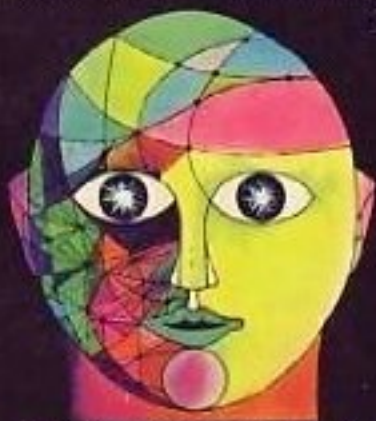


DELL

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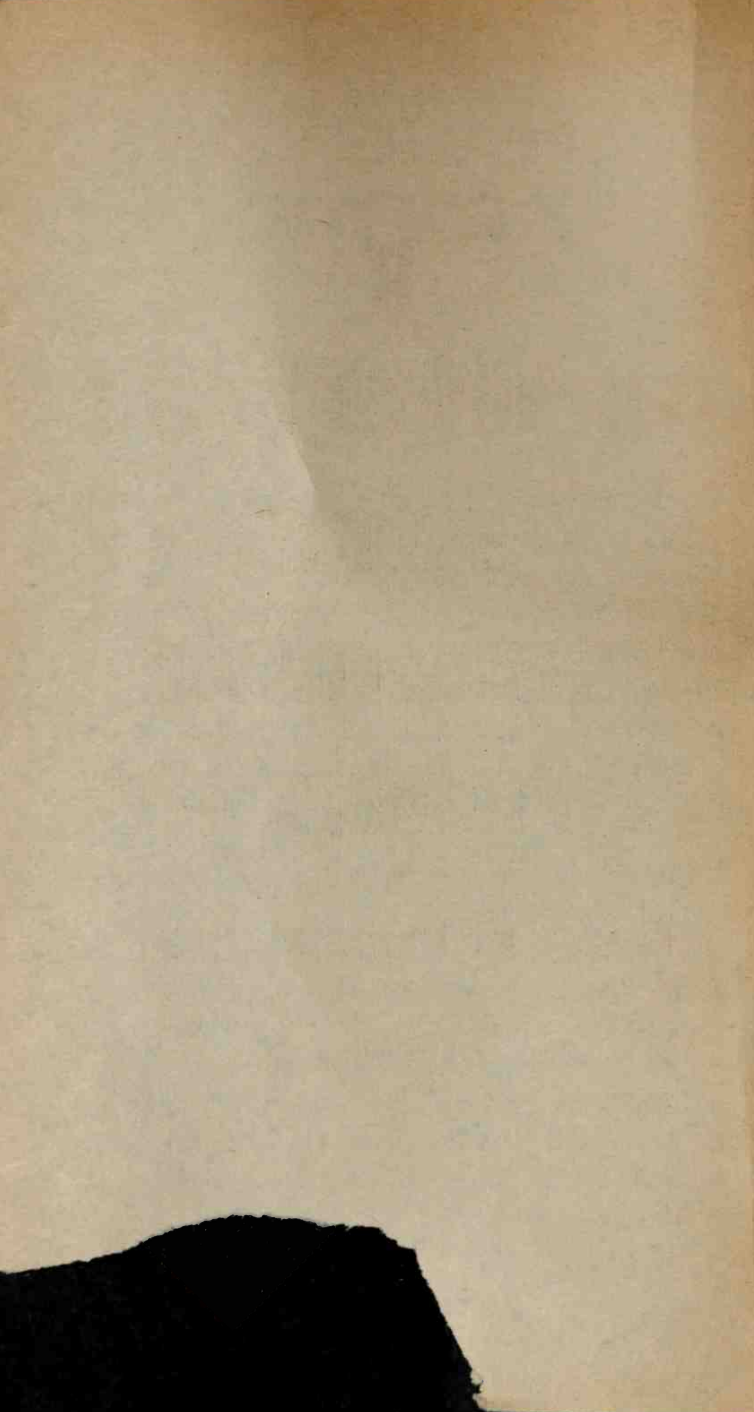
A CENTURY OF GREAT SHORT SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS

EDITED BY
DAMON KNIGHT

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The themes which constantly reappear in novels and stories of fantasy and the future are explored in this unique volume with dazzling imagination. Among them are: the co-existence (not too peacefully) of good and evil in man; the power of invisibility; the shape and substance of a Superman; the time machine; and the manufacture of God in a chemically pure form. The Book-of-the-Month's Club News says of this anthology: "Shows what science fiction can provide in the way of new thrillers" and describes the individual short novels as "merciless as Ian Fleming," "wickedly brilliant" and "stimulating speculations."

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**A
CENTURY OF GREAT
SHORT
SCIENCE FICTION
NOVELS**

EDITED BY DAMON KNIGHT

A DELL BOOK

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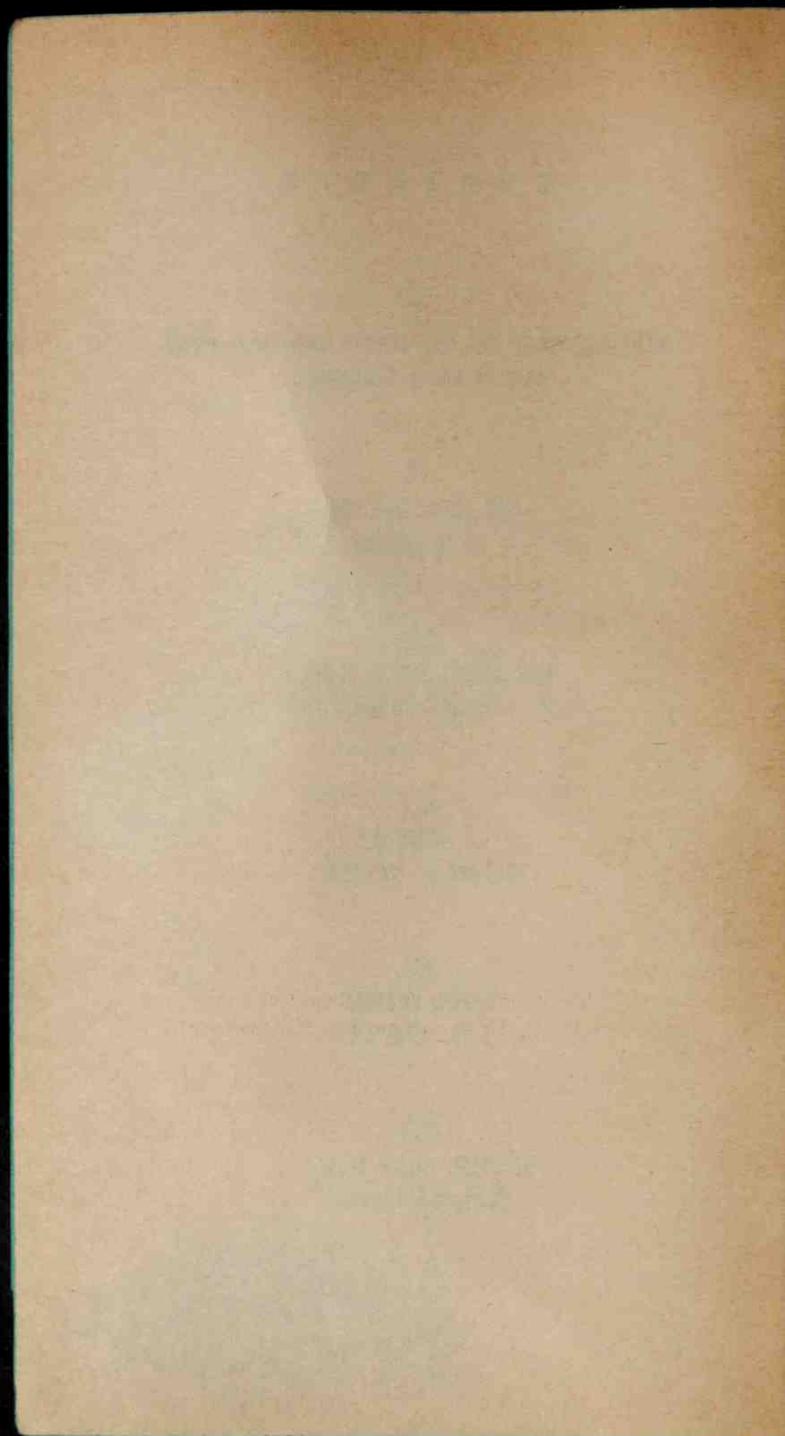
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STRANGE CASE

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AND

MR. HYDE

I seem to have been born with a sentiment of something moving in things, of an infinite attraction and horror coupled.

—Quoted in
The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson,
by Graham Balfour

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON WAS BORN IN EDINBURGH IN 1850, THE son of an engineer world-famous for his lighthouses. Ill health dogged the younger Stevenson all his life; he contracted tuberculosis in 1873 and died of it at the tragically early age of 44. Yet every account of him stresses his liveliness, his bubbling good spirits, his bravery and cheerfulness even when he was too ill to speak. "A childlike mirth leaped and danced in him; he seemed to skip upon the hills of life."

In 1885, "in the small hours of one morning," wrote his wife, "I was awakened by cries of horror from Louis. Thinking he had a nightmare, I awakened him. He said angrily: 'Why did you wake me? I was dreaming a fine bogey tale.'" This was *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the work that established Stevenson's reputation. He wrote the first draft in about three days, burned it when his wife criticized it for its lack of allegory, then rewrote it in three days more. (But he subsequently polished and revised it for months.)

Stevenson was much criticized for the chemical powders that effect the transformation, as being too material an agency to be suitable for an allegory, but he clung to them stubbornly, and he was right. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was written in that fascinating period, beginning about one hundred years ago, when the discoveries of nineteenth-century science were just beginning to be interpreted in literature. This story could only have come out of that curious era, the Victorian twilight, with its perverse division of life into the public and good, the private and evil. In truth, it is not only Victorian lighting and the weather of London that give this novel its master-image of flickering light against darkness.

Stevenson was much loved, as a man and as a writer. He formed his style, which seems so natural and easy, by arduous labor. He worked always under difficulties that would have silenced a lesser talent or a feebler spirit. In 1894, at the height of his powers, he died, leaving his two greatest works incomplete: *Weir of Hermiston* and *St. Ives*. The Samoans among whom

he had spent the last three years of his life cut a path to the summit of the mountain Vaea. There he was buried; on his tomb was placed the *Requiem* he wrote for himself:

*Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.*

*This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.*

STORY OF THE DOOR

MR. UTTERSON THE LAWYER WAS A MAN OF A RUGGED countenance, that was never lighted by a smile; cold, scanty and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, long, dusty, dreary and yet somehow lovable. At friendly meetings, and when the wine was to his taste, something eminently human beaconed from his eye; something indeed which never found its way into his talk, but which spoke not only in these silent symbols of the after-dinner face, but more often and loudly in the acts of his life. He was austere with himself; drank gin when he was alone, to mortify a taste for vintages; and though he enjoyed the theatre, had not crossed the doors of one for twenty years. But he had an approved tolerance for others; sometimes wondering, almost with envy, at the high pressure of spirits involved in their misdeeds; and in any extremity inclined to help rather than to reprove. "I incline to Cain's heresy," he used to say quaintly: "I let my brother go to the devil in his own way." In this character, it was frequently his fortune to be the last reputable acquaintance and the last good influence in the lives of down-going men. And to such as these, so long as they came about his chambers, he never marked a shade of change in his demeanour.

No doubt the feat was easy to Mr. Utterson; for he was undemonstrative at the best, and even his friendship seemed to be founded in a similar catholicity of good nature. It is the mark of a modest man to accept his friendly circle ready-made from the hands of opportunity; and that was the lawyer's way. His friends were those of his own blood or those whom he had known the longest; his affections, like ivy, were the growth of time, they implied no aptness in the object. Hence, no doubt, the bond that united him to Mr. Richard Enfield, his distant kinsman, the well-known man about town. It was a nut to crack for many, what these

two could see in each other, or what subject they could find in common. It was reported by those who encountered them in their Sunday walks, that they said nothing, looked singularly dull, and would hail with obvious relief the appearance of a friend. For all that, the two men put the greatest store by these excursions, counted them the chief jewel of each week, and not only set aside occasions of pleasure, but even resisted the calls of business, that they might enjoy them uninterrupted.

It chanced on one of these rambles that their way led them down a by-street in a busy quarter of London. The street was small and what is called quiet, but it drove a thriving trade on the week-days. The inhabitants were all doing well, it seemed, and all emulously hoping to do better still, and laying out the surplus of their gains in coquetry; so that the shop fronts stood along that thoroughfare with an air of invitation, like rows of smiling saleswomen. Even on Sunday, when it veiled its more florid charms and lay comparatively empty of passage, the street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighbourhood, like a fire in a forest; and with its freshly painted shutters, well-polished brasses, and general cleanliness and gaiety of note, instantly caught and pleased the eye of the passenger.

Two doors from one corner, on the left hand going east, the line was broken by the entry of a court; and just at that point, a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; and bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and disdained. Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop upon the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the mouldings; and for close on a generation, no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages.

Mr. Enfield and the lawyer were on the other side of the by-street; but when they came abreast of the entry, the former lifted up his cane and pointed.

"Did you ever remark that door?" he asked; and when his companion had replied in the affirmative, "It is connected in my mind," added he, "with a very odd story."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Utterson, with a slight change of voice, "and what was that?"

"Well, it was this way," returned Mr. Enfield: "I was coming home from some place at the end of the world, about three o'clock of a black winter morning, and my way lay through a part of town where there was literally nothing to be seen but lamps. Street after street, and all the folks asleep—street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession and all as empty as a church—till at last I got into that state of mind when a man listens and listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman. All at once, I saw two figures: one a little man who was stumping along eastward at a good walk, and the other a girl of maybe eight or ten who was running as hard as she was able down a cross street. Well, sir, the two ran into one another naturally enough at the corner; and then came the horrible part of the thing; for the man trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. It wasn't like a man; it was like some damned juggernaut. I gave a view halloo, took to my heels, collared my gentleman, and brought him back to where there was already quite a group about the screaming child. He was perfectly cool and made no resistance, but gave me one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running. The people who had turned out were the girl's own family; and pretty soon, the doctor, for whom she had been sent, put in his appearance. Well, the child was not much the worse, more frightened, according to the Sawbones; and there you might have supposed would be an end to it. But there was one curious circumstance. I had taken a loathing to my gentleman at first sight. So had the child's family, which was only natural. But the doctor's case was what struck me. He was the usual cut and dry apothecary, of no particular age and colour, with a strong Edinburgh accent, and about as emotional as a bagpipe. Well, sir, he was like the rest of us; every time he looked at my prisoner, I saw that Sawbones turned sick and white with the desire to kill him. I knew what was in his mind, just as he knew what was in mine; and killing being out of the question, we did the next best. We told the man we could and would make such a scandal out of this, as should make his name stink from one end of London to the other. If he had any friends or any credit, we undertook

that he should lose them. And all the time, as we were pitching it in red hot, we were keeping the women off him as best we could, for they were as wild as harpies. I never saw a circle of such hateful faces; and there was the man in the middle, with a kind of black, sneering coolness—frightened too, I could see that—but carrying it off, sir, really like Satan. ‘If you choose to make capital out of this accident,’ said he, ‘I am naturally helpless. No gentleman but wishes to avoid a scene,’ says he. ‘Name your figure.’ Well, we screwed him up to a hundred pounds for the child’s family; he would have clearly liked to stick out; but there was something about the lot of us that meant mischief, and at last he struck. The next thing was to get the money; and where do you think he carried us but to that place with the door?—whipped out a key, went in, and presently came back with the matter of ten pounds in gold and a cheque for the balance on Coutts’s, drawn payable to bearer and signed with a name that I can’t mention, though it’s one of the points of my story, but it was a name at least very well known and often printed. The figure was stiff; but the signature was good for more than that, if it was only genuine. I took the liberty of pointing out to my gentleman that the whole business looked apocryphal, and that a man does not, in real life, walk into a cellar door at four in the morning and come out of it with another man’s cheque for close upon a hundred pounds. But he was quite easy and sneering. ‘Set your mind at rest,’ says he, ‘I will stay with you till the banks open and cash the cheque myself.’ So we all set off, the doctor, and the child’s father, and our friend and myself, and passed the rest of the night in my chambers; and next day, when we had breakfasted, went in a body to the bank. I gave in the cheque myself, and said I had every reason to believe it was a forgery. Not a bit of it. The cheque was genuine.”

“Tut-tut,” said Mr. Utterson.

“I see you feel as I do,” said Mr. Enfield. “Yes, it’s a bad story. For my man was a fellow that nobody could have to do with, a really damnable man; and the person that drew the cheque is the very pink of the properties, celebrated too, and (what makes it worse) one of your fellows who do what they call good. Black mail, I suppose; an honest man paying through the nose for some of the capers of his youth. Black Mail House is what I call that

place with the door, in consequence. Though even that, you know, is far from explaining all," he added, and with the words fell into a vein of musing.

From this he was recalled by Mr. Utterson asking rather suddenly: "And you don't know if the drawer of the cheque lives there?"

"A likely place, isn't it?" returned Mr. Enfield. "But I happen to have noticed his address; he lives in some square or other."

"And you never asked about the—place with the door?" said Mr. Utterson.

"No, sir: I had a delicacy," was the reply. "I feel very strongly about putting questions; it partakes too much of the style of the day of judgment. You start a question, and it's like starting a stone. You sit quietly on the top of a hill; and away the stone goes, starting others; and presently some bland old bird (the last you would have thought of) is knocked on the head in his own back garden and the family have to change their name. No, sir, I make it a rule of mine: the more it looks like Queer Street, the less I ask."

"A very good rule, too," said the lawyer.

"But I have studied the place for myself," continued Mr. Enfield. "It seems scarcely a house. There is no other door, and nobody goes in or out of that one but, once in a great while, the gentleman of my adventure. There are three windows looking on the court on the first floor; none below; the windows are always shut but they're clean. And then there is a chimney which is generally smoking; so somebody must live there. And yet it's not so sure; for the buildings are so packed together about that court, that it's hard to say where one ends and another begins."

The pair walked on again for a while in silence; and then "Enfield," said Mr. Utterson, "that's a good rule of yours."

"Yes, I think it is," returned Enfield.

"But for all that," continued the lawyer, "there's one point I want to ask: I want to ask the name of that man who walked over the child."

"Well," said Mr. Enfield, "I can't see what harm it would do. It was a man of the name of Hyde."

"H'm," said Mr. Utterson. "What sort of a man is he to see?"

"He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something

downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. He's an extraordinary looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can't describe him. And it's not want of memory; for I declare I can see him this moment."

Mr. Utterson again walked some way in silence and obviously under a weight of consideration. "You are sure he used a key?" he inquired at last.

"My dear sir—" began Enfield, surprised out of himself.

"Yes, I know," said Utterson; "I know it must seem strange. The fact is, if I do not ask you the name of the other party, it is because I know it already. You see, Richard, your tale has gone home. If you have been inexact in any point, you had better correct it."

"I think you might have warned me," returned the other with a touch of sullenness. "But I have been pedantically exact, as you call it. The fellow had a key; and what's more, he has it still. I saw him use it, not a week ago."

Mr. Utterson sighed deeply but said never a word; and the young man presently resumed. "Here is another lesson to say nothing," said he. "I am ashamed of my long tongue. Let us make a bargain never to refer to this again."

"With all my heart," said the lawyer. "I shake hands on that, Richard."

2

SEARCH FOR MR. HYDE

THAT EVENING MR. UTTERSON CAME HOME TO HIS BACHELOR house in sombre spirits and sat down to dinner without relish. It was his custom of a Sunday, when this meal was over, to sit close by the fire, a volume of some dry divinity on his reading desk, until the clock of the neighbouring church rang out the hour of twelve, when he would go soberly and gratefully to bed. On this night, however, as

soon as the cloth was taken away, he took up a candle and went into his business room. There he opened his safe, took from the most private part of it a document endorsed on the envelope as Dr. Jekyll's Will, and sat down with a clouded brow to study its contents. The will was holograph, for Mr. Utterson, though he took charge of it now that it was made, had refused to lend the least assistance in the making of it; it provided not only that, in the case of the decease of Henry Jekyll, M.D., D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S., etc., all his possessions were to pass into the hands of his "friend and benefactor Edward Hyde," but that in case of Dr. Jekyll's "disappearance or unexplained absence for any period exceeding three calendar months," the said Edward Hyde should step into the said Henry Jekyll's shoes without further delay and free from any burthen or obligation, beyond the payment of a few small sums to the members of the doctor's household. This document had long been the lawyer's eyesore. It offended him both as a lawyer and as a lover of the sane and customary sides of life, to whom the fanciful was the immodest. And hitherto it was his ignorance of Mr. Hyde that had swelled his indignation; now, by a sudden turn, it was his knowledge. It was already bad enough when the name was but a name of which he could learn no more. It was worse when it began to be clothed upon with detestable attributes; and out of the shifting, insubstantial mists that had so long baffled his eye, there leaped up the sudden, definite presentment of a fiend.

"I thought it was madness," he said, as he replaced the obnoxious paper in the safe, "and now I begin to fear it is disgrace."

With that he blew out his candle, put on a great coat, and set forth in the direction of Cavendish Square, that citadel of medicine, where his friend, the great Dr. Lanyon, had his house and received his crowding patients. "If anyone knows, it will be Lanyon," he had thought.

The solemn butler knew and welcomed him; he was subjected to no stage of delay, but ushered direct from the door to the dining-room where Dr. Lanyon sat alone over his wine. This was a hearty, healthy, dapper, red-faced gentleman, with a shock of hair prematurely white, and a boisterous and decided manner. At sight of Mr. Utterson, he sprang up from his chair and welcomed him with both

hands. The geniality, as was the way of the man, was somewhat theatrical to the eye; but it reposed on genuine feeling. For these two were old friends, old mates both at school and college, both thorough respecters of themselves and of each other, and, what does not always follow, men who thoroughly enjoyed each other's company.

After a little rambling talk, the lawyer led up to the subject which so disagreeably preoccupied his mind.

"I suppose, Lanyon," said he, "you and I must be the two oldest friends that Henry Jekyll has?"

"I wish the friends were younger," chuckled Dr. Lanyon. "But I supposed we are. And what of that? I see little of him now."

"Indeed?" said Utterson. "I thought you had a bond of common interest."

"We had," was the reply. "But it is more than ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in mind; and though of course I continue to take an interest in him for old sake's sake, as they say, I see and I have seen devilish little of the man. Such unscientific balderdash," added the doctor, flushing suddenly purple, "would have estranged Damon and Pythias."

This little spirit of temper was somewhat of a relief to Mr. Utterson. "They have only differed on some point of science," he thought; and being a man of no scientific passions (except in the matter of conveyancing), he even added: "It is nothing worse than that!" He gave his friend a few seconds to recover his composure, and then approached the question he had come to put. "Did you ever come across a protégé of his—one Hyde?" he asked.

"Hyde?" repeated Lanyon. "No. Never heard of him. Since my time."

That was the amount of information that the lawyer carried back with him to the great, dark bed on which he tossed to and fro, until the small hours of the morning began to grow large. It was a night of little ease to his toiling mind, toiling in mere darkness and besieged by questions.

Six o'clock struck on the bells of the church that was so conveniently near to Mr. Utterson's dwelling, and still he was digging at the problem. Hitherto it had touched him on the intellectual side alone; but now his imagination also

was engaged, or rather enslaved; and as he lay and tossed in the gross darkness of the night and the curtained room, Mr. Enfield's tale went by before his mind in a scroll of lighted pictures. He would be aware of the great field of lamps of a nocturnal city; then of the figure of a man walking swiftly; then of a child running from the doctor's; and then these met, and that human juggernaut trod the child down and passed on regardless of her screams. Or else he would see a room in a rich house, where his friend lay asleep, dreaming and smiling at his dreams; and then the door of that room would be opened, the curtains of the bed plucked apart, the sleeper recalled, and lo! there would stand by his side a figure to whom power was given, and even at that dead hour, he must rise and do its bidding. The figure in these two phases haunted the lawyer all night; and if at any time he dozed over, it was but to see it glide more stealthily through sleeping houses, or move the more swiftly and still the more swiftly, even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamplighted city, and at every street corner crush a child and leave her screaming. And still the figure had no face by which he might know it; even in his dreams, it had no face, or one that baffled him and melted before his eyes; and thus it was that there sprang up and grew apace in the lawyer's mind a singularly strong, almost an inordinate, curiosity to behold the features of the real Mr. Hyde. If he could but once set eyes on him, he thought the mystery would lighten and perhaps roll altogether away, as was the habit of mysterious things when well examined. He might see a reason for his friend's strange preference or bondage (call it which you please) and even for the startling clause of the will. At least it would be a face worth seeing: the face of a man who was without bowels of mercy: a face which had but to show itself to raise up, in the mind of the unimpressionable Enfield, a spirit of enduring hatred.

From that time forward, Mr. Utterson began to haunt the door in the by-street of shops. In the morning before office hours, at noon when business was plenty, and time scarce, at night under the face of the fogged city moon, by all lights and at all hours of solitude or concourse, the lawyer was to be found on his chosen post.

"If he be Mr. Hyde," he had thought, "I shall be Mr. Seek."

And at last his patience was rewarded. It was a fine dry night; frost in the air; the streets as clean as a ballroom floor; the lamps, unshaken by any wind, drawing a regular pattern of light and shadow. By ten o'clock, when the shops were closed, the by-street was very solitary and, in spite of the low growl of London from all round, very silent. Small sounds carried far; domestic sounds out of the houses were clearly audible on either side of the roadway; and the rumour of the approach of any passenger preceded him by a long time. Mr. Utterson had been some minutes at his post, when he was aware of an odd, light footstep drawing near. In the course of his nightly patrols, he had long grown accustomed to the quaint effect with which the footfalls of a single person, while he is still a great way off, suddenly spring out distinct from the vast hum and clatter of the city. Yet his attention had never before been so sharply and decisively arrested; and it was with a strong, superstitious prevision of success that he withdrew into the entry of the court.

The steps drew swiftly nearer, and swelled out suddenly louder as they turned the end of the street. The lawyer, looking forth from the entry, could soon see what manner of man he had to deal with. He was small and very plainly dressed, and the look of him, even at that distance, went somehow strongly against the watcher's inclination. But he made straight for the door, crossing the roadway to save time; and as he came, he drew a key from his pocket like one approaching home.

Mr. Utterson stepped out and touched him on the shoulder as he passed. "Mr. Hyde, I think?"

Mr. Hyde shrank back with a hissing intake of the breath. But his fear was only momentary; and though he did not look the lawyer in the face, he answered coolly enough: "That is my name. What do you want?"

"I see you are going in," returned the lawyer. "I am an old friend of Dr. Jekyll's—Mr. Utterson of Gaunt Street—you must have heard my name; and meeting you so conveniently, I thought you might admit me."

"You will not find Dr. Jekyll; he is from home," replied Mr. Hyde, blowing in the key. And then suddenly, but still without looking up, "How did you know me?" he asked.

"On your side," said Mr. Utterson, "will you do me a favour?"

"With pleasure," replied the other. "What shall it be?"

"Will you let me see your face?" asked the lawyer.

Mr. Hyde appeared to hesitate, and then, as if upon some sudden reflection, fronted about with an air of defiance; and the pair stared at each other pretty fixedly for a few seconds. "Now I shall know you again," said Mr. Utterson. "It may be useful."

"Yes," returned Mr. Hyde, "it is as well we have met; and *à propos*, you should have my address." And he gave a number of a street in Soho.

"Good God!" thought Mr. Utterson, "can he, too, have been thinking of the will?" But he kept his feelings to himself and only grunted in acknowledgment of the address.

"And now," said the other, "how did you know me?"

"By description," was the reply.

"Whose description?"

"We have common friends," said Mr. Utterson.

"Common friends?" echoed Mr. Hyde, a little hoarsely. "Who are they?"

"Jekyll, for instance," said the lawyer.

"He never told you," cried Mr. Hyde, with a flush of anger. "I did not think you would have lied."

"Come," said Mr. Utterson, "that is not fitting language."

The other snarled aloud into a savage laugh; and the next moment, with extraordinary quickness, he had unlocked the door and disappeared into the house.

The lawyer stood awhile when Mr. Hyde had left him, the picture of disquietude. Then he began slowly to mount the street, pausing every step or two and putting his hand to his brow like a man in mental perplexity. The problem he was thus debating as he walked, was one of a class that is rarely solved. Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation, he had a displeasing smile, he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering and somewhat broken voice; all these were points against him, but not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him. "There must be something else," said the perplexed gentleman. "There *is* something more, if I could find a name for it. God bless me, the man seems hardly

human! Something troglodytic, shall we say? or can it be the old story of Dr. Fell? or is it the mere radiance of a foul soul that thus transpires through, and transfigures, its clay continent? The last, I think; for, O my poor old Harry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan's signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend."

Round the corner from the by-street, there was a square of ancient, handsome houses, now for the most part decayed from their high estate and let in flats and chambers to all sorts and conditions of men: map-engravers, architects, shady lawyers and the agents of obscure enterprises. One house, however, second from the corner, was still occupied entire; and at the door of this, which wore a great air of wealth and comfort, though it was now plunged in darkness except for the fanlight, Mr. Utterson stopped and knocked. A well-dressed, elderly servant opened the door.

"Is Dr. Jekyll at home, Poole?" asked the lawyer.

"I will see, Mr. Utterson," said Poole, admitting the visitor, as he spoke, into a large, low-roofed, comfortable hall, paved with flags, warmed (after the fashion of a country house) by a bright, open fire, and furnished with costly cabinets of oak. "Will you wait here by the fire, sir? or shall I give you a light in the dining-room?"

"Here, thank you," said the lawyer, and he drew near and leaned on the tall fender. This hall, in which he was now left alone, was a pet fancy of his friend the doctor's; and Utterson himself was wont to speak of it as the pleasantest room in London. But to-night there was a shudder in his blood; the face of Hyde sat heavy on his memory; he felt (what was rare with him) a nausea and distaste of life; and in the gloom of his spirits, he seemed to read a menace in the flickering of the firelight on the polished cabinets and the uneasy starting of the shadow on the roof. He was ashamed of his relief, when Poole presently returned to announce that Dr. Jekyll was gone out.

"I saw Mr. Hyde go in by the old dissecting-room door, Poole," he said. "Is that right, when Dr. Jekyll is from home?"

"Quite right, Mr. Utterson, sir," replied the servant. "Mr. Hyde has a key."

"Your master seems to repose a great deal of trust in

that young man, Poole," resumed the other musingly.

"Yes, sir, he do indeed," said Poole. "We have all orders to obey him."

"I do not think I ever met Mr. Hyde?" asked Utterson.

"O, dear no, sir. He never *dines* here," replied the butler. "Indeed we see very little of him on this side of the house; he mostly comes and goes by the laboratory."

"Well, good-night, Poole."

"Good-night, Mr. Utterson."

And the lawyer set out homeward with a very heavy heart. "Poor Harry Jekyll," he thought, "my mind mis-gives me he is in deep waters! He was wild when he was young; a long while ago to be sure; but in the law of God, there is no statute of limitations. Ay, it must be that; the ghost of some old sin, the cancer of some concealed disgrace: punishment coming, *pede claudo*, years after memory has forgotten and self-love condoned the fault." And the lawyer, scared by the thought, brooded awhile on his own past, groping in all the corners of memory, lest by chance some Jack-in-the-Box of an old iniquity should leap to light there. His past was fairly blameless; few men could read the rolls of their life with less apprehension; yet he was humbled to the dust by the many ill things he had done, and raised up again into a sober and fearful gratitude by the many that he had come so near to doing, yet avoided. And then by a return on his former subject, he conceived a spark of hope. "This Master Hyde, if he were studied," thought he, "must have secrets of his own; black secrets, by the look of him; secrets compared to which poor Jekyll's worst would be like sunshine. Things cannot continue as they are. It turns me cold to think of this creature stealing like a thief to Harry's bedside; poor Harry, what a wakening! And the danger of it; for if this Hyde suspects the existence of the will, he may grow impatient to inherit. Ay, I must put my shoulder to the wheel!—if Jekyll will but let me," he added, "if Jekyll will only let me." For once more he saw before his mind's eye, as clear as a transparency, the strange clauses of the will.

DR. JEKYLL WAS QUITE AT EASE

A FORTNIGHT LATER, BY EXCELLENT GOOD FORTUNE, THE doctor gave one of his pleasant dinners to some five or six old cronies, all intelligent, reputable men and all judges of good wine; and Mr. Utterson so contrived that he remained behind after the others had departed. This was no new arrangement, but a thing that had befallen many scores of times. Where Utterson was liked, he was liked well. Hosts loved to detain the dry lawyer, when the light-hearted and the loose-tongued had already their foot on the threshold; they liked to sit awhile in his unobtrusive company, practising for solitude, sobering their minds in the man's rich silence after the expense and strain of gaiety. To this rule, Dr. Jekyll was no exception; and as he now sat on the opposite side of the fire—a large, well-made, smooth-faced man of fifty, with something of a slyish cast perhaps, but every mark of capacity and kindness—you could see by his looks that he cherished for Mr. Utterson a sincere and warm affection.

"I have been wanting to speak to you, Jekyll," began the latter. "You know that will of yours?"

A close observer might have gathered that the topic was distasteful; but the doctor carried it off gaily. "My poor Utterson," said he, "you are unfortunate in such a client. I never saw a man so distressed as you were by my will; unless it were that hide-bound pedant, Lanyon, at what he called my scientific heresies. O, I know he's a good fellow—you needn't frown—an excellent fellow, and I always mean to see more of him; but a hide-bound pedant for all that; an ignorant, blatant pedant. I was never more disappointed in any man than Lanyon."

"You know I never approved of it," pursued Utterson, ruthlessly disregarding the fresh topic.

"My will? Yes, certainly, I know that," said the doctor, a trifle sharply. "You have told me so."

"Well, I tell you so again," continued the lawyer. "I have been learning something of young Hyde."

The large handsome face of Dr. Jekyll grew pale to the very lips, and there came a blackness about his eyes. "I do not care to hear more," said he. "This is a matter I thought we had agreed to drop."

"What I heard was abominable," said Utterson.

"It can make no change. You do not understand my position," returned the doctor, with a certain incoherency of manner. "I am painfully situated, Utterson; my position is a very strange—a very strange one. It is one of those affairs that cannot be mended by talking."

"Jekyll," said Utterson, "you know me: I am a man to be trusted. Make a clean breast of this in confidence; and I make no doubt I can get you out of it."

"My good Utterson," said the doctor, "this is very good of you, this is downright good of you, and I cannot find words to thank you in. I believe you fully; I would trust you before any man alive, ay, before myself, if I could make the choice; but indeed it isn't what you fancy; it is not so bad as that; and just to put your good heart at rest, I will tell you one thing: the moment I choose, I can be rid of Mr. Hyde. I give you my hand upon that; and I thank you again and again; and I will just add one little word, Utterson, that I'm sure you'll take in good part: this is a private matter, and I beg of you to let it sleep."

Utterson reflected a little, looking in the fire.

"I have no doubt you are perfectly right," he said at last, getting to his feet.

"Well, but since we have touched upon this business, and for the last time I hope," continued the doctor, "there is one point I should like you to understand. I have really a very great interest in poor Hyde. I know you have seen him; he told me so; and I fear he was rude. But I do sincerely take a great, a very great interest in that young man; and if I am taken away, Utterson, I wish you to promise me that you will bear with him and get his rights for him. I think you would, if you knew all; and it would be a weight off my mind if you would promise."

"I can't pretend that I shall ever like him," said the lawyer.

"I don't ask that," pleaded Jekyll, laying his hand upon the other's arm; "I only ask for justice; I only ask you to help him for my sake, when I am no longer here."

Utterson heaved an irrepressible sigh. "Well," said he, "I promise."

4

THE CAREW MURDER CASE

NEARLY A YEAR LATER, IN THE MONTH OF OCTOBER, 18—, London was startled by a crime of singular ferocity and rendered all the more notable by the high position of the victim. The details were few and startling. A maid servant living alone in a house not far from the river, had gone upstairs to bed about eleven. Although a fog rolled over the city in the small hours, the early part of the night was cloudless, and the lane, which the maid's window overlooked, was brilliantly lit by the full moon. It seems she was romantically given, for she sat down upon her box, which stood immediately under the window, and fell into a dream of musing. Never (she used to say, with streaming tears, when she narrated that experience), never had she felt more at peace with all men or thought more kindly of the world. And as she so sat she became aware of an aged and beautiful gentleman with white hair, drawing near along the lane; and advancing to meet him, another and very small gentleman, to whom at first she paid less attention. When they had come within speech (which was just under the maid's eyes) the older man bowed and accosted the other with a very pretty manner of politeness. It did not seem as if the subject of his address were of great importance; indeed, from his pointing, it sometimes appeared as if he were only inquiring his way; but the moon shone on his face as he spoke, and the girl was pleased to watch it, it seemed to breathe such an innocent and old-world kindness of disposition, yet with something high too, as of a well-founded self-content. Presently her eye wandered to

the other, and she was surprised to recognise in him a certain Mr. Hyde, who had once visited her master and for whom she had conceived a dislike. He had in his hand a heavy cane, with which he was trifling; but he answered never a word, and seemed to listen with an ill-contained impatience. And then all of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman. The old gentleman took a step back, with the air of one very much surprised and a trifle hurt; and at that Mr. Hyde broke out of all bounds and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway. At the horror of these sights and sounds, the maid fainted.

It was two o'clock when she came to herself and called for the police. The murderer was gone long ago; but there lay his victim in the middle of the lane, incredibly mangled. The stick with which the deed had been done, although it was of some rare and very tough and heavy wood, had broken in the middle under the stress of this insensate cruelty; and one splintered half had rolled in the neighbouring gutter—the other, without doubt, had been carried away by the murderer. A purse and a gold watch were found upon the victim; but no cards or papers, except a sealed and stamped envelope, which he had been probably carrying to the post, and which bore the name and address of Mr. Utterson.

This was brought to the lawyer the next morning, before he was out of bed; and he had no sooner seen it, and been told the circumstances, than he shot out a solemn lip. "I shall say nothing till I have seen the body," said he; "this may be very serious. Have the kindness to wait while I dress." And with the same grave countenance he hurried through his breakfast and drove to the police station, whither the body had been carried. As soon as he came into the cell, he nodded.

"Yes," said he, "I recognise him. I am sorry to say that this is Sir Danvers Carew."

"Good God, sir," exclaimed the officer, "is it possible?" And the next moment his eye lighted up with professional ambition. "This will make a deal of noise," he said. "And

perhaps you can help us to the man." And he briefly narrated what the maid had seen, and showed the broken stick.

Mr. Utterson had already quailed at the name of Hyde; but when the stick was laid before him, he could doubt no longer; broken and battered as it was, he recognised it for one that he had himself presented many years before to Henry Jekyll.

"Is this Mr. Hyde a person of small stature?" he inquired.

"Particularly small and particularly wicked-looking, is what the maid calls him," said the officer.

Mr. Utterson reflected; and then, raising his head, "If you will come with me in my cab," he said, "I think I can take you to his house."

It was by this time about nine in the morning, and the first fog of the season. A great chocolate-coloured pall lowered over heaven, but the wind was continually charging and routing these embattled vapours; so that as the cab crawled from street to street, Mr. Utterson beheld a marvellous number of degrees and hues of twilight; for here it would be dark like the back-end of evening; and there would be a glow of a rich, lurid brown, like the light of some strange conflagration; and here, for a moment, the fog would be quite broken up, and a haggard shaft of daylight would glance in between the swirling wreaths. The dismal quarter of Soho seen under these changing glimpses, with its muddy ways, and slatternly passengers, and its lamps, which had never been extinguished or had been kindled afresh to combat this mournful reinvasion of darkness, seemed, in the lawyer's eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare. The thoughts of his mind, besides, were of the gloomiest dye; and when he glanced at the companion of his drive, he was conscious of some touch of that terror of the law and the law's officers, which may at times assail the most honest.

As the cab drew up before the address indicated, the fog lifted a little and showed him a dingy street, a gin palace, a low French eating house, a shop for the retail of penny numbers and twopenny salads, many ragged children huddled in the doorways, and many women of many different nationalities passing out, key in hand, to have a morning glass; and the next moment the fog settled down again upon that part, as brown as umber, and cut him off from his blackguardly surroundings. This was the home of

Henry Jekyll's favourite; of a man who was heir to quarter of a million sterling.

An ivory-faced and silvery-haired old woman opened the door. She had an evil face, smoothed by hypocrisy; but her manners were excellent. Yes, she said, this was Mr. Hyde's, but he was not at home; he had been in that night very late, but had gone away again in less than an hour; there was nothing strange in that; his habits were very irregular, and he was often absent; for instance, it was nearly two months since she had seen him till yesterday.

"Very well, then, we wish to see his rooms," said the lawyer; and when the woman began to declare it was impossible, "I had better tell you who this person is," he added. "This is Inspector Newcomen of Scotland Yard."

A flash of odious joy appeared upon the woman's face.

"Ah!" said she, "he is in trouble! What has he done?"

Mr. Utterson and the inspector exchanged glances. "He don't seem a very popular character," observed the latter. "And now, my good woman, just let me and this gentleman have a look about us."

In the whole extent of the house, which but for the old woman remained otherwise empty, Mr. Hyde had only used a couple of rooms; but these were furnished with luxury and good taste. A closet was filled with wine; the plate was of silver, the napery elegant; a good picture hung upon the walls, a gift (as Utterson supposed) from Henry Jekyll, who was much of a connoisseur; and the carpets were of many plies and agreeable in colour. At this moment, however, the rooms bore every mark of having been recently and hurriedly ransacked; clothes lay about the floor, with their pockets inside out; lock-fast drawers stood open; and on the hearth there lay a pile of gray ashes, as though many papers had been burned. From these embers the inspector disinterred the butt end of a green cheque book, which had resisted the action of the fire; the other half of the stick was found behind the door; and as this clinched his suspicions, the officer declared himself delighted. A visit to the bank, where several thousand pounds were found to be lying to the murderer's credit, completed his gratification.

"You may depend upon it, sir," he told Mr. Utterson: "I have him in my hand. He must have lost his head, or he never would have left the stick or, above all, burned the

cheque book. Why, money's life to the man. We have nothing to do but wait for him at the bank, and get out the handbills."

This last, however, was not so easy of accomplishment; for Mr. Hyde had numbered few familiars—even the master of the servant maid had only seen him twice; his family could nowhere be traced; he had never been photographed; and the few who could describe him differed widely, as common observers will. Only on one point, were they agreed; and that was the haunting sense of unexpressed deformity with which the fugitive impressed his beholders.

5

INCIDENT OF THE LETTER

IT WAS LATE IN THE AFTERNOON, WHEN MR. UTTERSON found his way to Dr. Jekyll's door, where he was at once admitted by Poole, and carried down by the kitchen offices and across a yard which had once been a garden, to the building which was indifferently known as the laboratory or the dissecting rooms. The doctor had bought the house from the heirs of a celebrated surgeon; and his own tastes being rather chemical than anatomical, had changed the destination of the block at the bottom of the garden. It was the first time that the lawyer had been received in that part of his friend's quarters; and he eyed the dingy, windowless structure with curiosity, and gazed round with a distasteful sense of strangeness as he crossed the theatre, once crowded with eager students and now lying gaunt and silent, the tables laden with chemical apparatus, the floor strewn with crates and littered with packing straw, and the light falling dimly through the foggy cupola. At the further end, a flight of stairs mounted to a door covered with red baize; and through this, Mr. Utterson was at last received into the doctor's cabinet. It was a large room, fitted round with glass presses, furnished, among other things, with a cheval-glass and a business table, and looking out upon the court

by three dusty windows barred with iron. A fire burned in the grate; a lamp was set lighted on the chimney shelf, for even in the houses the fog began to lie thickly; and there, close up to the warmth, sat Dr. Jekyll, looking deadly sick. He did not rise to meet his visitor, but held out a cold hand and bade him welcome in a changed voice.

"And now," said Mr. Utterson, as soon as Poole had left them, "you have heard the news?"

The doctor shuddered. "They were crying it in the square," he said. "I heard them in my dining-room."

"One word," said the lawyer. "Carew was my client, but so are you, and I want to know what I am doing. You have not been mad enough to hide this fellow?"

"Utterson, I swear to God," cried the doctor, "I swear to God I will never set eyes on him again. I bind my honour to you that I am done with him in this world. It is all at an end. And indeed he does not want my help; you do not know him as I do; he is safe, he is quite safe; mark my words, he will never more be heard of."

The lawyer listened gloomily; he did not like his friend's feverish manner. "You seem pretty sure of him," said he; "and for your sake, I hope you may be right. If it came to a trial, your name might appear."

"I am quite sure of him," replied Jekyll; "I have grounds for certainty that I cannot share with anyone. But there is one thing on which you may advise me. I have—I have received a letter; and I am at a loss whether I should show it to the police. I should like to leave it in your hands, Utterson; you would judge wisely, I am sure; I have so great a trust in you."

"You fear, I suppose, that it might lead to his detection?" asked the lawyer.

"No," said the other. "I cannot say that I care what becomes of Hyde; I am quite done with him. I was thinking of my own character, which this hateful business has rather exposed."

Utterson ruminated awhile; he was surprised at his friend's selfishness, and yet relieved by it. "Well," said he, at last, "let me see the letter."

The letter was written in an odd, upright hand and signed "Edward Hyde": and it signified, briefly enough, that the writer's benefactor, Dr. Jekyll, whom he had long so unworthily repaid for a thousand generosity, need

labour under no alarm for his safety, as he had means of escape on which he placed a sure dependence. The lawyer liked this letter well enough; it put a better colour on the intimacy than he had looked for; and he blamed himself for some of his past suspicions.

"Have you the envelope?" he asked.

"I burned it," replied Jekyll, "before I thought what I was about. But it bore no postmark. The note was handed in."

"Shall I keep this and sleep upon it?" asked Utterson.

"I wish you to judge for me entirely," was the reply. "I have lost confidence in myself."

"Well, I shall consider," returned the lawyer. "And now one word more: it was Hyde who dictated the terms in your will about that disappearance?"

The doctor seemed seized with a qualm of faintness; he shut his mouth tight and nodded.

"I knew it," said Utterson. "He meant to murder you. You have had a fine escape."

"I have had what is far more to the purpose," returned the doctor solemnly: "I have had a lesson—O God, Utterson, what a lesson I have had!" And he covered his face for a moment with his hands.

On his way out, the lawyer stopped and had a word or two with Poole. "By the bye," said he, "there was a letter handed in to-day: what was the messenger like?" But Poole was positive nothing had come except by post; "and only circulars by that," he added.

This news sent off the visitor with his fears renewed. Plainly the letter had come by the laboratory door; possibly, indeed, it had been written in the cabinet; and if that were so, it must be differently judged, and handled with the more caution. The newsboys, as he went, were crying themselves hoarse along the footways: "Special edition. Shocking murder of an M. P." That was the funeral oration of one friend and client; and he could not help a certain apprehension lest the good name of another should be sucked down in the eddy of the scandal. It was, at least, a ticklish decision that he had to make; and self-reliant as he was by habit, he began to cherish a longing for advice. It was not to be had directly; but perhaps, he thought, it might be fished for.

Presently after, he sat on one side of his own hearth, with

Mr. Guest, his head clerk, upon the other, and midway between, at a nicely calculated distance from the fire, a bottle of a particular old wine that had long dwelt unsunned in the foundations of his house. The fog still slept on the wing above the drowned city, where the lamps glimmered like carbuncles; and through the muffle and smother of these fallen clouds, the procession of the town's life was still rolling in through the great arteries with a sound as of a mighty wind. But the room was gay with firelight. In the bottle the acids were long ago resolved; the imperial dye had softened with time, as the colour grows richer in stained windows; and the glow of hot autumn afternoons on hillside vineyards, was ready to be set free and to disperse the fogs of London. Insensibly the lawyer melted. There was no man from whom he kept fewer secrets than Mr. Guest; and he was not always sure that he kept as many as he meant. Guest had often been on business to the doctor's; he knew Poole; he could scarce have failed to hear of Mr. Hyde's familiarity about the house; he might draw conclusions: was it not as well, then, that he should see a letter which put that mystery to rights? and above all since Guest, being a great student and critic of handwriting, would consider the step natural and obliging? The clerk, besides, was a man of counsel; he would scarce read so strange a document without dropping a remark; and by that remark Mr. Utterson might shape his future course.

"This is a sad business about Sir Danvers," he said.

"Yes, sir, indeed. It has elicited a great deal of public feeling," returned Guest. "The man, of course, was mad."

"I should like to hear your views on that," replied Utterson. "I have a document here in his handwriting; it is between ourselves, for I scarce know what to do about it; it is an ugly business at the best. But there it is; quite in your way: a murderer's autograph."

Guest's eyes brightened, and he sat down at once and studied it with passion. "No, sir," he said: "not mad; but it is an odd hand."

"And by all accounts a very odd writer," added the lawyer.

Just then the servant entered with a note.

"Is that from Dr. Jekyll, sir?" inquired the clerk. "I thought I knew the writing. Anything private, Mr. Utterson?"

"Only an invitation to dinner. Why? Do you want to see it?"

"One moment. I thank you, sir;" and the clerk laid the two sheets of paper alongside and sedulously compared their contents. "Thank you, sir," he said at last, returning both; "it's a very interesting autograph."

There was a pause, during which Mr. Utterson struggled with himself. "Why did you compare them, Guest?" he inquired suddenly.

"Well, sir," returned the clerk, "there's a rather singular resemblance; the two hands are in many points identical: only differently sloped."

"Rather quaint," said Utterson.

"It is, as you say, rather quaint," returned Guest.

"I wouldn't speak of this note, you know," said the master.

"No, sir," said the clerk. "I understand."

But no sooner was Mr. Utterson alone that night than he locked the note into his safe, where it reposed from that time forward. "What!" he thought. "Henry Jekyll forge for a murderer!" And his blood ran cold in his veins.

6

REMARKABLE INCIDENT OF DR. LANYON

TIME RAN ON; THOUSANDS OF POUNDS WERE OFFERED IN reward, for the death of Sir Danvers was resented as a public injury; but Mr. Hyde had disappeared out of the ken of the police as though he had never existed. Much of his past was unearthed, indeed, and all disreputable: tales came out of the man's cruelty, at once so callous and violent; of his vile life, of his strange associates, of the hatred that seemed to have surrounded his career; but of his present whereabouts, not a whisper. From the time he had left the house in Soho on the morning of the murder, he was simply blotted out; and gradually, as time drew on, Mr. Utterson began to recover from the hotness of his

alarm, and to grow more at quiet with himself. The death of Sir Danvers was, to his way of thinking, more than paid for by the disappearance of Mr. Hyde. Now that that evil influence had been withdrawn, a new life began for Dr. Jekyll. He came out of his seclusion, renewed relations with his friends, became once more their familiar guest and entertainer; and whilst he had always been known for charities, he was now no less distinguished for religion. He was busy, he was much in the open air, he did good; his face seemed to open and brighten, as if with an inward consciousness of service; and for more than two months, the doctor was at peace.

On the 8th of January Utterson had dined at the doctor's with a small party; Lanyon had been there; and the face of the host had looked from one to the other as in the old days when the trio were inseparable friends. On the 12th, and again on the 14th, the door was shut against the lawyer. "The doctor was confined to the house," Poole said, "and saw no one." On the 15th, he tried again, and was again refused; and having now been used for the last two months to see his friend almost daily, he found this return of solitude to weigh upon his spirits. The fifth night he had in Guest to dine with him; and the sixth he betook himself to Dr. Lanyon's.

There at least he was not denied admittance; but when he came in, he was shocked at the change which had taken place in the doctor's appearance. He had his death-warrant written legibly upon his face. The rosy man had grown pale; his flesh had fallen away; he was visibly balder and older; and yet it was not so much these tokens of a swift physical decay that arrested the lawyer's notice, as a look in the eye and quality of manner that seemed to testify to some deep-seated terror of the mind. It was unlikely that the doctor should fear death; and yet that was what Utterson was tempted to suspect. "Yes," he thought; "he is a doctor, he must know his own state and that his days are counted; and the knowledge is more than he can bear." And yet when Utterson remarked on his ill-looks, it was with an air of great firmness that Lanyon declared himself a doomed man.

"I have had a shock," he said, "and I shall never recover. It is a question of weeks. Well, life has been pleasant;

I liked it; yes, sir, I used to like it. I sometimes think if we knew all, we should be more glad to get away."

"Jekyll is ill, too," observed Utterson. "Have you seen him?"

But Lanyon's face changed, and he held up a trembling hand. "I wish to see or hear no more of Dr. Jekyll," he said in a loud, unsteady voice. "I am quite done with that person; and I beg that you will spare me any allusion to one whom I regard as dead."

"Tut-tut," said Mr. Utterson; and then after a considerable pause, "Can't I do anything?" he inquired. "We are three very old friends, Lanyon; we shall not live to make others."

"Nothing can be done," returned Lanyon; "ask himself."

"He will not see me," said the lawyer.

"I am not surprised at that," was the reply. "Some day, Utterson, after I am dead, you may perhaps come to learn the right and wrong of this. I cannot tell you. And in the meantime, if you can sit and talk with me of other things, for God's sake, stay and do so; but if you cannot keep clear of this accursed topic, then, in God's name, go, for I cannot bear it."

As soon as he got home, Utterson sat down and wrote to Jekyll, complaining of his exclusion from the house, and asking the cause of this unhappy break with Lanyon; and the next day brought him a long answer, often very pathetically worded, and sometimes darkly mysterious in drift. The quarrel with Lanyon was incurable. "I do not blame our old friend," Jekyll wrote, "but I share his view that we must never meet. I mean from henceforth to lead a life of extreme seclusion; you must not be surprised, nor must you doubt my friendship, if my door is often shut even to you. You must suffer me to go my own dark way. I have brought on myself a punishment and a danger that I cannot name. If I am the chief of sinners, I am the chief of sufferers also. I could not think that this earth contained a place for sufferings and terrors so unmanly; and you can do but one thing, Utterson, to lighten this destiny, and that is to respect my silence." Utterson was amazed; the dark influence of Hyde had been withdrawn, the doctor had returned to his old tasks and amities; a week ago, the prospect had smiled with every promise of a cheerful and an

honoured age; and now in a moment, friendship, and peace of mind, and the whole tenor of his life were wrecked. So great and unprepared a change pointed to madness; but in view of Lanyon's manner and words, there must lie for it some deeper ground.

A week afterwards Dr. Lanyon took to his bed, and in something less than a fortnight he was dead. The night after the funeral, at which he had been sadly affected, Utterson locked the door of his business room, and sitting there by the light of a melancholy candle, drew out and set before him an envelope addressed by the hand and sealed with the seal of his dead friend. "PRIVATE: for the hands of G. J. Utterson ALONE, and in case of his predecease *to be destroyed unread*," so it was emphatically superscribed; and the lawyer dreaded to behold the contents. "I have buried one friend today," he thought: "what if this should cost me another?" And then he condemned the fear as a disloyalty, and broke the seal. Within there was another enclosure, likewise sealed, and marked upon the cover as "not to be opened till the death or disappearance of Dr. Henry Jekyll." Utterson could not trust his eyes. Yes, it was disappearance; here again, as in the mad will which he had long ago restored to its author, here again were the idea of a disappearance and the name of Henry Jekyll bracketted. But in the will, that idea had sprung from the sinister suggestion of the man Hyde; it was set there with a purpose all too plain and horrible. Written by the hand of Lanyon, what should it mean? A great curiosity came on the trustee, to disregard the prohibition and dive at once to the bottom of these mysteries; but professional honour and faith to his dead friend were stringent obligations; and the packet slept in the inmost corner of his private safe.

It is one thing to mortify curiosity, another to conquer it; and it may be doubted if, from that day forth, Utterson desired the society of his surviving friend with the same eagerness. He thought of him kindly; but his thoughts were disquieted and fearful. He went to call indeed; but he was perhaps relieved to be denied admittance; perhaps, in his heart, he preferred to speak with Poole upon the doorstep and surrounded by the air and sounds of the open city, rather than to be admitted into that house of voluntary bondage, and to sit and speak with its inscrutable recluse.

Poole had, indeed, no very pleasant news to communicate. The doctor, it appeared, now more than ever confined himself to the cabinet over the laboratory, where he would sometimes even sleep; he was out of spirits; he had grown very silent, he did not read; it seemed as if he had something on his mind. Utterson became so used to the unvarying character of these reports, that he fell off little by little in the frequency of his visits.

7

INCIDENT AT THE WINDOW

IT CHANCED ON SUNDAY, WHEN MR. UTTERSON WAS ON HIS usual walk with Mr. Enfield, that their way lay once again through the by-street; and that when they came in front of the door, both stopped to gaze on it.

"Well," said Enfield, "that story's at an end at least. We shall never see more of Mr. Hyde."

"I hope not," said Utterson. "Did I ever tell you that I once saw him, and shared your feeling of repulsion?"

"It was impossible to do the one without the other," returned Enfield. "And by the way, what an ass you must have thought me, not to know that this was a back way to Dr. Jekyll's! It was partly your own fault that I found it out, even when I did."

"So you found it out, did you?" said Utterson. "But if that be so, we may step into the court and take a look at the windows. To tell you the truth, I am uneasy about poor Jekyll; and even outside, I feel as if the presence of a friend might do him good."

The court was very cool and a little damp, and full of premature twilight, although the sky, high up overhead, was still bright with sunset. The middle one of the three windows was half-way open; and sitting close beside it, taking the air with an infinite sadness of mien, like some disconsolate prisoner, Utterson saw Dr. Jekyll.

"What! Jekyll!" he cried. "I trust you are better."

"I am very low, Utterson," replied the doctor, drearily, "very low. It will not last long, thank God."

"You stay too much indoors," said the lawyer. "You should be out, whipping up the circulation like Mr. Enfield and me. (This is my cousin—Mr. Enfield—Dr. Jekyll.) Come now; get your hat and take a quick turn with us."

"You are very good," sighed the other. "I should like to very much; but no, no, no, it is quite impossible; I dare not. But indeed, Utterson, I am very glad to see you; this is really a great pleasure; I would ask you and Mr. Enfield up, but the place is really not fit."

"Why then," said the lawyer, good-naturedly, "the best thing we can do is to stay down here and speak with you from where we are."

"That is just what I was about to venture to propose," returned the doctor with a smile. But the words were hardly uttered, before the smile was struck out of his face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair, as froze the very blood of the two gentlemen below. They saw it but for a glimpse, for the window was instantly thrust down; but that glimpse had been sufficient, and they turned and left the court without a word. In silence, too, they traversed the by-street; and it was not until they had come into a neighbouring thoroughfare, where even upon a Sunday there were still some stirrings of life, that Mr. Utterson at last turned and looked at his companion. They were both pale; and there was an answering horror in their eyes.

"God forgive us, God forgive us," said Mr. Utterson.

But Mr. Enfield only nodded his head very seriously, and walked on once more in silence.

8

THE LAST NIGHT

MR. UTTERSON WAS SITTING BY HIS FIRESIDE ONE EVENING after dinner, when he was surprised to receive a visit from Poole.

"Bless me, Poole, what brings you here?" he cried; and then taking a second look at him, "What ails you?" he added; "is the doctor ill?"

"Mr. Utterson," said the man, "there is something wrong."

"Take a seat, and here is a glass of wine for you," said the lawyer. "Now, take your time, and tell me plainly what you want."

"You know the doctor's ways, sir," replied Poole, "and how he shuts himself up. Well, he's shut up again in the cabinet; and I don't like it, sir—I wish I may die if I like it. Mr. Utterson, sir, I'm afraid."

"Now, my good man," said the lawyer, "be explicit. What are you afraid of?"

"I've been afraid for about a week," returned Poole, doggedly disregarding the question, "and I can bear it no more."

The man's appearance amply bore out his words; his manner was altered for the worse; and except for the moment when he had first announced his terror, he had not once looked the lawyer in the face. Even now, he sat with the glass of wine untasted on his knee, and his eyes directed to a corner of the floor. "I can bear it no more," he repeated.

"Come," said the lawyer, "I see you have some good reason, Poole; I see there is something seriously amiss. Try to tell me what it is."

"I think there's been foul play," said Poole, hoarsely.

"Foul play!" cried the lawyer, a good deal frightened and rather inclined to be irritated in consequence. "What foul play? What does the man mean?"

"I daren't say, sir," was the answer; "but will you come along with me and see for yourself?"

Mr. Utterson's only answer was to rise and get his hat and great coat; but he observed with wonder the greatness of the relief that appeared upon the butler's face, and perhaps with no less, that the wine was still untasted when he set it down to follow.

It was a wild, cold, seasonable night of March, with a pale moon, lying on her back as though the wind had tilted her, and a flying wrack of the most diaphanous and lawny texture. The wind made talking difficult, and flecked the blood into the face. It seemed to have swept the streets un-

usually bare of passengers, besides; for Mr. Utterson thought he had never seen that part of London so deserted. He could have wished it otherwise; never in his life had he been conscious of so sharp a wish to see and touch his fellow-creatures; for struggle as he might, there was borne in upon his mind a crushing anticipation of calamity. The square, when they got there, was all full of wind and dust, and the thin trees in the garden were lashing themselves along the railing. Poole, who had kept all the way a pace or two ahead, now pulled up in the middle of the pavement, and in spite of the biting weather, took off his hat and mopped his brow with a red pocket-handkerchief. But for all the hurry of his coming, these were not the dews of exertion that he wiped away, but the moisture of some strangling anguish; for his face was white and his voice, when he spoke, harsh and broken.

"Well, sir," he said, "here we are, and God grant there be nothing wrong."

"Amen, Poole," said the lawyer.

Thereupon the servant knocked in a very guarded manner; the door was opened on the chain; and a voice asked from within, "Is that you, Poole?"

"It's all right," said Poole. "Open the door."

The hall, when they entered it, was brightly lighted up; the fire was built high; and about the hearth the whole of the servants, men and women, stood huddled together like a flock of sheep. At the sight of Mr. Utterson, the housemaid broke into hysterical whimpering; and the cook, crying out "Bless God! it's Mr. Utterson," ran forward as if to take him in her arms.

"What, what? Are you all here?" said the lawyer peevishly. "Very irregular, very unseemly; your master would be far from pleased."

"They're all afraid," said Poole.

Blank silence followed, no one protesting; only the maid lifted up her voice and now wept loudly.

"Hold your tongue!" Poole said to her, with a ferocity of accent that testified to his own jangled nerves; and indeed, when the girl had so suddenly raised the note of her lamentation, they had all started and turned towards the inner door with faces of dreadful expectation. "And now," continued the butler, addressing the knife-boy, "reach me a candle, and we'll get this through hands at once." And

then he begged Mr. Utterson to follow him, and led the way to the back garden.

"Now, sir," said he, "you come as gently as you can. I want you to hear, and I don't want you to be heard. And see here, sir, if by any chance he was to ask you in, don't go."

Mr. Utterson's nerves, at this unlooked-for termination, gave a jerk that nearly threw him from his balance; but he recollected his courage and followed the butler into the laboratory building and through the surgical theatre, with its lumber of crates and bottles, to the foot of the stair. Here Poole motioned him to stand on one side and listen; while he himself, setting down the candle and making a great and obvious call on his resolution, mounted the steps and knocked with a somewhat uncertain hand on the red baize of the cabinet door.

"Mr. Utterson, sir, asking to see you," he called; and even as he did so, once more violently signed to the lawyer to give ear.

A voice answered from within: "Tell him I cannot see anyone," it said complainingly.

"Thank you, sir," said Poole, with a note of something like triumph in his voice; and taking up his candle, he led Mr. Utterson back across the yard and into the great kitchen, where the fire was out and the beetles were leaping on the floor.

"Sir," he said, looking Mr. Utterson in the eyes, "was that my master's voice?"

"It seems much changed," replied the lawyer, very pale, but giving look for look.

"Changed? Well, yes, I think so," said the butler. "Have I been twenty years in this man's house, to be deceived about his voice? No, sir; master's made away with; he was made away with, eight days ago, when we heard him cry out upon the name of God; and *who's* in there instead of him, and *why* it stays there, is a thing that cries to Heaven, Mr. Utterson!"

"This is a very strange tale, Poole; this is rather a wild tale, my man," said Mr. Utterson, biting his finger. "Suppose it were as you suppose, supposing Dr. Jekyll to have been—well, murdered, what could induce the murderer to stay? That won't hold water; it doesn't commend itself to reason."

"Well, Mr. Utterson, you are a hard man to satisfy, but I'll do it yet," said Poole. "All this last week (you must know) him, or it, or whatever it is that lives in that cabinet, has been crying night and day for some sort of medicine and cannot get it to his mind. It was sometimes his way—the master's, that is—to write his orders on a sheet of paper and throw it on the stair. We've had nothing else this week back; nothing but papers, and a closed door, and the very meals left there to be smuggled in when nobody was looking. Well, sir, every day, ay, and twice and thrice in the same day, there have been orders and complaints, and I have been sent flying to all the wholesale chemists in town. Every time I brought the stuff back, there would be another paper telling me to return it, because it was not pure, and another order to a different firm. This drug is wanted bitter bad, sir, whatever for."

"Have you any of these papers?" asked Mr. Utterson.

Poole felt in his pocket and handed out a crumpled note, which the lawyer, bending nearer to the candle, carefully examined. Its contents ran thus: "Dr. Jekyll presents his compliments to Messrs. Maw. He assures them that their last sample is impure and quite useless for his present purpose. In the year 18—, Dr. J. purchased a somewhat large quantity from Messrs. M. He now begs them to search with the most sedulous care, and should any of the same quality be left, to forward it to him at once. Expense is no consideration. The importance of this to Dr. J. can hardly be exaggerated." So far the letter had run composedly enough, but here with a sudden splutter of the pen, the writer's emotion had broken loose. "For God's sake," he had added, "find me some of the old."

"This is a strange note," said Mr. Utterson; and then sharply, "How do you come to have it open?"

"The man at Maw's was main angry, sir, and he threw it back to me like so much dirt," returned Poole.

"This is unquestionably the doctor's hand, do you know?" resumed the lawyer.

"I thought it looked like it," said the servant rather sulkily; and then, with another voice, "But what matters hand of write?" he said. "I've seen him!"

"Seen him?" repeated Mr. Utterson. "Well?"

"That's it!" said Poole. "It was this way. I come suddenly

into the theatre from the garden. It seems he had slipped out to look for this drug or whatever it is; for the cabinet door was open, and there he was at the far end of the room digging among the crates. He looked up when I came in, gave a kind of cry, and whipped upstairs into the cabinet. It was but for one minute that I saw him, but the hair stood upon my head like quills. Sir, if that was my master, why had he a mask upon his face? If it was my master, why did he cry out like a rat, and run from me? I have served him long enough. And then . . ." The man paused and passed his hand over his face.

"These are all very strange circumstances," said Mr. Utterson, "but I think I begin to see daylight. Your master, Poole, is plainly seized with one of those maladies that both torture and deform the sufferer; hence, for aught I know, the alteration of his voice; hence the mask and the avoidance of his friends; hence his eagerness to find this drug, by means of which the poor soul retains some hope of ultimate recovery—God grant that he be not deceived! There is my explanation; it is sad enough, Poole, ay, and appalling to consider; but it is plain and natural, hangs well together, and delivers us from all exorbitant alarms."

"Sir," said the butler, turning to a sort of mottled pallor, "that thing was not my master, and there's the truth. My master"—here he looked round him and began to whisper—"is a tall, fine build of a man, and this was more of a dwarf." Utterson attempted to protest. "O, sir," cried Poole, "do you think I do not know my master after twenty years? Do you think I do not know where his head comes to in the cabinet door, where I saw him every morning of my life? No, sir, that thing in the mask was never Dr. Jekyll—God knows what it was, but it was never Dr. Jekyll; and it is the belief of my heart that there was murder done."

"Poole," replied the lawyer, "if you say that, it will become my duty to make certain. Much as I desire to spare your master's feelings, much as I am puzzled by this note which seems to prove him to be still alive, I shall consider it my duty to break in that door."

"Ah, Mr. Utterson, that's talking!" cried the butler.

"And now comes the second question," resumed Utterson: "Who is going to do it?"

"Why, you and me," was the undaunted reply.

"That's very well said," returned the lawyer; "and whatever comes of it, I shall make it my business to see you are no loser."

"There is an axe in the theatre," continued Poole; "and you might take the kitchen poker for yourself."

The lawyer took that rude but weighty instrument into his hand, and balanced it. "Do you know, Poole," he said, looking up, "that you and I are about to place ourselves in a position of some peril?"

"You may say so, sir, indeed," returned the butler.

"It is well, then, that we should be frank," said the other. "We both think more than we have said; let us make a clean breast. This masked figure that you saw, did you recognise it?"

"Well, sir, it went so quick, and the creature was so doubled up, that I could hardly swear to that," was the answer. "But if you mean, was it Mr. Hyde—why, yes, I think it was! You see, it was much of the same bigness; and it had the same quick, light way with it; and then who else could have got in by the laboratory door? You have not forgot, sir, that at the time of the murder he had still the key with him? But that's not all. I don't know, Mr. Utterson, if ever you met this Mr. Hyde?"

"Yes," said the lawyer, "I once spoke with him."

"Then you must know as well as the rest of us that there was something queer about that gentleman—something that gave a man a turn—I don't know rightly how to say it, sir, beyond this: that you felt it in your marrow kind of cold and thin."

"I own I felt something of what you describe," said Mr. Utterson.

"Quite so, sir," returned Poole. "Well, when that masked thing like a monkey jumped from among the chemicals and whipped into the cabinet, it went down my spine like ice. O, I know it's not evidence, Mr. Utterson; I'm book-learned enough for that; but a man has his feelings, and I give you my bible-word it was Mr. Hyde!"

"Ay, ay," said the lawyer. "My fears incline to the same point. Evil, I fear, founded—evil was sure to come—of that connection. Ay, truly, I believe you; I believe poor Harry is killed; and I believe his murderer (for what purpose, God alone can tell) is still lurking in his victim's room. Well, let our name be vengeance. Call Bradshaw."

The footman came at the summons, very white and nervous.

"Pull yourself together, Bradshaw," said the lawyer. "This suspense, I know, is telling upon all of you; but it is now our intention to make an end of it. Poole, here, and I are going to force our way into the cabinet. If all is well, my shoulders are broad enough to bear the blame. Meanwhile, lest anything should really be amiss, or any malefactor seek to escape by the back, you and the boy must go round the corner with a pair of good sticks and take your post at the laboratory door. We give you ten minutes, to get to your stations."

As Bradshaw left, the lawyer looked at his watch. "And now, Poole, let us get to ours," he said; and taking the poker under his arm, led the way into the yard. The scud had banked over the moon, and it was now quite dark. The wind, which only broke in puffs and draughts into that deep well of building, tossed the light of the candle to and fro about their steps, until they came into the shelter of the theatre, where they sat down silently to wait. London hummed solemnly all around; but nearer at hand, the stillness was only broken by the sounds of a footfall moving to and fro along the cabinet floor.

"So it will walk all day, sir," whispered Poole; "ay, and the better part of the night. Only when a new sample comes from the chemist, there's a bit of a break. Ah, it's an ill-conscience that's such an enemy to rest! Ah, sir, there's blood foully shed in every step of it! But hark again, a little closer—put your heart in your ears, Mr. Utterson, and tell me, is that the doctor's foot?"

The steps fell lightly and oddly, with a certain swing, for all they went so slowly; it was different indeed from the heavy creaking tread of Henry Jekyll. Utterson sighed. "Is there never anything else?" he asked.

Poole nodded. "Once," he said. "Once I heard it weeping!"

"Weeping? how that?" said the lawyer, conscious of a sudden chill of horror.

"Weeping like a woman or a lost soul," said the butler. "I came away with that upon my heart, that I could have wept too."

But now the ten minutes drew to an end. Poole disinterred the axe from under a stack of packing straw; the candle

was set upon the nearest table to light them to the attack; and they drew near with bated breath to where that patient foot was still going up and down, up and down, in the quiet of the night.

"Jekyll," cried Utterson, with a loud voice, "I demand to see you." He paused a moment, but there came no reply. "I give you fair warning, our suspicions are aroused, and I must and shall see you," he resumed; "if not by fair means, then by foul—if not of your consent, then by brute force!"

"Utterson," said the voice, "for God's sake, have mercy!"

"Ah, that's not Jekyll's voice—it's Hyde's!" cried Utterson. "Down with the door, Poole!"

Poole swung the axe over his shoulder; the blow shook the building, and the red baize door leaped against the lock and hinges. A dismal screech, as of mere animal terror, rang from the cabinet. Up went the axe again, and again the panels crashed and the frame bounded; four times the blow fell; but the wood was tough and the fittings were of excellent workmanship; and it was not until the fifth, that the lock burst in sunder and the wreck of the door fell inwards on the carpet.

The besiegers, appalled by their own riot and the stillness that had succeeded, stood back a little and peered in. There lay the cabinet before their eyes in the quiet lamplight, a good fire glowing and chattering on the hearth, the kettle singing its thin strain, a drawer or two open, papers neatly set forth on the business table, and nearer the fire, the things laid out for tea: the quietest room, you would have said, and, but for the glazed presses full of chemicals, the most commonplace that night in London.

Right in the midst there lay the body of a man sorely contorted and still twitching. They drew near on tiptoe, turned it on its back and beheld the face of Edward Hyde. He was dressed in clothes far too large for him, clothes of the doctor's bigness; the cords of his face still moved with a semblance of life, but life was quite gone: and by the crushed phial in the hand and the strong smell of kernels that hung upon the air, Utterson knew that he was looking on the body of a self-destroyer.

"We have come too late," he said sternly, "whether to save or punish. Hyde is gone to his account; and it only remains for us to find the body of your master."

The far greater proportion of the building was occupied by the theatre, which filled almost the whole ground story and was lighted from above, and by the cabinet, which formed an upper storey at one end and looked upon the court. A corridor joined the theatre to the door on the by-street; and with this the cabinet communicated separately by a second flight of stairs. There were besides a few dark closets and a spacious cellar. All these they now thoroughly examined. Each closet needed but a glance, for all were empty, and all, by the dust that fell from their doors, had stood long unopened. The cellar, indeed, was filled with crazy lumber, mostly dating from the times of the surgeon who was Jekyll's predecessor; but even as they opened the door they were advertised of the uselessness of further search, by the fall of a perfect mat of cobweb which had for years sealed up the entrance. Nowhere was there any trace of Henry Jekyll, dead or alive.

Poole stamped on the flags of the corridor. "He must be buried here," he said, hearkening to the sound.

"Or he may have fled," said Utterson, and he turned to examine the door in the by-street. It was locked; and lying near by on the flags, they found the key, already stained with rust.

"This does not look like use," observed the lawyer.

"Use!" echoed Poole. "Do you not see, sir, it is broken? much as if a man had stamped on it."

"Ay," continued Utterson, "and the fractures, too, are rusty." The two men looked at each other with a scare. "This is beyond me, Poole," said the lawyer. "Let us go back to the cabinet."

They mounted the stair in silence, and still with an occasional awestruck glance at the dead body, proceeded more thoroughly to examine the contents of the cabinet. At one table, there were traces of chemical work, various measured heaps of some white salt being laid on glass saucers, as though for an experiment in which the unhappy man had been prevented.

"That is the same drug that I was always bringing him," said Poole; and even as he spoke, the kettle with a startling noise boiled over.

This brought them to the fireside, where the easy chair was drawn cosily up, and the tea things stood ready to the sitter's elbow, the very sugar in the cup. There were several

books on a shelf; one lay beside the tea things open, and Utterson was amazed to find it a copy of a pious work, for which Jekyll had several times expressed a great esteem, annotated, in his own hand, with startling blasphemies.

Next, in the course of their review of the chamber, the searchers came to the cheval glass, into whose depths they looked with an involuntary horror. But it was so turned as to show them nothing but the rosy glow playing on the roof, the fire sparkling in a hundred repetitions along the glazed front of the presses, and their own pale and fearful countenances stooping to look in.

"This glass have seen some strange things, sir," whispered Poole.

"And surely none stranger than itself," echoed the lawyer in the same tones. "For what did Jekyll"—he caught himself up at the word with a start, and then conquering the weakness—"what could Jekyll want with it?" he said.

"You may say that!" said Poole.

Next they turned to the business table. On the desk, among the neat array of papers, a large envelope was uppermost, and bore, in the doctor's hand, the name of Mr. Utterson. The lawyer unsealed it, and several enclosures fell to the floor. The first was a will, drawn in the same eccentric terms as the one which he had returned six months before, to serve as a testament in case of death and as a deed of gift in case of disappearance; but in place of the name of Edward Hyde, the lawyer, with indescribable amazement, read the name of Gabriel John Utterson. He looked at Poole, and then back at the paper, and last of all at the dead malefactor stretched upon the carpet.

"My head goes round," he said. "He has been all these days in possession; he had no cause to like me; he must have raged to see himself displaced; and he has not destroyed this document."

He caught up the next paper; it was a brief note in the doctor's hand and dated at the top. "O Poole!" the lawyer cried, "he was alive and here this day. He cannot have been disposed of in so short a space; he must be still alive, he must have fled! And then, why fled? and how? and in that case, can we venture to declare this suicide? O, we must be careful. I foresee that we may yet involve your master in some dire catastrophe."

"Why don't you read it, sir?" asked Poole.

"Because I fear," replied the lawyer solemnly. "God grant I have no cause for it!" And with that he brought the paper to his eyes and read as follows:

"My Dear Utterson,—When this shall fall into your hands, I shall have disappeared, under what circumstances I have not the penetration to foresee, but my instinct and all the circumstances of my nameless situation tell me that the end is sure and must be early. Go then, and first read the narrative which Lanyon warned me he was to place in your hands; and if you care to hear more, turn to the confession of

"Your unworthy and unhappy friend,
"Henry Jekyll."

"There was a third enclosure?" asked Utterson.

"Here, sir," said Poole, and gave into his hands a considerable packet sealed in several places.

The lawyer put it in his pocket. "I would say nothing of this paper. If your master has fled or is dead, we may at least save his credit. It is now ten; I must go home and read these documents in quiet; but I shall be back before midnight, when we shall send for the police."

They went out, locking the door of the theatre behind them; and Utterson, once more leaving the servants gathered about the fire in the hall, trudged back to his office to read the two narratives in which this mystery was now to be explained.

9

DR. LANYON'S NARRATIVE

ON THE NINTH OF JANUARY, NOW FOUR DAYS AGO, I RECEIVED by the evening delivery a registered envelope, addressed in the hand of my colleague and old school-companion, Henry Jekyll. I was a good deal surprised by this; for we were by no means in the habit of correspondence; I had

seen the man, dined with him, indeed, the night before; and I could imagine nothing in our intercourse that should justify formality of registration. The contents increased my wonder; for this is how the letter ran:

"10th December, 18—

"Dear Lanyon,—You are one of my oldest friends; and although we may have differed at times on scientific questions, I cannot remember, at least on my side, any break in our affection. There was never a day when, if you had said to me, 'Jekyll, my life, my honour, my reason, depend upon you,' I would not have sacrificed my left hand to help you. Lanyon, my life, my honour, my reason, are all at your mercy; if you fail me to-night I am lost. You might suppose, after this preface, that I am going to ask you for something dishonourable to grant. Judge for yourself.

"I want you to postpone all other engagements for to-night—ay, even if you were summoned to the bedside of an emperor; to take a cab, unless your carriage should be actually at the door; and with this letter in your hand for consultation, to drive straight to my house. Poole, my butler, has his orders; you will find him waiting your arrival with a locksmith. The door of my cabinet is then to be forced: and you are to go in alone; to open the glazed press (letter E) on the left hand, breaking the lock if it be shut; and to draw out, *with all its contents as they stand*, the fourth drawer from the top or (which is the same thing) the third from the bottom. In my extreme distress of mind, I have a morbid fear of misdirecting you; but even if I am in error, you may know the right drawer by its contents: some powders, a phial and a paper book. This drawer I beg of you to carry back with you to Cavendish Square exactly as it stands.

"That is the first part of the service: now for the second. You should be back, if you set out at once on the receipt of this, long before midnight; but I will leave you that amount of margin, not only in the fear of one of those obstacles that can neither be prevented nor foreseen, but because an hour when your servants are in bed is to be preferred for what will then remain to do. At midnight, then, I have to ask you to be alone

in your consulting room, to admit with your own hand into the house a man who will present himself in my name, and to place in his hands the drawer that you will have brought with you from my cabinet. Then you will have played your part and earned my gratitude completely. Five minutes afterwards, if you insist upon an explanation, you will have understood that these arrangements are of capital importance; and that by the neglect of one of them, fantastic as they must appear, you might have charged your conscience with my death or the shipwreck of my reason.

"Confident as I am that you will not trifle with this appeal, my heart sinks and my hand trembles at the bare thought of such a possibility. Think of me at this hour, in a strange place, labouring under a blackness of distress that no fancy can exaggerate, and yet well aware that, if you will but punctually serve me, my troubles will roll away like a story that is told. Serve me, my dear Lanyon, and save

"Your friend,

"H. J.

"P. S.—I had already sealed this up when a fresh terror struck upon my soul. It is possible that the post-office may fail me, and this letter not come into your hands until to-morrow morning. In that case, dear Lanyon, do my errand when it shall be most convenient for you in the course of the day; and once more expect my messenger at midnight. It may then already be too late; and if that night passes without event, you will know that you have seen the last of Henry Jekyll."

Upon the reading of this letter, I made sure my colleague was insane; but till that was proved beyond the possibility of doubt, I felt bound to do as he requested. The less I understood of this farrago, the less I was in a position to judge of its importance; and an appeal so worded could not be set aside without a grave responsibility. I rose accordingly from table, got into a hansom, and drove straight to Jekyll's house. The butler was awaiting my arrival; he had received by the same post as mine a registered letter of instruction, and had sent at once for a locksmith and a carpenter. The tradesmen came while we were yet speaking; and we moved in a body to old Dr. Denman's surgical

theatre, from which (as you are doubtless aware) Jekyll's private cabinet is most conveniently entered. The door was very strong, the lock excellent; the carpenter avowed he would have great trouble and have to do much damage, if force were to be used; and the locksmith was near despair. But this last was a handy fellow, and after two hours' work, the door stood open. The press marked E was unlocked; and I took out the drawer, had it filled up with straw and tied in a sheet, and returned with it to Cavendish Square.

Here I proceeded to examine its contents. The powders were neatly enough made up, but not with the nicety of the dispensing chemist; so that it was plain they were of Jekyll's private manufacture: and when I opened one of the wrappers I found what seemed to me a simple crystalline salt of a white colour. The phial, to which I next turned my attention, might have been about half full of a blood-red liquor, which was highly pungent to the sense of smell and seemed to me to contain phosphorous and some volatile ether. At the other ingredients I could make no guess. The book was an ordinary version book and contained little but a series of dates. These covered a period of many years, but I observed that the entries ceased nearly a year ago and quite abruptly. Here and there a brief remark was appended to a date, usually no more than a single word: "double" occurring perhaps six times in a total of several hundred entries; and once very early in the list and followed by several marks of exclamation, "total failure!!!" All this, though it whetted my curiosity, told me little that was definite. Here were a phial of some tincture, a paper of some salt, and the record of a series of experiments that had led (like too many of Jekyll's investigations) to no end of practical usefulness. How could the presence of these articles in my house affect either the honour, the sanity, or the life of my flighty colleague? If his messenger could go to one place, why could he not go to another? And even granting some impediment, why was this gentleman to be received by me in secret? The more I reflected the more convinced I grew that I was dealing with a case of cerebral disease; and though I dismissed my servants to bed, I loaded an old revolver, that I might be found in some posture of self-defence.

Twelve o'clock had scarce rung out over London, ere the knocker sounded very gently on the door. I went myself at

the summons, and found a small man crouching against the pillars of the portico.

"Are you come from Dr. Jekyll?" I asked.

He told me "yes" by a constrained gesture; and when I had bidden him enter, he did not obey me without a searching backward glance into the darkness of the square. There was a policeman not far off, advancing with his bull's eye open; and at the sight, I thought my visitor started and made greater haste.

These particulars struck me, I confess, disagreeably; and as I followed him into the bright light of the consulting room, I kept my hand ready on my weapon. Here, at last, I had a chance of clearly seeing him. I had never set eyes on him before, so much was certain. He was small, as I have said; I was struck besides with the shocking expression of his face, with his remarkable combination of great muscular activity and great apparent debility of constitution, and—last but not least—with the odd, subjective disturbance caused by his neighbourhood. This bore some resemblance to incipient rigour, and was accompanied by a marked sinking of the pulse. At the time, I set it down to some idiosyncratic, personal distaste, and merely wondered at the acuteness of the symptoms; but I have since had reason to believe the cause to lie much deeper in the nature of man, and to turn on some nobler hinge than the principle of hatred.

This person (who had thus, from the first moment of his entrance, struck in me what I can only describe as a disgusting curiosity) was dressed in a fashion that would have made an ordinary person laughable; his clothes, that is to say, although they were of rich and sober fabric, were enormously too large for him in every measurement—the trousers hanging on his legs and rolled up to keep them from the ground, the waist of the coat below his haunches, and the collar sprawling wide upon his shoulders. Strange to relate, this ludicrous accoutrement was far from moving me to laughter. Rather, as there was something abnormal and misbegotten in the very essence of the creature that now faced me—something seizing, surprising and revolting—this fresh disparity seemed but to fit in with and to reinforce it; so that to my interest in the man's nature and character, there was added a curiosity as to his origin, his life, his fortune and status in the world.

These observations, though they have taken so great a space to be set down in, were yet the work of a few seconds. My visitor was, indeed, on fire with sombre excitement.

"Have you got it?" he cried. "Have you got it?" And so lively was his impatience that he even laid his hand upon my arm and sought to shake me.

I put him back, conscious at his touch of a certain icy pang along my blood. "Come, sir," said I. "You forget that I have not yet the pleasure of your acquaintance. Be seated, if you please." And I showed him an example, and sat down myself in my customary seat and with as fair an imitation of my ordinary manner to a patient, as the lateness of the hour, the nature of my preoccupations, and the horror I had of my visitor, would suffer me to muster.

"I beg your pardon, Dr. Lanyon," he replied civilly enough. "What you say is very well founded; and my impatience has shown its heels to my politeness. I come here at the instance of your colleague, Dr. Henry Jekyll, on a piece of business of some moment; and I understood—" He paused and put his hand to his throat, and I could see, in spite of his collected manner, that he was wrestling against the approaches of the hysteria—"I understood, a drawer—"

But here I took pity on my visitor's suspense, and some perhaps on my own growing curiosity.

"There it is, sir," said I, pointing to the drawer, where it lay on the floor behind a table and still covered with the sheet.

He sprang to it, and then paused, and laid his hand upon his heart: I could hear his teeth grate with the convulsive action of his jaws; and his face was so ghastly to see that I grew alarmed both for his life and reason.

"Compose yourself," said I.

He turned a dreadful smile to me, and as if with the decision of despair, plucked away the sheet. At sight of the contents, he uttered one loud sob of such immense relief that I sat petrified. And the next moment, in a voice that was already fairly well under control, "Have you a graduated glass?" he asked.

I rose from my place with something of an effort and gave him what he asked.

He thanked me with a smiling nod, measured out a few minims of the red tincture and added one of the powders.

The mixture, which was at first of a reddish hue, began, in proportion as the crystals melted, to brighten in colour, to effervesce audibly, and to throw off small fumes of vapour. Suddenly and at the same moment, the ebullition ceased and the compound changed to a dark purple, which faded again more slowly to a watery green. My visitor, who had watched these metamorphoses with a keen eye, smiled, set down the glass upon the table, and then turned and looked upon me with an air of scrutiny.

"And now," said he, "to settle what remains. Will you be wise? will you be guided? will you suffer me to take this glass in my hand and to go forth from your house without further parley? or has the greed of curiosity too much command of you? Think before you answer, for it shall be done as you decide. As you decide, you shall be left as you were before, and neither richer nor wiser, unless the sense of service rendered to a man in mortal distress may be counted as a kind of riches of the soul. Or, if you shall so prefer to choose, a new province of knowledge and new avenues to fame and power shall be laid open to you, here, in this room, upon the instant; and your sight shall be blasted by a prodigy to stagger the unbelief of Satan."

"Sir," said I, affecting a coolness that I was far from truly possessing, "you speak enigmas, and you will perhaps not wonder that I hear you with no very strong impression of belief. But I have gone too far in the way of inexplicable services to pause before I see the end."

"It is well," replied my visitor. "Lanyon, you remember your vows: what follows is under the seal of our profession. And now, you who have so long been bound to the most narrow and material views, you who have denied the virtue of transcendental medicine, you who have derided your superiors—behold!"

He put the glass to his lips and drank at one gulp. A cry followed; he reeled, staggered, clutched at the table and held on, staring with injected eyes, gasping with open mouth; and as I looked there came, I thought, a change—he seemed to swell—his face became suddenly black and the features seemed to melt and alter—and the next moment, I had sprung to my feet and leaped back against the wall, my arm raised to shield me from that prodigy, my mind submerged in terror.

"O God!" I screamed, and "O God!" again and again;

for there before my eyes—pale and shaken, and half fainting, and groping before him with his hands, like a man restored from death—there stood Henry Jekyll!

What he told me in the next hour, I cannot bring my mind to set on paper. I saw what I saw, I heard what I heard, and my soul sickened at it; and yet now when that sight has faded from my eyes, I ask myself if I believe it, and I cannot answer. My life is shaken to its roots; sleep has left me; the deadliest terror sits by me at all hours of the day and night; I feel that my days are numbered, and that I must die; and yet I shall die incredulous. As for the moral turpitude that man unveiled to me, even with tears of penitence, I cannot, even in memory, dwell on it without a start of horror. I will say but one thing, Utterson, and that (if you can bring your mind to credit it) will be more than enough. The creature who crept into my house that night was, on Jekyll's own confession, known by the name of Hyde and hunted for in every corner of the land as the murderer of Carew.

Hastie Lanyon.

10

HENRY JEKYLL'S FULL STATEMENT OF THE CASE

I WAS BORN IN THE YEAR 18— TO A LARGE FORTUNE, ENDOWED besides with excellent parts, inclined by nature to industry, fond of the respect of the wise and good among my fellowmen, and thus, as might have been supposed, with every guarantee of an honourable and distinguished future. And indeed the worst of my faults was a certain impatient gaiety of disposition, such as has made the happiness of many, but such as I found it hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to carry my head high, and wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public. Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life.

Many a man would have even blazoned such irregularities as I was guilty of; but from the high views that I had set before me, I regarded and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame. It was thus rather the exacting nature of my aspirations than any particular degradation in my faults, that made me what I was, and, with even a deeper trench than in the majority of men, severed in me those provinces of good and ill which divide and compound man's dual nature. In this case, I was driven to reflect deeply and inveterately on that hard law of life, which lies at the root of religion and is one of the most plentiful springs of distress. Though so profound a double-dealer, I was in no sense a hypocrite; both sides of me were in dead earnest; I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in shame, than when I laboured, in the eye of day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering. And it chanced that the direction of my scientific studies, which led wholly towards the mystic and the transcendental, reacted and shed a strong light on this consciousness of the perennial war among my members. With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens. I for my part, from the nature of my life, advanced infallibly in one direction and in one direction only. It was on the moral side, and in my own person, that I learned to recognise the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both; and from an early date, even before the course of my scientific discoveries had begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle, I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved day-dream, on the thought of the separation of these elements. If each, I told myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more

upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil. It was the curse of mankind that these incongruous faggots were thus bound together—that in the agonised womb of consciousness, these polar twins should be continuously struggling. How, then, were they dissociated?

I was so far in my reflections when, as I have said, a side light began to shine upon the subject from the laboratory table. I began to perceive more deeply than it has ever yet been stated, the trembling immateriality, the mist-like transience, of this seemingly so solid body in which we walk attired. Certain agents I found to have the power to shake and to pluck back that fleshly vestment, even as a wind might toss the curtains of a pavilion. For two good reasons, I will not enter deeply into this scientific branch of my confession. First, because I have been made to learn that the doom and burthen of our life is bound forever on man's shoulders, and when the attempt is made to cast it off, it but returns upon us with more unfamiliar and more awful pressure. Second, because, as my narrative will make, alas! too evident, my discoveries were incomplete. Enough, then, that I not only recognised my natural body for the mere aura and effulgence of certain of the powers that made up my spirit, but managed to compound a drug by which these powers should be dethroned from their supremacy, and a second form and countenance substituted, none the less natural to me because they were the expression, and bore the stamp, of lower elements in my soul.

I hesitated long before I put this theory to the test of practice. I knew well that I risked death; for any drug that so potently controlled and shook the very fortress of identity, might by the least scruple of an overdose or at the least inopportunity in the moment of exhibition, utterly blot out the immaterial tabernacle which I looked to it to change. But the temptation of a discovery so singular and profound, at last overcame the suggestions of alarm. I had long since prepared my tincture; I purchased at once, from a firm of wholesale chemists, a large quantity of a particular salt which I knew, from my experiments, to be the last ingredient required; and late one accursed night, I compounded the elements, watched them boil and smoke to-

gether in the glass, and when the ebullition had subsided, with a strong glow of courage, drank off the potion.

The most racking pangs succeeded: a grinding in the bones, deadly nausea, and a horror of the spirit that cannot be exceeded at the hour of birth or death. Then these agonies began swiftly to subside, and I came to myself as if out of a great sickness. There was something strange in my sensations, something indescribably new and, from its very novelty, incredibly sweet. I felt younger, lighter, happier in body; within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a mill race in my fancy, a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul. I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine. I stretched out my hands, exulting in the freshness of these sensations; and in the act, I was suddenly aware that I had lost in stature.

There was no mirror, at that date, in my room; that which stands beside me as I write, was brought there later on and for the very purpose of these transformations. The night, however, was far gone into the morning—the morning, black as it was, was nearly ripe for the conception of the day—the inmates of my house were locked in the most rigorous hours of slumber; and I determined, flushed as I was with hope and triumph, to venture in my new shape as far as to my bedroom. I crossed the yard, wherein the constellations looked down upon me, I could have thought, with wonder, the first creature of that sort that their unsleeping vigilance had yet disclosed to them; I stole through the corridors, a stranger in my own house; and coming to my room, I saw for the first time the appearance of Edward Hyde.

