the gas, arose with the air of a man who relinquishes a difficult task. "One is limited," he said. "All one's ideas must fall within one's limitations. Faith is a sort of tour de force. A feat of the imagination. For such things as we are. Naturally--naturally.... One perceives it clearly only in rare moments.... That alters nothing...."

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THE PASSING OF THE EFFIGY

1

One of the minor peculiarities of this unprecedented war is the Tour of the Front. After some months of suppressed information--in which even the war correspondent was discouraged to the point of elimination--it was discovered on both sides that this was a struggle in which Opinion was playing a larger and more important part than it had ever done before. This wild spreading weed was perhaps of decisive importance; the Germans at any rate were attempting to make it a cultivated flower. There was Opinion flowering away at home, feeding rankly on rumour; Opinion in neutral countries; Opinion getting into great tangles of misunderstanding and incorrect valuation between the Allies. The confidence and courage of the enemy; the amiability and assistance of the neutral; the zeal, sacrifice, and serenity of the home population; all were affected. The German cultivation of opinion began long before the war; it is still the most systematic and, because of the psychological ineptitude of the Germans, it is probably the clumsiest. The French /Maison de la Presse/ is certainly the best organisation in existence for making things clear, counteracting hostile suggestion, the British official organisations are comparatively ineffective; but what is lacking officially is very largely made up for by the good will and generous efforts of the English and American press. An interesting monograph might be written upon these various attempts of the belligerents to get themselves and their proceedings explained.

Because there is perceptible in these developments, quite over and above the desire to influence opinion, a very real effort to

get things explained. It is the most interesting and curious--one might almost write touching--feature of these organisations that they do not constitute a positive and defined propaganda such as the Germans maintain. The German propaganda is simple, because its ends are simple; assertions of the moral elevation and loveliness of Germany; of the insuperable excellences of German Kultur, the Kaiser, and Crown Prince, and so forth; abuse of the "treacherous" English who allied themselves with the "degenerate" French and the "barbaric" Russians; nonsense about "the freedom of the seas"--the emptiest phrase in history--childish attempts to sow suspicion between the Allies, and still more childish attempts to induce neutrals and simple-minded pacifists of allied nationality to save the face of Germany by initiating peace negotiations. But apart from their steady record and reminder of German brutalities and German aggression, the press organisations of the Allies have none of this definiteness in their task. The aim of the national intelligence in each of the allied countries is not to exalt one's own nation and confuse and divide the enemy, but to get a real understanding with the peoples and spirits of a number of different nations, an understanding that will increase and become a fruitful and permanent understanding between the allied peoples. Neither the English, the Russians, the Italians, nor the French, to name only the bigger European allies, are concerned in setting up a legend, as the Germans are concerned in setting up a legend of themselves to impose upon mankind. They are reality dealers in this war, and the Germans are effigy mongers. Practically the Allies are saying each to one another, "Pray come to me and see for yourself that I am very much the human stuff that you are. Come and see that I am doing my best--and I think that is not so very bad a best...." And with that is something else still more subtle, something rather in the form of, "And please tell me what you think of me--and all this."

So we have this curious byplay of the war, and one day I find Mr.

Nabokoff, the editor of the *Retch*, and Count Alexy Tolstoy, that writer of delicate short stories, and Mr. Chukovsky, the subtle critic, calling in upon me after braving the wintry seas to see the British fleet; M. Joseph Reinach follows them presently upon the same errand; and then appear photographs of Mr. Arnold Bennett wading in the trenches of Flanders, Mr. Noyes becomes discreetly indiscreet about what he has seen among the submarines, and Mr. Hugh Walpole catches things from Mr. Stephen Graham in the Dark Forest of Russia. All this is quite over and above such writing of facts at first hand as Mr. Patrick McGill and a dozen other real experiencing soldiers--not to mention the soldiers' letters Mr. James Milne has collected, or the unforgettable and immortal *Prisoner of War* of Mr. Arthur Green--or such admirable war correspondents' work as Mr. Philip Gibbs or Mr. Washburne has done. Some of us writers--I can answer for one--have made our Tour of the Fronts with a very understandable diffidence. For my own part I did not want to go. I evaded a suggestion that I should go in 1915. I travel badly, I speak French and Italian with incredible atrociousness, and am an extreme Pacifist. I hate soldiering. And also I did not want to write anything "under instruction". It is largely owing to a certain stiffness in the composition of General Delme-Radcliffe is resolved that Italy shall not feel neglected by the refusal of the invitation from the Commando Supremo by anyone who from the perspective of Italy may seem to be a representative of British opinion. If Herbert Spencer had been alive General Radcliffe would have certainly made him come, travelling-hammock, ear clips and all--and I am not above confessing that I wish that Herbert Spencer was alive--for this purpose. I found Udine warm and gay with memories of Mr. Belloc, Lord Northcliffe, Mr. Sidney Low, Colonel Repington and Dr. Conan Doyle, and anticipating the arrival of Mr. Harold Cox. So we pass, mostly in automobiles that bump tremendously over war roads, a cloud of witnesses each testifying after his manner. Whatever else has happened, we have all been

photographed with invincible patience and resolution under the direction of Colonel Barberich in a sunny little court in Udine.

My own manner of testifying must be to tell what I have seen and what I have thought during this extraordinary experience. It has been my natural disposition to see this war as something purposeful and epic, as it is great, as an epoch, as "the War that will end War"--but of that last, more anon. I do not think I am alone in this inclination to a dramatic and logical interpretation. The caricatures in the French shops show civilisation (and particularly Marianne) in conflict with a huge and hugely wicked Hindenburg Ogre. Well, I come back from this tour with something not so simple as that. If I were to be tied down to one word for my impression of this war, I should say that this war is /Queer./ It is not like anything in a really waking world, but like something in a dream. It hasn't exactly that clearness of light against darkness or of good against ill. But it has the quality of wholesome instinct struggling under a nightmare. The world is not really awake. This vague appeal for explanations to all sorts of people, this desire to exhibit the business, to get something in the way of elucidation at present missing, is extraordinarily suggestive of the efforts of the mind to wake up that will sometimes occur at a deep crisis. My memory of this tour I have just made is full of puzzled-looking men. I have seen thousands of /poilus/ sitting about in cafes, by the roadside, in tents, in trenches, thoughtful. I have seen Alpini sitting restfully and staring with speculative eyes across the mountain gulfs towards unseen and unaccountable enemies. I have seen trainloads of wounded staring out of the ambulance train windows as we passed. I have seen these dim intimations of questioning reflection in the strangest juxtapositions; in Malagasy soldiers resting for a spell among the big shells they were hoisting into trucks for the front, in a couple of khaki-clad Maoris sitting upon the step of a horse-van in Amiens station. It is always the same expression one catches,

rather weary, rather sullen, inturned. The shoulders droop. The very outline is a note of interrogation. They look up as the privileged tourist of the front, in the big automobile or the reserved compartment, with his officer or so in charge, passes-- importantly. One meets a pair of eyes that seems to say: "Perhaps /you/ understand...."

"In which case---...?"

It is a part, I think, of this disposition to investigate what makes everyone collect "specimens" of the war. Everywhere the souvenir forces itself upon the attention. The homecoming permissionaire brings with him invariably a considerable weight of broken objects, bits of shell, cartridge clips, helmets; it is a peripatetic museum. It is as if he hoped for a clue. It is almost impossible, I have found, to escape these pieces in evidence. I am the least collecting of men, but I have brought home Italian cartridges, Austrian cartridges, the fuse of an Austrian shell, a broken Italian bayonet, and a note that is worth half a franc within the confines of Amiens. But a large heavy piece of exploded shell that had been thrust very urgently upon my attention upon the Carso I contrived to lose during the temporary confusion of our party by the arrival and explosion of another prospective souvenir in our close proximity. And two really very large and almost complete specimens of some species of /Ammonites/ unknown to me, from the hills to the east of the Adige, partially wrapped in a back number of the /Corriere della Sera/, that were pressed upon me by a friendly officer, were unfortunately lost on the line between Verona and Milan through the gross negligence of a railway porter. But I doubt if they would have thrown any very conclusive light upon the war.

I avow myself an extreme Pacifist. I am against the man who first takes up the weapon. I carry my pacifism far beyond the ambiguous little group of British and foreign sentimentalists who pretend so amusingly to be socialists in the /Labour Leader/, whose conception of foreign policy is to give Germany now a peace that would be no more than a breathing time for a fresh outrage upon civilisation, and who would even make heroes of the crazy young assassins of the Dublin crime. I do not understand those people. I do not merely want to stop this war. I want to nail down war in its coffin. Modern war is an intolerable thing. It is not a thing to trifle with in this Urban District Council way, it is a thing to end forever. I have always hated it, so far that is as my imagination enabled me to realise it; and now that I have been seeing it, sometimes quite closely for a full month, I hate it more than ever. I never imagined a quarter of its waste, its boredom, its futility, its desolation. It is merely a destructive and dispersive instead of a constructive and accumulative industrialism. It is a gigantic, dusty, muddy, weedy, bloodstained silliness. It is the plain duty of every man to give his life and all that he has if by so doing he may help to end it. I hate Germany, which has thrust this experience upon mankind, as I hate some horrible infectious disease. The new war, the war on the modern level, is her invention and her crime. I perceive that on our side and in its broad outlines, this war is nothing more than a gigantic and heroic effort in sanitary engineering; an effort to remove German militarism from the life and regions it has invaded, and to bank it in and discredit and enfeeble it so that never more will it repeat its present preposterous and horrible efforts. All human affairs and all great affairs have their reservations and their complications, but that is the broad outline of the business as it has impressed itself on my mind and as I find it conceived in

the mind of the average man of the reading class among the allied peoples, and as I find it understood in the judgment of honest and intelligent neutral observers.

It is my unshakeable belief that essentially the Allies fight for a permanent world peace, that primarily they do not make war but resist war, that has reconciled me to this not very congenial experience of touring as a spectator all agog to see, through the war zones. At any rate there was never any risk of my playing Balaam and blessing the enemy. This war is tragedy and sacrifice for most of the world, for the Germans it is simply the catastrophic outcome of fifty years of elaborate intellectual foolery. Militarism, Welt Politik, and here we are! What else /could/ have happened, with Michael and his infernal War Machine in the very centre of Europe, but this tremendous disaster?

It is a disaster. It may be a necessary disaster; it may teach a lesson that could be learnt in no other way; but for all that, I insist, it remains waste, disorder, disaster.

There is a disposition, I know, in myself as well as in others, to wriggle away from this verity, to find so much good in the collapse that has come to the mad direction of Europe for the past half-century as to make it on the whole almost a beneficial thing. But at most I can find it in no greater good than the good of a nightmare that awakens the sleeper in a dangerous place to a realisation of the extreme danger of his sleep. Better had he been awake--or never there. In Venetia Captain Pirelli, whose task it was to keep me out of mischief in the war zone, was insistent upon the way in which all Venetia was being opened up by the new military roads; there has been scarcely a new road made in Venetia since Napoleon drove his straight, poplar-bordered highways through the land. M. Joseph Reinach, who was my companion upon the French front, was equally impressed by the

stirring up and exchange of ideas in the villages due to the movement of the war. Charles Lamb's story of the discovery of roast pork comes into one's head with an effect of repartee. More than ideas are exchanged in the war zone, and it is doubtful how far the sanitary precautions of the military authorities avails against a considerable propaganda of disease. A more serious argument for the good of war is that it evokes heroic qualities that it has brought out almost incredible quantities of courage, devotion, and individual romance that did not show in the suffocating peace time that preceded the war. The reckless and beautiful zeal of the women in the British and French munition factories, for example, the gaiety and fearlessness of the common soldiers everywhere; these things have always been there--like champagne sleeping in bottles in a cellar. But was there any need to throw a bomb into the cellar?

I am reminded of a story, or rather of the idea for a story that I think I must have read in that curious collection of fantasies and observations, Hawthorne's *Note Book*. It was to be the story of a man who found life dull and his circumstances altogether mediocre. He had loved his wife, but now after all she seemed to be a very ordinary human being. He had begun life with high hopes--and life was commonplace. He was to grow fretful and restless. His discontent was to lead to some action, some irrevocable action; but upon the nature of that action I do not think the *Note Book* was very clear. It was to carry him in such a manner that he was to forget his wife. Then, when it was too late, he was to see her at an upper window, stripped and firelit, a glorious thing of light and loveliness and tragic intensity....

The elementary tales of the world are very few, and Hawthorne's story and Lamb's story are, after all, only variations upon the same theme. But can we poor human beings never realise our quality without destruction?

One of the larger singularities of the great war is its failure to produce great and imposing personalities, mighty leaders, Napoleons, Caesars. I would indeed make that the essential thing in my reckoning of the war. It is a drama without a hero; without countless incidental heroes no doubt, but no star part. Even the Germans, with a national predisposition for hero-cults and living still in an atmosphere of Victorian humbug, can produce nothing better than that timber image, Hindenburg.

It is not that the war has failed to produce heroes so much as that it has produced heroism in a torrent. The great man of this war is the common man. It becomes ridiculous to pick out particular names. There are too many true stories of splendid acts in the past two years ever to be properly set down. The V.C.'s and the palms do but indicate samples. One would need an encyclopaedia, a row of volumes, of the gloriousness of human impulses. The acts of the small men in this war dwarf all the pretensions of the Great Man. Imperatively these multitudinous heroes forbid the setting up of effigies. When I was a young man I imitated Swift and posed for cynicism; I will confess that now at fifty and greatly helped by this war, I have fallen in love with mankind.

But if I had to pick out a single figure to stand for the finest quality of the Allies' war, I should I think choose the figure of General Joffre. He is something new in history. He is leadership without vulgar ambition. He is the extreme antithesis to the Imperial boomster of Berlin. He is as it were the ordinary common sense of men, incarnate. He is the antithesis of the effigy.

By great good luck I was able to see him. I was delayed in Paris on my way to Italy, and my friend Captain Millet arranged for a visit to the French front at Soissons and put me in charge of Lieutenant de Tessin, whom I had met in England studying British social questions long before this war. Afterwards Lieutenant de Tessin took me to the great hotel--it still proclaims "/Restaurant/" in big black letters on the garden wall--which shelters the General Headquarters of France, and here I was able to see and talk to Generals Pelle and Castelnau as well as to General Joffre. They are three very remarkable and very different men. They have at least one thing in common; it is clear that not one of them has spent ten minutes in all his life in thinking of himself as a Personage or Great Man. They all have the effect of being active and able men doing an extremely complicated and difficult but extremely interesting job to the very best of their ability. With me they had all one quality in common. They thought I was interested in what they were doing, and they were quite prepared to treat me as an intelligent man of a different sort, and to show me as much as I could understand....

Let me confess that de Tessin had had to persuade me to go to Headquarters. Partly that was because I didn't want to use up even ten minutes of the time of the French commanders, but much more was it because I have a dread of Personages.

There is something about these encounters with personages--as if one was dealing with an effigy, with something tremendous put up to be seen. As one approaches they become remoter; great unsuspected crevasses are discovered. Across these gulfs one makes ineffective gestures. They do not meet you, they pose at you enormously. Sometimes there is something more terrible than dignity; there is condescension. They are affable. I had but recently had an encounter with an imported Colonial statesman, who was being advertised like a soap as the coming saviour of

England. I was curious to meet him. I wanted to talk to him about all sorts of things that would have been profoundly interesting, as for example his impressions of the Anglican bishops. But I met a hoarding. I met a thing like a mask, something surrounded by touts, that was dully trying--as we say in London--to "come it" over me. He said he had heard of me. He had read /Kipps./ I intimated that though I had written /Kipps/ I had continued to exist--but he did not see the point of that. I said certain things to him about the difference in complexity between political life in Great Britain and the colonies, that he was manifestly totally capable of understanding. But one could as soon have talked with one of the statesmen at Madame Tussaud's. An antiquated figure.

The effect of these French commanders upon me was quite different from my encounter with that last belated adventurer in the effigy line. I felt indeed that I was a rather idle and flimsy person coming into the presence of a tremendously compact and busy person, but I had none of that unpleasant sensation of a conventional role, of being expected to play the minute worshipper in the presence of the Great Image. I was so moved by the common humanity of them all that in each case I broke away from the discreet interpretations of de Tessin and talked to them directly in the strange dialect which I have inadvertently made for myself out of French, a disemvowelled speech of epicene substantives and verbs of incalculable moods and temperaments, "/Entente Cordiale./" They talked back as if we had met in a club. General Pelle pulled my leg very gaily with some quotations from an article I had written upon the conclusion of the war. I think he found my accent and my idioms very refreshing. I had committed myself to a statement that Bloch has been justified in his theory that under modern conditions the defensive wins. There were excellent reasons, and General Pelle pointed them out, for doubting the applicability of this to the present war.

Both he and General Castelnau were anxious that I should see a French offensive sector as well as Soissons. Then I should understand. And since then I have returned from Italy and I have seen and I do understand. The Allied offensive was winning; that is to say, it was inflicting far greater losses than it experienced; it was steadily beating the spirit out of the German army and shoving it back towards Germany. Only peace can, I believe, prevent the western war ending in Germany. And it is the Frenchmen mainly who have worked out how to do it.

But of that I will write later. My present concern is with General Joffre as the antithesis of the Effigy. The effigy,

"Thou Prince of Peace,
Thou God of War,"

as Mr. Sylvester Viereck called him, prances on a great horse, wears a Wagnerian cloak, sits on thrones and talks of shining armour and "unser Gott." All Germany gloats over his Jovian domesticities; when I was last in Berlin the postcard shops were full of photographs of a sort of procession of himself and his sons, all with long straight noses and sidelong eyes. It is all dreadfully old-fashioned. General Joffre sits in a pleasant little sitting-room in a very ordinary little villa conveniently close to Headquarters. He sits among furniture that has no quality of pose at all, that is neither magnificent nor ostentatiously simple and hardy. He has dark, rather sleepy eyes under light eyelashes, eyes that glance shyly and a little askance at his interlocutor and then, as he talks, away--as if he did not want to be preoccupied by your attention. He has a broad, rather broadly modelled face, a soft voice, the sort of persuasive reasoning voice that many Scotchmen have. I had a feeling that if he were to talk English he would do so with a Scotch accent. Perhaps somewhere I have met a Scotchman of his

type. He sat sideways to his table as a man might sit for a gossip in a cafe.

He is physically a big man, and in my memory he grows bigger and bigger. He sits now in my memory in a room like the rooms that any decent people might occupy, like that vague room that is the background of so many good portraits, a great blue-coated figure with a soft voice and rather tired eyes, explaining very simply and clearly the difficulties that this vulgar imperialism of Germany, seizing upon modern science and modern appliances, has created for France and the spirit of mankind.

He talked chiefly of the strangeness of this confounded war. It was exactly like a sanitary engineer speaking of the unexpected difficulties of some particularly nasty inundation. He made little stiff horizontal gestures with his hands. First one had to build a dam and stop the rush of it, so; then one had to organise the push that would send it back. He explained the organisation of the push. They had got an organisation now that was working out most satisfactorily. Had I seen a sector? I had seen the sector of Soissons. Yes, but that was not now an offensive sector. I must see an offensive sector; see the whole method. Lieutenant de Tessin must see that that was arranged....

Neither he nor his two colleagues spoke of the Germans with either hostility or humanity. Germany for them is manifestly merely an objectionable Thing. It is not a nation, not a people, but a nuisance. One has to build up this great counter-thrust bigger and stronger until they go back. The war must end in Germany. The French generals have no such delusions about German science or foresight or capacity as dominates the smart dinner chatter of England. One knows so well that detestable type of English folly, and its voice of despair: "They /plan/ everything. They foresee everything." This paralysing Germanophobia is not common among the French. The war, the

French generals said, might take--well, it certainly looked like taking longer than the winter. Next summer perhaps. Probably, if nothing unforeseen occurred, before a full year has passed the job might be done. Were any surprises in store? They didn't seem to think it was probable that the Germans had any surprises in store.... The Germans are not an inventive people; they are merely a thorough people. One never knew for certain.

Is any greater contrast possible than between so implacable, patient, reasonable--and above all things /capable/--a being as General Joffre and the rhetorician of Potsdam, with his talk of German Might, of Hammer Blows and Hacking Through? Can there be any doubt of the ultimate issue between them?

There are stories that sound pleasantly true to me about General Joffre's ambitions after the war. He is tired; then he will be very tired. He will, he declares, spend his first free summer in making a tour of the waterways of France in a barge. So I hope it may be. One imagines him as sitting quietly on the crumpled remains of the last and tawdriest of Imperial traditions, with a fishing line in the placid water and a large buff umbrella overhead, the good ordinary man who does whatever is given to him to do--as well as he can. The power that has taken the great effigy of German imperialism by the throat is something very composite and complex, but if we personify it at all it is something more like General Joffre than any other single human figure I can think of or imagine.

If I were to set a frontispiece to a book about this War I would make General Joffre the frontispiece.

As we swung back along the dusty road to Paris at a pace of fifty miles an hour and upwards, driven by a helmeted driver with an aquiline profile fit to go upon a coin, whose merits were a little flawed by a childish and dangerous ambition to run over every cat he saw upon the road, I talked to de Tessin about this big blue-coated figure of Joffre, which is not so much a figure as a great generalisation of certain hitherto rather obscured French qualities, and of the impression he had made upon me. And from that I went on to talk about the Super Man, for this encounter had suddenly crystallised out a set of realisations that had been for some time latent in my mind.

How much of what follows I said to de Tessin at the time I do not clearly remember, but this is what I had in mind.

The idea of the superman is an idea that has been developed by various people ignorant of biology and unaccustomed to biological ways of thinking. It is an obvious idea that follows in the course of half an hour or so upon one's realisation of the significance of Darwinism. If man has evolved from something different, he must now be evolving onward into something sur-human. The species in the future will be different from the species of the past. So far at least our Nietzsches and Shaws and so on went right.

But being ignorant of the elementary biological proposition that modification of a species means really a secular change in its average, they jumped to a conclusion--to which the late Lord Salisbury also jumped years ago at a very memorable British Association meeting--that a species is modified by the sudden appearance of eccentric individuals here and there in the general mass who interbreed--preferentially. Helped by a streak of antic

egotism in themselves, they conceived of the superman as a posturing personage, misunderstood by the vulgar, fantastic, wonderful. But the antic Personage, the thing I have called the Effigy, is not new but old, the oldest thing in history, the departing thing. It depends not upon the advance of the species but upon the uncritical hero-worship of the crowd. You may see the monster drawn twenty times the size of common men upon the oldest monuments of Egypt and Assyria. The true superman comes not as the tremendous personal entry of a star, but in the less dramatic form of a general increase of goodwill and skill and common sense. A species rises not by thrusting up peaks but by the brimming up as a flood does. The coming of the superman means not an epidemic of personages but the disappearance of the Personage in the universal ascent. That is the point overlooked by the megalomaniac school of Nietzsche and Shaw.

And it is the peculiarity of this war, it is the most reassuring evidence that a great increase in general ability and critical ability has been going on throughout the last century, that no isolated great personages have emerged. Never has there been so much ability, invention, inspiration, leadership; but the very abundance of good qualities has prevented our focusing upon those of any one individual. We all play our part in the realisation of God's sanity in the world, but, as the strange, dramatic end of Lord Kitchener has served to remind us, there is no single individual of all the allied nations whose death can materially affect the great destinies of this war.

In the last few years I have developed a religious belief that has become now to me as real as any commonplace fact. I think that mankind is still as it were collectively dreaming and hardly more awakened to reality than a very young child. It has these dreams that we express by the flags of nationalities and by strange loyalties and by irrational creeds and ceremonies, and its dreams at times become such nightmares as this war. But the

time draws near when mankind will awake and the dreams will fade away, and then there will be no nationality in all the world but humanity, and no kind, no emperor, nor leader but the one God of mankind. This is my faith. I am as certain of this as I was in 1900 that men would presently fly. To me it is as if it must be so.

So that to me this extraordinary refusal of the allied nations under conditions that have always hitherto produced a Great Man to produce anything of the sort, anything that can be used as an effigy and carried about for the crowd to follow, is a fact of extreme significance and encouragement. It seems to me that the twilight of the half gods must have come, that we have reached the end of the age when men needed a Personal Figure about which they could rally. The Kaiser is perhaps the last of that long series of crowned and cloaked and semi-divine personages which has included Caesar and Alexander and Napoleon the First-- and Third. In the light of the new time we see the emperor-god for the guy he is. In the August of 1914 he set himself up to be the paramount Lord of the World, and it will seem to the historian to come, who will know our dates so well and our feelings, our fatigues and efforts so little, it will seem a short period from that day to this, when the great figure already sways and staggers towards the bonfire.

5

I had the experience of meeting a contemporary king upon this journey. He was the first king I had ever met. The Potsdam figure--with perhaps some local exceptions behind the Gold Coast-- is, with its collection of uniforms and its pomps and splendours, the purest survival of the old tradition of divine monarchy now that the Emperor at Peking has followed the Shogun into the shadows. The modern type of king shows a disposition to intimate

at the outset that he cannot help it, and to justify or at any rate utilise his exceptional position by sound hard work. It is an age of working kings, with the manners of private gentlemen. The King of Italy for example is far more accessible than was the late Pierpont Morgan or the late Cecil Rhodes, and he seems to keep a smaller court.

I went to see him from Udine. He occupied a moderate-sized country villa about half an hour by automobile from headquarters. I went over with General Radcliffe; we drove through the gates of the villa past a single sentinel in an ordinary infantry uniform, up to the door of the house, and the number of guards, servants, attendants, officials, secretaries, ministers and the like that I saw in that house were--I counted very carefully--four.

Downstairs were three people, a tall soldier of the bodyguard in grey; an A.D.C., Captain Moreno, and Col. Matteoli, the minister of the household. I went upstairs to a drawing-room of much the same easy and generalised character as the one in which I had met General Joffre a few days before. I gave my hat to a second bodyguard, and as I did so a pleasantly smiling man appeared at the door of the study whom I thought at first must be some minister in attendance. I did not recognise him instantly because on the stamps and coins he is always in profile. He began to talk in excellent English about my journey, and I replied, and so talking we went into the study from which he had emerged. Then I realised I was talking to the king.

Addicted as I am to the cinematograph, in which the standard of study furniture is particularly rich and high, I found something very cooling and simple and refreshing in the sight of the king's study furniture. He sat down with me at a little useful writing table, and after asking me what I had seen in Italy and hearing what I had seen and what I was to see, he went on talking, very good talk indeed.

I suppose I did a little exceed the established tradition of courts by asking several questions and trying to get him to talk upon certain points as to which I was curious, but I perceived that he had had to carry on at least so much of the regal tradition as to control the conversation. He was, however, entirely un-posed. His talk reminded me somehow of Maurice Baring's books; it had just the same quick, positive understanding. And he had just the same detachment from the war as the French generals. He spoke of it--as one might speak of an inundation. And of its difficulties and perplexities.

Here on the Adriatic side there were political entanglements that by comparison made our western after-the-war problems plain sailing. He talked of the game of spellicans among the Balkan nationalities. How was that difficulty to be met? In Macedonia there were Turkish villages that were Christian and Bulgarians that were Moslem. There were families that changed the termination of their names from /ski/ to /off/ as Serbian or Bulgarian prevailed. I remarked that that showed a certain passion for peace, and that much of the mischief might be due to the propaganda of the great Powers. I have a prejudice against that blessed Whig "principle of nationality," but the King of Italy was not to be drawn into any statement about that. He left the question with his admission of its extreme complexity.

He went on to talk of the strange contrasts of war, of such things as the indifference of the birds to gunfire and desolation. One day on the Carso he had been near the newly captured Austrian trenches, and suddenly from amidst a scattered mass of Austrian bodies a quail had risen. that had struck him as odd, and so too had the sight of a pack of cards and a wine flask on some newly-made graves. The ordinary life was a very /obstinate/ thing....

He talked of the courage of modern men. He was astonished at the

quickness with which they came to disregard shrapnel. And they were so quietly enduring when they were wounded. He had seen a lot of the wounded, and he had expected much groaning and crying out. But unless a man is hit in the head and goes mad he does not groan or scream! They are just brave. If you ask them how they feel it is always one of two things: either they say quietly that they are very bad or else they say there is nothing the matter....

He spoke as if these were mere chance observations, but everyone tells me that nearly every day the king is at the front and often under fire. He has taken more risks in a week than the Potsdam War Lord has taken since the war began. He keeps himself acutely informed upon every aspect of the war. He was a little inclined to fatalism, he confessed. There were two stories current of two families of four sons, in each three had been killed and in each there was an attempt to put the fourth in a place of comparative safety. In one case a general took the fourth son in as an attendant and embarked upon a ship that was immediately torpedoed; in the other the fourth son was killed by accident while he was helping to carry dinner in a rest camp. From those stories we came to the question whether the uneducated Italians were more superstitious than the uneducated English; the king thought they were much less so. That struck me as a novel idea. But then he thought that English rural people believe in witches and fairies.

I have given enough of this talk to show the quality of this king of the new dispensation. It was, you see, the sort of easy talk one might hear from fine-minded people anywhere. When we had done talking he came to the door of the study with me and shook hands and went back to his desk--with that gesture of return to work which is very familiar and sympathetic to a writer, and with no gesture of regality at all.

Just to complete this impression let me repeat a pleasant story about this king and our Prince of Wales, who recently visited the Italian front. The Prince is a source of anxiety on these visits; he has a very strong and very creditable desire to share the ordinary risks of war. He is keenly interested, and unobtrusively bent upon getting as near the fighting as line as possible. But the King of Italy was firm upon keeping him out of anything more than the most incidental danger. "We don't want any historical incidents here," he said. I think that might well become an historical phrase. For the life of the Effigy is a series of historical incidents.

6

Manifestly one might continue to multiply portraits of fine people working upon this great task of breaking and ending the German aggression, the German legend, the German effigy, and the effigy business generally; the thesis being that the Allies have no effigy. One might fill a thick volume with pictures of men up the scale and down working loyally and devotedly upon the war, to make this point clear that the essential king and the essential loyalty of our side is the commonsense of mankind.

There comes into my head as a picture at the other extreme of this series, a memory of certain trenches I visited on my last day in France. They were trenches on an offensive front; they were not those architectural triumphs, those homes from home, that grow to perfection upon the less active sections of the great line. They had been first made by men who had run rapidly forward with spade and rifle, stooping as they ran, who had dropped into the craters of big shells, who had organised these chiefly at night and dug the steep ditches sideways to join up into continuous trenches. Now they were pushing forward saps into No Man's Land, linking them across, and so continually

creeping nearer to the enemy and a practicable jumping-off place for an attack. (It has been made since; the village at which I peeped was in our hands a week later.) These trenches were dug into a sort of yellowish sandy clay; the dug-outs were mere holes in the earth that fell in upon the clumsy; hardly any timber had been got up the line; a storm might flood them at any time a couple of feet deep and begin to wash the sides. Overnight they had been "strafed" and there had been a number of casualties; there were smashed rifles about and a smashed-up machine gun emplacement, and the men were dog-tired and many of them sleeping like logs, half buried in -clay. Some slept on the firing steps. As one went along one became aware ever and again of two or three pairs of clay-yellow feet sticking out of a clay hole, and peering down one saw the shapes of men like rudely modelled earthen images of soldiers, motionless in the cave.

I came round the corner upon a youngster with an intelligent face and steady eyes sitting up on the firing step, awake and thinking. We looked at one another. There are moments when mind leaps to mind. It is natural for the man in the trenches suddenly confronted by so rare a beast as a middle-aged civilian with an enquiring expression, to feel oneself something of a spectacle and something generalised. It is natural for the civilian to look rather in the vein of saying, "Well, how do you take it?" As I pushed past him we nodded slightly with an effect of mutual understanding. And we said with our nods just exactly what General Joffre had said with his horizontal gestures of the hand and what the King of Italy conveyed by his friendly manner; we said to each other that here was the trouble those Germans had brought upon us and here was the task that had to be done.

Our guide to these trenches was a short, stocky young man, a cobbler; with a rifle and a tight belt and projecting skirts and a helmet, a queer little figure that, had you seen it in a picture a year or so before the war, you would most certainly have pronounced

Chinese. He belonged to a Northumbrian battalion; it does not matter exactly which. As we returned from this front line, trudging along the winding path through the barbed wire tangles before the smashed and captured German trench that had been taken a fortnight before, I fell behind my guardian captain and had a brief conversation with this individual. He was a lad in the early twenties, weather-bit and with bloodshot eyes. He was, he told me, a miner. I asked my stock question in such cases, whether he would go back to the old work after the war. He said he would, and then added--with the events of overnight on his mind: "If A'hm looky."

Followed a little silence. Then I tried my second stock remark for such cases. One does not talk to soldiers at the front in this war of Glory or the "Empire on which the sun never sets" or "the meteor flag of England" or of King and Country or any of those fine old headline things. On the desolate path that winds about amidst the shell craters and the fragments and the red-rusted wire, with the silken shiver of passing shells in the air and the blue of the lower sky continually breaking out into eddying white puffs, it is wonderful how tawdry such panoplies of the effigy appear. We knew that we and our allies are upon a greater, graver, more fundamental business than that sort of thing now. We are very near the waking point.

"Well," I said, "it's got to be done."

"Aye," he said, easing the strap of his rifle a little; "it's got to be done."

THE WAR IN ITALY (AUGUST, 1916)

I. THE ISONZO FRONT

1

My first impressions of the Italian war centre upon Udine. So far I had had only a visit to Soissons on an exceptionally quiet day and the sound of a Zeppelin one night in Essex for all my experience of actual warfare. But my bedroom at the British mission in Udine roused perhaps extravagant expectations. There were holes in the plaster ceiling and wall, betraying splintered laths, holes, that had been caused by a bomb that had burst and killed several people in the little square outside. Such excitements seem to be things of the past now in Udine. Udine keeps itself dark nowadays, and the Austrian sea-planes, which come raiding the Italian coast country at night very much in the same aimless, casually malignant way in which the Zeppelins raid England, apparently because there is nothing else for them to do, find it easier to locate Venice.

My earlier rides in Venetia began always with the level roads of the plain, roads frequently edged by watercourses, with plentiful willows beside the road, vines and fields of Indian corn and suchlike lush crops. Always quite soon one came to some old Austrian boundary posts; almost everywhere the Italians are fighting upon what is technically enemy territory, but nowhere does it seem a whit less Italian than the plain of Lombardy. When at last I motored away from Udine to the northern mountain front I passed through Campo-Formio and saw the white-faced inn at which Napoleon dismembered the ancient republic of Venice and bartered away this essential part of Italy into foreign control. It just gravitates back now--as though there had been no

Napoleon.

And upon the roads and beside them was the enormous equipment of a modern army advancing. Everywhere I saw new roads being made, railways pushed up, vast store dumps, hospitals; everywhere the villages swarmed with grey soldiers; everywhere our automobile was threading its way and taking astonishing risks among interminable processions of motor lorries, strings of ambulances or of mule carts, waggons with timber, waggons with wire, waggons with men's gear, waggons with casks, waggons discreetly veiled, columns of infantry, cavalry, batteries /en route./ Every waggon that goes up full comes back empty, and many wounded were coming down and prisoners and troops returning to rest. Goritzia had been taken a week or so before my arrival; the Isonzo had been crossed and the Austrians driven back across the Carso for several miles; all the resources of Italy seemed to be crowding up to make good these gains and gather strength for the next thrust. The roads under all this traffic remained wonderful; gangs of men were everywhere repairing the first onset of wear, and Italy is the most fortunate land in the world for road metal; her mountains are solid road metal, and in this Venetian plain you need but to scrape through a yard of soil to find gravel.

One travelled through a choking dust under the blue sky, and above the steady incessant dusty succession of lorry, lorry, lorry, lorry that passed one by, one saw, looking up, the tree tops, house roofs, or the solid Venetian campanile of this or that wayside village. Once as we were coming out of the great grey portals of that beautiful old relic of a former school of fortification, Palmanova, the traffic became suddenly bright yellow, and for a kilometre or so we were passing nothing but Sicilian mule carts loaded with hay. These carts seem as strange among the grey shapes of modern war transport as a Chinese mandarin in painted silk would be. They are the most individual of things, all two-wheeled, all bright yellow and the same size

it is true, but upon each there are they gayest of little paintings, such paintings as one sees in England at times upon an ice-cream barrow. Sometimes the picture will present a scriptural subject, sometimes a scene of opera, sometimes a dream landscape or a trophy of fruits or flowers, and the harness--now much out of repair--is studded with brass. Again and again I have passed strings of these gay carts; all Sicily must be swept of them.

Through the dust I came to Aquileia, which is now an old cathedral, built upon the remains of a very early basilica, standing in a space in a scattered village. But across this dusty space there was carried the head of the upstart Maximinus who murdered Alexander Severus, and later Aquileia brought Attila near to despair. Our party alighted; we inspected a very old mosaic floor which has been uncovered since the Austrian retreat. The Austrian priests have gone too, and their Italian successors are already tracing out a score of Roman traces that it was the Austrian custom to minimise. Captain Pirelli refreshed my historical memories; it was rather like leaving a card on Gibbon /en route/ for contemporary history.

By devious routes I went on to certain batteries of big guns which had played their part in hammering the Austrian left above Monfalcone across an arm of the Adriatic, and which were now under orders to shift and move up closer. The battery was the most unobtrusive of batteries; its one desire seemed to be to appear a simple piece of woodland in the eye of God and the aeroplane. I went about the network of railways and paths under the trees that a modern battery requires, and came presently upon a great gun that even at the first glance seemed a little less carefully hidden than its fellows. Then I saw that it was a most ingenious dummy made of a tree and logs and so forth. It was in the emplacement of a real gun that had been located; it had its painted sandbags about it just the same, and it felt itself so

entirely a part of the battery that whenever its companions fired it burnt a flash and kicked up a dust. It was an excellent example of the great art of camouflage which this war has developed.

I went on through the wood to a shady observation post high in a tree, into which I clambered with my guide. I was able from this position to get a very good idea of the lie of the Italian eastern front. I was in the delta of the Isonzo. Directly in front of me were some marshes and the extreme tip of the Adriatic Sea, at the head of which was Monfalcone, now in Italian hands. Behind Monfalcone ran the red ridge of the Carso, of which the Italians had just captured the eastern half. Behind this again rose the mountains to the east of the Isonzo which the Austrians still held. The Isonzo came towards me from out of the mountains, in a great westward curve. Fifteen or sixteen miles away where it emerged from the mountains lay the pleasant and prosperous town of Goritzia, and at the westward point of the great curve was Sagrado with its broken bridge. The battle of Goritzia was really not fought at Goritzia at all. What happened was the brilliant and bloody storming of Mounts Podgora and Sabotino on the western side of the river above Goritzia, and simultaneously a crossing at Sagrado below Goritzia and a magnificent rush up the plateau and across the plateau of the Carso. Goritzia itself was not organised for defence, and the Austrians were so surprised by the rapid storm of the mountains to the north-west of it and of the Carso to the south-east, that they made no fight in the town itself.

As a consequence when I visited it I found it very little injured--compared, that is, with such other towns as have been fought through. Here and there the front of a house has been knocked in by an Austrian shell, or a lamp-post prostrated. But the road bridge had suffered a good deal; its iron parapet was twisted about by shell bursts and interwoven with young trees and big

boughs designed to screen the passer-by from the observation of the Austrian gunners upon Monte Santo. Here and there were huge holes through which one could look down upon the blue trickles of water in the stony river bed far below. The driver of our automobile displayed what seemed to me an extreme confidence in the margins of these gaps, but his confidence was justified. At Sagrado the bridge had been much more completely demolished; no effort had been made to restore the horizontal roadway, but one crossed by a sort of timber switchback that followed the ups and downs of the ruins.

It is not in these places that one must look for the real destruction of modern war. The real fight on the left of Goritzia went through the village of Lucinico up the hill of Podgora. Lucinico is nothing more than a heap of grey stones; except for a bit of the church wall and the gable end of a house one cannot even speak of it as ruins. But in one place among the rubble I saw the splintered top and a leg of a grand piano. Podgora hill, which was no doubt once neatly terraced and cultivated, is like a scrap of landscape from some airless, treeless planet. Still more desolate was the scene upon the Carso to the right (south) of Goritzia. Both San Martino and Doberdo are destroyed beyond the limits of ruination. The Carso itself is a waterless upland with but a few bushy trees; it must always have been a desolate region, but now it is an indescribable wilderness of shell craters, smashed-up Austrian trenches, splintered timber, old iron, rags, and that rusty thorny vileness of man's invention, worse than all the thorns and thickets of nature, barbed wire. There are no dead visible; the wounded have been cleared away; but about the trenches and particularly near some of the dug-outs there was a faint repulsive smell....

Yet into this wilderness the Italians are now thrusting a sort of order. The German is a wonderful worker, they say on the Anglo-

French front that he makes his trenches by way of resting, but I doubt if he can touch the Italian at certain forms of toil. All the way up to San Martino and beyond, swarms of workmen were making one of those carefully graded roads that the Italians make better than any other people. Other swarms were laying water-pipes. For upon the Carso there are neither roads nor water, and before the Italians can thrust farther both must be brought up to the front.

As we approached San Martino an Austrian aeroplane made its presence felt overhead by dropping a bomb among the tents of some workmen, in a little scrubby wood on the hillside near at hand. One heard the report and turned to see the fragments flying and the dust. Probably they got someone. And then, after a little pause, the encampment began to spew out men; here, there and everywhere they appeared among the tents, running like rabbits at evening-time, down the hill. Soon after and probably in connection with this signal, Austrian shells began to come over. They do not use shrapnel because the rocky soil of Italy makes that unnecessary. They fire a sort of shell that goes bang and releases a cloud of smoke overhead, and then drops a parcel of high explosive that bursts on the ground. The ground leaps into red dust and smoke. But these things are now to be seen on the cinema. Forthwith the men working on the road about us begin to down tools and make for the shelter trenches, a long procession going at a steady but resolute walk. Then like a blow in the chest came the bang of a big Italian gun somewhere close at hand....

Along about four thousand miles of the various fronts this sort of thing was going on that morning....

This Carso front is the practicable offensive front of Italy. From the left wing on the Isonzo along the Alpine boundary round to the Swiss boundary there is mountain warfare like nothing else in the world; it is warfare that pushes the boundary backward, but it is mountain warfare that will not, for so long a period that the war will be over first, hold out any hopeful prospects of offensive movements on a large scale against Austria or Germany. It is a short distance as the crow flies from Rovereto to Munich, but not as the big gun travels. The Italians, therefore, as their contribution to the common effort, are thrusting rather eastwardly towards the line of the Julian Alps through Carinthia and Carniola. From my observation post in the tree near Monfalcone I saw Trieste away along the coast to my right. It looked scarcely as distant as Folkestone from Dungeness. The Italian advanced line is indeed scarcely ten miles from Trieste. But the Italians are not, I think, going to Trieste just yet. That is not the real game now. They are playing loyally with the Allies for the complete defeat of the Central Powers, and that is to be achieved striking home into Austria. Meanwhile there is no sense in knocking Trieste to pieces, or using Italians instead of Austrian soldiers to garrison it.

II. THE MOUNTAIN WAR

1

The mountain warfare of Italy is extraordinarily unlike that upon any other front. From the Isonzo to the Swiss frontier we are dealing with high mountains, cut by deep valleys between which there is usually no practicable lateral communication. Each advance must have the nature of an unsupported shove along a narrow channel, until the whole mountain system, that is, is won,

and the attack can begin to deploy in front of the passes. Geographically Austria has the advantage. She had the gentler slope of the mountain chains while Italy has the steep side, and the foresight of old treaties has given her deep bites into what is naturally Italian territory; she is far nearer the Italian plain than Italy is near any practicable fighting ground for large forces; particularly is this the case in the region of the Adige valley and Lake Garda.

The legitimate war, so to speak, in this region is a mountaineering war. The typical position is roughly as follows. The Austrians occupy valley A which opens northward; the Italians occupy valley B which opens southward. The fight is for the crest between A and B. The side that wins that crest gains the power of looking down into, firing into and outflanking the positions of the enemy valley. In most cases it is the Italians now who are pressing, and if the reader will examine a map of the front and compare it with the official reports he will soon realise that almost everywhere the Italians are up to the head of the southward valleys and working over the crests so as to press down upon the Austrian valleys. But in the Trentino the Austrians are still well over the crest on the southward slopes. When I was in Italy they still held Roverto.

Now it cannot be said that under modern conditions mountains favour either the offensive or the defensive. But they certainly make operations far more deliberate than upon a level. An engineered road or railway in an Alpine valley is the most vulnerable of things; its curves and viaducts may be practically demolished by shell fire or swept by shrapnel, although you hold the entire valley except for one vantage point. All the mountains round about a valley must be won before that valley is safe for the transport of an advance. But on the other hand a surprise capture of some single mountain crest and the hoisting of one gun into position there may block the retreat of guns and

material from a great series of positions. Mountain surfaces are extraordinarily various and subtle. You may understand Picardy on a map, but mountain warfare is three-dimensional. A struggle may go on for weeks or months consisting of apparently separate and incidental skirmishes, and then suddenly a whole valley organisation may crumble away in retreat or disaster. Italy is gnawing into the Trentino day by day, and particularly around by her right wing. At no time I shall be surprised to see a sudden lunge forward on that front, and hear a tale of guns and prisoners. This will not mean that she has made a sudden attack, but that some system of Austrian positions has collapsed under her continual pressure.

Such briefly is the /idea/ of mountain struggle. Its realities, I should imagine, are among the strangest and most picturesque in all this tremendous world conflict. I know nothing of the war in the east, of course, but there are things here that must be hard to beat. Happily they will soon get justice done to them by an abler pen than mine. I hear that Kipling is to follow me upon this ground; nothing can be imagined more congenial to his extraordinary power of vivid rendering than this struggle against cliffs, avalanches, frost and the Austrian.

To go the Italian round needs, among other things, a good head. Everywhere it has been necessary to make roads where hitherto there have been only mule tracks or no tracks at all; the roads are often still in the making, and the automobile of the war tourist skirts precipices and takes hairpin bends upon tracks of loose metal not an inch too broad for the operation, or it floats for a moment over the dizzy edge while a train of mule transport blunders by. The unruly imagination of man's heart (which is "only evil continually") speculates upon what would be the consequences of one good bump from the wheel of a mule cart. Down below, the trees that one sees through a wisp of cloud look

far too small and spiky and scattered to hold out much hope for a fallen man of letters. And at the high positions they are too used to the vertical life to understand the secret feelings of the visitor from the horizontal. General Bompinani, whose writings are well known to all English students of military matters, showed me the Gibraltar he is making of a great mountain system east of the Adige.

"Let me show you," he said, and flung himself on to the edge of the precipice into exactly the position of a lady riding side-saddle. "You will find it more comfortable to sit down."

But anxious as I am abroad not to discredit my country by unseemly exhibitions I felt unequal to such gymnastics without a proper rehearsal at a lower level. I seated myself carefully at a yard (perhaps it was a couple of yards) from the edge, advanced on my trousers without dignity to the verge, and so with an effort thrust my legs over to dangle in the crystalline air.

"That," proceeded General Bompiani, pointing with a giddy flourish of his riding whip, "is Monte Tomba."

I swayed and half-extended my hand towards him. But he was still there--sitting, so to speak, on the half of himself.... I was astonished that he did not disappear abruptly during his exposition....

2

The fighting man in the Dolomites has been perhaps the most wonderful of all these separate campaigns. I went up by automobile as far as the clambering new road goes up the flanks of Tofana No. 2; thence for a time by mule along the flank of

Tofana No. 1, and thence on foot to the vestiges of the famous Castelletto.

The aspect of these mountains is particularly grim and wicked; they are worn old mountains, they tower overhead in enormous vertical cliffs of sallow grey, with the square jointings and occasional clefts and gullies, their summits are toothed and jagged; the path ascends and passes round the side of the mountain upon loose scree, which descend steeply to a lower wall of precipices. In the distance rise other harsh and desolate-looking mountain masses, with shining occasional scars of old snow. Far below is a bleak valley of stunted pine trees through which passes the road of the Dolomites.

As I ascended the upper track two bandages men were coming down on led mules. It was mid-August, and they were suffering from frostbite. Across the great gap between the summits a minute traveller with some provisions was going up by wire to some post upon the crest. For everywhere upon the icy pinnacles are observation posts directing the fire of the big guns on the slopes below, or machine-gun stations, or little garrisons that sit and wait through the bleak days. Often they have no link with the world below but a precipitous climb or a "teleferic" wire. Snow and frost may cut them off absolutely for weeks from the rest of mankind. The sick and wounded must begin their journey down to help and comfort in a giddy basket that swings down to the head of the mule track below.

Originally all these crests were in Austrian hands; they were stormed by the Alpini under almost incredible conditions. For fifteen days, for example, they fought their way up these scree on the flanks of Tofana No. 2 to the ultimate crags, making perhaps a hundred metres of ascent each day, hiding under rocks and in holes in the daylight and receiving fresh provisions and ammunition and advancing by night. They were subjected to rifle

fire, machine-gun fire and bombs of a peculiar sort, big iron balls of the size of a football filled with explosive that were just flung down the steep. They dodged flares and star shells. At one place they went up a chimney that would be far beyond the climbing powers of any but a very active man. It must have been like storming the skies. The dead and wounded rolled away often into inaccessible ravines. Stray skeletons, rags of uniform, fragments of weapons, will add to the climbing interest of these gaunt masses for many years to come. In this manner it was that Tofana No. 2 was taken.

Now the Italians are organising this prize, and I saw winding up far above me on the steep grey slope a multitudinous string of little things that looked like black ants, each carrying a small bright yellow egg. They were mules bringing back balks of timber....

But one position held out invincibly; this was the Castelletto, a great natural fortress of rock standing out at an angle of the mountain in such a position that it commanded the Italian communications (the Dolomite road) in the valley below, and rendered all their positions uncomfortable and insecure. This obnoxious post was practically inaccessible either from above or below, and it barred the Italians even from looking into the Val Travenanzes which it defended. It was, in fact, an impregnable position, and against it was pitted the invincible 5th Group of the Alpini. It was the old problem of the irresistible force in conflict with the immovable object. And the outcome has been the biggest military mine in all history.

The business began in January, 1916, with surveys of the rock in question. The work of surveying for excavations, never a very simple one, becomes much more difficult when the site is occupied by hostile persons with machine guns. In March, as the winter's snows abated, the boring machinery began to arrive, by mule as

far as possible and then by hand. Altogether about half a kilometre of gallery had to be made to the mine chamber, and meanwhile the explosive was coming up load by load and resting first here, then there, in discreetly chosen positions. There were at the last thirty-five tons of it in the inner chamber. And while the boring machines bored and the work went on, Lieutenant Malvezzi was carefully working out the problem of "il massimo effetto dirompimento" and deciding exactly how to pack and explode his little hoard. On the eleventh of July, at 3.30, as he rejoices to state in his official report, "the mine responded perfectly both in respect of the calculations made and of the practical effects," that is to say, the Austrians were largely missing and the Italians were in possession of the crater of the Castelletto and looking down the Val Travenanzes from which they had been barred for so long. Within a month things had been so tidied up, and secured by further excavations and sandbags against hostile fire, that even a middle-aged English writer, extremely fagged and hot and breathless, could enjoy the same privilege. All this, you must understand, had gone on at a level to which the ordinary tourist rarely climbs, in a rarefied, chest-tightening atmosphere, with wisps of clouds floating in the clear air below and club-huts close at hand....

Among these mountains avalanches are frequent; and they come down regardless of human strategy. In many cases the trenches cross avalanche tracks; they and the men in them are periodically swept away and periodically replaced. They are positions that must be held; if the Italians will not face such sacrifices, the Austrians will. Avalanches and frostbite have slain and disabled their thousands; they have accounted perhaps for as many Italians in this austere and giddy campaign as the Austrians....

It seems to be part of the stern resolve of Fate that this, the greatest of wars, shall be the least glorious; it is manifestly being decided not by victories but by blunders. It is indeed a history of colossal stupidities. Among the most decisive of these blunders, second only perhaps of the blunder of the Verdun attack and far outshining the wild raid of the British towards Bagdad, was the blunder of the Trentino offensive. It does not need the equipment of a military expert, it demands only quite ordinary knowledge and average intelligence, to realise the folly of that Austrian adventure. There is some justification for a claim that the decisive battle of the war was fought upon the soil of Italy. There is still more justification for saying that it might have been.

There was only one good point about the Austrian thrust. No one could have foretold it. And it did so completely surprise the Italians as to catch them without any prepared line of positions in the rear. On the very eve of the big Russian offensive, the Austrians thrust eighteen divisions hard at the Trentino frontier. The Italian posts were then in Austrian territory; they held on the left wing and the right, but they were driven by the sheer weight of men and guns in the centre; they lost guns and prisoners because of the difficulty of mountain retreats to which I have alluded, and the Austrians pouring through reached not indeed the plain of Venetia, but to the upland valleys immediately above it, to Asiago and Arsiero. They probably saw the Venetian plain through gaps in the hills, but they were still separated from it even at Arsiero by what are mountains to an English eye, mountains as high as Snowdon. But the Italians of such beautiful old places and Vicenza, Marostica, and Bassano could watch the Austrian shells bursting on the last line of hills above the plain, and I have no doubt they felt extremely uneasy.

As one motors through these ripe and beautiful towns and through

the rich valleys that link them--it is a smiling land abounding in old castles and villas, Vicenza is a rich museum of Palladio's architecture and Bassano is full of irreplaceable painted buildings--one feels that the things was a narrow escape, but from the military point of view it was merely an insane escapade. The Austrians had behind them--and some way behind them--one little strangulated railway and no good pass road; their right was held at Pasubio, their left was similarly bent back. In front of them was between twice and three times their number of first class troops, with an unlimited equipment. If they had surmounted that last mountain crest they would have come down to almost certain destruction in the plain. They could never have got back. For a time it was said that General Cardona considered that possibility. From the point of view of purely military considerations, the Trentino offensive should perhaps have ended in the capitulation of Vicenza.

I will confess I am glad it did not do so. This tour of the fronts has made me very sad and weary with a succession of ruins. I can bear no more ruins unless they are the ruins of Dusseldorf, Cologne, Berlin, or suchlike modern German city. Anxious as I am to be a systematic Philistine, to express my preference for Marinetti over the Florentine British and generally to antagonise aesthetic prigs, I rejoiced over that sunlit land as one might rejoice over a child saved from beasts.

On the hills beyond Schio I walked out through the embrasure of a big gun in a rock gallery, and saw the highest points upon the hillside to which the Austrian infantry clambered in their futile last attacks. Below me were the ruins of Arsiero and Velo d'Astico recovered, and across the broad valley rose Monte Cimone with the Italian trenches upon its crest and the Austrians a little below to the north. A very considerable bombardment was going on and it reverberated finely. (It is only among mountains that one hears anything that one can call the thunder of guns.

The heaviest bombardments I heard in France sounded merely like Brock's benefit on a much large scale, and disappointed me extremely.) As I sat and listened to the uproar and watched the shells burst on Cimone and far away up the valley over Castelletto above Pedescala, Captain Pirelli pointed out the position of the Austrian frontier. I doubt if the English people realise that the utmost depth to which this great Trentino offensive, which exhausted Austria, wasted the flower of the Hungarian army and led directly to the Galician disasters and the intervention of Rumania, penetrated into Italian territory was about six miles.

III. BEHIND THE FRONT

1

I have a peculiar affection for Verona and certain things in Verona. Italians must forgive us English this little streak of impertinent proprietorship in the beautiful things of their abundant land. It is quite open to them to revenge themselves by professing a tenderness for Liverpool or Leeds. It was, for instance, with a peculiar and personal indignation that I saw where an Austrian air bomb had killed five-and-thirty people in the Piazza Erbe. Somehow in that jolly old place, a place that have very much of the quality of a very pretty and cheerful old woman, it seemed exceptionally an outrage. And I made a special pilgrimage to see how it was with that monument of Can Grande, the equestrian Scaliger with the sidelong grin, for whom I confess a ridiculous admiration. Can Grande, I rejoice to say, has retired into a case of brickwork, surmounted by a steep roof of thick iron plates; no aeroplane exists to carry bombs enough to smash that covering; there he will smile securely in the darkness until peace comes again.

All over Venetia the Austrian seaplanes are making the same sort of idiot raid on lighted places that the Zeppelins have been making over England. These raids do no effective military work. What conceivable military advantage can there be in dropping bombs into a marketing crowd? It is a sort of anti-Teutonic propaganda by the Central Powers to which they seem to have been incited by their own evil genius. It is as if they could convince us that there is an essential malignity in Germans, that until the German powers are stamped down into the mud they will continue to do evil things. All of the Allies have borne the thrusting and boasting of Germany with exemplary patience for half a century; England gave her Heligoland and stood out of the way of her colonial expansion, Italy was a happy hunting ground for her business enterprise, France had come near resignation on the score of Alsace-Lorraine. And then over and above the great outrage of the war come these incessant mean-spirited atrocities. A great and simple wickedness it is possible to forgive; the war itself, had it been fought greatly by Austria and Germany, would have made no such deep and enduring breach as these silly, futile assassinations have done between the Austro-Germans and the rest of the civilised world. One great misdeed is a thing understandable and forgivable; what grows upon the consciousness of the world is the persuasion that here we fight not a national sin but a national insanity; that we dare not leave the German the power to attack other nations any more for ever....

Venice has suffered particularly from this ape-like impulse to hurt and terrorise enemy non-combatants. Venice has indeed suffered from this war far more than any other town in Italy. Her trade has largely ceased; she has no visitors. I woke up on my way to Udine and found my train at Venice with an hour to spare; after much examining and stamping of my passport I was allowed outside the station wicket to get coffee in the refreshment room and a glimpse of a very sad and silent Grand

Canal. There was nothing doing; a black despondent remnant of the old crowd of gondolas browsed dreamily among against the quay to stare at me the better. The empty palaces seemed to be sleeping in the morning sunshine because it was not worth while to wake up....

2

Except in the case of Venice, the war does not seem as yet to have made nearly such a mark upon life in Italy as it has in England or provincial France. People speak of Italy as a poor country, but that is from a banker's point of view. In some respects she is the richest country on earth, and in the matter of staying power I should think she is better off than any other belligerent. She produces food in abundance everywhere; her women are agricultural workers, so that the interruption of food production by the war has been less serious in Italy than in any other part of Europe. In peace time, she has constantly exported labour; the Italian worker has been a seasonal emigrant to America, north and south, to Switzerland, Germany and the south of France. The cessation of this emigration has given her great reserves of man power, so that she has carried on her admirable campaign with less interference with her normal economic life than any other power. The first person I spoke to upon the platform at Modane was a British officer engaged in forwarding Italian potatoes to the British front in France. Afterwards, on my return, when a little passport irregularity kept me for half a day in Modane, I went for a walk with him along the winding pass road that goes down into France. "You see hundreds and hundreds of new Fiat cars," he remarked, "along here--going up to the French front."

But there is a return trade. Near Paris I saw scores of thousands of shells piled high to go to Italy....

I doubt if English people fully realise either the economic sturdiness or the political courage of their Italian ally. Italy is not merely fighting a first-class war in first-class fashion but she is doing a big, dangerous, generous and far-sighted thing in fighting at all. France and England were obliged to fight; the necessity was as plain as daylight. The participation of Italy demanded a remoter wisdom. In the long run she would have been swallowed up economically and politically by Germany if she had not fought; but that was not a thing staring her plainly in the face as the danger, insult and challenge stared France and England in the face. What did stare her in the face was not merely a considerable military and political risk, but the rupture of very close financial and commercial ties. I found thoughtful men talking everywhere I have been in Italy of two things, of the Jugo-Slav riddle and of the question of post war finance. So far as the former matter goes, I think the Italians are set upon the righteous solution of all such riddles, they are possessed by an intelligent generosity. They are clearly set upon deserving Jugo-Slav friendship; they understand the plain necessity of open and friendly routes towards Roumania. It was an Italian who set out to explain to me that Fiume must be at least a free port; it would be wrong and foolish to cut the trade of Hungary off from the Mediterranean. But the banking puzzle is a more intricate and puzzling matter altogether than the possibility of trouble between Italian and Jugo-Slav.

I write of these things with the simplicity of an angel, but without an angelic detachment. Here are questions into which one does not so much rush as get reluctantly pushed. Currency and banking are dry distasteful questions, but it is clear that they are too much in the hands of mystery-mongers; it is as much the duty of anyone who talks and writes of affairs, it is as much the duty of every sane adult, to bring his possibly poor and unsuitable wits to bear upon these things, as it is for him to

vote or enlist or pay his taxes. Behind the simple ostensible spectacle of Italy recovering the unredeemed Italy of the Trentino and East Venetia, goes on another drama. Has Italy been sinking into something rather hard to define called "economic slavery"? Is she or is she not escaping from that magical servitude? Before this question has been under discussion for a minute comes a name--for a time I was really quite unable to decide whether it is the name of the villain in the piece or of the maligned heroine, or a secret society or a gold mine, or a pestilence or a delusion--the name of the /Banca Commerciale Italiana./

Banking in a country undergoing so rapid and vigorous an economic development as Italy is very different from the banking we simple English know of at home. Banking in England, like land-owning, has hitherto been a sort of hold up. There were always borrowers, there were always tenants, and all that had to be done was to refuse, obstruct, delay and worry the helpless borrower or would-be tenant until the maximum of security and profit was obtained. I have never borrowed but I have built, and I know something of the extreme hauteur of property of England towards a man who wants to do anything with land, and with money I gather the case is just the same. But in Italy, which already possessed a sunny prosperity of its own upon mediaeval lines, the banker has had to be suggestive and persuasive, sympathetic and helpful. These are unaccustomed attitudes for British capital. The field has been far more attractive to the German banker, who is less of a proudly impassive usurer and more of a partner, who demands less than absolute security because he investigates more industriously and intelligently. This great bank, the Banca Commerciale Italiana, is a bank of the German type: to begin with, it was certainly dominated by German directors; it was a bank of stimulation, and its activities interweave now into the whole fabric of Italian commercial life. But it has already liberated itself from German influence, and the bulk of its

capital is Italian. Nevertheless I found discussion ranging about firstly what the Banca Commerciale essentially /was/, secondly what it might /become/, thirdly what it might /do/, and fourthly what, if anything, had to be done to it.

It is a novelty to an English mind to find banking thus mixed up with politics, but it is not a novelty in Italy. All over Venetia there are agricultural banks which are said to be "clerical." I grappled with this mystery. "How are they clerical?" I asked Captain Pirelli. "Do they lend money on bad security to clerical voters, and on no terms whatever to anti-clericals?" He was quite of my way of thinking. "/Pecunia non olet/," he said; "I have never yet smelt a clerical fifty lira note."... But on the other hand Italy is very close to Germany; she wants easy money for development, cheap coal, a market for various products. The case against the Germans--this case in which the Banca Commerciale Italiana appears, I am convinced unjustly, as a suspect--is that they have turned this natural and proper interchange with Italy into the acquisition of German power. That they have not been merely easy traders, but patriotic agents. It is alleged that they used their early "pull" in Italian banking to favour German enterprises and German political influence against the development of native Italian business; that their merchants are not bona-fide individuals, but members of a nationalist conspiracy to gain economic controls. The German is a patriotic monomaniac. He is not a man but a limb, the worshipper of a national effigy, the digit of an insanelly proud and greedy Germania, and here are the natural consequences.

The case of the individual Italian compactly is this: "We do not like the Austrians and Germans. These Imperialisms look always over the Alps. Whatever increases German influence here threatens Italian life. The German is a German first and a human being afterwards.... But on the other hand England seems

commercially indifferent to us and France has been economically hostile..."

"After all," I said presently, after reflection, "in that matter of /Pecunia non olet/; there used to be fusses about European loans in China. And one of the favourite themes of British fiction and drama before the war was the unfortunate position of the girl who accepted a loan from the wicked man to pay her debts at bridge."

"Italy," said Captain Pirelli, "isn't a girl. And she hasn't been playing bridge."

I incline on the whole to his point of view. Money is facile cosmopolitan stuff. I think that any bank that settles down in Italy is going to be slowly and steadily naturalised Italian, it will become more and more Italian until it is wholly Italian. I would trust Italy to make and keep the Banca Commerciale Italiana Italian. I believe the Italian brain is a better brain than the German article. But still I heard people talking of the implicated organisation as if it were engaged in the most insidious duplicities. "Wait for only a year or so after the war," said one English authority to me, "and the mask will be off and it will be frankly a 'Deutsche Bank' once more." They assure me that then German enterprises will be favoured again, Italian and Allied enterprises blockaded and embarrassed, the good understanding of Italians and English poisoned, entirely through this organisation....

The reasonable uncommercial man would like to reject all this last sort of talk as "suspicion mania." So far as the Banca Commerciale Italiana goes, I at least find that easy enough; I quote that instance simply because it is a case where suspicion has been dispelled, but in regard to a score of other business veins it is not so easy to dispel suspicion. This war has been a

shock to reasonable men the whole world over. They have been forced to realise that after all a great number of Germans have been engaged in a crack-brained conspiracy against the non-German world; that in a great number of cases when one does business with a German the business does not end with the individual German. We hated to believe that a business could be tainted by German partners or German associations. If now we err on the side of over-suspicion, it is the German's little weakness for patriotic disingenuousness that is most to blame....

But anyhow I do not think there is much good in a kind of witch-smelling among Italian enterprises to find the hidden German. Certain things are necessary for Italian prosperity and Italy must get them. The Italians want intelligent and helpful capital. They want a helpful France. They want bituminous coal for metallurgical purposes. They want cheap shipping. The French too want metallurgical coal. It is more important for civilisation, for the general goodwill of the Allies and for Great Britain that these needs should be supplied than that individual British money-owners or ship-owners should remain sluggishly rich by insisting upon high security or high freights. The control of British coal-mining and shipping is in the national interests--for international interests--rather than for the creation of that particularly passive, obstructive, and wasteful type of wealth, the wealth of the mere profiteer, is as urgent a necessity for the commercial welfare of France and Italy and the endurance of the Great Alliance as it is for the well-being of the common man in Britain.

3

I left my military guide at Verona on Saturday afternoon and reached Milan in time to dine outside Salvini's in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, with an Italian fellow story-writer. The

place was as full as ever; we had to wait for a table. It is notable that there were still great numbers of young men not in uniform in Milan and Turin and Vicenza and Verona; there was no effect anywhere of a depletion of men. The whole crowded place was smouldering with excitement. The diners looked about them as they talked, some talked loudly and seemed to be expressing sentiments. Newspaper vendors appeared at the intersection of the arcades, uttering ambiguous cries, and did a brisk business of flitting white sheets among the little tables.

"To-night," said my companion, "I think we shall declare war upon Germany. The decision is being made."

I asked intelligently why this had not been done before. I forget the precise explanation he gave. A young soldier in uniform, who had been dining at an adjacent table and whom I had not recognised before as a writer I had met some years previously in London, suddenly joined in our conversation, with a slightly different explanation. I had been carrying on a conversation in slightly ungainly French, but now I relapsed into English.

But indeed the matter of that declaration of war is as plain as daylight; the Italian national consciousness has not at first that direct sense of the German danger that exists in the minds of the three northern Allies. To the Italian the traditional enemy is Austria, and this war is not primarily a war for any other end than the emancipation of Italy. Moreover we have to remember that for years there has been serious commercial friction between France and Italy, and considerable mutual elbowing in North Africa. Both Frenchmen and Italians are resolute to remedy this now, but the restoration of really friendly and trustful relations is not to be done in a day. It has been an extraordinary misfortune for Great Britain that instead of boldly taking over her shipping from its private owners and using it all, regardless of their profit, in the

interests of herself and her allies, her government has permitted so much of it as military and naval needs have not requisitioned to continue to ply for gain, which the government itself has shared by a tax on war profits. The Anglophobe elements in Italian public life have made the utmost of this folly or laxity in relation more particularly to the consequent dearness of coal in Italy. They have carried on an amazingly effective campaign in which this British slackness with the individual profiteer, is represented as if it were the deliberate greed of the British state. This certainly contributed very much to fortify Italy's disinclination to slam the door on the German connection.

