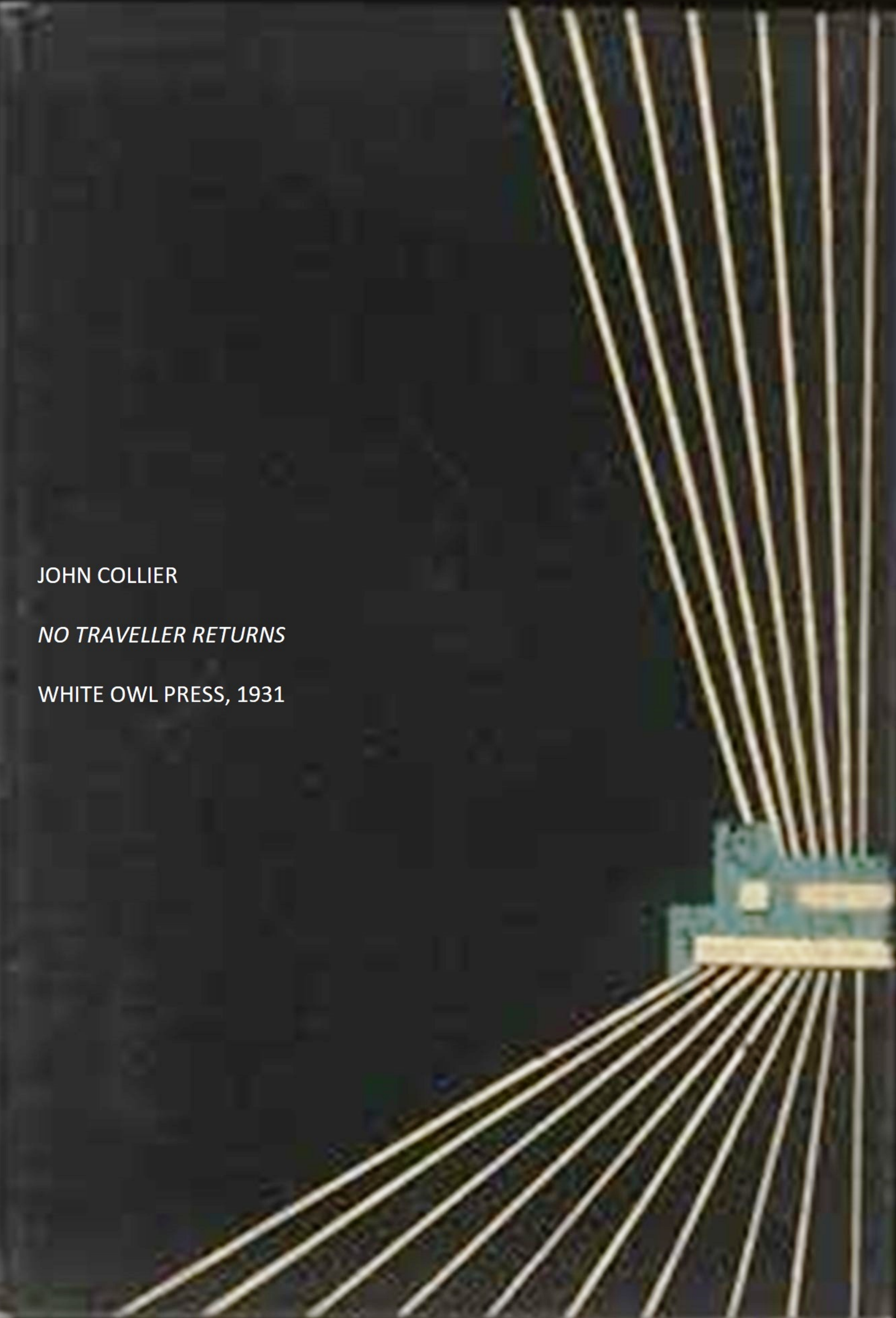


JOHN COLLIER

*NO TRAVELLER RETURNS*

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## THE APOLOGY

Two, among the many orders of men who merit the contempt and hatred of their fellows, are undoubtedly these: the grovelling minds which have never aspired to fancy an Utopia, and those ardents who have had the generosity to conceive a plan of our future good, and cannot refrain from afflicting us with a presentation of it.

At one time these incontinent oracles were content to insult us, by faking up a blissful state which should prevail (they said) when philosophy and conduct, and justice and society, and our tastes and theirs, should have become one. In more recent days, a class of enthusiasts has arisen, who, without abating at all the insult of a damaging comparison, have contrived to combine with it a formidable degree of injury. These are so extremely good as to promise us a Millenium, if we will permit the rude best of



our lives to be lived for us by a number of devices which the scientists propose to perfect.

Yet, in spite of their persuasiveness on behalf of the men of science, there still remain among us a few (of whom it is my only pride to count myself one) who consider the single great man, among all that swarm of pretentious mechanics, to have been the celebrated amateur, Captain C-and-m, who, weary of the futility of grape shot and cold steel in reducing the superfluity of the race, perfected a simple means of anticipating the good offices of his profession.

Although the scientists have much elaborated the instruments of the captain's benevolence, both those which he employed in the field, and that which he invented for the home, we shall hardly thank them for it, if we consider that in every hundred devices of their blind and inconsiderate spawning, two or three are likely to make some accidental flutter against the evil trend of the vast majority. Rather shall we blame them the harder for not having perceived that law, which insists that man shall receive no material gift but his myopic opportunism must convert it to its most damaging use,



so that having enfeebled himself by resorting to all kinds of props and crutches (in offering him which science has doomed all his lovely playgrounds, forests, seas, wastes, terræ incognitæ, and time and space themselves), having enfeebled himself thus, he cries out for more and more of the facile and enervating manna of the refrigerator and the tin, that he may feed his lasciviousness to the begetting, and his vanity in the contemplation, of the greatest possible number of offspring in the image of his own unbeautiful wantonness.

None are more prominent among those, who, for lack of money or for lack of wit, are loud to advertise the pseudo-benefactions of science, than are the modern writers of Utopias, who are not content with the agents of our present decay, but strain their spectacled peepers after those which are still, thank God ! a little way over the rim of our horizon. When they have speculated as to what these shall be, they sing out a cackling pæan, eager to foist them upon us as so many steps to Paradise. But the Paradise they prophesy is really nothing but an uneasy Nirvana, in which, as has been said, these damnable toys shall live for us the



lives which they have contrived to render not worth our living.

Any attempt that is made to contradict these infatuated progressives upon their own ground, must suffer under serious disadvantages. It is necessary to lie as brazenly as they do, but with infinitely less chance of being believed, for the mob, now in full cry after a shadow, is not likely to give much credit to a merely shadowy denial. Moreover, these emigrationists of that undiscovered country, from which not only no traveller returns, but for which not a man-jack of them all has ever set forth, have so bemused the vulgar, that there is no doubt we must all henceforward proceed by the Davy Lamp of science, and strike a course into the mines and caverns of snoring comfort, if only that its beams may show to better advantage than among the shining positive pleasures of our upper earth. This is not my lot, and if my descendants choose to ignore the precepts of their dad, they may tunnel to Hell for all I care, and be as heartily damned at the end of their laborious journey, as if they had got there by a simple and pleasant short cut, which I might, but will not, prescribe.