I must here speak by theory alone, saying not that which I know, but that which I suppose to be most probable. The evil side of my nature, to which I had now transferred the stamping efficacy, was less robust and less developed than the good which I had just deposed. Again, in the course of my life, which had been, after all, nine-tenths a life of effort, virtue and control, it had been much less exercised and much less exhausted. And hence, as I think, it came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller, slighter, and

younger than Henry Jekyll. Even as good shone upon the countenance of the one, evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other. Evil besides (which I must still believe to be the lethal side of man) had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay. And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human. In my eyes it bore a livelier image of the spirit, it seemed more express and single, than the imperfect and divided countenance I had been hitherto accustomed to call mine. And in so far I was doubtless right. I have observed that when I wore the semblance of Edward Hyde, none could come near to me at first without a visible misgiving of the flesh. This, as I take it, was because all human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil: and Edward Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil.

I lingered but a moment at the mirror: the second and conclusive experiment had yet to be attempted; it yet remained to be seen if I had lost my identity beyond redemption and must flee before daylight from a house that was no longer mine; and hurrying back to my cabinet, I once more prepared and drank the cup, once more suffered the pangs of dissolution, and came to myself once more with the character, the stature and the face of Henry Jekyll.

That night I had come to the fatal cross roads. Had I approached my discovery in a more noble spirit, had I risked the experiment while under the empire of generous or pious aspirations, all must have been otherwise, and from these agonies of death and birth, I had come forth an angel instead of a fiend. The drug had no discriminating action; it was neither diabolical nor divine; it but shook the doors of the prison-house of my disposition; and like the captives of Philippi, that which stood within ran forth. At that time my virtue slumbered; my evil, kept away by ambition, was alert and swift to seize the occasion; and the thing that was projected was Edward Hyde. Hence, although I had now two characters as well as two appearances, one was wholly evil, and the other was still the old Henry Jekyll, that incongruous compound of whose reformation and improvement I had already learned to despair. The movement was thus wholly towards the worse.

Even at that time, I had not yet conquered my aversion to the dryness of a life of study. I would still be merrily disposed at times; and as my pleasures were (to say the least) undignified, and I was not only well known and highly considered, but growing towards the elderly man, this incoherency of my life was daily growing more unwelcome. It was on this side that my new power tempted me until I fell in slavery. I had but to drink the cup, to doff at once the body of the noted professor, and to assume, like a thick cloak, that of Edward Hyde. I smiled at the notion; it seemed to me at the time to be humorous; and I made my preparations with the most studious care. I took and furnished that house in Soho, to which Hyde was tracked by the police; and engaged as housekeeper a creature whom I well knew to be silent and unscrupulous. On the other side, I announced to my servants that a Mr. Hyde (whom I described) was to have full liberty and power about my house in the square; and to parry mishaps, I even called and made myself a familiar object, in my second character. I next drew up that will to which you so much objected; so that if anything befell me in the person of Dr. Jekyll, I could enter on that of Edward Hyde without pecuniary loss. And thus fortified, as I supposed, on every side, I began to profit by the strange immunities of my position.

Men have before hired bravos to transact their crimes, while their own person and reputation sat under shelter. I was the first that ever did so for his pleasures. I was the first that could thus plod in the public eye with a load of genial respectability, and in a moment, like a schoolboy, strip off these lendings and spring headlong into the sea of liberty. But for me, in my impenetrable mantle, the safety was complete. Think of it—I did not even exist! Let me but escape into my laboratory door, give me but a second or two to mix and swallow the draught that I had always standing ready; and whatever he had done, Edward Hyde would pass away like the stain of breath upon a mirror; and there in his stead, quietly at home, trimming the midnight lamp in his study, a man who could afford to laugh at suspicion, would be Henry Jekyll.

The pleasures which I made haste to seek in my disguise were, as I have said, undignified; I would scarce use a harder term. But in the hands of Edward Hyde, they soon began to turn towards the monstrous. When I would come

back from these excursions, I was often plunged into a kind of wonder at my vicarious depravity. This familiar that I called out of my own soul, and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was a being inherently malign and villainous; his every act and thought centered on self; drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another; relentless like a man of stone. Henry Jekyll stood at times aghast before the acts of Edward Hyde; but the situation was apart from ordinary laws, and insidiously relaxed the grasp of conscience. It was Hyde, after all, and Hyde alone, that was guilty. Jekyll was no worse; he woke again to his good qualities seemingly unimpaired; he would even make haste, where it was possible, to undo the evil done by Hyde. And thus his conscience slumbered.

Into the details of the infamy at which I thus connived (for even now I can scarce grant that I committed it) I have no design of entering; I mean but to point out the warnings and the successive steps with which my chastisement approached. I met with one accident which, as it brought on no consequence, I shall no more than mention. An act of cruelty to a child aroused against me the anger of a passer-by, whom I recognised the other day in the person of your kinsman; the doctor and the child's family joined him; there were moments when I feared for my life; and at last, in order to pacify their too just resentment, Edward Hyde had to bring them to the door, and pay them in a cheque drawn in the name of Henry Jekyll. But this danger was easily eliminated from the future, by opening an account at another bank in the name of Edward Hyde himself; and when, by sloping my own hand backward, I had supplied my double with a signature, I thought I sat beyond the reach of fate.

Some two months before the murder of Sir Danvers, I had been out for one of my adventures, had returned at a late hour, and woke the next day in bed with somewhat odd sensations. It was in vain I looked about me; in vain I saw the decent furniture and tall proportions of my room in the square; in vain that I recognised the pattern of the bed curtains and the design of the mahogany frame; something still kept insisting that I was not where I was, that I had not wakened where I seemed to be, but in the little room in Soho where I was accustomed to sleep in the body of Edward Hyde. I smiled to myself, and, in my psychological

way began lazily to inquire into the elements of this illusion, occasionally, even as I did so, dropping back into a comfortable morning doze. I was still so engaged when, in one of my more wakeful moments, my eyes fell upon my hand. Now the hand of Henry Jekyll (as you have often remarked) was professional in shape and size: it was large, firm, white and comely. But the hand which I now saw, clearly enough, in the yellow light of a mid-London morning, lying half shut on the bed clothes, was lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair. It was the hand of Edward Hyde.

I must have stared upon it for near half a minute, sunk as I was in the mere stupidity of wonder, before terror woke up in my breast as sudden and startling as the crash of cymbals; and bounding from my bed, I rushed to the mirror. At the sight that met my eyes, my blood was changed into something exquisitely thin and icy. Yes, I had gone to bed Henry Jekyll, I had awakened Edward Hyde. How was this to be explained? I asked myself; and then, with another bound of terror—how was it to be remedied? It was well on in the morning; the servants were up; all my drugs were in the cabinet—a long journey down two pair of stairs, through the back passage, across the open court and through the anatomical theatre, from where I was then standing horror-struck. It might indeed be possible to cover my face; but of what use was that, when I was unable to conceal the alteration in my stature? And then with an overpowering sweetness of relief, it came back upon my mind that the servants were already used to the coming and going of my second self. I had soon dressed, as well as I was able, in clothes of my own size: had soon passed through the house, where Bradshaw stared and drew back at seeing Mr. Hyde at such an hour and in such a strange array; and ten minutes later, Dr. Jekyll had returned to his own shape and was sitting down, with a darkened brow, to make a feint of breakfasting.

Small indeed was my appetite. This inexplicable incident, this reversal of my previous experience, seemed, like the Babylonian finger on the wall, to be spelling out the letters of my judgment; and I began to reflect more seriously than ever before on the issues and possibilities of my double existence. That part of me which I had the power of projecting, had lately been much exercised and nourished; it had

seemed to me of late as though the body of Edward Hyde had grown in stature, as though (when I wore that form) I were conscious of a more generous tide of blood; and I began to spy a danger that, if this were much prolonged, the balance of my nature might be permanently overthrown, the power of voluntary change be forfeited, and the character of Edward Hyde become irrevocably mine. The power of the drug had not been always equally displayed. Once, very early in my career, it had totally failed me; since then I had been obliged on more than one occasion to double, and once, with infinite risk of death, to treble the amount; and these rare uncertainties had cast hitherto the sole shadow on my contentment. Now, however, and in the light of that morning's accident, I was led to remark that whereas, in the beginning, the difficulty had been to throw off the body of Jekyll, it had of late gradually but decidedly transferred itself to the other side. All things therefore seemed to point to this: that I was slowly losing hold of my original and better self, and becoming slowly incorporated with my second and worse.

Between these two, I now felt I had to choose. My two natures had memory in common, but all other faculties were most unequally shared between them. Jekyll (who was composite) now with the most sensitive apprehensions, now with a greedy gusto, projected and shared in the pleasures and adventures of Hyde; but Hyde was indifferent to Jekyll, or but remembered him as the mountain bandit remembers the cavern in which he conceals himself from pursuit. Jekyll had more than a father's interest; Hyde had more than a son's indifference. To cast in my lot with Jekyll, was to die to those appetites which I had long secretly indulged and had of late begun to pamper. To cast it in with Hyde, was to die to a thousand interests and aspirations, and to become, at a blow and forever, despised and friendless. The bargain might appear unequal; but there was still another consideration in the scales; for while Jekyll would suffer smartingly in the fires of abstinence, Hyde would be not even conscious of all that he had lost. Strange as my circumstances were, the terms of this debate are as old and commonplace as man; much the same inducements and alarms cast the die for any tempted and trembling sinner; and it fell out with me, as it falls with so vast a majority

of my fellows, that I chose the better part and was found wanting in the strength to keep to it.

Yes, I preferred the elderly and discontented doctor, surrounded by friends and cherishing honest hopes; and bade a resolute farewell to the liberty, the comparative youth, the light step, leaping impulses and secret pleasures, that I had enjoyed in the disguise of Hyde. I made this choice perhaps with some unconscious reservation, for I neither gave up the house in Soho, nor destroyed the clothes of Edward Hyde, which still lay ready in my cabinet. For two months, however, I was true to my determination; for two months I led a life of such severity as I had never before attained to, and enjoyed the compensations of an approving conscience. But time began at last to obliterate the freshness of my alarm; the praises of conscience began to grow into a thing of course; I began to be tortured with throes and longings, as of Hyde struggling after freedom; and at last, in an hour of moral weakness, I once again compounded and swallowed the transforming draught.

I do not suppose that, when a drunkard reasons with himself upon his vice, he is once out of five hundred times affected by the dangers that he runs through his brutish, physical insensibility; neither had I, long as I had considered my position, made enough allowance for the complete moral insensibility and insensate readiness to evil, which were the leading characters of Edward Hyde. Yet it was by these that I was punished. My devil had been long caged, he came out roaring. I was conscious, even when I took the draught, of a more unbridled, a more furious propensity to ill. It must have been this, I suppose, that stirred in my soul that tempest of impatience with which I listened to the civilities of my unhappy victim; I declare, at least, before God, no man morally sane could have been guilty of that crime upon so pitiful a provocation; and that I struck in no more reasonable spirit than that in which a sick child may break a plaything. But I had voluntarily stripped myself of all those balancing instincts by which even the worst of us continues to walk with some degree of steadiness among temptations; and in my case, to be tempted, however slightly, was to fall.

Instantly the spirit of hell awoke in me and raged. With a transport of glee, I mauled the unresisting body, tasting

delight from every blow; and it was not till weariness had begun to succeed, that I was suddenly, in the top fit of my delirium, struck through the heart by a cold thrill of terror. A mist dispersed; I saw my life to be forfeit; and fled from the scene of these excesses, at once glorifying and trembling, my lust of evil gratified and stimulated, my love of life screwed to the topmost peg. I ran to the house in Soho, and (to make assurance doubly sure) destroyed my papers; thence I set out through the lamplit streets, in the same divided ecstasy of mind, gloating on my crime, light-headedly devising others in the future, and yet still hastening and still hearkening in my wake for the steps of the avenger. Hyde had a song upon his lips as he compounded the draught, and as he drank it, pledged the dead man. The pangs of transformation had not done tearing him, before Henry Jekyll, with streaming tears of gratitude and remorse, had fallen upon his knees and lifted his clasped hands to God. The veil of self-indulgence was rent from head to foot. I saw my life as a whole: I followed it up from the days of childhood, when I had walked with my father's hand, and through the self-denying toils of my professional life, to arrive again and again, with the same sense of unreality, at the damned horrors of the evening. I could have screamed aloud; I sought with tears and prayers to smother down the crowd of hideous images and sounds with which my memory swarmed against me; and still, between the petitions, the ugly face of my iniquity stared into my soul. As the acuteness of this remorse began to die away, it was succeeded by a sense of joy. The problem of my conduct was solved. Hyde was thenceforth impossible; whether I would or not, I was now confined to the better part of my existence; and O, how I rejoiced to think it! with what willing humility, I embraced anew the restrictions of natural life! with what sincere renunciation, I locked the door by which I had so often gone and come, and ground the key under my heel!

The next day, came the news that the murder had been overlooked, that the guilt of Hyde was patent to the world, and that the victim was a man high in public estimation. It was not only a crime, it had been a tragic folly. I think I was glad to know it; I think I was glad to have my better impulses thus buttressed and guarded by the terrors of the scaffold. Jekyll was now my city of refuge; let Hyde peep

out an instant, and the hands of all men would be raised to take and slay him.

I resolved in my future conduct to redeem the past; and I can say with honesty that my resolve was fruitful of some good. You know yourself how earnestly in the last months of last year, I laboured to relieve suffering; you know that much was done for others, and that the days passed quietly, almost happily for myself. Nor can I truly say that I wearied of this beneficent and innocent life; I think instead that I daily enjoyed it more completely; but I was still cursed with my duality of purpose; and as the first edge of my penitence wore off, the lower side of me, so long indulged, so recently chained down, began to growl for license. Not that I dreamed of resuscitating Hyde; the bare idea of that would startle me to frenzy: no, it was in my own person, that I was once more tempted to trifle with my conscience; and it was as an ordinary secret sinner that I at last fell before the assaults of temptation.

There comes an end to all things; the most capacious measure is filled at last; and this brief condescension to my evil finally destroyed the balance of my soul. And yet I was not alarmed; the fall seemed natural, like a return to the old days before I had made my discovery. It was a fine, clear, January day, wet under foot where the frost had melted, but cloudless overhead; and the Regent's Park was full of winter chirrupings and sweet with spring odours. I sat in the sun on a bench; the animal within me licking the chops of memory; the spiritual side a little drowsed, promising subsequent penitence, but not yet moved to begin. After all, I reflected, I was like my neighbours; and then I smiled, comparing myself with other men, comparing my active goodwill with the lazy cruelty of their neglect. And at the very moment of that vain-glorious thought, a qualm came over me, a horrid nausea and the most deadly shuddering. These passed away, and left me faint; and then as in its turn the faintness subsided, I began to be aware of a change in the temper of my thoughts, a greater boldness, a contempt of danger, a solution of the bonds of obligation. I looked down; my clothes hung formlessly on my shrunken limbs; the hand that lay on my knee was corded and hairy. I was once more Edward Hyde. A moment before I had been safe of all men's respect, wealthy, beloved—the cloth laying for me in the dining-room at home; and now I was

the common quarry of mankind, hunted, houseless, a known murderer, thrall to the gallows.

My reason wavered, but it did not fail me utterly. I have more than once observed that, in my second character, my faculties seemed sharpened to a point and my spirits more tensely elastic; thus it came about that, where Jekyll perhaps might have succumbed, Hyde rose to the importance of the moment. My drugs were in one of the presses of my cabinet; how was I to reach them? That was the problem that (crushing my temples in my hands) I set myself to solve. The laboratory door I had closed. If I sought to enter by the house, my own servants would consign me to the gallows. I saw I must employ another hand, and thought of Lanyon. How was he to be reached? how persuaded? Supposing that I escaped capture in the streets, how was I to make my way into his presence? and how should I, an unknown and displeasing visitor, prevail on the famous physician to rifle the study of his colleague, Dr. Jekyll? Then I remembered that of my original character, one part remained to me: I could write my own hand; and once I had conceived that kindling spark, the way that I must follow became lighted up from end to end.

Thereupon, I arranged my clothes as best I could, and summoning a passing hansom, drove to an hotel in Portland Street, the name of which I chanced to remember. At my appearance (which was indeed comical enough, however tragic a fate these garments covered) the driver could not conceal his mirth. I gnashed my teeth upon him with a gust of devilish fury; and the smile withered from his face—happily for him—yet more happily for myself, for in another instant I had certainly dragged him from his perch. At the inn, as I entered, I looked about me with so black a countenance as made the attendants tremble; not a look did they exchange in my presence; but obsequiously took my orders, led me to a private room, and brought me wherewithal to write. Hyde in danger of his life was a creature new to me; shaken with inordinate anger, strung to the pitch of murder, lusting to inflict pain. Yet the creature was astute; mastered his fury with a great effort of the will; composed his two important letters, one to Lanyon and one to Poole; and that he might receive actual evidence of their being posted, sent them out with directions that they should be registered.

Thenceforward, he sat all day over the fire in the private room, gnawing his nails; there he dined, sitting alone with his fears, the waiter visibly quailing before his eye; and thence, when the night was fully come, he set forth in the corner of a closed cab, and was driven to and fro about the streets of the city. He, I say—I cannot say, I. That child of Hell had nothing human; nothing lived in him but fear and hatred. And when at last, thinking the driver had begun to grow suspicious, he discharged the cab and ventured on foot, attired in his misfitting clothes, an object marked out for observation, in to the midst of the nocturnal passengers, these two base passions raged within him like a tempest. He walked fast, hunted by his fears, chattering to himself, skulking through the less frequented thoroughfares, counting the minutes that still divided him from midnight. Once a woman spoke to him, offering, I think, a box of lights. He smote her in the face, and she fled.

When I came to myself at Lanyon's, the horror of my old friend perhaps affected me somewhat: I do not know; it was at least but a drop in the sea to the abhorrence with which I looked back upon these hours. A change had come over me. It was no longer the fear of the gallows, it was the horror of being Hyde that racked me. I received Lanyon's condemnation partly in a dream; it was partly in a dream that I came home to my own house and got into bed. I slept after the prostration of the day, with a stringent and profound slumber which not even the nightmares that wrung me could avail to break. I awoke in the morning shaken, weakened, but refreshed. I still hated and feared the thought of the brute that slept within me, and I had not of course forgotten the appalling dangers of the day before; but I was once more at home, in my own house and close to my drugs; and gratitude for my escape shone so strong in my soul that it almost rivalled the brightness of hope.

I was stepping leisurely across the court after breakfast, drinking the chill of the air with pleasure, when I was seized again with those indescribable sensations that heralded the change; and I had but the time to gain the shelter of my cabinet, before I was once again raging and freezing with the passions of Hyde. It took on this occasion a double dose to recall me to myself; and alas! six hours after, as I sat looking sadly in the fire, the pangs returned, and the drug had to be readministered. In short, from that day

forth it seemed only by a great effort as of gymnastics, and only under the immediate stimulation of the drug, that I was able to wear the countenance of Jekyll. At all hours of the day and night, I would be taken with the premonitory shudder; above all, if I slept, or even dozed for a moment in my chair, it was always as Hyde that I awakened. Under the strain of this continually impending doom and by the sleeplessness to which I now condemned myself, ay, even beyond what I had thought possible to man, I became, in my own person, a creature eaten up and emptied by fever, languidly weak both in body and mind, and solely occupied by one thought: the horror of my other self. But when I slept, or when the virtue of the medicine wore off, I would leap almost without transition (for the pangs of transformation grew daily less marked) into the possession of a fancy brimming with images of terror, a soul boiling with causeless hatreds, and a body that seemed not strong enough to contain the raging energies of life. The powers of Hyde seemed to have grown with the sickliness of Jekyll. And certainly the hate that now divided them was equal on each side. With Jekyll, it was a thing of vital instinct. He had now seen the full deformity of that creature that shared with him some of the phenomena of consciousness, and was co-heir with him to death: and beyond these links of community, which in themselves made the most poignant part of his distress, he thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic. This was the shocking thing; that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life. And this again, that that insurgent horror was knit to him closer than a wife, closer than an eye; lay caged in his flesh, where he heard it mutter and felt it struggle to be born; and at every hour of weakness, and in the confidence of slumber, prevailed against him, and deposed him out of life. The hatred of Hyde for Jekyll, was of a different order. His terror of the gallows drove him continually to commit temporary suicide, and return to his subordinate station of a part instead of a person; but he loathed the necessity, he loathed the despondency into which Jekyll was now fallen, and he resented the dislike with which he was himself regarded. Hence the apelike tricks that he would play me, scrawling in my own hand

blasphemies on the pages of my books, burning the letters and destroying the portrait of my father; and indeed, had it not been for his fear of death, he would long ago have ruined himself in order to involve me in the ruin. But his love of life is wonderful; I go further: I, who sicken and freeze at the mere thought of him, when I recall the abjection and passion of this attachment, and when I know how he fears my power to cut him off by suicide, I find it in my heart to pity him.

It is useless, and the time awfully fails me, to prolong this description; no one has ever suffered such torments, let that suffice; and yet even to these, habit brought—no, not alleviation—but a certain callousness of soul, a certain acquiescence of despair; and my punishment might have gone on for years, but for the last calamity which has now fallen, and which has finally severed me from my own face and nature. My provision of the salt, which had never been renewed since the date of the first experiment, began to run low. I sent out for a fresh supply, and mixed the draught; the ebullition followed, and the first change of colour, not the second; I drank it and it was without efficiency. You will learn from Poole how I have had London ransacked; it was in vain; and I am now persuaded that my first supply was impure, and that it was that unknown impurity which lent efficacy to the draught.

About a week had passed, and I am now finishing this statement under the influence of the last of the old powders. This, then, is the last time, short of a miracle, that Henry Jekyll can think his own thoughts or see his own face (now how sadly altered!) in the glass. Nor must I delay too long to bring my writing to an end; for if my narrative has hitherto escaped destruction, it has been by a combination of great prudence and great good luck. Should the throes of change take me in the act of writing it, Hyde will tear it in pieces; but if some time shall have elapsed after I have laid it by, his wonderful selfishness and circumscription to the moment will probably save it once again from the action of his apelike spite. And indeed the doom that is closing on us both, has already changed and crushed him. Half an hour from now, when I shall again and forever reindue that hated personality, I know how I shall sit shuddering and weeping in my chair, or continue, with the most strained and fearstruck ecstasy of listening, to pace up and down

this room (my last earthly refuge) and give ear to every sound of menace. Will Hyde die upon the scaffold? or will he find courage to release himself at the last moment? God knows; I am careless; this is my true hour of death, and what is to follow concerns another than myself. Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end.

THE INVISIBLE MAN

I had realized that the more impossible the story I had to tell, the more ordinary must be the setting. . . .

—Experiment in Autobiography

H. G. WELLS

H. G. WELLS WAS BORN IN 1866, SON OF A PART-TIME PROFESSIONAL cricket-player and unsuccessful tradesman. Both his parents had been in domestic service before their marriage; his mother later returned to it. Wells himself nearly fell into the living burial of the shop-assistant's life which claimed both his brothers. He escaped first into the Normal School of Science, where he studied under Huxley, then into teaching, then into free-lance journalism, and eventually, after many false starts, became a writer of fiction.

In *The Time Machine*, *The War of the Worlds*, *A Story of the Days to Come*, *The Sleeper Awakes*, *The First Men in the Moon*, and in his brilliant short stories, Wells developed nearly every one of the major themes that have kept science fiction going ever since—and did it all between his twenty-seventh and thirty-fifth year.

There have been many other stories of invisibility since *The Invisible Man*, but none half so good. When the novel opens with the Invisible Man's descent upon the village of Iping, every detail has been so meticulously laid out in advance that the story seems to rush downhill with its own force. And we sit watching with the same fascination, no matter how many times we have read the novel before, as these vivid little figures run after one another—lit by the glow of a great writer's imagination.

THE STRANGE MAN'S ARRIVAL

THE STRANGER CAME EARLY IN FEBRUARY, ONE WINTRY DAY, through a biting wind and a driving snow, the last snowfall of the year, over the down, walking as it seemed from Bramblehurst railway station, and carrying a little black portmanteau in his thickly gloved hand. He was wrapped up from head to foot, and the brim of his soft felt hat hid every inch of his face but the shiny tip of his nose; the snow had piled itself against his shoulders and chest, and added a white crest to the burden he carried. He staggered into the Coach and Horses, more dead than alive as it seemed, and flung his portmanteau down. "A fire," he cried, "in the name of human charity! A room and a fire!" He stamped and shook the snow from off himself in the bar, and followed Mrs. Hall into her guest parlor to strike his bargain. And with that much introduction, that and a ready acquiescence to terms and a couple of sovereigns flung upon the table, he took up his quarters in the inn.

Mrs. Hall lit the fire and left him there while she went to prepare him a meal with her own hands. A guest to stop at Iping in the wintertime was an unheard-of piece of luck, let alone a guest who was no "haggler," and she was resolved to show herself worthy of her good fortune. As soon as the bacon was well under way, and Millie, her lymphatic aid, had been brisked up a bit by a few deftly chosen expressions of contempt, she carried the cloth, plates, and glasses into the parlor and began to lay them with the utmost *éclat*. Although the fire was burning up briskly, she was surprised to see that her visitor still wore his hat and coat, standing with his back to her and staring out of the window at the falling snow in the yard. His gloved hands were clasped behind him, and he seemed to be lost in thought. She noticed that the melted snow that still sprinkled his shoulders dropped upon her carpet. "Can I take your hat

and coat, sir," she said, "and give them a good dry in the kitchen?"

"No," he said without turning.

She was not sure she had heard him, and was about to repeat her question. He turned his head and looked at her over his shoulder. "I prefer to keep them on," he said with emphasis, and she noticed that he wore big blue spectacles, and had a bushy side whisker over his coat collar that completely hid his cheeks and face.

"Very well, sir," she said. "As you like. In a bit the room will be warmer."

He made no answer, and had turned his face away from her again, and Mrs. Hall, feeling that her conversational advances were ill-timed, laid the rest of the table things in a quick staccato and whisked out of the room. When she returned he was still standing there, like a man of stone, his back hunched, his collar turned up, his dripping hat brim turned down, hiding his face and ears completely. She put down the eggs and bacon with considerable emphasis, and called rather than said to him, "Your lunch is served, sir."

"Thank you," he said at the same time, and did not stir until she was closing the door. Then he swung around and approached the table with a certain eager quickness.

As she went behind the bar to the kitchen she heard a sound repeated at regular intervals. Chirk, chirk, chirk, it went, the sound of a spoon being rapidly whisked round a basin. "That girl!" she said. "There! I clean forgot it. It's her being so long!" And while she herself finished mixing the mustard, she gave Millie a few verbal stabs for her excessive slowness. She had cooked the ham and eggs, laid the table, and done everything, while Millie (help indeed!) had only succeeded in delaying the mustard. And him a new guest and wanting to stay! Then she filled the mustard pot, and, putting it with a certain stateliness upon a gold and black tea tray, carried it into the parlor.

She rapped and entered promptly. As she did so her visitor moved quickly, so that she got but a glimpse of a white object disappearing behind the table. It would seem he was picking something from the floor. She rapped down the mustard pot on the table, and then she noticed the overcoat and hat had been taken off and put over a chair in front of the fire, and a pair of wet boots threatened rust to her steel fender. She went to these things resolutely. "I

suppose I may have them to dry now," she said in a voice that brooked no denial.

"Leave the hat," said her visitor, in a muffled voice, and turning she saw he had raised his head and was sitting and looking at her.

For a moment she stood gaping at him, too surprised to speak. He held a white cloth—it was a *serviette* he had brought with him—over the lower part of his face, so that his mouth and jaws were completely hidden, and that was the reason of his muffled voice. But it was not that which startled Mrs. Hall. It was the fact that all his forehead above his blue glasses was covered by a white bandage, and that another covered his ears, leaving not a scrap of his face exposed excepting only his pink, peaked nose. It was bright, pink, and shiny just as it had been at first. He wore a dark-brown velvet jacket with a high-black, linen-lined collar turned up about his neck. The thick black hair, escaping as it could below and between the cross bandages, projected in curious tails and horns, giving him the strangest appearance conceivable. This muffled and bandaged head was so unlike what she had anticipated that for a moment she was rigid.

He did not remove the *serviette*, but remained holding it, as she saw now, with a brown-gloved hand, and regarding her with his inscrutable blue glasses. "Leave the hat," he said, speaking very distinctly through the white cloth.

Her nerves began to recover from the shock they had received. She placed the hat on the chair again by the fire. "I didn't know, sir," she began, "that—" and she stopped embarrassed.

"Thank you," he said dryly, glancing from her to the door and then at her again.

"I'll have them nicely dried, sir, at once," she said, and carried his clothes out of the room. She glanced at his white-swathed head and blue goggles again as she was going out of the door; but his napkin was still in front of his face. She shivered a little as she closed the door behind her, and her face was eloquent of her surprise and perplexity. "I never," she whispered. "There!" She went quite softly to the kitchen, and was too preoccupied to ask Millie what she was messing about with *now*, when she got there.

The visitor sat and listened to her retreating feet. He glanced inquiringly at the window before he removed his

serviette, and resumed his meal. He took a mouthful, glanced suspiciously at the window, took another mouthful, then rose and, taking the *serviette* in his hand, walked across the room and pulled the blind down to the top of the white muslin that obscured the lower panes. This left the room in a twilight. This done, he returned with an easier air to the table and his meal.

"The poor soul's had an accident or an operation or something," said Mrs. Hall. "What a turn them bandages did give me, to be sure!"

She put on some more coal, unfolded the clothes-horse, and extended the traveler's coat upon this. "And they goggles! Why, he looked more like a divin' helmet than a human man!" She hung his muffler on a corner of the horse. "And holding that handkercher over his mouth all the time. Talkin' through it!—Perhaps his mouth was hurt too—maybe."

She turned round, as one who suddenly remembers. "Bless my soul alive!" she said, going off at a tangent, "ain't you done them taters yet, Millie?"

When Mrs. Hall went to clear away the stranger's lunch, her idea that his mouth must also have been cut or disfigured in the accident she supposed him to have suffered, was confirmed, for he was smoking a pipe, and all the time that she was in the room he never loosened the silk muffler he had wrapped round the lower part of his face to put the mouthpiece to his lips. Yet it was not forgetfulness, for she saw he glanced at it as it smoldered out. He sat in the corner with his back to the window blind and spoke now, having eaten and drunk and being comfortably warmed through, with less aggressive brevity than before. The reflection of the fire lent a kind of red animation to his big spectacles they had lacked hitherto.

"I have some luggage," he said, "at Bramblehurst station," and he asked her how he could have it sent. He bowed his bandaged head quite politely in acknowledgment of her explanation. "Tomorrow!" he said. "There is no speedier delivery?" and seemed quite disappointed when she answered, "No." Was she quite sure? No man with a trap who would go over?

Mrs. Hall, nothing loath, answered his questions and developed a conversation. "It's a steep road by the down,

sir," she said in answer to the question about a trap; and then, snatching at an opening, said, "It was there a carriage was upsettled, a year ago and more. A gentleman killed, besides his coachman. Accidents, sir, happen in a moment, don't they?"

But the visitor was not to be drawn so easily. "They do," he said through his muffler, eyeing her quietly through his impenetrable glasses.

"But they take long enough to get well, sir, don't they?—There was my sister's son, Tom, jest cut his arm with a scythe, tumbled on it in the 'ayfield, and, bless me! he was three months tied up, sir. You'd hardly believe it. It's regular given me a dread of a scythe, sir."

"I can quite understand that," said the visitor.

"He was afraid, one time, that he'd have to have an operation—he was that bad, sir."

The visitor laughed abruptly, a bark of a laugh that he seemed to bite and kill in his mouth. "*Was* he?" he said.

"He was, sir. And no laughing matter to them as had the doing for him, as I had—my sister being took up with her little ones so much. There was bandages to do, sir, and bandages to undo. So that if I may make so bold as to say it, sir—"

"Will you get me some matches?" said the visitor, quite abruptly. "My pipe is out."

Mrs. Hall was pulled up suddenly. It was certainly rude of him, after telling him all she had done. She gasped at him for a moment, and remembered the two sovereigns. She went for the matches.

"Thanks," he said concisely, as she put them down, and turned his shoulder upon her and stared out of the window again. It was altogether too discouraging. Evidently he was sensitive on the topic of operations and bandages. She did not "make so bold as to say," however, after all. But his snubbing way had irritated her, and Millie had a hot time of it that afternoon.

The visitor remained in the parlor until four o'clock, without giving the ghost of an excuse for an intrusion. For the most part he was quite still during that time; it would seem he sat in the growing darkness smoking in the fire-light, perhaps dozing.

Once or twice a curious listener might have heard him

at the coals, and for the space of five minutes he was audible pacing the room. He seemed to be talking to himself. Then the armchair creaked as he sat down again.

2

MR. TEDDY HENFREY'S FIRST IMPRESSIONS

AT FOUR O'CLOCK, WHEN IT WAS FAIRLY DARK AND MRS. HALL was screwing up her courage to go in and ask her visitor if he would take some tea, Teddy Henfrey, the clock-jobber, came into the bar. "My sakes! Mrs. Hall," said he, "but this is terrible weather for thin boots!" The snow outside was falling faster.

Mrs. Hall agreed with him, and then noticed he had his bag, and hit upon a brilliant idea. "Now you're here, Mr. Teddy," said she, "I'd be glad if you'd give th' old clock in the parlor a bit of a look. 'Tis going, and it strikes well and hearty, but the hour hand won't do nuthin' but point at six." And leading the way, she went across to the parlor door and rapped and entered.

Her visitor, she saw as she opened the door, was seated in the armchair before the fire, dozing it would seem, with his bandaged head drooping on one side. The only light in the room was the red glow from the fire—which lit his eyes like adverse railway signals, but left his downcast face in darkness—and the scanty vestiges of the day that came in through the open door. Everything was ruddy, shadowy, and indistinct to her, the more so since she had just been lighting the bar lamp, and her eyes were dazzled. But for a second it seemed to her that the man she looked at had an enormous mouth wide open—a vast and incredible mouth that swallowed the whole of the lower portion of his face. It was the sensation of a moment: the white-bound head, the monstrous goggle eyes, and this huge yawn below it. Then he stirred, started up in his chair, put up his hand. She opened the door wide, so that the room was lighter, and she saw him more clearly, with the muffler held to his face just

as she had seen him hold the *serviette* before. The shadows, she fancied, had tricked her.

"Would you mind, sir, this man a-coming to look at the clock, sir?" she said, recovering from her momentary shock.

"Look at the clock?" he said, staring around in a drowsy manner, and speaking over his hand, and then, getting more fully awake, "Certainly."

Mrs. Hall went away to get a lamp, and he rose and stretched himself. Then came the light, and Mr. Teddy Henfrey, entering, was confronted by this bandaged person. He was, he says, "taken aback."

"Good-afternoon," said the stranger, regarding him, as Mr. Henfrey says, with a vivid sense of the dark spectacles, like a lobster.

"I hope," said Mr. Henfrey, "that it's no intrusion."

"None whatever," said the stranger. "Though I understand," he said, turning to Mrs. Hall, "that this room is really to be mine for my own private use."

"I thought," said Mrs. Hall, "you'd prefer the clock—" She was going to say "mended."

"Certainly," said the stranger, "certainly—but, as a rule, I like to be alone and undisturbed."

"But I'm really glad to have the clock seen to," he said, seeing a certain hesitation in Mr. Henfrey's manner. "Very glad." Mr. Henfrey had intended to apologize and withdraw, but this anticipation reassured him. The stranger stood round with his back to the fireplace and put his hands behind his back. "And presently," he said, "when the clock-mending is over, I think I should like to have some tea. But not till the clock-mending is over."

Mrs. Hall was about to leave the room—she made no conversational advances this time, because she did not want to be snubbed in front of Mr. Henfrey—when her visitor asked her if she had made any arrangements about his boxes at Bramblehurst. She told him she had mentioned the matter to the postman, and that the carrier could bring them over on the morrow. "You are certain that is the earliest?" he said.

She was certain, with a marked coldness.

"I should explain," he added, "what I was really too cold and fatigued to do before, that I am an experimental investigator."

"Indeed, sir," said Mrs. Hall, much impressed.

"And my baggage contains apparatus and appliances."

"Very useful things, indeed, they are, sir," said Mrs. Hall.

"And I'm naturally anxious to get on with my inquiries."

"Of course, sir."

"My reason for coming to Iping," he proceeded, with a certain deliberation of manner, "was—a desire for solitude. I do not wish to be disturbed in my work. In addition to my work, an accident—"

"I thought as much," said Mrs. Hall to herself.

"—necessitates a certain retirement. My eyes—are sometimes so weak and painful that I have to shut myself up in the dark for hours together. Lock myself up. Sometimes—now and then. Not at present, certainly. At such times the slightest disturbance, the entry of a stranger into the room, is a source of excruciating annoyance to me—it is well these things should be understood."

"Certainly, sir," said Mrs. Hall. "And if I might make so bold as to ask—"

"That, I think, is all," said the stranger, with that quietly irresistible air of finality he could assume at will. Mrs. Hall reserved her question and sympathy for a better occasion.

After Mrs. Hall had left the room, he remained standing in front of the fire, glaring, so Mr. Henfrey puts it, at the clock-mending. Mr. Henfrey not only took off the hands of the clock, and the face, but extracted the works; and he tried to work in as slow and quiet and unassuming a manner as possible. He worked with the lamp close to him, and the green shade threw a brilliant light upon his hands, and upon the frame and wheels, and left the rest of the room shadowy. When he looked up, colored patches swam in his eyes. Being constitutionally of a curious nature, he had removed the works—a quite unnecessary proceeding—with the idea of delaying his departure and perhaps falling into conversation with the stranger. But the stranger stood there, perfectly silent and still. So still, it got on Henfrey's nerves. He felt alone in the room and looked up, and there, gray and dim, was the bandaged head and huge blue lenses staring fixedly, with a mist of green spots drifting in front of them. It was so uncanny-looking to Henfrey that for a minute they remained staring blankly at one another. Then Henfrey looked down again. Very uncomfortable position! One would like to say something. Should he remark that the weather was very cold for the time of year? He looked up

as if to take aim with that introductory shot. "The weather—" he began.

"Why don't you finish and go?" said the rigid figure, evidently in a state of painfully suppressed rage. "All you've got to do is to fix the hour hand on its axle. You're simply humbugging—"

"Certainly, sir—one minute more, sir. I overlooked—" And Mr. Henfrey finished and went.

But he went off feeling excessively annoyed. "Damn it!" said Mr. Henfrey to himself, trudging down the village through the thawing snow, "a man must do a clock at times."

And again: "Can't a man look at you?—Ugly!"

And yet again: "Seemingly not. If the police was wanting you, you couldn't be more wropped and bandaged."

At Gleeson's corner he saw Hall, who had recently married the stranger's hostess at the Coach and Horses, and who now drove the Iping conveyance, when occasional people required it, to Sidderbridge Junction, coming toward him on his return from that place. Hall had evidently been "stopping a bit" at Sidderbridge, to judge by his driving. "'Ow do, Teddy?" he said, passing.

"You got a rum un up home!" said Teddy.

Hall very sociably pulled up. "What's that?" he asked.

"Rum-looking customer stopping at the Coach and Horses," said Teddy. "My sakes!"

And he proceeded to give Hall a vivid description of his grotesque guest. "Looks a bit like a disguise, don't it? I'd like to see a man's face if I had him stopping in *my* place," said Henfrey. "But women are that trustful—where strangers are concerned. He's took your rooms and he ain't even given a name, Hall."

"You don't say so!" said Hall, who was a man of sluggish apprehension.

"Yes," said Teddy. "By the week. Whatever he is, you can't get rid of him under the week. And he's got a lot of luggage coming tomorrow, so he says. Let's hope it won't be stones in boxes, Hall."

He told Hall how his aunt at Hastings had been swindled by a stranger with empty portmanteaux. Altogether he left Hall vaguely suspicious. "Get up, old girl," said Hall. "I s'pose I must see 'bout this."

Teddy trudged on his way with his mind considerably relieved.

Instead of "seeing 'bout it," however, Hall on his return was severely rated by his wife on the length of time he had spent in Sidderbridge, and his mild inquiries were answered snappishly and in a manner not to the point. But the seed of suspicion Teddy had sown germinated in the mind of Mr. Hall in spite of these discouragements. "You wim' don't know everything," said Mr. Hall, resolved to ascertain more about the personality of his guest at the earliest possible opportunity. And after the stranger had gone to bed, which he did about half-past nine, Mr. Hall went very aggressively into the parlor and looked very hard at his wife's furniture, just to show that the stranger wasn't master there, and scrutinized closely and a little contemptuously a sheet of mathematical computation the stranger had left. When retiring for the night, he instructed Mrs. Hall to look very closely at the stranger's luggage when it came next day.

"You mind your own business, Hall," said Mrs. Hall, "and I'll mind mine."

She was all the more inclined to snap at Hall because the stranger was undoubtedly an unusually strange sort of stranger, and she was by no means assured about him in her own mind. In the middle of the night she woke up dreaming of huge white heads like turnips, that came trailing after her, at the end of interminable necks, and with vast black eyes. But being a sensible woman, she subdued her terrors and turned over and went to sleep again.

3

THE THOUSAND AND ONE BOTTLES

SO IT WAS THAT ON THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF FEBRUARY, at the beginning of the thaw, this singular person fell out of infinity into Iping Village. Next day his luggage arrived through the slush. And very remarkable luggage it was. There were a couple of trunks indeed, such as a rational

man might need, but in addition there were a box of books—big, fat books, of which some were just in an incomprehensible handwriting—and a dozen or more crates, boxes, and cases, containing objects packed in straw, as it seemed to Hall, tugging with a casual curiosity at the straw—glass bottles. The stranger, muffled in hat, coat, gloves, and wrapper, came out impatiently to meet Fearenside's cart, while Hall was having a word or so of gossip preparatory to helping bring them in. Out he came, not noticing Fearenside's dog, who was sniffing in a dilettante spirit at Hall's legs. "Come along with those boxes," he said. "I've been waiting long enough."

And he came down the steps toward the tail of the cart as if to lay hands on the smaller crate.

No sooner had Fearenside's dog caught sight of him, however, than it began to bristle and growl savagely, and when he rushed down the steps it gave an undecided hop, and then sprang straight at his hand. "Whup!" cried Hall, jumping back, for he was no hero with dogs, and Fearenside howled, "Lie down!" And snatched his whip.

They saw the dog's teeth had slipped the hand, heard a kick, saw the dog execute a flanking jump and get home on the stranger's leg, and heard the rip of his trousering. Then the finer end of Fearenside's whip reached his property, and the dog, yelping with dismay, retreated under the wheels of the wagon. It was all the business of a swift half-minute. No one spoke, everyone shouted. The stranger glanced swiftly at his torn glove and at his leg, made as if he would stoop to the latter, then turned and rushed swiftly up the steps into the inn. They heard him go headlong across the passage and up the uncarpeted stairs to his bedroom.

"You brute, you!" said Fearenside, climbing off the wagon with his whip in his hand, while the dog watched him through the wheel. "Come here!" said Fearenside—"You'd better."

Hall had stood gaping. "He wuz bit," said Hall. "I'd better go and see to en," and he trotted after the stranger. He met Mrs. Hall in the passage. "Carrier's darg," he said, "bit en."

He went straight upstairs, and the stranger's door being ajar, he pushed it open and was entering without any ceremony, being of a naturally sympathetic turn of mind.

The blind was down and the room dim. He caught a glimpse of a most singular thing, what seemed a handless

arm waving toward him, and a face of three huge indeterminate spots on white, very like the face of a pale pansy. Then he was struck violently in the chest, hurled back, and the door slammed in his face and locked. It was so rapid that it gave him no time to observe. A waving of indecipherable shapes, a blow, and a concussion. There he stood on the dark little landing, wondering what it might be that he had seen.

A couple of minutes after, he rejoined the little group that had formed outside the Coach and Horses. There was Fearenside telling about it all over again for the second time; there was Mrs. Hall saying his dog didn't have no business to bite her guests; there was Huxter, the general dealer from over the road, interrogative; and Sandy Wadgers from the forge, judicial; besides women and children—all of them saying fatuities: "Wouldn't let en bite *me*, I knows"; "Tasn't right *have* such dargs"; "Whad 'e bite'n for then?" and so forth.

Mr. Hall, staring at them from the steps and listening, found it incredible that he had seen anything so very remarkable happen upstairs. Besides, his vocabulary was altogether too limited to express his impressions. "He don't want no help, he says," he said in answer to his wife's inquiry. "We'd better be a-takin' of his luggage in."

"He ought to have it cauterized at once," said Mr. Huxter; "especially if it's at all inflamed."

"I'd shoot en, that's what I'd do," said a lady in the group.

Suddenly the dog began growling again.

"Come along," cried an angry voice in the doorway, and there stood the muffled stranger with his collar turned up, and his hat brim bent down. "The sooner you get those things in the better I'll be pleased." It is stated by an anonymous bystander that his trousers and gloves had been changed.

"Was you hurt, sir?" said Fearenside. "I'm rare sorry the darg—"

"Not a bit," said the stranger. "Never broke the skin. Hurry up with those things."

He then swore to himself, so Mr. Hall asserts.

Directly the first crate was, in accordance with his directions, carried into the parlor, the stranger flung himself upon it with extraordinary eagerness, and began to unpack it, scattering the straw with an utter disregard of Mrs.

Hall's carpet. And from it he began to produce bottles—little fat bottles containing powders, small and slender bottles containing colored and white fluids, fluted blue bottles labeled *Poison*, bottles with round bodies and slender necks, large green-glass bottles, large white-glass bottles, bottles with glass stoppers and frosted labels, bottles with fine corks, bottles with bungs, bottles with wooden caps, wine bottles, salad-oil bottles—putting them in rows on the chiffonnier, on the mantel, on the table under the window, round the floor, on the book-shelf—everywhere. The chemist's shop in Bramblehurst could not boast half so many. Quite a sight it was. Crate after crate yielded bottles, until all six were empty and the table high with straw; the only things that came out of these crates besides the bottles were a number of test-tubes and a carefully packed balance.

And directly the crates were unpacked, the stranger went to the window and set to work, not troubling in the least about the litter of straw, the fire which had gone out, the box of books outside, nor for the trunks and other luggage that had gone upstairs.

When Mrs. Hall took his dinner in to him, he was already so absorbed in his work, pouring little drops out of the bottles into test-tubes, that he did not hear her until she had swept away the bulk of the straw and put the tray on the table, with some little emphasis perhaps, seeing the state that the floor was in. Then he half turned his head and immediately turned it away again. But she saw he had removed his glasses; they were beside him on the table, and it seemed to her that his eye sockets were extraordinarily hollow. He put on his spectacles again, and then turned and faced her. She was about to complain of the straw on the floor when he anticipated her.

"I wish you wouldn't come in without knocking," he said in the tone of abnormal exasperation that seemed so characteristic of him.

"I knocked, but seemingly—"

"Perhaps you did. But in my investigations—my really very urgent and necessary investigations—the slightest disturbance, the jar of a door—I must ask you—"

"Certainly, sir. You can turn the lock if you're like that, you know—any time."

"A very good idea," said the stranger.

"This stror, sir, if I might make so bold as to remark—"

"Don't. If the straw makes trouble, put it down in the bill." And he mumbled at her—words suspiciously like curses.

He was so odd, standing there, so aggressive and explosive, bottle in one hand and test-tube in the other, that Mrs. Hall was quite alarmed. But she was a resolute woman. "In which case, I should like to know, sir, what you consider—"

"A shilling. Put down a shilling. Surely a shilling's enough?"

"So be it," said Mrs. Hall, taking up the tablecloth and beginning to spread it over the table. "If you're satisfied, of course—" He turned and sat down, with his coat collar toward her.

All the afternoon he worked with the door locked and, as Mrs. Hall testifies, for the most part in silence. But once there was a concussion and a sound of bottles ringing together as though the table had been hit, and the smash of a bottle flung violently down, and then a rapid pacing athwart the room. Fearing "something was the matter," she went to the door and listened, not caring to knock.

"I can't go on," he was raving. "I *can't* go on. Three hundred thousand, four hundred thousand! The huge multitude! Cheated! All my life it may take me! Patience! Patience indeed! Fool and liar!"

There was a noise of hobnails on the bricks in the bar, and Mrs. Hall had very reluctantly to leave the rest of his soliloquy. When she returned the room was silent again, save for the faint crackling of his chair and the occasional clink of a bottle. It was all over. The stranger had resumed work.

When she took in his tea she saw broken glass in the corner of the room under the concave mirror, and a golden stain that had been carelessly wiped. She called attention to it.

"Put it down in the bill," snapped her visitor. "For God's sake don't worry me. If there's damage done, put it down in the bill"; and he went on ticking a list in the exercise book before him.

"I'll tell you something," said Fearenside, mysteriously.

It was late in the afternoon, and they were in the little beer shop of Iping Hanger.

"Well?" said Teddy Henfrey.

"This chap you're speaking of, what my dog bit. Well—he's black. Leastways, his legs are. I seed through the tear of his trousers and the tear of his glove. You'd have expected a sort of pinky to show, wouldn't you? Well—there wasn't none. Just blackness. I tell you, he's as black as my hat."

"My sakes!" said Henfrey. "It's a rummy case altogether. Why, his nose is as pink as paint!"

"That's true," said Fearenside. "I knows that. And I tell 'ee what I'm thinking. That marn's a piebald, Teddy. Black here and white there—in patches. And he's ashamed of it. He's a kind of half-breed, and the color's come off patchy instead of mixing. I've heard of such things before. And it's the common way with horses, as anyone can see."

4

MR. CUSS INTERVIEWS THE STRANGER

I HAVE TOLD THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE STRANGER'S arrival in Iping with a certain fullness of detail, in order that the curious impression he created may be understood by the reader. But excepting two odd incidents, the circumstances of his stay until the extraordinary day of the Club Festival may be passed over very cursorily. There were a number of skirmishes with Mrs. Hall on matters of domestic discipline, but in every case until late in April, when the first signs of penury began, he overrode her by the easy expedient of an extra payment. Hall did not like him, and whenever he dared he talked of the advisability of getting rid of him; but he showed his dislike chiefly by concealing it ostentatiously, and avoiding his visitor as much as possible. "Wait till the summer," said Mrs. Hall, sagely, "when the artisks are beginning to come. Then we'll see. He may

be a bit over-bearing, but bills settled punctual is bills settled punctual, whatever you like to say."

The stranger did not go to church, and indeed made no difference between Sunday and the irreligious days, even in costume. He worked, as Mrs. Hall thought, very fitfully. Some days he would come down early and be continuously busy. On others he would rise late, pace his room, fretting audibly for hours together, smoke, sleep in the armchair by the fire. Communication with the world beyond the village he had none. His temper continued very uncertain; for the most part his manner was that of a man suffering under almost unendurable provocation, and once or twice things were snapped, torn, crushed, or broken in spasmodic gusts of violence. He seemed under a chronic irritation of the greatest intensity. His habit of talking to himself in a low voice grew steadily upon him, but though Mrs. Hall listened conscientiously she could make neither head nor tail of what she heard.

He rarely went abroad by daylight, but at twilight he would go out muffled up invisibly, whether the weather were cold or not, and he chose the loneliest paths and those most overshadowed by trees and banks. His goggling spectacles and ghastly bandaged face under the penthouse of his hat came with a disagreeable suddenness out of the darkness upon one or two home-going laborers, and Teddy Henfrey, tumbling out of the Scarlet Coat one night, at half-past nine, was scared shamefully by the stranger's skull-like head (he was walking hat in hand) lit by the sudden light of the opened inn door. Such children as saw him at nightfall dreamed of bogies, and it seemed doubtful whether he disliked boys more than they disliked him, or the reverse—but there was certainly a vivid dislike enough on either side.

It was inevitable that a person of so remarkable an appearance and bearing should form a frequent topic in such a village as Iping. Opinion was greatly divided about his occupation. Mrs. Hall was sensitive on the point. When questioned, she explained very carefully that he was an "experimental investigator," going gingerly over the syllables as one who dreads pitfalls. When asked what an experimental investigator was, she would say with a touch of superiority that most educated people knew such things as that, and would thus explain that he "discovered things."

Her visitor had had an accident, she said, which temporarily discolored his face and hands, and being of a sensitive disposition, he was averse to any public notice of the fact.

Out of her hearing there was a view largely entertained that he was a criminal trying to escape from justice by wrapping himself up so as to conceal himself altogether from the eye of the police. This idea sprang from the brain of Mr. Teddy Henfrey. No crime of any magnitude dating from the middle or end of February was known to have occurred. Elaborated in the imagination of Mr. Gould, the probationary assistant in the National School, this theory took the form that the stranger was an Anarchist in disguise, preparing explosives, and he resolved to undertake such detective operations as his time permitted. These consisted for the most part in looking very hard at the stranger whenever they met, or in asking people who had never seen the stranger, leading questions about him. But he detected nothing.

Another school of opinion followed Mr. Fearenside, and either accepted the piebald view or some modification of it; as, for instance, Silas Durgan, who was heard to assert that "if he chos'es to show ensel' at fairs he'd make his fortune in no time," and being a bit of a theologian, compared the stranger to the man with the one talent. Yet another view explained the entire matter by regarding the stranger as a harmless lunatic. That had the advantage of accounting for everything straight away.

Between these main groups there were waverers and compromisers. Sussex folk have few superstitions, and it was only after the events of early April that the thought of the supernatural was first whispered in the village. Even then it was only credited among the womenfolks.

But whatever they thought of him, people in Iping, on the whole, agreed in disliking him. His irritability, though it might have been comprehensible to an urban brain-worker, was an amazing thing to these quiet Sussex villagers. The frantic gesticulations they surprised now and then, the headlong pace after nightfall that swept him upon them round quiet corners, the inhuman bludgeoning of all the tentative advances of curiosity, the taste for twilight that led to the closing of doors, the pulling down of blinds, the extinction of candles and lamps—who could agree with such goings on? They drew aside as he passed down the

village, and when he had gone by, young humorists would up with coat collars and down with hat brims, and go pacing nervously after him in imitation of his occult bearing. There was a song popular at that time called the "Bogey Man"; Miss Statchell sang it at the schoolroom concert (in aid of the church lamps), and thereafter whenever one or two of the villagers were gathered together and the stranger appeared, a bar or so of this tune, more or less sharp or flat, was whistled in the midst of them. Also belated little children would call "Bogey Man!" after him, and make off tremulously elated.

Cuss, the general practitioner, was devoured by curiosity. The bandages excited his professional interest, the report of the thousand and one bottles aroused his jealous regard. All through April and May he coveted an opportunity of talking to the stranger, and at last, toward Whitsuntide, he could stand it no longer, but hit upon the subscription list for a village nurse as an excuse. He was surprised to find that Mr. Hall did not know his guest's name. "He give a name," said Mrs. Hall—an assertion which was quite unfounded—"but I didn't rightly hear it." She thought it seemed so silly not to know the man's name.

Cuss rapped at the parlor door and entered. There was a fairly audible imprecation from within. "Pardon my intrusion," said Cuss, and then the door closed and cut Mrs. Hall off from the rest of the conversation.

She could hear the murmur of voices for the next ten minutes, then a cry of surprise, a stirring of feet, a chair flung aside, a bark of laughter, quick steps to the door, and Cuss appeared, his face white, his eyes staring over his shoulder. He left the door open behind him, and without looking at her strode across the hall and went down the steps, and she heard his feet hurrying along the road. He carried his hat in his hand. She stood behind the door, looking at the open door of the parlor. Then she heard the stranger laughing quietly, and then his footsteps came across the room. She could not see his face where she stood. The parlor door slammed, and the place was silent again.

Cuss went straight up the village to Bunting, the vicar. "Am I mad?" Cuss began abruptly, as he entered the shabby little study. "Do I look like an insane person?"

"What's happened?" said the vicar, putting the ammonite on the loose sheets of his forthcoming sermon.

"That chap at the inn—"

"Well?"

"Give me something to drink," said Cuss, and he sat down.

When his nerves had been steadied by a glass of cheap sherry—the only drink the good vicar had available—he told him of the interview he had just had. "Went in," he gasped, "and began to demand a subscription for that Nurse Fund. He'd stuck his hands in his pockets as I came in, and he sat down lumpily in his chair. Sniffed. I told him I'd heard he took an interest in scientific things. He said yes. Sniffed again. Kept on sniffing all the time; evidently recently caught an infernal cold. No wonder, wrapped up like that! I developed the nurse idea, and all the while kept my eyes open. Bottles—chemicals—everywhere. Balance, test-tubes in stands, and a smell of—evening primrose. Would he subscribe? Said he'd consider it. Asked him, point-blank, was he researching. Said he was. A long research? Got quite cross. 'A damnable long research,' said he, blowing the cork out, so to speak. 'Oh,' said I. And out came the grievance. The man was just on the boil, and my question boiled him over. He had been given a prescription, most valuable prescription—what for he wouldn't say. Was it medical? 'Damn you! What are you fishing after?' I apologized. Dig-nified sniff and cough. He resumed. He'd read it. Five ingredients. Put it down; turned his head. Draught of air from window lifted the paper. Swish, rustle. He was working in a room with an open fireplace, he said. Saw a flicker, and there was the prescription burning and lifting chimneyward. Rushed toward it just as it whisked up chimney. So! Just at that point, to illustrate his story, out came his arm."

"Well?"

"No hand—just an empty sleeve. Lord! I thought, *that's* a deformity! Got a cork arm, I suppose, and has taken it off. Then, I thought, there's something odd in that. What the devil keeps that sleeve up and open, if there's nothing in it? There was nothing in it, I tell you. Nothing down it, right down to the joint. I could see right down it to the elbow, and there was a glimmer of light shining through a tear of the cloth. 'Good God!' I said. Then he stopped. Stared at me with those black goggles of his, and then at his sleeve."

"Well?"

"That's all. He never said a word; just glared, and put his sleeve back in his pocket quickly. 'I was saying,' said he, 'that there was the prescription burning, wasn't I?' Interrogative cough. 'How the devil,' said I, 'can you move an empty sleeve like that?' 'Empty sleeve?' 'Yes,' said I, 'n empty sleeve.'

"It's an empty sleeve, is it? You saw it was an empty sleeve?" He stood up right away. I stood up too. He came toward me in three very slow steps, and stood quite close. Sniffed venomously. I didn't flinch, though I'm hanged if that bandaged knob of his, and those blinkers, aren't enough to unnerve anyone, coming quietly up to you.

"'You said it was an empty sleeve?' he said. 'Certainly,' I said. At staring and saying nothing, a barefaced man, unspectacled, starts at scratch. Then very quietly he pulled his sleeve out of his pocket again, and raised his arm toward me as though he would show it to me again. He did it very, very slowly. I looked at it. Seemed an age. 'Well?' said I, clearing my throat, 'there's nothing in it.' Had to say something. I was beginning to feel frightened. I could see right down it. He extended it straight toward me, slowly, slowly—just like that—until the cuff was six inches from my face. Queer thing to see an empty sleeve come at you like that! And then—"

"Well?"

"Something—exactly like a finger and thumb it felt—nipped my nose."

Bunting began to laugh.

"There wasn't anything there!" said Cuss, his voice running up into a shriek at the "there." "It's all very well for you to laugh, but I tell you I was so startled, I hit his cuff hard, and turned round, and cut out of the room. I left him—"

Cuss stopped. There was no mistaking the sincerity of his panic. He turned round in a helpless way and took a second glass of the excellent vicar's very inferior sherry. "When I hit his cuff," said Cuss, "I tell you, it felt exactly like hitting an arm. And there wasn't an arm! There wasn't the ghost of an arm!"

Mr. Bunting thought it over. He looked suspiciously at Cuss. "It's a most remarkable story," he said. He looked very wise and grave indeed. "It's really," said Mr. Bunting with judicial emphasis, "a most remarkable story."

THE BURGLARY AT THE VICARAGE

THE FACTS OF THE BURGLARY AT THE VICARAGE COME TO US chiefly through the medium of the vicar and his wife. It occurred in the small hours of Whit-Monday—the day devoted in Iping to the Club festivities. Mrs. Bunting, it seems, woke up suddenly in the stillness that comes before the dawn, with the strong impression that the door of their bedroom had opened and closed. She did not arouse her husband at first, but sat up in bed listening. She then distinctly heard the pad, pad, pad of bare feet coming out of the adjoining dressing-room and walking along the passage toward the staircase. As soon as she felt assured of this, she aroused the Rev. Mr. Bunting as quietly as possible. He did not strike a light, but putting on his spectacles, his dressing-gown, and his bath slippers, he went out on the landing to listen. He heard quite distinctly a fumbling going on at his study desk downstairs, and then a violent sneeze.

At that he returned to his bedroom, armed himself with the most obvious weapon, the poker, and descended the staircase as noiselessly as possible. Mrs. Bunting came out on the landing.

The hour was about four, and the ultimate darkness of the night was past. There was a faint shimmer of light in the hall, but the study doorway yawned impenetrably black. Everything was still except the faint creaking of the stairs under Mr. Bunting's tread, the slight movements in the study. Then something snapped, the drawer was opened, and there was a rustle of papers. Then came an imprecation, and a match was struck and the study was flooded with yellow light. Mr. Bunting was now in the hall, and through the crack of the door he could see the desk and the open drawer and a candle burning on the desk. But the robber he could not see. He stood there in the hall undecided what to do, and Mrs. Bunting, her face white and intent, crept

slowly downstairs after him. One thing kept up Mr. Bunting's courage: the persuasion that this burglar was a resident in the village.

They heard the chink of money, and realized that the robber had found the housekeeping reserve of gold—two pounds ten in half-sovereigns altogether. At that sound Mr. Bunting was nerved to abrupt action. Gripping the poker firmly, he rushed into the room, closely followed by Mrs. Bunting. "Surrender!" cried Mr. Bunting, fiercely, and then stopped amazed. Apparently the room was perfectly empty.

Yet their conviction that they had, that very moment, heard somebody moving in the room had amounted to a certainty. For half a minute, perhaps, they stood gaping, then Mrs. Bunting went across the room and looked behind the screen, while Mr. Bunting, by a kindred impulse, peered under the desk. Then Mrs. Bunting turned back the window curtains, and Mr. Bunting looked up the chimney and probed it with the poker. Then Mrs. Bunting scrutinized the wastepaper basket and Mr. Bunting opened the lid of the coal-scuttle. Then they came to a stop and stood with eyes interrogating each other.

"I could have sworn—" said Mr. Bunting.

"The candle!" said Mr. Bunting. "Who lit the candle?"

"The drawer!" said Mrs. Bunting. "And the money's gone!" She went hastily to the doorway.

"Of all the extraordinary occurrences—"

There was a violent sneeze in the passage. They rushed out, and as they did so the kitchen door slammed. "Bring the candle," said Mr. Bunting, and led the way. They both heard a sound of bolts being hastily shot back.

As he opened the kitchen door he saw through the scullery that the back door was just opening, and the faint light of early dawn displayed the dark masses of the garden beyond. He is certain that nothing went out of the door. It opened, stood open for a moment, and then closed with a slam. As it did so, the candle Mrs. Bunting was carrying from the study flickered and flared. It was a minute or more before they entered the kitchen.

The place was empty. They refastened the back door, examined the kitchen, pantry, and scullery thoroughly, and at last went down into the cellar. There was not a soul to be found in the house, search as they would.

Daylight found the vicar and his wife, a quaintly costumed little couple, still marveling about on their own ground floor by the unnecessary light of a guttering candle.

6

THE FURNITURE THAT WENT MAD

NOW IT HAPPENED THAT IN THE EARLY HOURS OF WHIT-Monday, before Millie was hunted out for the day, Mr. Hall and Mrs. Hall both rose and went noiselessly down into the cellar. Their business there was of a private nature, and had something to do with the specific gravity of their beer. They had hardly entered the cellar when Mrs. Hall found she had forgotten to bring down a bottle of sarsaparilla from their joint-room. As she was the expert and principal operator in this affair, Hall very properly went upstairs for it.

On the landing he was surprised to see that the stranger's door was ajar. He went on into his own room and found the bottle as he had been directed.

But returning with the bottle, he noticed that the bolts of the front door had been shot back, that the door was in fact simply on the latch. And with a flash of inspiration he connected this with the stranger's room upstairs and the suggestions of Mr. Teddy Henfrey. He distinctly remembered holding the candle while Mrs. Hall shot these bolts overnight. At the sight he stopped, gaping, then with the bottle still in his hand went upstairs again. He rapped at the stranger's door. There was no answer. He rapped again; then pushed the door wide open and entered.

It was as he expected. The bed, the room also, was empty. And what was stranger, even to his heavy intelligence, on the bedroom chair and along the rail of the bed were scattered the garments, the only garments so far as he knew and the bandages of their guest. His big slouch hat even was cocked jauntily over the bedpost.

As Hall stood there, he heard his wife's voice coming

out of the depth of the cellar, with that rapid telescoping of the syllables and interrogative cocking up of the final words to a high note by which the West Sussex villager is wont to indicate a brisk impatience. "Gearge! You gart what a wand?"

At that he turned and hurried down to her. "Janny," he said, over the rail of the cellar steps, "'tas teh truth what Henfrey sez. 'E's not in uz room, 'e ent. And the front door's unbolted."

At first Mrs. Hall did not understand, and as soon as she did she resolved to see the empty room for herself. Hall, still holding the bottle, went first. "If 'e ent there," he said, "his close are. And what's 'e doin' without his close, then? 'Tas a most curious basness."

As they came up the cellar steps, they both, it was afterward ascertained, fancied they heard the front door open and shut, but seeing it closed and nothing there, neither said a word to the other about it at the time. Mrs. Hall passed her husband in the passage and ran on first upstairs. Someone sneezed on the staircase. Hall, following six steps behind, thought that he heard her sneeze. She, going on first, was under the impression that Hall was sneezing. She flung open the door and stood regarding the room. "Of all the curious!" she said.

She heard a sniff close behind her head as it seemed, and, turning, was surprised to see Hall a dozen feet off on the topmost stair. But in another moment he was beside her. She bent forward and put her hand on the pillow and then under the clothes.

"Cold," she said. "He's been up this hour or more."

As she did so, a most extraordinary thing happened—the bedclothes gathered themselves together, leaped up suddenly into a sort of peak, and then jumped headlong over the bottom rail. It was exactly as if a hand had clutched them in the center and flung them aside. Immediately after, the stranger's hat hopped off the bedpost, described a whirling flight in the air through the better part of a circle, and then dashed straight at Mrs. Hall's face. Then as swiftly came the sponge from the washstand; and then the chair, flinging the stranger's coat and trousers carelessly aside, and laughing dryly in a voice singularly like the stranger's, turned itself up with its four legs at Mrs. Hall, seemed to take aim at her for a moment, and charged at her. She

screamed and turned, and then the chair legs came gently but firmly against her back and impelled her and Hall out of the room. The door slammed violently and was locked. The chair and bed seemed to be executing a dance of triumph for a moment, and then abruptly everything was still.

Mrs. Hall was left almost in a fainting condition in Mr. Hall's arms on the landing. It was with the greatest difficulty that Mr. Hall and Millie, who had been roused by her scream of alarm, succeeded in getting her downstairs, and applying the restoratives customary in these cases.

"'Tas sperits," said Mrs. Hall. "I know 'tas sperits. I've read in papers of en. Tables and chairs leaping and dancing!—"

"Take a drop more, Janny," said Hall. "'Twill steady ye."

"Lock him out," said Mrs. Hall. "Don't let him come in again. I half guessed—I might ha' known. With them goggling eyes and bandaged head, and never going to church of a Sunday. And all they bottles—more 'n it's right for anyone to have. He's put the sperits into the furniture.—My good old furniture! 'Twas in that very chair my poor dear mother used to sit when I was a little girl. To think it should rise up against me now!"

"Just a drop more, Janny," said Hall. "Your nerves is all upset."

They sent Millie across the street through the golden five o'clock sunshine to rouse up Mr. Sandy Wadgers, the blacksmith. Mr. Hall's compliments and the furniture upstairs was behaving most extraordinary. Would Mr. Wadgers come round? He was a knowing man, was Mr. Wadgers, and very resourceful. He took quite a grave view of the case. "Arm darmed ef that ent witchcraft," was the view of Mr. Sandy Wadgers. "You warnt horseshoes for such gentry as he."

He came round greatly concerned. They wanted him to lead the way upstairs to the room, but he didn't seem to be in any hurry. He preferred to talk in the passage. Over the way Huxter's apprentice came out and began taking down the shutters of the tobacco window. He was called over to join the discussion. Mr. Huxter naturally followed over in the course of a few minutes. The Anglo-Saxon genius for parliamentary government asserted itself; there was a great deal of talk and no decisive action. "Let's have

the facts first," insisted Mr. Sandy Wadgers. "Let's be sure we'd be acting perfectly right in bustin' that there door open. A door onbust is always open to bustin', but ye can't onbust a door once you've busted en."

And suddenly and most wonderfully the door of the room upstairs opened of its own accord, and as they looked up in amazement, they saw descending the stairs the muffled figure of the stranger staring more blackly and blankly than ever with those unreasonably large blue glass eyes of his. He came down stiffly and slowly, staring all the time; he walked across the passage staring, then stopped.

"Look there!" he said, and their eyes followed the direction of his gloved finger and saw a bottle of sarsaparilla hard by the cellar door. Then he entered the parlor, and suddenly, swiftly, viciously, slammed the door in their faces.

Not a word was spoken until the last echoes of the slam had died away. They stared at one another. "Well, if that don't lick everything!" said Mr. Wadgers, and left the alternative unsaid. "I'd go in and ask 'n 'bout it," said Wadgers, to Mr. Hall. "I'd d'mand an explanation."

It took some time to bring the landlady's husband up to that pitch. At last he rapped, opened the door, and got as far as, "Excuse me—"

"Go to the devil!" said the stranger in a tremendous voice, and "Shut that door after you." So that brief interview terminated.

7

THE UNVEILING OF THE STRANGER

THE STRANGER WENT INTO THE LITTLE PARLOR OF THE Coach and Horses about half-past five in the morning, and there he remained until near midday, the blinds down, the door shut, and none, after Hall's repulse, venturing near him.

All that time he must have fasted. Thrice he rang his

bell, the third time furiously and continuously, but no one answered him. "Him and his 'go to the devil' indeed!" said Mrs. Hall. Presently came an imperfect rumor of the burglary at the vicarage, and two and two were put together. Hall, assisted by Wadgers, went off to find Mr. Shuckleforth, the magistrate, and take his advice. No one ventured upstairs. How the stranger occupied himself is unknown. Now and then he would stride violently up and down, and twice came an outburst of curses, a tearing of paper, and a violent smashing of bottles.

The little group of scared but curious people increased. Mrs. Huxter came over; some gay young fellows resplendent in black ready-made jackets and *piqué* paper ties, for it was Whit-Monday, joined the group with confused interrogations. Young Archie Harker distinguished himself by going up the yard and trying to peep under the window-blinds. He could see nothing, but gave reason for supposing that he did, and others of the Iping youth presently joined him.

And inside, in the artificial darkness of the parlor, into which only one thin jet of sunlight penetrated, the stranger, hungry we must suppose, and fearful, hidden in his uncomfortable hot wrappings, pored through his dark glasses upon his paper or chinked his dirty little bottles, and occasionally swore savagely at the boys, audible if invisible, outside the windows. In the corner by the fireplace lay the fragments of half a dozen smashed bottles, and a pungent tang of chlorine tainted the air. So much we know from what was heard at the time and from what was subsequently seen in the room.

About noon he suddenly opened his parlor door and stood glaring fixedly at the three or four people in the bar. "Mrs. Hall," he said. Somebody went sheepishly and called for Mrs. Hall.

Mrs. Hall appeared after an interval, a little short of breath, but all the fiercer for that. Hall was still out. She had deliberated over this scene, and she came holding a little tray with an unsettled bill upon it. "Is it your bill you're wanting, sir?" she said.

"Why wasn't my breakfast laid? Why haven't you prepared my meals and answered my bell? Do you think I live without eating?"

"Why isn't my bill paid?" said Mrs. Hall. "That's what I want to know."

"I told you three days ago I was awaiting a remittance—"

"I told you two days ago I wasn't going to await no remittances. You can't grumble if your breakfast waits a bit if my bill's been waiting these five days, can you?"

The stranger swore briefly but vividly.

"Nar, nar!" from the bar.

"And I'd thank you kindly, sir, if you'd keep your swearing to yourself, sir," said Mrs. Hall.

The stranger stood looking more like an angry diving-helmet than ever. It was universally felt in the bar that Mrs. Hall had the better of him. His next words showed as much. "Look here, my good woman—" he began.

"Don't good woman *me*," said Mrs. Hall.

"I've told you my remittance hasn't come—"

"Remittance indeed!" said Mrs. Hall.

"Still, I dare say in my pocket—"

"You told me two days ago that you hadn't anything but a sovereign's worth of silver upon you—"

"Well, I've found some more—"

"'Ul-lo!" from the bar.

"I wonder where you found it?" said Mrs. Hall.

That seemed to annoy the stranger very much. He stamped his foot. "What do you mean?" he said.

"That I wonder where you found it," said Mrs. Hall. "And before I take any bills or get any breakfasts, or do any such things whatsoever, you got to tell me one or two things I don't understand, and what nobody don't understand, and what everybody is very anxious to understand. I want know what you been doin' t' my chair upstairs, and I want know how 'tis your room was empty, and how you got in again. Them as stops in this house comes in by the doors—that's the rule of the house, and that you *didn't* do, and what I want know is how you *did* come in. And I want know—"

Suddenly the stranger raised his gloved hands clenched, stamped his foot, and said, "Stop!" with such extraordinary violence that he silenced her instantly.

"You don't understand," he said, "who I am or what I am. I'll show you. By Heaven! I'll show you." Then he put his open palm over his face and withdrew it. The center

of his face became a black cavity. "Here," he said. He stepped forward and handed Mrs. Hall something which she, staring at his metamorphosed face, accepted automatically. Then, when she saw what it was, she screamed loudly, dropped it, and staggered back. The nose—it was the stranger's nose! pink and shining—rolled on the floor.

Then he removed his spectacles, and everyone in the bar gasped. He took off his hat, and with a violent gesture tore at his whiskers and bandages. For a moment they resisted him. A flash of horrible anticipation passed through the bar. "Oh, my Gard!" said someone. Then off they came.

It was worse than anything. Mrs. Hall, standing open-mouthed and horror-struck, shrieked at what she saw, and made for the door of the house. Everyone began to move. They were prepared for scars, disfigurements, tangible horrors, but *nothing!* The bandages and false hair flew across the passage into the bar, making a hobbledehoy jump to avoid them. Everyone tumbled on everyone else down the steps. For the man who stood there shouting some incoherent explanation, was a solid gesticulating figure up to the coat collar of him, and then—nothingness, no visible thing at all!

People down the village heard shouts and shrieks, and looking up the street saw the Coach and Horses violently firing out its humanity. They saw Mrs. Hall fall down and Mr. Teddy Henfrey jump to avoid tumbling over her, and then they heard the frightful screams of Millie, who, emerging suddenly from the kitchen at the noise of the tumult, had come upon the headless stranger from behind. These ceased suddenly.

Forthwith everyone all down the street, the sweetstuff seller, the swing man, little boys and girls, rustic dandies, smart wenches, smocked elders and aproned gypsies, began running toward the inn, and in a miraculously short space of time a crowd of perhaps forty people, and rapidly increasing, swayed and hooted and inquired and exclaimed and suggested, in front of Mrs. Hall's establishment. Everyone seemed eager to talk at once, and the result, was babel. A small group supported Mrs. Hall, who was picked up in a state of collapse. There was a conference, and the incredible evidence of a vociferous eye-witness. "O Bogey!" "What's he been doin', then?" "Ain't hurt the girl, 'as 'e?"

"Run at en with a knife, I believe." "No 'ed, I tell ye. I don't mean no manner of speaking, I mean *marn 'ithout a 'ed!*" "Narnsense! 'tas some conjuring trick." "Fetched off 'is wrappin's 'e did—"

In its struggles to see in through the door, the crowd formed itself into a straggling wedge, with the more adventurous apex nearest the inn. "He stood for a moment, I heerd the gal scream, and he turned. I saw her skirts whisk, and he went after her. Didn't take ten seconds. Back he comes with a knife in uz hand and a loaf; stood just as if he was staring. Not a moment ago. Went in that there door. I tell 'e, 'e ain't gart no 'ed 't all. You just missed en—"

There was a disturbance behind, and the speaker stopped to step aside for a little procession that was marching very resolutely toward the house—first Mr. Hall, very red and determined, then Mr. Bobby Jaffers, the village constable, and then the wary Mr. Wadgers. They had come now armed with a warrant.

People shouted conflicting information of the recent circumstances. "'Ed or no 'ed," said Jaffers, "I got to 'rest en, and 'rest en I *will*."

Mr. Hall marched up the steps, marched straight to the door of the parlor and flung it open. "Constable," he said, "do your duty."

Jaffers marched in, Hall next, Wadgers last. They saw in the dim light the headless figure facing them, with a gnawed crust of bread in one gloved hand and a chunk of cheese in the other.

"That's him!" said Hall.

"What the devil's this?" came in a tone of angry expostulation from above the collar of the figure.

"You're a damned rum customer, mister," said Mr. Jaffers. "But 'ed or no 'ed, the warrant says 'body,' and duty's duty—"

"Keep off!" said the figure, starting back.

Abruptly he whipped down the bread and cheese, and Mr. Hall just grasped the knife on the table in time to save it. Off came the stranger's left glove and was slapped in Jaffers's face. In another moment Jaffers, cutting short some statement concerning a warrant, had gripped him by the handless wrist and caught his invisible throat. He got a sounding kick on the shin that made him shout, but he kept

his grip. Hall sent the knife sliding along the table to Wadgers, who acted as goal-keeper for the offensive, so to speak, and then stepped forward as Jaffers and the stranger swayed and staggered toward him, clutching and hitting in. A chair stood in the way, and went aside with a crash as they came down together.

"Get the feet," said Jaffers between his teeth.

Mr. Hall, endeavoring to act on instructions, received a sounding kick in the ribs that disposed of him for a moment, and Mr. Wadgers, seeing the decapitated stranger had rolled over and got the upper side of Jaffers, retreated toward the door, knife in hand, and so collided with Mr. Huxter and the Siddermorton carter coming to the rescue of law and order. At the same moment down came three or four bottles from the chiffonnier and shot a web of pungency into the air of the room.

"I'll surrender," cried the stranger, though he had Jaffers down, and in another moment he stood up panting, a strange figure, headless and handless—for he had pulled off his right glove now as well as his left. "It's no good," he said, as if sobbing for breath.

It was the strangest thing in the world to hear that voice coming as if out of empty space, but the Sussex peasants are perhaps the most matter-of-fact people under the sun. Jaffers got up also and produced a pair of handcuffs. Then he started.

"I say!" said Jaffers, brought up short by a dim realization of the incongruity of the whole business. "Darm it! Can't use 'em as I can see."

The stranger ran his arm down his waistcoat, and as if by a miracle the buttons to which his empty sleeve pointed became undone. Then he said something about his shin, and stooped down. He seemed to be fumbling with his shoes and socks.

"Why!" said Huxter, suddenly, "that's not a man at all. It's just empty clothes. Look! You can see down his collar and the linings of his clothes. I could put my arm—"

He extended his hand; it seemed to meet something in mid-air, and he drew it back with a sharp exclamation. "I wish you'd keep your fingers out of my eye," said the aerial voice, in a tone of savage expostulation. "The fact is, I'm all here: head, hands, legs, and all the rest of it, but it

happens I'm invisible. It's a confounded nuisance, but I am. That's no reason why I should be poked to pieces by every stupid bumpkin in Iping, is it?"

The suit of clothes, now all unbuttoned and hanging loosely upon its unseen supports, stood up, arms akimbo.

Several other of the men folks had now entered the room, so that it was closely crowded. "Invisible, eigh?" said Huxter, ignoring the stranger's abuse. "Who ever heard the likes of that?"

"It's strange, perhaps, but it's not a crime. Why am I assaulted by a policeman in this fashion?"

"Ah! that's a different matter," said Jaffers. "No doubt you are a bit difficult to see in this light, but I got a warrant and it's all correct. What I'm after ain't no invisibility—it's burglary. There's a house been broken into and money took."

"Well?"

"And circumstances certainly point—"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the Invisible Man.

"I hope so, sir; but I've got my instructions."

"Well," said the stranger, "I'll come. I'll *come*. But no handcuffs."

"It's the regular thing," said Jeffers.

"No handcuffs," stipulated the stranger.

"Pardon me," said Jaffers.

Abruptly the figure sat down, and before anyone could realize what was being done, the slippers, socks, and trousers had been kicked off under the table. Then he sprang up again and flung off his coat.

"Here, stop that," said Jaffers, suddenly realizing what was happening. He gripped the waistcoat; it struggled, and the shirt slipped out of it and left it limp and empty in his hand. "Hold him!" said Jaffers, loudly. "Once he gets they things off—!"

"Hold him!" cried everyone, and there was a rush at the fluttering white shirt which was now all that was visible of the stranger.

The shirt-sleeve planted a shrewd blow in Hall's face that stopped his open-armed advance, and sent him backward into old Toothsome the sexton, and in another moment the garment was lifted up and became convulsed and vacantly flapping about the arms, even as a shirt that

is being thrust over a man's head. Jaffers clutched at it, and only helped to pull it off; he was struck in the mouth out of the air, and incontinently drew his truncheon and smote Teddy Henfrey savagely upon the crown of his head.

"Look out!" said everybody, fencing at random and hitting at nothing. "Hold him! Shut the door! Don't let him loose! I got something! Here it is!" a perfect babel of noises they made. Everybody, it seemed, was being hit all at once, and Sandy Wadgers, knowing as ever and his wits sharpened by a frightful blow in the nose, reopened the door and led the rout. The others, following incontinently, were jammed for a moment in the corner by the doorway. The hitting continued. Phipps, the Unitarian, had a front tooth broken, and Henfrey was injured in the cartilage of his ear. Jaffers was struck under the jaw, and, turning, caught at something that intervened between him and Huxter in the melee, and prevented their coming together. He felt a muscular chest, and in another moment the whole mass of struggling, excited men shot out into the crowded hall.

"I got him!" shouted Jaffers, choking and reeling through them all, and wrestling with purple face and swelling veins against his unseen enemy.

Men staggered right and left as the extraordinary conflict swayed swiftly toward the house door, and went spinning down the half-dozen steps of the inn. Jaffers cried in a strangled voice—holding tight, nevertheless, and making play with his knee—spun round, and fell heavily undermost with his head on the gravel. Only then did his fingers relax.

There were excited cries of "Hold him!" "Invisible!" and so forth, and a young fellow, a stranger in the place whose name did not come to light, rushed in at once, caught something, missed his hold, and fell over the constable's prostrate body. Halfway across the road a woman screamed as something pushed by her; a dog, kicked apparently, yelped and ran howling into Huxter's yard, and with that the transit of the Invisible Man was accomplished. For a space people stood amazed and gesticulating, and then came Panic, and scattered them abroad through the village as a gust scatters dead leaves.

But Jaffers lay quite still, face upward and knees bent.

IN TRANSIT

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER IS EXCEEDINGLY BRIEF, AND RELATES that Gibbins, the amateur naturalist of the district, while lying out on the spacious open downs without a soul within a couple of miles of him, as he thought, and almost dozing, heard close to him the sound as of a man coughing, sneezing, and then swearing savagely to himself; and looking, beheld nothing. Yet the voice was indisputable. It continued to swear with that breadth and variety that distinguishes the swearing of a cultivated man. It grew to a climax, diminished again, and died away in the distance, going as it seemed to him in the direction of Adderdean. It lifted to a spasmodic sneeze and ended. Gibbins had heard nothing of the morning's occurrences, but the phenomenon was so striking and disturbing that his philosophical tranquillity vanished; he got up hastily, and hurried down the steepness of the hill toward the village, as fast as he could go.

MR. THOMAS MARVEL

YOU MUST PICTURE MR. THOMAS MARVEL AS A PERSON OF copious flexible visage, a nose of cylindrical protrusion, a liquorish, ample, fluctuating mouth, and a beard of bristling eccentricity. His figure inclined to embonpoint; his short limbs accentuated this inclination. He wore a furry silk hat, and the frequent substitution of twine and shoelaces for

buttons, apparent at critical points of his costume, marked a man essentially bachelor.

Mr. Thomas Marvel was sitting with his feet in a ditch by the roadside over the down toward Adderdean, about a mile and a half out of Iping. His feet, save for socks of irregular open-work, were bare, his big toes were broad, and pricked like the ears of a watchful dog. In a leisurely manner—he did everything in a leisurely manner—he was contemplating trying on a pair of boots. They were the soundest boots he had come across for a long time, but too large for him; whereas the ones he had were, in dry weather, a very comfortable fit, but too thin-soled for damp. Mr. Thomas Marvel hated roomy shoes, but then he hated damp. He had never properly thought out which he hated most, and it was a pleasant day, and there was nothing better to do. So he put the four shoes in a graceful group on the turf and looked at them. And seeing them there among the grass and springing agrimony, it suddenly occurred to him that both pairs were exceedingly ugly to see. He was not at all startled by a voice behind him.

"They're boots, anyhow," said the voice.

"They are—charity boots," said Mr. Thomas Marvel, with his head on one side regarding them distastefully, "and which is the ugliest pair in the whole blessed universe, I'm darned if I know!"

"H'm," said the voice.

"I've worn worse—in fact, I've worn none. But none so owdacious ugly—if you'll allow the expression. I've been cadging boots—in particular—for days. Because I was sick of *them*. They're sound enough, of course. But a gentleman on tramp sees such a thundering lot of his boots. And if you'll believe me, I've raised nothing in the whole blessed county, try as I would, but *them*. Look at 'em! And a good county for boots, too, in a general way. But it's just my promiscuous luck. I've got my boots in this county ten years or more. And then they treat you like this."

"It's a beast of a county," said the voice. "And pigs for people."

"Ain't it?" said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "Lord! But them boots! It beats it."

He turned his head over his shoulder to the right, to look at the boots of his interlocutor with a view to comparisons, and lo! where the boots of his interlocutor should

have been were neither legs nor boots. He turned his head over his shoulder to the left, and there also were neither legs nor boots. He was irradiated by the dawn of a great amazement. "Where *are* yer?" said Mr. Thomas Marvel over his shoulder and coming on all fours. He saw a stretch of empty downs with the wind swaying the remote green-pointed furze bushes.

"Am I drunk?" said Mr. Marvel. "Have I had visions? Was I talking to myself? What the—"

"Don't be alarmed," said a voice.

"None of your ventriloquizing *me*," said Mr. Thomas Marvel, rising sharply to his feet. "Where *are* yer? Alarmed, indeed!"

"Don't be alarmed," repeated the voice.

"*You'll* be alarmed in a minute, you silly fool," said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "Where *are* yer? Lemme get my mark on yer—"

"Are you *buried*?" said Mr. Thomas Marvel, after an interval.

There was no answer. Mr. Thomas Marvel stood bootless and amazed, his jacket nearly thrown off.

"Peewit," said a peewit, very remote.

"Peewit, indeed!" said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "This ain't no time for foolery." The down was desolate, east and west, north and south; the road, with its shallow ditches and white bordering stakes, ran smooth and empty north and south, and, save for that peewit, the blue sky was empty too. "So help me," said Mr. Thomas Marvel, shuffling his coat on to his shoulders again. "It's the drink! I might ha' known."

"It's not the drink," said the voice. "You keep your nerves steady."

"Ow!" said Mr. Marvel, and his face grew white amid its patches. "It's the drink," his lips repeated noiselessly. He remained staring about him, rotating slowly backward. "I could have *swore* I heard a voice," he whispered.

"Of course you did."

"It's there again," said Mr. Marvel, closing his eyes and clasping his hand on his brow with a tragic gesture. He was suddenly taken by the collar and shaken violently, and left more dazed than ever. "Don't be a fool," said the voice.

"I'm—off—my—blooming—chump," said Mr. Marvel. "It's no good. It's fretting about them blarsted boots. I'm off my blessed blooming chump. Or it's spirits."

"Neither one thing nor the other," said the voice. Listen!"

"Chump," said Mr. Marvel.

"One minute," said the voice, penetratingly—tremulous with self-control.

"Well?" said Mr. Thomas Marvel, with a strange feeling of having been dug in the chest by a finger.

"You think I'm just imagination? Just imagination?"

"What else *can* you be?" said Mr. Thomas Marvel, rubbing the back of his neck.

"Very well," said the voice, in a tone of relief. "Then I'm going to throw flints at you till you think differently."

"But where *are* yer?"

The voice made no answer. Whizz came a flint, apparently out of the air, and missed Mr. Marvel's shoulder by a hair's breadth. Mr. Marvel, turning, saw a flint jerk up into the air, trace a complicated path, hang for a moment, and then fling at his feet with almost invisible rapidity. He was too amazed to dodge. Whizz it came, and ricocheted from a bare toe into the ditch. Mr. Thomas Marvel jumped a foot and howled aloud. Then he started to run, tripped over an unseen obstacle, and came head over heels into a sitting position.

"Now," said the voice, as a third stone curved upward and hung in the air above the tramp. "Am I imagination?"

Mr. Marvel by way of reply struggled to his feet, and was immediately rolled over again. He lay quiet for a moment. "If you struggle any more," said the voice, "I shall throw the flint at your head."

"It's a fair do," said Mr. Thomas Marvel, sitting up, taking his wounded toe in hand and fixing his eye on the third missile. "I don't understand it. Stones flinging themselves. Stones talking. Put yourself down. Rot away. I'm done." The third flint fell.

"It's very simple," said the voice. "I'm an invisible man."

"Tell us something I don't know," said Mr. Marvel, gasping with pain. "Where you've hid—how you do it—I *don't* know. I'm beat."

"That's all," said the voice. "I'm invisible. That's what I want you to understand."

"Anyone could see that. There is no need for you to be so confounded impatient, mister. *Now* then. Give us a notion. How are you hid?"

"I'm invisible. That's the great point. And what I want you to understand is this—"

"But whereabouts?" interrupted Mr. Marvel.

"Here! Six yards in front of you."

"Oh, *come!* I ain't blind. You'll be telling me next you're just thin air. I'm not one of your ignorant tramps—"

"Yes, I am—thin air. You're looking through me."

"What! Ain't there any stuff to you? *Vox et*—what is it?—jabber. Is it that?"

"I am just a human being—solid, needing food and drink, needing covering too— But I'm invisible. You see? Invisible. Simple idea. Invisible."

"What, real like?"

"Yes, real."

"Let's have a hand of you," said Marvel, "if you *are* real. It won't be so darn out-of-the-way like, then—*Lord!*" he said, "how you made me jump—gripping me like that!"

He felt the hand that had closed round his wrist with his disengaged fingers, and his fingers went timorously up the arm, patted a muscular chest, and explored a bearded face. Marvel's face was astonishment.

"I'm dashed!" he said. "If this don't beat cockfighting! Most remarkable!—And there I can see a rabbit clean through you, 'arf a mile away! Not a bit of you visible—except—"

He scrutinized the apparently empty space keenly. "You 'aven't been eatin' bread and cheese?" he asked, holding the invisible arm.

"You're quite right, and it's not quite assimilated into the system."

"Ah!" said Mr. Marvel. "Sort of ghostly, though."

"Of course, all this isn't half so wonderful as you think."

"It's quite wonderful enough for *my* modest wants," said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "Howjer manage it! How the dooce is it done?"

"It's too long a story. And besides—"

"I tell you, the whole business fair beats me," said Mr. Marvel.

"What I want to say at present is this: I need help. I have come to that—I came upon you suddenly. I was wandering,

mad with rage, naked, impotent. I could have murdered. And I saw you—"

"*Lord!*" said Mr. Marvel.

"I came up behind you—hesitated—went on—"

Mr. Marvel's expression was eloquent.

"—then stopped. 'Here,' I said, 'is an outcast like myself. This is the man for me.' So I turned back and came to you—you. And—"

"*Lord!*" said Mr. Marvel. "But I'm all in a dizzy. May I ask—How is it? And what you may be requiring in the way of help?—Invisible!"

"I want you to help me get clothes—and shelter—and then, with other things. I've left them long enough. If you won't—well! But you *will—must.*"

"Look here," said Mr. Marvel. "I'm too flabbergasted. Don't knock me about any more. And leave me go. I must get steady a bit. And you've pretty near broken my toe. It's all so unreasonable. Empty downs, empty sky. Nothing visible for miles except the bosom of Nature. And then comes a voice. A voice out of heaven! And stones! And a fist—*Lord!*"

"Pull yourself together," said the voice, "for you have to do the job I've chosen for you."

Mr. Marvel blew out his cheeks, and his eyes were round.

"I've chosen you," said the voice. "You are the only man, except some of those fools down there, who knows there is such a thing as an invisible man. You have to be my helper. Help me—and I will do great things for you. An invisible man is a man of power." He stopped for a moment to sneeze violently.

"But if you betray me," he said, "if you fail to do as I direct you—" He paused and tapped Mr. Marvel's shoulder smartly. Mr. Marvel gave a yelp of terror at the touch. "I don't want to betray you," said Mr. Marvel, edging away from the direction of the fingers. "Don't you go a-thinking that, whatever you do. All I want to do is to help you—just tell me what I got to do. (*Lord!*) Whatever you want done, that I'm most willing to do."

MR. MARVEL'S VISIT TO IPING

AFTER THE FIRST GUSTY PANIC HAD SPENT ITSELF, IPING became argumentative. Skepticism suddenly reared its head—rather nervous skepticism, not at all assured of its back, but skepticism nevertheless. It is so much easier not to believe in an invisible man; and those who had actually seen him dissolve into air, or felt the strength of his arm, could be counted on the fingers of two hands. And of these witnesses Mr. Wadgers was presently missing, having retired impregnably behind the bolts and bars of his own house, and Jaffers was lying stunned in the parlor of the Coach and Horses. Great and strange ideas transcending experience often have less effect upon men and women than smaller, more tangible considerations. Iping was gay with bunting, and everybody was in gala dress. Whit-Monday had been looked forward to for a month or more. By the afternoon, even those who believed in the Unseen were beginning to resume their little amusements in a tentative fashion, on the supposition that he had quite gone away, and with the skeptics he was already a jest. But people, skeptics and believers alike, were remarkably sociable all that day.

About four o'clock a stranger entered the village from the direction of the downs. He was a short, stout person in an extraordinarily shabby top hat, and he appeared to be very much out of breath. His cheeks were alternately limp and tightly puffed. His mottled face was apprehensive, and he moved with a sort of reluctant alacrity. He turned the corner by the church, and directed his way to the Coach and Horses.