I did my best to make it clear to my two friends that so far from England exploiting Italy, I myself suffered in exactly the same way as any Italian, through the extraordinary liberties of our shipping interest. "I pay as well as you do," I said; "the shippers' blockade of Great Britain is more effective than the submarines'. My food, my coal, my petrol are all restricted in the sacred name of private property. You see, capital in England has hitherto been not an exploitation but a hold-up. We are learning differently now.... And anyhow, Mr. Runciman has been here and given Italy assurances...."

In the train to Modane this old story recurred again. It is imperative that English readers should understand clearly how thoroughly these little matters have been /worked/ by the enemy.

Some slight civilities led to a conversation that revealed the Italian lady in the corner as an Irishwoman married to an Italian, and also brought out the latent English of a very charming elderly lady opposite to her. She had heard a speech, a wonderful speech from a railway train, by "the Lord Runciman." He had said the most beautiful things about Italy.

I did my best to echo these beautiful things.

Then the Irishwoman remarked that Mr. Runciman had not satisfied everybody. She and her husband had met a minister--I found afterwards he was one of the members of the late Giolotti government--who had been talking very loudly and scornfully of the bargain Italy was making with England. I assured her that the desire of England was simply to give Italy all that she needed.

"But," said the husband casually, "Mr. Runciman is a shipowner."

I explained that he was nothing of the sort. It was true that he came of a shipowning family--and perhaps inherited a slight tendency to see things from a shipowning point of view--but in England we did not suspect a man on such a score as that.

"In Italy I think we should," said the husband of the Irish lady.

4

This incidental discussion is a necessary part of my impression of Italy at war. The two western allies and Great Britain in particular have to remember Italy's economic needs, and to prepare to rescue them from the blind exploitation of private profit. They have to remember these needs too, because, if they are left out of the picture, then it becomes impossible to understand the full measure of the risk Italy has faced in undertaking this war for an idea. With a Latin lucidity she has counted every risk, and with a Latin idealism she has taken her place by the side of those who fight for a liberal civilisation against a Byzantine imperialism.

As I came out of the brightly lit Galleria Vittorio Emanuele into the darkened Piazza del Duomo I stopped under the arcade and stood looking up at the shadowy darkness of that great pinnacled barn, that marble bride-cake, which is, I suppose, the last southward fortress of the Franco-English Gothic.

"It was here," said my host, "that we burnt the German stuff."

"What German stuff?"

"Pianos and all sorts of things. From the shops. It is possible, you know, to buy things too cheaply--and to give too much for the cheapness."

THE WESTERN WAR (SEPTEMBER, 1916)

I. RUINS

1

If I had to present some particular scene as typical of the peculiar vileness and mischief wrought by this modern warfare that Germany has elaborated and thrust upon the world, I do not think I should choose as my instance any of those great architectural wrecks that seem most to impress contemporary writers. I have seen the injuries and ruins of the cathedrals at Arras and Soissons and the wreckage of the great church at Saint Eloi, I have visited the Hotel de Ville at Arras and seen photographs of the present state of the Cloth Hall at Ypres--a building I knew very well indeed in its days of pride--and I have not been very deeply moved. I suppose that one is a little accustomed to Gothic ruins, and that there is always something monumental about old buildings; it is only a question of degree whether they are more or less tumble-down. I was far more desolated by the obliteration of such villages as Fricourt and Dompierre, and by the horrible state of the fields and gardens round about them, and my visit to Arras railway station gave me all the sensations of coming suddenly on a newly murdered body.

Before I visited the recaptured villages in the zone of the actual fighting, I had an idea that their evacuation was only temporary, that as soon as the war line moved towards Germany the people of the devastated villages would return to build their houses and till their fields again. But I see now that not only are homes and villages destroyed almost beyond recognition, but the very fields are destroyed. They are wildernesses of shell craters; the old worked soil is buried and great slabs of crude

earth have been flung up over it. No ordinary plough will travel over this frozen sea, let alone that everywhere chunks of timber, horrible tangles of rusting wire, jagged fragments of big shells, and a great number of unexploded shells are entangled in the mess. Often this chaos is stained bright yellow by high explosives, and across it run the twisting trenches and communication trenches eight, ten, or twelve feet deep. These will become water pits and mud pits into which beasts will fall. It is incredible that there should be crops from any of this region of the push for many years to come. There is no shade left; the roadside trees are splintered stumps with scarcely the spirit to put forth a leaf; a few stunted thistles and weeds are the sole proofs that life may still go on.

The villages of this wide battle region are not ruined; they are obliterated. It is just possible to trace the roads in them, because the roads have been cleared and repaired for the passing of the guns and ammunition. Fricourt is a tangle of German dug-outs. One dug-out in particular there promises to become a show place. It must be the masterpiece of some genius for dug-outs; it is made as if its makers enjoyed the job; it is like the work of some horrible badger among the vestiges of what were pleasant human homes. You are taken down a timbered staircase into its warren of rooms and passages; you are shown the places under the craters of the great British shells, where the wood splintered but did not come in. (But the arrival of those shells must have been a stunning moment.) There are a series of ingenious bolting shafts set with iron climbing bars. In this place German officers and soldiers have lived continually for nearly two years. This war is, indeed, a troglodytic propaganda. You come up at last at the far end into what was once a cellar of a decent Frechman's home.

But there are stranger subterranean refuges than that at Fricourt. At Dompierre the German trenches skirted the cemetery,

and they turned the dead out of their vaults and made lurking places of the tombs. I walked with M. Joseph Reinach about this place, picking our way carefully amidst the mud holes and the wire, and watched the shells bursting away over the receding battle line to the west. The wreckage of the graves was Durereqsue. And here would be a fragment of marble angle and here a split stone with an inscription. Splinters of coffins, rusty iron crosses and the petals of tin flowers were trampled into the mud, amidst the universal barbed wire. A little distance down the slope is a brand new cemetery, with new metal wreaths and even a few flowers; it is a disciplined array of uniform wooden crosses, each with its list of soldiers' names. Unless I am wholly mistaken in France no Germans will ever get a chance for ever more to desecrate that second cemetery as they have done its predecessor.

We walked over the mud heaps and litter that had once been houses towards the centre of Dompierre village, and tried to picture to ourselves what the place had been. Many things are recognisable in Dompierre that have altogether vanished at Fricourt; for instance, there are quire large triangular pieces of the church wall upstanding at Dompierre. And a mile away perhaps down the hill on the road towards Amiens, the ruins of the sugar refinery are very distinct. A sugar refinery is an affair of big iron receptacles and great flues and pipes and so forth, and iron does not go down under gun fire as stone or brick does. The whole fabric wars rust, bent and twisted, gaping with shell holes, that raggedest display of old iron, but it still kept its general shape, as a smashed, battered, and sunken ironclad might do at the bottom of the sea.

There wasn't a dog left of the former life of Dompierre. There was not even much war traffic that morning on the worn and muddy road. The guns muttered some miles away to the west, and a lark sang. But a little way farther on up the road was an

intermediate dressing station, rigged up with wood and tarpaulins, and orderlies were packing two wounded men into an ambulance. The men on the stretchers were grey faced, as though they had been trodden on by some gigantic dirty boot.

As we came back towards where our car waited by the cemetery I heard the jingle of a horseman coming across the space behind us. I turned and beheld one of the odd contrasts that seem always to be happening in this incredible war. This man was, I suppose, a native officer of some cavalry force from French north Africa. He was a handsome dark brown Arab, wearing a long yellow-white robe and a tall cap about which ran a band of sheepskin. He was riding one of those little fine lean horses with long tails that I think are Barbary horses, his archaic saddle rose fore and aft of him, and the turned-up toes of his soft leather boots were stuck into great silver stirrups. He might have ridden straight out of the Arabian nights. He passed thoughtfully, picking his way delicately among the wire and the shell craters, and coming into the road, broke into a canter and vanished in the direction of the smashed-up refinery.

2

About such towns as Rheims or Arras or Soissons there is an effect of waiting stillness like nothing else I have ever experienced. At Arras the situation is almost incredible to the civilian mind. The British hold the town, the Germans hold a northern suburb; at one point near the river the trenches are just four metres apart. This state of tension has lasted for long months.

Unless a very big attack is contemplated, I suppose there is no advantage in an assault; across that narrow interval we should only get into trenches that might be costly or impossible to

hold, and so it would be for the Germans on our side. But there is a kind of etiquette observed; loud vulgar talking on either side of the four-metre gap leads at once to bomb throwing. And meanwhile on both sides guns of various calibre keep up an intermittent fire, the German guns register--I think that is the right term--on the cross of Arras cathedral, the British guns search lovingly for the German batteries. As one walks about the silent streets one hears, "/Bang/---Pheeee---woooo" and then far away "/dump./" One of ours. Then presently back comes "Pheeee---woooo---/Bang!/" One of theirs.

Amidst these pleasantries, the life of the town goes on. /Le Lion d'Arras/, an excellent illustrated paper, produces its valiant sheets, and has done so since the siege began.

The current number of /Le Lion d'Arras/ had to report a local German success. Overnight they had killed a gendarme. There is to be a public funeral and much ceremony. It is rare for anyone now to get killed; everything is so systematised.

You may buy postcards with views of the destruction at various angles, and send them off with the Arras postmark. The town is not without a certain business activity. There is, I am told, a considerable influx of visitors of a special sort; they wear khaki and lead the troglodytic life. They play cards and gossip and sleep in the shadows, and may not walk the streets. I had one glimpse of a dark crowded cellar. Now and then one sees a British soldier on some special errand; he keeps to the pavement, mindful of the spying German sausage balloon in the air. The streets are strangely quite and grass grows between the stones.

The Hotel de Ville and the cathedral are now mostly heaps of litter, but many streets of the town have suffered very little. Here and there a house has been crushed and one or two have been bisected, the front reduced to a heap of splinters and the back

halves of the rooms left so that one sees the bed, the hanging end of the carpet, the clothes cupboard yawning open, the pictures still on the wall. In one place a lamp stands on a chest of drawers, on a shelf of floor cut off completely from the world below.... Pheeee---woooo---/Bang!/ One would be irresistibly reminded of a Sunday afternoon in the city of London, if it were not for those unmeaning explosions.

I went to the station, a dead railway station. A notice-board requested us to walk around the silent square on the outside pavement and not across it. The German sausage balloon had not been up for days; it had probably gone off to the Somme; the Somme was a terrible vortex just then which was sucking away the resources of the whole German line; but still discipline is discipline. The sausage might come peeping up at any moment over the station roof, and so we skirted the square. Arras was fought for in the early stages of the war; two lines of sand-bagged breastworks still run obliquely through the station; one is where the porters used to put luggage upon cabs and one runs the length of the platform. The station was a fine one of the modern type, with a glass roof whose framework still remains, though the glass powders the floor and is like a fine angular gravel underfoot. The rails are rails of rust, and cornflowers and mustard and tall grasses grow amidst the ballast. The waiting-rooms have suffered from a shell or so, but there are still the sofas of green plush, askew, a little advertisement hung from the wall, the glass smashed. The ticket bureau is as if a giant had scattered a great number of tickets, mostly still done up in bundles, to Douai, to Valenciennes, to Lens and so on. These tickets are souvenirs too portable to resist. I gave way to that common weakness.

I went out and looked up and down the line; two deserted goods trucks stood as if they sheltered under a footbridge. The grass poked out through their wheels. The railway signals seemed

uncertain in their intimations; some were up and some were down. And it was as still and empty as a summer afternoon in Pompeii. No train has come into Arras for two long years now.

We lunched in a sunny garden with various men who love Arras but are weary of it, and we disputed about Irish politics. We discussed the political future of Sir F. E. Smith. We also disputed whether there was an equivalent in English for /embusque./ Every now and then a shell came over--an aimless shell.

A certain liveliness marked our departure from the town. Possibly the Germans also listen for the rare infrequent automobile. At any rate, as we were just starting our way back--it is improper to mention the exact point from which we started--came "Pheeee---woooo." Quite close. But there was no /Bang!/ One's mind hung expectant and disappointed. It was a dud shell.

And then suddenly I became acutely aware of the personality of our chauffeur. It was not his business to talk to us, but he turned his head, showed a sharp profile, wry lips and a bright excited eye, and remarked, "/That/ was a near one--anyhow." He then cut a corner over the pavement and very nearly cut it through a house. He bumped us over a shell hole and began to toot his horn. At every gateway, alley, and cross road on this silent and empty streets of Arras and frequently in between, he tooted punctiliously. (It is not proper to sound motor horns in Arras.) I cannot imagine what the listening Germans made of it. We passed the old gates of that city of fear, still tooting vehemently, and then with shoulders eloquent of his feelings, our chauffeur abandoned the horn altogether and put his whole soul into the accelerator....

Soissons was in very much the same case as Arras. There was the same pregnant silence in her streets, the same effect of waiting for the moment which draws nearer and nearer, when the brooding German lines away there will be full of the covert activities of retreat, when the streets of the old town will stir with the joyous excitement of the conclusive advance.

The organisation of Soissons for defence is perfect. I may not describe it, but think of whatever would stop and destroy an attacking party or foil the hostile shell. It is there. Men have had nothing else to do and nothing else to think of for two years. I crossed the bridge the English made in the pursuit after the Marne, and went into the first line trenches and peeped towards the invisible enemy. To show me exactly where to look a seventy-five obliged with a shell. In the crypt of the Abbey of St. Medard near by it--it must provoke the Germans bitterly to think that all the rest of the building vanished ages ago--the French boys sleep beside the bones of King Childebert the Second. They shelter safely in the prison of Louis the Pious. An ineffective shell from a German seventy-seven burst in the walled garden close at hand as I came out from those thousand-year-old memories again.

The cathedral at Soissons had not been nearly so completely smashed up as the one at Arras; I doubt if it has been very greatly fired into. There is a peculiar beauty in the one long vertical strip of blue sky between the broken arches in the chief gap where the wall has tumbled in. And the people are holding on in many cases exactly as they are doing in Arras; I do not know whether it is habit or courage that is most apparent in this persistence. About the chief place of the town there are ruined houses, but some invisible hand still keeps the grass of the little garden within bounds and has put out a bed of begonias. In Paris I met a charming American writer, the wife of a French

artist, the lady who wrote /My House on the Field of Honour./ She gave me a queer little anecdote. On account of some hospital work she had been allowed to visit Soissons--a rare privilege for a woman--and she stayed the night in a lodging. The room into which she was shown was like any other French provincial bedroom, and after her Anglo-Saxon habit she walked straight to the windows to open them.

They looked exactly like any other French bedroom windows, with neat, clean white lace curtains across them. The curtains had been put there, because they were the proper things to put there.

"Madame," said the hostess, "need not trouble to open the glass. There is no more glass in Soissons."

But there were curtains nevertheless. There was all the precise delicacy of the neatly curtained home life of France.

And she told me too of the people at dinner, and how as the little serving-maid passed about a proud erection of cake and conserve and cream, came the familiar "Pheeee---woooo---/Bang!/"

"That must have been the Seminaire," said someone.

As one speaks of the weather or a passing cart.

"It was in the Rue de la Bueire, M'sieur," the little maid asserted with quiet conviction, poising the trophy of confectionery for Madame Huard with an unshaking hand.

So stoutly do the roots of French life hold beneath the tramplings of war.

II. THE GRADES OF WAR

1

Soissons and Arras when I visited them were samples of the deadlock war; they were like Bloch come true. The living fact about war so far is that Bloch has not come true--/yet./ I think in the end he will come true, but not so far as this war is concerned, and to make that clear it is necessary to trouble the reader with a little disquisition upon war--omitting as far as humanly possible all mention of Napoleon's campaigns.

The development of war has depended largely upon two factors. One of these is invention. New weapons and new methods have become available, and have modified tactics, strategy, the relative advantage of offensive and defensive. The other chief factor in the evolution of the war has been social organisation. As Machiavelli points out in his /Art of War/, there was insufficient social stability in Europe to keep a properly trained and disciplined infantry in the field from the passing of the Roman legions to the appearance of the Swiss footmen. he makes it very clear that he considers the fighting of the Middle Ages, though frequent and bloody, to be a confused, mobbing sort of affair, and politically and technically unsatisfactory. The knight was an egotist in armour. Machiavelli does small justice to the English bowmen. It is interesting to note that Switzerland, that present island of peace, was regarded by him as the mother of modern war. Swiss aggression was the curse of the Milanese. That is a remark by the way; our interest here is to note that modern war emerges upon history as the sixteenth century unfolds, as an affair in which the essential factor is the drilled and trained infantryman. The artillery is developing as a means of breaking the infantry; cavalry for charging them when broken, for pursuit and scouting. To this day this triple

division of forces dominates soldiers' minds. The mechanical development of warfare has consisted largely in the development of facilities for enabling or hindering the infantry to get to close quarters. As that has been made easy or difficult the offensive or the defensive has predominated.

A history of military method for the last few centuries would be a record of successive alternate steps in which offensive and defensive contrivances pull ahead, first one and then the other. Their relative fluctuations are marked by the varying length of campaigns. From the very outset we have the ditch and the wall; the fortified place upon a pass or main road, as a check to the advance. Artillery improves, then fortification improves. The defensive holds its own for a long period, wars are mainly siege wars, and for a century before the advent of Napoleon there are no big successful sweeping invasions, no marches upon the enemy capital and so on. There were wars of reduction, wars of annoyance. Napoleon developed the offensive by seizing upon the enthusiastic infantry of the republic, improving transport and mobile artillery, using road-making as an aggressive method. In spite of the successful experiment of Torres Vedras and the warning of Plevna the offensive remained dominant throughout the nineteenth century.

But three things were working quietly towards the rehabilitation of the defensive; firstly the increased range, accuracy and rapidity of rifle fire, with which we may include the development of the machine gun; secondly the increasing use of the spade, and thirdly the invention of barbed wire. By the end of the century these things had come so far into military theory as to produce the great essay of Bloch, and to surprise the British military people, who are not accustomed to read books or talk shop, in the Boer war. In the thinly populated war region of South Africa the difficulties of forcing entrenched positions were largely met by outflanking, the Boers had only a limited amount of barbed wire

and could be held down in their trenches by shrapnel, and even at the beginning of the present war there can be little doubt that we and our Allies were still largely unprepared for the full possibilities of trench warfare, we attempted a war of manoeuvres, war at about the grade to which war had been brought in 1898, and it was the Germans who first brought the war up to date by entrenching upon the Aisne. We had, of course, a few aeroplanes at that time, but they were used chiefly as a sort of accessory cavalry for scouting; our artillery was light and our shell almost wholly shrapnel.

Now the grades of warfare that have been developed since the present war began, may be regarded as a series of elaborations and counter elaborations of the problem which begins as a line of trenches behind wire, containing infantry with rifles and machine guns. Against this an infantry attack with bayonet, after shrapnel fails. This we will call Grade A. To this the offensive replies with improved artillery, and particularly with high explosive shell instead of shrapnel. By this the wire is blown away, the trench wrecked and the defender held down as the attack charges up. This is Grade B. But now appear the dug-out elaborating the trench and the defensive battery behind the trench. The defenders, under the preliminary bombardment, get into the dug-outs with their rifles and machine guns, and emerge as fresh as paint as the attack comes up. Obviously there is much scope for invention and contrivance in the dug-out as the reservoir of counter attacks. Its possibilities have been very ably exploited by the Germans. Also the defensive batteries behind, which have of course the exact range of the captured trench, concentrate on it and destroy the attack at the moment of victory. The trench falls back to its former holders under this fire and a counter attack. Check again for the offensive. Even if it can take, it cannot hold a position under these conditions. This we will call Grade A2; a revised and improved A. What is the retort from the opposite side? Obviously to enhance and

extend the range of the preliminary bombardment behind the actual trench line, to destroy or block, if it can, the dug-outs and destroy or silence the counter offensive artillery. If it can do that, it can go on; otherwise Bloch wins.

If fighting went on only at ground level Bloch would win at this stage, but here it is that the aeroplane comes in. From the ground it would be practically impossible to locate the enemies' dug-outs, secondary defences, and batteries. But the aeroplane takes us immediately into a new grade of warfare, in which the location of the defender's secondary trenches, guns, and even machine-gun positions becomes a matter of extreme precision--provided only that the offensive has secured command of the air and can send his aeroplanes freely over the defender lines. Then the preliminary bombardment becomes of a much more extensive character; the defender's batteries are tackled by the overpowering fire of guns they are unable to locate and answer; the secondary dug-outs and strong places are plastered down, a barrage fire shuts off support from the doomed trenches, the men in these trenches are held down by a concentrated artillery fire and the attack goes up at last to hunt them out of the dug-outs and collect the survivors. Until the attack is comfortably established in the captured trench, the fire upon the old counter attack position goes on. This is the grade, Grade B2, to which modern warfare has attained upon the Somme front. The appearance of the Tank has only increased the offensive advantage. There at present warfare rests.

There is, I believe, only one grade higher possible. The success of B2 depends upon the completeness of the aerial observation. The invention of an anti-aircraft gun which would be practically sure of hitting and bringing down an aeroplane at any height whatever up to 20,000 feet, would restore the defensive and establish what I should think must be the final grade of war, A3. But at present nothing of the sort exists and nothing of the sort

is likely to exist for a very long time; at present hitting an aeroplane by any sort of gun at all is a rare and uncertain achievement. Such a gun is not impossible and therefore we must suppose such a gun will some day be constructed, but it will be of a novel type and character, unlike anything at present in existence. The grade of fighting that I was privileged to witness on the Somme, the grade at which a steady successful offensive is possible, is therefore, I conclude, the grade at which the present war will end.

2

But now having thus spread out the broad theory of the business, let me go on to tell some of the actualities of the Somme offensive. The key fact upon both British and French fronts was the complete ascendancy of the Allies aeroplanes. It is the necessary preliminary condition for the method upon which the great generals of the French army rely in this sanitary task of shoving the German Thing off the soil of Belgium and France back into its own land. A man who is frequently throwing out prophecies is bound to score a few successes, and one that I may legitimately claim is my early insistence upon that fact that the equality of the German aviator was likely to be inferior to that of his French or British rival. The ordinary German has neither the flexible quality of body, the quickness of nerve, the temperament, nor the mental habits that make a successful aviator. This idea was first put into my head by considering the way in which Germans walk and carry themselves, and by noting the difference in nimbleness between the cyclists in the streets of German and French towns. It was confirmed by a conversation I had with a German aviator who was also a dramatist, and who came to see me upon some copyright matter in 1912. He broached the view that aviation would destroy democracy, because he said only aristocrats make aviators. (He was a man of good family.) With a

duke or so in my mind I asked him why. Because, he explained, a man without aristocratic quality in tradition, cannot possibly endure the "high loneliness" of the air. That sounded rather like nonsense at the time, and then I reflected that for a Prussian that might be true. There may be something in the German composition that does demand association and the support of pride and training before dangers can be faced. The Germans are social and methodical, the French and English are by comparison chaotic and instinctive; perhaps the very readiness for a conscious orderliness that makes the German so formidable upon the ground, so thorough and fore-seeking, makes him slow and unsure in the air. At any rate the experiences of this war have seemed to carry out this hypothesis. The German aviators will not as a class stand up to those of the Allies. They are not nimble in the air. Such champions as they have produced have been men of one trick; one of their great men, Immelmann--he was put down by an English boy a month or so ago--had a sort of hawk's swoop. He would go very high and then come down at his utmost pace at his antagonist, firing his machine gun at him as he came. If he missed in this hysterical lunge, he went on down.... This does not strike the Allied aviator as very brilliant. A gentleman of that sort can sooner or later be caught on the rise by going for him over the German lines.

The first phase, then, of the highest grade offensive, the ultimate development of war regardless of expense, is the clearance of the air. Such German machines as are up are put down by fighting aviators. These last fly high; in the clear blue of the early morning they look exactly like gnats; some trail a little smoke in the sunshine; they take their machine guns in pursuit over the German lines, and the German anti-aircraft guns, the Archibalds, begin to pattern the sky about them with little balls of black smoke. From below one does not see men nor feel that men are there; it is as if it were an

affair of midges. Close after the fighting machines come the photographic aeroplanes, with cameras as long as a man is high, flying low--at four or five thousand feet that is--over the enemy trenches. The Archibald leaves these latter alone; it cannot fire a shell to explode safely so soon after firing; but they are shot at with rifles and machine guns. They do not mind being shot at; only the petrol tank and the head and thorax of the pilot are to be considered vital. They will come back with forty or fifty bullet holes in the fabric. They will go under this fire along the length of the German positions exposing plate after plate; one machine will get a continuous panorama of many miles and then come back straight to the aerodrome to develop its plates.

There is no waste of time about the business, the photographs are developed as rapidly as possible. Within an hour and a half after the photographs were taken the first prints are going back into the bureau for the examination of the photographs. Both British and French air photographs are thoroughly scrutinised and marked.

An air photograph to an inexperienced eye is not a very illuminating thing; one makes our roads, blurs of wood, and rather vague buildings. But the examiner has an eye that has been in training; he is a picked man; he has at hand yesterday's photographs and last week's photographs, marked maps and all sorts of aids and records. If he is a Frenchman he is only too happy to explain his ideas and methods. Here, he will point out, is a little difference between the German trench beyond the wood since yesterday. For a number of reasons he thinks that will be a new machine gun emplacement; here at the centre of the farm wall they have been making another. This battery here--isn't it plain? Well, it's a dummy. The grass in front of it hasn't been scorched, and there's been no serious wear on the road here for a week. Presently the Germans will send one or two waggons up and

down that road and instruct them to make figures of eight to imitate scorching on the grass in front of the gun. We know all about that. The real wear on the road, compare this and this and this, ends here at this spot. It turns off into the wood. There's a sort of track in the trees. Now look where the trees are just a little displaced! (This lens is rather better for that.) /That's/ one gun. You see? Here, I will show you another....

That process goes on two or three miles behind the front line. Very clean young men in white overalls do it as if it were a labour of love. And the Germans in the trenches, the German gunners, /know it is going on./ They know that in the quickest possible way these observations of the aeroplane that was over them just now will go to the gunners. The careful gunner, firing by the map and marking by aeroplane, kite balloon or direct observation, will be getting onto the located guns and machine guns in another couple of hours. The French claim that they have located new batteries, got their /tir de demolition/ upon them in and destroyed them within five hours. The British I told of that found it incredible. Every day the French print special maps showing the guns, sham guns, trenches, everything of significance behind the German lines, showing everything that has happened in the last four-and-twenty hours. It is pitiless. It is indecent. The map-making and printing goes on in the room next and most convenient to the examination of the photographs. And, as I say, the German army knows of this, and knows that it cannot prevent it because of its aerial weakness. That knowledge is not the last among the forces that is crumpling up the German resistance upon the Somme.

I visited some French guns during the /tir de demolition/ phase. I counted nine aeroplanes and twenty-six kite balloons in the air at the same time. There was nothing German visible in the air at all.

It is a case of eyes and no eyes.

The French attack resolves itself into a triple system of gun-fire. First for a day or so, or two or three days, there is demolition fire to smash up all the exactly located batteries, organisation, supports, behind the front line enemy trenches; then comes barrage fire to cut off supplies and reinforcements; then, before the advance, the hammering down fire, "heads down," upon the trenches. When at last this stops and the infantry goes forward to rout out the trenches and the dug-outs, they go forward with a minimum of inconvenience. The first wave of attack fights, destroys, or disarms the surviving Germans and sends them back across the open to the French trenches. They run as fast as they can, hands up, and are shepherded farther back. The French set to work to turn over the captured trenches and organise themselves against any counter attack that may face the barrage fire.

That is the formula of the present fighting, which the French have developed. After an advance there is a pause, while the guns move up nearer the Germans and fresh aeroplane reconnaissance goes on. Nowhere on this present offensive has a German counter attack had more than the most incidental success; and commonly they have had frightful losses. Then after a few days of refreshment and accumulation, the Allied attack resumes.

That is the perfected method of the French offensive. I had the pleasure of learning its broad outlines in good company, in the company of M. Joseph Reinach and Colonel Carence, the military writer. Their talk together and with me in the various messes at which we lunched was for the most part a keen discussion of every detail and every possibility of the offensive machine; every French officer's mess seems a little council upon the one supreme question in France, /how to do it best./ M. Reinach has

made certain suggestions about the co-operation of the French and British that I will discuss elsewhere, but one great theme was the constitution of "the ideal battery." For years French military thought has been acutely attentive to the best number of guns for effective common action, and has tended rather to the small battery theory. My two companies were playing with the idea that the ideal battery was a battery of one big gun, with its own aeroplane and kite balloon marking for it.

The British seem to be associated with the adventurous self-reliance needed in the air. The British aeroplanes do not simply fight the Germans out of the sky; they also make themselves an abominable nuisance by bombing the enemy trenches. For every German bomb that is dropped by aeroplane on or behind the British lines, about twenty go down on the heads of the Germans. British air bombs upon guns, stores and communications do some of the work that the French effect by their systematic demolition fire.

And the British aviator has discovered and is rapidly developing an altogether fresh branch of air activity in the machine-gun attack at a very low altitude. Originally I believe this was tried in western Egypt, but now it is being increasingly used upon the British front in France. An aeroplane which comes down suddenly, travelling very rapidly, to a few hundred feet, is quite hard to hit, even if it is not squirting bullets from a machine gun as it advances. Against infantry in the open this sort of thing is extremely demoralising. It is a method of attack still in its infancy, but there are great possibilities for it in the future, when the bending and cracking German line gives, as ultimately it must give if this offensive does not relax. If the Allies persist in their pressure upon the western front, if there is no relaxation in the supply of munitions from Britain and no lapse into tactical stupidity, a German retreat eastward is inevitable.

Now a cavalry pursuit alone may easily come upon disaster, cavalry can be so easily held up by wire and a few machine guns. I think the Germans have reckoned on that and on automobiles, probably only the decay of their /morale/ prevents their opening their lines now on the chance of the British attempting some such folly as a big cavalry advance, but I do not think the Germans have reckoned on the use of machine guns in aeroplanes, supported by and supporting cavalry or automobiles. At the present time I should imagine there is no more perplexing consideration amidst the many perplexities of the German military intelligence than the new complexion put upon pursuit by these low level air developments. It may mean that in all sorts of positions where they had counted confidently on getting away, they may not be able to get away--from the face of a scientific advance properly commanding and using modern material in a dexterous and intelligent manner.

III. THE WAR LANDSCAPE

1

I saw rather more of the British than of the French aviators because of the vileness of the weather when I visited the latter. It is quite impossible for me to institute comparisons between these two services. I should think that the British organisation I saw would be hard to beat, and that none but the French could hope to beat it. On the Western front the aviation has been screwed up to a very much higher level than on the Italian line. In Italy it has not become, as it has in France, the decisive factor. The war on the Carso front in Italy--I say nothing of the mountain warfare, which is a thing in itself--is in fact still in the stage that I have called B. It is good warfare well waged, but not such an intensity of warfare. It has not, as one

says of pianos and voices, the same compass.

This is true in spite of the fact that the Italians along of all the western powers have adopted a type of aeroplane larger and much more powerful than anything except the big Russian machines. They are not at all suitable for any present purpose upon the Italian front, but at a later stage, when the German is retiring and Archibald no longer searches the air, they would be invaluable on the western front because of their enormous bomb or machine gun carrying capacity. "But sufficient for the day is the swat thereof," as the British public schoolboy says, and no doubt we shall get them when we have sufficiently felt the need for them. The big Caproni machines which the Italians possess are of 300 h.p. and will presently be of 500h.p. One gets up a gangway into them as one gets into a yacht; they have a main deck, a forward machine gun deck and an aft machine gun; one may walk about in them; in addition to guns and men they carry a very considerable weight of bombs beneath. They cannot of course beget up with the speed nor soar to the height of our smaller aeroplanes; it is as carriers in raids behind a force of fighting machines that they should find their use.

The British establishment I visited was a very refreshing and reassuring piece of practical organisation. The air force of Great Britain has had the good fortune to develop with considerable freedom from old army tradition; many of its officers are ex-civil engineers and so forth; Headquarters is a little shy of technical direction; and all this in a service that is still necessarily experimental and plastic is to the good. There is little doubt that, given a release from prejudice, bad associations and the equestrian tradition, British technical intelligence and energy can do just as well as the French. Our problem with our army is not to create intelligence, there is an abundance of it, but to release it from a dreary social and official pressure. The air service ransacks the army for men

with technical training and sees that it gets them, there is a real keenness upon the work, and the men in these great mobile hangars talk shop readily and clearly.

I have already mentioned and the newspapers have told abundantly of the pluck, daring, and admirable work of our aviators; what is still untellable in any detail is the energy and ability of the constructive and repairing branch upon whose efficiency their feats depend. Perhaps the most interesting thing I saw in connection with the air work was the hospital for damaged machines and the dump to which those hopelessly injured are taken, in order that they may be disarticulated and all that is sound in them used for reconstruction. How excellently this work is being done may be judged from the fact that our offensive in July started with a certain number of aeroplanes, a number that would have seemed fantastic in a story a year before the war began. These aeroplanes were in constant action; they fought, they were shot down, they had their share of accidents. Not only did the repair department make good every loss, but after three weeks of the offensive the army was fighting with fifty more machines than at the outset. One goes through a vast Rembrandtesque shed opening upon a great sunny field, in whose cool shadows rest a number of interesting patients; captured and slightly damaged German machines, machines of our own with scars of battle upon them, one or two cases of bad landing. The star case came over from Peronne. It had come in two days ago.

I examined this machine and I will tell the state it was in, but I perceive that what I have to tell will read not like a sober statement of truth but like strained and silly lying. The machine had had a direct hit from an Archibald shell. The propeller had been clean blown away; so had the machine gun and all its fittings. The engines had been stripped naked and a good deal bent about. The timber stay over the aviator had been broken, so that it is marvellous the wings of the machine did not

just up at once like the wings of a butterfly. The solitary aviator had been wounded in the face. He had then come down in a long glide into the British lines, and made a tolerable landing....

2

One consequence of the growing importance of the aeroplane in warfare is the development of a new military art, the art of camouflage. Camouflage is humbugging disguise, it is making things--and especially in this connection, military things--seem not what they are, but something peaceful and rural, something harmless and quite uninteresting to aeroplane observers. It is the art of making big guns look like haystacks and tents like level patches of field.

Also it includes the art of making attractive models of guns, camps, trenches and the like that are not bona-fide guns, camps, or trenches at all, so that the aeroplane bomb-dropper and the aeroplane observer may waste his time and energies and the enemy gunfire be misdirected. In Italy I saw dummy guns so made as to deceive the very elect at a distance of a few thousand feet. The camouflage of concealment aims either at invisibility or imitation; I have seen a supply train look like a row of cottages, its smoke-stack a chimney, with the tops of sham palings running along the back of the engine and creepers painted up its sides. But that was a flight of the imagination; the commonest camouflage is merely to conceal. Trees are brought up and planted near the object to be hidden, it is painted in the same tones as its background, it is covered with an awning painted to look like grass or earth. I suppose it is only a matter of development before a dummy cow or so is put up to chew the cud on the awning.

But camouflage or no camouflage, the bulk of both the French and British forces in the new won ground of the great offensive lay necessarily in the open. Only the big guns and the advanced Red Cross stations had got into pits and subterranean hiding places. The advance has been too rapid and continuous for the armies to make much of a toilette as they halted, and the destruction and the desolation of the country won afforded few facilities for easy concealment. Tents, transport, munitions, these all indicated an army on the march--at the rate of half a mile in a week or so, to Germany. If the wet and mud of November and December have for a time delayed that advance, the force behind has but accumulated for the resumption of the thrust.

3

A journey up from the base to the front trenches shows an interesting series of phases. One leaves Amiens, in which the normal life threads its way through crowds of resting men in khaki and horizon blue, in which staff officers in automobiles whisk hither and thither, in which there are nurses and even a few inexplicable ladies in worldly costume, in which restaurants and cafes are congested and busy, through which there is a perpetual coming and going of processions of heavy vans to the railway sidings. One dodges past a monstrous blue-black gun going up to the British front behind two resolute traction engines--the three sun-blistered young men in the cart that trails behind lounge in attitudes of haughty pride that would shame the ceiling gods of Hampton Court. One passes through arcades of waiting motor vans, through arcades of waiting motor vans, through suburbs still more intensely khaki or horizon blue, and so out upon the great straight poplar-edged road--to the front. Sometimes one laces through spates of heavy traffic, sometimes the dusty road is clear ahead, now we pass a vast aviation camp, now a park of waiting field guns, now an

encampment of cavalry. One turns aside, and abruptly one is in France--France as one knew it before the war, on a shady secondary road, past a delightful chateau behind its iron gates, past a beautiful church, and then suddenly we are in a village street full of stately Indian soldiers.

It betrays no military secret to say that commonly the rare tourist to the British offensive passes through Albert, with its great modern red cathedral smashed to pieces and the great gilt Madonna and Child that once surmounted the tower now, as everyone knows, hanging out horizontally in an attitude that irresistibly suggests an imminent dive upon the passing traveller. One looks right up under it.

Presently we begin to see German prisoners. The whole lot look entirely contented, and are guarded by perhaps a couple of men in khaki. These German prisoners do not attempt to escape, they have not the slightest desire for any more fighting, they have done their bit, they say, honour is satisfied; they give remarkably little trouble. A little way further on perhaps we pass their cage, a double barbed-wire enclosure with a few tents and huts within.

A string of covered wagons passes by. I turn and see a number of men sitting inside and looking almost as cheerful as a beanfeast in Epping Forest. They make facetious gestures. They have a subdued sing-song going on. But one of them looks a little sick, and then I notice not very obtrusive bandages. "Sitting-up cases," my guide explains.

These are part of the casualties of last night's fight.

The fields on either side are now more evidently in the war zone. The array of carts, the patches of tents, the coming and going of men increases. But here are three women harvesting, and

presently in a cornfield are German prisoners working under one old Frenchman. Then the fields become trampled again. Here is a village, not so very much knocked about, and passing through it we go slowly beside a long column of men going up to the front. We scan their collars for signs of some familiar regiment. These are new men going up for the first time; there is a sort of solemn elation in many of their faces.

The men coming down are usually smothered in mud or dust, and unless there has been a fight they look pretty well done up. They stoop under their equipment, and some of the youngsters drag. One pleasant thing about this coming down is the welcome of the regimental band, which is usually at work as soon as the men turn off from the high road. I hear several bands on the British front; they do much to enhance the general cheerfulness. On one of these days of my tour I had the pleasure of seeing the ---th Blankshires coming down after a fight. As we drew near I saw that they combined an extreme muddiness with an unusual elasticity. They all seemed to be looking us in the face instead of being too fagged to bother. Then I noticed a nice grey helmet dangling from one youngster's bayonet, in fact his eye directed me to it. A man behind him had a black German helmet of the type best known in English illustrations; then two more grey appeared. The catch of helmets was indeed quite considerable. Then I perceived on the road bank above and marching parallel with this column, a double file of still muddier Germans. Either they wore caps or went bare-headed. There were no helmets among them. We do not rob our prisoners but--a helmet is a weapon. Anyhow, it is an irresistible souvenir.

Now and then one sees afar off an ammunition dump, many hundreds of stacks of shells--without their detonators as yet--being unloaded from railway trucks, transferred from the broad gauge to the narrow gauge line, or loaded onto motor trolleys. Now and then one crosses a railway line. The railway lines run

everywhere behind the British front, the construction follows the advance day by day. They go up as fast as the guns. One's guide remarks as the car bumps over the level crossing, "That is one of Haig's railways." It is an aspect of the Commander-in-Chief that has much impressed and pleased the men. And at last we begin to enter the region of the former Allied trenches, we pass the old German front line, we pass ruined houses, ruined fields, and thick patches of clustering wooden crosses and boards where the dead of the opening assaults lie. There are no more reapers now, there is no more green upon the fields, there is no green anywhere, scarcely a tree survives by the roadside, but only overthrown trunks and splintered stumps; the fields are wildernesses of shell craters and coarse weeds, the very woods are collections of blasted stems and stripped branches. This absolutely ravaged and ruined battlefield country extends now along the front of the Somme offensive for a depth of many miles; across it the French and British camps and batteries creep forward, the stores, the dumps, the railways creep forward, in their untiring, victorious thrust against the German lines. Overhead hum and roar the aeroplanes, away towards the enemy the humped, blue sausage-shaped kite balloons brood thoughtfully, and from this point and that, guns, curiously invisible until they speak, flash suddenly and strike their one short hammer-blow of sound.

Then one sees an enemy shell drop among the little patch of trees on the crest to the right, and kick up a great red-black mass of smoke and dust. We see it, and then we hear the whine of its arrival and at last the bang. The Germans are blind now, they have lost the air, they are firing by guesswork and their knowledge of the abandoned territory.

"They think they have got divisional headquarters there," someone remarks.... "They haven't. But they keep on."

In this zone where shells burst the wise automobile stops and tucks itself away as inconspicuously as possible close up to a heap of ruins. There is very little traffic on the road now except for a van or so that hurries up, unloads, and gets back as soon as possible. Mules and men are taking the stuff the rest of the journey. We are in a flattened village, all undermined by dug-outs that were in the original German second line. We report ourselves to a young troglodyte in one of these, and are given a guide, and so set out on the last part of the journey to the ultimate point, across the land of shell craters and barbed wire litter and old and new trenches. We have all put on British steel helmets, hard but heavy and inelegant head coverings. I can write little that is printable about these aesthetic crimes. The French and German helmets are noble and beautiful things. These lumpish /pans./..

They ought to be called by the name of the man who designed them.

Presently we are advised to get into a communication trench. It is not a very attractive communication trench, and we stick to our track across the open. Three or four shells shiver overhead, but we decide they are British shells, going out. We reach a supporting trench in which men are waiting in a state of nearly insupportable boredom for the midday stew, the one event of interest in a day-long vigil. Here we are told imperatively to come right in at once, and we do.

All communication trenches are tortuous and practically endless. On an offensive front they have vertical sides of unsupported earth and occasional soakaways for rain, covered by wooden gratings, and they go on and on and on. At rare intervals they branch, and a notice board says "To Regent Street," or "To Oxford Street," or some such lie. It is all just trench. For a time you talk, but talking in single file soon palls. You cease to

talk, and trudge. A great number of telephone wires come into the trench and cross and recross it. You cannot keep clear of them. Your helmet pings against them and they try to remove it. Sometimes you have to stop and crawl under wires. Then you wonder what the trench is like in really wet weather. You hear a shell burst at no great distance. You pass two pages of /The Strand Magazine./ Perhaps thirty yards on you pass a cigarette end. After these sensational incidents the trench quiets down again and continues to wind endlessly--just a sandy, extremely narrow vertical walled trench. A giant crack.

At last you reach the front line trench. On an offensive sector it has none of the architectural interest of first line trenches at such places as Soissons or Arras. It was made a week or so ago by joining up shell craters, and if all goes well we move into the German trench along by the line of scraggy trees, at which we peep discreetly, to-morrow night. We can peep discreetly because just at present our guns are putting shrapnel over the enemy at the rate of about three shells a minute, the puffs follow each other up and down the line, and no Germans are staring out to see us.

The Germans "strafed" this trench overnight, and the men are tired and sleepy. Our guns away behind us are doing their best now to give them a rest by strafing the Germans. One or two men are in each forward sap keeping a look out; the rest sleep, a motionless sleep, in the earthy shelter pits that have been scooped out. One officer sits by a telephone under an earth-covered tarpaulin, and a weary man is doing the toilet of a machine gun. We go on to a shallow trench in which we must stoop, and which has been badly knocked about.... Here we have to stop. The road to Berlin is not opened up beyond this point.

My companion on this excursion is a man I have admired for years and never met until I came out to see the war, a fellow writer.

He is a journalist let loose. Two-thirds of the junior British officers I met on this journey were really not "army men" at all. One finds that the apparent subaltern is really a musician, or a musical critic, or an Egyptologist, or a solicitor, or a cloth manufacturer, or a writer. At the outbreak of the war my guide dyed his hair to conceal its tell-tale silver, and having been laughed to scorn by the ordinary recruiting people, enlisted in the sportsmen's battalion. He was wounded, and then the authorities discovered that he was likely to be of more use with a commission and drew him, in spite of considerable resistance, out of the firing line. To which he always returns whenever he can get a visitor to take with him as an excuse. He now stood up, fairly high and clear, explaining casually that the Germans were no longer firing, and showed me the points of interest.

I had come right up to No Man's Land at last. It was under my chin. The skyline, the last skyline before the British could look down on Bapaume, showed a mangy wood and a ruined village, crouching under repeated gobbings of British shrapnel. "They've got a battery just there, and we're making it uncomfortable." No Man's Land itself is a weedy space broken up by shell craters, with very little barbed wire in front of us and very little in front of the Germans. "They've got snipers in most of the craters, and you see them at twilight hopping about from one to the other." We have very little wire because we don't mean to stay for very long in this trench, but the Germans have very little wire because they have not been able to get it up yet. They never will get it up now....

I had been led to believe that No Man's Land was littered with the unburied dead, but I saw nothing of the sort at this place. There had been no German counter attack since our men came up here. But at one point as we went along the trench there was a dull stench. "Germans, I think," said my guide, though I did not see how he could tell.

He looked at his watch and remarked reluctantly, "If you start at once, you may just do it."

I wanted to catch the Boulogne boat. It was then just past one in the afternoon. We met the stew as we returned along the communication trench, and it smelt very good indeed.... We hurried across the great spaces of rusty desolation upon which every now and again a German shell was bursting....

That night I was in my flat in London. I had finished reading the accumulated letters of some weeks, and I was just going comfortably to bed.

IV. NEW ARMS FOR OLD ONES

1

Such are the landscapes and method of modern war. It is more difficult in its nature from war as it was waged in the nineteenth century than that was from the nature of the phalanx or the legion. The nucleus fact--when I talked to General Joffre he was very insistent upon this point--is still as ever the ordinary fighting man, but all the accessories and conditions of his personal encounter with the fighting man of the other side have been revolutionised in a quarter of a century. The fighting together in a close disciplined order, shoulder to shoulder, which has held good for thousands of years as the best and most successful fighting, has been destroyed; the idea of /breaking/ infantry formation as the chief offensive operation has disappeared, the cavalry charge and the cavalry pursuit are as obsolete as the cross-bow. The modern fighting man is as individualised as a half back or a centre forward in a

football team. Personal fighting has become "scrapping" again, an individual adventure with knife, club, bomb, revolver or bayonet. In this war we are working out things instead of thinking them out, and these enormous changes are still but imperfectly apprehended. The trained and specialised military man probably apprehends them as feebly as anyone.

This is a thing that I want to state as emphatically as possible. It is the pith of the lesson I have learnt at the front. The whole method of war has been so altered in the past five and twenty years as to make it a new and different process altogether. Much the larger part of this alteration has only become effective in the last two years. Everyone is a beginner at this new game; everyone is experimenting and learning.

The idea has been put admirably by /Punch./ That excellent picture of the old-fashioned sergeant who complains to his officer of the new recruit; "'E's all right in the trenches, Sir; 'e's all right at a scrap; but 'e won't never make a soldier," is the quintessence of everything I am saying here. And were there not the very gravest doubts about General Smuts in British military circles because he had "had no military training"? A Canadian expressed the new view very neatly on being asked, in consequence of a deficient salute, whether he wanted to be a soldier, by saying, "Not I! I want to be a fighter!"

The professional officer of the old dispensation was a man specialised in relation to one of the established "arms." He was an infantryman, a cavalryman, a gunner or an engineer. It will be interesting to trace the changes that have happened to all these arms.

Before this war began speculative writers had argued that infantry drill in close formation had now no fighting value whatever, that it was no doubt extremely necessary for the

handling, packing, forwarding and distribution of men, but that the ideal infantry fighter was now a highly individualised and self-reliant man put into a pit with a machine gun, and supported by a string of other men bringing him up supplies and ready to assist him in any forward rush that might be necessary.

The opening phases of the war seemed to contradict this. It did not at first suit the German game to fight on this most modern theory, and isolated individual action is uncongenial to the ordinary German temperament and opposed to the organised social tendencies of German life. To this day the Germans attack only in close order; they are unable to produce a real modern infantry for aggressive purposes, and it is a matter of astonishment to military minds on the English side that our hastily trained new armies should turn out to be just as good at the new fighting as the most "seasoned troops." But there is no reason whatever why they should not be. "Leading," in the sense of going ahead of the men and making them move about mechanically at the word of command, has ceased. On the British side our magnificent new subalterns and our equally magnificent new non-commissioned officers play the part of captains of football teams; they talk their men individually into an understanding of the job before them; they criticise style and performance. On the French side things have gone even farther. Every man in certain attacks has been given a large scale map of the ground over which he has to go, and has had his own individual job clearly marked and explained to him. All the Allied infantrymen tend to become specialised, as bombers, as machine-gun men, and so on. The unspecialised common soldier, the infantryman who has stood and marched and moved in ranks and ranks, the "serried lines of men," who are the main substance of every battle story for the last three thousand years, are as obsolete as the dodo. The rifle and bayonet very probably are becoming obsolete too. Knives and clubs and revolvers serve better in the trenches. The krees and the Roman sword would be as useful. The fine flourish of the

bayonet is only possible in the rare infrequent open. Even the Zulu assegai would serve as well.

The two operations of the infantry attack now are the rush and the "scrap." These come after the artillery preparation. Against the rush, the machine gun is pitted. The machine gun becomes lighter and more and more controllable by one man; as it does so the days of the rifle draw to a close. Against the machine gun we are now directing the "Tank," which goes ahead and puts out the machine gun as soon as it begins to sting the infantry rush. We are also using the swooping aeroplane with a machine gun. Both these devices are of British origin, and they promise very well.

After the rush and the scrap comes the organisation of the captured trench. "Digging in" completes the cycle of modern infantry fighting. You may consider this the first or the last phase of an infantry operation. It is probably at present the least worked-out part of the entire cycle. Here lies the sole German superiority; they bunch and crowd in the rush, they are inferior at the scrap, but they do dig like moles. The weakness of the British is their failure to settle down. they like the rush and the scrap; they press on too far, they get outflanked and lost "in the blue"; they are not naturally clever at the excavating part of the work, and they are not as yet well trained in making dug-outs and shelter-pits rapidly and intelligently. they display most of the faults that were supposed to be most distinctively French before this war came to revolutionise all our conceptions of French character.

2

Now the operations of this modern infantry, which unlike any preceding infantry in the history of war does not fight in

disciplined formations but as highly individualised specialists, are determined almost completely by the artillery preparation. Artillery is now the most essential instrument of war. You may still get along with rather bad infantry; you may still hold out even after the loss of the aerial ascendancy, but so soon as your guns fail you approach defeat. The backbone process of the whole art of war is the manufacture in overwhelming quantities, the carriage and delivery of shell upon the vulnerable points of the enemy's positions. That is, so to speak, the essential blow. Even the infantryman is now hardly more than the residuary legatee after the guns have taken their toll.

I have now followed nearly every phase in the life history of a shell from the moment when it is a segment of steel bar just cut off, to the moment when it is no more than a few dispersed and rusting rags and fragments of steel--pressed upon the stray visitor to the battlefield as souvenirs. All good factories are intensely interesting places to visit, but a good munition factory is romantically satisfactory. It is as nearly free from the antagonism of employer and employed as any factory can be. The busy sheds I visited near Paris struck me as being the most living and active things in the entire war machine. Everywhere else I saw fitful activity, or men waiting. I have seen more men sitting about and standing about, more bored inactivity, during my tour than I have ever seen before in my life. Even the front line trenches seem to slumber; the Angel of Death drowns over them, and moves in his sleep to crush out men's lives. The gunfire has an indolent intermittence. But the munition factories grind on night and day, grinding against the factories in Central Europe, grinding out the slow and costly and necessary victory that should end aggressive warfare in the world for ever.

It would be very interesting if one could arrange a meeting between any typical Allied munition maker on the one hand, and the Kaiser and Hindenburg, those two dominant effigies of the

German nationalists' dream of "world might." Or failing that, Mr. Dyson might draw the encounter. You imagine these two heroic figures got up for the interview, very magnificent in shining helms and flowing cloaks, decorations, splendid swords, spurs. "Here," one would say, "is the power that has held you. You were bolstered up very loyally by the Krupp firm and so forth, you piled up shell, guns, war material, you hoped to snatch your victory before the industrialisation and invention of the world could turn upon you. But you failed. You were not rapid enough. The battle of the Marne was your misfortune. And Ypres. You lost some chances at Ypres. Two can play at destructive industrialism, and now we out-gun you. We are piling up munitions now faster than you. The essentials of this Game of the War Lord are idiotically simple, but it was not of our choosing. It is now merely a question of months before you make your inevitable admission. This is no war to any great commander's glory. This gentleman in the bowler hat is the victor, Sire; not you. Assisted, Sire, by these disrespectful-looking factory girls in overalls."

For example, there is M. Citroen. Before the war I understand he made automobiles; after the war he wants to turn to and make automobiles again. For the duration of the war he makes shell. He has been temporarily diverted from constructive to destructive industrialism. He did me the honours of his factory. He is a compact, active man in dark clothes and a bowler hat, with a pencil and notebook conveniently at hand. He talked to me in carefully easy French, and watched my face with an intelligent eye through his pince-nez for the signs of comprehension. Then he went on to the next point.

He took me through every stage of his process. In his office he showed me the general story. Here were photographs of certain vacant fields and old sheds--"this place"--he indicated the altered prospect from the window--"at the outbreak of the war."

He showed me a plan of the first undertaking. "Now we have rather over nine thousand workpeople."

He showed me a little row of specimens. "These we make for Italy. These go to Russia. These are the Rumanian pattern."

Thence to the first stage, the chopping up of the iron bars, the furnace, the punching out of the first shape of the shell; all this is men's work. I had seen this sort of thing before in peace ironworks, but I saw it again with the same astonishment, the absolute precision of movement on the part of the half-naked sweating men, the calculated efficiency of each worker, the apparent heedlessness, the real certitude, with which the blazing hot cylinder is put here, dropped there, rolls to its next appointed spot, is chopped up and handed on, the swift passage to the cooling crude, pinkish-purple shell shape. Down a long line one sees in perspective a practical symmetry, of furnace and machine group and the shells marching on from this first series of phases to undergo the long succession of operations, machine after machine, across the great width of the shed in which eighty per cent of the workers are women. There is a thick dust of sounds in the air, a rumble of shafting, sudden thuddings, clankings, and M. Citroen has to raise his voice. He points out where he has made little changes in procedures, cut out some wasteful movement.... He has an idea and makes a note in the ever-ready notebook.

There is a beauty about all these women, there is extraordinary grace in their finely adjusted movements. I have come from an after-lunch coffee upon the boulevards and from watching the ugly fashion of our time; it is a relief to be reminded that most women can after all be beautiful--if only they would not "dress." these women wear simple overalls and caps. In the cap is a rosette. Each shed has its own colour of rosette.

"There is much esprit de corps here," says M. Citroen.

"And also," he adds, showing obverse as well as reverse of the world's problem of employment and discipline, "we can see at once if a woman is not in her proper shed."

Across the great sheds under the shafting--how fine it must look at night!--the shells march, are shaped, cut, fitted with copper bands, calibrated, polished, varnished....

Then we go on to another system of machines in which lead is reduced to plastic ribbons and cut into shrapnel bullets as the sweetstuff makers pull out and cut up sweetstuff. And thence into a warren of hot underground passages in which run the power cables. There is not a cable in the place that is not immediately accessible to the electricians. We visit the dynamos and a vast organisation of switchboards....

These things are more familiar to M. Citroen than they are to me. He wants me to understand, but he does not realise that I would like a little leisure to wonder. What is interesting him just now, because it is the newest thing, is his method of paying his workers. He lifts a hand gravely: "I said, what we must do is abolish altogether the counting of change."

At a certain hour, he explained, came pay-time. The people had done; it was to his interest and their that they should get out of the works as quickly as possible and rest and amuse themselves. He watched them standing in queues at the wickets while inside someone counted; so many francs, so many centimes. It bored him to see this useless, tiresome waiting. It is abolished. Now at the end of each week the worker goes to a window under the initial of his name, and is handed a card on which these items have been entered:

Balance from last week.
So many hours at so much.
Premiums.

The total is so many francs, so many centimes. This is divided into the nearest round number, 100, 120, 80 francs as the case may be, and a balance of the odd francs and centimes. The latter is carried forward to the next week's account. At the bottom of the card is a tear-off coupon with a stamp, coloured to indicate the round sum, green, let us say, for 100, blue for 130 francs. This is taken to a wicket marked 100 or 130 as the case may be, and there stands a cashier with his money in piles of 100 or 130 francs counted ready to hand; he sweeps in the coupon, sweeps out the cash. "/Next!/"

I became interested in the worker's side of this organisation. I insist on seeing the entrances, the clothes-changing places, the lavatories, and so forth of the organisation. As we go about we pass a string of electric trolleys steered by important-looking girls, and loaded with shell, finished as far as these works are concerned and on their way to the railway siding. We visit the hospital, for these works demand a medical staff. It is not only that men and women faint or fall ill, but there are accidents, burns, crushings, and the like. The war casualties begin already here, and they fall chiefly among the women. I saw a wounded woman with a bandaged face sitting very quietly in the corner.

The women here face danger, perhaps not quite such obvious danger as the women who, at the next stage in the shell's career, make and pack the explosives in their silk casing, but quite considerable risk. And they work with a real enthusiasm. They know they are fighting the Bloches as well as any men. Certain of them wear Russian decorations. The women of this particular factory have been thanked by the Tsar, and a number of decorations were sent by him for distribution among them.

The shell factory and the explosives shed stand level with the drill yard as the real first stage in one of the two essential /punches/ in modern war. When one meets the shell again it is being unloaded from the railway truck into an ammunition dump. And here the work of control is much more the work of a good traffic manager than of the old-fashioned soldier.

The dump I best remember I visited on a wet and windy day. Over a great space of ground the sidings of the rail-head spread, the normal gauge rail-head spread out like a fan and interdigitated with the narrow gauge lines that go up practically to the guns. And also at the sides camions were loading, and an officer from the Midi in charge of one of these was being dramatically indignant at five minutes' delay. Between these two sets of lines, shells were piled of all sizes, I should think some hundreds of thousands of shells altogether, wet and shining in the rain. French reservists, soldiers from Madagascar, and some Senegalese were busy at different points loading and unloading the precious freights. A little way from me were despondent-looking German prisoners handling timber. All this dump was no more than an eddy as it were in the path of the shell from its birth from the steel bars near Paris to the accomplishment of its destiny in the destruction or capture of more Germans.

And next the visitor meets the shell coming up upon a little trolley to the gun. He sees the gunners, as drilled and precise as the men he saw at the forges, swing out the breech block and run the shell, which has met and combined with its detonators and various other industrial products since it left the main dump, into the gun. The breech closes like a safe door, and hides the shell from the visitor. It is "good-bye." He receives

exaggerated warning of the danger to his ears, stuffs his fingers into them, and opens his mouth as instructed, hears a loud but by no means deafening report, and sees a spit of flame near the breech. Regulations of a severe character prevent his watching from an aeroplane the delivery of the goods upon the customers opposite.

I have already described the method of locating enemy guns and so forth by photography. Many of the men at this work are like dentists rather than soldiers; they are busy in carefully lit rooms, they wear white overalls, they have clean hands and laboratory manners. The only really romantic figure in the whole of this process, the only figure that has anything of the old soldierly swagger about him still, is the aviator. And, as one friend remarked to me when I visited the work of the British flying corps, "The real essential strength of this arm is the organisation of its repairs. Here is one of the repair vans through which our machine guns go. It is a motor workshop on wheels. But at any time all this park, everything, can pack up and move forward like Barnum and Bailey's Circus. The machine guns come through this shop in rotation; they go out again, cleaned, repaired, made new again. Since we got all that working we have heard nothing of a machine gun jamming in any air fight at all."...

The rest of the career of the shell after it has left the gun one must imagine chiefly from the incoming shell from the enemy. You see suddenly a flying up of earth and stones and anything else that is movable in the neighbourhood of the shell-burst, the instantaneous unfolding of a dark cloud of dust and reddish smoke, which comes very quickly to a certain size and then begins slowly to fray out and blow away. Then, after seeing the cloud of the burst you hear the hiss of the shell's approach, and finally you are hit by the sound of the explosion. This is the climax and end of the life history of any shell that is not a dud

shell. Afterwards the battered fuse may serve as some journalist's paper-weight. The rest is scrap iron.

Such is, so to speak, the primary process of modern warfare. I will not draw the obvious pacifist moral of the intense folly of human concentration upon such a process. The Germans willed it. We Allies have but obeyed the German will for warfare because we could not do otherwise, we have taken up this simple game of shell delivery, and we are teaching them that we can play it better, in the hope that so we and the world may be freed from the German will-to-power and all its humiliating and disgusting consequences henceforth for ever. Europe now is no more than a household engaged in holding up and if possible overpowering a monomaniac member.

4

Now the whole of this process of the making and delivery of a shell, which is the main process of modern warfare, is one that can be far better conducted by a man accustomed to industrial organisation or transit work than by the old type of soldier. This is a thing that cannot be too plainly stated or too often repeated. Germany nearly won this way because of her tremendously modern industrial resources; but she blundered into it and she is losing it because she has too many men in military uniform and because their tradition and interests were too powerful with her. All the state and glories of soldiering, the bright uniforms, the feathers and spurs, the flags, the march-past, the disciplined massed advance, the charge; all these are as needless and obsolete now in war as the masks and shields of an old-time Chinese brave. Liberal-minded people talk of the coming dangers of militarism in the face of events that prove conclusively that professional militarism is already as dead as Julius Caesar. What is coming is not so much the conversion

of men into soldiers as the socialisation of the economic organisation of the country with a view to both national and international necessities. We do not want to turn a chemist or a photographer into a little figure like a lead soldier, moving mechanically at the word of command, but we do want to make his chemistry or photography swiftly available if the national organisation is called upon to fight.

We have discovered that the modern economic organisation is in itself a fighting machine. It is so much so that it is capable of taking on and defeating quite easily any merely warrior people that is so rash as to pit itself against it. Within the last sixteen years methods of fighting have been elaborated that have made war an absolutely hopeless adventure for any barbaric or non-industrialised people. In the rush of larger events few people have realised the significance of the rapid squashing of the Senussi in western Egypt, and the collapse of De Wet's rebellion in South Africa. Both these struggles would have been long, tedious and uncertain even in A.D. 1900. This time they have been, so to speak, child's play.

Occasionally into the writer's study there come to hand drifting fragments of the American literature upon the question of "preparedness," and American papers discussing the Mexican situation. In none of these is there evident any clear realisation of the fundamental revolution that has occurred in military methods during the last two years. It looks as if a Mexican war, for example, was thought of as an affair of rather imperfectly trained young men with rifles and horses and old-fashioned things like that. A Mexican war on that level might be as tedious as the South African war. But if the United States preferred to go into Mexican affairs with what I may perhaps call a 1916 autumn outfit instead of the small 1900 outfit she seems to possess at present, there is no reason why America should not clear up any and every Mexican guerilla force she wanted to in a

few weeks.

To do that she would need a plant of a few hundred aeroplanes, for the most part armed with machine guns, and the motor repair vans and so forth needed to go with the aeroplanes; she would need a comparatively small army of infantry armed with machine guns, with motor transport, and a few small land ironclads. Such a force could locate, overtake, destroy and disperse any possible force that a country in the present industrial condition of Mexico could put into the field. No sort of entrenchment or fortification possible in Mexico could stand against it. It could go from one end of the country to the other without serious loss, and hunt down and capture anyone it wished....

The practical political consequence of the present development of warfare, of the complete revolution in the conditions of warfare since this century began, is to make war absolutely hopeless for any peoples not able either to manufacture or procure the very complicated appliances and munitions now needed for its prosecution. Countries like Mexico, Bulgaria, Serbia, Afghanistan or Abyssinia are no more capable of going to war without the connivance and help of manufacturing states than horses are capable of flying. And this makes possible such a complete control of war by the few great states which are at the necessary level of industrial development as not the most Utopian of us have hitherto dared to imagine.

5

Infantrymen with automobile transport, plentiful machine guns, Tanks and such-like accessories; that is the first Arm in modern war. The factory hand and all the material of the shell route from the factory to the gun constitute the second Arm. Thirdly comes the artillery, the guns and the photographic aeroplanes

working with the guns. Next I suppose we must count sappers and miners as a fourth Arm of greatly increased importance. The fifth and last combatant Arm is the modern substitute for cavalry; and that also is essentially a force of aeroplanes supported by automobiles. Several of the French leaders with whom I talked seemed to be convinced that the horse is absolutely done with in modern warfare. There is nothing, they declared, that cavalry ever did that cannot now be done better by aeroplane.

This is something to break the hearts of the Prussian junkers and of old-fashioned British army people. The hunt across the English countryside, the preservation of the fox as a sacred animal, the race meeting, the stimulation of betting in all classes of the public; all these things depend ultimately upon the proposition that the "breed of horses" is of vital importance to the military strength of Great Britain. But if the arguments of these able French soldiers are sound, the cult of the horse ceases to be of any more value to England than the elegant activities of the Toxophilite Society. Moreover, there has been a colossal buying of horses for the British army, a tremendous organisation for the purchase and supply of fodder, then employment of tens of thousands of men as grooms, minders and the like, who would otherwise have been in the munition factories or the trenches.

To what possible use can cavalry be put? Can it be used in attack? Not against trenches; that is better done by infantrymen following up gunfire. Can it be used against broken infantry in the open? Not if the enemy has one or two machine guns covering their retreat. Against expose infantry the swooping aeroplane with a machine gun is far more deadly and more difficult to hit. Behind it your infantry can follow to receive surrenders; in most circumstances they can come up on cycles if it is a case of getting up quickly across a wide space. Similarly for pursuit

the use of wire and use of the machine gun have abolished the possibility of a pouring cavalry charge. The swooping aeroplane does everything that cavalry can do in the way of disorganising the enemy, and far more than it can do in the way of silencing machine guns. It can capture guns in retreat much more easily by bombing traction engines and coming down low and shooting horses and men. An ideal modern pursuit would be an advance of guns, automobiles full of infantry, motor cyclists and cyclists, behind a high screen of observation aeroplanes and a low screen of bombing and fighting aeroplanes. Cavalry /might/ advance across fields and so forth, but only as a very accessory part of the general advance....

And what else is there for the cavalry to do?

It may be argued that horses can go over country that is impossible for automobiles. That is to ignore altogether what has been done in this war by such devices as caterpillar wheels. So far from cavalry being able to negotiate country where machines would stick and fail, mechanism can now ride over places where any horse would flounder.

I submit these considerations to the horse-lover. They are not my original observations; they have been put to me and they have convinced me. Except perhaps as a parent of transport mules I see no further part henceforth for the horse to play in war.

6

The form and texture of the coming warfare--if there is still warfare to come--are not yet to be seen in their completeness upon the modern battlefield. One swallow does not make a summer, nor a handful of aeroplanes, a "Tank" or so, a few acres of shell craters, and a village here and there, pounded out of

recognition, do more than foreshadow the spectacle of modernised war on land. War by these developments has become the monopoly of the five great industrial powers; it is their alternative to end or evolve it, and if they continue to disagree, then it must needs become a spectacle of majestic horror such as no man can yet conceive. It has been wise of Mr. Pennell therefore, who has recently been drawing his impressions of the war upon stone, to make his pictures not upon the battlefield, but among the huge industrial apparatus that is thrusting behind and thrusting up through the war of the gentlemen in spurs. He gives us the splendours and immensities of forge and gun pit, furnace and mine shaft. He shows you how great they are and how terrible. Among them go the little figures of men, robbed of all dominance, robbed of all individual quality. He leaves it for you to draw the obvious conclusion that presently, if we cannot contrive to put an end to war, blacknesses like these, enormities and flares and towering threats, will follow in the track of the Tanks and come trampling over the bickering confusion of mankind.