The certainty of their fate, however, is



depressing to one who would dissuade them from embracing it, and their infatuation is likely to render a hopeless task also a thankless one. Although the days of the pillory are past, and not yet returned, nothing but obscurity is likely to save me from the cruellest check that it lies in their power to inflict: that is, that I am not scientific. Gladly as I would open my bosom to this thrust, that it might warm the cockles of my chilly heart, I am prevented from doing so by the fact that, in this gull's eye view of the remote future, I have curbed every rocketting of Pegasus, and ridden him along the tramlines of laboratory reasoning.

My accuracy will chiefly be impugned, I imagine, over the suggestion that scientists may come to figure as music-hall buffoons. Yet in deducing this, I have only applied the cyclical theory of the most scientific (and the most uninspired) of sociologists. It may be observed universally, that Gods, heroes, gladiators and merry-Andrews are fundamentally the same characters, at successive stages on an inevitable curve—Olympus, Olympia, the Colosseum, the Coliseum—and the seeds or vestiges of the others are discernible in each individual stage. Some-



times they overlap. Bully parsons are preaching in the temple of Science, who are prepared to sacrifice themselves (their own rabbits!) on the altar. Or is the temple a theatre, whose stalls began to fill with *Science from an Easy Chair*? There is a complete change of programme once a fortnight. Little children in the gallery cry Oh! and Ah! impressed by the marvels of God knows what. A face pokes through the curtain: the observed of all *Observers*. The overture appears to be by Sullivan.

How I came by my knowledge of other parts of the future, I am not disposed to conceal. The process is very similar to that by which a certain sect has arrived at the conclusion, that the universe is a thought in the mind of a great Mathematician. That is, by wanting and trying, as Mr. Bernard Shaw would say, and chiefly by the former. The only point in which I differ from them is in the conclusion; for I hold that all is the thought of a great Satirist, an opinion in which I rest the more secure, in that however little mathematics they may discover in me, in support of their theory, I find that mine is in no way invalidated when I come to examine theirs and them.



# NO TRAVELLER RETURNS

## I

THERE appeared with surprising suddenness, on the corner opposite Professor Wilkinson's lodgings, one of those erections, or rather the super-terrestrial lip of one of those excavations, with which municipal authorities offer a brief but important hospitality to all of nature's Gentlemen. But though the suddenness was surprising, for the thing pouted up from the under-earth as suddenly as a carp does from still water, it so chanced that no-one was surprised. It happened in the small hours of the morning, and as the road had been up for some weeks previously, the local residents nodded and smiled, and half of them dismissed the matter from their minds. Just at that time the Borough Council had undergone re-election, so that the new board imagined itself to have inherited this grotto from its predecessors, and the old board merely remarked that new brooms swept extravagantly clean.

That dry old stick, the Professor, noticed nothing at all until some months had passed. He was then much disconcerted by the complete upsetting of certain mathematical formulæ, from which he had of course experienced that extraordinary æsthetic pleasure which only mathematicians are privileged to feel, unless perhaps



Shakespeare and Giotto may have glimpsed some twinkling mirage of it. This super-artistic rapture has become so prized by many contemporary scientists, that they are now eagerly implanting all heaven in a wild atom, in order that, having already told us they experience the purest of artistic truths, they may now claim to be seers of religious ones, as were their ancestors, the witch doctors before them. But as in every great eclectic renaissance a few obstinate temperamental primitives will survive, the good Wilkinson found it as impossible to join with his flexible colleagues as would St. Peter with the present Pope of Rome. He was that sort of whole-hogger who feels that the abstract beauty of science must be founded on objective truth, and as, like all the rest of his profession, he found more beauty in the celestial harmony of those two twos which make four, than in all the poems and creeds which have ever been created, so he saw no more of advantage than of justice in the strenuous efforts of the modernists to lay claim to alien and barren fields. Accordingly, when he found his æsthetic joys to have been invalidated by a slight mistake in the formulæ which evoked them, he determined to return to the ecstasies of simple arithmetic, much as a painter, who finds himself unable to imitate a cow, will decide to adopt the asceticism of peasant art, as opposed to others in the same case, who will proceed to a broad treatment of light and shade.

The stern old Puritan speedily devised a



means of satisfying at once his ascetic tastes and his hunger for the beauty of scientific truth. His attention, as it sank punctured from the stars, condescended to drag its tail over objects in his immediate vicinity, and was tangled for a moment or two in the railings that had so mysteriously appeared on the opposite corner. The Professor, as he gazed dreamily at these, was seized by an inspiration more original, and more humane, than that which prompted an illustrious confrere of his to bore a hole through a jaw-bone, and to connect a vessel with certain salivary ducts, to discover definitely whether a hungry dog's mouth would water or no, when it was shown a piece of meat.

"I will establish for certain," said he, "whether there is any truth in the common belief, that the number of people who emerge from places such as this equals the number of those who enter. If I find this to be so, or if I can discover a constant ratio between the two orders, or if I can discover none, I will publish my results, and the principle can be known as Wilkinson's Law of Equality or Variability as the case may be."

"I hope," he proceeded, his hands trembling a little as he sought for writing materials, so that he might design an apparatus which would equip his research, "I hope that the numbers will prove to be equal, for I can imagine no ecstasy so exalted as the contemplation of a perfect balance, presiding inscrutably over a multitude of irregular arrivals and departures.



Yet, if they are unequal—what a blow to causality ! ”

With that he began to design a remarkable instrument, for the construction of which, since his means were scanty, he was compelled to apply to the Pockhealer Research Fund for a grant, which was unhesitatingly accorded to him. This instrument consisted of two complicated lenses, which would, when he had hung his spectacles upon them, transmit rays of light to a sensitive plate behind, so that no solid body might pass over the spot on which he focussed them, without being observed and registered.

“ Why,” he cried in a transport, as he stood adjusting this apparatus in his window, “ How simple in essence are even the most complicated devices of science ! It is just as if I were to count them myself.”

Thereupon he set the instrument to work, himself passing the day in a series of lofty calculations, in which there was certainly this much of religious ecstasy, that they were closely akin to those of a rural dean, who wonders, supposing that his merit bears fruit, whether he had better accept the post of Bishop suffragan, or wait in the hope of being made a full prelate in the near future. In short, our excellent professor could not decide whether he should publish his results as an immediate fortnightly part of some series or other of marvels, or whether he should write a large book, explaining them clearly to the popular mind.

It was therefore with much eagerness that



he extracted the plates at the end of the day, and hastened to develop them. Prepared as he was, to be amazed at the profundity of the most obvious results, or to remain calm before an unexpected one, he stared, trembling like a novice, at the revelation which ensued. For although a great many people were registered as having crossed the threshold in one direction, it appeared that no one at all had crossed it in the other. Not one had come up.

The Professor's brain reeled. Could it be that he had stumbled thus upon the most momentous discovery of the age? At this thought, a further quiver of æsthetic rapture shook his frail form.

Before long, however, his Spartan training re-asserted itself, and he determined to subject his results to the most rigorous of tests, before broadcasting what might well prove to be the salvation of the race. After scrupulously overhauling his apparatus, he set it again in the window, resolving to control his impatience until it had functioned for a full week.

When this period had elapsed, he again developed the plates, and observed, with a throbbing heart, that although the number of entrants was proportionately increased (Saturday night having made up for Sunday morning) still not one person had ever emerged.

But during that week, as he had sat in solitude beside the remorseless machine, a great resolution had sprung up within his breast. The same spirit that has urged the physician to swallow



his own drugs, the economist to achieve the closest possible contact with wealth, and the psycho-analyst to probe bravely into the material basis of his science, now prescribed one course, and one alone, for Professor Wilkinson.

Next day, having left his instrument still at work in the window, he left the house, and, glancing neither to the right nor to the left, he crossed the road, and descended promptly into the grotto, whence he also never came up.