This stranger, to the perceptions of the proprietor of the cocoanut shy, appeared to be talking to himself, and Mr. Huxter remarked the same thing. He stopped at the foot of the Coach and Horses steps, and, according to Mr. Huxter, appeared to undergo a severe internal struggle be-

fore he could induce himself to enter the house. Finally he marched up the steps, and was seen by Mr. Huxter to turn to the left and open the door of the parlor. Mr. Huxter heard voices from within the room and from the bar apprising the man of his error. "That room's private!" said Hall, and the stranger shut the door clumsily and went into the bar.

In the course of a few minutes he reappeared wiping his lips with the back of his hand with an air of quiet satisfaction that somehow impressed Mr. Huxter as assumed. He stood looking about him for some moments, and then Mr. Huxter saw him walk in an oddly furtive manner toward the gates of the yard, upon which the parlor window opened. The stranger, after some hesitation, leaned against one of the gate posts, produced a short clay pipe, and prepared to fill it. His fingers trembled while doing so. He lit it clumsily, and folding his arms, began to smoke in a languid attitude, an attitude which his occasional quick glances up the yard altogether belied.

All this Mr. Huxter saw over the canisters of the tobacco window, and the singularity of the man's behavior prompted him to maintain his observation.

Presently the stranger stood up abruptly and put his pipe in his pocket. Then he vanished into the yard. Forthwith Mr. Huxter, conceiving he was witness of some petty larceny, leaped round his counter and ran out into the road to intercept the thief. As he did so, Mr. Marvel reappeared, his hat askew, a big bundle in a blue tablecloth in one hand, and three books tied together—as it proved afterward with the Vicar's braces—in the other. Directly he saw Huxter he gave a sort of gasp, and turning sharply to the left, began to run. "Stop thief!" cried Huxter, and set off after him. Mr. Huxter's sensations were vivid but brief. He saw the man just before him and spurting briskly for the church corner and the hill road. He saw the village flags and festivities beyond, and a face or so turned toward him. He bawled, "Stop!" again. He had hardly gone ten strides before his shin was caught in some mysterious fashion, and he was no longer running, but flying with inconceivable rapidity through the air. He saw the ground suddenly close to his face. The world seemed to splash into a million whirling specks of light, and subsequent proceedings interested him no more.

IN THE COACH AND HORSES

NOW IN ORDER CLEARLY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HAD HAPPENED in the inn, it is necessary to go back to the moment when Mr. Marvel first came into view of Mr. Huxter's window. At that precise moment Mr. Cuss and Mr. Bunting were in the parlor. They were seriously investigating the strange occurrences of the morning, and were, with Mr. Hall's permission, making a thorough examination of the Invisible Man's belongings. Jaffers had partially recovered from his fall and had gone home in the charge of his sympathetic friends. The stranger's scattered garments had been removed by Mrs. Hall and the room tidied up, and on the table under the window where the stranger had been wont to work, Cuss had hit almost at once on three big books in manuscript labeled "Diary."

"Diary!" said Cuss, putting the three books on the table. "Now, at any rate, we shall learn something." The Vicar stood with his hands on the table.

"Diary," repeated Cuss, sitting down, putting two volumes to support the third, and opening it. "H'm—no name on the fly-leaf. Bother!—cipher. And figures."

The Vicar came round to look over his shoulder.

Cuss turned the pages over with a face suddenly disappointed. "I'm—dear me! It's all cipher, Bunting."

"There are no diagrams?" asked Mr. Bunting. "No illustrations throwing light—"

"See for yourself," said Mr. Cuss. "Some of it's mathematical and some of it's Russian or some such language (to judge by the letters), and some of it's Greek. Now the Greek I thought *you*—"

"Of course," said Mr. Bunting, taking out and wiping his spectacles and feeling suddenly very uncomfortable—for he had no Greek left in his mind worth talking about; "yes—the Greek, of course, may furnish a clue."

"I'll find you a place."

"I'd rather glance through the volumes first," said Mr. Bunting, still wiping. "A general impression first, Cuss, and *then*, you know, we can go looking for clues."

He coughed, put on his glasses, arranged them fastidiously, coughed again, and wished something would happen to avert the seemingly inevitable exposure. Then he took the volume Cuss handed him in a leisurely manner. And then something did happen.

The door opened suddenly.

Both gentlemen started violently, looked round, and were relieved to see a sporadically rosy face beneath a furry silk hat. "Tap?" asked the face, and stood staring.

"No," said both gentlemen at once.

"Over the other side, my man," said Mr. Bunting. And "Please shut that door," said Mr. Cuss, irritably.

"All right," said the intruder, as it seemed, in a low voice curiously different from the huskiness of its first inquiry. "Right you are," said the intruder in the former voice. "Stand clear!" and he vanished and closed the door.

"A sailor, I should judge," said Mr. Bunting.

"Amusing fellows, they are. Stand clear! indeed. A nautical term, referring to his getting back out of the room, I suppose."

"I dare say so," and Cuss. "My nerves are all loose today. It quite made me jump—the door opening like that."

Mr. Bunting smiled as if he had not jumped. "And now," he said with a sigh, "these books."

"One minute," said Cuss, and went and locked the door. "Now I think we are safe from interruption."

Someone sniffed as he did so.

"One thing is indisputable," said Bunting, drawing up a chair next to that of Cuss. "There certainly have been very strange things happening in Iping during the last few days—very strange. I cannot of course believe in this absurd invisibility story—"

"It's incredible," said Cuss, "—incredible. But the fact remains that I saw—I certainly saw right down his sleeve—"

"But did you—are you sure? Suppose a mirror, for instance—hallucinations are so easily produced. I don't know if you have ever seen a really good conjuror—"

"I won't argue again," said Cuss. "We've thrashed that out, Bunting. And just now there's these books— Ah! here's

some of what I take to be Greek! Greek letters certainly."

He pointed to the middle of the page. Mr. Bunting flushed slightly and brought his face nearer, apparently finding some difficulty with his glasses. Suddenly he became aware of a strange feeling at the nape of his neck. He tried to raise his head, and encountered an immovable resistance. The feeling was a curious pressure, the grip of a heavy, firm hand, and it bore his chin irresistibly to the table. "*Don't move, little men,*" whispered a voice, "*or I'll brain you both!*" He looked into the face of Cuss, close to his own, and each saw a horrified reflection of his own sickly astonishment.

"I'm sorry to handle you roughly," said the Voice, "but it's unavoidable.

"Since when did you learn to pry into an investigator's private memoranda?" said the Voice, and two chins struck the table simultaneously, and two sets of teeth rattled.

"Since when did you learn to invade the private rooms of a man in misfortune?" and the concussion was repeated.

"Where have they put my clothes? Listen," said the Voice. "The windows are fastened and I've taken the key out of the door. I am a fairly strong man, and I have the poker handy—besides being invisible. There's not the slightest doubt that I could kill you both and get away quite easily if I wanted to—do you understand? Very well. If I let you go, will you promise not to try any nonsense and do what I tell you?"

The Vicar and the Doctor looked at one another and the Doctor pulled a face. "Yes," said Mr. Bunting, and the Doctor repeated it. Then the pressure on the necks relaxed, and the Doctor and the Vicar sat up, both very red in the face and wriggling their heads.

"Please keep sitting where you are," said the Invisible Man. "Here's the poker, you see.

"When I came into this room," continued the Invisible Man, after presenting the poker to the tip of the nose of each of his visitors, "I did not expect to find it occupied, and I expected to find, in addition to my books of memoranda, an outfit of clothing. Where is it? No—don't rise. I can see it's gone. Now, just at present, though the days are quite warm enough for an invisible man to run about stark, the evenings are chilly. I want clothing—and other accommodations; and I must also have those three books."

THE INVISIBLE MAN LOSES HIS TEMPER

IT IS UNAVOIDABLE THAT AT THIS POINT THE NARRATIVE should break off again, for a certain very painful reason that will presently be apparent. And while these things were going on in the parlor, and while Mr. Huxter was watching Mr. Marvel smoking his pipe against the gate, not a dozen yards away were Mr. Hall and Teddy Henfrey discussing in a state of cloudy puzzlement the one Iping topic.

Suddenly there came a violent thud against the door of the parlor, a sharp cry, and then—silence.

"Hul-lo!" said Teddy Henfrey.

"Hul-lo!" from the Tap.

Mr. Hall took things in slowly but surely. "That ain't right," he said, and came round from behind the bar toward the parlor door.

He and Teddy approached the door together, with intent faces. Their eyes considered. "Summat wrong," said Hall, and Henfrey nodded agreement. Whiffs of an unpleasant chemical odor met them, and there was a muffled sound of conversation, very rapid and subdued.

"You all raight thur?" asked Hall, rapping.

The muttered conversation ceased abruptly, for a moment silence, then the conversation was resumed, in hissing whispers, then a sharp cry of "No! no, you don't!" There came a sudden motion and the oversetting of a chair, a brief struggle. Silence again.

"What the dooce?" exclaimed Henfrey, *sotto voce*.

"You—all—raight—thur?" asked Mr. Hall, sharply, again.

The Vicar's voice answered with a curious jerking intonation, "Quite ri—ight. Please don't—interrupt."

"Odd!" said Mr. Henfrey.

"Odd!" said Mr. Hall.

"Says, 'Don't interrupt,' " said Henfrey.

"I heerd'n," said Hall.

"And a sniff," said Henfrey.

They remained listening. The conversation was rapid and subdued. "I *can't*," said Mr. Bunting, his voice rising; "I tell you, sir, I *will* not."

"What was that?" asked Henfrey.

"Says he wi' nart," said Hall. "Warn't speakin' to us, wuz he?"

"Disgraceful!" said Mr. Bunting, within.

"'Disgraceful,'" said Mr. Henfrey. "I heard it—*distinct*. Who's that speaking now?"

"Mr. Cuss, I s'pose," said Hall. "Can you hear—anything?"

Silence. The sounds within indistinct and perplexing.

"Sounds like throwing the tablecloth about," said Hall.

Mrs. Hall appeared behind the bar. Hall made gestures of silence and invitation. This roused Mrs. Hall's wifely opposition. "What yer listenin' there for, Hall?" she asked. "Ain't you nothin' better to do—busy day like this?"

Hall tried to convey everything by grimaces and dumb show, but Mrs. Hall was obdurate. She raised her voice. So Hall and Henfrey, rather crestfallen, tiptoed back to the bar, gesticulating to explain to her.

At first she refused to see anything in what they had heard at all. Then she insisted on Hall keeping silence, while Henfrey told her his story. She was inclined to think the whole business nonsense—perhaps they were just moving the furniture about. "I heerd 'n say 'disgraceful'; *that* I did," said Hall.

"I heerd that, Mis' Hall," said Henfrey.

"Like as not—" began Mrs. Hall.

"Hsh!" said Mr. Teddy Henfrey. "Didn't I hear the window?"

"What window?" asked Mrs. Hall.

"Parlor window," said Henfrey.

Everyone stood listening intently. Mrs. Hall's eyes, directed straight before her, saw without seeing the brilliant oblong of the inn door, the road white and vivid, and Huxter's shop front blistering in the June sun. Abruptly Huxter's door opened and Huxter appeared, eyes staring with excitement, arms gesticulating. "*Yap!*" cried Huxter. "Stop thief!" and he ran obliquely across the oblong toward the yard gates, and vanished.

Simultaneously came a tumult from the parlor, and a sound of windows being closed.

Hall, Henfrey, and the human contents of the Tap rushed out at once pell-mell into the street. They saw someone whisk round the corner toward the down road, and Mr. Huxter executing a complicated leap in the air that ended on his face and shoulder. Down the street people were standing astonished or running toward them.

Mr. Huxter was stunned. Henfrey stopped to discover this, but Hall and the two laborers from the Tap rushed at once to the corner, shouting incoherent things, and saw Mr. Marvel vanishing by the corner of the church wall. They appear to have jumped to the impossible conclusion that this was the Invisible Man suddenly become visible, and set off at once along the lane in pursuit. But Hall had hardly run a dozen yards before he gave a loud shout of astonishment and went flying headlong sideways, clutching one of the laborers and bringing him to the ground. He had been charged just as one charges a man at football. The second laborer came round in a circle, stared, and conceiving that Hall had tumbled over of his own accord, turned to resume the pursuit, only to be tripped by the ankle just as Huxter had been. Then, as the first laborer struggled to his feet, he was kicked sideways by a blow that might have felled an ox.

As he went down, the rush from the direction of the village green came round the corner. The first to appear was a burly man in a blue jersey. He was astonished to see the lane empty save for three men sprawling absurdly on the ground. And then something happened to his rearmost foot, and he went headlong and rolled sideways just in time to graze the feet of his partner, falling headlong. The two were then kicked, knelt on, fallen over, and cursed by quite a number of over-hasty people.

Now when Hall and Henfrey and the laborers ran out of the house, Mrs. Hall, who had been disciplined by years of experience, remained in the bar next the till. And suddenly the parlor door was opened, and Mr. Cuss appeared, and without glancing at her rushed at once down the steps toward the corner. "Hold him!" he cried. "Don't let him drop that parcel! You can see him so long as he holds the parcel." He knew nothing of the existence of Marvel. For the Invisible Man had handed over the books and bundle in

the yard. The face of Mr. Cuss was angry and resolute, but his costume was defective, a sort of limp white kilt that could only have passed muster in Greece. "Hold him!" he bawled. "He's got my trousers! And every stitch of the Vicar's clothes!"

"Tend to him in a minute!" he cried to Henfrey as he passed the prostrate Huxter, and coming round the corner to join the tumult, was promptly knocked off his feet into an indecorous sprawl. Somebody in full flight trod heavily on his finger. He yelled, struggled to regain his feet, was knocked against and thrown on all fours again, and became aware that he was involved not in a capture, but a rout. Everyone was running back to the village. He rose again and was hit severely behind the ear. He staggered and set off back to the Coach and Horses forthwith, leaping over the deserted Huxter, who was now sitting up, on his way.

Behind him as he was halfway up the inn steps he heard a sudden yell of rage, rising sharply out of the confusion of cries, and a sounding smack in someone's face. He recognized the voice as that of the Invisible Man, and the note was that of a man suddenly infuriated by a painful blow.

In another moment Mr. Cuss was back in the parlor. "He's coming back, Bunting!" he said, rushing in. "Save yourself! He's gone mad!"

Mr. Bunting was standing in the window engaged in an attempt to clothe himself in the hearthrug and a *West Surrey* gazette. "Who's coming?" he said, so startled that his costume narrowly escaped disintegration.

"Invisible Man," said Cuss, and rushed to the window. "We'd better clear out from here! He's fighting mad! Mad!" In another moment he was out in the yard.

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Bunting, hesitating between two horrible alternatives. He heard a frightful struggle in the passage of the inn, and his decision was made. He clambered out of the window, adjusted his costume hastily, and fled up the village as fast as his fat little legs would carry him.

From the moment when the Invisible Man screamed with rage and Mr. Bunting made his memorable flight up the village, it became impossible to give a consecutive account of affairs in Iping. Possibly the Invisible Man's original intention was simply to cover Marvel's retreat with

the clothes and books. But his temper, at no time very good, seems to have gone completely at some chance blow, and forthwith he set to smiting and overthrowing, for the mere satisfaction of hurting.

You must figure the street full of running figures, of doors slamming and fights for hiding-places. You must figure the tumult suddenly striking on the unstable equilibrium of old Fletcher's planks and two chairs—with cataclysmal results. You must figure an appalled couple caught dismally in a swing. And then the whole tumultuous rush has passed and the Iping street with its gauds and flags is deserted save for the still raging Unseen, and littered with cocoanuts, overthrown canvas screens, and the scattered stock in trade of a sweetstuff stall. Everywhere there is a sound of closing shutters and shoving bolts, and the only visible humanity is an occasional flitting eye under a raised eyebrow in the corner of a windowpane.

The Invisible Man amused himself for a little while by breaking all the windows in the Coach and Horses, and then he thrust a street lamp through the parlor window of Mrs Gribble. He it must have been who cut the telegraph wire to Adderdean just beyond Higgins's cottage on the Adderdean road. And after that, as his peculiar qualities allowed, he passed out of human perceptions altogether, and he was neither heard, seen, nor felt in Iping any more. He vanished absolutely.

But it was the best part of two hours before any human being ventured out again into the desolation of Iping street.

13

MR. MARVEL DISCUSSES HIS RESIGNATION

WHEN THE DUSK WAS GATHERING AND IPING WAS JUST BEGINNING to peep timorously forth again upon the shattered wreckage of its Bank Holiday, a short, thickset man in a shabby silk hat was marching painfully through the twilight

behind the beechwoods on the road to Bramblehurst. He carried three books bound together by some sort of ornamental elastic ligature, and a bundle wrapped in a blue tablecloth. His rubicund face expressed consternation and fatigue; he appeared to be in a spasmodic sort of hurry. He was accompanied by a Voice other than his own, and ever and again he winced under the touch of unseen hands.

"If you give me the slip again," said the Voice; "if you attempt to give me the slip again—"

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel. "That shoulder's a mass of bruises as it is."

"—on my honor," said the Voice, "I will kill you."

"I didn't try to give you the slip," said Marvel, in a voice that was not far remote from tears. "I swear I didn't. I didn't know the blessed turning, that was all! How the devil was I to know the blessed turning? As it is, I've been knocked about—"

"You'll get knocked about a great deal more if you don't mind," said the Voice, and Mr. Marvel abruptly became silent. He blew out his cheeks, and his eyes were eloquent of despair.

"It's bad enough to let these floundering yokels explode my little secret, without *your* cutting off with my books. It's lucky for some of them they cut and ran when they did! Here am I— No one knew I was invisible! And now what am I to do?"

"What am *I* to do?" asked Marvel, *sotto voce*.

"It's all about. It will be in the papers! Everybody will be looking for me; everyone on their guard—" The Voice broke off into vivid curses and ceased.

The despair of Mr. Marvel's face deepened, and his pace slackened.

"Go on!" said the Voice.

Mr. Marvel's face assumed a grayish tint between the ruddier patches.

"Don't drop those books, stupid," said the Voice, sharply—overtaking him.

"The fact is," said the Voice, "I shall have but to make use of you. You're a poor tool."

"I'm a *miserable* tool," said Marvel.

"You are," said the Voice.

"I'm the worst possible tool you could have," said Marvel.

"I'm not strong," he said after a discouraging silence.

"I'm not over strong," he repeated.

"No?"

"And my heart's weak. That little business—I pulled it through, of course—but bless you! I could have dropped."

"Well?"

"I haven't the nerve and strength for the sort of thing you want."

"I'll stimulate you."

"I wish you wouldn't. I wouldn't like to mess up your plans, you know. But I might—out of sheer funk and misery."

"You'd better not," said the Voice, with quiet emphasis.

"I wish I was dead," said Marvel.

"It ain't justice," he said, "you must admit— It seems to me I've a perfect right—"

"Get on!" said the Voice.

Mr. Marvel mended his pace, and for a time they went in silence again.

"It's devilish hard," said Mr. Marvel.

This was quite ineffectual. He tried another tack.

"What do I make by it?" he began again in a tone of unendurable wrong.

"Oh! *shut up!*" said the Voice, with sudden amazing vigor. "I'll see to you all right. You do what you're told. You'll do it all right. You're a fool and all that, but you'll do—"

"I tell you, sir, I'm not the man for it. Respectfully—but it is so—"

"If you don't shut up, I shall twist your wrist again," said the Invisible Man. "I want to think."

Presently two oblongs of yellow light appeared through the trees, and the square tower of a church loomed through the gloaming. "I shall keep my hand on your shoulder," said the Voice, "all through the village. Go straight through and try no foolery. It will be the worse for you if you do."

"I know that," sighed Mr. Marvel, "I know all that."

The unhappy-looking figure in the obsolete silk hat passed up the street of the little village with his burdens, and vanished into the gathering darkness beyond the lights of the windows.

AT PORT STOWE

TEN O'CLOCK THE NEXT MORNING FOUND MR. MARVEL, UN-shaven, dirty, and travel-stained, sitting with his hands deep in his pockets, looking very weary, nervous, and uncomfortable and inflating his cheeks at frequent intervals, on the bench outside a little inn on the outskirts of Port Stowe. Beside him were the books, but now they were tied with string. The bundle had been abandoned in the pine-woods beyond Bramblehurst, in accordance with a change in the plans of the Invisible Man. Mr. Marvel sat on the bench, and although no one took the slightest notice of him, his agitation remained at fever heat.

When he had been sitting for the best part of an hour, however, an elderly Mariner, carrying a newspaper, came out of the inn and sat down beside him. "Pleasant day," said the Mariner.

Mr. Marvel glanced about him with something very like terror. "Very," he said.

"Just seasonable weather for the time of year," said the Mariner, taking no denial.

"Quite," said Mr. Marvel.

The Mariner produced a toothpick, and (saving his regard) was engrossed thereby for some minutes. His eyes meanwhile were at liberty to examine Mr. Marvel's dusty figure, and the books beside him. As he had approached Mr. Marvel he had heard a sound like the dropping of coins into a pocket. He was struck by the contrast of Mr. Marvel's appearance with this suggestion of opulence. Thence his mind wandered back again to a topic that had taken a curiously firm hold of his imagination. "Books?" he said suddenly, noisily finishing with the toothpick.

Mr. Marvel started and looked at them. "Oh, yes," he said. "Yes, they're books."

"There's some extra-ordinary things in books," said the Mariner.

"I believe you," said Mr. Marvel.

"And some extra-ordinary things out of 'em," said the Mariner.

"True likewise," said Mr. Marvel. He eyed his interlocutor, and then glanced about him.

"There's some extraordinary things in newspapers, for example," said the Mariner.

"There are."

"In *this* newspaper," said the Mariner.

"Ah!" said Mr. Marvel.

"There's a story," said the Mariner, fixing Mr. Marvel with an eye that was firm and deliberate, "there's a story about an Invisible Man, for instance."

Mr. Marvel pulled his mouth askew and scratched his cheek and felt his ears glowing. "What will they be writing next?" he asked faintly. "Ostria, or America?"

"Neither," said the Mariner. "*Here!*"

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel, starting.

"When I say *here*," said the Mariner, to Mr. Marvel's intense relief, "I don't of course mean here in this place, I mean hereabouts."

"An Invisible Man!" said Mr. Marvel. "And what's *he* been up to?"

"Everything," said the Mariner, controlling Marvel with his eye, and then amplifying: "Every Blessed Thing."

"I ain't seen a paper these four days," said Marvel.

"Iping's the place he started at," said the Mariner.

"In-deed!" said Mr. Marvel.

"He started there. And where he came from, nobody don't seem to know. Here it is: *Pe Culiar Story from Iping*. And it says in this paper that the evidence is extraordinary strong—extra-ordinary."

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel.

"But then, it's a extra-ordinary story. There is a clergyman and a medical gent witnesses—saw 'im all right and proper—or leastways, didn't see 'im. He was staying, it says, at the Coach an' Horses, and no one don't seem to have been aware of his misfortune, it says, aware of his misfortune, until in an altercation in the inn, it says, his bandages on his head was torn off. It was then observed that his

head was invisible. Attempts were At Once made to secure him, but casting off his garments, it says, he succeeded in escaping, but not until after a desperate struggle, In Which he had inflicted serious injuries, it says, on our worthy and able constable, Mr. J. A. Jaffers. Pretty straight story, eigh? Names and everything."

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel, looking nervously about him, trying to count the money in his pockets by his unaided sense of touch, and full of a strange and novel idea. "It sounds most astonishing."

"Don't it? Extra-ordinary, *I* call it. Never heard tell of Invisible Men before, I haven't, but nowadays one hears such a lot of extra-ordinary things—that—"

"That all he did?" asked Marvel, trying to seem at his ease.

"It's enough, ain't it?" said the Mariner.

"Didn't go Back by any chance?" asked Marvel. "Just escaped and that's all, eh?"

"All!" said the Mariner. "Why!—ain't it enough?"

"Quite enough," said Marvel.

"I should think it was enough," said the Mariner. "I should think it was enough."

"He didn't have any pals—it don't say he had any pals, does it?" asked Mr. Marvel, anxious.

"Ain't one of a sort enough for you?" asked the Mariner. "No, thank Heaven, as one might say, he didn't."

He nodded his head slowly. "It makes me regular uncomfortable, the bare thought of that chap running about the country! He is at present At Large, and from certain evidence it is supposed that he has—taken—took, I suppose they mean—the road to Port Stowe. You see we're right *in* it! None of your American wonders, this time. And just think of the things he might do! Where'd you be, if he took a drop over and above, and had a fancy to go for you? Suppose he wants to rob—who can prevent him? He can trespass, he can burgle, he could walk through a cordon of policemen as easy as me or you could give the slip to a blind man! Easier! For these here blind chaps hear uncommon sharp, I'm told. And wherever there was liquor he fancied—"

"He's got a tremenjous advantage, certainly," said Mr. Marvel. "And—well."

"You're right," said the Mariner. "He *has*."

All this time Mr. Marvel had been glancing about him intently, listening for faint footfalls, trying to detect imperceptible movements. He seemed on the point of some great resolution. He coughed behind his hand.

He looked about him again, listened, bent toward the Mariner, and lowered his voice: "The fact of it is—I happen—to know just a thing or two about this Invisible Man. From private sources."

"Oh!" said the Mariner, interested. "You?"

"Yes," said Mr. Marvel. "Me."

"Indeed!" said the Mariner. "And may I ask—"

"You'll be astonished," said Mr. Marvel behind his hand. "It's tremenjous."

"Indeed!" said the Mariner.

"The fact is," began Mr. Marvel eagerly in a confidential undertone. Suddenly his expression changed marvelously. "Ow!" he said. He rose stiffly in his seat. His face was eloquent of physical suffering. "Wow!" he said.

"What's up?" said the Mariner, concerned.

"Toothache," said Mr. Marvel, and put his hand to his ear. He caught hold of his books.

"I must be getting on, I think," he said. He edged in a curious way along the seat away from his interlocutor. "But you was just agoing to tell me about this here Invisible Man!" protested the Mariner. Mr. Marvel seemed to consult with himself. "Hoax," said a voice. "It's a hoax," said Mr. Marvel.

"But it's in the paper," said the Mariner.

"Hoax all the same," said Marvel. "I know the chap that started the lie. There ain't no Invisible Man whatsoever—Blimey."

"But how 'bout this paper? D'you mean to say—?"

"Not a word of it," said Marvel, stoutly.

The Mariner stared, paper in hand. Mr. Marvel jerkily faced about. "Wait a bit," said the Mariner, rising and speaking slowly. "D'you mean to say—?"

"I do," said Mr. Marvel.

"Then why did you let me go on and tell you all this blarsted stuff, then? What d'yer mean by letting a man make a fool of himself like that for? Eigh?"

Mr. Marvel blew out his cheeks. The Mariner was suddenly very red indeed; he clenched his hands. "I been talking here this ten minutes," he said, "and you, you little

pot-bellied, leathery-faced son of an old boot, couldn't have the elementary manners—"

"Don't you come bandying words with me," said Mr. Marvel.

"Bandyng words! I'm a jolly good mind—"

"Come up," said a voice, and Mr. Marvel was suddenly whirled about and started marching off in a curious spasmodic manner. "You'd better move on," said the Mariner. "Who's moving on?" said Mr. Marvel. He was receding obliquely with a curious hurrying gait, with occasional violent jerks forward. Some way along the road he began a muttered monologue, protests and recriminations.

"Silly devil!" said the Mariner, legs wide apart, elbows akimbo, watching the receding figure. "I'll show you, you silly ass—hoaxing *me*! It's here—on the paper!"

Mr. Marvel retorted incoherently and, receding, was hidden by a bend in the road, but the Mariner still stood magnificent in the midst of the way, until the approach of a butcher's cart dislodged him. Then he turned himself toward Port Stowe. "Full of extra-ordinary asses," he said softly to himself. "Just to take me down a bit—that was his silly game—It's on the paper!"

And there was another extraordinary thing he was presently to hear, that had happened quite close to him. And that was a vision of a "fist full of money" (no less) traveling without visible agency, along by the wall at the corner of St. Michael's Lane. A brother mariner had seen this wonderful sight that very morning. He had snatched at the money forthwith and had been knocked headlong, and when he had got to his feet the butterfly money had vanished. Our mariner was in the mood to believe anything, he declared, but that was a bit *too* stiff. Afterward, however, he began to think things over.

The story of the flying money was true. And all about that neighborhood, even from the august London and Country Banking Company, from the tills of shops and inns—money had been quietly and dextrously making off that day in handfuls and rouleaux, floating quietly along by walls and shady places, dodging quickly from the approaching eyes of men. And it had, though no man had traced it, invariably ended its mysterious flight in the pocket of that agitated gentleman in the obsolete silk hat, sitting outside the little inn on the outskirts of Port Stowe.

THE MAN WHO WAS RUNNING

IN THE EARLY EVENING TIME DOCTOR KEMP WAS SITTING in his study in the belvedere on the hill overlooking Burdock. It was a pleasant little room, with three windows, north, west, and south, and bookshelves covered with books and scientific publications, and a broad writing table, and, under the north window, a microscope, glass slips, minute instruments, some cultures, and scattered bottles of reagents. Doctor Kemp's solar lamp was lit, albeit the sky was still bright with the sunset light, and his blinds were up because there was no offense of peering outsiders to require them pulled down. Doctor Kemp was a tall and slender young man, with flaxen hair and a mustache almost white, and the work he was upon would earn him, he hoped, the fellowship of the Royal Society, so highly did he think of it.

And his eye presently wandering from his work caught the sunset blazing at the back of the hill that is over against his own. For a minute perhaps he sat, pen in mouth, admiring the rich golden color above the crest, and then his attention was attracted by the little figure of a man, inky black, running over the hill-brow toward him. He was a shortish little man, and he wore a high hat, and he was running so fast that his legs verily twinkled.

"Another of those fools," said Doctor Kemp. "Like that ass who ran into me this morning round a corner, with his 'Visible Man a-coming, sir!' I can't imagine what possesses people. One might think we were in the thirteenth century."

He got up, went to the window, and stared at the dusky hillside, and the dark little figure tearing down it. "He seems in a confounded hurry," said Doctor Kemp, "but he doesn't seem to be getting on. If his pockets were full of lead, he couldn't run heavier."

In another moment the higher of the villas that had clambered up the hill from Burdock had occulted the running figure. He was visible again for a moment, and again, and then again, three times between the three detached houses that came next, and the terrace hid him.

"Asses!" said Doctor Kemp, swinging round on his heel and walking back to his writing table.

But those who saw the fugitive nearer, and perceived the abject terror on his perspiring face, being themselves in the open roadway, did not share in the doctor's contempt. By the man pounded, and as he ran he chinked like a well-filled purse that is tossed to and fro. He looked neither to the right nor the left, but his dilated eyes stared straight downhill to where the lamps were being lit, and the people were crowded in the street. And his ill-shaped mouth fell apart, and a glairy foam lay on his lips, and his breath came hoarse and noisy. All he passed stopped and began staring up the road and down, and interrogating one another with an inkling of discomfort for the reason of his haste.

And then presently, far up the hill, a dog playing in the road yelped and ran under a gate, and as they still wondered, something—a wind—pad, pad, pad—a sound like a panting breathing—rushed by.

People screamed. People sprang off the pavement. It passed in shouts, it passed by instinct down the hill. They were shouting in the street before Marvel was halfway there. They were bolting into houses and slamming the doors behind them, with the news. He heard it and made one last desperate spurt. Fear came striding by, rushed ahead of him, and in a moment had seized the town.

"The Invisible Man is coming! *The Invisible Man!*"

IN THE JOLLY CRICKETERS

THE JOLLY CRICKETERS IS JUST AT THE BOTTOM OF THE hill, where the tram-lines begin. The barman leaned his fat

red arms on the counter and talked of horses with an anemic cabman, while a black-bearded man in gray snapped up biscuit and cheese, drank Burton, and conversed in American with a policeman off duty.

"What's the shouting about!" said the anemic cabman, going off at a tangent, trying to see up the hill over the dirty yellow blind in the low window of the inn. Somebody ran by outside. "Fire, perhaps," said the barman.

Footsteps approached, running heavily, the door was pushed open violently, and Marvel, weeping and disheveled, his hat gone, the neck of his coat torn open, rushed in, made a convulsive turn, and attempted to shut the door. It was held half open by a strap.

"Coming!" he bawled, his voice shrieking with terror. "He's coming. The 'Visible Man! After me! For Gawd's sake! 'Elp! 'Elp! 'Elp!"

"Shut the doors," said the policeman. "Who's coming? What's the row?" He went to the door, released the strap, and it slammed. The American closed the other door.

"Lemme go inside," said Marvel, staggering and weeping, but still clutching the books. "Lemme go inside. Lock me in—somewhere. I tell you he's after me. I give him the slip. He said he'd kill me and he will."

"You're safe," said the man with the black beard. "The door's shut. What's it all about?"

"Lemme go inside," said Marvel, and shrieked aloud as a blow suddenly made the fastened door shiver and was followed by a hurried rapping and a shouting outside. "Hullo," cried the policeman, "who's there?" Mr. Marvel began to make frantic dives at panels that looked like doors. "He'll kill me—he's got a knife or something. For Gawd's sake!"

"Here you are," said the barman. "Come in here." And he held up the flap of the bar.

Mr. Marvel rushed behind the bar as the summons outside was repeated. "Don't open the door," he screamed. "*Please don't open the door. Where shall I hide?*"

"This, this Invisible Man, then?" asked the man with the black beard, with one hand behind him. "I guess it's about time we saw him."

The window of the inn was suddenly smashed in, and there was a screaming and running to and fro in the street. The policeman had been standing on the settee staring out, craning to see who was at the door. He got down with

raised eyebrows. "It's that," he said. The barman stood in front of the bar-parlor door, which was now locked on Mr. Marvel, stared at the smashed window, and came round to the two other men.

Everything was suddenly quiet. "I wish I had my truncheon," said the policeman, going irresolutely to the door. "Once we open, in he comes. There's no stopping him."

"Don't you be in too much hurry about that door," said the anemic cabman, anxiously.

"Draw the bolts," said the man with the black beard, "and if he comes—" He showed a revolver in his hand.

"That won't do," said the policeman; "that's murder."

"I know what country I'm in," said the man with the beard. "I'm going to let off at his legs. Draw the bolts."

"Not with that thing going off behind me," said the barman, craning over the blind.

"Very well," said the man with the black beard, and stooping down, revolver ready, drew them himself. Barman, cabman, and policeman faced about.

"Come in," said the bearded man in an undertone, standing back and facing the unbolted doors with his pistol behind him. No one came in; the door remained closed. Five minutes afterward, when a second cabman pushed his head in cautiously, they were still waiting, and an anxious face peered out of the bar-parlor and supplicated information. "Are all the doors of the house shut?" asked Marvel.

"He's going round—prowling round. He's as artful as the devil."

"Good Lord!" said the burly barman. "There's the back! Just watch them doors! I say!—" He looked about him helplessly. The bar-parlor door slammed and they heard the key turn. "There's the yard door and the private door. The yard door—" He rushed out of the bar.

In a minute he reappeared with a carving-knife, in his hand. "The yard door was open!" he said, and his fat underlip dropped.

"He may be in the house now!" said the first cabman.

"He's not in the kitchen," said the barman. "There's two women there, and I've stabbed every inch of it with this little beef slicer. And they don't think he's come in. They haven't noticed—"

"Have you fastened it?" asked the first cabman.

"I'm out of frocks," said the barman.

The man with the beard replaced his revolver. And even as he did so the flap of the bar was shut down and the bolt clicked, and then with a tremendous thud the catch of the door snapped and the bar-parlor door burst open. They heard Marvel squeal, and forthwith they were clambering over the bar to his rescue. The bearded man's revolver cracked and the looking-glass at the back of the parlor started and came smashing and tinkling down.

As the barman entered the room he saw Marvel, curiously crumpled up and struggling against the door that led to the yard and kitchen. The door flew open while the barman hesitated, and Marvel was dragged into the kitchen. There was a scream and a clatter of pans. Marvel, head down, and lugging back obstinately, was forced to the kitchen door, and the bolts were drawn.

Then the policeman, who had been trying to pass the barman, rushed in, followed by one of the cabmen, gripped the wrist of the invisible hand that collared Marvel, was hit in the face, and went reeling back. The door opened, and Marvel made a frantic effort to obtain a lodgment behind it. Then the cabman collared something. "I got him," said the cabman. The barman's red hands came clawing at the unseen. "Here he is!" said the barman.

Mr. Marvel, released, suddenly dropped to the ground and made an attempt to crawl behind the legs of the fighting men. The struggle blundered round the edge of the door. The voice of the Invisible Man was heard for the first time, yelling out sharply, as the policeman trod on his foot. Then he cried out passionately and his fists flew round like flails. The cabman suddenly whooped and doubled up, kicked under the diaphragm. The door into the bar-parlor from the kitchen slammed and covered Mr. Marvel's retreat. The men in the kitchen found themselves clutching at and struggling with empty air.

"Where's he gone?" cried the man with the beard. "Out?"

"This way," said the policeman, stepping into the yard and stopping. A piece of tile whizzed by his head and smashed among the crockery on the kitchen table.

"I'll show him," shouted the man with the black beard, and suddenly a steel barrel shone over the policeman's shoulder, and five bullets had followed one another into the twilight whence the missile had come. As he fired, the man with the beard moved his hand in a horizontal curve,

so that his shots radiated out into the narrow yard like spokes from a wheel.

A silence followed. "Five cartridges," said the man with the black beard. "That's the best of all. Four aces and the joker. Get a lantern, someone, and come and feel about for his body."

17

DOCTOR KEMP'S VISITOR

DOCTOR KEMP HAD CONTINUED WRITING IN HIS STUDY UNTIL the shots aroused him. Crack, crack, crack, they came one after the other. "Hullo!" said Doctor Kemp, putting his pen into his mouth again and listening. "Who's letting off revolvers in Burdock? What are the asses at now?"

He went to the south window, threw it up, and leaning out stared down on the network of windows, beaded gas-lamps and shops, with its black interstices of roofs that made up the town at night. "Looks like a crowd down the hill," he said, "by the Cricketers," and remained watching. Thence his eyes wandered over the town to far away where the ships' lights shone, and the pier glowed, a little illuminated faceted pavilion like a gem of yellow light. The moon in its first quarter hung over the western hill, and the stars were clear and almost tropically bright.

After five minutes, during which his mind had traveled into a remote speculation of social conditions of the future, and lost itself at last over the time dimension, Doctor Kemp roused himself with a sigh, pulled down the window again, and returned to his writing desk.

It must have been about an hour after this that the front-door bell rang. He had been writing slackly, and with intervals of abstraction, since the shots. He sat listening. He heard the servant answer the door, and waited for her feet on the staircase, but she did not come. "Wonder what that was," said Doctor Kemp.

He tried to resume his work, failed, got up, went down-

stairs from his study to the landing, rang, and called over the balustrade to the housemaid as she appeared in the hall below. "Was that a letter?" he asked.

"Only a runaway ring, sir," she answered.

"I'm restless tonight," he said to himself. He went back to his study, and this time attacked his work resolutely. In a little while he was hard at work again, and the only sounds in the room were the ticking of the clock and the subdued shrillness of his quill, hurrying in the very center of the circle of light his lampshade threw on his table.

It was two o'clock before Doctor Kemp had finished his work for the night. He rose, yawned, and went downstairs to bed. He had already removed his coat and vest, when he noticed that he was thirsty. He took a candle and went down to the dining-room in search of a siphon and whisky.

Doctor Kemp's scientific pursuits had made him a very observant man, and as he recrossed the hall, he noticed a dark spot on the linoleum near the mat at the foot of the stairs. He went on upstairs, and then it suddenly occurred to him to ask himself what the spot on the linoleum might be. Apparently some subconscious element was at work. At any rate, he turned with his burden, went back to the hall, put down the siphon and whisky, and bending down, touched the spot. Without any great surprise he found it had the stickiness and color of drying blood.

He took up his burden again, and returned upstairs, looking about him and trying to account for the bloodspot. On the landing he saw something and stopped astonished. The door handle of his own room was bloodstained.

He looked at his own hand. It was quite clean, and then he remembered that the door of his room had been open when he came down from his study, and that consequently he had not touched the handle at all. He went straight into his room, his face quite calm—perhaps a trifle more resolute than usual. His glance, wandering inquisitively, fell on the bed. On the counterpane was a mess of blood, and the sheet had been torn. He had not noticed this before because he had walked straight to the dressing-table. On the farther side the bedclothes were depressed as if someone had been recently sitting there.

Then he had an odd impression that he had heard a loud voice say, "Good Heavens!—*Kemp!*" But Doctor Kemp was no believer in Voices.

He stood staring at the tumbled sheets. Was that really a voice? He looked about again, but noticed nothing further than the disordered and bloodstained bed. Then he distinctly heard a movement across the room, near the wash-hand stand. All men, however highly educated, retain some superstitious inklings. The feeling that is called "eerie" came upon him. He closed the door of the room, came forward to the dressing-table, and put down his burdens. Suddenly, with a start, he perceived a coiled and bloodstained bandage of linen rag hanging in mid-air, between him and the wash-hand stand.

He stared at this in amazement. It was an empty bandage, a bandage properly tied but quite empty. He would have advanced to grasp it, but a touch arrested him, and a voice speaking quite close to him.

"Kemp!" said the Voice.

"Eigh?" said Kemp, with his mouth open.

"Keep your nerve," said the Voice. "I'm an Invisible Man."

Kemp made no answer for a space, simply stared at the bandage. "Invisible Man," he said.

"I'm an Invisible Man," repeated the Voice.

The story he had been active to ridicule only that morning rushed through Kemp's brain. He does not appear to have been either very much frightened or very greatly surprised at the moment. Realization came later.

"I thought it was all a lie," he said. The thought uppermost in his mind was the reiterated arguments of the morning. "Have you a bandage on?" he asked.

"Yes," said the Invisible Man.

"Oh!" said Kemp, and then roused himself. "I say!" he said. "But this is nonsense. It's some trick." He stepped forward suddenly, and his hand, extended toward the bandage, met invisible fingers.

He recoiled at the touch and his color changed. "Keep steady, Kemp, for God's sake! I want help badly. Stop!" The hand gripped his arm. He struck at it.

"Kemp!" cried the Voice. "Kemp! Keep steady!" and the grip tightened.

A frantic desire to free himself took possession of Kemp. The hand of the bandaged arm gripped his shoulder, and he was suddenly tripped and flung backward upon the bed. He opened his mouth to shout, and the corner

of the sheet was thrust between his teeth. The Invisible Man had him down grimly, but his arms were free and he struck and tried to kick savagely.

"Listen to reason, will you?" said the Invisible Man, sticking to him in spite of a pounding in the ribs. "By Heaven! you'll madden me in a minute! Lie still, you fool!" bawled the Invisible Man in Kemp's ear.

Kemp struggled for another moment and then lay still.

"If you shout I'll smash your face," said the Invisible Man, relieving his mouth. "I'm an Invisible Man. It's no foolishness, and no magic. I really am an Invisible Man. And I want your help. I don't want to hurt you, but if you behave like a frantic rustic, I must. Don't you remember me, Kemp? Griffin, of University College?"

"Let me get up," said Kemp. "I'll stop where I am. And let me sit quiet for a minute." He sat up and felt his neck.

"I am Griffin, of University College, and I have made myself invisible. I am just an ordinary man—a man you have known—made invisible."

"Griffin?" said Kemp.

"Griffin," answered the Voice—"a younger student, almost an albino, six feet high, and broad, with a pink and white face and red eyes—who won the medal for chemistry."

"I am confused," said Kemp. "My brain is rioting. What has this to do with Griffin?"

"I *am* Griffin."

Kemp thought. "It's horrible," he said. "But what devilry must happen to make a man invisible?"

"It's no devilry. It's a process, sane and intelligible enough—"

"It's horrible!" said Kemp. "How on earth—?"

"It's horrible enough. But I'm wounded and in pain, and tired—Great God! Kemp, you are a man. Take it steady. Give me some food and drink, and let me sit down here."

Kemp stared at the bandage as it moved across the room, then saw a basket chair dragged across the floor and come to rest near the bed. It creaked, and the seat was depressed a quarter of an inch or so. He rubbed his eyes and felt his neck again. "This beats ghosts," he said, and laughed stupidly.

"That's better. Thank Heaven, you're getting sensible!"

"Or silly," said Kemp, and knuckled his eyes.

"Give me some whisky. I'm near dead."

"It didn't feel so. Where are you? If I get up shall I run into you? *There!* all right. Whisky? Here. Where shall I give it you?"

The chair creaked and Kemp felt the glass drawn away from him. He let go by an effort; his instinct was all against it. It came to rest poised twenty inches above the front edge of the seat of the chair. He stared at it in infinite perplexity. "This is—this *must* be—hypnotism. You must have suggested you are invisible."

"Nonsense," said the Voice.

"It's frantic."

"Listen to me."

"I demonstrated conclusively this morning," began Kemp, "that invisibility—"

"Never mind what you've demonstrated!—I'm starving," said the Voice, "and the night—chilly to a man without clothes."

"Food!" said Kemp.

The tumbler of whisky tilted itself. "Yes," said the Invisible Man, rapping it down. "Have you got a dressing-gown?"

Kemp made some exclamation in an undertone. He walked to a wardrobe and produced a robe of dingy scarlet. "This do?" he asked. It was taken from him. It hung limp for a moment in mid-air, fluttered weirdly, stood full and decorous buttoning itself, and sat down in his chair. "Drawers, socks, slippers would be a comfort," said the Unseen, curtly. "And food."

"Anything. But this is the insanest thing I ever was in, in my life!"

He turned out his drawers for the articles, and then went downstairs to ransack his larder. He came back with some cold cutlets and bread, pulled up a light table, and placed them before his guest. "Never mind knives," said his visitor, and a cutlet hung in mid-air, with a sound of gnawing.

"Invisible!" said Kemp, and sat down on a bedroom chair.

"I always like to get something about me before I eat," said the Invisible Man, with a full mouth, eating greedily. "Queer fancy!"

"I suppose that wrist is all right," said Kemp.

"Trust me," said the Invisible Man.

"Of *all* the strange and wonderful—"

"Exactly. But it's odd I should blunder into *your* house to get my bandaging. My first stroke of luck! Anyhow, I meant to sleep in this house tonight. You must stand that! It's a filthy nuisance, my blood showing, isn't it? Quite a clot over there. Gets visible as it coagulates, I see. I've been in the house three hours."

"But how's it done?" began Kemp, in a tone of exasperation. "Confound it! The whole business—it's unreasonable from beginning to end."

"Quite reasonable," said the Invisible Man. "Perfectly reasonable."

He reached over and secured the whisky bottle. Kemp stared at the devouring dressing-gown. A ray of candle-light, penetrating a torn patch in the right shoulder, made a triangle of light under the left ribs. "What were the shots?" he asked. "How did the shooting begin?"

"There was a fool of a man—sort of confederate of mine—curse him!—who tried to steal my money. *Has* done so."

"Is *he* invisible too?"

"No."

"Well?"

"Can't I have some more to eat before I tell you all that? I'm hungry—in pain. And you want me to tell stories!"

Kemp got up. "*You* didn't do any shooting?" he asked.

"Not me," said his visitor. "Some fool I'd never seen fired at random. A lot of them got scared. They all got scared at me. Curse them! I say—I want more to eat than this, Kemp."

"I'll see what there is more to eat downstairs," said Kemp. "Not much, I'm afraid."

After he had done eating, and he made a heavy meal, the Invisible Man demanded a cigar. He bit the end savagely before Kemp could find a knife, and cursed when the outer leaf loosened. It was stranger to see him smoking; his mouth, and throat, pharynx and nares, became visible as a sort of whirling smoke cast.

"This blessed gift of smoking!" he said, and puffed vigorously. "I'm lucky to have fallen upon you, Kemp. You must

help me. Fancy tumbling on you just now! I'm in a devilish scrape. I've been mad, I think. The things I have been through! But we will do things yet. Let me tell you—"

He helped himself to more whisky and soda. Kemp got up, looked about him, and fetched himself a glass from his spare room. "It's wild—but I suppose I may drink."

"You haven't changed much, Kemp, these dozen years. You fair men don't. Cool and methodical—after the first collapse. I must tell you. We will work together!"

"But how was it all done?" said Kemp, "and how did you get this way?"

"For God's sake, let me smoke in peace for a little while! And then I will begin to tell you."

But the story was not told that night. The Invisible Man's wrist was growing painful, he was feverish, exhausted, and his mind came round to brood upon his chase down the hill and the struggle about the inn. He spoke in fragments of Marvel, he smoked faster, his voice grew angry. Kemp tried to gather what he could.

"He was afraid of me, I could see he was afraid of me," said the Invisible Man many times over. "He meant to give me the slip—he was always casting about! What a fool I was! The cur! I should have killed him—"

"Where did you get the money?" asked Kemp, abruptly.

The Invisible Man was silent for a space. "I can't tell you tonight," he said.

He groaned suddenly and leaned forward, supporting his invisible head on invisible hands. "Kemp," he said, "I've had no sleep for near three days, except a couple of dozes of an hour or so. I must sleep soon."

"Well, have my room—have this room."

"But how can I sleep? If I sleep—he will get away. Ugh! What does it matter?"

"What's the shot-wound?" asked Kemp, abruptly.

"Nothing—scratch and blood. Oh, God! How I want sleep!"

"Why not?"

The Invisible Man appeared to be regarding Kemp. "Because I've a particular objection to being caught by my fellow-man," he said slowly. Kemp started.

"Fool that I am!" said the Invisible Man, striking the table smartly. "I've put the idea into your head."

THE INVISIBLE MAN SLEEPS

EXHAUSTED AND WOUNDED AS THE INVISIBLE MAN WAS, HE refused to accept Kemp's word that his freedom should be respected. He examined the two windows of the bedroom, drew up the blinds, and opened the sashes, to confirm Kemp's statement that a retreat by them would be possible. Outside the night was very quiet and still, and the new moon was setting over the down. Then he examined the keys of the bedroom and the two dressing-room doors, to satisfy himself that these also could be made an assurance of freedom. Finally he expressed himself satisfied. He stood on the hearthrug and Kemp heard the sound of a yawn.

"I'm sorry," said the Invisible Man, "if I cannot tell you all that I have done tonight. But I am worn out. It's grotesque, no doubt. It's horrible! But believe me, Kemp, in spite of your arguments of this morning, it is quite a possible thing. I have made a discovery. I meant to keep it to myself. I can't. I must have a partner. And you— We can do such things— But tomorrow. Now, Kemp, I feel as though I must sleep or perish."

Kemp stood in the middle of the room staring at the headless garment. "I suppose I must leave you," he said. "It's—incredible. Three things happening like this, overturning all my preconceptions, would make me insane. But it's real! Is there anything more that I can get you?"

"Only bid me good-night," said Griffin.

"Good-night," said Kemp, and shook an invisible hand. He walked sideways to the door. Suddenly the dressing-gown walked quickly toward him. "Understand me!" said the dressing-gown. "No attempts to hamper me, or capture me! Or—"

Kemp's face changed a little. "I thought I gave you my word," he said.

Kemp closed the door softly behind him, and the key

was turned upon him forthwith. Then, as he stood with an expression of passive amazement on his face, the rapid feet came to the door of the dressing-room and that too was locked. Kemp slapped his brow with his hand. "Am I dreaming? Has the world gone mad—or have I?"

He laughed, and put his hand to the locked door. "Barred out of my own bedroom, by a flagrant absurdity!" he said.

He walked to the head of the staircase, turned, and stared at the locked doors. "It's fact," he said. He put his fingers to his slightly bruised neck. "Undeniable fact! But—"

He shook his head hopelessly, turned, and went downstairs. He lit the dining-room lamp, got out a cigar, and began pacing the room, ejaculating. Now and then he would argue with himself. "Invisible!" he said.

"Is there such a thing as an invisible animal? In the sea, yes. Thousands! Millions! All the larvae, all the little nauplii and tornarias, all the microscopic things, the jelly-fish. In the sea there are more things invisible than visible! I never thought of that before. And in the ponds too! All those little pond-life things—specks of colorless translucent jelly! But in air? No! It can't be— But after all—why not? If a man was made of glass he would still be visible."

His meditation became profound. The bulk of three cigars had passed into the invisible or diffused as a white ash over the carpet before he spoke again. Then it was merely an exclamation. He turned aside, walked out of the room, and went into his little consulting-room and lit the gas there. It was a little room, because Dr. Kemp did not live by practice, and in it were the day's newspapers. The morning's paper lay carelessly opened and thrown aside. He caught it up, turned it over, and read the account of a *Strange Story from Iping* that the mariner at Port Stowe had spelt over so painfully to Mr. Marvel. Kemp read it swiftly.

"Wrapped up!" said Kemp. "Disguised! Hiding it! 'No one seems to have been aware of his misfortune.' What the devil is his game?"

He dropped the paper, and his eye went seeking. "Ah!" he said, and caught up the *St. James' Gazette*, lying folded up as it arrived. "Now we shall get at the truth," said Dr. Kemp. He rent the paper open; a couple of columns confronted him. *An Entire Village in Sussex Goes Mad* was the heading.

"Good Heavens!" said Kemp, reading eagerly an incredulous account of the events in Iping, of the previous afternoon, that have already been described. Over the leaf the report in the morning paper had been reprinted.

He re-read it. "Ran through the streets striking right and left. Jaffers insensible. Mr. Huxter in great pain—still unable to describe what he saw. Painful humiliation—vicar. Woman ill with terror! Windows smashed. This extraordinary story probably a fabrication. Too good not to print—with a grain of salt."

He dropped the paper and stared blankly in front of him. "Probably a fabrication!"

He caught up the paper again, and re-read the whole business. "But when does the tramp come in? Why the deuce was he chasing a tramp?"

He sat down abruptly on the surgical couch. "He's not only invisible," he said, "but he's mad! Homicidal!"

When dawn came to mingle its pallor with the lamp-light and cigar smoke of the dining-room, Kemp was still pacing up and down, trying to grasp the incredible.

He was altogether too excited to sleep. His servants, descending sleepily, discovered him, and were inclined to think that over-study had worked this ill on him. He gave them extraordinary but quite explicit instructions to lay breakfast for two in the belvedere study—and then to confine themselves to the basement and ground floor. Then he continued to pace the dining-room until the morning's paper came. That had much to say and little to tell, beyond the confirmation of the evening before, and a very baldly written account of another remarkable tale from Port Burdock. This gave Kemp the essence of the happenings at the Jolly Cricketers, and the name of Marvel. "He has made me keep with him twenty-four hours," Marvel testified. Certain minor facts were added to the Iping story, notably the cutting of the village telegraph wire. But there was nothing to throw light on the connection between the Invisible Man and the tramp, for Mr. Marvel had supplied no information about the three books, or the money with which he was lined. The incredulous tone had vanished and a shoal of reporters and inquirers were already at work elaborating the matter.

Kemp read every scrap of the report and sent his house-

maid out to get every one of the morning papers she could. These also he devoured.

"He is invisible!" he said. "And it reads like rage growing to mania! The things he may do! The things he may do! And he's upstairs free as the air. What on earth ought I to do? For instance, would it be a breach of faith if—? No."

He went to a little untidy desk in the corner, and began a note. He tore this up half written, and wrote another. He read it over and considered it. Then he took an envelope and addressed it to *Colonel Adye, Port Burdock*.

The Invisible Man awoke even as Kemp was doing this. He awoke in an evil temper, and Kemp, alert for every sound, heard his pattering feet rush suddenly across the bedroom overhead. Then a chair was flung over and the wash-hand stand tumbler smashed. Kemp hurried upstairs and rapped eagerly.

19

CERTAIN FIRST PRINCIPLES

"WHAT'S THE MATTER?" ASKED KEMP, WHEN THE INVISIBLE Man admitted him.

"Nothing," was the answer.

"But, confound it! The smash?"

"Fit of temper," said the Invisible Man. "Forgot this arm; and it's sore."

"You're rather liable to that sort of thing."

"I am."

Kemp walked across the room and picked up the fragments of broken glass. "All the facts are out about you," said Kemp, standing up with the glass in his hand; "all that happened in Iping, and down the hill. The world has become aware of its invisible citizen. But no one knows you are here." The Invisible Man swore.

"The secret's out. I gather it was a secret. I don't know what your plans are, but of course I'm anxious to help you."

The Invisible Man sat down on the bed.

"There's breakfast upstairs," said Kemp, speaking as easily as possible, and he was delighted to find his strange guest rose willingly. Kemp led the way up the narrow staircase to the belvedere.

"Before we can do anything else," said Kemp, "I must understand a little more about this invisibility of yours." He had sat down, after one nervous glance out of the window, with the air of a man who has talking to do. His doubts of the sanity of the entire business flashed and vanished again as he looked across to where Griffin sat at the breakfast-table—a headless, handless dressing-gown, wiping unseen lips on a miraculously held *serviette*.

"It's simple enough—and credible enough," said Griffin, putting the *serviette* aside and leaning the invisible head on an invisible hand.

"No doubt, to you, but—" Kemp laughed.

"Well, yes; to me it seemed wonderful at first, no doubt. But now, great God!—But we will do great things yet! I came on the stuff first at Chesilstowe."

"Chesilstowe?"

"I went there after I left London. You know I dropped medicine and took up physics? *No!*—well, I did. *Light*—fascinated me."

"Ah!"

"Optical density! The whole subject is a network of riddles—a network with solutions glimmering elusively through. And being but two and twenty and full of enthusiasm, I said, 'I will devote my life to this. This is worthwhile.' You know what fools we are at two and twenty?"

"Fools then or fools now," said Kemp.

"As though Knowing could be any satisfaction to a man!

"But I went to work. And I had hardly worked and thought about the matter six months before light came through one of the meshes suddenly—blindingly! I found a general principle of pigments and refraction—a formula, a geometrical expression involving four dimensions. Fools, common men, even common mathematicians, do not know anything of what some general expression may mean to the student of molecular physics. In the books—the books that tramp has hidden—there are marvels, miracles! But this was not a method, it was an idea, that might lead to a

method by which it would be possible, without changing any other property of matter—except, in some instances, colors—to lower the refractive index of a substance, solid or liquid, to that of air—so far as all practical purposes are concerned.”

“Phew!” said Kemp. “That’s odd! But still I don’t see quite— I can understand that thereby you could spoil a valuable stone, but personal invisibility is a far cry.”

“Precisely,” said Griffin. “But consider: Visibility depends on the action of the visible bodies on light. Either a body absorbs light, or it reflects or refracts it, or does all these things. If it neither reflects nor refracts nor absorbs light, it cannot of itself be visible. You see an opaque red box, for instance, because the color absorbs some of the light and reflects the rest, all the red part of the light, to you. If it did not absorb any particular part of the light, but reflected it all, then it would be a shining white box. Silver! A diamond box would neither absorb much of the light nor reflect much from the general surface, but just here and there where the surfaces were favorable the light would be reflected and refracted, so that you would get a brilliant appearance of flashing reflections and translucencies—a sort of skeleton of light. A glass box would not be so brilliant, not so clearly visible, as a diamond box, because there would be less refraction and reflection. See that? From certain points of view you would see quite clearly through it. Some kinds of glass would be more visible than others, a box of flint glass would be brighter than a box of ordinary window glass. A box of very thin common glass would be hard to see in a bad light, because it would absorb hardly any light and refract and reflect very little. And if you put a sheet of common white glass in water, still more if you put it in some denser liquid than water, it would vanish almost altogether, because light passing from water to glass is only slightly refracted or reflected or indeed affected in any way. It is almost as invisible as a jet of coal gas or hydrogen is in air. And for precisely the same reason!”

“Yes,” said Kemp, “that is pretty plain sailing.”

“And here is another fact you will know to be true. If a sheet of glass is smashed, Kemp, and beaten into a powder, it becomes much more visible while it is in the air; it becomes at last an opaque white powder. This is because the powdering multiplies the surfaces of the glass at which re-

fraction and reflection occur. In the sheet of glass there are only two surfaces; in the powder the light is reflected or refracted by each grain it passes through, and very little gets right through the powder. But if the white powdered glass is put into water, it forthwith vanishes. The powdered glass and water have much the same refractive index; that is, the light undergoes very little refraction or reflection in passing from one to the other.

"You make the glass invisible by putting it into a liquid of nearly the same refractive index; a transparent thing becomes invisible if it is put in any medium of almost the same refractive index. And if you will consider only a second, you will see also that the powder of glass might be made to vanish in air, if its refractive index could be made the same as that of air; for then there would be no refraction or reflection as the light passed from glass to air."

"Yes," said Kemp. "But a man's not powdered glass!"

"No," said Griffin. "*He's more transparent!*"

"Nonsense!"

"That from a doctor! How one forgets! Have you already forgotten your physics, in ten years? Just think of all the things that are transparent and seem not to be so. Paper, for instance, is made up of transparent fibers, and it is white and opaque only for the same reason that a powder of glass is white and opaque. Oil white paper, fill up the interstices between the particles with oil so that there is no longer refraction or reflection except at the surfaces, and it becomes as transparent as glass. And not only paper, but cotton fiber, linen fiber, wool fiber, woody fiber, and *bone*, Kemp, *flesh*, Kemp, *hair*, Kemp, *nails* and *nerves*, Kemp, in fact the whole fabric of a man except the red of his blood and the black pigment of hair, are all made up of transparent, colorless tissue. So little suffices to make us visible one to the other. For the most part the fibers of a living creature are no more opaque than water."

"Great Heavens!" cried Kemp. "Of course, of course! I was thinking only last night of the sea larvae and all jelly-fish!"

"Now you have me! And all that I knew and had in mind a year after I left London—six years ago. But I kept it to myself. I had to do my work under frightful disadvantages. Oliver, my professor, was a scientific bounder, a journalist by instinct, a thief of ideas—he was always prying! And you

know the knavish system of the scientific world. I simply would not publish, and let him share my credit. I went on working; I got nearer and nearer making my formula into an experiment, a reality. I told no living soul, because I meant to flash my work upon the world with crushing effect—to become famous at a blow. I took up the question of pigments to fill up certain gaps. And suddenly, not by design but by accident, I made a discovery in physiology."

"Yes?"

"You know the red coloring matter of blood; it can be made white—colorless—and remain with all the functions it has now!" Kemp gave a cry of incredulous amazement.

The Invisible Man rose and began pacing the little study. "You may well exclaim. I remember that night. It was late at night—in the daytime one was bothered with the gaping, silly students—and I worked then sometimes till dawn. It came suddenly, splendid and complete, into my mind. I was alone; the laboratory was still, with the tall lights burning brightly and silently. In all my great moments I have been alone. 'One could make an animal—a tissue—transparent! One could make it invisible! All except the pigments—I could be invisible!' I said, suddenly realizing what it meant to be an albino with such knowledge. It was overwhelming. I left the filtering I was doing, and went and stared out of the great window at the stars. 'I could be invisible!' I repeated.

"To do such a thing would be to transcend magic. And I beheld, unclouded by a doubt, a magnificent vision of all that invisibility might mean to man—the mystery, the power, the freedom. Drawbacks I saw none. You have only to think! And I, a shabby, poverty-struck, hemmed-in demonstrator, teaching fools in a provincial college, might suddenly become—this. I ask you, Kemp, if *you*— Anyone, I tell you, would have flung himself upon that research. And I worked three years, and every mountain of difficulty I toiled over showed another from its summit. The infinite details! And the exasperation—a professor, a provincial professor, always prying. 'When are you going to publish this work of yours?' was his everlasting question. And the students, the cramped means! Three years I had of it— And after three years of secrecy and exasperation, I found that to complete it was impossible—impossible."

"How?" asked Kemp.

"Money," said the Invisible Man, and went again to stare out of the window. He turned round abruptly. "I robbed the old man—robbed my father. The money was not his, and he shot himself."

20

AT THE HOUSE IN GREAT PORTLAND STREET

FOR A MOMENT KEMP SAT IN SILENCE, STARING AT THE BACK of the headless figure at the window. Then he started, struck by a thought, rose, took the Invisible Man's arm, and turned him away from the outlook.

"You are tired," he said, "and while I sit, you walk about. Have my chair."

He placed himself between Griffin and the nearest window. For a space Griffin sat silent, and then he resumed abruptly:

"I had left the Chesilstowe cottage already," he said, "when that happened. It was last December. I had taken a room in London, a large unfurnished room in a big ill-managed lodging-house in a slum near Great Portland Street. The room was soon full of the appliances I had bought with his money; the work was going on steadily, successfully, drawing near an end. I was like a man emerging from a thicket, and suddenly coming on some unmeaning tragedy. I went to bury him. My mind was still on this research, and I did not lift a finger to save his character. I remember the funeral, the cheap hearse, the scant ceremony, the windy frost-bitten hillside, and the old college friend of his who read the service over him—a shabby, black, bent old man with a sniveling cold.

"I remember walking back to the empty home, through the place that had once been a village and was now patched and tinkered by the jerry builders into the ugly likeness of a town. Every way the roads ran out at last into the desecrated fields and ended in rubble heaps and rank wet weeds. I remember myself as a gaunt black figure, going along the

slippery, shiny pavement, and the strange sense of detachment I felt from the squalid respectability, the sordid commercialism of the place.

"I did not feel a bit sorry for my father. He seemed to me to be the victim of his own foolish sentimentality. The current cant required my attendance at his funeral, but it was really not my affair.

"But going along the High Street, my old life came back to me for a space, for I met the girl I had known ten years since. Our eyes met. Something moved me to turn back and talk to her. She was a very ordinary person.

"It was all like a dream, that visit to the old places. I did not feel then that I was lonely, that I had come out from the world into a desolate place. I appreciated my loss of sympathy, but I put it down to the general inanity of things. Re-entering my room seemed like the recovery of reality. There were the things I knew and loved. There stood the apparatus, the experiments arranged and waiting. And now there was scarcely a difficulty left, beyond the planning of details.

"I will tell you, Kemp, sooner or later, all the complicated processes. We need not go into that now. For the most part, saving certain gaps I chose to remember, they are written in cipher in those books that tramp has hidden. We must hunt him down. We must get those books again. But the essential phase was to place the transparent object whose refractive index was to be lowered between two radiating centers of a sort of ethereal vibration, of which I will tell you more fully later. No, not these Röntgen vibrations—I don't know that these others of mine have been described. Yet they are obvious enough. I needed two little dynamos, and these I worked with a cheap gas engine. My first experiment was with a bit of white wool fabric. It was the strangest thing in the world to see it in the flicker of the flashes soft and white, and then to watch it fade like a wreath of smoke and vanish.

"I could scarcely believe I had done it. I put my hand into the emptiness, and there was the thing as solid as ever. I felt it awkwardly, and threw it on the floor. I had a little trouble finding it again.

"And then came a curious experience. I heard a miaow behind me, and turning, saw a lean white cat, very dirty, on the cistern cover outside the window. A thought came into

my head. 'Everything ready for you,' I said, and went to the window, opened it, and called softly. She came in, purring—the poor beast was starving—and I gave her some milk. All my food was in a cupboard in the corner of the room. After that she went smelling round the room—evidently with the idea of making herself at home. The invisible rag upset her a bit; you should have seen her spit at it! But I made her comfortable on the pillow of my truckle-bed. And I gave her butter to get her to wash."

"And you processed her?"

"I processed her. But giving drugs to a cat is no joke, Kemp! And the process failed."

"Failed!"

"In two particulars. These were the claws and the pigment stuff—what is it?—at the back of the eye in a cat. You know?"

"*Tapetum*."

"Yes, the *tapetum*. It didn't go. After I'd given the stuff to bleach the blood and done certain other things to her, I gave the beast opium, and put her and the pillow she was sleeping on on the apparatus. And after all the rest had faded and vanished, there remained two little ghosts of her eyes."

"Odd!"

"I can't explain it. She was bandaged and clamped, of course—so I had her safe; but she woke while she was still misty, and miaowed dismally, and someone came knocking. It was an old woman from downstairs, who suspected me of vivisecting—a drink-sodden old creature, with only a white cat to care for in all the world. I whipped out some chloroform, applied it, and answered the door. 'Did I hear a cat?' she asked. 'My cat?' 'Not here,' said I, very politely. She was a little doubtful and tried to peer past me into the room; strange enough to her no doubt—bare walls, uncurtained windows, truckle-bed, with the gas engine vibrating, and the seethe of the radiant points, and that faint ghastly stinging of chloroform in the air. She had to be satisfied at last and went away again."

"How long did it take?" asked Kemp.

"Three or four hours—the cat. The bones and sinews and the fat were the last to go, and the tips of the colored hairs. And, as I say, the back part of the eye, tough iridescent stuff it is, wouldn't go at all.

"It was night outside long before the business was over, and nothing was to be seen but the dim eyes and the claws. I stopped the gas engine, felt for and stroked the beast, which was still insensible, and then, being tired, left it sleeping on the invisible pillow and went to bed. I found it hard to sleep. I lay awake thinking weak, aimless stuff, going over the experiment over and over again, or dreaming feverishly of things growing misty and vanishing about me, until everything, the ground I stood on, vanished, and so I came to that sickly falling nightmare one gets. About two, the cat began miaowing about the room. I tried to hush it by talking to it, and then I decided to turn it out. I remember the shock I had when striking a light—there were just the round eyes shining green—and nothing round them. I would have given it milk, but I hadn't any. It wouldn't be quiet; it just sat down and miaowed at the door. I tried to catch it, with an idea of putting it out of the window, but it wouldn't be caught, it vanished. Then it began miaowing in different parts of the room. At last I opened the window and made a bustle. I suppose it went out at last. I never saw any more of it.

"Then—Heaven knows why—I fell thinking of my father's funeral again, and the dismal windy hillside, until the day had come. I found sleeping was hopeless, and, locking my door after me, wandered out into the morning streets."

"You don't mean to say there's an invisible cat at large!" said Kemp.

"If it hasn't been killed," said the Invisible Man. "Why not?"

"Why not?" said Kemp. "I didn't mean to interrupt."

"It's very probably been killed," said the Invisible Man. "It was alive four days after, I know, and down a grating in Great Tichfield Street; because I saw a crowd round the place, trying to see whence the miaowing came."

He was silent for the best part of a minute. Then he resumed abruptly: "I remember that morning before the change very vividly. I must have gone up Great Portland Street. I remember the barracks in Albany Street, and the horse soldiers coming out, and at last I found myself sitting in the sunshine and feeling very ill and strange, on the summit of Primrose Hill. It was a sunny day in January—one of those sunny, frosty days that came before the snow

this year. My weary brain tried to formulate the position, to plot out a plan of action.

"I was surprised to find, now that my prize was within my grasp, how inconclusive its attainment seemed. As a matter of fact I was worked out; the intense stress of nearly four years' continuous work left me incapable of any strength of feeling. I was apathetic, and I tried in vain to recover the enthusiasm of my first inquiries, the passion of discovery that had enabled me to compress even the downfall of my father's gray hairs. Nothing seemed to matter. I saw pretty clearly this was a transient mood, due to overwork and want of sleep, and that either by drugs or rest it would be possible to recover my energies.

"All I could think clearly was that the thing had to be carried through; the fixed idea still ruled me. And soon, for the money I had was almost exhausted. I looked about me at the hillside, with children playing, girls watching them, and tried to think of all the fantastic advantages an invisible man would have in the world. After a time I crawled home, took some food and a strong dose of strychnine, and went to sleep in my clothes on my unmade bed. Strychnine is a grand tonic, Kemp, to take the flabbiness out of a man."

"It's the devil," said Kemp. "It's the paleolithic in a bottle."

"I woke vastly invigorated and rather irritable. You know?"

"I know the stuff."

"And there was someone rapping at the door. It was my landlord with threats and inquiries. I had been tormenting a cat in the night, he was sure—the old woman's tongue had been busy. He insisted on knowing all about it. The laws of this country against vivisection were very severe—he might be liable. I denied the cat. Then the vibration of the little gas engine could be felt all over the house, he said. That was true, certainly. He edged round me into the room, peering about over his German-silver spectacles, and a sudden dread came into my mind that he might carry away something of my secret. I tried to keep between him and the concentrating apparatus I had arranged, and that only made him more curious. What was I doing? Why was I always alone and secretive? Was it legal? Was it danger-

ous? I paid nothing but the usual rent. His had always been a most respectable house—in a disreputable neighborhood. Suddenly my temper gave way. I told him to get out. He began to protest, to jabber of his right of entry. In a moment I had him by the collar; something ripped, and he went spinning out into his own passage. I slammed and locked the door and sat down quivering.

“He made a fuss outside which I disregarded, and after a time he went away. But this brought matters to a crisis. I did not know what he would do, nor even what he had power to do. To move to fresh apartments would have meant delay; all together I had barely twenty pounds left in the world—for the most part in a bank—and I could not afford that. Vanish! It was irresistible. Then there would be an inquiry, the sacking of my room—

“At the thought of the possibility of my work being exposed or interrupted at its very climax, I became angry and active. I hurried out with my three books of notes, my checkbook—the tramp has them now—and directed them from the nearest post office to a house of call for letters and parcels in Great Portland Street. I tried to go out noiselessly. Coming in, I found my landlord going quietly upstairs; he had heard the door close, I suppose. You would have laughed to see him jump aside on the landing as I came tearing after him. He glared at me as I went by him, and I made the house quiver with the slamming of my door. I heard him come shuffling up to my floor, hesitate, and go down. I set to work upon my preparations forthwith.

“It was all done that evening and night. While I was still sitting under the sickly, drowsy influence of the drugs that decolorize blood, there came a repeated knocking at the door. It ceased, footsteps went away and returned, and the knocking was resumed. There was an attempt to push something under the door—a blue paper. Then in a fit of irritation I rose and went and flung the door wide open. ‘Now then?’ said I.

“It was my landlord, with a notice of ejectment or something. He held it out to me, saw something odd about my hands, I expect, and lifted his eyes to my face.

“For a moment he gaped. Then he gave a sort of inarticulate cry, dropped candle and writ together, and went blundering down the dark passage to the stairs. I shut the

door, locked it, and went to the looking-glass. Then I understood his terror. My face was white—like white stone.

"But it was all horrible. I had not expected the suffering. A night of racking anguish, sickness, and fainting. I set my teeth, though my skin was presently afire, all my body afire; but I lay there like grim death. I understood now how it was the cat had howled until I chloroformed it. Lucky it was I lived alone and untended in my room. There were times when I sobbed and groaned and talked. But I stuck to it. I became insensible and woke languid in the darkness.

"The pain had passed. I thought I was killing myself and I did not care. I shall never forget that dawn, and the strange horror of seeing that my hands had become as clouded glass, and watching them grow clearer and thinner as the day went by, until at last I could see the sickly disorder of my room through them, though I closed my transparent eyelids. My limbs became glassy, the bones and arteries faded, vanished, and the little white nerves went last. I gritted my teeth and stayed there to the end. At last only the dead tips of the fingernails remained, pallid and white, and the stain of some acid upon my fingers.

"I struggled up. At first I was as incapable as a swathed infant—stepping with limbs I could not see. I was weak and very hungry. I went and stared at nothing in my shaving-glass, at nothing save where an attenuated pigment still remained behind the retina of my eyes, fainter than mist. I had to hang on to the table and press my forehead to the glass. It was only by a frantic effort of will that I dragged myself back to the apparatus and completed the process.

"I slept during the forenoon, pulling the sheet over my eyes to shut out the light, and about midday I was awakened again by a knocking. My strength had returned. I sat up and listened and heard a whispering. I sprang to my feet and as noiselessly as possible began to detach the connections of my apparatus, and to distribute it about the room, so as to destroy the suggestions of its arrangement. Presently the knocking was renewed and voices called, first my landlord's, and then two others. To gain time I answered them. The invisible rag and pillow came to hand and I opened the window and pitched them out onto the cistern cover. As the window opened, a heavy crash came at the door. Someone had charged it with the idea of smashing the lock. But

the stout bolts I had screwed up some days before stopped him. That startled me, made me angry. I began to tremble and do things hurriedly.

"I tossed together some loose paper, straw, packing-paper and so forth, in the middle of the room, and turned on the gas. Heavy blows began to rain upon the door. I could not find the matches. I beat my hands on the wall with rage. I turned down the gas again, stepped out of the window on the cistern cover, very softly lowered the sash, and sat down, secure and invisible, but quivering with anger, to watch events. They split a panel, I saw, and in another moment they had broken away the staples of the bolts and stood in the open doorway. It was the landlord and his two stepsons, sturdy young men of three or four and twenty. Behind them fluttered the old hag of a woman from downstairs.

"You may imagine their astonishment to find the room empty. One of the younger men rushed to the window at once, flung it up and stared out. His staring eyes and thick-lipped, bearded face came a foot from my face. I was half minded to hit his silly countenance, but I arrested my doubled fist. He stared right through me. So did the others as they joined him. The old man went and peered under the bed, and then they all made a rush for the cupboard. They had to argue about it at length. They concluded I had not answered them, that their imagination had deceived them. A feeling of extraordinary elation took the place of my anger as I sat outside the window and watched these four people—for the old lady came in, glancing suspiciously about her like a cat, trying to understand the riddle of my behavior.

"The old man agreed with the old lady that I was a vivisectionist. The sons protested that I was an electrician, and appealed to the dynamos and radiators. They were all nervous against my arrival, although I found subsequently that they had bolted the front door. The old lady peered into the cupboard and under the bed, and one of the young men pushed up the register and stared up the chimney. One of my fellow lodgers, a costermonger who shared the opposite room with a butcher, appeared on the landing, and he was called in and told several incoherent things.

"It occurred to me that the radiators, if they fell into the

hands of some acute, well-educated person, would give me away too much, and watching my opportunity, I came into the room and tilted one of the little dynamos off its fellow on which it was standing, and smashed both apparatus. Then, while they were trying to explain the smash, I dodged out of the room and went downstairs.

"I went into one of the sitting-rooms and waited until they came down, still speculating and argumentative, all a little disappointed at finding no 'horrors,' and all a little puzzled how they stood with regard to me. Then I slipped up again with a box of matches, fired my heap of paper and rubbish, put the chairs and bedding thereby, led the gas to the affair, by means of an india-rubber tube, and waving a farewell to the room left it for the last time."

"You fired the house!" exclaimed Kemp.

"Fired the house. It was the only way to cover my trail—and no doubt it was insured. I slipped the bolts of the front door quietly and went out into the street. I was invisible, and I was only just beginning to realize the extraordinary advantage my invisibility gave me. My head was already teeming with plans of all the wild and wonderful things I had now impunity to do."

21

IN OXFORD STREET

"IN GOING DOWNSTAIRS THE FIRST TIME I FOUND AN UNEXPECTED difficulty because I could not see my feet; indeed I stumbled twice, and there was an unaccustomed clumsiness in gripping the bolt. By not looking down, however, I managed to walk on the level passably well.

"My mood, I say, was one of exaltation. I felt as a seeing man might do, with padded feet and noiseless clothes, in a city of the blind. I experienced a wild impulse to jest, to startle people, to clap men on the back, fling people's hats

astray, and generally revel in my extraordinary advantage.

"But hardly had I emerged upon Great Portland Street, however (my lodging was close to the big draper's shop there), when I heard a clashing concussion and was hit violently behind, and turning saw a man carrying a basket of soda-water siphons, and looking in amazement at his burden. Although the blow had really hurt me, I found something so irresistible in his astonishment that I laughed aloud. 'The devil's in the basket,' I said, and suddenly twisted it out of his hand. He let go incontinently, and I swung the whole weight into the air.

"But a fool of a cabman, standing outside a public house, made a sudden rush for this, and his extending fingers took me with excruciating violence under the ear. I let the whole down with a smash on the cabman, and then, with shouts and the clatter of feet about me, people coming out of shops, vehicles pulling up, I realized what I had done for myself, and cursing my folly, backed against a shop window and prepared to dodge out of the confusion. In a moment I should be wedged into a crowd and inevitably discovered. I pushed by a butcher boy, who luckily did not turn to see the nothingness that shoved him aside, and dodged behind the cabman's four-wheeler. I do not know how they settled the business. I hurried straight across the road, which was happily clear, and hardly heeding which way I went, in the fright of detection the incident had given me, plunged into the afternoon throng of Oxford Street.

"I tried to get into the stream of people, but they were too thick for me, and in a moment my heels were being trodden upon. I took to the gutter, the roughness of which I found painful to my feet, and forthwith the shaft of a crawling hansom dug me forcibly under the shoulder blade, reminding me that I was already bruised severely. I staggered out of the way of the cab, avoided a perambulator by a convulsive movement, and found myself behind the hansom. A happy thought saved me, and as this drove slowly along I followed in its immediate wake, trembling and astonished at the turn of my adventure. And not only trembling, but shivering. It was a bright day in January and I was stark naked and the thin slime of mud that covered the road was freezing. Foolish as it seems to me now, I had not reckoned that, transparent or not, I was still amenable

to the weather and all its consequences.

"Then suddenly a bright idea came into my head. I ran round and got into the cab. And so, shivering, scared, and sniffing with the first intimations of a cold, and with the bruises in the small of my back growing upon my attention, I drove slowly along Oxford Street and past Tottenham Court Road. My mood was as different from that in which I had sallied forth ten minutes ago as it is possible to imagine. *This* invisibility indeed! The one thought that possessed me was—how was I to get out of the scrape I was in.

"We crawled past Mudie's, and there a tall woman with five or six yellow-labeled books hailed my cab, and I sprang out just in time to escape her, shaving a railway van narrowly in my flight. I made off up the roadway to Bloomsbury Square, intending to strike north past the Museum and so get into the quiet district. I was now cruelly chilled, and the strangeness of my situation so unnerved me that I whimpered as I ran. At the northward corner of the Square a little white dog ran out of the Pharmaceutical Society's offices, and incontinently made for me, nose down.

"I had never realized it before, but the nose is to the mind of a dog what the eye is to the mind of a seeing man. Dogs preceive the scent of a man moving as men perceive his vision. This brute began barking and leaping, showing, as it seemed to me, only too plainly that he was aware of me. I crossed Great Russell Street, glancing over my shoulder as I did so, and went some way along Montagu Street before I realized what I was running toward.

"Then I became aware of a blare of music, and looking along the street saw a number of people advancing out of Russell Square, red shirts, and the banner of the Salvation Army to the fore. Such a crowd, chanting in the roadway and scoffing on the pavement, I could not hope to penetrate, and dreading to go back and farther from home again, and deciding on the spur of the moment, I ran up the white steps of a house facing the Museum railings, and stood there until the crowd should have passed. Happily the dog stopped at the noise of the band too, hesitated, and turned tail, running back to Bloomsbury Square again.

"On came the band, bawling with unconscious irony some hymn about 'When shall we see His face?' and it

seemed an interminable time to me before the tide of the crowd washed along the pavement by me. Thud, thud, thud, came the drum with a vibrating resonance, and for the moment I did not notice two urchins stopping at the railings by me. 'See 'em,' said one. 'See what?' said the other. 'Why—they footmarks—*bare*. Like what you makes in mud.'

"I looked down and saw the youngsters had stopped and were gaping at the muddy footmarks I had left behind me up the newly whitened steps. The passing people elbowed and jostled them, but their confounded intelligence was arrested. 'Thud, thud, thud, When, thud, shall we see, thud, His face, thud, thud.' 'There's a barefoot man gone up them steps, or I don't know nothing,' said one. 'And he ain't never come down again. And his foot was a-bleeding.'

"The thick of the crowd had already passed. 'Looky there, Ted,' quoth the younger of the detectives, with the sharpness of surprise in his voice, and pointed straight to my feet. I looked down and saw at once the dim suggestion of their outline sketched in splashes of mud. For a moment I was paralyzed.

"'Why, that's rum,' said the elder. 'Dashed rum! It's just like the ghost of a foot, ain't it?' He hesitated and advanced with outstretched hand. A man pulled up short to see what he was catching, and then a girl. In another moment he would have touched me. Then I saw what to do. I made a step, the boy started back with an exclamation, and with a rapid movement I swung myself over into the portico of the next house. But the smaller boy was sharp-eyed enough to follow the movement, and before I was well down the steps and upon the pavement, he had recovered from his momentary astonishment and was shouting out that the feet had gone over the wall.

"They rushed round and saw my new footmarks flash into being on the lower step and upon the pavement. 'What's up?' asked someone. 'Feet! Look! Feet running!' Everybody in the road, except my three pursuers, was pouring along after the Salvation Army, and this blow not only impeded me but them. There was an eddy of surprise and interrogation. At the cost of bowling over one young fellow, I got through, and in another moment I was rushing head-long round the circuit of Russell Square, with six or seven

astonished people following my footmarks. There was no time for explanation, or else the whole host would have been after me.

"Twice I doubled round corners, thrice I crossed the road and came back on my tracks, and then, as my feet grew hot and dry, the damp impressions began to fade. At last I had a breathing space and rubbed my feet clean with my hands, and so got away altogether. The last I saw of the chase was a little group of a dozen people perhaps, studying with infinite perplexity a slowly drying footprint that had resulted from a puddle in Tavistock Square—a footprint as isolated and incomprehensible to them as Crusoe's solitary discovery.

"This running warmed me to a certain extent, and I went on with a better courage through the maze of less frequented roads that runs thereabouts. My back had now become very stiff and sore, my tonsils were painful from the cabman's fingers, and the skin of my neck had been scratched by his nails; my feet hurt exceedingly and I was lame from a little cut on one foot. I saw in time a blind man approaching me, and fled limping, for I feared his subtle intuitions. Once or twice accidental collisions occurred and I left people amazed, with unaccountable curses ringing in their ears. Then came something silent and quiet against my face, and across the Square fell a thin veil of slowly falling flakes of snow. I had caught a cold, and do as I would I could not avoid an occasional sneeze. And every dog that came in sight, with its pointing nose and curious sniffing, was a terror to me.

"Then came men and boys running, first one and then others, and shouting as they ran. It was a fire. They ran in the direction of my lodging, and looking back down a street I saw a mass of black smoke streaming up above the roofs and telephone wires. It was my lodging burning; my clothes, my apparatus, all my resources indeed, except my checkbook and the three volumes of memoranda that awaited me in Great Portland Street, were there. Burning! I had burned my boats—if ever a man did! The place was blazing."

The Invisible Man paused and thought. Kemp glanced nervously out of the window. "Yes?" he said. "Go on."

IN THE EMPORIUM

"SO LAST JANUARY, WITH THE BEGINNINGS OF A SNOWSTORM in the air about me—and if it settled on me it would betray me!—weary, cold, painful, inexpressibly wretched, and still but half convinced of my invisible quality, I began this new life to which I am committed. I had no refuge, no appliances, no human being in the world in whom I could confide. To have told my secret would have given me away—made a mere show and rarity of me. Nevertheless, I was half minded to accost some passer-by and throw myself upon his mercy. But I knew too clearly the terror and brutal cruelty my advances would evoke. I made no plans in the street. My sole object was to get sheltered from the snow, to get myself covered and warm; then I might hope to plan. But even to me, an Invisible Man, the rows of London houses stood latched, barred, and bolted impregnably.

"Only one thing could I see clearly before me, the cold exposure and misery of the snowstorm and the night.

"And then I had a brilliant idea. I turned down one of the roads leading from Gower Street to Tottenham Court Road, and found myself outside Omnium's, the big establishment where everything is to be bought—you know the place—meat, grocery, linen, furniture, clothing, oil paintings even—a huge meandering collection of shops rather than a shop. I had thought I should find the doors open, but they were closed, and as I stood in the wide entrance a carriage stopped outside, and a man in uniform—you know the kind of personage with Omnium on his cap—flung open the door. I contrived to enter, and walking down the shop—it was a department where they were selling ribbons and gloves and stockings and that kind of thing—came to a more spacious region devoted to picnic baskets and wicker furniture.

"I did not feel safe there, however; people were going to

and fro, and I prowled restlessly about until I came upon a huge section in an upper floor containing multitudes of bedsteads; in this I clambered, and found a resting-place at last among a huge pile of folded flock mattresses. The place was already lit up and agreeably warm, and I decided to remain where I was, keeping a cautious eye on the two or three sets of shopmen and customers who were meandering through the place, until closing time came. Then I should be able, I thought, to rob the place for food and clothing, and disguised, prowl through it and examine its resources, perhaps sleep on some of the bedding. That seemed an acceptable plan. My idea was to procure clothing to make myself a muffled but acceptable figure, to get money, and then to recover my books and parcels where they awaited me, take a lodging somewhere and elaborate plans for the complete realization of the advantages my invisibility gave me (as I still imagined) over my fellow men.

"Closing time arrived quickly enough; it could not have been more than an hour after I took up my position on the mattresses before I noticed the blinds of the windows being drawn, and customers being marched doorward. And then a number of brisk young men began with remarkable alacrity to tidy up the goods that remained disturbed. I left my lair as the crowds diminished, and prowled cautiously out into the less desolate parts of the shop. I was really surprised to observe how rapidly the young men and women whipped away the goods displayed for sale during the day. All the boxes of goods, the hanging fabrics, the festoons of lace, the boxes of sweets in the grocery section, the displays of this and that, were being whipped down, folded up, slapped into tidy receptacles, and everything that could not be taken down and put away had sheets of some coarse stuff like sacking flung over them. Finally all the chairs were turned up on to the counters, leaving the floor clear. Directly each of these young people had done, he or she made promptly for the door with such an expression of animation as I have rarely observed in a shop assistant before. Then came a lot of youngsters scattering sawdust and carrying pails and brooms. I had to dodge to get out of the way, and as it was, my ankle got stung with the sawdust. For some time, wandering through the swathed and darkened departments, I could hear the brooms at work. And at last a good hour or more after the shop had been closed, came

a noise of locking doors. Silence came upon the place, and I found myself wandering through the vast and intricate shops, galleries, showrooms of the place, alone. It was very still; in one place I remember passing near one of the Tottenham Court Road entrances and listening to the tapping of boot heels of the passers-by.

"My first visit was to the place where I had seen stockings and gloves for sale. It was dark, and I had the devil of a hunt after matches, which I found at last in the drawer of the little cash desk. Then I had to get a candle. I had to tear down wrappings and ransack a number of boxes and drawers, but at last I managed to turn out what I sought; the box label called them lambswool pants, and lambswool vests. Then socks, a thick comforter, and then I went to the clothing place and got trousers, a lounge jacket, an overcoat, and a slouch hat—a clerical sort of hat with the brim turned down. I began to feel a human being again, and my next thought was food.

"Upstairs was a refreshment department, and there I got cold meat. There was coffee still in the urn, and I lit the gas and warmed it up again, and altogether I did not do badly. Afterward, prowling through the place in search of blankets—I had to put up at last with a heap of down quilts—I came upon a grocery section with a lot of chocolate and candied fruits, more than was good for me indeed—and some white burgundy. And near that was a toy department, and I had a brilliant idea. I found some artificial noses—dummy noses, you know, and I thought of dark spectacles. But Omnium's had no optical department. My nose had been a difficulty indeed—I had thought of paint. But the discovery set my mind running on wigs and masks and the like. Finally I went to sleep in a heap of down quilts, very warm and comfortable.

"My last thoughts before sleeping were the most agreeable I had had since the change. I was in a state of physical serenity, and that was reflected in my mind. I thought that I should be able to slip out unobserved in the morning with my clothes upon me, muffling my face with a white wrapper I had taken, purchase, with the money I had taken, spectacles and so forth, and so complete my disguise. I lapsed into disorderly dreams of all the fantastic things that had happened during the last few days. I saw the ugly little landlord vociferating in his rooms; I saw his two sons

marveling, and the wrinkled old woman's gnarled face as she asked for her cat. I experienced again the strange sensation of seeing the cloth disappear, and so I came round to the windy hillside and the sniffing old clergyman mumbling 'Dust to dust, earth to earth,' and my father's open grave.

"'You also,' said a voice, and suddenly I was being forced toward the grave. I struggled, shouted, appealed to the mourners, but they continued stonily following the service; the old clergyman, too, never faltered droning and sniffing through the ritual, I realized I was invisible and inaudible, that overwhelming forces had their grip on me. I struggled in vain, I was forced over the brink, the coffin rang hollow as I fell upon it, and the gravel came flying after me in spadefuls. Nobody heeded me, nobody was aware of me. I made convulsive struggles and awoke.

"The pale London dawn had come; the place was full of a chilly gray light that filtered round the edges of the window blinds. I sat up, and for a time I could not think where this ample apartment, with its counters, its piles of rolled stuff, its heap of quilts and cushions, its iron pillars, might be. Then, as recollection came back to me, I heard voices in conversation.

"Then far down the place, in the brighter light of some department which had already raised its blinds, I saw two men approaching. I scrambled to my feet, looking about me for some way of escape, and even as I did so the sound of my movement made them aware of me. I suppose they saw merely a figure moving quietly and quickly away. 'Who's that?' cried one, and 'Stop there!' shouted the other. I dashed round a corner and came full tilt—a faceless figure, mind you!—on a lanky lad of fifteen. He yelled and I bowled him over, rushed past him, turned another corner, and by a happy inspiration threw myself flat behind a counter. In another moment feet went running past and I heard voices shouting. 'All hands to the doors!' asking what was 'up,' and giving one another advice how to catch me.

"Lying on the ground, I felt scared out of my wits. But—odd as it may seem—it did not occur to me at the moment to take off my clothes as I should have done. I had made up my mind, I suppose, to get away in them, and that ruled me. And then down the vista of the counters came a bawling of 'Here he is!'

"I sprang to my feet, whipped a chair off the counter, and sent it whirling at the fool who had shouted, turned, came into another round a corner, sent him spinning, and rushed up the stairs. He kept his footing, gave a view hallo! and came up the staircase hot after me. Up the staircase were piled a multitude of those bright-colored pot things—what are they?"

"Art pots," suggested Kemp.

"That's it! Art pots. Well, I turned at the top step and swung round, plucked one out of a pile and smashed it on his silly head as he came at me. The whole pile of pots went headlong, and I heard shouting and footsteps running from all parts. I made a mad rush for the refreshment place, and there was a man in white like a man cook, who took up the chase. I made one last desperate turn and found myself among lamps and ironmongery. I went behind the counter of this, and waited for my cook, and as he bolted in at the head of the chase, I doubled him up with a lamp. Down he went, and I crouched down behind the counter and began whipping off my clothes as fast as I could. Coat, jacket, trousers, shoes were all right, but a lambswool vest fits a man like a skin. I heard more men coming, my cook was lying quiet on the other side of the counter, stunned or scared speechless, and I had to make another dash for it, like a rabbit hunted out of a woodpile.

"'This way, policeman!' I heard someone shouting. I found myself in my bedstead storeroom again, and at the end of wilderness of wardrobes. I rushed among them, went flat, got rid of my vest after infinite wriggling, and stood a free man again, panting and scared, as the policeman and three of the shopmen came round the corner. They made a rush for the vest and pants, and collared the trousers. 'He's dropping his plunder,' said one of the young men. 'He *must* be somewhere here.'