There is something very striking in these insignificant and incidental men that Mr. Pennell shows us. Nowhere does a man dominate in all these wonderful pictures. You may argue perhaps that that is untrue to the essential realities; all this array of machine and workshop, all this marshalled power and purpose, has been the creation of inventor and business organiser. But are we not a little too free with that word "creation"? Falstaff was a "creation" perhaps, or the Sistine sibyls; there we have indubitably an end conceived and sought and achieved; but did these inventors and business organisers do more than heed certain unavoidable imperatives? Seeking coal they were obliged to mine in a certain way; seeking steel they had to do this and this and not that and that; seeking profit they had to obey the imperative of the economy. So little did they plan their ends that most of these manufacturers speak with a kind of astonishment of the deadly use to which their works are put. They find themselves

making the new war as a man might wake out of some drugged condition to find himself strangling his mother.

So that Mr. Pennell's sketchy and transient human figures seem altogether right to me. He sees these forges, workshops, cranes and the like, as inhuman and as wonderful as cliffs or great caves or icebergs or the stars. They are a new aspect of the logic of physical necessity that made all these older things, and he seizes upon the majesty and beauty of their dimensions with an entire impartiality. And they are as impartial. Through all these lithographs runs one present motif, the motif of the supreme effort of western civilisation to save itself and the world from the dominance of the reactionary German Imperialism of modern science. The pictures are arranged to shape out the life of a shell, from the mine to the great gun; nothing remains of their history to show except the ammunition dump, the gun in action and the shell-burst. Upon this theme all these great appearances are strung to-day. But to-morrow they may be strung upon some other and nobler purpose. These gigantic beings of which the engineer is the master and slave, are neither benevolent nor malignant. To-day they produce destruction, they are the slaves of the spur; to-morrow we hope they will bridge and carry and house and help again.

For that peace we struggle against the dull inflexibility of the German Will-to-Power.

V. TANKS

1

It is the British who have produced the "land ironclad" since I returned from France, and used it apparently with very good

effect. I felt no little chagrin at not seeing them there, because I have a peculiar interest in these contrivances. It would be more than human not to claim a little in this matter. I described one in a story in /The Strand Magazine/ in 1903, and my story could stand in parallel columns beside the first account of these monsters in action given by Mr. Beach Thomas or Mr. Philip Gibbs. My friend M. Joseph Reinach has successfully passed off long extracts from my story as descriptions of the Tanks upon British officers who had just seen them. The filiation was indeed quite traceable. They were my grandchildren-- I felt a little like King Lear when first I read about them. Yet let me state at once that I was certainly not their prime originator. I took up an idea, manipulated it slightly, and handed it on. The idea was suggested to me by the contrivances of a certain Mr. Diplock, whose "ped-rail" notion, the notion of a wheel that was something more than a wheel, a wheel that would take locomotives up hill-sides and over ploughed fields, was public property nearly twenty years ago. Possibly there were others before Diplock. To the Ped-rail also Commander Murray Sueter, one of the many experimentalists upon the early tanks, admits his indebtedness, and it would seem that Mr. Diplock was actually concerned in the earlier stage of the tanks.

Since my return I have been able to see the Tank at home, through the courtesy of the Ministry of Munitions. They have progressed far beyond any recognisable resemblance to the initiatives of Mr. Diplock; they have approximated rather to the American caterpillar. As I suspected when first I heard of these devices, the War Office and the old army people had practically nothing to do with their development. They took to it very reluctantly--as they have taken to every novelty in this war. One brilliant general scrawled over an early proposal the entirely characteristic comment that it was a pity the inventor could not use his imagination to better purpose. (That foolish British trick of sneering at "imagination" has cost us hundreds of

thousands of useless casualties and may yet lose us the war.) Tanks were first mooted at the front about a year and a half ago; Mr. Winston Churchill was then asking questions about their practicability; he filled many simple souls with terror; they thought him a most dangerous lunatic. The actual making of the Tanks arose as an irregular side development of the armoured-car branch of the Royal Naval Air Service work. The names most closely associated with the work are (I quote a reply of Dr. Macnamara's in the House of Commons) Mr. d'Eyncourt, the Director of Naval Construction, Mr. W. O. Tritton, Lieut. Wilson, R.N.A.S., Mr. Bussell, Lieut. Stern, R.N.A.S., who is now Colonel Stern, Captain Symes, and Mr. F. Skeens. There are many other claims too numerous to mention in detail.

But however much the Tanks may disconcert the gallant Colonel Newcomes who throw an air of restraint over our victorious front, there can be no doubt that they are an important as well as a novel development of the modern offensive. Of course neither the Tanks nor their very obvious next developments going to wrest the decisive pre-eminence from the aeroplane. The aeroplane remains now more than ever the instrument of victory upon the western front. Aerial ascendancy, properly utilised, is victory. But the mobile armoured big gun and the Tank as a machine-gun silencer must enormously facilitate an advance against the blinded enemy. Neither of them can advance against properly aimed big gun fire. That has to be disposed of before they make their entrance. It remains the function of the aeroplane to locate the hostile big guns and to direct the /tir de demolition/ upon them before the advance begins-- possibly even to bomb them out. But hitherto, after the destruction of driving back of the defender's big guns has been effected, the dug-out and the machine gun have still inflicted heavy losses upon the advancing infantry until the fight is won. So soon as the big guns are out, the tanks will advance, destroying machine guns, completing the destruction of the wire,

and holding prisoners immobile. Then the infantry will follow to gather in the sheaves. Multitudinously produced and--I write it with a defiant eye on Colonel Newcome--/properly handled/, these land ironclads are going to do very great things in shortening the war, in pursuit, in breaking up the retreating enemy. Given the air ascendancy, and I am utterly unable to imagine any way of conclusively stopping or even greatly delaying an offensive thus equipped.

2

The young of even the most horrible beasts have something piquant and engaging about them, and so I suppose it is in the way of things that the land ironclad which opens a new and more dreadful and destructive phase in the human folly of warfare, should appear first as if it were a joke. Never has any such thing so completely masked its wickedness under an appearance of genial silliness. The Tank is a creature to which one naturally flings a pet name; the five or six I was shown wandering, rooting and climbing over obstacles, round a large field near X, were as amusing and disarming as a little of lively young pigs.

At first the War Office prevented the publication of any pictures or descriptions of these contrivances except abroad; then abruptly the embargo was relaxed, and the press was flooded with photographs. The reader will be familiar now with their appearance. They resemble large slugs with an underside a little like the flattened rockers of a rocking-horse, slugs between 20 and 40 feet long. They are like flat-sided slugs, slugs of spirit, who raise an enquiring snout, like the snout of a dogfish, into the air. They crawl upon their bellies in a way that would be tedious to describe to the general reader and unnecessary to describe to the enquiring specialists. They go over the ground with the sliding speed of active snails. Behind

them trail two wheels, supporting a flimsy tail, wheels that strike one as incongruous as if a monster began kangaroo and ended doll's perambulator. (These wheels annoy me.) They are not steely monsters; they are painted with drab and unassuming colours that are fashionable in modern warfare, so that the armour seems rather like the integument of a rhinoceros. At the sides of the head project armoured checks, and from above these stick out guns that look like stalked eyes. That is the general appearance of the contemporary tank.

It slides on the ground; the silly little wheels that so detract from the genial bestiality of its appearance dandle and bump behind it. It swings about its axis. It comes to an obstacle, a low wall let us say, or a heap of bricks, and sets to work to climb it with its snout. It rears over the obstacle, it raises its straining belly, it overhangs more and more, and at last topples forward; it sways upon the heap and then goes plunging downwards, sticking out the weak counterpoise of its wheeled tail. If it comes to a house or a tree or a wall or such-like obstruction it rams against it so as to bring all its weight to bear upon it--it weighs /some/ tons--and then climbs over the debris. I saw it, and incredulous soldiers of experience watched it at the same time, cross trenches and wallow amazingly through muddy exaggerations of small holes. Then I repeated the tour inside.

Again the Tank is like a slug. The slug, as every biological student knows, is unexpectedly complicated inside. The Tank is as crowded with inward parts as a battleship. It is filled with engines, guns and ammunition, and in the interstices men.

"You will smash your hat," said Colonel Stern. "No; keep it on, or else you will smash your head."

Only Mr. C. R. W. Nevinson could do justice to the interior of a

Tank. You see a hand gripping something; you see the eyes and forehead of an engineer's face; you perceive that an overall bluishness beyond the engine is the back of another man. "Don't hold that," says someone; "it is too hot. Hold on to that." The engines roar, so loudly that I doubt whether one could hear guns without; the floor begins to slope and slopes until one seems to be at forty-five degrees or thereabouts; then the whole concern swings up and sways and slants the other way. You have crossed a bank. You heel sideways. Through the door which has been left open you see the little group of engineers, staff officers and naval men receding and falling away behind you. You straighten up and go up hill. You halt and begin to rotate. Through the open door, the green field, with its red walls, rows of worksheds and forests of chimneys in the background, begins a steady processional movement. The group of engineers and officers and naval men appears at the other side of the door and farther off. Then comes a sprint down hill. You descend and stretch your legs.

About the field other Tanks are doing their stunts. One is struggling in an apoplectic way in the mud pit with a cheek half buried. It noses its way out and on with an air of animal relief.

They are like jokes by Heath Robinson. One forgets that these things have already saved the lives of many hundreds of our soldiers and smashed and defeated thousands of Germans.

Said one soldier to me: "In the old attacks you used to see the British dead lying outside the machine-gun emplacements like birds outside a butt with a good shot inside. /Now/, these things walk through."

I saw other things that day at X. The Tank is only a beginning in a new phase of warfare. Of these other things I may only write in the most general terms.

But though Tanks and their collaterals are being made upon a very considerable scale in X, already I realised as I walked through gigantic forges as high and marvellous as cathedrals, and from workshed to workshed where gun carriages, ammunition carts and a hundred such things were flowing into existence with the swelling abundance of a river that flows out of a gorge, that as the demand for the new developments grows clear and strong, the resources of Britain are capable still of a tremendous response. /If only we do not rob these great factories and works of their men./

Upon this question certain things need to be said very plainly. The decisive factor in the sort of war we are now waging is production and right use of mechanical material; victory in this war depends now upon three things: the aeroplane, the gun, and the Tank developments. These--and not crowds of men--are the prime necessity for a successful offensive. Every man we draw from munition making to the ranks brings our western condition nearer to the military condition of Russia. In these things we may be easily misled by military "experts" We have to remember that the military "expert" is a man who learnt his business before 1914, and that the business of war has been absolutely revolutionised since 1914; the military expert is a man trained to think of war as essentially an affair of cavalry, infantry in formation, and field guns, whereas cavalry is entirely obsolete, infantry no longer fights in formation, and the methods of gunnery have been entirely changed. The military man I observe still runs about the world in spurs, he travels in trains in spurs, he walks in spurs, he thinks in terms of spurs. He has still to discover that it is about as ridiculous as if he were to

carry a crossbow. I take it these spurs are only the outward and visible sign of an inward obsolescence. The disposition of the military "expert" is still to think too little of machinery and to demand too much of the men. Behind our front at the time of my visit there were, for example, many thousands of cavalry, men tending horses, men engaged in transporting bulky fodder for horses and the like. These men were doing about as much in this war as if they had been at Timbuctoo. Every man who is taken from munition making at X to spur-worshipping in khaki, is a dead loss to the military efficiency of the country. Every man that is needed or is likely to be needed for the actual operations of modern warfare can be got by combing out the cavalry, the brewing and distilling industries, the theatres and music halls, and the like unproductive occupations. The under-staffing of munition works, the diminution of their efficiency by the use of aged and female labour, is the straight course to failure in this war.

In X, in the forges and machine shops, I saw already too large a proportion of boys and grey heads.

War is a thing that changes very rapidly, and we have in the Tanks only the first of a great series of offensive developments. They are bound to be improved, at a great pace. The method of using them will change very rapidly. Any added invention will necessitate the scrapping of old types and the production of the new patterns in quantity. It is of supreme necessity to the Allies if they are to win this war outright that the lead in inventions and enterprise which the British have won over the Germans in this matter should be retained. It is our game now to press the advantage for all it is worth. We have to keep ahead to win. We cannot do so unless we have unstinted men and unstinted material to produce each new development as its use is realised.

Given that much, the Tank will enormously enhance the advantage

of the new offensive method on the French front; the method that is of gun demolition after aerial photography, followed by an advance; it is a huge addition to our prospect of decisive victory. What does it do? It solves two problems. The existing Tank affords a means of advancing against machine-gun fire and of destroying wire and machine guns without much risk of loss, so soon as the big guns have done their duty by the enemy guns. And also behind the Tank itself, it is useless to conceal, lies the possibility of bringing up big guns and big gun ammunition, across nearly any sort of country, as fast as the advance can press forward. Hitherto every advance has paid a heavy toll to the machine gun, and every advance has had to halt after a couple of miles or so while the big guns (taking five or six days for the job) toiled up to the new positions.

4

It is impossible to restrain a note of sharp urgency from what one has to say about these developments. The Tanks remove the last technical difficulties in our way to decisive victory and a permanent peace; they also afford a reason for straining every nerve to bring about a decision and peace soon. At the risk of seeming an imaginative alarmist I would like to point out the reasons these things disclose for hurrying this war to a decision and doing our utmost to arrange the world's affairs so as to make another war improbable. Already these serio-comic Tanks, weighing something over twenty tons or so, have gone slithering around and sliding over dead and wounded men. That is not an incident for sensitive minds to dwell upon, but it is a mere little child's play anticipation of what the big land ironclads /that are bound to come if there is no world pacification/, are going to do.

What lies behind the Tank depends upon this fact; there is no

definable upward limit of mass. Upon that I would lay all the stress possible, because everything turns upon that.

You cannot make a land ironclad so big and heavy but that you cannot make a caterpillar track wide enough and strong enough to carry it forward. Tanks are quite possible that will carry twenty-inch or twenty-five inch guns, besides minor armament. Such Tanks may be undesirable; the production may exceed the industrial resources of any empire to produce; but there is no inherent impossibility in such things. There are not even the same limitations as to draught and docking accommodation that sets bounds to the size of battleships. It follows, therefore, as a necessary deduction that if the world's affairs are so left at the end of the war that the race of armaments continues, that Tank will develop steadily into a tremendous instrument of warfare, driven by engines of scores of thousands of horse-power, tracking on a track scores of hundreds of yards wide and weighing hundreds or thousands of tons. Nothing but a world agreement not to do so can prevent this logical development of the land ironclad. Such a structure will make wheel-ruts scores of feet deep; it will plough up, devastate and destroy the country it passes over altogether.

For my own part I never imagined the land ironclad idea would get loose into war. I thought that the military intelligence was essentially unimaginative and that such an aggressive military power as Germany, dominated by military people, would never produce anything of the sort. I thought that this war would be fought out without Tanks and that then war would come to an end. For of course it is mere stupidity that makes people doubt the ultimate ending of war. I have been so far justified in these expectations of mine, that it is not from military sources that these things have come. They have been thrust upon the soldiers from without. But now that they are loose, now that they are in war, we have to face their full possibilities, to use our

advantage in them and press on to the end of the war. In support of a photo-aero directed artillery, even our present Tanks can be used to complete an invisible offensive. We shall not so much push as ram. It is doubtful if the Germans can get anything of the sort into action before six months are out. We ought to get the war on to German soil before the Tanks have grown to more than three or four times their present size. Then it will not matter so much how much bigger they grow. It will be the German landscape that will suffer.

After one has seen the actual Tanks it is not very difficult to close one's eyes and figure the sort of Tank that may be arguing with Germany in a few months' time about the restoration of Belgium and Serbia and France, the restoration of the sunken tonnage, the penalties of the various Zeppelin and submarine murders, the freedom of seas and land alike from piracy, the evacuation of all Poland including Posen and Cracow, and the guarantees for the future peace of Europe. The machine will be perhaps as big as a destroyer and more heavily armed and equipped. It will swim over and through the soil at a pace of ten or twelve miles an hour. In front of it will be corn, land, neat woods, orchards, pasture, gardens, villages and towns. It will advance upon its belly with a swaying motion, devouring the ground beneath it. Behind it masses of soil and rock, lumps of turf, splintered wood, bits of houses, occasional streaks of red, will drop from its track, and it will leave a wake, six or seven times as wide as a high road, from which all soil, all cultivation, all semblance to cultivated or cultivatable land will have disappeared. It will not even be a track of soil. It will be a track of subsoil laid bare. It will be a flayed strip of nature. In the course of its fighting the monster may have to turnabout. It will then halt and spin slowly round, grinding out an arena of desolation with a diameter equal to its length. If it has to retreat and advance again these streaks and holes of destruction will increase and multiply. Behind the fighting line

these monsters will manoeuvre to and fro, destroying the land for all ordinary agricultural purposes for ages to come. The first imaginative account of the land ironclad that was ever written concluded with the words, "They are the /reductio ad absurdum/ of war." They are, and it is to the engineers, the ironmasters, the workers and the inventive talent of Great Britain and France that we must look to ensure that it is in Germany, the great teacher of war, that this demonstration of war's ultimate absurdity is completed.

For forty years Frankenstein Germany invoked war, turned every development of material and social science to aggressive ends, and at last when she felt the time was ripe she let loose the new monster that she had made of war to cow the spirit of mankind. She set the thing trampling through Belgium. She cannot grumble if at last it comes home, stranger and more dreadful even than she made it, trampling the German towns and fields with German blood upon it and its eyes towards Berlin.

This logical development of the Tank idea may seem a gloomy prospect for mankind. But it is open to question whether the tremendous development of warfare that has gone on in the last two years does after all open a prospect of unmitigated gloom. There has been a good deal of cheap and despondent sneering recently at the phrase, "The war that will end war." It is still possible to maintain that that may be a correct description of this war. It has to be remembered that war, as the aeroplane and the Tank have made it, has already become an impossible luxury for any barbaric or uncivilised people. War on the grade that has been achieved on the Somme predicates an immense industrialism behind it. Of all the States in the world only four can certainly be said to be fully capable of sustaining war at the level to which it has now been brought upon the western front. These are Britain, France, Germany, and the United States of America. Less certainly equal to the effort are Italy, Japan,

Russia, and Austria. These eight powers are the only powers /capable of warfare under modern conditions./ Five are already Allies and one is incurably pacific. There is no other power or people in the world that can go to war now without the consent and connivance of these great powers. If we consider their alliances, we may count it that the matter rests now between two groups of Allies and one neutral power. So that while on the one hand the development of modern warfare of which the Tank is the present symbol opens a prospect of limitless senseless destruction, it opens on the other hand a prospect of organised world control. This Tank development must ultimately bring the need of a real permanent settlement within the compass of the meanest of diplomatic intelligences. A peace that will restore competitive armaments has now become a less desirable prospect for everyone than a continuation of the war. Things were bad enough before, when the land forces were still in a primitive phase of infantry, cavalry and artillery, and when the only real race to develop monsters and destructors was for sea power. But the race for sea power before 1914 was mere child's play to the breeding of engineering monstrosities for land warfare that must now follow any indeterminate peace settlement. I am no blind believer in the wisdom of mankind, but I cannot believe that men are so insensate and headstrong as to miss the plain omens of the present situation.

So that after all the cheerful amusement the sight of a Tank causes may not be so very unreasonable. These things may be no more than one of those penetrating flashes of wit that will sometimes light up and dispel the contentions of an angry man. If they are not that, then they are the grimmest jest that ever set men grinning. Wait and see, if you do not believe me.

HOW PEOPLE THINK ABOUT THE WAR

I. DO THEY REALLY THINK AT ALL?

All human affairs are mental affairs; the bright ideas of to-day are the realities of to-morrow. The real history of mankind is the history of how ideas have arisen, how they have taken possession of men's minds, how they have struggled, altered, proliferated, decayed. There is nothing in this war at all but a conflict of ideas, traditions, and mental habits. The German Will clothed in conceptions of aggression and fortified by cynical falsehood, struggles against the fundamental sanity of the German mind and the confused protest of mankind. So that the most permanently important thing in the tragic process of this war is the change of opinion that is going on. What are people making of it? Is it producing any great common understandings, any fruitful unanimities?

No doubt it is producing enormous quantities of cerebration, but is it anything more than chaotic and futile cerebration? We are told all sorts of things in answer to that, things without a scrap of evidence or probability to support them. It is, we are assured, turning people to religion, making them moral and thoughtful. It is also, we are assured with equal confidence, turning them to despair and moral disaster. It will be followed by (1) a period of moral renaissance, and (2) a debauch. It is going to make the workers (1) more and (2) less obedient and industrious. It is (1) inuring men to war and (2) filling them with a passionate resolve never to suffer war again. And so on. I propose now to ask what is really happening in this matter? How is human opinion changing? I have opinions of my own and they are bound to colour my discussion. The reader must allow for that, and as far as possible I will remind him where necessary to make his allowance.

Now first I would ask, is any really continuous and thorough mental process going on at all about this war? I mean, is there any considerable number of people who are seeing it as a whole, taking it in as a whole, trying to get a general idea of it from which they can form directing conclusions for the future? Is there any considerable number of people even trying to do that? At any rate let me point out first that there is quite an enormous mass of people who--in spite of the fact that their minds are concentrated on aspects of this war, who are at present hearing, talking, experiencing little else than the war--are nevertheless neither doing nor trying to do anything that deserves to be called thinking about it at all. They may even be suffering quite terribly by it. But they are no more mastering its causes, reasons, conditions, and the possibility of its future prevention than a monkey that has been rescued in a scorching condition from the burning of a house will have mastered the problem of a fire. It is just happening to and about them. It may, for anything they have learnt about it, happen to them again.

A vast majority of people are being swamped by the spectacular side of the business. It was very largely my fear of being so swamped myself that made me reluctant to go as a spectator to the front. I knew that my chances of being hit by a bullet were infinitesimal, but I was extremely afraid of being hit by some too vivid impression. I was afraid that I might see some horribly wounded man or some decayed dead body that would so scar my memory and stamp such horror into me as to reduce me to a mere useless, gibbering, stop-the-war-at-any-price pacifist. Years ago my mind was once darkened very badly for some weeks with a kind of fear and distrust of life through a sudden unexpected encounter one tranquil evening with a drowned body. But in this journey in Italy and France, although I have had glimpses of much death and seen many wounded men, I have had no really horrible

impressions at all. That side of the business has, I think, been overwritten. The thing that haunts me most is the impression of a prevalent relapse into extreme untidiness, of a universal discomfort, of fields, and of ruined houses treated disregardedly.... But that is not what concerns us now in this discussion. What concerns us now is the fact that this war is producing spectacular effects so tremendous and incidents so strange, so remarkable, so vivid, that the mind forgets both causes and consequences and simply sits down to stare.

For example, there is this business of the Zeppelin raids in England. It is a supremely silly business; it is the most conclusive demonstration of the intellectual inferiority of the German to the Western European that it should ever have happened. There was the clearest /a priori/ case against the gas-bag. I remember the discussions ten or twelve years ago in which it was established to the satisfaction of every reasonable man that ultimately the "heavier than air" machine (as we called it then) must fly better than the gas-bag, and still more conclusively that no gas-bag was conceivable that could hope to fight and defeat aeroplanes. Nevertheless the German, with that dull faith of his in mere "Will," persisted along his line. He knew instinctively that he could not produce aviators to meet the Western European; all his social instincts made him cling to the idea of a great motherly, almost sow-like bag of wind above him. At an enormous waste of resources Germany has produced these futile monsters, that drift in the darkness over England promiscuously dropping bombs on fields and houses. They are now meeting the fate that was demonstrably certain ten years ago. If they found us unready for them it is merely that we were unable to imagine so idiotic an enterprise would ever be seriously sustained and persisted in. We did not believe in the probability of Zeppelin raids any more than we believed that Germany would force the world into war. It was a thing too silly to be believed. But they came--to their certain fate. In the

month after I returned from France and Italy, no less than four of these fatuities were exploded and destroyed within thirty miles of my Essex home.... There in chosen phrases you have the truth about these things. But now mark the perversion of thought due to spectacular effect.

I find over the Essex countryside, which has been for more than a year and a half a highway for Zeppelins, a new and curious admiration for them that has arisen out of these very disasters. Previously they were regarded with dislike and a sort of distrust, as one might regard a sneaking neighbour who left his footsteps in one's garden at night. But the Zeppelins of Billericay and Potter's Bar are--heroic things. (The Cuffley one came down too quickly, and the fourth one which came down for its crew to surrender is despised.) I have heard people describe the two former with eyes shining with enthusiasm.

"First," they say, "you saw a little round red glow that spread. Then you saw the whole Zeppelin glowing. Oh, it was /beautiful!/ Then it began to turn over and come down, and it flames and pieces began to break away. And then down it came, leaving flaming pieces all up the sky. At last it was a pillar of fire eight thousand feet high.... Everyone said, 'Oooooo!' And then someone pointed out the little aeroplane lit up by the flare--such a leetle thing up there in the night! It is the greatest thing I have ever seen. Oh! the most wonderful--most wonderful!"

There is a feeling that the Germans really must after all be a splendid people to provide such magnificent pyrotechnics.

Some people in London the other day were pretending to be shocked by an American who boasted that he had been in "two /bully/ bombardments," but he was only saying what everyone feels more or less. We are at a spectacle that--as a spectacle--our grandchildren will envy. I understand now better the story of

the man who stared at the sparks raining up from his own house as it burnt in the night and whispered "/Lovely! Lovely!/"

The spectacular side of the war is really an enormous distraction from thought. And against thought there also fights the native indolence of the human mind. The human mind, it seems, was originally developed to think about the individual; it thinks reluctantly about the species. It takes refuge from that sort of thing if it possibly can. And so the second great preventive of clear thinking is the tranquillising platitude.

The human mind is an instrument very easily fatigued. Only a few exceptions go on thinking restlessly--to the extreme exasperation of their neighbours. The normal mind craves for decisions, even wrong or false decisions rather than none. It clutches at comforting falsehoods. It loves to be told, "/There/, don't you worry. That'll be all right. That's /settled./" This war has come as an almost overwhelming challenge to mankind. To some of us it seems as if it were the Sphynx proffering the alternative of its riddle or death. Yet the very urgency of this challenge to think seems to paralyse the critical intelligence of very many people altogether. They will say, "This war is going to produce enormous changes in everything." They will then subside mentally with a feeling of having covered the whole ground in a thoroughly safe manner. Or they will adopt an air of critical aloofness. They will say, "How is it possible to foretell what may happen in this tremendous sea of change?" And then, with an air of superior modesty, they will go on doing--whatever they feel inclined to do. Many others, a degree less simple in their methods, will take some entirely partial aspect, arrive at some guesswork decision upon that, and then behave as though that met every question we have to face. Or they will make a sort of admonitory forecast that is conditional upon the good behaviour of other people. "Unless the Trade Unions are more reasonable," they will say. Or, "Unless the shipping

interest is grappled with and controlled." Or, "Unless England wakes up." And with that they seem to wash their hands of further responsibility for the future.

One delightful form of put-off is the sage remark, "Let us finish the war first, and then let us ask what is going to happen after it." One likes to think of the beautiful blank day after the signing of the peace when these wise minds swing round to pick up their deferred problems....

I submit that a man has not done his duty by himself as a rational creature unless he has formed an idea of what is going on, as one complicated process, until he has formed an idea sufficiently definite for him to make it the basis of a further idea, which is his own relationship to that process. He must have some notion of what the process is going to do to him, and some notion of what he means to do, if he can, to the process. That is to say, he must not only have an idea how the process is going, but also an idea of how he wants it to go. It seems so natural and necessary for a human brain to do this that it is hard to suppose that everyone has not more or less attempted it. But few people, in Great Britain at any rate, have the habit of frank expression, and when people do not seem to have made out any of these things for themselves there is a considerable element of secretiveness and inexpressiveness to be allowed for before we decide that they have not in some sort of fashion done so. Still, after all allowances have been made, there remains a vast amount of jerry-built and ready-made borrowed stuff in most of people's philosophies of the war. The systems of authentic opinion in this world of thought about the war are like comparatively rare thin veins of living mentality in a vast world of dead repetitions and echoed suggestions. And that being the case, it is quite possible that history after the war, like history before the war, will not be so much a display of human will and purpose as a resultant of human vacillations,

obstructions, and inadvertences. We shall still be in a drama of blind forces following the line of least resistance.

One of the people who is often spoken of as if he were doing an enormous amount of concentrated thinking is "the man in the trenches." We are told--by gentlemen writing for the most part at home--of the most extraordinary things that are going on in those devoted brains, how they are getting new views about the duties of labour, religion, morality, monarchy, and any other notions that the gentleman at home happens to fancy and wished to push. Now that is not at all the impression of the khaki mentality I have reluctantly accepted as correct. For the most part the man in khaki is up against a round of tedious immediate duties that forbid consecutive thought; he is usually rather crowded and not very comfortable. He is bored.

The real horror of modern war, when all is said and done, is the boredom. To get killed or wounded may be unpleasant, but it is at any rate interesting; the real tragedy is in the desolated fields, the desolated houses, the desolated hours and days, the bored and desolated minds that hang behind the melee and just outside the melee. The peculiar beastliness of the German crime is the way the German war cant and its consequences have seized upon and paralysed the mental movement of Western Europe. Before 1914 war was theoretically unpopular in every European country; we thought of it as something tragic and dreadful. Now everyone knows by experience that it is something utterly dirty and detestable. We thought it was the Nemean lion, and we have found it is the Augean stable. But being bored by war and hating war is quite unproductive /unless you are thinking about its nature and causes so thoroughly that you will presently be able to take hold of it and control it and end it./ It is no good for everyone to say unanimously, "We will have no more war," unless you have thought out how to avoid it, and mean to bring that end about. It is as

if everyone said, "We will have no more catarrh," or "no more flies," or "no more east wind." And my point is that the immense sorrows at home in every European country and the vast boredom of the combatants are probably not really producing any effective remedial mental action at all, and will not do so unless we get much more thoroughly to work upon the thinking-out process.

In such talks as I could get with men close up to the front I found beyond this great boredom and attempts at distraction only very specialised talk about changes in the future. Men were keen upon questions of army promotion, of the future of conscription, of the future of the temporary officer, upon the education of boys in relation to army needs. But the war itself was bearing them all upon its way, as unquestioned and uncontrolled as if it were the planet on which they lived.

II. THE YIELDING PACIFIST AND THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

1

Among the minor topics that people are talking about behind the western fronts is the psychology of the Yielding Pacifist and the Conscientious Objector. Of course, we are all pacifists nowadays; I know of no one who does not want not only to end this war but to put an end to war altogether, except those blood-red terrors Count Reventlow, Mr. Leo Maxse--how he does it on a vegetarian dietary I cannot imagine!--and our wild-eyed desperados of /The Morning Post./ But most of the people I meet, and most of the people I met on my journey, are pacifists like myself who want to /make/ peace by beating the armed man until he gives in and admits the error of his ways, disarming him and reorganising the world for the forcible suppression of military adventures in the future. They want belligerency put

into the same category as burglary, as a matter of forcible suppression. The Yielding Pacifist who will accept any sort of peace, and the Conscientious Objector who will not fight at all, are not of that opinion.

Both Italy and France produce parallel types to those latter, but it would seem that in each case England displays the finer developments. The Latin mind is directer than the English, and its standards--shall I say?--more primitive; it gets more directly to the fact that here are men who will not fight. And it is less charitable. I was asked quite a number of times for the English equivalent of an /embusque./ "We don't generalise," I said, "we treat each case on its merits!"

One interlocutor near Udine was exercised by our Italian Red Cross work.

"Here," he said, "are sixty or seventy young Englishmen, all fit for military service.... Of course they go under fire, but it is not like being junior officers in the trenches. Not one of them has been killed or wounded."

He reflected. "One, I think, has been decorated," he said....

My French and Italian are only for very rough common jobs; when it came to explaining the Conscientious Objector sympathetically they broke down badly. I had to construct long parenthetical explanations of our antiquated legislative methods to show how it was that the "conscientious objector" had been so badly defined. The foreigner does not understand the importance of vague definition in British life. "Practically, of course, we offered to exempt anyone who conscientiously objected to fight or serve. Then the Pacifist and German people started a campaign to enrol objectors. Of course every shirker, every coward and slacker in the country decided at once to be a conscientious objector.

Anyone but a British legislator could have foreseen that. Then we started Tribunals to wrangle with the objectors about their /bona fides./ Then the Pacifists and the Pro-Germans issued little leaflets and started correspondence courses to teach people exactly how to lie to the Tribunals. Trouble about freedom of the pamphleteer followed. I had to admit--it has been rather a sloppy business. "The people who made the law knew their own minds, but we English are not an expressive people."

These are not easy things to say in Elementary (and slightly Decayed) French or in Elementary and Corrupt Italian.

"But why do people support the sham conscientious objector and issue leaflets to help him--when there is so much big work clamouring to be done?"

"That," I said, "is the Whig tradition."

When they pressed me further, I said: "I am really the questioner. I am visiting /your/ country, and you have to tell /me/ things. It is not right that I should do all the telling. Tell me all about Romain Rolland."

And so I pressed them about the official socialists in Italy and the Socialist minority in France until I got the question out of the net of national comparisons and upon a broader footing. In several conversations we began to work out in general terms the psychology of those people who were against the war. But usually we could not get to that; my interlocutors would insist upon telling me just what they would like to do or just what they would like to see done to stop-the-war pacifists and conscientious objectors; pleasant rather than fruitful imaginative exercises from which I could effect no more than platitudinous uplifts.

But the general drift of such talks as did seem to penetrate the question was this, that among these stop-the-war people there are really three types. First there is a type of person who hates violence and the infliction of pain under any circumstances, and who have a mystical belief in the rightness (and usually the efficacy) of non-resistance. These are generally Christians, and then their cardinal text is the instruction to "turn the other cheek." Often they are Quakers. If they are consistent they are vegetarians and wear /Lederlos/ boots. They do not desire police protection for their goods. They stand aloof from all the force and conflict of life. They have always done so. This is an understandable and respectable type. It has numerous Hindu equivalents. It is a type that finds little difficulty about exemptions--provided the individual has not been too recently converted to his present habits. But it is not the prevalent type in stop-the-war circles. Such genuine ascetics do not number more than a thousand or so, all three of our western allied countries. The mass of the stop-the-war people is made up quite other elements.

2

In the complex structure of the modern community there are two groups or strata or pockets in which the impulse of social obligation, the gregarious sense of a common welfare, is at its lowest; one of these is the class of the Resentful Employee, the class of people who, without explanation, adequate preparation or any chance, have been shoved at an early age into uncongenial work and never given a chance to escape, and the other is the class of people with small fixed incomes or with small salaries earned by routine work, or half independent people practising some minor artistic or literary craft, who have led uneventful, irresponsible lives from their youth up, and never came at any point into relations of service to the state. This latter class

was more difficult to define than the former--because it is more various within itself. My French friends wanted to talk of the "Psychology of the Rentier." I was for such untranslatable phrases as the "Genteel Whig," or the "Donnish Liberal." But I lit up an Italian--he is a Milanese manufacturer--with "these Florentine English who would keep Italy in a glass case." "I know," he said. Before I go on to expand this congenial theme, let me deal first with the Resentful Employee, who is a much more considerable, and to me a much more sympathetic, figure in European affairs. I began life myself as a Resentful Employee. By the extremest good luck I have got my mind and spirit out of the distortions of that cramping beginning, but I can still recall even the anger of those old days.

He becomes an employee between thirteen and fifteen; he is made to do work he does not like for no other purpose that he can see except the profit and glory of a fortunate person called his employer, behind whom stand church and state blessing and upholding the relationship. He is not allowed to feel that he has any share whatever in the employer's business, or that any end is served but the employer's profit. He cannot see that the employer acknowledges any duty to the state. Neither church nor state seems to insist that the employer has any public function. At no point does the employee come into a clear relationship of mutual obligation with the state. There does not seem to be any way out for the employee from a life spent in this subordinate, toilsome relationship. He feels put upon and cheated out of life. He is without honour. If he is a person of ability or stubborn temper he struggles out of his position; if he is a kindly and generous person he blames his "luck" and does his work and lives his life as cheerfully as possible--and so live the bulk of our amazing European workers; if he is a being of great magnanimity he is content to serve for the ultimate good of the race; if he has imagination, he says, "Things will not always be like this," and becomes a socialist or a guild socialist, and

tries to educate the employer to a sense of reciprocal duty; but if he is too human for any of these things, then he begins to despise and hate the employer and the system that made him. He wants to hurt them. Upon that hate it is easy to trade.

A certain section of what is called the Socialist press and the Socialist literature in Europe is no doubt great-minded; it seeks to carve a better world out of the present. But much of it is socialist only in name. Its spirit is Anarchistic. Its real burthen is not construction but grievance; it tells the bitter tale of the employee, it feeds and organises his malice, it schemes annoyance and injury for the hated employer. The state and the order of the world is confounded with the capitalist. Before the war the popular so-called socialist press reeked with the cant of rebellion, the cant of any sort of rebellion. "I'm a rebel," was the silly boast of the young disciple. "Spoil something, set fire to something," was held to be the proper text for any girl or lad of spirit. And this blind discontent carried on into the war. While on the one hand a great rush of men poured into the army saying, "Thank God! we can serve our country at last instead of some beastly profiteer," a sourer remnant, blind to the greater issues of the war, clung to the reasonless proposition, "the state is only for the Capitalist. This war is got up by Capitalists. Whatever has to be done--/we are rebels./"

Such a typical paper as the British /Labour Leader/, for example, may be read in vain, number after number, for any sound and sincere constructive proposal. It is a prolonged scream of extreme individualism, a monotonous repetition of incoherent discontent with authority, with direction, with union, with the European effort. It wants to do nothing. It just wants effort to stop--even at the price of German victory. If the whole fabric of society in western Europe were to be handed over to those pseudo-socialists to-morrow, to be administered for the

common good, they would fly the task in terror. They would make excuses and refuse the undertaking. They do not want the world to go right. The very idea of the world going right does not exist in their minds. They are embodied discontent and hatred, making trouble, and that is all they are. They want to be "rebels"--to be admired as "rebels".

That is the true psychology of the Resentful Employee. He is a de-socialised man. His sense of the State has been destroyed.

The Resentful Employees are the outcome of our social injustices. They are the failures of our social and educational systems. We may regret their pitiful degradation, we may exonerate them from blame; none the less they are a pitiful crew. I have seen the hardship of the trenches, the gay and gallant wounded. I do a little understand what our soldiers, officers and men alike, have endured and done. And though I know I ought to allow for all that I have stated, I cannot regard these conscientious objectors with anything but contempt. Into my house there pours a dismal literature rehearsing the hardships of these men who set themselves up to be martyrs for liberty; So and So, brave hero, has been sworn at--positively sworn at by a corporal; a nasty rough man came into the cell of So and So and dropped several h's; So and So, refusing to undress and wash, has been undressed and washed, and soap was rubbed into his eyes--perhaps purposely; the food and accommodation are not of the best class; the doctors in attendance seem hasty; So and So was put into a damp bed and has got a nasty cold. Then I recall a jolly vanload of wounded men I saw out there....

But after all, we must be just. A church and state that permitted these people to be thrust into dreary employment in their early 'teens, without hope or pride, deserves such citizens as these. The marvel is that there are so few. There are a poor thousand or so of these hopeless, resentment-poisoned creatures

in Great Britain. Against five willing millions. The Allied countries, I submit, have not got nearly all the conscientious objectors they deserve.

3

If the Resentful Employee provides the emotional impulse of the resisting pacifist, whose horizon is bounded by his one passionate desire that the particular social system that has treated him so ill should collapse and give in, and its leaders and rulers be humiliated and destroyed, the intellectual direction of a mischievous pacifism comes from an entirely different class.

The Genteel Whig, though he differs very widely in almost every other respect from the Resentful Employee, has this much in common, that he has never been drawn into the whirl of collective life in any real and assimilative fashion. This is what is the matter with both of them. He is a little loose, shy, independent person. Except for eating and drinking--in moderation, he has never done anything real from the day he was born. He has frequently not even faced the common challenge of matrimony. Still more frequently is he childless, or the daring parent of one particular child. He has never traded nor manufactured. He has drawn his dividends or his salary with an entire unconsciousness of any obligations to policemen or navy for these punctual payments. Probably he has never ventured even to reinvest his little legacy. He is acutely aware of possessing an exceptionally fine intelligence, but he is entirely unconscious of a fundamental unreality. Nothing has ever occurred to him to make him ask why the mass of men were either not possessed of his security or discontented with it. The impulses that took his school friends out upon all sorts of odd feats and adventures struck him as needless. As he grew up he turned with an equal

distrust from passion or ambition. His friends went out after love, after adventure, after power, after knowledge, after this or that desire, and became men. But he noted merely that they became fleshly, that effort strained them, that they were sometimes angry or violent or heated. He could not but feel that theirs were vulgar experiences, and he sought some finer exercise for his exceptional quality. He pursued art or philosophy or literature upon their more esoteric levels, and realised more and more the general vulgarity and coarseness of the world about him, and his own detachment. The vulgarity and crudity of the things nearest him impressed him most; the dreadful insincerity of the Press, the meretriciousness of success, the loudness of the rich, the baseness of common people in his own land. The world overseas had by comparison a certain glamour. Except that when you said "United States" to him he would draw the air sharply between his teeth and beg you not to...

Nobody took him by the collar and shook him.

If our world had considered the advice of William James and insisted upon national service from everyone, national service in the drains or the nationalised mines or the nationalised deep-sea fisheries if not in the army or navy, we should not have had any such men. If it had insisted that wealth and property are no more than a trust for the public benefit, we should have had no genteel indispensables. These discords in our national unanimity are the direct consequence of our bad social organisation. We permit the profiteer and the usurer; they evoke the response of the Reluctant Employee, and the inheritor of their wealth becomes the Genteel Whig.

But that is by the way. It was of course natural and inevitable that the German onslaught upon Belgium and civilisation generally should strike these recluse minds not as a monstrous ugly wickedness to be resisted and overcome at any cost, but merely as

a nerve-racking experience. Guns were going off on both sides. The Genteel Whig was chiefly conscious of a repulsive vast excitement all about him, in which many people did inelegant and irrational things. They waved flags--nasty little flags. This child of the ages, this last fruit of the gigantic and tragic tree of life, could no more than stick its fingers in its ears as say, "Oh, please, do /all/ stop!" and then as the strain grew intenser and intenser set itself with feeble pawings now to clamber "Au-dessus de la Melee," and now to--in some weak way--stop the conflict. ("Au-dessus de la Melee"--as the man said when they asked him where he was when the bull gored his sister.) The efforts to stop the conflict at any price, even at the price of entire submission to the German Will, grew more urgent as the necessity that everyone should help against the German Thing grew more manifest.

Of all the strange freaks of distressed thinking that this war has produced, the freaks of the Genteel Whig have been among the most remarkable. With an air of profound wisdom he returns perpetually to his proposition that there are faults on both sides. To say that is his conception of impartiality. I suppose that if a bull gored his sister he would say that there were faults on both sides; his sister ought not to have strayed into the field, she was wearing a red hat of a highly provocative type; she ought to have been a cow and then everything would have been different. In the face of the history of the last forty years, the Genteel Whig struggles persistently to minimise the German outrage upon civilisation and to find excuses for Germany. He does this, not because he has any real passion for falsehood, but because by training, circumstance, and disposition he is passionately averse from action with the vulgar majority and from self-sacrifice in a common cause, and because he finds in the justification of Germany and, failing that, in the blackening of the Allies to an equal blackness, one line of defence against the wave of impulse that threatens to submerge his private self. But

when at last that line is forced he is driven back upon others equally extraordinary. You can often find simultaneously in the same Pacifist paper, and sometimes even in the utterances of the same writer, two entirely incompatible statements. The first is that Germany is so invincible that it is useless to prolong the war since no effort of the Allies is likely to produce any material improvement in their position, and the second is that Germany is so thoroughly beaten that she is now ready to abandon militarism and make terms and compensations entirely acceptable to the countries she has forced into war. And when finally facts are produced to establish the truth that Germany, though still largely wicked and impenitent, is being slowly and conclusively beaten by the sanity, courage and persistence of the Allied common men, then the Genteel Whig retorts with his last defensive absurdity. He invents a national psychology for Germany. Germany, he invents, loves us and wants to be our dearest friend. Germany has always loved us. The Germans are a loving, unenvious people. They have been a little misled--but nice people do not insist upon that fact. But beware of beating Germany, beware of humiliating Germany; then indeed trouble will come. Germany will begin to dislike us. She will plan a revenge. Turning aside from her erstwhile innocent career, she may even think of hate. What are our obligations to France, Italy, Serbia and Russia, what is the happiness of a few thousands of the Herero, a few millions of the Belgians--whose numbers moreover are constantly diminishing--when we might weigh them against the danger, the most terrible danger, of incurring /permanent German hostility?.../

A Frenchman I talked to knew better than that. "What will happen to Germany," I asked, "if we are able to do so to her and so; would she take to dreams of a /Revanche?/"

"She will take to Anglomania," he said, and added after a flash of reflection, "In the long run it will be the worse for you."

III. THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

1

One of the indisputable things about the war, so far as Britain and France go--and I have reason to believe that on a lesser scale things are similar in Italy--is that it has produced a very great volume of religious thought and feeling. About Russia in these matters we hear but little at the present time, but one guesses at parallelism. People habitually religious have been stirred to new depths of reality and sincerity, and people are thinking of religion who never thought of religion before. But as I have already pointed out, thinking and feeling about a matter is of no permanent value unless something is /thought out/, unless there is a change of boundary or relationship, and it an altogether different question to ask whether any definite change is resulting from this universal ferment. If it is not doing so, then the sleeper merely dreams a dream that he will forget again....

Now in no sort of general popular mental activity is there so much froth and waste as in religious excitements. This has been the case in all periods of religious revival. The number who are rather impressed, who for a few days or weeks take to reading their Bibles or going to a new place of worship or praying or fasting or being kind and unselfish, is always enormous in relation to the people whose lives are permanently changed. The effort needed if a contemporary is to blow off the froth, is always very considerable.

Among the froth that I would blow off is I think most of the tremendous efforts being made in England by the Anglican church

to attract favourable attention to itself /apropos/ of the war. I came back from my visit to the Somme battlefields to find the sylvan peace of Essex invaded by a number of ladies in blue dresses adorned with large white crosses, who, regardless of the present shortage of nurses, were visiting every home in the place on some mission of invitation whose details remained obscure. So far as I was able to elucidate this project, it was in the nature of a magic incantation; a satisfactory end of the war was to be brought about by convergent prayer and religious assiduities. The mission was shy of dealing with me personally, although as a lapsed communicant I should have thought myself a particularly hopeful field for Anglican effort, and it came to my wife and myself merely for our permission and countenance in an appeal to our domestic servants. My wife consulted the household; it seemed very anxious to escape from that appeal, and as I respect Christianity sufficiently to detest the identification of its services with magic processes, the mission retired--civilly repulsed. But the incident aroused an uneasy curiosity in my mind with regard to the general trend of Anglican teaching and Anglican activities at the present time. The trend of my enquiries is to discover the church much more incoherent and much less religious--in any decent sense of the word--than I had supposed it to be.

Organisation is the life of material and the death of mental and spiritual processes. There could be no more melancholy exemplification of this than the spectacle of the Anglican and Catholic churches at the present time, one using the tragic stresses of war mainly for pew-rent touting, and the other paralysed by its Austrian and South German political connections from any clear utterance upon the moral issues of the war. Through the opening phases of the war the Established Church of England was inconspicuous; this is no longer the case, but it may be doubted whether the change is altogether to its advantage. To me this is a very great disappointment. I have always had a very

high opinion of the intellectual values of the leading divines of both the Anglican and Catholic communions. The self-styled Intelligentsia of Great Britain is all too prone to sneer at their equipment; but I do not see how any impartial person can deny that Father Bernard Vaughn is in mental energy, vigour of expression, richness of thought and variety of information fully the equal of such an influential lay publicist as Mr. Horatio Bottomley. One might search for a long time among prominent laymen to find the equal of the Bishop of London. Nevertheless it is impossible to conceal the impression of tawdriness that this latter gentleman's work as head of the National Mission has left upon my mind. Attired in khaki he has recently been preaching in the open air to the people of London upon Tower Hill, Piccadilly, and other conspicuous places. Obsessed as I am by the humanities, and impressed as I have always been by the inferiority of material to moral facts, I would willingly have exchanged the sight of two burning Zeppelins for this spectacle of ecclesiastical fervour. But as it is, I am obliged to trust to newspaper reports and the descriptions of hearers and eye-witnesses. They leave to me but little doubt of the regrettable superficiality of the bishop's utterances.

We have a multitude of people chastened by losses, ennobled by a common effort, needing support in that effort, perplexed by the reality of evil and cruelty, questioning and seeking after God. What does the National Mission offer? On Tower Hill the bishop seems to have been chiefly busy with a wrangling demonstration that ten thousand a year is none too big a salary for a man subject to such demands and expenses as his see involves. So far from making anything out of his see he was, he declared, two thousand a year to the bad. Some day, when the church has studied efficiency, I suppose that bishops will have the leisure to learn something about the general state of opinion and education in their dioceses. The Bishop of London was evidently unaware of the almost automatic response of the sharp socialists

among his hearers. Their first enquiry would be to learn how he came by that mysterious extra two thousand a year with which he supplemented his stipend. How did he earn /that?/ And if he didn't earn it---! And secondly, they would probably have pointed out to him that his standard of housing, clothing, diet and entertaining was probably a little higher than theirs. It is really no proof of virtuous purity that a man's expenditure exceeds his income. And finally some other of his hearers were left unsatisfied by his silence with regard to the current proposal to pool all clerical stipends for the common purposes of the church. It is a reasonable proposal, and if bishops must dispute about stipends instead of preaching the kingdom of God, then they are bound to face it. The sooner they do so, the more graceful will the act be. From these personal apologetics the bishop took up the question of the exemption, at the request of the bishops, of the clergy from military service. It is one of our contrasts with French conditions--and it is all to the disadvantage of the British churches.

In his Piccadilly contribution to the National Mission of Repentance and Hope the bishop did not talk politics but sex. He gave his hearers the sort of stuff that is handed out so freely by the Cinema Theatres, White Slave Traffic talk, denunciations of "Night Hawks"--whatever "Night Hawks" may be--and so on. One this or another occasion the bishop--he boasts that he himself is a healthy bachelor--lavished his eloquence upon the Fall in the Birth Rate, and the duty of all married people, from paupers upward, to have children persistently. Now sex, like diet, is a department of conduct and a very important department, but /it isn't religion!/ The world is distressed by international disorder, by the monstrous tragedy of war; these little hot talks about indulgence and begetting have about as much to do with the vast issues that concern us as, let us say, a discussion of the wickedness of eating very new and indigestible bread. It is talking round and about the essential issue. It is fogging the

essential issue, which is the forgotten and neglected kingship of God. The sin that is stirring the souls of men is the sin of this war. It is the sin of national egotism and the devotion of men to loyalties, ambitions, sects, churches, feuds, aggressions, and divisions that are an outrage upon God's universal kingdom.

2

The common clergy of France, sharing the military obligations and the food and privations of their fellow parishioners, contrast very vividly with the home-staying types of the ministries of the various British churches. I met and talked to several. Near Frise there were some barge gunboats--they have since taken their place in the fighting, but then they were a surprise--and the men had been very anxious to have their craft visited and seen. The priest who came after our party to see if he could still arrange that, had been decorated for gallantry. Of course the English too have their gallant chaplains, but they are men of the officer caste, they are just young officers with peculiar collars; not men among men, as are the French priests.

There can be no doubt that the behaviour of the French priests in this war has enormously diminished anti-clerical bitterness in France. There can be no doubt that France is far more a religious country than it was before the war. But if you ask whether that means any return to the church, any reinstatement of the church, the answer is a doubtful one. Religion and the simple priest are stronger in France to-day; the church, I think, is weaker.

I trench on no theological discussion when I record the unfavourable impression made upon all western Europe by the failure of the Holy Father to pronounce definitely upon the

rights and wrongs of the war. The church has abrogated its right of moral judgement. Such at least seemed to be the opinion of the Frenchmen with whom I discussed a remarkable interview with Cardinal Gasparri that I found one morning in /Le Journal./

It was not the sort of interview to win the hearts of men who were ready to give their lives to set right what they believe to be the greatest outrage that has ever been inflicted upon Christendom, that is to say the forty-three years of military preparation and of diplomacy by threats that culminated in the ultimatum to Serbia, the invasion of Belgium and the murder of the Visé villagers. It was adorned with a large portrait of "Benoit XV.," looking grave and discouraging over his spectacles, and the headlines insisted it was "/La Pensee du Pape./" Cross-heads sufficiently indicated the general tone. One read:

/"Le Saint Siege impartial...
Au-dessus de la bataille...."/

The good Cardinal would have made a good lawyer. He had as little to say about God and the general righteousness of things as the Bishop of London. But he got in some smug reminders of the severance of diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Perhaps now France will be wiser. He pointed out that the Holy See in its Consistorial Allocution of January 22nd, 1915, invited the belligerents to observe the rules of war. Could anything more be done than that? Oh!--in the general issue of the war, if you want a judgement on the war as a whole, how is it possible that the Vatican to decide? Surely the French know that excellent principle of justice, /Audiatur et altera pars/, and how under existing circumstances can the Vatican do that...? The Vatican is cut off from communication with Austria and Germany. The Vatican has been deprived of its temporal power and local independence (another neat point)....

So France is bowed out. When peace is restored, the Vatican will perhaps be able to enquire if there was a big German army in 1914, if German diplomacy was aggressive from 1875 onward, if Belgium was invaded unrighteously, if (Catholic) Austria forced the pace upon (non-Catholic) Russia. But now--now the Holy See must remain as impartial as an unbought mascot in a shop window....

The next column of /Le Journal/ contained an account of the Armenian massacres; the blood of the Armenian cries out past the Holy Father to heaven; but then Armenians are after all heretics, and here again the principle of /Audiatur et altera pars/ comes in. Communications are not open with the Turks. Moreover, Armenians, like Serbs, are worse than infidels; they are heretics. Perhaps God is punishing them....

/Audiatur et altera pars/, and the Vatican has not forgotten the infidelity and disrespect of both France and Italy in the past. These are the things, it seems, that really matter to the Vatican. Cardinal Gasparri's portrait, in the same issue of /Le Journal/, displays a countenance of serene contentment, a sort of incarnate "Told-you-so."

So the Vatican lifts its pontifical skirts and shakes the dust of western Europe off its feet.

It is the most astounding renunciation in history.

Indubitably the Christian church took a wide stride from the kingship of God when it placed a golden throne for the unbaptised Constantine in the midst of its most sacred deliberations at Nicaea. But it seems to me that this abandonment of moral judgments in the present case by the Holy See is an almost wider step from the church's allegiance to God....

Thought about the great questions of life, thought and reasoned direction, this is what the multitude demands mutely and weakly, and what the organised churches are failing to give. They have not the courage of their creeds. Either their creeds are intellectual flummery or they are the solution to the riddles with which the world is struggling. But the churches make no mention of their creeds. They chatter about sex and the magic effect of church attendance and simple faith. If simple faith is enough, the churches and their differences are an imposture. Men are stirred to the deepest questions about life and God, and the Anglican church, for example, obliges--as I have described.

It is necessary to struggle against the unfavourable impression made by these things. They must not blind us to the deeper movement that is in progress in a quite considerable number of minds in England and France alike towards the realisation of the kingdom of God.

What I conceive to be the reality of the religious revival is to be found in quarters remote from the religious professionals. Let me give but one instance of several that occur to me. I met soon after my return from France a man who has stirred my curiosity for years, Mr. David Lubin, the prime mover in the organisation of the International Institute of Agriculture in Rome. It is a movement that has always appealed to my imagination. The idea is to establish and keep up to date a record of the food supplies in the world with a view to the ultimate world control of food supply and distribution. When its machinery has developed sufficiently to a control in the interests of civilisation of many other staples besides foodstuffs. It is in fact the suggestion and beginning of the economic world peace and the economic world state, just as the

Hague Tribunal is the first faint sketch of a legal world state. The King of Italy has met Mr. Lubin's idea with open hands. (It was because of this profoundly interesting experiment that in a not very widely known book of mine, /The World Set Free/ (May, 1914), in which I represented a world state as arising out of Armageddon, I made the first world conference meet at Brissago in Italian Switzerland under the presidency of the King of Italy.) So that when I found I could meet Mr. Lubin I did so very gladly. We lunched together in a pretty little room high over Knightsbridge, and talked through an afternoon.

He is a man rather after the type of Gladstone; he could be made to look like Gladstone in a caricature, and he has that compelling quality of intense intellectual excitement which was one of the great factors in the personal effectiveness of Gladstone. He is a Jew, but until I had talked to him for some time that fact did not occur to me. He is in very ill health, he has some weakness of the heart that grips him and holds him at times white and silent.

At first we talked of his Institute and its work. Then we came to shipping and transport. Whenever one talks now of human affairs one comes presently to shipping and transport generally. In Paris, in Italy, when I returned to England, everywhere I found "cost of carriage" was being discovered to be a question of fundamental importance. Yet transport, railroads and shipping, these vitally important services in the world's affairs, are nearly everywhere in private hands and run for profit. In the case of shipping they are run for profit on such antiquated lines that freights vary from day to day and from hour to hour. It makes the business of food supply a gamble. And it need not be a gamble.

But that is by the way in the present discussion. As we talked, the prospect broadened out from a prospect of the growing and

distribution of food to a general view of the world becoming one economic community.

I talked of various people I had been meeting in the previous few weeks. "So many of us," I said, "seem to be drifting away from the ideas of nationalism and faction and policy, towards something else which is larger. It is an idea of a right way of doing things for human purposes, independently of these limited and localised references. Take such things as international hygiene for example, take /this/ movement. We are feeling our way towards a bigger rule."

"The rule of Righteousness," said Mr. Lubin.

I told him that I had been coming more and more to the idea--not as a sentimentality or a metaphor, but as the ruling and directing idea, the structural idea, of all one's political and social activities--of the whole world as one state and community and of God as the King of that state.

"But /I/ say that," cried Mr. Lubin, "I have put my name to that. And--it is /here!/"

He struggled up, seized an Old Testament that lay upon a side table. He stood over it and rapped its cover. "It is /here/," he said, looking more like Gladstone than ever, "in the Prophets."

4

That is all I mean to tell at present of that conversation.

We talked of religion for two hours. Mr. Lubin sees things in terms of Israel and I do not. For all that we see things very

much after the same fashion. That talk was only one of a number of talks about religion that I have had with hard and practical men who want to get the world straighter than it is, and who perceive that they must have a leadership and reference outside themselves. That is why I assert so confidently that there is a real deep religious movement afoot in the world. But not one of those conversations could have gone on, it would have ceased instantly, if anyone bearing the uniform and brand of any organised religious body, any clergyman, priest, mollah, of suchlike advocate of the ten thousand patented religions in the world, had come in. He would have brought in his sectarian spites, his propaganda of church-going, his persecution of the heretic and the illegitimate, his ecclesiastical politics, his taboos, and his doctrinal touchiness.... That is why, though I perceive there is a great wave of religious revival in the world to-day, I doubt whether it bodes well for the professional religions....

The other day I was talking to an eminent Anglican among various other people and someone with an eye to him propounded this remarkable view.

"There are four stages between belief and utter unbelief. There are those who believe in God, those who doubt like Huxley the Agnostic, those who deny him like the Atheists but who do at least keep his place vacant, and lastly those who have set up a Church in his place. That is the last outrage of unbelief."

IV. THE RIDDLE OF THE BRITISH

All the French people I met in France seemed to be thinking and talking about the English. The English bring their own atmosphere with them; to begin with they are not so talkative, and I did not find among them anything like the same vigour of examination, the same resolve to understand the Anglo-French

reaction, that I found among the French. In intellectual processes I will confess that my sympathies are undisguisedly with the French; the English will never think nor talk clearly until they get clerical "Greek" and sham "humanities" out of their public schools and sincere study and genuine humanities in; our disingenuous Anglican compromise is like a cold in the English head, and the higher education in England is a training in evasion. This is an always lamentable state of affairs, but just now it is particularly lamentable because quite tremendous opportunities for the good of mankind turn on the possibility of a thorough and entirely frank mutual understanding between French, Italians, and English. For years there has been a considerable amount of systematic study in France of English thought and English developments. Upon almost any question of current English opinion and upon most current English social questions, the best studies are in French. But there has been little or no reciprocal activity. The English in France seem to confine their French studies to *La Vie Parisienne*. It is what they have been led to expect of French literature.

There can be no doubt in any reasonable mind that this war is binding France and England very closely together. They dare not quarrel for the next fifty years. They are bound to play a central part in the World League for the Preservation of Peace that must follow this struggle. There is no question of their practical union. It is a thing that must be. But it is remarkable that while the French mind is agog to apprehend every fact and detail it can about the British, to make the wisest and fullest use of our binding necessities, that strange English "incuria"--to use the new slang--attains to its most monumental in this matter.

So there is not much to say about how the British think about the French. They do not think. They feel. At the outbreak of the war, when the performance of France seemed doubtful, there was an

enormous feeling for France in Great Britain; it was like the formless feeling one has for a brother. It was as if Britain had discovered a new instinct. If France had crumpled up like paper, the English would have fought on passionately to restore her. That is ancient history now. Now the English still feel fraternal and fraternally proud; but in a mute way they are dazzled. Since the German attack on Verdun began, the French have achieved a crescendo. None of us could have imagined it. It did not seem possible to very many of us at the end of 1915 that either France or Germany could hold on for another year. There was much secret anxiety for France. It has given place now to unstinted confidence and admiration. In their astonishment the British are apt to forget the impressive magnitude of their own effort, the millions of soldiers, the innumerable guns, the endless torrent of supplies that pour into France to avenge the little army of Mons. It seems natural to us that we should so exert ourselves under the circumstances. I suppose it is wonderful, but, as a sample Englishman, I do not feel that it is at all wonderful. I did not feel it wonderful even when I saw the British aeroplanes lording it in the air over Martinpuich, and not a German to be seen. Since Michael would have it so, there, at last, they were.

There was a good deal of doubt in France about the vigour of the British effort, until the Somme offensive. All that had been dispelled in August when I reached Paris. There was not the shadow of a doubt remaining anywhere of the power and loyalty of the British. These preliminary assurances have to be made, because it is in the nature of the French mind to criticise, and it must not be supposed that criticisms of detail and method affect the fraternity and complete mutual confidence which is the stuff of the Anglo-French relationship.

Now first the French have been enormously astonished by the quality of the ordinary British soldiers in our new armies. One Colonial colonel said something almost incredible to me--almost incredible as coming as from a Frenchman; it was a matter to solemn for any compliments or polite exaggerations; he said in tones of wonder and conviction, "/They are as good as ours./" It was his acme of all possible praise.

That means any sort of British soldier. Unless he is assisted by a kilt the ordinary Frenchman is unable to distinguish between one sort of British soldier and another. He cannot tell--let the ardent nationalist mark the fact!--a Cockney from an Irishman or the Cardiff from the Essex note. He finds them all extravagantly and unquenchably cheerful and with a generosity--"like good children." There his praise is a little tinged by doubt. The British are reckless--recklessness in battle a Frenchman can understand, but they are also reckless about to-morrow's bread and whether the tent is safe against a hurricane in the night. He is struck too by the fact that they are much more vocal than the French troops, and that they seem to have a passion for bad lugubrious songs. There he smiles and shrugs his shoulders, and indeed what else can any of us do in the presence of that mystery? At any rate the legend of the "phlegmatic" Englishman has been scattered to the four winds of heaven by the guns of the western front. The men are cool in action, it is true; but for the rest they are, by the French standards, quicksilver.

But I will not expand further upon the general impression made by the English in France. Philippe Millet's */En Liaison avec les Anglais/* gives in a series of delightful pictures portraits of British types from the French angle. There can be little doubt that the British quality, genial naive, plucky and generous, has

won for itself a real affection in France wherever it has had a chance to display itself....

But when it comes to British methods then the polite Frenchman's difficulties begin. Translating hints into statements and guessing at reservations, I would say that the French fall very short of admiration of the way in which our higher officers set about their work, they are disagreeably impressed by a general want of sedulousness and close method in our leading. They think we economise brains and waste blood. They are shocked at the way in which obviously incompetent or inefficient men of the old army class are retained in their positions even after serious failures, and they were profoundly moved by the bad staff work and needlessly heavy losses of our opening attacks in July. They were ready to condone the blunderings and flounderings of the 1915 offensive as the necessary penalties of an "amateur" army, they had had to learn their own lesson in Champagne, but they were surprised to find how much the British had still to learn in July, 1916. The British officers excuse themselves because, they plead, they are still amateurs. "That is no reason," says the Frenchman, "why they should be amateurish."

No Frenchman said as much as this to me, but their meaning was as plain as daylight. I tackled one of my guides on this matter; I said that it was the plain duty of the French military people to criticise British military methods sharply if they thought they were wrong. "It is not easy," he said. "Many British officers do not think they have anything to learn. And English people do not like being told things. What could we do? We could hardly send a French officer or so to your headquarters in a tutorial capacity. You have to do things in your own way." When I tried to draw General Castelnau into this dangerous question by suggesting that we might borrow a French general or so, he would say only, "There is only one way to learn war, and that is to make war." When it was too late, in the lift, I thought of the

answer to that. There is only one way to make war, and that is by the sacrifice of incapables and the rapid promotion of able men. If old and tried types fail now, new types must be sought. But to do that we want a standard of efficiency. We want a conception of intellectual quality in performance that is still lacking....

M. Joseph Reinach, in whose company I visited the French part of the Somme front, was full of a scheme, which he has since published, for the breaking up and recomposition of the French and British armies into a series of composite armies which would blend the magnificent British manhood and material with French science and military experience. He pointed out the endless advantages of such an arrangement; the stimulus of emulation, the promotion of intimate fraternal feeling between the peoples of the two countries. "At present," he said, "no Frenchman ever sees an Englishman except at Amiens or on the Somme. Many of them still have no idea of what the English are doing...."

"Have I ever told you the story of compulsory Greek at Oxford and Cambridge?" I asked abruptly.

"What has that to do with it?"

"Or how two undistinguished civil service commissioners can hold up the scientific education of our entire administrative class?"

M. Reinach protested further.

"Because you are proposing to loosen the grip of a certain narrow and limited class upon British affairs, and you propose it as though it were a job as easy as rearranging railway fares or sending a van to Calais. That is the problem that every decent Englishman is trying to solve to-day, every man of that Greater Britain which has supplied these five million volunteers, these

magnificent temporary officers and all this wealth of munitions. And the oligarchy is so invincibly fortified! Do you think it will let in Frenchmen to share its controls? It will not even let in Englishmen. It holds the class schools; the class universities; the examinations for our public services are its class shibboleths; it is the church, the squirearchy, the permanent army class, permanent officialdom; it makes every appointment, it is the fountain of honour; what it does not know is not knowledge, what it cannot do must not be done. It rules India ignorantly and obstructively; it will wreck the empire rather than relinquish its ascendancy in Ireland. It is densely self-satisfied and instinctively monopolistic. It is on our backs, and with it on our backs we common English must bleed and blunder to victory.... And you make this proposal!"

3

The antagonistic relations of the Anglican oligarchy with the greater and greater-spirited Britain that thrust behind it in this war are probably paralleled very closely in Germany, probably they are exaggerated in Germany with a bigger military oligarchy and a relatively lesser civil body under it. This antagonism is the oddest outcome of the tremendous /demilitarisation/ of war that has been going on. In France it is probably not so marked because of the greater flexibility and adaptability of the French culture.

All military people--people, that is, professionally and primarily military--are inclined to be conservative. For thousands of years the military tradition has been a tradition of discipline. The conception of the common soldier has been a mechanically obedient, almost dehumanised man, of the officer a highly trained autocrat. In two years all this has been absolutely reversed. Individual quality, inventive organisation

and industrialism will win this war. And no class is so innocent of these things as the military caste. Long accustomed as they are to the importance of moral effect they put a brave face upon the business; they save their faces astonishingly, but they are no longer guiding and directing this war, they are being pushed from behind by forces they never foresaw and cannot control. The aeroplanes and great guns have bolted with them, the tanks begotten of naval and civilian wits, shove them to victory in spite of themselves.

