

THE NEW KING

BY

M.P. SHIEL



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(1865-1947)

Plus an unpublished dialog
with
Cummings King Monk
omitted from *The Pale Ape* of 1911

Privately printed for
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Preface by A. Reynolds Morse

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An Introduction to *The New King* (M.P. Shiel's last novel)

By A. Reynolds Morse

1 In 1946 and 1947 when I was struggling to find anyone willing to publish *The Works of M.P. Shiel*, several attempts were made to get other Shiel books into print. To this end, Shiel had already revised *The Weird O' It* into a shorter version titled *The Innocent Hands*. And since the publication of *The Young Men Are Coming* in 1937, the septuagenarian had been working on his *New Translation of Luke* as well as on a final novel titled *The New King* or alternately, *The Splendid Devil*.

Under the latter title, there exists in Texas at the Humanities Research Center in Austin, a drama in four acts. It is in the form of a corrected typescript of 165 pages (ms. no. T-236). Under the title of *The New King*, the Humanities Research Center also possesses a 341 page, first draft manuscript carrying a note by Shiel importantly dated 5/12/38. In my own collection is a 472 page manuscript of the same novel. The final typescript version is lightly corrected in Shiel's own writing. It was sent to me by John Gawsworth in the summer of 1947 in exchange for food parcels, and with the request that I attempt to get Shasta Publishing Co. of Chicago (whose editors were considering the Shiel bibliography) to undertake issuing it.

On November 29, 1947 Gawsworth wrote me as follows from 18 Gwendwr Rd. Barons Court London, W 14:

Dear Ren:

I owe you thanks for magnificent parcels (sent with Annamarie Miller) and acknowledgement of 5 letters. Only today can I thank you most sincerely and acknowledge, for as you will see I now have a new address and MPS and I are at last settled in.

When I got back from India, I took a furnished house - it cost too much, and now we (MPS & I) are in an unfurnished room, with light, a fire, a divan, 4 tons of books (40 crates) and off we start again!!! (My wife has temporarily returned chez mama) I was so glad Rota sent you the Monk ms - I bid for it, (to get it back) but, of course he outbid me. By all means draw up the proposed book - it sounds most interesting and I look forward to hearing of

your final selection. (This was to have been a book of short stories, ed.) You have Arkham House Catalog, so will not overstep their copyrights. I have written Mr. Dikty (of Shasta) that he really ought to clear his mind of doing anything else except *The New King*, SHIEL'S LAST NOVEL; and that I will provide an 8 page bio-bibliographical Preface, (defending any possible faults) and pointing out its merits for the unpracticed reviewer. I have told him I do not want to tinker with *Jesus*, and still hope to find the missing notebooks once a clue turns up. I have written James Henle to send *The New King* (and the revised typescript of *The Weird O' It*, re-entitled *The Innocent Hands*) to Dikty. I have also told Dikty that if he accepts *The New King* I will not quarrel over terms, and that he may announce it on the wrapper of your book. It is not in Phipps' very best vein, but well-introduced, it is well worth publishing, as I am sure you will agree when you see it. So I count on your backing with Shasta . . . As soon as I get my 4 tons sorted, I'll let Rota have some Shiel ms and ts (duplicates) to post your way. In the meantime, get Shasta interested in *The New King*, alternative titles: *The Splendid Devil* or *The Kiss*. That's the job. As ever, Juan R.

Needless to say, Shasta turned down both of the Shiel books. Eventually, early in the 1950's, Gawsworth asked me to get the two manuscripts back from Shasta and to see if some other publisher would be interested in them. After a couple of other unsuccessful attempts to find a publisher, I wrote to Gawsworth that the situation seemed hopeless. He said to keep the manuscripts and hope a publisher would come along. The years passed. Gawsworth died in 1970. In 1980, the update of the original Shiel bibliography (finally published in 1948 by Fantasy Publishing Co. of Los Angeles) was privately printed by me. And while I examined all the various manuscripts and books in my collection, it must be confessed that I did not read the two mentioned here.

During a hot summer night's nocturnal reading session between 2 and 4 a.m. recently, I got to thinking about the people who had asked concerning Shiel's essay "On Reading" which is found in the 1909 novel *This Knot of Life* on pages (9)-80. I got out of bed to go to the attic to get it to re-read it, when my eye caught the box containing a draft of *Cold Steel* abridged by Shiel and the manuscript of *The New King*. I stumbled back to

bed with the latter and started to read it. It was not a propitious beginning, for the story was long in getting moving.

The New King ms is in four tied sets of pages. At the end of the first 'book' of 134 typed pages only a sense of duty to M.P. Shiel kept me going. But gradually the story gained momentum. Here and there flashes of real Shiel began to appear. Finally, as events became more frequent and the pace quickened, I found I was almost unable to put the novel down. In fact I ended up reading the last 2 sets of ms pages today, July 19, 1980 in a single sitting! The old Shiel magic had worked again - and the morning stars sang once more - this time on a dripping hot afternoon!