PROFESSOR Wilkinson had no sooner reached the bottom step, when he trod, as it were, upon a mathematical banana skin, and, after an eternal instant of slip and twist, he found himself standing in a cavern altogether different from that he had expected to enter. Before he could take stock of his surroundings, he was seized upon by a number of slight but active figures, he was stripped stark naked, surveyed disapprovingly, and hurried off along one side of the vast hall, past what seemed to be a series of railed pens, and finally he was dumped down in one of these, on a litter of soft mossy stuff which was spread upon the floor.

His assailants had no sooner slammed to the door of this pen, than the professor bounded to his feet, and called out a number of protests and enquiries after their retreating forms, and, these being ignored, he seized upon the tall metal railings of the doorway, and shook them very severely. An outlandish looking fellow, in something resembling a peaked cap, had already begun to move towards his pen, in order to whip his fingers from the bars, when a certain article of furniture, which ran down the whole long middle of the hall, so arrested the professor's attention that he ceased his shaking,



and stood absolutely rigid. This was a mighty and composite oven, or rather a chain of ovens, which succeeded one another on low supports above what appeared to be a hot electric cable.

"Is it possible," wondered the professor, "that my analyst has not entirely smoothed all complexes from my mind? Can he have failed to light upon some unpleasant event of my childhood, connected with ovens?" For the fact is, that at the sight of this one, the good man felt profoundly uneasy.

And although the scientist has none of that instinctive fear of what is out of the ordinary, which is apt to embarrass men of commoner clay, since his lot is daily contact with the mysterious, even in the most everyday matters, such as form the subjects of a thousand and one questions of children, or one joke of adults, yet Professor Wilkinson, when he was led on to examine the rest of his surroundings, could not but find their strangeness as ominous as it was interesting.

The long row of pens, of which his own was one, continued down the entire length of the hall, and was duplicated on the other side. Most of them were occupied, and by gentlemen as naked as was the professor, and it occurred to him, that at no learned gathering he had ever attended, had he seen such an unanimous expression of profound gravity. And, as if he were in one of those humours which nothing can please, he found no sort of compensation in the appearance of the other figures in the



cavern, though they all seemed comparatively brisk and merry. These were men of small stature, who chattered in an unknown tongue, and whose costume seemed rather designed to differentiate them according to their various functions, than to protect them from the cold, for it resembled nothing so much as those soldiers' or bus-conductors' outfits which are sold, pinned to a card, for two and elevenpence, at Christmas toy bazaars. The group that waited near the entrance wore the sketchy indications of a cowboy's rig, the peaked-capped men who strolled along and beat mutinous fingers from the bars, or prodded with pointed sticks at those whose melancholy overflowed in wails and howls, were perhaps tricked out as Zoo attendants, while the set who attended to the ovens wore what looked damnably like the tall white caps of cooks. Some others, of whom the commoner sort sported straw boaters and small aprons striped with blue and white, while their chiefs were dressed in bowlers and watch-chains, seemed to act as salesmen, for they received visitors, who entered at the further door, and whose functions must have been labours of spiritual love, for most of them were equipped for nothing else. These were conducted on a tour of the pens, by the salesmen, who seemed, in a sort of gabble, to praise the gentlemen confined in these, until they hit upon one who found favour in the eyes of the visitor. Professor Wilkinson watched anxiously to see what happened then.



It chanced that one of these visitors, accompanied by a straw-hatted man, soon approached the pen where the professor was, and after bestowing a whimsical glance on him, turned with a different sort of attention to his next door neighbour. This happened to be a plump young man, who, like many of the corpulent kind, seemed over-sensitive as to his proportions, for he no sooner found himself an object of regard, than he shrank himself into the smallest possible compass, in the remotest corner of his cage, and, by sucking in his cheeks, endeavoured to elongate a face, which had, as a matter of fact, become remarkably lank and wan at the first approach of the strangers. His nervousness, however, defeated its own ends, for though, had his face alone been visible, its natural plumpness might have escaped detection, he ostrich-like thrust his head down into the very corner of his cell, and, in concealing it, exposed certain other contours, which no emotion can attenuate, and which exhibited, in more forms than one, all the buxom evidence of a bountiful diet.

The visitor, to whom beauty must have been more than skin deep, gazed with positive rapture at this spectacle, and, turning to the salesman, he gave a lively nod. The young man, who had been peeping out from between his legs, as if to scare away crocodiles, no sooner perceived this nod, than he uttered a cry not unlike that of a dog (or, to be quite fair, that of a pig either) who is about to give up his life



in the cause of humanity. At the same time, he laid hold of the rails which divided his cage from that of the professor, with a determination which seemed to indicate, that though he might have been critical of his accommodation hitherto, he had now become so enamoured of it that he would fain dwell there for ever. This whim of his, though, was fated to pass ungratified, for the straw-hatted man jerked his head, thereby summoning a bevy of those attired as cowboys, who jauntily entered, and, heedless of the young man's bitter outcry, bore him from the cell, and through a door in the opposite wall, whose heavy closing guillotined most nastily the last of his urgent wails. It was as if someone had cut off the loud speaker in the middle of a radio thriller. And now, just as the company will begin to chatter and complain when this occurs, a positive babel broke out from all the long extent of cages. The peaked-capped men rushed up and down with their long sticks, prodding furiously.

They had hardly succeeded in subduing the frenzy of screams and execrations, when these broke out once more with redoubled fury, for the door swung open again, and a sort of trolley came through, on which, to the professor's horror, sat the unfortunate young man, looking inexpressibly pink and fresh and clean, but showing no signs of life. Had our hero been of a literary turn of mind, he might have derived much satisfaction from the fact that this young man, dead and trussed and stuffed, bore in his



dumb mouth a symbolic answer to all the vexatious questions of science, and was, moreover, crowned with the poet's garland of parsley.

But though he was denied this literary relish, the professor gained some sort of advantage from the spectacle, and that was, that in one bound he took leave of all his primitive materialism, and overtook, and passed, all the religious tendencies of his more advanced colleagues, for the truth is, he found himself offering up a short but fervent prayer.

An oven door was opened, and the gridiron stretcher on which the young man reposed was thrust on to the wide and shallow metal pan within. The rosy cook took a last peep, and gently shut the door, and smiled.

"They do one rather well here!" cried a round-faced man, who was penned on the professor's other side, and having given vent to this sally, he let out an eldritch cackle, and began to run his head against the hinder wall, for he had been there some days, and his strong spirit had gone half zany at the contemplation of his approaching end. Others sat in a deplorable apathy, too listless to wipe away the tears which overflowed from eyes fastened hopelessly upon the fatal oven.

It was not long after this, though long enough for two or three more of the captives to disappear, that the attendants began to run up and down with pails, from which they dispensed to each prisoner a quantity of rather colourless paste, which all these unfortunates began to gobble up



with an avidity which was altogether surprising, since the donation of this oily snack had so obvious a connection with the vile purposes of their captors. That all present were aware of the connection, became apparent as soon as they had finished their meals, for their expressions grew if possible more dolorous than before, and not a few began surreptitiously to practise some hasty Swedish exercises.

The round-faced man on the professor's right, who had finished his portion before any of the others, was now so busily occupied in damning his own eyes, appetite, teeth, throat, stomach, guts and liver, that he had no attention to spare to satisfy the poor man's curiosity, which was soon allayed, however, and by the following means.