Wherever I went behind the British lines the officers were going about in spurs. These spurs at last got on my nerves. They became symbolical. They became as grave an insult to the tragedy of the war as if they were false noses. The British officers go for long automobile rides in spurs. They walk about the trenches in spurs. Occasionally I would see a horse; I do not wish to be unfair in this matter, there were riding horses sometimes within two or three miles of the ultimate front, but they were rarely used.

I do not say that the horse is entirely obsolescent in this war. In was nothing is obsolete. In the trenches men fight with sticks. In the Pasubio battle the other day one of the Alpini silenced a machine gun by throwing stones. In the West African campaign we have employed troops armed with bows and arrows, and they have done very valuable work. But these are exceptional cases. The military use of the horse henceforth will be such an exceptional case. It is ridiculous for these spurs still to clink about the modern battlefield. What the gross cost of the spurs and horses and trappings of the British army amount to, and how many men are grooming and tending horses who might just as well be ploughing and milking at home, I cannot guess; it must be a total so enormous as seriously to affect the balance of the war.

And these spurs and their retention are only the outward and visible symbol of the obstinate resistance of the Anglican intelligence to the clear logic of the present situation. It is not only the external equipment of our leaders that falls behind the times; our political and administrative services are in the hands of the same desolatingly inadaptably class. The British are still wearing spurs in Ireland; they are wearing them in India; and the age of the spur has passed. At the outset of this war there was an absolute cessation of criticism of the military and administrative castes; it is becoming a question whether we may not pay too heavily in blundering and waste, in military and economic lassitude, in international irritation and the accumulation of future dangers in Ireland, Egypt, India, and elsewhere, for an apparent absence of internal friction. These people have no gratitude for tacit help, no spirit of intelligent service, and no sense of fair play to the outsider. The latter deficiency indeed they call /esprit de corps/ and prize it as if it were a noble quality.

It becomes more and more imperative that the foreign observer should distinguish between this narrower, older official Britain and the greater newer Britain that struggles to free itself from the entanglement of a system outgrown. There are many Englishmen who would like to say to the French and Irish and the Italians and India, who indeed feel every week now a more urgent need of saying, "Have patience with us." The Riddle of the British is very largely solved if you will think of a great modern liberal nation seeking to slough an exceedingly tough and tight skin....

Nothing is more illuminating and self-educational than to explain one's home politics to an intelligent foreigner enquirer; it strips off all the secondary considerations, the allusiveness, the merely tactical considerations, the allusiveness, the merely tactical considerations. One sees the forest not as a confusion of trees but as something with a definite shape and place. I was

asked in Italy and in France, "Where does Lord Northcliffe come into the British system--or Lloyd George? Who is Mr. Redmond? Why is Lloyd George a Minister, and why does not Mr. Redmond take office? Isn't there something called an ordnance department, and why is there a separate ministry of munitions? Can Mr. Lloyd George remove an incapable general?..."

I found it M. Joseph Reinach particularly penetrating and persistent. It is an amusing but rather difficult exercise to recall what I tried to convey to him by way of a theory of Britain. He is by no means an uncritical listener. I explained that there is an "inner Britain," official Britain, which is Anglican or official Presbyterian, which at the outside in the whole world cannot claim to speak for twenty million Anglican or Presbyterian communicants, which monopolises official positions, administration and honours in the entire British empire, dominates the court, and, typically, is spurred and red-tabbed. (It was just at this time that the spurs were most on my nerves.)

This inner Britain, I went on to explain, holds tenaciously to its positions of advantage, from which it is difficult to dislodge it without upsetting the whole empire, and it insists upon treating the rest of the four hundred millions who constitute that empire as outsiders, foreigners, subject races and suspected persons.

"To you," I said, "it bears itself with an appearance of faintly hostile, faintly contemptuous apathy. It is still so entirely insular that it shudders at the thought of the Channel Tunnel. This is the Britain which irritates and puzzles you so intensely--that you are quite unable to conceal these feelings from me. Unhappily it is the Britain you see most of. Well, outside this official Britain is 'Greater Britain'--the real Britain with which you have to reckon in the future." (From this point a

faint flavour of mysticism crept into my dissertation. I found myself talking with something in my voice curiously reminiscent of those liberal Russians who set themselves to explain the contrasts and contradictions of "official" Russia and "true" Russia.) "This Greater Britain," I asserted, "is in a perpetual conflict with official Britain, struggling to keep it up to its work, shoving it towards its ends, endeavouring in spite of its tenacious mischievousness of the privileged to keep the peace and a common aim with the French and Irish and Italians and Russians and Indians. It is to that outer Britain that those Englishmen you found so interesting and sympathetic, Lloyd George and Lord Northcliffe, for example, belong. It is the Britain of the great effort, the Britain of the smoking factories and the torrent of munitions, the Britain of the men and subalterns of the new armies, the Britain which invents and thinks and achieves, and stands now between German imperialism and the empire of the world. I do not want to exaggerate the quality of greater Britain. If the inner set are narrowly educated, the outer set is often crudely educated. If the inner set is so close knit as to seem like a conspiracy, the outer set is so loosely knit as to seem like a noisy confusion. Greater Britain is only beginning to realise itself and find itself. For all its crudity there is a giant spirit in it feeling its way towards the light. It has quite other ambitions for the ending of the war than some haggled treaty of alliance with France and Italy; some advantage that will invalidate German competition; it begins to realise newer and wider sympathies, possibilities of an amalgamation of interests and community of aim that is utterly beyond the habits of the old oligarchy to conceive, beyond the scope of that tawdry word 'Empire' to express...."

I descended from my rhetoric to find M. Reinach asking how and when this greater Britain was likely to become politically effective.

V. THE SOCIAL CHANGES IN PROGRESS

1

"Nothing will be the same after the war." This is one of the consoling platitudes with which people cover over voids of thought. They utter it with an air of round-eyed profundity. But to ask in reply, "Then how will things be different?" is in many cases to rouse great resentment. It is almost as rude as saying, "Was that thought of yours really a thought?"

Let us in this chapter confine ourselves to the social-economic processes that are going on. So far as I am able to distinguish among the things that are being said in these matters, they may be classified out into groups that centre upon several typical questions. There is the question of "How to pay for the war?" There is the question of the behaviour of labour after the war. "Will there be a Labour Truce or a violent labour struggle?" There is the question of the reconstruction of European industry after the war in the face of an America in a state of monetary and economic repletion through non-intervention. My present purpose in this chapter is a critical one; it is not to solve problems but to set out various currents of thought that are flowing through the general mind. Which current is likely to seize upon and carry human affairs with it, is not for our present speculation.

There seem to be two distinct ways of answering the first of the questions I have noted. They do not necessarily contradict each other. Of course the war is being largely paid for immediately out of the accumulated private wealth of the past. We are buying off the "hold-up" of the private owner upon the material and resources we need, and paying in paper money and war loans. This

is not in itself an impoverishment of the community. The wealth of individuals is not the wealth of nations; the two things may easily be contradictory when the rich man's wealth consists of land or natural resources or franchises or privileges the use of which he reluctantly yields for high prices. The conversion of held-up land and material into workable and actively used material in exchange for national debt may be indeed a positive increase in the wealth of the community. And what is happening in all the belligerent countries is the taking over of more and more of the realities of wealth from private hands and, in exchange, the contracting of great masses of debt to private people. The nett tendency is towards the disappearance of a reality holding class and the destruction of realities in warfare, and the appearance of a vast /rentier/ class in its place. At the end of the war much material will be destroyed for evermore, transit, food production and industry will be everywhere enormously socialised, and the country will be liable to pay every year in interest, a sum of money exceeding the entire national expenditure before the war. From the point of view of the state, and disregarding material and moral damages, that annual interest is the annual instalment of the price to be paid for the war.

Now the interesting question arises whether these great belligerent states may go bankrupt, and if so to what extent. States may go bankrupt to the private creditor without repudiating their debts or seeming to pay less to him. They can go bankrupt either by a depreciation of their currency or--without touching the gold standard--through a rise in prices. In the end both these things work out to the same end; the creditor gets so many loaves or pairs of boots or workman's hours of labour for his pound /less/ than he would have got under the previous conditions. One may imagine this process of price (and of course wages) increase going on to a limitless extent. Many people are inclined to look to such an increase in prices as a

certain outcome of the war, and just so far as it goes, just so far will the burthen of the /rentier/ class, their call, tax is, for goods and services, be lightened. This expectation is very generally entertained, and I can see little reason against it. The intensely stupid or dishonest "labour" press, however, which in the interests of the common enemy misrepresents socialism and seeks to misguide labour in Great Britain, ignores these considerations, and positively holds out this prospect of rising prices as an alarming one to the more credulous and ignorant of its readers.

But now comes the second way of meeting the after-the-war obligations. This second way is by increasing the wealth of the state and by increasing the national production to such an extent that the payment of the /rentier/ class will not be an overwhelming burthen. Rising prices bilk the creditor. Increased production will check the rise in prices and get him a real payment. The outlook for the national creditor seems to be that he will be partly bilked and partly paid; how far he will be bilked and how far depends almost entirely upon this possible increase in production; and there is consequently a very keen and quite unprecedented desire very widely diffused among intelligent and active people, holding War Loan scrip and the like, in all the belligerent countries, to see bold and hopeful schemes for state enrichment pushed forward. The movement towards socialism is receiving an impulse from a new and unexpected quarter, there is now a /rentier/ socialism, and it is interesting to note that while the London /Times/ is full of schemes of great state enterprises, for the exploitation of Colonial state lands, for the state purchase and wholesaling of food and many natural products, and for the syndication of shipping and the great staple industries into vast trusts into which not only the British but the French and Italian governments may enter as partners, the so-called socialist press of Great Britain is chiefly busy about the draughts in the cell of Mr. Fenner

Brockway and the refusal of Private Scott Duckers to put on his khaki trousers. /The New Statesman/ and the Fabian Society, however, display a wider intelligence.

There is a great variety of suggestions for this increase of public wealth and production. Many of them have an extreme reasonableness. The extent to which they will be adopted depends, no doubt, very largely upon the politician and permanent official, and both these classes are prone to panic in the presence of reality. In spite of its own interests in restraining a rise in prices, the old official "salaried" is likely to be obstructive to any such innovations. It is the resistance of spurs and red tabs to military innovations over again. This is the resistance of quills and red tape. On the other hand the organisation of Britain for war has "officialised" a number of industrial leaders, and created a large body of temporary and adventurous officials. They may want to carry on into peace production the great new factories the war has created. At the end of the war, for example, every belligerent country will be in urgent need of cheap automobiles for farmers, tradesmen, and industrial purposes generally, America is now producing such automobiles at a price of eighty pounds. But Europe will be heavily in debt to America, her industries will be disorganised, and there will therefore be no sort of return payment possible for these hundreds of thousands of automobiles. A country that is neither creditor nor producer cannot be an importer. Consequently though those cheap tin cars may be stacked as high as the Washington Monument in America, they will never come to Europe. On the other hand the great shell factories of Europe will be standing idle and ready, their staffs disciplined and available, for conversion to the new task. The imperative common sense of the position seems to be that the European governments should set themselves straight away to out-Ford Ford, and provide their own people with cheap road transport.

But here comes in the question whether this common-sense course is inevitable. Suppose the mental energy left in Europe after the war is insufficient for such a constructive feat as this. There will certainly be the obstruction of official pedantry, the hold-up of this vested interest and that, the greedy desire of "private enterprise" to exploit the occasion upon rather more costly and less productive lines, the general distrust felt by ignorant and unimaginative people of a new way of doing things. The process after all may not get done in the obviously wise way. This will not mean that Europe will buy American cars. It will be quite unable to buy American cars. It will be unable to make anything that America will not be able to make more cheaply for itself. But it will mean that Europe will go on without cheap cars, that is to say it will go on a more sluggishly and clumsily and wastefully at a lower economic level. Hampered transport means hampered production of other things, and in increasing inability to buy abroad. And so we go down and down.

It does not follow that because a course is the manifestly right and advantageous course for the community that it will be taken. I am reminded of this by a special basket in my study here, into which I pitch letters, circulars, pamphlets and so forth as they come to hand from a gentleman named Gattie, and his friends Mr. Adrian Ross, Mr. Roy Horniman, Mr. Henry Murray and others. His particular project is the construction of a Railway Clearing House for London. It is an absolutely admirable scheme. It would cut down the heavy traffic in the streets of London to about one-third; it would enable us to run the goods traffic of England with less than half the number of railway trucks we now employ; it would turn over enormous areas of valuable land from their present use as railway goods yards and sidings; it would save time in the transit of goods and labour in their handling. It is a quite beautifully worked out scheme. For the last eight or ten years this group of devoted fanatics has been pressing

this undertaking upon an indifferent country with increasing vehemence and astonishment at that indifference. The point is that its adoption, though it would be of general benefit, would be of no particular benefit to any leading man or highly placed official. On the other hand it would upset all sorts of individuals who are in a position to obstruct it quietly--and they do so. Meaning no evil. I dip my hand in the accumulation and extract a leaflet by the all too zealous Mr. Murray. In it he denounces various public officials by name as he cheats and scoundrels, and invites a prosecution for libel.

In that fashion nothing will ever get done. There is no prosecution, but for all that I do not agree with Mr. Murray about the men he names. These gentlemen are just comfortable gentlemen, own brothers to these old generals of ours who will not take off their spurs. They are probably quite charming people except that they know nothing of that Fear of God which searches by heart. Why should they bother?

So many of these after-the-war problems bring one back to the question of how far the war has put the Fear of God into the hearts of responsible men. There is really no other reason in existence that I can imagine why they should ask themselves the question, "Have I done my best?" and that still more important question, "Am I doing my best now?" And so while I hear plenty of talk about the great reorganisations that are to come after the war, while there is the stir of doubt among the /rentiers/ whether, after all, they will get paid, while the unavoidable stresses and sacrifices of the war are making many people question the rightfulness of much that they did as a matter of course, and of much that they took for granted, I perceive there is also something dull and not very articulate in this European world, something resistant and inert, that is like the obstinate rolling over of a heavy sleeper after he has been called upon to get up. "Just a little longer.... Just for

/my/ time."

One thought alone seems to make these more intractable people anxious. I thrust it in as my last stimulant when everything else has failed. "There will be /frightful/ trouble with labour after the war," I say.

They try to persuade themselves that military discipline is breaking in labour....

2

What does British labour think of the outlook after the war?

As a distinctive thing British labour does not think. "Class-conscious labour," as the Marxists put it, scarcely exists in Britain. The only convincing case I ever met was a bath-chairman of literary habits Eastbourne. The only people who are, as a class, class-conscious in the British community are the Anglican gentry and their fringe of the genteel. Everybody else is "respectable." The mass of British workers find their thinking in the ordinary halfpenny papers or in /John Bull./ The so-called labour papers are perhaps less representative of British Labour than any other section of the press; the /Labour Leader/, for example, is the organ of such people as Bertrand Russell, Vernon Lee, Morel, academic /rentiers/ who know about as much as of the labour side of industrialism as they do of cock-fighting. All the British peoples are racially willing and good-tempered people, quite ready to be led by those they imagine to be abler than themselves. They make the most cheerful and generous soldiers in the whole world, without insisting upon that democratic respect which the Frenchman exacts. They do not criticise and they do not trouble themselves much about the general plan of operations, so long as they have confidence in

the quality and good will of their leading. But British soldiers will hiss a general when they think he is selfish, unfeeling, or a muff. And the socialist propaganda has imported ideas of public service into private employment. Labour in Britain has been growing increasingly impatient of bad or selfish industrial leadership. Labour trouble in Great Britain turns wholly upon the idea crystallised in the one word "profiteer." Legislation and regulation of hours of labour, high wages, nothing will keep labour quiet in Great Britain if labour thinks it is being exploited for private gain.

Labour feels very suspicious of private gain. For that suspicion a certain rather common type of employer is mainly to blame. Labour believes that employers is mainly to blame. Labour believes that employers as a class cheat workmen as a class, plan to cheat them of their full share in the common output, and drive hard bargains. It believes that private employers are equally ready to sacrifice the welfare of the nation and the welfare of the workers for mere personal advantage. It has a traditional experience to support these suspicions.

In no department of morals have ideas changed so completely during the last eight years as in relation to "profits". Eighty years ago everyone believed in the divine right of property to do what it pleased its advantages, a doctrine more disastrous socially than the divine right of kings. There was no such sense of the immorality of "holding up" as pervades the public conscience to-day. The worker was expected not only to work, but to be grateful for employment. The property owner held his property and handed it out for use and development or not, just as he thought fit. These ideas are not altogether extinct today. Only a few days ago I met a magnificent old lady of seventy nine or eighty, who discoursed upon the wickedness of her gardener in demanding another shilling a week because of war prices.

She was a valiant and handsome personage. A face that had still a healthy natural pinkness looked out from under blond curls, and an elegant and carefully tended hand tossed back some fine old lace to gesticulate more freely. She had previously charmed her hearers by sweeping aside certain rumours that were drifting about.

"Germans invade /Us!/" she cried. "Who'd /let/ 'em, I'd like to know? Who'd /let/ 'em?"

And then she reverted to her grievance about the gardener.

"I told him that after the war he'd be glad enough to get anything. Grateful! They'll all be coming back after the war-- all of 'em, glad enough to get anything. Asking for another shilling indeed!"

Everyone who heard her looked shocked. But that was the tone of everyone of importance in the dark years that followed the Napoleonic wars. That is just one survivor of the old tradition. Another is Blight the solicitor, who goes about bewailing the fact that we writers are "holding out false hopes of higher agricultural wages after the war." But these are both exceptions. They are held to be remarkable people even by their own class. The mass of property owners and influential people in Europe to-day no more believe in the sacred right of property to hold up development and dictate terms than do the more intelligent workers. The ideas of collective ends and of the fiduciary nature of property, had been soaking through the European community for years before the war. The necessity for sudden and even violent co-operations and submersions of individuality in a common purpose, is rapidly crystallising out these ideas into clear proposals.

War is an evil thing, but most people who will not learn from reason must have an ugly teacher. This war has brought home to everyone the supremacy of the public need over every sort of individual claim.

One of the most remarkable things in the British war press is the amount of space given to the discussion of labour developments after the war. This in its completeness peculiar to the British situation. Nothing on the same scale is perceptible in the press of the Latin allies. A great movement on the part of capitalists and business organisers is manifest to assure the worker of a change of heart and a will to change method. Labour is suspicious, not foolishly but wisely suspicious. But labour is considering it.

"National industrial syndication," say the business organisers.

"Guild socialism," say the workers.

There is also a considerable amount of talking and writing about "profit-sharing" and about giving the workers a share in the business direction. Neither of these ideas appeals to the shrewder heads among the workers. So far as direction goes their disposition is to ask the captain to command the ship. So far as profits go, they think the captain has no more right than the cabin boy to speculative gains; he should do his work for his pay whether it is profitable or unprofitable work. There is little balm for labour discontent in these schemes for making the worker also an infinitesimal profiteer.

During my journey in Italy and France I met several men who were keenly interested in business organisation. Just before I started my friend N, who has been the chief partner in the building up of a very big and very extensively advertised American business, came to see me on his way back to America. He

is as interested in his work as a scientific specialist, and as ready to talk about it to any intelligent and interested hearer. He was particularly keen upon the question of continuity in the business, when it behoves the older generation to let in the younger to responsible management and to efface themselves. He was a man of five-and-forty. Incidentally he mentioned that he had never taken anything for his private life out of the great business he had built up but a salary, "a good salary," and that now he was going to grant himself a pension. "I shan't interfere any more. I shall come right away and live in Europe for a year so as not to be tempted to interfere. The boys have got to run it some day, and they had better get their experience while they're young and capable of learning by it. I did."

I like N's ideas. "Practically," I said, "you've been a public official. You've treated your business like a public service."

That was his idea.

"Would you mind if it was a public service?"

He reflected, and some disagreeable memory darkened his face. "Under the politicians?" he said.

I took the train of thought N had set going abroad with me next day. I had the good luck to meet men who were interesting industrially. Captain Pirelli, my guide in Italy, has a name familiar to every motorist; his name goes wherever cars go, spelt with a big long capital P. Lieutenant de Tessin's name will recall one of the most interesting experiments in profit-sharing to the student of social science. I tried over N's problem on both of them. I found in both their minds just the same attitude as he takes up towards his business. They think any businesses that are worthy of respect, the sorts of businesses that interest them, are public functions. Money-lenders and speculators,

merchants and gambling gentlefolk may think in terms of profit; capable business directors certainly do nothing of the sort.

I met a British officer in France who is also a landowner. I got him to talk about his administrative work upon his property. He was very keen upon new methods. He said he tried to do his duty by his land.

"How much land?" I asked.

"Just over nine thousand acres," he said.

"But you could manage forty or fifty thousand with little more trouble."

"If I had it. In some ways it would be easier."

"What a waste!" I said. "Of course you ought not to /own/ these acres; what you ought to be is the agricultural controller of just as big an estate of the public lands as you could manage--with a suitable salary."

He reflected upon that idea. He said he did not get much of a salary out of his land as it was, and made a regrettable allusion to Mr. Lloyd George. "When a man tries to do his duty by his land," he said...

But here running through the thoughts of the Englishman and the Italian and the Frenchman and the American alike one finds just the same idea of a kind of officialdom in ownership. It is an idea that pervades our thought and public discussion to-day everywhere, and it is an idea that is scarcely traceable at all in the thought of the early half of the nineteenth century. The idea of service and responsibility in property has increased and is increasing, the conception of "hold-up," the usurer's

conception of his right to be bought out of the way, fades. And the process has been enormously enhanced by the various big-scale experiments in temporary socialism that have been forced upon the belligerent powers. Men of the most individualistic quality are being educated up to the possibilities of concerted collective action. My friend and fellow-student Y, inventor and business organiser, who used to make the best steam omnibuses in the world, and who is now making all sorts of things for the army, would go pink with suspicious anger at the mere words "inspector" or "socialism" three or four years ago. He does not do so now.

A great proportion of this sort of man, this energetic directive sort of man in England, is thinking socialism to-day. They may not be saying socialism, but they are thinking it. When labour begins to realise what is adrift it will be divided between two things: between appreciative co-operation, for which guild socialism in particular has prepared its mind, and traditional suspicion. I will not over to guess here which will prevail.

3

The impression I have of the present mental process in the European communities is that while the official class and the /rentier/ class is thinking very poorly and inadequately and with a merely obstructive disposition; while the churches are merely wasting their energies in futile self-advertisement; while the labour mass is suspicious and disposed to make terms for itself rather than come into any large schemes of reconstruction that will abolish profit as a primary aim in economic life, there is still a very considerable movement towards such a reconstruction. Nothing is so misleading as a careless analogy. In the dead years that followed the Napoleonic wars, which are often quoted as a precedent for expectation now, the spirit of collective service was near its minimum; it was never so strong

and never so manifestly spreading and increasing as it is to-day.

But service to what?

I have my own very strong preconceptions here, and since my temperament is sanguine they necessarily colour my view. I believe that this impulse to collective service can satisfy itself only under the formula that mankind is one state of which God is the undying king, and that the service of men's collective needs is the true worship of God. But eagerly as I would grasp at any evidence that this idea is being developed and taken up by the general consciousness, I am quite unable to persuade myself that anything of the sort is going on. I do perceive a search for large forms into which the prevalent impulse to devotion can be thrown. But the organised religious bodies, with their creeds and badges and their instinct for self-preservation at any cost, stand between men and their spiritual growth in just the same way the forestallers stand between men and food. Their activities at present are an almost intolerable nuisance. One cannot say "God" but some tout is instantly seeking to pluck one into his particular cave of flummery and orthodoxy. What a rational man means by God is just God. The more you define and argue about God the more he remains the same simple thing. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, modern Hindu religious thought, all agree in declaring that there is one God, master and leader of all mankind, in unending conflict with cruelty, disorder, folly and waste. To my mind, it follows immediately that there can be no king, no government of any sort, which is not either a subordinate or a rebel government, a local usurpation, in the kingdom of God. But no organised religious body has ever had the courage and honesty to insist upon this. They all pander to nationalism and to powers and princes. They exist so to pander. Every organised religion in the world exists only to exploit and divert and waste the religious impulse in man.

This conviction that the world kingdom of God is the only true method of human service, is so clear and final in my own mind, it seems so inevitably the conviction to which all right-thinking men must ultimately come, that I feel almost like a looker-on at a game of blind-man's bluff as I watch the discussion of synthetic political ideas. The blind man thrusts his seeking hands into the oddest corners, he clutches at chairs and curtains, but at last he must surely find and hold and feel over and guess the name of the plainly visible quarry.

Some of the French and Italian people I talked to said they were fighting for "Civilisation." That is one name for the kingdom of God, and I have heard English people use it too. But much of the contemporary thought of England still wanders with its back to the light. Most of it is pawing over jerry-built, secondary things. I have before me a little book, the joint work of Dr. Grey and Mr. Turner, of an ex-public schoolmaster and a manufacturer, called *Eclipse or Empire?* (The title *World Might or Downfall?* had already been secured in another quarter.) It is a book that has been enormously advertised; it has been almost impossible to escape its column-long advertisements; it is billed upon the hoardings, and it is on the whole a very able and right-spirited book. It calls for more and better education, for more scientific methods, for less class suspicion and more social explicitness and understanding, for a franker and fairer treatment of labour. But why does it call for these things? Does it call for them because they are right? Because in accomplishing them one serves God?

Not at all. But because otherwise this strange sprawling empire of ours will drop back into a secondary place in the world. These two writers really seem to think that the slack workman, the slacker wealthy man, the negligent official, the conservative schoolmaster, the greedy usurer, the comfortable obstructive, confronted with this alternative, terrified at this idea of

something or other called the Empire being "eclipsed," eager for the continuance of this undefined glory over their fellow-creatures called "Empire," will perceive the error of their ways and become energetic, devoted, capable. They think an ideal of that sort is going to change the daily lives of men.... I sympathise with their purpose, and I deplore their conception of motives. If men will not give themselves for righteousness, they will not give themselves for a geographical score. If they will not work well for the hatred of bad work, they will not work well for the hatred of Germans. This "Empire" idea has been cadging about the British empire, trying to collect enthusiasm and devotion, since the days of Disraeli. It is, I submit, too big for the mean-spirited, and too tawdry and limited for the fine and generous. It leaves out the French and the Italians and the Belgians and all our blood brotherhood of allies. It has no compelling force in it. We British are not naturally Imperialist; we are something greater--or something less. For two years and a half now we have been fighting against Imperialism in its most extravagant form. It is a poor incentive to right living to propose to parody the devil we fight against.

The blind man must lunge again.

For when the right answer is seized it answers not only the question why men should work for their fellow-men but also why nation should cease to arm and plan and contrive against nation. The social problem is only the international problem in retail, the international problem is only the social one in gross.

My bias rules me altogether here. I see men in social, in economic and in international affairs alike, eager to put an end to conflict, inexpressibly weary of conflict and the waste and pain and death it involves. But to end conflict one must abandon aggressive or uncordial pretensions. Labour is sick at the idea of more strikes and struggles after the war, industrialism is

sick of competition and anxious for service, everybody is sick of war. But how can they end any of these clashes except by the definition and recognition of a common end which will establish a standard for the trial of every conceivable issue, to which, that is, every other issue can be subordinated; and what common end can there be in all the world except this idea of the world kingdom of God? What is the good of orienting one's devotion to a firm, or to class solidarity, or /La Republique Francais/, or Poland, or Albania, or such love and loyalty as people profess for King George or King Albert or the Duc d'Orleans--it puzzles me why--or any such intermediate object of self-abandonment? We need a standard so universal that the platelayer may say to the barrister or the duchess, or the Red Indian to the Limehouse sailor, or the Anzac soldier to the Sinn Feiner or the Chinaman, "What are we two doing for it?" And to fill the place of that "it," no other idea is great enough or commanding enough, but only the world kingdom of God.

However long he may have to hunt, the blind man who is seeking service and an end to bickerings will come to that at last, because of all the thousand other things he may clutch at, nothing else can satisfy his manifest need.

VI. THE ENDING OF THE WAR

1

About the end of the war there are two chief ways of thinking, there is a simpler sort of mind which desires merely a date, and a more complex kind which wants particulars. To the former class belong most of the men out at the front. They are so bored by this war that they would welcome any peace that did not definitely admit defeat--and examine the particulars later. The

"tone" of the German army, to judge by its captured letters, is even lower. It would welcome peace in any form. Never in the whole history of the world has a war been so universally unpopular as this war.

The mind of the soldier is obsessed by a vision of home-coming for good, so vivid and alluring that it blots out nearly every other consideration. The visions of people at home are of plenty instead of privation, lights up, and the cessation of a hundred tiresome restrictions. And it is natural therefore that a writer rather given to guesses and forecasts should be asked very frequently to guess how long the war has still to run.

All such forecasting is the very wildest of shooting. There are the chances of war to put one out, and of a war that changes far faster than the military intelligence. I have made various forecasts. At the outset I thought that military Germany would fight at about the 1899 level, would be lavish with cavalry and great attacks, that it would be reluctant to entrench, and that the French and British had learnt the lesson of the Boer war better than the Germans. I trusted to the melodramatic instinct of the Kaiser. I trusted to the quickened intelligence of the British military caste. The first rush seemed to bear me out, and I opened my paper day by day expecting to read of the British and French entrenched and the Germans beating themselves to death against wire and trenches. In those days I wrote of the French being over the Rhine before 1915. But it was the Germans who entrenched first.

Since then I have made some other attempts. I did not prophesy at all in 1915, so far as I can remember. If I had I should certainly have backed the Gallipoli attempt to win. It was the right thing to do, and it was done abominably. It should have given us Constantinople and brought Bulgaria to our side; it gave us a tragic history of administrative indolence and negligence,

and wasted bravery and devotion. I was very hopeful of the western offensive in 1915; and in 1916 I counted still on our continuing push. I believe we were very near something like decision this last September, but some archaic dream of doing it with cavalry dashed these hopes. The "Tanks" arrived too late to do their proper work, and their method of use is being worked out very slowly.... I still believe in the western push, if only we push it for all we are worth. If only we push it with our brains, with our available and still unorganised brains; if only we realise that the art of modern war is to invent and invent and invent. Hitherto I have always hoped and looked for decision, a complete victory that would enable the Allies to dictate peace. But such an expectation is largely conditioned by these delicate questions of adaptability that my tour of the front has made very urgent in my mind. A spiteful German American writer has said that the British would rather kill twenty thousand of their men than break one general. Even a grain of truth in such a remark is a very valid reasoning for lengthening one's estimate of the duration of the war.

There can be no doubt that the Western allies are playing a winning game upon the western front, and that this is the front of decision now. It is not in doubt that they are beating the Germans and shoving them back. The uncertain factor is the rate at which they are shoving them back. If they can presently get to so rapid an advance as to bring the average rate since July 1st up to two or three miles a day, then we shall still see the Allies dictating terms. But if the shove drags on at its present pace of less than a mile and four thousand prisoners a week over the limited Somme front only, if nothing is attempted elsewhere to increase the area of pressure, [*This was written originally before the French offensive at Verdun.] then the intolerable stress and boredom of the war will bring about a peace long before the Germans are decisively crushed. But the war, universally detested, may go on into 1918 or 1919. Food riots,

famine, and general disorganisation will come before 1920, if it does. The Allies have a winning game before them, but they seem unable to discover and promote the military genius needed to harvest an unquestionable victory. In the long run this may not be an unmixed evil. Victory, complete and dramatic, may be bought too dearly. We need not triumphs out of this war but the peace of the world.

This war is altogether unlike any previous war, and its ending, like its development, will follow a course of its own. For a time people's minds ran into the old grooves, the Germans were going /nach Paris/ and /nach London/; Lord Curzon filled our minds with a pleasant image of the Bombay Lancers riding down /Unter den Linden./ But the Versailles precedent of a council of victors dictating terms to the vanquished is not now so evidently in men's minds. The utmost the Allies talk upon now is to say, "We must end the war on German soil." The Germans talk frankly of "holding out." I have guessed that the western offensive will be chiefly on German soil by next June; it is a mere guess, and I admit it is quite conceivable that the "push" may still be grinding out its daily tale of wounded and prisoners in 1918 far from that goal.

None of the combatants expected such a war as this, and the consequence is that the world at large has no idea how to get out of it. The war may stay with us like a schoolboy caller, because it does not know how to go. The Italians said as much to me. "Suppose we get to Innsbruck and Laibach and Trieste," they said, "it isn't an end!" Lord Northcliffe, I am told, came away from Italy with the conviction that the war would last six years.

There is the clearest evidence that nearly everyone is anxious to get out of the war now. Nobody at all, except perhaps a few people who may be called to account, and a handful of greedy profit-seekers, wants to keep it going. Quietly perhaps and

unobtrusively, everyone I know is now trying to find the way out of the war, and I am convinced that the same is the case in Germany. That is what makes the Peace-at-any-price campaign so exasperating. It is like being chased by clamorous geese across a common in the direction in which you want to go. But how are we to get out--with any credit--in such a way as to prevent a subsequent collapse into another war as frightful?

At present three programmes are before the world of the way in which the war can be ended. The first of these assumes a complete predominance of our Allies. It has been stated in general terms by Mr. Asquith. Evacuation, reparation, due punishment of those responsible for the war, and guarantees that nothing of the sort shall happen again. There is as yet no mention of the nature of these guarantees. Just exactly what is to happen to Poland, Austria, and the Turkish Empire does not appear in this prospectus. The German Chancellor is equally elusive. The Kaiser has stampeded the peace-at-any-price people of Great Britain by proclaiming that Germany wants peace. We knew that. But what sort of peace? It would seem that we are promised vaguely evacuation and reparation on the western frontier, and in addition there are to be guarantees--but it is quite evident that they are altogether different guarantees from Mr. Asquith's--that nothing of the sort is ever to happen again. The programme of the British and their Allies seems to contemplate something like a forcible disarmament and military occupation of Belgium, the desertion of Serbia and Russia, and the surrender to Germany of every facility for a later and more successful German offensive in the west. But it is clear that on these terms as stated the war must go on to the definite defeat of one side or the other, or a European chaos. They are irreconcilable sets of terms.

Yet it is hard to say how they can be modified on either side, if the war is to be decided only between the belligerents and by

standards of national interest only, without reference to any other considerations. Our Allies would be insane to leave the Hohenzollern at the end of the war with a knife in his hand, after the display he has made of his quality. To surrender his knife means for the Hohenzollern the abandonment of his dreams, the repudiation of the entire education and training of Germany for half a century. When we realise the fatality of this antagonism, we realise how it is that, in this present anticipation of hell, the weary, wasted and tormented nations must still sustain their monstrous dreary struggle. And that is why this thought that possible there may be a side way out, a sort of turning over of the present endlessly hopeless game into a new and different and manageable game through the introduction of some external factor, creeps and spreads as I find it creeping and spreading.

That is what the finer intelligences of America are beginning to realise, and why men in Europe continually turn their eyes to America, with a surmise, with a doubt.

A point of departure for very much thinking in this matter is the recent speech of President Wilson that heralded the present discussion. All Europe was impressed by the truth, and by President Wilson's recognition of the truth, that from any other great war after this America will be unable to abstain. Can America come into this dispute at the end to insist upon something better than a new diplomatic patchwork, and so obviate the later completer Armageddon? Is there, above the claims and passions of Germany, France, Britain, and the rest of them, a conceivable right thing to do for all mankind, that it might also be in the interest of America to support? Is there a Third Party solution, so to speak, which may possibly be the way out from this war?

And further I would go on to ask, is not this present exchange of

Notes, appealing to the common sense of the world, really the beginning, and the proper beginning, of the unprecedented Peace Negotiations to end this unprecedented war? And, I submit, the longer this open discussion goes on before the doors close upon the secret peace congress the better for mankind.

2

Let me sketch out here what I conceive to be the essentials of a world settlement. Some of the items are the mere commonplaces of everyone who discusses this question; some are less frequently insisted upon. I have been joining up one thing to another, suggestions I have heard from this man and that, and I believe that it is really possible to state a solution that will be acceptable to the bulk of reasonable men all about the world. Directly we put the panic-massacres of Dinant and Louvain, the crime of the /Lusitania/ and so on into the category of symptoms rather than essentials, outrages that call for special punishments and reparations, but that do not enter further into the ultimate settlement, we can begin to conceive a possible world treaty. Let me state the broad outlines of this pacification. The outlines depend one upon the other; each is a condition of the other. It is upon these lines that the thoughtful, as distinguished from the merely the combative people, seem to be drifting everywhere.

In the first place, it is agreed that there would have to be an identical treaty between all the great powers of the world binding them to certain things. It would have to provide:---

That the few great industrial states capable of producing modern war equipment should take over and control completely the manufacture of all munitions of war in the world. And that they

should absolutely close the supply of such material to all the other states in the world. This is a far easier task than many people suppose. War has now been so developed on its mechanical side that the question of its continuance or abolition rests now entirely upon four or five great powers.

Next comes the League of Peace idea; that there should be an International Tribunal for the discussion and settlement of international disputes. That the dominating powers should maintain land and sea forces only up to a limit agreed upon and for internal police use only or for the purpose of enforcing the decisions of the Tribunal. That they should all be bound to attack and suppress any power amongst them which increases its war equipment beyond its defined limits.

That much has already been broached in several quarters. But so far is not enough. It ignores the chief processes of that economic war that aids and abets and is inseparably a part of modern international conflicts. If we are to go as far as we have already stated in the matter of international controls, then we must go further and provide that the International Tribunal should have power to consider and set aside all tariffs and localised privileges that seem grossly unfair or seriously irritating between the various states of the world. It should have power to pass or revise all new tariff, quarantine, alien exclusion, or the like legislation affecting international relations. Moreover, it should take over and extend the work of the International Bureau of Agriculture at Rome with a view to the control of all staple products. It should administer the sea law of the world, and control and standardise freights in the common interests of mankind. Without these provisions it would be merely preventing the use of certain weapons; it would be doing nothing to prevent countries strangling or suffocating each other by commercial warfare. It would not abolish war.

Now upon this issue people do not seem to me to be yet thinking very clearly. It is the exception to find anyone among the peace talkers who really grasps how inseparably the necessity for free access for everyone to natural products, to coal and tropical products, e.g. free shipping at non-discriminating tariffs, and the recognition by a Tribunal of the principle of common welfare in trade matters, is bound up with the ideal of a permanent world peace. But any peace that does not provide for these things will be merely laying down of the sword in order to take up the cudgel. And a "peace" that did not rehabilitate industrial Belgium, Poland, and the north of France would call imperatively for the imposition upon the Allies of a system of tariffs in the interests of these countries, and for a bitter economic "war after the war" against Germany. That restoration is, of course, an implicit condition to any attempt to set up an economic peace in the world.

These things being arranged for the future, it would be further necessary to set up an International Boundary Commission, subject to certain defining conditions agreed upon by the belligerents, to re-draw the map of Europe, Asia, and Africa. This war does afford an occasion such as the world may never have again of tracing out the "natural map" of mankind, the map that will secure the maximum of homogeneity and the minimum of racial and economic freedom. All idealistic people hope for a restored Poland. But it is a childish thing to dream of a contented Poland with Posen still under the Prussian heel, with Cracow cut off, and without a Baltic port. These claims of Poland to completeness have a higher sanction than the mere give and take of belligerents in congress.

Moreover this International Tribunal, if it was indeed to prevent war, would need also to have power to intervene in the affairs of any country or region in a state of open and manifest disorder, for the protection of foreign travellers and of persons and

interests localised in that country but foreign to it.

Such an agreement as I have here sketched out would at once lift international politics out of the bloody and hopeless squalor of the present conflict. It is, I venture to assert, the peace of the reasonable man in any country whatever. But it needs the attention of such a disengaged people as the American people to work it out and supply it with--weight. It needs putting before the world with some sort of authority greater than its mere entire reasonableness. Otherwise it will not come before the minds of ordinary men with the effect of a practicable proposition. I do not see any such plant springing from the European battlefields. It is America's supreme opportunity. And yet it is the common sense of the situation, and the solution that must satisfy a rational German as completely as a rational Frenchman or Englishman. It has nothing against it but the prejudice against new and entirely novel things.

3

In throwing out the suggestion that America should ultimately undertake the responsibility of proposing a world peace settlement, I admit that I run counter to a great deal of European feeling. Nowhere in Europe now do people seem to be in love with the United States. But feeling is a colour that passes. And the question is above matters of feeling. Whether the belligerents dislike Americans or the Americans dislike the belligerents is an incidental matter. The main question is of the duty of a great and fortunate nation towards the rest of the world and the future of mankind.

I do not know how far Americans are aware of the trend of feeling in Europe at the present time. Both France and Great Britain have a sense of righteousness in this war such as no nation, no

people, has ever felt in war before. We know we are fighting to save all the world from the rule of force and the unquestioned supremacy of the military idea. Few Frenchmen or Englishmen can imagine the war presenting itself to an American intelligence under any other guise. At the invasion of Belgium we were astonished that America did nothing. At the sinking of the /Lusitania/ all Europe looked to America. The British mind contemplates the spectacle of American destroyers acting as bottleholders to German submarines with a dazzled astonishment. "Manila," we gasp. In England we find excuses for America in our own past. In '64 we betrayed Denmark; in '70 we deserted France. The French have not these memories. They do not understand the damning temptations of those who feel they are *"/au-dessus de la meele./"* They believe they had some share in the independence of America, that there is a sacred cause in republicanism, that there are grounds for a peculiar sympathy between France and the United States in republican institutions. They do not realise that Germany and America have a common experience in recent industrial development, and a common belief in the "degeneracy" of all nations with a lower rate of trade expansion. They do not realise how a political campaign with the slogan of "Peace and a Full Dinner-Pail" looks in the middle west, what an honest, simple, rational appeal it makes there. Atmospheres alter values. In Europe, strung up to tragic and majestic issues, to Europe gripping a gigantic evil in a death struggle, that would seem an inscription worthy of a pigsty. A child in Europe would know now that the context is, "until the bacon-buyer calls," and it is difficult to realise that adult citizens in America may be incapable of realising that obvious context.

I set these things down plainly. There is a very strong disposition in all the European countries to believe America fundamentally indifferent to the rights and wrongs of the European struggle; sentimentally interested perhaps, but

fundamentally indifferent. President Wilson is regarded as a mere academic sentimentalist by a great number of Europeans. There is a very widespread disposition to treat America lightly and contemptuously, to believe that America, as one man put it to me recently, "hasn't the heart to do anything great or the guts to do anything wicked." There is a strong undercurrent of hostility therefore to the idea of America having any voice whatever in the final settlement after the war. It is not for a British writer to analyse the appearance that have thus affected American world prestige. I am telling what I have observed.

Let me relate two trivial anecdotes.

X came to my hotel in Paris one day to take me to see a certain munitions organisation. He took from his pocket a picture postcard that had been sent him by a well-meaning American acquaintance from America. It bore a portrait of General Lafayette, and under it was printed the words, "General Lafayette, /Colonel in the United States army./"

"Oh! These Americans!" said X with a gesture.

And as I returned to Paris from the French front, our train stopped at some intermediate station alongside of another train of wounded men. Exactly opposite our compartment was a car. It arrested our conversation. It was, as it were, an ambulance /de grand luxe/; it was a thing of very light, bright wood and very golden decorations; at one end of it was painted very large and fair the Stars and Stripes, and at the other fair-sized letters of gold proclaimed--I am sure the lady will not resent this added gleam of publicity--"Presented by Mrs. William Vanderbilt."

My companions were French writers and French military men, and they were discussing with very keen interest that persistent

question, "the ideal battery." But that ambulance sent a shaft of light into our carriage, and we stared together.

Then Colonel Z pointed with two fingers and remarked to us, without any excess of admiration:

"/America!/"

Then he shrugged his shoulders and pulled down the corners of his mouth.

We felt there was nothing more to add to that, and after a little pause the previous question was resumed.

I state these things in order to make it clear that America will start at a disadvantage when she starts upon the mission of salvage and reconciliation which is, I believe, her proper role in this world conflict. One would have to be blind and deaf on this side to be ignorant of European persuasion of America's triviality. I would not like to be an American travelling in Europe now, and those I meet here and there have some of the air of men who at any moment may be dunned for a debt. They explode without provocation into excuses and expostulations.

And I will further confess that when Viscount Grey answered the intimations of President Wilson and ex-President Taft of an American initiative to found a World League for Peace, by asking if America was prepared to back that idea with force, he spoke the doubts of all thoughtful European men. No one but an American deeply versed in the idiosyncrasies of the American population can answer that question, or tell us how far the delusion of world isolation which has prevailed in America for several generations has been dispelled. But if the answer to Lord Grey is "Yes," then I think history will emerge with a

complete justification of the obstinate maintenance of neutrality by America. It is the end that reveals a motive. It is our ultimate act that sometimes teaches us our original intention. No one can judge the United States yet. Were you neutral because you are too mean and cowardly, or too stupidly selfish, or because you had in view an end too great to be sacrificed to a moment of indignant pride and a force in reserve too precious to dispel? That is the still open question for America.

Every country is a mixture of many strands. There is a Base America, there is a Dull America, there is an Ideal and Heroic America. And I am convinced that at present Europe underrates and misjudges the possibilities of the latter.

All about the world to-day goes a certain freemasonry of thought. It is an impalpable and hardly conscious union of intention. It thinks not in terms of national but human experience; it falls into directions and channels of thinking that lead inevitably to the idea of a world-state under the rule of one righteousness. In no part of the world is this modern type of mind so abundantly developed, less impeded by antiquated and perverse political and religious forms, and nearer the sources of political and administrative power, than in America. It does not seem to matter what thousand other things America may happen to be, seeing that it is also that. And so, just as I cling to the belief, in spite of hundreds of adverse phenomena, that the religious and social stir of these times must ultimately go far to unify mankind under the kingship of God, so do I cling also to the persuasion that there are intellectual forces among the rational elements in the belligerent centres, among the other neutrals and in America, that will co-operate in enabling the United States to play that role of the Unimpassioned Third Party, which becomes more and more necessary to a generally satisfactory ending of the war.

The idea that the settlement of this war must be what one might call an unimpassioned settlement or, if you will, a scientific settlement or a judicial and not a treaty settlement, a settlement, that is, based upon some conception of what is right and necessary rather than upon the relative success or failure of either set of belligerents to make its Will the standard of decision, is one that, in a great variety of forms and partial developments, I find gaining ground in the most different circles. The war was an adventure, it was the German adventure under the Hohenzollern tradition, to dominate the world. It was to be the last of the Conquests. It has failed. Without calling upon the reserve strength of America the civilised world has defeated it, and the war continues now partly upon the issue whether it shall be made for ever impossible, and partly because Germany has no organ but its Hohenzollern organisation through which it can admit its failure and develop its latent readiness for a new understanding on lines of mutual toleration. For that purpose nothing more reluctant could be devised than Hohenzollern imperialism. But the attention of every new combatant--it is not only Germany now--has been concentrated upon military necessities; every nation is a clenched nation, with its powers of action centred in its own administration, bound by many strategic threats and declarations, and dominated by the idea of getting and securing advantages. It is inevitable that a settlement made in a conference of belligerents alone will be shortsighted, harsh, limited by merely incidental necessities, and obsessed by the idea of hostilities and rivalries continuing perennially; it will be a trading of advantages for subsequent attacks. It will be a settlement altogether different in effect as well as in spirit from a world settlement made primarily to establish a new phase in the history of mankind.

Let me take three instances of the impossibility of complete victory /on either side/ giving a solution satisfactory to the conscience and intelligence of reasonable men.

The first--on which I will not expatiate, for everyone knows of its peculiar difficulty--is Poland.

The second is a little one, but one that has taken hold of my imagination. In the settlement of boundaries preceding this war the boundary between Serbia and north-eastern Albania was drawn with an extraordinary disregard of the elementary needs of the Albanians of that region. It ran along the foot of the mountains which form their summer pastures and their refuge from attack, and it cut their mountains off from their winter pastures and market towns. Their whole economic life was cut to pieces and existence rendered intolerable for them. Now an intelligent Third Party settling Europe would certainly restore these market towns, Ipek, Jakova, and Prisrend, to Albania. But the Albanians have no standing in this war; theirs is the happy lot that might have fallen to Belgium had she not resisted; the war goes to and fro through Albania; and when the settlement comes, it is highly improbable that the slightest notice will be taken of Albania's plight in the region. In which case these particular Albanians will either be driven into exile to America or they will be goaded to revolt, which will be followed no doubt by the punitive procedure usual in the Balkan peninsula.

For my third instance I would step from a matter as small as three market towns and the grazing of a few thousand head of sheep to a matter as big as the world. What is going to happen to the shipping of the world after this war? The Germans, with that combination of cunning and stupidity which baffles the rest of mankind, have set themselves to destroy the mercantile marine not merely of Britain and France but of Norway and Sweden, Holland, and all the neutral countries. The German papers openly

boast that they are building up a big mercantile marine that will start out to take up the world's overseas trade directly peace is declared. Every such boast receives careful attention in the British press. We have heard a very great deal about the German will-to-power in this war, but there is something very much older and tougher and less blatant and conspicuous, the British will. In the British papers there has appeared and gained a permanent footing this phrase, "ton for ton." This means that Britain will go on fighting until she has exacted and taken over from Germany the exact equivalent of all the British shipping Germany has submarined. People do not realise that a time may come when Germany will be glad and eager to give Russia, France and Italy all that they require of her, when Great Britain may be quite content to let her allies make an advantageous peace and herself still go on fighting Germany. She does not intend to let that furtively created German mercantile marine ship or coal or exist upon the high seas--so long as it can be used as an economic weapon against her. Neither Britain nor France nor Italy can tolerate anything of the sort.

It has been the peculiar boast of Great Britain that her shipping has been unpatriotic. She has been the impartial carrier of the whole world. Her shippers may have served their own profit; they have never served hers. The fluctuations of freight charges may have been a universal nuisance, but they have certainly not been an aggressive national conspiracy. It is Britain's case against any German ascendancy at sea, an entirely convincing case, that such an ascendancy would be used ruthlessly for the advancement of German world power. The long-standing freedom of the seas vanishes at the German touch. So beyond the present war there opens the agreeable prospect of a mercantile struggle, a bitter freight war and a war of Navigation Acts for the ultimate control in the interests of Germany or of the Anti-German allies, of the world's trade.

Now how in any of these three cases can the bargaining and trickery of diplomatists and the advantage-hunting of the belligerents produce any stable and generally beneficial solution? What all the neutrals want, what every rational and far-sighted man in the belligerent countries wants, what the common sense of the whole world demands, is neither the "ascendancy" of Germany nor the "ascendancy" of Great Britain nor the "ascendancy" of any state or people or interest in the shipping of the world. The plain right thing is a world shipping control, as impartial as the Postal Union. What right and reason and the welfare of coming generations demand in Poland is a unified and autonomous Poland, with Cracow, Danzig, and Posen brought into the same Polish-speaking ring-fence with Warsaw. What everyone who has looked into the Albanian question desires is that the Albanians shall pasture their flocks and market their sheepskins in peace, free of Serbian control. In every country at present at war, the desire of the majority of people is for a non-contentious solution that will neither crystallise a triumph nor propitiate an enemy, but which will embody the economic and ethnological and geographical common sense of the matter. But while the formulae of national belligerence are easy, familiar, blatant, and instantly present, the gentler, greater formulae of that wider and newer world pacifism has still to be generally understood. It is so much easier to hate and suspect than negotiate generously and patiently; it is so much harder to think than to let go in a shrill storm of hostility. The rational pacifist is hampered not only by belligerency, but by a sort of malignant extreme pacifism as impatient and silly as the extremest patriotism.

5

I sketch out these ideas of a world pacification from a third-party standpoint, because I find them crystallising out in men's

minds. I note how men discuss the suggestion that America may play a large part in such a permanent world pacification. There I end my account rendered. These things are as much a part of my impression of the war as a shell-burst on the Carso or the yellow trenches at Martinpuich. But I do not know how opinion is going in America, and I am quite unable to estimate the power of these new ideas I set down, relative to the blind forces of instinct and tradition that move the mass of mankind. On the whole I believe more in the reason-guided will-power of men than I did in the early half of 1914. If I am doubtful whether after all this war will "end war," I think on the other hand it has had such an effect of demonstration that it may start a process of thought and conviction, it may sow the world with organisations and educational movements considerable enough to grapple with an either arrest or prevent the next great war catastrophe. I am by no means sure even now that this is not the last great war in the experience of men. I still believe it may be.

The most dangerous thing in the business so far is concerned is the wide disregard of the fact that national economic fighting is bound to cause war, and the almost universal ignorance of the necessity of subjecting shipping and overseas and international trade to some kind of international control. These two things, restraint of trade and advantage of shipping, are the chief material causes of anger between modern states. But they would not be in themselves dangerous things if it were not for the exaggerated delusions of kind and difference, and the crack-brained "loyalties" arising out of these, that seem still to rule men's minds. Years ago I came to the conviction that much of the evil in human life was due to the inherent vicious disposition of the human mind to intensify classification.[*See my "First and Last Things," Book I. and my "Modern Utopia," Chapter X.] I do not know how it will strike the reader, but to me this war, this slaughter of eight or nine million people, is due almost entirely to this little, almost universal lack of clear-headedness; I

believe that the share of wickedness in making war is quite secondary to the share of this universal shallow silliness of outlook. These effigies of emperors and kings and statesmen that lead men into war, these legends of nationality and glory, would collapse before our universal derision, if they were not stuffed tight and full with the unthinking folly of the common man.

There is in all of us an indolent capacity for suffering evil and dangerous things, that I contemplate each year of my life with a deepening incredulity. I perceive we suffer them; I record the futile protests of the intelligence. It seems to me incredible that men should not rise up out of this muddy, bloody, wasteful mess of a world war, with a resolution to end for ever the shams, the prejudices, the pretences and habits that have impoverished their lives, slaughtered our sons, and wasted the world, a resolution so powerful and sustained that nothing could withstand it.

But it is not apparent that any such will arises. Does it appear at all? I find it hard to answer that question because my own answer varies with my mood. There are moods when it seems to me that nothing of the sort is happening. This war has written its warning in letters of blood and flame and anguish in the skies of mankind for two years and a half. When I look for the collective response to that warning, I see a multitude of little chaps crawling about their private ends like mites in an old cheese. The kings are still in their places, not a royal prince has been killed in this otherwise universal slaughter; when the fatuous portraits of the monarchs flash upon the screen the widows and orphans still break into loyal song. The ten thousand religions of mankind are still ten thousand religions, all busy at keeping men apart and hostile. I see scarcely a measurable step made anywhere towards that world kingdom of God, which is, I assert, the manifest solution, the only formula that can bring peace to all mankind. Mankind as a whole seems to have learnt nothing and

forgotten nothing in thirty months of war.

And then on the other hand I am aware of much quiet talking. This book tells of how I set out to see the war, and it is largely conversation.... Perhaps men have always expected miracles to happen; if one had always lived in the night and only heard tell of the day, I suppose one would have expected dawn to come as a vivid flash of light. I suppose one would still think it was night long after the things about one had crept out of the darkness into visibility. In comparison with all previous wars there has been much more thinking and much more discussion. If most of the talk seems to be futile, if it seems as if everyone were talking and nobody doing, it does not follow that things are not quietly slipping and sliding out of their old adjustments amidst the babble and because of the babble. Multitudes of men must be struggling with new ideas. It is reasonable to argue that there must be reconsideration, there must be time, before these millions of mental efforts can develop into a new collective purpose and really /show/--in consequences.

But that they will do so is my hope always and, on the whole, except in moods of depression and impatience, my belief. When one has travelled to a conviction so great as mine it is difficult to doubt that other men faced by the same universal facts will not come to the same conclusion. I believe that only through a complete simplification of religion to its fundamental idea, to a world-wide realisation of God as the king of the heart and of all mankind, setting aside monarchy and national egotism altogether, can mankind come to any certain happiness and security. The precedent of Islam helps my faith in the creative inspiration of such a renaissance of religion. The Sikh, the Moslem, the Puritan have shown that men can fight better for a Divine Idea than for any flag or monarch in the world. It seems to me that illusions fade and effigies lose credit everywhere. It is a very wonderful thing to me that China is now a

republic.... I take myself to be very nearly an average man, abnormal only by reason of a certain mental rapidity. I conceive myself to be thinking as the world thinks, and if I find no great facts, I find a hundred little indications to reassure me that God comes. Even those who have neither the imagination nor the faith to apprehend God as a reality will, I think, realise presently that the Kingdom of God over a world-wide system of republican states, is the only possible formula under which we may hope to unify and save mankind.

**THE
SECRET PLACES
OF THE HEART**

**BY
H. G. WELLS
1922**

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THE SECRET PLACES OF THE HEART

CHAPTER THE FIRST

THE CONSULTATION

Section 1

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

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

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

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

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

"Rush out of the place? . . .

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

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

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

There was something reassuringly inaggressive about the figure that confronted Sir Richmond. Dr. Martineau's height wanted at least three inches of Sir Richmond's five feet eleven; he was humanly plump, his face was round and pink and cheerfully wistful, a little suggestive of the full moon, of what the full moon might be if it could get fresh air and exercise. Either his tailor had made his trousers too short or he had braced them too high so that he seemed to have grown out of them quite recently. Sir Richmond had been dreading an encounter with some dominating and mesmeric personality; this amiable presence dispelled his preconceived resistances.

Dr. Martineau, a little out of breath as though he had been running upstairs, with his hands in his trouser pockets, seemed intent only on disavowals. "People come here and talk. It does them good, and sometimes I am able to offer a suggestion.

"Talking to someone who understands a little," he expanded the idea.

"I'm jangling damnably...overwork... . . ."

"Not overwork," Dr. Martineau corrected. "Not overwork. Overwork never hurt anyone. Fatigue stops that. A man can work--good straightforward work, without internal resistance, until he drops,--and never hurt himself. You must be working against friction."

"Friction! I'm like a machine without oil. I'm grinding to death. . . . And it's so DAMNED important I SHOULDN'T break down. It's VITALLY important."

He stressed his words and reinforced them with a quivering gesture of his upraised clenched hand. "My temper's in rags. I explode at any little thing. I'm RAW. I can't work steadily for ten minutes and I can't leave off working."

"Your name," said the doctor, "is familiar. Sir Richmond Hardy? In the papers. What is it?"

"Fuel."

"Of course! The Fuel Commission. Stupid of me! We certainly can't afford to have you ill."

"I AM ill. But you can't afford to have me absent from that Commission."

"Your technical knowledge--"

"Technical knowledge be damned! Those men mean to corner the

national fuel supply. And waste it! For their profits. That's what I'm up against. You don't know the job I have to do. You don't know what a Commission of that sort is. The moral tangle of it. You don't know how its possibilities and limitations are canvassed and schemed about, long before a single member is appointed. Old Cassidy worked the whole thing with the prime minister. I can see that now as plain as daylight. I might have seen it at first. . . . Three experts who'd been got at; they thought I'd been got at; two Labour men who'd do anything you wanted them to do provided you called them 'level-headed.' Wagstaffe the socialist art critic who could be trusted to play the fool and make nationalization look silly, and the rest mine owners, railway managers, oil profiteers, financial adventurers. . . . "

He was fairly launched. "It's the blind folly of it! In the days before the war it was different. Then there was abundance. A little grabbing or cornering was all to the good. All to the good. It prevented things being used up too fast. And the world was running by habit; the inertia was tremendous. You could take all sorts of liberties. But all this is altered. We're living in a different world. The public won't stand things it used to stand. It's a new public. It's--wild. It'll smash up the show if they go too far. Everything short and running shorter--food, fuel, material. But these people go on. They go on as though nothing had changed. . . . Strikes, Russia, nothing will warn them. There are men on that Commission who would steal the brakes off a mountain railway just before they went down in it. . . . It's a struggle with suicidal imbeciles. It's--! But I'm talking! I didn't come here to talk Fuel."

"You think there may be a smash-up?"

"I lie awake at night, thinking of it."

"A social smash-up."

"Economic. Social. Yes. Don't you?"

"A social smash-up seems to me altogether a possibility. All sorts of people I find think that," said the doctor. "All sorts of people lie awake thinking of it."

"I wish some of my damned Committee would!"

The doctor turned his eyes to the window. "I lie awake too," he said and seemed to reflect. But he was observing his patient acutely--with his ears.

"But you see how important it is," said Sir Richmond, and left his sentence unfinished.

"I'll do what I can for you," said the doctor, and considered swiftly what line of talk he had best follow.

Section 2

"This sense of a coming smash is epidemic," said the doctor. "It's at the back of all sorts of mental trouble. It is a new state of mind. Before the war it was abnormal--a phase of neurasthenia. Now it is almost the normal state with whole classes of intelligent people. Intelligent, I say. The others always have been casual and adventurous and always will be. A loss of confidence in the general background of life. So that we seem to float over abysses."

"We do," said Sir Richmond.

"And we have nothing but the old habits and ideas acquired in

the days of our assurance. There is a discord, a jarring."

The doctor pursued his train of thought. "A new, raw and dreadful sense of responsibility for the universe. Accompanied by a realization that the job is overwhelmingly too big for us."

"We've got to stand up to the job," said Sir Richmond. "Anyhow, what else is there to do? We MAY keep things together. . . . "I've got to do my bit. And if only I could hold myself at it, I could beat those fellows. But that's where the devil of it comes in. Never have I been so desirous to work well in my life. And never have I been so slack and weak-willed and inaccurate. . . . Sloppy. . . . Indolent. . . . VISCIOUS! . . . "

The doctor was about to speak, but Sir Richmond interrupted him. "What's got hold of me? What's got hold of me? I used to work well enough. It's as if my will had come untwisted and was ravelling out into separate strands. I've lost my unity. I'm not a man but a mob. I've got to recover my vigour. At any cost."

Again as the doctor was about to speak the word was taken out of his mouth. "And what I think of it, Dr. Martineau, is this: it's fatigue. It's mental and moral fatigue. Too much effort. On too high a level. And too austere. One strains and fags. FLAGS! 'Flags' I meant to say. One strains and flags and then the lower stuff in one, the subconscious stuff, takes control."

There was a flavour of popularized psychoanalysis about this, and the doctor drew in the corners of his mouth and gave his head a critical slant. "M'm." But this only made Sir Richmond raise his voice and quicken his speech. "I want," he said, "a

good tonic. A pick-me-up, a stimulating harmless drug of some sort. That's indicated anyhow. To begin with. Something to pull me together, as people say. Bring me up to the scratch again."

"I don't like the use of drugs," said the doctor.

The expectation of Sir Richmond's expression changed to disappointment. "But that's not reasonable," he cried.

"That's not reasonable. That's superstition. Call a thing a drug and condemn it! Everything is a drug. Everything that affects you. Food stimulates or tranquillizes. Drink. Noise is a stimulant and quiet an opiate. What is life but response to stimulants? Or reaction after them? When I'm exhausted I want food. When I'm overactive and sleepless I want tranquillizing. When I'm dispersed I want pulling together."

"But we don't know how to use drugs," the doctor objected.

"But you ought to know."

Dr. Martineau fixed his eye on a first floor window sill on the opposite side of Harley Street. His manner suggested a lecturer holding on to his theme.

"A day will come when we shall be able to manipulate drugs--all sorts of drugs--and work them in to our general way of living. I have no prejudice against them at all. A time will come when we shall correct our moods, get down to our reserves of energy by their help, suspend fatigue, put off sleep during long spells of exertion. At some sudden crisis for example. When we shall know enough to know just how far to go with this, that or the other stuff. And how to wash out its after effects I quite agree with you,--in principle But that time hasn't come yet. . . .

Decades of research yet. . . . If we tried that sort of thing now, we should be like children playing with poisons and explosives. . . . It's out of the question."

"I've been taking a few little things already. Easton Syrup for example."

"Strychnine. It carries you for a time and drops you by the way. Has it done you any good--any NETT good? It has--I can see--broken your sleep."

The doctor turned round again to his patient and looked up into his troubled face.

"Given physiological trouble I don't mind resorting to a drug. Given structural injury I don't mind surgery. But except for any little mischief your amateur drugging may have done you do not seem to me to be either sick or injured. You've no trouble either of structure or material. You are--worried--ill in your mind, and otherwise perfectly sound. It's the current of your thoughts, fermenting. If the trouble is in the mental sphere, why go out of the mental sphere for a treatment? Talk and thought; these are your remedies. Cool deliberate thought. You're unravelled. You say it yourself. Drugs will only make this or that unravelled strand behave disproportionately. You don't want that. You want to take stock of yourself as a whole--find out where you stand.

"But the Fuel Commission?"

"Is it sitting now?"

"Adjourned till after Whitsuntide. But there's heaps of work to be done.

"Still," he added, "this is my one chance of any treatment."

The doctor made a little calculation. "Three weeks. . . .
It's scarcely time enough to begin."

"You're certain that no regimen of carefully planned and
chosen tonics--"

"Dismiss the idea. Dismiss it." He decided to take a plunge.
"I've just been thinking of a little holiday for myself. But
I'd like to see you through this. And if I am to see you
through, there ought to be some sort of beginning now. In
this three weeks. Suppose. . . ."

Sir Richmond leapt to his thought. "I'm free to go anywhere."

"Golf would drive a man of your composition mad?"

"It would."

"That's that. Still--. The country must be getting beautiful
again now,--after all the rain we have had. I have a little
two-seater. I don't know. . . . The repair people promise to
release it before Friday."

"But I have a choice of two very comfortable little cars.
Why not be my guest?"

"That might be more convenient."

"I'd prefer my own car."

"Then what do you say?"

"I agree. Peripatetic treatment."

"South and west. We could talk on the road. In the evenings. By the wayside. We might make the beginnings of a treatment. . . . A simple tour. Nothing elaborate. You wouldn't bring a man?"

"I always drive myself."

Section 3

"There's something very pleasant, said the doctor, envisaging his own rash proposal, "in travelling along roads you don't know and seeing houses and parks and villages and towns for which you do not feel in the slightest degree responsible. They hide all their troubles from the road. Their backyards are tucked away out of sight, they show a brave face; there's none of the nasty self-betrayals of the railway approach. And everything will be fresh still. There will still be a lot of apple-blossom--and bluebells. . . . And all the while we can be getting on with your affair."

He was back at the window now. "I want the holiday myself," he said.

He addressed Sir Richmond over his shoulder. "Have you noted how fagged and unstable EVERYBODY is getting? Everybody intelligent, I mean."

"It's an infernally worrying time."

"Exactly. Everybody suffers."

"It's no GOOD going on in the old ways--"

"It isn't. And it's a frightful strain to get into any new

ways. So here we are.

"A man," the doctor expanded, "isn't a creature in vacuo. He's himself and his world. He's a surface of contact, a system of adaptations, between his essential self and his surroundings. Well, our surroundings have become--how shall I put it?--a landslide. The war which seemed such a definable catastrophe in 1914 was, after all, only the first loud crack and smash of the collapse. The war is over and--nothing is over. This peace is a farce, reconstruction an exploded phrase. The slide goes on,--it goes, if anything, faster, without a sign of stopping. And all our poor little adaptations! Which we have been elaborating and trusting all our lives! . . . One after another they fail us. We are stripped. . . . We have to begin all over again. . . . I'm fifty-seven and I feel at times nowadays like a chicken new hatched in a thunderstorm."

The doctor walked towards the bookcase and turned.

"Everybody is like that...it isn't--what are you going to do? It isn't--what am I going to do? It's--what are we all going to do! . . . Lord! How safe and established everything was in 1910, say. We talked of this great war that was coming, but nobody thought it would come. We had been born in peace, comparatively speaking; we had been brought up in peace. There was talk of wars. There were wars--little wars--that altered nothing material. . . . Consols used to be at 112 and you fed your household on ten shillings a head a week. You could run over all Europe, barring Turkey and Russia, without even a passport. You could get to Italy in a day. Never were life and comfort so safe--for respectable people. And we WERE respectable people. . . . That was the world that made us what we are. That was the sheltering and friendly greenhouse in which we grew. We fitted our minds to that. . . . And here

we are with the greenhouse falling in upon us lump by lump, smash and clatter, the wild winds of heaven tearing in through the gaps."