"But they did not find me all the same.

"I stood watching them hunt for me for a time, and cursing my ill-luck in losing the clothes. Then I went into the refreshment-room, drank a little milk I found there, and sat down by the fire to consider my position.

"In a little while two assistants came in and began to talk over the business very excitedly and like the fools they were. I heard a magnified account of my depredations, and other speculations as to my whereabouts. Then I fell to

scheming again. The insurmountable difficulty of the place, especially now it was alarmed, was to get any plunder out of it. I went down into the warehouse to see if there was any chance of packing and addressing a parcel, but I could not understand the system of checking. About eleven o'clock, the snow having thawed as it fell, and the day being finer and a little warmer than the previous one, I decided that the Emporium was hopeless, and went out again, exasperated at my want of success, with only the vaguest plans of action in my mind."

23

IN DRURY LANE

"BUT YOU BEGIN NOW TO REALIZE," SAID THE INVISIBLE Man, "the full disadvantage of my condition. I had no shelter, no covering—to get clothing was to forego all my advantage, to make of myself a strange and terrible thing. I was fasting; for to eat, to fill myself with unassimilated matter, would be to become grotesquely visible again."

"I never thought of that," said Kemp.

"Nor had I. And the snow had warned me of other dangers. I could not go abroad in snow—it would settle on me and expose me. Rain, too, would make me a watery outline, a glistening surface of a man—a bubble. And fog—I should be like a fainter bubble in a fog, a surface, a greasy glimmer of humanity. Moreover, as I went abroad—in the London air—I gathered dirt about my ankles, floating smuts and dust upon my skin. I did not know how long it would be before I should become visible from that cause also. But I saw clearly it could not be for long. Not in London at any rate.

"I went into the slums toward Great Portland Street, and found myself at the end of the street in which I had lodged. I did not go that way, because of the crowd halfway down it opposite to the still smoking ruins of the house I had fired. My most immediate problem was to get clothing.

What to do with my face puzzled me. Then I saw in one of those little miscellaneous shops—news, sweets, toys, stationery, belated Christmas tomfoolery, and so forth—an array of masks and noses. I realized that problem was solved. In a flash I saw my course. I turned about, no longer aimless, and went—circuitously in order to avoid the busy ways, toward the back streets north of the Strand; for I remembered, though not very distinctly where, that some theatrical costumiers had shops in that district.

“The day was cold, with a nipping wind down the northward running streets. I walked fast to avoid being overtaken. Every crossing was a danger, every passenger a thing to watch alertly. One man, as I was about to pass him at the top of Bedford Street, turned upon me abruptly and came into me, sending me into the road and almost under the wheel of a passing hansom. The verdict of the cab-rank was that he had had some sort of stroke. I was so unnerved by this encounter that I went into Covent Garden Market and sat down for some time in a quiet corner by a stall of violets, panting and trembling. I found I had caught a fresh cold, and had to turn out after a time lest my sneezes should attract attention.

“At last I reached the object of my quest, a dirty fly-blown little shop in a byway near Drury Lane, with a window full of tinsel robes, sham jewels, wigs, slippers, dominoes, and theatrical photographs. The shop was old-fashioned and low and dark, and the house rose above it for four stories, dark and dismal. I peered through the window and, seeing no one within, entered. The opening of the door set a clanking bell ringing. I left it open, and walked round a bare costume stand, into a corner behind a cheval glass. For a minute or so no one came. Then I heard heavy feet striding across a room, and a man appeared down the shop.

“My plans were now perfectly definite. I proposed to make my way into the house, secrete myself upstairs, watch my opportunity, and when everything was quiet, rummage out a wig, mask, spectacles, and costume, and go into the world, perhaps a grotesque but still a credible figure. And incidentally of course I could rob the house of any available money.

“The man who had entered the shop was a short, slight, hunched, beetle-browed man, with long arms and very short

bandy legs. Apparently I had interrupted a meal. He stared about the shop with an expression of expectation. This gave way to surprise, and then anger, as he saw the shop empty. 'Damn the boys!' he said. He went to stare up and down the street. He came in again in a minute, kicked the door to with his foot spitefully, and went muttering back to the house door.

"I came forward to follow him, and at the noise of my movement he stopped dead. I did so too, startled by his quickness of ear. He slammed the house door in my face.

"I stood hesitating. Suddenly I heard his quick footsteps returning, and the door re-opened. He stood looking about the shop like one who was still not satisfied. Then, murmuring to himself, he examined the back of the counter and peered behind some fixtures. Then he stood doubtful. He had left the house door open and I slipped into the inner room.

"It was a queer little room, poorly furnished and with a number of big masks in the corner. On the table was his belated breakfast, and it was a confoundedly exasperating thing for me, Kemp, to have to sniff his coffee and stand watching while he came in and resumed his meal. And his table manners were irritating. Three doors opened into the little room, one going upstairs and one down, but they were all shut. I could not get out of the room while he was there, I could scarcely move because of his alertness, and there was a draught down my back. Twice I strangled a sneeze just in time.

"The spectacular quality of my sensations was curious and novel, but for all that I was heartily tired and angry long before he had done his eating. But at last he made an end and putting his beggarly crockery on the black tin tray upon which he had his teapot, and gathering all the crumbs up on the mustard-stained cloth, he took the whole lot of things after him. His burden prevented his shutting the door behind him—as he would have done; I never saw such a man for shutting doors—and I followed him into a very dirty underground kitchen and scullery. I had the pleasure of seeing him begin to wash up, and then, finding no good in keeping down there, and the brick floor being cold to my feet, I returned upstairs and sat in his chair by the fire. It was burning low, and scarcely thinking, I put on a little coal. The noise of this brought him up at

once, and he stood aglare. He peered about the room and was within an ace of touching me. Even after that examination, he scarcely seemed satisfied. He stopped in the doorway and took a final inspection before he went down.

"I waited in the little parlor for an age, and at last he came up and opened the upstairs door. I just managed to get by him.

"On the staircase he stopped suddenly, so that I very nearly blundered into him. He stood looking back right into my face and listening. 'I could have sworn,' he said. His long hairy hand pulled at his lower lip. His eye went up and down the staircase. Then he grunted and went on up again.

"His hand was on the handle of a door, and then he stopped again with the same puzzled anger on his face. He was becoming aware of the faint sounds of my movements about him. The man must have had diabolically acute hearing. He suddenly flashed into rage. 'If there's anyone in this house,' he cried with an oath, and left the threat unfinished. He put his hand in his pocket, failed to find what he wanted, and rushing past me went blundering noisily and pugnaciously downstairs. But I did not follow him. I sat on the head of the staircase until his return.

"Presently he came up again, still muttering. He opened the door of the room, and before I could enter, slammed it in my face.

"I resolved to explore the house, and spent some time in doing so as noiselessly as possible. The house was very old and tumble-down, damp so that the paper in the attics was peeling from the walls, and rat infested. Some of the door handles were stiff and I was afraid to turn them. Several rooms I did inspect were unfurnished, and others were littered with theatrical lumber, bought secondhand, I judged, from its appearance. In one room next to his I found a lot of old clothes. I began routing among them and in my eagerness forgot again the evident sharpness of his ears. I heard a stealthy footstep and, looking up just in time, saw him peering in at the tumbled heap and holding an old-fashioned revolver in his hand. I stood perfectly still while he stared about open-mouthed and suspicious. 'It must have been her,' he said slowly. 'Damn her.'

"He shut the door quietly, and immediately I heard the key turn in the lock. Then his footsteps retreated. I realized

abruptly that I was locked in. For a minute I did not know what to do. I walked from door to window and back, and stood perplexed. A gust of anger came upon me. But I decided to inspect the clothes before I did anything further, and my first attempt brought down a pile from an upper shelf. This brought him back, more sinister than ever. This time he actually touched me, jumped back with amazement, and stood astonished in the middle of the room.

"Presently he calmed a little. 'Rats,' he said in an undertone, fingers on lip. He was evidently a little scared; he edged quietly out of the room, but a plank creaked. Then the infernal little brute started going all over the house, revolver in hand and locking door after door and pocketing the keys. When I realized what he was up to I had a fit of rage—I could hardly control myself sufficiently to watch my opportunity. By this time I knew he was alone in the house, and so I made no more ado, but knocked him on the head."

"Knocked him on the head!" exclaimed Kemp.

"Yes—stunned him—as he was going downstairs. Hit him from behind with a stool that stood on the landing. He went downstairs like a bag of old boots."

"But—I say! The common conventions of humanity—"

"Are all very well for common people. But the point was, Kemp, that I had to get out of that house in a disguise without his seeing me. I couldn't think of any other way of doing it. And then I gagged him with a Louis Quatorze vest and tied him up in a sheet."

"Tied him up in a sheet!"

"Made a sort of bag of it. It was rather a good idea to keep the idiot scared and quiet, and a devilish hard thing to get out of—head away from the string. My dear Kemp, it's no good your sitting and glaring as though I was a murderer. It had to be done. He had his revolver. If once he saw me he would be able to describe me—"

"But still," said Kemp, "in England—today. And the man was in his own house, and you were—well, robbing."

"Robbing! Confound it! You'll call me a thief next! Surely, Kemp, you're not fool enough to dance on the old strings. Can't you see my position?"

"And his too," said Kemp.

The Invisible Man stood up sharply. "What do you mean to say?"

Kemp's face grew a trifle hard. He was about to speak and checked himself. "I suppose, after all," he said with a sudden change of manner, "the thing had to be done. You were in a fix. But still—"

"Of course I was in a fix—an infernal fix. And he made me wild too—hunting me about the house, fooling about with his revolver, locking and unlocking doors. He was simply exasperating. You don't blame me, do you? You don't blame me?"

"I never blame anyone," said Kemp. "It's quite out of fashion. What did you do next?"

"I was hungry. Downstairs I found a loaf and some rank cheese—more than sufficient to satisfy my hunger. I took some brandy and water, and then went up past my impromptu bag—he was lying quite still—to the room containing the old clothes. I began a systematic search of the place. I should judge the hunchback had been alone in the house for some time. He was a curious person. Everything that could possibly be of service to me I collected in the clothes store-room, and then I made a deliberate selection. I found a handbag I thought a suitable possession, and some powder, rouge, and sticking-plaster.

"I had thought of painting and powdering my face and all that there was to show of me, in order to render myself visible, but the disadvantage of this lay in the fact that I should require turpentine and other appliances and a considerable amount of time before I could vanish again. Finally I chose a mask of the better type, slightly grotesque but not more so than many human beings, dark glasses, grayish whiskers, and a wig. I could find no underclothing, but that I could buy subsequently, and for the time I swathed myself in calico dominoes and some white cashmere scarfs. I could find no socks, but the hunchback's boots were rather a loose fit and sufficed. In a desk in the shop were three sovereigns and about thirty shillings' worth of silver, and in a locked cupboard I burst in the inner room were eight pounds in gold. I could go forth into the world again, equipped.

"Then came a curious hesitation. Was my appearance really—credible? I tried myself with a little bedroom look-

ing-glass, inspecting myself from every point of view to discover any forgotten chink, but it all seemed sound. I was grotesque to the theatrical pitch, a stage miser, but I was certainly not a physical impossibility. Gathering confidence, I took my looking-glass down into the shop, pulled down the shop blinds, and surveyed myself from every point of view with the help of the cheval glass in the corner.

"I spent some minutes screwing up my courage and then unlocked the shop door and marched out into the street, leaving the little man to get out of his sheet again when he liked. In five minutes a dozen turnings intervened between me and the costumier's shop. No one appeared to notice me very pointedly. My last difficulty seemed overcome." He stopped again.

"And you troubled no more about the hunchback?" said Kemp.

"No," said the Invisible Man. "Nor have I heard what became of him. I suppose he untied himself or kicked himself out. The knots were pretty tight." He became silent and went to the window and stared out.

"What happened when you went out into the Strand?"

"Oh!—disillusionment again. I thought my troubles were over. Practically I thought I had impunity to do whatever I chose, everything—save to give away my secret. So I thought. Whatever I did, whatever the consequences might be, was nothing to me. I had merely to fling aside my garments and vanish. No person could hold me. I could take my money where I found it. I decided to treat myself to a sumptuous feast, and then put up at a good hotel, and accumulate a new outfit of property. I felt amazingly confident—it's not particularly pleasant recalling that I was an ass. I went into a place and was already ordering a lunch, when it occurred to me that I could not eat unless I exposed my invisible face. I finished ordering the lunch, told the man I should be back in ten minutes, and went out exasperated. I don't know if you have ever been disappointed in your appetite."

"Not quite so badly," said Kemp, "but I can imagine it."

"I could have smashed the silly devils. At last, faint with the desire for tasteful food, I went into another place and demanded a private room. 'I am disfigured,' I said. 'Badly.' They looked at me curiously, but of course it was not their

affair—and so at last I got my lunch. It was not particularly well served, but it sufficed; and when I had had it, I sat over a cigar, trying to plan my line of action. And outside a snowstorm was beginning.

"The more I thought it over, Kemp, the more I realized what a helpless absurdity an Invisible Man was—in a cold and dirty climate and a crowded civilized city. Before I made this mad experiment I had dreamed of a thousand advantages. That afternoon it seemed all disappointment. I went over the heads of the things a man reckons desirable. No doubt invisibility made it possible to get them, but it made it impossible to enjoy them when they are got. Ambition—what is the good of pride of place when you cannot appear there? What is the good of the love of woman when her name must needs be Delilah? I have no taste for politics, for the blackguardism of fame, for philanthropy, for sport. What was I to do? And for this I had become a wrapped-up mystery, a swathed and bandaged caricature of a man!" He paused, and his attitude suggested a roving glance at the window.

"But how did you get to Iping?" said Kemp, anxious to keep his guest busy talking.

"I went there to work. I had one hope. It was a half idea! I have it still. It is a full-blown idea now. A way of getting back! Of restoring what I have done. When I choose. When I have done all I mean to do invisibly. And that is what I chiefly want to talk to you about now."

"You went straight to Iping?"

"Yes. I had simply to get my three volumes of memoranda and my checkbook, my luggage and underclothing, order a quantity of chemicals to work out this idea of mine—I will show you the calculations as soon as I get my books—and then I started. Jove! I remember the snowstorm now, and the accursed bother it was to keep the snow from damping my pasteboard nose."

"At the end," said Kemp, "the day before yesterday, when they found you out, you rather—to judge by the papers—"

"I did. Rather. Did I kill that fool of a constable?"

"No," said Kemp. "He's expected to recover."

"That's his luck, then. I clean lost my temper, the fools! Why couldn't they leave me alone? And that grocer lout?"

"There are no deaths expected," said Kemp.

"I don't know about that tramp of mine," said the Invisible Man, with an unpleasant laugh. "By Heaven, Kemp, you don't know what rage *is*! To have worked for years, to have planned and plotted, and then to get some fumbling, purblind idiot messing across your course! Every conceivable sort of silly creature that has ever been created has been sent to cross me. If I have much more of it, I shall go wild—I shall start mowing 'em. As it is, they've made things a thousand times more difficult."

"No doubt it's exasperating," said Kemp, dryly.

24

THE PLAN THAT FAILED

"BUT NOW," SAID KEMP, WITH A SIDE GLANCE OUT OF THE window, "what are we to do?" He moved nearer his guest as he spoke in such a manner as to prevent the possibility of a sudden glimpse of the three men who were advancing up the hill road—with an intolerable slowness, as it seemed to Kemp. "What were you planning to do when you were heading for Port Burdock? *Had* you any plan?"

"I was going to clear out of the country. But I have altered that plan rather since seeing you. I thought it would be wise, now the weather is hot and invisibility possible, to make for the South. Especially as my secret was known, and everyone would be on the lookout for a masked and muffled man. You have a line of steamers from here to France. My idea was to get aboard one and run the risks of the passage. Thence I could go by train into Spain, or else get to Algiers. It would not be difficult. There a man might always be invisible—and yet live. And do things. I was using that tramp as a money box and luggage carrier, until I decided how to get my books and things sent over to meet me."

"That's clear."

"And then the filthy brute must needs try and rob me! He has hidden my books, Kemp. Hidden my books! If I can lay my hands on him!"

"Best plan to get the books out of him first."

"But where is he? Do you know?"

"He's in the town police station, locked up, by his own request, in the strongest cell in the place."

"Cur!" said the Invisible Man.

"But that hangs up your plans a little."

"We must get those books; those books are vital."

"Certainly," said Kemp, a little nervously, wondering if he heard footsteps outside. "Certainly we must get those books. But that won't be difficult, if he doesn't know they're for you."

"No," said the Invisible Man, and thought.

Kemp tried to think of something to keep the talk going, but the Invisible Man resumed of his own accord.

"Blundering into your house, Kemp," he said, "changes all my plans. For you are a man that can understand. In spite of all that has happened, in spite of this publicity, of the loss of my books, of what I have suffered, there still remain great possibilities, huge possibilities—

"You have told no one I am here?" he asked abruptly.

Kemp hesitated. "That was implied," he said.

"No one?" insisted Griffin.

"Not a soul."

"Ah! Now—" The Invisible Man stood up, and sticking his arms akimbo began to pace the study.

"I made a mistake, Kemp, a huge mistake, in carrying this thing through alone. I have wasted strength, time, opportunities. Alone—it is wonderful how little a man can do alone! To rob, to hurt a little, and there is the end.

"What I want, Kemp, is a goal-keeper, a helper, and a hiding-place, an arrangement whereby I can sleep and eat and rest in peace, and unsuspected. I must have a confederate. With a confederate, with food and rest—a thousand things are possible.

"Hitherto I have gone on vague lines. We have to consider all that invisibility means, all that it does not mean. It means little advantage for eavesdropping and so forth—one makes sounds. It's of little help, a little help perhaps—in housebreaking and so forth. Once you've caught me you

could easily imprison me. But on the other hand I am hard to catch. This invisibility, in fact, is only good in two cases: It's useful in getting away, it's useful in approaching. It's particularly useful therefore, in killing. I can walk round a man, whatever weapon he has, choose my point, strike as I like. Dodge as I like. Escape as I like."

Kemp's hand went to his mustache. Was that a movement downstairs?

"And it is killing we must do, Kemp."

"It is killing we must do," repeated Kemp. "I'm listening, Griffin, but I'm not agreeing, mind. *Why* killing?"

"Not wanton killing, but a judicious slaying. The point is, they know there is an Invisible Man—as well as we know there is an Invisible Man. And that Invisible Man, Kemp, must now establish a Reign of Terror. Yes—no doubt it's startling. But I mean it. A Reign of Terror. He must take some town like your Burdock and terrify and dominate it. He must issue his orders. He can do that in a thousand ways—scraps of paper thrust under doors would suffice. And all who disobey his orders he must kill, and kill all who would defend them."

"Humph!" said Kemp, no longer listening to Griffin but to the sound of his front door opening and closing.

"It seems to me, Griffin," he said, to cover his wandering attention, "that your confederate would be in a difficult position."

"No one would know he was a confederate," said the Invisible Man, eagerly. And then suddenly, "*Hush!* What's that downstairs?"

"Nothing," said Kemp, and suddenly began to speak loud and fast. "I don't agree to this, Griffin," he said. "Understand me, I don't agree to this. Why dream of playing a game against the race? How can you hope to gain happiness? Don't be a lone wolf. Publish your results; take the world—take the nation at least—into your confidence. Think what you might do with a million helpers—"

The Invisible Man interrupted Kemp—arms extended. "There are footsteps coming upstairs," he said in a low voice.

"Nonsense," said Kemp.

"Let me see," said the Invisible Man, and advanced, arm extended, to the door.

And then things happened very swiftly. Kemp hesitated for a second and then moved to intercept him. The Invisible Man started and stood still. "Traitor!" cried the Voice, and suddenly the dressing-gown opened, and sitting down the Unseen began to disrobe. Kemp made three swift steps to the door, and forthwith the Invisible Man—his legs had vanished—sprang to his feet with a shout. Kemp flung the door open. As it opened, there came a sound of hurrying feet downstairs and voices.

With a quick movement Kemp thrust the Invisible Man back, sprang aside, and slammed the door. The key was outside and ready. In another moment Griffin would have been alone in the belvedere study, a prisoner. Save for one little thing. The key had been slipped in hastily that morning. As Kemp slammed the door it fell noisily upon the carpet.

Kemp's face became white. He tried to grip the door handle with both hands. For a moment he stood lugging. Then the door gave six inches. But he got it closed again. The second time it was jerked a foot wide, and the dressing-gown came wedging itself into the opening. His throat was gripped by invisible fingers, and he left his hold on the handle to defend himself. He was forced back, tripped, and pitched heavily into the corner of the landing. The empty dressing-gown was flung on top of him.

Halfway up the staircase was Colonel Adye, the recipient of Kemp's letter, the chief of the Burdock police. He was staring aghast at the sudden appearance of Kemp, followed by the extraordinary sight of clothing tossing empty in the air. He saw Kemp felled, and struggling to his feet. He saw him rush forward, and go down, felled like an ox.

Then suddenly he was struck violently. By nothing! A vast weight, it seemed, leaped upon him, and he was hurled headlong down the staircase, with the grip at his throat and a knee in his groin. An invisible foot trod on his back, a ghostly patter passed downstairs, he heard the two police officers in the hall shout and run, and the front door of the house slammed violently.

He rolled over and sat up staring. He saw, staggering down the staircase, Kemp, dusty and disheveled, one side of his face white from a blow, his lip bleeding, and a pink dressing-gown and some underclothing held in his arms.

"My God!" cried Kemp, "the game's up! He's gone!"

THE HUNTING OF THE INVISIBLE MAN

FOR A SPACE KEMP WAS TOO INARTICULATE TO MAKE ADYE understand the swift things that had just happened. They stood on the landing, Kemp speaking swiftly, the grotesque swathings of Griffin still on his arm. But presently Adye began to grasp something of the situation.

"He is mad," said Kemp, "inhuman. He is pure selfishness. He thinks of nothing but his own advantage, his own safety. I have listened to such a story this morning of brutal self-seeking! He has wounded men. He will kill them unless we can prevent him. He will create a panic. Nothing can stop him. He is going out now—furious!"

"He must be caught," said Adye. "That is certain."

"But how?" cried Kemp, and suddenly became full of ideas. "You must begin at once. You must set every available man to work. You must prevent his leaving this district. Once he gets away, he may go through the countryside as he wills, killing and maiming. He dreams of a reign of terror! A reign of terror, I tell you. You must set a watch on trains and roads and shipping. The garrison must help. You must wire for help. The only thing that may keep him here is the thought of recovering some books of notes he counts of value. I will tell you of that! There is a man in your police station—Marvel."

"I know," said Adye, "I know. Those books—yes."

"And you must prevent him from eating or sleeping; day and night the country must be astir from him. Food must be locked up and secured, all food, so that he will have to break his way to it. The houses everywhere must be barred against him. Heaven send us cold nights and rain! The whole countryside must begin hunting and keep hunting. I tell you, Adye, he is a danger, a disaster; unless he is pinned

and secured, it is frightful to think of the things that may happen."

"What else can we do?" said Adye. "I must go down at once and begin organizing. But why not come? Yes—you come too! Come, and we must hold a sort of council of war—get Hopps to help—and the railway managers. By Jove! it's urgent. Come along—tell me as we go. What else is there we can do? Put that stuff down."

In another moment Adye was leading the way downstairs. They found the front door open and the policemen standing outside staring at empty air. "He's got away, sir," said one.

"We must go to the central station at once," said Adye. "One of you go on down and get a cob to come up and meet us—quickly. And now, Kemp, what else?"

"Dogs," said Kemp. "Get dogs. They don't see him, but they wind him. Get dogs."

"Good," said Adye. "It's not generally known, but the prison officials over at Halstead know a man with bloodhounds. Dogs. What else?"

"Bear in mind," said Kemp, "his food shows. After eating, his food shows until it is assimilated. So that he has to hide after eating. You must keep on beating—every thicket, every quiet corner. And put all weapons, all implements that might be weapons, away. He can't carry such things for long. And what he can snatch up and strike men with must be hidden away."

"Good again," said Adye. "We shall have him yet!"

"And on the roads," said Kemp, and hesitated.

"Yes?" said Adye.

"Powdered glass," said Kemp. "It's cruel, I know. But think of what he may do!"

Adye drew the air in sharply between his teeth. "It's unsportsmanlike. I don't know. But I'll have powdered glass got ready. If he goes too far—"

"The man's become inhuman, I tell you," said Kemp. "I am as sure he will establish a reign of terror—so soon as he has got over the emotions of this escape—as I am sure I am talking to you. Our only chance is to be ahead. He has cut himself off from his kind. His blood be upon his own head."

THE WICKSTEED MURDER

THE INVISIBLE MAN SEEMS TO HAVE RUSHED OUT OF KEMP'S house in a state of blind fury. A little child playing near Kemp's gateway was violently caught up and thrown aside, so that its ankle was broken, and thereafter for some hours the Invisible Man passed out of human perceptions. No one knows where he went nor what he did. But one can imagine him hurrying through the hot June forenoon, up the hill and on to the open downland behind Port Burdock, raging and despairing at his intolerable fate, and sheltering at last, heated and weary, amid the thickets of Hintondean, to piece together again his shattered schemes against his species. That seems the most probable refuge for him, for there it was he re-asserted himself in a grimly tragical manner about two in the afternoon.

One wonders what his state of mind may have been during that time, and what plans he devised. No doubt he was almost ecstatically exasperated by Kemp's treachery, and though we may be able to understand the motives that led to that deceit, we may still imagine and even sympathize a little with the fury the attempted surprise must have occasioned. Perhaps something of the stunned astonishment of his Oxford Street experiences may have returned to him, for he had evidently counted on Kemp's cooperation in his brutal dream of a terrorized world. At any rate he vanished from human ken about midday, and no living witness can tell what he did until about half-past two. It was a fortunate thing, perhaps, for humanity, but for him it was a fatal inaction.

During that time a growing multitude of men scattered over the countryside were busy. In the morning he had still been simply a legend, a terror; in the afternoon, by virtue chiefly of Kemp's dryly worded proclamation, he was pre-

sented as a tangible antagonist, to be wounded, captured, or overcome, and the countryside began organizing itself with inconceivable rapidity. By two o'clock, even, he might still have removed himself out of the district by getting aboard a train, but after two that became impossible. Every passenger train along the lines on a great parallelogram between Southampton, Manchester, Brighton, and Horsham, traveled with locked doors, and the goods traffic was almost entirely suspended. And in a great circle of twenty miles round Port Burdock, men armed with guns and bludgeons were presently setting out in groups of three and four, with dogs, to beat the roads and fields.

Mounted policemen rode along the country lanes, stopping at every cottage and warning the people to lock up their houses, and keep indoors unless they were armed, and all the elementary schools had broken up by three o'clock, and the children, scared and keeping together in groups, were hurrying home. Kemp's proclamation—signed indeed by Adye—was posted over almost the whole district by four or five o'clock in the afternoon. It gave briefly but clearly all the conditions of the struggle, the necessity of keeping the Invisible Man from food and sleep, the necessity for incessant watchfulness and for a prompt attention to any evidence of his movements. And so swift and decided was the action of the authorities, so prompt and universal was the belief in this strange being, that before nightfall an area of several hundred square miles was in a stringent state of siege. And before nightfall, too, a thrill of horror went through the whole watching, nervous countryside. Going from whispering mouth to mouth, swift and certain over the length and breadth of the county, passed the story of the murder of Mr. Wicksteed.

If our supposition that the Invisible Man's refuge was the Hintondean thickets, then we must suppose that in the early afternoon he sallied out again bent upon some project that involved the use of a weapon. We cannot know what the project was, but the evidence that he had the iron rod in hand before he met Wicksteed is to me at least overwhelming.

Of course we can know nothing of the details of the encounter. It occurred on the edge of a gravel pit, not two hundred yards from Lord Burdock's Lodge gate. Everything points to a desperate struggle—the trampled ground,

the numerous wounds Mr. Wicksteed received, his splintered walking-stick; but why the attack was made—save in a murderous frenzy—it is impossible to imagine. Indeed the theory of madness is almost unavoidable. Mr. Wicksteed was a man of forty-five or forty-six, steward to Lord Burdock, of inoffensive habits and appearance, the very last person in the world to provoke such a terrible antagonist. Against him it would seem the Invisible Man used an iron rod dragged from a broken piece of fence. He stopped this quiet man, going quietly home to his midday meal, attacked him, beat down his feeble defenses, broke his arm, felled him, and smashed his head to a jelly.

Of course he must have dragged this rod out of the fencing before he met his victim; he must have been carrying it ready in his hand. Only two details beyond what has already been stated seem to bear on the matter. One is the circumstance that the gravel pit was not in Mr. Wicksteed's direct path home, but nearly a couple of hundred yards out of his way. The other is the assertion of a little girl to the effect that, going to her afternoon school, she saw the murdered man "trotting" in a peculiar manner across a field toward the gravel pit. Her pantomime of his action suggests a man pursuing something on the ground before him and striking at it ever and again with his walking-stick. She was the last person to see him alive. He passed out of her sight to his death, the struggle being hidden from her only by a clump of beech trees and a slight depression in the ground.

Now this, to the present writer's mind at least, lifts the murder out of the realm of the absolutely wanton. We may imagine that Griffin had taken the rod as a weapon indeed, but without any deliberate intention of using it in murder. Wicksteed may then have come by and noticed this rod inexplicably moving through the air. Without any thought of the Invisible Man—for Port Burdock is ten miles away—he may have pursued it. It is quite conceivable that he may not even have heard of the Invisible Man. One can then imagine the Invisible Man making off—quietly in order to avoid discovering his presence in the neighborhood, and Wicksteed, excited and curious, pursuing this unaccountably locomotive object—finally striking at it.

No doubt the Invisible Man could easily have distanced his middle-aged pursuer under ordinary circumstances, but

the position in which Wicksteed's body was found suggests that he had the ill luck to drive his quarry into a corner between a drift of stinging nettles and the gravel pit. To those who appreciate the extraordinary irascibility of the Invisible Man, the rest of the encounter will be easy to imagine.

But this is pure hypothesis. The only undeniable facts—for stories of children are often unreliable—are the discovery of Wicksteed's body, done to death, and of the bloodstained iron rod flung among the nettles. The abandonment of the rod by Griffin suggests that in the emotional excitement of the affair, the purpose for which he took it—if he had a purpose—was abandoned. He was certainly an intensely egotistical and unfeeling man, but the sight of his victim, his first victim, bloody and pitiful at his feet, may have released some long-pent fountain of remorse which for a time may have flooded whatever scheme of action he had contrived.

After the murder of Mr. Wicksteed, he would seem to have struck across the country toward the downland. There is a story of a voice heard about sunset by a couple of men in a field near Fern Bottom. It was wailing and laughing, sobbing and groaning, and ever and again it shouted. It must have been queer hearing. It drove up across the middle of a clover field and died away toward the hills.

That afternoon the Invisible Man must have learned something of the rapid use Kemp had made of his confidences. He must have found houses locked and secured; he may have loitered about railway stations and prowled about inns, and no doubt he read the proclamations and realized something of the nature of the campaign against him. And as the evening advanced, the fields became dotted here and there with groups of three or four men, and noisy with the yelping of dogs. These men-hunters had particular instructions in the case of an encounter as to the way they should support one another. He avoided them all. We may understand something of his exasperation, and it could have been none the less because he himself had supplied the information that was being used so remorselessly against him. For that day at least he lost heart; for nearly twenty-four hours, save when he turned on Wicksteed, he was a hunted man. In the night, he must have eaten and slept; for in the morning he was himself again, active, powerful,

angry, and malignant, prepared for his last great struggle against the world.

27

THE SIEGE OF KEMP'S HOUSE

KEMP READ A STRANGE MISSIVE, WRITTEN IN PENCIL ON A greasy sheet of paper: *You have been amazingly energetic and clever, this letter ran, though what you stand to gain by it I cannot imagine. You are against me. For a whole day you have chased me; you have tried to rob me of a night's rest. But I have had food in spite of you, I have slept in spite of you, and the game is only beginning. The game is only beginning. There is nothing for it, but to start the Terror. This announces the first day of the Terror. Port Burdock is no longer under the Queen, tell your Colonel of Police, and the rest of them; it is under me—the Terror! This is day one of year one of the new epoch—the Epoch of the Invisible Man. I am Invisible Man the First. To begin with the rule will be easy. The first day there will be one execution for the sake of example—a man named Kemp. Death starts for him today. He may lock himself away, hide himself away, get guards about him, put on armor if he likes; Death, the unseen Death, is coming. Let him take precautions; it will impress my people. Death starts from the pillar box by midday. The letter will fall in as the postman comes along, then off! The game begins. Death starts. Help him not, my people, lest Death fall upon you also. Today Kemp is to die.*

When Kemp read this letter twice, "It's no hoax," he said. "That's his voice! And he means it."

He turned the folded sheet over and saw on the addressed side of it the postmark Hintondean, and the prosaic detail: *2d. to pay.*

He got up slowly, leaving his lunch unfinished—the letter had come by the one o'clock post—and went into his study. He rang for his housekeeper, and told her to go round the

house at once, examine all the fastenings of the windows, and close all the shutters. He closed the shutters of his study himself. From a locked drawer in his bedroom he took a little revolver, examined it carefully, and put it into the pocket of his lounge jacket. He wrote a number of brief notes, one to Colonel Adye, gave them to his servant to take, with explicit instructions as to her way of leaving the house. "There is no danger," he said, and added a mental reservation, *to you*. He remained meditative for a space after doing this, and then returned to his cooling lunch.

He ate with gaps of thought. Finally he struck the table sharply. "We will have him!" he said, "and I am the bait. He will come too far."

He went up to the belvedere, carefully shutting every door after him. "It's a game," he said, "an odd game—but the chances are all for me, Mr. Griffin, in spite of your invisibility. Griffin against the world—with a vengeance."

He stood at the window staring at the hot hillside. "He must get food every day—and I don't envy him. Did he really sleep last night? Out in the open somewhere—secure from collisions. I wish we could get some good cold wet weather instead of the heat—He may be watching me now."

He went close to the window. Something rapped smartly against the brickwork over the frame, and made him start violently back. "I'm getting nervous," said Kemp. But it was five minutes before he went to the window again. "It must have been a sparrow," he said.

Presently he heard the front-door bell ringing, and hurried downstairs. He unbolted and unlocked the door, examined the chain, put it up, and opened cautiously without showing himself. A familiar voice hailed him. It was Adye.

"Your servant's been assaulted, Kemp," he said round the door.

"What!" exclaimed Kemp.

"Had that note of yours taken away from her. He's close about here. Let me in."

Kemp released the chain, and Adye entered through as narrow an opening as possible. He stood in the hall, looking with infinite relief at Kemp refastening the door. "Note was snatched out of her hand. Scared her horribly. She's down at the station. Hysterics. He's close here. What was it about?"

Kemp swore. "What a fool I was," said Kemp. "I might

have known. It's not an hour's walk from Hintondean. Already!"

"What's up?" said Adye.

"Look here!" said Kemp, and led the way into his study. He handed Adye the Invisible Man's letter. Adye read it and whistled softly. "And you—?" said Adye.

"Proposed a trap—like a fool," said Kemp, "and sent my proposal out by a maidservant. To him."

Adye followed Kemp's profanity. "He'll clear out," said Adye.

"Not he," said Kemp.

A resounding smash of glass came from upstairs. Adye had a silvery glimpse of a little revolver half out of Kemp's pocket. "It's a window, upstairs!" said Kemp, and led the way up. There came a second smash while they were still on the staircase. When they reached the study they found two of the three windows smashed, half the room littered with splintered glass, and one big flint lying on the writing table. The two men stopped in the doorway, contemplating the wreckage. Kemp swore again, and as he did so the third window went with a snap like a pistol, hung starred for a moment, and collapsed in jagged, shivering triangles into the room.

"What's this for?" said Adye.

"It's a beginning" said Kemp.

"There's no way of climbing up here?"

"Not for a cat," said Kemp.

"No shutters?"

"Not here. All the downstairs rooms— Hullo!"

Smash, and then whack of boards hit hard came from downstairs. "Confound him!" said Kemp. "That must be—yes—it's one of the bedrooms. He's going to do all the house. But he's a fool. The shutters are up inside, and the glass will fall outside. He'll cut his feet."

Another window proclaimed its destruction. The two men stood on the landing perplexed. "I have it!" said Adye. "Let me have a stick or something, and I'll go down to the station and get the bloodhounds put on. That ought to settle him! They're hard by—not ten minutes—"

Another window went the way of its fellows.

"You haven't a revolver?" asked Adye.

Kemp's hand went to his pocket. Then he hesitated. "I haven't one—at least to spare."

"I'll bring it back," said Adye, "you'll be safe here."

Kemp, ashamed of his momentary lapse from truthfulness, handed him the weapon.

"Now for the door," said Adye.

As they stood hesitating in the hall, they heard one of the bedroom windows crack and clash. Kemp went to the door and began to slip the bolts as silently as possible. His face was a little paler than usual. "You must step straight out," said Kemp. In another moment Adye was on the doorstep and the bolts were dropping back into the staples. He hesitated for a moment, feeling more comfortable with his back against the door. Then he marched, upright and square, down the steps. He crossed the lawn and approached the gate. A little breeze seemed to ripple over the grass. Something moved near him. "Stop a bit," said a Voice, and Adye stopped dead and his hand tightened on the revolver.

"Well?" said Adye, white and grim, and every nerve tense.

"Oblige me by going back to the house," said the Voice, as tense and grim as Adye's.

"Sorry," said Adye a little hoarsely, and moistened his lips with his tongue. The Voice was on his left front, he thought. Suppose he were to take his luck with a shot?

"What are you going for?" said the Voice, and there was a quick movement of the two, and a flash of sunlight from the open lip of Adye's pocket.

Adye desisted and thought. "Where I go," he said slowly, "is my own business." The words were still on his lips, when an arm came round his neck, his back felt a knee, and he was sprawling backward. He drew clumsily and fired absurdly, and in another moment was struck in the mouth and the revolver wrested from his grip. He made a vain clutch at a slippery limb, tried to struggle up and fell back. "Damn!" said Adye. The Voice laughed. "I'd kill you now if it wasn't the waste of a bullet," it said. He saw the revolver in mid-air, six feet off, covering him.

"Well?" said Adye, sitting up.

"Get up," said the Voice.

Adye stood up.

"Attention," said the Voice, and then fiercely: "Don't try any games. Remember I can see your face if you can't see mine. You've got to go back to the house."

"He won't let me in," said Adye.

"That's a pity," said the Invisible Man. "I've got no quarrel with you."

Adye moistened his lips again. He glanced away from the barrel of the revolver and saw the sea far off very blue and dark under the midday sun, the smooth green down, the white cliff of the Head, and the multitudinous town, and suddenly he knew that life was very sweet. His eyes came back to this little metal thing hanging between heaven and earth, six feet away. "What am I to do?" he said sullenly.

"What am *I* to do?" asked the Invisible Man. "You will get help. The only thing is for you to go back."

"I will try. If he lets me in will you promise not to rush the door?"

"I've got no quarrel with you," said the Voice.

Kemp had hurried upstairs after letting Adye out, and now crouching among the broken glass and peering cautiously over the edge of the study window sill, he saw Adye stand parleying with the Unseen. "Why doesn't he fire?" whispered Kemp to himself. Then the revolver moved a little and the glint of the sunlight flashed in Kemp's eyes. He shaded his eyes and tried to see the source of the blinding beam.

"Surely!" he said. "Adye has given up the revolver."

"Promise not to rush the door," Adye was saying. "Don't push a winning game too far. Give a man a chance."

"You go back to the house. I tell you flatly I will not promise anything."

Adye's decision seemed suddenly made. He turned toward the house, walking slowly with his hands behind him. Kemp watched him—puzzled. The revolver vanished, flashed again into sight, vanished again, and became evident on a closer scrutiny as a little dark object following Adye. Then things happened very quickly. Adye leaped backward, swung round, clutched at this little object, missed it, threw up his hands, and fell forward on his face, leaving a little puff of blue in the air. Kemp did not hear the sound of the shot. Adye writhed, raised himself on one arm, fell forward, and lay still.

For a space Kemp remained staring at the quiet carelessness of Adye's attitude. The afternoon was very hot and still; nothing seemed stirring in all the world save a couple of yellow butterflies chasing each other through the shrub-

bery between the house and the road gate. Adye lay on the lawn near the gate. The blinds of all the villas down the hill-road were drawn, but in one little green summerhouse was a white figure, apparently an old man asleep. Kemp scrutinized the surroundings of the house for a glimpse of the revolver, but it had vanished. His eyes came back to Adye. The game was opening well.

Then came a ringing and knocking at the front door, that grew at last tumultuous, but pursuant to Kemp's instructions the servants had locked themselves into their rooms. This was followed by a silence. Kemp sat listening and then began peering cautiously out of the three windows, one after another. He went to the staircase head and stood listening uneasily. He armed himself with his bedroom poker, and went to examine the interior fastenings of the ground-floor windows again. Everything was safe and quiet. He returned to the belvedere. Adye lay motionless over the edge of the gravel just as he had fallen. Coming along the road by the villas were the housemaid and two policemen.

Everything was deadly still. The three people seemed very slow in approaching. He wondered what his antagonist was doing. He started. There was a smash from below. He hesitated and went downstairs again. Suddenly the house resounded with heavy blows and the splintering of wood. He heard a smash and the destructive clang of the iron fastenings of the shutters. He turned the key and opened the kitchen door. As he did so, the shutters, split and splintering, came flying inward. He stood aghast. The window frame, save for one cross bar, was still intact, but only little teeth of glass remained in the frame. The shutters had been driven in with an ax, and now the ax was descending in sweeping blows upon the window frame and the iron bars defending it. Then suddenly it leaped aside and vanished. He saw the revolver lying on the path outside, and then the little weapon sprang into the air. He dodged back. The revolver cracked just too late, and a splinter from the edge of the closing door flashed over his head. He slammed and locked the door, and as he stood outside he heard Griffin shouting and laughing. Then the blows of the ax, with its splitting and smashing consequences, were resumed.

Kemp stood in the passage trying to think. In a moment the Invisible Man would be in the kitchen. This door would

not keep him a moment, and then—

A ringing came at the front door again. It would be the policemen. He ran into the hall, put up the chain, and drew the bolts. He made the girl speak before he dropped the chain, and the three people blundered into the house in a heap, and Kemp slammed the door again.

"The Invisible Man!" said Kemp. "He has a revolver, with two shots—left. He's killed Adye. Shot him anyhow. Didn't you see him on the lawn? He's lying there."

"Who?" said one of the policemen.

"Adye," said Kemp.

"We came in the back way," said the girl.

"What's that smashing?" asked one of the policemen.

"He's in the kitchen—or will be. He has found an ax—"

Suddenly the house was full of the Invisible Man's resounding blows on the kitchen door. The girl stared toward the kitchen, shuddered, and retreated into the dining-room. Kemp tried to explain in broken sentences. They heard the kitchen door give.

"This way," cried Kemp, starting into activity, and bundled the policemen into the dining-room doorway.

"Poker," said Kemp, and rushed to the fender. He handed the poker he had carried to the policeman and the dining-room one to the other. He suddenly flung himself backward.

"Whup!" said one policeman, ducked, and caught the ax on his poker. The pistol snapped its penultimate shot and ripped a valuable painting. The second policeman brought his poker down on the little weapon, as one might knock down a wasp, and sent it rattling to the floor.

At the first clash the girl screamed, stood screaming for a moment by the fireplace, and then ran to open the shutters—possibly with an idea of escaping by the shattered window.

The ax receded into the passage, and fell to a position about two feet from the ground. They could hear the Invisible Man breathing. "Stand away, you two," he said. "I want that man Kemp."

"We want you," said the first policeman, making a quick step forward and wiping with his poker at the Voice. The Invisible Man must have started back, and he blundered into the umbrella stand. Then, as the policeman staggered with the swing of the blow he had aimed, the Invisible Man countered with the ax, the helmet crumpled like

paper, and the blow sent the man spinning to the floor at the head of the kitchen stairs. But the second policeman, aiming behind the ax with his poker, hit something soft that snapped. There was a sharp exclamation of pain and then the ax fell to the ground. The policeman wiped again at vacancy and hit nothing; he put his foot on the ax, and struck again. Then he stood, poker clubbed, listening intent for the slightest movement.

He heard the dining-room window open, and a quick rush of feet within. His companion rolled over and sat up, with the blood running down between his eye and ear. "Where is he?" asked the man on the floor.

"Don't know. I've hit him. He's standing somewhere in the hall. Unless he's slipped past you. Doctor Kemp—sir."

Pause. "Doctor Kemp," cried the policeman again.

The second policeman began struggling to his feet. He stood up. Suddenly the faint pad of bare feet on the kitchen stairs could be heard. "Yap!" cried the first policeman, and incontinently flung his poker. It smashed a little gas bracket.

He made as if he would pursue the Invisible Man downstairs. Then he thought better of it and stepped into the dining-room. "Doctor Kemp," he began, and stopped short—

"Doctor Kemp's in here," he said, as his companion looked over his shoulder.

The dining-room window was wide open, and neither housemaid nor Kemp was to be seen. The second policeman's opinion of Kemp was terse and vivid.

28

THE HUNTER HUNTED

MR. HEELAS, MR. KEMP'S NEAREST NEIGHBOR AMONG THE villa holders, was asleep in his summerhouse when the siege of Kemp's house began. Mr. Heelas was one of the sturdy minority who refused to believe in "all this nonsense" about an Invisible Man. His wife, however, as he was subsequently to be reminded, did. He insisted upon

walking about his garden just as if nothing was the matter, and he went to sleep in the afternoon in accordance with the custom of years. He slept through the smashing of the windows, and then woke up suddenly with curious persuasion of something wrong. He looked across at Kemp's house, rubbed his eyes, and looked again. Then he put his feet to the ground, and sat listening. He said he was damned, and still the strange thing was visible. The house looked as though it had been deserted for weeks—after a violent riot. Every window was broken, and every window, save those of the belvedere study, was blinded by the internal shutters.

"I could have sworn it was all right"—he looked at his watch—"twenty minutes ago."

He became aware of a measured concussion and the clash of glass, far away in the distance. And then, as he sat open-mouthed, came a still more wonderful thing. The shutters of the drawing-room window were flung open violently, and the housemaid in her outdoor hat and garments appeared struggling in a frantic manner to throw up the sash. Suddenly a man appeared beside her, helping her—Dr. Kemp! In another moment the window was open, and the housemaid was struggling out; she pitched forward and vanished among the shrubs. Mr. Heelas stood up, exclaiming vaguely and vehemently at all these wonderful things. He saw Kemp stand on the sill, spring from the window, and reappear almost instantaneously running along a path in the shrubbery and stooping as he ran, like a man who evades observation. He vanished behind a laburnum, and appeared again clambering a fence that abutted on the open down. In a second he had tumbled over and was running at a tremendous pace down the slope toward Mr. Heelas.

"Lord!" cried Mr. Heelas, struck with an idea, "it's that Invisible Man brute! It's right, after all!"

With Mr. Heelas, to think things like that was to act, and his cook watching him from the top window was amazed to see him come pelting toward the house at a good nine miles an hour. "Thought he wasn't afraid," said the cook.

"Mary, just come here!" There was a slamming of doors, a ringing of bells, and the voice of Mr. Heelas bellowing like a bull. "Shut the doors, shut the windows, shut everything! the Invisible Man is coming!" Instantly the house was

full of screams and directions, and scurrying feet. He ran himself to shut the French windows that opened on the veranda; as he did so, Kemp's head and shoulders and knee appeared over the edge of the garden fence. In another moment Kemp had plowed through the asparagus, and was running across the tennis lawn to the house.

"You can't come in," said Mr. Heelas, shutting the bolts. "I'm very sorry if he's after you, but you can't come in!"

Kemp appeared with a face of terror close to the glass, rapping and then shaking frantically at the French window. Then, seeing his efforts were useless, he ran along the veranda, vaulted the end, and went to hammer at the side door. Then he ran round by the side gate to the front of the house, and so into the hill-road. And Mr. Heelas—staring from his window, a face of horror—had scarcely witnessed Kemp vanish ere the asparagus was being trampled this way and that by feet unseen. At that Mr. Heelas fled precipitately upstairs, and the rest of the chase is beyond his purview. But as he passed the staircase window, he heard the side gate slam.

Emerging into the hill-road, Kemp naturally took the downward direction, and so it was he came to run in his own person the very race he had watched with such a critical eye from the belvedere study only four days ago. He ran it well, for a man out of training, and though his face was white and wet, his wits were cool to the last. He ran with wide strides, and wherever a patch of rough ground intervened, wherever there came a patch of raw flints, or a bit of broken glass shone dazzling, he crossed it and left the bare invisible feet that followed to take what line they would.

For the first time in his life Kemp discovered that the hill-road was indescribably vast and desolate, and that the beginnings of the town far below at the hill foot were strangely remote. Never had there been a slower or more painful method of progression than running. All the gaunt villas, sleeping in the afternoon sun, looked locked and barred; no doubt they were locked and barred—by his own orders. But at any rate they might have kept a lookout for an eventuality like this! The town was rising up now, the sea had dropped out of sight behind it, and people down below were stirring. A tram was just arriving at the hill foot. Beyond that was the police station. Was that foot-

steps he heard behind him? Spurt.

The people below were staring at him, one or two were running, and his breath was beginning to saw in his throat. The tram was quite near now, and the Jolly Cricketers was noisily barring its doors. Beyond the tram were posts and heaps of gravel—the drainage works. He had a transitory idea of jumping into the tram and slamming the doors, and then he resolved to go for the police station. In another moment he had passed the door of the Jolly Cricketers, and was in the blistering fag end of street, with human beings about him. The tram driver and his helper—arrested by the sight of his furious haste—stood staring. Farther on the astonished features of navvies appeared above the mounds of gravel.

His pace broke a little, and then he heard the swift pad of his pursuer, and leaped forward again. "The Invisible Man!" he cried to the navvies, with a vague indicative gesture, and by an inspiration leaped the excavation and placed a burly group between him and the chase. Then abandoning the idea of the police station, he turned into a little side street, rushed by a greengrocer's cart, hesitated for the tenth of a second at the door of a sweetstuff shop, and then made for the mouth of an alley that ran back into the main Hill Street again. Two or three little children were playing here, and shrieked and scattered, running at his apparition, and forthwith doors and windows opened and excited mothers revealed their hearts. Out he shot into Hill Street again, three hundred yards from the tram-line end, and immediately he became aware of a tumultuous vociferation and running people.

He glanced up the street toward the hill. Hardly a dozen yards off ran a huge navvy, cursing in fragments and slashing viciously with a spade, and hard behind him came the tram conductor with his fists clenched. Up the street others followed these two, striking and shouting. Down toward the town, men and women were running, and he noticed clearly one man coming out of a shop door with a stick in his hand. "Spread out! Spread out!" cried someone. Kemp suddenly grasped the altered condition of the chase. He stopped, and looked round, panting. "He's close here!" he cried. "Form a line across—"

"Aha!" shouted a voice.

He was hit hard under the ear, and went reeling, trying

to face round toward his unseen antagonist. He just managed to keep his feet, and he struck a vain counter in the air. Then he was hit again under the jaw, and sprawled headlong on the ground. In another moment a knee compressed his diaphragm, and a couple of eager hands gripped his throat, but the grip of one was weaker than the other; he grasped the wrists, heard a cry of pain from his assailant, and then the spade of the navvy came whirling through the air above him, and struck something with a dull thud. He felt a drop of moisture on his face. The grip at his throat suddenly relaxed, and with a convulsive effort, Kemp loosed himself, grasped a limp shoulder, and rolled uppermost. He gripped the unseen elbows near the ground. "I've got him!" screamed Kemp. "Help! Help hold! He's down! Hold his feet!"

In another second there was a simultaneous rush upon the struggle, and a stranger coming into the road suddenly might have thought an exceptionally savage game of Rugby football was in progress. And there was no shouting after Kemp's cry—only a sound of blows and feet and a heavy breathing.

Then came a mighty effort, and the Invisible Man threw off a couple of his antagonists and rose to his knees. Kemp clung to him in front like a hound to a stag, and a dozen hands gripped, clutched, and tore at the Unseen. The tram conductor suddenly got the neck and shoulders and hugged him back.

Down went the heap of struggling men again and rolled over. There was, I am afraid, some savage kicking. Then suddenly a wild scream of "Mercy! Mercy!" that died down swiftly to a sound like choking.

"Get back, you fools!" cried the muffled voice of Kemp, and there was a vigorous shoving back of stalwart forms. "He's hurt, I tell you. Stand back!"

There was a brief struggle to clear a space, and then the circle of eager faces saw the doctor kneeling, as it seemed, fifteen inches in the air, and holding invisible arms to the ground. Behind him a constable gripped invisible ankles.

"Don't you leave go of en," cried the big navvy, holding a blood-stained spade; "he's shamming."

"He's not shamming," said the doctor, cautiously raising his knee, "and I'll hold him." His face was bruised and already going red; he spoke thickly because of a bleeding

lip. He released one hand and seemed to be feeling at the face. "The mouth's all wet," he said. And then, "Good God!"

He stood up abruptly and then knelt down on the ground by the side of the thing unseen. There was a pushing and shuffling, a sound of heavy feet as fresh people turned up to increase the pressure of the crowd. People now were coming out of the houses. The doors of the Jolly Cricketers were suddenly wide open. Very little was said.

Kemp, felt about, his hand seeming to pass through empty air. "He's not breathing," he said, and then: "I can't feel his heart. His side—ugh!"

Suddenly an old woman, peering under the arm of the big navvy, screamed sharply. "Looky there!" she said, and and thrust out a wrinkled finger.

And looking where she pointed, everyone saw, faint and transparent as though it was made of glass, so that veins and arteries and bones and nerves could be distinguished, the outline of a hand, a hand limp and prone. It grew clouded and opaque even as they stared.

"Hullo!" cried the constable. "Here's his feet a-showing!"

And so, slowly, beginning at his hands and feet and creeping along his limbs to the vital centers of his body, that strange change continued. It was like the slow spreading of a poison. First came the little white nerves, a hazy gray sketch of a limb, then the glassy bones and intricate arteries, then the flesh and skin, first a faint foginess, and then growing rapidly dense and opaque. Presently they could see his crushed chest and his shoulders, and the dim outline of his drawn and battered features.

When at last the crowd made way for Kemp to stand erect, there lay, naked and pitiful on the ground, the bruised and broken body of a young man about thirty. His hair and beard were white—not gray with age, but white with the whiteness of albinism, and his eyes were like garnets. His hands were clenched, his eyes wide open, and his expression was one of anger and dismay.

"Cover his face!" said a man. "For Gawd's sake, cover that face!" and three little children, pushing forward through the crowd, were suddenly twisted round and sent packing off again. Someone brought a sheet from the Jolly Cricketers, and having covered him, they carried him into that house.

THE EPILOGUE

SO ENDS THE STORY OF THE STRANGE AND EVIL EXPERIMENT of the Invisible Man. And if you would learn more of him you must go to a little inn near Port Stowe and talk to the landlord. The sign of the inn is an empty board save for a hat and boots, and the name is the title of this story. The landlord is a short and corpulent little man with a nose of cylindrical protrusion, wiry hair, and a sporadic rosiness of visage. Drink generously, and he will tell you generously of all the things that happened to him after that time, and of how the lawyers tried to do him out of the treasure found upon him.

"When they found they couldn't prove whose money was which, I'm blessed," he says, "if they didn't try to make me out a blooming treasure trove! Do I *look* like a Treasure Trove? And then a gentleman gave me a guinea a night to tell the story at the Empire Music 'all—just tell 'em in my own words—barring one."

And if you want to cut off the flow of his reminiscences abruptly, you can always do so by asking if there weren't three manuscript books in the story. He admits there were and proceeds to explain, with asseverations that everybody thinks *he* has 'em! But bless you! he hasn't. "The Invisible Man it was took 'em off to hide 'em when I cut and ran for Port Stowe. It's that Mr. Kemp put people on with the idea of *my* having 'em."

And then he subsides into a pensive state, watches you furtively, bustles nervously with glasses, and presently leaves the bar.

He is a bachelor man—his tastes were ever bachelor, and there are no womenfolk in the house. Outwardly he buttons—it is expected of him—but in his more vital privacies, in the matter of braces for example, he still turns to string. He conducts his house without enterprise, but with eminent

decorum. His movements are slow, and he is a great thinker. But he has a reputation for wisdom and for a respectable parsimony in the village, and his knowledge of the roads of the South of England would beat Cobbett.

And on Sunday mornings, every Sunday morning, all the year round, while he is closed to the outer world, and every night after ten, he goes into his bar parlor, bearing a glass of gin faintly tinged with water, and having placed this down, he locks the door and examines the blinds, and even looks under the table. And then, being satisfied of his solitude, he unlocks the cupboard and a box in the cupboard and a drawer in that box, and produces three volumes bound in brown leather, and places them solemnly in the middle of the table. The covers are weather-worn and tinged with an algal green—for once they sojourned in a ditch and some of the pages have been washed blank by dirty water. The landlord sits down in an armchair, fills a long clay pipe slowly—gloating over the books the while. Then he pulls one toward him and opens it, and begins to study it—turning over the leaves backward and forward.

His brows are knit and his lips move painfully. "Hex, little two up in the air, cross, and a fiddle-de-dee. Lord! what a one he was for intellect!"

Presently he relaxes and leans back, and blinks through his smoke across the room at things invisible to other eyes. "Full of secrets," he says. "Wonderful secrets!"

"Once I get the haul of them—*Lord!* I wouldn't do what *he* did; I'd just—well!" He pulls at his pipe.

So he lapses into a dream, the undying wonderful dream of his life. And though Kemp has fished unceasingly, and Adye has questioned closely, no human being save the landlord knows those books are there, with the subtle secret of invisibility and a dozen other strange secrets written therein. And none other will know of them until he dies.

THE ABSOLUTE AT LARGE

O Lord, grant that in some way it may rain every day, say from about midnight until three o'clock in the morning . . . gentle and warm so that it can soak in . . . that there may be plenty of dew and little wind, enough worms, no plant-lice and snails, no mildew, and that once a week thin liquid manure and guano may fall from heaven.

—The Gardener's Year

KAREL CAPEK

KAREL CAPEK, BORN IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1890, IS BEST KNOWN for his play *R.U.R.*, in which the word "robot" was introduced. (Capek's robots were artificially created human beings, what we now call "androids.") He had a doctorate in philosophy, and his works are philosophical in intent—behind the satirical humor and wit there is always a deep and anguished concern with man's fate.

Thomas Mark's translation of *The Absolute at Large* was published in this country in 1927 and never reprinted. Most science fiction readers have never seen a copy, although it is one of Capek's funniest and most moving novels. The reason for this neglect probably lies in the book's unevenness. It would be impertinent to accuse a dead author of padding—but, for whatever reason, there are long chapters in *The Absolute at Large*—nearly half the book—that go nowhere and contribute nothing to the story. These chapters are omitted in the present version; the story now appears, for the first time, in what seems to me its proper length and form.

THE ADVERTISEMENT

ON NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1943, G. H. BONDY, HEAD OF THE GREAT Metallo-Electric Company, was sitting as usual reading his paper. He skipped the news from the theatre of war rather disrespectfully, avoided the Cabinet crisis, then crowded on sail (for the *People's Journal*, which had grown long ago to five times its ancient size, now afforded enough canvas for an ocean voyage) for the Finance and Commerce section. Here he cruised about for quite a while, then furled his sails, and abandoned himself to his thoughts.

"The Coal Crisis!" he said to himself. "Mines getting worked out; the Ostrava basin suspending work for years. Heavens above, it's a sheer disaster! We'll have to import Upper Silesian coal. Just work out what that will add to the cost of our manufacturers, and then talk about competition. We're in a pretty fix. And if Germany raises her tariff, we may as well shut up shop. And the Industrial Banks going down, too! What a wretched state of affairs! What a hopeless, stupid, stifling state of affairs! Oh, damn the crisis!"

Here G. H. Bondy, Chairman of the Board of Directors, came to a pause. Something was fidgeting him and would not let him rest. He traced it back to the last page of his discarded newspaper. It was the syllable TION, only part of a word, for the fold of the paper came just in front of the T. It was this very incompleteness which had so curiously impressed itself upon him.

"Well, hang it, it's probably IRON PRODUCTION," Bondy pondered vaguely, "or PREVENTION, or, maybe, RESTITUTION— And the Azote shares have gone down, too. The stagnation's simply shocking. The position's so bad that it's ridiculous— But that's nonsense: who would advertise the RESTITUTION of anything? More likely RESIGNATION. It's sure to be RESIGNATION."

With a touch of annoyance, G. H. Bondy spread out the

newspaper to dispose of this irritating word. It had now vanished amid the chequering of the small advertisements. He hunted for it from one column to another, but it had concealed itself with provoking ingenuity. Mr. Bondy then worked from the bottom up, and finally started again from the right-hand side of the page. The contumacious TION was not to be found.

Mr. Bondy did not give in. He refolded the paper along its former creases, and behold, the detestable TION leaped forth on the very edge. Keeping his finger firmly on the spot, he swiftly spread the paper out once more, and found— Mr. Bondy swore under his breath. It was nothing but a very modest, very commonplace small advertisement:

INVENTION

Highly remunerative, suitable for any factory, for immediate sale, personal reasons. Apply R. Marek, Engineer, Břevnov, 1651.

“So that’s all it was!” thought G. H. Bondy. “Some sort of patent braces; just a cheap swindle or some crazy fellow’s pet plaything. And here I’ve wasted five minutes on it! I’m getting scatterbrained myself. What a wretched state of affairs! And not a hint of improvement anywhere!”

He settled himself in a rocking chair to savour in more comfort the full bitterness of this wretched state of affairs. True, the M.E.C. had ten factories and 34,000 employees. The M.E.C. was the leading producer of iron. The M.E.C. had no competitor as regards boilers. The M.E.C. grates were world-famous. But after thirty years’ hard work, gracious Heavens, surely one would have got bigger results elsewhere—

G. H. Bondy sat up with a jerk. “R. Marek, Engineer; R. Marek, Engineer. Half a minute: mightn’t that be that red-haired Marek—let’s see, what was his name? Rudolph, Rudy Marek, my old chum Rudy of the Technical School? Sure enough, here it is in the advertisement: ‘R. Marek, Engineer.’ Rudy, you rascal, is it possible? Well, you’ve not got on very far in the world, my poor fellow! Selling ‘a highly remunerative invention.’ Ha! ha! ‘... for personal reasons.’ We know all about those ‘personal reasons.’ No money, isn’t that what it is? You want to catch some jaw of

a manufacturer on a nicely limed 'patent,' do you? Oh, well, you always had rather a notion of turning the world upside down. Ah, my lad, where are all our fine notions now! And those extravagant, romantic days when we were young!"

Bondy lay back in his chair once more.

"It's quite likely it really is Marek," he reflected. "Still, Marek had a head for science. He was a bit of a talker, but there was a touch of genius about the lad. He had ideas. In other respects he was a fearfully unpractical fellow. An absolute fool, in fact. It's very surprising that he isn't a Professor," mused Mr. Bondy. "I haven't set eyes on him for twenty years. God knows what he has been up to; perhaps he's come right down in the world. Yes, he must be down and out, living away over in Břevnov, poor chap—and getting a living out of inventions! What an awful finish!"

He tried to imagine the straits of the fallen inventor. He managed to picture a horribly shaggy and dishevelled head, surrounded by dismal paper walls like those in a film. There is no furniture, only a mattress in the corner, and a pitiful model made of spools, nails, and match ends on the table. A murky window looks out on a little yard. Upon this scene of unspeakable indigence enters a visitor in rich furs. "I have come to have a look at your invention." The half-blind inventor fails to recognize his old schoolfellow. He humbly bows his tousled head, looks about for a seat to offer to his guest, and then, oh Heaven! with his poor, stiff, shaking fingers he tries to get his sorry invention going—it's some crazy perpetual-motion device—and mumbles confusedly that it should work, and certainly *would* work, if only he had—if only he could buy—. The fur-coated visitor looks all around the garret, and suddenly he takes a leather wallet from his pocket and lays on the table one, two (Mr. Bondy takes fright and cries "That's enough!") three thousand-crown notes. ("One would have been quite enough—to go on with, I mean," protests something in Mr. Bondy's brain.)

"There is—something to carry on the work with, Mr. Marek. No, no, you're not in any way indebted to me. Who am I? That doesn't matter. Just take it that I am a friend."

Bondy found this scene very pleasant and touching.

"I'll send my secretary to Marek," he resolved; "tomor-

row without fail. And what shall I do today? It's a holiday; I'm not going to the works. My time's my own—a wretched state things are in! Nothing to do all day long! Suppose I went round today myself.”

G. H. Bondy hesitated. It would be a bit of an adventure to go and see for oneself how that queer fellow was struggling along in Břevnov.

“After all, we were such chums! And old times have their claim on one. Yes, I'll go!” decided Mr. Bondy. And he went.

He had rather a boring time while his car was gliding all over Břevnov in search of a mean hovel bearing the number 1651. They had to inquire at the police station.

“Marek, Marek,” said the inspector, searching his memory. “That must be Marek the engineer, of Marek and Co., the electric lamp factory, 1651, Mixa Street.”

The electric lamp factory! Bondy felt disappointed, even annoyed. Rudy Marek wasn't living up in a garret, then! He was a manufacturer and wanted to sell some invention or other “for personal reasons.” If that didn't smell of bankruptcy, his name wasn't Bondy.

“Do you happen to know how Mr. Marek is doing?” he asked the police inspector, with a casual air, as he took his seat in the car.

“Oh, splendidly!” the inspector answered. “He's got a very fine business.” Local pride made him add, “The firm's very well-known”; and he amplified this with: “A very wealthy man, and a learned one, too. He does nothing but make experiments.”

“Mixa Street!” cried Bondy to his chauffeur.

“Third on the right!” the inspector called after the car.

Bondy was soon ringing at the residential part of quite a pretty little factory.

“It's all very nice and clean here,” he remarked to himself. “Flower beds in the yard, creeper on the walls. Humph! There always was a touch of the philanthropist and reformer about that confounded Marek.” And at that moment Marek himself came out on the steps to meet him; Rudy Marek, awfully thin and serious-looking, up in the clouds, so to speak. It gave Bondy a queer pang to find him neither so young as he used to be nor so unkempt as that inventor; so utterly different from what Bondy had imagined that he was scarcely recognizable. But before he

could fully realize his disillusionment, Marek stretched out his hand and said quietly, "Well, so you've come at last, Bondy! I've been expecting you!"

2

THE KARBURATOR

"I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU!" MAREK REPEATED, WHEN HE had seated his guest in a comfortable leather chair. Nothing on earth would have induced Bondy to own up to his vision of the fallen inventor. "Just fancy!" he said, with a rather forced gaiety. "What a coincidence! It struck me only this very morning that we hadn't seen one another for twenty years. Twenty years, Rudy, think of it!"

"Hm," said Marek. "And so you want to buy my invention."

"Buy it?" said G. H. Bondy hesitatingly. "I really don't know—I haven't even given it a thought. I wanted to see you and—"

"Oh, come, you needn't pretend," Marek interrupted him. "I knew that you were coming. You'd be sure to, for a thing like this. This kind of invention is just in your line. There's a lot to be done with it." He made an eloquent motion with his hand, coughed, and began again more deliberately. "The invention I am going to show you means a bigger revolution in technical methods than Watt's invention of the steam engine. To give you its nature briefly, it provides, putting it theoretically, for the *complete utilization of atomic energy.*"

Bondy concealed a yawn. "But tell me, what have you been doing all these twenty years?"

Marek glanced at him with some surprise.

"Modern science teaches that all matter—that is to say, its atoms—is composed of a vast number of units of energy. An atom is in reality a collection of electrons, *i.e.*, of the tiniest particles of electricity."

"That's tremendously interesting," Bondy broke in. "I

was always weak in physics, you know. But you're not looking well, Marek. By the way, how did you happen to come by this playth—this, er—factory?"

"I? Oh, quite by accident. I invented a new kind of filament for electric bulbs—but that's nothing; I only came upon it incidentally. You see, for twenty years I've been working on the combustion of matter. Tell me yourself, Bondy, what is the greatest problem of modern industry?"

"Doing business," said Bondy. "And are you married yet?"

"I'm a widower," answered Marek, leaping up excitedly. "No, business has nothing to do with it, I tell you. It's combustion. The complete utilization of the heat-energy contained in matter! Just consider that we use hardly one hundred-thousandth of the heat that there is in coal, and that could be extracted from it! Do you realize that!"

"Yes, coal is terribly dear!" said Mr. Bondy sapiently.

Marek sat down and cried disgustedly, "Look here, if you haven't come here about my Karburator, Bondy, you can go."

"Go ahead, then," Bondy returned, anxious to conciliate him.

Marek rested his head in his hands, and after a struggle came out with, "For twenty years I've been working on it, and now—now, I'll sell it to the first man who comes along! My magnificent dream! The greatest invention of all the ages! Seriously, Bondy, I tell you, it's something really amazing."

"No doubt, in the present wretched state of affairs," assented Bondy.

"No, without any qualification at all, amazing. Do you realize that it means the utilization of atomic energy without any residue whatever?"

"Aha," said Bondy. "So we're going to do our heating with atoms. Well, why not?—You've got a nice place here, Rudy. Small and pleasant. How many hands do you employ?"

Marek took no notice. "You know," he said thoughtfully, "it's all the same thing, whatever you call it—the utilization of atomic energy, or the complete combustion of matter, or the disintegration of matter. You can call it what you please."

"I'm in favour of 'combustion'!" said Mr. Bondy. "It sounds more familiar."

"But 'disintegration' is more exact—to break up the atoms into electrons, and harness the electrons and make them work. Do you understand that?"

"Perfectly," Bondy assured him. "The point is to harness them!"

"Well, imagine, say, that there are two horses at the ends of a rope, pulling with all their might in opposite directions. Do you know what you have then?"

"Some kind of sport, I suppose," suggested Mr. Bondy.

"No, a state of repose. The horses pull, but they stay where they are. And if you were to cut the rope—"

"—The horses would fall over," cried G. H. Bondy, with a flash of inspiration.

"No, but they would start running; they would become energy released. Now, pay attention. Matter is a team in that very position. Cut the bonds that hold its electrons together, and they will—"

"Run loose!"

"Yes, but we can catch and harness them, don't you see? Or put it to yourself this way: we burn a piece of coal, say, to produce heat. We do get a little heat from it, but we also get ashes, coal gas, and soot. So we don't lose the matter altogether, do we?"

"No. —Won't you have a cigar?"

"No, I won't.—But the matter which is left still contains a vast quantity of unused atomic energy. If we used up the whole of the atomic energy, we should use up the whole of the atoms. In short, *the matter would vanish altogether.*"

"Aha! Now I understand."

"It's just as though we were to grind corn badly—as if we ground up the thin outer husk and threw the rest away, just as we throw away ashes. When the grinding is perfect, there's nothing or next to nothing left of the grain, is there? In the same way, when there is perfect combustion, there's nothing or next to nothing left of the matter we burn. It's ground up completely. It is used up. It returns to its original nothingness. You know, it takes a tremendous amount of energy to make matter exist at all. Take away its existence, compel it not to be, and you thereby release an enormous supply of power. That's how it is, Bondy."

"Aha. That's not bad."

"Pflüger, for instance, calculates that one kilogram of coal contains twenty-three billions of calories. I think that Pflüger exaggerates."

"Decidedly."

"I have arrived at seven billions myself, theoretically. But even that signifies that one kilogram of coal, if it underwent complete combustion, would run a good-sized factory for several hundred hours!"

"The devil it does!" cried Mr. Bondy, springing from his chair.

"I can't give you the exact number of hours. I've been burning half a kilogram of coal for six weeks at a pressure of thirty kilogram-meters and, man alive," said the engineer in a whisper, turning pale, "it's still going on—and on—and on."

Bondy was embarrassed; he stroked his smooth round chin. "Listen, Marek," he began, hesitatingly. "You're surely—er—a bit—er—overworked."

Marek's hand thrust the suggestion aside. "Not a bit of it. If you'd only get up physics a bit, I could give you an explanation of my Karburator¹ in which the combustion takes place. It involves a whole chapter of advanced physics, you know. But you'll see it downstairs in the cellar. I shovelled half a kilogram of coal into the machine, then I shut it up and had it officially sealed in the presence of witnesses, so that no one could put any more coal in. Go and have a look at it for yourself—go on—go now! You won't understand it, anyway, but—go down to the cellar! Go on down, man, I tell you!"

"Won't you come with me?" asked Bondy in astonishment.

"No, you go alone. And—I say, Bondy—don't stay down there long."

¹ This name which Marek gave to his atomic boiler is, of course, quite incorrect, and is one of the melancholy results of the ignorance of Latin among technicians. A more exact term would have been Komburator, Atomic Kettle, Karbowatt, Disintegrator, Motor M, Bondymover, Hylergon, Molecular Disintegration Dynamo, E. W., and other designations which were later proposed. It was, of course, the bad one that was generally adopted.

"Why not?" asked Bondy, growing a trifle suspicious.

"Oh, nothing much. Only I've a notion that perhaps it's not quite healthy down there. Turn on the light, the switch is just by the door. That noise down in the cellar doesn't come from my machine. It works noiselessly, steadily, and without any smell. —The roaring is only a—a ventilator. Well, now, you go on. I'll wait here. Then you can tell me—"

Bondy went down the cellar steps, quite glad to be away from that madman for a while (quite mad, no doubt whatever about it) and rather worried as to the quickest means of getting out of the place altogether. Why, just look, the cellar had a huge thick reinforced door just like an armored safe in a bank. And now let's have a light. The switch was just by the door. And there in the middle of the arched concrete cellar, clean as a monastery cell, lay a gigantic copper cylinder resting on cement supports. It was closed on all sides except at the top, where there was a grating bedecked with seals. Inside the machine all was darkness and silence. With a smooth and regular motion the cylinder thrust forth a piston which slowly rotated a heavy flywheel. That was all. Only the ventilator in the cellar window kept up a ceaseless rattle.

Perhaps it was the draught from the ventilator or something—but Mr. Bondy felt a peculiar breeze upon his brow, and an eerie sensation as though his hair were standing on end; and then it seemed as if he were being borne through boundless space; and then as though he were floating in the air without any sensation of his own weight. G. H. Bondy fell on his knees, lost in a bewildering, shining ecstasy. He felt as if he must shout and sing, he seemed to hear about him the rustle of unceasing and innumerable wings. And suddenly someone seized him violently by the hand and dragged him from the cellar. It was Marek, wearing over his head a mask or a helmet like a diver's, and he hauled Bondy up the stairs.

Up in the room he pulled off his metal head-covering and wiped away the sweat that soaked his brow.

"Only just in time," he gasped, showing tremendous agitation.

PANTHEISM

G. H. BONDY FELT RATHER AS THOUGH HE WERE DREAMING. Marek settled him in an easy chair with quite maternal solicitude, and made haste to bring some brandy.

"Here, drink this up quickly," he jerked out hoarsely, offering him the glass with a trembling hand. "*You* came over queer down there too, didn't you?"

"On the contrary," Bondy answered unsteadily. "It was—it was beautiful, old chap! I felt as if I were flying, or something like that."

"Yes, yes," said Marek quickly. "That's exactly what I mean. As though you were flying along, or rather soaring upward, wasn't that it?"

"It was a feeling of perfect bliss," said Mr. Bondy. "I think it's what you'd call being transported. As if there was something down there—something—"

"Something—holy?" asked Marek hesitatingly.

"Perhaps. Yes, man alive, you're right. I never go to church, Rudy, never in my life, but down in that cellar I felt as if I were in church. Tell me, man, what did I do down there?"

"You went on your knees," Marek muttered with a bitter smile, and began striding up and down the room.

Bondy stroked his bald head in bewilderment.

"That's extraordinary. But come, on my knees? Well, then, tell me what—what is there in the cellar that acts on one so queerly?"

"The Karburator," growled Marek, gnawing his lips. His cheeks seemed even more sunken than before and were as pale as death.

"But, confound it, man," cried Bondy in amazement, "how can it be?"

The engineer only shrugged his shoulders, and with bent head went on pacing up and down the room.

G. H. Bondy's eyes followed him with childish astonishment. "The man's crazy," he said to himself. "All the same, what the devil is it that comes over one in that cellar? That tormenting bliss, that tremendous security, that terror, that overwhelming feeling of devotion, or whatever you like to call it." Mr. Bondy arose and poured himself out another dash of brandy.

"I say, Marek," he said, "I've got it now."

"Got what?" exclaimed Marek, halting.

"That business in the cellar. That queer psychical condition. It's some form of poisoning, isn't it?"

Marek gave an angry laugh. "Oh, yes, of course, poisoning!"

"I thought so at once," declared Bondy, his mind at rest in an instant. "That apparatus of yours produces something, ah—er—something like ozone, doesn't it? Or more likely poisonous gas. And when anyone inhales it, it—er—poisons him or excites him somehow, isn't that it? Why, of course, man, it's nothing but poisonous gases; they're probably given off somehow by the combustion of the coal in that—that Karburator of yours. Some sort of illuminating gas or paradise gas, or phosgene or something of the sort. That's why you've put in the ventilator, and that's why you wear a gas mask when you go into the cellar, isn't it? Just some confounded gases."

"If only there were nothing but *gases!*" Marek burst out, shaking his fists threateningly. "Look here, Bondy, that's why I must sell that Karburator! I simply can't stand it—I can't stand it—I *can't stand it*," he shouted, well-nigh weeping. "I never dreamed my Karburator would do anything like *this*—this—terrifying mischief! Just think, it's been going on like *that* from the very beginning! And everyone feels it who comes near the thing. You haven't any notion even yet, Bondy. But our porter caught it properly."

"Poor fellow!" said the astonished Bondy, full of sympathy. "And did he die of it?"

"No, but he got *converted*," cried Marek in despair. "Bondy, you're a man I can confide in. My invention, my Karburator, has one terrible defect. Nevertheless, you're going to buy it or else take it from me as a gift. You will,

Bondy—even if it spews forth demons. It doesn't matter to you, Bondy, so long as you can get your millions out of it. And you'll get them, man. It's a stupendous thing, I tell you—; but I don't want to have anything more to do with it. You haven't such a sensitive conscience as I have, you know, Bondy. It'll bring in millions, thousands of millions; but it will lay a frightful load upon your conscience. Make up your mind!"

"Oh, leave me alone," Mr. Bondy protested. "If it gives off poisonous gases, the authorities will prohibit it, and there's an end of it. You know the wretched state of affairs here. Now in America—"

"It isn't poisonous gases," Marek exclaimed. "It's *something a thousand times worse*. Mark what I tell you, Bondy, it's something beyond human reason, but there's not a scrap of deception about it. Well, then, my Karburator actually does burn up matter, causes its utter combustion, so that not even a grain of dust remains. Or rather, it breaks it up, crushes it, splits it up into electrons, consumes it, grinds it—I don't know how to express it—in short, uses it up completely. You have no idea what a colossal amount of energy is contained in the atoms. With half a hundredweight of coal in the Karburator you can sail right round the world in a steamship, you can light the whole city of Prague, you can supply power for the whole of a huge factory, or anything you like. A bit of coal the size of a nut will do the heating and the cooking for a whole family. And ultimately we shan't even require coal; we can do our heating with the first pebble or handful of dirt we pick up in front of the house. Every scrap of matter has in it more energy than an enormous boiler; you've only to extract it. You've only to know how to secure total combustion! Well, Bondy, I can do it; my Karburator can do it. You'll admit, Bondy, that it has been worthwhile toiling over it for twenty years."

"Look here, Rudy," Bondy began slowly, "it's all very extraordinary—but I believe you, so to speak. On my soul, I do believe you. You know, when I stood in front of that Karburator of yours, I felt that I was in the presence of something overpoweringly great, something a man could not withstand. I can't help it: I believe you. Down there in the cellar you have something uncanny, something that will overturn the whole world."

"Alas, Bondy," Marek whispered anxiously, "that's just where the trouble is. Listen, and I'll tell you the whole thing. Have you ever read Spinoza?"

"No."

"No more had I. But now, you see, I am beginning to read that sort of thing. I don't understand it—it's terribly difficult stuff for us technical people—but there's something in it. Do you by any chance believe in God?"

"I? Well, now—" G. H. Bondy deliberated. "Upon my word, I couldn't say. Perhaps there is a God, but He's on some other planet. Not on ours. Oh, well, that sort of thing doesn't fit in with our times at all. Tell me, what makes you drag that into it?"

"I don't believe in anything," said Marek in a hard voice. "I don't want to believe. I have always been an atheist. I believed in matter and in progress and in nothing else. I'm a scientific man, Bondy; and science cannot admit the existence of God."

"From the business point of view," Mr. Bondy remarked, "it's a matter of indifference. If He wants to exist, in Heaven's name, let Him. We aren't mutually exclusive."

"But from the scientific point of view, Bondy," cried the engineer sternly, "it is absolutely intolerable. It's a case of Him or science. I don't assert that God does not exist; I only assert that He *ought* not to exist, or at least ought not to let Himself be seen. And I believe that science is crowding Him out step by step, or at any rate is preventing Him from letting Himself be seen; and I believe that that is the greatest mission of science."

"Possibly," said Bondy calmly. "But go on."

"And now just imagine, Bondy, that— But wait, I'll put it to you this way. Do you know what Pantheism is? It's the belief that God, or the Absolute, if you prefer it, is manifest in everything that exists. In men, as in stones, in the grass, the water—everywhere. And do you know what Spinoza teaches? That matter is only the outward manifestation, only one phase of the divine substance, the other phase of which is spirit. And do you know what Fechner teaches?"

"No, I don't," the other admitted.

"Fechner teaches that everything, everything that is, is penetrated with the divine, that God fills with His being

the whole of the matter in the world. And do you know Leibniz? Leibniz teaches that physical matter is composed of physical atoms, monads, whose nature is divine. What do you say to that?"

"I don't know," said G. H. Bondy. "I don't understand it."

"Nor do I. It's fearfully abstruse. But let us assume, for the sake of argument, that God is contained in all forms of physical matter, that He is, as it were, imprisoned in it. And when you smash this matter up completely, He flies out of it as though from a box. He is suddenly set free. He is released from matter as illuminating gas is from coal. You have only to burn one single atom up completely, and immediately the whole cellar is filled with the Absolute. It's simply appalling how quickly it spreads."

"Hold on," Mr. Bondy interrupted. "Say that all over again, but say it slowly."

"Look at it like this then" said Marek. "We're assuming that all matter contains the Absolute in some state of confinement. We can call it a latent imprisoned force, or simply say that as God is omnipresent He is therefore present in all matter and in every particle of matter. And now suppose you utterly destroy a piece of matter, apparently leaving not the slightest residue. Then, since all matter is really Matter plus Absolute, what you have destroyed is *only* the matter, and you're left with an indestructible residue—free and active Absolute. You're left with the chemically unanalyzable, immaterial residue, which shows no spectrum lines, neither atomic weight nor chemical affinity, no obedience to Boyle's law, none, none whatever, of the properties of matter. What is left behind is pure God. A chemical nullity which acts with monstrous energy. Being immaterial, it is not subject to the laws of matter. Thence, it already follows that its manifestations are contrary to nature and downright miraculous. All this proceeds from the assumption that God is present in all matter. Can you imagine, for the sake of argument, that He is really so present?"

"I certainly can," said Bondy. "What then?"

"Good," said Marek, rising to his feet. "Then *it's the solemn truth.*"

GOD IN THE CELLAR

G. H. BONDY SUCKED MEDITATIVELY AT HIS CIGAR. "AND HOW did you find it out, old chap?" he asked at last.

"By the effect on myself," said the engineer, resuming his march up and down the room. "As a result of its complete disintegration of matter, my Perfect Karburator manufactures a by-product: pure and unconfined Absolute, God in a chemically pure form. At one end, so to speak, it emits mechanical power, and at the other, the divine principle. Just as when you split water up into hydrogen and oxygen, only on an immensely larger scale."

"Hm," said Mr. Bondy. "And then—?"

"I've an idea," continued Marek cautiously, "that there are many of the elect who can separate the material substance in themselves from the divine substance. They can release or distill the Absolute, as it were, from their material selves. Christ and the miracle-workers, fakirs, mediums, and prophets have achieved it by means of their psychic power. My Karburator does it by a purely mechanical process. It acts, you might say, as a factory for the Absolute."

"Facts," said G. H. Bondy. "Stick to facts."

"These are facts. I constructed my Perfect Karburator only in theory to begin with. Then I made a little model, which wouldn't go. The fourth model was the first that really worked. It was only about so big, but it ran quite nicely. But even while I was working with it on this small scale, I felt peculiar physical effects—a strange exhilaration—a 'fey' feeling. But I thought it was due to being so pleased about the invention, or to being overworked, perhaps. It was then that I first began to prophesy and perform miracles."

"To do *what*?" Bondy cried.

"To prophesy and perform miracles," Marek repeated

gloomily. "I had moments of astounding illumination. I saw, for instance, quite clearly, things that would happen in the future. I predicted even your visit here. And once I tore my nail off on a lathe. I looked at the damaged finger, and all at once a new nail grew on it. Very likely I'd formed the wish, but all the same it's queer and—terrible. Another time—just think of it—I rose right up into the air. It's called levitation, you know. I never believed in any rubbish of that kind, so you can imagine the shock it gave me."

"I can quite believe it," said Bondy gravely. "It must be most distressing."

"Extremely distressing. I thought it must be due to nerves, a kind of autosuggestion or something. In the meanwhile I erected the big Karburator in the cellar and started it off. As I told you, it's been running now for six weeks, day and night. And it was there that I first realized the full significance of the business. In a single day the cellar was chock-full of the Absolute, ready to burst with it; and it began to spread all over the house. The pure Absolute penetrates all matter, you know, but it takes a little longer with solid substances. In the air it spread as swiftly as light. When I went in, I tell you, man, it took me like a stroke. I shrieked out aloud. I don't know where I got the strength to run away. When I got upstairs, I thought over the whole business. My first notion was that it must be some new intoxicating, stimulating gas, developed by the process of complete combustion. That's why I had that ventilator fixed up, from the outside. Two of the fitters on the job "saw the light" and had visions; the third was a drinker and so perhaps to some extent immune. As long as I thought it was only a gas, I made a series of experiments with it, and it's interesting to find that any light burns much more brightly in the Absolute. If it would let itself be confined in glass bulbs, I'd fill lamps with it; but it escapes from any vessel, however thick you make it. Then I decided it must be some sort of Ultra-X-ray, but there's no trace of any form of electricity, and it makes no impression on photosensitive plates. On the third day, the porter and his wife, who live just over the cellar, had to be taken off to the sanatorium."

"What for?" asked Bondy.

"He got religion. He was inspired. He gave religious

addresses and performed miracles. His wife uttered prophecies. My porter had been a thoroughly hardheaded chap, a monist and a freethinker, and an unusually steady fellow. Well, just fancy, from no visible cause whatever, he started healing people by laying on of hands. Of course, Bondy, he was reported at once. The district health officer, who is a friend of mine, was tremendously upset about it; so, to avoid any scandal, I had the porter sent to a sanatorium. They say he's better now; quite cured. He has lost the power to perform miracles. I'm going to send him on the land to recuperate— Then I began to work miracles myself and see into the future. Among other things, I had visions of gigantic, swampy primeval forests, overgrown with mosses and inhabited by weird monsters—probably because the Karburator was burning Upper Silesian coal, which is of the oldest formation. Possibly the God of the Carboniferous Age is in it."

Mr. Bondy shuddered. "Marek, this is frightful!"

"It is indeed," said Marek sorrowfully. "Gradually I began to see that it wasn't gas, but the Absolute. The symptoms were terrible. I could read people's thoughts, light emanated from me, I had a desperate struggle not to become absorbed in prayer and preach belief in God. I tried to clog the Karburator up with sand, but I was seized with a bout of levitation. That machine won't let anything stop it. I don't sleep at home nowadays. Even in the factory there have been several serious cases of illumination among the workmen. I don't know where to turn, Bondy. Yes, I've tried every possible isolating material that might prevent the Absolute from getting out of the cellar. Ashes, sand, metal walls, nothing can keep it back. I've even tried covering the cellar with the work of Professor Krejči, Spencer, Haeckel, and all the Positivists you can think of: would you believe it, the Absolute goes calmly through even that stuff! Even papers, prayerbooks, Lives of the Saints, patriotic songbooks, university lectures, best-sellers, political treatises, and parliamentary reports, present no obstacle to it. I'm simply desperate. You can't shut it up, you can't soak it up. It's mischief let loose."

"Oh, but why?" said Mr. Bondy. "Does it really mean such mischief? Even if all this were true—is it such a disaster?"

"Bondy, my Karburator is a terrific thing. It will over-

turn the world, mechanically and socially. It will cheapen production to an unbelievable extent. It will do away with poverty and hunger. It will some day save our planet from freezing up. But, on the other hand it hurls God as a by-product into the world. I implore you, Bondy, don't underrate what it means. We aren't used to reckoning with God as a *reality*. We don't know what His presence may bring about—say, socially, morally, and so on. Why, man, this thing affects the whole of human civilization!"

"Wait a minute!" said Bondy thoughtfully. "Perhaps there's some charm or other that would exorcise it. Have you called in the clergy?"

"What kind of clergy?"

"Any kind. The denomination probably makes no difference in this case, you know. Perhaps they could do something to stop it."

"Oh, that's all superstition!" burst out Marek. "Leave me alone with your parsons! Catch me giving them a chance to make a miraculous shrine out of my cellar! Me, with my views!"

"Very well," declared Mr. Bondy. "Then I'll call them in myself. You never can tell—Come, it can't do any harm, anyway. After all, I haven't anything against God. Only He oughtn't to interfere with business. Have you tried negotiating with Him in a friendly spirit?"

"No," admitted the engineer.

"That was a mistake," said Bondy dryly. "Perhaps you could come to some agreement with Him. A proper formal contract, in something like this style: 'We guarantee to produce You discreetly and continuously to an extent to be fixed by mutual agreement; in return for which You pledge yourself to refrain from any divine manifestations within such and such a radius from the place of origin.' What do you think—would He consider these terms?"

"I don't know," answered Marek uneasily. "He seems to have a decided inclination in favor of becoming independent of matter once more. Still, perhaps—in His own interests—He might be willing to listen. But don't ask me to do it."

"Very well, then!" Bondy agreed. "I'll send my own solicitor. A very tactful and capable fellow. And then again—er—one might perhaps offer Him some church or other. After all, a factory cellar and its surroundings are

rather—well—undignified quarters for Him. We ought to ascertain His tastes. Have you tried yet?"

"No; it would suit me best to flood the cellar with water."

"Gently, Marek, gently. I'm probably going to buy this invention. You understand, of course, that—I'll send my experts over first—we'll have to look into the business a little further. Perhaps it's only poisonous fumes, after all. And if it actually turns out to be God Himself, that's all right. So long as the Karburator really works."

Marek got up. "And you wouldn't be afraid to install the Karburator in the M.E.C. works?"

"I'm not afraid," said Bondy, rising, "to manufacture Karburators wholesale. Karburators for trains and ships. Karburators for central heating, for houses, offices, factories, and schools. In ten years' time all the heating in the world will be done by Karburators. I'll give you three percent of the gross profits. The first year it will only be a few millions, perhaps. Meanwhile you can move out, so that I can send my men along. I'll bring the Suffragan Bishop up tomorrow morning. See that you keep out of his way, Rudy. I don't like seeing you about here in any case. You are rather abrupt, and I don't want to offend the Absolute to start with."

"Bondy," Marek whispered, horror-stricken. "I warn you for the last time. It means letting God loose upon this world!"

"Then," said G. H. Bondy, with dignity, "He will be personally indebted to me to that extent. And I hope that He won't show me any ill-feeling."

5

BISHOP LINDA

ABOUT A FORTNIGHT AFTER NEW YEAR'S DAY, MAREK WAS sitting in Bondy's business office.

"How far have you got?" Bondy had just asked, raising

his head from some papers over which he was bending.

"I've finished," said the engineer. "I've given your engineers detailed drawings of the Karburator. That bald-headed fellow—what's his name—"

"Krolmus."

"Yes, Krolmus has simplified my atomic motor amazingly—the transformation of electronic energy into motor power, you know. He's an able fellow, my boy, is Krolmus. And what other news is there?"

G. H. Bondy went on writing assiduously.

"We're building," he said after a while. "Seven thousand bricklayers on the job. A factory for Karburators."

"At Vysočany. And we've increased our share capital. A billion and a half. Our new invention's getting into the papers. See for yourself," he added, tipping half a hundredweight of Czech and foreign papers into Marek's lap, then buried himself in the documents on his desk.

"I haven't been for a fortnight," said Marek gloomily.

"Haven't been where?"

"I haven't been to my little factory out at Břevnov for a fortnight. I—I daren't go there. Is anything being done there?"

"Mphm."

"And what about my Karburator?" asked Marek, controlling his anxiety.

"It's still running."

"And what about—the other thing?"

The Chief sighed and laid down his pen. "Do you know that we had to have Mixa Street closed?"

"Why?"

"People kept going there to pray. Whole processions of them. The police tried to disperse them, and seven people lost their lives. They let themselves be knocked over like sheep."

"I feared as much, I feared as much," muttered Marek in despair.

"We've blocked the street with barbed wire," Bondy went on. "We had to clear the people out of the neighboring houses—religious manifestations all over them, you know. A commission of the Ministries of Health and Education is occupying them now."

"I expect," said Marek with a breath of relief, "that the authorities will prohibit my Karburator."

"Oh, no they won't," said G. H. Bondy. "The Clerical party are making a fearful row about your Karburator, and for that very reason the progressive parties have taken it under their wing. In reality no one knows what it's all about. It's evident that you don't read the papers, man. It's developed into a quite needless attack upon clericalism, and the Church happens to have a little right on its side in this case. That confounded Bishop informed the Cardinal Archbishop—"

"What Bishop?"

"Oh, some Bishop by the name of Linda, quite a sensible man in other respects. You see, I took him up *there* as an expert, to inspect the wonder-working Absolute. His inspection lasted a full three hours, and he spent the whole time in the cellar, and—"

"He got religion?" burst out Marek.

"Not a bit of it! Perhaps, he's had too long a training with God, or else he's a more hard-baked atheist than you; I don't know. But three days later he came to me and told me that from the Catholic standpoint God cannot be brought into the matter, that the Church absolutely rejects and forbids the pantheistic hypothesis as heresy. In short, that this isn't any legal, duly recognized God, supported by the authority of the Church, and that, as a priest, he must declare it false, perverse, and heretical. He talked very reasonably, did his Reverence."