Now I have made further amends, celebrating the Centenary of Shiel's Redonda Coronation on July 21, 1980 by handing to the printers the manuscript of *The New King*.

Thus it was, here sitting in the same garden, but now much civilized, with the chickens long gone and the trees grown up, that there flashed before me all the reading done forty years ago. Then I was 25, and M.P. Shiel was still alive. Now the realization is born again that good or bad, M.P. Shiel is still an author to be reckoned with. Even in the last decade of his life, and after 24 other novels, some of which shook the early developing world of modern fiction, his last novel is well worth the first look!

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As Shiel's bibliographer, it is now somewhat generally supposed that I am so stoutly pro-Shiel that it is impossible for me either to look at him critically or to withstand the opinions of others when they are hostile or adverse. Despite these misapprehensions, I am still a realist. And I see the writer's good as well as his worst points.

Before discussing M.P. Shiel's last novel, it is well to dispense with certain mechano-historical questions relative to it. First, it is interesting to note that the author has apparently counted the words in the manuscript, for the number is given lightly in pencil at the end of each chapter. Did this

mean that he was writing the novel to sell as a serial? Or was he still imbued with selling a book by the word? Who knows!

Next is the question of the ending of the story. Might it one time have had a different conclusion? I ask this hesitatingly, for it could be simply random chance that the last three pages of the manuscript (470-472) are of totally different paper stock and typing impressions. But the question is important since the winding down of the tale is as momentous as it seems almost too severely compressed. Could the author have cut it back? After all, ms no. 242, whereabouts unknown, has 493 pages according to a note I received from John Gawsworth. Certainly the manner in which the book terminates is such that it could easily have taken a wide variety of turns.

Another mechanical matter, of course is the kind and number of the author's own holograph corrections and changes. Any appraisal of these really belongs under critique, rather than in this brief history of the author's last novel being examined here for the first time.

Now as to the exact date of *The New King*. It may, after all, be a much earlier story which Shiel refurbished and updated. Its first mention is in ms no. T-241 found in the Humanities Research Center Shiel Collection, 341 pages of a 'first draft', with a note by Shiel dated May 12, 1938. (Shiel's 'last novel', of course, is conventionally regarded as *The Young Men Are Coming* issued in 1937.)

There are some cogent reasons to consider that *The New King* must have a spread in its date - say 1938-1945. And while we may still unearth earlier roots, the author does mention the Gestapo and the Ogpu. Even in an otherwise timeless 'kingdom' we find that cars and aeroplanes are present, although horses do creep in here and there when people move about. The king himself dies with a machine gun blazing in his hands, so the story must be considered 'modern', even though there is a good deal of evidence that it could have precluded, at one time, the isolatedly mentioned trappings of today. The staging is clearly such that it could have happened almost

anywhere in east central Europe, and anytime after say, 1890. After all, an imaginary kingdom and its rather inbred royal family could exist where Wratislaw is placed, east of Germany; and the need for extending the date of the book forward to 1945 or so is that there is some internal evidence at the end which echoes phrases from Shiel's last essay, *Jesus*.

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It seems logical to ask if such a belated reading of Shiel's final novel will change any of the almost didactic assessments which appeared in the 1980 *Update of the Shiel Bibliography*. Is that ambitious 850 page work made any the less definitive by my total failure to look into *The New King*? The answer is, alas, no. The novel will not be a best seller in today's bland market. It is a romantic adventure story, but it also reflects the mature Shiel's perhaps retrograde philosophy reaching out beyond our temporal world to the broader concepts of how the author thinks life should be lived: Everybody should be wealthy but nobody should ever become rich. And science should, by its natural thrust, succor us all.

In approaching *The New King* it is well to be prepared for a pedestrian beginning. It will not hurt, however, to know in advance that the reigning monarch of the kingdom of Wratislaw is named Carol. He is engaged to his cousin Vasilissa, while another cousin, Prince Alexander Wratislaw is the Splendid Devil who aspires to fill the shoes of Carol and to gain Vasilissa. It is also a frustrating tale, apart from the slow beginning, because the 'old' king is at once so full of introspection and developing ideas, that the imminent inaction of his self-humiliation will turn off the reader who does not recognize the temperaments of the Overman when they are in the process of being shaped by the vicissitudes necessary to his spiritual and ideological transformations. The theme of self-immolation, even in a king, is not destined to catch the popular imagination which has never known such an era of total self-indulgence as ours.

One is, alas therefore, not really drawn to Carol, for as the rightful king he showed no fight.

His abdication, even though temporary, to take up the life of a working man, lacks conviction. Yet as a foundry laborer, and under the name of Lancelot, Carol did tackle and whip the loud-mouth Blucher. That encounter, as often happens with Shiel, is brought up again at a crucial moment when the book is exploding at the end.