After he had carefully inspected the mess, his interest led him to taste a little on the tip of his forefinger, when he observed that while its flavour resembled that of some highly concentrated form of the pallid vitamine foods his landlady gave him for breakfast, it had the property of begetting a very powerful thirst. This caused him to look about hurriedly for some water, of which he perceived a quantity in a trough set down in the moss, and this he lapped up with the greatest eagerness. It was only when he had satisfied his craving, that he perceived something slightly bitter in its taste, and this bitterness grew upon his palate until suddenly it achieved apotheosis in the most ravenous appetite he had ever known in his



life. Returning to the despised and distrusted paste, he fell upon it like a madman, and devoured it to the last fragment before he paid heed to the warning voice of reason. The round-faced man, who now was quietly surveying him through the bars, laughed and wept alternately as he watched the professor's downfall.

It would be a stupendous labour to set down all that the professor observed during the days that followed on this, and to describe the sensations that possessed him would be a super-human one. Let it suffice to say, that, owing perhaps to certain peculiarities of his figure, which resembled nothing so much as that of the stately heron, with its feathers off, he passed through his novitiate in this monastery, and through his full brotherhood, and into the position of oldest inhabitant, in the course of a fortnight, during which two or three generations, so to speak, of newcomers wept, swelled and commanded a fair price in the cages on either side of him.

Their expressions of regret, though sincere, became monotonous very early in this period, so after a short time the professor avoided all converse with them, and concentrated entirely on studying his surroundings.

It was his privilege to witness, among a host of less distinguished entries, the advent of M. B••l•st•n, who was sold, after a great deal of bargaining, at so obviously low a figure, that his outcries rang with a double anguish. Messrs. Ch•st•rt•n and B•ll•c, who dropped in



shortly afterwards, were each purchased by a syndicate, within two hours of their arrival. Lord B\*\*v\*rbr\*\*k, who also had the misfortune to descend, spent his days and nights in crying out a series of headlines, more heartily than ever did his humblest newsboy, in which he recanted entirely his peculiar antagonism to the League of Nations, but appeared to be more enthusiastic than ever for the protection of British foodstuffs. Yet he was bought by an apparently needy stripling, who stood by till he was cooked, and wheeled him off in high glee.

The interest of watching arrivals, however, palled long before that which our hero found in observing departures from this place, which began to engross him to the point of morbidity, and it was to distract his mind from dwelling on this melancholy procession, that he set himself to an intensive study of the inhabitants. Something in their speech seemed not unfamiliar to the professor, and it was not long before he decided that their language must be related to the Esperanto of which he had once been a student, and though it had widely diverged from that synthetic tongue, it seemed to have been simplified to a logical though an insipid extreme. Unless its vocabulary was peculiarly inadequate to questions of gastronomics, the professor concluded it to be a language in which there was no great subtlety of words expressive of physical sensation, for he noticed that the same sound was employed, though modified by vastly different gestures, in indicating the juicy-



ness of one subject, the tenderness of another, and the rich, gamey potentialities of a third.

To one who had mastered several of the dialects of science, there was no great difficulty in grasping the principles of this modified Esperanto, and when he had spent some days in revising his whole stock of that lingo, in accordance with what appeared to be quite regular rules, he felt himself prepared to address a conciliatory speech to any friendly-looking visitor who might linger by his cage. He would have paid his compliments to one of those regularly occupied in the place, except that their treatment of him had become such, that he felt but little hope that his advances would be received very favourably. For the truth is, the chief of the bowler-hatted men viewed him with an extraordinarily sour expression, and referred to him openly as a poor doer, which encouraged the baser sort to make a set upon him, as brutal drovers will, upon some scraggy and unmarketable member of the herd. It was their amusement to prod him wantonly with their pointed sticks, and ceaselessly to revile him for that leanness which, the professor thought, was largely contributed to by the capers their barbarity forced him to cut. And, while caution and resentment alike prevented him from addressing the attendants, he found little opportunity of recommending himself to any of the visitors, for these were usually hurried past his cage, and, if they glanced at him at all, they did so with the



offended eye of one who recognises the form of a skinned cat among the poulterer's array of coneys.

Weary of waiting for the kind glance of a potential patron, who might, he hoped, be persuaded to buy him alive, and offer him a good home as something in the nature of a parrot, until the opportunity of more leisured conversations would reveal him as an intellect fitted to be treated as an equal, and possibly as a leader, or king, the professor sought some other distraction from his sorrows. Brushing away the mossy litter from a part of his floor-space, he began upon a series of mathematical speculations, which he pursued by means of figures drawn in the dust.

It was while he was engaged on these, that the manager of the place approached, bearing along with him an individual whose watch-chain far eclipsed his own, and who wore also a monocle, a pearly topper, yellow gloves, and checked spats. This floridly dressed man, who chattered and gesticulated very vivaciously, declined to be hurried past the professor's humble abode, but stopped and eyed him with great good humour, condescending at last to expose a row of celluloid teeth in a highly mannered smile.

"By Newton! my boy," cried he to the manager, rolling out the rich oath as if to some invisible audience perched up in the vaulted roof, "that's a funny specimen you've got hold of. *He's* going pretty cheap, I suppose?"



"We sell no inferior meat here," replied the manager with much dignity. "Cheap or dear, we supply nothing but the best. That one ought never to have been penned up at all. Anyone could tell with half an eye he'd never get well covered. His fodder's been entirely wasted. He's going into the destructor to-day, where he'd have been weeks ago, except I've been too busy to attend to him."

"I'm sorry to hear it," boomed the customer, "for the fact is, laddie, I look like being reduced to vile economy if the present state of things continues. If I don't get hold of some big attraction, I shall be asking you for credit next week, unless you can save something cheap like that for me."

The manager gave a suave and non-committal smile.

"But what's this?" cried the florid man, as he caught sight of the professor's diagrams on the floor.

"Sir," murmured that unfortunate, with a meek proud blush, "in spite of my present plight, I am a scientist, and by means of these angles....."

"Scientist! Angles!" cried the opulent one, in a sudden rapture. "Angles! *Non anglii*, laddie, *sed angellii*!" murmured he, or words to that effect. "My fortune's made. You're great. You're a draw."

"I know that gag," he went on, peering at the professor's beautifully simple diagram. "It may be an old one, and I've seen it slicker done."



But coming from an early Woolworth Age man, why, it'll be standing room only for the longest run since Einstein knows when!

"I'll have him," cried this enthusiast to the manager, "if he costs as much as the best. What's your figure?"

"It's our principle, Sir," replied that worthy, "to sell nothing but the very best, and I fear I shall have to charge extra for this one, on account of the damage to our reputation. You'd be wanting him raw, too, I suppose. That would be extra." And he proceeded to name a price which might have been very pleasing to the professor, except for what had gone before, and for what, he feared, was about to follow.

This figure being grandly accepted by the customer, the manager jerked his hand authoritatively, and two attendants hastened to extract the captive from his cage.

"I shall want him dressed," said the florid man.

"Dressed?" said the manager, enquiringly.

"Dressed in his native costume, laddie," replied the purchaser, "not for the table."

At these last words the professor looked up hopefully, and his grasp on the bars of the cage relaxed a little.

"Am I," he wondered, "to be made a pet of, after all?"

It seemed as if his hopes were to be realised. On receipt of a small consideration for this favour, the manager sang out to those who



waited to receive entrants, and commanded them to bring him the clothes of one whom they were at that moment disrobing, and who chanced to be none other than Mr. M•x B••rb•hm. The professor arrayed his lanky form in these, and putting a hand trustingly in that of his preserver, he suffered himself to be led towards that door of the kitchen, through which he had scarcely hoped to pass, save in one of the large aluminium boxes, wherein, he had noted, purchases were ultimately carried out in the wake of the customers.