Upstairs on Dr. Martineau's desk lay the typescript of the opening chapters of a book that was intended to make a great splash in the world, his PSYCHOLOGY OF A NEW AGE. He had his metaphors ready.

"We said: 'This system will always go on. We needn't bother about it.' We just planned our lives accordingly. It was like a bird building its nest of frozen snakes. My father left me a decent independence. I developed my position; I have lived between here and the hospital, doing good work, enormously interested, prosperous, mildly distinguished. I had been born and brought up on the good ship Civilization. I assumed that someone else was steering the ship all right. I never knew; I never enquired."

"Nor did I" said Sir Richmond, "but--"

"And nobody was steering the ship," the doctor went on. "Nobody had ever steered the ship. It was adrift."

"I realized that. I--"

"It is a new realization. Always hitherto men have lived by faith--as children do, as the animals do. At the back of the healthy mind, human or animal, has been this persuasion: 'This is all right. This will go on. If I keep the rule, if I do so and so, all will be well. I need not trouble further; things are cared for.'"

"If we could go on like that!" said Sir Richmond.

"We can't. That faith is dead. The war--and the peace--have killed it."

The doctor's round face became speculative. His resemblance to the full moon increased. He seemed to gaze at remote things. "It may very well be that man is no more capable of living out of that atmosphere of assurance than a tadpole is of living out of water. His mental existence may be conditional on that. Deprived of it he may become incapable of sustained social life. He may become frantically self-seeking--incoherent . . . a stampede. . . . Human sanity may--DISPERSE.

"That's our trouble," the doctor completed. "Our fundamental trouble. All our confidences and our accustomed adaptations are destroyed. We fit together no longer. We are--loose. We don't know where we are nor what to do. The psychology of the former time fails to give safe responses, and the psychology of the New Age has still to develop."

Section 4

"That is all very well," said Sir Richmond in the resolute voice of one who will be pent no longer. "That is all very well as far as it goes. But it does not cover my case. I am not suffering from inadaptation. I HAVE adapted. I have thought things out. I think--much as you do. Much as you do. So it's not that. But-- . . . Mind you, I am perfectly clear where I am. Where we are. What is happening to us all is the breakup of the entire system. Agreed! We have to make another system or perish amidst the wreckage. I see that clearly. Science and plan have to replace custom and tradition in human affairs. Soon. Very soon. Granted. Granted. We used to say all that. Even before the war. Now we mean it. We've muddled about in the old ways overlong. Some new sort of

world, planned and scientific, has to be got going. Civilization renewed. Rebuilding civilization--while the premises are still occupied and busy. It's an immense enterprise, but it is the only thing to be done. In some ways it's an enormously attractive enterprise. Inspiring. It grips my imagination. I think of the other men who must be at work. Working as I do rather in the dark as yet. With whom I shall presently join up. . . The attempt may fail; all things human may fail; but on the other hand it may succeed. I never had such faith in anything as I have in the rightness of the work I am doing now. I begin at that. But here is where my difficulty comes in. The top of my brain, my innermost self says all that I have been saying, but-- The rest of me won't follow. The rest of me refuses to attend, forgets, straggles, misbehaves."

"Exactly."

The word irritated Sir Richmond. "Not 'exactly' at all. 'Amazingly,' if you like. . . . I have this unlimited faith in our present tremendous necessity--for work--for devotion; I believe my share, the work I am doing, is essential to the whole thing--and I work sluggishly. I work reluctantly. I work damnably."

"Exact--" The doctor checked himself . "All that is explicable. Indeed it is. Listen for a moment to me! Consider what you are. Consider what we are. Consider what a man is before you marvel at his ineptitudes of will. Face the accepted facts. Here is a creature not ten thousand generations from the ape, his ancestor. Not ten thousand. And that ape again, not a score of thousands from the monkey, his forebear. A man's body, his bodily powers, are just the body and powers of an ape, a little improved, a little adapted to novel needs. That brings me to my point. CAN HIS MIND AND

WILL BE ANYTHING BETTER? For a few generations, a few hundreds at most, knowledge and wide thought have flared out on the darkneses of life. . . . But the substance of man is ape still. He may carry a light in his brain, but his instincts move in the darkness. Out of that darkness he draws his motives."

"Or fails to draw them," said Sir Richmond.

"Or fails. . . . And that is where these new methods of treatment come in. We explore that failure. Together. What the psychoanalyst does--and I will confess that I owe much to the psychoanalyst--what he does is to direct thwarted, disappointed and perplexed people to the realities of their own nature. Which they have been accustomed to ignore and forget. They come to us with high ambitions or lovely illusions about themselves, torn, shredded, spoilt. They are morally denuded. Dreams they hate pursue them; abhorrent desires draw them; they are the prey of irresistible yet uncongenial impulses; they succumb to black despairs. The first thing we ask them is this: 'What else could you expect?'"

"What else could I expect?" Sir Richmond repeated, looking down on him. "H'm!"

"The wonder is not that you are sluggish, reluctantly unselfish, inattentive, spasmodic. The wonder is that you are ever anything else. . . . Do you realize that a few million generations ago, everything that stirs in us, everything that exalts human life, self-devotions, heroisms, the utmost triumphs of art, the love--for love it is--that makes you and me care indeed for the fate and welfare of all this round world, was latent in the body of some little lurking beast that crawled and hid among the branches of vanished and

forgotten Mesozoic trees? A petty egg-laying, bristle-covered beast it was, with no more of the rudiments of a soul than bare hunger, weak lust and fear. . . . People always seem to regard that as a curious fact of no practical importance. It isn't: it's a vital fact of the utmost practical importance. That is what you are made of. Why should you expect--because a war and a revolution have shocked you--that you should suddenly be able to reach up and touch the sky?"

"H'm!" said Sir Richmond. "Have I been touching the sky!"

"You are trying to play the part of an honest rich man."

"I don't care to see the whole system go smash."

"Exactly," said the doctor, before he could prevent himself.

"But is it any good to tell a man that the job he is attempting is above him--that he is just a hairy reptile twice removed--and all that sort of thing?"

"Well, it saves him from hoping too much and being too greatly disappointed. It recalls him to the proportions of the job. He gets something done by not attempting everything. . . . And it clears him up. We get him to look into himself, to see directly and in measurable terms what it is that puts him wrong and holds him back. He's no longer vaguely incapacitated. He knows."

"That's diagnosis. That's not treatment."

"Treatment by diagnosis. To analyze a mental knot is to untie it."

"You propose that I shall spend my time, until the Commission

meets, in thinking about myself. I wanted to forget myself."

"Like a man who tries to forget that his petrol is running short and a cylinder missing fire. . . . No. Come back to the question of what you are," said the doctor. "A creature of the darkness with new lights. Lit and half-blinded by science and the possibilities of controlling the world that it opens out. In that light your will is all for service; you care more for mankind than for yourself. You begin to understand something of the self beyond your self. But it is a partial and a shaded light as yet; a little area about you it makes clear, the rest is still the old darkness--of millions of intense and narrow animal generations. . . . You are like someone who awakens out of an immemorial sleep to find himself in a vast chamber, in a great and ancient house, a great and ancient house high amidst frozen and lifeless mountains--in a sunless universe. You are not alone in it. You are not lord of all you survey. Your leadership is disputed. The darkness even of the room you are in is full of ancient and discarded but quite unsubjected powers and purposes. . . . They thrust ambiguous limbs and claws suddenly out of the darkness into the light of your attention. They snatch things out of your hand, they trip your feet and jog your elbow. They crowd and cluster behind you. Wherever your shadow falls, they creep right up to you, creep upon you and struggle to take possession of you. The souls of apes, monkeys, reptiles and creeping things haunt the passages and attics and cellars of this living house in which your consciousness has awakened "

The doctor gave this quotation from his unpublished book the advantages of an abrupt break and a pause.

Sir Richmond shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "And you propose a vermin hunt in the old tenement?"

"The modern man has to be master in his own house. He has to take stock and know what is there."

"Three weeks of self vivisection."

"To begin with. Three weeks of perfect honesty with yourself. As an opening. . . . It will take longer than that if we are to go through with the job."

It is a considerable--process."

"It is."

"Yet you shrink from simple things like drugs!"

"Self-knowledge--without anaesthetics."

"Has this sort of thing ever done anyone any good at all?"

"It has turned hundreds back to sanity and steady work."

"How frank are we going to be? How full are we going to be? Anyhow--we can break off at any time. . . . We'll try it. We'll try it. . . . And so for this journey into the west of England. . . . And--if we can get there--I'm not sure that we can get there--into the secret places of my heart.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

LADY HARDY

The patient left the house with much more self possession than he had shown when entering it. Dr. Martineau had thrust him back from his intenser prepossessions to a more generalized view of himself, had made his troubles objective and detached him from them. He could even find something amusing now in his situation. He liked the immense scope of the theoretical duet in which they had indulged. He felt that most of it was entirely true--and, in some untraceable manner, absurd. There were entertaining possibilities in the prospect of the doctor drawing him out--he himself partly assisting and partly resisting.

He was a man of extensive reservations. His private life was in some respects exceptionally private.

"I don't confide Do I even confide in myself? I imagine I do Is there anything in myself that I haven't looked squarely in the face? . . . How much are we going into? Even as regards facts?"

"Does it really help a man--to see himself?. . ."

Such thoughts engaged him until he found himself in his study. His desk and his writing table were piled high with a heavy burthen of work. Still a little preoccupied with Dr. Martineau's exposition, he began to handle this confusion. . . .

At half past nine he found himself with three hours of good work behind him. It had seemed like two. He had not worked like this for many weeks. "This is very cheering," he said.

"And unexpected. Can old Moon-face have hypnotized me? Anyhow--. . . Perhaps I've only imagined I was ill. . . . Dinner?" He looked at his watch and was amazed at the time. "Good Lord! I've been at it three hours. What can have happened? Funny I didn't hear the gong."

He went downstairs and found Lady Hardy reading a magazine in a dining-room armchair and finely poised between devotion and martyrdom. A shadow of vexation fell athwart his mind at the sight of her.

"I'd no idea it was so late," he said. "I heard no gong."

"After you swore so at poor Bradley I ordered that there should be no gongs when we were alone. I did come up to your door about half past eight. I crept up. But I was afraid I might upset you if I came in."

"But you've not waited--"

"I've had a mouthful of soup." Lady Hardy rang the bell.

"I've done some work at last," said Sir Richmond, astride on the hearthrug.

"I'm glad," said Lady Hardy, without gladness. "I waited for three hours."

Lady Hardy was a frail little blue-eyed woman with uneven shoulders and a delicate sweet profile. Hers was that type of face that under even the most pleasant and luxurious circumstances still looks bravely and patiently enduring. Her refinement threw a tinge of coarseness over his eager consumption of his excellent clear soup.

"What's this fish, Bradley?" he asked.

"Turbot, Sir Richmond."

"Don't you have any?" he asked his wife.

"I've had a little fish, " said Lady Hardy.

When Bradley was out of the room, Sir Richmond remarked: "I saw that nerves man, Dr. Martineau, to-day. He wants me to take a holiday. "

The quiet patience of the lady's manner intensified. She said nothing. A flash of resentment lit Sir Richmond's eyes. When he spoke again, he seemed to answer unspoken accusations. "Dr. Martineau's idea is that he should come with me."

The lady adjusted herself to a new point of view.

"But won't that be reminding you of your illness and worries?"

"He seems a good sort of fellow. . . . I'm inclined to like him. He'll be as good company as anyone. . . . This TOURNEDOS looks excellent. Have some."

"I had a little bird," said Lady Hardy, "when I found you weren't coming."

"But I say--don't wait here if you've dined. Bradley can see to me."

She smiled and shook her head with the quiet conviction of one who knew her duty better. "Perhaps I'll have a little ice pudding when it comes," she said.

Sir Richmond detested eating alone in an atmosphere of observant criticism. And he did not like talking with his mouth full to an unembarrassed interlocutor who made no conversational leads of her own. After a few mouthfuls he pushed his plate away from him. "Then let's have up the ice pudding," he said with a faint note of bitterness.

"But have you finished--?"

"The ice pudding!" he exploded wrathfully. "The ice pudding!"

Lady Hardy sat for a moment, a picture of meek distress. Then, her delicate eyebrows raised, and the corners of her mouth drooping, she touched the button of the silver table-bell.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

THE DEPARTURE

Section 1

No wise man goes out upon a novel expedition without misgivings. And between their first meeting and the appointed morning both Sir Richmond Hardy and Dr. Martineau were the prey of quite disagreeable doubts about each other, themselves, and the excursion before them. At the time of their meeting each had been convinced that he gauged the other sufficiently for the purposes of the proposed tour. Afterwards each found himself trying to recall the other with greater distinctness and able to recall nothing but queer, ominous and minatory traits. The doctor's impression of the great fuel specialist grew ever darker, leaner, taller and more impatient. Sir Richmond took on the likeness of a monster obdurate and hostile, he spread upwards until like the Djinn out of the bottle, he darkened the heavens. And he talked too much. He talked ever so much too much. Sir Richmond also thought that the doctor talked too much. In addition, he read into his imperfect memory of the doctor's face, an expression of protruded curiosity. What was all this problem of motives and inclinations that they were "going into" so gaily? He had merely consulted the doctor on a simple, straightforward need for a nervous tonic--that was what he had needed--a tonic. Instead he had engaged himself for--he scarcely knew what--an indiscreet, indelicate, and altogether undesirable experiment in confidences.

Both men were considerably reassured when at last they set eyes on each other again. Indeed each was surprised to find something almost agreeable in the appearance of the other. Dr. Martineau at once perceived that the fierceness of Sir

Richmond was nothing more than the fierceness of an overwrought man, and Sir Richmond realized at a glance that the curiosity of Dr. Martineau's bearing had in it nothing personal or base; it was just the fine alertness of the scientific mind.

Sir Richmond had arrived nearly forty minutes late, and it would have been evident to a much less highly trained observer than Dr. Martineau that some dissension had arisen between the little, ladylike, cream and black Charmeuse car and its owner. There was a faint air of resentment and protest between them. As if Sir Richmond had been in some way rude to it.

The cap of the radiator was adorned with a little brass figure of a flying Mercury. Frozen in a sprightly attitude, its stiff bound and its fixed heavenward stare was highly suggestive of a forced and tactful disregard of current unpleasantness.

Nothing was said, however, to confirm or dispel this suspicion of a disagreement between the man and the car. Sir Richmond directed and assisted Dr. Martineau's man to adjust the luggage at the back, and Dr. Martineau watched the proceedings from his dignified front door. He was wearing a suit of fawn tweeds, a fawn Homburg hat and a light Burberry, with just that effect of special preparation for a holiday which betrays the habitually busy man. Sir Richmond's brown gauntness was, he noted, greatly set off by his suit of grey. There had certainly been some sort of quarrel. Sir Richmond was explaining the straps to Dr. Martineau's butler with the coldness a man betrays when he explains the uncongenial habits of some unloved intimate. And when the moment came to start and the little engine did not immediately respond to the electric starter, he said: "Oh! COME up, you--!"

His voice sank at the last word as though it was an entirely confidential communication to the little car. And it was an extremely low and disagreeable word. So Dr. Martineau decided that it was not his business to hear it. . . .

It was speedily apparent that Sir Richmond was an experienced and excellent driver. He took the Charmeuse out into the traffic of Baker Street and westward through brisk and busy streets and roads to Brentford and Hounslow smoothly and swiftly, making a score of unhesitating and accurate decisions without apparent thought. There was very little conversation until they were through Brentford. Near Shepherd's Bush, Sir Richmond had explained, "This is not my own particular car. That was butted into at the garage this morning and its radiator cracked. So I had to fall back on this. It's quite a good little car. In its way. My wife drives it at times. It has one or two constitutional weaknesses--incidental to the make--gear-box over the back axle for example--gets all the vibration. Whole machine rather on the flimsy side. Still--"

He left the topic at that.

Dr. Martineau said something of no consequence about its being a very comfortable little car.

Somewhere between Brentford and Hounslow, Sir Richmond plunged into the matter between them. "I don't know how deep we are going into these psychological probings of yours," he said. "But I doubt very much if we shall get anything out of them."

"Probably not," said Dr. Martineau.

"After all, what I want is a tonic. I don't see that there is anything positively wrong with me. A certain lack of energy--"

"Lack of balance," corrected the doctor. "You are wasting energy upon internal friction. "But isn't that inevitable? No machine is perfectly efficient. No man either. There is always a waste. Waste of the type; waste of the individual idiosyncrasy. This little car, for instance, isn't pulling as she ought to pull--she never does. She's low in her class. So with myself; there is a natural and necessary high rate of energy waste. Moods of apathy and indolence are natural to me. (Damn that omnibus! All over the road!)"

"We don't deny the imperfection--" began the doctor.

"One has to fit oneself to one's circumstances," said Sir Richmond, opening up another line of thought.

"We don't deny the imperfection" the doctor stuck to it. "These new methods of treatment are based on the idea of imperfection. We begin with that. I began with that last Tuesday. . . ."

Sir Richmond, too, was sticking to his argument. "A man, and for that matter the world he lives in, is a tangle of accumulations. Your psychoanalyst starts, it seems to me, with a notion of stripping down to something fundamental. The ape before was a tangle of accumulations, just as we are. So it was with his forebears. So it has always been. All life is an endless tangle of accumulations."

"Recognize it," said the doctor.

"And then?" said Sir Richmond, controversially.

"Recognize in particular your own tangle."

"Is my particular tangle very different from the general tangle? (Oh! Damn this feeble little engine!) I am a creature of undecided will, urged on by my tangled heredity to do a score of entirely incompatible things. Mankind, all life, is that."

"But our concern is the particular score of incompatible things you are urged to do. We examine and weigh--we weigh--"

The doctor was still saying these words when a violent and ultimately disastrous struggle began between Sir Richmond and the little Charmeuse car. The doctor stopped in mid-sentence.

It was near Taplow station that the mutual exasperation of man and machine was brought to a crisis by the clumsy emergence of a laundry cart from a side road. Sir Richmond was obliged to pull up smartly and stopped his engine. It refused an immediate obedience to the electric starter. Then it picked up, raced noisily, disengaged great volumes of bluish smoke, and displayed an unaccountable indisposition to run on any gear but the lowest. Sir Richmond thought aloud, unpleasing thoughts. He addressed the little car as a person; he referred to ancient disputes and temperamental incompatibilities. His anger betrayed him a coarse, ill-bred man. The little car quickened under his reproaches. There were some moments of hope, dashed by the necessity of going dead slow behind an interloping van. Sir Richmond did not notice the outstretched arm of the driver of the van, and stalled his engine for a second time. The electric starter refused its office altogether.

For some moments Sir Richmond sat like a man of stone.

"I must wind it up " he said at last in a profound and awful voice. "I must wind it up."

"I get out, don't I?" asked the doctor, unanswered, and did so. Sir Richmond, after a grim search and the displacement and replacement of the luggage, produced a handle from the locker at the back of the car and prepared to wind.

There was a little difficulty. "Come UP!" he said, and the small engine roared out like a stage lion.

The two gentlemen resumed their seats. The car started and then by an unfortunate inadvertency Sir Richmond pulled the gear lever over from the first speed to the reverse. There was a metallic clangour beneath the two gentlemen, and the car slowed down and stopped although the engine was still throbbing wildly, and the dainty veil of blue smoke still streamed forward from the back of the car before a gentle breeze. The doctor got out almost precipitately, followed by a gaunt madman, mouthing vileness, who had only a minute or so before been a decent British citizen. He made some blind lunges at the tremulous but obdurate car, but rather as if he looked for offences and accusations than for displacements to adjust. Quivering and refusing, the little car was extraordinarily like some recalcitrant little old aristocratic lady in the hands of revolutionaries, and this made the behaviour of Sir Richmond seem even more outrageous than it would otherwise have done. He stopped the engine, he went down on his hands and knees in the road to peer up at the gear-box, then without restoring the spark, he tried to wind up the engine again. He spun the little handle with an insane violence, faster and faster for--as it seemed to the doctor--the better part of a minute. Beads of perspiration appeared upon his brow and ran together; he bared his teeth

in a snarl; his hat slipped over one eye. He groaned with rage. Then, using the starting handle as a club, he assailed the car. He smote the brazen Mercury from its foothold and sent it and a part of the radiator cap with it flying across the road. He beat at the wings of the bonnet, until they bent in under his blows. Finally, he hurled the starting-handle at the wind-screen and smashed it. The starting-handle rattled over the bonnet and fell to the ground. . . .

The paroxysm was over. Ten seconds later this cataclysmal lunatic had reverted to sanity--a rather sheepish sanity.

He thrust his hands into his trouser pockets and turned his back on the car. He remarked in a voice of melancholy detachment: "It was a mistake to bring that coupe."

Dr. Martineau had assumed an attitude of trained observation on the side path. His hands rested on his hips and his hat was a little on one side. He was inclined to agree with Sir Richmond. "I don't know," he considered. "You wanted some such blow-off as this."

"Did I? "

"The energy you have! That car must be somebody's whipping boy."

"The devil it is!" said Sir Richmond, turning round sharply and staring at it as if he expected it to display some surprising and yet familiar features. Then he looked questioningly and suspiciously at his companion.

"These outbreaks do nothing to amend the originating grievance," said the doctor. "No. And at times they are even costly. But they certainly lift a burthen from the nervous

system. . . . And now I suppose we have to get that little ruin to Maidenhead."

"Little ruin!" repeated Sir Richmond. "No. There's lots of life in the little beast yet."

He reflected. "She'll have to be towed." He felt in his breast pocket. "Somewhere I have the R.A.C. order paper, the Badge that will Get You Home. We shall have to hail some passing car to take it into Maidenhead."

Dr. Martineau offered and Sir Richmond took and lit a cigarette.

For a little while conversation hung fire. Then for the first time Dr. Martineau heard his patient laugh.

"Amazing savage," said Sir Richmond. "Amazing savage!"

He pointed to his handiwork. "The little car looks ruffled. Well it may."

He became grave again. "I suppose I ought to apologize.

"Dr. Martineau weighed the situation. "As between doctor and patient," he said. "No."

"Oh!" said Sir Richmond, turned to a new point of view. "But where the patient ends and the host begins. . . . I'm really very sorry." He reverted to his original train of thought which had not concerned Dr. Martineau at all. "After all, the little car was only doing what she was made to do."

Section 2

The affair of the car effectively unsealed Sir Richmond's mind. Hitherto Dr. Martineau had perceived the possibility and danger of a defensive silence or of a still more defensive irony; but now that Sir Richmond had once given himself away, he seemed prepared to give himself away to an unlimited extent. He embarked upon an apologetic discussion of the choleric temperament.

He began as they stood waiting for the relief car from the Maidenhead garage. "You were talking of the ghosts of apes and monkeys that suddenly come out from the darkness of the subconscious"

"You mean--when we first met at Harley Street?"

"That last apparition of mine seems to have been a gorilla at least."

The doctor became precise. Gorillaesque. We are not descended from gorillas."

"Queer thing a fit of rage is!"

"It's one of nature's cruder expedients. Crude, but I doubt if it is fundamental. There doesn't seem to be rage in the vegetable world, and even among the animals--? No, it is not universal." He ran his mind over classes and orders. "Wasps and bees certainly seem to rage, but if one comes to think, most of the invertebrata show very few signs of it."

"I'm not so sure," said Sir Richmond. "I've never seen a snail in a towering passion or an oyster slamming its shell behind it. But these are sluggish things. Oysters sulk, which is after all a smouldering sort of rage. And take any more active invertebrate. Take a spider. Not a smashing and

swearing sort of rage perhaps, but a disciplined, cold-blooded malignity. Crabs fight. A conger eel in a boat will rage dangerously."

"A vertebrate. Yes. But even among the vertebrata; who has ever seen a furious rabbit?"

"Don't the bucks fight?" questioned Sir Richmond.

Dr. Martineau admitted the point.

"I've always had these fits of passion. As far back as I can remember. I was a kicking, screaming child. I threw things. I once threw a fork at my elder brother and it stuck in his forehead, doing no serious damage--happily. There were whole days of wrath--days, as I remember them. Perhaps they were only hours. . . . I've never thought before what a peculiar thing all this raging is in the world. WHY do we rage? They used to say it was the devil. If it isn't the devil, then what the devil is it? "After all," he went on as the doctor was about to answer his question; "as you pointed out, it isn't the lowlier things that rage. It's the HIGHER things and US."

"The devil nowadays," the doctor reflected after a pause, "so far as man is concerned, is understood to be the ancestral ape. And more particularly the old male ape."

But Sir Richmond was away on another line of thought. "Life itself, flaring out. Brooking no contradiction." He came round suddenly to the doctor's qualification. "Why male? Don't little girls smash things just as much?"

"They don't," said Dr. Martineau. "Not nearly as much."

Sir Richmond went off at a tangent again. "I suppose you have watched any number of babies?"

"Not nearly as many as a general practitioner would do. There's a lot of rage about most of them at first, male or female. "

"Queer little eddies of fury. . . . Recently--it happens--I've been seeing one. A spit of red wrath, clenching its fists and squalling threats at a damned disobedient universe."

The doctor was struck by an idea and glanced quickly and questioningly at his companion's profile.

"Blind driving force," said Sir Richmond, musing.

"Isn't that after all what we really are?" he asked the doctor. "Essentially--Rage. A rage in dead matter, making it alive."

"Schopenhauer," footnoted the doctor. "Boehme."

"Plain fact," said Sir Richmond. "No Rage--no Go."

"But rage without discipline?"

"Discipline afterwards. The rage first."

"But rage against what? And FOR what?"

"Against the Universe. And for--? That's more difficult. What IS the little beast squalling itself crimson for? Ultimately? . . . What is it clutching after? In the long run, what will it get?"

("Yours the car in distress what sent this?" asked an unheeded voice.)

"Of course, if you were to say 'desire'," said Dr. Martineau, "then you would be in line with the psychoanalysts. They talk of LIBIDO, meaning a sort of fundamental desire. Jung speaks of it at times almost as if it were the universal driving force."

"No," said Sir Richmond, in love with his new idea. "Not desire. Desire would have a definite direction, and that is just what this driving force hasn't. It's rage."

"Yours the car in distress what sent this?" the voice repeated. It was the voice of a mechanic in an Overland car. He was holding up the blue request for assistance that Sir Richmond had recently filled in.

The two philosophers returned to practical matters.

Section 3

For half an hour after the departure of the little Charmeuse car with Sir Richmond and Dr. Martineau, the brass Mercury lay unheeded in the dusty roadside grass. Then it caught the eye of a passing child.

He was a bright little boy of five. From the moment when he caught the gleam of brass he knew that he had made the find of his life. But his nurse was a timorous, foolish thing. "You did ought to of left it there, Masterrarry," she said.

"Findings ain't keepings nowadays, not by no manner of means, Masterrarry.

"Yew'd look silly if a policeman came along arsting people if they seen a goldennimage.

"Arst yer 'ow you come by it and look pretty straight at you."

All of which grumblings Master Harry treated with an experienced disregard. He knew definitely that he would never relinquish this bright and lovely possession again. It was the first beautiful thing he had ever possessed. He was the darling of fond and indulgent parents and his nursery was crowded with hideous rag and sawdust dolls, golliwogs, comic penguins, comic lions, comic elephants and comic policemen and every variety of suchlike humorous idiocy and visual beastliness. This figure, solid, delicate and gracious, was a thing of a different order.

There was to be much conflict and distress, tears and wrath, before the affinity of that cleanlimbed, shining figure and his small soul was recognized. But he carried his point at last. The Mercury became his inseparable darling, his symbol, his private god, the one dignified and serious thing in a little life much congested by the quaint, the burlesque, and all the smiling, dull condescensions of adult love.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

AT MAIDENHEAD

Section 1

The little Charmeuse was towed to hospital and the two psychiatrists took up their quarters at the Radiant Hotel with its pleasant lawns and graceful landing stage at the bend towards the bridge. Sir Richmond, after some trying work at the telephone, got into touch with his own proper car. A man would bring the car down in two days' time at latest, and afterwards the detested coupe could go back to London. The day was still young, and after lunch and coffee upon a sunny lawn a boat seemed indicated. Sir Richmond astonished the doctor by going to his room, reappearing dressed in tennis flannels and looking very well in them. It occurred to the doctor as a thing hitherto unnoted that Sir Richmond was not indifferent to his personal appearance. The doctor had no flannels, but he had brought a brown holland umbrella lined with green that he had acquired long ago in Algiers, and this served to give him something of the riverside quality.

The day was full of sunshine and the river had a Maytime animation. Pink geraniums, vivid green lawns, gay awnings, bright glass, white paint and shining metal set the tone of Maidenhead life. At lunch there had been five or six small tables with quietly affectionate couples who talked in undertones, a tableful of bright-coloured Jews who talked in overtones, and a family party from the Midlands, badly smitten with shyness, who did not talk at all. "A resort, of honeymoon couples," said the doctor, and then rather knowingly: "Temporary honeymoons, I fancy, in one or two of the cases."

"Decidedly temporary," said Sir Richmond, considering the company--"in most of the cases anyhow. The two in the corner might be married. You never know nowadays."

He became reflective. . . .

After lunch and coffee he rowed the doctor up the river towards Cliveden.

"The last time I was here," he said, returning to the subject, "I was here on a temporary honeymoon."

The doctor tried to look as though he had not thought that could be possible.

"I know my Maidenhead fairly well," said Sir Richmond. "Aquatic activities, such as rowing, punting, messing about with a boat-hook, tying up, buzzing about in motor launches, fouling other people's boats, are merely the stage business of the drama. The ruling interests of this place are love--largely illicit--and persistent drinking. . . . Don't you think the bridge charming from here?"

"I shouldn't have thought--drinking," said Dr. Martineau, after he had done justice to the bridge over his shoulder.

"Yes, the place has a floating population of quiet industrious soakers. The incurable river man and the river girl end at that."

Dr. Martineau encouraged Sir Richmond by an appreciative silence.

"If we are to explore the secret places of the heart," Sir Richmond went on, "we shall have to give some attention to

this Maidenhead side of life. It is very material to my case. I have,--as I have said--BEEN HERE. This place has beauty and charm; these piled-up woods behind which my Lords Astor and Desborough keep their state, this shining mirror of the water, brown and green and sky blue, this fringe of reeds and scented rushes and forget-me-not and lilies, and these perpetually posing white swans: they make a picture. A little artificial it is true; one feels the presence of a Conservancy Board, planting the rushes and industriously nicking the swans; but none the less delightful. And this setting has appealed to a number of people as an invitation, as, in a way, a promise. They come here, responsive to that promise of beauty and happiness. They conceive of themselves here, rowing swiftly and gracefully, punting beautifully, brandishing boat-hooks with ease and charm. They look to meet, under pleasant or romantic circumstances, other possessors and worshippers of grace and beauty here. There will be glowing evenings, warm moonlight, distant voices singing. . . . There is your desire, doctor, the desire you say is the driving force of life. But reality mocks it. Boats bump and lead to coarse ungracious quarrels; rowing can be curiously fatiguing; punting involves dreadful indignities. The romance here tarnishes very quickly. Romantic encounters fail to occur; in our impatience we resort to--accosting. Chilly mists arise from the water and the magic of distant singing is provided, even excessively, by boatloads of cads--with collecting dishes. When the weather keeps warm there presently arises an extraordinary multitude of gnats, and when it does not there is a need for stimulants. That is why the dreamers who come here first for a light delicious brush with love, come down at last to the Thameside barmaid with her array of spirits and cordials as the quintessence of all desire."

"I say," said the doctor. "You tear the place to pieces."

"The desires of the place," said Sir Richmond.

"I'm using the place as a symbol."

He held his sculls awash, rippling in the water.

"The real force of life, the rage of life, isn't here," he said. "It's down underneath, sulking and smouldering. Every now and then it strains and cracks the surface. This stretch of the Thames, this pleasure stretch, has in fact a curiously quarrelsome atmosphere. People scold and insult one another for the most trivial things, for passing too close, for taking the wrong side, for tying up or floating loose. Most of these notice boards on the bank show a thoroughly nasty spirit. People on the banks jeer at anyone in the boats. You hear people quarrelling in boats, in the hotels, as they walk along the towing path. There is remarkably little happy laughter here. The RAGE, you see, is hostile to this place, the RAGE breaks through. . . . The people who drift from one pub to another, drinking, the people who fuddle in the riverside hotels, are the last fugitives of pleasure, trying to forget the rage. . . ."

"Isn't it that there is some greater desire at the back of the human mind?" the doctor suggested. "Which refuses to be content with pleasure as an end?"

"What greater desire?" asked Sir Richmond, disconcertingly.

"Oh! . . . " The doctor cast about.

"There is no such greater desire," said Sir Richmond. "You cannot name it. It is just blind drive. I admit its discontent with pleasure as an end--but has it any end of its

own? At the most you can say that the rage in life is seeking its desire and hasn't found it."

"Let us help in the search," said the doctor, with an afternoon smile under his green umbrella. "Go on."

Section 2

"Since our first talk in Harley Street," said Sir Richmond, "I have been trying myself over in my mind. (We can drift down this backwater.) "

"Big these trees are," said the doctor with infinite approval.

"I am astonished to discover what a bundle of discordant motives I am. I do not seem to deserve to be called a personality. I cannot discover even a general direction. Much more am I like a taxi-cab in which all sorts of aims and desires have travelled to their destination and got out. Are we all like that?"

"A bundle held together by a name and address and a certain thread of memory?" said the doctor and considered. "More than that. More than that. We have leading ideas, associations, possessions, liabilities."

"We build ourselves a prison of circumstances that keeps us from complete dispersal."

"Exactly," said the doctor. "And there is also something, a consistency, that we call character."

"It changes."

"Consistently with itself."

"I have been trying to recall my sexual history," said Sir Richmond, going off at a tangent. "My sentimental education. I wonder if it differs very widely from yours or most men's."

"Some men are more eventful in these matters than others," said the doctor,--it sounded--wistfully.

"They have the same jumble of motives and traditions, I suspect, whether they are eventful or not. The brakes may be strong or weak but the drive is the same. I can't remember much of the beginnings of curiosity and knowledge in these matters. Can you?"

"Not much," said the doctor. "No."

"Your psychoanalysts tell a story of fears, suppressions, monstrous imaginations, symbolic replacements. I don't remember much of that sort of thing in my own case. It may have faded out of my mind. There were probably some uneasy curiosities, a grotesque dream or so perhaps; I can't recall anything of that sort distinctly now. I had a very lively interest in women, even when I was still quite a little boy, and a certain--what shall I call it?--imaginative slavishness--not towards actual women but towards something magnificently feminine. My first love--"

Sir Richmond smiled at some secret memory. "My first love was Britannia as depicted by Tenniel in the cartoons in PUNCH. I must have been a very little chap at the time of the Britannia affair. I just clung to her in my imagination and did devoted things for her. Then I recall, a little later, a secret abject adoration for the white goddesses of the Crystal Palace. Not for any particular one of them that I can

remember,--for all of them. But I don't remember anything very monstrous or incestuous in my childish imaginations,--such things as Freud, I understand, lays stress upon. If there was an Oedipus complex or anything of that sort in my case it has been very completely washed out again. Perhaps a child which is brought up in a proper nursery of its own and sees a lot of pictures of the nude human body, and so on, gets its mind shifted off any possible concentration upon the domestic aspect of sex. I got to definite knowledge pretty early. By the time I was eleven or twelve."

"Normally? "

"What is normally? Decently, anyhow. Here again I may be forgetting much secret and shameful curiosity. I got my ideas into definite form out of a little straightforward physiological teaching and some dissecting of rats and mice. My schoolmaster was a capable sane man in advance of his times and my people believed in him. I think much of this distorted perverse stuff that grows up in people's minds about sex and develops into evil vices and still more evil habits, is due to the mystery we make about these things."

"Not entirely," said the doctor.

"Largely. What child under a modern upbringing ever goes through the stuffy horrors described in James Joyce's **PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN.**"

"I've not read it."

"A picture of the Catholic atmosphere; a young soul shut up in darkness and ignorance to accumulate filth. In the name of purity and decency and under threats of hell fire."

"Horrible!"

"Quite. A study of intolerable tensions, the tensions that make young people write unclean words in secret places. "

"Yes, we certainly ventilate and sanitize in those matters nowadays. Where nothing is concealed, nothing can explode."

"On the whole I came up to adolescence pretty straight and clean," said Sir Richmond. "What stands out in my memory now is this idea, of a sort of woman goddess who was very lovely and kind and powerful and wonderful. That ruled my secret imaginations as a boy, but it was very much in my mind as I grew up."

"The mother complex," said Dr. Martineau as a passing botanist might recognize and name a flower.

Sir Richmond stared at him for a moment.

"It had not the slightest connexion with my mother or any mother or any particular woman at all. Far better to call it the goddess complex."

"The connexion is not perhaps immediately visible," said the doctor.

"There was no connexion," said Sir Richmond. "The women of my adolescent dreams were stripped and strong and lovely. They were great creatures. They came, it was clearly traceable, from pictures sculpture--and from a definite response in myself to their beauty. My mother had nothing whatever to do with that. The women and girls about me were fussy bunches of clothes that I am sure I never even linked with that dream world of love and worship."

"Were you co-educated?"

"No. But I had a couple of sisters, one older, one younger than myself, and there were plenty of girls in my circle. I thought some of them pretty--but that was a different affair. I know that I didn't connect them with the idea of the loved and worshipped goddesses at all, because I remember when I first saw the goddess in a real human being and how amazed I was at the discovery. . . . I was a boy of twelve or thirteen. My people took me one summer to Dymchurch in Romney Marsh; in those days before the automobile had made the Marsh accessible to the Hythe and Folkestone crowds, it was a little old forgotten silent wind-bitten village crouching under the lee of the great sea wall. At low water there were miles of sand as smooth and shining as the skin of a savage brown woman. Shining and with a texture--the very same. And one day as I was mucking about by myself on the beach, boy fashion,--there were some ribs of a wrecked boat buried in the sand near a groin and I was busy with them--a girl ran out from a tent high up on the beach and across the sands to the water. She was dressed in a tight bathing dress and not in the clumsy skirts and frills that it was the custom to inflict on women in those days. Her hair was tied up in a blue handkerchief. She ran swiftly and gracefully, intent upon the white line of foam ahead. I can still remember how the sunlight touched her round neck and cheek as she went past me. She was the loveliest, most shapely thing I have ever seen--to this day. She lifted up her arms and thrust through the dazzling white and green breakers and plunged into the water and swam; she swam straight out for a long way as it seemed to me, and presently came in and passed me again on her way back to her tent, light and swift and sure. The very prints of her feet on the sand were beautiful. Suddenly I realized that there could be living people in the world as

lovely as any goddess. . . . She wasn't in the least out of breath.

"That was my first human love. And I love that girl still. I doubt sometimes whether I have ever loved anyone else. I kept the thing very secret. I wonder now why I have kept the thing so secret. Until now I have never told a soul about it. I resorted to all sorts of tortuous devices and excuses to get a chance of seeing her again without betraying what it was I was after."

Dr. Martineau retained a simple fondness for a story.

"And did you meet her again?"

"Never. Of course I may have seen her as a dressed-up person and not recognized her. A day or so later I was stabbed to the heart by the discovery that the tent she came out of had been taken away. "

"She had gone?"

"For ever."

Sir Richmond smiled brightly at the doctor's disappointment.

Section 3

"I was never wholehearted and simple about sexual things," Sir Richmond resumed presently. "Never. I do not think any man is. We are too much plastered-up things, too much the creatures of a tortuous and complicated evolution."

Dr. Martineau, under his green umbrella, nodded his conceded agreement.

"This--what shall I call it?--this Dream of Women, grew up in my mind as I grew up--as something independent of and much more important than the reality of Women. It came only very slowly into relation with that. That girl on the Dymchurch beach was one of the first links, but she ceased very speedily to be real--she joined the women of dreamland at last altogether. She became a sort of legendary incarnation. I thought of these dream women not only as something beautiful but as something exceedingly kind and helpful. The girls and women I met belonged to a different creation. . . ."

Sir Richmond stopped abruptly and rowed a few long strokes.

Dr. Martineau sought information.

"I suppose," he said, "there was a sensuous element in these dreamings?"

"Certainly. A very strong one. It didn't dominate but it was a very powerful undertow."

"Was there any tendency in all this imaginative stuff to concentrate? To group itself about a single figure, the sort of thing that Victorians would have called an ideal?"

"Not a bit of it," said Sir Richmond with conviction. "There was always a tremendous lot of variety in my mind. In fact the thing I liked least in the real world was the way it was obsessed by the idea of pairing off with one particular set and final person. I liked to dream of a blonde goddess in her own Venusberg one day, and the next I would be off over the mountains with an armed Brunhild."

"You had little thought of children?"

"As a young man?"

"Yes."

"None at all. I cannot recall a single philoprogenitive moment. These dream women were all conceived of, and I was conceived of, as being concerned in some tremendous enterprise--something quite beyond domesticity. It kept us related--gave us dignity. . . . Certainly it wasn't babies."

"All this is very interesting, very interesting, from the scientific point of view. A PRIORI it is not what one might have expected. Reasoning from the idea that all instincts and natural imaginations are adapted to a biological end and seeing that sex is essentially a method of procreation, one might reasonably expect a convergence, if not a complete concentration, upon the idea of offspring. It is almost as if there were other ends to be served. It is clear that Nature has not worked this impulse out to any sight of its end. Has not perhaps troubled to do so. The instinct of the male for the female isn't primarily for offspring--not even in the most intelligent and farseeing types. The desire just points to glowing satisfactions and illusions. Quite equally I think the desire of the female for the male ignores its end. Nature has set about this business in a CHEAP sort of way. She is like some pushful advertising tradesman. She isn't frank with us; she just humbugs us into what she wants with us. All very well in the early Stone Age--when the poor dear things never realized that their mutual endearments meant all the troubles and responsibilities of parentage. But NOW--!"

He shook his head sideways and twirled the green umbrella like an animated halo around his large broad-minded face.

Sir Richmond considered. "Desire has never been the chief incentive of my relations with women. Never. So far as I can analyze the thing, it has been a craving for a particular sort of life giving companionship."

"That I take it is Nature's device to keep the lovers together in the interest of the more or less unpremeditated offspring."

"A poor device, if that is its end. It doesn't keep parents together; more often it tears them apart. The wife or the mistress, so soon as she is encumbered with children, becomes all too manifestly not the companion goddess. . . ."

Sir Richmond brooded over his sculls and thought.

"Throughout my life I have been an exceedingly busy man. I have done a lot of scientific work and some of it has been very good work. And very laborious work. I've travelled much. I've organized great business developments. You might think that my time has been fairly well filled without much philandering. And all the time, all the time, I've been--about women--like a thirsty beast looking for water. . . . Always. Always. All through my life."

Dr. Martineau waited through another silence.

"I was very grave about it at first. I married young. I married very simply and purely. I was not one of those young men who sow a large crop of wild oats. I was a fairly decent youth. It suddenly appeared to me that a certain smiling and dainty girl could make herself into all the goddesses of my dreams. I had but to win her and this miracle would occur. Of course I forget now the exact things I thought and felt then,

but surely I had some such persuasion. Or why should I have married her? My wife was seven years younger than myself,--a girl of twenty. She was charming. She is charming. She is a wonderfully intelligent and understanding woman. She has made a home for me--a delightful home. I am one of those men who have no instinct for home making. I owe my home and all the comfort and dignity of my life to her ability. I have no excuse for any misbehaviour--so far as she is concerned. None at all. By all the rules I should have been completely happy. But instead of my marriage satisfying me, it presently released a storm of long-controlled desires and imprisoned cravings. A voice within me became more and more urgent. 'This will not do. This is not love. Where are your goddesses? This is not love.' . . . And I was unfaithful to my wife within four years of my marriage. It was a sudden overpowering impulse. But I suppose the ground had been preparing for a long time. I forget now all the emotions of that adventure. I suppose at the time it seemed beautiful and wonderful. . . . I do not excuse myself. Still less do I condemn myself. I put the facts before you. So it was."

"There were no children by your marriage?"

"Your line of thought, doctor, is too philoprogenitive. We have had three. My daughter was married two years ago. She is in America. One little boy died when he was three. The other is in India, taking up the Mardipore power scheme again now that he is out of the army. . . . No, it is simply that I was hopelessly disappointed with everything that a good woman and a decent marriage had to give me. Pure disappointment and vexation. The anti-climax to an immense expectation built up throughout an imaginative boyhood and youth and early manhood. I was shocked and ashamed at my own disappointment. I thought it mean and base. Nevertheless this orderly household into which I had placed my life, these almost

methodical connubialities"

He broke off in mid-sentence.

Dr. Martineau shook his head disapprovingly.

"No," he said, "it wasn't fair to your wife."

"It was shockingly unfair. I have always realized that. I've done what I could to make things up to her. . . . Heaven knows what counter disappointments she has concealed. . . . But it is no good arguing about rights and wrongs now. This is not an apology for my life. I am telling you what happened.

"Not for me to judge," said Dr. Martineau. "Go on."

"By marrying I had got nothing that my soul craved for, I had satisfied none but the most transitory desires and I had incurred a tremendous obligation. That obligation didn't restrain me from making desperate lunges at something vaguely beautiful that I felt was necessary to me; but it did cramp and limit these lunges. So my story flops down into the comedy of the lying, cramped intrigues of a respectable, married man. . . I was still driven by my dream of some extravagantly beautiful inspiration called love and I sought it like an area sneak. Gods! What a story it is when one brings it all together! I couldn't believe that the glow and sweetness I dreamt of were not in the world--somewhere. Hidden away from me. I seemed to catch glimpses of the dear lost thing, now in the corners of a smiling mouth, now in dark eyes beneath a black smoke of hair, now in a slim form seen against the sky. Often I cared nothing for the woman I made love to. I cared for the thing she seemed to be hiding from me"

Sir Richmond's voice altered.

"I don't see what possible good it can do to talk over these things." He began to row and rowed perhaps a score of strokes. Then he stopped and the boat drove on with a whisper of water at the bow and over the outstretched oar blades.

"What a muddle and mockery the whole thing is!" he cried.

"What a fumbling old fool old Mother Nature has been! She drives us into indignity and dishonour: and she doesn't even get the children which are her only excuse for her mischief. See what a fantastic thing I am when you take the machine to pieces! I have been a busy and responsible man throughout my life. I have handled complicated public and industrial affairs not unsuccessfully and discharged quite big obligations fully and faithfully. And all the time, hidden away from the public eye, my life has been laced by the thread of these--what can one call them? --love adventures. How many? you ask. I don't know. Never have I been a whole-hearted lover; never have I been able to leave love alone. . . . Never has love left me alone.

"And as I am made, said Sir Richmond with sudden insistence, "AS I AM MADE--I do not believe that I could go on without these affairs. I know that you will be disposed to dispute that.

Dr. Martineau made a reassuring noise.

"These affairs are at once unsatisfying and vitally necessary. It is only latterly that I have begun to perceive this. Women MAKE life for me. Whatever they touch or see or desire becomes worth while and otherwise it is not worth while. Whatever is lovely in my world, whatever is

delightful, has been so conveyed to me by some woman. Without the vision they give me, I should be a hard dry industry in the world, a worker ant, a soulless rage, making much, valuing nothing."

He paused.

"You are, I think, abnormal," considered the doctor.

"Not abnormal. Excessive, if you like. Without women I am a wasting fever of distressful toil. Without them there is no kindness in existence, no rest, no sort of satisfaction. The world is a battlefield, trenches, barbed wire, rain, mud, logical necessity and utter desolation--with nothing whatever worth fighting for. Whatever justifies effort, whatever restores energy is hidden in women"

"An access of sex," said Dr. Martineau. " This is a phase. . . ."

"It is how I am made," said Sir Richmond.

A brief silence fell upon that. Dr. Martineau persisted. "It isn't how you are made. We are getting to something in all this. It is, I insist, a mood of how you are made. A distinctive and indicative mood."

Sir Richmond went on, almost as if he soliloquized.

"I would go through it all again. . . . There are times when the love of women seems the only real thing in the world to me. And always it remains the most real thing. I do not know how far I may be a normal man or how far I may not be, so to speak, abnormally male, but to me life has very little personal significance and no value or power until it has a

woman as intermediary. Before life can talk to me and say anything that matters a woman must be present as a medium. I don't mean that it has no significance mentally and logically; I mean that irrationally and emotionally it has no significance. Works of art, for example, bore me, literature bores me, scenery bores me, even the beauty of a woman bores me, unless I find in it some association with a woman's feeling. It isn't that I can't tell for myself that a picture is fine or a mountain valley lovely, but that it doesn't matter a rap to me whether it is or whether it isn't until there is a feminine response, a sexual motif, if you like to call it that, coming in. Whatever there is of loveliness or pride in life doesn't LIVE for me until somehow a woman comes in and breathes upon it the breath of life. I cannot even rest until a woman makes holiday for me. Only one thing can I do without women and that is work, joylessly but effectively, and latterly for some reason that it is up to you to discover, doctor, even the power of work has gone from me."

Section 4

"This afternoon brings back to me very vividly my previous visit here. It was perhaps a dozen or fifteen years ago. We rowed down this same backwater. I can see my companion's hand--she had very pretty hands with rosy palms--trailing in the water, and her shadowed face smiling quietly under her sunshade, with little faint streaks of sunlight, reflected from the ripples, dancing and quivering across it. She was one of those people who seem always to be happy and to radiate happiness.

"By ordinary standards," said Sir Richmond, "she was a thoroughly bad lot. She had about as much morality, in the narrower sense of the word, as a monkey. And yet she stands out in my mind as one of the most honest women I have ever

met. She was certainly one of the kindest. Part of that effect of honesty may have been due to her open brow, her candid blue eyes, the smiling frankness of her manner. . . . But--no! She was really honest.

"We drifted here as we are doing now. She pulled at the sweet rushes and crushed them in her hand. She adds a remembered brightness to this afternoon.

"Honest. Friendly. Of all the women I have known, this woman who was here with me came nearest to being my friend. You know, what we call virtue in a woman is a tremendous handicap to any real friendliness with a man. Until she gets to an age when virtue and fidelity are no longer urgent practical concerns, a good woman, by the very definition of feminine goodness, isn't truly herself. Over a vast extent of her being she is RESERVED. She suppresses a vast amount of her being, holds back, denies, hides. On the other hand, there is a frankness and honesty in openly bad women arising out of the admitted fact that they are bad, that they hide no treasure from you, they have no peculiarly precious and delicious secrets to keep, and no poverty to conceal. Intellectually they seem to be more manly and vigorous because they are, as people say, unsexed. Many old women, thoroughly respectable old women, have the same quality. Because they have gone out of the personal sex business. Haven't you found that?"

"I have never," said the doctor, known what you call an openly bad woman,--at least, at all intimately. . . . "

Sir Richmond looked with quick curiosity at his companion. "You have avoided them!"

"They don't attract me."

"They repel you?"

"For me," said the doctor, "for any friendliness, a woman must be modest. . . . My habits of thought are old-fashioned, I suppose, but the mere suggestion about a woman that there were no barriers, no reservation, that in any fashion she might more than meet me half way . . . "

His facial expression completed his sentence.

"Now I wonder," whispered Sir Richmond, and hesitated for a moment before he carried the great research into the explorer's country. "You are afraid of women?" he said, with a smile to mitigate the impertinence.

"I respect them."

"An element of fear."

"Well, I am afraid of them then. Put it that way if you like. Anyhow I do not let myself go with them. I have never let myself go."

"You lose something. You lose a reality of insight."

There was a thoughtful interval.

"Having found so excellent a friend," said the doctor, "why did you ever part from her?"

Sir Richmond seemed indisposed to answer, but Dr. Martineau's face remained slantingly interrogative. He had found the effective counterattack and he meant to press it. "I was jealous of her," Sir Richmond admitted. "I couldn't stand that side of it."

Section 5

After a meditative silence the doctor became briskly professional again.

"You care for your wife," he said. "You care very much for your wife. She is, as you say, your great obligation and you are a man to respect obligations. I grasp that. Then you tell me of these women who have come and gone. . . . About them too you are perfectly frank. . . There remains someone else." Sir Richmond stared at his physician.

"Well," he said and laughed. "I didn't pretend to have made my autobiography anything more than a sketch."

"No, but there is a special person, the current person."

"I haven't dilated on my present situation, I admit."

"From some little things that have dropped from you, I should say there is a child."

"That," said Sir Richmond after a brief pause, "is a good guess." "Not older than three." "Two years and a half."

"You and this lady who is, I guess, young, are separated. At any rate, you can't go to her. That leaves you at loose ends, because for some time, for two or three years at least, you have ceased to be--how shall I put it?--an emotional wanderer." "I begin to respect your psychoanalysis."

"Hence your overwhelming sense of the necessity of feminine companionship for weary men. I guess she is a very jolly companion to be with, amusing, restful--interesting."

"H'm," said Sir Richmond. "I think that is a fair description. When she cares, that is. When she is in good form."

"Which she isn't at present," hazarded the doctor. He exploded a mine of long-pent exasperation.

"She is the clumsiest hand at keeping well that I have ever known. Health is a woman's primary duty. But she is incapable of the most elementary precautions. She is maddeningly receptive to every infection. At the present moment, when I am ill, when I am in urgent need of help and happiness, she has let that wretched child get measles and she herself won't let me go near her because she has got something disfiguring, something nobody else could ever have or think of having, called CARBUNCLE. Carbuncle!"

"It is very painful," said Dr. Martineau. "No doubt it is," said Sir Richmond.

"No doubt it is." His voice grew bitter. He spoke with deliberation. "A perfectly aimless, useless illness,--and as painful as it CAN be."

He spoke as if he slammed a door viciously. And indeed he had slammed a door. The doctor realized that for the present there was no more self-dissection to be got from Sir Richmond.

For some time Sir Richmond had been keeping the boat close up to the foaming weir to the left of the lock by an occasional stroke. Now with a general air of departure he swung the boat round and began to row down stream towards the bridge and the Radiant Hotel.

"Time we had tea," he said,

Section 6

After tea Dr. Martineau left Sir Richmond in a chair upon the lawn, brooding darkly--apparently over the crime of the carbuncle. The doctor went to his room, ostensibly to write a couple of letters and put on a dinner jacket, but really to make a few notes of the afternoon's conversation and meditate over his impressions while they were fresh.

His room proffered a comfortable armchair and into this he sank. . . A number of very discrepant things were busy in his mind. He had experienced a disconcerting personal attack. There was a whirl of active resentment in the confusion.

"Apologetics of a rake," he tried presently.

"A common type, stripped of his intellectual dressing. Every third manufacturer from the midlands or the north has some such undertow of 'affairs.' A physiological uneasiness, an imaginative laxity, the temptations of the trip to London--weakness masquerading as a psychological necessity. The Lady of the Carbuncle seems to have got rather a hold upon him. She has kept him in order for three or four years."

The doctor scrutinized his own remarks with a judicious expression.

"I am not being fair. He ruffled me. Even if it is true, as I said, that every third manufacturer from the midlands is in much the same case as he is, that does not dismiss the case. It makes it a more important one, much more important: it makes it a type case with the exceptional quality of being

self-expressive. Almost too selfexpressive.

"Sir Richmond does, after all, make out a sort of case for himself. . . .

"A valid case?"

The doctor sat deep in his chair, frowning judicially with the fingers of one hand apposed to the fingers of the other. "He makes me bristle because all his life and ideas challenge my way of living. But if I eliminate the personal element? "

He pulled a sheet of note-paper towards him and began to jot down notes with a silver-cased pencil. Soon he discontinued writing and sat tapping his pencil-case on the table. "The amazing selfishness of his attitude! I do not think that once--not once--has he judged any woman except as a contributor to his energy and peace of mind. . . . Except in the case of his wife. . . .

"For her his habit of respect was formed before his ideas developed. . . .

"That I think explains HER. . . .

"What was his phrase about the unfortunate young woman with the carbuncle? . . . 'Totally Useless and unnecessary illness,' was it? . . .

"Now has a man any right by any standards to use women as this man has used them?

"By any standards?"

The doctor frowned and nodded his head slowly with the

corners of his mouth drawn in.

For some years now an intellectual reverie had been playing an increasing part in the good doctor's life. He was writing this book of his, writing it very deliberately and laboriously, *THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A NEW AGE*, but much more was he dreaming and thinking about this book. Its publication was to mark an epoch in human thought and human affairs generally, and create a considerable flutter of astonishment in the doctor's own little world. It was to bring home to people some various aspects of one very startling proposition: that human society had arrived at a phase when the complete restatement of its fundamental ideas had become urgently necessary, a phase when the slow, inadequate, partial adjustments to two centuries of changing conditions had to give place to a rapid reconstruction of new fundamental ideas. And it was a fact of great value in the drama of these secret dreams that the directive force towards this fundamentally reconstructed world should be the pen of an unassuming Harley Street physician, hitherto not suspected of any great excesses of enterprise.

The written portions of this book were already in a highly polished state. They combined a limitless freedom of proposal with a smooth urbanity of manner, a tacit denial that the thoughts of one intelligent being could possibly be shocking to another. Upon this the doctor was very insistent. Conduct, he held, could never be sufficiently discreet, thought could never be sufficiently free. As a citizen, one had to treat a law or an institution as a thing as rigidly right as a natural law. That the social well-being demands. But as a scientific man, in one's stated thoughts and in public discussion, the case was altogether different. There was no offence in any possible hypothesis or in the contemplation of any possibility. Just as when one played a game one was

bound to play in unquestioning obedience to the laws and spirit of the game, but if one was not playing that game then there was no reason why one should not contemplate the completest reversal of all its methods and the alteration and abandonment of every rule. Correctness of conduct, the doctor held, was an imperative concomitant of all really free thinking. Revolutionary speculation is one of those things that must be divorced absolutely from revolutionary conduct. It was to the neglect of these obvious principles, as the doctor considered them, that the general muddle in contemporary marital affairs was very largely due. We left divorce-law revision to exposed adulterers and marriage reform to hot adolescents and craving spinsters driven by the furies within them to assertions that established nothing and to practical demonstrations that only left everybody thoroughly uncomfortable. Far better to leave all these matters to calm, patient men in easy chairs, weighing typical cases impartially, ready to condone, indisposed to envy.

In return for which restraint on the part of the eager and adventurous, the calm patient man was prepared in his thoughts to fly high and go far. Without giving any guarantee, of course, that he might not ultimately return to the comfortable point of inaction from which he started.

In Sir Richmond, Dr. Martineau found the most interesting and encouraging confirmation of the fundamental idea of THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A NEW AGE, the immediate need of new criteria of conduct altogether. Here was a man whose life was evidently ruled by standards that were at once very high and very generous. He was overworking himself to the pitch of extreme distress and apparently he was doing this for ends that were essentially unselfish. Manifestly there were many things that an ordinary industrial or political magnate would do that Sir Richmond would not dream of doing, and a number

of things that such a man would not feel called upon to do that he would regard as imperative duties. And mixed up with so much fine intention and fine conduct was this disreputable streak of intrigue and this extraordinary claim that such misconduct was necessary to continued vigour of action.

"To energy of thought it is not necessary," said Dr. Martineau, and considered for a time. "Yet--certainly--I am not a man of action. I admit it. I make few decisions.

"The chapters of THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A NEW AGE dealing with women were still undrafted, but they had already greatly exercised the doctor's mind. He found now that the case of Sir Richmond had stirred his imagination. He sat with his hands apposed, his head on one side, and an expression of great intellectual contentment on his face while these emancipated ideas gave a sort of gala performance in his mind.

The good doctor did not dislike women, he had always guarded himself very carefully against misogyny, but he was very strongly disposed to regard them as much less necessary in the existing scheme of things than was generally assumed. Women, he conceded, had laid the foundations of social life. Through their contrivances and sacrifices and patience the fierce and lonely patriarchal family-herd of a male and his women and off spring had grown into the clan and tribe; the woven tissue of related families that constitute the human comity had been woven by the subtle, persistent protection of sons and daughters by their mothers against the intolerant, jealous, possessive Old Man. But that was a thing, of the remote past. Little was left of those ancient struggles now but a few infantile dreams and nightmares. The greater human community, human society, was made for good. And being made, it had taken over the ancient tasks of the woman, one by one,

until now in its modern forms it cherished more sedulously than she did, it educated, it housed and comforted, it clothed and served and nursed, leaving the wife privileged, honoured, protected, for the sake of tasks she no longer did and of a burthen she no longer bore. "Progress has TRIVIALIZED women," said the doctor, and made a note of the word for later consideration.

"And woman has trivialized civilization," the doctor tried.

"She has retained her effect of being central, she still makes the social atmosphere, she raises men's instinctive hopes of help and direction. Except," the doctor stipulated, "for a few highly developed modern types, most men found the sense of achieving her a necessary condition for sustained exertion. And there is no direction in her any more.

"She spends," said the doctor, "she just spends. She spends excitingly and competitively for her own pride and glory, she drives all the energy of men over the weirs of gain. . . .

"What are we to do with the creature?" whispered the doctor.

Apart from the procreative necessity, was woman an unavoidable evil? The doctor's untrammelled thoughts began to climb high, spin, nose dive and loop the loop. Nowadays we took a proper care of the young, we had no need for high birth rates, quite a small proportion of women with a gift in that direction could supply all the offspring that the world wanted. Given the power of determining sex that science was slowly winning today, and why should we have so many women about? A drastic elimination of the creatures would be quite practicable. A fantastic world to a vulgar imagination, no doubt, but to a calmly reasonable mind by no means fantastic. But this was where the case of Sir Richmond became so

interesting. Was it really true that the companionship of women was necessary to these energetic creative types? Was it the fact that the drive of life towards action, as distinguished from contemplation, arose out of sex and needed to be refreshed by the reiteration of that motive? It was a plausible proposition: it marched with all the doctor's ideas of natural selection and of the conditions of a survival that have made us what we are. It was in tune with the Freudian analyses.

"SEX NOT ONLY A RENEWAL OF LIFE IN THE SPECIES," noted the doctor's silver pencil; "SEX MAY BE ALSO A RENEWAL OF ENERGY IN THE INDIVIDUAL."

After some musing he crossed out "sex" and wrote above it "sexual love."

"That is practically what he claims, Dr. Martineau said. "In which case we want the completest revision of all our standards of sexual obligation. We want a new system of restrictions and imperatives altogether."

It was a fixed idea of the doctor's that women were quite incapable of producing ideas in the same way that men do, but he believed that with suitable encouragement they could be induced to respond quite generously to such ideas. Suppose therefore we really educated the imaginations of women; suppose we turned their indubitable capacity for service towards social and political creativeness, not in order to make them the rivals of men in these fields, but their moral and actual helpers. "A man of this sort wants a mistress-mother," said the doctor. "He wants a sort of woman who cares more for him and his work and honour than she does for child or home or clothes or personal pride. "But are there such

women? Can there be such a woman?"

"His work needs to be very fine to deserve her help. But admitting its fineness? . . .

"The alternative seems to be to teach the sexes to get along without each other.

"A neutralized world. A separated world. How we should jostle in the streets! But the early Christians have tried it already. The thing is impossible.

"Very well, then, we have to make women more responsible again. In a new capacity. We have to educate them far more seriously as sources of energy--as guardians and helpers of men. And we have to suppress them far more rigorously as tempters and dissipaters. Instead of mothering babies they have to mother the race. . . . "

A vision of women made responsible floated before his eyes.

"Is that man working better since you got hold of him? If not, why not? "Or again,--Jane Smith was charged with neglecting her lover to the common danger. . . . The inspector said the man was in a pitiful state, morally quite uncombed and infested with vulgar, showy ideas. . . . "

The doctor laughed, telescoped his pencil and stood up.

Section 7

It became evident after dinner that Sir Richmond also had been thinking over the afternoon's conversation.

He and Dr. Martineau sat in wide-armed cane chairs on the

lawn with a wickerwork table bearing coffee cups and little glasses between them. A few other diners chatted and whispered about similar tables but not too close to our talkers to disturb them; the dining room behind them had cleared its tables and depressed its illumination. The moon, in its first quarter, hung above the sunset, sank after twilight, shone brighter and brighter among the western trees, and presently had gone, leaving the sky to an increasing multitude of stars. The Maidenhead river wearing its dusky blue draperies and its jewels of light had recovered all the magic Sir Richmond had stripped from it in the afternoon. The grave arches of the bridge, made complete circles by the reflexion of the water, sustained, as if by some unifying and justifying reason, the erratic flat flashes and streaks and glares of traffic that fretted to and fro overhead. A voice sang intermittently and a banjo tinkled, but remotely enough to be indistinct and agreeable.

"After all," Sir Richmond began abruptly, "the search for some sort of sexual *modus vivendi* is only a means to an end. One does not want to live for sex but only through sex. The main thing in my life has always been my work. This afternoon, under the Maidenhead influence, I talked too much of sex. I babbled. Of things one doesn't usually . . . "

"It was very illuminating," said the doctor.

"No doubt. But a temporary phase. It is the defective bearing talks. . . . Just now--I happen to be irritated."

The darkness concealed a faint smile on the doctor's face.

"The work is the thing," said Sir Richmond. So long as one can keep one's grip on it."

"What," said the doctor after a pause, leaning back and sending wreaths of smoke up towards the star-dusted zenith, "what is your idea of your work? I mean, how do you see it in relation to yourself--and things generally?"

"Put in the most general terms?"

"Put in the most general terms."

"I wonder if I can put it in general terms for you at all. It is hard to put something one is always thinking about in general terms or to think of it as a whole. . . . Now. . . . Fuel? . . .

"I suppose it was my father's business interests that pushed me towards specialization in fuel. He wanted me to have a thoroughly scientific training in days when a scientific training was less easy to get for a boy than it is today. And much more inspiring when you got it. My mind was framed, so to speak, in geology and astronomical physics. I grew up to think on that scale. Just as a man who has been trained in history and law grows to think on the scale of the Roman empire. I don't know what your pocket map of the universe is, the map, I mean, by which you judge all sorts of other general ideas. To me this planet is a little ball of oxides and nickel steel; life a sort of tarnish on its surface. And we, the minutest particles in that tarnish. Who can nevertheless, in some unaccountable way, take in the idea of this universe as one whole, who begin to dream of taking control of it."

"That is not a bad statement of the scientific point of view. I suppose I have much the same general idea of the world. On rather more psychological lines."

"We think, I suppose, said Sir Richmond, of life as something that is only just beginning to be aware of what it is--and what it might be."

"Exactly," said the doctor. "Good."

He went on eagerly. "That is precisely how I see it. You and I are just particles in the tarnish, as you call it, who are becoming dimly awake to what we are, to what we have in common. Only a very few of us have got as far even as this. These others here, for example"

He indicated the rest of Maidenhead by a movement.

"Desire, mutual flattery, egotistical dreams, greedy solitudes fill them up. They haven't begun to get out of themselves."

"We, I suppose, have," doubted Sir Richmond.

"We have."

The doctor had no doubt. He lay back in his chair, with his hands behind his head and his smoke ascending vertically to heaven. With the greatest contentment he began quoting himself. "This getting out of one's individuality--this conscious getting out of one's individuality--is one of the most important and interesting aspects of the psychology of the new age that is now dawning. As compared with any previous age. Unconsciously, of course, every true artist, every philosopher, every scientific investigator, so far as his art or thought went, has always got out of himself,--has forgotten his personal interests and become Man thinking for the whole race. And intimations of the same thing have been at the heart of most religions. But now people are beginning

to get this detachment without any distinctively religious feeling or any distinctive aesthetic or intellectual impulse, as if it were a plain matter of fact. Plain matter of fact, that we are only incidentally ourselves. That really each one of us is also the whole species, is really indeed all life. "

"A part of it."