Carol decides to leave his throne for 6 months to come to grips with himself and the real world of work and men. He leaves the palace in the disguise of a worker and very soon meets Haralda Hásdruvol. She is the epitome of the educated woman worker and helps him adapt to the mores of those who work - who MUST work - but who so often think themselves better equipped to rule than they really are.

Prince Alexander conspires to take over the kingdom. He uses an old decree of the Middle Ages called the Crusader Law. This was designed to keep the throne of Wratislaw occupied when the Kings of that time were off on their adventures in the Holy Land. That is enough of the story to mention here, although you will undoubtedly find, as I did, that the names of the Prince's two attendants, Snifkin and Snarkski, remained sort of like stumbling blocks as the pace of the adventure steps up.

Certain important Shielian manifestations in *The New King* are, of course, the real justifications for ending its some forty year sleep. In an author's last or posthumous work, inevitably readers will search for traces of what it was that made his prior books so great, so popular - and now so controversial.

First is his variegated style, and the swiftly mutant kaleidoscopic colors of his descriptive prose. In *The New King* one soon begins to be swept along by the growing number and strengthening character of the word pictures. In fact they develop enough hold on one so as to make us forget some of the mundane or even trite initial action - or lack of it - in the first and some other parts of the novel. Never before has Harold Billing's acute observation been so applicable:

Shiel is better read than read about! With this admonition in mind, let's look at some of the author's ways and means of climbing well above the realm of ordinary writing. It is these fiery sparks of the old, the early Shiel that illumine *The New King* and make it sparkle in spite of its easily criticized belabored theme and irregular pace:

. . . a crowd of household ladies and gentlemen meantime gathering to stand ranged with aspen agitations, gigglings, fuss of whisperings, in two groups, one on each side of that east portal.(ms p. 289)

Or consider a word appearing twice in the book, referring to the king's hair. On ms p. 280, Shiel corrects "the wind of his business whipping his hair backward" to "whiffing". How better to demonstrate the word-master's touch, for there are several breathless running treks in the old Shiel style here, for example as when Carol returns home after he is freed, or when Prince Alexander is followed into the woods by Vasilissa. What happens in the latter case is stoutly put. The splendid devil faces his regal cousin and says:

'Look here, Vasilissa, I claim you, I have you. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but I shall have you, Vasilissa, desire of my life' - his arms stretched stiff toward her, appealing, while she, startled, rather ghast, short of breath, stood agaze, confronted with the phenomenon of maleness in him, musing on his sex-nature, and suddenly — took to her heels. (ms p. 279-280).

The chase that follows, "as the hound hunts the hare, bent with inflexible intent" sweeps one past romantic landscapes so quickly one almost loses the semantic beauty of the exposition. Again, on ms p. 281, Shiel's pen again changes just one letter with remarkable effect:

. . . three different cataracts battering down its crags in rapture of ruggedness. (The last word becomes "raggedness".)

In addition to the mind-and-eye-startling neologistic phrase, there are other touches of the 'old Shiel'. For example, when the new king, Alexander, is finally cornered by the mob in his palace, the people over-run even his machine guns. As Blucher said later:

When we got at him, we got at him like dogs - mad we were from his massacre of us; nor we had no weapons, you know, only our hands to do him; his left arm got wrenched sheer off, and was swung as a club to bludgeon him: dreadful affair, I'll dream of it.

There is another memory that is not easily dispelled. The lords and ladies are leaving the castle to go down to a water-fete, and waiting, of

course, are not 'boats' — not in Shiel's world — but:

. . . caïques, flimsy crescent-shapes — painted to resemble the moon's flush — just touching the lake's surface with the weightlessness of their frailty . . . (The guests) going down by a stairlike path that has a lonesome mood at the castle-back, scarcely to be called 'stair' — long, tortuous, mostly narrow, no three steps similar, some shallow, planks embedded in moss, or mere moss, or steep, of stone, cut out of the mountain, all deep in shade under lushness of bush now blushing to Autumn reds. (ms p. 271-272)

Truly Shiel is better read than read about, and there is just enough of the bold verbalizer in *The New King* to prove that even during the last decade, after he was 71, the author could work language magic like the true word master he was, even to tiny details of punctuation, or a final polish:

Now silence some time again, while somewhere in the offing of their consciousness a frog's great chops were agape guffawing, his jolly (illegible word lined out) gorge crowing for rollick at the crowds and glories of the coronation (illegible deletion of three words) rite of the night's reign. (ms p. 95).

It will be this sort of word picture and polishing that will lure you to follow Carol's rather inert adventure, and the final undoing of his cousin, the 'new' king. The latter in the end was forced to be "more devil than splendid"(ms p. 327). And he fell, not because of the great spiritual 'power' of the Overman, Carol, but because of his own evil and selfish nature.

As one emerges from the gathering action and brilliant stylistic momentum of this book, the message is momentarily obscured. It is, however, at the ideology of M.P. Shiel woven in here and there, and which surfaces strongly at the end, that real Shielians will tend to look. Good overcomes evil somehow, even strongly. Work is more salubrious than wealth, its product. These Shielian precepts gradually come to have the inherent characteristics needed to form the only 'right' philosophy. It is precisely this Shielian philosophy that surfaces in *The New King* and which is another aspect of the novel that one should examine.