### III

THE exit opened upon a wide and listless boulevard, which extended in a perfectly straight line in either direction, as far as eye could see. There was no sort of bustle in this thoroughfare, though it was very populous, for most of the people were sitting on the broad pavements, neither talking nor reading, nor even comfortably asleep. As far as the professor could judge, they were doing nothing whatsoever. Every now and then, one of them would start up, and go through an elaborate series of exercises, on the completion of which he would resume his former recumbent apathy. This the professor noticed while he and his patron were standing on one of the two wide moving belts that flowed smoothly up and down the middle of the boulevard. He observed that the whole of this multitude, who all looked exactly alike, fell into the masculine category, but only in a scientific sense.

"Excuse me," said the professor, who had maintained a thoughtful silence since they had left the kitchen, "excuse me, but I cannot refrain from asking you, in the interests of science, what place this is, and who these people are, and where you are taking me, and what is going to happen to me, and....."



"What?" said the florid man, "are you curious? That's right. There's nothing like interest. It's infectious. You'll go down well. I know it. I knew it at once."

"What place is this?" said the professor, "and who are these?"

"Good!" said his proprietor.

"Where am I?" cried the professor, smiting his brow.

"Bully!" was the reply.

"I assure you," screamed the professor, "I am dying of curiosity."

"What?" cried the other, "you mustn't die. Dying of curiosity! What an extraordinary people you must have been! But don't die. I'll tell you." And at once he began to rattle off a mass of information, and in such a business-like way as might have shown that he took the professor's hyperbole quite at its literal meaning.

"You are now at approximately the same spot on the earth's surface as that from which you entered our little trap. You are not, however, on the same point in time." Here he snatched a long hair from what the professor now observed to be a wig. This he rolled into a little ball, between his finger and thumb.

"Time," he said, "doubles and redoubles upon itself as this hair now does. It happens that that point in time at which we are now arrived, is, in another dimension, closely adjacent to the point you have recently left. It was thus a very simple matter for us to burrow



through and set up a little trap, which has enabled us to supply the atavistic members of our community, of whom I have the honour to be one, with a little fresh butcher's meat."

"But have you no domestic animals, then?" asked the professor, rather petulantly. "Or could you not eat one another?"

"All animal life, except human, was obliterated shortly after the scientists became rulers of the planet," replied his companion with the utmost good humour. "And as for eating one another, we have tried that, but the masses, while they have no great objection to being eaten by the handful of recessives, in whom lies our only hope of a return to a desirable life, have so insipid a flavour, owing to the synthetic foods on which the race has been fed for centuries, that they are simply not worth eating."

"But why should you regard recessives as the hope of the race?" asked the professor.

"We have lived under the rule of science for many thousands of years," said his companion gravely.

"I cannot help thinking," spoke up the professor, after a long meditation on the innumerable inert figures which lined the sunny banks of their metal stream, "I cannot help thinking that when you speak of government by science, you refer to the use of applied science, in the hands of those, who, even if they are scientists to begin with, become, in the act of using it, men. We in the twentieth century, had already discriminated between Science



temporal, and Science spiritual, and had chosen....."

"Yes, I know all about the twentieth century," said the florid man sharply. "We've taken a special interest in it since we got into touch with you. But let me tell you that the abstract mysteries, demonstrated by an odd miracle now and then, remained in fashion just so long as science had no share in the government. But with the establishment of the Scientific Roman Empire, its attitude suddenly changed, and the very first of its infallible fortnightly decrees was, that there was no truth but scientific truth, and Mathematics was its prophet. When, at the Diet of Vitamines, the strong sect of the Psychiarists, who held that they alone could read accurately the mental processes of the great Mathematician, in whose mind the entire Universe was but a thought; when, I say, the Psychiarists accepted the mathematical method of communication, and thus dissolved themselves into the orthodox body, (one of their number assuming the three tiered crown shortly afterwards) it was proclaimed that the Kingdom of Science was come. The vast majority of mankind rejoiced at what they believed to be the advent of the Millenium, for there was a proverb in those days concerning scientists, which ran, 'The fewer the merrier, but the more the better fare.'

"A recalcitrant handful, who secretly worshipped a barbarous ideal which they called æsthetic truth, were conscientiously examined,



and the Scientific Office, which was set up for the purpose, convicted them of Inaccuracy, and decreed the obliteration of devotees, temples, images, hymns, and sacred books. The utmost humanity was observed in the weeding out of these fanatics, not only because Science is always humane, but because their faith was less vicious than blind, since the object of their worship was in reality a minor attribute of that true Truth which they were rash enough to contemn."

"Go on," murmured the professor. "What happened then?"

"Through a succession of peaceful ages, the burdens of human life were one by one lifted from the shoulders of the race, until at last there was nothing whatever to do except to exchange ideas through a mechanism at once too complex and too simple for your easy comprehension. As, however, the profoundest ideas were held to be the only ones meriting attention, the exchange was, in effect, a one-sided one, in which the chief scientist, in pronouncing his fortnightly decree from the Vatican, took a fortnight to pronounce it, while mankind sat enthralled. At length, such progress had been made, that the greatest scientist was able to comprehend the whole system of the universe, which is perhaps less subtle than it was thought to be in your time, and hence it followed that, as the universe is but a thought in the mind of a great mathematician, and as this thought was now in the mind of the Incarnation of Truth upon Earth, the two were henceforward



identical, so that the greatest scientist, and the two or three who were closest to him, were no longer held as rulers only, but as Gods."

"And I," asked the professor, "am I to be a god, too?"

"You may well become an idol," replied his instructor, with a smile. "The fact is," he added, not unkindly, "that when there was no mystery left to explore, men found the spiritual joy of contemplating the entire workings of matter to be rather dull. Two and two make four. One part of oxygen combined with two parts of hydrogen makes water. These, I believe were tenets of your early creed. But I assure you it is just as trite, that two and two make  $4-\sqrt{-1}$ ; and the formula for making the atom from energy is as banal as that for making water. I wonder what were the superstitions of those old heathens, the artists, about water. They may have been interesting. Unfortunately, all records have been destroyed."

"If you're eager to know," said the professor, with a sniff, "why don't you send a party back to explore the ancient world?"

"We have done so," said the other, "but they never return. If only we could know why!"

"Well, as I was saying, it became apparent that the exaltation of scientific discovery had no better basis than vulgar curiosity, and people became as apathetic to the *vox ex cathedra* as that voice had rendered them to everything else. At last the voice itself faltered, was heard to mumble, and expired upon a yawn."



"For some generations now, we have continued to follow the incredibly simplified routine that has been organised for us. To make it more effortless, the race has been bred with a view to making this part of our lives a transmitted instinct, so that life is run inevitably and unconsciously, without pleasure or pain."

"But how, then, if science is so much underrated now, am I to become an idol?" asked the professor.

"You have observed," said his Virgil, "our splendidly equipped kitchen, filled with officials briskly occupied in their respective tasks, and visited by customers with far more eager and exacting appetites than you can imagine these multitudes to have, for their ration of pap."

"Yes, indeed," said the professor. "But what of that? Good heavens, you don't mean to tell me, that, having worshipped the divinity of science, you have descended to making a God of your stomach? Not *that*!"