"An integral part-as sight is part of a man . . . with no absolute separation from all the rest--no more than a separation of the imagination. The whole so far as his distinctive quality goes. I do not know how this takes shape in your mind, Sir Richmond, but to me this idea of actually being life itself upon the world, a special phase of it dependent upon and connected with all other phases, and of being one of a small but growing number of people who apprehend that, and want to live in the spirit of that, is quite central. It is my fundamental idea. We,--this small but growing minority--constitute that part of life which knows and wills and tries to rule its destiny. This new realization, the new psychology arising out of it is a fact of supreme importance in the history of life. It is like the appearance of self-consciousness in some creature that has not hitherto had self-consciousness. And so far as we are concerned, we are the true kingship of the world.

Necessarily. We who know, are the true king. . . .I wonder how this appeals to you. It is stuff I have thought out very slowly and carefully and written and approved. It is the very core of my life. . . . And yet when one comes to say these things to someone else, face to face. . . . It is much more difficult to say than to write."

Sir Richmond noted how the doctor's chair creaked as he rolled to and fro with the uneasiness of these intimate utterances.

"I agree," said Sir Richmond presently. "One DOES think in this fashion. Something in this fashion. What one calls one's work does belong to something much bigger than ourselves.

"Something much bigger," he expanded.

"Which something we become," the doctor urged, "in so far as our work takes hold of us."

Sir Richmond made no answer to this for a little while. "Of course we trail a certain egotism into our work," he said.

"Could we do otherwise? But it has ceased to be purely egotism. It is no longer, 'I am I' but 'I am part.' . . . One wants to be an honourable part."

"You think of man upon his planet," the doctor pursued. "I think of life rather as a mind that tries itself over in millions and millions of trials. But it works out to the same thing."

"I think in terms of fuel," said Sir Richmond.

He was still debating the doctor's generalization. "I suppose it would be true to say that I think of myself as mankind on his planet, with very considerable possibilities and with only a limited amount of fuel at his disposal to achieve them. Yes. . . . I agree that I think in that way. . . . I have not thought much before of the way in which I think about things--but I agree that it is in that way. Whatever enterprises mankind attempts are limited by the sum total of that store of fuel upon the planet. That is very much in my mind. Besides that he has nothing but his annual allowance of energy from the sun."

"I thought that presently we were to get unlimited energy from atoms," said the doctor.

"I don't believe in that as a thing immediately practicable. No doubt getting a supply of energy from atoms is a theoretical possibility, just as flying was in the time of Daedalus; probably there were actual attempts at some sort of glider in ancient Crete. But before we get to the actual utilization of atomic energy there will be ten thousand difficult corners to turn; we may have to wait three or four thousand years for it. We cannot count on it. We haven't it in hand. There may be some impasse. All we have surely is coal and oil,--there is no surplus of wood now--only an annual growth. And water-power is income also, doled out day by day. We cannot anticipate it. Coal and oil are our only capital. They are all we have for great important efforts. They are a gift to mankind to use to some supreme end or to waste in trivialities. Coal is the key to metallurgy and oil to transit. When they are done we shall either have built up such a fabric of apparatus, knowledge and social organization that we shall be able to manage without them--or we shall have travelled a long way down the slopes of waste towards extinction. . . . To-day, in getting, in distribution, in use we waste enormously. . . .As we sit here all the world is wasting fuel fantastically."

"Just as mentally--educationally we waste," the doctor interjected.

"And my job is to stop what I can of that waste, to do what I can to organize, first of all sane fuel getting and then sane fuel using. And that second proposition carries us far. Into the whole use we are making of life.

"First things first," said Sir Richmond. If we set about getting fuel sanely, if we do it as the deliberate, co-operative act of the whole species, then it follows that we shall look very closely into the use that is being made of it. When all the fuel getting is brought into one view as a common interest, then it follows that all the fuel burning will be brought into one view. At present we are getting fuel in a kind of scramble with no general aim. We waste and lose almost as much as we get. And of what we get, the waste is idiotic.

"I won't trouble you," said Sir Richmond, "with any long discourse on the ways of getting fuel in this country. But land as you know is owned in patches and stretches that were determined in the first place chiefly by agricultural necessities. When it was divided up among its present owners nobody was thinking about the minerals beneath. But the lawyers settled long ago that the landowner owned his land right down to the centre of the earth. So we have the superficial landlord as coal owner trying to work his coal according to the superficial divisions, quite irrespective of the lie of the coal underneath. Each man goes for the coal under his own land in his own fashion. You get three shafts where one would suffice and none of them in the best possible place. You get the coal coming out of this point when it would be far more convenient to bring it out at that--miles away. You get boundary walls of coal between the estates, abandoned, left in the ground for ever. And each coal owner sells his coal in his own pettifogging manner... But you know of these things. You know too how we trail the coal all over the country, spoiling it as we trail it, until at last we get it into the silly coal scuttles beside the silly, wasteful, airpoisoning, fog-creating fireplace.

"And this stuff," said Sir Richmond, bringing his hand down

so smartly on the table that the startled coffee cups cried out upon the tray; "was given to men to give them power over metals, to get knowledge with, to get more power with."

"The oil story, I suppose, is as bad."

"The oil story is worse. . . .

"There is a sort of cant," said Sir Richmond in a fierce parenthesis, "that the supplies of oil are inexhaustible--that you can muddle about with oil anyhow. . . . Optimism of knaves and imbeciles. . . . They don't want to be pulled up by any sane considerations. . . ."

For some moments he kept silence--as if in unspeakable commination.

"Here I am with some clearness of vision--my only gift; not very clever, with a natural bad temper, and a strong sexual bias, doing what I can to get a broader handling of the fuel question--as a common interest for all mankind. And I find myself up against a lot of men, subtle men, sharp men, obstinate men, prejudiced men, able to get round me, able to get over me, able to blockade me. . . . Clever men--yes, and all of them ultimately damned--oh! utterly damned--fools. Coal owners who think only of themselves, solicitors who think backwards, politicians who think like a game of cat's-cradle, not a gleam of generosity not a gleam."

"What particularly are you working for?" asked the doctor.

"I want to get the whole business of the world's fuel discussed and reported upon as one affair so that some day it may be handled as one affair in the general interest."

"The world, did you say? You meant the empire?"

"No, the world. It is all one system now. You can't work it in bits. I want to call in foreign representatives from the beginning."

"Advisory--consultative?"

"No. With powers. These things interlock now internationally both through labour and finance. The sooner we scrap this nonsense about an autonomous British Empire complete in itself, contra mundum, the better for us. A world control is fifty years overdue. Hence these disorders. "

"Still--it's rather a difficult proposition, as things are."

"Oh, Lord! don't I know it's difficult!" cried Sir Richmond in the tone of one who swears. "Don't I know that perhaps it's impossible! But it's the only way to do it. Therefore, I say, let's try to get it done. And everybody says, difficult, difficult, and nobody lifts a finger to try. And the only real difficulty is that everybody for one reason or another says that it's difficult. It's against human nature. Granted! Every decent thing is. It's socialism. Who cares? Along this line of comprehensive scientific control the world has to go or it will retrogress, it will muddle and rot. . . ."

"I agree," said Dr. Martineau.

"So I want a report to admit that distinctly. I want it to go further than that. I want to get the beginnings, the germ, of a world administration. I want to set up a permanent world commission of scientific men and economists--with powers, just as considerable powers as I can give them--they'll be feeble powers at the best--but still some sort of SAY in the

whole fuel supply of the world. A say--that may grow at last to a control. A right to collect reports and receive accounts for example, to begin with. And then the right to make recommendations. . . . You see? . . . No, the international part is not the most difficult part of it. But my beastly owners and their beastly lawyers won't relinquish a scrap of what they call their freedom of action. And my labour men, because I'm a fairly big coal owner myself, sit and watch and suspect me, too stupid to grasp what I am driving at and too incompetent to get out a scheme of their own. They want a world control on scientific lines even less than the owners. They try to think that fuel production can carry an unlimited wages bill and the owners try to think that it can pay unlimited profits, and when I say; 'This business is something more than a scramble for profits and wages; it's a service and a common interest,' they stare at me--" Sir Richmond was at a loss for an image. "Like a committee in a thieves' kitchen when someone has casually mentioned the law."

"But will you ever get your Permanent Commission?"

"It can be done. If I can stick it out."

"But with the whole Committee against you!"

"The curious thing is that the whole Committee isn't against me. Every individual is"

Sir Richmond found it difficult to express. "The psychology of my Committee ought to interest you. . . . It is probably a fair sample of the way all sorts of things are going nowadays. It's curious. . . . There is not a man on that Committee who is quite comfortable within himself about the particular individual end he is there to serve. It's there I

get them. They pursue their own ends bitterly and obstinately I admit, but they are bitter and obstinate because they pursue them against an internal opposition--which is on my side. They are terrified to think, if once they stopped fighting me, how far they might not have to go with me."

"A suppressed world conscience in fact. This marches very closely with my own ideas."

"A world conscience? World conscience? I don't know. But I do know that there is this drive in nearly every member of the Committee, some drive anyhow, towards the decent thing. It is the same drive that drives me. But I am the most driven. It has turned me round. It hasn't turned them. I go East and they go West. And they don't want to be turned round. Tremendously, they don't."

"Creative undertow," said Dr. Martineau, making notes, as it were. "An increasing force in modern life. In the psychology of a new age strengthened by education--it may play a directive part."

"They fight every little point. But, you see, because of this creative undertow--if you like to call it that--we do get along. I am leader or whipper-in, it is hard to say which, of a bolting flock. . . .I believe they will report for a permanent world commission; I believe I have got them up to that; but they will want to make it a bureau of this League of Nations, and I have the profoundest distrust of this League of Nations. It may turn out to be a sort of side-tracking arrangement for all sorts of important world issues. And they will find they have to report for some sort of control. But there again they will shy. They will report for it and then they will do their utmost to whittle it down again. They will refuse it the most reasonable powers. They

will alter the composition of the Committee so as to make it innocuous."

"How?"

"Get rid of the independent scientific men, load it up so far as Britain is concerned with muck of the colonial politician type and tame labour representatives, balance with shady new adventurer millionaires, get in still shadier stuff from abroad, let these gentry appoint their own tame experts after their own hearts,--experts who will make merely advisory reports, which will not be published. . . ."

"They want in fact to keep the old system going under the cloak of YOUR Committee, reduced to a cloak and nothing more?"

"That is what it amounts to. They want to have the air of doing right--indeed they do want to have the FEEL of doing right--and still leave things just exactly what they were before. And as I suffer under the misfortune of seeing the thing rather more clearly, I have to shepherd the conscience of the whole Committee. . . . But there is a conscience there. If I can hold out myself, I can hold the Committee."

He turned appealingly to the doctor. "Why should I have to be the conscience of that damned Committee? Why should I do this exhausting inhuman job? In their hearts these others know. . . . Only they won't know. . . . Why should it fall on me?"

"You have to go through with it," said Dr. Martineau.

"I have to go through with it, but it's a hell of utterly inglorious squabbling. They bait me. They have been fighting

the same fight within themselves that they fight with me. They know exactly where I am, that I too am doing my job against internal friction. The one thing before all others that they want to do is to bring me down off my moral high horse. And I loathe the high horse. I am in a position of special moral superiority to men who are on the whole as good men as I am or better. That shows all the time. You see the sort of man I am. I've a broad streak of personal vanity. I fag easily. I'm short-tempered. I've other things, as you perceive. When I fag I become obtuse, I repeat and bore, I get viciously ill-tempered, I suffer from an intolerable sense of ill usage. Then that ass, Wagstaffe, who ought to be working with me steadily, sees his chance to be pleasantly witty. He gets a laugh round the table at my expense. Young Dent, the more intelligent of the labour men, reads me a lecture in committee manners. Old Cassidy sees HIS opening and jabs some ridiculous petty accusation at me and gets me spluttering self-defence like a fool. All my stock goes down, and as my stock goes down the chances of a good report dwindle. Young Dent grieves to see me injuring my own case. Too damned a fool to see what will happen to the report! You see if only they can convince themselves I am just a prig and an egotist and an impractical bore, they escape from a great deal more than my poor propositions. They escape from the doubt in themselves. By dismissing me they dismiss their own consciences. And then they can scamper off and be sensible little piggy-wigs and not bother any more about what is to happen to mankind in the long run. . . . Do you begin to realize the sort of fight, upside down in a dustbin, that that Committee is for me?"

"You have to go through with it," Dr. Martineau repeated.

"I have. If I can. But I warn you I have been near breaking point. And if I tumble off the high horse, if I can't keep

going regularly there to ride the moral high horse, that Committee will slump into utter scoundrelism. It will turn out a long, inconsistent, botched, unreadable report that will back up all sorts of humbugging bargains and sham settlements. It will contain some half-baked scheme to pacify the miners at the expense of the general welfare. It won't even succeed in doing that. But in the general confusion old Cassidy will get away with a series of hauls that may run into millions. Which will last his time--damn him! And that is where we are. . . . Oh! I know! I know! I must do this job. I don't need any telling that my life will be nothing and mean nothing unless I bring this thing through. . . .

"But the thanklessness of playing this lone hand!"

The doctor watched his friend's resentful black silhouette against the lights on the steely river, and said nothing for awhile.

"Why did I ever undertake to play it?" Sir Richmond appealed. "Why has it been put upon me? Seeing what a poor thing I am, why am I not a poor thing altogether?"

Section 8

"I think I understand that loneliness of yours, said the doctor after an interval.

"I am INTOLERABLE to myself."

"And I think it explains why it is that you turn to women as you do. You want help; you want reassurance. And you feel they can give it."

"I wonder if it has been quite like that," Sir Richmond reflected.

By an effort Dr. Martineau refrained from mentioning the mother complex. "You want help and reassurance as a child does," he said. "Women and women alone seem capable of giving that, of telling you that you are surely right, that notwithstanding your blunders you are right; that even when you are wrong it doesn't so much matter, you are still in spirit right. They can show their belief in you as no man can. With all their being they can do that."

"Yes, I suppose they could."

"They can. You have said already that women are necessary to make things real for you."

"Not my work," said Sir Richmond. "I admit that it might be like that, but it isn't like that. It has not worked out like that. The two drives go on side by side in me. They have no logical connexion. All I can say is that for me, with my bifid temperament, one makes a rest from the other, and is so far refreshment and a renewal of energy. But I do not find women coming into my work in any effectual way. "

The doctor reflected further. "I suppose," he began and stopped short.

He heard Sir Richmond move in his chair, creaking an interrogation.

"You have never," said the doctor, "turned to the idea of God?"

Sir Richmond grunted and made no other answer for the better

part of a minute.

As Dr. Martineau waited for his companion to speak, a falling star streaked the deep blue above them.

"I can't believe in a God," said Sir Richmond.

"Something after the fashion of a God," said the doctor insidiously.

"No," said Sir Richmond. "Nothing that reassures."

"But this loneliness, this craving for companionship. . . ."

"We have all been through that," said Sir Richmond. "We have all in our time lain very still in the darkness with our souls crying out for the fellowship of God, demanding some sign, some personal response. The faintest feeling of assurance would have satisfied us."

"And there has never been a response?"

"Have YOU ever had a response?"

"Once I seemed to have a feeling of exaltation and security."

"Well?"

"Perhaps I only persuaded myself that I had. I had been reading William James on religious experiences and I was thinking very much of Conversion. I tried to experience Conversion. . . ."

"Yes? "

"It faded."

"It always fades," said Sir Richmond with anger in his voice.

"I wonder how many people there are nowadays who have passed through this last experience of ineffectual invocation, this appeal to the fading shadow of a vanished God. In the night. In utter loneliness. Answer me! Speak to me! Does he answer? In the silence you hear the little blood vessels whisper in your ears. You see a faint glow of colour on the darkness. . . . "

Dr. Martineau sat without a word.

"I can believe that over all things Righteousness rules. I can believe that. But Righteousness is not friendliness nor mercy nor comfort nor any such dear and intimate things. This cuddling up to Righteousness! It is a dream, a delusion and a phase. I've tried all that long ago. I've given it up long ago. I've grown out of it. Men do--after forty. Our souls were made in the squatting-place of the submen of ancient times. They are made out of primitive needs and they die before our bodies as those needs are satisfied. Only young people have souls, complete. The need for a personal God, feared but reassuring, is a youth's need. I no longer fear the Old Man nor want to propitiate the Old Man nor believe he matters any more. I'm a bit of an Old Man myself I discover. Yes. But the other thing still remains. "

"The Great Mother of the Gods," said Dr. Martineau--still clinging to his theories.

"The need of the woman," said Sir Richmond. "I want mating because it is my nature to mate. I want fellowship because I am a social animal and I want it from another social animal. Not from any God--any inconceivable God. Who fades and

disappears. No. . . .

"Perhaps that other need will fade presently. I do not know. Perhaps it lasts as long as life does. How can I tell?"

He was silent for a little while. Then his voice sounded in the night, as if he spoke to himself. "But as for the God of All Things consoling and helping! Imagine it! That up there--having fellowship with me! I would as soon think of cooling my throat with the Milky Way or shaking hands with those stars."

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

IN THE LAND OF THE FORGOTTEN PEOPLES

Section 1

A gust of confidence on the part of a person naturally or habitually reserved will often be followed by a phase of recoil. At breakfast next morning their overnight talk seemed to both Sir Richmond and Dr. Martineau like something each had dreamt about the other, a quite impossible excess of intimacy. They discussed the weather, which seemed to be settling down to the utmost serenity of which the English spring is capable, they talked of Sir Richmond's coming car and of the possible routes before them. Sir Richmond produced the Michelin maps which he had taken out of the pockets of the little Charmeuse. The Bath Road lay before them, he explained, Reading, Newbury, Hungerford, Marlborough, Silbury Hill which overhangs Avebury. Both travellers discovered a common excitement at the mention of Avebury and Silbury Hill. Both took an intelligent interest in archaeology. Both had been greatly stimulated by the recent work of Elliot Smith and Rivers upon what was then known as the Heliolithic culture. It had revived their interest in Avebury and Stonehenge. The doctor moreover had been reading Hippisley Cox's GREEN ROADS OF ENGLAND.

Neither gentleman had ever seen Avebury, but Dr. Martineau had once visited Stonehenge.

"Avebury is much the oldest," said the doctor. They must have made Silbury Hill long before 2000 B.C. It may be five thousand years old or even more. It is the most important historical relic in the British Isles. And the most

neglected. "

They exchanged archaeological facts. The secret places of the heart rested until the afternoon.

Then Sir Richmond saw fit to amplify his confessions in one particular.

Section 2

The doctor and his patient had discovered a need for exercise as the morning advanced. They had walked by the road to Marlow and had lunched at a riverside inn, returning after a restful hour in an arbour on the lawn of this place to tea at Maidenhead. It was as they returned that Sir Richmond took up the thread of their overnight conversation again.

"In the night," he said, "I was thinking over the account I tried to give you of my motives. A lot of it was terribly out of drawing."

"Facts?" asked the doctor.

"No, the facts were all right. It was the atmosphere, the proportions. . . . I don't know if I gave you the effect of something Don Juanesque? . . ."

"Vulgar poem," said the doctor remarkably. "I discounted that."

"Vulgar!"

"Intolerable. Byron in sexual psychology is like a stink in a kitchen."

Sir Richmond perceived he had struck upon the sort of thing that used to be called a pet aversion.

"I don't want you to think that I run about after women in an habitual and systematic manner. Or that I deliberately hunt them in the interests of my work and energy. Your questions had set me theorizing about myself. And I did my best to improvise a scheme of motives yesterday. It was, I perceive, a jerry-built scheme, run up at short notice. My nocturnal reflections convinced me of that. I put reason into things that are essentially instinctive. The truth is that the wanderings of desire have no single drive. All sorts of motives come in, high and low, down to sheer vulgar imitativeness and competitiveness. What was true in it all was this, that a man with any imagination in a fatigue phase falls naturally into these complications because they are more attractive to his type and far easier and more refreshing to the mind, at the outset, than anything else. And they do work a sort of recovery in him, They send him back to his work refreshed--so far, that is, as his work is concerned."

"At the OUTSET they are easier," said the doctor.

Sir Richmond laughed. "When one is fagged it is only the outset counts. The more tired one is the more readily one moves along the line of least resistance. . . .

"That is one footnote to what I said. So far as the motive of my work goes, I think we got something like the spirit of it. What I said about that was near the truth of things. . . .

"But there is another set of motives altogether, "Sir Richmond went on with an air of having cleared the ground for his real business, "that I didn't go into at all yesterday."

He considered. "It arises out of these other affairs. Before you realize it your affections are involved. I am a man much swayed by my affections."

Mr. Martineau glanced at him. There was a note of genuine self-reproach in Sir Richmond's voice.

"I get fond of people. It is quite irrational, but I get fond of them. Which is quite a different thing from the admiration and excitement of falling in love. Almost the opposite thing. They cry or they come some mental or physical cropper and hurt themselves, or they do something distressingly little and human and suddenly I find they've GOT me. I'm distressed. I'm filled with something between pity and an impulse of responsibility. I become tender towards them. I am impelled to take care of them. I want to ease them off, to reassure them, to make them stop hurting at any cost. I don't see why it should be the weak and sickly and seamy side of people that grips me most, but it is. I don't know why it should be their failures that gives them power over me, but it is. I told you of this girl, this mistress of mine, who is ill just now. SHE'S got me in that way; she's got me tremendously."

"You did not speak of her yesterday with any morbid excess of pity," the doctor was constrained to remark.

"I abused her very probably. I forget exactly what I said. . . ."

The doctor offered no assistance.

"But the reason why I abuse her is perfectly plain. I abuse her because she distresses me by her misfortunes and instead of my getting anything out of her, I go out to her. But I DO

go out to her. All this time at the back of my mind I am worrying about her. She has that gift of making one feel for her. I am feeling that damned carbuncle almost as if it had been my affair instead of hers.

"That carbuncle has made me suffer FRIGHTFULLY. . . . Why should I? It isn't mine."

He regarded the doctor earnestly. The doctor controlled a strong desire to laugh.

"I suppose the young lady--" he began.

"Oh! SHE puts in suffering all right. I've no doubt about that.

"I suppose," Sir Richmond went on, "now that I have told you so much of this affair, I may as well tell you all. It is a sort of comedy, a painful comedy, of irrelevant affections."

The doctor was prepared to be a good listener. Facts he would always listen to; it was only when people told him their theories that he would interrupt with his "Exactly."

"This young woman is a person of considerable genius. I don't know if you have seen in the illustrated papers a peculiar sort of humorous illustrations usually with a considerable amount of bite in them over the name of Martin Leeds?"

"Extremely amusing stuff."

"It is that Martin Leeds. I met her at the beginning of her career. She talks almost as well as she draws. She amused me immensely. I'm not the sort of man who waylays and besieges women and girls. I'm not the pursuing type. But I perceived

that in some odd way I attracted her and I was neither wise enough nor generous enough not to let the thing develop."

"H'm," said Dr. Martineau.

"I'd never had to do with an intellectually brilliant woman before. I see now that the more imaginative force a woman has, the more likely she is to get into a state of extreme self-abandonment with any male thing upon which her imagination begins to crystallize. Before I came along she'd mixed chiefly with a lot of young artists and students, all doing nothing at all except talk about the things they were going to do. I suppose I profited by the contrast, being older and with my hands full of affairs. Perhaps something had happened that had made her recoil towards my sort of thing. I don't know. But she just let herself go at me."

"And you?"

"Let myself go too. I'd never met anything like her before. It was her wit took me. It didn't occur to me that she wasn't my contemporary and as able as I was. As able to take care of herself. All sorts of considerations that I should have shown to a sillier woman I never dreamt of showing to her. I had never met anyone so mentally brilliant before or so helpless and headlong. And so here we are on each other's hands! "

"But the child?"

"It happened to us. For four years now things have just happened to us. All the time I have been overworking, first at explosives and now at this fuel business. She too is full of her work.

"Nothing stops that though everything seems to interfere with

it. And in a distraught, preoccupied way we are abominably fond of each other. 'Fond' is the word. But we are both too busy to look after either ourselves or each other.

"She is much more incapable than I am," said Sir Richmond as if he delivered a weighed and very important judgment.

"You see very much of each other?"

"She has a flat in Chelsea and a little cottage in South Cornwall, and we sometimes snatch a few days together, away somewhere in Surrey or up the Thames or at such a place as Southend where one is lost in a crowd of inconspicuous people. "Then things go well--they usually go well at the start--we are glorious companions. She is happy, she is creative, she will light up a new place with flashes of humour, with a keenness of appreciation "

"But things do not always go well?"

"Things," said Sir Richmond with the deliberation of a man who measures his words, "are apt to go wrong. . . . At the flat there is constant trouble with the servants; they bully her. A woman is more entangled with servants than a man. Women in that position seem to resent the work and freedom of other women. Her servants won't leave her in peace as they would leave a man; they make trouble for her. . . . And when we have had a few days anywhere away, even if nothing in particular has gone wrong--"

Sir Richmond stopped short.

"When they go wrong it is generally her fault," the doctor sounded.

"Almost always."

"But if they don't?" said the psychiatrist.

"It is difficult to describe. . . . The essential incompatibility of the whole thing comes out."

The doctor maintained his expression of intelligent interest.

"She wants to go on with her work. She is able to work anywhere. All she wants is just cardboard and ink. My mind on the other hand turns back to the Fuel Commission"

"Then any little thing makes trouble."

"Any little thing makes trouble. And we always drift round to the same discussion; whether we ought really to go on together."

"It is you begin that?"

"Yes, I start that. You see she is perfectly contented when I am about. She is as fond of me as I am of her."

"Fonder perhaps."

"I don't know. But she is--adhesive. Emotionally adhesive. All she wants to do is just to settle down when I am there and go on with her work. But then, you see, there is MY work."

"Exactly. . . . After all it seems to me that your great trouble is not in yourselves but in social institutions. Which haven't yet fitted themselves to people like you two. It is the sense of uncertainty makes her, as you say,

adhesive. Nervously so. If we were indeed living in a new age
Instead of the moral ruins of a shattered one--"

"We can't alter the age we live in," said Sir Richmond a
little testily.

"No. Exactly. But we CAN realize, in any particular
situation, that it is not the individuals to blame but the
misfit of ideas and forms and prejudices."

"No," said Sir Richmond, obstinately rejecting this pacifying
suggestion; "she could adapt herself. If she cared enough."

"But how?"

"She will not take the slightest trouble to adjust herself to
the peculiarities of our position. . . . She could be
cleverer. Other women are cleverer. Any other woman almost
would be cleverer than she is."

"But if she was cleverer, she wouldn't be the genius she is.
She would just be any other woman."

"Perhaps she would," said Sir Richmond darkly and
desperately. "Perhaps she would. Perhaps it would be better
if she was."

Dr. Martineau raised his eyebrows in a furtive aside.

"But here you see that it is that in my case, the fundamental
incompatibility between one's affections and one's wider
conception of duty and work comes in. We cannot change social
institutions in a year or a lifetime. We can never change
them to suit an individual case. That would be like
suspending the laws of gravitation in order to move a piano.

As things are, Martin is no good to me, no help to me. She is a rival to my duty. She feels that. She is hostile to my duty. A definite antagonism has developed. She feels and treats fuel--and everything to do with fuel as a bore. It is an attack. We quarrel on that. It isn't as though I found it so easy to stick to my work that I could disregard her hostility. And I can't bear to part from her. I threaten it, distress her excessively and then I am overcome by sympathy for her and I go back to her. . . . In the ordinary course of things I should be with her now."

"If it were not for the carbuncle?"

"If it were not for the carbuncle. She does not care for me to see her disfigured. She does not understand--" Sir Richmond was at a loss for a phrase--"that it is not her good looks."

"She won't let you go to her?"

"It amounts to that. . . . And soon there will be all the trouble about educating the girl. Whatever happens, she must have as good a chance as--anyone. . . . "

"Ah! That is worrying you too!"

"Frightfully at times. If it were a boy it would be easier. It needs constant tact and dexterity to fix things up. Neither of us have any. It needs attention. . . . "

Sir Richmond mused darkly.

Dr. Martineau thought aloud. "An incompetent delightful person with Martin Leeds's sense of humour. And her powers of expression. She must be attractive to many people. She could

probably do without you. If once you parted."

Sir Richmond turned on him eagerly.

"You think I ought to part from her? On her account?"

"On her account. It might pain her. But once the thing was done--"

"I want to part. I believe I ought to part."

"Well?"

"But then my affection comes in."

"That extraordinary--TENDERNESS of yours?"

"I'm afraid."

"Of what?"

"Anyone might get hold of her--if I let her down. She hasn't a tithe of the ordinary coolheaded calculation of an average woman. . . . I've a duty to her genius. I've got to take care of her."

To which the doctor made no reply.

"Nevertheless the idea of parting has been very much in my mind lately."

"Letting her go FREE?"

"You can put it in that way if you like."

"It might not be a fatal operation for either of you."

"And yet there are moods when parting is an intolerable idea. When one is invaded by a flood of affection." . . . And old habits of association."

Dr. Martineau thought. Was that the right word,--affection? Perhaps it was.

They had come out on the towing path close by the lock and they found themselves threading their way through a little crowd of boating people and lookers-on. For a time their conversation was broken. Sir Richmond resumed it.

"But this is where we cease to be Man on his Planet and all the rest of it. This is where the idea of a definite task, fanatically followed to the exclusion of all minor considerations, breaks down. When the work is good, when we are sure we are all right, then we may carry off things with a high hand. But the work isn't always good, we aren't always sure. We blunder, we make a muddle, we are fatigued. Then the sacrificed affections come in as accusers. Then it is that we want to be reassured."

"And then it is that Miss Martin Leeds--?"

"Doesn't," Sir Richmond snapped.

Came a long pause.

"And yet--"

"It is extraordinarily difficult to think of parting from Martin."

Section 3

In the evening after dinner Dr. Martineau sought, rather unsuccessfully, to go on with the analysis of Sir Richmond.

But Sir Richmond was evidently a creature of moods. Either he regretted the extent of his confidences or the slight irrational irritation that he felt at waiting for his car affected his attitude towards his companion, or Dr. Martineau's tentatives were ill-chosen. At any rate he would not rise to any conversational bait that the doctor could devise. The doctor found this the more regrettable because it seemed to him that there was much to be worked upon in this Martin Leeds affair. He was inclined to think that she and Sir Richmond were unduly obsessed by the idea that they had to stick together because of the child, because of the look of the thing and so forth, and that really each might be struggling against a very strong impulse indeed to break off the affair. It seemed evident to the doctor that they jarred upon and annoyed each other extremely. On the whole separating people appealed to a doctor's mind more strongly than bringing them together. Accordingly he framed his enquiries so as to make the revelation of a latent antipathy as easy as possible.

He made several not very well-devised beginnings. At the fifth Sir Richmond was suddenly conclusive. "It's no use," he said, "I can't fiddle about any more with my motives to-day."

An awkward silence followed. On reflection Sir Richmond seemed to realize that this sentence needed some apology. "I admit," he said, "that this expedition has already been a wonderfully good thing for me. These confessions have made me look into all sorts of things-squarely. But--

"I'm not used to talking about myself or even thinking directly about myself. What I say, I afterwards find disconcerting to recall. I want to alter it. I can feel myself wallowing into a mess of modifications and qualifications."

"Yes, but--"

"I want a rest anyhow. . . ."

There was nothing for Dr. Martineau to say to that.

The two gentlemen smoked for some time in a slightly uncomfortable silence. Dr. Martineau cleared his throat twice and lit a second cigar. They then agreed to admire the bridge and think well of Maidenhead. Sir Richmond communicated hopeful news about his car, which was to arrive the next morning before ten--he'd just ring the fellow up presently to make sure--and Dr. Martineau retired early and went rather thoughtfully to bed. The spate of Sir Richmond's confidences, it was evident, was over.

Section 4

Sir Richmond's car arrived long before ten, brought down by a young man in a state of scared alacrity--Sir Richmond had done some vigorous telephoning before turning in,--the Charmeuse set off in a repaired and chastened condition to town, and after a leisurely breakfast our two investigators into the springs of human conduct were able to resume their westward journey. They ran through scattered Twyford with its pleasant looking inns and through the commonplace urbanities of Reading, by Newbury and Hungerford's pretty bridge and up long wooded slopes to Savernake forest, where they found the

road heavy and dusty, still in its war-time state, and so down a steep hill to the wide market street which is Marlborough. They lunched in Marlborough and went on in the afternoon to Silbury Hill, that British pyramid, the largest artificial mound in Europe. They left the car by the roadside and clambered to the top and were very learned and inconclusive about the exact purpose of this vast heap of chalk and earth, this heap that men had made before the temples at Karnak were built or Babylon had a name.

Then they returned to the car and ran round by a winding road into the wonder of Avebury. They found a clean little inn there kept by pleasant people, and they garaged the car in the cowshed and took two rooms for the night that they might the better get the atmosphere of the ancient place. Wonderful indeed it is, a vast circumvallation that was already two thousand years old before the dawn of British history; a great wall of earth with its ditch most strangely on its inner and not on its outer side; and within this enclosure gigantic survivors of the great circles of unhewn stone that, even as late as Tudor days, were almost complete. A whole village, a church, a pretty manor house have been built, for the most part, out of the ancient megaliths; the great wall is sufficient to embrace them all with their gardens and paddocks; four cross-roads meet at the village centre. There are drawings of Avebury before these things arose there, when it was a lonely wonder on the plain, but for the most part the destruction was already done before the MAYFLOWER sailed. To the southward stands the cone of Silbury Hill; its shadow creeps up and down the intervening meadows as the seasons change. Around this lonely place rise the Downs, now bare sheep pastures, in broad undulations, with a wart-like barrow here and there, and from it radiate, creeping up to gain and hold the crests of the hills, the abandoned trackways of that forgotten world. These trackways, these green roads of

England, these roads already disused when the Romans made their highway past Silbury Hill to Bath, can still be traced for scores of miles through the land, running to Salisbury and the English Channel, eastward to the crossing at the Straits and westward to Wales, to ferries over the Severn, and southwestward into Devon and Cornwall.

The doctor and Sir Richmond walked round the walls, surveyed the shadow cast by Silbury upon the river flats, strolled up the down to the northward to get a general view of the village, had tea and smoked round the walls again in the warm April sunset. The matter of their conversation remained prehistoric. Both were inclined to find fault with the archaeological work that had been done on the place. "Clumsy treasure hunting," Sir Richmond said. "They bore into Silbury Hill and expect to find a mummified chief or something sensational of that sort, and they don't, and they report nothing. They haven't sifted finely enough; they haven't thought subtly enough. These walls of earth ought to tell what these people ate, what clothes they wore, what woods they used. Was this a sheep land then as it is now, or a cattle land? Were these hills covered by forests? I don't know. These archaeologists don't know. Or if they do they haven't told me, which is just as bad. I don't believe they know.

"What trade came here along these tracks? So far as I know, they had no beasts of burthen. But suppose one day someone were to find a potsherd here from early Knossos, or a fragment of glass from Pepi's Egypt."

The place had stirred up his imagination. He wrestled with his ignorance as if he thought that by talking he might presently worry out some picture of this forgotten world, without metals, without beasts of burthen, without letters,

without any sculpture that has left a trace, and yet with a sense of astronomical fact clear enough to raise the great gnomon of Silbury, and with a social system complex enough to give the large and orderly community to which the size of Avebury witnesses and the traffic to which the green roads testify.

The doctor had not realized before the boldness and liveliness of his companion's mind. Sir Richmond insisted that the climate must have been moister and milder in those days; he covered all the downlands with woods, as Savernake was still covered; beneath the trees he restored a thicker, richer soil. These people must have done an enormous lot with wood. This use of stones here was a freak. It was the very strangeness of stones here that had made them into sacred things. One thought too much of the stones of the Stone Age. Who would carve these lumps of quartzite when one could carve good oak? Or beech--a most carvable wood. Especially when one's sharpest chisel was a flint. "It's wood we ought to look for," said Sir Richmond. "Wood and fibre." He declared that these people had their tools of wood, their homes of wood, their gods and perhaps their records of wood. "A peat bog here, even a few feet of clay, might have pickled some precious memoranda. . . . No such luck. . . . Now in Glastonbury marshes one found the life of the early iron age--half way to our own times--quite beautifully pickled."

Though they wrestled mightily with the problem, neither Sir Richmond nor the doctor could throw a gleam of light upon the riddle why the ditch was inside and not outside the great wall.

"And what was our Mind like in those days?" said Sir Richmond. "That, I suppose, is what interests you. A vivid childish mind, I guess, with not a suspicion as yet that it

was Man ruling his Planet or anything of that sort."

The doctor pursed his lips. "None," he delivered judicially. "If one were able to recall one's childhood--at the age of about twelve or thirteen--when the artistic impulse so often goes into abeyance and one begins to think in a troubled, monstrous way about God and Hell, one might get something like the mind of this place."

"Thirteen. You put them at that already? . . . These people, you think, were religious?"

"Intensely. In that personal way that gives death a nightmare terror. And as for the fading of the artistic impulse, they've left not a trace of the paintings and drawings and scratchings of the Old Stone people who came before them."

"Adults with the minds of thirteen-year-old children. Thirteen-year-old children with the strength of adults--and no one to slap them or tell them not to. . . . After all, they probably only thought of death now and then. And they never thought of fuel. They supposed there was no end to that. So they used up their woods and kept goats to nibble and kill the new undergrowth. DID these people have goats? "

"I don't know," said the doctor. So little is known."

"Very like children they must have been. The same unending days. They must have thought that the world went on for ever--just as they knew it--like my damned Committee does. . . . With their fuel wasting away and the climate changing imperceptibly, century by century. . . . Kings and important men followed one another here for centuries and centuries. . . . They had lost their past and had no idea of any future. . . . They had forgotten how they came into the land . . . When

I was a child I believed that my father's garden had been there for ever. . . .

"This is very like trying to remember some game one played when one was a child. It is like coming on something that one built up with bricks and stones in some forgotten part of the garden. . . ."

"The life we lived here," said the doctor, has left its traces in traditions, in mental predispositions, in still unanalyzed fundamental ideas."

"Archaeology is very like remembering," said Sir Richmond. "Presently we shall remember a lot more about all this. We shall remember what it was like to live in this place, and the long journey hither, age by age out of the south. We shall remember the sacrifices we made and the crazy reasons why we made them. We sowed our corn in blood here. We had strange fancies about the stars. Those we brought with us out of the south where the stars are brighter. And what like were those wooden gods of ours? I don't remember. . . . But I could easily persuade myself that I had been here before."

They stood on the crest of the ancient wall and the setting sun cast long shadows of them athwart a field of springing wheat.

"Perhaps we shall come here again," the doctor carried on Sir Richmond's fancy; "after another four thousand years or so, with different names and fuller minds. And then I suppose that this ditch won't be the riddle it is now."

"Life didn't seem so complicated then," Sir Richmond mused. "Our muddles were unconscious. We drifted from mood to mood

and forgot. There was more sunshine then, more laughter perhaps, and blacker despair. Despair like the despair of children that can weep itself to sleep. . . . It's over. . . . Was it battle and massacre that ended that long afternoon here? Or did the woods catch fire some exceptionally dry summer, leaving black hills and famine? Or did strange men bring a sickness--measles, perhaps, or the black death? Or was it cattle pest? Or did we just waste our woods and dwindle away before the new peoples that came into the land across the southern sea? I can't remember. . . . "

Sir Richmond turned about. "I would like to dig up the bottom of this ditch here foot by foot--and dry the stuff and sift it--very carefully. . . . Then I might begin to remember things."

Section 5

In the evening, after a pleasant supper, they took a turn about the walls with the moon sinking over beyond Silbury, and then went in and sat by lamplight before a brightly fussy wood fire and smoked. There were long intervals of friendly silence.

"I don't in the least want to go on talking about myself, " said Sir Richmond abruptly.

"Let it rest then," said the doctor generously.

"To-day, among these ancient memories, has taken me out of myself wonderfully. I can't tell you how good Avebury has been for me. This afternoon half my consciousness has seemed to be a tattooed creature wearing a knife of stone. . . . "

"The healing touch of history."

"And for the first time my damned Committee has mattered scarcely a rap. "

Sir Richmond stretched himself in his chair and blinked cheerfully at his cigar smoke.

"Nevertheless," he said, "this confessional business of yours has been an excellent exercise. It has enabled me to get outside myself, to look at myself as a Case. Now I can even see myself as a remote Case. That I needn't bother about further. . . . So far as that goes, I think we have done all that there is to be done."

"I shouldn't say that--quite--yet," said the doctor.

"I don't think I'm a subject for real psychoanalysis at all. I'm not an overlaid sort of person. When I spread myself out there is not much indication of a suppressed wish or of anything masked or buried of that sort. What you get is a quite open and recognized discord of two sets of motives."

The doctor considered. "Yes, I think that is true. Your LIBIDO is, I should say, exceptionally free. Generally you are doing what you want to do--overdoing, in fact, what you want to do and getting simply tired."

"Which is the theory I started with. I am a case of fatigue under irritating circumstances with very little mental complication or concealment."

"Yes," said the doctor. "I agree. You are not a case for psychoanalysis, strictly speaking, at all. You are in open conflict with yourself, upon moral and social issues. Practically open. Your problems are problems of conscious

conduct."

"As I said."

"Of what renunciations you have consciously to make."

Sir Richmond did not answer that. . . .

"This pilgrimage of ours," he said, presently, "has made for magnanimity. This day particularly has been a good day. When we stood on this old wall here in the sunset I seemed to be standing outside myself in an immense still sphere of past and future. I stood with my feet upon the Stone Age and saw myself four thousand years away, and all my distresses as very little incidents in that perspective. Away there in London the case is altogether different; after three hours or so of the Committee one concentrates into one little inflamed moment of personality. There is no past any longer, there is no future, there is only the rankling dispute. For all those three hours, perhaps, I have been thinking of just what I had to say, just how I had to say it, just how I looked while I said it, just how much I was making myself understood, how I might be misunderstood, how I might be misrepresented, challenged, denied. One draws in more and more as one is used up. At last one is reduced to a little, raw, bleeding, desperately fighting, pin-point of SELF. . . . One goes back to one's home unable to recover. Fighting it over again. All night sometimes I get up and walk about the room and curse Martineau, how is one to get the Avebury frame of mind to Westminster?"

"When Westminster is as dead as Avebury," said the doctor, unhelpfully. He added after some seconds, "Milton knew of these troubles. 'Not without dust and heat' he wrote--a great phrase."

"But the dust chokes me," said Sir Richmond.

He took up a copy of THE GREEN ROADS OF ENGLAND that lay beside him on the table. But he did not open it. He held it in his hand and said the thing he had had in mind to say all that evening. "I do not think that I shall stir up my motives any more for a time. Better to go on into the west country cooling my poor old brain in these wide shadows of the past."

"I can prescribe nothing better," said Dr. Martineau.

"Incidentally, we may be able to throw a little more light on one or two of your minor entanglements."

"I don't want to think of them, said Sir Richmond. "Let me get right away from everything. Until my skin has grown again."

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

THE ENCOUNTER AT STONEHENGE

Section 1

Next day in the early afternoon after a farewell walk over the downs round Avebury they went by way of Devizes and Netheravon and Amesbury to Stonehenge.

Dr. Martineau had seen this ancient monument before, but now, with Avebury fresh in his mind, he found it a poorer thing than he had remembered it to be. Sir Richmond was frankly disappointed. After the real greatness and mystery of the older place, it seemed a poor little heap of stones; it did not even dominate the landscape; it was some way from the crest of the swelling down on which it stood and it was further dwarfed by the colossal air-ship hangars and clustering offices of the air station that the great war had called into existence upon the slopes to the south-west. "It looks," Sir Richmond said, "as though some old giantess had left a discarded set of teeth on the hillside." Far more impressive than Stonehenge itself were the barrows that capped the neighbouring crests.

The sacred stones were fenced about, and our visitors had to pay for admission at a little kiosk by the gate. At the side of the road stood a travelstained middle-class automobile, with a miscellany of dusty luggage, rugs and luncheon things therein--a family automobile with father no doubt at the wheel. Sir Richmond left his own trim coupe at its tail.

They were impeded at the entrance by a difference of opinion between the keeper of the turnstile and a small but resolute boy of perhaps five or six who proposed to leave the

enclosure. The custodian thought that it would be better if his nurse or his mother came out with him.

"She keeps on looking at it, " said the small boy. "It isunt anything. I want to go and clean the car."

"You won't SEE Stonehenge every day, young man," said the custodian, a little piqued.

"It's only an old beach," said the small boy, with extreme conviction. "It's rocks like the seaside. And there isunt no sea."

The man at the turnstile mutely consulted the doctor.

"I don't see that he can get into any harm here," the doctor advised, and the small boy was released from archaeology.

He strolled to the family automobile, produced an EN-TOUT-CAS pocket-handkerchief and set himself to polish the lamps with great assiduity. The two gentlemen lingered at the turnstile for a moment or so to watch his proceedings. "Modern child," said Sir Richmond. "Old stones are just old stones to him. But motor cars are gods."

"You can hardly expect him to understand--at his age," said the custodian, jealous for the honor of Stonehenge. . . .

"Reminds me of Martin's little girl," said Sir Richmond, as he and Dr. Martineau went on towards the circle. "When she encountered her first dragon-fly she was greatly delighted. 'Oh, dee' lill' a'eplane,' she said."

As they approached the grey old stones they became aware of a certain agitation among them. A voice, an authoritative bass

voice, was audible, crying, "Anthony!" A nurse appeared remotely going in the direction of the aeroplane sheds, and her cry of "Master Anthony" came faintly on the breeze. An extremely pretty young woman of five or six and twenty became visible standing on one of the great prostrate stones in the centre of the place. She was a black-haired, sun-burnt individual and she stood with her arms akimbo, quite frankly amused at the disappearance of Master Anthony, and offering no sort of help for his recovery. On the greensward before her stood the paterfamilias of the family automobile, and he was making a trumpet with his hands in order to repeat the name of Anthony with greater effect. A short lady in grey emerged from among the encircling megaliths, and one or two other feminine personalities produced effects of movement rather than of individuality as they flitted among the stones. "Well," said the lady in grey, with that rising intonation of humorous conclusion which is so distinctively American, "those Druids have GOT him."

"He's hiding," said the automobilist, in a voice that promised chastisement to a hidden hearer. "That's what he is doing. He ought not to play tricks like this. A great boy who is almost six."

"If you are looking for a small, resolute boy of six," said Sir Richmond, addressing himself to the lady on the rock rather than to the angry parent below, "he's perfectly safe and happy. The Druids haven't got him. Indeed, they've failed altogether to get him. 'Stonehenge,' he says, 'is no good.' So he's gone back to clean the lamps of your car."

"Aa-oo. So THAT'S it! " said Papa. "Winnie, go and tell Price he's gone back to the car. . . . They oughtn't to have let him out of the enclosure. . . ."

The excitement about Master Anthony collapsed. The rest of the people in the circles crystallized out into the central space as two apparent sisters and an apparent aunt and the nurse, who was packed off at once to supervise the lamp cleaning. The head of the family found some difficulty, it would seem, in readjusting his mind to the comparative innocence of Anthony, and Sir Richmond and the young lady on the rock sought as if by common impulse to establish a general conversation. There were faint traces of excitement in her manner, as though there had been some controversial passage between herself and the family gentleman.

"We were discussing the age of this old place," she said, smiling in the frankest and friendliest way. "How old do YOU think it is?"

The father of Anthony intervened, also with a shadow of controversy in his manner. "I was explaining to the young lady that it dates from the early bronze age. Before chronology existed. . . . But she insists on dates."

"Nothing of bronze has ever been found here," said Sir Richmond.

"Well, when was this early bronze age, anyhow?" said the young lady.

Sir Richmond sought a recognizable datum. "Bronze got to Britain somewhere between the times of Moses and Solomon."

"Ah! " said the young lady, as who should say, 'This man at least talks sense.'

"But these stones are all shaped," said the father of the family. "It is difficult to see how that could have been done

without something harder than stone."

"I don't SEE the place," said the young lady on the stone. "I can't imagine how they did it up--not one bit."

"Did it up!" exclaimed the father of the family in the tone of one accustomed to find a gentle sport in the intellectual frailties of his womenkind.

"It's just the bones of a place. They hung things round it. They draped it."

"But what things?" asked Sir Richmond.

"Oh! they had things all right. Skins perhaps. Mats of rushes. Bast cloth. Fibre of all sorts. Wadded stuff."

"Stonehenge draped! It's really a delightful idea;" said the father of the family, enjoying it.

"It's quite a possible one," said Sir Richmond.

"Or they may have used wicker," the young lady went on, undismayed. She seemed to concede a point. "Wicker IS likelier."

"But surely," said the father of the family with the expostulatory voice and gesture of one who would recall erring wits to sanity, "it is far more impressive standing out bare and noble as it does. In lonely splendour."

"But all this country may have been wooded then," said Sir Richmond. "In which case it wouldn't have stood out. It doesn't stand out so very much even now."

"You came to it through a grove," said the young lady, eagerly picking up the idea.

"Probably beech," said Sir Richmond.

"Which may have pointed to the midsummer sunrise," said Dr. Martineau, unheeded.

"These are NOVEL ideas," said the father of the family in the reproving tone of one who never allows a novel idea inside HIS doors if he can prevent it.

"Well," said the young lady, "I guess there was some sort of show here anyhow. And no human being ever had a show yet without trying to shut people out of it in order to make them come in. I guess this was covered in all right. A dark hunched old place in a wood. Beech stems, smooth, like pillars. And they came to it at night, in procession, beating drums, and scared half out of their wits. They came in THERE and went round the inner circle with their torches. And so they were shown. The torches were put out and the priests did their mysteries. Until dawn broke. That is how they worked it."

"But even you can't tell what the show was, V.V." said the lady in grey, who was standing now at Dr. Martineau's elbow.

"Something horrid," said Anthony's younger sister to her elder in a stage whisper.

"BLUGGY," agreed Anthony's elder sister to the younger, in a noiseless voice that certainly did not reach father.

"SQUEALS!"

This young lady who was addressed as "V.V." was perhaps one

or two and twenty, Dr. Martineau thought,--he was not very good at feminine ages. She had a clear sun-browned complexion, with dark hair and smiling lips. Her features were finely modelled, with just that added touch of breadth in the brow and softness in the cheek bones, that faint flavour of the Amerindian, one sees at times in American women. Her voice was a very soft and pleasing voice, and she spoke persuasively and not assertively as so many American women do. Her determination to make the dry bones of Stonehenge live shamed the doctor's disappointment with the place. And when she had spoken, Dr. Martineau noted that she looked at Sir Richmond as if she expected him at least to confirm her vision. Sir Richmond was evidently prepared to confirm it.

With a queer little twinge of infringed proprietorship, the doctor saw Sir Richmond step up on the prostrate megalith and stand beside her, the better to appreciate her point of view. He smiled down at her. "Now why do you think they came in THERE?" he asked.

The young lady was not very clear about her directions. She did not know of the roadway running to the Avon river, nor of the alleged race course to the north, nor had she ever heard that the stones were supposed to be of two different periods and that some of them might possibly have been brought from a very great distance.

Section 2

Neither Dr. Martineau nor the father of the family found the imaginative reconstruction of the Stonehenge rituals quite so exciting as the two principals. The father of the family endured some further particulars with manifest impatience, no longer able, now that Sir Richmond was encouraging the girl,

to keep her in check with the slightly derisive smile proper to her sex. Then he proclaimed in a fine loud tenor, "All this is very imaginative, I'm afraid." And to his family, "Time we were pressing on. Turps, we must go-o. Come, Phoebe!"

As he led his little flock towards the exit his voice came floating back. "Talking wanton nonsense. . . . Any professional archaeologist would laugh, simply laugh. . . ."

He passed out of the world.

With a faint intimation of dismay Dr. Martineau realized that the two talkative ladies were not to be removed in the family automobile with the rest of the party. Sir Richmond and the younger lady went on very cheerfully to the population, agriculture, housing and general scenery of the surrounding Downland during the later Stone Age. The shorter, less attractive lady, whose accent was distinctly American, came now and stood at the doctor's elbow. She seemed moved to play the part of chorus to the two upon the stone.

"When V.V. gets going," she remarked, "she makes things come alive."

Dr. Martineau hated to be addressed suddenly by strange ladies. He started, and his face assumed the distressed politeness of the moon at its full. "Your friend," he said, "interested in archaeology? "

"Interested!" said the stouter lady. "Why! She's a fiend at it. Ever since we came on Carnac. "

"You've visited Carnac?"

"That's where the bug bit her." said the stout lady with a note of querulous humour. "Directly V.V. set eyes on Carnac, she just turned against all her up-bringing. 'Why wasn't I told of this before?' she said. 'What's Notre Dame to this? This is where we came from. This is the real starting point of the MAYFLOWER. Belinda,' she said, 'we've got to see all we can of this sort of thing before we go back to America. They've been keeping this from us.' And that's why we're here right now instead of being shopping in Paris or London like decent American women."

The younger lady looked down on her companion with something of the calm expert attention that a plumber gives to a tap that is misbehaving, and like a plumber refrained from precipitate action. She stood with the backs of her hands resting on her hips.

"Well," she said slowly, giving most of the remark to Sir Richmond and the rest to the doctor. "it is nearer the beginnings of things than London or Paris."

"And nearer to us, " said Sir Richmond.

"I call that just--paradoxical," said the shorter lady, who appeared to be called Belinda.

"Not paradoxical," Dr. Martineau contradicted gently. "Life is always beginning again. And this is a time of fresh beginnings."

"Now that's after V.V.'s own heart," cried the stout lady in grey. "She'll agree to all that. She's been saying it right across Europe. Rome, Paris, London; they're simply just done. They don't signify any more. They've got to be cleared away."

"You let me tell my own opinions, Belinda," said the young lady who was called V.V. "I said that if people went on building with fluted pillars and Corinthian capitals for two thousand years, it was time they were cleared up and taken away."

"Corinthian capitals?" Sir Richmond considered it and laughed cheerfully. "I suppose Europe does rather overdo that sort of thing."

"The way she went on about the Victor Emmanuele Monument!" said the lady who answered to the name of Belinda. "It gave me cold shivers to think that those Italian officers might understand English. "

The lady who was called V.V. smiled as if she smiled at herself, and explained herself to Sir Richmond. "When one is travelling about, one gets to think of history and politics in terms of architecture. I do anyhow. And those columns with Corinthian capitals have got to be a sort of symbol for me for everything in Europe that I don't want and have no sort of use for. It isn't a bad sort of capital in its way, florid and pretty, but not a patch on the Doric;--and that a whole continent should come up to it and stick at it and never get past it! . . ."

"It's the classical tradition."

"It puzzles me."

"It's the Roman Empire. That Corinthian column is a weed spread by the Romans all over western Europe."

"And it smothers the history of Europe. You can't see Europe because of it. Europe is obsessed by Rome. Everywhere Marble

Arches and ARCS DE TRIOMPHE. You never get away from it. It is like some old gentleman who has lost his way in a speech and keeps on repeating the same thing. And can't sit down. 'The empire, gentlemen--the Empire. Empire.' Rome itself is perfectly frightful. It stares at you with its great round stupid arches as though it couldn't imagine that you could possibly want anything else for ever. Saint Peter's and that frightful Monument are just the same stuff as the Baths of Caracalla and the palaces of the Caesars. Just the same. They will make just the same sort of ruins. It goes on and goes on."

"AVE ROMA IMMORTALIS," said Dr. Martineau.

"This Roman empire seems to be Europe's first and last idea. A fixed idea. And such a poor idea! . . . America never came out of that. It's no good-telling me that it did. It escaped from it. . . . So I said to Belinda here, 'Let's burrow, if we can, under all this marble and find out what sort of people we were before this Roman empire and its acanthus weeds got hold of us.'"

"I seem to remember at Washington, something faintly Corinthian, something called the Capitol," Sir Richmond reflected. "And other buildings. A Treasury."

"That is different," said the young lady, so conclusively that it seemed to leave nothing more to be said on that score.

"A last twinge of Europeanism," she vouchsafed. "We were young in those days."

"You are well beneath the marble here."

She assented cheerfully.

"A thousand years before it."

"Happy place! Happy people!"

"But even this place isn't the beginning of things here. Carnac was older than this. And older still is Avebury. Have you heard in America of Avebury? It may have predated this place, they think, by another thousand years."

"Avebury?" said the lady who was called Belinda.

"But what is this Avebury?" asked V.V. "I've never heard of the place."

"I thought it was a lord," said Belinda.

Sir Richmond, with occasional appeals to Dr. Martineau, embarked upon an account of the glory and wonder of Avebury. Possibly he exaggerated Avebury. . . .

It was Dr. Martineau who presently brought this disquisition upon Avebury to a stop by a very remarkable gesture. He looked at his watch. He drew it out ostentatiously, a thick, respectable gold watch, for the doctor was not the sort of man to wear his watch upon his wrist. He clicked it open and looked at it. Thereby he would have proclaimed his belief this encounter was an entirely unnecessary interruption of his healing duologue with Sir Richmond, which must now be resumed.

But this action had scarcely the effect he had intended it to have. It set the young lady who was called Belinda asking about ways and means of getting to Salisbury; it brought to light the distressing fact that V.V. had the beginnings of a

chafed heel. Once he had set things going they moved much too quickly for the doctor to deflect their course. He found himself called upon to make personal sacrifices to facilitate the painless transport of the two ladies to Salisbury, where their luggage awaited them at the Old George Hotel. In some way too elusive to trace, it became evident that he and Sir Richmond were to stay at this same Old George Hotel. The luggage was to be shifted to the top of the coupe, the young lady called V.V. was to share the interior of the car with Sir Richmond, while the lady named Belinda, for whom Dr. Martineau was already developing a very strong dislike, was to be thrust into an extreme proximity with him and the balance of the luggage in the dicky seat behind.

Sir Richmond had never met with a young woman with a genuine historical imagination before, and he was evidently very greatly excited and resolved to get the utmost that there was to be got out of this encounter.

Section 3

Sir Richmond displayed a complete disregard of the sufferings of Dr. Martineau, shamefully compressed behind him. Of these he was to hear later. He ran his overcrowded little car, overcrowded so far as the dicky went, over the crest of the Down and down into Amesbury and on to Salisbury, stopping to alight and stretch the legs of the party when they came in sight of Old Sarum.

"Certainly they can do with a little stretching," said Dr. Martineau grimly.

This charming young woman had seized upon the imagination of Sir Richmond to the temporary exclusion of all other considerations. The long Downland gradients, quivering very

slightly with the vibration of the road, came swiftly and easily to meet and pass the throbbing little car as he sat beside her and talked to her. He fell into that expository manner which comes so easily to the native entertaining the visitor from abroad.

"In England, it seems to me there are four main phases of history. Four. Avebury, which I would love to take you to see to-morrow. Stonehenge. Old Sarum, which we shall see in a moment as a great grassy mound on our right as we come over one of these crests. Each of them represents about a thousand years. Old Sarum was Keltic; it, saw the Romans and the Saxons through, and for a time it was a Norman city. Now it is pasture for sheep. Latest as yet is Salisbury,--English, real English. It may last a few centuries still. It is little more than seven hundred years old. But when I think of those great hangars back there by Stonehenge, I feel that the next phase is already beginning. Of a world one will fly to the ends of, in a week or so. Our world still. Our people, your people and mine, who are going to take wing so soon now, were made in all these places. We are visiting the old homes. I am glad I came back to it just when you were doing the same thing."

"I'm lucky to have found a sympathetic fellow traveller," she said; "with a car."

"You're the first American I've ever met whose interest in history didn't seem--" He sought for an inoffensive word.

"Silly? Oh! I admit it. It's true of a lot of us. Most of us. We come over to Europe as if it hadn't anything to do with us except to supply us with old pictures and curios generally. We come sight-seeing. It's romantic. It's picturesque. We stare at the natives--like visitors at a Zoo. We don't

realize that we belong. . . . I know our style. . . . But we aren't all like that. Some of us are learning a bit better than that. We have one or two teachers over there to lighten our darkness. There's Professor Breasted for instance. He comes sometimes to my father's house. And there's James Harvey Robinson and Professor Hutton Webster. They've been trying to restore our memory."

"I've never heard of any of them," said Sir Richmond.

"You hear so little of America over here. It's quite a large country and all sorts of interesting things happen there nowadays. And we are waking up to history. Quite fast. We shan't always be the most ignorant people in the world. We are beginning to realize that quite a lot of things happened between Adam and the Mayflower that we ought to be told about. I allow it's a recent revival. The United States has been like one of those men you read about in the papers who go away from home and turn up in some distant place with their memories gone. They've forgotten what their names were or where they lived or what they did for a living; they've forgotten everything that matters. Often they have to begin again and settle down for a long time before their memories come back. That's how it has been with us. Our memory is just coming back to us."

"And what do you find you are?"

"Europeans. Who came away from kings and churches-@-and Corinthian capitals."

"You feel all this country belongs to you?"

"As much as it does to you."

Sir Richmond smiled radiantly at her. "But if I say that

America belongs to me as much as it does to you?"

"We are one people," she said.

"We"

"Europe. These parts of Europe anyhow. And ourselves."

"You are the most civilized person I've met for weeks and weeks." "Well, you are the first civilized person I've met in Europe for a long time. If I understand you."

"There are multitudes of reasonable, civilized people in Europe."

"I've heard or seen very little of them.

"They're scattered, I admit."

"And hard to find."

"So ours is a lucky meeting. I've wanted a serious talk to an American for some time. I want to know very badly what you think you are up to with the world,--our world. "

"I'm equally anxious to know what England thinks she is doing. Her ways recently have been a little difficult to understand. On any hypothesis--that is honourable to her."
"H'm," said Sir Richmond.

"I assure you we don't like it. This Irish business. We feel a sort of ownership in England. It's like finding your dearest aunt torturing the cat."

"We must talk of that," said Sir Richmond.

"I wish you would."

"It is a cat and a dog--and they have been very naughty animals. And poor Aunt Britannia almost deliberately lost her temper. But I admit she hits about in a very nasty fashion."

"And favours the dog."

"She does."

"I want to know all you admit."

"You shall. And incidentally my friend and I may have the pleasure of showing you Salisbury and Avebury. If you are free?"

"We're travelling together, just we two. We are wandering about the south of England on our way to Falmouth. Where I join a father in a few days' time, and I go on with him to Paris. And if you and your friend are coming to the Old George--"

"We are," said Sir Richmond.

"I see no great scandal in talking right on to bedtime. And seeing Avebury to-morrow. Why not? Perhaps if we did as the Germans do and gave our names now, it might mitigate something of the extreme informality of our behaviour."

"My name is Hardy. I've been a munition manufacturer. I was slightly wounded by a stray shell near Arras while I was inspecting some plant I had set up, and also I was hit by a stray knighthood. So my name is now Sir Richmond Hardy. My friend is a very distinguished Harley Street physician.

Chiefly nervous and mental cases. His name is Dr. Martineau. He is quite as civilized as I am. He is also a philosophical writer. He is really a very wise and learned man indeed. He is full of ideas. He's stimulated me tremendously. You must talk to him."

Sir Richmond glanced over his shoulder at the subject of these commendations. Through the oval window glared an expression of malignity that made no impression whatever on his preoccupied mind.

"My name," said the young lady, "is Grammont. The war whirled me over to Europe on Red Cross work and since the peace I've been settling up things and travelling about Europe. My father is rather a big business man in New York."

"The oil Grammont?"

"He is rather deep in oil, I believe. He is coming over to Europe because he does not like the way your people are behaving in Mesopotamia. He is on his way to Paris now. Paris it seems is where everything is to be settled against you. Belinda is a sort of companion I have acquired for the purposes of independent travel. She was Red Cross too. I must have somebody and I cannot bear a maid. Her name is Belinda Seyffert. From Philadelphia originally. You have that? Seyffert, Grammont?"

"And Hardy?" "Sir Richmond and Dr. Martineau."

"And-Ah!--That great green bank there just coming into sight must be Old Sarum. The little ancient city that faded away when Salisbury lifted its spire into the world. We will stop here for a little while. . . ."

Then it was that Dr. Martineau was grim about the stretching of his legs.

Section 4

The sudden prospect which now opened out before Sir Richmond of talking about history and suchlike topics with a charming companion for perhaps two whole days instead of going on with this tiresome, shamefaced, egotistical business of self-examination was so attractive to him that it took immediate possession of his mind, to the entire exclusion and disregard of Dr. Martineau's possible objections to any such modification of their original programme. When they arrived in Salisbury, the doctor did make some slight effort to suggest a different hotel from that in which the two ladies had engaged their rooms, but on the spur of the moment and in their presence he could produce no sufficient reason for refusing the accommodation the Old George had ready for him. He was reduced to a vague: "We don't want to inflict ourselves--" He could not get Sir Richmond aside for any adequate expression of his feelings about Miss Seyffert, before the four of them were seated together at tea amidst the mediaeval modernity of the Old George smoking-room. And only then did he begin to realize the depth and extent of the engagements to which Sir Richmond had committed himself.

"I was suggesting that we run back to Avebury to-morrow," said Sir Richmond. "These ladies were nearly missing it."

The thing took the doctor's breath away. For the moment he could say nothing. He stared over his tea-cup dour-faced. An objection formulated itself very slowly. "But that dicky," he whispered.

His whisper went unnoted. Sir Richmond was talking of the

completeness of Salisbury. From the very beginning it had been a cathedral city; it was essentially and purely that. The church at its best, in the full tide of its mediaeval ascendancy, had called it into being. He was making some extremely loose and inaccurate generalizations about the buildings and ruins each age had left for posterity, and Miss Grammont was countering with equally unsatisfactory qualifications. "Our age will leave the ruins of hotels," said Sir Richmond. "Railway arches and hotels."

"Baths and aqueducts," Miss Grammont compared. "Rome of the Empire comes nearest to it "

As soon as tea was over, Dr. Martineau realized, they meant to walk round and about Salisbury. He foresaw that walk with the utmost clearness. In front and keeping just a little beyond the range of his intervention, Sir Richmond would go with Miss Grammont; he himself and Miss Seyffert would bring up the rear. "If I do," he muttered, "I'll be damned!" an unusually strong expression for him.

"You said--?" asked Miss Seyffert.

"That I have some writing to do--before the post goes," said the doctor brightly.

"Oh! come and see the cathedral!" cried Sir Richmond with ill-concealed dismay. He was, if one may put it in such a fashion, not looking at Miss Seyffert in the directest fashion when he said this.

"I'm afraid," said the doctor mulishly. "Impossible."

(With the unspoken addition of, "You try her for a bit.")

Miss Grammont stood up. Everybody stood up. "We can go first to look for shops," she said. "There's those things you want to buy, Belinda; a fountain pen and the little books. We can all go together as far as that. And while you are shopping, if you wouldn't mind getting one or two things for me. . . ."

It became clear to Dr. Martineau that Sir Richmond was to be let off Belinda. It seemed abominably unjust. And it was also clear to him that he must keep closely to his own room or he might find Miss Seyffert drifting back alone to the hotel and eager to resume with him. . . .

Well, a quiet time in his room would not be disagreeable. He could think over his notes. . . .

But in reality he thought over nothing but the little speeches he would presently make to Sir Richmond about the unwarrantable, the absolutely unwarrantable, alterations that were being made without his consent in their common programme. . . .

For a long time Sir Richmond had met no one so interesting and amusing as this frank-minded young woman from America. "Young woman" was how he thought of her; she didn't correspond to anything so prim and restrained and extensively reserved and withheld as a "young lady "; and though he judged her no older than five and twenty, the word "girl" with its associations of virginal ignorances, invisible purdah, and trite ideas newly discovered, seemed even less appropriate for her than the word "boy." She had an air of having in some obscure way graduated in life, as if so far she had lived each several year of her existence in a distinctive and conclusive manner with the utmost mental profit and no particular tarnish or injury. He could talk

with her as if he talked with a man like himself--but with a zest no man could give him.

It was evident that the good things she had said at first came as the natural expression of a broad stream of alert thought; they were no mere display specimens from one of those jackdaw collections of bright things so many clever women waste their wits in accumulating. She was not talking for effect at all, she was talking because she was tremendously interested in her discovery of the spectacle of history, and delighted to find another person as possessed as she was.