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The New King obviously is basic reading for all good Shielians. But it is not the stuff - necessarily - of which best sellers are made these days. Still it

remains a landmark in a recherche literary sort of way if only because it is Shiel's last and 25th novel. The book is destined to seize peoples' interests for widely varying reasons other than the obvious ones of style or plot. For example, on ms page no. 331, the author says:

I do love life, that's true, healthy I am — I live in heaven-high health; sometimes looking upward in the face of heaven, I have high delights.

This is a clearly autobiographical observation quite familiar in thrust to anyone who has ever read *About Myself*. I cite it here only because it was at about this stage of the book that some of Shiel's basic — and possibly pre-stated — philosophy begins to take precedence over the pace of the story. For the final forty pages of the manuscript the writer's ultimate preoccupations become more starkly visible than in the earlier and more labored pages of the adventure.

The New King is typically Shiel in that it winds down to a climax. The hero exasperating as ever, annoyingly drags his feet. He becomes a monument to vacillation, a model of inaction just when things have finally turned in his favor and he needs to woo the voters in the coming election to his humane cause.

King Carol's indecisions crop up only AFTER his Stevensonian "Little Prince" adventure among the working people has taught him the enormous virtues of reflection and hard labor. Yet now wise and full of serious introspections about the proper distribution of wealth, Carol's new-found knowledge of truths worthy of better worlds than ours weighs him down. For some readers, this silent, masochistic suffering, this almost insuperable longing for the poisoned, martyred girl worker, Haralda, becomes a painful hiatus which reminds us of the protagonist's suffering in *The Last Miracle* of 1898-1906.

Most certainly, King Carol's state of mind is something to rub raw the typical literary critic, especially one not imbued with Shielian traits of procrastination on the part of an otherwise indomitable hero.

The contra-Overman situation so typical of Shiel puts his admirers (and the virtues of the

Overman as well) onto a red-hot critical and anti-convention griddle. Not only is Shiel's basic search for the source of strength in his hero side-tracked, but the story runs into a stasis that spreads confusingly over the on-going fiction.

One is left in no mood to see the Overman as the hero because he seems transfixed, expecting to conquer not by action but by default - to win not because of his love of 'science', of 'work', or of the 'people', but in spite of it. In *The New King*, Carol lost the election under the Crusader Law just because his posture froze at precisely the wrong time. No critic will bother to research the reasons for this, either those inherent in Shiel the writer or of Carol, the protagonist in this case.

Thus, woven through the final chapters of Shiel's last novel is just about everything it takes to drive a hurrying literary critic toward a negative conclusion about M.P. Shiel being any sort of writer worthy either of immediate praise or ultimate immortality.

In *The New King*, as the story closes, and excited as I was with something new from Shiel's pen thirty-three years after his demise, I found myself doubly distracted. First, I was totally bowled over by the impact of the abrupt surprise ending. True, it was far from being satisfactorily explained, but still dramatically the effect was profound — and worthy.

Second, it became quite clear at the end of *The New King* that I was also hearing - again - some faint echoes of his notes on *Jesus*. Shiel was winnowing the curiously still primitive philosophical preoccupations of his own last years. Again, he was concerned about the nature of man in the universe as contrasted with men's role in reality, getting wealthy, but not too wealthy, for this will prevent the ultimate elevation of man above the animal norm. Just because the protagonist himself finally evolves into an Overman, Shiel somehow tries to convince us that likewise, by some mysterious process which he does not explain, the masses can also be endowed with all the virtues and wisdom which it took the hero years of ineffable suffering to attain.

Let me make one last attempt to sum up Shiel's literary politics as I read them. His 'socialism' is clearly seen in *The New King*, just as it is in earlier novels, where Overman heroes are transmogrified into the antithesis of what their self-immolations should have produced. Their greatness is sacrificed so that the masses can be saved by it. This, of course, is precisely what the socialists offer the masses: first, you impoverish the rich. Then you destroy the natural leaders in society. And then you hypnotize 'the workers' into believing they are suddenly 'wealthy' when actually they are far worse off than before because they are now without real leaders. This summation of Shielian socialism is here lifted from the contexts of various stories, but the process is pretty much the same in a dozen of Shiel's books. The leader comes to an ignominious end, and the masses over-run the seats of government. Then all will be well with 'the people' in power. And evil will be extirpated because the rich have been stripped of their too much money and property, too much, that is, in the naive opinions of those who must work but cannot lead.

In effect, the orchestration of Shiel's socialism is very much like listening to the vast chorus needed to sing Beethoven's "Ode to Joy". The voices swell in a message of overwhelming unison. We are elevated.