"Have no fear," replied the other, "I merely wished to draw your attention to the presence among us of certain individuals who are more active and enterprising than the rest of the race, whose enervated forms you see on every side. These are composed of that minority of throwbacks, which science would no doubt have eliminated completely, had it not lost interest a little too soon. We recessives form a little society of our own, and it is our aim to regain as many as possible of the lost characteristics which seem to have made life interesting to our



forefathers, for though we are less continually afflicted with boredom than are our fellows, we feel it, on the whole, very much more. We are, however, making great strides. We have developed needs which call for some energy for their supplying. One of them is our new meat diet, which we hope will increase our atavistic tendencies. We have even spiritual needs. Some of us, who have had the misfortune to revert to some old scientific strain, minister to these. I have the honour to organise them, and I propose to add you to the company."

"What?" cried the professor, perking up, "Does science still arouse enthusiasm after all?"

"It does, my boy," was the genial reply, "Just as that dexterity, which made your century what it was, appeared at its purest neither in war nor production nor finance, but in the feats of the juggler and the patter of the comedian, so science, to which we owe our present happy state, is now kind enough to add no more to the debt, beyond providing wholesome thrills and clean merriment, under my management, at the Isosceles, our chief Variety Palace, which you now see before you.



PROFESSOR Wilkinson stood uneasily in the wings, awaiting his turn to go on. It had been arranged that his debut was to be made in the Quantum Theory, and though this was his subject, the prospect depressed him. He had hoped to give his views on twentieth-century life in general, with which, like all his contemporaries, he was always ready to oblige.

“For,” he had said to his producer, “if I talk upon some entirely scientific subject, I shall be at a great disadvantage. What will be the use of my dealing with the dimensions of space, for example, where, in the eyes of my audience, I shall be like a magpie fumbling over the number four, while they rejoice in being able to count up to goodness knows how many? I shall look a fool.”

“You have missed the point,” was the reply. “We recessives, who will constitute the whole of your audience (for the masses have no interest in anything whatsoever), we recessives are not anxious to come by a new store of facts, for our minds are over-burdened with them already. Even about your remote century, we know too much. To take an example from your environment:—you had, I believe, a greater interest in the body than we can easily



conceive, for it appears that you would flock to see men performing feats with heavy lumps of lead. I take it that the lead, as such, played an entirely subordinate part in the exhibition. No-one wanted to learn anything about it, except perhaps that it was genuine and solid. So with us. It is true that in this, the promised heaven of Science, we are angelically free from all bodily needs and crises (though we hope to regain some of them by our new diet), but we dearly love to see the feats of the mind. The particular leaden truth you may deal with, is of little account; it is the juggling we want to see."

....."Er.....I shall be delighted to exhibit my mental powers," said the professor, "but, as far as knowledge goes, we were but sub-men compared with you. Besides," said he, with an ironic simper, "won't it be rather as if a chimpanzee had been brought in, upon one of our stages, to caricature the feats of the strong men you mention?"

"You've hit it, laddie!" cried the producer, enthusiastically. "That's the very line I had in mind for you. Keep that ideal in view, and you'll go over big."

The professor had pouted mutinously. Nevertheless, he saw that further protest was of no avail, and a few evenings later he was standing, as has been noted, awaiting his turn to go on.

The performer he was to follow was explaining a final wonder of radio-activity. Attired in the parody of some severe but gorgeous robe, he spoke in a tone of almost devout enthusiasm.



The professor, though he could only follow intermittently, was amazed by the intellectual force and agility displayed, and his heart grew hot within him when he thought of all that this figure stood for, and when he saw how the unworthy audience only tittered the louder when the lecturer grew in dignified enthusiasm, as he pursued his subject into depths more secret and profound. A red-nosed man added to our hero's indignation, by irrepressibly advancing from the wings, and endeavouring, by a multitude of sneering questions, to break or entangle the thread of the exalted discourse. But the performer, with unflurried poise, kept, so to speak, all his balls in the air, and finished amid the hilarious applause of those who had watched in sadistic ecstasy for his breakdown.

The torch, or rather the Roman candle, of Science, now passed into the professor's hands. The manager spoke him a last cheery word of encouragement, the audience stirred expectantly, one or two in the back rows gave peculiar whistles, and the good man strode resolutely forward. It seemed as though a hot potato was lodged where his sad heart had been. His deepest feelings were in revolt against the outrageous reception accorded to the great mind which had preceded him. All his discreet submission was now flung to the winds; the faint unworthy notion that had stirred within him, that it would be rather pleasant to be a *star*, was entirely quenched. All thoughts of the Quantum Theory fled before his sudden determination to rebuke



these heedless mockers for their folly, to represent to them the true place of science in the life of man, perchance to lead them back into the path from which they had strayed.

"Friends," he began, "friends: ever since our first ape-like ancestor took up some simple object between finger and thumb, and felt in his dim mind the first blind gropings of curiosity as to what and why it was, that curiosity has been the torch which has guided us on our upward march. In that first feeble and obscure awakening Science was born. Science....."

And he proceeded in a very elegant fortnightly style, to remind them of all they owed to it. But in doing this, the professor overlooked two very important considerations. One was that his reasoning, like that of many of his confreres, was not quite so tight and lucid on these general matters as it was when he confined himself to the formulated processes of his own subject. And the other, which lent great importance to the first, was that he had here no such audience of Jocks and Scotties as those who cheered Sir Arthur Keith's speech in favour of war, at Aberdeen University, and who showed their approbation by carting that great man off in a model Dreadnought, on wheels.

The connoisseurs of technique, who were ranged before him, had been eager to see this primitive creature perform his simple feats, but when they found out what his discourse was, they were as much annoyed as you or I might be, if we had gone to see an ape smoke a cigar,



and found that it would only trifle with a straw.

Therefore it happened, that Professor Wilkinson had not had time to show them how their lives might be filled and justified by an insatiable curiosity as to the properties of matter, whether in the form of crystals, organic cells, pond life, turds, guts, brains or nebulae, before these cynics began to hiss and boo, and the manager ran on and dragged him off the stage.

"You fool!" cried he, "you've been my ruin! Did I save you from the refuse bin for this? Get out!" And with that he gave the poor man an atavistically hearty kick, which impelled him down the steps of the theatre, and he rushed back to placate the infuriated audience.



THE professor sat for some time at the foot of the steps, endeavouring to survey his misfortune with the dispassionate eye of science. In this he showed much wisdom, for that eye, as if it looked out through a smoked monocle, can reduce the most dazzling beauty and the most glaring injustice to the same grey neutrality, so that while sometimes it leaves us with only the worser half of sensuousness, it affords us, in the event of a kick on the backside, that calm which resides in the better part of valour.

"After all," said he, "three hundred millions of years elapse while the light from yonder star is on its journey to us. What matter if, for a fraction of a second, one infinitesimal mass, consisting largely of water, came into contact with another of the same constituents, and scarcely larger? Why should I resent it? At least he didn't send me back to be put in the oven." And at this thought he sprang up in a twinkling, and hastened towards the moving belt, for it occurred to him that the irrational fellow might possibly change his mind.

All through the night the professor allowed himself to be carried through the city, which showed no signs of coming to an end. The dawn showed him the same vista still extending



before him, and except that he was travelling eastwards at a steady eight miles an hour, he would have thought himself only just out of sight of the theatre. By this time he had begun to feel hungry, and gaining confidence from the fact that none among the idle multitude on the sidewalks seemed to pay any attention to him, he stepped off the moving belt, and addressed himself to one who lay nearest at hand.

"Excuse me," he said, raising Mr. B\*\*rb\*hm's hat with a winning old-world courtesy, "but can you inform me how I can get some breakfast?"