"So he wasn't conscious of any supernatural manifestations down there?"

"He underwent them all: illuminations, miraculous powers, ecstasy, everything. He doesn't deny, either, that these things happen there."

"Well, then, tell me, how does he explain it?"

"He simply doesn't. He said that the Church does not explain, but merely prescribes or prohibits. In short, he definitely refused to compromise the Church with any new and untried God. At least, that's what I understood him to mean. Do you know that I've bought that church up on the White Mountain?"

"Why?"

"It's the nearest one to Břevnov. It cost me three hundred thousand, man. Both in writing and by word of mouth I offered it to the Absolute down in the cellar to induce it to move over there. It's quite a pretty baroque church; and be-

sides, I expressed my readiness to undertake any necessary alterations. And here's a queer thing: just a few steps from the church, at No. 457, there was a fine case of ecstasy the night before last—one of our erectors; but in the church itself nothing miraculous happened, nothing whatever. There was even one case right out in Vokovice and two in Košíře, while at the Petřín wireless station there's practically an epidemic of religion. All the wireless operators on duty up there are sending out ecstatic messages of their own accord, a sort of new gospel to the world at large: God coming down again to the earth to ransom it, and so forth. Just imagine the scandal! Now the progressive papers are going for the Post Office, and the fur's fairly flying. They're screaming about Clericalism showing its horns, and rubbish of that kind. Nobody as yet suspects that this has any connection with the Karburator. Marek," Bondy added in a whisper. "I'll tell you something, but it's a dead secret. A week ago it attacked our Minister for War."

"Whom!" cried Marek.

"Hush, quietly. The Minister for War. He 'saw the light' all of a sudden in his villa at Dejvice. The following morning he assembled the garrison of Prague, talked to them about eternal peace, and exhorted the troops to become martyrs. Of course he had to resign at once. The papers stated that his health had suddenly broken down. And that's how matters stand, my friend."

"In Dejvice already!" groaned the engineer. "It's terrible, Bondy, the way it's spreading."

"It's amazing," said Bondy. "The other day a man shifted his piano from the infected Mixa Street area out to Pankrác. In twenty-four hours the whole house was down with it."

Here the Chairman was interrupted. A servant entered to announce a caller in the person of Bishop Linda. Marek hurriedly rose to take his leave, but Bondy forced him to resume his seat, saying, "Just sit still and say nothing. The Bishop's really a charming man." At that moment the Suffragan Bishop Linda came into the room.

He was a small, jolly person with gold spectacles and a comical mouth puckered up in clerical fashion in pleasant childish folds. Bondy introduced Marek to him as the owner of the ill-omened cellar at Břevnov. The Bishop rubbed his hands with delight while the wrathful engineer

spluttered out something about being "delighted to have the honour," with a dogged expression that said clearly, "Confound you for a canting humbug!" The Bishop pursed his lips and turned quickly to Bondy.

He began briskly, without beating about the bush. "I've come to you on a very delicate errand. Very delicate indeed," he repeated with relish. "We have been discussing your—ahem—your affair in the Consistory. His Eminence, the Archbishop, wishes to settle this regrettable incident with as little publicity as possible. You understand. This objectionable business about the miracles. Oh, I'm sorry. I have no wish to hurt the feelings of Mr.—er—the proprietor—"

"Please go on," Marek conceded gruffly.

"Well, then, in a word, the whole scandal. His Eminence declares that from the standpoint of both reason and faith there can be nothing more offensive than this godless and blasphemous perversion of the laws of Nature—"

"I beg your pardon!" Marek broke out disgustedly. "Would you mind leaving the laws of Nature to us? After all, we don't interfere with your dogmas!"

"You are mistaken," cried the Bishop gaily. "Quite mistaken. Science without dogma is only a heap of doubts. What is worse, your Absolute opposes the laws of the Church. It contradicts the doctrine of the holy sacraments. It does not regard the traditions of the Church. It seriously violates the doctrine of the Trinity. It pays no attention to the apostolic succession. It does not even submit to the rites of exorcism. And so on. In short, it behaves itself in a manner which we must severely discountenance."

"Come, come," suggested Bondy propitiatingly. "Up to the present its behavior has been very—dignified."

The Bishop raised his finger warningly.

"Up to the present; but we don't know how it will behave next. Look here, Mr. Bondy," he suddenly said in a confidential tone, "it is to your interest that there should be no unpleasantness. To our interest, too. You would like to settle it quickly, like a practical businessman. So should we, as the representatives and servants of the Lord. We cannot permit the rise of some new God or possibly a new religion."

"Thank Heaven," Mr. Bondy sighed with relief. "I knew we should come to an agreement."

"Splendid!" cried the Bishop, his eyes sparkling with happiness through his spectacles. "An agreement, that's the thing. The venerable Consistory decided that in the interests of the Church it would place your—er—Absolute provisionally under its patronage. It would attempt to bring it into harmony with Catholic doctrine. It would proclaim the premises in Břevnov known as No. 1651 a miraculous shrine and place of pilgrimage—"

"Oho!" growled Marek, and leaped to his feet.

"Permit me," said the Bishop with an imperious motion. "A miraculous shrine and place of pilgrimage—with certain conditions, of course. The first condition is that on the aforesaid premises the production of the Absolute should be limited to the smallest possible quantity, and that it should be only weak, almost innocuous, very much diluted Absolute, whose manifestations would be less uncontrollable and more irregular, rather as at Lourdes. Otherwise we cannot assume the responsibility."

"Very well," agreed Mr. Bondy. "And what else?"

"Further," continued the Bishop, "it is to be manufactured only from coal obtained at Male Svantovice. As you know, there is a miraculous shrine of the Virgin in that district, so that with the aid of this particular coal we might establish at No. 1651 Břevnov a center for the worship of Our Lady."

"Undoubtedly," assented Mr. Bondy. "Anything more?"

"In the third place, you must bind yourself not to manufacture the Absolute at any other place or time."

"What?" cried G. H. Bondy, "and our Karburators—"

"—Will never come into operation, with the exception of the one at Břevnov, which remains the property of the Holy Church, and will be under her management."

"Nonsense," protested G. H. Bondy. "The Karburators *shall* be manufactured. In three weeks' time ten of them will be erected. In the first six months there will be twelve hundred. In the course of a year, ten thousand. Our arrangements have gone as far as that already."

"And I tell you," said the Bishop quietly and sweetly, "that at the end of that year not a single Karburator will be running."

"Why not?"

"Because mankind, whether believers or unbelievers, cannot do with a real and active God. We simply cannot, gen-

tlemen. It is out of the question."

"And I tell you," Marek interposed vehemently, "that the Karburator *shall* be made. I'm in favor of them myself now. I mean to have them precisely because you don't want them. In spite of you, my Lord Bishop, in spite of all superstition, in spite of all Rome! And I mean to be the first to cry"—here the engineer took breath, then burst out with unmelodious enthusiasm—"Success to the Perfect Karburator!"

"We shall see," said the Bishop with a sigh. "You gentlemen will live to be convinced that the venerable Consistory was right. In a year's time you will stop the manufacture of the Absolute of your own accord. But, oh, the damage, the devastation it will bring to pass in the meantime! Gentlemen, in the name of Heaven, do not imagine that the Church brings God into the world. The Church merely confines Him and controls Him. And you two unbelievers are loosing Him upon the earth like a flood. The ship of Peter will survive even this deluge; like the Ark of Noah, it will ride out this inundation of the Absolute—but your modern society," cried the Bishop with a mighty voice, "*that* will pay the price!"

6

THE BOARD MEETING

"GENTLEMEN—" IT WAS G. H. BONDY ADDRESSING THE MEETING of the Board of Directors of the M.E.C. (the Metallo-Electrical Company) held on February 20th—"I have to inform you that one building of our new group of factories at Vysočany has been completed and began production yesterday. In a very few days the standardized production of Karburators will be in full swing, beginning with eighteen finished machines per day. In April we expect to turn out sixty-five per day; by the end of July two hundred per day. We have laid down fifteen kilometers of private line, chiefly for our coal supply. Twelve boiler furnaces are now being erected. We have begun the building of new quarters for our workmen."

"Twelve boiler furnaces?" Dr. Hubka, the leader of the opposition, asked at a venture.

"Yes, twelve for the time being," confirmed Bondy.

"That's strange," Dr. Hubka declared.

"I ask you, gentlemen," said Bondy, "what is there strange about having twelve boilers? For a huge group of factories like this—"

"Of course, of course," came from several quarters.

Dr. Hubka smiled ironically.

"And why the fifteen kilometers of railway line?"

"For the transport of coal and raw materials. We are reckoning on a daily consumption of eight truckloads of coal until we have things properly under way. I don't know what Dr. Hubka's objection to our getting coal in can be."

"I'll give you my objection," cried Dr. Hubka, leaping up. "It's that the whole business looks highly suspicious. Yes, gentlemen, extremely suspicious. Mr. Bondy has forced us to erect a factory for Karburators. The Karburator, he assured us, is the only power supply of the future. The Karburator, as he expressly stated, can develop a thousand horsepower from a single bucket of coal. And now he is talking about twelve boiler furnaces and whole truckloads of coal for them. Gentlemen, I ask you, why then shouldn't a single bucket of coal give sufficient power for our whole factory? Why are we erecting boiler furnaces when we've got atomic motors? Gentlemen, if the Karburator is not an utter swindle, I don't see why our Chairman did not arrange for our own new factory to be equipped to be run by Karburator power. I don't see it, and no one else will see it. Why hasn't our Chairman sufficient confidence in these Karburators of his to install them in our establishment? Gentlemen, it's shockingly bad advertisement for our Karburators if their manufacturer himself will not or cannot use them. I beg you, gentlemen, to ask Mr. Bondy to give us his reasons. For my part, I have formed my own opinion. That is all I have to say, gentlemen."

Thereupon Dr. Hubka sat down resolutely, and victoriously blew his nose.

The members of the Board of Directors remained silent and dejected. Dr. Hubka's indictment was all too clear. Bondy did not raise his eyes from his paper; not a muscle of his face moved.

"M—m no," growled old Rosenthal, anxious for peace.

"Our Chairman will explain. Yes, yes, it can all be explained, gentlemen, I think, m—m—er, yes—very satisfactorily. Dr. Hubka is surely mm—hm—hm—yes, yes—with regard to what he has told us."

The Chairman at last raised his eyes. "Gentlemen," he said quietly, "I have read you the expert report of our engineers on the Karburator. The facts are precisely as there stated. The Karburator is no swindle. We have already built ten of them for testing purposes. They all work perfectly. Here are the proofs. Karburator No. 1 drives the suction pump on the Sazava River, and has been running without attention for fourteen days. No. 2, the dredge on the Upper Vltava, is working splendidly. No. 3 is in the testing laboratory of the Brno Technical Institute. No. 4 was damaged in transport. No. 5 is supplying the city of Hradec Králové with light. That is the ten-kilo pattern. The five-kilo pattern, No. 6, is running a mill at Slany. No. 7 has been installed to provide central heating for a block of buildings in the New Town. Mr. Machat, the proprietor of that block, is with us today. Would you mind, Mr. Machat?"

The elderly gentleman of that name awoke as from a dream. "I beg your pardon?"

"We were asking how your new central-heating system is working."

"What? What heating do you mean?"

"In your new block of buildings," said Bondy gently.

"What block of buildings?"

"In your new houses."

"In my houses? I haven't any houses."

"Come, come, come!" Mr. Rosenthal exclaimed. "You put them up only last year."

"I did?" said Machat in tones of surprise. "Oh, yes, you're right, so I did. But, you see, I have given those houses away, now. I gave them all away."

Bondy looked at him very attentively. "And to whom did you give them, Mr. Machat?"

Machat flushed slightly. "Well, to poor people. I've let poor families occupy them. You see, I—I came to the conclusion that—well, in short, poor people have got them now, I mean."

Mr. Bondy kept his eyes on Machat like an examining magistrate. "Why, Mr. Machat?"

"I—I couldn't help it," Machat stammered. "It took me like that. Our lives should be holy, I mean."

The Chairman drummed nervously on the table. "And what about your family?"

Machat began to smile beatifically. "Oh, we're all of the same mind in that matter. Those poor people are such saints. Some of them are ill. My daughter is looking after them, you know. We've all changed so tremendously."

G. H. Bondy dropped his eyes. Machat's daughter Ellen, the fair-haired Ellen, with her seventy millions, tending the sick! Ellen, who was ready to be, who ought to be, who had half consented to be, Mrs. Bondy! Bondy bit his lip; things *had* turned out nicely!

"Mr. Machat," he began, in subdued tones, "I only wanted to know how the new Karburator was doing the heating on your premises."

"Oh, splendidly! It's so beautifully warm in every one of the houses! Just as though they were being warmed with eternal love! Do you know," said Machat rapturously, wiping his eyes, "whoever enters there becomes at one stroke a changed man. It is like Paradise there. We are all living as if we were in Heaven. Oh, come and join us!"

"You see, gentlemen," said Bondy, controlling himself with an effort, "that the Karburators work exactly as I promised you they would. I ask you to waive any further questions."

"We only want to know," cried Dr. Hubka pugnaciously, "why, in that case, you don't arrange for our new works to be run by Karburator power? Why should we use expensive coal for heating when we're supplying atomic energy to other people? Is Mr. Bondy disposed to let us have his reasons?"

"By no means," Bondy declared. "Our heating will be done with coal. For reasons known to myself, the Karburator system will not suit our purposes. Let that suffice, gentlemen. I regard the whole affair as a question of confidence in me."

Machat made himself heard. "If you only knew how wonderful it feels to be in a state of holiness! Gentlemen, take my sincere advice. Give away all that you possess! Become poor and holy! Deliver yourselves from Mammon, and glorify the one God!"

"Come, come." Mr. Rosenthal tried to calm him down.

"We know you for a kind and upright man, Mr. Machat—yes, yes, extremely so. And I have every confidence in you, Mr. Bondy, you know. I tell you what, send me one of those Karburators for my own heating apparatus! I'll give it a trial, gentlemen. What's the use of all this talking? What about it, Mr. Bondy?"

"We are all brothers in God's sight!" continued the radiant Machat. "Gentlemen, let us give the factory to the poor! I move that we change the M.E.C. into a religious community of 'The Humble of Heart.' Let us be the seed from which the tree of God shall spring. The Kingdom of God on earth!"

"I demand a hearing," shouted Dr. Hubka.

"Come, now, Mr. Bondy," pleaded old Rosenthal in mollifying tones. "You see I am on your side! Lend me one of those Karburators, Mr. Bondy!"

"For God Himself is descending upon the earth," Machat continued in great excitement. "Hearken to His message: Be ye holy and simple; open your hearts to the infinite; let your love be unbounded. Let me tell you, gentlemen—"

"I demand the floor," yelled Dr. Hubka hoarsely.

"Silence!" shouted Bondy, pale and with gleaming eyes, as he rose with the whole authority of his massive frame. "Gentlemen, if the factory for Karburators does not suit your fancy, I will take it over under my own personal charge. I will compensate you to the last penny for all the expenditure so far incurred. I resign my position, gentlemen. I beg to take my leave."

Dr. Hubka darted forward. "But, gentlemen, I protest! We all protest! We will not part with the manufacture of Karburators! A splendid line like that, gentlemen! No, thank you, we are not to be hoodwinked into handing over a valuable business. With your permission, gentlemen—"

Bondy rang the bell. "Friends," he said gloomily, "we will leave this for the time being. It seems to me that our friend Machat is—er—slightly indisposed. As far as the Karburator is concerned, gentlemen, I guarantee you a dividend of one hundred and fifty percent. I move that the discussion be now closed."

Dr. Hubka took the floor. "I move, gentlemen, that every member of the Board of Directors shall receive one Karburator for testing purposes, so to speak."

Bondy looked at all present. His features twitched. He

tried to say something, but he only shrugged his shoulders and hissed between his teeth, "As you please."

7

DEVELOPMENTS

"HOW DO WE STAND IN LONDON?"

"M.E.C. shares were quoted at 1470 yesterday. The day before yesterday they were 750."

"Good!"

"Mr. Marek has been made an honorary member of ten learned societies, and is certain to be awarded the Nobel Prize."

"Good!"

"There's a rush of orders from Germany. Over five thousand Karburators wanted."

"Aha!"

"Nine hundred orders from Japan, too."

"Look at that now!"

"Czechoslovakia doesn't show much interest. Three fresh inquiries."

"Hm. That's all one might expect. A wretched state of affairs here, you know."

"The Russian Government wants two hundred immediately."

"Good! What's the total?"

"Thirteen thousand orders."

"Good! How far have we got with the buildings?"

"The division for atomic motorcars has got the roof on. The section for atomic flying machines will begin work during the week. We are laying the foundations for the atomic locomotive works. One wing of the department for ships' engines is already in operation."

"Wait a minute. You should start calling them atomobiles, atomotors, and atomotives, you know. How is Krolmus getting along with the atomic cannon?"

"He's already constructing a model at Pilsen. Our atomic

cyclecar is doing its thirty thousandth kilometre on the Brussels racing track. It has done two hundred and seventy kilometers an hour. We have had seventeen thousand orders for our half-kilo atomotors in the last two days."

A minute ago you told me that the total was thirteen thousand."

"Thirteen thousand stationary atomic boilers. Eight thousand of the central-heating apparatus. Nearly ten thousand automobiles. Sixty hundred and twenty atoplanes. Our A.7 has flown from Prague to Melbourne, Australia, without a stop; all on board safe and sound. Here is the telegram."

Bondy drew himself up. "Why, my young friend, that's splendid!"

"The agricultural machinery department has five thousand orders in. In the section for small power engines, twenty-two thousand. One hundred and fifty atomic pumps. Three atomic presses. Twelve atomic blast furnaces. Seventy-five atomic wireless stations. One hundred and ten atomic locomotives, all for Russia. We have established general agencies in forty-eight different capitals. The American Steel Trust, the Berlin General Electric Company, the Italian Fiat, Mannesmann, Creusot, and the Swedish steel works are all making us offers of amalgamation. Krupp's are paying any price for our shares."

"What about the new issue?"

"Thirty-five times oversubscribed. The financial papers predict a superdividend of two hundred percent. The other papers are talking of nothing but this business; politics, sport, technology, science, everything's Karburator. We've had seven tons of newspaper cuttings from our agent in Germany, four hundredweight from France, and a truckload from England. The scientific and technical literature dealing with atomotors, to be published this year, is estimated at sixty tons. The Anglo-Japanese war has been broken off owing to the lack of public interest. In England alone there are nine hundred thousand coal miners out of work. There has been a rising in the Belgian coalfields; about four thousand killed. More than half the mines in the world have ceased working. The surplus petroleum in Pennsylvania has set the oil fields ablaze. The fire's still raging."

"The fire's still raging," repeated Bondy, as though in a dream. "The fire's still raging. My God, then, we have won!"

"The Chairman of the Mining and Smelting Company has shot himself. The Stock Exchange has simply gone mad. We stand at 8,000 today in Berlin. The Cabinet is in permanent sitting, and want to proclaim a state of siege. This isn't an invention, Chief, it's a revolution!"

The Chairman and the General Manager of the M.E.C. looked at each other in silence. Neither of them was a poet, but in that moment their very souls were singing.

The manager drew his chair closer and said in a low voice, "Chief, Rosenthal has gone crazy."

"Rosenthal!" exclaimed G. H. Bondy.

The manager nodded mournfully. "He has become an orthodox Jew, and he's gone in for Talmudic mysticism and Cabalism. He has given ten millions to the cause of Zionism. Not long ago he had a terrible quarrel with Dr. Hubka. You've surely heard that Hubka has joined the Bohemian Brethren."

"What, has Hubka got it too?"

"Yes, I think the Board of Directors must have caught it from Machat. You were not present at the last meeting, Chief. It was terrible; they talked religion until morning. Hubka moved that we hand over our establishments to the workers. Luckily, they forgot to take a vote on it. They were like men possessed."

Bondy gnawed at his fingers. "What on earth am I to do with them?"

"Hm, nothing whatever. It's a nervous disease of the age. Something of the sort crops up now and again in the papers, too, but they're so full of the Karburators that they haven't space for anything else. There's an appalling number of cases of religious mania. It's a psychical epidemic or something. The other day I saw Dr. Hubka preaching to a crowd of people in front of the Industrial Bank about seeking the inward light and making straight the path for God. Fearfully incoherent stuff. He wound up by performing miracles. Forst is at it too. Rosenthal is nothing short of insane. Miller, Homola, and Kolator came out with a proposal for voluntary poverty. We can't possibly have another board meeting. It's a regular madhouse, Chief. You'll have to take the whole idiotic business in hand."

"But, man, this is simply awful," groaned G. H. Bondy.

"It is indeed. Did you hear about the Sugar Bank? All the officials there were seized with it at one fell swoop. They

opened the safes and gave away the money to anyone who came. They finished by burning bundles of banknotes on a bonfire in the main hall. Religious Bolshevism, I should call it."

"In the Sugar Bank?—Hasn't the Sugar Bank one of our Karburators?"

"Yes. For central heating. The Sugar Bank was the first to install one. Now the police have closed the Bank. Even the confidential clerks and the directors were affected."

"Send word round that the sale of Karburators to banks is forbidden."

"But why?"

"I forbid it, and that's enough! Let them do their heating with coal!"

"It's a bit too late. All the banks are already putting in our heating system. It's being installed in the Houses of Parliament and in all the Government departments. The central Karburator at Stvanice, which is to light the whole of Prague, is finished. It is a fifty-kilo monster, a magnificent machine. It is to be ceremoniously set in motion at six o'clock the day after tomorrow, in the presence of the President, the Burgomaster, the City Council, and the representatives of the M.E.C. You must be present. You of all people!"

"God forbid!" Mr. Bondy shouted, horror-stricken. "No, no, Heaven defend me from that! I will not go!"

"But, Chief, you must. We can't send Rosenthal or Hubka there. Why, they're raving mad. They would make dreadful speeches. It's the honor of the firm that's at stake. The Burgomaster of Prague has prepared a speech in our honor. The representatives of foreign Governments and the foreign Press will be there. It's to be a great occasion. As soon as the street lamps light up, military bands are going to play salutes and fanfares in the streets, the Male Voice Choirs and the other Choral Societies will sing, there'll be fire works and a salute of a hundred and one guns, the Castle will be illuminated, and I don't know what. Chief, you simply must be there."

G. H. Bondy arose in great torment of spirit. "God! oh God!" he whispered, "if it be possible, remove this cup—"

"Will you be there?" repeated the manager inexorably.

"God! oh God! why hast Thou forsaken me?"

THE DREDGE

THE DREDGE M. E. 28 STOOD MOTIONLESS IN THE EVENING twilight above Stechovice. The Paternoster shovel had long since ceased heaving up the cold sand from the bed of the Vltava River. The evening was mild and calm, fragrant with new-mown hay and the breath of the woodlands. A tender orange glow still lingered in the northwest. Here and there a wave glittered with unearthly splendor amid the reflections of the sky—gleamed, murmured, and blent itself with the shining surface of the stream. A skiff was coming towards the dredge from Stechovice. It made slow progress against the rapid current, and stood out upon the glowing river like a black water beetle.

"Someone is coming over to see us," Kuzenda, the skipper, said quietly, from his seat in the rear of the dredge.

"Two of 'em," said Brych, the stoker, after a pause.

"Yes, and I know who it is, too," said Kuzenda.

"The sweethearts from Stechovice," said Brych.

"I'd better make them some coffee," Kuzenda decided, and went below.

"Now then, youngsters," Brych shouted to the boat. "To the left! Left! Give us your hand, lass. There we are. Up she comes!"

"Me and Joe," the girl announced on reaching the deck, "we—we'd like to—"

"Good evening," said the young workman who climbed up after her. "Where is Mr. Kuzenda?"

"Mr. Kuzenda is making coffee," said the stoker. "Take a seat. Look, there's someone else coming across. Is that you, baker?"

"That's me," a voice rang back. "Good evening, Mr. Brych. I've got the postman and the gamekeeper with me."

"Come up then, brothers," said Mr. Brych. "We can

begin while Mr. Kuzenda is getting the coffee ready. Who else is coming?"

"I am," came a voice from the side of the dredge. "My name's Hudec, and I'd very much like to hear you."

"You are very welcome, Mr. Hudec," the stoker shouted down. "Come up, will you?—there's a ladder here. Half a minute and I'll give you a hand, Mr. Hudec, seeing you've never been here before."

"Mr. Brych," three people shouted from the bank. "Send the boat across for us, will you? We'd like to come over."

"Go and fetch them over, you below," said Mr. Brych, "that all may hear the word of God. Brothers and sisters, please sit down. It's not dirty here now that we do our heating with a Karburator. Brother Kuzenda will bring you some coffee, and then we can start. Welcome, young people. Come right up." With this, Mr. Brych took his place by the opening down which ran the ladder to the interior of the dredge. "Halloa there, Kuzenda, ten on deck."

"Right!" cried a beard-muffled voice from the depths. "I'm just bringing it."

"Come, friends, sit down," said Brych, briskly indicating suitable seats. "Mr. Hudec, we have nothing but coffee here; I don't expect you'll mind."

"Why should I?" returned Mr. Hudec. "I just wanted to see your—to be present at your—séance."

"Our service," Brych mildly corrected him. "We are all brothers, here, you know. Let me tell you, Mr. Hudec, that I was a drunkard and Kuzenda was in politics, and the grace of God came upon us, and our brethren and sisters here," he said pointing round him, "come to us in the evenings to pray for the same gift of the spirit. The baker here had asthma, and Kuzenda cured him. Come now, baker, tell us yourself how it happened."

"Kuzenda laid hands on me," said the baker softly and rapturously, "and all at once such a feeling of warmth began to pour through my chest. You know, something just snapped in me, and I began to breathe as if I was flying about in the sky."

"Wait a bit, baker," Brych corrected him. "Kuzenda didn't lay his hands on you. He hadn't any notion he was going to work a miracle. He simply went like this with his hand, and then you said that you could breathe easily. That's the way it was."

"We were there when it happened," said the young girl from Stechovice. "And the baker had a ring of light around his head, and then Mr. Kuzenda charmed away my consumption, didn't he, Joe?"

The young fellow from Stechovice said, "That's the honest truth, Mr. Hudec. But what happened to me is queerer still. I wasn't straight, Mr. Hudec; I'd already been in jail for theft, and for another job besides. Mr. Brych here could tell you."

"Oh, it wasn't as bad as all that." Mr. Brych dismissed it with a wave of his hand. "All that you needed was grace. But there's some very queer things happened here, Mr. Hudec, on this spot. But perhaps you will find it out for yourself. Brother Kuzenda can give it you properly because he used to go to meetings before. Look, here he comes."

Everyone turned towards the opening leading from the deck to the engine room. From the opening there emerged a bearded face, wearing the forced, embarrassed smile of one who is being shoved from behind and is trying to pretend that nothing is happening. Mr. Kuzenda was visible now from the waist up, carrying in both hands a large tin tray on which stood cups and tins of preserves; he smiled uncertainly as he rose higher and higher. His feet could soon be seen on a level with the deck, and still Mr. Kuzenda and his cups went on rising in the air. About eighteen inches above the opening he stopped and began groping with his feet. There he hung unsupported in the air, apparently doing his utmost to get his feet to the ground.

Mr. Hudec was like a man in a dream. "What is the matter, Mr. Kuzenda?" he exclaimed, almost in terror.

"Nothing, nothing," Kuzenda replied evasively, still trying to draw himself down from the air with his feet; and Mr. Hudec was reminded of a picture of the Ascension that in his childhood had hung above his little cot, and how Our Lord and the Apostles in precisely the same manner were hanging in the air and paddling with their feet, but showing less amazement on their faces.

Suddenly Mr. Kuzenda moved forward and floated, floated over the deck through the evening air as though a gentle breeze might carry him away; now and again he raised his feet as if he wanted to step out firmly or something, and he was visibly concerned for his cups.

"I say, come and take this coffee," he said hastily. Brych, the stoker, held both hands up to him and took charge of the tray and the cups. Then Kuzenda let his feet hang down, crossed his arms on his breast, and hung there motionless, with his head a little on one side, and said, "Welcome, brothers. Don't be afraid because I'm flying. It is only a sign. Will you take the cup with the flowers on, young lady."

The stoker passed the cups and tins round. No one dared to speak. Those who had never been there before gazed in wonder on the levitation of Kuzenda. The guests of longer standing sipped their coffee slowly, and seemed, between the sips, to be praying.

"Have you finished?" asked Kuzenda after a while, opening wide his colorless, rapt eyes. "Then I'll begin." So saying, he cleared his throat, meditated for a while, and began: "In the name of the Father! Brethren and sisters, on this dredge, where signs of grace are shown to us, we are gathered together for worship. We need not send away the unbelievers and mockers as the spiritualists do. Mr. Hudec came as an unbeliever, and the gamekeeper has been looking forward to a little bit of fun. You are both welcome; but listen so that you may see that it is by grace I know you. You, gamekeeper, drink far too much; you drive the poor from the forest, and curse and swear even when there is no need. Do it no more. And you, Mr. Hudec, are a better-class thief. You know very well what I mean. And you're shockingly bad-tempered. Faith will reform and redeem you."

Utter stillness reigned on the deck. Mr. Hudec gazed steadfastly at the floor. The gamekeeper sobbed and sniffed, and fumbled with trembling hands for his pocket.

"I know what it is, gamekeeper," said Kuzenda gently from above. "You'd like to smoke. Don't be afraid to light up. Make yourself quite at home."

"Look at the little fish," whispered the young girl, pointing down to the smooth surface of the Vltava. "Look, Joe, the carp have come to listen, too."

"They're not carp," came from the exalted Kuzenda. "They're perch or dace. And, Mr. Hudec, you mustn't worry about your sins. Look at me: I once cared for nothing but politics. And I tell you, that, too, is a sin. There's no need to weep, gamekeeper; I didn't mean to be hard on you. He

who once experiences grace can see right into men's hearts. You can see into people's souls too, can't you, Brych?"

"I can," said Mr. Brych. "The postman here is thinking this minute how fine it would be if you could help his little daughter. She's got scrofula, hasn't she, postman? Mr. Kuzenda will help her right enough if you bring her here."

"It's easy to mock and talk about superstition," said Kuzenda. "Brothers, if anyone had told me about miracles and God before this, I should have laughed at him. That's the kind of man I was. When we got this new machine that runs without fuel for the dredge, all our dirty heavy work ceased. Yes, Mr. Hudec, that was the first miracle that happened here—this Karburator, that does everything by itself, as though it had a mind. Even the dredge floats by itself wherever it ought to go. And look how steady it is. Do you notice, Mr. Hudec, that the anchors aren't down? It stands still without being anchored, and floats off again when it's needed to clear the riverbed; it starts itself and stops itself. We, that's Brych and me, don't have to touch a single thing. Will anyone dare tell me that isn't a miracle? And when we saw all this, we began to think it over, didn't we, Brych, until it all became clear to us. This is a sacred dredge, it is an iron church, and we are only here as its priests. If in old times God could appear in a well or in an oak tree, and sometimes even like a woman, as with the ancient Greeks, why should He not appear on a dredge? Why should He shun machinery? A machine is often cleaner than a nun, and Brych keeps everything here as bright and shining as if it was on a sideboard. However, that's by the way. And let me tell you, God is not so infinite as the Catholics assert. He is about six hundred meters in diameter, and even then is weak towards the edges. He is at His strongest on the dredge. Here He performs miracles, but on the bank He only does inspirations and conversions, and in Stechovice, with a favorable wind, you only notice a kind of holy fragrance. Not long ago some oarsmen from the Czech Rowing Club were paddling by in the *Lightning*, close to us, and grace descended on all of them. Such is His power. And what this God wishes us to do, one can only feel here within," Kuzenda declared, with an emphatic gesture towards his heart. "I know that He cannot bear politics and money, intellect, pride, and self-conceit. I know He dearly loves both men and beasts, that He is

very glad when you come here, and that good deeds are pleasing to Him. He is a thorough democrat, brethren. We, Brych and me, that is, feel that every penny burns us until we've bought coffee for everybody. One Sunday recently, there were several hundred people here, even sitting on both banks of the river, and behold, our coffee multiplied itself so that there was enough for everybody—and what splendid coffee it was! But such things, brethren, are only outward appearances. The greatest miracle is the influence He has on our feelings. It is so intensely beautiful that it fairly makes one shiver. Sometimes you feel as if you could die of love and happiness, as if you were one with the water below, with all the animals, with the very earth and stones, or as if gigantic arms were holding you embraced; oh, words cannot utter what you feel. Everything around you is sounding and singing, you understand the speech of voiceless things, the water and the wind, you see deep into everything, how one thing is linked with another and with you; at one stroke you grasp everything better than if you had read it in print. Sometimes it comes upon one like a fit, so that one foams at the mouth; but often it acts quite slowly and penetrates to one's tiniest little vein. And now, brothers and sisters, do not be afraid; two police officers are just coming across in a boat to 'disperse' us because we are holding an unauthorized assembly. Just keep calm and have faith in the God of the dredge."

It was already dark; but the entire deck of the dredge and the faces of those present were glowing with a tender light. The splash of oars was heard below the dredge, then the boat stopped alongside. "Hi, there!" cried a man's voice. "Is Mr. Kuzenda there?"

"Yes, he is here," answered Kuzenda in the voice of an angel. "Come right up, brethren of the police. I know that the innkeeper of Stechovice has laid information against me."

Two policemen mounted to the deck. "Which of you is Kuzenda?" asked the sergeant.

"I am, sir," said Kuzenda, rising higher in the air. "Kindly come up here to me, sergeant." And forthwith both police officers rose into the air and floated upwards towards Kuzenda. Their feet groped desperately for some support, their hands clutched wildly at the yielding air, and one could hear their quick and frightened breathing.

"Don't be afraid, officers," said Kuzenda beatifically, "and say after me this prayer: O God, our Father, who are incarnate in this vessel—"

"O God, our Father, who are incarnate in this vessel," repeated the sergeant in a choking voice.

"O God, our Father, who are incarnate in this vessel," Mr. Hudec began in a loud voice, and he fell on his knees, and on the deck a chorus of voices mingled with his own.

9

THE CEREMONY

CYRIL KEVAL, DISTRICT REPORTER ON THE STAFF OF THE Prague *People's Journal*, hurried into evening dress for the occasion and dashed off to Stvanice just after six o'clock in the evening, to write up the ceremonial opening of the new Central Karburator Electric Power Station for Greater Prague. He shouldered his way through the curious crowds that overflowed the whole Petrov quarter, penetrated the three ranks of police, and reached a small concrete structure decorated with flags. From inside the little building could be heard the objurgations of the workmen, who were, of course, behind time with the erecting of the machine, and were now trying to catch up. The whole Central Power Station was an insignificant affair, no bigger than a public convenience. Old Cvancara of the *Venkov* was walking pensively up and down in front of it, looking somewhat like a meditative heron.

"Well, my friend," he said quietly to the young journalist, "it's safe to bet on something happening today. I've never yet seen a function where there wasn't some silly incident or other. And I've been at it now, young fellow, for forty years."

"But it is amazing, isn't it, sir?" Keval returned. "Fancy this little building lighting the whole city of Prague and driving the trams and trains for sixty kilometres round, be-

sides supplying power for thousands of factories and—and—”

Mr. Cvancara shook his head skeptically. “We’ll see, my young friend, we’ll see. Nothing nowadays can surprise any of us of the old guard, but”—and here Cvancara lowered his voice to a whisper—“well, just look round and you’ll see that they haven’t even got a reserve Karburator handy. Suppose this one broke down, or even, say, went up in the air, what then—do you see what I mean?”

Keval was annoyed at not having thought of this himself, so he dissented. “That’s out of the question, sir,” he began. “I have reliable information. This power station here is only for show. The real Central Station is somewhere else; it’s—it’s—” he whispered, and pointed with his finger, “right down underground, I mustn’t say where. Haven’t you noticed, sir, that they are continually repairing the streets in Prague?”

“They’ve been doing it these forty years,” said Mr. Cvancara gloomily.

“Well, there you have it,” Keval lied triumphantly. “Military reasons, you know. A huge system of underground passages, storehouses, powder magazines, and so on. My information is quite trustworthy. They’ve got sixteen underground Karburator fortresses right round Prague. On the surface there’s not a trace of it, only football fields, a mineral-water stand, or a patriotic monument. Ha, ha! Do you see now? That’s why they’re putting up all these memorials.”

“Young man,” observed Mr. Cvancara, “what does the present generation know of war? We could tell them something. Aha, here comes the Burgomaster.”

“And the new Minister for War. You see, I told you so. The Director of the Technical Institute. The Chairman of the M.E.C. The Chief Rabbi.”

“The French Ambassador, the Minister of Public Works. I say, my friend, we’d better see about getting inside. The Archbishop, the Italian Ambassador, the President of the Senate, the Chief of the Sokol organization; you’ll find that there’s somebody they’ve left out.”

Just then Mr. Cyril Keval gave up his place to a lady, and so was separated from the doyen of the journalists and lost his place near the entrance through which the endless

stream of the personages invited was pouring. Then the strains of the national anthem were heard, and the orders to the guard of honour rang out, proclaiming the arrival of the Chief of State. Accompanied by a retinue of gentlemen in top hats and uniforms, the President advanced along the crimson carpet towards the little concrete structure. Mr. Keval stood on tiptoe, confounding himself and his politeness.

"I'll never get in now," he said to himself. "Cvancara is right," he went on ruminating. "They always do something silly. Fancy putting up that little hut for an imposing ceremony like this. Ah well, the Czechoslovak Press Bureau will supply the speeches, and one can soon work up the trimmings—deep impressiveness of the occasion, magnificent progress, enthusiastic reception for the President—"

A sudden hush within the building made itself felt outside, and someone began to reel off the official address. Mr. Keval yawned and sauntered round the little building with his hands in his pockets. It was getting dark. The guards were in full-dress uniform with white gloves and rubber truncheons. Crowds of people were standing tightly packed along the banks. The opening address was far too long, as usual. Who was it speaking, anyway?

Then Keval noticed a little window in the concrete wall of the Central Station about two meters from the ground. He looked around, then leapt up like a flash, caught hold of the grating, and drew his clever head up to the window. Aha, the speaker was the Burgomaster of Greater Prague, all red in the face; beside him stood G. H. Bondy, Chairman of the M.E.C., representing the contracting firm, biting his lips. The President had his hand on the lever of the machine, ready to press it down at a given signal: an instant later the festal illuminations of the whole of Prague would flare out, the bands would play, the fireworks would begin to blaze.

The Minister of Public Works was turning and twisting nervously; doubtless he was to speak when the Burgomaster had finished. A young Army officer was pulling at his tiny moustache, the Ambassadors were pretending to be giving their whole souls to the address, of which they understood not a single word, two Trade-Union delegates were not moving an eyelash—in short, "the proceedings passed off with-

out a hitch," Mr. Keval said to himself as he jumped down again.

He then ran five times round the whole Stvanice district, came back to the Central Power Station, and again sprang up to the little window. The Burgomaster was still speaking. Straining his ears, Keval could hear "—And then came the disastrous period of the Battle of the White Mountain." He dropped down the wall again quickly, sat down, and lit a cigar. It was already very dark. Overhead the little stars twinkled through the branches of the trees. "It's surprising that they didn't wait until the President pressed the lever to light up too," Keval said to himself. Otherwise, Prague was in darkness. The black stream of the Vltava rolled on without a lamp reflected in its waters. Everything quivered with expectation of the solemn moment that was to bring the light.

When Keval had finished his cigar, he went back to the Power Station and once more hoisted himself up to the little window. The Burgomaster was still talking, and his face was now of a purple bordering on blackness. The Chief of State was standing with his hand on the lever, the personages present were talking together in low tones, only the foreign Ambassadors listened on unmoving. At the very back, the head of Mr. Cvancara could be seen nodding drowsily.

Sheer physical exhaustion brought the Burgomaster to an end, and the Minister of Public Works began speaking. He was obviously cutting his sentences down unmercifully to shorten his address. The Chief of State was now holding the lever in his left hand. Old Billington, the doyen of the Diplomatic Corps, had passed away on his feet, preserving even in death the expression of an attentive listener. Then the Minister put an end to his speech as though with an axe.

G. H. Bondy raised his head, looked about with heavy eyes, and said a few words, apparently something to the effect that the M.E.C. was handing over its work to the public for the use and benefit of our metropolis, and so concluded. The Chief of State drew himself erect and pressed the lever. Then, in an instant, the whole of Prague shone out as a vast expanse of light, the crowds cheered, the bells in all the steeples began to swing, and from the Marianske fort there sounded the first boom of the cannon.

Still hanging to his grating, Keval looked around towards the city. Flaming rockets shot up from Střelecký Island; Hradčany, Petřín, and even Letná, were aglow with garlands of electric lamps, distant bands began competing with each other, illuminated biplanes circled above Stvanice, while the immense V. 16 soared up from Vyšehrad all bedecked with lanterns. The crowds removed their hats, the police stood like statues, their hands raised to their helmets in salute. Two batteries boomed out from the bastions, answered by the monitors from near Karlín.

Keval again pressed his face to the bars to see the conclusion of the ceremonies over the Karburator taking place inside. The next instant he uttered a hoarse cry, rolled his eyes, and once more squeezed himself still closer to the window. Then he uttered something like "Oh, God!", loosened his hold on the grating, and dropped heavily to the earth. Before he had actually reached the ground, someone rushing away from the place knocked into him. Keval seized him by the coat, and the man looked round. It was G. H. Bondy; he was as pale as death.

"What has happened, sir?" Keval stammered. "What are they doing in there?"

"Let go of me," Bondy panted. "For Christ's sake, let go. And get out of here, as quick as you can."

"But what has happened to them in there?"

"Let me go," shouted Bondy; and knocking Keval back with his fist, he disappeared among the trees.

Trembling all over, Keval supported himself against the trunk of a tree. From the interior of the concrete building came sounds as of savages chanting a hymn.

A few days later the Czechoslovak Press Bureau published the following obscure statement:

Contrary to the reports issued by a local publication which have obtained some currency abroad, we are able to state on the very best authority that no improper incidents of any kind took place on the occasion of the formal opening of the Karburator Central Power Station. In connection with this, the Burgomaster of Greater Prague has resigned his office and has gone into the country to recuperate. Mr. Billington, doyen of the Diplomatic Corps, is, contrary to pub-

lished reports, well and active. The fact is that all present declare that nothing in their experience has ever made so powerful an impression upon them. Every citizen has the right to fall to the earth and worship God, and the performance of miracles is not in conflict with any official position whatever in a democratic State. It is in any case decidedly improper to connect the Chief of State with regrettable incidents occasioned only by insufficient ventilation, combined with excessive strain upon the nerves.

10

SAINT ELLEN

A FEW DAYS AFTER THESE OCCURENCES G. H. BONDY WAS wandering through the streets of Prague, a cigar between his teeth, thinking things over. Anyone who met him would have thought that he was looking at the pavement; but Mr. Bondy was really looking into the future. "Marek was right," he was saying to himself, "Bishop Linda even more so. It was simply impossible to bring God to earth without a confounded lot coming of it. People could do what they liked, but it was going to shake the banks and do goodness knows what with industry. A religious strike broke out at the Industrial Bank today. We installed a Karburator there, and within two days the officials declared the bank's property to be a sacred trust for the poor. That couldn't have happened when Preis was manager. No, it certainly would never have happened."

Bondy sucked at his cigar in great depression. "Well, what about it?" he said to himself. "Are we to throw the whole thing up? Orders worth twenty-three millions came in today. It can't be stopped now. It means the end of the world, or something. In two years' time everything will have come down crash. There are several thousand Karburators at work in the world already, every one of them pouring forth the Absolute day and night. And this Ab-

solute is fiendishly clever, too. It has an insane desire to exert itself, no matter how. There you are, it hasn't anything to do, for thousands of years it's had nothing to do, and now we've let it off the chain. Just look at what it's doing at the Industrial Bank, for instance. It keeps the bank's books all on its own, does the accounts, carries on the correspondence. It gives orders to the Board of Directors in writing. It sends its clients fervent epistles about showing love by works. What's the result? The Industrial Bank shares are mere waste paper: it would take a kilo of them to buy a bit of cheese. That's what happens when God starts meddling with banking.

"The Oberlander firm, a textile factory in Upice, is bombarding us with despairing telegrams. A month ago they put in a Karburator in place of a boiler. Splendid, the machines are going strong: all's well. But suddenly the spinning jennies and looms begin to work all by themselves. When a thread breaks, it simply splices itself again, and on they go. The workmen just look on with their hands in their pockets. They're supposed to knock off at six o'clock. The spinners and weavers go home. But the looms go running on by themselves. They go on running all night and all day, for three whole weeks, weaving, weaving, weaving without a pause. The firm wires us: 'In the devil's name, take the finished goods off us, send us raw material, stop the machines!' And now it has got hold of the factory of Buxbaum Brothers, Morawetz and Co., by sheer long-range infection. There are no raw materials in the place. They lose their heads and fling rags, straw, earth, whatever comes handy, into the machines; well, even that stuff, if you please, gets woven into kilometers of towels, calico, cretonne, and everything imaginable. There's a terrific upheaval; the prices of textiles are coming down with a crash; England is raising her protective tariff; and our neighbouring states are threatening us with a boycott. And the factories are wailing, 'For the love of Heaven, take the finished goods away at least. Cart them away; send us men, lorries, motor trains; stop the machines!' In the meantime, they're suing us for damages. A damnable life! And we hear the same thing from all sides, from everywhere where a Karburator has been installed.

"The Absolute wants work. It clings furiously to life. Once it created the earth! now it has flung itself into manufacture. It has captured Liberec and the Brno cotton

works, Trutnov, twenty sugar factories, sawmills, the City Brewery in Pilsen; it is threatening the Skoda arsenal; it is busy at Jablonec and in the Jachymov mines. In many places people are dismissing their workmen; in others they've taken fright, closed the factories, and are just letting the machine go ahead inside. It's insane overproduction. Factories that haven't got the Absolute are stopping production altogether. It's ruin.

"And I," said Mr. Bondy to himself, "am a patriot. I will not let our country be brought to ruin. Besides, there are our own establishments here. Very well, from today onward we will cancel all orders from Czechoslovakia. What has been done is done; but from this moment not a single Karburator shall be set up in the land of the Czechs. We'll flood the Germans and the French with them; then we'll bombard England with the Absolute. England is conservative and won't have anything to do with our Karburators. Well, we'll drop them on her from airships like big bombs. We'll infect the whole industrial and financial world with God, and preserve only our own country as an island of civilization and honest labor free from God. It is a patriotic duty, so to speak, and besides, we have our own factories to consider."

The prospect gladdened G. H. Bondy's heart.

"At any rate we'll gain time to invent some sort of protective mask against the Absolute. Damn it, I'll set aside three millions myself for purposes of research into protective measures against God. Better say two millions to start with. All the Czechs will go about wearing their masks, while the rest—ha! ha!—will be getting drowned in the Absolute. At any rate their industries will go under."

Mr. Bondy began to look upon the world less darkly. "There's a young woman going by. Nice springy walk. I wonder what she looks like from the front." Mr. Bondy quickened his step, passed her, suddenly stepped respectfully to one side, then seemed to change his mind again, and turned on his heel so abruptly that he almost ran right into her.

"You, Ellen," he said hastily. "I had no idea, that—that—"

"I knew that you were following me," said the girl, standing still with downcast eyes.

"You knew it?" said Bondy, greatly pleased. "I was just thinking about you."

"I could feel your bestial desires," said Ellen quietly.

"My what?"

"Your bestial desires. You did not recognize me. You only appraised me with your eyes as if I were for sale."

G. H. Bondy frowned. "Ellen, why do you wish to hurt my feelings?"

Ellen shook her head. "They all do it. They're all alike, every one of them. One rarely meets a look that is pure."

Mr. Bondy pursed his lips for a whistle. Aha, so that's what it is! Old Machat's religious community!

"Yes," Ellen replied to his thoughts. "You ought to come and join us."

"Oh, of course," cried Mr. Bondy; and in his mind he said, "A nice girl like this! It's a shame."

"Why is it a shame?" asked Ellen gently.

"Oh, come, Ellen," protested Bondy. "You are a thought-reader. That isn't fair. If people were to read each other's thoughts they could never decently associate with one another. It's very indiscreet of you to know what I am thinking."

"What am I to do?" said Ellen. "Everyone who knows God has this same gift. Every one of your thoughts is born in my mind as soon as in yours. I don't read it, I have it myself. If you only knew how purifying it is when one can judge of every hidden baseness!"

"Hm," muttered Mr. Bondy, trembling lest anything should cross his mind.

"It is indeed," Ellen assured him. "It has cured me, with the help of God, of the love of riches. I should be ever so glad if the scales were to fall from your eyes, too."

"God forbid," exclaimed G. H. Bondy, horrified. "But tell me, do you understand everything that you—er—see in people like this?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Then listen to me, Ellen," said Bondy. "I can tell you everything, for you'd read it in me in any case. I could never marry a woman who would be able to read my thoughts. She could be religious to her heart's content, boundlessly charitable to the poor; I'm able to afford it, and besides, it's good publicity. I'd put up even with virtue, Ellen, for love of you. I'd put up with anything. I have

loved you after my fashion, Ellen. I can tell you so because you can read it for yourself. But, Ellen, neither business nor society is possible without thoughts that are not disclosed. And marriage, above all things, is impossible without thoughts that are not disclosed. It is unthinkable, Ellen. And even if you find the holiest of men, don't marry him as long as you can read his thoughts. A little illusion is the only bond between mortals that never breaks. Saint Ellen, you must not marry."

"Why not?" said Saint Ellen in soft tones. "Our God is not opposed to nature; He only sanctifies it. He does not ask us to mortify ourselves. He bids us live and be fruitful. He wants us to—"

"Stop," Mr. Bondy interrupted her. "Your God doesn't understand. If He takes away our illusions. He is doing something confoundedly opposed to nature. He's simply impossible, Ellen, utterly impossible. If He were a reasonable being, He would realize it. He's either wholly inexperienced or else completely and criminally destructive. It's a great pity, Ellen. I haven't anything against religion, but this God doesn't know what He ought to want. Depart into the wilderness, Saint Ellen, with your second sight. You are out of place among us mortals. Farewell, Ellen; or rather—good-bye for ever."

11

THE FIRST BLOW STRUCK

EXACTLY HOW IT HAPPENED HAS NOT YET BEEN ESTABLISHED, but just at the very time when the little factory belonging to R. Marek, Engineer, 1651 Mixa Street, Břevnov, was garrisoned by detectives and surrounded by a cordon of police, unknown malefactors stole the original Marek Karburator. Despite the most active search, not a trace of the stolen machine was found.

Not long afterwards Jan Binder, the proprietor of a merry-go-round, was looking round the premises of a dealer

in old iron in Hastal Square with a view to purchasing a little naphtha motor to run his roundabout and its orchestration. The dealer offered him a big copper cylinder with a piston, and said it was a very economical motor; all one had to do was to shovel in a little coal, and it would run for months. Jan Binder was seized with a strange, almost blind faith in the copper cylinder, and he bought it for three hundred crowns. Then he hauled it away on a truck with his own hands to his merry-go-round, which was standing out of action near Zlichov.

Jan Binder took off his coat, unloaded the copper cylinder from the cart, and set to work whistling softly. He fixed a wheel on the axle where the flywheel used to be, and ran a belt over this wheel to another axle which drove the orchestration with one end and the merry-go-round with the other. Then he oiled the bearings, put them into a wheel, and stood there, in his broad-striped jersey, with his hands in his pockets, puckering his lips for a whistle and waiting pensively to see what would happen next. The wheel went round three times, then stopped; presently it quivered, wobbled, and then began to turn quietly and smoothly. Then the orchestration started with all its little drums and whistles, the merry-go-round gave itself a shake as if waking from sleep, creaked in all its joints, and began glidingly to revolve. The silver fringes gleamed, the white steeds with their showy trappings and red bridles seemed to set in motion their princely equipages, the deer with its wildly staring eyes swept round, poised as for a leap, the swans with their elegantly arching necks drew in a circle their white and sky-blue vessels; and so all aglitter, and to the accompaniment of blaring music, the merry-go-round rotated its splendors before the unwinking eyes of the Three Graces painted on the orchestration, now carried away on the rush of its own melodies.

Jan Binder still stood there with his lips pursed and his hands in his pockets. He gazed upon his merry-go-round as though in a dream, seemingly entranced by something new and lovely. By this time he was no longer alone. A tear-stained dirty child dragged its young nurse up to the merry-go-round and stopped in front of it with great round eyes and mouth wide open, rigid with wonderment. The little nurse, too, opened wide her eyes and stood there like one enraptured. The merry-go-round performed its

circuit with a strange resplendence, sublimity, stateliness, like a festal day—now whirling round with an impassioned velocity, now rocking gently like a vessel laden with the rich perfumes of India, now floating like a golden cloud high in the heavens; it seemed to soar upwards, sundered from the earth, it seemed to sing. But no, it was the orchestration that was singing; now with the joyous voices of women mingling with a silvery rain of music falling from harps; and now it was the roar of a forest or a great organ, but from the depths of the forest birds fluted their songs and came and settled on your shoulders. Golden trumpets proclaimed the coming of a conqueror or, it might be, a whole army with flashing fiery swords. And who was it singing that glorious hymn? Thousands of people were waving branches of palm, the heavens opened, and, heralded by rolling drums, the son of God Himself descended upon the earth.

Jan Binder raised his hand, but at that moment the merry-go-round stopped and leaned towards the little child. The child tripped on to the merry-go-round as if it were entering the open gates of Paradise, and the nursemaid followed as though in a trance and seated it in one of the boats drawn by swans. "Free rides today!" said Binder hoarsely; the orchestration burst out jubilantly, and the merry-go-round began to turn as though it would soar up into the sky. Jan Binder reeled. What could this mean? Why, it wasn't the merry-go-round that was turning now, but the whole earth was spinning round and round. The Zlichovsky Church was describing a gigantic curve, the Podol Sanatorium and Vyšehrad were setting off together for the other bank of the Vltava. Yes, the whole earth was turning about the merry-go-round, circling faster and faster, humming like a turbine; only the merry-go-round stood firm in the center, rocking gently like a ship with white horses, deer and swans roving about the deck, and a little child leading its nurse by the hand and stroking the animals. Yes, yes, the earth was spinning furiously, and only the merry-go-round was a lovely island of quiet and repose. And Jan Binder, dizzy and sick, raised his arms, and let the mad earth carry him staggering towards the merry-go-round, seized one of the rods, and swung himself up on to its peaceful deck.

Now he could clearly see how the earth was heaving and

tossing like a stormy sea. And look, there were terrified people rushing out of their houses, waving their hands, stumbling and falling as though borne along by a gigantic whirlwind. Holding tightly to his rod, Binder stooped down to them and shouted, "Here, people, this way!" And the people seeing the shining merry-go-round calmly uplifted above the reeling earth, staggered towards it. Gripping the rod, Binder held out his free hand and pulled them up from the heaving earth: children, grandmothers, old men, all stood on the deck of the merry-go-round, taking breath again after their terrible fright, and looking down in dismay upon the earth spinning below them. Binder had just helped them all up, when a little black puppy came running by, yelping with fear, and tried to leap aboard; but the earth carried him faster and faster round the merry-go-round. Binder squatted down, reached out his hand, and grabbed the puppy by the tail, and lifted it into safety.

Then the orchestrion played a song of thanksgiving. It sounded like a chorus of survivors of a shipwreck, with the rough voices of the sailors mingling with the prayers of children. Over the unleashed tempest there bent a rainbow of melody (in B minor) and the heavens opened in the happy radiance of pizzicati on the violins. The castaways on Binder's merry-go-round stood there silent with their heads bare. The women's lips moved softly in silent prayer, and the children, forgetting the horrors they had passed through, plucked up courage to stroke the hard muzzle of the deer and the supple neck of the swan. The white horses patiently allowed the little limbs to clamber into the saddles; sometimes one of them neighed or pawed knowingly with his hoof. The earth was turning more slowly now, and Jan Binder, a tall figure in his sleeveless striped jersey, began in his unpracticed style to make a speech.

"Well, good people, here we have landed out of the whirl and confusion of the world. Here we have peace amid the storm. Here we are with God, as safe as in our beds. It is a sign that we should flee from the tumult of the world and find refuge in the arms of God. Amen." Thus and in like manner spoke Jan Binder, and the people on the merry-go-round listened as if they were in church.

At last the earth stopped spinning, the orchestrion played a soft and reverent voluntary, and the people jumped down from the merry-go-round. Jan Binder told them that there

was no charge, and dismissed them, converted and uplifted. And when towards four o'clock the mothers and children and the old pensioners were taking their afternoon walk between Zlichov and Smichov, the orchestrion again began to play, and the earth once more went flying round, and again Jan Binder brought everybody safe on to the deck of the merry-go-round and calmed them with a suitable address. At six o'clock people came from their day's work, sweethearts emerged at eight, and at ten the pleasure-seekers left the public-houses and picture-palaces; all of them in turn were overcome by the dizzy whirling of the earth, brought to safety in the embrace of the merry-go-round, and strengthened for their future life by the apt exhortations of Jan Binder.

After a week of this hallowed work, Binder's merry-go-round forsook Zlichov and went roaming along the bank of the Vltava up to Chuchle and Zbraslav, and so reached Stechovice. It had been working in Stechovice for four days with tremendous power, when an incident of a somewhat mysterious character took place.

Jan Binder had just finished his sermon and dismissed his new disciples with a blessing. At that moment there approached out of the darkness a black and silent body of people. At their head walked a tall, bearded man, who went straight up to Binder.

"Now then," he said, trying to master his excitement, "pack up at once, or—"

Binder's adherents heard this and returned to their teacher. Conscious of having his people at the back of him, Binder declared firmly, "Not till it rains."

"Control yourself, sir," said another excited man. "It's Mr. Kuzenda speaking to you."

"Leave him to me, Mr. Hudec," cried the bearded man. "I'll soon settle with him myself. I'm telling you for the second time; clear out with that thing or, in the name of the Lord, I'll smash it up for you."

"And as for you," said Jan Binder, "get out of here or, in the name of the Lord, I'll knock the teeth out of your head."

"God Almighty!" shouted Brych, the stoker, forcing his way through the crowd to the front. "Just let him try!"

"Brother," said Kuzenda soothingly, "let us first try to settle it quietly. Binder, you are carrying on foul witch-

craft here, and we'll not put up with it so close to the sacred shrine of our dredge."

"Your dredge is a fraud!" said Binder decisively.

"What did you say?" cried Kuzenda, cut to the quick.

"Your dredge is a fraud!"

What happened next it is hard to disentangle into any logical sequence. It seems that the first blow was struck by the baker from Kuzenda's camp, but Binder landed him a blow on the head with his fist. The gamekeeper struck Binder on the chest with his gunstock, but directly afterwards he lost his gun, and some Stechovice youth from Binder's camp used it to knock out Brych's front teeth and smash Mr. Hudec's hat in. Kuzenda's postman tried to throttle a youth on Binder's side. Binder leaped forward to help the boy, but a girl from Stechovice flung herself on him from behind, and bit him in the arm just where he had had the Bohemian lion tattooed. One of Binder's party drew a knife, and Kuzenda's followers seemed to be falling back, but a smaller group of them dashed on to the merry-go-round and broke off the deer's antlers and the elegantly arching neck of one of the swans. The merry-go-round gave a deep groan and heeled over, its roof falling right upon the struggling mob. Kuzenda was struck by a pole and knocked unconscious. It all happened in darkness and silence. When people came rushing up, Binder had a broken collarbone, Kuzenda lay there unconscious, Brych was spitting out teeth and blood, and the girl from Stechovice was sobbing hysterically. The rest had fled.

12

DOCTOR BLAHOUS

THAT YOUTHFUL SAVANT DOCTOR BLAHOUS, PH.D., ONLY fifty-five years of age, and now Lecturer in Comparative Religion at the University of Prague, rubbed his hands as he sat down before his quarto sheets of paper. With a few swift strokes he set down his title, "Religious Phenomena of

Recent Times"—and began his article with the words: "The controversy over the definition of the idea of 'religion' has lasted ever since the days of Cicero"; then he gave himself up to his thoughts.

"I'll send this article to the *Prague Times*," he said to himself, "and just you wait, my revered colleagues, and see what a stir it will make! It's lucky for me that this religious epidemic has broken out just now! It will make it a very topical little article. The papers will say, 'That youthful savant, Dr. Blahous, has just published a penetrating study,' etc. Then I'll be given the Assistant Professorship, and old Regner will burst with fury."

Whereupon the youthful savant rubbed his wrinkled hands until the bones cracked blithely, and again began to write. When towards evening his landlady came to inquire what he would like for supper, he was already on the sixtieth page, among the Fathers of the Church. At eleven o'clock (and page 115) he had arrived at his own definition of the idea of religion, which differed from his predecessor's by precisely one word. After this he dealt succinctly with the methods of the exact science of religion (with a few shrewd hits at his opponents), and so brought to an end the brief introduction to his little article.

Shortly after midnight our lecturer wrote the following passage: "It happens that quite recently various phenomena of a religious and occult character have occurred which deserve the attention of the exact science of religion. Although its main purpose is undoubtedly to study the religious customs of nations long since extinct, nevertheless even the living present can afford the *modern* [Dr. Blahous underlined the word] student numerous data which *mutatis mutandis* throw a certain light on cults long vanished, which can only be the subject of conjecture."

Then, with the aid of newspaper reports and evidence given verbally, he gave a description of Kuzendism, in which he found traces of fetish worship and even totemism (the dredge being made a sort of Totem God of Stechovice). In the case of the Binderians, he worked out their relationship to the Dancing Dervishes and ancient orgiastic cults. He touched upon the phenomena witnessed at the opening of the Power Station, and deftly showed their connection with the fire worship of the Parsees. In Machat's religious community he discovered the characteristics of the fakirs and

ascetics. He cited various examples of clairvoyance and miraculous healing, which he compared very aptly to the magic practiced by the old negro tribes of Central Africa. He went on to deal with mental contagion and mass-suggestion, introducing historical references to the Flagellants, the Crusades, Millenarianism, and "running amok" among the Malays. He threw light upon the recent religious movement from two psychological points of view, ascribing it to pathological cases in degenerate hysterical subjects, and to a collective psychical epidemic among the superstitious and mentally inferior masses. In both cases he demonstrated the atavistic occurrence of primitive forms of worship, the tendency to animistic pantheism and shamanism, a religious communism reminiscent of the Anabaptists, and a general surrender of reasoning power in favor of the grossest impulses of superstition, witchcraft, occultism, mysticism, and necromancy.

"It is not for us to decide," Dr. Blahous went on writing, "to what extent this is due to quackery and imposture on the part of individuals bent on exploiting human credulity; a scientific inquiry would doubtless show that the alleged 'miracles' of the thaumaturgists of today are only old and well-known devices of trickery and suggestion. In this connection we would recommend the new 'religious communities,' sects, and circles now daily springing into existence to the attention of our police authorities and psychoanalysts. The exact science of religion confines itself to establishing the fact that all these religious phenomena are at bottom nothing but examples of barbaric atavism, and a hotch-potch of the most rudimentary forms of worship still subconsciously active in the human imagination. It has only needed a few fanatics, charlatans, and notorious swindlers to revive among the peoples of Europe, under the veneer of civilization, these prehistoric elements of religious belief."

Dr. Blahous got up from his desk. He had just finished the three hundredth and forty-sixth page of his little article, but still he did not feel weary. "I must think out an effective finish," he said to himself; "some reflections on progress and science, on the suspicious benevolence of the Government towards religious heterodoxy, and on the necessity of presenting a fighting front to reaction, and so forth."

The youthful savant, borne on the wings of his enthu-

siasm, went to the window and leaned out into the quiet night. It was half-past four in the morning. Dr. Blahous looked out on the dark street, shivering a little with the cold of the night. Everywhere was the stillness of death, not a glimmer of light showed in any human habitation. The Lecturer raised his eyes to the sky. It was already paling a little, but it still shone in its infinite sublimity, sown with stars. "How long it is since I looked at the sky!" came suddenly into the scholar's mind. "Good heavens, it is more than thirty years!"

And then he felt a delicious coolness about his brow, as though someone had taken his head in cool and spotless hands. "I'm so lonely," the old man sighed, "so terribly lonely all the time! Yes, stroke my hair a little. Alas, it is thirty long years since anyone's hand was laid upon my brow!"

Dr. Blahous stood there in the window, stiff and shaking. "There is something here all about me," he suddenly perceived with a sweet and overwhelming emotion. "Dear God, I am not alone after all! Someone's arm is around me, someone is beside me; oh, if he would only stay!"

If his landlady had entered the room a little later, she would have seen him standing in the window with both arms raised on high, his head flung back, and an expression of the utmost rapture on his face. But then he shuddered, opened his eyes, and as if in a dream went back to his desk.

"On the other hand, however, it is impossible to doubt," he wrote rapidly, heedless of all that he had already written, "that God cannot now reveal Himself otherwise than in primitive forms of worship. With the decay of faith in modern times our connection with the old religious life has been broken. To bring us back to Him, God must begin again from the beginning and do as He did with the savages in olden times: at first He is an idol, a fetish; the idol of a group, a clan, or a tribe; He animates all nature and works through a witch doctor. This evolution of religion is being repeated before our eyes, beginning with its prehistoric forms and working upwards to the loftier types. It is possible that the present religious wave will divide into several streams, each striving for supremacy to the disadvantage of the others. We must expect an era of religious struggles which will surpass the Crusades in their fury and

obstinacy and the last World Wars in their scope. In our godless world the Kingdom of Heaven cannot be established without great sacrifices and confusion of doctrine. Nevertheless I say unto you: Give yourself up with your whole beings to the Absolute; believe in God, in whatsoever form He may declare Himself to you. Behold even now He cometh to set up on our earth, and perchance on other planets of our system also, the everlasting Empire of God, the Czardom of the Absolute. Ere it is too late, I say yet again unto you: Humble yourselves before Him!"

This article by Dr. Blahous did actually appear. Not in its entirety, to be sure. The editor published part of his discussion of the new sects and the whole of his conclusion, with a cautious note to the effect that this paper by the youthful savant was certainly characteristic of our times.

Blahous's article did not cause any stir, for it was overshadowed by other events. Only that youthful savant, Dr. Regner, Lecturer in Philosophy, read it with immense interest and afterwards proclaimed in various places: "Blahous is impossible. Utterly impossible. How on earth can a man have the nerve to pose as an expert on religion when he actually believes in God?"

13

THE CHRONICLER'S APOLOGY

AND NOW PERMIT THE CHRONICLER OF THE ABSOLUTE TO call your attention to his painful situation. First of all, he is in the act of writing Chapter 13, well aware that this unlucky number will have a fatal influence on the clarity and completeness of his exposition. There is going to be a mix-up of some kind in this unfortunate chapter, you may be sure. Of course, the author could quite calmly head it Chapter 14, but the observant reader would feel that he had been cheated out of Chapter 13, and no one could blame him, since he has paid to have the whole narrative. Besides, if

you are afraid of the number thirteen, you have only to skip this chapter. It will certainly not cause you to lose much light on the obscure affair of the Factory for the Absolute.

But the other embarrassments of the chronicler are much more serious. He has described as coherently as he could the origin of the factory and its prosperity. He has called your attention to the occurrences due to certain of the Karburator cylinders in Mr. Machat's buildings, at the Zivno Industrial Bank, in the textile works at Upice, aboard Kuzenda's dredge, and on Binder's merry-go-round. He has described the tragic experience of Blahous, the result of long-range infection induced by the free and mobile Absolute, which had evidently begun to spread in a serious fashion, although after no definite plan.

But now you must remember that since the beginning of the whole affair countless thousands of Karburators of the most diverse types had been manufactured. Trains, flying machines, automobiles, and ships driven by this most economical of all motors discharged along their routes whole clouds of the Absolute, just as in other days they used to leave a trail of dust, smoke, and smells. You must remember that thousands of factories all over the world had already scrapped their old boilers and equipped themselves with Karburators; that hundreds of Government departments and offices, hundreds of banks, exchanges, wholesale and export firms, as well as huge restaurants, hotels, military barracks, schools, theatres, tenements, thousands of newspaper offices and clubs, cabarets, and households were being heated by the latest M.E.C. Central-Heating Karburator. You must remember that the Stinnes interests with all their ramifications had amalgamated with the M.E.C., and that the American Ford works had flung themselves into mass production which hurled thirty thousand finished Karburators out upon the world every day.

Well, bearing all this in mind, just recall what happened with each of those Karburators whose history has been presented to you. Multiply these incidents a hundred thousand times, and you will grasp at once the unhappy position of the present chronicler. How gladly he would journey with you after each new Karburator, see it loaded on the wagon, and offer a bit of hay or bread or a lump of sugar to the heavy draught-horses, with their broad and kingly backs,

which drag the new copper cylinders on the rattling lorry to the factory! How gladly he would look on while they set it up, standing with his hands behind his back and giving the erectors his advice, and then wait until it was set in motion! How eagerly then he would peer into people's faces to note when "it" would begin to affect them, when the Absolute would creep into their being by the nose or ears or any other part, and begin to dissolve the hardness of their nature, overpower their personal tendencies, and cure their moral wounds; to watch the Absolute turn them up with its heavy plough, warm them, master them, and shape them anew; to see it lay open to them a world so marvellous and yet intrinsically so human, of wonders, ecstasy, enlightenment, inspiration and belief! For you must know that the chronicler admits that he is incapable of writing a history. Where the historian uses the press or pounder of his historical learning, documentary lore, abstracts, synthesis, statistics, and other professional devices, to squeeze thousands and hundreds of thousands of little vital personal incidents into a dense and arbitrary conglomerate known as "a historical fact," "a social phenomenon," "a mass movement," "evolution," "the mind of the race," or "historical truth" in general, the chronicler sees only the individual cases and even finds them pleasing in themselves.

Now suppose that he had to describe and explain, say, pragmatically, progressively, theoretically, and synthetically, the "religious wave" which swept over the whole world before the year 1950. Once he sees this grandiose task before him, he begins collecting the "religious phenomena" of his own time; and there, in the course of these researches, he comes, for example, upon Jan Binder, ex-variety artiste, wandering from place to place in his striped jersey with his atomic merry-go-round. Historical synthesis, of course, requires the chronicler to omit the striped jersey, the merry-go-round, even Jan Binder himself, and retain as the "historical nucleus" or scientific result, only the discovery that "these religious phenomena from the very outset affected the most diverse classes of society."

Well, then, the chronicler must here and now confess that he cannot cast aside Jan Binder, that he is fascinated by his merry-go-round, and that even that striped jersey of his interests him far more than any "synthetic outline" whatever. To be sure, this displays complete scientific in-

competence, empty dilettantism, the narrowest historical outlook, or anything else you like; yet if the chronicler could give rein to his personal inclinations, he would go off on his travels with Jan Binder as far as Budelovice, then to Klatovy, Pilsen, Zlutice, and so on. It is with regret that he leaves him in Stechovice and waves his hand and cries, "Good-bye, Binder, you sturdy fellow, and good-bye, merry-go-round! We shall never meet again."

Bless my soul, it was with just the same feeling that I left Kuzenda and Brych on the Vltava dredge. I should have liked to spend many and many an evening with them, for I love the Vltava and all running water in general, and evenings on the water in particular, and I took an unusual liking to Mr. Kuzenda and Mr. Brych as well. As for Mr. Hudec, the baker, the postman, the gamekeeper, and the sweethearts from Stechovice, I believe that they, too, would be worth knowing intimately, as anyone is, as all of you are, as is every living human being. But I must push on, and I have hardly time enough to wave my hat to you. Good-bye, Mr. Kuzenda; good-night, Mr. Brych. My thanks for that one evening on board the dredge.

Of you, too, Dr. Blahous, I must take my leave. I should like to spend many a year with you and describe your whole career—for is not the life of a university lecturer rich and exciting, after its fashion? Give my regards to your landlady at least.

Everything there is, is worth observing.

And that is why I should like to accompany each new Karburator on its way. I should become acquainted with fresh people every day, and so would you, and that is always worthwhile. Just to peep through one's spyglass into their lives, to see their hearts, to watch their personal faith and personal salvation come into being, to linger amid the new marvels of human saintliness—that is what would lure me on! Just picture to yourself a beggar, a ruling chief, a bank manager, an engine driver, a waiter, a rabbi, a major, a writer on political economy, a cabaret comedian, men of every possible calling; and imagine a miser, a sensualist, a glutton, a skeptic, a hypocrite, a sneak, a career hunter, men of every possible human passion—what diverse, endlessly varying, strange, and surprising instances and phenomena of heavenly grace (or, if you like, poisoning with the Absolute) one could meet, and how absorbing

it would be to study each one of them. What gradations of faith there would be, from the ordinary believer to the fanatic, from the penitent to the miracle-worker, from the convert to the fiery apostle. If one could only embrace it all! If one could only extend a hand to each of them! But it is useless; that great work will never be completed, and the chronicler, having renounced the honour of distilling scientifically all his historical material, turns away with sorrow from the individual cases which it is not permitted him to relate.

I wish I could stay a little longer with Saint Ellen! I wish I need not treacherously abandon our friend, R. Marek, undergoing a rest cure at Spindelmühl! I wish I could reveal the workings of the brain of that industrial strategist, G. H. Bondy. All in vain; the Absolute has already flooded the world, and has become a mass phenomenon; and the chronicler, regretfully looking backward, must reconcile himself to a summary description of a few of the social and political events which inevitably ensued.

Come, then, let us enter upon a new range of facts.

On April 1st the world situation was approximately as follows: In Central Europe the great world conflict between the Catholics and Protestants was running its course. The Protestant Union had forced back the Crusaders out of Berlin, had got a firm hold on Saxony, and had occupied even the neutral territory of Czechoslovakia. The City of Prague was, by a peculiar coincidence, under the command of the Swedish Major-General Wrangel, possibly a descendant of the general of the same name who figured in the Thirty Years' War. On the other hand, the Crusaders had made themselves masters of Holland, which they had flooded by breaking the dykes and letting in the sea, as well as of Hanover and Holstein as far as Lübeck, whence they were making inroads on Denmark. No quarter was given in the fighting. Cities were razed to the ground, the men killed, and women up to the age of fifty violated. But the first things destroyed in every case were the enemy Karburators. Contemporaries of these inordinately bloody struggles assure us that supernatural powers were fighting on both sides. Often it seemed as though an invisible hand seized hostile aircraft and dashed them to the ground, or intercepted in its flight a fifty-four centimeter projectile weighing a ton and

hurled it back upon its own ranks. Particularly horrible were the scenes enacted during the destruction of the Karburators. As soon as the enemy position was occupied, there ensued an invisible but desperate struggle round the local Karburators. At times it was like a cyclone which wrecked and scattered the whole building in which an atomic boiler stood, like someone blowing on a heap of feathers. Bricks, timbers, and tiles flew round in wild confusion, and the contest usually ended in a frightful explosion which felled every tree and structure within a radius of twelve kilometers and scooped out a crater over two hundred meters deep. The force of the detonation naturally varied according to the size of the exploding Karburator.

Suffocating gases spread over a radius of three hundred kilometers, utterly blasting all vegetation; however, as these creeping clouds several times turned back upon their own ranks—through the strategical intervention of supernatural powers—this very unreliable method of warfare was abandoned. It was apparent that while the Absolute attacked on one side, it also defended itself on the other. It introduced unheard-of weapons into warfare—earthquakes, cyclones, showers of sulphur, inundations, angels, pestilence, famines, plagues of locusts, etc.—till there was no alternative but to alter the art of military strategy altogether. Mass attacks, permanent entrenchments, open order, strong points, and such-like nonsense, were abandoned; every soldier received a knife, some cartridges, and some bombs, and with these he went off on his own to kill any soldier who wore on his breast a cross of a different colour. It was not a matter of two armies confronting each other. There was simply a particular country which was the battlefield, and there the two armies moved about promiscuously, killing one another off, man for man, until finally it became clear to whom that country now belonged. It was a terribly murderous method, to be sure, but it had ultimately, in the long run, a certain conclusiveness.

Such was the situation in Central Europe. At the beginning of April the Protestant armies were entering Austria and Bavaria by way of Czechoslovakia, while the Catholics were overrunning Denmark and Pomerania. Holland, as already stated, had completely vanished from the map of Europe.

In Italy internal warfare was raging between the parties

of Urban and Martin; meanwhile Sicily fell into the hands of the Greek Evzones. The Portuguese occupied Austria and Castile, but lost their own Estramadura; in the South as a whole the war was waged with quite exceptional ferocity.

England had been fighting on Irish soil and then in the colonies. By the beginning of April she held only the coast-line of Egypt. The other colonies had been lost, and the settlers killed by the natives. With the aid of Arabians, Sudanese, and Persian armies the Turks had overwhelmed the entire Balkan region, and had made themselves masters of Hungary, when the schism broke out between the Shiah and the Sunnis on what was apparently a very important question concerning Ali, the fourth Caliph. Both sects pursued each other from Constantinople to the Carpathians with a zeal and bloodthirstiness which unfortunately also vented itself upon the Christians. And so in this part of Europe things were worse than anywhere else.

Poland vanished, being wiped out of existence by the Russian armies. The Russian hosts then turned to face the Yellow invasion which was sweeping northward and westward. Meanwhile ten Japanese army corps had been landed in North America.

You will notice that no mention has yet been made of France, the chronicler having reserved that country for Chapter 14.

14

THE NAPOLEON OF THE MOUNTAIN BRIGADE

BOBINET, IF YOU PLEASE, TONI BOBINET, THE TWENTY-TWO-year-old lieutenant of Mountain artillery, attached to the garrison of Annecy (Haute Savoie), but at present on six weeks' manoeuvres on the Needles (Les Aiguilles), from which on a clear day one can see in the west the lakes of Annecy and Geneva, and in the east the blunted ridge of the Bonne Montagne and the peaks of Mont Blanc—do you

know your way about now? Well, then, Lieutenant Toni Bobinet sat on a boulder and tugged at his tiny moustache, first because he was bored, and secondly because he had read a newspaper two weeks old right through for the fifth time, and was now thinking things over.

At this point the chronicler ought to follow the meditations of the prospective Napoleon, but in the meantime his glance (the chronicler's, that is) had slid along the snow-covered slopes to the gorge of the Arly, where the thaw had already set in, and where his eye is caught and held by the tiny little towns of Mégève, Flumet, and Ugines, with their pointed churches looking like toys. Ah, the memories of long-vanished childhood! The castles in the air one reared with one's box of bricks!

Meanwhile Lieutenant Bobinet—but no. Let us abandon any attempt to psychologize great men, to express the titanic idea in the germ from which it sprang. We are not equal to the task, and if we were, we should perhaps be disappointed. Just picture to yourself this little Lieutenant Bobinet sitting on Les Aiguilles with Europe falling to ruin all about him—a battery of mountain guns in front of him, and below him a miniature world which could easily be shot to pieces from where he sat. Imagine that he has just read in an old copy of the Annecy *Moniteur* the leading article in which some M. Babillard calls for the strong hand of a helmsman who will steer the good ship France out of the raging storm toward new power and glory; and that up there, at a height of over two thousand meters, the air is pure and free from the Absolute, so that one can think clearly and freely. Picture all this, and you will understand how it was that Lieutenant Bobinet, sitting there on his rock, first grew very thoughtful and then wrote his venerable, wrinkled, white-haired mother a somewhat confused letter, assuring her that “she would soon be hearing of her Toni,” and that Toni had “a magnificent idea.” After that he saw to one thing and another, had a good night's sleep, and in the morning assembled all the soldiers of his battery, deposed the incompetent old captain, took possession of the military post of Sallanches, declared war on the Absolute with Napoleonic brevity, and went to sleep again. The following day he shot to pieces the Karburator in the bakery at Thônes, occupied the railway station of Bonneville, and seized the command at Annecy, having by this

time three thousand men under him. Within a week he had destroyed over two hundred Karburators and was leading fifteen thousand bayonets and sabres against Grenoble. He was proclaimed commandant of Grenoble, and now had a small army of forty thousand men at his back, with which he descended into the valley of the Rhône and busied himself in painstakingly clearing the surrounding territory of all atomic motors by means of his long-range guns. On the road to Chambéry he captured the Minister for War, who was hurrying in his motorcar to put Bobinet back in his place. The Minister for War was so captivated and convinced by Bobinet's plans that he made him a General on the following day. On April 1st the city of Lyons was completely cleansed of every trace of the Absolute.

Up to this point Bobinet's triumphant progress had not been attended by bloodshed. He met with his first opposition from ardent Catholics beyond the Loire, and sanguinary engagements took place. Fortunately for Bobinet, many Frenchmen had remained skeptics, even in communities completely saturated with the Absolute, and indeed showed themselves wildly fanatical in their unbelief and rationalism. After cruel massacres and new St. Bartholomew's Eves "les Bobinets" were welcomed everywhere as liberators, and everywhere they went they succeeded in pacifying the populace after destroying all the Karburetors.

And so it befell that as early as July, Parliament proclaimed that Toni Bobinet had deserved well of his country and raised him to the dignity of First Consul with the title of Marshal. France was consolidated. Bobinet introduced State atheism; any sort of religious demonstration was punishable by court-martial with death.

We cannot refrain from mentioning a few episodes in the great man's career.

Bobinet and his Mother.—One day Bobinet was holding council at Versailles with his General Staff. As the day was hot, he had taken his place by an open window. Suddenly he noticed an aged woman in the park, warming herself in the sun. Bobinet at once interrupted Marshal Jollivet with a cry of "Look, gentlemen—my mother!" All present, even the most hardened generals, were moved to tears by this demonstration of filial affection.

Bobinet and Love of Country.—On one occasion Bobinet was holding a military review on the Champ de Mars in a downpour of rain. While the heavy howitzers were passing before him, an army motor ran into a large puddle of water which spurted up and bespattered Bobinet's cloak. Marshal Jollivet wished to punish the commander of the unfortunate battery by reducing him in rank on the spot. But Bobinet restrained him, saying, "Let him alone, Marshal. After all, this is the mud of France!"

Bobinet and the Old Pensioner.—Bobinet was once driving out incognito to Chartres. On the way a tire burst, and while the chauffeur was putting on a new one, a one-legged pensioner came up and asked for alms.

"Where did this man lose his leg?" asked Bobinet.

The old pensioner related that he had lost it while serving in Indochina. He had a poor old mother, and there were often days when neither of them had a bite to eat.

"Marshal, take this man's name," said Bobinet, deeply affected. And sure enough a week later there came a knock at the door of the old pensioner's hut; it was Bobinet's personal courier, who handed the hapless cripple a packet "from the First Consul." Who can describe the surprise and delight of the old soldier when upon opening the packet he found inside it *the Bronze Medal!*

15

THE END OF EVERYTHING

MANY YEARS WENT BY. BRYCH THE STOKER, NOW THE PROPRIETOR of a locksmith's business, was sitting in the Damohorsky tavern, reading a copy of the *People's Journal*.

"The liver sausages will be ready in a minute," announced the landlord, emerging from the kitchen. And bless me if it wasn't old Jan Binder, who used to own the merry-go-round. He had grown fat and no longer wore his striped jersey; nevertheless it was he!

"There's no hurry," Mr. Brych answered slowly. "Father Jost hasn't turned up yet. Nor Rejzek either."

"And—how is Mr. Kuzenda getting along?" Jan Binder inquired.

"Oh, well, you know. He's not very grand. He's one of the best men breathing, Mr. Binder."

"He is, indeed," assented the innkeeper. "I don't know—Mr. Brych—what about taking him a few liver sausages with my compliments? They're first class, Mr. Brych, and if you'd be so kind—"

"Why, with pleasure, Mr. Binder. He'll be delighted to think you remember him. Of course I will. With pleasure!"

"Praise be the Lord!" came a voice from the doorway, and Canon Jost stepped into the room, his cheeks ruddy with the cold, and hung up his hat and fur coat.

"Good evening, your Reverence," responded Mr. Brych. "We've waited for you—we've waited."

Father Jost pursed his lips contentedly and rubbed his stiffened hands. "Well, sir, what's in the papers, what have they got to say today?"

"I was just reading this: 'The President of the Republic has appointed that youthful savant, Dr. Blahous, Lecturer at the University, to be Assistant Professor.' You remember, Canon, it's that Blahous who once wrote an article about Mr. Kuzenda."

"Aha, aha," said Father Jost, wiping his little spectacles. "I know, I know, the athiest. They are a lot of infidels at the University. And you're another, Mr. Brych."

"Come, his Reverence will pray for us, I know," said Mr. Binder. "He'll want us in heaven to make up the card party. Well, your Reverence, two and one?"

"Yes, of course, two and one."

Mr. Binder opened the kitchen door and shouted:

"Two liver sausages and one blood sausage."

"'Evening!' growled Rejzek, the journalist, entering the room. "It's cold, friends."

"It's a very pleasant evening," chirped Mr. Binder. "We don't get company like this every day."

"Well, what's the news?" inquired Father Jost gaily. "What's going on in the editorial sanctum? Ah, yes, I used to write for the papers myself in my young days."

"By the way, that fellow Blahous mentioned me in the paper too that time," said Mr. Brych. "I've still got the cut-

ting somewhere: 'The Apostle of Kuzenda's Sect,' or something like that, he called me. Yes, yes, those were the days!"

"Let's have supper," ordered Mr. Rejzek. Mr. Binder and his daughter were already setting sausages on the table. They were still sizzling, covered with frothing bubbles of fat, and they reclined upon crisp sauerkraut like Turkish odalisques on cushions. Father Jost clicked his tongue resoundingly and cut into the first beauty before him.

"Splendid," said Mr. Brych after a while.

"Mhm," came from Mr. Rejzek after a lengthier interval.

"Binder, these do you credit," said the Canon approvingly.

A silence ensued, full of appreciation and pious meditations.

"Allspice," contributed Mr. Brych. "I love the smell of it."

"But it mustn't be too much in evidence."

"No, this is just as it should be."

"And the skin must be just crisp enough."

"Mhm." And again conversation ceased for a space.

"And the sauerkraut must be nice and white."

"In Moravia," said Mr. Brych, "they make the sauerkraut like a sort of porridge. I was there as an apprentice. It's quite runny."

"Oh, come," exclaimed Father Jost. "Sauerkraut has to be strained. Don't talk such nonsense. Why, the stuff wouldn't be fit to eat."

"Well, there you are—they do eat it that way down there. With spoons."

"Horrible!" cried the Canon, marvelling. "What extraordinary people they must be, friends! Why, sauerkraut should only just be greased, shouldn't it, Mr. Binder? I don't understand how anyone could have it any other way."

"Well, you know," said Mr. Brych meditatively, "it's just the same with sauerkraut as it is with religion. One man can't understand how another can believe anything different."

"Oh, enough of that!" protested Father Jost. "Why, I'd sooner believe in Mahomet than eat sauerkraut made any other way. After all, reason teaches one that sauerkraut ought only to be greased."

"And don't reason teach one one's religion?"

"Our religion, certainly," said the Canon decisively. "But the others are not based on reason."

"Now we've got back again to just where we were before the war," sighed Mr. Brych.

"People are always getting back just where they used to be," observed Mr. Binder. "That's what Mr. Kuzenda is always saying. 'Binder,' he often says, 'the truth can never be defeated. You know, Binder,' he says, 'that God of ours on the dredge in those days wasn't so bad, nor was yours on the merry-go-round, and yet, you see, they've both of them vanished. Everyone believes in his own superior God, but he doesn't believe in another man, or credit him with believing in something good. People should first of all believe in other people, and the rest would soon follow.' That's what Mr. Kuzenda always says."

"Yes, yes," assented Mr. Brych. "A man may certainly think that another religion is a bad one, but he oughtn't to think that the man who follows it is a low, vile, and treacherous fellow. And the same applies to politics and everything."

"And that's what so many people have hated and killed each other for," Father Jost declared. "You know, the greater the things are in which a man believes, the more fiercely he despises those who do not believe in them. And yet the greatest of all beliefs would be belief in one's fellowmen."

"Everyone has the best of feelings towards mankind in general, but not towards the individual man. We'll kill men, but we want to save mankind. And that isn't right, your Reverence. The world will be an evil place as long as people don't believe in other people."

"Mr. Binder," said Father Jost thoughtfully, "I wonder if you would make me some of that Moravian sauerkraut tomorrow. I'd like to try it."

"It has to be partly stewed and then steamed, and done like that with a fried sausage it's very good. Every religion and every truth has something good in it, if it's only the fact that it suits somebody else."

The door was opened from outside, and a policeman stepped in. He was chilled to the bone and wanted a glass of rum.

"Ah, it's you, is it, Sergeant Hruska," said Brych. "Well now, where have you come from?"

"Oh, we've been up in Zizkov," answered the policeman, pulling off his enormous gloves. "There was a raid on."

"What did you catch?"

"Oh, a couple of roughs, and a few undesirables. And then at number 1006—in the cellar of the house, I mean—there was a den."

"What sort of den?" inquired Mr. Rejzek.

"A Karburator den, sir. They had set up a tiny Karburator down there out of an old prewar motor. A very low crowd has been going down there and holding orgies."

"What kind of orgies do you mean?"

"Oh, disorderly behavior. They pray and sing and have visions and prophesy and perform miracles, and all that sort of business."

"And isn't that allowed?"

"No, it's forbidden by the police. You see, it's something like those dens where they smoke opium. We found one of them in the Old Town. We've routed out seven of these Karburator caverns already. An awful gang used to collect there: vagrants, loose women, and other doubtful characters. That's why it's forbidden. It's a breach of the peace."

"And are there many haunts of this kind?"

"Not now. I think this one was the last of the Karburators."

GULF

"Me? I'm as decadent as the city I infest; it's my natural element. But that doesn't keep me from telling a hawk from a handsaw."

—Dr. Jefferson, in *Between Planets*

ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

ROBERT A. HEINLEIN, BORN IN 1907, GRADUATED FROM THE U. S. Naval Academy and spent some ten years in the Navy before he was disabled and retired. He took graduate courses in physics and mathematics, dabbled in real estate, mining, politics, and architecture, and finally turned to writing.

Heinlein, as I have remarked elsewhere, is a hard writer to pin down. In much of his early work he built up an image of conservatism and conventionality. *Gulf*, with its drugstore stripteasers, was the first intimation to many that there was more than this to Heinlein. Since then he has written two even more startling novels—*Starship Troopers* and *Stranger in a Strange Land*—both of which won Hugos.

Gulf had a curious genesis. In 1948 a reader of *Astounding Science-Fiction* wrote a deadpan letter to that magazine, criticizing the stories in the yet unborn issue of November, 1949. *Gulf*, by Robert A. Heinlein, was one of the mythical titles the reader had invented. The editor, John W. Campbell, went quietly to work, got the stories written by the authors who had been named, and published them on the date mentioned.

No other modern science-fiction writer has exerted so revolutionary an influence on the field. Again and again, Heinlein takes a well-worn theme and demonstrates, clearly and simply, that it has never been handled properly before.

Gulf offers a new answer to the question, "What is a superman?"—and as always, Heinlein makes you see that previous answers have been muddleheaded.

THE FIRST-QUARTER ROCKET FROM MOON-BASE PUT HIM down at Pied-à-Terre. The name he was traveling under began—by foresight—with the letter “A”; he was through port inspection and into the shuttle tube to the city ahead of the throng. Once in the tube car he went to the men’s washroom and locked himself in.

Quickly he buckled on the safety belt he found there, snapped its hooks to the wall fixtures, and leaned over awkwardly to remove a razor from his bag. The surge caught him in that position; despite the safety belt he bumped his head—and swore. He straightened up and plugged in the razor. His moustache vanished; he shortened his sideburns, trimmed the corners of his eyebrows, and brushed them up.

He towelled his hair vigorously to remove the oil that had sleeked it down, combed it loosely into a wavy mane. The car was now riding in a smooth, unaccelerated 300 mph; he let himself out of the safety belt without unhooking it from the walls and, working very rapidly, peeled off his moon-suit, took from his bag and put on a tweedy casual outfit suited to outdoors on Earth and quite unsuited to Moon Colony’s air-conditioned corridors.

His slippers he replaced with walking shoes from the bag; he stood up. Joel Abner, commercial traveler, had disappeared; in his place was Captain Joseph Gilead, explorer, lecturer, and writer. Of both names he was the sole user; neither was his birth name.

He slashed the moonsuit to ribbons and flushed it down the water closet, added “Joel Abner’s” identification card; then peeled a plastic skin off his travel bag and let the bits follow the rest. The bag was now pearl grey and rough, instead of dark brown and smooth. The slippers bothered him; he was afraid they might stop up the car’s plumbing.

He contented himself with burying them in the waste receptacle.

The acceleration warning sounded as he was doing this; he barely had time to get back into the belt. But, as the car plunged into the solenoid field and surged to a stop, nothing remained of Joel Abner but some unmarked underclothing, very ordinary toilet articles, and nearly two dozen spools of microfilm equally appropriate—until examined—to a commercial traveler or a lecturer-writer. He planned not to let them be examined as long as he was alive.

He waited in the washroom until he was sure of being last man out of the car, then went forward into the next car, left by its exit, and headed for the lift to the ground level.

"New Age Hotel, sir," a voice pleaded near his ear. He felt a hand fumbling at the grip of his travel bag.

He repressed a reflex to defend the bag and looked the speaker over. At first glance he seemed an undersized adolescent in a smart uniform and a pillbox cap. Further inspection showed premature wrinkles and the features of a man at least forty. The eyes were glazed. A pituitary case, he thought to himself, and on the hop as well. "New Age Hotel," the runner repeated. "Best mechanos in town, chief. There's a discount if you're just down from the moon."

Captain Gilead, when in town as Captain Gilead, always stayed at the old Savoy. But the notion of going to the New Age appealed to him; in that incredibly huge, busy, and ultramodern hostelry he might remain unnoticed until he had had time to do what had to be done.

He disliked mightily the idea of letting go his bag. Nevertheless it would be out of character not to let the runner carry the bag; it would call attention to himself—and the bag. He decided that this unhealthy runt could not outrun him even if he himself were on crutches; it would suffice to keep an eye on the bag.

"Lead on, comrade," he answered heartily, surrendering the bag. There had been no hesitation at all; he had let go the bag even as the hotel runner reached for it.

"Okay, chief." The runner was first man into an empty lift; he went to the back of the car and set the bag down beside him. Gilead placed himself so that his foot rested firmly against his bag and faced forward as other travelers

crowded in. The car started.