But when the theater lights are turned up, and the massed chorus disbands, then 'man' becomes 'men' once again - that is individuals with separate voices, with different opinions - so their former unity fades back into the chaos of every day reality. In *The New King* the mob struggles to storm Wratismaw's royal palace. We are with them. They win. But without a leader they become nothing. They are, after all, just 'workers'. They can coalesce for a cause, but they cannot hold themselves, or the 'masses' on the promised road to wealth-but-not-riches for all, because the 'people', it always evolves in reality, are all different - and leaderless. Neither Shiel's socialism nor any other form of forced sharing of the wealth (mass salvation) will work in practice for just one reason: the greed of no two men is equal. Only the Overman can decide where the

people should go. Only a savior can lead the leaderless masses.

Somehow I hear a swelling of song in a small country church in Plymouth, Montserrat. I hear Matthew Dowdy Shiell exhort the doctrine that Christ can save us all, not only from our sins, but also from the heat of labor in the sun if we believe him firmly enough. And I see a young lad, M.P. Shiel, listening, imagining how a man, even he himself, if he became an Overman, can somehow substitute for Christ and heal the divisiveness of the 'people'. Simply take from the rich, give to the poor, and everyone will be 'wealthy'. Then 'men' will think as 'man' should; and we can all soar to the infinite stars as citizens of the universe. A nice dream but it overlooks, in Shiel's own words:

... the ill-luck with actual things which attends a barrister-at-law, trained in opinions, not trained in facts. And yet men so trained are put to govern nations. (*Herbert Spencer*, ms p. 100).

The unresolved question is whether or not 'the people' are really redeemable through the sufferings of some sort of savior or other. To me, it is this sort of wishful preaching of mass salvation, of freeing the 'slaves' of the 'wealthy' - that is those who 'work' - that threads through the latter part of *The New King* as well *The Lord of the Sea*, *The Isle of Lies*, and *This Above All*. Even though these books are spread over forty years, 'Methodist' threads through them all when it comes to redemption of the lot of those who labor. They only create wealth, not capital; and only capital can create work. Like all social visionaries, Shiel here skips a cog. So he sings to the stars, forgetting that wealth is not capital.

At the end of *The New King*, the author is persuading himself - and us - that eternal life lives in limitless space; and what he tells us is really only a re-analysis of the tribulations through which one must pass to achieve ultimate redemption. Everyone will interpret Shiel's 'eternal' messages differently. Following Harold Billing's admonition that to read Shiel is best, read this. King Carol soliloquizes:

... The gods, careful of the race, are so careless of us as individuals! hard of heart, You Stars. The generations of us come raging, teeming, streaming, like numberless lumber streaming to the drag of some Niagara cataract,

then the rush down to perish, generation chasing generation down — violent ending, after finding ourselves somehow alive, like silly children hatched in incubators, knowing not how much under the dumb constellations, knowing pain, every life under sentence of death without trial, destined to stink, to grin, be degraded to grotesqueness, ridiculousness — pitiless thing, eh? . . . Time like a cannibal cat, *edax rerum*, Eater of them it breeds. Still it is high drama, Manfred, star-high: for starlight is the theater lights turned low, the scene is deep in eternity's sleeps, there to comfort — wait — it is not for nothing, out of the Eater shall come forth meat . . . 'It is well that once the muds mothered me and I fluttered', for wild is this delight of mine in that might, under the shadow of Whose wing is Life's refuge forever. (ms p. 466).

In the end, is it not really as I have said: the Methodist preacher - Shiel's father - who is speaking? The king and the people alike must all meet the same death. Then at that exact moment, the virtues of the Overman, the redeemed Christ-figure will miraculously transfer from the anguished-cleansed individual to the downtrodden 'masses'. The 'people' will then all be illuminated, made intelligent at last, if not in life, then at least in the final comforting glories of death!

That is the formula. it seems to me, of Shiel's socialism. It is not a very practical one. In fact it goes counter to the concept of Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) who originated the idea of the 'survival of the fittest.' It does so because Fate destroys the leader, giving a diabolical twist to the Social Darwinism of Shiel's day which saw only the best emerging from the process of natural selection, whether it was on the level of the individual or of the social group.

Shiel clearly did not reckon on his socialism turning into a government such as we have today which is based on a totally opposite concept - the preservations at any cost to society of its worst, most ignorant and genetically unqualified individuals. Neither Shiel nor his contemporaries, phantasiasts and fantastical though they were, ever came near dreaming of a socialism where the 'masses' were really the 'dregs' of the population. Shiel et al wanted to save the 'workers' but this salvation did not extend to the lazy, the inept, the ineducable and animalistic predators who comprise the 'downtrodden' and the 'oppressed' of modern times.

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It is significant to me that Shiel's farce — the

still-unpublished (and undated) play called *Herbert Spencer* is actually a preview of the French theater of the absurd. Here the characters talk inanely, presaging Ionesco. They even wear ear muffs so they cannot hear each other, while a fish-hook contrivance raises up the skirt of Hetty Spencer, the great man's daughter, among the other incongruous antics.