The fellow eyed him vacantly, and an expression of fear overspread a countenance so devoid of personality that it looked, if the image is permissible, like a terrified blancmange. He began to slither away without replying.

"Come, come, Sir!" cried the professor irascibly, "this is no way to receive a stranger to your point in space-time." And, emboldened to it by the other's pusillanimous appearance, he took hold of him by the shoulder, and repeated his question in no uncertain terms.

A wriggle, and a plaintive moo, was the only response.

"Dear me," thought the professor, "have I accosted a mute? Poor fellow! What a pity I haven't a sixpence!" For he was a kindly soul at bottom.

Without wasting time in vain regrets on this point, he approached another reclining figure, and was amazed and a little alarmed to receive



only a similar reply. When this had happened a third and a fourth time, he began to feel altogether dismayed.

"Can I have stumbled upon a colony of mutes or half-wits?" he thought. "Or is it possible that everyone is like this, except those atavistic creatures, who are little better than scoffers? How on earth shall I get any breakfast?"

But while he was standing in this dire perplexity, a strident hooter sounded, which he had heard before during the days he had been confined to his dressing-room at the theatre. When they heard this, the flabby multitudes began to show signs of life, and drifted into little groups of a score or so, clustering about certain arrays of taps which protruded from the wall at short intervals all down the street. The professor attached himself to one of these groups, and peering over their heads, he saw the taps begin to ooze out a sort of pap, not unlike that which he had eaten in his pen. At the sight of this nourishment his hunger became quite uncontrollable.

"Allow me," he said politely to the nearest ingurgitator. And by thrusting an elbow into his ribs, he removed him a distance of a yard or so. Then, regardless of his victim's plaintive moos, which attracted no notice at all from the suckling mob, he possessed himself of the vacant tap, as avidly as an infant pig lays hold of the dug from which he has ousted a more tender brother.



"Well," thought he, as he stood wiping his mouth on the back of his hand, "it's probably very rich in vitamins, anyway." And feeling considerably restored, he settled his hat upon his head, and strode off along the street, humanely stepping over the recumbent forms, that lay all about his path, except when they were spread so thick that he was obliged to use them as stepping stones.

Once or twice in his progress he met with an individual who wore the rudimentary insignia of some activity or other, but these, though they eyed him curiously, seemed to partake sufficiently of the general *laissez-faire* to prevent them from accosting him. On his part he felt some diffidence in opening a conversation with people whose cannibal tendencies were offset by no reverence for his vocation.

"They probably take me," he thought, "for one of themselves, engaged in some new sort of futile hobby."

It was not until he had become heartily weary of his stolen meals of pap, that he resolved to approach the next of these atavistics he should meet with.

"Who knows?" he said to himself. "They may have some form of diet other than what they get from that dreadful oven. I couldn't eat that. It's unthinkable. I wonder who bought that little district messenger boy."

As he was meditating on this chubby victim, a wistful smile softened his austere countenance, and one of the atavistic kind, who was passing



at that moment, was so attracted by this phenomenon that he stood still for a space to pleasure his eyes with it. This individual, whose features shone with an extraordinary benevolence, was dressed in a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, which had, however, no glasses in them, and a large note-book.

"Pray," said he, "what vocation do you follow? For I thought I knew every outfit, having designed most of them myself, but yours is strange to me."

Now, he accompanied these words with a very winning smile, and the professor, whose nerves were very much strained by his wanderings in this extraordinary world, suddenly found his need of sympathy to be urgent beyond all caution, so he abandoned his notion of diplomatic reserve, and blurted out the whole of his simple story.

"Yours is certainly a difficult position," said his new acquaintance, "for though we applaud their performances, we have the utmost contempt for those among us who are of your way of thinking. Off the stage, they live in an outcast society of their own, and even in this, from what I have heard of your failure, I can hardly imagine that you would be well received. As far as that goes, you are not missing much, for their conversation is deplorable, being confined entirely to accounts of their professional antics. The trouble is, that since your connection with science is known, no-one else will have anything to do with you, unless perhaps



to order your destruction."

"What can I do?" cried the professor in dismay.

"I will look after you," replied the other, magnanimously. "Though you call yourself a scientist, I believe there is more in you than that. There was something more than mere fact in your discourse on the stage the other night. The audience, who were only expecting you to juggle with facts, didn't notice it; but I thought that what you said about science being the aim of mankind, was (to use an archaism) positively artistic, though terribly perverted of course."

"Oh yes," said the professor, eager to please, "We twentieth century scientists were many of us artistic as well. Professor J\*l\*\*n H\*xl\*y, for example, used to write lovely poetry, and Sir J\*m\*s J\*\*ns, in his book on the Universe, revealed things about cubist painting such as no mere painter had ever suspected. And...."

"That producer was wrong to liken you to a chimpanzee," cried his new acquaintance, warmly, "I really believe you are, so to speak, the missing link."

"Er.....how so?" asked our hero.

"When the scientists discovered that they were gods," was the reply, "they proved to be extremely jealous ones, and obliterated all vestiges of mankind's earlier enthusiasms. Only by the remotest references, have we discovered that such enthusiasms existed, but I believe that the secret lies in those, and nowhere else—



*in the arts.* Otherwise why should science have so carefully destroyed them? Eh?"

"You," he said, tapping the professor on the breast, "you, though but a scientist, lived on the fringes of that golden age when these things were known to everyone. You stand halfway between the higher man and what we are now. That's why I called you the missing link."

When the professor had finished pointing out that some slip must have occurred, for science had found a neat room for art in all its Utopias, the horn-rimmed man said nothing, but when the good fellow had gone on to observe that a mathematical concept was akin to a musical or sculptural one, only truer, and how science had discovered a majesty and profundity greater than that of poetry in its vision of astronomic spaces (shewing how a nit, an orange-pip, and a golf-ball, if placed in Hyde Park, gave one a conception of the Solar System): then the horn-rimmed man laughed heartily.

"The one thing you never seemed to have observed," said he, "is that it's not merely the proportions that are similar, but the values, both of your solar system and of the model you have so happily described.

"Man cannot live by pap alone," he added briskly, "even though you may tell him that five hundred billion meals of it, if placed end to end, will reach from here to Sirius."

"Speaking of pap....." began the professor.

"I expect you're tired of it," said his com-



panion with a smile. "Well, come in, for this is where I live, and I think I can offer you a meal of something better."

"It happens," said he, when they had seated themselves in a large and sunny room, "it happens that I have lighted on a most important discovery, in the course of my activities. What do you think? I have discovered that vegetables are edible. You shall have some."

The professor smacked his lips, for he was extremely partial to a salad, and he waited impatiently while his new friend was preparing the meal in an adjoining room.

"Here we are," cried this pioneer, as he returned with two heaped plates of some sort of moss.

"Oh! *Moss*," said the professor.

"Yes, moss," replied the other. "What else did you think I meant? Fall to. It's fine."

"H'm!" said the professor after his first mouthful. "Very nice. Very nice, I'm sure. Only what *we* used to mean by vegetables was something more like lettuce, or tomatoes, or beetroot, or perhaps boiled spinach, or potatoes, or....."

"Oh, we've only this one form now," was the reply. "When synthetic food came in, and artificial oxygenation of the air, most forms of vegetation were obliterated to make room for more people."

"But what about the lemons and parsley you use in cooking?" asked the professor.

"Artificial," said the other. "Such period



touches are the fashion. This moss is all that survived, and I think its edibility one of the most important of my discoveries. Think what it means to us ! ”

“ Discoveries ! ” said the professor, brightening. “ Are you an inventor, then ? ”

“ That word has unpleasant associations,” returned his companion. “ I’m generally known as the un-inventor.”