The lift was jammed; Gilead was subjected to body pressures on every side—but he noticed an additional, unusual, and uncalled-for pressure behind him.

His right hand moved suddenly and clamped down on a skinny wrist and a hand clutching something. Gilead made no further movement, nor did the owner of the hand attempt to draw away or make any objection. They remained so until the car reached the surface. When the passengers had spilled out he reached behind him with his left hand, recovered his bag and dragged the wrist and its owner out of the car.

It was, of course, the runner; the object in his fist was Gilead's wallet. "You durn near lost that, chief," the runner announced with no show of embarrassment. "It was falling out of your pocket."

Gilead liberated the wallet and stuffed it into an inner pocket. "Fell right through the zipper," he answered cheerfully. "Well, let's find a cop."

The runt tried to pull away. "You got nothing on me!"

Gilead considered the defense. In truth, he had nothing. His wallet was already out of sight. As to witnesses, the other lift passengers were already gone—nor had they seen anything. The lift itself was automatic. He was simply a man in the odd position of detaining another citizen by the wrist. And Gilead himself did not want to talk to the police.

He let go that wrist. "On your way, comrade. We'll call it quits."

The runner did not move. "How about my tip?"

Gilead was beginning to like this rascal. Locating a loose half-credit in his change pocket he flipped it at the runner, who grabbed it out of the air but still didn't leave. "I'll take your bag now. Gimme."

"No, thanks, chum. I can find your delightful inn without further help. One side, please."

"Oh, yeah? How about my commission? I gotta carry your bag, else how they gonna know I brung you in? Gimme."

Gilead was delighted with the creature's unabashed insistence. He found a two-credit piece and passed it over. "There's your cumshaw. Now beat it, before I kick your tail up around your shoulders."

"You and who else?"

Gilead chuckled and moved away down the concourse toward the station entrance to the New Age Hotel. His subconscious sentries informed him immediately that the runner had not gone back toward the lift as expected, but was keeping abreast of him in the crowd. He considered this. The runner might very well be what he appeared to be, common city riffraff who combined casual thievery with his overt occupation. On the other hand—

He decided to unload. He stepped suddenly off the sidewalk into the entrance of a drugstore and stopped just inside the door to buy a newspaper. While his copy was being printed, he scooped up, apparently as an afterthought, three standard pneumo mailing tubes. As he paid for them he palmed a pad of gummed address labels.

A glance at the mirrored wall showed him that his shadow had hesitated outside but was still watching him. Gilead went on back to the shop's soda fountain and slipped into an unoccupied booth. Although the floor show was going on—a remarkably shapely ecdysiast was working down toward her last string of beads—he drew the booth's curtain.

Shortly the call light over the booth flashed discreetly; he called, "Come in!" A pretty and very young waitress came inside the curtain. Her plastic costume covered without concealing.

She glanced around. "Lonely?"

"No, thanks, I'm tired."

"How about a redhead, then? Real cute—"

"I really am tired. Bring me two bottles of beer, unopened, and some pretzels."

"Suit yourself, sport." She left.

With speed he opened the travel bag, selected nine spools of microfilm, and loaded them into the three mailing tubes, the tubes being of the common three-spool size. Gilead then took the filched pad of address labels, addressed the top one to "Raymond Calhoun, P. O. Box 1060, Chicago," and commenced to draw with great care in the rectangle reserved for the electric-eye sorter. The address he shaped in arbitrary symbols intended not to be read, but to be scanned automatically. The handwritten address was merely a precaution, in case a robot sorter should reject his handdrawn symbols as being imperfect and thereby turn the tube over to a human postal clerk for readdressing.

He worked fast, but with the care of an engraver. The waitress returned before he had finished. The call light warned him; he covered the label with his elbow and kept it covered.

She glanced at the mailing tubes as she put down the beer and a bowl of pretzels. "Want me to mail those?"

He had another instant of split-second indecision. When he had stepped out of the tube car he had been reasonably sure, first, that the *persona* of Joel Abner, commercial traveler, had not been penetrated, and, second, that the transition from Abner to Gilead had been accomplished without arousing suspicion. The pocket-picking episode had not alarmed him, but had caused him to reclassify those two propositions from calculated certainties to unproved variables. He had proceeded to test them at once; they were now calculated certainties again—of the opposite sort. Ever since he had spotted his erstwhile porter, the New Age runner, as standing outside this same drugstore his subconscious had been clanging like a burglar alarm.

It was clear not only that he had been spotted but that they were organized with a completeness and shrewdness he had not believed possible.

But it was mathematically probable to the point of certainty that they were not operating through this girl. They had no way of knowing that he would choose to turn aside into this particular drugstore. That she could be used by them he was sure—and she had been out of sight since his first contact with her. But she was clearly not bright enough, despite her alley-cat sophistication, to be approached, subverted, instructed, and indoctrinated to the point where she could seize an unexpected opportunity, all in a space of time merely adequate to fetch two bottles of beer. No, this girl was simply after a tip. Therefore she was safe.

But her costume offered no possibility of concealing three mailing tubes, nor would she be safe crossing the concourse to the post office. He had no wish that she be found tomorrow morning dead in a ditch.

"No," he answered immediately. "I have to pass the post office anyway. But it was a kind thought. Here." He gave her a half-credit.

"Thanks." She waited and stared meaningfully at the beer. He fumbled again in his change pocket, found only

a few bits, reached for his wallet and took out a five-pluton note.

"Take it out of this."

She handed him back three singles and some change. He pushed the change toward her, then waited, frozen, while she picked it up and left. Only then did he hold the wallet closer to his eyes.

It was not his wallet.

He should have noticed it before, he told himself. Even though there had been only a second from the time he had taken it from the runner's clutched fingers until he had concealed it in a front pocket, he should have known it—known it and forced the runner to disgorge, even if he had had to skin him alive.

But why was he sure that it was not his wallet? It was the proper size and shape, the proper weight and feel—real ostrich skin in these days of synthetics. There was the weathered ink stain which had resulted from carrying a leaky stylus in the same pocket. There was a V-shaped scratch on the front which had happened so long ago he did not recall the circumstances.

Yet it was not his wallet.

He opened it again. There was the proper amount of money, there were what seemed to be his Explorers' Club card and his other identity cards, there was a dog-eared flat-photo of a mare he had once owned. Yet the more the evidence showed that it was his, the more certain he became that it was not his. These things were forgeries; they did not *feel* right.

There was one way to find out. He flipped a switch provided by a thoughtful management; the booth became dark. He took out his pen-knife and carefully slit a seam back of the billfold pocket. He dipped a finger into a secret pocket thus disclosed and felt around; the space was empty—nor in this case had the duplication of his own wallet been quite perfect; the space should have been lined, but his fingers encountered rough leather.

He switched the light back on, put the wallet away, and resumed his interrupted drawing. The loss of the card which should have been in the concealed pocket was annoying, certainly awkward, and conceivably disastrous, but he did not judge that the information on it was jeopardized by the loss of the wallet. The card was quite featureless

unless examined by black light; if exposed to visible light—by someone taking the real wallet apart, for example—it had the disconcerting quality of bursting explosively into flame.

He continued to work, his mind busy with the wider problem of why they had taken so much trouble to try to keep him from knowing that his wallet was being stolen—and the still wider and more disconcerting question of why they had bothered with *his* wallet. Finished, he stuffed the remainder of the pad of address labels into a crack between cushions in the booth, palmed the label he had prepared, picked up the bag and the three mailing tubes. One tube he kept separate from the others by a finger.

No attack would take place, he judged, in the drugstore. The crowded concourse between himself and the post office he would ordinarily have considered equally safe—but not today. A large crowd of people, he knew, are equal to so many trees as witnesses if the dice are loaded with any sort of a diversion.

He slanted across the bordering slidewalk and headed directly across the middle toward the post office, keeping as far from other people as he could manage. He had become aware of two men converging on him when the expected diversion took place.

It was a blinding light and a loud explosion, followed by screams and startled shouts. The source of the explosion he could imagine; the screams and shouts were doubtless furnished free by the public. Being braced, not for this, but for anything, he refrained even from turning his head.

The two men closed rapidly, as on cue.

Most creatures and almost all humans fight only when pushed. This can lose them decisive advantage. The two men made no aggressive move of any sort, other than to come close to Gilead—nor did they ever attack.

Gilead kicked the first of them in the kneecap, using the side of his foot, a much more certain stroke than with the toe. He swung with his travel bag against the other at the same time, not hurting him but bothering him, spoiling his timing. Gilead followed it with a heavy kick to the man's stomach.

The man whose kneecap he had ruined was on the pavement, but still active—reaching for something, a gun or a knife. Gilead kicked him in the head and stepped over him,

continued toward the post office.

Slow march—slow march all the way! He must not give the appearance of running away; he must be the perfect respectable citizen, going about his lawful occasions.

The post office came close, and still no tap on the shoulder, no denouncing shout, no hurrying footsteps. He reached the post office, was inside. The opposition's diversion had worked, perfectly—but for Gilead, not for them.

There was a short queue at the addressing machine. Gilead joined it, took out his stylus and wrote addresses on the tubes while standing. A man joined the queue almost at once; Gilead made no effort to keep him from seeing what address he was writing; it was "Captain Joseph Gilead, the Explorers' Club, New York." When it came his turn to use the symbol printing machine he still made no effort to conceal what keys he was punching—and the symbol address matched the address he had written on each tube.

He worked somewhat awkwardly as the previously prepared gummed label was still concealed in his left palm.

He went from the addressing machine to the mailing receivers; the man who had been behind him in line followed him without pretending to address anything.

Thwunk! and the first tube was away with a muted implosion of compressed air. *Thwunk!* again and the second was gone—and at the same time Gilead grasped the last one in his left hand, sticking the gummed label down firmly over the address he had just printed on it. Without looking at it he made sure by touch that it was in place, all corners seated, then *thwunk!* it joined its mates.

Gilead turned suddenly and trod heavily on the feet of the man crowded close behind him. "Wups! pardon *me*," he said happily, and turned away. He was feeling very cheerful; not only had he turned his dangerous charge over into the care of a mindless, utterly reliable, automatic machine which could not be coerced, bribed, drugged, nor subverted by any other means and in whose complexities the tube would be perfectly hidden until it reached a destination known only to Gilead, but also he had just stepped on the corns of one of the opposition.

On the steps of the post office he paused beside a policeman who was picking his teeth and staring out at a cluster

of people and an ambulance in the middle of the concourse. "What's up?" Gilead demanded.

The cop shifted his toothpick. "First some damn fool sets off fireworks," he answered, "then two guys get in a fight and blame near ruin each other."

"My goodness!" Gilead commented and set off diagonally toward the New Age Hotel.

He looked around for his pickpocket friend in the lobby, did not see him. Gilead strongly doubted if the runt were on the hotel's staff. He signed in as Captain Gilead, ordered a suite appropriate to the *persona* he was wearing, and let himself be conducted to the lift.

Gilead encountered the runner coming down just as he and his bellman were about to go up. "Hi, Shorty!" he called out while deciding not to eat anything in this hotel. "How's business?"

The runt looked startled, then passed him without answering, his eyes blank. It was not likely, Gilead considered, that the runt would be used after being detected; therefore some sort of drop box, call station, or headquarters of the opposition was actually inside the hotel. Very well, that would save everybody a lot of useless commuting—and there would be fun for all!

In the meantime he wanted a bath.

In his suite he tipped the bellman who continued to linger.

"Want some company?"

"No, thanks, I'm a hermit."

"Try this then." The bellman inserted Gilead's room key in the stereo panel, fiddled with the controls; the entire wall lighted up and faded away. A svelte blonde creature, backed by a chorus line, seemed about to leap into Gilead's lap. "That's not a tape," the bellman went on, "that's a live transmission direct from the Tivoli. We got the best equipment in town."

"So you have," Gilead agreed, and pulled out his key. The picture blanked; the music stopped. "But I want a bath, so get out—now that you've spent four credits of my money."

The bellman shrugged and left. Gilead threw off his clothes and stepped into the fresher. Twenty minutes later, shaved from ear to toe, scrubbed, soaked, sprayed,

pummeled, rubbed, scented, powdered, and feeling ten years younger, he stepped out. His clothes were gone.

His bag was still there; he looked it over. It seemed okay, itself and contents. There were the proper number of microfilm spools—not that it mattered. Only three of the spools mattered and they were already in the mail. The rest were just shrubbery, copies of his own public lectures. Nevertheless he examined one of them, unspooling a few frames.

It was one of his own lectures all right—but not one he had had with him. It was one of his published transcriptions, available in any large book store. "Pixies everywhere," he remarked and put it back. Such attention to detail was admirable.

"Room service!"

The service panel lighted up. "Yes, sir?"

"My clothes are missing. Chase 'em up for me."

"The valet has them, sir."

"I didn't order valet service. Get 'em back."

The girl's voice and face were replaced, after a slight delay, by those of a man. "It is not necessary to order valet service here, sir. 'A New Age guest receives the best.'"

"Okay, get 'em back—chop, chop! I've got a date with the Queen of Sheba."

"Very good, sir." The image faded.

With wry humor he reviewed his situation. He had already made the possibly fatal error of underestimating his opponent through—he now knew—visualizing that opponent in the unimpressive person of "the runt." Thus he had allowed himself to be diverted; he should have gone anywhere rather than to the New Age, even to the old Savoy, although that hotel, being a known stamping ground of Captain Gilead, was probably as thoroughly booby-trapped by now as this palatial dive.

He must not assume that he had more than a few more minutes to live. Therefore he must use those few minutes to tell his boss the destination of the three important spools of microfilm. Thereafter, if he still were alive, he must replenish his cash to give him facilities for action—the amount of money in "his" wallet, even if it were returned, was useless for any major action. Thirdly, he must report in, close the present assignment, and be as-

signed to his present antagonists as a case in themselves, quite aside from the matter of the microfilm.

Not that he intended to drop Runt & Company even if not assigned to them. True artists were scarce—nailing him down by such a simple device as stealing his pants! He loved them for it and wanted to see more of them, as violently as possible.

Even as the image on the room service panel faded, he was punching the scrambler keys on the room's communicator desk. It was possible—certain—that the scramble code he used would be repeated elsewhere in the hotel and the supposed privacy attained by scrambling thereby breached at once. This did not matter; he would have his boss disconnect and call back with a different scramble from the other end. To be sure, the call code of the station to which he was reporting would thereby be breached, but it was more than worthwhile to expend and discard one relay station to get this message through.

Scramble pattern set up, he coded—not New Washington, but the relay station he had selected. A girl's face showed on the screen. "New Age service, sir. Were you scrambling?"

"Yes."

"I am verree sorree, sir. The scrambling circuits are being repaired. I can scramble for you from the main board."

"No, thanks, I'll call in clear."

"I yam ve-ree sor-ree, sir."

There was one clear-code he could use—to be used only for crash priority. This was crash priority. Very well—

He punched the keys again without scrambling and waited. The same girl's face appeared presently. "I am verree sorree, sir; that code does not reply. May I help you?"

"You might send up a carrier pigeon." He cleared the board.

The cold breath on the back of his neck was stronger now; he decided to do what he could to make it awkward to kill him just yet. He reached back into his mind and coded in clear the *Star-Times*.

No answer.

He tried the *Clarion*—again no answer.

No point in beating his head against it; they did not in-

tend to let him talk outside to anyone. He rang for a bellman, sat down in an easy chair, switched it to "shallow massage," and luxuriated happily in the chair's tender embrace. No doubt about it; the New Age *did* have the best mechanos in town—his bath had been wonderful; this chair was superb. Both the recent austerities of Moon Colony and the probability that this would be his last massage added to his pleasure.

The door dilated and a bellman came in—about his own size, Gilead noted. The man's eyebrows went up a fraction of an inch on seeing Gilead's oyster-naked condition. "You want company?"

Gilead stood up and moved toward him. "No, dearie," he said grinning, "I want *you*—" at which he sank three stiffened fingers in the man's solar plexus.

As the man grunted and went down Gilead chopped him in the side of the neck with the edge of his hand.

The shoulders of the jacket were too narrow and the shoes too large; nevertheless two minutes later "Captain Gilead" had followed "Joel Abner" to oblivion and Joe, temporary and free-lance bellman, let himself out of the room. He regretted not being able to leave a tip with his predecessor.

He sauntered past the passenger lifts, firmly misdirected a guest who had stopped him, and found the service elevator. By it was a door to the "quick drop." He opened it, reached out and grasped a waiting pulley belt, and, without stopping to belt himself into it, contenting himself with hanging on, he stepped off the edge. In less time than it would have taken him to parachute the drop he was picking himself up off the cushions in the hotel basement and reflecting that lunar gravitation surely played hob with a man's leg muscles.

He left the drop room and started out in an arbitrary direction, but walking as if he were on business and belonged where he was—any exit would do and he would find one eventually.

He wandered in and out of the enormous pantry, then found the freight door through which the pantry was supplied.

When he was thirty feet from it, it closed and an alarm sounded. He turned back.

He encountered two policemen in one of the many

corridors under the giant hotel and attempted to brush on past them. One of them stared at him, then caught his arm. "Captain Gilead—"

Gilead tried to squirm away, but without showing any skill in the attempt. "What's the idea?"

"You are Captain Gilead."

"And you're my Aunt Sadie. Let go of my arm, copper."

The policeman fumbled in his pocket with his other hand, pulled out a notebook. Gilead noted that the other officer had moved a safe ten feet away and had a Markheim gun trained on him.

"You, Captain Gilead," the first officer droned, "are charged on a sworn complaint with uttering a counterfeit five-pluton note at or about thirteen hours this date at the Grand Concourse drugstore in this city. You are cautioned to come peacefully and are advised that you need not speak at this time. Come along."

The charge might or might not have something to it, thought Gilead; he had not examined closely the money in the substituted wallet. He did not mind being booked, now that the microfilm was out of his possession; to be in an ordinary police station with nothing more sinister to cope with than crooked cops and dumb desk sergeants would be easy street compared with Runt & Company searching for him.

On the other hand the situation was too pat, unless the police had arrived close on his heels and found the stripped bellman, gotten his story, and started searching.

The second policeman kept his distance and did not lower the Markheim gun. That made other considerations academic. "Okay, I'll go," he protested. "You don't have to twist my arm that way."

They went up to the weather level and out to the street—and not once did the second cop drop his guard. Gilead relaxed and waited. A police car was balanced at the curb. Gilead stopped. "I'll walk," he said. "The nearest station is just around the corner. I want to be booked in my own precinct."

He felt a teeth-chattering chill as the blast from the Markheim hit him; he pitched forward on his face.

He was coming to, but still could not coordinate, as they lifted him out of the car. By the time he found himself being half-carried, half-marched down a long corridor

he was almost himself again, but with a gap in his memory. He was shoved through a door which clanged behind him. He steadied himself and looked around.

"Greetings, friend," a resonant voice called out. "Drag up a chair by the fire."

Gilead blinked, deliberately slowed himself down, and breathed deeply. His healthy body was fighting off the effects of the Markheim bolt; he was almost himself.

The room was a cell, old-fashioned, almost primitive. The front of the cell and the door were steel bars; the walls were concrete. Its only furniture, a long wooden bench, was occupied by the man who had spoken. He was fiftyish, of ponderous frame, heavy features set in a shrewd, good-natured expression. He was lying back on the bench, head pillowed on his hands, in animal ease. Gilead had seen him before.

"Hello, Dr. Baldwin."

The man sat up with a flowing economy of motion that moved his bulk as little as possible. "I'm not Dr. Baldwin—I'm not Doctor anything, though my name is Baldwin." He stared at Gilead. "But I know you—seen some of your lectures."

Gilead cocked an eyebrow. "A man would seem naked around the Association of Theoretical Physicists without a doctor's degree—and you were at their last meeting."

Baldwin chuckled booming. "That accounts for it—that has to be my cousin on my father's side, Hartley M. Stuffy citizen, Hartley. I'll have to try to take the curse off the family name, now that I've met you, Captain." He stuck out a huge hand. "Gregory Baldwin, 'Kettle Belly' to my friends. New and used helicopters is as close as I come to theoretical physics. *'Kettle Belly Baldwin, King of the Kopters'*—you must have seen my advertising."

"Now that you mention it, I have."

Baldwin pulled out a card. "Here. If you ever need one, I'll give you ten percent off for knowing old Hartley. Matter of fact, I can do right well by you in a year-old Curtiss, a family car without a mark on it."

Gilead accepted the card and sat down. "Not at the moment, thanks. You seem to have an odd sort of office, Mr. Baldwin."

Baldwin chuckled again. "In the course of a long life these things happen, Captain. I won't ask you why *you*

are here or what you are doing in that monkey suit. Call me Kettle Belly."

"Okay." Gilead got up and went to the door. Opposite the cell was a blank wall; there was no one in sight. He whistled and shouted—no answer.

"What's itching you, Captain?" Baldwin asked gently.

Gilead turned. His cellmate had dealt a solitaire hand on the bench and was calmly playing.

"I've got to raise the turnkey and send for a lawyer."

"Don't fret about it. Let's play some cards." He reached in a pocket. "I've got a second deck; how about some Russian bank?"

"No, thanks. I've got to get out of here." He shouted again—still no answer.

"Don't waste your lung power, Captain," Baldwin advised him. "They'll come when it suits them and not a second before. I *know*. Come play with me; it passes the time." Baldwin appeared to be shuffling the two decks; Gilead could see that he was actually stacking the cards. The deception amused him; he decided to play—since the truth of Baldwin's advice was so evident.

"If you don't like Russian bank," Kettle Belly went on, "here is a game I learned as a kid." He paused and stared into Gilead's eyes. "It's instructive as well as entertaining, yet it's simple, once you catch on to it." He started dealing out the cards. "It makes a better game with two decks, because the black cards don't mean anything. Just the twenty-six red cards in each deck count—with the heart suit coming first. Each card scores according to its position in that sequence. The ace of hearts is one and the king of hearts counts thirteen; the ace of diamonds is next at fourteen and so on. Savvy?"

"Yes."

"And the blacks don't count. They're blanks—spaces. Ready to play?"

"What are the rules?"

"We'll deal out one hand for free; you'll learn faster as you see it. Then, when you've caught on, I'll play you for a half interest in the atomics trust—or ten bits in cash." He resumed dealing, laying the cards out rapidly in columns, five to a row. He paused, finished. "It's my deal, so it's your count. See what you get."

It was evident that Baldwin's stacking had brought the red

cards into groups, yet there was no evident advantage to it, nor was the count especially high—nor low. Gilead stared at it, trying to figure out the man's game. The cheating as cheating seemed too bold to be probable.

Suddenly the cards jumped at him, arranged themselves in a meaningful array. He read:

XTHXY
CANXX
XXXSE
HEARX
XUSXX

The fact that there were only two fives-of-hearts available had affected the spelling but the meaning was clear. Gilead reached for the cards. "I'll try one. I can beat that score." He dipped into the tips belonging to the suit's owner. "Ten bits it is."

Baldwin covered it. Gilead shuffled, making even less attempt to cover up than had Baldwin. He dealt:

WHATS
XXXXX
XYOUR
GAMEX
XXXXX

Baldwin shoved the money toward him and anted again. "Okay, my turn for revenge." He laid out:

XXIMX
XONXX
YOURX
XXXXX
XSIDE

"I win again," Gilead announced gleefully. "Ante up." He grabbed the cards and manipulated them:

YEAHX
XXXXX
PROVE
XXITX
XXXXX

Baldwin counted and said, "You're too smart for me. Gimme the cards." He produced another ten-bit piece and dealt again:

XXILX
HELFX

XXYOU
XGETX
OUTXX

"I should have cut the cards," Gilead complained, pushing the money over. "Let's double the bets." Baldwin grunted and Gilead dealt again:

XNUTS
IMXXX
SAFER
XXINX
XGAOL

"I broke your luck," Baldwin gloated. "We'll double it again?"

XUXRX
XNUTS
THISX
NOXXX
XJAIL

The deal shifted:

KEEPX
XTALK
INGXX
XXXXX
XBUDX

Baldwin answered:

THISX
XXXXX
XXNEW
AGEXX
XHOTL

As he stacked the cards again Gilead considered these new factors. He was prepared to believe that he was hidden somewhere in the New Age Hotel; in fact the counterposition that his opponents had permitted two ordinary cops to take him away to a normal city jail was most unlikely—unless they had the jail as fully under control as they quite evidently had the hotel. Nevertheless the point was not proven. As for Baldwin, he might be on Gilead's side; more probably he was planted as an *agent provocateur*—or he might be working for himself.

The permutations added up to six situations, only one of which made it desirable to accept Baldwin's offer for help

in a jail break—said situation being the least likely of the six.

Nevertheless, though he considered Baldwin a liar, net, he tentatively decided to accept. A static situation brought him no advantage; a dynamic situation—*any* dynamic situation—he might turn to his advantage. But more da a were needed. "These cards are sticky as candy," he complained. "You letting your money ride?"

"Suits."

Gilead dealt again:

XXXXX
WHYXX
AMXXX
XXXXI
XHERE

"You have the damndest luck," Baldwin commented:

FILMS
ESCAP
BFORE
XUXXX
KRACK

Gilead swept up the cards, was about to "shuffle," when Baldwin said, "Oh oh, school's out." Footsteps could be heard in the passage. "Good luck, boy," Baldwin added.

Baldwin knew about the films, but had not used any of the dozen ways to identify himself as part of Gilead's own organization. Therefore he was planted by the opposition, or he was a third factor.

More important, the fact that Baldwin knew about the films proved his assertion that this was not a jail. It followed with bitter certainty that he, Gilead, stood no computable chance of getting out alive. The footsteps approaching the cell could be ticking off the last seconds of his life.

He knew now that he should have found means to report the destination of the films before going to the New Age. But Humpty Dumpty was off the wall, entropy always increases—but the films *must* be delivered.

The footsteps were quite close.

Baldwin might get out alive.

But who was Baldwin?

All the while he was "shuffling" the cards. The action was not final; he had only to give them one true shuffle to destroy the message being set up in them. A spider settled

from the ceiling, landed on the other man's hand. Baldwin, instead of knocking it off and crushing it, most carefully reached his arm out toward the wall and encouraged it to lower itself to the floor. "Better stay out of the way, shorty," he said gently, "or one of the big boys is likely to step on you."

The incident, small as it was, determined Gilead's decision—and with it, the fate of a planet. He stood up and handed the stacked deck to Baldwin. "I owe you exactly sixty," he said carefully. "Be sure to remember it—I'll see who our visitors are."

The footsteps had stopped outside the cell door.

There were two of them, dressed neither as police nor as guards; the masquerade was over. One stood well back, covering the maneuver with a Markheim, the other unlocked the door. "Back against the wall, Fatso," he ordered. "Gilead, out you come. And take it easy, or, after we freeze you, I'll knock out your teeth just for fun."

Baldwin shuffled back against the wall; Gilead came out slowly. He watched for any opening but the leader backed away from him without once getting between him and the man with the Markheim. "Ahead of us and take it slow," he was ordered. He complied, helpless under the precautions, unable to run, unable to fight.

Baldwin went back to the bench when they had gone. He dealt out the cards as if playing solitaire, swept them up again, and continued to deal himself solitaire hands. Presently he "shuffled" the cards back to the exact order Gilead had left them in and pocketed them.

The message had read: XTELLXFBSXPOBOXDEBT-XXXCHI

His two guards marched Gilead into a room and locked the door behind him, leaving themselves outside. He found himself in a large window overlooking the city and a reach of the river; balancing it on the left hung a solido portraying a lunar landscape in convincing color and depth. In front of him was a rich but not ostentatious executive desk.

The lower part of his mind took in these details; his attention could be centered only on the person who sat at that desk. She was old but not senile, frail but not helpless. Her eyes were very much alive, her expression serene. Her translucent, well-groomed hands were busy with a frame of embroidery.

On the desk in front of her were two pneumo mailing tubes, a pair of slippers, and some tattered, soiled remnants of cloth and plastic.

She looked up. "How do you do, Captain Gilead?" she said in a thin, sweet soprano suitable for singing hymns.

Gilead bowed. "Well, thank you—and you, Mrs. Keithley?"

"You know me, I see."

"Madame would be famous if only for her charities."

"You are kind. Captain, I will not waste your time. I had hoped that we could release you without fuss, but—" She indicated the two tubes in front of her. "You can see for yourself that we must deal with you further."

"So?"

"Come, now, Captain. You mailed *three* tubes. These two are only dummies, and the third did not reach its apparent destination. It is possible that it was badly addressed and has been rejected by the sorting machines. If so, we shall have it in due course. But it seems much more likely that you found some way to change its address—likely to the point of pragmatic certainty."

"Or possibly I corrupted your servant."

She shook her head slightly. "We examined him quite thoroughly before—"

"Before he died?"

"Please, Captain, let's not change the subject. I must know where you sent that other tube. You cannot be hypnotized by ordinary means; you have an acquired immunity to hypnotic drugs. Your tolerance for pain extends beyond the threshold of unconsciousness. All of these things have already been proved, else you would not be in the job you are in; I shall not put either of us to the inconvenience of proving them again. Yet I must have that tube. What is your price?"

"You assume that I have a price."

She smiled. "If the old saw has any exceptions, history does not record them. Be reasonable, Captain. Despite your admitted immunity to ordinary forms of examination, there are ways of breaking down—of *changing*—a man's character so that he becomes really quite pliant under examination—ways that we learned from the commissars. But those ways take time and a woman my age has no time to waste."

Gilead lied convincingly. "It's not your age, ma'am; it is

the fact that you know that you must obtain that tube at once or you will never get it." He was hoping—more than that, he was *willing*—that Baldwin would have sense enough to examine the cards for one last message—and act on it. If Baldwin failed and he, Gilead, died, the tube would eventually come to rest in a dead-letter office and would in time be destroyed.

"You are probably right. Nevertheless, Captain, I will go ahead with the Mindszenty technique if you insist upon it. What do you say to ten million plutonium credits?"

Gilead believed her first statement. He reviewed in his mind the means by which a man bound hand and foot, or worse, could kill himself unassisted. "Ten million plutons and a knife in my back?" he answered. "Let's be practical."

"Convincing assurance would be given before you need talk."

"Even so, it is not my price. After all, you are worth at least five hundred million plutons."

She leaned forward. "I like you, Captain. You are a man of strength. I am an old woman, without heirs. Suppose you became my partner—and my successor?"

"Pie in the sky."

"No, no! I mean it. My age and sex do not permit me actively to serve myself; I must rely on others. Captain, I am very tired of inefficient tools, of men who can let things be spirited away right from under their noses. Imagine!" She made a little gesture of exasperation, clutching her hand into a claw. "You and I could go far, Captain. I need you."

"But I do not need you, madame. And I won't have you."

She made no answer, but touched a control on her desk. A door on the left dilated; two men and a girl came in. The girl Gilead recognized as the waitress from the Grand Concourse Drug Store. They had stripped her bare, which seemed to him an unnecessary indignity since her working uniform could not possibly have concealed a weapon.

The girl, once inside, promptly blew her top, protesting, screaming, using language unusual to her age and sex—an hysterical, thalamic outburst of volcanic proportions.

"Quiet, child!"

The girl stopped in midstream, looked with surprise at Mrs. Keithley, and shut up. Nor did she start again, but stood there, looking even younger than she was and some-

what aware of and put off stride by her nakedness. She was covered now with goose flesh, one tear cut a white line down her dust-smeared face, stopped at her lip. She licked at it and sniffled.

"You were out of observation once, Captain," Mrs. Keithley went on, "during which time this person saw you twice. Therefore we will examine her."

Gilead shook his head. "She knows no more than a gold-fish. But go ahead—five minutes of hypno will convince you."

"Oh, no, Captain! Hypno is sometimes fallible; if she is a member of your bureau, it is certain to be fallible." She signalled to one of the men attending the girl; he went to a cupboard and opened it. "I am old-fashioned," the old woman went on. "I trust simple mechanical means much more than I do the cleverest of clinical procedures."

Gilead saw the implements that the man was removing from the cupboard and started forward. "Stop that!" he commanded. "You can't do that—"

He bumped his nose quite hard.

The man paid him no attention. Mrs. Keithley said, "Forgive me, Captain. I should have told you that this room is not one room, but two. The partition is merely glass, but very special glass—I use the room for difficult interviews. There is no need to hurt yourself by trying to reach us."

"Just a moment!"

"Yes, Captain?"

"Your time is already running out. Let the girl and me go free *now*. You are aware that there are several hundred men searching this city for me even now—and that they will not stop until they have taken it apart panel by panel."

"I think not. A man answering your description to the last factor caught the South Africa rocket twenty minutes after you registered at the New Age Hotel. He was carrying your very own identifications. He will not reach South Africa, but the manner of his disappearance will point to desertion rather than accident or suicide."

Gilead dropped the matter. "What do you plan to gain by abusing this child? You have all she knows; certainly you do not believe that we could afford to trust in such as she?"

Mrs. Keithley pursed her lips. "Frankly, I do not expect

to learn anything from her. I may learn something from you."

"I see."

The leader of the two men looked questioningly at his mistress; she motioned him to go ahead. The girl stared blankly at him, plainly unaware of the uses of the equipment he had gotten out. He and his partner got busy.

Shortly the girl screamed, continued to scream for a few moments in a high ululation. Then it stopped as she fainted.

They roused her and stood her up again. She stood, swaying and staring stupidly at her poor hands, forever damaged even for the futile purposes to which she had been capable of putting them. Blood spread down her wrists and dripped on a plastic tarpaulin, placed there earlier by the second of the two men.

Gilead did nothing and said nothing. Knowing as he did that the tube he was protecting contained matters measured in millions of lives, the problem of the girl, as a problem, did not even arise. It disturbed a deep and very ancient part of his brain, but almost automatically he cut that part off and lived for the time in his forebrain.

Consciously he memorized the faces, skulls, and figures of the two men and filed the data under "personal." Thereafter he unobtrusively gave his attention to the scene out the window. He had been noting it all through the interview but he wanted to give it explicit thought. He recast what he saw in terms of what it would look like had he been able to look squarely out the window and decided that he was on the ninety-first floor of the New Age Hotel and approximately one hundred and thirty meters from the north end. He filed this under "professional."

When the girl died, Mrs. Keithley left the room without speaking to him. The men gathered up what was left in the tarpaulin and followed her. Presently the two guards returned and, using the same foolproof methods, took him back to his cell.

As soon as the guards had gone and Kettle Belly was free to leave his position against the wall he came forward and pounded Gilead on the shoulders. "Hi, boy! I'm sure glad to see you—I was scared I would never lay eyes on you again. How was it? Pretty rough?"

"No, they didn't hurt me; they just asked some questions."

"You're lucky. Some of those crazy damn cops play

mean when they get you alone in a back room. Did they let you call your lawyer?"

"No."

"Then they ain't through with you. You want to watch it, kid."

Gilead sat down on the bench. "The hell with them. Want to play some more cards?"

"Don't mind if I do. I feel lucky." Baldwin pulled out the double deck, riffled through it. Gilead took them and did the same. Good! they were in the order he had left them in. He ran his thumb across the edges again—yes, even the black nulls were unchanged in sequence; apparently Kettle Belly had simply stuck them in his pocket without examining them, without suspecting that a last message had been written into them. He felt sure that Baldwin would not have left the message set up if he had read it. Since he found himself still alive, he was much relieved to think this.

He gave the cards one true shuffle, then started stacking them. His first layout read:

XXXXX
 ESCAP
 XXATX
 XXXXX
 XONCE

"Gotcha that time!" Baldwin crowed. "Ante up:"

DIDXX
 XYOUX
 XXXXX
 XXXXX
 CRACK

"Let it ride," announced Gilead and took the deal:

XXNOX
 BUTXX
 XXXXX
 XLETS
 XXGOX

"You're too derved lucky to live," complained Baldwin. "Look—we'll leave the bets doubled and double the layout. I want a fair chance to get my money back."

His next layout read:

XXXXX

XTHXN

XXXXX

THXYX

NEEDX

XXXUX

ALIVX

XXXXX

PLAYX

XXXUP

"Didn't do you much good, did it?" Gilead commented, took the cards and started arranging them.

"There's something mighty funny about a man that wins all the time," Baldwin grumbled. He watched Gilead narrowly. Suddenly his hand shot out, grabbed Gilead's wrist. "I thought so," he yelled. "A goddam card sharp—"

Gilead shook his hand off. "Why, you obscene fat slug!"

"Caught you! *Caught you!*" Kettle Belly reclaimed his hold, grabbed the other wrist as well. They struggled and rolled to the floor.

Gilead discovered two things: this awkward, bulky man was an artist at every form of dirty fighting, and he could simulate it convincingly without damaging his partner. His nerve holds were an inch off the nerve; his kneeings were to thigh muscle rather than to the crotch.

Baldwin tried for a chancery strangle; Gilead let him take it. The big man settled the flat of his forearm against the point of Gilead's chin rather than against his Adam's apple and proceeded to "strangle" him.

There were running footsteps in the corridor.

Gilead caught a glimpse of the guards as they reached the door. They stopped momentarily; the bell of the Markheim was too big to use through the steel grating, the charge would be screened and grounded. Apparently they did not have pacifier bombs with them, for they hesitated. Then the leader quickly unlocked the door, while the man with the Markheim dropped back to the cover position.

Baldwin ignored them, while continuing his stream of profanity and abuse at Gilead. He let the first man almost reach him before he suddenly said in Gilead's ear, "Close your eyes!" At which he broke just as suddenly.

Gilead sensed an incredibly dazzling flash of light even through his eyelids. Almost on top of it he heard a muffled crack; he opened his eyes and saw that the first man was

down, his head twisted at a grotesque angle.

The man with the Markheim was shaking his head; the muzzle of his weapon weaved around. Baldwin was charging him in a waddle, back and knees bent until he was hardly three feet tall. The blinded guard could hear him, let fly a charge in the direction of the noise; it passed over Baldwin.

Baldwin was on him; the two went down. There was another cracking noise of ruptured bone and another dead man. Baldwin stood up, grasping the Markheim, keeping it pointed down the corridor. "How are your eyes, kid?" he called out anxiously.

"They're all right."

"Then come take this chiller." Gilead moved up, took the Markheim. Baldwin ran to the dead end of the corridor where a window looked out over the city. The window did not open; there was no "copter step" beyond it. It was merely a straight drop. He came running back.

Gilead was shuffling possibilities in his mind. Events had moved by Baldwin's plan, not by his. As a result of his visit to Mrs. Keithley's "interview room" he was oriented in space. The corridor ahead and a turn to the left should bring him to the quick-drop shaft. Once in the basement and armed with a Markheim, he felt sure that he could fight his way out—with Baldwin in trail if the man would follow. If not—well, there was too much at stake.

Baldwin was into the cell and out again almost at once. "Come along!" Gilead snapped. A head showed at the bend in the corridor; he let fly at it and the owner of the head passed out on the floor.

"Out of my way, kid!" Baldwin answered. He was carrying the heavy bench on which they had "played" cards. He started up the corridor with it, toward the sealed window, gaining speed remarkably as he went.

His makeshift battering ram struck the window heavily. The plastic bulged, ruptured, and snapped like a soap bubble. The bench went on through, disappeared from sight, while Baldwin teetered on hands and knees, a thousand feet of nothingness under his chin.

"Kid!" he yelled. "Close in! Fall back!"

Gilead backed towards him, firing twice more as he did so. He still did not see how Baldwin planned to get out, but the big man had demonstrated that he had resource-

fulness—and resources.

Baldwin was whistling through his fingers and waving. In violation of all city traffic rules a helicopter separated itself from the late afternoon throng, cut through a lane, and approached the window. It hovered just far enough away to keep from fouling its blades. The driver opened the door, a line snaked across and Kettle Belly caught it. With great speed he made it fast to the window's polarizer knob, then grabbed the Markheim. "You first," he snapped. "Hurry!"

Gilead dropped to his knees and grasped the line; the driver immediately increased his tip speed and tilted his rotor; the line tautened. Gilead let it take his weight, then swarmed across it. The driver gave him a hand up while controlling his craft like a highschool horse with his other hand.

The 'copter bucked; Gilead turned and saw Baldwin coming across, a fat spider on a web. As he himself helped the big man in, the driver reached down and cut the line. The ship bucked again and slid away.

There were already men standing in the broken window. "Get lost, Steve!" Baldwin ordered. The driver gave his tip jets another notch and tilted the rotor still more; the 'copter swooped away. He eased it into the traffic stream and inquired, "Where to?"

"Set her for home—and tell the other boys to go home, too. No—you've got your hands full; I'll tell them!" Baldwin crowded up into the other pilot's seat, slipped on phones and settled a quiet-mike over his mouth. The driver adjusted his car to the traffic, set up a combination on his pilot, then settled back and opened a picture magazine.

Shortly Baldwin took off the phones and came back to the passenger compartment. "Takes a lot of 'copters to be sure you have one cruising by when you need it," he said conversationally. "Fortunately, I've got a lot of 'em. Oh, by the way, this is Steve Halliday. Steve, meet Joe—Joe, what is your last name?"

"Greene," answered Gilead.

"Howdy," said the driver and let his eyes go back to his magazine.

Gilead considered the situation. He was not sure that it had been improved. Kettle Belly, whatever he was, was more than a used 'copter dealer—and he knew about the

films. This boy Steve looked like a harmless young extrovert but, then, Kettle Belly himself looked like a lunk. He considered trying to overpower both of them, remembered Kettle Belly's virtuosity in rough-and-tumble fighting, and decided against it. Perhaps Kettle Belly really was on his side, completely and utterly. He had heard rumors that the Department used more than one echelon of operatives and he had no way of being sure that he himself was at the top level.

"Kettle Belly," he went on, "could you set me down at the airport first? I'm in one hell of a hurry."

Baldwin looked him over. "Sure, if you say so. But I thought you would want to swap those duds. You're as conspicuous as a preacher at a stag party. And how are you fixed for cash?"

With his fingers Gilead counted the change that had come with the suit. A man without cash had one arm in a sling. "How long would it take?"

"Ten minutes extra, maybe."

Gilead thought again about Kettle Belly's fighting ability and decided that there was no way for a fish in water to get any wetter. "Okay." He settled back and relaxed completely.

Presently he turned again to Baldwin. "By the way, how did you manage to sneak in that dazzle bomb?"

Kettle Belly chuckled. "I'm a large man, Joe; there's an awful lot of me to search." He laughed again. "You'd be amazed at where I had that hidden."

Gilead changed the subject. "How did you happen to be there in the first place?"

Baldwin sobered. "That's a long and complicated story. Come back some day when you're not in such a rush and I'll tell you all about it."

"I'll do that—soon."

"Good. Maybe I can sell you that used Curtiss at the same time."

The pilot alarm sounded; the driver put down his magazine and settled the craft on the roof of Baldwin's establishment.

Baldwin was as good as his word. He took Gilead to his office, sent for clothes—which showed up with great speed—and handed Gilead a wad of bills suitable to stuff

a pillow. "You can mail it back," he said.

"I'll bring it back in person," promised Gilead.

"Good. Be careful out on the street. Some of our friends are sure to be around."

"I'll be careful." He left, as casually as if he had called there on business, but feeling less sure of himself than usual. Baldwin himself remained a mystery, and, in his business, Gilead could not afford mysteries.

There was a public phone booth in the lobby of Baldwin's building. Gilead went in, scrambled, then coded a different relay station from the one he had attempted to use before. He gave his booth's code and instructed the operator to scramble back. In a matter of minutes he was talking to his chief in New Washington.

"Joe! Where the hell have you been?"

"Later, boss—get this." In departmental oral code as an added precaution, he told his chief that the films were in post office box 1060, Chicago, and insisted that they be picked up by a major force at once.

His chief turned away from the view plate, then returned, "Okay, it's done. Now what happened to you?"

"Later, boss, later. I think I've got some friends outside who are anxious to rattle with me. Keep me here and I may get a hole in my head."

"Okay—but head right back here. I want a full report; I'll wait here for you."

"Right." He switched off.

He left the booth lightheartedly, with the feeling of satisfaction that comes from a hard job successfully finished. He rather hoped that some of his "friends" would show up; he felt like kicking somebody who needed kicking.

But they disappointed him. He boarded the transcontinental rocket without alarms and slept all the way to New Washington.

He reached the Federal Bureau of Security by one of many concealed routes and went to his boss's office. After scan and voice check he was let in. Bonn looked up and scowled.

Gilead ignored the expression; Bonn usually scowled. "Agent Joseph Briggs, three-four-oh-nine-seven-two, reporting back from assignment, sir," he said evenly.

Bonn switched a desk control to "recording" and another to "covert." "You are, eh? Why, you thumb-fingered idiot!

how do you dare to show your face around here?"

"Easy now, boss—what's the trouble?"

Bonn fumed incoherently for a time, then said, "Briggs, twelve star men covered that pickup—and the box was empty. Post office box ten-sixty, Chicago, indeed! Where are those films? Was it a cover-up? Have you got them with you?"

Gilead-Briggs restrained his surprise. "No. I mailed them at the Grand Concourse post office to the address you just named." He added, "The machine may have kicked them out; I was forced to letter the machine symbols by hand."

Bonn looked suddenly hopeful. He touched another control and said, "Carruthers! On that Briggs matter: Check the rejection stations for that routing." He thought and then added, "Then try a rejection sequence on the assumption that the first symbol was acceptable to the machine but mistaken. Also for each of the other symbols; run them simultaneously—crash priority for all agents and staff. After that try combinations of symbols taken two at a time, then three at a time, and so on." He switched off.

"The total of that series you just set up is every postal address in the continent," Briggs suggested mildly. "It can't be done."

"It's got to be done! Man, have you any idea of the *importance* of those films you were guarding?"

"Yes. The director at Moon Base told me what I was carrying."

"You don't act as if you did. You've lost the most valuable thing this or any other government can possess—the absolute weapon. Yet you stand there blinking at me as if you had mislaid a pack of cigarettes."

"Weapon?" objected Briggs. "I wouldn't call the nova effect that, unless you class suicide as a weapon. And I don't concede that I've lost it. As an agent acting alone and charged primarily with keeping it out of the hands of others, I used the best means available in an emergency to protect it. That is well within the limits of my authority. I was spotted, by some means—"

"You shouldn't have been spotted!"

"Granted. But I was. I was unsupported and my estimate of the situation did not include a probability of staying alive. Therefore I had to protect my charge by some means which did not depend on my staying alive."

"But you *did* stay alive—you're here."

"Not my doing nor yours, I assure you. I should have been covered. It was your order, you will remember, that I act alone."

Bonn looked sullen. "That was necessary."

"So? In any case, I don't see what all the shooting is about. Either the films show up, or they are lost and will be destroyed as unclaimed mail. So I go back to the Moon and get another set of prints."

Bonn chewed his lip. "You can't do that."

"Why not?"

Bonn hesitated a long time. "There were just two sets. You had the originals, which were to be placed in a vault in the Archives—and the others were to be destroyed at once when the originals were known to be secure."

"Yes? What's the hitch?"

"You don't see the importance of the procedure. Every working paper, every file, every record was destroyed when these films were made. Every technician, every assistant, received hypno. The intention was not only to protect the results of the research but to wipe out the very fact that the research had taken place. There aren't a dozen people in the system who even know of the existence of the nova effect."

Briggs had his own opinions on this point, based on recent experience, but he kept still about them. Bonn went on, "The Secretary has been after me steadily to let him know when the originals were secured. He has been quite insistent, quite critical. When you called in, I told him that the films were safe and that he would have them in a few minutes."

"Well?"

"Don't you see, you fool—he gave the order at once to destroy the other copies."

Briggs whistled. "Jumped the gun, didn't he?"

"That's not the way he'll figure it—mind you, the President was pressuring *him*. He'll say that *I* jumped the gun."

"And so you did."

"No, *you* jumped the gun. You told me the films were in that box."

"Hardly. I said I had sent them there."

"No, you didn't."

"Get out the tape and play it back."

"There is no tape—by the President's own order no records are kept on this operation."

"So? Then why are you recording now?"

"Because," Bonn answered sharply, "someone is going to pay for this and it is not going to be me."

"Meaning," Briggs said slowly, "that it is going to be me."

"I didn't say that. It might be the Secretary."

"If his head rolls, so will yours. No, both of you are figuring on using me. Before you plan on that, hadn't you better hear my report? It might affect your plans. I've got news for you, boss."

Bonn drummed the desk. "Go ahead. It had better be good."

In a passionless monotone Briggs recited all events as recorded by sharp memory from receipt of the films on the Moon to the present moment. Bonn listened impatiently.

Finished, Briggs waited. Bonn got up and strode around the room. Finally he stopped and said, "Briggs, I never heard such a fantastic pack of lies in my life. A fat man who plays cards! A wallet that wasn't your wallet—your clothes stolen! And Mrs. Keithley—Mrs. *Keithley*! Don't you know that she is one of the strongest supporters of the Administration?"

Briggs said nothing. Bonn went on, "Now I'll tell you what actually did happen. Up to the time you grounded at Pied-à-Terre your report is correct, but—"

"How do you know?"

"Because you were covered, naturally. You don't think I would trust this to one man, do you?"

"Why didn't you tell me? I could have hollered for help and saved all this."

Bonn brushed it aside. "You engaged a runner, dismissed him, went in that drugstore, came out, and went to the post office. There was no fight in the concourse for the simple reason that no one was following you. At the post office you mailed three tubes, one of which may or may not have contained the films. You went from there to the New Age Hotel, left it twenty minutes later and caught the transrocket for Cape Town. You—"

"Just a moment," objected Briggs. "How could I have done that and still be here now?"

"Eh?" For a moment Bonn seemed stumped. "That's just

a detail; you were positively identified. For that matter, it would have been a far, far better thing for you if you had stayed on that rocket. In fact—" The bureau chief got a far-away look in his eyes. "You'll be better off for the time being if we assume officially that you did stay on that rocket. You are in a bad spot, Briggs, a very bad spot. You did not muffle this assignment—you sold out!"

Briggs looked at him levelly. "You are preferring charges?"

"Not just now. That is why it is best to assume that you stayed on that rocket—until matters settle down, clarify."

Briggs did not need a graph to show him what solution would come out when "matters clarified." He took from a pocket a memo pad, scribbled on it briefly, and handed it to Bonn.

It read: "I resign my appointment effective immediately." He had added signature, thumbprint, date, and hour.

"So long, boss," he added. He turned slightly, as if to go.

Bonn yelled, "Stop! Briggs, you are under arrest." He reached toward his desk.

Briggs cuffed him in the windpipe, added one to the pit of Bonn's stomach. He slowed down then and carefully made sure that Bonn would remain out for a satisfactory period. Examination of Bonn's desk produced a knockout kit; he added a two-hour hypodermic, placing it inconspicuously beside a mole near the man's backbone. He wiped the needle, restored everything to its proper place, removed the current record from the desk and wiped the tape of all mention of himself, including door check. He left the desk set to "covert" and "do not disturb" and left by another of the concealed routes to the Bureau.

He went to the rocket port, bought a ticket, unreserved, for the first ship to Chicago. There was twenty minutes to wait; he made a couple of minor purchases from clerks rather than from machines, letting his face be seen. When the Chicago ship was called, he crowded forward with the rest.

At the inner gate, just short of the weighing-in platform, he became part of the crowd present to see passengers off, rather than a passenger himself. He waved at someone in the line leaving the weighing station beyond the gate, smiled, called out a good-by, and let the crowd carry him

back from the gate as it closed. He peeled off from the crowd at the men's washroom. When he came out there were several hasty but effective changes in his appearance.

More important, his manner was different.

A short, illicit transaction in a saloon near a hiring hall provided the work card he needed; fifty-five minutes later he was headed across country as Jack Gillespie, loader and helper-driver on a diesel freighter.

Could his addressing of the pneumo tube have been bad enough to cause the automatic postal machines to reject it? He let the picture of the label, as it had been when he had completed it, build in his mind until it was as sharp as the countryside flowing past him. No, his lettering of the symbols had been perfect and correct; the machines would accept it.

Could the machine have kicked out the tube for another cause, say a turned up edge of the gummed label? Yes, but the written label was sufficient to enable a postal clerk to get it back in the groove. One such delay did not exceed ten minutes, even during the rush hour. Even with five such delays the tube would have reached Chicago more than one hour before he reported to Bonn by phone.

Suppose the gummed label had peeled off entirely; in such case the tube would have gone to the same destination as the two cover-up tubes.

In which case Mrs. Keithley would have gotten it, since she had been able to intercept or receive the other two.

Therefore the tube had reached the Chicago post office box.

Therefore Kettle Belly *had* read the message in the stacked cards, had given instructions to someone in Chicago, had done so while at the helicopter's radio. After an event, "possible" and "true" are equivalent ideas, whereas "probable" becomes a measure of one's ignorance. To call a conclusion "improbable" *after* the event was self-confusing amphigory.

Therefore Kettle Belly Baldwin had the films—a conclusion he had reached in Bonn's office.

Two hundred miles from New Washington, he worked up an argument with the top driver and got himself fired. From a local booth in the town where he was dropped, he scrambled through to Baldwin's business office. "Tell him I'm a man who owes him money."

Shortly the big man's face built up on the screen. "Hi, kid! How's tricks?"

"I'm fired."

"I thought you would be."

"Worse than that—I'm wanted."

"Naturally."

"I'd like to talk with you."

"Swell. Where are you?"

Gilead told him.

"You're clean?"

"For a few hours, at least."

"Go to the local airport. Steve will pick you up."

Steve did so, nodded a greeting, jumped his craft into the air, set his pilot, and went back to his reading. When the ship settled down on course, Gilead noted it and asked, "Where are we going?"

"The boss's ranch. Didn't he tell you?"

"No." Gilead knew it was possible that he was being taken for a one-way ride. True, Baldwin had enabled him to escape an otherwise pragmatically certain death—it was certain that Mrs. Keithley had not intended to let him stay alive longer than suited her uses, else she would not have had the girl killed in his presence. Until he had arrived at Bonn's office, he had assumed that Baldwin had saved him because he knew something that Baldwin most urgently wanted to know—whereas now it looked as if Baldwin had saved him for altruistic reasons.

Gilead conceded the existence in this world of altruistic reasons, but was inclined not to treat them as "least hypothesis" until all other possible hypotheses had been eliminated; Baldwin might have had his own reasons for wishing him to live long enough to report to New Washington and nevertheless be pleased to wipe him out now that he was a wanted man whose demise would cause no comment.

Baldwin might even be a partner in these dark matters of Mrs. Keithley. In some ways that was the simplest explanation though it left other factors unexplained. In any case Baldwin was a key factor—and he had the films. The risk was necessary.

Gilead did not worry about it. The factors known to him were chalked up on the blackboard of his mind, there to remain until enough variables become constants to permit a solution by logic. The ride was very pleasant.

Steve put him down on the lawn of a large rambling ranch house, introduced him to a motherly old party named Mrs. Garver, and took off. "Make yourself at home, Joe," she told him. "Your room is the last one in the east wing—shower across from it. Supper in ten minutes."

He thanked her and took the suggestion, getting back to the living room with a minute or two to spare. Several others, a dozen or more of both sexes, were there. The place seemed to be a sort of a dude ranch—not entirely dude, as he had seen Herefords on the spread as Steve and he were landing.

The other guests seemed to take his arrival as a matter of course. No one asked why he was there. One of the women introduced herself as Thalia Wagner and then took him around the group. Ma Garver came in swinging a dinner bell as this was going on and they all filed into a long, low dining room. Gilead could not remember when he had had so good a meal in such amusing company.

After eleven hours of sleep, his first real rest in several days, he came fully, suddenly awake at a group of sounds his subconscious could not immediately classify and refused to discount. He opened his eyes, swept the room with them, and was at once out of bed, crouching on the side away from the door.

There were hurrying footsteps moving past his bedroom door. There were two voices, one male, one female, outside the door; the female was Thalia Wagner, the man he could not place.

Male: "tsumaeq?"

Female: "nø!"

Male: "zulntsi."

Female: "ipbit' New Jersey."

These are not precisely the sounds that Gilead heard, first because of the limitations of phonetic symbols, and second because his ears were not used to the sounds. Hearing is a function of the brain, not of the ear; his brain, sophisticated as it was, nevertheless insisted on forcing the sounds that reached his ears into familiar pockets rather than stop to create new ones.

Thalia Wagner identified, he relaxed and stood up. Thalia was part of the unknown situation he accepted in coming here; a stranger known to her he must accept also. The new unknowns, including the odd language, he filed under

"pending" and put aside.

The clothes he had had were gone, but his money—Baldwin's money, rather—was where his clothes had been and with it his work card as Jack Gillespie and his few personal articles. By them someone had laid out a fresh pair of walking shorts and new sneakers, in his size.

He noted, with almost shocking surprise, that someone had been able to serve him thus without waking him.

He put on his shorts and shoes and went out. Thalia and her companion had left while he dressed. No one was about and he found the dining room empty, but three places were set, including his own of supper, and hot dishes and facilities were on the sideboard. He selected baked ham and hot rolls, fried four eggs, poured coffee. Twenty minutes later, warmly replenished and still alone, he stepped out on the veranda.

It was a beautiful day. He was drinking it in and eyeing with friendly interest a desert lark when a young woman came around the side of the house. She was dressed much as he was, allowing for difference in sex, and she was comely, though not annoyingly so. "Good morning," he said.

She stopped, put her hands on her hips, and looked him up and down. "Well!" she said. "Why doesn't somebody tell me these things?"

Then she added, "Are you married?"

"No."

"I'm shopping around. Object: matrimony. Let's get acquainted."

"I'm a hard man to marry. I've been avoiding it for years."

"They're all hard to marry," she said bitterly. "There's a new colt down at the corral. Come on."

They went. The colt's name was War Conqueror of Baldwin; hers was Gail. After proper protocol with mare and son they left. "Unless you have pressing engagements," said Gail, "now is a salubrious time to go swimming."

"If salubrious means what I think it does, yes."

The spot was shaded by cottonwoods, the bottom was sandy; for a while he felt like a boy again, with all such matters as lies and nova effects and death and violence away in some improbable, remote dimension. After a long while he pulled himself up on the bank and said, "Gail,

what does 'tsumaeq' mean?"

"Come again?" she answered. "I had water in my ear."

He repeated all of the conversation he had heard. She looked incredulous, then laughed. "You didn't hear that, Joe, you just didn't." She added, "You got the 'New Jersey' part right."

"But I did."

"Say it again."

He did so, more carefully, and giving a fair imitation of the speakers' accents.

Gail chortled. "I got the gist of it that time. That Thalia; someday some strong man is going to wring her neck."

"But what does it mean?"

Gail gave him a long, sidewise look. "If you ever find out, I really will marry you, in spite of your protests."

Someone was whistling from the hilltop. "Joe! Joe Greene—the boss wants you."

"Gotta go," he said to Gail. "G'bye."

"See you later," she corrected him.

Baldwin was waiting in a study as comfortable as himself. "Hi, Joe," he greeted him. "Grab a seatful of chair. They been treating you right?"

"Yes, indeed. Do you always set as good a table as I've enjoyed so far?"

Baldwin patted his middle. "How do you think I came by my nickname?"

"Kettle Belly, I'd like a lot of explanations."

"Joe, I'm right sorry you lost your job. If I'd had my druthers, it wouldn't have been the way it was."

"Are you working with Mrs. Keithley?"

"No. I'm against her."

"I'd like to believe that, but I've no reason to—yet. What were you doing where I found you?"

"They had grabbed me—Mrs. Keithley and her boys."

"They just happened to grab you—and just happened to stuff you in the same cell with me—and you just happened to know about the films I was supposed to be guarding—and you just happened to have a double deck of cards in your pocket? Now, really!"

"If I hadn't had the cards, we would have found some

other way to talk," Kettle Belly said mildly. "Wouldn't we, now?"

"Yes. Granted."

"I didn't mean to suggest that the setup was an accident. We had you covered from Moon Base; when you were grabbed—or rather as soon as you let them suck you into the New Age, I saw to it that they grabbed me too; I figured I might have a chance to lend you a hand, once I was inside." He added, "I kinda let them think that I was an FBS man, too."

"I see. Then it was just luck that they locked us up together."

"Not luck," Kettle Belly objected. "Luck is a bonus that follows careful planning—it's never free. There was a computable probability that they would put us together in hopes of finding out what they wanted to know. We hit the jackpot because we paid for the chance. If we hadn't, I would have had to crash out of that cell and look for you—but I had to be inside to do it."

"Who is Mrs. Keithley?"

"Other than what she is publicly, I take it. She is the queen bee—or the black widow—of a gang. 'Gang' is a poor word—power group, maybe. One of several such groups, more or less tied together where their interests don't cross. Between them they divvy up the country for whatever they want like two cats splitting a gopher."

Gilead nodded; he knew what Baldwin meant, though he had not known that the enormously respected Mrs. Keithley was in such matters—not until his nose had been rubbed in the fact. "And what are you, Kettle Belly?"

"Now, Joe—I like you and I'm truly sorry you're in a jam. You led wrong a couple of times and I was obliged to trump, as the stakes were high. See here, I feel that I owe you something; what do you say to this: we'll fix you up with a brand-new personality, vacuum tight—even new fingerprints if you want them. Pick any spot on the globe you like and any occupation; we'll supply all the money you need to start over—or money enough to retire and play with the cuties the rest of your life. What do you say?"

"No." There was no hesitation.

"You've no close relatives, no intimate friends. Think about it. I can't put you back in your job; this is the best I can do."

"I've thought about it. The devil with the job; I want to finish my case! You're the key to it."

"Reconsider, Joe. This is your chance to get out of affairs of state and lead a normal, happy life."

"'Happy,' he says!"

"Well, safe, anyhow. If you insist on going further your life expectancy becomes extremely problematical."

"I don't recall ever having tried to play safe."

"You're the doctor, Joe. In that case—" A speaker on Baldwin's desk uttered: "æn:ə r høg rylp."

Baldwin answered, "nU," and sauntered quickly to the fireplace. An early-morning fire still smouldered in it. He grasped the mantelpiece, pulled it toward him. The entire masonry assembly, hearth, mantel, and grate, came toward him, leaving an arch in the wall. "Duck downstairs, Joe," he said. "It's a raid."

"A real priest's hole!"

"Yeah, corny, ain't it? This joint has more bolt holes than a rabbit's nest—and booby-trapped, too. Too many gadgets, if you ask me." He went back to his desk, opened a drawer, removed three film spools and dropped them in a pocket.

Gilead was about to go down the staircase; seeing the spools, he stopped. "Go ahead, Joe," Baldwin said urgently. "You're covered and outnumbered. With this raid showing up we wouldn't have time to fiddle; we'd just have to kill you."

They stopped in a room well underground, another study much like the one above, though lacking sunlight and view. Baldwin said something in the odd language to the mike on the desk, was answered. Gilead experimented with the idea that the lingo might be reversed English, discarded the notion.

"As I was saying," Baldwin went on, "if you are dead set on knowing all the answers—"

"Just a moment. What about this raid?"

"Just the government boys. They won't be rough and not too thorough. Ma Garver can handle them. We won't have to hurt anybody as long as they don't use penetration radar."

Gilead smiled wryly at the disparagement of his own former service. "And if they do?"

"That gimmick over there squeals like a pig if it's touched

by penetration frequencies. Even then we're safe against anything short of an A-bomb. They won't do that; they want the films, not a hole in the ground. Which reminds me—here, catch."

Gilead found himself suddenly in possession of the films which were at the root of the matter. He unspooled a few frames and made certain that they were indeed the right films. He sat still and considered how he might get off this limb and back to the ground without dropping the eggs. The speaker again uttered something; Baldwin did not answer it but said, "We won't be down here long."

"Bonn seems to have decided to check my report." Some of his—former—comrades were upstairs. If he did Baldwin in, could he locate the inside control for the door?

"Bonn is a poor sort. He'll check me—but not too thoroughly; I'm rich. He won't check Mrs. Keithley at all; she's too rich. He thinks with his political ambitions instead of his head. His late predecessor was a better man—he was one of us."

Gilead's tentative plans underwent an abrupt reversal. His oath had been to a government; his personal loyalty had been given to his former boss. "Prove that last remark and I shall be much interested."

"No, you'll come to learn that it's true—if you still insist on knowing the answers. Through checking those films, Joe? Toss 'em back."

Gilead did not do so. "I suppose you have made copies in any case?"

"Wasn't necessary; I looked at them. Don't get ideas, Joe; you're washed up with the FBS, even if you brought the films and my head back on a platter. You slugged your boss—remember?"

Gilead remembered that he had not told Baldwin so. He began to believe that Baldwin did have men inside the FBS, whether his late bureau chief had been one of them or not.

"I would at least be allowed to resign with a clear record. I know Bonn—officially he would be happy to forget it." He was simply stalling for time, waiting for Baldwin to offer an opening.

"Chuck them back, Joe. I don't want to rattle. One of us might get killed—both of us, if you won the first round. You can't prove your case, because I can prove I was home teasing the cat. I sold 'copters to two very respectable

citizens at the exact time you would claim I was somewhere else." He listened again to the speaker, answered it in the same gibberish.

Gilead's mind evaluated his own tactical situation to the same answer that Baldwin had expressed. Not being given to wishful thinking he at once tossed the films to Baldwin.

"Thanks, Joe." He went to a small oubliette set in the wall, switched it to full power, put the films in the hopper, waited a few seconds, and switched it off. "Good riddance to bad rubbish."

Gilead permitted his eyebrows to climb. "Kettle Belly, you've managed to surprise me."

"How?"

"I thought you wanted to keep the nova effect as a means to power."

"Nuts! Scalping a man is a hell of a poor way to cure him of dandruff. Joe, how much do you know about the nova effect?"

"Not much. I know it's a sort of atom bomb powerful enough to scare the pants off anybody who gets to thinking about it."

"It's not a bomb. It's not a weapon. It's a means of destroying a planet and everything on it completely—by turning that planet into a nova. If that's a weapon, military or political, then I'm Samson and you're Delilah."

"But I'm not Samson," he went on, "and I don't propose to pull down the Temple—nor let anybody else do so. There are moral lice around who would do just that, if anybody tried to keep them from having their own way. Mrs. Keithley is one such. Your boy friend Bonn is another such, if only he had the guts and the savvy—which he ain't. I'm bent on frustrating such people. What do you know about ballistics, Joe?"

"Grammar school stuff."

"Inexcusable ignorance." The speaker sounded again; he answered it without breaking his flow. "The problem of three bodies still lacks a neat general solution, but there are several special solutions—the asteroids that chase Jupiter in Jupiter's own orbit at the sixty degree position, for example. And there's the straight-line solution—you've heard of the asteroid 'Earth-Anti'?"

"That's the chunk of rock that is always on the other

side of the Sun, where we never see it."

"That's right—only it ain't there any more. It's been novaed."

Gilead, normally immune to surprise, had been subjected to one too many. "Huh? I thought this nova effect was theory?"

"Nope. If you had had time to scan through the films you would have seen pictures of it. It's a plutonium, lithium, and heavy water deal, with some flourishes we won't discuss. It adds up to the match that can set afire a world. It did—a little world flared up and was gone.

"Nobody saw it happen. No one on Earth *could* see it, for it was behind the Sun. It couldn't have been seen from Moon Colony; the Sun still blanked it off from there—visualize the geometry. All that ever saw it were a battery of cameras in a robot ship. All who knew about it were the scientists who rigged it—and *all* of them were with us, except the director. If *he* had been, too, you would never have been in this mixup."

"Dr. Finnley?"

"Yep. A nice guy, but a mind like a pretzel. A 'political' scientist, second-rate ability. He doesn't matter; our boys will ride herd on him until he's pensioned off. But we couldn't keep him from reporting and sending the films down. So I had to grab 'em and destroy them."

"Why didn't you simply save them? All other considerations aside, they are unique in science."

"The human race doesn't need that bit of science, not this millennium. I saved all that mattered, Joe—in my head."

"You *are* your cousin Hartley, aren't you?"

"Of course. But I'm also Kettle Belly Baldwin, and several other guys."

"You can be Lady Godiva, for all of me."

"As Hartley, I was entitled to those films, Joe. It was my project. I instigated it, through my boys."

"I never credited Finnley with it. I'm not a physicist, but he obviously isn't up to it."

"Sure, sure. I was attempting to prove that an artificial nova could not be created; the political—the *racial*—importance of establishing the point is obvious. It backfired on me—so we had to go into emergency action."

"Perhaps you should have left well enough alone."

"No. It's better to know the worst; now we can be alert

for it, divert research away from it." The speaker growled again; Baldwin went on, "There may be a divine destiny, Joe, unlikely as it seems, that makes really dangerous secrets too difficult to be broached until intelligence reaches the point where it can cope with them—if said intelligence has the will and the good intentions. Ma Garver says to come up now."

They headed for the stairs. "I'm surprised that you leave it up to an old gal like Ma to take charge during an emergency."

"She's competent, I assure you. But I was running things—you heard me."

"Oh."

They settled down again in the above-surface study. "I give you one more chance to back out, Joe. It doesn't matter that you know all about the films, since they are gone and you can't prove anything—but beyond that—you realize that if you come in with us, are told what is going on, you will be killed deader than a duck at the first suspicious move?"

Gilead did; he knew in fact that he was already beyond the point of no return. With the destruction of the films went his last chance of rehabilitating his former main *persona*. This gave him no worry; the matter was done. He had become aware that from the time he had admitted that he understood the first message this man had offered him concealed in a double deck of cards he had no longer been a free actor, his moves had been constrained by moves made by Baldwin. Yet there was no help for it; his future lay here or nowhere.

"I know it; go ahead."

"I know what your mental reservations are, Joe; you are simply accepting risk; not promising loyalty."

"Yes—but why are you considering taking a chance on me?"

Baldwin was more serious in manner than he usually allowed himself to be. "You're an able man, Joe. You have the savvy and the moral courage to do what is reasonable in an odd situation rather than what is conventional."

"That's why you want me?"

"Partly that. Partly because I like the way you catch on to a new card game." He grinned. "And even partly because Gail likes the way you behave with a colt."

"Gail? What's she got to do with it?"

"She reported on you to me about five minutes ago, during the raid."

"Hmm—go ahead."

"You've been warned." For a moment Baldwin looked almost sheepish. "I want you to take what I say next at its face value, Joe—don't laugh."

"Okay."

"You asked what I was. I'm sort of the executive secretary of this branch of an organization of supermen."

"I thought so."

"Eh? How long have you known?"

"Things added up. The card game, your reaction time. I knew it when you destroyed the films."

"Joe, what is a superman?"

Gilead did not answer.

"Very well, let's chuck the term," Baldwin went on. "It's been overused and misused and beat up until it has mostly comic connotations. I used it for shock value and I didn't shock you. The term 'superman' has come to have a fairy tale meaning, conjuring up pictures of X-ray eyes, odd sense organs, double hearts, uncuttable skin, steel muscles—an adolescent's dream of the dragon-killing hero. Tripe, of course. Joe, what is a *man*? What is man that makes him more than an animal? Settle that and we'll take a crack at defining a superman—or New Man, *homo novis*, who must displace *homo sapiens*—is displacing him—because he is better able to survive than is *homo sap*. I'm not trying to define myself, I'll leave it up to my associates and the inexorable processes of time as to whether or not I am a superman, a member of the new species of man—same test to apply to you."

"Me?"

"You. You show disturbing symptoms of being *homo novis*, Joe, in a sloppy, ignorant, untrained fashion. Not likely, but you just might be one of the breed. Now—what is man? What is the one thing he can do better than animals which is so strong a survival factor that it outweighs all the things that animals of one sort or another can do much better than he can?"

"He can think."

"I fed you that answer; no prize for it. Okay, you pass yourself off as a man; let's see you do something. What is

the one possible conceivable factor—or factors, if you prefer—which the hypothetical superman could have, by mutation or magic or any other means, and which could be added to this advantage which man already has and which has enabled him to dominate this planet against the unceasing opposition of a million other species of fauna? Some factor that would make the domination of man by his successor as inevitable as your domination over a hound dog? Think, Joe. What is the *necessary* direction of evolution to the next dominant species?"

Gilead engaged in contemplation for what was for him a long time. There were so many lovely attributes that a man might have: to be able to see both like a telescope and microscope, to see the insides of things, to see throughout the spectrum, to have hearing of the same order, to be immune to disease, to grow a new arm or leg, to fly through the air without bothering with silly gadgets like helicopters or jets, to walk unharmed the ocean bottom, to work without tiring—

Yet the eagle could fly and he was nearly extinct, even though his eyesight was better than man's. A dog has better smell and hearing; seals swim better, balance better, and furthermore can store oxygen. Rats can survive where men would starve or die of hardship; they are smart and pesky hard to kill. Rats could—

Wait! Could tougher, smarter rats displace man? No, it just wasn't in them; too small a brain.

"To be able to think better," Gilead answered almost instantly.

"Hand the man a cigar! Supermen are superthinkers; anything else is a side issue. I'll allow the possibility of super-somethings which might exterminate or dominate mankind other than by outsmarting him in his own racket—thought. But I deny that it is possible for a *man* to conceive in discrete terms what such a super-something would be or how this something would win out. New Man will beat our homo sap in homo sap's own specialty—rational thought, the ability to recognize data, store them, integrate them, evaluate correctly the result, and arrive at a correct decision. That is how man got to be champion; the creature who can do it better is the coming champion. Sure, there are other survival factors, good health, good sense organs, fast reflexes, but they aren't even comparable, as

the long, rough history of mankind has proved over and over—Marat in his bath, Roosevelt in his wheelchair, Caesar with his epilepsy and his bad stomach, Nelson with one eye and one arm, blind Milton; when the chips are down it's *brain* that wins, not the body's tools."

"Stop a moment," said Gilead. "How about ESP?"

Baldwin shrugged. "I'm not sneering at extrasensory perception any more than I would at exceptional eyesight—ESP is not in the same league with the ability to think correctly. ESP is a grab-bag name for the means other than the known sense organs by which the brain may gather data—but the trick that pays off with first prize is to make use of that data, to *reason* about it. If you would like a telepathic hookup to Shanghai, I can arrange it; we've got operators at both ends—but you can get whatever data you might happen to need from Shanghai by phone with less trouble, less chance of a bad connection, and less danger of somebody listening in. Telepaths can't pick up a radio message; it's not the same wave band."

"What wave band is it?"

"Later, later. You've got a lot to learn."

"I wasn't thinking especially of telepathy. I was thinking of all para-psychological phenomena."

"Same reasoning. Apportation would be nice, if telekinetics had gotten that far—which it ain't. But a pickup truck moves things handily enough. Television in the hands of an intelligent man counts for more than clairvoyance in a moron. Quit wasting my time, Joe."

"Sorry."

"We defined thinking as integrating data and arriving at correct answers. Look around you. Most people do that stunt just well enough to get to the corner store and back without breaking a leg. If the average man thinks at all, he does silly things like generalizing from a single datum. He uses one-valued logics. If he is exceptionally bright, he may use two-valued, 'either-or' logic to arrive at his wrong answers. If he is hungry, hurt, or personally interested in the answer, he can't use any sort of logic and will discard an observed fact as blithely as he will stake his life on a piece of wishful thinking. He uses the technical miracles created by superior men without wonder nor surprise, as a kitten accepts a bowl of milk. Far from aspiring to higher reasoning, he is not even aware that higher reasoning exists. He

classes his own mental process as being of the same sort as the genius of an Einstein. Man is not a rational animal; he is a rationalizing animal.

"For explanations of a universe that confuses him, he seizes onto numerology, astrology, hysterical religions, and other fancy ways to go crazy. Having accepted such glorified nonsense, facts make no impression on him, even if at the cost of his own life. Joe, one of the hardest things to believe is the abysmal depth of human stupidity.

"That is why there is always room at the top, why a man with just a *leetle* more on the ball can so easily become governor, millionaire, or college president—and why homo sap is sure to be displaced by New Man, because there is so much room for improvement and evolution never stops.

"Here and there among ordinary men is a rare individual who really thinks, can and does use logic in at least one field—he's often as stupid as the rest outside his study or laboratory—but he can think, if he's not disturbed or sick or frightened. This rare individual is responsible for *all* the progress made by the race; the others reluctantly adopt his results. Much as the ordinary man dislikes and distrusts and persecutes the process of thinking he is forced to accept the results occasionally, because thinking is efficient compared with his own maunderings. He may still plant his corn in the dark of the Moon, but he will plant better corn developed by better men than he.

"Still rarer is the man who thinks habitually, who applies reason, rather than habit pattern, to all his activity. Unless he masques himself, his is a dangerous life; he is regarded as queer, untrustworthy, subversive of public morals; he is a pink monkey among brown monkeys—a fatal mistake. Unless the pink monkey can dye himself brown before he is caught.

"The brown monkey's instinct to kill is correct; such men are dangerous to all monkey customs.

"Rarest of all is the man who can and does reason at all times, quickly, accurately, inclusively, despite hope or fear or bodily distress, without egocentric bias or thalamic disturbance, with correct memory, with clear distinction between fact, assumption, and nonfact. Such men exist, Joe; they are 'New Man'—human in all respects, indistinguishable in appearance or under the scalpel from homo sap, yet as unlike him in action as the Sun is unlike a single candle."

Gilead said, "Are you that sort?"

"You will continue to form your own opinions."

"And you think I may be, too?"

"Could be. I'll have more data in a few days."

Gilead laughed until the tears came. "Kettle Belly, if I'm the future hope of the race, they had better send in the second team quick. Sure I'm brighter than most of the jerks I run into, but, as you say, the competition isn't stiff. But I haven't any sublime aspirations. I've got as lecherous an eye as the next man. I enjoy wasting time over a glass of beer. I just don't *feel* like a superman."

"Speaking of beer, let's have some." Baldwin got up and obtained two cans of the brew. "Remember that Mowgli felt like a wolf. Being a New Man does not divorce you from human sympathies and pleasures. There have been New Men all through history; I doubt if most of them suspected that their difference entitled them to call themselves a different breed. Then they went ahead and bred with the daughters of men, diffusing their talents through the racial organism, preventing them from effectuating until chance brought the genetic factors together again."

"Then I take it that New Man is not a special mutation?"

"Huh? Who isn't a mutation, Joe? All of us are a collection of millions of mutations. Around the globe hundreds of mutations have taken place in our human germ plasm while we have been sitting here. No, *homo novis* didn't come about because great grandfather stood too close to a cyclotron; *homo novis* was not even a separate breed until he became aware of himself, organized, and decided to hang on to what his genes had handed him. You could mix New Man back into the race today and lose him; he's merely a variation becoming a species. A million years from now is another matter; I venture to predict that New Man, of that year and model, won't be able to interbreed with *homo sap*—no viable offspring."

"You don't expect present man—*homo sapiens*—to disappear?"

"Not necessarily. The dog adapted to man. Probably more dogs now than in umpteen BC—and better fed."

"And man would be New Man's dog."

"Again not necessarily. Consider the cat."

"The idea is to skim the cream of the race's germ plasm and keep it biologically separate until the two races are

permanently distinct. You chaps sound like a bunch of stinkers, Kettle Belly."

"Monkey talk."

"Perhaps. The new race would necessarily run things—"

"Do you expect New Man to decide grave matters by counting common man's runny noses?"

"No, that was my point. Postulating such a new race, the result is inevitable. Kettle Belly, I confess to a monkey prejudice in favor of democracy, human dignity, and freedom. It goes beyond logic; it is the kind of a world I like. In my job I have jungled with the outcasts of society, shared their slumgullion. Stupid they may be, bad they are not—I have no wish to see them become domestic animals."

For the first time the big man showed concern. His *persona* as "King of the Kopters," master merchandiser, slipped away; he sat in brooding majesty, a lonely and unhappy figure. "I know, Joe. They are of us; their little dignities, their nobilities, are not lessened by their sorry state. Yet it must be."

"Why? New Man will come—granted. But why hurry the process?"

"Ask yourself." He swept a hand toward the oubliette. "Ten minutes ago you and I saved this planet, all our race. It's the hour of the knife. Someone must be on guard if the race is to live; there is no one but us. To guard effectively we New Men must be organized, must never fumble any crisis like this—and must increase our numbers. We are few now, Joe; as the crises increase, we must increase to meet them. Eventually—and it's a dead race with time—we must take over and make certain that baby never plays with matches."

He stopped and brooded. "I confess to that same affection for democracy, Joe. But it's like yearning for the Santa Claus you believed in as a child. For a hundred and fifty years or so democracy, or something like it, could flourish safely. The issues were such as to be settled without disaster by the votes of common men, befogged and ignorant as they were. But now, if the race is simply to stay alive, political decisions depend on real knowledge of such things as nuclear physics, planetary ecology, genetic theory, even system mechanics. They aren't up to it, Joe. With goodness and more will than they possess less than one in a thousand could stay awake over one page of nuclear physics;

they can't learn what they must know."

Gilead brushed it aside. "It's up to us to brief them. Their hearts are all right; tell them the score—they'll come down with the right answers."

"No, Joe. We've tried it; it does not work. As you say most of them are good, the way a dog can be noble and good. Yet there are bad ones—Mrs. Keithley and company and more like her. Reason is poor propaganda when opposed by the yammering, unceasing lies of shrewd and evil and self-serving men. The little man has no way to judge and the shoddy lies are packaged more attractively. There is no way to offer color to a colorblind man, nor is there any way for us to give the man of imperfect brain the canny skill to distinguish a lie from a truth.

"No, Joe. The gulf between us and them is narrow, but it is very deep. We cannot close it."

"I wish," said Gilead, "that you wouldn't class me with your 'New Man'; I feel more at home on the other side."

"You will decide for yourself which side you are on, as each of us has done."

Gilead forced a change in subject. Ordinarily immune to thalamic disturbance this issue upset him; his brain followed Baldwin's argument and assured him that it was true; his inclinations fought it. He was confronted with the sharpest of all tragedy; two equally noble and valid rights, utterly opposed. "What do you people do, aside from stealing films?"

"Mmm—many things." Baldwin relaxed, looked again like a jovial sharp businessman. "Where a push here and a touch there will keep things from going to pot, we apply the pressure, by many and devious means. And we scout for suitable material and bring it into the fold when we can—we've had our eye on you for ten years."

"So?"

"Yep. That is a prime enterprise. Through public data we eliminate all but about one tenth of one percent; that thousandth individual we watch. And then there are our horticultural societies." He grinned.

"Finish your joke."

"We weed people."

"Sorry, I'm slow today."

"Joe, didn't you ever feel a yen to wipe out some evil, obscene, rotten jerk who infected everything he touched,

yet was immune to legal action? We treat them as cancers; we excise them from the body social. We keep a 'Better Dead' list; when a man is clearly morally bankrupt we close his account at the first opportunity."

Gilead smiled. "If you were sure what you were doing, it could be fun."

"We are always sure, though our methods would be no good in a monkey law court. Take Mrs. Keithley—is there doubt in your mind?"

"None."

"Why don't you have her indicted? Don't bother to answer. For example, two weeks from tonight there will be a giant powwow of the new, rejuvenated, bigger-and-better-than-ever Ku Klux Klan on a mountaintop down Carolina way. When the fun is at its height, when they are mouthing obscenities, working each other up to the pogrom spirit, an act of God is going to wipe out the whole kit and kaboodle. Very sad."

"Could I get in on that?"

"You aren't even a cadet as yet." Baldwin went on. "There is the project to increase our numbers, but that is a thousand-year program; you'd need a perpetual calendar to check it. More important is keeping matches away from baby. Joe, it's been eighty-five years since we beheaded the last commissar: have you wondered why so little basic progress in science has been made in that time?"

"Eh? There have been a lot of changes."

"Minor adaptations—some spectacular, almost none of them basic. Of course there was very little progress made under communism; a totalitarian political religion is incompatible with free investigation. Let me digress: the communist interregnum was responsible for the New Men getting together and organizing. Most New Men are scientists, for obvious reasons. When the commissars started ruling on natural laws by political criteria—Lysenkoism and similar nonsense—it did not sit well; a lot of us went underground."

"I'll skip the details. It brought us together, gave us practice in underground activity, and gave a backlog of new research, carried out underground. Some of it was obviously dangerous; we decided to hang onto it for a while. Since then such secret knowledge has grown, for we never give out an item until it has been scrutinized for social

hazards. Since much of it *is* dangerous and since very few indeed outside our organization are capable of real original thinking, basic science has been almost at a—public!—standstill.

"We hadn't expected to have to do it that way. We helped to see to it that the new constitution was liberal and—we thought—workable. But the new Republic turned out to be an even poorer thing than the old. The evil ethic of communism had corrupted, even after the form was gone. We held off. Now we know that we must hold off until we can revise the whole society."

"Kettle Belly," Joe said slowly, "you speak as if you had been on the spot. How old are you?"

"I'll tell you when you are the age I am now. A man has lived long enough when he no longer longs to live. I ain't there yet. Joe, I must have your answer, or this must be continued in our next."

"You had it at the beginning—but, see here, Kettle Belly, there is one job I want promised to me."

"Which is?"

"I want to kill Mrs. Keithley."

"Keep your pants on. When you're trained, and if she's still alive then, you'll be used for that purpose—"

"Thanks!"

"—provided you are the proper tool for it." Baldwin turned toward the mike, called out, "Gail!" and added one word in the strange tongue.

Gail showed up promptly. "Joe," said Baldwin, "when this young lady gets through with you, you will be able to sing, whistle, chew gum, play chess, hold your breath, and fly a kite simultaneously—and all this while riding a bicycle under water. Take him, sis, he's all yours."

Gail rubbed her hands. "Oh, boy!"

"First we must teach you to see and to hear, then to remember, then to speak, and then to think."

Joe looked at her. "What's this I'm doing with my mouth at this moment?"

"It's not talking, it's a sort of grunting. Furthermore English is not structurally suited to thinking. Shut up and listen."

In their underground classroom Gail had available several types of apparatus to record and manipulate light and

sound. She commenced throwing groups of figures on a screen, in flashes. "What was it, Joe?"

"Nine-six-oh-seven-two—That was as far as I got."

"It was up there a full thousandth of a second. Why did you get only the left-hand side of the group?"

"That's all the farther I had read."

"Look at *all* of it. Don't make an effort of will; just look at it." She flashed another number.

Joe's memory was naturally good; his intelligence was high—just how high he did not yet know. Unconvinced that the drill was useful, he relaxed and played along. Soon he was beginning to grasp a nine-digit array as a single *gestalt*; Gail reduced the flash time.

"What is this magic lantern gimmick?" he inquired.

"It's a Renshaw tachistoscope. Back to work."

Around World War II Dr. Samuel Renshaw at the Ohio State University was proving that most people are about one-fifth efficient in using their capacities to see, hear, taste, feel, and remember. His research was swallowed in the morass of communist pseudoscience that obtained after World War III, but, after his death, his findings were preserved underground. Gail did not expose Gilead to the odd language he had heard until he had been rather thoroughly Renshawed.

However, from the time of his interview with Baldwin the other persons at the ranch used it in his presence. Sometimes someone—usually Ma Garver—would translate, sometimes not. He was flattered to feel accepted, but gravelled to know that it was at the lowest cadetship. He was a child among adults.

Gail started teaching him to hear by speaking to him single words from the odd language, requiring him to repeat them back. "No, Joe. Watch." This time when she spoke the word, it appeared on the screen in sound analysis, by a means basically like one long used to show the deaf-and-dumb their speech mistakes. "Now you try it."

He did, the two arrays hung side by side. "How's that, teacher?" he said triumphantly.

"Terrible, by several decimal places. You held the final guttural too long—" She pointed. "The middle vowel was formed with your tongue too high and you pitched it too low and you failed to let the pitch rise. And six other things. You couldn't possibly have been understood. I heard

what you said, but it was gibberish. Try again. And don't call me 'teacher.'"

"Yes, ma'am," he answered solemnly.

She shifted the controls; he tried again. This time his analysis array was laid down on top of hers; where the two matched, they cancelled. Where they did not match, his errors stood out in contrasting colors. The screen looked like a sunburst.

"Try again, Joe." She repeated the word without letting it affect the display.

"Confound it, if you would tell me what the words mean instead of treating me the way Milton treated his daughters about Latin, I could remember them easier."

She shrugged. "I can't, Joe. You must learn to hear and to speak first. Speedtalk is a flexible language; the same word is not likely to recur. This practice word means: 'The far horizons draw no nearer.' That's not much help, is it?"

The definition seemed improbable, but he was learning not to doubt her. He was not used to women who were always two jumps ahead of him. He ordinarily felt sorry for the poor little helpless cuddly creatures; this one he often wanted to slug. He wondered if this response were what the romancers meant by "love"; he decided that it couldn't be.

"Try again, Joe." Speedtalk was a structurally different speech from any the race had ever used. Long before, Ogden and Richards had shown that eight hundred and fifty words were sufficient vocabulary to express anything that could be expressed by "normal" human vocabularies, with the aid of a handful of special words—a hundred-odd—for each special field, such as horse racing or ballistics. About the same time phoneticians had analyzed all human tongues into about a hundred-odd sounds, represented by the letters of a general phonetic alphabet.

On these two propositions Speedtalk was based.

To be sure, the phonetic alphabet was much less in number than the words in Basic English. But the letters representing sounds in the phonetic alphabet were each capable of variation several different ways—length, stress, pitch, rising, falling. The more trained an ear was the larger the number of possible variations; there was no limit to variations but, without much refinement of accepted phonetic practice, it was possible to establish a one-to-one relationship with Basic English so that *one phonetic symbol* was

equivalent to an entire word in a "normal" language, one Speedtalk word was equal to an entire sentence. The language consequently was learned by letter units rather than by word units—but each word was spoken and listened to as a single structured *gestalt*.

But Speedtalk was not "shorthand" Basic English. "Normal" languages, having their roots in days of superstition and ignorance, have in them inherently and unescapably wrong structures of mistaken ideas about the universe. One can think logically in English only by extreme effort, so bad it is as a mental tool. For example, the verb "to be" in English has twenty-one distinct meanings, *every single one of which is false-to-fact*.

A symbolic structure, invented instead of accepted without question, can be made similar in structure to the real world to which it refers. The structure of Speedtalk did *not* contain the hidden errors of English; it was structured as much like the real world as the New Men could make it. For example, it did not contain the unreal distinction between nouns and verbs found in most other languages. The world—the continuum known to science and including all human activity—does not contain "noun things" and "verb things"; it contains space-time events and relationships between them. The advantage for achieving truth, or something more nearly like truth, was similar to the advantage of keeping account books in Arabic numerals rather than Roman.

All other languages made scientific, multi-valued logic almost impossible to achieve; in Speedtalk it was as difficult *not* to be logical. Compare the pellucid Boolean logic with the obscurities of the Aristotelian logic it supplanted.

Paradoxes are verbal, do not exist in the real world—and Speedtalk did not have such built into it. Who shaves the Spanish Barber? Answer: follow him around and see. In the syntax of Speedtalk the paradox of the Spanish Barber could not even be expressed, save as a self-evident error.

But Joe Greene-Gilead-Briggs could not learn it until he had learned to hear, by learning to speak. He slaved away; the screen continued to remain lighted with his errors.

Came finally a time when Joe's pronunciation of a sentence-word blanked out Gail's sample; the screen turned dark. He felt more triumph over that than anything he

could remember.

His delight was short. By a circuit Gail had thoughtfully added some days earlier, the machine answered with a flourish of trumpets, loud applause, and then added in a cooing voice, "Mama's *good* boy!"

He turned to her. "Woman, you spoke of matrimony. If you ever do manage to marry me, I'll beat you."

"I haven't made up my mind about you yet," she answered evenly. "Now try this word, Joe—"

Baldwin showed up that evening, called him aside. "Joe! C'mere. Listen, lover boy, you keep your animal nature out of your work, or I'll have to find you a new teacher."

"But—"

"You heard me. Take her swimming, take her riding, after hours you are on your own. Work time—strictly business. I've got plans for you; I want you to get smarted up."

"She complained about me?"

"Don't be silly. It's my business to know what's going on."

"Hmm. Kettle Belly, what is this shopping-for-a-husband she kids about? Is she serious, or is it just intended to rattle me?"

"Ask her. Not that it matters, as you won't have any choice if she means it. She has the calm persistence of the law of gravitation."

"Ouch! I had had the impression that the 'New Men' did not bother with marriage and such like, as you put it, 'monkey customs.'"

"Some do, some don't. Me, I've been married quite a piece, but I mind a mousy little member of our lodge who has had nine kids by nine fathers—all wonderful genius-plus kids. On the other hand I can point out one with eleven kids—Thalia Wagner—who has never so much as looked at another man. Geniuses make their own rules in such matters, Joe; they always have. Here are some established statistical facts about genius, as shown by Armatoe's work—"

He ticked them off. "Geniuses are usually long-lived. They are not modest, not honestly so. They have infinite capacity for taking pains. They are emotionally indifferent to accepted codes of morals—they make their own rules. You seem to have the stigmata, by the way."

"Thanks for nothing. Maybe I should have a new teacher,

if there is anyone else available who can do it."

"Any of us can do it, just as anybody handy teaches a baby to talk. She's actually a biochemist, when she has time for it."

"When she has time?"

"Be careful of that kid, son. Her real profession is the same as yours—honorable hatchet man. She's killed upwards of three hundred people." Kettle Belly grinned. "If you want to switch teachers, just drop me a wink."

Gilead-Greene hastily changed the subject. "You were speaking of work for me: how about Mrs. Keithley? Is she still alive?"

"Yes, blast her."

"Remember, I've got dibs on her."

"You may have to go to the Moon to get her. She's reported to be building a vacation home there. Old age seems to be telling on her; you had better get on with your homework if you want a crack at her." Moon Colony even then was a center of geriatrics for the rich. The low gravity was easy on their hearts, made them feel young—and possibly extended their lives.

"Okay, I will."

Instead of asking for a new teacher Joe took a highly polished apple to their next session. Gail ate it, leaving him very little core, and put him harder to work than ever. While perfecting his hearing and pronunciation, she started him on the basic thousand-letter vocabulary by forcing him to start to talk simple three- and four-letter sentences, and by answering him in different word-sentences using the same phonetic letters. Some of the vowel and consonant sequences were very difficult to pronounce.

Master them he did. He had been used to doing most things easier than could those around him; now he was in very fast company. He stretched himself and began to achieve part of his own large latent capacity. When he began to catch some of the dinner-table conversation and to reply in simple Speedtalk—being forbidden by Gail to answer in English—she started him on the ancillary vocabularies.

An economical language cannot be limited to a thousand words; although almost every idea can be expressed somehow in a short vocabulary, higher orders of abstraction are convenient. For technical words Speedtalk employed an

open expansion of sixty of the thousand-odd phonetic letters. They were the letters ordinarily used as numerals; by preceding a number with a letter used for no other purpose, the symbol was designated as having a word value.