Belinda having been conducted to her shops, the two made their way through the bright evening sunlight to the compact gracefulness of the cathedral. A glimpse through a wrought-iron gate of a delightful garden of spring flowers, alyssum, aubrietia, snow-upon-the-mountains, daffodils, narcissus and the like, held them for a time, and then they came out upon the level, grassy space, surrounded by little ripe old houses, on which the cathedral stands. They stood for some moments surveying it.

"It's a perfect little lady of a cathedral," said Sir Richmond. "But why, I wonder, did we build it? "

"Your memory ought to be better than mine," she said, with her half-closed eyes blinking up at the sunlit spire sharp against the blue. "I've been away for so long-over there-that I forget altogether. Why DID we build it?"

She had fallen in quite early with this freak of speaking and thinking as if he and she were all mankind. It was as if her mind had been prepared for it by her own eager exploration in Europe. "My friend, the philosopher," he had said, "will not

have it that we are really the individuals we think we are. You must talk to him--he is a very curious and subtle thinker. We are just thoughts in the Mind of the Race, he says, passing thoughts. We are--what does he call it? --Man on his Planet, taking control of life."

"Man and woman," she had amended.

But just as man on his planet taking control of life had failed altogether to remember why the ditch at Avebury was on the inside instead of the outside of the vallum, so now Miss Grammont and Sir Richmond found very great difficulty in recalling why they had built Salisbury Cathedral.

"We built temples by habit and tradition," said Sir Richmond. "But the impulse was losing its force. "

She looked up at the spire and then at him with a faintly quizzical expression.

But he had his reply ready.

"We were beginning to feel our power over matter. We were already very clever engineers. What interested us here wasn't the old religion any more. We wanted to exercise and display our power over stone. We made it into reeds and branches. We squirted it up in all these spires and pinnacles. The priest and his altar were just an excuse. Do you think people have ever feared and worshipped in this--this artist's lark--as they did in Stonehenge?"

"I certainly do not remember that I ever worshipped here," she said.

Sir Richmond was in love with his idea. "The spirit of the

Gothic cathedrals," he said, "is the spirit of the sky-scrapers. It is architecture in a mood of flaming ambition. The Freemasons on the building could hardly refrain from jeering at the little priest they had left down below there, performing antiquated puerile mysteries at his altar. He was just their excuse for doing it all."

"Sky-scrapers?" she conceded. "An early display of the sky-scra- per spirit. . . . You are doing your best to make me feel thoroughly at home."

"You are more at home here still than in that new country of ours over the Atlantic. But it seems to me now that I do begin to remember building this cathedral and all the other cathedrals we built in Europe. . . . It was the fun of building made us do it. . . ."

"H'm," she said. "And my sky-scrapers?"

"Still the fun of building. That is the thing I envy most about America. It's still large enough, mentally and materially, to build all sorts of things. . . . Over here, the sites are frightfully crowded. . . ."

"And what do you think we are building now? And what do you think you are building over here?"

"What are we building now? I believe we have almost grown up. I believe it is time we began to build in earnest. For good. . . ."

"But are we building anything at all?"

"A new world."

"Show it me," she said.

"We're still only at the foundations," said Sir Richmond.
Nothing shows as yet."

"I wish I could believe they were foundations."

"But can you doubt we are scrapping the old? . . ."

It was too late in the afternoon to go into the cathedral, so they strolled to and fro round and about the west end and along the path under the trees towards the river, exchanging their ideas very frankly and freely about the things that had recently happened to the world and what they thought they ought to be doing in it.

Section 5

After dinner our four tourists sat late and talked in a corner of the smoking-room. The two ladies had vanished hastily at the first dinner gong and reappeared at the second, mysteriously and pleasantly changed from tweedy pedestrians to indoor company. They were quietly but definitely dressed, pretty alterations had happened to their coiffure, a silver band and deep red stones lit the dusk of Miss Grammont's hair and a necklace of the same colourings kept the peace between her jolly sun-burnt cheek and her soft untanned neck. It was evident her recent uniform had included a collar of great severity. Miss Seyffert had revealed a plump forearm and proclaimed it with a clash of bangles. Dr. Martineau thought her evening throat much too confidential.

The conversation drifted from topic to topic. It had none of the steady continuity of Sir Richmond's duologue with Miss Grammont. Miss Seyffert's methods were too discursive and

exclamatory. She broke every thread that appeared. The Old George at Salisbury is really old; it shows it, and Miss Seyffert laced the entire evening with her recognition of the fact. "Just look at that old beam!" she would cry suddenly. "To think it was exactly where it is before there was a Cabot in America!"

Miss Grammont let her companion pull the talk about as she chose. After the animation of the afternoon a sort of lazy contentment had taken possession of the younger lady. She sat deep in a basket chair and spoke now and then. Miss Seyffert gave her impressions of France and Italy. She talked of the cabmen of Naples and the beggars of Amalfi.

Apropos of beggars, Miss Grammont from the depths of her chair threw out the statement that Italy was frightfully overpopulated. "In some parts of Italy it is like mites on a cheese. Nobody seems to be living. Everyone is too busy keeping alive."

"Poor old women carrying loads big enough for mules," said Miss Seyffert.

"Little children working like slaves," said Miss Grammont.

"And everybody begging. Even the people at work by the roadside. Who ought to be getting wages--sufficient. . . ."

"Begging--from foreigners--is just a sport in Italy," said Sir Richmond. "It doesn't imply want. But I agree that a large part of Italy is frightfully overpopulated. The whole world is. Don't you think so, Martineau?"

"Well--yes--for its present social organization. "

"For any social organization," said Sir Richmond.

"I've no doubt of it," said Miss Seyffert, and added amazingly: "I'm out for Birth Control all the time."

A brief but active pause ensued. Dr. Martineau in a state of sudden distress attempted to drink out of a cold and empty coffee cup.

"The world swarms with cramped and undeveloped lives," said Sir Richmond. "Which amount to nothing. Which do not even represent happiness. And which help to use up the resources, the fuel and surplus energy of the world."

"I suppose they have a sort of liking for their lives," Miss Grammont reflected.

"Does that matter? They do nothing to carry life on. They are just vain repetitions--imperfect dreary, blurred repetitions of one common life. All that they feel has been felt, all that they do has been done better before. Because they are crowded and hurried and underfed and undereducated. And as for liking their lives, they need never have had the chance."

"How many people are there in the world?" she asked abruptly.

"I don't know. Twelve hundred, fifteen hundred millions perhaps."

"And in your world?"

"I'd have two hundred and fifty millions, let us say. At most. It would be quite enough for this little planet, for a time, at any rate. Don't you think so, doctor?"

"I don't know," said Dr. Martineau. "Oddly enough, I have never thought about that question before. At least, not from this angle."

"But could you pick out two hundred and fifty million aristocrats?" began Miss Grammont. "My native instinctive democracy--"

"Need not be outraged," said Sir Richmond. "Any two hundred and fifty million would do, They'd be able to develop fully, all of them. As things are, only a minority can do that. The rest never get a chance."

"That's what I always say," said Miss Seyffert.

"A New Age," said Dr. Martineau; "a New World. We may be coming to such a stage, when population, as much as fuel, will be under a world control. If one thing, why not the other? I admit that the movement of thought is away from haphazard towards control--"

"I'm for control all the time," Miss Seyffert injected, following up her previous success.

"I admit", the doctor began his broken sentence again with marked patience, "that the movement of thought is away from haphazard towards control--in things generally. But is the movement of events?"

"The eternal problem of man," said Sir Richmond. "Can our wills prevail?"

There came a little pause.

Miss Grammont smiled an enquiry at Miss Seyffert. "If YOU

are," said Belinda.

"I wish I could imagine your world," said Miss Grammont, rising, "of two hundred and fifty millions of fully developed human beings with room to live and breathe in and no need for wars. Will they live in palaces? Will they all be healthy? . . . Machines will wait on them. No! I can't imagine it. Perhaps I shall dream of it. My dreaming self may be cleverer."

She held out her hand to Sir Richmond. Just for a moment they stood hand in hand, appreciatively. . . .

"Well!" said Dr. Martineau, as the door closed behind the two Americans, "This is a curious encounter."

"That young woman has brains," said Sir Richmond, standing before the fireplace. There was no doubt whatever which young woman he meant. But Dr. Martineau grunted.

"I don't like the American type," the doctor pronounced judicially.

"I do," Sir Richmond countered.

The doctor thought for a moment or so. "You are committed to the project of visiting Avebury?" he said.

"They ought to see Avebury, " said Sir Richmond.

"H'm," said the doctor, ostentatiously amused by his thoughts and staring at the fire. "Birth Control! I NEVER did."

Sir Richmond smiled down on the top of the doctor's head and said nothing.

"I think" said the doctor and paused. "I shall leave this Avebury expedition to you."

"We can be back in the early afternoon," said Sir Richmond. "To give them a chance of seeing the cathedral. The chapter house here is not one to miss "

"And then I suppose we shall go on?"

"As you please," said Sir Richmond insincerely.

"I must confess that four people make the car at any rate seem tremendously overpopulated. And to tell the truth, I do not find this encounter so amusing as you seem to do. . . . I shall not be sorry when we have waved good-bye to those young ladies, and resume our interrupted conversation."

Sir Richmond considered something mulish in the doctor's averted face.

"I find Miss Grammont an extremely interesting--and stimulating human being.

"Evidently."

The doctor sighed, stood up and found himself delivering one of the sentences he had engendered during his solitary meditations in his room before dinner. He surprised himself by the plainness of his speech. "Let me be frank," he said, regarding Sir Richmond squarely. "Considering the general situation of things and your position, I do not care very greatly for the part of an accessory to what may easily develop, as you know very well, into a very serious flirtation. An absurd, mischievous, irrelevant flirtation.

You may not like the word. You may pretend it is a conversation, an ordinary intellectual conversation. That is not the word. Simply that is not the word. You people eye one another. . . . Flirtation. I give the affair its proper name. That is all. Merely that. When I think--But we will not discuss it now. . . . Good night. . . . Forgive me if I put before you, rather bluntly, my particular point of view."

Sir Richmond found himself alone. With his eyebrows raised.

Section 6

After twenty-four eventful hours our two students of human motives found themselves together again by the fireplace in the Old George smoking-room. They had resumed their overnight conversation, in a state of considerable tension.

"If you find the accommodation of the car insufficient," said Sir Richmond in a tone of extreme reasonableness, and I admit it is, we can easily hire a larger car in a place like this.

I would not care if you hired an omnibus, said Dr. Martineau. "I am not coming on if these young women are."

"But if you consider it scandalous--and really, Martineau, really! as one man to another, it does seem to me to be a bit pernicky of you, a broad and original thinker as you are--"

"Thought is one matter. Rash, inconsiderate action quite another. And above all, if I spend another day in or near the company of Miss Belinda Seyffert I shall--I shall be extremely rude to her."

"But," said Sir Richmond and bit his lower lip and considered.

"We might drop Belinda," he suggested turning to his friend and speaking in low, confidential tones. "She is quite a manageable person. Quite. She could--for example--be left behind with the luggage and sent on by train. I do not know if you realize how the land lies in that quarter. It needs only a word to Miss Grammont. "

There was no immediate reply. For a moment he had a wild hope that his companion would agree, and then he perceived that the doctor's silence meant only the preparation of an ultimatum.

"I object to Miss Grammont and that side of the thing, more than I do to Miss Seyffert."

Sir Richmond said nothing.

"It may help you to see this affair from a slightly different angle if I tell you that twice today Miss Seyffert has asked me if you were a married man."

"And of course you told her I was."

"On the second occasion."

Sir Richmond smiled again.

"Frankly," said the doctor, "this adventure is altogether uncongenial to me. It is the sort of thing that has never happened in my life. This highway coupling--"

"Don't you think," said Sir Richmond, "that you are attaching rather too much--what shall I say--romantic?--flirtatious?--meaning to this affair? I don't mind that after my rather

lavish confessions you should consider me a rather oversexed person, but isn't your attitude rather unfair,--unjust, indeed, and almost insulting, to this Miss Grammont? After all, she's a young lady of very good social position indeed. She doesn't strike you--does she?--as an undignified or helpless human being. Her manners suggest a person of considerable self-control. And knowing less of me than you do, she probably regards me as almost as safe as--a maiden aunt say. I'm twice her age. We are a party of four. There are conventions, there are considerations. . . . Aren't you really, my dear Martineau, overdoing all this side of this very pleasant little enlargement of our interests."

"AM I?" said Dr. Martineau and brought a scrutinizing eye to bear on Sir Richmond's face.

"I want to go on talking to Miss Grammont for a day or so," Sir Richmond admitted.

"Then I shall prefer to leave your party."

There were some moments of silence.

"I am really very sorry to find myself in this dilemma," said Sir Richmond with a note of genuine regret in his voice.

"It is not a dilemma," said Dr. Martineau, with a corresponding loss of asperity. "I grant you we discover we differ upon a question of taste and convenience. But before I suggested this trip, I had intended to spend a little time with my old friend Sir Kenelm Latter at Bournemouth. Nothing simpler than to go to him now"

"I shall be sorry all the same."

"I could have wished," said the doctor, "that these ladies had happened a little later. . . ."

The matter was settled. Nothing more of a practical nature remained to be said. But neither gentleman wished to break off with a harsh and bare decision.

"When the New Age is here," said Sir Richmond, "then, surely, a friendship between a man and a woman will not be subjected to the--the inconveniences your present code would set about it? They would travel about together as they chose?"

"The fundamental principle of the new age," said the doctor, will be *Honi soit qui mal y pense*. In these matters. With perhaps *Fay ce que voudras* as its next injunction. So long as other lives are not affected. In matters of personal behaviour the world will probably be much more free and individuals much more open in their conscience and honour than they have ever been before. In matters of property, economics and public conduct it will probably be just the reverse. Then, there will be much more collective control and much more insistence, legal insistence, upon individual responsibility. But we are not living in a new age yet; we are living in the patched-up ruins of a very old one. And you-- if you will forgive me--are living in the patched up remains of a life that had already had its complications. This young lady, whose charm and cleverness I admit, behaves as if the new age were already here. Well, that may be a very dangerous mistake both for her and for you. . . . This affair, if it goes on for a few days more, may involve very serious consequences indeed, with which I, for one, do not wish to be involved."

Sir Richmond, upon the hearthrug, had a curious feeling that he was back in the head master's study at Caxton.

Dr. Martineau went on with a lucidity that Sir Richmond found rather trying, to give his impression of Miss Grammont and her position in life.

"She is," he said, "manifestly a very expensively educated girl. And in many ways interesting. I have been watching her. I have not been favoured with very much of her attention, but that fact has enabled me to see her in profile. Miss Seyffert is a fairly crude mixture of frankness, insincerity and self-explanatory egotism, and I have been able to disregard a considerable amount of the conversation she has addressed to me. Now I guess this Miss Grammont has had no mother since she was quite little."

"Your guesses, doctor, are apt to be pretty good," said Sir Richmond.

"You know that?"

"She has told me as much."

"H'm. Well--She impressed me as having the air of a girl who has had to solve many problems for which the normal mother provides ready made solutions. That is how I inferred that there was no mother. I don't think there has been any stepmother, either friendly or hostile? There hasn't been. I thought not. She has had various governesses and companions, ladies of birth and education, engaged to look after her and she has done exactly what she liked with them. Her manner with Miss Seyffert, an excellent manner for Miss Seyffert, by the bye, isn't the sort of manner anyone acquires in a day. Or for one person only. She is a very sure and commanding young woman."

Sir Richmond nodded.

"I suppose her father adores and neglects her, and whenever she has wanted a companion or governess butchered, the thing has been done. . . . These business Americans, I am told, neglect their womenkind, give them money and power, let them loose on the world. . . . It is a sort of moral laziness masquerading as affection. . . . Still I suppose custom and tradition kept this girl in her place and she was petted, honoured, amused, talked about but not in a harmful way, and rather bored right up to the time when America came into the war. Theoretically she had a tremendously good time."

"I think this must be near the truth of her biography," said Sir Richmond.

"I suppose she has lovers."

"You don't mean--?" "No, I don't. Though that is a matter that ought to have no special interest for you. I mean that she was surrounded by a retinue of men who wanted to marry her or who behaved as though they wanted to marry her or who made her happiness and her gratifications and her condescensions seem a matter of very great importance to them. She had the flattery of an extremely uncritical and unexacting admiration. That is the sort of thing that gratifies a silly woman extremely. Miss Grammont is not silly and all this homage and facile approval probably bored her more than she realized. To anyone too intelligent to be steadily excited by buying things and wearing things and dancing and playing games and going to places of entertainment, and being given flowers, sweets, jewellery, pet animals, and books bound in a special sort of leather, the prospect of being a rich man's only daughter until such time as it becomes advisable to change into a rich man's

wealthy wife, is probably not nearly so amusing as envious people might suppose. I take it Miss Grammont had got all she could out of that sort of thing some time before the war, and that she had already read and thought rather more than most young women in her position. Before she was twenty I guess she was already looking for something more interesting in the way of men than a rich admirer with an automobile full of presents. Those who seek find."

"What do you think she found?"

"What would a rich girl find out there in America? I don't know. I haven't the material to guess with. In London a girl might find a considerable variety of active, interesting men, rising politicians, university men of distinction, artists and writers even, men of science, men--there are still such men--active in the creative work of the empire.

"In America I suppose there is at least an equal variety, made up of rather different types. She would find that life was worth while to such people in a way that made the ordinary entertainments and amusements of her life a monstrous silly waste of time. With the facility of her sex she would pick up from one of them the idea that made life worth while for him. I am inclined to think there was someone in her case who did seem to promise a sort of life that was worth while. And that somehow the war came to alter the look of that promise.

"How?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I am only romancing. But for this young woman I am convinced this expedition to Europe has meant experience, harsh educational experience and very profound mental disturbance. There have been love

experiences; experiences that were something more than the treats and attentions and proposals that made up her life when she was sheltered over there. And something more than that. What it is I don't know. The war has turned an ugly face to her. She has seen death and suffering and ruin. Perhaps she has seen people she knew killed. Perhaps the man has been killed. Or she has met with cowardice or cruelty or treachery where she didn't expect it. She has been shocked out of the first confidence of youth. She has ceased to take the world for granted. It hasn't broken her but it has matured her. That I think is why history has become real to her. Which so attracts you in her. History, for her, has ceased to be a fabric of picturesque incidents; it is the study of a tragic struggle that still goes on. She sees history as you see it and I see it. She is a very grown-up young woman.

"It's just that," said Sir Richmond. "It's just that. If you see as much in Miss Grammont as all that, why don't you want to come on with us? You see the interest of her."

"I see a lot more than that. You don't know what an advantage it is to be as I am, rather cold and unresponsive to women and unattractive and negligible--negligible, that is the exact word--to them. YOU can't look at a woman for five minutes without losing sight of her in a mist of imaginative excitement. Because she looks back at you. I have the privilege of the negligible--which is a cool head. Miss Grammont has a startled and matured mind, an original mind. Yes. And there is something more to be said. Her intelligence is better than her character."

"I don't quite see what you are driving at."

"The intelligence of all intelligent women is better than

their characters. Goodness in a woman, as we understand it, seems to imply necessarily a certain imaginative fixity. Miss Grammont has an impulsive and adventurous character. And as I have been saying she was a spoiled child, with no discipline. . . . You also are a person of high intelligence and defective controls. She is very much at loose ends. You-- on account of the illness of that rather forgotten lady, Miss Martin Leeds--"

"Aren't you rather abusing the secrets of the confessional?"

"This IS the confessional. It closes to-morrow morning but it is the confessional still. Look at the thing frankly. You, I say, are also at loose ends. Can you deny it? My dear sir, don't we both know that ever since we left London you have been ready to fall in love with any pretty thing in petticoats that seemed to promise you three ha'porth of kindness. A lost dog looking for a master! You're a stray man looking for a mistress. Miss Grammont being a woman is a little more selective than that. But if she's at a loose end as I suppose, she isn't protected by the sense of having made her selection. And she has no preconceptions of what she wants. You are a very interesting man in many ways. You carry marriage and entanglements lightly. With an air of being neither married nor entangled. She is quite prepared to fall in love with you."

"But you don't really think that?" said Sir Richmond, with an ill-concealed eagerness.

Dr. Martineau rolled his face towards Sir Richmond. "These miracles--grotesquely--happen," he said. "She knows nothing of Martin Leeds. . . . You must remember that. . . ."

"And then," he added, "if she and you fall in love, as the phrase goes, what is to follow?"

There was a pause.

Sir Richmond looked at his toes for a moment or so as if he took counsel with them and then decided to take offence.

"Really!" he said, "this is preposterous. You talk of falling in love as though it was impossible for a man and woman to be deeply interested in each other without that. And the gulf in our ages--in our quality! From the Psychologist of a New Age I find this amazing. Are men and women to go on for ever--separated by this possibility into two hardly communicating and yet interpenetrating worlds? Is there never to be friendship and companionship between men and women without passion?"

"You ought to know even better than I do that there is not. For such people as you two anyhow. And at present the world is not prepared to tolerate friendship and companionship WITH that accompaniment. That is the core of this situation."

A pause fell between the two gentlemen. They had smoothed over the extreme harshness of their separation and there was very little more to be said.

"Well," said Sir Richmond in conclusion, "I am very sorry indeed, Martineau, that we have to part like this."

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

COMPANIONSHIP

Section 1

"Well," said Dr. Martineau, extending his hand to Sir Richmond on the Salisbury station platform, "I leave you to it."

His round face betrayed little or no vestiges of his overnight irritation.

"Ought you to leave me to it?" smiled Sir Richmond.

"I shall be interested to learn what happens."

"But if you won't stay to see!"

"Now Sir, please," said the guard respectfully but firmly, and Dr. Martineau got in.

Sir Richmond walked thoughtfully down the platform towards the exit.

"What else could I do?" he asked aloud to nobody in particular.

For a little while he thought confusedly of the collapse of his expedition into the secret places of his own heart with Dr. Martineau, and then his prepossession with Miss Grammont resumed possession of his mind. Dr. Martineau was forgotten.

Section 2

For the better part of forty hours, Sir Richmond had either been talking to Miss Grammont, or carrying on imaginary conversations with her in her absence, or sleeping and dreaming dreams in which she never failed to play a part, even if at times it was an altogether amazing and incongruous part. And as they were both very frank and expressive people, they already knew a very great deal about each other.

For an American Miss Grammont was by no means autobiographical. She gave no sketches of her idiosyncrasies, and she repeated no remembered comments and prophets of her contemporaries about herself. She either concealed or she had lost any great interest in her own personality. But she was interested in and curious about the people she had met in life, and her talk of them reflected a considerable amount of light upon her own upbringing and experiences. And her liking for Sir Richmond was pleasingly manifest. She liked his turn of thought, she watched him with a faint smile on her lips as he spoke, and she spread her opinions before him carefully in that soft voice of hers like a shy child showing its treasures to some suddenly trusted and favoured visitor.

Their ways of thought harmonized. They talked at first chiefly about the history of the world and the extraordinary situation of aimlessness in a phase of ruin to which the Great War had brought all Europe, if not all mankind. The world excited them both in the same way; as a crisis in which they were called upon to do something--they did not yet clearly know what. Into this topic they peered as into some deep pool, side by side, and in it they saw each other reflected.

The visit to Avebury had been a great success. It had been a perfect springtime day, and the little inn had been delighted at the reappearance of Sir Richmond's car so soon after its

departure. Its delight was particularly manifest in the cream and salad it produced for lunch. Both Miss Grammont and Miss Seyffert displayed an intelligent interest in their food.

After lunch they had all gone out to the stones and the wall. Half a dozen sunburnt children were putting one of the partially overturned megaliths to a happy use by clambering to the top of it and sliding on their little behinds down its smooth and sloping side amidst much mirthful squealing.

Sir Richmond and Miss Grammont had walked round the old circumvallation together, but Belinda Seyffert had strayed away from them, professing an interest in flowers. It was not so much that she felt they had to be left together that made her do this as her own consciousness of being possessed by a devil who interrupted conversations.

When Miss Grammont was keenly interested in a conversation, then Belinda had learnt from experience that it was wiser to go off with her devil out of the range of any temptation to interrupt.

"You really think," said Miss Grammont, "that it would be possible to take this confused old world and reshape it, set it marching towards that new world of yours--of two hundred and fifty million fully developed, beautiful and happy people?"

"Why not? Nobody is doing anything with the world except muddle about. Why not give it a direction? "

"You'd take it in your hands like clay?"

"Obdurate clay with a sort of recalcitrant, unintelligent life of its own."

Her imagination glowed in her eyes and warmed her voice. "I believe what you say is possible. If people dare."

"I am tired of following little motives that are like flames that go out when you get to them. I am tired of seeing all the world doing the same. I am tired of a world in which there is nothing great but great disasters. Here is something mankind can attempt, that we can attempt."

"And will? "

"I believe that as Mankind grows up this is the business Man has to settle down to and will settle down to."

She considered that.

"I've been getting to believe something like this. But-- . . . it frightens me. I suppose most of us have this same sort of dread of taking too much upon ourselves."

"So we just live like pigs. Sensible little piggywiggys. I've got a Committee full of that sort of thing. We live like little modest pigs. And let the world go hang. And pride ourselves upon our freedom from the sin of presumption."

"Not quite that!"

"Well! How do you put it?"

"We are afraid," she said. "It's too vast. We want bright little lives of our own. "

"Exactly--sensible little piggy-wiggys."

"We have a right to life--and happiness."

"First," said Sir Richmond, "as much right as a pig has to food. But whether we get life and happiness or fail to get them we human beings who have imaginations want something more nowadays. . . . Of course we want bright lives, of course we want happiness. Just as we want food, just as we want sleep. But when we have eaten, when we have slept, when we have jolly things about us--it is nothing. We have been made an exception of--and got our rations. The big thing confronts us still. It is vast, I agree, but vast as it is it is the thing we have to think about. I do not know why it should be so, but I am compelled by something in my nature to want to serve this idea of a new age for mankind. I want it as my culminating want. I want a world in order, a disciplined mankind going on to greater things. Don't you?"

"Now you tell me of it," she said with a smile, "I do."

"But before--?"

"No. You've made it clear. It wasn't clear before."

"I've been talking of this sort of thing with my friend Dr. Martineau. And I've been thinking as well as talking. That perhaps is why I'm so clear and positive."

"I don't complain that you are clear and positive. I've been coming along the same way. . . . It's refreshing to meet you."

"I found it refreshing to meet Martineau." A twinge of conscience about Dr. Martineau turned Sir Richmond into a new channel. "He's a most interesting man," he said. "Rather shy in some respects. Devoted to his work. And he's writing a book which has saturated him in these ideas. Only two nights

ago we stood here and talked about it. The Psychology of a New Age. The world, he believes, is entering upon a new phase in its history, the adolescence, so to speak, of mankind. It is an idea that seizes the imagination. There is a flow of new ideas abroad, he thinks, widening realizations, unprecedented hopes and fears. There is a consciousness of new powers and new responsibilities. We are sharing the adolescence of our race. It is giving history a new and more intimate meaning for us. It is bringing us into directer relation with public affairs,--making them matter as formerly they didn't seem to matter. That idea of the bright little private life has to go by the board."

"I suppose it has," she said, meditatively, as though she had been thinking over some such question before.

"The private life," she said, "has a way of coming aboard again."

Her reflections travelled fast and broke out now far ahead of him.

"You have some sort of work cut out for you," she said abruptly.

"Yes. Yes, I have."

"I haven't," she said.

"So that I go about," she added, like someone who is looking for something. I'd like to know if it's not jabbing too searching a question at you--what you have found."

Sir Richmond considered. "Incidentally," he smiled, "I want to get a lasso over the neck of that very forcible and

barbaric person, your father. I am doing my best to help lay the foundation of a scientific world control of fuel production and distribution. We have a Fuel Commission in London with rather wide powers of enquiry into the whole world problem of fuel. We shall come out to Washington presently with proposals. "

Miss Grammont surveyed the landscape. "I suppose," she said, "poor father IS rather like an unbroken mule in business affairs. So many of our big business men in America are. He'll lash out at you."

"I don't mind if only he lashes out openly in the sight of all men."

She considered and turned on Sir Richmond gravely.

"Tell me what you want to do to him. You find out so many things for me that I seem to have been thinking about in a sort of almost invisible half-conscious way. I've been suspecting for a long time that Civilization wasn't much good unless it got people like my father under some sort of control. But controlling father--as distinguished from managing him!" She reviewed some private and amusing memories. "He is a most intractable man."

Section 3

They had gone on to talk of her father and of the types of men who controlled international business. She had had plentiful opportunities for observation in their homes and her own. Gunter Lake, the big banker, she knew particularly well, because, it seemed, she had been engaged or was engaged to marry him. "All these people," she said, "are pushing things about, affecting millions of lives, hurting and

disordering hundreds of thousands of people. They don't seem to know what they are doing. They have no plans in particular. . . . And you are getting something going that will be a plan and a direction and a conscience and a control for them? You will find my father extremely difficult, but some of our younger men would love it.

"And," she went on; "there are American women who'd love it too. We're petted. We're kept out of things. We aren't placed. We don't get enough to do. We're spenders and wasters --not always from choice. While these fathers and brothers and husbands of ours play about with the fuel and power and life and hope of the world as though it was a game of poker. With all the empty unspeakable solemnity of the male. And treat us as though we ought to be satisfied if they bring home part of the winnings.

"That can't go on," she said.

Her eyes went back to the long, low, undulating skyline of the downs. She spoke as though she took up the thread of some controversy that had played a large part in her life. "That isn't going on," she said with an effect of conclusive decision.

Sir Richmond recalled that little speech now as he returned from Salisbury station to the Old George after his farewell to Martineau. He recalled too the soft firmness of her profile and the delicate line of her lifted chin. He felt that this time at any rate he was not being deceived by the outward shows of a charming human being. This young woman had real firmness of character to back up her free and independent judgments. He smiled at the idea of any facile passion in the composition of so sure and gallant a personality. Martineau was very fine-minded in many respects,

but he was an old maid; and like all old maids he saw man and woman in every encounter. But passion was a thing men and women fell back upon when they had nothing else in common. When they thought in the pleasantest harmony and every remark seemed to weave a fresh thread of common interest, then it wasn't so necessary. It might happen, but it wasn't so necessary. . . . If it did it would be a secondary thing to companionship. That's what she was,--a companion.

But a very lovely and wonderful companion, the companion one would not relinquish until the very last moment one could keep with her.

Her views about America and about her own place in the world seemed equally fresh and original to Sir Richmond.

"I realize I've got to be a responsible American citizen," she had said. That didn't mean that she attached very much importance to her recently acquired vote. She evidently classified voters into the irresponsible who just had votes and the responsible who also had a considerable amount of property as well. She had no illusions about the power of the former class. It didn't exist. They were steered to their decisions by people employed, directed or stimulated by "father" and his friends and associates, the owners of America, the real "responsible citizens." Or they fell a prey to the merely adventurous leading of "revolutionaries." But anyhow they were steered. She herself, it was clear, was bound to become a very responsible citizen indeed. She would some day, she laughed, be swimming in oil and such like property. Her interest in Sir Richmond's schemes for a scientific world management of fuel was therefore, she realized, a very direct one. But it was remarkable to find a young woman seeing it like that.

Father it seemed varied very much in his attitude towards her. He despised and distrusted women generally, and it was evident he had made it quite clear to her how grave an error it was on her part to persist in being a daughter and not a son. At moments it seemed to Sir Richmond that she was disposed to agree with father upon that. When Mr. Grammont's sense of her regrettable femininity was uppermost, then he gave his intelligence chiefly to schemes for tying her up against the machinations of adventurers by means of trustees, partners, lawyers, advisers, agreements and suchlike complications, or for acquiring a workable son by marriage. To this last idea it would seem the importance in her life of the rather heavily named Gunter Lake was to be ascribed. But another mood of the old man's was distrust of anything that could not be spoken of as his "own flesh and blood," and then he would direct his attention to a kind of masculinization of his daughter and to schemes for giving her the completest control of all he had to leave her provided she never married nor fell under masculine sway. "After all," he would reflect as he hesitated over the practicability of his life's ideal, "there was Hetty Green."

This latter idea had reft her suddenly at the age of seventeen from the educational care of an English gentlewoman warranted to fit her for marriage with any prince in Europe, and thrust her for the mornings and a moiety of the afternoons of the better part of a year, after a swift but competent training, into a shirt waist and an office down town. She had been entrusted at first to a harvester concern independent of Mr. Grammont, because he feared his own people wouldn't train her hard. She had worked for ordinary wages and ordinary hours, and at the end of the day, she mentioned casually, a large automobile with two menservants and a trustworthy secretary used to pick her out from the torrent of undistinguished workers that poured out of the Synoptical

Building. This masculinization idea had also sent her on a commission of enquiry into Mexico. There apparently she had really done responsible work.

But upon the question of labour Mr. Grammont was fierce, even for an American business man, and one night at a dinner party he discovered his daughter displaying what he considered an improper familiarity with socialist ideas. This had produced a violent revulsion towards the purdah system and the idea of a matrimonial alliance with Gunter Lake. Gunter Lake, Sir Richmond gathered, wasn't half a bad fellow. Generally it would seem Miss Grammont liked him, and she had a way of speaking about him that suggested that in some way Mr. Lake had been rather hardly used and had acquired merit by his behaviour under bad treatment. There was some story, however, connected with her war services in Europe upon which Miss Grammont was evidently indisposed to dwell. About that story Sir Richmond was left at the end of his Avebury day and after his last talk with Dr. Martineau, still quite vaguely guessing.

So much fact about Miss Grammont as we have given had floated up in fragments and pieced itself together in Sir Richmond's mind in the course of a day and a half. The fragments came up as allusions or by way of illustration. The sustaining topic was this New Age Sir Richmond fore shadowed, this world under scientific control, the Utopia of fully developed people fully developing the resources of the earth. For a number of trivial reasons Sir Richmond found himself ascribing the project of this New Age almost wholly to Dr. Martineau, and presenting it as a much completer scheme than he was justified in doing. It was true that Dr. Martineau had not said many of the things Sir Richmond ascribed to him, but also it was true that they had not crystallized out in Sir Richmond's mind before his talks with Dr. Martineau. The idea

of a New Age necessarily carries with it the idea of fresh rules of conduct and of different relationships between human beings. And it throws those who talk about it into the companionship of a common enterprise. To-morrow the New Age will be here no doubt, but today it is the hope and adventure of only a few human beings.

So that it was natural for Miss Grammont and Sir Richmond to ask: "What are we to do with such types as father?" and to fall into an idiom that assumed a joint enterprise. They had agreed by a tacit consent to a common conception of the world they desired as a world scientifically ordered, an immense organization of mature commonsense, healthy and secure, gathering knowledge and power for creative adventures as yet beyond dreaming. They were prepared to think of the makers of the Avebury dyke as their yesterday selves, of the stone age savages as a phase, in their late childhood, and of this great world order Sir Richmond foresaw as a day where dawn was already at hand. And in such long perspectives, the states, governments and institutions of to-day became very temporary-looking and replaceable structures indeed. Both these two people found themselves thinking in this fashion with an unwonted courage and freedom because the other one had been disposed to think in this fashion before. Sir Richmond was still turning over in his mind the happy mutual release of the imagination this chance companionship had brought about when he found himself back again at the threshold of the Old George.

Section 4

Sir Richmond Hardy was not the only man who was thinking intently about Miss Grammont at that particular moment. Two gentlemen were coming towards her across the Atlantic whose minds, it chanced, were very busily occupied by her affairs.

One of these was her father, who was lying in his brass bed in his commodious cabin on the *Hollandia*, regretting his diminishing ability to sleep in the early morning now, even when he was in the strong and soothing air of mid-Atlantic, and thinking of V.V. because she had a way of coming into his mind when it was undefended; and the other was Mr. Gunter Lake on the *Megantic*, one day out from Sandy Hook, who found himself equally sleepless and preoccupied. And although Mr. Lake was a man of vast activities and complicated engagements he was coming now to Europe for the express purpose of seeing V.V. and having things out with her fully and completely because, in spite of all that had happened, she made such an endless series of delays in coming to America.

Old Grammont as he appeared upon the pillow of his bed by the light of a rose-shaded bedside lamp, was a small-headed, grey-haired gentleman with a wrinkled face and sunken brown eyes. Years of business experience, mitigated only by such exercise as the game of poker affords, had intensified an instinctive inexpressiveness. Under the most solitary circumstances old Grammont was still inexpressive, and the face that stared at the ceiling of his cabin and the problem of his daughter might have been the face of a pickled head in a museum, for any indication it betrayed of the flow of thought within. He lay on his back and his bent knees lifted the bed-clothes into a sharp mountain. He was not even trying to sleep.

Why, he meditated, had V.V. stayed on in Europe so much longer than she need have done? And why had Gunter Lake suddenly got into a state of mind about her? Why didn't the girl confide in her father at least about these things? What was afoot? She had thrown over Lake once and it seemed she was going to turn him down again. Well, if she was an ordinary female person that was a silly sort of thing to do.

With her fortune and his--you could buy the world. But suppose she was not all ordinary female person. . . . Her mother hadn't been ordinary anyhow, whatever else you called her, and no one could call Grammont blood all ordinary fluid. . . . Old Grammont had never had any delusions about Lake. If Lake's father hadn't been a big man Lake would never have counted for anything at all. Suppose she did turn him down. In itself that wasn't a thing to break her father's heart.

What did matter was not whether she threw Lake over but what she threw him over for. If it was because he wasn't man enough, well and good. But if it was for some other lover, some good-looking, worthless impostor, some European title or suchlike folly--!

At the thought of a lover for V.V. a sudden flood of anger poured across the old man's mind, behind the still mask of his face. It infuriated him even to think of V.V., his little V.V., his own girl, entertaining a lover, being possibly--most shameful thought--IN LOVE! Like some ordinary silly female, sinking to kisses, to the deeds one could buy and pay for. His V.V.! The idea infuriated and disgusted him. He fought against it as a possibility. Once some woman in New York had ventured to hint something to him of some fellow, some affair with an artist, Caston; she had linked this Caston with V.V.'s red cross nursing in Europe. . . . Old Grammont had made that woman sorry she spoke. Afterwards he had caused enquiries to be made about this Caston, careful enquiries. It seems that he and V.V. had known each other, there had been something. But nothing that V.V. need be ashamed of. When old Grammont's enquiry man had come back with his report, old Grammont had been very particular about that. At first the fellow had not been very clear, rather muddled indeed as to how things were--no doubt he had wanted to make out there was something just to seem to earn his

money. Old Grammont had struck the table sharply and the eyes that looked out of his mask had blazed. "What have you found out against her?" he had asked in a low even voice.

"Absolutely nothing, Sir," said the agent, suddenly white to the lips. . . .

Old Grammont stared at his memory of that moment for a while. That affair was all right, quite all right. Of course it was all right. And also, happily, Caston was among the dead. But it was well her broken engagement with Lake had been resumed as though it had never been broken off. If there had been any talk that fact answered it. And now that Lake had served his purpose old Grammont did not care in the least if he was shelved. V.V. could stand alone.

Old Grammont had got a phrase in his mind that looked like dominating the situation. He dreamt of saying to V.V.: "V.V., I'm going to make a man of you--if you're man enough." That was a large proposition; it implied--oh! it implied all sorts of things. It meant that she would care as little for philandering as an able young business man. Perhaps some day, a long time ahead, she might marry. There wasn't much reason for it, but it might be she would not wish to be called a spinster. "Take a husband," thought old Grammont, "when I am gone, as one takes a butler, to make the household complete." In previous meditations on his daughter's outlook old Grammont had found much that was very suggestive in the precedent of Queen Victoria. She had had no husband of the lord and master type, so to speak, but only a Prince Consort, well in hand. Why shouldn't the Grammont heiress dominate her male belonging, if it came to that, in the same fashion? Why shouldn't one tie her up and tie the whole thing up, so far as any male belonging was concerned, leaving V.V. in all other respects free? How could one do it?

The speculative calm of the sunken brown eyes deepened.

His thoughts went back to the white face of the private enquiry agent. "Absolutely nothing, Sir." What had the fellow thought of hinting? Nothing of that kind in V.V.'s composition, never fear. Yet it was a curious anomaly that while one had a thousand ways of defending one's daughter and one's property against that daughter's husband, there was no power on earth by which a father could stretch his dead hand between that daughter and the undue influence of a lover. Unless you tied her up for good and all, lover or none. . . .

One was left at the mercy of V.V.'s character. . . .

"I ought to see more of her," he thought. "She gets away from me. Just as her mother did." A man need not suspect his womenkind but he should know what they are doing. It is duty, his protective duty to them. These companions, these Seyffert women and so forth, were all very well in their way; there wasn't much they kept from you if you got them cornered and asked them intently. But a father's eye is better. He must go about with the girl for a time, watch her with other men, give her chances to talk business with him and see if she took them. "V.V., I'm going to make a man of you," the phrase ran through his brain. The deep instinctive jealousy of the primordial father was still strong in old Grammont's blood. It would be pleasant to go about with her on his right hand in Paris, HIS girl, straight and lovely, desirable and unapproachable,--above that sort of nonsense, above all other masculine subjugation.

"V.V., I'm going to make a man of you. . . ."

His mind grew calmer. Whatever she wanted in Paris should be hers. He'd just let her rip. They'd be like sweethearts

together, he and his girl.

Old Grammont dozed off into dreamland.

Section 5

The imaginations of Mr. Gunter Lake, two days behind Mr. Grammont upon the Atlantic, were of a gentler, more romantic character. In them V.V. was no longer a daughter in the fierce focus of a father's jealousy, but the goddess enshrined in a good man's heart. Indeed the figure that the limelight of the reverie fell upon was not V.V. at all but Mr. Gunter Lake himself, in his favourite role of the perfect lover.

An interminable speech unfolded itself. "I ask for nothing in return. I've never worried you about that Caston business and I never will. Married to me you shall be as free as if you were unmarried. Don't I know, my dear girl, that you don't love me yet. Let that be as you wish. I want nothing you are not willing to give me, nothing at all. All I ask is the privilege of making life happy--and it shall be happy--for you. . . . All I ask. All I ask. Protect, guard, cherish. . . ."

For to Mr. Gunter Lake it seemed there could be no lovelier thing in life than a wife "in name only" slowly warmed into a glow of passion by the steadfast devotion and the strength and wisdom of a mate at first despised. Until at last a day would come. . . .

"My darling!" Mr. Gunter Lake whispered to the darkness. "My little guurl. IT HAS BEEN WORTH THE WAITING. . . ."

Section 6

Miss Grammont met Sir Richmond in the bureau of the Old George with a telegram in her hand. "My father reported his latitude and longitude by wireless last night. The London people think he will be off Falmouth in four days' time. He wants me to join his liner there and go on to Cherbourg and Paris. He's arranged that. He is the sort of man who can arrange things like that. There'll be someone at Falmouth to look after us and put us aboard the liner. I must wire them where I can pick up a telegram to-morrow."

"Wells in Somerset," said Sir Richmond.

His plans were already quite clear. He explained that he wanted her first to see Shaftesbury, a little old Wessex town that was three or four hundred years older than Salisbury, perched on a hill, a Saxon town, where Alfred had gathered his forces against the Danes and where Canute, who had ruled over all Scandinavia and Iceland and Greenland, and had come near ruling a patch of America, had died. It was a little sleepy place now, looking out dreamily over beautiful views. They would lunch in Shaftesbury and walk round it. Then they would go in the afternoon through the pleasant west country where the Celts had prevailed against the old folk of the Stonehenge temple and the Romans against the Celts and the Saxons against the Romanized Britons and the Danes against the Saxons, a war-scarred landscape, abounding in dykes and entrenchments and castles, sunken now into the deepest peace, to Glastonbury to see what there was to see of a marsh village the Celts had made for themselves three or four hundred years before the Romans came. And at Glastonbury also there were the ruins of a great Benedictine church and abbey that had once rivalled Salisbury. Thence they would go on to Wells to see yet another great cathedral and to dine and sleep. Glastonbury Abbey and Wells Cathedral brought the

story of Europe right up to Reformation times.

"That will be a good day for us," said Sir Richmond. "It will be like turning over the pages of the history of our family, to and fro. There will be nothing nearly so old as Avebury in it, but there will be something from almost every chapter that comes after Stonehenge. Rome will be poorly represented, but that may come the day after at Bath. And the next day too I want to show you something of our old River Severn. We will come right up to the present if we go through Bristol. There we shall have a whiff of America, our new find, from which the tobacco comes, and we shall be reminded of how we set sail thither--was it yesterday or the day before? You will understand at Bristol how it is that the energy has gone out of this dreaming land--to Africa and America and the whole wide world. It was the good men of Bristol, by the bye, with their trade from Africa to America, who gave you your colour problem. Bristol we may go through to-morrow and Gloucester, mother of I don't know how many American Gloucesters. Bath we'll get in somehow. And then as an Anglo-American showman I shall be tempted to run you northward a little way past Tewkesbury, just to go into a church here and there and show you monuments bearing little shields with the stars and stripes upon them, a few stars and a few stripes, the Washington family monuments."

"It was not only from England that America came," said Miss Grammont.

"But England takes an American memory back most easily and most fully--to Avebury and the Baltic Northmen, past the emperors and the Corinthian columns that smothered Latin Europe. . . . For you and me anyhow this is our past, this was our childhood, and this is our land." He interrupted laughing as she was about to reply. "Well, anyhow," he said,

"it is a beautiful day and a pretty country before us with the ripest history in every grain of its soil. So we'll send a wire to your London people and tell them to send their instructions to Wells."

"I'll tell Belinda," she said, "to be quick with her packing."

Section 7

As Miss Grammont and Sir Richmond Hardy fulfilled the details of his excellent programme and revised their impressions of the past and their ideas about the future in the springtime sunlight of Wiltshire and Somerset, with Miss Seyffert acting the part of an almost ostentatiously discreet chorus, it was inevitable that their conversation should become, by imperceptible gradations, more personal and intimate. They kept up the pose, which was supposed to represent Dr. Martineau's philosophy, of being Man and Woman on their Planet considering its Future, but insensibly they developed the idiosyncrasies of their position. They might profess to be Man and Woman in the most general terms, but the facts that she was the daughter not of Everyman but old Grammont and that Sir Richmond was the angry leader of a minority upon the Fuel Commission became more and more important. "What shall we do with this planet of ours? " gave way by the easiest transitions to "What are you and I doing and what have we got to do? How do you feel about it all? What do you desire and what do you dare?"

It was natural that Sir Richmond should talk of his Fuel Commission to a young woman whose interests in fuel were even greater than his own. He found that she was very much better read than he was in the recent literature of socialism, and that she had what he considered to be a most unfeminine grasp

of economic ideas. He thought her attitude towards socialism a very sane one because it was also his own. So far as socialism involved the idea of a scientific control of natural resources as a common property administered in the common interest, she and he were very greatly attracted by it; but so far as it served as a form of expression for the merely insubordinate discontent of the many with the few, under any conditions, so long as it was a formula for class jealousy and warfare, they were both repelled by it. If she had had any illusions about the working class possessing as a class any profounder political wisdom or more generous public impulses than any other class, those illusions had long since departed. People were much the same, she thought, in every class; there was no stratification of either rightness or righteousness.

He found he could talk to her of his work and aims upon the Fuel Commission and of the conflict and failure of motives he found in himself, as freely as he had done to Dr. Martineau and with a surer confidence of understanding. Perhaps his talks with the doctor had got his ideas into order and made them more readily expressible than they would have been otherwise. He argued against the belief that any class could be good as a class or bad as a class, and he instanced the conflict of motives he found in all the members of his Committee and most so in himself. He repeated the persuasion he had already confessed to Dr. Martineau that there was not a single member of the Fuel Commission but had a considerable drive towards doing the right thing about fuel, and not one who had a single-minded, unencumbered drive towards the right thing. "That," said Sir Richmond, "is what makes life so interesting and, in spite of a thousand tragic disappointments, so hopeful. Every man is a bad man, every man is a feeble man and every man is a good man. My motives come and go. Yours do the same. We vary in response to the

circumstances about us. Given a proper atmosphere, most men will be public-spirited, right-living, generous. Given perplexities and darkness, most of us can be cowardly and vile. People say you cannot change human nature and perhaps that is true, but you can change its responses endlessly. The other day I was in Bohemia, discussing Silesian coal with Benes, and I went to see the Festival of the Bohemian Sokols. Opposite to where I sat, far away across the arena, was a great bank of men of the Sokol organizations, an unbroken brown mass wrapped in their brown uniform cloaks. Suddenly the sun came out and at a word the whole body flung back their cloaks, showed their Garibaldi shirts and became one solid blaze of red. It was an amazing transformation until one understood what had happened. Yet nothing material had changed but the sunshine. And given a change in laws and prevailing ideas, and the very same people who are greedy traders, grasping owners and revolting workers to-day will all throw their cloaks aside and you will find them working together cheerfully, even generously, for a common end. They aren't traders and owners and workers and so forth by any inner necessity. Those are just the ugly parts they play in the present drama. Which is nearly at the end of its run."

"That's a hopeful view," said Miss Grammont. "I don't see the flaw in it--if there is a flaw."

"There isn't one, " said Sir Richmond. "It is my chief discovery about life. I began with the question of fuel and the energy it affords mankind, and I have found that my generalization applies to all human affairs. Human beings are fools, weaklings, cowards, passionate idiots,--I grant you. That is the brown cloak side of them, so to speak. But they are not such fools and so forth that they can't do pretty well materially if once we hammer out a sane collective method of getting and using fuel. Which people generally will

understand--in the place of our present methods of snatch and wrangle. Of that I am absolutely convinced. Some work, some help, some willingness you can get out of everybody. That's the red. And the same principle applies to most labour and property problems, to health, to education, to population, social relationships and war and peace. We haven't got the right system, we have inefficient half-baked systems, or no system at all, and a wild confusion and war of ideas in all these respects. But there is a right system possible none the less. Let us only hammer our way through to the sane and reasonable organization in this and that and the other human affairs, and once we have got it, we shall have got it for good. We may not live to see even the beginnings of success, but the spirit of order, the spirit that has already produced organized science, if only there are a few faithful, persistent people to stick to the job, will in the long run certainly save mankind and make human life clean and splendid, happy work in a clear mind. If I could live to see it!"

"And as for us--in our time?"

"Measured by the end we serve, we don't matter. You know we don't matter."

"We have to find our fun in the building and in our confidence that we do really build."

"So long as our confidence lasts there is no great hardship," said Sir Richmond.

"So long as our confidence lasts," she repeated after him.

"Ah!" cried Sir Richmond. "There it is! So long as our confidence lasts! So long as one keeps one's mind steady.

That is what I came away with Dr. Martineau to discuss. I went to him for advice. I haven't known him for more than a month. It's amusing to find myself preaching forth to you. It was just faith I had lost. Suddenly I had lost my power of work. My confidence in the rightness of what I was doing evaporated. My will failed me. I don't know if you will understand what that means. It wasn't that my reason didn't assure me just as certainly as ever that what I was trying to do was the right thing to try to do. But somehow that seemed a cold and personally unimportant proposition. The life had gone out of it. . . . "

He paused as if arrested by a momentary doubt.

"I don't know why I tell you these things," he said.

"You tell them me," she said.

"It's a little like a patient in a hydropath retailing his ailments."

"No. No. Go on."

"I began to think now that what took the go out of me as my work went on was the lack of any real fellowship in what I was doing. It was the pressure of the opposition in the Committee, day afterday. It was being up against men who didn't reason against me but who just showed by everything they did that the things I wanted to achieve didn't matter to them one rap. It was going back to a home, lunching in clubs, reading papers, going about a world in which all the organization, all the possibility of the organization I dream of is tacitly denied. I don't know if it seems an extraordinary confession of weakness to you, but that steady refusal of the majority of my Committee to come into co-

operation with me has beaten me--or at any rate has come very near to beating me. Most of them you know are such able men. You can FEEL their knowledge and commonsense. They, and everybody about me, seemed busy and intent upon more immediate things, that seemed more real to them than this remote, theoretical, PRIGGISH end I have set for myself. . . ."

He paused.

"Go on," said Miss Grammont. "I think I understand this. "

"And yet I know I am right."

"I know you are right. I'm certain. Go on.

"If one of those ten thousand members of the Sokol Society had thrown back his brown cloak and shown red when all the others still kept them selves cloaked--if he was a normal sensitive man--he might have felt something of a fool. He might have felt premature and presumptuous. Red he was and the others he knew were red also, but why show it? That is the peculiar distress of people like ourselves, who have some sense of history and some sense of a larger life within us than our merely personal life. We don't want to go on with the old story merely. We want to live somehow in that larger life and to live for its greater ends and lose something unbearable of ourselves, and in wanting to do that we are only wanting to do what nearly everybody perhaps is ripe to do and will presently want to do. When the New Age Martineau talks about begins to come it may come very quickly--as the red came at Prague. But for the present everyone hesitates about throwing back the cloak."

"Until the cloak becomes unbearable," she said, repeating his

word.

"I came upon this holiday in the queerest state. I thought I was ill. I thought I was overworked. But the real trouble was a loneliness that robbed me of all driving force. Nobody seemed thinking and feeling with me. . . . I have never realized until now what a gregarious beast man is. It needed only a day or so with Martineau, in the atmosphere of ideas and beliefs like my own, to begin my restoration. Now as I talk to you--That is why I have clutched at your company. Because here you are, coming from thousands of miles away, and you talk my ideas, you fall into my ways of thought as though we had gone to the same school."

"Perhaps we HAVE gone to the same school," she said.

"You mean?"

"Disappointment. Disillusionment. Having to find something better in life than the first things it promised us."

"But you--? Disappointed? I thought that in America people might be educating already on different lines--"

"Even in America," Miss Grammont said, "crops only grow on the ploughed land."

Section 8

Glastonbury in the afternoon was wonderful; they talked of Avalon and of that vanished legendary world of King Arthur and his knights, and in the early evening they came to Wells and a pleasant inn, with a quaint little garden before its front door that gave directly upon the cathedral. The three tourists devoted a golden half hour before dinner to the

sculptures on the western face. The great screen of wrought stone rose up warmly, grey and clear and distinct against a clear blue sky in which the moon hung, round and already bright. That western facade with its hundreds of little figures tells the whole story of God and Man from Adam to the Last Judgment, as the mediaeval mind conceived it. It is an even fuller exposition than the carved Bible history that goes round the chapter house at Salisbury. It presented the universe, said Sir Richmond, as a complete crystal globe. It explained everything in life in a simple and natural manner, hope, heaven, devil and despair. Generations had lived and died mentally within that crystal globe, convinced that it was all and complete.

"And now," said Miss Grammont, "we are in limitless space and time. The crystal globe is broken."

"And?" said Belinda amazingly--for she had been silent for some time, "the goldfish are on the floor, V.V. Free to flop about. Are they any happier?"

It was one of those sudden rhetorical triumphs that are best left alone. "I trow not," said Belinda, giving the last touch to it.

After dinner Sir Richmond and Miss Grammont walked round the cathedral and along by the moat of the bishop's palace, and Miss Seyffert stayed in the hotel to send off postcards to her friends, a duty she had neglected for some days. The evening was warm and still and the moon was approaching its full and very bright. Insensibly the soft afterglow passed into moonlight.

At first the two companions talked very little. Sir Richmond was well content with this tacit friendliness and Miss

Grammont was preoccupied because she was very strongly moved to tell him things about herself that hitherto she had told to no one. It was not merely that she wanted to tell him these things but also that for reasons she did not put as yet very clearly to herself she thought they were things he ought to know. She talked of herself at first in general terms.

"Life comes on anyone with a rush, childhood seems lasting for ever and then suddenly one tears into life," she said. It was even more so for women than it was for men. You are shown life, a crowded vast spectacle full of what seems to be intensely interesting activities and endless delightful and frightful and tragic possibilities, and you have hardly had time to look at it before you are called upon to make decisions. And there is something in your blood that urges you to decisive acts. Your mind, your reason resists. "Give me time," it says. "They clamour at you with treats, crowds, shows, theatres, all sorts of things; lovers buzz at you, each trying to fix you part of his life when you are trying to get clear to live a little of your own." Her father had had one merit at any rate. He had been jealous of her lovers and very ready to interfere.

"I wanted a lover to love," she said. "Every girl of course wants that. I wanted to be tremendously excited. . . . And at the same time I dreaded the enormous interference. . . ."

"I wasn't temperamentally a cold girl. Men interested and excited me, but there were a lot of men about and they clashed with each other. Perhaps way down in some out of the way place I should have fallen in love quite easily with the one man who came along. But no man fixed his image. After a year or so I think I began to lose the power which is natural to a young girl of falling very easily into love. I became critical of the youths and men who were attracted to me and I became analytical about myself. . . ."

"I suppose it is because you and I are going to part so soon that I can speak so freely to you. . . . But there are things about myself that I have never had out even with myself. I can talk to myself in you--"

She paused baffled. "I know exactly," said Sir Richmond.

"In my composition I perceive there have always been two ruling strains. I was a spoilt child at home, a rather reserved girl at school, keen on my dignity. I liked respect. I didn't give myself away. I suppose one would call that personal pride. Anyhow it was that streak made me value the position of being a rich married woman in New York. That was why I became engaged to Lake. He seemed to be as good a man as there was about. He said he adored me and wanted me to crown his life. He wasn't ill-looking or ill-mannered. The second main streak in my nature wouldn't however fit in with that."

She stopped short.

"The second streak, " said Sir Richmond.

"Oh!--Love of beauty, love of romance. I want to give things their proper names; I don't want to pretend to you. . . . It was more or less than that. . . . It was--imaginative sensuousness. Why should I pretend it wasn't in me? I believe that streak is in all women."

"I believe so too. In all properly constituted women."

"I tried to devote that streak to Lake," she said. "I did my best for him. But Lake was much too much of a gentleman or an idealist about women, or what you will, to know his business

as a lover. And that side of me fell in love, the rest of me protesting, with a man named Caston. It was a notorious affair. Everybody in New York couples my name with Caston. Except when my father is about. His jealousy has blasted an area of silence--in that matter--all round him. He will not know of that story. And they dare not tell him. I should pity anyone who tried to tell it him."

"What sort of man was this Caston?"

Miss Grammont seemed to consider. She did not look at Sir Richmond; she kept her profile to him.

"He was," she said deliberately, "a very rotten sort of man."

She spoke like one resolved to be exact and judicial. "I believe I always knew he wasn't right. But he was very handsome. And ten years younger than Lake. And nobody else seemed to be all right, so I swallowed that. He was an artist, a painter. Perhaps you know his work." Sir Richmond shook his head. "He could make American business men look like characters out of the Three Musketeers, they said, and he was beginning to be popular. He made love to me. In exactly the way Lake didn't. If I shut my eyes to one or two things, it was delightful. I liked it. But my father would have stood a painter as my husband almost as cheerfully as he would a man of colour. I made a fool of myself, as people say, about Caston. Well--when the war came, he talked in a way that irritated me. He talked like an East Side Annunzio, about art and war. It made me furious to know it was all talk and that he didn't mean business. . . . I made him go."

She paused for a moment. "He hated to go."

"Then I relented. Or I missed him and I wanted to be made

love to. Or I really wanted to go on my own account. I forget. I forget my motives altogether now. That early war time was a queer time for everyone. A kind of wildness got into the blood. . . . I threw over Lake. All the time things had been going on in New York I had still been engaged to Lake. I went to France. I did good work. I did do good work. And also things were possible that would have seemed fantastic in America. You know something of the war-time atmosphere. There was death everywhere and people snatched at gratifications. Caston made 'To-morrow we die' his text. We contrived three days in Paris together--not very cleverly. All sorts of people know about it. . . . We went very far."

She stopped short. "Well?" said Sir Richmond.

"He did die. . . ."

Another long pause. "They told me Caston had been killed. But someone hinted--or I guessed--that there was more in it than an ordinary casualty.

"Nobody, I think, realizes that I know. This is the first time I have ever confessed that I do know. He was--shot. He was shot for cowardice."

"That might happen to any man," said Sir Richmond presently. "No man is a hero all round the twenty-four hours. Perhaps he was caught by circumstances, unprepared. He may have been taken by surprise."

"It was the most calculated, cold-blooded cowardice imaginable. He let three other men go on and get killed. . . ."

"No. It is no good your inventing excuses for a man you know

nothing about. It was vile, contemptible cowardice and meanness. It fitted in with a score of ugly little things I remembered. It explained them all. I know the evidence and the judgment against him were strictly just and true, because they were exactly in character. . . . And that, you see, was my man. That was the lover I had chosen. That was the man to whom I had given myself with both hands."

Her soft unhurrying voice halted for a time, and then resumed in the same even tones of careful statement. "I wasn't disgusted, not even with myself. About him I was chiefly sorry, intensely sorry, because I had made him come out of a life that suited and protected him, to the war. About myself, I was stunned and perplexed. I had the clearest realization that what you and I have been calling the bright little personal life had broken off short and was spoilt and over and done with. I felt as though it was my body they had shot. And there I was, with fifty years of life left in me and nothing particular to do with them."

"That was just the prelude to life, said Sir Richmond.

"It didn't seem so at the time. I felt I had to get hold of something or go to pieces. I couldn't turn to religion. I had no religion. And Duty? What is Duty? I set myself to that. I had a kind of revelation one night. 'Either I find out what all this world is about, I said, or I perish.' I have lost myself and I must forget myself by getting hold of something bigger than myself. And becoming that. That's why I have been making a sort of historical pilgrimage. . . . That's my story, Sir Richmond. That's my education. . . . Somehow though your troubles are different, it seems to me that my little muddle makes me understand how it is with you. What you've got, this idea of a scientific ordering of the world, is what I, in my younger, less experienced way, have been

feeling my way towards. I want to join on. I want to get hold of this idea of a great fuel control in the world and of a still greater economic and educational control of which it is a part. I want to make that idea a part of myself. Rather I want to make myself a part of it. When you talk of it I believe in it altogether."

"And I believe in it, when I talk of it to you."

Section 9

Sir Richmond was stirred very deeply by Miss Grammont's confidences. His dispute with Dr. Martineau was present in his mind, so that he did not want to make love to her. But he was extremely anxious to express his vivid sense of the value of her friendship. And while he hesitated over this difficult and unfamiliar task she began to talk again of herself, and in such a way as to give a new turn to Sir Richmond's thoughts.

"Perhaps I ought to tell you a little more about myself," she said; "now that I have told you so much. I did a thing that still puzzles me. I was filled with a sense of hopeless disaster in France and I suppose I had some sort of desperate idea of saving something out of the situation. . . . I renewed my correspondence with Gunter Lake. He made the suggestion I knew he would make, and I renewed our engagement."

"To go back to wealth and dignity in New York?"

"Yes."

"But you don't love him?"

"That's always been plain to me. But what I didn't realize, until I had given my promise over again, was that I dislike him acutely."

"You hadn't realized that before?"

"I hadn't thought about him sufficiently. But now I had to think about him a lot. The other affair had given me an idea perhaps of what it means to be married to a man. And here I am drifting back to him. The horrible thing about him is the steady ENVELOPING way in which he has always come at me. Without fellowship. Without any community of ideas. Ready to make the most extraordinary bargains. So long as he can in any way fix me and get me. What does it mean? What is there behind those watching, soliciting eyes of his? I don't in the least love him, and this desire and service and all the rest of it he offers me--it's not love. It's not even such love as Caston gave me. It's a game he plays with his imagination."

She had released a flood of new ideas in Sir Richmond's mind. "This is illuminating," he said. "You dislike Lake acutely. You always have disliked him."

"I suppose I have. But it's only now I admit it to myself."

"Yes. And you might, for example, have married him in New York before the war."

"It came very near to that."

"And then probably you wouldn't have discovered you disliked him. You wouldn't have admitted it to yourself."

"I suppose I shouldn't. I suppose I should have tried to believe I loved him."

"Women do this sort of thing. Odd! I never realized it before. And there are endless wives suppressing an acute dislike. My wife does. I see now quite clearly that she detests me. Reasonably enough. From her angle I'm entirely detestable. But she won't admit it, won't know of it. She never will. To the end of my life, always, she will keep that detestation unconfessed. She puts a face on the matter. We both do. And this affair of yours. . . . Have you thought how unjust it is to Lake?"

"Not nearly so much as I might have done."

"It is unfair to him. Atrociously unfair. He's not my sort of man, perhaps, but it will hurt him cruelly according to the peculiar laws of his being. He seems to me a crawling sort of lover with an immense self-conceit at the back of his crawlingness."

"He has," she endorsed.

"He backs himself to crawl--until he crawls triumphantly right over you I don't like to think of the dream he has I take it he will lose. Is it fair to go into this game with him?"

"In the interests of Lake," she said, smiling softly at Sir Richmond in the moonlight. "But you are perfectly right."

"And suppose he doesn't lose!"

Sir Richmond found himself uttering sentiments.

"There is only one decent way in which a civilized man and a civilized woman may approach one another. Passionate desire

is not enough. What is called love is not enough. Pledges, rational considerations, all these things are worthless. All these things are compatible with hate. The primary essential is friendship, clear understanding, absolute confidence. Then within that condition, in that elect relationship, love is permissible, mating, marriage or no marriage, as you will-- all things are permissible. . . ."

Came a long pause between them.

"Dear old cathedral," said Miss Grammont, a little irrelevantly. She had an air of having concluded something that to Sir Richmond seemed scarcely to have begun. She stood looking at the great dark facade edged with moonlight for some moments, and then turned towards the hotel, which showed a pink-lit window.

"I wonder," she said, "if Belinda is still up, And what she will think when I tell her of the final extinction of Mr. Lake. I think she rather looked forward to being the intimate friend, secrets and everything, of Mrs. Gunter Lake."

Section 10

Sir Richmond woke up at dawn and he woke out of an extraordinary dream. He was saying to Miss Grammont: "There is no other marriage than the marriage of true minds. There is no other marriage than the marriage of true minds." He saw her as he had seen her the evening before, light and cool, coming towards him in the moonlight from the hotel. But also in the inconsistent way of dreams he was very close to her kind, faintly smiling face, and his eyes were wet with tears and he was kissing her hand. "My dear wife and mate," he was saying, and suddenly he was kissing her cool lips.

He woke up and stared at his dream, which faded out only very slowly before the fresh sun rise upon the red tiles and tree boughs outside the open window, and before the first stir and clamour of the birds.

He felt like a court in which some overwhelmingly revolutionary piece of evidence had been tendered. All the elaborate defence had broken down at one blow. He sat up on the edge of his bed, facing the new fact.

"This is monstrous and ridiculous," he said, "and Martineau judged me exactly. I am in love with her. . . . I am head over heels in love with her. I have never been so much in love or so truly in love with anyone before."

Section 11

That was the dawn of a long day of tension for Sir Richmond and Miss Grammont. Because each was now vividly aware of being in love with the other and so neither was able to see how things were with the other. They were afraid of each other. A restraint had come upon them both, a restraint that was greatly enhanced by their sense of Belinda, acutely observant, ostentatiously tactful and self-effacing, and prepared at the slightest encouragement to be overwhelmingly romantic and sympathetic. Their talk waned, and was revived to an artificial activity and waned again. The historical interest had evaporated from the west of England and left only an urgent and embarrassing present.

But the loveliness of the weather did not fail, and the whole day was set in Severn landscapes. They first saw the great river like a sea with the Welsh mountains hanging in the sky behind as they came over the Mendip crest above Shipham. They saw it again as they crossed the hill before Clifton Bridge,

and so they continued, climbing to hill crests for views at Alveston and near Dursley, and so to Gloucester and the lowest bridge and thence back down stream again through fat meadow lands at first and much apple-blossom and then over gentle hills through wide, pale Nownham and Lidney and Alvington and Woolaston to old Chepstow and its brown castle, always with the widening estuary to the left of them and its foaming shoals and shining sand banks. From Chepstow they turned back north along the steep Wye gorge to Tintern, and there at the snug little Beaufort Arms with its prim lawn and flower garden they ended the day's journey.