It is interesting to note that in the unpublished farce *Herbert Spencer*, the philosopher is masquerading as a woman:

Chuckabultee: Has Constable not come, Madam?

Spencer: No, Sir. Nor am I a madam, but Herbert Spencer.

Chuckabultee: Are you great philosopher in fancy dress?

Spencer: I am Herbert Spencer. Where is the Constable?

(ms p. 89)

As the profane and mundane charade proceeds, we read:

Chuckabultee: (Running out from screen) But Herbert Spencer is not atheist! It is all mistake! African blackman would think D.D. atheist, too! because D.D.'s God is higher, more abstract God than African God; same way D.D. thinks great philosopher atheist because great philosopher's God is higher, more abstract God than D.D.'s. But D.D. is not atheist! Neither is great philosopher!

Spencer: That is the simple truth; and very well expressed .

Farther on, on ms pp. 139-140, the author gets into one of the rare non-Ionescan passages:

Spencer: (Down left) Do you take camomile, Sir?

Chester Bull: No, Mr. Spencer. I have found flowers of sulphur a powerful specific.

Spencer: Take camomile. Let your household meat be kept sprayed with permanganate of potash. And for massaging the limbs at bedtime a mixture of witch-hazel and oil of wintergreen. Science is still an infant in hygiene, but in time . . .

Chester Bull: This growth of science I dread! Is not science, Mr. Spencer, the foe of religion?

Spencer: No, Sir. The foe of unreal religion, not real religion. Professor Huxley has said that science is the twin-sister of religion, but I say that science is the mother of religion, for before adoring, one must be conscious - must know something; and to know is science; and to know more is to adore more. Moreover, science advises us that there is more to adore than we can know. We behold some day the heaven full of clouds blown by tempest, and we exclaim 'How great now and holy is this thing we see!' But we little realize how great: could we dream, our petty breasts would burst with worship, and we should die admiring. Science advises us of this — bids us be sure that the religion of men or angels is never, by billions, religious enough. And in every direction our very bread of life is — science; as hell is paved with good intentions, so heaven is paved with - SCIENCE; for health - science; for wealth - science; for culture - science; on all counts the verdict is one — SCIENCE.

And here the text lapses back into inanities, with capital, the seed corn of man's economic life,

overlooked again because it is obliterated with the rich.

Shiel's Social Darwinism always ends (in those novels where the Overman veers towards politics) on a vague and dream-like note. This is because the masses of the average working public really are not fit to rule either themselves and certainly not the whole world. The Overman? Well, he had rather reflect on the reality of what Fate portends for the 'people' than to DO SOMETHING about it. So the author (often, it seems as himself in the role of the protagonist) transmutes his own limitless suffering-taught wisdom into those ideals which are basic and desirable for the 'people'. 'Men' in the socialist's view must always 'suffer', but only because they are poor and have to work. They really suffer, however, because slaves (which we all are in nature's eyes) always end up historically by destroying the capital, the property, that when wisely managed is the source of our work.

Shiel repeatedly seems to forget that wealth is transitory. With all the wealth of 'the rich' shared among 'the masses', the people are not one whit better off than a ruminant with a full reticulum. M.P. Shiel seems to assert that work has only one end: to make some unfairly rich. Hard work will only make a few a little more wealthy. And it is then that 'injustices' set in. Like all socialists, however, he is not at all clear about capital and its essentiality in society. He fails to see it as the real and only source of the 'work' men need to survive. Is this not really the embittered plaint of a writer whose hard-forged prose never became really popular and never made him rich?

Is not this a sort of genetic scenario of a man born on a small Caribbean island where the people have gotten historically poorer and poorer as work became scarcer with each new promise given to the 'people' by socialistic reformers?

As the mob of 'workers' stormed the Wratishaw Royal Palace, their aim was noble. It was to kill the Splendid Devil, even with their bare hands. Afterwards they hail the rightful King Carol and slowly recede into the "torch-lit blotch of glow moving in the morning's gloom", that is