New Men numbered to the base sixty—three times four times five, a convenient, easily factored system, most economical, *i.e.*, the symbol "100" identified the number described in English as thirty-six hundred—yet permitting quick, in-the-head translation from common notation to Speedtalk figures and vice versa.

By using these figures, each prefaced by the indicator—a voiceless Welsh or Burmese "l"—a pool of 215,999 words (one less than the cube of sixty) was available for specialized meaning without using more than four letters including the indicator. Most of them could be pronounced as one syllable. These had not the stark simplicity of basic Speedtalk; nevertheless words such as "ichthyophagous" and "constitutionality" were thus compressed to monosyllables. Such shortcuts can best be appreciated by anyone who has heard a long speech in Cantonese translated into a short speech in English. Yet English is not the most terse of "normal" languages—and expanded Speedtalk is many times more economical than the briefest of "normal" tongues.

By adding one more letter (sixty to the fourth power) just short of thirteen *million* words could be added if needed—and most of them could still be pronounced as one syllable.

When Joe discovered that Gail expected him to learn a couple of hundred thousand new words in a matter of days, he balked. "Damn it, Fancy Pants, I am not a superman. I'm in here by mistake."

"Your opinion is worthless; I think you can do it. Now listen."

"Suppose I flunk; does that put me safely off your list of possible victims?"

"If you flunk, I wouldn't have you on toast. Instead I'd tear your head off and stuff it down your throat. But you won't flunk; I *know*. However," she added, "I'm not sure you would be a satisfactory husband; you argue too much."

He made a brief and bitter remark in Speedtalk; she answered with one word which described his shortcomings in detail. They got to work.

Joe was mistaken; he learned the expanded vocabulary

as fast as he heard it. He had a latent eidetic memory; the Renshawing process now enabled him to use it fully. And his mental processes, always fast, had become faster than he knew.

The ability to learn Speedtalk at all is proof of supernormal intelligence; the *use* of it by such intelligence renders that mind efficient. Even before World War II Alfred Korzybski had shown that human thought was performed, when done efficiently, only in symbols; the notion of "pure" thought, free of abstracted speech symbols, was merely fantasy. The brain was so constructed as to work without symbols only on the animal level; to speak of "reasoning" without symbols was to speak nonsense.

Speedtalk did not merely speed up communication—by its structures it made thought more logical; by its economy it made thought processes enormously faster, since it takes almost as long to *think* a word as it does to speak it.

Korzybski's monumental work went fallow during the communist interregnum; *Das Kapital* is a childish piece of work, when analyzed by semantics, so the politburo suppressed semantics—and replaced it by *ersatz* under the same name, as Lysenkoism replaced the science of genetics.

Having Speedtalk to help him learn *more* Speedtalk, Joe learned very rapidly. The Renshawing had continued; he was now able to grasp a gestalt or configuration in many senses at once, grasp it, remember it, reason about it with great speed.

Living time is not calendar time; a man's life is the thought that flows through his brain. Any man capable of learning Speedtalk had an association time at least three times as fast as an ordinary man. Speedtalk itself enabled him to manipulate symbols approximately seven times as fast as English symbols could be manipulated. Seven times three is twenty-one; a new man had an *effective* life time of at least *sixteen hundred years*, reckoned in flow of ideas.

They had time to become encyclopedic synthesists, something denied any ordinary man by the straitjacket of his sort of time.

When Joe had learned to talk, to read and write and cipher, Gail turned him over to others for his real education. But before she checked him out she played him several dirty tricks.

For three days she forbade him to eat. When it was evi-

dent that he could think and keep his temper despite low blood-sugar count, despite hunger reflex, she added sleeplessness and pain—intense, long-continued, and varied pain. She tried subtly to goad him into irrational action; he remained bedrock steady, his mind clicking away at any assigned task as dependably as an electronic computer.

"Who's not a superman?" she asked at the end of their last session.

"Yes, teacher."

"Come here, lug." She grabbed him by the ears, kissed him soundly. "So long." He did not see her again for many weeks.

His tutor in ESP was an ineffectual-looking little man who had taken the protective coloration of the name Weems. Joe was not very good at producing ESP phenomena. Clairvoyance he did not appear to have. He was better at precognition, but he did not improve with practice. He was best at telekinesis; he could have made a soft living with dice. But, as Kettle Belly had pointed out, from affecting the roll of dice to moving tons of freight was quite a gap—and one possibly not worth bridging.

"It may have other uses, however," Weems had said softly, lapsing into English. "Consider what might be done if one could influence the probability that a neutron would reach a particular nucleus—or change the statistical probability in a mass."

Gilead let it ride; it was an outrageous thought.

At telepathy he was erratic to exasperation. He called the Rhine cards once without a miss, then had poor scores for three weeks. More highly structured communication seemed quite beyond him, until one day without apparent cause but during an attempt to call the cards by telepathy, he found himself hooked in with Weems for all of ten seconds—time enough for a thousand words by Speedtalk standards.

—it comes out as speech!

—why not? thought is speech.

—how do we do it?

—if we knew it would not be so unreliable. as it is, some can do it by volition, some by accident, and some never seem to be able to do it. we do know this: while thought may not be of the physical world in any fashion we can now define and manipulate, it is similar to events in the continuum in its quantal nature. you are now studying the ex-

tension of the quantum concept to all features of the continuum, you know the chronon, the mensum, and the viton, as quanta, as well as the action units of quanta such as the photon. the continuum has not only structure but texture in all its features. the least unit of thought we term the psychon.

—define it. put salt on its tail.

—someday, someday. i can tell you this; the fastest possible rate of thought is one psychon per chronon; this is a basic, universal constant.

—how close do we come to that?

—less than sixty-to-the-minus-third-power of the possibility.

—!!!!!!

—better creatures than ourselves will follow us. we pick pebbles at a boundless ocean.

—what can we do to improve it?

—gather our pebbles with serene minds.

Gilead paused for a long split second of thought. *—can psychons be destroyed?*

—vitons may be transferred. psychons are—

The connection was suddenly destroyed. "As I was saying," Weems went on quietly, "psychons are as yet beyond our comprehension in many respects. Theory indicates that they may not be destroyed, that thought, like action, is persistent. Whether or not such theory, if true, means that personal identity is also persistent must remain an open question. See the daily papers—a few hundred years from now—or a few hundred thousand." He stood up.

"I'm anxious to try tomorrow's session, Doc," Gilead-Greene almost bubbled. "Maybe—"

"I'm finished with you."

"But, Doctor Weems, that connection was clear as a phone hookup. Perhaps tomorrow—"

"We have established that your talent is erratic. We have no way to train it to dependability. Time is too short to waste, mine and yours." Lapsing suddenly into English, he added, "No."

Gilead left.

During his training in other fields Joe was exposed to many things best described as impressive gadgets. There was an integrating pantograph, a factory-in-a-box, which the New Men planned to turn over to ordinary men as soon

as the social system was no longer dominated by economic wolves. It could and did reproduce almost any prototype placed on its stage, requiring thereto only materials and power. Its power came from a little nucleonics motor the size of Joe's thumb; its theory played hob with conventional notions of entropy. One put in "sausage"; one got out "pig."

Latent in it was the shape of an economic system as different from the current one as the assembly-line economy differed from the family-shop system—and in such a system lay possibilities of human freedom and dignity missing for centuries, if they had ever existed.

In the meantime New Men rarely bought more than one of anything—a pattern. Or they made a pattern.

Another useful but hardly wonderful gadget was a dictaphone-typewriter-printing-press combination. The machine's analysers recognized each of the thousand-odd phonetic symbols; there was a typebar for each sound. It produced one or many copies. Much of Gilead's education came from pages printed by this gadget, saving the precious time of others.

The arrangement, classification, and accessibility of knowledge remains in all ages the most pressing problem. With the New Men, complete and organized memory licked most of the problem and rendered record keeping, most reading and writing—and most especially the time-destroying trouble of rereading—unnecessary. The autoscriber gadget, combined with a "librarian" machine that could "hear" that portion of Speedtalk built into it as a filing system, covered most of the rest of the problem. New Men were not cluttered with endless bits of paper. They *never* wrote memoranda.

The area under the ranch was crowded with technological wonders, all newer than next week. Incredibly tiny manipulators for micrurgy of all sorts, surgical, chemical, biological manipulation, oddities of cybernetics only less complex than the human brain—the list is too long to describe. Joe did not study all of them; an encyclopedic synthesist is concerned with structured shapes of knowledge; he cannot, even with Speedtalk, study details in every field.

Early in his education, when it was clear that he had had the potential to finish the course, plastic surgery was started

to give him a new identity and basic appearance. His height was reduced by three inches; his skull was somewhat changed; his complexion was permanently darkened. Gail picked the facial appearance he was given; he did not object. He rather liked it; it seemed to fit his new inner personality.

With a new face, a new brain, and a new outlook, he was almost in fact a new man. Before he had been a natural genius; now he was a *trained* genius.

"Joe, how about some riding?"

"Suits."

"I want to give War Conqueror some gentle exercise. He's responding to the saddle; I don't want him to forget."

"Right with you."

Kettle Belly and Gilead-Greene rode out from the ranch buildings. Baldwin let the young horse settle to a walk and began to talk. "I figure you are about ready for work, son." Even in Speedtalk Kettle Belly's speech retained his own flavor.

"I suppose so, but I still have those mental reservations."

"Not sure we are on the side of the angels?"

"I'm sure you mean to be. It's evident that the organization selects for good will and humane intentions quite as carefully as for ability. I wasn't sure at one time—"

"Yes?"

"That candidate who came here about six months ago, the one who broke his neck in a riding accident."

"Oh, yes! Very sad."

"Very opportune, you mean, Kettle Belly."

"Damn it, Joe, if a bad apple gets in this far, we can't let him out." Baldwin reverted to English for swearing purposes; he maintained that it had "more juice."

"I know it. That's why I'm sure about the quality of our people."

"So it's 'our people' now?"

"Yes. But I'm not sure we are on the right track."

"What's your notion of the right track?"

"We should come out of hiding and teach the ordinary man what he can learn of what we know. He could learn a lot of it and could use it. Properly briefed and trained, he could run his affairs pretty well. He would gladly kick out the no-goods who ride on his shoulders, if only he knew

how. We could show him. That would be more to the point than this business of spot assassination, now and then, here and there—mind you, I don't object to killing any man who merits killing; I simply say it's inefficient. No doubt we would have to continue to guard against such crises as the one that brought you and me together, but, in the main, people could run their own affairs if we would just stop pretending that we are so scared we can't mix with people, come out of our hole, and lend a hand."

Baldwin reined up. "Don't say that I don't mix with the common people, Joe; I sell used 'copters for a living. You can't get any commoner. And don't imply that my heart is not with them. We are not like them, but we are tied to them by the strongest bond of all, for we are all, each and every one, sickening with the same certainly fatal disease—we are alive.

"As for our killings, you don't understand the principles of assassination as a political weapon. Read—" He named a Speedtalk library designation. "If I were knocked off, our organization wouldn't even hiccup, but organizations for bad purposes are different. They are personal empires; if you pick the time and the method, you can destroy such an organization by killing one man—the parts that remain will be almost harmless until assimilated by another leader—then you kill *him*. It is not inefficient; it's quite efficient, if planned with the brain and not with the emotions.

"As for keeping ourselves separate, we are about like the U-235 in U-238, not effective unless separated out. There have been potential New Men in every generation, but they were spread too thin.

"As for keeping our existence secret, it is utterly necessary if we are to survive and increase. There is nothing so dangerous as being the Chosen People—and in the minority. One group was persecuted for two thousand years merely for making the claim."

He again shifted to English to swear. "Damn it, Joe, face up to it. This world is run the way my great aunt Susie flies a 'copter. Speedtalk or no Speedtalk, common man *can't* learn to cope with modern problems. No use to talk about the unused potential of his brain, he has not got the *will* to learn what he would have to know. We can't fit him out with new genes, so we have to lead him by the hand to keep him from killing himself—and us. We can

give him personal liberty, we can give him autonomy in most things, we can give him a great measure of personal dignity—and we will, because we believe that individual freedom, at all levels, is the direction of evolution, of maximum survival value. But we can't let him fiddle with issues of racial life and death; he ain't up to it.

"No help for it. Each shape of society develops its own ethic. We are shaping this the way we are inexorably forced to, by the logic of events. We *think* we are shaping it toward survival."

"Are we?" mused Gilead-Greene.

"Remains to be seen. Survivors survive. We'll know—Wup! Meeting's adjourned."

The radio on Baldwin's pommel was shrilling his personal emergency call. He listened, then spoke one sharp word in Speedtalk. "Back to the house, Joe!" He wheeled and was away. Joe's mount came of less selected stock; he was forced to follow.

Baldwin sent for Joe soon after he got back. Joe went in; Gail was already there.

Baldwin's face was without expression. He said in English, "I've work for you, Joe, work you won't have any doubt about. Mrs. Keithley."

"Good."

"Not good." Baldwin shifted to Speedtalk. "We have been caught flat-footed. Either the second set of films was never destroyed, or there was a third set. We do not know; the man who could tell us is dead. But Mrs. Keithley obtained a set and has been using them.

"This is the situation. The 'fuse' of the Nova effect has been installed in the New Age Hotel. It has been sealed off and can be triggered only by radio signal from the Moon—her signal. The 'fuse' has been rigged so that any attempt to break in, as long as the firing circuit is still armed, will trigger it and set it off. Even an attempt to examine it by penetration wavelengths will set it off. Speaking as a physicist, it is my considered opinion that *no* plan for tackling the 'Nova' fuse bomb itself will work unless the arming circuit is first broken on the Moon and that no attempt should be made to get at the fuse before then, because of extreme danger to the entire planet.

"The arming circuit and the radio relay to the Earthside trigger are located on the Moon in a building inside her

private dome. The triggering control she keeps with her. From the same control she can disarm the arming circuit temporarily; it is a combination dead-man switch and time-clock arrangement. It can be set to disarm for a maximum of twelve hours, to let her sleep, or possibly to permit her to order rearrangements. Unless it is switched off any attempt to enter the building in which the arming circuit is housed will also trigger the 'Nova' bomb circuit. While it is disarmed, the housing on the Moon may be breached by force but this will set off alarms which will warn her to rearm and then to trigger at once. The setup is such that the following sequence of events must take place:

"First, she must be killed, and the circuit disarmed.

"Second, the building housing the arming circuit and radio relay to the trigger must be broken open and the circuits destroyed *before* the time clock can rearm and trigger. This must be done with speed, not only because of guards, but because her surviving lieutenants will attempt to seize power by possessing themselves of the controls.

"Third, as soon as word is received on Earth that the arming circuit is destroyed, the New Age will be attacked in force and the 'Nova' bomb destroyed.

"Fourth, as soon as the bomb is destroyed, a general roundup must be made of all persons technically capable of setting up the 'Nova' effect from plans. This alert must be maintained until it is certain that no plans remain in existence, including the third set of films, and further established by hypno that no competent person possesses sufficient knowledge to set it up without plans. This alert may compromise our secret status; the risk must be taken.

"Any questions?"

"Kettle Belly," said Joe, "doesn't she know that if the Earth becomes a Nova, the Moon will be swallowed up in the disaster?"

"Crater walls shield her dome from line-of-sight with Earth; apparently she believes she is safe. Evil is essentially stupid, Joe; despite her brilliance, she believes what she wishes to believe. Or it may be that she is willing to risk her own death against the tempting prize of absolute power. Her plan is to proclaim power with some pious nonsense about being high priestess of peace—a euphemism for Empress of Earth. It is a typical paranoid deviation; the proof of the craziness lies in the fact that the physical ar-

rangements make it certain—if we do not intervene—that Earth will be destroyed automatically a few hours after her death; a thing that could happen any time—and a compelling reason for all speed. No one has ever quite managed to conquer all of Earth, not even the commissars. Apparently she wishes not only to conquer it, but wants to destroy it after she is gone, lest anyone else ever manage to do so again. Any more questions?”

He went on, “The plan is this:

“You two will go to the Moon to become domestic servants to Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Copley, a rich, elderly couple living at the Elysian Rest Homes, Moon Colony. They are of us. Shortly they will decide to return to Earth; you two will decide to remain, you like it. You will advertise, offering to work for anyone who will post your return bond. About this time Mrs. Keithley will have lost through circumstances that will be arranged, two or more of her servants; she will probably hire you, since domestic service is the scarcest commodity on the Moon. If not, a variation will be arranged for you.

“When you are inside her dome, you’ll maneuver yourselves into positions to carry out your assignments. When both of you are so placed, you will carry out procedures one and two with speed.

“A person named McGinty, already inside her dome, will help you in communication. He is not one of us but is our agent, a telepath. His ability does not extend past that. Your communication hookup will probably be, Gail to McGinty by telepathy, McGinty to Joe by concealed radio.”

Joe glanced at Gail; it was the first that he had known that she was a telepath. Baldwin went on. “Gail will kill Mrs. Keithley; Joe will break into the housing and destroy the circuits. Are you ready to go?”

Joe was about to suggest swapping the assignments when Gail answered, “Ready;” he echoed her.

“Good. Joe, you will carry your assumed I.Q. at about 85, Gail at 95; she will appear to be the dominant member of a married couple—” Gail grinned at Joe. “But you, Joe, will be in charge. Your personalities and histories are now being made up and will be ready with your identifications. Let me say again that the greatest of speed is necessary; government security forces here may attempt a foolhardy attack on the New Age Hotel. We shall prevent or delay

such efforts, but act with speed. Good luck."

Operation Black Widow, first phase, went off as planned. Eleven days later Joe and Gail were inside Mrs. Keithley's dome on the moon and sharing a room in the servants' quarters. Gail glanced around when first they entered it and said in Speedtalk, "Now you'll have to marry me; I'm compromised."

"Shut that up, idiot! Some one might hear you."

"Pooh! They'd just think I had asthma. Don't you think it's noble of me, Joe, to sacrifice my girlish reputation for home and country?"

"What reputation?"

"Come closer so I can slug you."

Even the servants' quarters were luxurious. The dome was a sybarite's dream. The floor of it was gardened in real beauty save where Mrs. Keithley's mansion stood. Opposite it, across a little lake—certainly the only lake on the Moon—was the building housing the circuits; it was disguised as a little Doric Grecian shrine.

The dome itself was edge-lighted fifteen hours out of each twenty-four, shutting out the black sky and the harsh stars. At "night" the lighting was gradually withdrawn.

McGinty was a gardener and obviously enjoyed his work. Gail established contact with him, got out of him what little he knew. Joe left him alone save for contacts in character.

There was a staff of over two hundred, having its own social hierarchy, from engineers for dome and equipment, Mrs. Keithley's private pilot, and so on down to gardeners' helpers. Joe and Gail were midway, being inside servants. Gail made herself popular as the harmlessly flirtatious but always helpful and sympathetic wife of a meek and older husband. She had been a beauty parlor operator, so it seemed, before she "married" and had great skill in massaging aching backs and stiff necks, relieving headaches and inducing sleep. She was always ready to demonstrate.

Her duties as a maid had not yet brought her into close contact with their employer. Joe, however, had acquired the job of removing all potted plants to the "outdoors" during "night"; Mrs. Keithley, according to Mr. James, the butler, believed that plants should be outdoors at "night." Joe was thus in a position to get outside the house when the dome was dark; he had already reached the point where

the night guard at the Grecian temple would sometimes get Joe to "jigger" for him while the guard snatched a forbidden cigarette.

McGinty had been able to supply one more important fact: in addition to the guard at the temple building, and the locks and armor plate of the building itself, the arming circuit was booby-trapped. Even if it were inoperative as an arming circuit for the "Nova" bomb on Earth, it itself would blow up if tampered with. Gail and Joe discussed it in their room, Gail sitting on his lap like an affectionate wife, her lips close to his left ear. "Perhaps you could wreck it from the door, without exposing yourself."

"I've got to be sure. There is certainly some way of switching that gimmick off. She has to provide for possible repairs or replacements."

"Where would it be?"

"Just one place that matches the pattern of the rest of her planning. Right under her hand, along with the disarming switch and the trigger switch." He rubbed his other ear; it contained his short-range radio hookup to McGinty and itched almost constantly.

"Hmm—then there's just one thing to be done; I'll have to wring it out of her before I kill her."

"We'll see."

Just before dinner the following "evening" she found him in their room. "It worked, Joe, it worked!"

"What worked?"

"She fell for the bait. She heard from her secretary about my skill as a masseuse; I was ordered up for a demonstration this afternoon. Now I am under strict instructions to come to her tonight and rub her to sleep."

"It's tonight, then."

McGinty waited in his room, behind a locked door. Joe stalled in the back hall, spinning out endlessly a dull tale to Mr. James.

A voice in his ear said, "She's in *her* room now."

"—and that's how my brother got married to two women at once," Joe concluded. "Sheer bad luck. I better get these plants outside before the missus happens to ask about 'em."

"I suppose you had. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Mr. James." He picked up two of the pots and waddled out.

He put them down outside and heard, "She says she's started the massage. She's spotted the radio switching unit; it's on the belt that the old gal keeps at her bedside table when she's not wearing it."

"Tell her to kill her and grab it."

"She says she wants to make her tell how to unswitch the booby-trap gimmick first."

"Tell her not to delay."

Suddenly, inside his head, clear and sweet as a bell as if they were her own spoken tones, he heard her.—*joe, i can hear you. can you hear me?*

—*yes, yes!* Aloud he added, "Stand by the phones anyhow, Mac."

—*it won't be long. i have her in intense pain; she'll crack soon.*

—*hurt her plenty!* He began to run toward the temple building.

—*gail, are you still shopping for a husband?*

—*i've found him.*

—*marry me and i'll beat you every saturday night.*

—*the man who can beat me hasn't been born.*

—*i'd like to try.* He slowed down before he came near the guard's station. "Hi, Jim!"

—*it's a deal.*

"Well, if it taint Joey boy! Got a match?"

"Here." He reached out a hand—then, as the guard fell, he eased him to the ground and made sure that he would stay out. —*gail! it's got to be now!*

The voice in his head came back in great consternation: —*joe! she was too tough, she wouldn't crack. she's dead!*

—*good! get that belt, break the arming circuit, then see what else you find. i'm going to break in.*

He went toward the door of the temple.

—*it's disarmed, joe. i could spot it; it has a time set on it. i can't tell about the others; they aren't marked and they all look alike.*

He took from his pocket a small item provided by Baldwin's careful planning. —*twist them all from where they are to the other way, you'll probably hit it.*

—*oh, joe, i hope so!*

He had placed the item against the lock; the metal around it turned red and now was melting away. An alarm clanged somewhere.

Gail's voice came again in his head; there was urgency in it but no fear: —*joe! they're beating on the door. i'm trapped.*

—*mcginty! be our witness!* He went on:—*i, joseph, take thee, gail to be my lawfully wedded wife—*

He was answered in tranquil rhythm:—*i, gail, take thee, joseph, to be my lawfully wedded husband—*

—*to have and to hold*, he went on.

—*to have and to hold, my beloved!*

—*for better, for worse—*

—*for better, for worse—*Her voice in his head was singing.

—*till death do us part. i've got it open, darling; i am going in.*

—*till death do us part! they are breaking down the bedroom door, joseph my dearest.*

—*hang on! i'm almost through here.*

—*they have broken it down, joe. they are coming toward me. good-bye my darling! i am very happy.* Abruptly her "voice" stopped.

He was facing the box that housed the disarming circuit, alarms clanging in his ears; he took from his pocket another gadget and tried it.

The blast that shattered the box caught him full in the chest.

The letters on the metal marker read:

TO THE MEMORY OF
MR. AND MRS. JOSEPH GREENE
WHO, NEAR THIS SPOT,
DIED FOR ALL THEIR FELLOW MEN

E FOR EFFORT

The first thing I did after breakfast was to call up my boss and tell him what he could do with his job. An hour after that his boss called me up and hinted that all would be forgiven if I reported for work on the afternoon shift as usual. I hinted right back for a raise and waited until he agreed. Then I told him what he could do with his job.

—Eye for Iniquity

T. L. SHERRED

T. L. SHERRED, BORN IN 1915, TOOK HIS EARLY TRAINING IN THE hard school of the Detroit production lines. As an engineer and technical writer, he has been associated with Detroit for most of his life, and for years has been at work on a massive history of the automotive industry.

E for Effort, his first story, made him famous among science-fiction readers overnight.

What makes this story great, I think, is the fact that it is not just another intellectual exercise—it is deeply and honestly felt. Sherred is that odd combination, a hard-boiled idealist; or, if you like, a soft-hearted cynic. He passionately believes in the ultimate perfectability of the human race; but as for its present state—

“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you . . .”
Finish the statement yourself, after you have read this story.

THE CAPTAIN WAS MET AT THE AIRPORT BY A STAFF CAR. Long and fast it sped. In a narrow, silent room the general sat, ramrod-backed, tense. The major waited at the foot of the gleaming steps shining frostily in the night air. Tires screamed to a stop and together the captain and the major raced up the steps. No words of greeting were spoken. The general stood quickly, hand outstretched. The captain ripped open a dispatch case and handed over a thick bundle of papers. The general flipped them over eagerly and spat a sentence at the major. The major disappeared and his harsh voice rang curtly down the outside hall. The man with glasses came in and the general handed him the papers. With jerky fingers the man with glasses sorted them out. With a wave from the general the captain left, a proud smile on his weary young face. The general tapped his fingertips on the black glossy surface of the table. The man with glasses pushed aside crinkled maps, and began to read aloud.

Dear Joe:

I started this just to kill time, because I got tired of just looking out the window. But when I got almost to the end I began to catch the trend of what's going on. You're the only one I know that can come through for me, and when you finish this you'll know why you must.

I don't know who will get this to you. Whoever it is won't want you to identify a face later. Remember that, and please, Joe—*hurry!*

Ed

It all started because I'm lazy. By the time I'd shaken off the sandman and checked out of the hotel every seat in the bus was full. I stuck my bag in a dime locker and went out to kill the hour I had until the next bus left. You know the bus terminal: right across from the Book-Cadillac and the Statler, on Washington Boulevard near Michigan Avenue.

Michigan Avenue. Like Main in Los Angeles, or maybe Sixty-third in its present state of decay in Chicago, where I was going. Cheap movies, pawnshops and bars by the dozens, a penny arcade or two, restaurants that feature hamburger steak, bread and butter, and coffee for forty cents. Before the War, a quarter.

I like pawnshops. I like cameras, I like tools, I like to look in windows crammed with everything from electric razors to sets of socket wrenches to upper plates. So, with an hour to spare, I walked out Michigan to Sixth and back on the other side of the street. There are a lot of Chinese and Mexicans around that part of town, the Chinese running the restaurants and the Mexicans eating Southern Home Cooking. Between Fourth and Fifth I stopped to stare at what passed for a movie. Store windows painted black, amateurish signs extolling in Spanish: "Detroit premiere . . . cast of thousands . . . this week only . . . ten cents—" The few 8x10 glossy stills pasted on the windows were poor blowups, spotty and wrinkled; pictures of mailed cavalry and what looked like a good-sized battle. All for ten cents. Right down my alley.

Maybe it's lucky that history was my major in school. Luck it must have been, certainly not cleverness, that made me pay a dime for a seat in an undertaker's rickety folding chair imbedded solidly—although the only other customers were a half-dozen Sons of the Order of Tortilla—in a cast of second-hand garlic. I sat near the door. A couple of hundred-watt bulbs dangling naked from the ceiling gave enough light for me to look around. In front of me, in the rear of the store, was the screen, what looked like a white-painted sheet of beaverboard, and when over my shoulder I saw the battered sixteen-millimeter projector I began to think that even a dime was no bargain. Still, I had forty minutes to wait.

Everyone was smoking. I lit a cigarette, and the discouraged Mexican who had taken my dime locked the door and turned off the lights, after giving me a long, questioning look. I'd paid my dime, so I looked right back. In a minute the old projector started clattering. No film credits, no producer's name, no director, just a tentative flicker before a closeup of a bewhiskered mug labeled Cortez. Then a painted and feathered Indian with the title of Guatemotzin, successor to Montezuma; an aerial shot of a beautiful

job of model building tagged Ciudad de Mejico, 1521. Shots of old muzzle-loaded artillery banging away, great walls spurting stone splinters under direct fire, skinny Indians dying violently with the customary gyrations, smoke and haze and blood. The photography sat me right up straight. It had none of the scratches and erratic cuts that characterize an old print, none of the fuzziness, none of the usual mugging at the camera by the handsome hero. There wasn't any handsome hero. Did you ever see one of these French pictures, or a Russian picture, and note the reality and depth brought out by working on a small budget that can't afford famed actors? This, what there was of it was as good, or better.

It wasn't until the picture ended with a pan shot of a dreary desolation that I began to add two and two. You can't, for pennies, really have a cast of thousands, or sets big enough to fill Central Park. A mock-up, even, of a thirty-foot wall costs enough to irritate the auditors, and there had been a lot of wall. That didn't fit with the bad editing and lack of sound track, not unless the picture had been made in the old silent days. And I knew it hadn't by the color tones you get with pan film. It looked like a well-rehearsed and badly planned newsreel.

The Mexicans were easing out and I followed them to where the discouraged one was rewinding the reel. I asked him where he got the print. "I haven't heard of any epics from the press agents lately, and it looks like a fairly recent print."

He agreed that it was recent, and added that he'd made it himself. I was polite to that, and he saw that I didn't believe him and straightened up from the projector.

"You don't believe that, do you?" I said that I certainly did, and I had to catch a bus. "Would you mind telling me why, exactly why?" I said that the bus— "I mean it. I'd appreciate it if you'd tell me just what's wrong with it."

"There's nothing wrong with it," I told him. He waited for me to go on. "Well, for one thing, pictures like that aren't made for the sixteen-millimeter trade. You've got a reduction from a thirty-five-millimeter master." I gave him a few of the other reasons that separate home movies from Hollywood. When I finished he smoked quietly for a minute.

"I see." He took the reel off the projector spindle and closed the case. "I have beer in the back." I agreed beer sounded good, but the bus—well, just one. From in back of the beaverboard screen he brought paper cups and a jumbo bottle. With a whimsical "Business suspended" he closed the open door and opened the bottle with an opener screwed on the wall. The store had likely been a grocery or restaurant. There were plenty of chairs. Two we shoved around and relaxed companionably. The beer was warm.

"You know something about this line," he said tentatively.

I took it as a question and laughed. "Not too much. Here's mud." And we drank. "Used to drive a truck for the Film Exchange." He was amused at that.

"Stranger in town?"

"Yes and no. Mostly yes. Sinus trouble chased me out and relatives bring me back. Not any more, though; my father's funeral was last week." He said that was too bad, and I said it wasn't. "He had sinus, too." That was a joke, and he refilled the cups. We talked awhile about Detroit climate.

Finally he said, rather speculatively, "Didn't I see you around here last night? Just about eight." He got up and went after more beer.

I called after him. "No more beer for me." He brought a bottle anyway, and I looked at my watch. "Well, just one."

"Was it you?"

"Was it me what?" I held out my paper cup.

"Weren't you around here—"

I wiped foam off my mustache. "Last night? No, but I wish I had. I'd have caught my bus. No, I was in the Motor Bar last night at eight. And I was still there at midnight."

He chewed his lip thoughtfully. "The Motor Bar. Just down the street?" and I nodded. "The Motor Bar. Hm-m-m." I looked at him. "Would you like—sure, you would." Before I could figure out what he was talking about he went to the back and from behind the beaverboard screen rolled out a big radiophonograph and another jumbo bottle. I held the bottle against the light. Still half full. I looked at my watch. He rolled the radio against the wall and lifted the lid to get at the dials.

"Reach behind you, will you? The switch on the wall." I could reach the switch without getting up, and I did. The lights went out. I hadn't expected that, and I groped at arm's length. Then the lights came on again, and I turned back, relieved. But the lights weren't on; I was looking at the street!

Now, all this happened while I was dripping beer and trying to keep my balance on a tottering chair—the street moved, I didn't and it was day and it was night and I was in front of the Book-Cadillac and I was going into the Motor Bar and I was watching myself order a beer and I knew I was wide awake and not dreaming. In a panic I scrambled off the floor, shedding chairs and beer like an umbrella while I ripped my nails feeling frantically for that light switch. By the time I found it—and all the while I was watching myself pound the bar for the barkeep—I was really in fine fettle, just about ready to collapse. Out of thin air right into a nightmare. At last I found the switch.

The Mexican was looking at me with the queerest expression I've ever seen, like he'd baited a mousetrap and caught a frog. Me? I suppose I looked like I'd seen the devil himself. Maybe I had. The beer was all over the floor and I barely made it to the nearest chair.

"What," I managed to get out, "what was that?"

The lid of the radio went down. "I felt like that too, the first time. I'd forgotten."

My fingers were too shaky to get out a cigarette, and I ripped off the top of the package. "I said, what was that?"

He sat down. "That was you, in the Motor Bar, at eight last night." I must have looked blank as he handed me another paper cup. Automatically I held it out to be refilled.

"Look here—" I started.

"I suppose it is a shock. I'd forgotten what I felt like the first time. I—I don't care much any more. Tomorrow I'm going out to Phillips Radio." That made no sense to me, and I said so. He went on.

"I'm licked. I'm flat broke. I don't give a care any more. I'll settle for cash and live off the royalties." The story came out, slowly at first, then faster until he was pacing the floor. I guess he was tired of having no one to talk to.

His name was Miguel Jose Zapata Laviada. I told him mine; Lefko. Ed Lefko. He was the son of sugar beet

workers who had emigrated from Mexico somewhere in the twenties. They were sensible enough not to quibble when their oldest son left the backbreaking Michigan fields to seize the chance provided by a NYA scholarship. When the scholarship ran out, he'd worked in garages, driven trucks, clerked in stores, and sold brushes door-to-door to exist and learn. The Army cut short his education with the First Draft to make him a radar technician; the Army had given him an honorable discharge and an idea so nebulous as to be almost merely a hunch. Jobs were plentiful then, and it wasn't too hard to end up with enough money to rent a trailer and fill it with Army surplus radio and radar equipment. One year ago he'd finished what he'd started, finished underfed, underweight, and overexcited. But successful, because he had it.

"It" he installed in a radio cabinet, both for ease in handling and for camouflage. For reasons that will become apparent, he didn't dare apply for a patent. I looked "it" over pretty carefully. Where the phonograph turntable and radio controls had been were vernier dials galore. One big one was numbered 1 to 24, a couple were numbered 1 to 60, and there were a dozen or so numbered 1 to 25, plus two or three with no numbers at all. Closest of all it resembled one of these fancy radio or motor testers found in a super superservice station. That was all, except that there was a sheet of heavy plywood hiding whatever was installed in place of the radio chassis and speaker. A perfectly innocent cache for—

Daydreams are swell. I suppose we've all had our share of mental wealth or fame or travel or fantasy. But to sit in a chair and drink warm beer and realize that the dream of ages isn't a dream any more, to feel like a god, to know that just by turning a few dials you can see and watch anything, anybody, anywhere, that has ever happened—it still bothers me once in a while.

I know this much, that it's high frequency stuff. And there's a lot of mercury and copper and wiring of metals cheap and easy to find, but what goes where, or how, least of all why, is out of my line. Light has mass and energy, and that mass always loses part of itself and can be translated back to electricity, or something. Mike Laviada himself says that what he stumbled on and developed was nothing new, that long before the War it had been observed

many times by men like Compton and Michelson and Pfeiffer, who discarded it as a useless laboratory effect. And, of course, that was before atomic research took precedence over everything.

When the first shock wore off—and Mike had to give me another demonstration—I must have made quite a sight. Mike tells me I couldn't sit down. I'd pop up and gallop up and down the floor of that ancient store kicking chairs out of my way or stumbling over them, all the time gobbling out words and disconnected sentences faster than my tongue could trip. Finally it filtered through that he was laughing at me. I didn't see where it was any laughing matter, and I prodded him. He began to get angry.

"I know what I have," he snapped. "I'm not the biggest fool in the world, as you seem to think. Here, watch this," and he went back to the radio. "Turn out the light." I did, and there I was watching myself at the Motor Bar again, a lot happier this time. "Watch this."

The bar backed away. Out in the street, two blocks down to the City Hall. Up the steps to the Council Room. No one there. Then Council was in session, then they were gone again. Not a picture, not a projection of a lantern slide, but a slice of life about twelve feet square. If we were close, the field of view was narrow. If we were further away, the background was just as much in focus as the foreground. The images, if you want to call them images, were just as real, just as lifelike as looking in the doorway of a room. Real they were, three-dimensional, stopped by only the back wall or the distance in the background. Mike was talking as he spun the dials, but I was too engrossed to pay much attention.

I yelped and grabbed and closed my eyes as you would if you were looking straight down with nothing between you and the ground except a lot of smoke and a few clouds. I winked my eyes open almost at the end of what must have been a long racing vertical dive, and there I was, looking at the street again.

"Go any place up to the Heaviside Layer, go down as deep as any hole, anywhere, anytime." A blur, and the street changed into a glade of sparse pines. "Buried treasure. Sure. Find it, with what?" The trees disappeared and I reached back for the light switch as he dropped the lid of

the radio and sat down.

"How are you going to make any money when you haven't got it to start?" No answer to that from me. "I ran an ad in the paper offering to recover lost articles; my first customer was the Law wanting to see my private detective's license. I've seen every big speculator in the country sit in his office buying and selling and making plans; what do you think would happen if I tried to peddle advance market information? I've watched the stock market get shoved up and down while I had barely the money to buy the paper that told me about it. I watched a bunch of Peruvian Indians bury the second ransom of Atuahalpa; I haven't the fare to get to Peru, or the money to buy the tools to dig." He got up and brought two more bottles. He went on. By that time I was getting a few ideas.

"I've watched scribes indite the books that burnt at Alexandria; who would buy, or who would believe me, if I copied one? What would happen if I went over to the Library and told them to rewrite their histories? How many would fight to tie a rope around my neck if they knew I'd watched them steal and murder and take a bath? What sort of a padded cell would I get if I showed up with a photograph of Washington, or Caesar? Or Christ?"

I agreed that it was all probably true, but—

"Why do you think I'm here now? You saw the picture I showed for a dime. A dime's worth, and that's all, because I didn't have the money to buy film or to make the picture as I knew I should." His tongue began to get tangled. He was excited. "I'm doing this because I haven't the money to get the things I need to get the money I'll need—" He was so disgusted he booted a chair halfway across the room. It was easy to see that if I had been around a little later, Phillips Radio would have profited. Maybe I'd have been better off, too.

Now, although always I've been told that I'd never be worth a hoot, no one has ever accused me of being slow for a dollar. Especially an easy one. I saw money in front of me, easy money, the easiest and the quickest in the world. I saw, for a minute, so far in the future with me on top of the heap, that my head reeled and it was hard to breathe.

"Mike," I said, "let's finish that beer and go where we can get some more, and maybe something to eat. We've got a lot of talking to do." So we did.

Beer is a mighty fine lubricant; I have always been a pretty smooth talker, and by the time we left the gin mill I had a pretty good idea of just what Mike had on his mind. By the time we'd shacked up for the night behind that beaverboard screen in the store, we were full-fledged partners. I don't recall our even shaking hands on the deal, but that partnership still holds good. Mike is ace high with me, and I guess it's the other way around, too. That was six years ago; it only took me a year or so to round some of the corners I used to cut.

Seven days after that, on a Tuesday, I was riding a bus to Grosse Pointe with a full briefcase. Two days after that I was riding back from Grosse Pointe in a shiny taxi, with an empty briefcase and a pocketful of folding money.* It was easy.

"Mr. Jones—or Smith—or Brown—I'm with Aristocrat Studios, Personal and Candid Portraits. We thought you might like this picture of you and—no, this is just a test proof. The negative is in our files— Now, if you're really interested, I'll be back the day after tomorrow with our files— I'm sure you will, Mr. Jones. Thank you, Mr. Jones—"

Dirty? Sure. Blackmail is always dirty. But if I had a wife and family and a good reputation, I'd stick to the roast beef and forget the Roquefort. Very smelly Roquefort, at that. Mike liked it less than I did. It took some talking, and I had to drag out the old one about the ends justifying the means, and they could well afford it, anyway. Besides, if there was a squawk, they'd get the negatives free. Some of them were pretty bad.

So we had the cash; not too much, but enough to start. Before we took the next step there was plenty to decide. There are a lot of people who live by convincing millions that Sticks soap is better. We had a harder problem than that: we had, first, to make a salable and profitable product, and second, we had to convince many, many millions that our "product" was absolutely honest and absolutely accurate. We all know that if you repeat something long enough and loud enough many—or most—will accept it as gospel truth. That called for publicity on an international scale. For the skeptics who knew better than to accept advertising, no matter how blatant, we had to use another technique. And since we were going to get certainly only

one chance, we had to be right the first time. Without Mike's machine the job would have been impossible; without it the job would have been unnecessary.

A lot of sweat ran under the bridge before we found what we thought—and we still do!—the only workable scheme. We picked the only possible way to enter every mind in the world without a fight; the field of entertainment. Absolute secrecy was imperative, and it was only when we reached the last decimal point that we made a move. We started like this.

First we looked for a suitable building, or Mike did, while I flew east, to Rochester, for a month. The building he rented was an old bank. We had the windows sealed, a flossy office installed in the front—the bullet-proof glass was my idea—air conditioning, a portable bar, electrical wiring of whatever type Mike's little heart desired, and a blond secretary who thought she was working for M-E Experimental Laboratories. When I got back from Rochester I took over the job of keeping happy the stone masons and electricians, while Mike fooled around in our suite in the Book where he could look out the window at his old store. The last I heard, they were selling snake oil there. When the Studio, as we came to call it, was finished, Mike moved in and the blond settled down to a routine of reading love stories and saying no to all the salesmen that wandered by. I left for Hollywood.

I spent a week digging through the files of Central Casting before I was satisfied, but it took a month of snooping and some under-the-table cash to lease a camera that would handle Trucolor film. That took the biggest load from my mind. When I got back to Detroit the big view camera had arrived from Rochester, with a truckload of glass color plates. Ready to go.

We made quite a ceremony of it. We closed the Venetian blinds and I popped the cork on one of the bottles of champagne I'd bought. The blond secretary was impressed; all she'd been doing for her salary was to accept delivery of packages and crates and boxes. We had no wine glasses, but we made no fuss about that. Too nervous and excited to drink any more than one bottle, we gave the rest to the blonde and told her to take the rest of the afternoon off. After she left—and I think she was disappointed at breaking up what could have been a good party—we locked up

after her, went into the studio itself, locked up again and went to work.

I've mentioned that the windows were sealed. All the inside wall had been painted dull black, and with the high ceiling that went with that old bank lobby, it was impressive. But not gloomy. Midway in the studio was planted the big Trucolor camera, loaded and ready. Not much could we see of Mike's machine, but I knew it was off to the side, set to throw on the back wall. Not *on* the wall, understand, because the images produced are projected into the air, like the meeting of the rays of two searchlights. Mike lifted the lid and I could see him silhouetted against the tiny lights that lit the dials.

"Well?" he said expectantly.

I felt pretty good just then, right down to my billfold.

"It's all yours, Mike." A switch ticked over. There he was. There was a youngster, dead twenty-five hundred years, real enough, almost, to touch. Alexander. Alexander of Macedon.

Let's take that first picture in detail. I don't think I can ever forget what happened in the next year or so. First we followed Alexander through his life, from beginning to end. We skipped, of course, the little things he did, jumping ahead days and weeks and years at a time. Then we'd miss him, or find that he'd moved in space. That would mean we'd have to jump back and forth, like the artillery firing bracket or ranging shots, until we found him again. Helped only occasionally by his published lives, we were astounded to realize how much distortion had crept into his life. I often wonder why legends arise about the famous. Certainly their lives are as startling or appalling as fiction. And unfortunately we had to hold closely to the accepted histories. If we hadn't, every professor would have gone into his corner for a hearty sneer. We couldn't take that chance. Not at first.

After we knew approximately what had happened and where, we used our notes to go back to what had seemed a particularly photogenic section and work on that awhile. Eventually we had a fair idea of what we were actually going to film. Then we sat down and wrote an actual script to follow, making allowance for whatever shots we'd have to double in later. Mike used his machine as the projector, and I operated the Trucolor camera at a fixed focus,

like taking moving pictures of a movie. As fast as we finished a reel it would go to Rochester for processing, instead of one of the Hollywood outfits that might have done it cheaper. Rochester is so used to horrible amateur stuff that I doubt if anyone ever looks at anything. When the reel was returned we'd run it ourselves to check our choice of scenes and color sense and so on.

For example, we had to show the traditional quarrels with his father, Philip. Most of that we figured on doing with doubles, later. Olympias, his mother, and the fangless snakes she affected, didn't need any doubling, as we used an angle and amount of distance that didn't call for actual conversation. The scene where Alexander rode the bucking horse no one else could ride came out of some biographer's head, but we thought it was so famous we couldn't leave it out. We dubbed the closeups later, and the actual horseman was a young Scythian who hung around the royal stables for his keep. Roxanne was real enough, like the rest of the Persians' wives that Alexander took over. Luckily most of them had enough poundage to look luscious. Philip and Parmenio and the rest of the characters were heavily bearded, which made easy the necessary doubling and dubbing-in the necessary speech. (If you ever saw them shave in those days, you'd know why whiskers were popular.)

The most trouble we had with the interior shots. Smoky wicks in a bowl of lard, no matter how plentiful, were too dim even for fast film. Mike got around that by running the Trucolor camera at a single frame a second, with his machine paced accordingly. That accounts for the startling clarity and depth of focus we got from a lens well stopped down. We had all the time in the world to choose the best possible scenes and camera angles; the best actors in the world, expensive camera booms, or repeated retakes under the most exacting director couldn't compete with us. We had a lifetime from which to choose.

Eventually we had on film about eighty percent of what you saw in the finished picture. Roughly we spliced the reels together and sat there entranced at what we had actually done. Even more exciting, even more spectacular than we'd dared to hope, the lack of continuity and sound didn't stop us from realizing that we'd done a beautiful job. We'd done all we could, and the worst was yet to

come. So we sent for more champagne and told the blonde we had cause for celebration. She giggled.

"What are you doing in there, anyway?" she asked. "Every salesman who comes to the door wants to know what you're making."

I opened the first bottle. "Just tell them you don't know."

"That's just what I've been telling them. They think I'm awfully dumb." We all laughed at the salesmen.

Mike was thoughtful. "If we're going to do this sort of thing very often, we ought to have some of these fancy hollow-stemmed glasses."

The blonde was pleased with that. "And we could keep them in my bottom drawer." Her nose wrinkled prettily. "These bubbles— You know, this is the only time I've ever had champagne, except at a wedding, and then it was only one glass."

"Pour her another," Mike suggested. "Mine's empty, too." I did. "What did you do with those bottles you took home last time?"

A blush and a giggle. "My father wanted to open them, but I told him you said to save it for a special occasion."

By that time I had my feet on her desk. "This is the special occasion, then," I invited. "Have another, Miss— what's your first name, anyway? I hate being formal after working hours."

She was shocked. "And you and Mr. Laviada sign my checks every week! It's Ruth."

"Ruth. Ruth." I rolled it around the piercing bubbles, and it sounded all right.

She nodded. "And your name is Edward, and Mr. Laviada's is Migwell. Isn't it?" And she smiled at him.

"Migell." He smiled back. "An old Spanish custom. Usually shortened to Mike."

"If you'll hand me another bottle," I offered, "shorten Edward to Ed." She handed it over.

By the time we got to the fourth bottle we were as thick as bugs in a rug. It seems that she was twenty-four, free, white, and single, and loved champagne.

"But," she burred fretfully, "I wish I knew what you were doing in there all hours of the day and night. I know you're here at night sometimes because I've seen your car out in front."

Mike thought that over. "Well," he said a little unsteadily, "we take pictures." He blinked one eye. "Might even take pictures of you if we were approached properly."

I took over. "We take pictures of models."

"Oh, no."

"Yes. Models of things and people and what not. Little ones. We make it look like it's real." I think she was a trifle disappointed.

"Well, now I know, and that makes me feel better. I sign all those bills from Rochester and I don't know what I'm signing for. Except that they must be film or something."

"That's just what it is; film and things like that."

"Well, it bothered me— No, there's two more behind the fan."

Only two more. She had a capacity. I asked her how she would like a vacation. She hadn't thought about a vacation just yet.

I told her she'd better start thinking about it. "We're leaving day after tomorrow for Los Angeles, Hollywood."

"The day after tomorrow? Why—"

I reassured her. "You'll get paid just the same. But there's no telling how long we'll be gone, and there doesn't seem to be much use in your sitting around here with nothing to do."

From Mike, "Let's have that bottle." And I handed it to him. I went on.

"You'll get your checks just the same. If you want, we'll pay you in advance so—"

I was getting full of champagne, and so were we all. Mike was humming softly to himself, happy as a taco. The blonde, Ruth, was having a little trouble with my left eye. I know just how she felt, because I was having a little trouble watching where she overlapped the swivel chair. Blue eyes, sooo tall, fuzzy hair. Hm-m-m. All work and no play— She handed me the last bottle.

Demurely she hid a tiny hiccup. "I'm going to save all the corks— No I won't either. My father would want to know what I'm thinking of, drinking with my bosses."

I said it wasn't a good idea to annoy your father. Mike said why fool with bad ideas, when he had a good one. We were interested. Nothing like a good idea to liven things up.

Mike was expansive as the very devil. "Going to Los

Angeles."

We nodded solemnly.

"Going to Los Angeles to work."

Another nod.

"Going to work in Los Angeles. What will we do for pretty blond girl to write letters?"

Awful. No pretty blonde to write letters and drink champagne. Sad case.

"Gotta hire somebody to write letters anyway. Might not be blond. No blondes in Hollywood. No good ones, anyway. So—"

I saw the wonderful idea, and finished for him. "So we take pretty blonde to Los Angeles to write letters!"

What an idea that was! One bottle sooner and its brilliancy would have been dimmed. Ruth bubbled like a fresh bottle and Mike and I sat there, smirking like mad.

"But I can't! I couldn't leave day after tomorrow just like that—!"

Mike was magnificent. "Who said day after tomorrow? Changed our minds. Leave right now."

She was appalled. "Right now! Just like that?"

"Right now. Just like that." I was firm.

"But—"

"No buts. Right now. Just like that."

"Nothing to wear—"

"Buy clothes any place. Best ones in Los Angeles."

"But my hair—"

Mike suggested a haircut in Hollywood, maybe?

I pounded the table. It felt solid. "Call the airport. Three tickets."

She called the airport. She intimidated easy.

The airport said we could leave for Chicago any time on the hour, and change there for Los Angeles. Mike wanted to know why she was wasting time on the telephone when we could be on our way. Holding up the wheels of progress, emery dust in the gears. One minute to get her hat.

"Call Pappy from the airport."

Her objections were easily brushed away with a few word-pictures of how much fun there was to be had in Hollywood. We left a sign on the door, "Gone to Lunch—Back in December," and made the airport in time for the four o'clock plane, with no time left to call Pappy. I told

the parking attendant to hold the car until he heard from me and we made it up the steps and into the plane just in time. The steps were taken away, the motors snorted, and we were off, with Ruth holding fast her hat in an imaginary breeze.

There was a two-hour layover in Chicago. They don't serve liquor at the airport, but an obliging cab driver found us a convenient bar down the road, where Ruth made her call to her father. Cautiously we stayed away from the telephone booth, but from what Ruth told us, he must have read her the riot act. The bartender didn't have champagne, but gave us the special treatment reserved for those that order it. The cab driver saw that we made the liner two hours later.

In Los Angeles we registered at the Commodore, cold sober and ashamed of ourselves. The next day Ruth went shopping for clothes for herself, and for us. We gave her the sizes and enough money to soothe her hangover. Mike and I did some telephoning. After breakfast we sat around until the desk clerk announced a Mr. Lee Johnson to see us.

Lee Johnson was the brisk professional type, the high-bracket salesman. Tall, rather homely, a clipped way of talking. We introduced ourselves as embryo producers. His eyes brightened when we said that. His meat.

"Not exactly the way you think," I told him. "We have already eighty percent or better of the final print."

He wanted to know where he came in.

"We have several thousand feet of Trucolor film. Don't bother asking where or when we got it. This footage is silent. We'll need sound and, in places, speech dubbed in."

He nodded. "Easy enough. What condition is the master?"

"Perfect condition. It's in the hotel vault right now. There are gaps in the story to fill. We'll need quite a few male and female characters. And all of these will have to do their doubling for cash, and not for screen credit."

Johnson raised his eyebrows. "And why? Out here screen credit is bread and butter."

"Several reasons. This footage was made—never mind where—with the understanding that film credit would favor no one."

"If you're lucky enough to catch your talent between

pictures you might get away with it. But if your footage is worth working with, my boys will want screen credit. And I think they're entitled to it."

I said that was reasonable enough. The technical crews were essential, and I was prepared to pay well. Particularly to keep their mouths closed until the print was ready for final release. Maybe even after that.

"Before we go any further," Johnson rose and reached for his hat, "let's take a look at that print. I don't know if we can—"

I knew what he was thinking. Amateurs. Home movies. Feelthy peekchures, mebbe?

We got the reels out of the hotel safe and drove to his laboratory, out Sunset. The top was down on his convertible and Mike hoped audibly that Ruth would have sense enough to get sport shirts that didn't itch.

"Wife?" Johnson asked carelessly.

"Secretary," Mike answered just as casually. "We flew in last night and she's out getting us some light clothes." Johnson's estimation of us rose visibly.

A porter came out of the laboratory to carry the suitcase containing the film reels. It was a long, low building, with the offices at the front and the actual laboratories tapering off at the rear. Johnson took us in the side door and called for someone whose name we didn't catch. The anonymous one was a projectionist who took the reels and disappeared into the back of the projection room. We sat for a minute in the soft easy chairs until the projectionist buzzed ready. Johnson glanced at us and we nodded. He clicked a switch on the arm of his chair and the overhead lights went out. The picture started.

It ran a hundred and ten minutes as it stood. We both watched Johnson like a cat at a rathole. When the tag end showed white on the screen he signaled with the chairside buzzer for lights. They came on. He faced us.

"Where did you get that print?"

Mike grinned at him. "Can we do business?"

"Do business?" He was vehement. "You bet your life we can do business. We'll do the greatest business you ever saw!"

The projection man came down. "Hey, that's all right. Where'd you get it?"

Mike looked at me. I said, "This isn't to go any further." Johnson looked at his man, who shrugged. "None of my business."

I dangled the hook. "That wasn't made here. Never mind where."

Johnson rose and struck, hook, line and sinker. "Europe! Hm-m-m. Germany. No, France. Russia, maybe. Einstein, or Eisenstein, or whatever his name is?"

I shook my head. "That doesn't matter. The leads are all dead, or out of commission, but their heirs—well, you get what I mean."

Johnson saw what I meant. "Absolutely right. No point taking any chances. Where's the rest—?"

"Who knows? We were lucky to salvage that much. Can do?"

"Can do." He thought for a minute. "Get Bernstein in here. Better get Kessler and Marrs, too." The projectionist left. In a few minutes Kessler, a heavy-set man, and Marrs, a young, nervous chain smoker, came in with Bernstein, the sound man. We were introduced all around and Johnson asked if we minded sitting through another showing.

"Nope. We like it better than you do."

Not quite. Kessler and Marrs and Bernstein, the minute the film was over, bombarded us with startled questions. We gave them the same answers we'd given Johnson. But we were pleased with the reception, and said so.

Kessler grunted. "I'd like to know who was behind that camera. Best I've seen, by cripes, since *Ben Hur*. Better than *Ben Hur*. The boy's good."

I grunted right back at him. "That's the only thing I can tell you. The photography was done by the boys you're talking to right now. Thanks for the kind word."

All four of them stared.

Mike said, "That's right."

"Hey, hey!" from Marrs. They all looked at us with new respect. It felt good.

Johnson broke into the silence when it became awkward. "What's next on the score card?"

We got down to cases. Mike, as usual, was content to sit there with his eyes half closed, taking it all in, letting me do all the talking.

"We want sound dubbed in all the way through."

"Pleasure," said Bernstein.

"At least a dozen, maybe more, of speaking actors with a close resemblance to the leads you've seen."

Johnson was confident. "Easy. Central Casting has everybody's picture since the Year One."

"I know. We've already checked that. No trouble there. They'll have to take the cash and let the credit go, for reasons I've already explained to Mr. Johnson."

A moan from Marrs. "I bet I get that job."

Johnson was snappish. "You do. What else?" to me.

I didn't know. "Except that we have no plans for distribution as yet. That will have to be worked out."

"Like falling off a log." Johnson was happy about that. "One look at the rushes and United Artists would spit in Shakespeare's eye."

Marrs came in. "What about the other shots? Got a writer lined up?"

"We've got what will pass for the shooting script, or will have in a week or so. Want to go over it with us?"

He'd like that.

"How much time have we got?" interposed Kessler. "This is going to be a job. When do we want it?" Already it was "we."

"Yesterday is when we want it," snapped Johnson, and he rose. "Any ideas about music? No? We'll try for Werner Janssen and his boys. Bernstein, you're responsible for that print from now on. Kessler, get your crew in and have a look at it. Marrs, you'll go with Mr. Lefko and Mr. Laviada through the files at Central Casting at their convenience. Keep in touch with them at the Commodore. Now, if you'll step into my office, we'll discuss the financial arrangements—"

As easy as all that.

Oh, I don't say that it was easy work or anything like that, because in the next few months we were playing *Busy Bee*. What with running down the only one registered at Central Casting who looked like Alexander himself—he turned out to be a young Armenian who had given up hope of ever being called from the extra lists and had gone home to Santee—casting and rehearsing the rest of the actors and swearing at the costumers and the boys who built the sets, we were kept hopping. Even Ruth, who had

reconciled her father with soothing letters, for once earned her salary. We took turns shooting dictation at her until we had a script that satisfied Mike and myself and young Marrs, who turned out to be a fox on dialogue.

What I really meant is that it was easy, and immensely gratifying, to crack the shell of the tough boys who had seen epics and turkeys come and go. They were really impressed by what we had done. Kessler was disappointed when we refused to be bothered with photographing the rest of the film. We just batted our eyes and said that we were too busy, that we were perfectly confident that he would do as well as we. He outdid himself, and us. I don't know what we would have done if he had asked us for any concrete advice. I suppose, when I think it all over, that the boys we met and worked with were so tired of working with the usual mine-run Grade B's, that they were glad to meet someone that knew the difference between glycerin tears and reality and didn't care if it cost two dollars extra. They had us placed as a couple of city slickers with plenty on the ball. I hope.

Finally it was all over with. We all sat in the projection room; Mike and I, Marrs and Johnson, Kessler and Bernstein, and all the lesser technicians that had split up the really enormous amount of work that had been done watched the finished product. It was terrific. Everyone had done his work well. When Alexander came on the screen, he *was* Alexander the Great. (The Armenian kid got a good bonus for that.) All that blazing color, all that wealth and magnificence and glamor seemed to flare right out of the screen and sear across your mind. Even Mike and I, who had seen the original, were on the edge of our seats.

The sheer realism and magnitude of the battle scenes, I think, really made the picture. Gore, of course, is glorious when it's all make-believe and the dead get up to go to lunch. But when Bill Mauldin sees a picture and sells a breathless article on the similarity of infantrymen of all ages—well, Mauldin knows what war is like. So did the infantrymen throughout the world who wrote letters comparing Alexander's Arbela to Anzio and the Argonne. The weary peasant, not stolid at all, trudging and trudging into mile after mile of those dust-laden plains and ending as a stinking, naked, ripped corpse peeping from under a mound of flies isn't any different when he carries a sarissa

instead of a rifle. That we'd tried to make obvious, and we succeeded.

When the lights came up in the projection room we knew we had a winner. Individually we shook hands all around, proud as a bunch of penguins, and with chests out as far. The rest of the men filed out and we retired to Johnson's office. He poured a drink all around and got down to business.

"How about releases?"

I asked him what he thought.

"Write your own ticket." He shrugged. "I don't know whether or not you know it, but the word has already gone around that you've got something."

I told him we'd had calls at the hotel from various sources, and named them.

"See what I mean? I know those babies. Kiss them out if you want to keep your shirt. And while I'm at it, you owe us quite a bit. I suppose you've got it."

"We've got it."

"I was afraid you would. If you didn't, I'd be the one that would have your shirt." He grinned, but we all knew he meant it. "All right, that's settled. Let's talk about release."

"There are two or three outfits around town that will want a crack at it. My boys will have the word spread around in no time; there's no point in trying to keep them quiet any longer. I know—they'll have sense enough not to talk about the things you want off the record. I'll see to that. But you're top dog right now. You got loose cash, you've got the biggest potential gross I've ever seen, and you don't have to take the first offer. That's important, in this game."

"How would you like to handle it yourself?"

"I'd like to try. The outfit I'm thinking of needs a feature right now, and they don't know I know it. They'll pay and pay. What's in it for me?"

"That," I said, "we can talk about later. And I think I know just what you're thinking. We'll take the usual terms and we don't care if you hold up whoever you deal with. What we don't know won't hurt us." That's what he was thinking, all right. That's a cutthroat game out there.

"Good, Kessler, get your setup ready for duplication."

"Always ready."

"Marrs, start the ball rolling on publicity—what do you want to do about that?" to us.

Mike and I had talked about that before. "As far as we're concerned," I said slowly, "do as you think best. Personal publicity, O.K. We won't look for it, but we won't dodge it. As far as that goes, we're the local yokels making good. Soft-pedal any questions about where the picture was made, without being too obvious. You're going to have trouble when you talk about the nonexistent actors, but you ought to be able to figure out something."

Marrs groaned and Johnson grinned. "He'll figure out something."

"As far as technical credit goes, we'll be glad to see you get all you can, because you've done a swell job." Kessler took that as a personal compliment, and it was. "You might as well know now, before we go any further, that some of the work came right from Detroit." They all sat up at that.

"Mike and I have a new process of model and trick work." Kessler opened his mouth to say something but thought better of it. "We're not going to say what was done, or how much was done in the laboratory, but you'll admit that it defies detection."

About that they were fervent. "I'll say it defies detection. In the game this long and process work gets by me—where—"

"I'm not going to tell you that. What we've got isn't patented and won't be, as long as we can hold it up." There wasn't any griping there. These men knew process work when they saw it. If they didn't see it, it was good. They could understand why we'd want to keep a process that good a secret.

"We can practically guarantee there'll be more work for you to do later on." Their interest was plain. "We're not going to predict when, or make any definite arrangement, but we still have a trick or two in the deck. We like the way we've been getting along, and we want to stay that way. Now, if you'll excuse us, we have a date with a blonde."

Johnson was right about the bidding for the release. We—or rather Johnson—made a very profitable deal with United Amusement and the affiliated theaters. Johnson, the bandit, got his percentage from us and likely did better with United. Kessler and Johnson's boys took huge ads in the trade journals to boast about their connections with the

Academy Award Winner. Not only the Academy, but every award that ever went to any picture. Even the Europeans went overboard. They're the ones that make a fetish of realism. They knew the real thing when they saw it, and so did everyone else.

Our success went to Ruth's head. In no time she wanted a secretary. At that, she needed one to fend off the screwballs that popped out of the woodwork. So we let her hire a girl to help out. She picked a good typist, about fifty. Ruth is a smart girl, in a lot of ways. Her father showed signs of wanting to see the Pacific, so we raised her salary on condition he'd stay away. The three of us were having too much fun.

The picture opened at the same time in both New York and Hollywood. We went to the premiere in great style with Ruth between us, swollen like a trio of bullfrogs. It's a great feeling to sit on the floor, early in the morning, and read reviews that make you feel like floating. It's a better feeling to have a mintful of money. Johnson and his men were right along with us. I don't think he could have been too flush in the beginning, and we all got a kick out of riding the crest.

It was a good-sized wave, too. We had all the personal publicity we wanted, and more. Somehow the word was out that we had a new gadget for process photography, and every big studio in town was after what they thought would be a mighty economical thing to have around. The studios that didn't have a spectacle scheduled looked at the receipts of *Alexander* and promptly scheduled a spectacle. We drew some very good offers, Johnson said, but we made a series of long faces and broke the news that we were leaving for Detroit the next day, and to hold the fort awhile. I don't think he thought we actually meant it, but we did. We left the next day.

Back in Detroit we went right to work, helped by the knowledge that we were on the right track. Ruth was kept busy turning away the countless would-be visitors. We admitted no reporters, no salesmen, no one. We had no time. We were using the view camera. Plate after plate we sent to Rochester for developing. A print of each was returned to us and the plate was held in Rochester for our disposal. We sent to New York for a representative of one of the biggest publishers in the country. We made a deal.

Your main library has a set of the books we published, if you're interested. Huge heavy volumes, hundreds of them, each page a razor-sharp blowup from an 8x10 negative. A set of those books went to every major library and university in the world. Mike and I got a real kick out of solving some of the problems that have had savants guessing for years. In the Roman volume, for example, we solved the trireme problem with a series of pictures: not only the interior of a trireme, but a line-of-battle quinquereme. (Naturally, the professors and amateur yachtsmen weren't convinced at all.) We had a series of aerial shots of the City of Rome taken a hundred years apart, over a millennium. Aerial views of Ravenna and Londinium, Palmyra and Pompeii, of Eboracum and Byzantium. Oh, we had the time of our lives! We had a volume for Greece and for Rome, for Persia and for Crete, for Egypt and for the Eastern Empire. We had pictures of the Parthenon and the Pharos, pictures of Hannibal and Caractacus and Vercingetorix, pictures of the Walls of Babylon and the building of the pyramids and the palace of Sargon, pages from the Lost Books of Livy and the plays of Euripides. Things like that.

Terrifically expensive, a second printing sold at cost to a surprising number of private individuals. If the cost had been less, historical interest would have become even more the fad of the moment.

When the flurry had almost died down, some Italian digging in the hitherto-unexcavated section of ash-buried Pompeii, dug right into a tiny buried temple right where our aerial shot had showed it to be. His budget was expanded and he found more ash-covered ruins that agreed with our aerial layout, ruins that hadn't seen the light of day for almost two thousand years. Everyone promptly wailed that we were the luckiest guessers in captivity; the head of some California cult suspected aloud that we were the reincarnations of two gladiators named Joe.

To get some peace and quiet Mike and I moved into our studio, lock, stock, and underwear. The old bank vault had never been removed, at our request, and it served well to store our equipment when we weren't around. All the mail Ruth couldn't handle we disposed of, unread; the old bank building began to look like a well-patronized soup kitchen. We hired burly private detectives to handle the more ob-

noxious visitors and subscribed to a telegraphic protective service. We had another job to do, another full-length feature.

We still stuck to the old historical theme. This time we tried to do what Gibbon did in the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. And, I think, we were rather successful, at that. In four hours you can't completely cover two thousand years, but you can, as we did, show the cracking up of a great civilization, and how painful the process can be. The criticism we drew for almost ignoring Christ and Christianity was unjust, we think, and unfair. Very few knew then, or know now, that we had included, as a kind of trial balloon, some footage of Christ Himself, and His times. This footage we had to cut. The Board of Review, as you know, is both Catholic and Protestant. They—the Board—went right up in arms. We didn't protest very hard when they claimed our "treatment" was irreverent, indecent, and biased and inaccurate "by any Christian standard. Why," they wailed, "it doesn't even look like Him." And they were right; it didn't. Not any picture *they* ever saw. Right then and there we decided that it didn't pay to tamper with anyone's religious beliefs. That's why you've never seen anything emanating from us that conflicted even remotely with the accepted historical, sociological, or religious features of Someone Who Knew Better. That Roman picture, by the way—but not accidentally—deviated so little from the textbooks you conned in school that only a few enthusiastic specialists called our attention to what they insisted were errors. We were still in no position to do any mass rewriting of history, because we were unable to reveal just where we got our information.

Johnson, when he saw the Roman epic, mentally clicked high his heels. His men went right to work, and we handled the job as we had the first. One day Kessler got me in a corner, dead earnest.

"Ed," he said, "I'm going to find out where you got that footage if it's the last thing I ever do."

I told him that someday he would.

"And I don't mean someday, either; I mean right now. That bushwa about Europe might go once, but not twice. I know better, and so does everyone else. Now, what about it?"

I told him I'd have to consult Mike and I did. We were up against it. We called a conference.

"Kessler tells me he has troubles. I guess you all know what they are." They all knew.

Johnson spoke up. "He's right, too. We know better. Where did you get it?"

I turned to Mike. "Want to do the talking?"

A shake of his head. "You're doing all right."

"All right." Kessler hunched a little forward and Marrs lit another cigarette. "We weren't lying and we weren't exaggerating when we said the actual photography was ours. Every frame of film was taken right here in this country, within the last few months. Just how—I won't mention why or where—we can't tell you just now." Kessler snorted in disgust.

"Let me finish. We all know that we're cashing in, hand over fist. And we're going to cash in some more. We have, on our personal schedule, five more pictures. Three of that five we want you to handle as you did the others. The last two of the five will show you both the reason for all the childish secrecy, as Kessler calls it, and another motive that we have so far kept hidden. The last two pictures will show you both our motives and our methods; one is as important as the other. Now—is that enough? Can we go ahead on that basis?"

It wasn't enough for Kessler. "That doesn't mean a thing to me. What are we, a bunch of hacks?"

Johnson was thinking about his bank balance. "Five more. Two years, maybe four."

Marrs was skeptical. "Who do you think you're going to kid that long? Where's your studio? Where's your talent? Where do you shoot your exteriors? Where do you get your costumes and your extras? In one single shot you've got forty thousand extras, if you've got one! Maybe you can shut *me* up, but who's going to answer the questions that Metro and Fox and Paramount and RKO have been asking? Those boys aren't fools; they know their business. How do you expect me to handle any publicity when I don't know what the score is, myself?"

Johnson told him to pipe down for a while and let him think. Mike and I didn't like this one bit. But what could we do—tell the truth and end up in a straitjacket?

"Can we do it this way?" he finally asked. "Marrs, these

boys have an in with the Soviet Government. They work in some place in Siberia, maybe. Nobody gets within miles of there. No one ever knows what the Russians are doing—"

"Nope!" Marrs was definite. "Any hint that these came from Russia and we'd all be a bunch of Reds. Cut the gross in half."

Johnson began to pick up speed. "All right, not from Russia. From one of these little republics fringed around Siberia or Armenia or one of those places. They're not Russian-made films at all. In fact, they've been made by some of these Germans and Austrians the Russians took over and moved after the War. The war fever has died down enough for people to realize that the Germans knew their stuff occasionally. The old sympathy racket for these refugees struggling with faulty equipment, lousy climate, making superspectacles and smuggling them out under the nose of the Gestapo or whatever they call it— That's it!"

Doubtfully, from Marrs: "And the Russians tell the world we're nuts, that they haven't got any loose Germans?"

That, Johnson overrode. "Who reads the back pages? Who pays any attention to what the Russians say? Who cares? They might even think we're telling the truth and start looking around their own backyard for something that isn't there! All right with you?" to Mike and myself.

I looked at Mike and he looked at me.

"O.K. with us."

"O.K. with the rest of you? Kessler? Bernstein?"

They weren't too agreeable, and certainly not happy, but they agreed to play games until we gave the word.

We were warm in our thanks. "You won't regret it."

Kessler doubted that very much, but Johnson eased them all out, back to work. Another hurdle leaped, or sidestepped.

"Rome" was released on schedule and drew the same friendly reviews. "Friendly" is the wrong word for reviews that stretched ticket lineups blocks long. Marrs did a good job on the publicity. Even that chain of newspapers that afterward turned on us so viciously fell for Marrs' word wizardry and ran full-page editorials urging the reader to see "Rome."

With our third picture, *Flame over France*, we corrected a few misconceptions about the French Revolution, and

began stepping on a few tender toes. Luckily, however, and not altogether by design, there happened to be in power in Paris a liberal government. They backed us to the hilt with the confirmation we needed. At our request they released a lot of documents that had hitherto conveniently been lost in the cavernous recesses of the Bibliothèque Nationale. I've forgotten the name of whoever happened to be the perennial pretender to the French throne. At, I'm sure, the subtle prodding of one of Marrs' ubiquitous publicity men, the pretender sued us for our whole net, alleging the defamation of the good name of the Bourbons. A lawyer Johnson dug up for us sucked the poor chump into a courtroom and cut him to bits. Not even six cents damages did he get. Samuels, the lawyer, and Marrs drew a good-sized bonus, and the pretender moved to Honduras.

Somewhere around this point, I believe, did the tone of the press begin to change. Up until then we'd been regarded as crosses between Shakespeare and Barnum. Since long obscure facts had been dredged into the light, a few well-known pessimists began to wonder *sotto voce* if we weren't just a pair of blasted pests. "Should leave well enough alone." Only our huge advertising budget kept them from saying more.

I'm going to stop right here and say something about our personal life while all this was going on. Mike kept in the background pretty well, mostly because he wanted it that way. He let me do all the talking and stick my neck out while he sat in the most comfortable chair in sight. I yelled and I argued and he just sat there; hardly ever a word coming out of that dark-brown pan, certainly never an indication showing that behind those polite eyebrows there was a brain—and a sense of humor and wit—faster and as deadly as a bear trap. Oh, I know we played around, sometimes with a loud bang, but we were, ordinarily, too busy and too preoccupied with what we were doing to waste any time. Ruth, while she was with us, was a good dancing and drinking partner. She was young, she was almost what you'd call beautiful, and she seemed to like being with us. For a while I had a few ideas about her that might have developed into something serious. We both—I should say, all three of us—found out in time that we looked at a lot of things too differently. So we weren't too disappointed when she signed with Metro. Her contract

meant what she thought was all the fame and money and happiness in the world, plus the personal attention she was doubtless entitled to have. They put her in Class B's and serials and she, financially, is better off than she ever expected to be. Emotionally, I don't know. We heard from her sometime ago, and I think she's about due for another divorce. Maybe it's just as well.

But let's get away from Ruth. I'm ahead of myself, anyway. All this time Mike and I had been working together, our approach to the final payoff had been divergent. Mike was hopped on the idea of making a better world, and doing that by making war impossible. "War," he often said, "war of any kind is what has made man spend most of his history in merely staying alive. Now, with the atom to use, he has within himself the seed of self-extermination. So help me, Ed, I'm going to do my share of stopping that, or I don't see any point in living. I mean it!"

He did mean it. He told me that in almost the same words the first day we met. Then, I tagged that idea as a pipe dream picked up on an empty stomach. I saw his machine only as a path to a luxurious and personal Nirvana, and I thought he'd soon be going my way. I was wrong.

You can't live, or work, with a likable person without admiring some of the qualities that make that person likable. Another thing; it's a lot easier to worry about the woes of the world when you haven't any yourself. It's a lot easier to have a conscience when you can afford it. When I donned the rose-colored glasses half my battle was won; when I realized how grand a world this *could* be, the battle was over. That was about the time of *Flame over France*, I think. The actual time isn't important. What *is* important is that, from that time on, we became the tightest team possible. Since then about the only thing we differed on was the time to knock off for a sandwich. Most of our leisure time, what we had of it, was spent in locking up for the night, rolling out the portable bar, opening just enough beer to feel good, and relaxing. Maybe, after one or two, we might diddle the dials of the machine, and go rambling.

Together we'd been everywhere and seen everything. It might be a good night to check up on François Villon, that faker, or maybe we might chase around with Haroun-el-Rashid. (If there was ever a man born a few hundred years too soon, it was that careless caliph.) Or if we were in a

bad or discouraged mood we might follow the Thirty Years' War for a while, or if we were real raffish we might inspect the dressing rooms at Radio City. For Mike the crackup of Atlantis had always had an odd fascination, probably because he was afraid that man would do it again, now that he's rediscovered nuclear energy. And if I dozed off he was quite apt to go back to the very Beginning, back to the start of the world as we know it now. (It wouldn't do any good to tell you what went before *that*.)

When I stop to think, it's probably just as well that neither of us married. We, of course, had hopes for the future, but we were both tired of the whole human race; tired of greedy faces and hands. With a world that puts a premium on wealth and power and strength, it's no wonder what decency there is stems from fear of what's here now, or fear of what's hereafter. We had seen so much of the hidden actions of the world—call it snooping, if you like—that we learned to disregard the surface indications of kindness and good. Only once did Mike and I ever look into the private life of someone we knew and liked and respected. Once was enough. From that day on we made it a point to take people as they seemed. Let's get away from that.

The next two pictures were released in rapid succession; first *Freedom for Americans*, the American Revolution, and *The Brothers and the Guns*, the American Civil War. Bang! Every third politician, a lot of so-called "educators," and all the professional patriots started after our scalps. Every single chapter of the DAR, the Sons of Union Veterans, and the Daughters of the Confederacy pounded their collective heads against the wall. The South went frantic; every state in the Deep South and one state on the border flatly banned both pictures, the second because it was truthful, and the first because censorship is a contagious disease. They stayed banned until the professional politicians got wise. The bans were revoked, and the choke-collar and string-tie brigade pointed to both pictures as horrible examples of what some people actually believed and thought, and felt pleased that someone had given them an opportunity to roll out the barrel and beat the drums that sound sectional and racial hatred.

New England was tempted to stand on its dignity, but couldn't stand the strain. North of New York both pictures

were banned. In New York state the rural representatives voted *en bloc*, and the ban was clamped on statewide. Special trains ran to Delaware, where the corporations were too busy to pass another law. Libel suits flew like confetti, and although the extras blared the filing of each new suit, very few knew that we lost not one. Although we had to appeal almost every suit to higher courts, and in some cases request a change of venue which was seldom granted, the documentary proof furnished by the record cleared us once we got to a judge, or series of judges, with no fences to mend.

It was a mighty rasp we drew over wounded ancestral pride. We had shown that not all the mighty had haloes of purest gold, that not all the Redcoats were strutting bullies—nor angels, and the British Empire, except South Africa, refused entry to both pictures and made violent passes at the State Department. The spectacle of Southern and New England congressmen approving the efforts of a foreign ambassador to suppress free speech drew hilarious hosannahs from certain quarters. In Detroit the Ku Klux Klan fired an anemic cross on our doorstep, and the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, the NAACP, and the WCTU passed flattering resolutions. We forwarded the most vicious and obscene letters—together with a few names and addresses that hadn't been originally signed—to our lawyers and the Post Office Department. There were no convictions south of Illinois.

Johnson and his boys made hay. Johnson had pyramided his bets into an international distributing organization, and pushed Marrs into hiring every top press agent either side of the Rockies. What a job they did! In no time at all there were two definite schools of thought that overflowed into the public letter boxes. One school held that we had no business raking up old mud to throw, that such things were better left forgotten and forgiven, that nothing wrong had ever happened, and if it had, we were liars anyway. The other school reasoned more to our liking. Softly and slowly at first, then with a triumphant shout, this fact began to emerge; such things had actually happened, and could happen again, were possibly happening even now; had happened because twisted truth had too long left its imprint on international, sectional, and racial feelings. It pleased us when many began to agree, with us, that it is important to

forget the past, but that it is even more important to understand and evaluate it with a generous and unjaundiced eye. That was what we were trying to bring out.

The banning that occurred in the various states hurt the gross receipts only a little, and were vindicated in Johnson's mind. He had dolefully predicted loss of half the national gross because "you can't tell the truth in a movie and get away with it. Not if the house holds over three hundred." Not even on the stage? "Who goes to anything but a movie?"

So far things had gone just about as we'd planned. We'd earned and received more publicity, favorable and otherwise, than anyone living. Most of it stemmed from the fact that our doings had been newsworthy. Some, naturally, had been the ninety-day-wonder material that fills a thirsty newspaper. We had been very careful to make our enemies in the strata that can afford to fight back. Remember the old saw about knowing a man by the enemies he makes? Well, publicity was our ax. Here's how we put an edge on it.

I called Johnson in Hollywood. He was glad to hear from us. "Long time no see. What's the pitch, Ed?"

"I want some lip-readers. And I want them yesterday, like you tell your boys."

"Lip-readers? Are you nuts? What do you want with lip-readers?"

"Never mind why. I want lip-readers. Can you get them?"

"How should I know? What do you want them for?"

"I said, can you get them?"

He was doubtful. "I think you've been working too hard."

"Look—"

"Now, I didn't say I couldn't. Cool off. When do you want them? And how many?"

"Better write this down. Ready? I want lip-readers for these languages: English, French, German, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Greek, Belgian, Dutch, and Spanish."

"Ed Lefko, have you gone crazy?"

I guess it didn't sound very sensible, at that. "Maybe I have. But those languages are essential. If you run across any who can work in any other language, hang on to them. I might need them, too." I could see him sitting in front of his telephone, wagging his head like mad. Crazy. The heat

must have got Lefko, good old Ed. "Did you hear what I said?"

"Yes, I heard you. If this is a rib—"

"No rib. Dead serious."

He began to get mad. "Where you think I'm going to get lip-readers, out of my hat?"

"That's your worry. I'd suggest you start with the local School for the Deaf." He was silent. "Now, get this into your head; this isn't a rib, this is the real thing. I don't care what you do, or where you go, or what you spend—I want those lip-readers in Hollywood when we get there or I want to know they're on the way."

"When are you going to get here?"

I said I wasn't sure. "Probably a day or two. We've got a few loose ends to clean up."

He swore a blue streak at the inequities of fate. "You'd better have a good story when you do—" I hung up.

Mike met me at the studio. "Talk to Johnson?" I told him, and he laughed. "Does sound crazy, I suppose. But he'll get them, if they exist and like money. He's the Original Resourceful Man."

I tossed my hat in a corner. "I'm glad this is about over. Your end caught up?"

"Set and ready to go. The films and the notes are on the way, the real estate company is ready to take over the lease, and the girls are paid up to date, with a little extra."

I opened a bottle of beer for myself. Mike had one. "How about the office files? How about the bar, here?"

"The files go to the bank to be stored. The bar? Hadn't thought about it."

The beer was cold. "Have it crated and send it to Johnson."

We grinned, together. "Johnson it is. He'll need it."

I nodded at the machine. "What about that?"

"That goes with us on the plane as air express." He looked closely at me. "What's the matter with you—jitters?"

"Nope. Willies. Same thing."

"Me, too. Your clothes and mine left this morning."

"Not even a clean shirt left?"

"Not even a clean shirt. Just like—"

I finished it: "—the first trip with Ruth. A little different, maybe."

Mike said slowly, "A lot different." I opened another beer. "Anything you want around here, anything else to be done?" I said no. "O.K. Let's get this over with. We'll put what we need in the car. We'll stop at the Courville Bar before we hit the airport."

I didn't get it. "There's still beer left—"

"But no champagne."

I got it. "O.K. I'm dumb, at times. Let's go."

We loaded the machine into the car, and the bar, left the studio keys at the corner grocery for the real estate company, and headed for the airport by way of the Courville Bar. Ruth was in California, but Joe had champagne. We got to the airport late.

Marrs met us in Los Angeles. "What's up? You've got Johnson running around in circles."

"Did he tell you why?"

"Sounds crazy to me. Couple of reporters inside. Got anything for them?"

"Not right now. Let's get going."

In Johnson's private office we got a chilly reception. "This better be good. Where do you expect to find someone to lip-read in Chinese? Or Russian, for that matter?"

We all sat down. "What have you got so far?"

"Besides a headache?" He handed me a short list.

I scanned it. "How long before you can get them here?"

An explosion. "How long before I can get them here? Am I your errand boy?"

"For all practical purposes you are. Quit the fooling. How about it?" Marrs snickered at the look on Johnson's face.

"What are you smirking at, you moron?" Marrs gave in and laughed outright, and I did, too. "Go ahead and laugh. This isn't funny. When I called the State School for the Deaf they hung up. Thought I was some practical joker. We'll skip that.

"There's three women and a man on that list. They cover English, French, Spanish, and German. Two of them are working in the East, and I'm waiting for answers to telegrams I sent them. One lives in Pomona and one works for the Arizona School for the Deaf. That's the best I could do."

We thought that over. "Get on the phone. Talk to every state in the union if you have to, or overseas."

Johnson kicked the desk. "And what are you going to do with them, if I'm that lucky?"

"You'll find out. Get them on planes and fly them here, and we'll talk turkey when they get here. I want a projection room, not yours, and a good bonded court reporter."

He asked the world to appreciate what a life he led.

"Get in touch with us at the Commodore." To Marrs: "Keep the reporters away for a while. We'll have something for them later." Then we left.

Johnson never did find anyone who could lip-read Greek. None, at least, that could speak English. The expert on Russian he dug out of Ambridge, in Pennsylvania, the Flemish and Holland Dutch expert came from Leyden, in the Netherlands, and at the last minute he stumbled upon a Korean who worked in Seattle as an inspector for the Chinese Government. Five women and two men. We signed them to an ironclad contract drawn by Samuels, who now handled all our legal work. I made a little speech before they signed.

"These contracts, as far as we've been able to make sure, are going to control your personal and business life for the next year, and there's a clause that says we can extend that period for another year if we so desire. Let's get this straight. You are to live in a place of your own, which we will provide. You will be supplied with all necessities by our buyers. Any attempt at unauthorized communication will result in abrogation of the contract. Is that clear?"

"Good. Your work will not be difficult, but it will be tremendously important. You will, very likely, be finished in three months, but you will be ready to go any place at any time at our discretion, naturally at our expense. Mr. Sorenson, as you are taking this down, you realize that this goes for you, too." He nodded.

"Your references, your abilities, and your past work have been thoroughly checked, and you will continue under constant observation. You will be required to verify and notarize every page, perhaps every line, of your transcripts, which Mr. Sorenson here will supply. Any questions?"

No questions. Each was getting a fabulous salary, and each wanted to appear eager to earn it. They all signed.

Resourceful Johnson bought for us a small rooming house, and we paid an exorbitant price to a detective agency to do the cooking and cleaning and chauffeuring required.

We requested that the lip-readers refrain from discussing their work among themselves, especially in front of the house employees, and they followed instructions very well.

One day, about a month later, we called a conference in the projection room of Johnson's laboratory. We had a single reel of film.

"What's that for?"

"That's the reason for all the cloak-and-dagger secrecy. Never mind calling your projection man. This I'm going to run through myself. See what you think of it."

They were all disgusted. "I'm getting tired of all this kid stuff," said Kessler.

As I started for the projection booth I heard Mike say, "You're no more tired of it than I am."

From the booth I could see what was showing on the downstairs screen, but nothing else. I ran through the reel, rewound, and went back down.

I said, "One more thing, before we go any further, read this. It's a certified and notarized transcript of what has been read from the lips of the characters you just saw. They weren't, incidentally, 'characters,' in that sense of the word." I handed the crackling sheets around, a copy for each. "Those 'characters' are real people. You've just seen a newsreel. This transcript will tell you what they were talking about. Read it. In the trunk of the car Mike and I have something to show you. We'll be back by the time you've read it."

Mike helped me carry in the machine from the car. We came in the door in time to see Kessler throw the transcript as far as he could. He bounced to his feet as the sheets fluttered down.

He was furious. "What's going on here?" We paid no attention to him, nor to the excited demands of the others until the machine had been plugged into the nearest outlet.

Mike looked at me. "Any ideas?"

I shook my head and told Johnson to shut up for a minute. Mike lifted the lid and hesitated momentarily before he touched the dials. I pushed Johnson into his chair and turned off the lights myself. The room went black. Johnson, looking over my shoulder, gasped. I heard Bernstein swear softly, amazed.

I turned to see what Mike had shown them.

It was impressive, all right. He had started just over the

roof of the laboratory and continued straight up in the air. Up, up, up, until the city of Los Angeles was a tiny dot on a great ball. On the horizon were the Rockies. Johnson grabbed my arm. He hurt.

"What's that? What's that? Stop it!" He was yelling. Mike turned off the machine.

You can guess what happened next. No one believed their eyes, nor Mike's patient explanation. He had to twice turn on the machine again, once going far back into Kessler's past. Then the reaction set in.

Marrs smoked one cigarette after another, Bernstein turned a gold pencil over and over in his nervous fingers, Johnson paced like a caged tiger, and burly Kessler stared at the machine, saying nothing at all. Johnson was muttering as he paced. Then he stopped and shook his fist under Mike's nose.

"Man! Do you know what you've got there? Why waste time playing around here? Can't you see you've got the world by the tail on a downhill pull? If I'd ever known this—"

Mike appealed to me. "Ed, talk to this wildman."

I did. I can't remember exactly what I said, and it isn't important. But I did tell him how we'd started, how we'd plotted our course, and what we were going to do. I ended by telling him the idea behind the reel of film I'd run off a minute before.

He recoiled as though I were a snake. "You can't get away with that! You'd be hung—if you weren't lynched first!"

"Don't you think we know that? Don't you think we're willing to take that chance?"

He tore his thinning hair. Marrs broke in. "Let me talk to him." He came over and faced us squarely.

"Is this on the level? You going to make a picture like that and stick your neck out? You're going to turn that—that thing over to the people of the world?"

I nodded. "Just that."

"And toss over everything you've got?" He was dead serious, and so was I. He turned to the others. "He means it!"

Bernstein said, "Can't be done!"

Words flew. I tried to convince them that we had followed the only possible path. "What kind of a world do

you want to live in? Or don't you want to live?"

Johnson grunted. "How long do you think we'd live if we ever made a picture like that? You're crazy! I'm not. I'm not going to put my head in a noose."

"Why do you think we've been so insistent about credit and responsibility for direction and production? You'll be doing only what we hired you for. Not that we want to twist your arm, but you've made a fortune, all of you, working for us. Now, when the going gets heavy, you want to back out!"

Marrs gave in. "Maybe you're right, maybe you're wrong. Maybe you're crazy, maybe I am. I always used to say I'd try anything once. Bernie, you?"

Bernstein was quietly cynical. "You saw what happened in the last war. This might help. I don't know if it will. I don't know—but I'd hate to think I didn't try. Count me in!"

Kessler?

He swiveled his head. "Kid stuff! Who wants to live forever? Who wants to let a chance go by?"

Johnson threw up his hands. "Let's hope we get a cell together. Let's all go crazy." And that was that.

We went to work in a blazing drive of mutual hope and understanding. In four months the lip-readers were through. There's no point in detailing here their reactions to the dynamite they daily dictated to Sorenson. For their own good we kept them in the dark about our final purpose, and when they were through we sent them across the border into Mexico, to a small ranch Johnson had leased. We were going to need them later.

While the print duplicators worked overtime Marrs worked harder. The press and the radio shouted the announcement that, in every city of the world we could reach, there would be held the simultaneous premieres of our latest picture. It would be the last we needed to make. Many wondered aloud at our choice of the word "needed." We whetted curiosity by refusing any advance information about the plot, and Marrs and Johnson so well infused their men with their own now-fervent enthusiasm that not much could be pried out of them but conjecture. The day we picked for release was Sunday. Monday, the storm broke.

I wonder how many prints of that picture are left today. I wonder how many escaped burning or confiscation. Two

World Wars we covered, covered from the unflattering angles that, up until then, had been represented by only a few books hidden in the dark corners of libraries. We showed and *named* the war-makers, the cynical ones who signed and laughed and lied, the blatant patriots who used the flare of headlines and the ugliness of atrocity to hide behind their flag while life turned to death for millions. Our own and foreign traitors were there, the hidden ones with Janus faces. Our lip-readers had done their work well; no guesses these, no deduced conjectures from the broken records of a blasted past, but the exact words that exposed treachery disguised as patriotism.

In foreign lands the performances lasted barely the day. Usually, in retaliation for the imposed censorship, the theaters were wrecked by the raging crowds. (Marrs, incidentally, had spent hundreds of thousands bribing officials to allow the picture to be shown without previous censorship. Many censors, when that came out, were shot without trial.) In the Balkans, revolutions broke out, and various embassies were stormed by mobs. Where the film was banned or destroyed written versions spontaneously appeared on the streets or in coffeehouses. Bootlegged editions were smuggled past customs guards, who looked the other way. One royal family fled to Switzerland.

Here in America it was a racing two weeks before the Federal Government, prodded into action by the raging of press and radio, in an unprecedented move closed all performances "to promote the common welfare, insure domestic tranquillity, and preserve foreign relations." Murmurs—and one riot—rumbled in the Midwest and spread until it was realized by the powers that be that something had to be done, and done quickly, if every government in the world were not to collapse of its own weight.

We were in Mexico, at the ranch Johnson had rented for the lip-readers. While Johnson paced the floor, jerkily fraying a cigar, we listened to a special broadcast of the attorney general himself:

"... furthermore, this message was today forwarded to the government of the United States of Mexico. It read: 'The government of the United States of America requests the immediate arrest and extradition of the following:

"'Edward Joseph Lefkowicz, known as Lefko.'" First on the list. Even a fish wouldn't get into trouble if he kept

his mouth shut.

"'Miguel Jose Zapata Laviada.'" Mike crossed one leg over the other.

"'Edward Lee Johnson.'" He threw his cigar on the floor and sank into a chair.

"'Robert Chester Marrs.'" He lit another cigarette. His face twitched.

"'Benjamin Lionel Bernstein.'" He smiled a twisted smile and closed his eyes.

"'Carl Wilhelm Kessler.'" A snarl.

"These men are wanted by the government of the United States of America, to stand trial on charges ranging from criminal syndicalism, incitement to riot, suspicion of treason—"

I clicked off the radio. "Well?" to no one in particular.

Bernstein opened his eyes. "The *rurales* are probably on their way. Might as well go back and face the music—" We crossed the border at Juarez. The FBI was waiting.

Every press and radio chain in the world must have had coverage at that trial, every radio system, even the new and imperfect television chain. We were allowed to see no one but our lawyers. Samuels flew from the West Coast and spent a week trying to get past our guards. He told us not to talk to reporters, if we ever saw them.

"You haven't seen the newspapers? Just as well— How did you ever get yourselves into this mess, anyway? You ought to know better."

I told him.

He was stunned. "Are you all crazy?"

He was hard to convince. Only the united effort and concerted stories of all of us made him believe that there was such a machine in existence. (He talked to us separately, because we were kept isolated.) When he got back to me he was unable to think coherently.

"What kind of defense do you call that?"

I shook my head. "No. That is, we know that we're guilty of practically everything under the sun if you look at it one way. If you look at it another—"

He rose. "Man, you don't need a lawyer, you need a doctor. I'll see you later. I've got to get this figured out in my mind before I can do a thing."

"Sit down. What do you think of this?" And I outlined what I had in mind.

"I think—I don't know what I think. I don't know. I'll talk to you later. Right now I want some fresh air." And he left.

As most trials do, this one began with the usual blackening of the defendant's character, or lack of it. (The men we'd blackmailed at the beginning had long since had their money returned, and they had sense enough to keep quiet. That might have been because they'd received a few hints that there might still be a negative or two lying around. Compounding a felony? Sure.) With the greatest of interest we sat in that great columned hall and listened to a sad tale.