“ The *Un-inventor* ? ”

“ Just so. My vocation is to discover means of doing without the terrible devices which have made most of us what you see. It’s I who organised the atavistic society here, and suggested the idea of vocations. Before that we were all terribly unhappy. Now we are developing all sorts of lost instincts, and we feel that our lives have some purpose. Though only our remotest descendants will see it, we are at least struggling backwards, towards the Golden Age.”

“ And you are hailed as a benefactor of humanity ? ” said the professor. “ You are honoured ? Permit me to assist you by any means in my power.”

“ Yes, I am honoured,” replied the other modestly. “ In fact, of all the atavistics, I am by far the most bred from.”

“ Indeed,” said the professor, with a curious glance. “ But you have no.....er, that is to say, you have no women here, as far as I can see. And where are the children ? ”

“ Here are my jewels,” replied the other,



leading him to the next room. And he waved a hand towards an immense array of bottles and jars of various sizes.

"Marvellous," said the professor as they withdrew. "We had, of course, a far cruder way of carrying on the race, though even in my day, we foresaw this."

"I've heard there was a different way," said the horn-rimmed man, "but I've never been able to grasp quite what it was. Can you explain it to me?"

"H'm!" said the professor. "Let me see. Oh! Here we are!" And he picked out a tiny moss-flower from among the remnants of their meal. "Now you see this flower....." And he proceeded to explain the facts of archaic life in a manner at once simple and candid, but neither prudish nor prurient. His hearer, with downcast gaze, devised himself a little apron from a piece of moss.

"A jungle of savage emotions, did you say?" said he. "Through which reason could hardly penetrate? Ah, what an idea you've given me. What holidays one might have in that jungle!"

"Excuse me," he added, after a few moments' silence, "I must withdraw, and meditate upon this. Make yourself at home." And with that he went out, and left the professor alone.

It was some days before he returned, and, when he did so, it was with a face beaming with enthusiasm.

"I've found it out," he cried, "I've consulted the great recording machine. What a job!"



"Anyway," he went on, "this is a greater step than ever we could have hoped for. I'd feared at first it was hopeless. And so it would have been, except for you," he cried enthusiastically, pressing the professor's hand. "For the fact is, we just put a drop of blood in those vessels I showed you, and that's all we've done for thousands of years. Completely atrophied, to all intents and purposes! And it can't be done synthetically. But you.....our saviour!"

"Why, what is it?" said the professor.

"It must be done by grafting," cried the other. "The smallest particle will produce the tendency, but it must be done by grafting."

"What?" asked the professor.

"Why, getting back to the old-fashioned way," said the other. "If we can start the tendency in as many atavistics as possible, we shall be breeding complete men before very long."

"But I fail to see," said the professor slowly, "how I am to be the saviour of the race."

"I've told you," cried the enthusiast.

"Grafting. Grafting, my boy!"

"No," said the professor, backing away a little.

"Don't worry," returned the other. "It won't hurt you. We have quite perfect anesthetics."

"No," said the professor.

"But why not, then?"

"No," said the professor.

"Come, come," said the other sharply, "I



thought you wanted to help us by all the means in your power. Why this sudden objection? What good are such things to you, seeing there are no women in this world? Though, as it happens, the vestigial female principle is still active in certain rare cases, and can be stimulated and bred from. Isn't it splendid? How pleased everyone will be! They'll adore you. Come on!"

"No," said the professor.

"Oh, it's like that, is it," said the horn-rimmed man with a scowl. "Well, if you won't volunteer, you must be conscripted. I'll call for assistance."

And he advanced to lay hold of the prospective Kronos, but, gasping a final "no," the professor scuttled away, and taking a wrong turning in his hurry, he rushed into the room where the bottles were, with the other in hot pursuit.

"Let me go, let me go!" cried the professor, and, nerved by desperation, he broke away for a moment, and, glancing round for a weapon, he seized the bottle containing his assailant's youngest son, and felled him with it, like a log.

Without pausing to see if the blow he had inflicted was a fatal one, he rushed out of the building, and leapt on to the moving belt, to the speed of which he added all that fear had lent to his flying limbs.

"Good heavens!" murmured he, when at last he had to sink down, and resign himself to the mechanical eight miles an hour. "There's



only one chance for me. If I can find that cursed trap of theirs, I may be able to walk in like a customer, and slip out at the other end."

Buoyed up by this hope, he rose again, and hurried on as fast as he could. When at last he calculated that he was nearing the spot where the trap must be, he peered anxiously from side to side, and suddenly he cried aloud in joy. He had seen it.

"Now," said he, "to assume an easy air. I may yet be safe. Good Lord! Why didn't I suggest that some of these victims might have been used for his abominable purpose. They would hardly have minded, since they are so soon to die. However, it is too late now."

And controlling his features, he strolled up the steps, and peeped through the door until he saw the manager's back was turned, when he slipped in and began to walk nonchalantly up and down by the pens at the farther end, waiting till the attendants who lurked there should be busy with some arrivals, when he hoped to nip past them, and plunge back into the twentieth century.

"Don't worry," murmured he to the occupants of the pens outside which he was patrolling. "At least you won't beget any more descendants to populate this horrible world." And as they stared amazed upon him, he saw that two burly fellows had descended, who required all the attention of those who had awaited them.

"Here goes," he thought, and sprang towards



the stairs. But just as he reached the entrance, he stumbled in his haste, and sprawled on the very threshold of freedom. An attendant looked round, and saw this figure, still in Mr. M\*x B\*rb\*hm's very twentieth-century attire, and, as he scrambled to his feet, the attendant seized upon him, and then another came, and in a trice he was stripped and in a pen. His cries rang through the building. The men with long sticks approached. The professor sank down, and buried his face in his hands.

How long he sat thus he could not tell, but at last he crawled forward to the front of his cage, and pushed aside the moss, and began to inscribe another set of diagrams.

"Who knows," he thought, "there may be another theatre, whose producer comes here. I can pretend I'm a new and better scientist."

But before he had finished his diagram, he heard footsteps approaching his pen, and he heard the manager say, "No, sir, I'm very sorry, but our rules forbid me to give credit."

"But hang it," said a rolling voice, which he recognised, "it's through that dud that you sold me that I'm hard up. He let me down."

"I'm sorry, sir," replied the manager.

"But what's this?" they cried together, as their eyes fell upon the professor. "Why, here he is again!"

"He's plumper now," murmured the theatrical man. "Look here, he's mine. I've paid for him. I'll have him roasted now."

"I won't do it again," cried the professor,



"I'll stick to the Quantum Theory, I promise you."

"What?" said the producer with a sneer, "do you think I can rely on anything you say after that statement about science being the highest good of man? Roast him!" he cried, "He's better than nothing."

The manager summoned the attendants.

"Stop, stop!" cried the professor, "I've something important to tell you. A new discovery. Taste of the fruit of the tree of knowledge....."

"Sure thing!" said the theatrical man, and they hurried him away.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" he cried, as they laid him on the slab.

"Why," thought he, his consciousness left stranded in quiet by his ebbing blood, "why ever did I come into this cursed place?"

"Why," thought he, gloomily surveying his bowels, "why did I ever start that experiment? Why did I ever become a scientist? What's the good of it, anyway?"

And as his spirit flickered up, and failed, he saw, out of the tail of his eye, a scullion take from out of a basket, and hold in readiness,—a lemon.