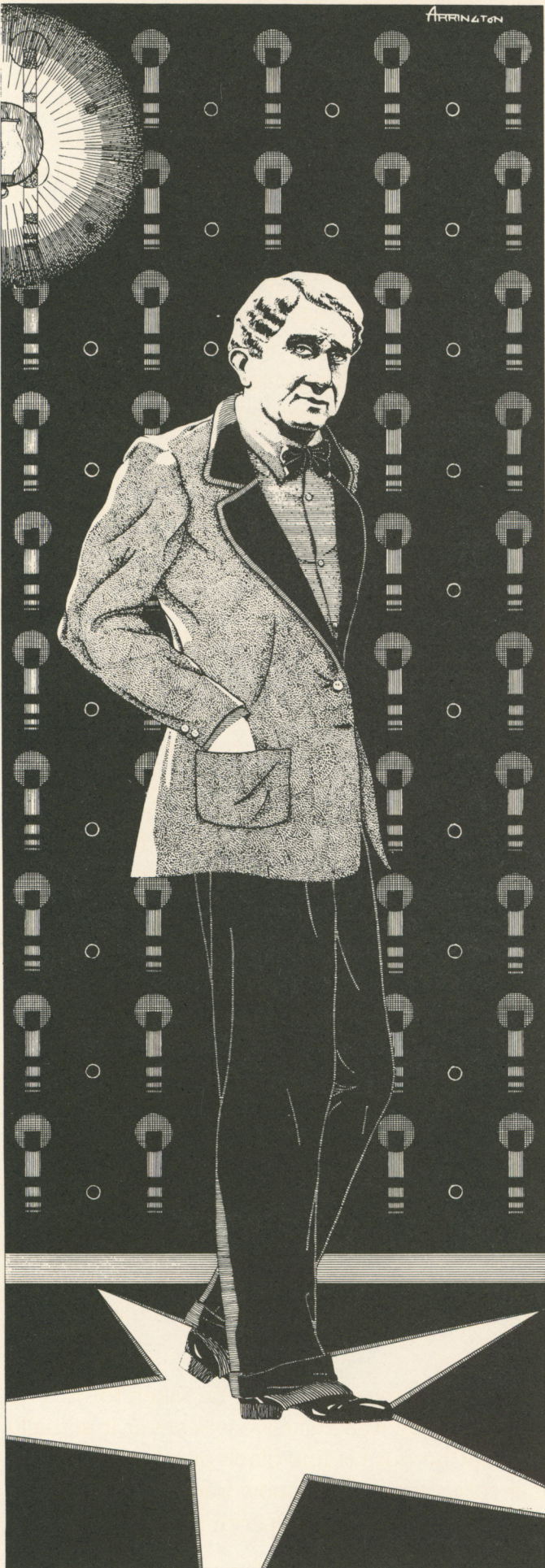
back to work. The Overman is left to resolve which woman he will love the more: his royal cousin or the 'girl of the people' whose basic common sense it really was that made her rightful king truly wise. We are left in the clouds. Below on earth when the magic of this story starts to fade away, the 'people' still remain. And they still must 'work'.

Appearing nearly 35 years after the author's death in February, 1947 (and after its long sleep under my own quarter of a century of Shielian inertia) *The New King* offers a timely romantic challenge to a whole new generation of readers. It combines, stylistically, the good with the bad of M.P. Shiel. It mixes the magic and the myth of the author's period Darwinian Socialism, with his poor man's view of wealth and cosmos. And it offers a happy chance for all to re-assess this greatly erratic Edwardian wordsmith and spinner of tales. *The New King* could also be seen as big with message.

Has this sort of fictional tale become so grossly unfashionable no one will read it today? Is its periodism now so unpalatable — so 'classic' that 'modern' readers cannot dig it? Probably. But still, for true Shielians, this novel, M.P. Shiel's 25th and last, will not prove either as uninspired or as overall anti-climactic as today's critics will obviously attempt to make it, should it, by some publishing miracle, ever reach a broader audience.

It is sad, a tragedy in fact, that John Gawsworth never seems to have ever begun, much less completed his promised eight page biobibliographical preface for *The New King*. It might well have given wholly new insights into many of the mysteries that still surround Mr. Shiel. This sort of first-hand enlightenment would have been invaluable in revitalizing the writer where facts about him are as few as our speculations are many.

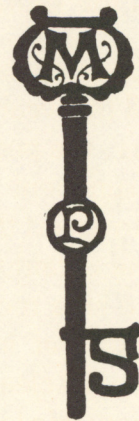
Meantime, my word must be taken for it. The old Shiel's fire was still alive whenever it actually was that he put his fine black pen to making the final corrections on the now fragile - and I believe literarily precious - manuscript of *The New King*.



THE NEW KING

also known as
The Splendid Devil
 and
The Kiss

is the 25th and final novel
 of Matthew Phipps Shiel
 probably dating from the years
 1938-1945



The New King is printed here for the first time
 from a manuscript sequestered for over 30 years
 in the collection of A. Reynolds Morse.

M.P Shiel (1865-1947) by Robert Arrington

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I

THE DOCTOR

Haralda Hásdruvol opened her sitting-room door, to put her face out and speak into the little hall where her patients were seated on a bench — poor work-girls mostly, but not looking too poor, being about as prettily dressed as Parisian soubrettes are: for Kargo is like that; there the back robs from the belly, and to be brawly attired one tightens one's belt, existing on pinches — *sphingi*, queer little grains like seeds, "figs-of-India", little bits of anything.

With that smile of her pretty lips, which smiled automatically, Haralda, looking out, said, "Come, you, Nix". As one Belletta, an assembler-girl, was properly next, Nix's finger digged toward her, but Haralda said, "No, you", knowing that every minute he was losing pay: so Nix, a thin fellow, white-faced, wide-eyed, elfin in type, popped his crutch under, to hop in to where she sat beside a table.