We had, with malice aforethought, libeled beyond repair great and unselfish men who had made a career of devotion to the public weal, imperiled needlessly relations traditionally friendly by falsely reporting mythical events, mocked the courageous sacrifices of those who had *dulce et gloria mori*, and completely upset everyone's peace of mind. Every new accusation, every verbal lance drew solemn agreement from the dignitary-packed hall. Against someone's better judgment, the trial had been transferred from the regular courtroom to the Hall of Justice. Packed with influence, brass, and pompous legates from over the world, only the congressmen from the biggest states or with the biggest votes were able to crowd the newly installed seats. So you can see it was a hostile audience that faced Samuels when the defense had its say. We had spent the previous night together in the guarded suite to which we had been transferred for the duration of the trial, perfecting, as far as we could, our planned defense. Samuels has the arrogant sense of humor that usually goes with supreme self-confidence, and I'm sure he enjoyed standing there among bemedaled and bejeweled bigwigs, knowing the bombshell he was going to hurl. He made a good grenadier. Like this:

"We believe there is only one defense possible; we believe there is only one defense necessary. We have gladly waived, without prejudice, our inalienable right of trial by jury. We shall speak plainly and bluntly, to the point.

"You have seen the picture in question. You have remarked, possibly, upon what has been called the startling resemblance of the actors in that picture to the characters named and portrayed. You have remarked possibly, upon

the apparent verisimilitude to reality. That I will mention again. The first witness will, I believe, establish the trend of our rebuttal of the allegations of the prosecution." He called the first witness.

"Your name, please?"

"Mercedes Maria Gomez."

"A little louder, please."

"Mercedes Maria Gomez."

"Your occupation?"

"Until last March I was a teacher at the Arizona School for the Deaf. Then I asked for and obtained a leave of absence. At present I am under personal contract to Mr. Lefko."

"If you see Mr. Lefko in this courtroom, Miss—Mrs.—"

"Miss."

"Thank you. If Mr. Lefko is in this court will you point him out? Thank you. Will you tell us the extent of your duties at the Arizona School?"

"I taught children born totally deaf to speak. And to read lips."

"You read lips yourself, Miss Gomez?"

"I have been totally deaf since I was fifteen."

"In English only?"

"English and Spanish. We have—had many children of Mexican descent."

Samuels asked for a designated Spanish-speaking interpreter. An officer in the back immediately volunteered. He was identified by his ambassador, who was present.

"Will you take this book to the rear of the courtroom, sir?" To the Court: "If the prosecution wishes to examine that book, they will find that it is a Spanish edition of the Bible." The prosecution didn't wish to examine it.

"Will the officer open the Bible at random and read aloud?" He opened the Bible at the center and read. In dead silence the Court strained to hear. Nothing could be heard the length of that enormous hall.

Samuels: "Miss Gomez. Will you take these binoculars and repeat, to the Court, just what the officer is reading at the other end of the room?"

She took the binoculars and focused them expertly on the officer, who had stopped reading and was watching alertly. "I am ready."

Samuels: "Will you please read, sir?"

He did, and the Gomez woman repeated aloud, quickly and easily, a section that sounded as though it might be anything at all. I can't speak Spanish. The officer continued to read for a minute or two.

Samuels: "Thank you, sir. And thank you, Miss Gomez. Your pardon, sir, but since there are several who have been known to memorize the Bible, will you tell the Court if you have anything on your person that is written, anything that Miss Gomez has had no chance of viewing?" Yes, the officer had. "Will you read that as before? Will you, Miss Gomez—"

She read that, too. Then the officer came to the front to listen to the court reporter read Miss Gomez' words.

"That's what I read," he affirmed.

Samuels turned her over to the prosecution, who made more experiments that served only to convince that she was equally good as an interpreter and lip-reader in either language.

In rapid succession Samuels put the rest of the lip-readers on the stand. In rapid succession they proved themselves as able and as capable as Miss Gomez, in their own linguistic specialty. The Russian from Ambridge generously offered to translate into his broken English any other Slavic language handy, and drew scattered grins from the press box. The Court was convinced, but failed to see the purpose of the exhibition. Samuels, glowing with satisfaction and confidence, faced the Court.

"Thanks to the indulgence of the Court, and despite the efforts of the distinguished prosecution, we have proved the almost amazing accuracy of lip-reading in general, and these lip-readers in particular." One Justice absently nodded in agreement. "Therefore, our defense will be based on that premise, and on one other which we have had until now found necessary to keep hidden—the picture in question was and is definitely not a fictional representation of events of questionable authenticity. Every scene in that film contained, not polished professional actors, but the original person named and portrayed. Every foot, every inch of film was not the result of an elaborate studio reconstruction but an actual collection of pictures, an actual collection of newsreels—if they can be called that—edited and assembled in story form!"

Through the startled spurt of astonishment we heard one

of the prosecution: "That's ridiculous! No newsreel—"

Samuels ignored the objections and the tumult to put me on the stand. Beyond the usual preliminary questions I was allowed to say things my own way. At first hostile, the Court became interested enough to overrule the repeated objections that flew from the table devoted to the prosecution. I felt that at least two of the Court, if not outright favorable, were friendly. As far as I can remember, I went over the maneuvers of the past years, and ended something like this:

"As to why we arranged the cards to fall as they did; both Mr. Laviada and myself were unable to face the prospect of destroying his discovery, because of the inevitable penalizing of needed research. We were, and we are, unwilling to better ourselves or a limited group by the use and maintenance of secrecy, if secrecy were possible. As to the only other alternative," and I directed this straight at Judge Bronson, the well-known liberal on the bench, "since the last war all atomic research and activity has been under the direction of a Board nominally civilian, but actually under the 'protection and direction' of the Army and Navy. This 'direction and protection,' as any competent physicist will gladly attest, has proved to be nothing but a smothering blanket serving to conceal hidebound antiquated reasoning, abysmal ignorance, and inestimable amounts of fumbling. As of right now, this country, or any country that was foolish enough to place any confidence in the rigid regime of the military mind, is years behind what would otherwise be the natural course of discovery and progress in nuclear and related fields.

"We were, and we are, firmly convinced that even the slightest hint of the inherent possibilities and scope of Mr. Laviada's discovery would have meant, under the present regime, instant and mandatory confiscation of even a supposedly secure patent. Mr. Laviada has never applied for a patent, and never will. We both feel that such a discovery belongs not to an individual, a group, or corporation, or even to a nation, but to the world and those who live in it.

"We know, and are eager and willing to prove, that the domestic and external affairs not only of this nation but of every nation are influenced, sometimes controlled, by esoteric groups warping political theories and human lives to suit their own ends." The Court was smothered in sullen

silence, thick and acid with hate and disbelief.

"Secret treaties, for example, and vicious, lying propaganda have too long controlled human passions and made men hate; honored thieves have too long rotted secretly in undeserved high places. The machine can make treachery and untruth impossible. It *must*, if atomic war is not to sear the face and fate of the world.

"Our pictures were all made with that end in view. We needed, first, the wealth and prominence to present to an international audience what we knew to be the truth. We have done as much as we can. From now on, this Court takes over the burden we have carried. We are guilty of no treachery, guilty of no deceit, guilty of nothing but deep and true humanity. Mr. Laviada wishes me to tell the Court and the world that he has been unable till now to give his discovery to the world, free to use as it wills."

The Court stared at me. Every foreign representative was on the edge of his seat waiting for the Justices to order us shot without further ado, the sparkling uniforms were seething, and the pressmen were racing their pencils against time. The tension dried my throat. The speech that Samuels and I had rehearsed the previous night was strong medicine. Now what?

Samuels filled the breach smoothly. "If the Court pleases; Mr. Lefko has made some startling statements. Startling, but certainly sincere, and certainly either provable or disprovable. And proof it shall be!"

He strode to the door of the conference room that had been allotted us. As the hundreds of eyes followed him it was easy for me to slip down from the witness stand, and wait, ready. From the conference room Samuels rolled the machine, and Mike rose. The whispers that curdled the air seemed disappointed, unimpressed. Right in front of the Bench he trundled it.

He moved unobtrusively to one side as the television men trained their long-snouted cameras. "Mr. Laviada and Mr. Lefko will show you—I trust there will be no objection from the prosecution?" He was daring them.

One of the prosecution was already on his feet. He opened his mouth hesitantly, but thought better, and sat down. Heads went together in conference as he did. Samuels was watching the Court with one eye, and the courtroom with the other.

"If the Court pleases, we will need a cleared space. If the bailiff will—thank you, sir." The long tables were moved back, with a raw scraping. He stood there, with every eye in the courtroom glued on him. For two long breaths he stood there, then he spun and went to his table. "Mr. Lefko." And he bowed formally. He sat.

The eyes swung to me, to Mike, as he moved to his machine and stood there silently. I cleared my throat and spoke to the Bench as though I did not see the directional microphones trained at my lips.

"Justice Bronson."

He looked steadily at me and then glanced at Mike. "Yes, Mr. Lefko?"

"Your freedom from bias is well-known." The corners of his mouth went down as he frowned. "Will you be willing to be used as proof that there can be no trickery?" He thought that over, then nodded slowly. The prosecution objected, and was waved down. "Will you tell me exactly where you were at any given time? Any place where you are absolutely certain and can verify that there were no concealed cameras or observers?"

He thought. Seconds. Minutes. The tension twanged, and I swallowed dust. He spoke quietly. "1918. November 11th."

Mike whispered to me. I said, "Any particular time?"

Justice Bronson looked at Mike. "Exactly eleven. Armistice time." He paused, then went on. "Niagara Falls. Niagara Falls, New York."

I heard the dials tick in the stillness, and Mike whispered again. I said, "The lights should be off." The bailiff rose. "Will you please watch the left wall, or in that direction? I think that if Justice Kassel will turn a little—we are ready."

Bronson looked at me, and at the left wall. "Ready."

The lights flicked out overhead and I heard the television crews mutter. I touched Mike on the shoulder. "Show them, Mike!"

We're all showmen at heart, and Mike is no exception. Suddenly out of nowhere and into the depths poured a frozen torrent. Niagara Falls. I've mentioned, I think, that I've never got over my fear of heights. Few people ever do. I heard long, shuddery gasps as we started straight down. Down, until we stopped at the brink of the silent cataract,

weird in its frozen majesty. Mike had stopped time at exactly eleven, I knew. He shifted to the American bank. Slowly he moved along. There were a few tourists standing in almost comic attitudes. There was snow on the ground, flakes in the air. Time stood still, and hearts slowed in sympathy.

Bronson snapped, "Stop!"

A couple, young. Long skirts, high-buttoned army collar, dragging army overcoat, facing, arms about each other. Mike's sleeve rustled in the darkness and they moved. She was sobbing and the soldier was smiling. She turned away her head, and he turned it back. Another couple seized them gayly, and they twirled breathlessly.

Bronson's voice was harsh. "That's enough!" The view blurred for seconds.

Washington. The White House. The President. Someone coughed like a small explosion. The President was watching a television screen. He jerked erect suddenly, startled. Mike spoke for the first time in Court.

"That is the President of the United States. He is watching the trial that is being broadcast and televised from this courtroom. He is listening to what I am saying right now, and he is watching, on his television screen, as I use my machine to show him what he was doing one second ago."

The President heard those fateful words. Stiffly he threw an unconscious glance around his room at nothing and looked back at his screen in time to see himself do what he just had done, one second ago. Slowly, as if against his will, his hand started toward the switch of his set.

"Mr. President, don't turn off the set." Mike's voice was curt, almost rude. "You must hear this, you of all people in the world. You must understand!"

"This is not what we wanted to do, but we have no recourse left but to appeal to you, and to the people of this twisted world." The President might have been cast in iron. "You must see, you must understand that you have in your hands the power to make it impossible for greed-born war to be bred in secrecy and rob man of his youth or his old age or whatever he prizes." His voice softened, pleaded. "That is all we have to say. That is all we want. That is all anyone could want, ever." The President, unmoving, faded into blackness. "The lights, please." And almost immediately the Court adjourned. That was over a month ago.

Mike's machine has been taken from us, and we are under military guard. Probably it's just as well we're guarded. We understand there have been lynching parties, broken up only as far as a block or two away. Last week we watched a white-haired fanatic scream about us, on the street below. We couldn't catch what he was shrieking, but we did catch a few airborne epithets.

"Devils! Anti-Christ! Violation of the Bible! Violations of this and that!" Some, right here in the city, I suppose, would be glad to build a bonfire to cook us right back to the flames from which we've sprung. I wonder what the various religious groups are going to do now that the truth can be seen. Who can read lips in Aramaic, or Latin, or Coptic? And is a mechanical miracle a miracle?

This changes everything. We've been moved. Where, I don't know, except that the weather is warm, and we're on some type of military reservation, by the lack of civilians. Now we know what we're up against. What started out to be just a time-killing occupation, Joe, has turned out to be a necessary preface to what I'm going to ask you to do. Finish this, and then move fast! We won't be able to get this to you for a while yet, so I'll go on for a bit the way I started, to kill time. Like our clippings:

TABLOID:

... Such a weapon cannot, must not be loosed in unscrupulous hands. The last professional production of the infamous pair proves what distortions can be wrested from isolated and misunderstood events. In the hands of perpetrators of heretical isms, no property, no business deal, no personal life could be sacrosanct, no foreign policy could be ...

TIMES:

... colonies stand with us firmly ... liquidation of the Empire ... white man's burden ...

LE MATIN:

... rightful place ... restore proud France ...

PRAVDA:

... democratic imperialist plot ... our glorious scientists ready to announce ...

NICHI-NICHI:

... incontrovertibly prove divine descent ...

LA PRENSA:

... oil concessions ... dollar diplomacy ...

DETROIT JOURNAL:

... under our noses in a sinister fortress on East Warren ... under close Federal supervision ... perfection by our production-trained technicians a mighty aid to law-enforcement agencies ... tirades against politicians and business common sense carried too far ... tomorrow revelations by ...

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO:

Council of Cardinals . . . announcement expected hourly ...

JACKSON STAR-CLARION:

... proper handling will prove the fallacy of race equality ...

Almost unanimously the press screamed; Hearst frothed, Winchell leered. We got the surface side of the situation from the press. But a military guard is composed of individuals, a hotel room must be swept by maids, waiters must serve food, and a chain is as strong— We got what we think the truth from those who work for a living.

There are meetings on street corners and in homes, two great veterans' groups have arbitrarily fired their officials, seven governors have resigned, three senators and over a dozen representatives have retired with "ill health," and the general temper is ugly. International travelers report the same of Europe, Asia is bubbling, and transport planes with motors running stud the airports of South America. A general whisper is that a Constitutional Amendment is being rammed through to forbid the use of any similar instrument by any individual, with the manufacture and leasing by the Federal government to law-enforcement agencies or financially responsible corporations suggested; it is whispered that motor caravans are forming throughout the country for a Washington march to demand a decision by the Court on the truth of our charges; it is generally suspected that all news disseminating services are under direct Federal—Army—control; wires are supposed to be sizzling with petitions and demands to Congress, which are seldom delivered.

One day the chambermaid said: "And the whole hotel might as well close up shop. The whole floor is blocked off, there're MP's at every door, and they're clearing out all

the other guests as fast as they can be moved. The whole place wouldn't be big enough to hold the letters and wires addressed to you, or the ones that are trying to get in to see you. Fat chance they have," she added grimly. "The joint is lousy with brass."

Mike glanced at me and I cleared my throat. "What's your idea of the whole thing?"

Expertly she spanked and reversed a pillow. "I saw your last picture before they shut it down. I saw all your pictures. When I wasn't working I listened to your trial. I heard you tell them off. I never got married because my boyfriend never came back from Burma. Ask *him* what he thinks." And she jerked her head at the young private who was supposed to keep her from talking. "Ask him if he wants some bunch of stinkers to start him shooting at some other poor chump. See what he says, and then ask me if I want an atom bomb dropped down my neck just because some chisellers want more than they got." She left suddenly, and the soldier left with her. Mike and I had a beer and went to bed. Next week the papers had headlines a mile high.

U.S. KEEPS MIRACLE RAY CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT AWAITS STATES OKAY LAVIADA-LEFKO FREED

We were freed all right, Bronson and the President being responsible for that. But the President and Bronson don't know, I'm sure, that we were rearrested immediately. We were told that we'll be held in "protective custody" until enough states have ratified the proposed constitutional amendment. The Man Without a Country was in what you might call "protective custody," too. We'll likely be released the same way he was.

We're allowed no newspapers, no radio, allowed no communication coming or going, and we're given no reason, as if that were necessary. They'll never, never let us go, and they'd be fools if they did. They think that if we can't communicate, or if we can't build another machine, our fangs are drawn, and when the excitement dies, we fall into oblivion, six feet of it. Well, we can't build another machine. But, communicate?

Look at it this way. A soldier is a soldier because he

wants to serve his country. A soldier doesn't want to die unless his country is at war. Even then death is only a last resort. And war isn't necessary any more, not with our machine. In the dark? Try to plan or plot in absolute darkness, which is what would be needed. Try to plot or carry on a war without putting things in writing. O.K. Now—

The Army has Mike's machine. The Army has Mike. They call it military expediency, I suppose. Bosh! Anyone beyond the grade of moron can see that to keep that machine, to hide it, is to invite the world to attack, and attack in self-defense. If every nation, or if every man, had a machine, each would be equally open, or equally protected. But if only one nation, or only one man can see, the rest will not long be blind. Maybe we did this all wrong. God knows that we thought about it often. God knows we did our best to make an effort at keeping man out of his own trap.

There isn't much time left. One of the soldiers guarding us will get this to you, I hope, in time.

A long time ago we gave you a key, and hoped we would never have to ask you to use it. But now is the time. That key fits a box at the Detroit Savings Bank. In that box are letters. Mail them, not all at once, or in the same place. They'll go all over the world, to men we know, and have watched well; clever, honest, and capable of following the plans we've enclosed.

But you've got to hurry! One of these bright days someone is going to wonder if we've made more than one machine. We haven't, of course. That would have been foolish. But if some smart young lieutenant gets hold of that machine long enough to start tracing back our movements they'll find that safety deposit box, with the plans and letters ready to be scattered broadside. You can see the need for haste—if the rest of the world, or any particular nation, wants that machine bad enough, they'll fight for it. And they will! They must! Later on, when the Army gets used to the machine and its capabilities, it will become obvious to everyone, as it already has to Mike and me, that, with every plan open to inspection as soon as it's made, no nation or group of nations would have a chance in open warfare. So if there is to be an attack, it will have to be deadly, and fast, and sure. Please God that we haven't shoved the world into a war we tried to make impossible.

With all the atom bombs and rockets that have been made in the past few years—*Joe, you've got to hurry!*

GHQ TO 9TH ATTK GRP

Report report report report report report report report report report

CMDR 9TH ATTK GRP TO GHQ

BEGINS: No other manuscript found. Searched body of Lefko immediately upon landing. According to plan Building Three untouched. Survivors insist both were moved from Building Seven previous day defective plumbing. Body of Laviada identified definitely through fingerprints. Request further instructions. ENDS

GHQ TO CMDR 32ND
SHIELDED RGT

BEGINS: Seal area Detroit Savings Bank. Advise immediately condition safety deposit boxes. Afford coming technical unit complete cooperation. ENDS

LT. COL. TEMP. ATT.
32ND SHIELDED RGT TO GHQ

BEGINS: Area Detroit Savings Bank vaporized direct hit. Radioactivity lethal. Impossible boxes or any contents survive. Repeat, direct hit. Request permission proceed Washington Area. ENDS

GHQ. TO LT. COL. TEMP. ATT.
32ND SHIELDED RGT

BEGINS: Request denied. Sift ashes if necessary regardless cost. Repeat, regardless cost. ENDS

GHQ. TO ALL UNITS REPEAT
ALL UNITS

BEGINS: Lack of enemy resistance explained misdirected atom rockets seventeen miles SSE Washington. Lone survivor completely destroyed special train claims all top officials left enemy capital two hours preceding attack. Notify local governments where found necessary and obvious cessation hostilities. Occupy present areas Plan Two. Further orders follow. ENDS

HUNTER,

COME

HOME

You can't just plain die. You got to do it by the book.
Casey Agonistes

RICHARD MCKENNA

RICHARD MCKENNA WAS BORN IN 1913; THE DEPRESSION FORCED him into the Navy when he was eighteen. He stayed in it a total of twenty years, retiring in 1953 as a Chief Machinist's Mate. This extraordinary man then enrolled in the University of North Carolina and graduated in three years, with an A average. Then he got married. At the age of forty-three, he began to write science fiction and fantasy. His first published story, *Casey Agonistes*, brought him wide notice and was reprinted in Judith Merrill's annual *Best SF*. In 1960 his agent, the late Rogers Terrill, urged him to make a novel out of his China Coast experiences, and the result, after three years' work, was the best-selling Harper Prize Novel *The Sand Pebbles*.

McKenna's science fiction is remarkable for, among other things, its grasp of widely separated disciplines. One of these is cultural anthropology, a science much neglected in science fiction. Most writers assume that future cultures, even on other planets colonized by human beings, will be just like mid-twentieth-century America, only with more gadgets. Except for Jack Vance, McKenna is almost the only writer who has realized what nonsense this is: "just like—" is the one answer, out of infinity, that we *know* can't be right.

In the field of biochemistry and ecology, McKenna's touch is equally magical. His conception of a planet's biota as one enormous organism, thinking "biochemical thoughts," feeling the pain of its own slow destruction, is more than an imaginative leap. It gives us a curious, trembling intimation that "love" may have another meaning, to future space travelers, than the one we know.

ON THAT PLANET THE DAMNED TREES WERE IMMORTAL, the new guys said in disgust, so there was no wood for camp fires and they had to burn pyrolene doused on raw stem fragments. Roy Craig crouched over the fire tending a bubbling venison stew and caught himself wishing they might still use the electric galley inside their flyer. But these new guys were all red dots and they wanted flame in the open and they were right, of course.

Four of them sat across the fire from Craig, talking loudly and loading explosive pellets. They wore blue field denims and had roached hair and a red dot tattooed on their foreheads. Bork Wilde, the new field chief, stood watching them. He was tall and bold-featured, with roached black hair, and he had two red dots on his forehead. Craig's reddish hair was unroached and, except for freckles, his forehead was blank, because he had never taken the Mordin manhood test. For all his gangling young six-foot body, he felt like a boy among men. Under the new deal he caught all the menial camp jobs, and he didn't like it.

They were a six-man ringwalling crew and they were camped beside their flyer, a gray, high-sided cargo job, a safe two miles downslope from the big ringwall. All around them the bare, fluted, silvery stems speared and branched fifty feet overhead and gave a watery cast to the twilight. Normally the stems would be covered with two-lobed phytozoon leaves of all sizes and color patterns. The men and their fire had excited the leaves and they had detached themselves, to hover in a pulsating rainbow cloud high enough to catch the sun above the silver tracery of the upper branches. They piped and twittered and shed a spicy perfume, and certain daring ones dipped low above the men. One of the pellet loaders, a rat-faced little man named Cobb, hurled a flaming chunk up through them.

"Shut up, you stupid flitterbugs!" he roared. "Let a man hear himself think!"

The men laughed. The red and white fibrous root tangle underfoot was slowly withdrawing, underground and to the sides, leaving bare soil around the fire. The new guys thought it was to escape the fire, but Craig remembered the roots had always done that when the old ringwall crew used to camp without fire. By morning the whole area around the flyer would be bare soil. A brown, many-legged crawler an inch long pushed out of the exposed soil and scuttled after the retreating roots. Craig smiled and stirred the stew. A small green and red phyto leaf dropped from the cloud and settled on his knobby wrist. He let it nuzzle at him. Its thin, velvety wings waved slowly. A much thickened midrib made a kind of body with no head or visible appendages. Craig turned his wrist over and wondered idly why the phyto didn't fall off. Then a patterned green and gold phyto with wings large as dinner plates settled on Wilde's shoulder. Wilde snatched it and tore its wings with thick fingers. It whimpered and fluttered. Distress shadowed Craig's gaunt, sensitive face.

"It can't hurt you, Mr. Wilde," he protested. "It's just curious."

"Who pulled your trigger, Blanky?" Wilde snapped. "I wish these damned bloodsucking butterflies *could* know what I'm doing here!"

He turned and kicked one of the weak, turgor-rigid stems and brought it crumpling down across the flyer. He threw the torn phyto after it and laughed, showing big horse teeth. Craig bit his lip.

"Chow's ready," he said. "Come and get it."

After cleanup it got dark, with only one moon in the sky, and the phytos furled their wings and went to sleep on the upper branches. The fire died away and the men rolled up in blankets and snored. Craig sat up, not able to sleep. He saw Sidis come and stand looking out the lighted doorway of the flyer's main cabin. Sidis was a Belconti ecologist who had been boss of the old ringwall crew and he was along on this trip just to break Wilde in as his replacement. He insisted on eating and sleeping inside the flyer, to the scorn of the Planet Mordin red dots. His forehead was blank as Craig's, but that was little comfort. Sidis

was from Planet Belconti, where they had different customs.

For Mordinmen, courage was the supreme good. They were descendants of a lost Earth-colony that had lapsed to a stone-age technology and fought its way back to gunpowder in ceaseless war against the fearsome Great Russel dinotheres that were the dominant life-form on Planet Mordin before men came. For many generations young candidates for manhood went forth in a sworn band to kill a Great Russel with spears and arrows. When rifles came, they hunted him singly. Survivors wore the red dot of manhood and fathered the next generation. Then the civilized planets discovered Mordin, knowledge flowed in, and population exploded. Suddenly there were too few Great Russels left to meet the need. Craig's family had not been able to buy him a Great Russel hunt.

I'll kill one, when I get my chance, Craig thought. Mr. Wilde killed two. That don't seem fair.

Ten years before Craig's birth, the Mordin Hunt Council found the phyto planet unclaimed and set out to convert it to one great dinothere hunting range. The Earth-type Mordin biota could neither eat nor displace the alien phytos. Mordin contracted with Belconti biologists to exterminate the native life. Mordin laborers served under Belconti biotechs. All were blankies; no red dots would serve under the effete Belcontis, many of whom were women. Using the killer plant *Thanasis*, the Belcontis cleared two large islands and restocked them with a Mordin biota. They made a permanent base on one of the islands and attacked the three continents.

When I was little, they told me I'd kill my Great Russel on this planet, Craig thought. He clasped his arms around his knees. There was still only one Great Russel on the planet, on one of the cleared islands.

Because for thirty years the continents refused to die. The phytos encysted *Thanasis* areas, adapted, recovered ground. Belconti genesmiths designed ever more deadly strains of *Thanasis*, pushing it to the safe upper limit of its recombination index, and it began losing ground. The Belcontis said the attempt must be given up. But the planet had become a symbol of future hope to curb present social unrest on Mordin and the Hunt Council refused to give up. It sent red dots to study biotechnics on Belconti.

Craig had come to the planet on a two-year labor contract. He had enjoyed working with other blankies under a Belconti boss and he had almost forgotten the pain of withheld manhood. He had extended his contract for another two years. Then the Mordin relief ship a month ago landed a full crew of red dots, including biotechs to replace the Belcontis, who were all to go home in about a year, when their own relief ship came. Craig was left the only blanky on the planet, except for the Belcontis, and they didn't count.

I'm already alone, he thought. He bowed his head on his knees and wished he could sleep. Someone touched his shoulder and he looked up to see Sidis beside him.

"Come inside, will you, Roy?" he whispered. "I want to talk to you."

Craig sat down across from Sidis at the long table in the main cabin. Sidis was a slender, dark man with gentle Belconti manners and a wry smile.

"I'm worried about you for these next two years," he said. "I don't like the way they order you around, that nasty little fellow Cobb in particular. Why do you take it?"

"I have to because I'm a blanky," Craig said.

"You can't help that. If it's one of your laws, it's unfair."

"It's fair because it's natural," Craig said. "I don't like not being a man, but that's just the way things are with me."

"You are a man. You're twenty-four years old."

"I'm not a man until I feel like one," Craig said. "I can't feel like one until I kill my Great Russel."

"I'm afraid you'd still feel out of place," Sidis said. "I've watched you for two years and I think you have a certain quality your own planet has no use for. So I have a proposition for you." He glanced at the door, then back to Craig. "Declare yourself a Belconti citizen, Roy. We'll all sponsor you and I know Mil Ames will find you a job on the staff. You can go home to Belconti with us."

"Great Russell" Craig said. "I couldn't never do that, Mr. Sidis."

"How is life on Mordin for a blanky? Could he get a wife?"

"Maybe. She'd be some woman that's gave up hope of being even number three wife to a red dot." Craig frowned

and thought about his own father. "She'd hate him all her life for her bad luck."

"And you call that fair?"

"It's fair because it's natural. It's natural for a woman to want an all-the-way man instead of a boy that just grew up."

"Not Belconti women. How about it, Roy?"

Craig clasped his hands between his knees. He lowered his head and shook it slowly.

"No. No, I couldn't. My place is here, fighting for a time when no kid has to grow up cheated, like I been." He raised his head. "Besides, no Mordinman ever runs away from a fight."

Sidis smiled gently. "This fight is already lost," he said.

"Not the way Mr. Wilde talks," Craig said. "Back in the labs at Base Camp they're going to use a trans-something, I hear."

"Translocator in the gene matrix," Sidis said. "I guarantee they won't do it while Mil Ames runs the labs. After we go, they'll probably kill themselves in a year." He looked doubtfully at Craig. "I hadn't meant to tell you that, but it's one reason I hope you'll leave with us."

"How kill ourselves?"

"With an outlaw free-system."

Craig shook his head and Sidis smiled.

"Look, you know how the phyto stems are all rooted together underground like one big plant," he said. "You know we design the self-duplicating enzyme systems that *Thanasis* pumps into them. You know *Thanasis* free-systems can digest a man, too, and that's what you get inoculated against each time we design a new one. Well then." He steeped his fingers. "With translocation, *Thanasis* can redesign its own free-systems in the field, in a way. It might come up with something impossible to immunize. It might change so that our specific control virus would no longer kill it. Then it would kill us and rule the planet itself."

"I don't get all that," Craig said.

"Then trust my word. It happened once, on Planet Froy."

Craig nodded. "I heard about Planet Froy."

"That's what you risk and you can't win anyway. So come to Planet Belconti with us."

Craig stood up. "I almost wish you didn't tell me that," he said. "Now I can't even think about leaving."

Sidis leaned back and spread his fingers on the table.

"Talk to Midori Blake before you say no," he said. "I know she's fond of you, Roy. I thought you rather liked her."

Craig felt his face burn. "I do like to be around her," he said. "I liked it when you used to stop at Burton Island instead of camping in the field. I wish Mr. Wilde would go there."

"I'll try to persuade him. Think it over, will you?"

"I can't think," Craig said. "I don't know what I feel." He turned to the door. "I'm going out and walk and try to think."

"Good night, Roy." Sidis reached for a book.

The second moon was just rising. Craig walked through a jungle of ghostly silver stems. Phytos clinging to them piped sleepily, disturbed by his passage. "I'm too ignorant to be a Belconti," he said once, aloud. He neared the ring-wall. Stems grew more thickly, became harder, fused at last into a sloping ninety-foot dam. Craig climbed halfway up and stopped. It was foolhardy to go higher without a protective suit. *Thanasis* was on the other side, and its free-systems diffused hundreds of feet even in still air. The phyto stems were all rooted together into one big plant and *Thanasis* ate into it like a sickness. The stems formed ringwalls around stands of *Thanasis*, to stop its spread. Craig climbed a few feet higher.

Sure I'm big enough to whip Cobb, he thought. Whip any of them, except Mr. Wilde. But he knew in a quarrel his knees would turn to water and his voice squeak off to nothing, because they were men and he was not. "I'm not a coward," he said aloud. "I'll kill my Great Russel yet."

He climbed to the top. *Thanasis* stretched off in a sea of blackness beneath the moons. Just below he could see the outline of narrow leaves furred with stinging hairs and beaded with poison droplets meant to be rainwashed into the roots of downslope prey. The ringwall impounded the poisoned water and this stand of *Thanasis* was drowning in it and it was desperate. He saw the tendrils, hungry to release poison into enemy tissues and follow after to suck and absorb. (They felt his warmth and waved feebly.) This below him was the woody, climbing form, but they said even waist-high shrubs could eat a man in a week.

I'm not afraid, Craig thought. He sat down and took off his boots and let his bare feet dangle above the *Thanasis*. Midori Blake and all the Belcontis would think this was crazy. They didn't understand about courage—all they had was brains. He liked them anyway, Midori most of all. He thought about her as he gazed off across the dark *Thanasis*. The whole continent would have to be like that first. Then they'd kill off *Thanasis* with a control virus and plant grass and real trees and it would all be like Base and Russel Islands were now. Sidis was wrong—that trans-stuff would do it. He'd stay and help. He felt better, with his mind made up.

Then he felt a gentle tug at his left ankle. It stabbed with fierce and sudden pain. He jerked his leg up. The tendril broke and came with it, still squirming and stinging. Craig whistled and swore as he scraped it off with a boot heel, careful not to let it touch his hands. Then he pulled on his right boot and hurried back to camp for treatment. He carried his left boot, because he knew how fast his ankle would swell. He reached camp with his left leg one screaming ache. Sidis was still up. He neutralized the poison, gave Craig a sedative, and made him take one of the bunks inside the flyer. He didn't ask questions, just looked down at Craig with his wry smile.

"You Mordinmen," he said, and shook his head.

The Belcontis were always saying that.

In the morning Cobb sneered and Wilde was furious.

"If you're shooting for a week on the sick list, aim again," Wilde said. "I'll give you two days."

"I'll do his work," Sidis said. "He needs two weeks to recover."

"I'll work," Craig said. "It don't hurt so much I can't work."

"Take today off," Wilde said, mollified.

"I'll work today," Craig said. "I'm all right."

It was a tortured day under the hot yellow sun, with his foot wrapped in sacks and stabbing pain up his spine with every step. Craig drove his power auger deep into basal ringwall tissue and the aromatic, red-purple sap gushed out and soaked his feet. Then he pushed in the explosive pellet, shouldered his rig and paced off the next position. Over and over he did it, like a machine, not stopping to eat his

lunch, ignoring the phytos that clung to his neck and hands. He meant to finish his arc first if it killed him. But when he finished and had time to think about it, his foot felt better than it had all day. He snapped a red cloth to his auger shaft and waved it high and the flyer slanted down to pick him up. Sidis was at the controls.

"You're the first to finish," he said. "I don't see why you're even alive. Go and lie down now."

"I'll take the controls," Craig said. "I feel good."

Sidis shrugged. "I guess you're proving something," he said.

He gave Craig the controls and went aft. Driving the flyer was one of the menial jobs that Craig liked. He liked being alone in the little control cabin, with its two seats and windows all around. He lifted to a thousand feet and glanced along the ringwall, curving out of sight in both directions. The pent sea of *Thanasis* was dark green by daylight. The phyto area outside the ringwall gleamed silvery, with an overplay of shifting colors, and it was very beautiful. Far and high in the north he saw a colored cloud among the fleecy ones. It was a mass of migratory phytos drifting in the wind with their hydrogen sacs inflated. It was beautiful, too.

"They transfer substance to grow the ringwalls," he heard Sidis telling Wilde back in the main cabin. "You'll notice the biomass downslope is less dense. When you release that poisoned water from inside the ringwall, you get a shock effect and *Thanasis* follows up fast. But a new ringwall always forms."

"Next time through I'll blow fifty-mile arcs," Wilde said.

Craig slanted down to pick up Jordan. He was a stocky, sandy-haired man about Craig's age. He scrambled aboard grinning.

"Beat us again, hey, Craig?" he said. "That took guts, boy. You're all right!"

"I got two years practice on you guys," Craig said.

The praise made him feel good. It was the first time Jordan had called him by name instead of "Blanky." He lifted the flyer again. Jordan sat down in the spare seat.

"How's the foot?" he asked.

"Pretty good. I think I could get my boot on, unlaced," Craig said.

"I'll take camp chores tonight," Jordan said. "You rest

that foot, Craig. You're too good a man to lose."

"There's Whelan's flag," Craig said.

He felt himself blushing with pleasure as he slanted down to pick up Whelan. Jordan went aft. When Rice and Cobb had been picked up, Craig hovered the flyer at two miles and Wilde pulsed off the explosive. Twenty miles of living ringwall tissue fountained in dust and flame. Phytos rising in terrified, chromatic clouds marked the rolling shock wave. Behind it the silvery plain darkened with the sheet flow of poisoned water.

"Hah! Go it, *Thanasis!*" Wilde shouted. "I swear to bullets, that's a pretty sight down there! Now where's a safe place to camp, Sidis?"

"We're only an hour from Burton Island," Sidis said. "I used to stop at the taxonomy station there every night, when we worked this area."

"Probably why you never got anywhere, too," Wilde said. "But I want a look at that island. The Huntsman's got plans for it."

He shouted orders up to Craig. Craig lifted to ten miles and headed southeast at full throttle. A purplish sea rolled above the silvery horizon. Far on the sea rim beaded islands climbed to view. It had been a good day, Craig thought. Jordan seemed to want to be friends. And now, at last, he'd see Midori Blake again.

He grounded the flyer on slagged earth near the familiar gray stone buildings on the eastern headland. The men got out and George and Helen Toyama, smiling and gray haired in lab smocks, came to welcome them. Craig's left boot was tight and it hurt, but he could wear it unlaced. Helen told him Midori was painting in the gorge. He limped down the gorge path, past Midori's small house and the Toyama home on the cliff edge at left. Midori and the Toyamas were the only people on Burton Island. The island was a phyto research sanctuary and had never been touched by *Thanasis*. It was the only place other than Base Camp where humans lived permanently.

The gorge was Midori's special place. She painted it over and over, never satisfied. Craig knew it well, the quartz ledge, the cascading waterfall and pool, the phytos dancing in sunlight that the silvery stem forest changed to the quality of strong moonlight. Craig liked watching Midori paint,

most of all when she forgot him and sang to herself. She was clean and apart and never resentful or demanding, and it was just good to be in the same world with her. Through the splash of the waterfall and the phyto piping Craig heard her singing before he came upon her, standing before her easel beside a quartz boulder. She heard him and turned and smiled warmly.

"Roy! I'm so glad to see you," she said. "I was afraid you'd gone home after all."

She was small and dainty under her gray dress, with large black eyes and delicate features. Her dark hair snugged boyishly close to her head. Her voice had a natural, birdlike quality, and she moved and gestured with the quick grace of a singing bird. Craig grinned happily.

"For a while I almost wished I did," he said. "Now I'm glad again I didn't." He limped toward her.

"Your foot!" she said. "Come over here and sit down." She tugged him to a seat on the boulder. "What happened?"

"Touch of *Thanasis*," he said. "Nothing much."

"Take off your boot! You don't want pressure on it."

She helped him take the boot off and ran cool fingertips lightly over the red, swollen ankle. Then she sat beside him.

"I know it hurts you. How did it happen?"

"I was kind of unhappy," he said. "I went and sat on a ringwall and let my bare feet hang over."

"Foolish Roy. Why were you unhappy?"

"Oh—things." Several brilliant phytos settled on his bared ankle. He let them stay. "We got to sleep in the field now, 'stead of coming here. The new boss thinks our old gang was lazy. The new guys are all red dots and I'm just a nothing again and—oh, hell!"

"You mean they think they're better than you?"

"They are better, and that's what hurts. Killing a Great Russel is a kind of spirit thing, Midori." He scuffed his right foot. "I'll see the day when this planet has enough Great Russels so no kid has to grow up cheated, like I been."

"The phytos are not going to die, Roy," she said softly. "It's very clear now. We're defeated."

"You Belcontis are. Mordinmen never give up."

"*Thanasis* is defeated. Will you shoot phytos with rifles?"

"Please don't joke about rifles," he said. "We're going to use a trans-something on *Thanasis*."

"Translocation? Oh no! It can't be controlled for field

use. They wouldn't dare!"

"Red dots dare anything," he said proudly. "These guys all studied on Belconti; they know how. That's another thing—"

He scuffed his foot again. Phytos were on both their heads and shoulders now and all over his bared ankle. They twittered faintly.

"What, Roy?"

"I feel like an ignorant nothing. Here I been ringwalling for two years, and they already know more about phytos than I do. I want you to tell me something about phytos that I can use to make the guys notice me. Like, can phytos feel?"

She held her hand to her cheek, silent a moment.

"Phytos are strange and wonderful and I love them," she said softly. "They're mixed plant and animal. Life never split itself apart on this planet."

The flying phytozoons, she explained, functioned as leaves for the vegetative stems. But the stems, too, had internal temperature control. The continental networks of great conduit roots moved fluids with a reversible, valved peristalsis. A stem plus attached phytos made an organism.

"But any phyto, Roy, can live with any stem, and they're forever shifting. Everything is part of everything," she said. "Our job here on Burton Island is to classify the phytos, and we just can't do it. They vary continuously along every dimension we choose, physical or chemical, and *kind* simply has no meaning." She sighed. "That's the most wonderful thing I know about them. Will that help you?"

"I don't get all that. That's what I mean, I'm ignorant," he said. "Tell me some one simple thing I can use to make the guys take notice of me."

"All right, tell them this," she said. "Phyto color patterns are plastid systems that synthesize different molecules. The way they can recombine parts to form new organisms gives them a humanly inconceivable biochemical range. Whatever new poison or free-system we design for *Thanasis*, somewhere by sheer chance they hit on a countersubstance. The knowledge spreads faster each time. That's why *Thanasis* is defeated."

"I couldn't say that, and don't you say it either, Midori," Craig protested. "This here translocation, now—"

"Not even that." Her voice was faintly sharp. "The

phytos have unlimited translocation and any number of sexes. Collectively, I don't doubt they're the mightiest biochemical lab in the galaxy. They form a kind of biochemical intelligence, almost a mind, and it's learning faster than we are." She turned and shook his arm with both her small hands. "Yes, tell them, make them understand," she said. "Human intelligence is defeated here. Now human ferocity—oh, Roy—"

"Say it," he said bitterly. "Mordinmen are stupid. I ought to know. You sound almost like you want us to lose, Midori."

She turned away and began cleaning her brushes. It was nearly dark and the phytos were going to rest on the stems overhead. Craig sat miserably silent, remembering the feel of her hands on his arm. Then she spoke, and her voice was soft again.

"I don't know. If you wanted homes and farms here—but you want only the ritual deaths of man and dinothere—"

"You Belcontis can't understand," Craig said. "Maybe people's souls get put together different ways on different planets. I know there's a piece missing out of mine and I know what it is." He put his hand lightly on her shoulder. "Some holidays I fly down to Russel Island just to look at the Great Russel there, and then I know. I wish I could take you to see him; he'd make you understand."

"I understand. I just don't agree."

She swished and splashed brushes, but she didn't pull her shoulder away from his hand. Craig wished he dared ask her about the phytos and that many-sex stuff; the guys'd like that. He blushed and shook his head.

"Why is it you never see a dead phyto? Why is it there ain't enough dead wood on a whole continent to make one camp fire?" he asked. "What eats 'em? What keeps 'em down?"

She laughed and turned back to him, making his arm slide across her shoulders. He barely let it touch her, and she seemed not to know.

"They eat themselves internally, resorption, we call it," she said. "They can grow themselves again in another place and form, as a ringwall, for instance. Roy, this planet has never known death and decay. Everything is resorbed and reconstituted. We try to kill it and it suffers, but its—"

her voice trembled —“yes, its *mind*—can’t form the idea of death. There’s no way to think death biochemically.”

“Oh bullets, Midori! Phytos can’t think,” he said. “I wonder, can they even feel?”

She jumped up and away from his arm. “Yes, they feel! Their piping is a cry of pain,” she said. “Papa Toyama can remember when the planet was almost silent. Since he’s been here, twenty years, their temperature has risen twelve degrees, their metabolic rate and speed of neural impulse doubled, chronaxy halved—”

Craig stood up too and raised his hands.

“Hold your fire, Midori,” he said. “You know I don’t know all them words. You’re mad at me.” It was too dark to see her face plainly.

“I think I’m just terribly afraid,” she said. “I’m afraid of what we’ve been doing that we don’t know about.”

“That piping has always made me feel sad, kind of,” Craig said. “I never would hurt a phyto. But Great Russel, when you think about whole continents hurting and crying, day and night for years—you scare me too, Midori.”

She began packing her painting kit. Craig pulled on his boot. It laced up easily. I ain’t really scared, he thought.

“We’ll go to my house and I’ll make our supper,” she said.

She didn’t sound angry. He took the kit and walked beside her, hardly limping at all. They started up the cliff path.

“Why did you stay on here, if the work makes you sad?” she asked.

“Two more years and I’ll have enough saved to buy me a Great Russel hunt,” he said. He flushed and was glad it was dark. “I guess you think that’s a pretty silly reason.”

“Not at all. I thought you might have an even sillier one.”

He fumbled for a remark, trying not to understand her sudden chill. Then Jordan’s voice bawled from above.

“Craig! Ho Craig!”

“Craig aye!”

“Come arunning!” Jordan yelled. “Bork’s raising hell cause you ain’t loading pellets. I saved chow for you.”

The rest of the field job was much better. Jordan helped on camp chores and joked Rice and Whelan into following

suit. Only Wilde and Cobb still called Craig "Blanky." Craig felt good about things. Jordan sat beside him in the control cabin as Craig brought the flyer home to Base Island. Russel Island loomed blue to the south and the Main Continent coast range toothed the eastern sea rim.

"Home again. Beer and the range, eh, Craig?" Jordan said. "We'll get in some hunting, maybe."

"Hope so," Craig said.

Base Island looked good. It was four thousand square miles of savanna and rolling hills with stands of young oak and beech. It teemed with game birds and animals transplanted from Mordin. On its northern tip buildings and fields made the rectilinear pattern of man. Sunlight gleamed on square miles of *Thanasis* greenhouses behind their ionic stockades. Base Island was a promise of the planet's future, when *Thanasis* would have killed off the phytos and been killed in its turn and the wholesome life of Planet Mordin replaced them both. Base Island was home.

They were the first ringwalling team to come in. Wilde reported twelve hundred miles of ringwall destroyed, fifty percent better than the old Belconti average. Barim, the Chief Huntsman, congratulated them. He was a burly, deep-voiced man with roached gray hair and four red dots on his forehead. It was the first time Craig had ever shaken hands with a man who had killed four Great Russels. Barim rewarded the crew with a week on food hunting detail. Jordan teamed up with Craig. Craig shot twenty deer and twelve pigs and scores of game birds. His bag was better than Cobb's. Jordan joked at Cobb about it, and it made the sparrowy little man very angry.

The new men had brought a roaring, jovial atmosphere to Base Camp that Craig rather liked. He picked up camp gossip. Barim had ordered immediate production of translocator pollen. Mildred Ames, the Belconti Chief Biologist, had refused. But the labs and equipment were Mordin property and Barim had ordered his own men to go to work on it. Miss Ames raised shrill hell and Barim barred all Belcontis from the labs. She counterattacked, rapier against bludgeon, and got her staff back in the labs. They were to observe only, for science and the record.

Jealous, scared we'll show 'em up, the Mordin lab men laughed. And so we will, by the bones of Great Russell!

Craig saw Miss Ames several times around the labs. She

was a tall, slender woman and she looked pinch-mouthed and unhappy. She detached Sidis from ringwalling and made him a lab observer. Craig thought a lot about what Midori had told him. He especially liked that notion of resorption and waited for his chance to spring it at the mess table. It came one morning at breakfast. Wilde's crew shared a table with lab men in the raftered, stone-floored mess hall. It was always a clamor of voices and rattling mess gear. Craig sat between Cobb and Jordan and across from a squat, bald-headed lab man named Joe Breen. Joe brought up the subject of ringwalls and Craig saw his chance.

"Them ringwalls, how they make 'em," he said. "They eat themselves and grow themselves again; it's called resorption."

"They're resorbing sons of guns, for sure," Joe said. "How do you like the way they mate?"

"That way's not for me!" Wilde shouted from the head of the table.

"What do they mean?" Craig whispered it to Jordan, but Cobb heard him.

"Blanky wants to know the facts of life," Cobb said loudly. "Who'll tell him?"

"Who but old Papa Bork?" Wilde shouted. "Blanky, when a flutterbug gets that funny feeling it rounds up from one to a dozen others. They clump on a stem and get resorbed into one of those pinkish swellings you're all the time seeing. After a while it splits and a mess of crawlers falls out. Get it?"

Craig blushed and shook his head.

"They crawl off and plant themselves and each one grows into a phytogenous stem," Jordan said. "For a year it buds off new phyto like mad. Then it turns into a vegetative stem."

"Hell, I seen plenty crawlers," Craig muttered. "I just didn't know they was seeds."

Cobb snickered. "Know how to tell the boy crawlers from the girl crawlers, Blanky?" he asked. Joe Breen laughed.

"You're sharp as a gunflint, ain't you, Cobb?" Jordan said. "You don't tell their sex, Craig, you count it. They got one pair of legs for each parent."

"Hey, you know, that's good!" Wilde said. "Maybe a

dozen sexes, each one tearing a slow piece off all the others in one operation. That's good, all right!"

"Once in a lifetime, it better be good," Joe said. "But Great Russel, talk about polyploidy and multihybrids—wish we could breed *Thanasis* that way."

"I'll breed my own way," Wilde said. "Just you give me the chance."

"These Belconti women think Mordinmen are crude," Joe said. "You'll just have to save it up for Mordin."

"There's a pretty little target lives alone on Burton Island," Wilde said.

"Yeah! Blanky knows her," Cobb said. "Can she be had, Blanky?"

"No!" Craig clamped his big hand around his coffee cup. "She's funny, keeps to herself a lot," he said. "But she's decent and good."

"Maybe Blanky never tried," Cobb said. He winked at Joe. "Sometimes all you have to do is ask them quiet ones."

Everyone laughed. Craig scowled and clamped his teeth.

"I'm the guy that'll ask, give me the chance," Wilde shouted.

"Old Bork'll come at her with them two red dots shining and she'll fall back into loading position slick as gun oil," Joe said.

"Yeah, and he'll find out old One-dot Cobb done nipped in there ahead of him," Cobb whooped.

The work horn blared. The men stood up in a clatter of scraping feet and chairs.

"Blanky, you go on brewhouse duty till Monday," Wilde said. "Then we start a new field job."

Craig wished they were back in the field already. He felt a sudden dislike of Base Camp.

The new job was dusting translocator pollen over the many North Continent areas where, seen from the air, silver streaking into dark green signaled phyto infiltration of old-strain *Thanasis*. The flowerless killers were wind-pollinated, with the sexes on separate plants. Old ringwall scars made an overlapping pattern across half the continent, more often than not covered by silvery, iridescent stands of pure phyto growth where *Thanasis* had once ravaged. Wilde charted new ringwalls to be blown the next trip out. It was hot, sweaty work in the black protective suits and

helmets. They stayed contaminated and ate canned rations and forgot about camp fires. After two weeks their pollen cargo was used up and they landed at Burton Island and spent half a day decontaminating. As soon as he could, Craig broke away and hurried down the gorge path.

He found Midori by the pool. She had been bathing and her yellow print dress molded damply to her rounded figure and her hair still dripped. Craig couldn't help thinking, what if he'd come a few minutes earlier, and he remembered Cobb's raucous voice saying, sometimes all you have to do is ask them quiet ones. Small phytos, patterned curiously in gold and scarlet and green, clung to Midori's bare arms and shoulders. They looked natural and beautiful, and the gorge and Midori were beautiful, and Craig felt a slow ache inside him.

She was glad to see him. She shook her head sadly when he told her about the translocator pollen. A phyto settled on Craig's hand and he tried to change the subject.

"What makes 'em do that?" he asked. "The guys think they suck blood, but I know different."

"They do take body fluid samples, but so tiny you can't feel it."

"Do they so?" He shook the phyto off his hand. "Do they really?"

"Tiny, tiny samples," she said. "They're curious about us."

"Just tasting of us, huh?" He shook his head. "If they can eat us, how come us and pigs and dinotheres can't eat them?"

"Foolish Roy! They don't *eat* us!" She stamped a bare foot. "They want to understand us, but the only symbols they have are atoms and groups and radicals and ions and so on." She laughed. "Sometimes I wonder what they do think of us. Maybe they think we're giant seeds. Maybe they think we're each a single, terribly complicated molecule." She brushed her lips against a small scarlet and silver phyto on her wrist and it shifted to her cheek. "This is just their way of trying to live with us," she said.

"Just the same, it's what we call eating," he said.

"They eat only water and sunshine. They can't conceive of life that preys on life." She stamped her foot again. "Eating! Oh, Roy! It's more like a kiss!"

Craig wished he were a phyto, to touch her smooth arms

and shoulders and her firm cheek. He inhaled deeply.

"I know a better kind of kiss," he said.

"Do you, Roy?" She dropped her eyes.

"Yes, I do," he said unsteadily. Needles prickled his sweating hands that felt as big as baskets. "Midori, I—someday I—"

"Yes, Roy?" Her voice was soft.

"Ho the camp!" roared a voice from up the path.

It was Wilde, striding along, grinning with his horse teeth.

"Pop Toyama's throwing us a party, come along," he shouted. He looked closely at Midori and whistled. "Hey there, pretty little Midori, you look good enough to eat," he said.

"Thank you, Mr. Wilde," The small voice was cold.

On the way up the path, Wilde told Midori, "I learned the *Tanko* dance on Belconti. I told Pop if he'd play, you and I'd dance it for him after we eat."

"I don't feel at all like dancing," Midori said.

Wilde and Cobb flanked Midori at the dinner table and vied in paying rough court to her afterward in the small sitting room. Craig talked to Helen Toyama in a corner. She was a plump, placid woman and she pretended not to hear the rough hunting stories Jordan, Rice, and Whelan were telling each other. Papa Toyama kept on his feet, pouring the hot wine. He looked thin and old and fragile. Craig kept watching Midori. Wilde was getting red-faced and loud, and he wouldn't keep his hands off Midori. He gulped bowl after bowl of wine. Suddenly he stood up, left hand still on Midori's shoulder.

"Hey, a toast!" he shouted. He raised his bowl. "On your feet, men! Guns up for pretty little Midori!"

They stood and drank. Wilde broke his bowl with his hands. He put one fragment in his pocket and handed another to Midori. She shook her head, refusing it. Wilde grinned.

"We'll see a lot of you folks soon," he said. "Meant to tell you, Barim's moving you in to Base Camp. Our lab men will fly over next week to pick out what they can use of your gear."

Papa Toyama's lined, gentle face paled.

"We have always understood that Burton Island would remain a sanctuary for the study of the phytozoa," he said.

"It was never a Mordin understanding, Pop."

Toyama looked helplessly from Midori to Helen.

"How much time have we to close out our projects?" he asked.

Wilde shrugged. "Say a month, if you need that long."

"We do, and more." Anger touched the old man's voice.

"Why can't we at least stay here until the Belconti relief ship comes?"

"This has been our home for twenty years," Helen said softly.

"I'll ask the Huntsman to give you all the time he can," Wilde said, more gently. "But as soon as he pulls a harvest of pure-line translocator seed out of the forcing chambers, he wants to seed this island. We figure to get a maximum effect in virgin territory."

Papa Toyama blinked and nodded.

"More wine?" he asked, looking around the room.

When Wilde and Midori danced, Papa Toyama's music sounded strange to Craig. It sounded as sad as the piping of phytos.

These translocator hybrids were sure deathific, the lab men chortled. Their free-systems had high thermal stability; that would get around that sneaky phyto trick of running a fever. Their recombination index was fantastic. But there'd be a time lag in gross effect, of course. The phytos were still infiltrating more and more old-strain *Thanasis* areas. Belconti bastards should've started translocation years ago, the lab men grumbled. Scared, making their jobs last, want this planet for themselves. But wait. Just wait.

Craig and Jordan became good friends. One afternoon Craig sat waiting for Jordan at a table in the cavernous, smoky beer hall. On the rifle range an hour earlier he had fired three perfect Great Russel patterns and beaten Jordan by ten points. Barim had chanced by, slapped Craig's shoulder, and called him "stout rifle." Craig glowed at the memory. He saw Jordan coming with the payoff beer, threading between crowded, noisy tables and the fire pit where the pig carcass turned. Round face beaming, Jordan set four bottles on the rough plank table.

"Drink up, hunter!" he said. "Boy, today you earned it!"

Craig grinned back at him and took a long drink.

"My brain was ice," he said. "It wasn't like me doing it." Jordan drank and wiped his mouth on the back of his hand.

"That's how it takes you when it's for real," he said. "You turn into one big rifle."

"What's it like, Jordan? What's it really like, then?"

"Nobody can ever say." Jordan looked upward into the smoke. "You don't eat for two days, they take you through the hunt ceremonies, you get to feeling light-headed and funny, like you don't have a name or a family any more. Then—" His nostrils flared and he clenched his fists. "Then—well, for me—there was Great Russel coming at me, getting bigger and bigger, filling the whole world, just him and me in the world." Jordan's face paled and he closed his eyes. "That's the moment. Oh, oh, oh—that's the moment!" he said. He sighed, then looked at Craig solemnly. "I fired the pattern like it was somebody else, the way you just said. Three-sided and I *felt* it hit wide, but I picked it up with a spare."

Craig's heart thudded. He leaned forward.

"Were you scared then, even a least little bit?"

"You ain't scared then, because you're Great Russel himself." Jordan leaned forward too, whispering. "You feel your own shots hit you, Craig, and you know you can't never be scared again. It's like a holy dance you and Great Russel been practicing for a million years. After that, somewhere inside you, you never stop doing that dance until you die."

Jordan sighed again, leaned back and reached for his bottle.

"I dream about it lots," Craig said. He noticed his hands were shaking. "I wake up scared and sweating. Well, anyway, I mailed my application to the Hunt College by the ship you came here on."

"You'll gun through, Craig. Did you hear the Huntsman call you 'stout rifle'?"

"Yeah, like from a long way off." Craig grinned happily.

"Move your fat rump, Jordan!" a jovial voice shouted.

It was Joe Breen, the bald, squat lab man. He had six bottles clasped in his hairy arms. Sidis came behind him. Joe put down his bottles.

"This is Sidis, my Belconti seeing eye," he said.

"We know Sidis; he's an old ringwaller," Jordan said. "Hi, Sidis."

"Hello, Jordan, Roy," Sidis said. "Don't see you around much."

He and Joe sat down. Joe uncapped bottles.

"We're in the field most all the time now," Craig said.

"You'll be out more, soon's we pull the pure-line translocator seed," Joe said. "It's close. Sidis has kittens everyday."

"You grow 'em, we'll plant 'em," Jordan said. "Sidis, why don't you get off Joe's neck and come ringwalling again?"

"Too much to learn here in the labs," Sidis said. "We're all going to make our reputations out of this, if Joe and his pals don't kill us before we can publish."

"Damn the labs. Give me the field," Jordan said. "Right, Craig?"

"Right. It's clean and good, out with the phytos," Craig said. "This resorption they got, does away with things being rotten and dead—"

"Well, arrow my guts!" Joe slammed down his bottle. "Beer must make you poetical, Blanky," he snorted. "What you really mean is, they eat their own dead and their own dung. Now make a poem out of that!"

Craig felt the familiar weak, helpless anger rise in him.

"With them everything is alive all the time without stopping," he said. "All you can say they eat is water and sunshine."

"They eat water and fart helium," Joe said. "Some old-time Belconti, name of Toyama, thought they could catalyze hydrogen fusion."

"They do," Sidis said. "They can grow at night and underground and in the winter. When you stop to think about it, they're pretty wonderful."

"You're a damned poet too," Joe said. "All you Belcontis are poets."

"We're not, but I wish we had more poets," Sidis said. "Roy, you haven't forgotten what I told you once?"

"I ain't a poet," Craig said. "I never rhymed two words in my life."

"Craig's all right. Barim called him 'stout rifle' on the range this afternoon," Jordan said. "Joe, that guy Toyama,

he's still here, out on Burton Island. We got orders to move him in to Base Camp on our next field trip."

"Great Russel, he must've been here twenty years!" Joe said. "How's he ever stood it?"

"Got his wife along," Jordan said. "Craig here is going on three years. He's standing it."

"He's turning into a damned poet," Joe said. "Blanky, you better go home for sure on the next relief ship, while you're still a kind of a man."

Craig found Midori alone in her house. It looked bare. Her paintings lay strapped together beside crates of books and clothing. She smiled at him, but she looked tired and sad.

"It's hard, Roy. I don't want to leave here," she said. "I can't bear to think of what you're going to do to this island."

"I never think about what we do, except that it just has to be," he said. "Can I help you pack?"

"I'm finished. We've worked for days. And now Barim won't give us transportation for our cases of specimens." She was almost ready to cry. "Papa Toyama's heart is broken," she said.

Craig bit his lip. "Heck, we can carry fifty tons," he said. "We got the room. Why don't I ask Mr. Wilde to take 'em anyway?"

She grasped his arms and looked up at him.

"Would you, Roy? I—don't want to ask him a favor. The cases are stacked outside the lab building."

Craig found his chance after supper at the Toyamas'. Wilde left off paying court to Midori and carried his wine bowl outside. Craig followed and asked him. Wilde was looking up at the sky. Both moons rode high in a clear field of stars.

"What's in the cases, did you say?" Wilde asked.

"Specimens, slides, and stuff. It's kind of like art to 'em."

"All ours now. I'm supposed to destroy it," Wilde said. "Oh hell! All right, if you want to strong back the stuff aboard." He chuckled. "I about got Midori talked into taking one last walk down to that pool of hers. I'll tell her you're loading the cases." He nudged Craig. "Might help, hey?"

When he had the forty cases stowed and lashed, Craig

lifted the flyer to a hundred feet to test his trim. Through his side window he saw Wilde and Midori come out of the Toyama house and disappear together down the gorge path. Wilde had his arm across her shoulders. Craig grounded and went back, but he couldn't rejoin the party. For an hour he paced outside in dull, aching anger. Then his crewmates came out, arguing noisily.

"Ho Craig! Where been, boy?" Jordan slapped his shoulder. "I just bet Cobb you could outgun him tomorrow, like you did me. We'll stick him for the beer."

"Like hell," Cobb said.

"Like shooting birds in a cage," Jordan said. "Come along, Craig. Get some sleep."

"I ain't sleepy," Craig said.

"Bet old Bork's shooting a cage bird about now," Cobb said.

They all laughed except Craig.

"Come along, Craig," Jordan said. "You got to be slept and rested for tomorrow. If you don't outgun Cobb, I'll disown you."

"All right, but I ain't sleepy," Craig said.

On the trip to Base Camp next morning Craig stayed at the controls and had no chance to speak to Midori. He wasn't sure he wanted a chance. Cobb outgunned him badly on the range and he drank himself sodden afterward. He woke next morning to Jordan's insistent shaking.

"We're going out again right away," Jordan said. "Don't let Bork catch you sleeping in. Something went wrong for him last night over in Belconti quarters and he's mad as a split snake."

Four hours later Craig grounded the flyer again at the Burton Island station, with a cargo of pure-line translocator seed. The crew wore black pro-suits. Craig felt dizzy and sick. Wilde seemed very angry. He ordered his men to seed all the paths and open spaces around the buildings. Craig and Jordan seeded the gorge path and the area around the pool. When they finished, they rested briefly on the quartz boulder. For the first time, Craig let himself look around. Phytos danced piping above their heads. The stems marching up the slopes transmuted the golden sun glare to a strong, silvery moonlight that sparkled on the quartz ledge and the cascading water. He wondered if he'd ever see it again. Not like this, anyway.

"Say, it's pretty down here," Jordan said. "Kind of twangs your string, don't it? It'll make a nice hunting camp someday."

"Let's go up," Craig said. "They'll be waiting."

When he lifted out of the field, Craig looked down at the station from his side window. Midori's house looked small and forlorn and accusing.

Months of driving fieldwork followed. At Base Camp six men died of a mutant free-system before an immunizer could be synthesized. An escaped control virus wiped out a seed crop. The once jovial atmosphere turned glum and the Mordin lab men muttered about Belconti sabotage. On his first free day Craig checked out a sports flyer, found Midori in the Belconti quarters, and asked her to go riding. She came, wearing a white blouse and pearls and a blue and yellow flare skirt. She seemed sad, her small face half dreaming and her eyes unfocused. Craig forgot about being angry with her and wanted to cheer her. When he was a mile up and heading south, he tried.

"You look pretty in that dress, like a phyto," he said.

She smiled faintly. "My poor phytos. How I miss them," she said. "Where are we going, Roy?"

"Russel Island, down ahead there. I want you to see Great Russel."

"I want to see him," she said. A moment later she cried out and grasped his arm. "Look at that color in the sky over to the right!"

It was a patch of softly twinkling, shifting colors far off and high in the otherwise cloudless sky.

"Migratory phytos," he said. "We see 'em all the time."

"I know," she said. "Let's go up close. Please, Roy."

He arrowed the flyer toward the green-golden cloud. It resolved into millions of phytos, each with its opalescent hydrogen sac inflated and drifting northwest in the trade wind.

"They stain the air with beauty," Midori said. She was almost crying, but her face was vividly awake and her eyes sparkled. "Go clear inside, please, Roy."

She used to look like that when she was painting in the gorge, Craig thought. It was the way he liked her best. He matched wind speed inside the cloud and lost all sense of motion. Vividly colored phytos obscured land, sea, and

sky. Craig felt dizzily suspended in nowhere and moved closer to Midori. She slid open her window to let in the piping and the spicy perfume.

"It's so beautiful I can't bear it," she said. "They have no eyes, Roy. We must know for them how beautiful they are."

She began piping and trilling in her clear voice. A phyto patterned in scarlet and green and silver dropped to her outstretched hand and she sang to it. It deflated its balloon and quivered velvety wings. Craig shifted uneasily.

"It acts almost like it knows you," he said.

"It knows I love it."

He frowned. "Love, something so different, that ain't how I mean love."

She looked up. "How do you understand love, Roy?"

"Well, you want to protect people you love, do things for 'em," he said. He was blushing. "What can you do for a phyto?"

"Stop trying to exterminate them," she said softly.

"Please don't start that again," he said. "I don't like to think about it either, but I know it just has to be."

"It will never be," she said. "I know. Look at all the different color patterns out there. Papa Toyama remembers when phytos were almost all green. They developed the new pigment patterns to make counter-substances against *Thanasis*." She lowered her voice. "All the colors and patterns are new thoughts in that strange, inconceivably powerful biochemical mind of theirs. This cloud is a message, from one part of it to another part of it. Doesn't it frighten you?"

"You do, I think." He moved slightly away from her. "I didn't know they been changing like that."

"Who stays here long enough to notice? Who looks around him to see?" Her lips trembled. "But just think of the agony and the changings, through all the long years men have been trying to kill this planet. What if something—somehow—suddenly *understands*?"

Craig felt the hair bristle on his neck and he shifted further away from her. He felt weird and alone, without time or place or motion in that piping, perfumed phyto cloud-world. He couldn't face Midori's eyes.

"Damn it, this planet belongs to Great Russell!" he said harshly. "We'll win yet. At least they'll never take back Base or Russel Islands. Their seeds can't walk on water."

She kept her eyes on his, judging or pleading or questioning, he couldn't tell. He couldn't bear them. He dropped his own eyes.

"Shake that thing off your hand!" he ordered. "Close your window. I'm getting out of here!"

Half an hour later Craig hovered the flyer over the wholesome green grass and honest oak trees of Russel Island. He found Great Russel and held him in the magniviewer and they watched him catch and kill a buffalo. Midori gasped.

"Ten feet high at the shoulder. Four tons, and light on his feet as a cat," Craig said proudly. "That long reddish hair is like wire. Them bluish bare spots are like armor plate."

"Aren't his great teeth enough to kill the cattle he eats?" she asked. "What enemies has he, to need those terrible horns and claws?"

"His own kind. And us," Craig said. "Our boys will hunt him here, here on this planet, and become men. Our men will hunt him here, to heal their souls."

"You love him, don't you, Roy? Did you know you were a poet?" She couldn't take her eyes off the screen. "He is beautiful, fierce and terrible, not what women call beauty."

"He's a planet-shaker, he is! It takes four perfect shots to bring him down," Craig said. "He jumps and roars like the world ending—oh, Midori, I'll have my day!"

"But you might be killed."

"The finest kind of death. In our lost-colony days, our old fathers fought him with bow and arrow," Craig said. "Even now, sometimes, we form a sworn band and fight him to the death with spears and arrows."

"I've read of sworn bands. I suppose you can't help how you feel."

"I don't want to help it. A sworn band is the greatest honor that can come to a man," he said. "But thanks for trying to understand."

"I want to understand," she said. "I want to, Roy. Is it that you can't believe in your own courage until you face Great Russel?"

"That's just what women can't ever understand." He looked at her eyes again and that question or whatever was still in them. "Girls can't help turning into women, but

a man has to make himself," he said. "It's like I don't have my man's courage until I get it from Great Russel. There's chants and stuff with salt and fire—afterward the boy eats pieces of the heart—I shouldn't talk about that, you'll laugh."

"I feel more like crying," she said. "There are different kinds of courage, Roy." Her face worked strangely, but she kept her eyes on his. "You have more courage than you know, Roy. You must find your true courage in your own heart, not in Great Russel's."

"I can't." He clenched his fists and looked away from her eyes. "I'm just a nothing inside me, until I face Great Russel," he said.

"Take me home, Roy, I'm afraid I'm going to cry." She dropped her face to her folded hands. "I don't have much courage," she said.

They flew to Base Camp in silence. When Craig helped her down from the flyer, she was really crying. She bowed her head momentarily against his chest and the spicy phyto smell rose from her hair.

"Goodbye, Roy," she said.

He could barely hear her. Then she turned and ran.

Craig didn't see her again. Wilde's crew spent all its time in the field, blowing ringwalls and planting translocator seed. Craig was glad to be away. The atmosphere of Base Camp turned from glum to morose. Everywhere across North Continent new phyto growth in silver, green, and scarlet spotted the dark green *Thanasis* areas. Other ring-wall crews reported the same of Main and South Continents. Wilde's temper became savage; Cobb cursed bitterly at trifles; even happy-go-lucky Jordan stopped joking. Half asleep one night in field camp, Craig heard Wilde shouting incredulous questions at the communicator inside the flyer. He came out cursing to rouse the camp.

"Phytos are on Base Island," he said. "Stems popping up everywhere."

"Great Russel in the sky!" Jordan jerked full awake. "How come?"

"Belconti bastards planted 'em, that's how!" Wilde said. "Barims got 'em all arrested under camp law."

Cobb began cursing in a steady, monotonous voice.

"That—cracks—the gunflint!" Jordan said.

"We can't turn loose *Thanasis* there," Whelan said. "What'll we do?"

"Kill 'em by hand," Wilde said grimly. "We'll sow the rest of our seed broadcast and go in to help."

Craig felt numb and unbelieving. Shortly after noon he grounded the flyer at Base Camp, in the foul area beyond the emergency rocket launching frame. Wilde cleaned up at once and went to see Barim, while his crew decontaminated the flyer. When they came through the irradiation tunnel in clean denims, Wilde was waiting.

"Blanky, come with me!" he barked.

Craig followed him into the gray stone building at the field edge. Wilde pushed him roughly through a door, said "Here he is, Huntsman," and closed the door again.

Rifles, bows, and spears decorated the stone walls. The burly Chief Huntsman, cold-eyed under his roached gray hair and the four red dots, sat facing the door from behind a wooden desk. He motioned Craig to sit down in one of the row of wooden chairs along the inner wall. Craig sat stiffly in the one nearest the door. His mouth was dry.

"Roy Craig, you are on your trial for life and honor under camp law," Barim said sternly. "Swear now to speak truth in the blood of Great Russel."

"I swear to speak truth in the blood of Great Russel." Craig's voice sounded squeaky and false to him. He began to sweat.

"What would you say of someone who deliberately betrayed our project to destroy the phytos?"

"He would be guilty of hunt treason, sir, and be outlawed."

"Very well." Barim clasped his hands and leaned forward, his gray eyes boring into Craig's eyes. "What did you tell Bork Wilde was in those cases you flew from Burton Island to Base Island?"

Craig felt his stomach knot up.

"Slides, specimens, science stuff, sir," he said.

Barim questioned him closely about the cases. Craig tried desperately to speak truth without naming Midori. Barim forced her name from him, then questioned him on her attitudes. Craig sweated and squirmed and a terrible fear grew in him. He kept his eyes on Barim's eyes and spoke a tortured kind of truth, but he would not attain

Midori. Finally Barim broke their locked gazes and slapped his desk.

"Are you in *love* with Midori Blake, boy?" he roared.

Craig dropped his own glance. "I don't know," he said. How do you know when you're in love, he thought. You just know it, like you know you're alive. "Well—I like to be around her—I guess I never thought—" he said. If you have to think about it, it ain't love, it's just being friends, he thought. "I—don't think so, sir," he said finally.

"The phyto seeds came here in those cases," Barim said. "Who planted them?"

Craig avoided Barim's eyes. "They can walk and plant themselves, sir. Maybe they escaped," he said. His mouth was dry as powder.

"Would Midori Blake be morally capable of releasing them?"

Craig's face twisted. "Morally—I'm not clear on the word, sir—" Sweat dripped on his hands.

"I mean, would she have the guts to want to do it and to do it?"

Ice clamped Craig's heart. He looked Barim in the eye.

"No, sir!" he said. "I won't never believe that about Midori!"

Barim smiled grimly and slapped his desk again.

"Wilde!" he roared. "Bring them in!"

Midori, in white blouse and black skirt, came in first. Her face was pale but composed, and she smiled faintly at Craig. Mildred Ames followed, slender and thin-faced in white, then Wilde, scowling blackly. Wilde sat between Craig and Miss Ames, Midori on the end.

"Miss Blake, young Craig has clearly been your dupe, as you insist he has," Barim said. "Your confession ends your trial except for sentencing. Once more I beg you to say why you have done this."

"You wouldn't understand," Midori said. "Be content with what you know."

Her voice was low but firm. Craig felt sick with dismay.

"I can understand without condoning," Barim said. "For your own sake, I must know your motive. You may be insane."

"You know I'm sane," Midori said. "You know that."

"Yes." Barim's wide shoulders sagged. "Invent a motive,

then," he said. He seemed almost to plead. "Say you hate Mordin. Say you hate me."

"I hate no one. I'm sorry for you all."

"I'll give you a reason!" Miss Ames jumped to her feet, thin face burning. "Your reckless, irresponsible use of translocation endangers us all! Accept defeat and go home!"

She helped Barim recover his composure. He smiled.

"Please sit down, Miss Ames," he said calmly. "In three months your relief ship will take you to safety. But we neither accept defeat nor fear death. We will require no tears of you or anyone."

Miss Ames sat down, her whole posture shouting defiance. Barim swung his eyes back to Midori and his face turned to iron.

"Miss Blake, you are guilty of hunt treason. You have betrayed your own kind in a fight with an alien life form," he said. "Unless you admit to some recognizably *human* motive, I must conclude that you abjure your own humanity."

Midori said nothing. Craig stole a glance at her. She sat erect but undefiant, small feet together, small hands folded in her lap. Barim slapped his desk and stood up.

"Very well. Under camp law I sentence you, Midori Blake, to outlawry from your kind. You are a woman and not of Mordin; therefore I will remit the full severity. You will be set down, lacking everything made with hands, on Russel Island. There you may still be nourished by the roots and berries of the Earth-type life you have wilfully betrayed. If you survive until the Belconti relief ship comes, you will be sent home on it." He burned his glance at Midori. "Have you anything to say before I cause your sentence to be executed?"

The four red dots blazed against the sudden pallor of the Huntsman's forehead. Something snapped in Craig. He leaped up, shouting into the hush.

"You can't do it, sir! She's little and weak! She doesn't know our ways—"

"Down! Shut up, you whimpering fool!" Wilde slapped and wrestled Craig down to his chair. "Silence!" Barim thundered. Wilde sat down, breathing hard, and the room was hushed again.

"I understand your ways too well," Midori said. "Spare me your mercy. Put me down on Burton Island."

"Midori, no!" Miss Ames turned to her. "You'll starve! *Thanasis* will kill you!"

"You can't understand either, Mildred," Midori said. "Mr. Barim, will you grant my request?"

Barim leaned forward, resting on his hands. "It is so ordered," he said huskily. "Midori Blake, almost you make me know again the taste of fear." He straightened and turned to Wilde, his voice suddenly flat and impersonal. "Carry out the sentence, Wilde."

Wilde stood up and pulled Craig to his feet. "Get the crew to the flyer. Wear pro-suits," he ordered. "Run, boy!"

Craig stumbled out into the twilight.

Craig drove the flyer northwest from Base Camp at full throttle, overtaking the sun, making it day again. Silence ached in the main cabin behind him. He leaned away from it, as if to push the flyer forward with his muscles. He refused to think at all, but he couldn't help feeling. He knew it had to be and still he couldn't bear it. It seemed an anguished forever before he grounded the flyer roughly beside the deserted buildings on Burton Island. They got out, the men in black pro-suits, Midori still in blouse and skirt. She stood apart quietly and looked toward her little house on the cliff edge. *Thanasis* thrust up dark green and knee high along all the paths.

"Break out ringwall kits. Blow all the buildings," Wilde ordered. "Blanky, you come with me."

At Midori's house Wilde ordered Craig to sink explosive pellets every three feet along the foundations. A single pellet would have been enough. Craig found his voice.

"The Huntsman didn't say do this, Mr. Wilde. Can't we at least leave her this house?"

"She won't need it," Wilde said. "*Thanasis* will kill her before morning."

"Let her have it to die in, then. She loved this little house."

Wilde grinned without mirth, baring his big horse teeth.

"She's *outlaw*, Blanky," he said. "You know the law: nothing made with hands."

Craig bowed his head, teeth clamped. Wilde whistled tunelessly as Craig set the pellets. They returned to the flyer and Jordan reported the other buildings ready to blow. His round, jolly face was grim. Midori had not moved. Craig

wanted to speak to her, say he was sorry, say goodbye, but he knew if he tried he would find no words but a howl. Her strange little smile seemed already to remove her to another world, a million light-years from Roy Craig and his kind. Cobb looked at her, his rat face eager.

"We'll detonate from the air," Wilde said. "The blast will kill anyone standing here."

"We're supposed to take off all her clothes first," Cobb said. "You know the law, Bork. Nothing made with hands."

"That's right," Wilde said.

Midori took off her blouse. She looked straight at Wilde. Red mist clouded Craig's vision.

"Load the kits," Wilde said abruptly. "Into the flyer, all hands! *Jump*, you dogs!"

From his side window by the controls Craig saw Midori start down the gorge path. She walked as carelessly relaxed as if she were going down to paint. *Thanasis* brushed her bare legs and he thought he saw the angry red spring out. She did not flinch or look back. Craig felt the pain in his own skin. He lifted the flyer with a lurching roar and he did not look out when Wilde blew up the buildings.

Away from the sun, southeast toward Base Camp, wrapped in his own thought-vacant hell, Roy Craig raced to meet the night.

With flame, chemicals, and grub hoes, the Mordinmen fought their losing battle for Base Island. Craig worked himself groggy with fatigue to keep from thinking. He felt a mingled sense of loss and grief and anger and satisfaction, and he wondered if he were losing his mind. The phyto stems radiated underground with incredible growth energy. They thrust up redoubly each new day like hydra heads. Newly budded phytos, the size of thumbnails, colored the air of Base Island in gaily dancing swirls. Once Craig saw Joe Breen, the squat lab man, cursing and hopping like a frog while he slashed at dancing phytos with an axe. It seemed to express the situation.

Barim made his grim decision to move camp to Russel Island and seed the home island with *Thanasis*. Craig was helping erect the new camp when he collapsed. He awoke in bed in a small, bare infirmary room at Base Camp. The Mordin doctor took blood samples and questioned him.

Craig admitted to nausea and joint pains for several days past.

"I been half crazy, sir," he defended himself. "I didn't know I was sick."

"I've got twenty more do know it," the doctor grunted.

He went out, frowning. Craig slept, to flee in dream-terror from a woman's eyes. He half woke at intervals for medication and clinical tests, to sleep again and face repeatedly a Great Russel dinother. It looked at him with a woman's inscrutable eyes. He roused into the morning of the second day to find another bed squeezed into the small room, by the window. Papa Toyama was in it. He smiled at Craig.

"Good morning, Roy," he said. "I would be happier to meet you in another place."

Many were down and at least ten had died, he told Craig. The Belconti staff was back in the labs, working frantically to identify agent and vector. Craig felt hollow and his head ached and he didn't much care. Dimly he saw Miss Ames in a white lab smock come around the foot of his bed to stand between him and Papa Toyama. She took the old man's hand.

"George, old friend, we've found it," she said.

"You do not smile, Mildred."

"I don't smile. All night I've been running a phase analysis of diffraction patterns," she said. "It's what we've feared—a spread of two full Ris units."

"So. Planet Froy again." Papa Toyama's voice was calm. "I would like to be with Helen now, for the little time we have."

"Surely," she said. "I'll see to it."

Quick, heavy footsteps sounded outside. A voice broke in.

"Ah. Here you are, Miss Ames."

Barim, in leather hunting clothes, bulked in the door. Miss Ames turned to face him across Craig's bed.

"I'm told you found the virus," Barim said.

"Yes." Miss Ames smiled thinly.

"Well, what countermeasures? Twelve are dead. What can I do?"

"You might shoot at it with a rifle, Mr. Barim. It is a *Thanasis* free-system that has gotten two degrees of tem-

poral freedom. Does that mean anything to you?"

His heavy jaw set like a trap. "No, but your manner does. It's the plague, isn't it?"

She nodded. "No suit can screen it. No cure is possible. We are all infected."

Barim chewed his lip and looked at her in silence.

"For your sake now, I wish we'd never come here," he said at last. "I'll put our emergency rocket in orbit to broadcast a warning message. That will save your relief ship, when it comes, and Belconti can warn the sector." A half-smile softened his bluff, grim features. "Why don't you rub my nose in it? Say you told me so?"

"Need I?" Her chin came up. "I pity you Mordinmen. You must all die now without dignity, crying out for water and your mothers. How you will loathe that!"

"Does that console you?" Barim still smiled. "Not so, Miss Ames. All night I thought it might come to this, and even now men are forging arrow points. We'll form a sworn band and all die fighting Great Russel." His voice deepened and his eyes blazed. "We'll stagger who can, crawl who must, carry our helpless, and all die fighting like men."

"Like savages! No! No!" Her hands flew up in shocked protest. "Forgive me for taunting you, Mr. Barim. One never says yes to death. I need your help, all of your men and transport, truly I do. Some of us may live, if we fight hard enough."

"How?" He growled it. "I thought on Planet Froy—"

"Our people on Planet Froy had only human resources," she said. "But here, I'm certain that somewhere already the phytos have synthesized the plague immunizer that seems forever impossible to human science." Her voice shook. "Please help us, Mr. Barim. If we can find it, isolate enough to learn its structure—"

"No!" He cut her off bluntly. "Too long a gamble. One doesn't run squealing away from death, Miss Ames. My way's decent and sure."

Her chin came up again and her voice sharpened. "How dare you condemn your own men unconsulted? They might prefer a fight for life."

"Hah! You don't know them!" He bent to shake Craig's shoulder with rough affection. "You, lad," he said. "You'll

get up and walk with a sworn band, won't you?"

"No," Craig said.

He struggled off his pillow, propped shakily on his arms. Miss Ames smiled and patted his cheek.

"You'll stay and help us fight to live, won't you?" she said.

"No," Craig said.

"Think what you say, lad!" Barim said tautly. "Great Russel can die of plague, too. We owe him a clean death."

Craig sat bolt upright. He stared straight ahead.

"I foul the blood of Great Russel," he said slowly and clearly. "I foul it with dung. I foul it with carrion. I foul it with—"

Barim's fist knocked Craig to the pillow and split his lip. The Huntsman's face paled under his tan.

"You're mad, boy!" he whispered. "Not even in madness may you say those words."

Craig struggled up again. "You're the crazy ones, not me," he said. He tongued his lip and blood dripped on his thin pajama coat. "I'll die an outlaw, that's how I'll die," he said. "An outlaw, on Burton Island." He met Barim's unbelieving eyes. "I foul the blood—"

"Silence!" Barim roared. "Outlawry it is. I'll send a party for you, stranger."

He whirled and stamped out. Miss Ames followed him.

"You Mordinmen," she said, shaking her head.

Craig sat on the edge of his bed and pulled his sweat-soaked pajamas straight. The room blurred and swam around him. Papa Toyama's smile was like a light.

"I'm ashamed. I'm ashamed. Please forgive us, Papa Toyama," Craig said. "All we know is to kill and kill and kill."

"We all do what we must," the old man said. "Death cancels all debts, Roy. It will be good to rest."

"Not my debts. I'll never rest again," Craig said. "All of a sudden I know—Great Russel, *how* I know—I know I loved Midori Blake."

"She was a strange girl," Papa Toyama said. "Helen and I thought she loved you, in the old days on our island." He bowed his head. "But our lives are only chips in a waterfall. Goodbye, Roy."

Jordan in a black pro-suit came shortly after. His face

was bitter with contempt. He jerked his thumb at the door.

"On your feet, stranger! Get going!" he snapped.

In pajamas and barefooted, Craig followed him. From somewhere in the infirmary he heard a voice screaming. It sounded like Cobb. They walked across the landing field. Everything seemed underwater. Men were rigging to fuel the emergency rocket. Craig sat apart from the others in the flyer. Cobb was missing. Wilde was flushed and shivering and his eyes glared with fever. Jordan took the controls. No one spoke. Craig dozed through colored dream-scrapes while the flyer outran the sun. He woke when it grounded in early dawn at Burton Island.

He climbed down and stood swaying beside the flyer. *Thanasis* straggled across the rubble heaps and bulked waist-high in the dim light along the paths. Phytos stirred on their stems and piped sleepily in the damp air. Craig's eyes searched for something, a memory, a presence, a completion and rest, he didn't know, searching with his eyes, but he felt it very near him. Then Wilde came behind him, shoving. Craig moved away.

"Stranger!" Wilde called.

Craig turned and looked into the fever glaring eyes above the big horse teeth. The teeth gaped.

"I foul the blood of Midori Blake. I foul it with dung. I—"

Strength from nowhere exploded into the bone and muscle of Roy Craig. He sprang and felt the teeth break under his knuckles. Wilde fell. The others scrambled down from the flyer.

"Blood right! Blood right!" Craig shouted.

A bell note rang in his voice, as strange to him as the strength that flamed along his nerves. Jordan held back Rice and Whelan. Wilde rose, spitting blood, swinging big fists. Craig closed to meet him, berserk in fury. The world wheeled and tilted, shot with flashing colors, gasping with grunts and curses, but rock-steady in the center of things, Wilde pressed the fight and Craig hurled it back on him. He felt the blows without pain, felt his ribs splinter, felt the good shock of his own blows all the way to his heels. Bruising falls on the rough slag, feet stamping, arms grappling, hands tearing, breath sobbing, both men on knees clubbing with fists and forearms. The scene

cleared and Craig saw through one eye Wilde crumpled and inert before him. He rose unsteadily. He felt weightless and clean inside.

"Blood right, stranger," Jordan said, grim faced and waiting.

"Let it go," Craig said. "Great Russel go with you, stranger."

He turned down the gorge path, ignoring his chest pains, crashing through the rank *Thanasis*. *Home!* going *home!* going *home!* a bell tolled in his head. He did not look back.

Thanasis grew more sparsely in the shaded gorge. Craig heard the waterfall and old memories cascaded upon him. He rounded to view of it by the quartz boulder and his knees buckled and he knelt beside the boulder. She was very near him. He felt an overpowering sense of her presence. She was this place.

Dawn light shafted strongly into the gorge, sparkled on the quartz ledge, made fleeting rainbows in the spray above the pool. Phytos lifted from ghost-silver stems to twitter and dance their own rainbow in the air. Something rose in Craig's throat and choked him. Tears blurred his good eye.

"Midori," he said. "Midori."

The feeling overwhelmed him. His heart was bursting. He could find no words. He raised his arms and battered face to the sky and cried out incoherently. Then a blackness swept away his intolerable pain.

Titanic stirrings. Windy rushings. Sharp violences swarming.

Fittings-together in darkness. A trillion times a trillion times a trillion patient searchings. Filtering broken lights, silver, green, golden, scarlet.

Bluntings. Smoothings. Transformings into otherness.

Flickering awareness, planet-vast and atom-tiny, no focus between. The proto-sensorium of a god yearning to know himself. Endless, patient agony in search for being.

Form and color unfolding in middle focus. Flashings of terrible joy and love unspeakable. It looked. Listened. Felt. Smelled. Tasted.

Crystalline polar wastes. Wine of sweet. Warm sun glint on blue water. Perfumed wind caress. Thorn of bitter.

Rain patter. Silver-green sweep of hill. Storm roar and shaking. Sharp of salt. Sleeping mountains. Surf beat. Star patterns dusted on blackness. Clear of sour. Cool moons of night.

It knew and loved.

Ragged line of men gaunt under beard stubble. Green plain. High golden sun. Roar. Shaggy redness bounding. Bow twangs. Whispering arrow flights. Deep-chested shouts of men. Lances thrusting. Bodies ripped, thrown, horn-impaled and beating with fists. Great shape kneeling, threshing, streaming blood. Deep man-shouts dwindling to a silence.

It knew and sorrowed.

The woman bathing. Sunlight dappling rounded limbs. Black hair streaming. Grace beyond bearing. Beauty that was pain.

It shook terribly with love.

Ground firm beneath rested flesh, whole and unblemished forever. Bursting excitement. HOME! coming HOME! coming HOME!

It came home.

Roy Craig knew his body again and the solid frame of things around him. He lay on his back and a warm, aromatic breeze blew down the gorge and tossed the branches in graceful, silvery patterns against the blue sky. He heard the waterfall and the phytos and he felt rested and good. He groped for an old, lost grief and it was lost forever in Midori suddenly kneeling beside him, her face radiant and her fingers cool on his forehead. Except for clinging phytos, she was naked. He was naked too and he was not ashamed and not excited and he realized they were both dead. He sat up in fearful wonder.

"Midori," he said. "When you die—it's like this—how—what—"

He wanted to know a million things, but one came first.

"Can I ever lose you again, now?" he asked.

"Never again." She smiled. "We didn't die, Roy. We're more alive than we've ever been."

He took her hands. They were warm and solid.

"The plague killed everybody," he said.

"I know. You talked in your delirium. But we didn't die."

"What happened to us?"

"The phytos saved us," she said. "Somewhere in their infinite life-spectrum they matched up a band for humans. They mingled their substance with ours, cleansed us of *Thanasis* and gave us immunity." She smiled and squeezed his hands. "I know how you feel. I watched over you for two weeks while phytos came and went from you. Then I understood what had happened to me."

His hand discovered his beard and he nodded. "I have to believe you. But why, when we tried so long and hard to kill 'em? Why?"

"They couldn't know that. Here death and decay are only vital changings," she said. "This life never split apart, Roy, and in wholeness is nothing but love."

"I felt—dreamed that." He told her of his visions.

"It was no dream," she said. "You were diffused into the planetary consciousness. It happened to me, too."

"I'm afraid I'm dreaming right this minute," he said. "Can we still eat and drink and sleep and all?"

She laughed, jumped to her feet and pulled him upright.

"Foolish Roy. You still don't believe you're alive," she said. "Come, I want to show you something."

He ran hand in hand with her to the pool side. The gravel hurt his feet, but the scrubby *Thanasis* that brushed his ankles didn't hurt at all. Beside the pool stems had fused ringwall fashion into a series of connecting rooms like hollow cones, clean, dry and silvery with shadows. He followed Midori through the rooms and outside again to where a grove of separate stems displayed brownish swellings. She tore away one covering like thin paper to reveal pearly, plum-sized nodules closely packed in a cavity. She held one to his lips and he ate it. It was cool and crisp, with a delightful, unfamiliar flavor. He realized he was very hungry. He ate another and looked at her with awe.

"There are hundreds of these vesicles," she said. "No two ever taste quite the same."

"Do they know us like people, then?" he asked. "Like I know you?"

"It knows us biochemically, as if we were giant molecules," she said. "Here's what I think, Roy. I think this life had infinite potentialities and mastered its environment using only the tiniest part of them. It never split up, to fight itself and evolve that way. So it lay dreaming and might

have dreamed forever—”

She looked away across the pool to the stem clad slope and the dancing, rainbow clouds of phytos.

“Go on,” he said. “You mean we came then, with *Thanasis*?”

“Yes. We forced changes, genetic recombinations, rises in temperatures and process speeds. Whatever happened at one point could be duplicated everywhere, because it’s all one and a year is to it like a million years in the evolution of Earth-life. It raised itself to a new level of awareness. We awakened it.” She brought her eyes back to Craig’s eyes. “I feel it knows us and loves us for that.”

“Loves us for *Thanasis*!”

“It loves *Thanasis* too. *Thanasis* is being fused into the planetary life, just as we are,” she said. “It thinks us biochemically, Roy. Like each littlest phyto, we are thoughts now in that strange mind. I think we focus its new-found awareness somehow, serve it as a symbol system, a form-giver—” She lowered her voice and pressed closer to him and he felt her warmth and nearness. “We are its thoughts that also think themselves, the first it has ever had,” she whispered. “It is a great and holy mystery, Roy. Only through us can it know its own beauty and wonder. It loves and needs us.”

“I feel what you mean.” He ran his hands down the smooth curve of her back and she shivered under his hands. “I feel what you mean. I know what you mean.” He clasped her to him and kissed her. “I love it, too. Through you, I love it.”

“I give you back its love,” she whispered into his shoulder.

“We’re alive!” he said. “Midori, now I know we’re alive!”

“We’re alive. Do you realize that we’ll never be ill, never grow old, never have to die?”

He pressed his face into her hair. “Never is a long time. But I want you for a long, long time, Midori.”

“Our children will take up our duties,” she said, still into his shoulder, and she was blushing now. “If we tire, we can be resorbed and diffuse through the planetary consciousness, as we did in our visions.”

“Our children,” he said. “Our children’s children. Thousands and thousands. It’s wonderful, Midori.”

"It could be the same for any old or ill human being who might come to this planet, now," she said. "They could have youth and strength again forever."

"Yes." He looked up at the arching sky. "And there's a rocket up there in orbit with a warning message. Maybe they'll discover us someday. But for a long time yet they'll hunt shy of us like the plague they think we are."

"Yes. It's not fair they can't know—"

"That they are their own plague," he finished for her.

He kissed her tear-bright eyes and patted her head to rest again on his shoulder.

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