Tintern Abbey they thought a poor graceless mass of ruin down beside the river, and it was fenced about jealously and locked up from their invasion. After dinner Sir Richmond and Miss Grammont went for a walk in the mingled twilight and moonlight up the hill towards Chepstow. Both of them were absurdly and nervously pressing to Belinda to come with them, but she was far too wise to take this sudden desire for her company seriously. Her dinner shoes, she said, were too thin. Perhaps she would change and come out a little later. "Yes, come later," said Miss Grammont and led the way to the door.

They passed through the garden. "I think we go up the hill?" said Sir Richmond.

"Yes," she agreed, "up the hill."

Followed a silence.

Sir Richmond made an effort, but after some artificial and disconnected talk about Tintern Abbey, concerning, which she had no history ready, and then, still lamer, about whether Monmouthshire is in England or Wales, silence fell again. The silence lengthened, assumed a significance, a dignity that no

common words might break.

Then Sir Richmond spoke. "I love, you, he said, "with all my heart."

Her soft voice came back after a stillness. "I love you," she said, "with all myself."

"I had long ceased to hope, " said Sir -Richmond, that I should ever find a friend . . . a lover . . . perfect companionship "

They went on walking side by side, without touching each other or turning to each other.

"All the things I wanted to think I believe have come alive in me," she said. . . .

"Cool and sweet," said Sir Richmond. "Such happiness as I could not have imagined."

The light of a silent bicycle appeared above them up the hill and swept down upon them, lit their two still faces brightly and passed.

"My dear," she whispered in the darkness between the high hedges.

They stopped short and stood quite still, trembling. He saw her face, dim and tender, looking up to his.

Then he took her in his arms and kissed her lips as he had desired in his dream. . . .

When they returned to the inn Belinda Seyffert offered flat

explanations of why she had not followed them, and enlarged upon the moonlight effect of the Abbey ruins from the inn lawn. But the scared congratulations in her eyes betrayed her recognition that momentous things had happened between the two.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

FULL MOON

Section 1

Sir Richmond had talked in the moonlight and shadows of having found such happiness as he could not have imagined. But when he awoke in the night that happiness had evaporated. He awoke suddenly out of this love dream that had lasted now for nearly four days and he awoke in a mood of astonishment and dismay.

He had thought that when he parted from Dr. Martineau he had parted also from that process of self-exploration that they had started together, but now he awakened to find it established and in full activity in his mind. Something or someone, a sort of etherealized Martineau-Hardy, an abstracted intellectual conscience, was demanding what he thought he was doing with Miss Grammont and whither he thought he was taking her, how he proposed to reconcile the close relationship with her that he was now embarked upon with, in the first place, his work upon and engagements with the Fuel Commission, and, in the second place, Martin Leeds. Curiously enough Lady Hardy didn't come into the case at all. He had done his utmost to keep Martin Leeds out of his head throughout the development of this affair. Now in an unruly and determined way that was extremely characteristic of her she seemed resolute to break in.

She appeared as an advocate, without affection for her client but without any hostility, of the claims of Miss Grammont to be let alone. The elaborate pretence that Sir Richmond had maintained to himself that he had not made love to Miss Grammont, that their mutual attraction had been irresistible

and had achieved its end in spite of their resolute and complete detachment, collapsed and vanished from his mind. He admitted to himself that driven by a kind of instinctive necessity he had led their conversation step by step to a realization and declaration of love, and that it did not exonerate him in the least that Miss Grammont had been quite ready and willing to help him and meet him half way. She wanted love as a woman does, more than a man does, and he had steadily presented himself as a man free to love, able to love and loving.

"She wanted a man to love, she wanted perfected fellowship, and you have made her that tremendous promise. That was implicit in your embrace. And how can you keep that promise?"

It was as if Martin spoke; it was her voice; it was the very quality of her thought.

"You belong to this work of yours, which must needs be interrupted or abandoned if you take her. Whatever is not mortgaged to your work is mortgaged to me. For the strange thing in all this is that you and I love one another--and have no power to do otherwise. In spite of all this.

"You have nothing to give her but stolen goods," said the shadow of Martin. "You have nothing to give anyone personally any more. . . .

"Think of the love that she desires and think of this love that you can give. . . .

"Is there any new thing in you that you can give her that you haven't given me? You and I know each other very well; perhaps I know YOU too well. Haven't you loved me as much as you can love anyone? Think of all that there has been between

us that you are ready now, eager now to set aside and forget as though it had never been. For four days you have kept me out of your mind in order to worship her. Yet you have known I was there--for all you would not know. No one else will ever be so intimate with you as I am. We have quarrelled together, wept together, jested happily and jested bitterly. You have spared me not at all. Pitiless and cruel you have been to me. You have reckoned up all my faults against me as though they were sins. You have treated me at times unlovingly--never was lover treated so unlovingly as you have sometimes treated me. And yet I have your love--as no other woman can ever have it. Even now when you are wildly in love with this girl's freshness and boldness and cleverness I come into your mind by right and necessity."

"She is different," argued Sir Richmond.

"But you are the same," said the shadow of Martin with Martin's unsparing return. "Your love has never been a steadfast thing. It comes and goes like the wind. You are an extravagantly imperfect lover. But I have learnt to accept you, as people accept the English weather. . . . Never in all your life have you loved, wholly, fully, steadfastly--as people deserve to be loved--,not your mother nor your father, not your wife nor your children, nor me, nor our child, nor any living thing. Pleasant to all of us at times--at times bitterly disappointing. You do not even love this work of yours steadfastly, this work to which you sacrifice us all in turn. You do not love enough. That is why you have these moods and changes, that is why you have these lassitudes. So it is you are made. . . .

"And that is why you must not take this brave young life, so much simpler and braver than your own, and exalt it--as you can do--and then fail it, as you will do. . . . "

Sir Richmond's mind and body lay very still for a time.

"Should I fail her? . . ."

For a time Martin Leeds passed from the foreground of his mind.

He was astonished to think how planless, instinctive and unforeseeing his treatment of Miss Grammont had been. It had been just a blind drive to get hold of her and possess her. . . .

Suddenly his passion for her became active in its defence again.

"But is there such a thing as a perfect love? Is YOURS a perfect love, my dear Martin, with its insatiable jealousy, its ruthless criticism? Has the world ever seen a perfect lover yet? Isn't it our imperfection that brings us together in a common need? Is Miss Grammont, after all, likely to get a more perfect love in all her life than this poor love of mine? And isn't it good for her that she should love?"

"Perfect love cherishes. Perfect love foregoes."

Sir Richmond found his mind wandering far away from the immediate question. "Perfect love," the phrase was his point of departure. Was it true that he could not love passionately and completely? Was that fundamentally what was the matter with him? Was that perhaps what was the matter with the whole world of mankind? It had not yet come to that power of loving which makes action full and simple and direct and unhesitating. Man upon his planet has not grown up to love, is still an eager, egotistical and fluctuating adolescent. He

lacks the courage to love and the wisdom to love. Love is here. But it comes and goes, it is mixed with greeds and jealousies and cowardice and cowardly reservations. One hears it only in snatches and single notes. It is like something tuning up before the Music begins. . . . The metaphor altogether ran away with Sir Richmond's half dreaming mind. Some day perhaps all life would go to music.

Love was music and power. If he had loved. enough he need never have drifted away from his wife. Love would have created love, would have tolerated and taught and inspired. Where there is perfect love there is neither greed nor impatience. He would have done his work calmly. He would have won his way with his Committee instead of fighting and quarrelling with it perpetually. . . .

"Flimsy creatures," he whispered. "Uncertain health. Uncertain strength. A will that comes and goes. Moods of baseness. Moods of utter beastliness. . . . Love like April sunshine. April? . . ."

He dozed and dreamt for a time of spring passing into a high summer sunshine, into a continuing music, of love. He thought of a world like some great playhouse in which players and orchestra and audience all co-operate in a noble production without dissent or conflict. He thought he was the savage of thirty thousand years ago dreaming of the great world that is still perhaps thirty thousand years ahead. His effort to see more of that coming world than indistinct and cloudy pinnacles and to hear more than a vague music, dissolved his dream and left him awake again and wrestling with the problem of Miss Grammont.

Section 2

The shadow of Martin stood over him, inexorable. He had to release Miss Grammont from the adventure into which he had drawn her. This decision stood out stern-and inevitable in his mind with no conceivable alternative.

As he looked at the task before him he began to realize its difficulty. He was profoundly in love with her, he was still only learning how deeply, and she was not going to play a merely passive part in this affair. She was perhaps as deeply in love with him. . . .

He could not bring himself to the idea of confessions and disavowals. He could not bear to think of her disillusionment. He felt that he owed it to her not to disillusion her, to spoil things for her in that fashion. "To turn into something mean and ugly after she has believed in me. . . . It would be like playing a practical joke upon her. It would be like taking her into my arms and suddenly making a grimace at her. . . . It would scar her with a second humiliation. . . ."

Should he take her on to Bath or Exeter to-morrow and contrive by some sudden arrival of telegrams that he had to go from her suddenly? But a mere sudden parting would not end things between them now unless he went off abruptly without explanations or any arrangements for further communications. At the outset of this escapade there had been a tacit but evident assumption that it was to end when she joined her father at Falmouth. It was with an effect of discovery that Sir Richmond realized that now it could not end in that fashion, that with the whisper of love and the touching of lips, something had been started that would go on, that would develop. To break off now and go away without a word would leave a raw and torn end, would leave her perplexed and perhaps even more humiliated with an aching mystery to

distress her. "Why did he go? Was it something I said?-- something he found out or imagined? "

Parting had disappeared as a possible solution of this problem. She and he had got into each other's lives to stay: the real problem was the terms upon which they were to stay in each other's lives. Close association had brought them to the point of being, in the completest sense, lovers; that could not be; and the real problem was the transmutation of their relationship to some form compatible with his honour and her happiness. A word, an idea, from some recent reading floated into Sir Richmond's head. "Sublimate," he whispered. "We have to sublimate this affair. We have to put this relationship upon a Higher Plane.

His mind stopped short at that.

Presently his voice sounded out of the depths of his heart. "God! How I loathe the Higher Plane!

"God has put me into this Higher Plane business like some poor little kid who has to wear irons on its legs.

"I WANT her. . . . Do you hear, Martin? I want her. "

As if by a lightning flash he saw his car with himself and Miss Grammont--Miss Seyffert had probably fallen out--traversing Europe and Asia in headlong flight. To a sunlit beach in the South Seas. . . .

His thoughts presently resumed as though these unmannerly and fantastic interruptions had not occurred.

"We have to carry the whole affair on to a Higher Plane--and keep it there. We two love one another--that has to be

admitted now. (I ought never to have touched her. I ought never to have thought of touching her.) But we two are too high, our aims and work and obligations are too high for any ordinary love making. That sort of thing would embarrass us, would spoil everything.

"Spoil everything," he repeated, rather like a small boy who learns an unpalatable lesson.

For a time Sir Richmond, exhausted by moral effort, lay staring at the darkness.

"It has to be done. I believe I can carry her through with it if I can carry myself. She's a finer thing than I am. . . . On the whole I am glad it's only one more day. Belinda will be about. . . . Afterwards we can write to each other. . . . If we can get over the next day it will be all right. Then we can write about fuel and politics--and there won't be her voice and her presence. We shall really SUBLIMATE. . . . First class idea-- sublimate! And I will go back to dear old Martin who's all alone there and miserable; I'll be kind to her and play my part and tell her her Carbuncle scar rather becomes her. . . . And in a little while I shall be altogether in love with her again.

"Queer what a brute I've always been to Martin."

"Queer that Martin can come in a dream to me and take the upper hand with me.

"Queer that NOW--I love Martin."

He thought still more profoundly. "By the time the Committee meets again I shall have been tremendously refreshed."

He repeated:--"Put things on the Higher Plane and keep them there. Then go back to Martin. And so to the work. That's it. . . ."

Nothing so pacifies the mind as a clear-cut purpose. Sir Richmond fell asleep during the fourth recapitulation of this programme.

Section 3

When Miss Grammont appeared at breakfast Sir Richmond saw at once that she too had had a restless night. When she came into the little long breakfast room of the inn with its brown screens and its neat white tables it seemed to him that the Miss Grammont of his nocturnal speculations, the beautiful young lady who had to be protected and managed and loved unselfishly, vanished like some exorcised intruder. Instead was this real dear young woman, who had been completely forgotten during the reign of her simulacrum and who now returned completely remembered, familiar, friendly, intimate. She touched his hand for a moment, she met his eyes with the shadow of a smile in her own.

"Oranges!" said Belinda from the table by the window.
"Beautiful oranges."

She had been preparing them, poor Trans-atlantic exile, after the fashion in which grape fruits are prepared upon liners and in the civilized world of the west. "He's getting us tea spoons," said Belinda, as they sat down.

"This is realler England than ever," she said. "I've been up an hour. I found a little path down to the river bank. It's the greenest morning world and full of wild flowers. Look at these."

"That's lady's smock," said Sir Richmond. "It's not really a flower; it's a quotation from Shakespeare."

"And there are cowslips!"

"CUCKOO BUDS OF YELLOW HUE. DO PAINT THE MEADOWS WITH DELIGHT. All the English flowers come out of Shakespeare. I don't know what we did before his time."

The waiter arrived with the tea spoons for the oranges.

Belinda, having distributed these, resumed her discourse of enthusiasm for England. She asked a score of questions about Gloucester and Chepstow, the Severn and the Romans and the Welsh, and did not wait for the answers. She did not want answers; she talked to keep things going. Her talk masked a certain constraint that came upon her companions after the first morning's greetings were over.

Sir Richmond as he had planned upstairs produced two Michelin maps. "To-day," he said, "we will run back to Bath--from which it will be easy for you to train to Falmouth. We will go by Monmouth and then turn back through the Forest of Dean, where you will get glimpses of primitive coal mines still worked by two men and a boy with a windlass and a pail. Perhaps we will go through Cirencester. I don't know. Perhaps it is better to go straight to Bath. In the very heart of Bath you will find yourselves in just the same world you visited at Pompeii. Bath is Pompeii overlaid by Jane Austen's England."

He paused for a moment. "We can wire to your agents from here before we start and we can pick up their reply at Gloucester

or Nailsworth or even Bath itself. So that if your father is nearer than we suppose--But I think to-morrow afternoon will be soon enough for Falmouth, anyhow."

He stopped interrogatively.

Miss Grammont's face was white. "That will do very well," she said.

Section 4,

They started, but presently they came to high banks that showed such masses of bluebells, ragged Robin, great stitchwort and the like that Belinda was not to be restrained. She clamoured to stop the car and go up the bank and pick her hands full, and so they drew up by the roadside and Sir Richmond and Miss Grammont sat down near the car while Belinda carried her enthusiastic onslaught on the flowers up the steep bank and presently out of earshot.

The two lovers said unheeded things about the flowers to each other and then fell silent. Then Miss Grammont turned her head and seemed deliberately to measure her companion's distance. Evidently she judged her out of earshot.

"Well, said Miss Grammont in her soft even voice. "We love one another. Is that so still?"

"I could not love you more."

"It wasn't a dream?"

"No."

"And to-morrow we part?"

He looked her in the eyes. "I have been thinking of that all night," he said at last.

"I too."

"And you think--?"

"That we must part. Just as we arranged it when was it? Three days or three ages ago? There is nothing else in the world to do except for us to go our ways. . . . I love you. That means for a woman--It means that I want to be with you. But that is impossible. . . . Don't doubt whether I love you because I say--impossible. . . . "

Sir Richmond, faced with his own nocturnal decision, was now moved to oppose it flatly. "Nothing that one can do is impossible."

She glanced again at Belinda and bent down towards him. "Suppose," she said, "you got back into that car with me; suppose that instead of going on as we have planned, you took me away. How much of us would go?"

"You would go," said Sir Richmond, "and my heart."

"And this work of yours? And your honour? For the honour of a man in this New Age of yours will be first of all in the work he does for the world. And you will leave your work to be just a lover. And the work that I might do because of my father's wealth; all that would vanish too. We should leave all of that, all of our usefulness, all that much of ourselves. But what has made me love you? Just your breadth of vision, just the sense that you mattered. What has made you love me? Just that I have understood the dream of your

work. All that we should have to leave behind. We should specialize, in our own scandal. We should run away just for one thing. To think, by sharing the oldest, simplest, dearest indulgences in the world, that we had got each other. When really we had lost each other, lost all that mattered. . . ."

Her face was flushed with the earnestness of her conviction. Her eyes were bright with tears. "Don't think I don't love you. It's so hard to say all this. Somehow it seems like going back on something--something supreme. Our instincts have got us. . . . Don't think I'd hold myself from you, dear. I'd give myself to you with both hands. I love you-- When a woman loves--I at any rate--she loves altogether. But this thing--I am convinced--cannot be. I must go my own way, the way I have to go. My father is the man, obstinate, more than half a savage. For me--I know it--he has the jealousy of ten husbands. If you take me--If our secret becomes manifest--If you are to take me and keep me, then his life and your life will become wholly this Feud, nothing but this Feud. You have to fight him anyhow--that is why I of all people must keep out of the quarrel. For him, it would be an immense excitement, full of the possibility of fierce satisfactions; for you, whether you won me or lost me, it would be utter waste and ruin."

She paused and then went on:--"And for me too, waste and ruin. I shall be a woman fought over. I shall be fought over as dogs fight over a bone. I shall sink back to the level of Helen of Troy. I shall cease to be a free citizen, a responsible free person. Whether you win me or lose me it will be waste and ruin for us both. Your Fuel Commission will go to pieces, all the wide, enduring work you have set me dreaming about will go the same way. We shall just be another romantic story. . . . No!"

Sir Richmond sat still, a little like a sullen child, she thought. "I hate all this," he said slowly. "I didn't think of your father before, and now I think of him it sets me bristling for a fight. It makes all this harder to give up. And yet, do you know, in the night I was thinking, I was coming to conclusions, very like yours. For quite other reasons. I thought we ought not to--We have to keep friends anyhow and hear of each other?"

"That goes without saying."

"I thought we ought not to go on to be lovers in any way that would affect you, touch you too closely. . . . I was sorry--I had kissed you."

"Not I. No. Don't be sorry for that. I am glad we have fallen in love, more glad than I have been of anything else in my life, and glad we have spoken plainly. . . . Though we have to part. And--"

Her whisper came close to him. "For a whole day yet, all round the clock twice, you and I have one another."

Miss Seyffert began speaking as soon as she was well within earshot.

"I don't know the name of a single one of these flowers" she cried, "except the bluebells. Look at this great handful I've gotten! Springtime in Italy doesn't compare with it, not for a moment."

Section 5

Because Belinda Seyffert was in the dicky behind them with her alert interest in their emotions all too thinly and

obviously veiled, it seemed more convenient to Sir Richmond and Miss Grammont to talk not of themselves but of Man and Woman and of that New Age according to the prophet Martineau, which Sir Richmond had partly described and mainly invented and ascribed to his departed friend. They talked anthropologically, philosophically, speculatively, with an absurd pretence of detachment, they sat side by side in the little car, scarcely glancing at one another, but side by side and touching each other, and all the while they were filled with tenderness and love and hunger for one another.

In the course of a day or so they had touched on nearly every phase in the growth of Man and Woman from that remote and brutish past which has left its traces in human bones mingled with the bones of hyaenas and cave bears beneath the stalagmites of Wookey Hole near Wells. In those nearly forgotten days the mind of man and woman had been no more than an evanescent succession of monstrous and infantile imaginations. That brief journey in the west country had lit up phase after phase in the long teaching and discipline of man as he had developed depth of memory and fixity of purpose out of these raw beginnings, through the dreaming childhood of Avebury and Stonehenge and the crude boyhood of ancient wars and massacres. Sir Richmond recalled those phases now, and how, as they had followed one another, man's idea of woman and woman's idea of man had changed with them, until nowadays in the minds of civilized men brute desire and possession and a limitless jealousy had become almost completely overlaid by the desire for fellowship and a free mutual loyalty. "Overlaid," he said. "The older passions are still there like the fires in an engine." He invented a saying for Dr. Martineau that the Man in us to-day was still the old man of Palaeolithic times, with his will, his wrath against the universe increased rather than diminished. If to-day he ceases to crack his brother's bones and rape and bully

his womenkind, it is because he has grown up to a greater game and means to crack this world and feed upon its marrow and wrench their secrets from the stars.

And furthermore it would seem that the prophet Martineau had declared that in this New Age that was presently to dawn for mankind, jealousy was to be disciplined even as we had disciplined lust and anger; instead of ruling our law it was to be ruled by law and custom. No longer were the jealousy of strange peoples, the jealousy of ownership and the jealousy of sex to determine the framework of human life. There was to be one peace and law throughout the world, one economic scheme and a universal freedom for men and women to possess and give themselves.

"And how many generations yet must there be before we reach that Utopia?" Miss Grammont asked.

"I wouldn't put it at a very great distance."

"But think of all the confusions of the world!"

"Confusions merely. The world is just a muddle of states and religions and theories and stupidities. There are great lumps of disorderly strength in it, but as a whole it is a weak world. It goes on by habit. There's no great idea in possession and the only possible great idea is this one. The New Age may be nearer than we dare to suppose."

"If I could believe that!"

"There are many more people think as we do than you suppose. Are you and I such very strange and wonderful and exceptional people?"

"No. I don't think so."

"And yet the New World is already completely established in our hearts. What has been done in our minds can be done in most minds. In a little while the muddled angry mind of Man upon his Planet will grow clear and it will be this idea that will have made it clear. And then life will be very different for everyone. That tyranny of disorder which oppresses every life on earth now will be lifted. There will be less and less insecurity, less and less irrational injustice. It will be a better instructed and a better behaved world. We shall live at our ease, not perpetually anxious, not resentful and angry. And that will alter all the rules of love. Then we shall think more of the loveliness of other people because it will no longer be necessary to think so much of the dangers and weaknesses and pitifullnesses of other people. We shall not have to think of those who depend upon us for happiness and selfrespect. We shall not have to choose between a wasteful fight for a personal end or the surrender of our heart's desire."

"Heart's desire," she whispered. "Am I indeed your heart's desire?"

Sir Richmond sank his head and voice in response.

"You are the best of all things. And I have to let you go."

Sir Richmond suddenly remembered Miss Seyffert and half turned his face towards her. Her forehead was just visible over the hood of the open coupe. She appeared to be intelligently intent upon the scenery. Then he broke out suddenly into a tirade against the world. "But I am bored by this jostling unreasonable world. At the bottom of my heart I am bitterly resentful to-day. This is a world of fools and

brutes in which we live, a world of idiotic traditions, imbecile limitations, cowardice, habit, greed and mean cruelty. It is a slum of a world, a congested district, an insanitary jumble of souls and bodies. Every good thing, every sweet desire is thwarted--every one. I have to lead the life of a slum missionary, a sanitary inspector, an underpaid teacher. I am bored. Oh God! how I am bored! I am bored by our laws and customs. I am bored by our rotten empire and its empty monarchy. I am bored by its parades and its flags and its sham enthusiasms. I am bored by London and its life, by its smart life and by its servile life alike. I am bored by theatres and by books and by every sort of thing that people call pleasure. I am bored by the brag of people and the claims of people and the feelings of people. Damn people! I am bored by profiteers and by the snatching they call business enterprise. Damn every business man! I am bored by politics and the universal mismanagement of everything. I am bored by France, by AngloSaxondom, by German self-pity, by Bolshevik fanaticism. I am bored by these fools' squabbles that devastate the world. I am bored by Ireland, Orange and Green. Curse the Irish--north and south together! Lord! how I HATE the Irish from Carson to the last Sinn Feiner! And I am bored by India and by Egypt. I am bored by Poland and by Islam. I am bored by anyone who professes to have rights. Damn their rights! Curse their rights! I am bored to death by this year and by last year and by the prospect of next year. I am bored--I am horribly bored--by my work. I am bored by every sort of renunciation. I want to live with the woman I love and I want to work within the limits of my capacity. Curse all Hullo! Damn his eyes!--Steady, ah! The spark! . . . Good! No skid."

He had come round a corner at five and twenty miles an hour and had stopped his spark and pulled up neatly within a yard of the fore-wheel of a waggon that was turning in the road so

as to block the way completely.

"That almost had me. . . .

"And now you feel better?" said Miss Grammont.

"Ever so much," said Sir Richmond and chuckled.

The waggoner cleared the road and the car started up again.

For a minute or so neither spoke.

"You ought to be smacked hard for that outbreak,--my dear," said Miss Grammont.

"I ought--MY dear. I have no right to be ill-tempered. We two are among the supremely fortunate ones of our time. We have no excuse for misbehaviour. Got nothing to grumble at. Always I am lucky. THAT--with the waggon--was a very near thing. God spoils us.

"We two," he went on, after a pause, "are among the most fortunate people alive. We are both rich and easily rich. That gives us freedoms few people have. We have a vision of the whole world in which we live. It's in a mess--but that is by the way. The mass of mankind never gets enough education to have even a glimpse of the world as a whole. They never get a chance to get the hang of it. It is really possible for us to do things that will matter in the world. All our time is our own; all our abilities we are free to use. Most people, most intelligent and educated people, are caught in cages of pecuniary necessity; they are tied to tasks they can't leave, they are driven and compelled and limited by circumstances they can never master. But we, if we have tasks, have tasks of our own choosing. We may not like the

world, but anyhow we are free to do our best to alter it. If I were a clerk in Hoxton and you were a city typist, then we MIGHT swear. "

"It was you who swore," smiled Miss Grammont.

"It's the thought of that clerk in Hoxton and that city typist who really keep me at my work. Any smacking ought to come from them. I couldn't do less than I do in the face of their helplessness. Nevertheless a day will come--through what we do and what we refrain from doing when there will be no bound and limited clerks in Hoxton and no captive typists in the city. And nobody at all to consider."

"According to the prophet Martineau," said Miss Grammont.

"And then you and I must contrive to be born again. "

"Heighho!" cried Miss Grammont. "A thousand years ahead! When fathers are civilized. When all these phantom people who intervene on your side--no! I don't want to know anything about them, but I know of them by instinct--when they also don't matter."

"Then you and I can have things out with each other--**THOROUGHLY**," said Sir Richmond, with a surprising ferocity in his voice, charging the little hill before him as though he charged at Time.

Section 6

They had to wait at Nailsworth for a telegram from Mr. Grammont's agents; they lunched there and drove on to Bath in the afternoon. They came into the town through unattractive and unworthy outskirts, and only realized the charm of the

place after they had garaged their car at the Pulteney Hotel and walked back over the Pulteney Bridge to see the Avon with the Pump Room and the Roman Baths. The Pulteney they found hung with pictures and adorned with sculpture to an astonishing extent; some former proprietor must have had a mania for replicas and the place is eventful with white marble fauns and sylphs and lions and Caesars and Queen Victorias and packed like an exhibition with memories of Rome, Florence, Milan, Paris, the National Gallery and the Royal Academy, amidst which splendours a competent staff administers modern comforts with an old-fashioned civility. But round and about the Pulteney one has still the scenery of Georgian England, the white, faintly classical terraces and houses of the days of Fielding, Smollett, Fanny Burney and Jane Austen, the graceful bridge with the bright little shops full of "presents from Bath"; the Pump Room with its water drinkers and a fine array of the original Bath chairs.

Down below the Pump Room our travellers explored the memories of the days when the world was Latin from York to the Tigris, and the Corinthian capital flourished like a weed from Bath to Baalbek. And they considered a little doubtfully the seventeenth century statue of Bladud, who is said to have been healed by the Bath waters and to have founded the city in the days when Stonehenge still flourished, eight hundred years before the Romans came.

In the afternoon Miss Seyffert came with Sir Richmond and Miss Grammont and was very enthusiastic about everything, but in the evening after dinner it was clear that her role was to remain in the hotel. Sir Richmond and Miss Grammont went out into the moonlit gloaming; they crossed the bridge again and followed the road beside the river towards the old Abbey Church, that Lantern of the West. Away in some sunken gardens ahead of them a band was playing, and a cluster of little

lights about the bandstand showed a crowd of people down below dancing on the grass. These little lights, these bobbing black heads and the lilting music, this little inflamed Centre of throbbing sounds and ruddy illumination, made the dome of the moonlit world about it seem very vast and cool and silent. Our visitors began to realize that Bath could be very beautiful. They went to the parapet above the river and stood there, leaning over it elbow to elbow and smoking cigarettes. Miss Grammont was moved to declare the Pulteney Bridge, with its noble arch, its effect of height over the swirling river, and the cluster of houses above, more beautiful than the Ponte Vecchio at Florence. Down below was a man in waders with a fishing-rod going to and fro along the foaming weir, and a couple of boys paddled a boat against the rush of the water lower down the stream.

"Dear England!" said Miss Grammont, surveying this gracious spectacle. "How full it is of homely and lovely and kindly things!"

"It is the home we come from."

"You belong to it still."

"No more than you do. I belong to a big overworking modern place called London which stretches its tentacles all over the world. I am as much a home-coming tourist as you are. Most of this western country I am seeing for the first time."

She said nothing for a space. "I've not a word to say to-night," she said. "I'm just full of a sort of animal satisfaction in being close to you. . . . And in being with you among lovely things. . . . Somewhere--Before we part to-night--. . . ."

"Yes?" he said to her pause, and his face came very near to hers.

I want you to kiss me. "

"Yes," he said awkwardly, glancing over his shoulder, acutely aware of the promenaders passing close to them.

"It's a promise?"

"Yes."

Very timidly and guiltily his hand sought hers beside it and gripped it and pressed it. "My dear!" he whispered, tritest and most unavoidable of expressions. It was not very like Man and Woman loving upon their Planet; it was much more like the shy endearments of the shop boys and work girls who made the darkling populous about them with their silent interchanges.

"There are a thousand things I want to talk about to you," she said. "After we have parted to-morrow I shall begin to think of them. But now--every rational thing seems dissolved in this moonlight. . . ."

Presently she made an effort to restore the intellectual dignity of their relationship.

"I suppose I ought to be more concerned tonight about the work I have to do in the world and anxious for you to tell me this and that, but indeed I am not concerned at all about it. I seem to have it in outline all perfectly clear. I mean to play a man's part in the world just as my father wants me to do. I mean to win his confidence and work with him--like a partner. Then some day I shall be a power in the world of fuel. And at the same time I must watch and read and think

and learn how to be the servant of the world. . . . We two have to live like trusted servants who have been made guardians of a helpless minor. We have to put things in order and keep them in order against the time when Man--Man whom we call in America the Common Man--can take hold of his world--"

"And release his servants," said Sir Richmond.

"All that is perfectly clear in my mind. That is what I am going to live for; that is what I have to do."

She stopped abruptly. "All that is about as interesting to-night--in comparison with the touch of your dear fingers--as next month's railway time-table."

But later she found a topic that could hold their attention for a time.

"We have never said a word about religion," she said.

Sir Richmond paused for a moment. "I am a godless man," he said. "The stars and space and time overwhelm my imagination. I cannot imagine anything above or beyond them."

She thought that over. "But there are divine things," she said.

"YOU are divine. . . . I'm not talking lovers' nonsense," he hastened to add. "I mean that there is something about human beings--not just the everyday stuff of them, but something that appears intermittently--as though a light shone through something translucent. If I believe in any divinity at all it is a divinity revealed to me by other people-- And even by myself in my own heart.

"I'm never surprised at the badness of human beings," said Sir Richmond; "seeing how they have come about and what they are; but I have been surprised time after time by fine things Often in people I disliked or thought little of I can understand that I find you full of divine quality, because I am in love with you and all alive to you. Necessarily I keep on discovering loveliness in you. But I have seen divine things in dear old Martineau, for example. A vain man, fussy, timid--and yet filled with a passion for truth, ready to make great sacrifices and to toil tremendously for that. And in those men I am always cursing, my Committee, it is astonishing at times to discover what streaks of goodness even the really bad men can show. . . . But one can't make use of just anyone's divinity. I can see the divinity in Martineau but it leaves me cold. He tired me and bored me. . . . But I live on you. It's only through love that the God can reach over from one human being to another. All real love is a divine thing, a reassurance, a release of courage. It is wonderful enough that we should take food and drink and turn them into imagination, invention and creative energy; it is still more wonderful that we should take an animal urging and turn it into a light to discover beauty and an impulse towards the utmost achievements of which we are capable. All love is a sacrament and all lovers are priests to each other. You and I--"

Sir Richmond broke off abruptly. "I spent three days trying to tell this to Dr. Martineau. But he wasn't the priest I had to confess to and the words wouldn't come. I can confess it to you readily enough"

"I cannot tell," said Miss Grammont, "whether this is the last wisdom in life or moonshine. I cannot tell whether I am thinking or feeling; but the noise of the water going over the weir below is like the stir in my heart. And I am

swimming in love and happiness. Am I awake or am I dreaming you, and are we dreaming one another? Hold my hand--hold it hard and tight. I'm trembling with love for you and all the world. . . . If I say more I shall be weeping."

For a long time they stood side by side saying not a word to one another.

Presently the band down below and the dancing ceased and the little lights were extinguished. The silent moon seemed to grow brighter and larger and the whisper of the waters louder. A crowd of young people flowed out of the gardens and passed by on their way home. Sir Richmond and Miss Grammont strolled through the dispersing crowd and over the Toll Bridge and went exploring down a little staircase that went down from the end of the bridge to the dark river, and then came back to their old position at the parapet looking upon the weir and the Pulteney Bridge. The gardens that had been so gay were already dark and silent as they returned, and the streets echoed emptily to the few people who were still abroad.

"It's the most beautiful bridge in the world," said Miss Grammont, and gave him her hand again.

Some deep-toned clock close by proclaimed the hour eleven.

The silence healed again.

"Well?" said Sir Richmond.

"Well?" said Miss Grammont smiling very faintly.

"I suppose we must go out of all this beauty now, back to the lights of the hotel and the watchful eyes of your dragon. "

"She has not been a very exacting dragon so far, has she?"

"She is a miracle of tact."

"She does not really watch. But she is curious--and very sympathetic. "

"She is wonderful."

"That man is still fishing," said Miss Grammont.

For a time she peered down at the dark figure wading in the foam below as though it was the only thing of interest in the world. Then she turned to Sir Richmond.

"I would trust Belinda with my life, she said. "And anyhow--now--we need not worry about Belinda."

Section 7

At the breakfast table it was Belinda who was the most nervous of the three, the most moved, the most disposed to throw a sacramental air over their last meal together. Her companions had passed beyond the idea of separation; it was as if they now cherished a secret satisfaction at the high dignity of their parting. Belinda in some way perceived they had become different. They were no longer tremulous lovers; they seemed sure of one another and with a new pride in their bearing. It would have pleased Belinda better, seeing how soon they were to be torn apart, if they had not made quite such excellent breakfasts. She even suspected them of having slept well. Yet yesterday they had been deeply stirred. They had stayed out late last night, so late that she had not heard them come in. Perhaps then they had passed the climax

of their emotions. Sir Richmond, she learnt, was to take the party to Exeter, where there would be a train for Falmouth a little after two. If they started from Bath about nine that would give them an ample margin of time in which to deal with a puncture or any such misadventure.

They crested the Mendips above Shepton Mallet, ran through Tilchester and Ilminster into the lovely hill country about Up-Ottery and so to Honiton and the broad level road to Exeter. Sir Richmond and Miss Grammont were in a state of happy gravity; they sat contentedly side by side, talking very little. They had already made their arrangements for writing to one another. There was to be no stream of love-letters or protestations. That might prove a mutual torment. Their love was to be implicit. They were to write at intervals about political matters and their common interests, and to keep each other informed of their movements about the world.

"We shall be working together," she said, speaking suddenly out of a train of thought she had been following, "we shall be closer together than many a couple who have never spent a day apart for twenty years."

Then presently she said: "In the New Age all lovers will have to be accustomed to meeting and parting. We women will not be tied very much by domestic needs. Unless we see fit to have children. We shall be going about our business like men; we shall have world-wide businesses--many of us--just as men will. . . ."

"It will be a world full of lovers' meetings."

Some day--somewhere--we two will certainly meet again."

"Even you have to force circumstances a little," said Sir Richmond.

"We shall meet, she said, "without doing that."

"But where?" he asked unanswered. . . .

"Meetings and partings," she said. "Women will be used to seeing their lovers go away. Even to seeing them go away to other women who have borne them children and who have a closer claim on them."

"No one-" began Sir Richmond, startled.

"But I don't mind very much. It's how things are. If I were a perfectly civilized woman I shouldn't mind at all. If men and women are not to be tied to each other there must needs be such things as this."

"But you," said Sir Richmond. I at any rate am not like that. I cannot bear the thought that YOU--"

"You need not bear it, my dear. I was just trying to imagine this world that is to be. Women I think are different from men in their jealousy. Men are jealous of the other man; women are jealous for their man--and careless about the other woman. What I love in you I am sure about. My mind was empty when it came to you and now it is full to overflowing. I shall feel you moving about in the same world with me. I'm not likely to think of anyone else for a very long time. . . . Later on, who knows? I may marry. I make no vows. But I think until I know certainly that you do not want me any more it will be impossible for me to marry or to have a lover. I don't know, but that is how I believe it will be with me. And my mind feels beautifully clear now and settled.

I've got your idea and made it my own, your idea that we matter scarcely at all, but that the work we do matters supremely. I'll find my rope and tug it, never fear. Half way round the world perhaps some day you will feel me tugging."

"I shall feel you're there," he said, "whether you tug or not. . . ."

"Three miles left to Exeter," he reported presently.

She glanced back at Belinda.

"It is good that we have loved, my dear," she whispered. "Say it is good."

"The best thing in all my life," he said, and lowered his head and voice to say: "My dearest dear."

"Heart's desire--still--?"

"Heart's delight. . . . Priestess of life. . . . Divinity."

She smiled and nodded and suddenly Belinda, up above their lowered heads, accidentally and irrelevantly, no doubt, coughed.

At Exeter Station there was not very much time to spare after all. Hardly had Sir Richmond secured a luncheon basket for the two travellers before the train came into the station. He parted from Miss Grammont with a hand clasp. Belinda was flushed and distressed at the last but her friend was quiet and still. "Au revoir," said Belinda without conviction when Sir Richmond shook her hand.

Section 8.

Sir Richmond stood quite still on the platform as the train ran out of the station. He did not move until it had disappeared round the bend. Then he turned, lost in a brown study, and walked very slowly towards the station exit.

"The most wonderful thing in my life," he thought. "And already--it is unreal.

"She will go on to her father whom she knows ten thousand times more thoroughly than she knows me; she will go on to Paris, she will pick up all the threads of her old story, be reminded of endless things in her life, but never except in the most casual way of these days: they will be cut off from everything else that will serve to keep them real; and as for me--this connects with nothing else in my life at all. . . . It is as disconnected as a dream. . . . Already it is hardly more substantial than a dream. . . .

"We shall write letters. Do letters breathe faster or slower as you read them?

"We may meet.

"Where are we likely to meet again? ... I never realized before how improbable it is that we shall meet again. And if we meet? . . .

"Never in all our lives shall we be really TOGETHER again. It's over--With a completeness. . . .

"Like death."

He came opposite the bookstalls and stopped short and stared with unseeing eyes at the display of popular literature. He

was wondering now whether after all he ought to have let her go. He experienced something of the blank amazement of a child who has burst its toy balloon. His golden globe of satisfaction in an instant had gone. An irrational sense of loss was flooding every other feeling about V.V. If she had loved him truly and altogether could she have left him like this? Neither of them surely had intended so complete a separation. He wanted to go back and recall that train.

A few seconds more, he realized, and he would give way to anger. Whatever happened that must not happen. He pulled himself together. What was it he had to do now? He had not to be angry, he had not even to be sorry. They had done the right thing. Outside the station his car was waiting.

He went outside the station and stared at his car. He had to go somewhere. Of course! down into Cornwall to Martin's cottage. He had to go down to her and be kind and comforting about that carbuncle. To be kind? . . . If this thwarted feeling broke out into anger he might be tempted to take it out of Martin. That at any rate he must not do. He had always for some inexplicable cause treated Martin badly. Nagged her and blamed her and threatened her. That must stop now. No shadow of this affair must lie on Martin. . . . And Martin must never have a suspicion of any of this. . . .

The image of Martin became very vivid in his mind. He thought of her as he had seen her many times, with the tears close, fighting with her back to the wall, with all her wit and vigour gone, because she loved him more steadfastly than he did her. Whatever happened he must not take it out of Martin. It was astonishing how real she had become now--as V.V. became a dream. Yes, Martin was astonishingly real. And if only he could go now and talk to Martin--and face all the facts of life with her, even as he had done with that phantom

Martin in his dream. . . .

But things were not like that.

He looked to see if his car was short of water or petrol; both needed replenishing, and so he would have to go up the hill into Exeter town again. He got into his car and sat with his fingers on the electric starter.

Martin! Old Friend! Eight days were still left before the Committee met again, eight days for golden kindness. He would distress Martin by no clumsy confession. He would just make her happy as she loved to be made happy. . . . Nevertheless. Nevertheless. . . .

Was it Martin who failed him or he who failed Martin?

Incessant and insoluble dispute. Well, the thing now was to go to Martin. . . . And then the work!

He laughed suddenly.

"I'll take it out of the damned Commission. I'll make old Rumford Brown sit up."

He was astonished to find himself thinking of the affairs of the Commission with a lively interest and no trace of fatigue. He had had his change; he had taken his rest; he was equal to his task again already. He started his engine and steered his way past a van and a waiting cab.

"Fuel," he said.

CHAPTER THE NINTH

THE LAST DAYS OF SIR RICHMOND HARDY

Section 1

The Majority and Minority Reports of the Fuel Commission were received on their first publication with much heat and disputation, but there is already a fairly general agreement that they are great and significant documents, broadly conceived and historically important. They do lift the questions of fuel supply and distribution high above the level of parochial jealousies and above the petty and destructive profiteering of private owners and traders, to a view of a general human welfare. They form an important link in a series of private and public documents that are slowly opening out a prospect of new economic methods, methods conceived in the generous spirit of scientific work, that may yet arrest the drift of our western civilization towards financial and commercial squalor and the social collapse that must ensue inevitably on that. In view of the composition of the Committee, the Majority Report is in itself an amazing triumph of Sir Richmond's views; it is astonishing that he was able to drive his opponents so far and then leave them there securely advanced while he carried on the adherents he had altogether won, including, of course, the labour representatives, to the further altitudes of the Minority Report.

After the Summer recess the Majority Report was discussed and adopted. Sir Richmond had shown signs of flagging energy in June, but he had come back in September in a state of exceptional vigour; for a time he completely dominated the Committee by the passionate force of his convictions and the illuminating scorn he brought to bear on the various

subterfuges and weakening amendments by which the meaner interests sought to save themselves in whole or in part from the common duty of sacrifice. But toward the end he fell ill. He had worked to the pitch of exhaustion. He neglected a cold that settled on his chest. He began to cough persistently and betray an increasingly irritable temper. In the last fights in the Committee his face was bright with fever and he spoke in a voiceless whisper, often a vast angry whisper. His place at table was marked with scattered lozenges and scraps of paper torn to the minutest shreds. Such good manners as had hitherto mitigated his behaviour on the Committee departed from him, He carried his last points, gesticulating and coughing and wheezing rather than speaking. But he had so hammered his ideas into the Committee that they took the effect of what he was trying to say.

He died of pneumonia at his own house three days after the passing of the Majority Report. The Minority Report, his own especial creation, he never signed. It was completed by Wast and Carmichael. . . .

After their parting at Salisbury station Dr. Martineau heard very little of Sir Richmond for a time except through the newspapers, which contained frequent allusions to the Committee. Someone told him that Sir Richmond had been staying at Ruan in Cornwall where Martin Leeds had a cottage, and someone else had met him at Bath on his way, he said, in his car from Cornwall to a conference with Sir Peter Davies in Glamorganshire.

But in the interim Dr. Martineau had the pleasure of meeting Lady Hardy at a luncheon party. He was seated next to her and he found her a very pleasing and sympathetic person indeed. She talked to him freely and simply of her husband and of the journey the two men had taken together. Either she knew

nothing of the circumstances of their parting or if she did she did not betray her knowledge. "That holiday did him a world of good," she said. "He came back to his work like a giant. I feel very grateful to you."

Dr. Martineau said it was a pleasure to have helped Sir Richmond's work in any way. He believed in him thoroughly. Sir Richmond was inspired by great modern creative ideas.

"Forgive me if I keep you talking about him," said Lady Hardy. "I wish I could feel as sure that I had been of use to him."

Dr. Martineau insisted. "I know very well that you are."

"I do what I can to help him carry his enormous burthen of toil" she said. "I try to smooth his path. But he is a strange silent creature at times. "

Her eyes scrutinized the doctor's face.

It was not the doctor's business to supplement Sir Richmond's silences. Yet he wished to meet the requirements of this lady if he could. "He is one of those men," he said, "who are driven by forces they do not fully understand. A man of genius."

"Yes," she said in an undertone of intimacy. Genius. . . . A great irresponsible genius. . . . Difficult to help. . . . I wish I could do more for him."

A very sweet and charming lady. It was with great regret that the doctor found the time had come to turn to his left-hand neighbour.

Section 2

It was with some surprise that Dr. Martineau received a fresh appeal for aid from Sir Richmond. It was late in October and Sir Richmond was already seriously ill. But he was still going about his business as though he was perfectly well. He had not mistaken his man. Dr. Martineau received him as though there had never been a shadow of offence between them.

He came straight to the point. "Martineau," he said, "I must have those drugs I asked you for when first I came to you now. I must be bolstered up. I can't last out unless I am. I'm at the end of my energy. I come to you because you will understand. The Commission can't go on now for more than another three weeks. Whatever happens afterwards I must keep going until then."

The doctor did understand. He made no vain objections. He did what he could to patch up his friend for his last struggles with the opposition in the Committee. "Pro forma," he said, stethoscope in hand, "I must order you to bed. You won't go. But I order you. You must know that what you are doing is risking your life. Your lungs are congested, the bronchial tubes already. That may spread at any time. If this open weather lasts you may go about and still pull through. But at any time this may pass into pneumonia. And there's not much in you just now to stand up against pneumonia. . . ."

"I'll take all reasonable care."

"Is your wife at home!"

"She is in Wales with her people. But the household is well trained. I can manage."

"Go in a closed car from door to door. Wrap up like a mummy. I wish the Committee room wasn't down those abominable House of Commons corridors. . . ."

They parted with an affectionate handshake.

Section 3

Death approved of Sir Richmond's determination to see the Committee through. Our universal creditor gave this particular debtor grace to the very last meeting. Then he brushed a gust of chilly rain across the face of Sir Richmond as he stood waiting for his car outside the strangers' entrance to the House. For a couple of days Sir Richmond felt almost intolerably tired, but scarcely noted the changed timbre of the wheezy notes in his throat. He rose later each day and with ebbing vigour, jotted down notes and corrections upon the proofs of the Minority Report. He found it increasingly difficult to make decisions; he would correct and alter back and then repeat the correction, perhaps half a dozen times. On the evening of the second day his lungs became painful and his breathing difficult. His head ached and a sense of some great impending evil came upon him. His skin was suddenly a detestable garment to wear. He took his temperature with a little clinical thermometer he kept by him and found it was a hundred and one. He telephoned hastily for Dr. Martineau and without waiting for his arrival took a hot bath and got into bed. He was already thoroughly ill when the doctor arrived.

"Forgive my sending for you," he said. "Not your line. I know. . . . My wife's G.P.--an exasperating sort of ass. Can't stand him. No one else."

He was lying on a narrow little bed with a hard pillow that

the doctor replaced by one from Lady Hardy's room. He had twisted the bed-clothes into a hopeless muddle, the sheet was on the floor.

Sir Richmond's bedroom was a large apartment in which sleep seemed to have been an admitted necessity rather than a principal purpose. On one hand it opened into a business-like dressing and bath room, on the other into the day study. It bore witness to the nocturnal habits of a man who had long lived a life of irregular impulses to activity and dislocated hours and habits. There was a desk and reading lamp for night work near the fireplace, an electric kettle for making tea at night, a silver biscuit tin; all the apparatus for the lonely intent industry of the small hours. There was a bookcase of bluebooks, books of reference and suchlike material, and some files. Over the mantelpiece was an enlarged photograph of Lady Hardy and a plain office calendar. The desk was littered with the galley proofs of the Minority Report upon which Sir Richmond had been working up to the moment of his hasty retreat to bed. And lying among the proofs, as though it had been taken out and looked at quite recently was the photograph of a girl. For a moment Dr. Martineau's mind hung in doubt and then he knew it for the young American of Stonehenge. How that affair had ended he did not know. And now it was not his business to know.

These various observations printed themselves on Dr. Martineau's mind after his first cursory examination of his patient and while he cast about for anything that would give this large industrious apartment a little more of the restfulness and comfort of a sick room. "I must get in a night nurse at once," he said. "We must find a small table somewhere to put near the bed.

"I am afraid you are very ill," he said, returning to the

bedside. "This is not, as you say, my sort of work. Will you let me call in another man, a man we can trust thoroughly, to consult?"

"I'm in your hands, said Sir Richmond. I want to pull through."

"He will know better where to get the right sort of nurse for the case--and everything."

The second doctor presently came, with the right sort of nurse hard on his heels. Sir Richmond submitted almost silently to his expert handling and was sounded and looked to and listened at.

"H'm," said the second doctor, and then encouragingly to Sir Richmond: "We've got to take care of you."

"There's a lot about this I don't like," said the second doctor and drew Dr. Martineau by the arm towards the study. For a moment or so Sir Richmond listened to the low murmur of their voices, but he did not feel very deeply interested in what they were saying. He began to think what a decent chap Dr. Martineau was, how helpful and fine and forgiving his professional training had made him, how completely he had ignored the smothered incivilities of their parting at Salisbury. All men ought to have some such training, Not a bad idea to put every boy and girl through a year or so of hospital service. . . . Sir Richmond must have dozed, for his next perception was of Dr. Martineau standing over him and saying "I am afraid, my dear Hardy, that you are very ill indeed. Much more so than I thought you were at first."

Sir Richmond's raised eyebrows conveyed that he accepted this fact.

"I think Lady Hardy ought to be sent for."

Sir Richmond shook his head with unexpected vigour.

"Don't want her about," he said, and after a pause, "Don't want anybody about."

"But if anything happens-?"

"Send then."

An expression of obstinate calm overspread Sir Richmond's face. He seemed to regard the matter as settled. He closed his eyes.

For a time Dr. Martineau desisted. He went to the window and turned to look again at the impassive figure on the bed. Did Sir Richmond fully understand? He made a step towards his patient and hesitated. Then he brought a chair and sat down at the bedside.

Sir Richmond opened his eyes and regarded him with a slight frown.

"A case of pneumonia," said the doctor, "after great exertion and fatigue, may take very rapid and unexpected turns."

Sir Richmond, cheek on pillow, seemed to assent.

"I think if you want to be sure that Lady Hardy sees you again-- . . . If you don't want to take risks about that-- . . . One never knows in these cases. Probably there is a night train."

Sir Richmond manifested no surprise at the warning. But he stuck to his point. His voice was faint but firm. "Couldn't make up anything to say to her. Anything she'd like."

Dr. Martineau rested on that for a little while. Then he said: "If there is anyone else?"

"Not possible," said Sir Richmond, with his eyes on the ceiling.

"But to see?"

Sir Richmond turned his head to Dr. Martineau. His face puckered like a peevish child's. "They'd want things said to them...Things to remember...I CAN'T. I'm tired out."

"Don't trouble," whispered Dr. Martineau, suddenly remorseful.

But Sir Richmond was also remorseful. "Give them my love," he said. "Best love...Old Martin. Love."

Dr. Martineau was turning away when Sir Richmond spoke again in a whisper. "Best love...Poor at the best. . . ."

He dozed for a time. Then he made a great effort. "I can't see them, Martineau, until I've something to say. It's like that. Perhaps I shall think of some kind things to say--after a sleep. But if they came now...I'd say something wrong. Be cross perhaps. Hurt someone. I've hurt so many. People exaggerate...People exaggerate--importance these occasions."

"Yes, yes," whispered Dr. Martineau. "I quite understand."

Section 4

For a time Sir Richmond dozed. Then he stirred and muttered.
"Second rate. . . Poor at the best. . . Love. . . Work.
All. . ."

"It had been splendid work," said Dr. Martineau, and was not sure that Sir Richmond heard.

"Those last few days. . . lost my grip. . . Always lose my damned grip.

"Ragged them. . . . Put their backs upSilly....

"Never.... Never done anything--WELL

"It's done. Done. Well or ill....

"Done."

His voice sank to the faintest whisper. "Done for ever and ever ... and ever . . . and ever."

Again he seemed to doze.

Dr. Martineau stood up softly. Something beyond reason told him that this was certainly a dying man. He was reluctant to go and he had an absurd desire that someone, someone for whom Sir Richmond cared, should come and say good-bye to him, and for Sir Richmond to say good-bye to someone. He hated this lonely launching from the shores of life of one who had sought intimacy so persistently and vainly. It was extraordinary--he saw it now for the first time--he loved this man. If it had been in his power, he would at that moment have anointed him with kindness.

The doctor found himself standing in front of the untidy

writing desk, littered like a recent battlefield. The photograph of the American girl drew his eyes. What had happened? Was there not perhaps some word for her? He turned about as if to enquire of the dying man and found Sir Richmond's eyes open and regarding him. In them he saw an expression he had seen there once or twice before, a faint but excessively irritating gleam of amusement.

"Oh!--WELL!" said Dr. Martineau and turned away. He went to the window and stared out as his habit was.

Sir Richmond continued to smile dimly at the doctor's back until his eyes closed again.

It was their last exchange. Sir Richmond died that night in the small hours, so quietly that for some time the night nurse did not observe what had happened. She was indeed roused to that realization by the ringing of the telephone bell in the adjacent study.

Section 5

For a long time that night Dr. Martineau had lain awake unable to sleep. He was haunted by the figure of Sir Richmond lying on his uncomfortable little bed in his big bedroom and by the curious effect of loneliness produced by the nocturnal desk and by the evident dread felt by Sir Richmond of any death-bed partings. He realized how much this man, who had once sought so feverishly for intimacies, had shrunken back upon himself, how solitary his motives had become, how rarely he had taken counsel with anyone in his later years. His mind now dwelt apart. Even if people came about him he would still be facing death alone.

And so it seemed he meant to slip out of life, as a man might

slip out of a crowded assembly, unobserved. Even now he might be going. The doctor recalled how he and Sir Richmond had talked of the rage of life in a young baby, how we drove into life in a sort of fury, how that rage impelled us to do this and that, how we fought and struggled until the rage spent itself and was gone. That eddy of rage that was Sir Richmond was now perhaps very near its end. Presently it would fade and cease, and the stream that had made it and borne it would know it no more.

Dr. Martineau's thoughts relaxed and passed into the picture land of dreams. He saw the figure of Sir Richmond, going as it were away from him along a narrow path, a path that followed the crest of a ridge, between great darknesses, enormous cloudy darknesses, above him and below. He was going along this path without looking back, without a thought for those he left behind, without a single word to cheer him on his way, walking as Dr. Martineau had sometimes watched him walking, without haste or avidity, walking as a man might along some great picture gallery with which he was perhaps even over familiar. His hands would be in his pockets, his indifferent eyes upon the clouds about him. And as he strolled along that path, the darkness closed in upon him. His figure became dim and dimmer.

Whither did that figure go? Did that enveloping darkness hide the beginnings of some strange long journey or would it just dissolve that figure into itself?

Was that indeed the end?

Dr. Martineau was one of that large class of people who can neither imagine nor disbelieve in immortality. Dimmer and dimmer grew the figure but still it remained visible. As one can continue to see a star at dawn until one turns away. Or

one blinks or nods and it is gone.

Vanished now are the beliefs that held our race for countless generations. Where now was that Path of the Dead, mapped so clearly, faced with such certainty, in which the heliolithic peoples believed from Avebury to Polynesia? Not always have we had to go alone and unprepared into uncharted darkneses. For a time the dream artist used a palette of the doctor's vague memories of things Egyptian, he painted a new roll of the Book of the Dead, at a copy of which the doctor had been looking a day or so before. Sir Richmond became a brown naked figure, crossing a bridge of danger, passing between terrific monsters, ferrying a dark and dreadful stream. He came to the scales of judgment before the very throne of Osiris and stood waiting while dogheaded Anubis weighed his conscience and that evil monster, the Devourer of the Dead, crouched ready if the judgment went against him. The doctor's attention concentrated upon the scales. A memory of Swedengorg's Heaven and Hell mingled with the Egyptian fantasy. Now at last it was possible to know something real about this man's soul, now at last one could look into the Secret Places of his Heart. Anubis and Thoth, the god with the ibis head, were reading the heart as if it were a book, reading aloud from it to the supreme judge.

Suddenly the doctor found himself in his own dreams. His anxiety to plead for his friend had brought him in. He too had become a little painted figure and he was bearing a book in his hand. He wanted to show that the laws of the new world could not be the same as those of the old, and the book he was bringing as evidence was his own Psychology of a New Age.

The clear thought of that book broke up his dream by releasing a train of waking troubles. . . . You have been six months on Chapter Ten; will it ever be ready for

Osiris? . . . will it ever be ready for print? . . .

Dream and waking thoughts were mingled like sky and cloud upon a windy day in April. Suddenly he saw again that lonely figure on the narrow way with darkneses above and darkneses below and darkneses on every hand. But this time it was not Sir Richmond. . . . Who was it? Surely it was Everyman. Everyman had to travel at last along that selfsame road, leaving love, leaving every task and every desire. But was it Everyman? . . . A great fear and horror came upon the doctor. That little figure was himself! And the book which was his particular task in life was still undone. He himself stood in his turn upon that lonely path with the engulfing darkneses about him. . . .

He seemed to wrench himself awake.

He lay very still for some moments and then he sat up in bed. An overwhelming conviction had arisen--in his mind that Sir Richmond was dead. He felt he must know for certain. He switched on his electric light, mutely interrogated his round face reflected in the looking glass, got out of bed, shuffled on his slippers and went along the passage to the telephone. He hesitated for some seconds and then lifted the receiver. It was his call which aroused the nurse to the fact of Sir Richmond's death.

Section 6

Lady Hardy arrived home in response to Dr. Martineau's telegram late on the following evening. He was with her next morning, comforting and sympathetic. Her big blue eyes, bright with tears, met his very wistfully; her little body seemed very small and pathetic in its simple black dress. And yet there was a sort of bravery about her. When he came into

the drawing-room she was in one of the window recesses talking to a serious-looking woman of the dressmaker type. She left her business at once to come to him. "Why did I not know in time?" she cried.

"No one, dear lady, had any idea until late last night," he said, taking both her hands in his for a long friendly sympathetic pressure.

"I might have known that if it had been possible you would have told me," she said.

"You know," she added, "I don't believe it yet. I don't realize it. I go about these formalities--"

"I think I can understand that."

"He was always, you know, not quite here It is as if he were a little more not quite here I can't believe it is over. . . ."

She asked a number of questions and took the doctor's advice upon various details of the arrangements. "My daughter Helen comes home to-morrow afternoon," she explained. "She is in Paris. But our son is far, far away in the Punjab. I have sent him a telegram. . . . It is so kind of you to come in to me."

Dr. Martineau went more than half way to meet Lady Hardy's disposition to treat him as a friend of the family. He had conceived a curious, half maternal affection for Sir Richmond that had survived even the trying incident of the Salisbury parting and revived very rapidly during the last few weeks. This affection extended itself now to Lady Hardy. Hers was a type that had always appealed to him. He could understand so

well the perplexed loyalty with which she was now setting herself to gather together some preservative and reassuring evidences of this man who had always been; as she put it, "never quite here." It was as if she felt that now it was at last possible to make a definite reality of him. He could be fixed. And as he was fixed he would stay. Never more would he be able to come in and with an almost expressionless glance wither the interpretation she had imposed upon him. She was finding much comfort in this task of reconstruction. She had gathered together in the drawingroom every presentable portrait she had been able to find of him. He had never, she said, sat to a painter, but there was an early pencil sketch done within a couple of years of their marriage; there was a number of photographs, several of which--she wanted the doctor's advice upon this point--she thought might be enlarged; there was a statuette done by some woman artist who had once beguiled him into a sitting. There was also a painting she had had worked up from a photograph and some notes. She flitted among these memorials, going from one to the other, undecided which to make the standard portrait. "That painting, I think, is most like," she said: "as he was before the war. But the war and the Commission changed him,--worried him and aged him. . . . I grudged him to that Commission. He let it worry him frightfully."

"It meant very much to him," said Dr. Martineau.

"It meant too much to him. But of course his ideas were splendid. You know it is one of my hopes to get some sort of book done, explaining his ideas. He would never write. He despised it--unreasonably. A real thing done, he said, was better than a thousand books. Nobody read books, he said, but women, parsons and idle people. But there must be books. And I want one. Something a little more real than the ordinary official biography. . . . I have thought of young Leighton,

the secretary of the Commission. He seems thoroughly intelligent and sympathetic and really anxious to reconcile Richmond's views with those of the big business men on the Committee. He might do. . . . Or perhaps I might be able to persuade two or three people to write down their impressions of him. A sort of memorial volume. . . . But he was shy of friends. There was no man he talked to very intimately about his ideas unless it was to you . . . I wish I had the writer's gift, doctor."

Section 7

It was on the second afternoon that Lady Hardy summoned Dr. Martineau by telephone. "Something rather disagreeable," she said. "If you could spare the time. If you could come round.

"It is frightfully distressing," she said when he got round to her, and for a time she could tell him nothing more. She was having tea and she gave him some. She fussed about with cream and cakes and biscuits. He noted a crumpled letter thrust under the edge of the silver tray.

"He talked, I know, very intimately with you," she said, coming to it at last. "He probably went into things with you that he never talked about with anyone else. Usually he was very reserved, Even with me there were things about which he said nothing."

"We did," said Dr. Martineau with discretion, "deal a little with his private life.

"There was someone--"

Dr. Martineau nodded and then, not to be too portentous, took and bit a biscuit.

"Did he by any chance ever mention someone called Martin Leeds?"

Dr. Martineau seemed to reflect. Then realizing that this was a mistake, he said: "He told me the essential facts."

The poor lady breathed a sigh of relief. "I'm glad," she said simply. She repeated, "Yes, I'm glad. It makes things easier now."

Dr. Martineau looked his enquiry.

"She wants to come and see him."

"Here?"

"Here! And Helen here! And the servants noticing everything! I've never met her. Never set eyes on her. For all I know she may want to make a scene." There was infinite dismay in her voice.

Dr. Martineau was grave. "You would rather not receive her?"

"I don't want to refuse her. I don't want even to seem heartless. I understand, of course, she has a sort of claim. " She sobbed her reluctant admission. "I know it. I know. . . . There was much between them."

Dr. Martineau pressed the limp hand upon the little tea table. "I understand, dear lady," he said. "I understand. Now . . . suppose I were to write to her and arrange--I do not see that you need be put to the pain of meeting her. Suppose I were to meet her here myself?"

"If you COULD!"

The doctor was quite prepared to save the lady any further distresses, no matter at what trouble to himself. "You are so good to me," she said, letting the tears have their way with her.

"I am silly to cry," she said, dabbing her eyes.

"We will get it over to-morrow," he reassured her. "You need not think of it again."

He took over Martin's brief note to Lady Hardy and set to work by telegram to arrange for her visit. She was in London at her Chelsea flat and easily accessible. She was to come to the house at mid-day on the morrow, and to ask not for Lady Hardy but for him. He would stay by her while she was in the house, and it would be quite easy for Lady Hardy to keep herself and her daughter out of the way. They could, for example, go out quietly to the dressmakers in the closed car, for many little things about the mourning still remained to be seen to.

Section 8

Miss Martin Leeds arrived punctually, but the doctor was well ahead of his time and ready to receive her. She was ushered into the drawing room where he awaited her. As she came forward the doctor first perceived that she had a very sad and handsome face, the face of a sensitive youth rather than the face of a woman. She had fine grey eyes under very fine brows; they were eyes that at other times might have laughed very agreeably, but which were now full of an unrestrained sadness. Her brown hair was very untidy and parted at the side like a man's. Then he noted that she seemed to be very

untidily dressed as if she was that rare and, to him, very offensive thing, a woman careless of her beauty. She was short in proportion to her broad figure and her broad forehead.

"You are Dr. Martineau?" she said. "He talked of you." As she spoke her glance went from him to the pictures that stood about the room. She walked up to the painting and stood in front of it with her distressed gaze wandering about her. "Horrible!" she said. "Absolutely horrible! . . . Did SHE do this?"

Her question disconcerted the doctor very much. "You mean Lady Hardy?" he asked. "She doesn't paint."

"No, no. I mean, did she get all these things together? "

"Naturally," said Dr. Martineau.

"None of them are a bit like him. They are like blows aimed at his memory. Not one has his life in it. How could she do it? Look at that idiot statuette! . . . He was extraordinarily difficult to get. I have burnt every photograph I had of him. For fear that this would happen; that he would go stiff and formal--just as you have got him here. I have been trying to sketch him almost all the time since he died. But I can't get him back. He's gone."

She turned to the doctor again. She spoke to him, not as if she expected him to understand her, but because she had to say these things which burthened her mind to someone. "I have done hundreds of sketches. My room is littered with them. When you turn them over he seems to be lurking among them. But not one of them is like him."

She was trying to express something beyond her power. "It is as if someone had suddenly turned out the light."

She followed the doctor upstairs. "This was his study," the doctor explained.

"I know it. I came here once," she said.

They entered the big bedroom in which the confined body lay. Dr. Martineau, struck by a sudden memory, glanced nervously at the desk, but someone had made it quite tidy and the portrait of Aliss Grammont had disappeared. Miss Leeds walked straight across to the coffin and stood looking down on the waxen inexpressive dignity of the dead. Sir Richmond's brows and nose had become sharper and more clear-cut than they had ever been in life and his lips had set into a faint inane smile. She stood quite still for a long time. At length she sighed deeply.

She spoke, a little as though she thought aloud, a little as though she talked at that silent presence in the coffin. "I think he loved," she said. "Sometimes I think he loved me. But it is hard to tell. He was kind. He could be intensely kind and yet he didn't seem to care for you. He could be intensely selfish and yet he certainly did not care for himself. . . . Anyhow, I loved HIM. . . . There is nothing left in me now to love anyone else--for ever. . . ."

She put her hands behind her back and looked at the dead man with her head a little on one side. "Too kind," she said very softly.

"There was a sort of dishonesty in his kindness. He would not let you have the bitter truth. He would not say he did not love you. . . ."

"He was too kind to life ever to call it the foolish thing it is. He took it seriously because it takes itself seriously. He worked for it and killed himself with work for it "

She turned to Dr. Martineau and her face was streaming with tears. "And life, you know, isn't to be taken seriously. It is a joke--a bad joke--made by some cruel little god who has caught a neglected planet. . . . Like torturing a stray cat. . . . But he took it seriously and he gave up his life for it.

"There was much happiness he might have had. He was very capable of happiness. But he never seemed happy. This work of his came before it. He overworked and fretted our happiness away. He sacrificed his happiness and mine."

She held out her hands towards the doctor. "What am I to do now with the rest of my life? Who is there to laugh with me now and jest?

"I don't complain of him. I don't blame him. He did his best--to be kind.

"But all my days now I shall mourn for him and long for him. . . . "

She turned back to the coffin. Suddenly she lost every vestige of self-control. She sank down on her knees beside the trestle. "Why have you left me!" she cried.

"Oh! Speak to me, my darling! Speak to me, I TELL YOU! Speak to me!"

It was a storm of passion, monstrously childish and dreadful. She beat her hands upon the coffin. She wept loudly and fiercely as a child does....

Dr. Martineau drifted feebly to the window.

He wished he had locked the door. The servants might hear and wonder what it was all about. Always he had feared love for the cruel thing it was, but now it seemed to him for the first time that he realized its monstrous cruelty.

THE END

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