The table had a cover of canvas embroidered in wool with cottages, wind-mills, which Haralda Hásdruvol herself had embroidered, on a piano, too, and other objects, being bits of embroidered sacking or canvas, aiming at an "Art-effect"; but a sofa's stuffing was rather looking through, threadbare some bits of carpet, though the flooring ("pavimento") itself, composed of parqueted woods, was pretty, and the ceiling elegant, gaily stenciled — that being the way in Kargo city, in all Balainca probably — ceilings that meet the walls in a curve, along which scrolls of ornament run, the ceiling's centre pretty with some painting of roses or something.

But nothing in her surroundings had any effect upon that suggestion of ladyship which emanated like a halo from the essence and presence of Haralda Hásdruvol — a ladyship suggested somehow in the delicacy of that concavity of her nose, whose tip lifted a little, in that slightness of her smile, in the humour of the flesh at her cheekbones, which contained the lips' humour, in the perfect curving of eyebrows over eyes which said, "I know you, we are fellow-humans"; but what the bird in the cage chirped was "lady, élite, lady", though a bar of the chair on which Nix sat was missing; and something was missing in the physician herself, for she kept blinking, in peering at Nix's left leg, which his lifted breeches exhibited; so that he said to her, "What's wrong with the eyes? look a bit red".

"A little ophthalmia somehow", she muttered, "rather shameful, but — of no importance".

Now came sauntering a woman who said, "Morning, Tinski Nix", a saucepan in hand, her slippers flat and slapping — Haralda's Aunt Anna — rather a slattern, a brown stout soul, overflowing with fatness, her waist up under breasts which lay pendulous, pear-shaped, like spinning-tops and drops that drip, her bottom's breadth immoral, though, as to her face, that was a pattern of classical perfection — handsome! She said, addressing Haralda, "No impor-

tance? Of course it is important"; then to Nix: "Some people don't know where to stop, you see: *presti*, the girl is sitting up here till two and three in the morning, studying, making experiments — what for? Statistics! Experiments! She's got her doctor's degree at the University: what more does she want? I've told her she'll ruin . . . her speech not free, achieved through spittle, for between her lips she had a stick of tobacco, ink-black, big as a cigarette, named "pigtail" (*coda-di-porco*) — tobacco sweetened with syrop, seasoned with rum — with the soppy root-end of which stick she ever and anon rubbed her beautiful rows of teeth, ever and anon spitting a charge of darksome spittle at some chosen spot, as now her hips wandered to a window to spit, she continuing meanwhile to say, "People must listen to advice, people shouldn't turn a deaf ear to their elders' words. I've told her not to keep on going to bed with her window open — who else would do such a thing? yes, window wide open, with the wind of heaven blowing in on her! And there's going to be a death — first sight I saw this morning on opening my window was a white cat; and, on going to my pigtails, I found two of them forming a cross: *presti*, I wouldn't touch them! had to go out and get more — heaven knows how the things had got like that. And I have told her that the patients can well afford to pay — some of them have told her so themselves; but she says she can afford — says she's a land-owner, if you please! won't ever accept a *cento* from anybody" (*cento* = penny = tenth of *gento*, or shilling).

"Well, you see", Nix answered, "some may tell her they can afford, but how is she to know? And, if she takes from some, she must take from all, then some will be hard-hit".

"Don't trouble", Haralda muttered upward to Nix, then continued to peer at an old hole that could hold a nut in his left leg".

But the carping Anna Lopescu continued to carp: "Is she a charitable institution? If people catch cold, they must expect to sneeze; if they get sick, they must pay a doctor. And her taking of sphingi and soup to you Crowdar Foundry hands since this new tax on barrows: is it her business if you have to pay more for your dinners? She is a doctor: what other doctor ever went rolling a barrow through Kargo streets like that? And headstrong! Doesn't say anything, just goes and does whatever jumps to her nut to do, and no earthquake will deter her. I have told her — She will kill herself: the girl gets through more work in a day than other people in a week. And now her eyes — it was for *her*, maybe, that I saw that white cat —"

"No, no" — from Nix — "it is only if you see the King in the same week in which you see a white cat, *then* there's a death — as they say. So keep indoors, you, to-morrow, *presti*".

"Coming into Kargo at noon tomorrow, is he, the King?" Anna asked, now passing inertly out with slippers and alternate hips.

"Aye, at 12:30", Nix answered: "or arrives then in Piazza Publica, to open the new session of the House of Notables". To Haralda he added, "If he stays inside the House as much as fifteen minutes, we Crowdar hands are to let

out for dinner at a quarter to One, instead of at One, to see him come out of the House”.

“Decent of Crowdar’s”, Haralda muttered, “they aren’t bad. I’d like to see him myself — I’ll go fifteen minutes earlier with my sphingi and pitzi. Nice little King, I think, not like the others — student, they say, he is, scientist. Perhaps he’ll be some good. No other King, I think, ever opened The Notables before: he may be doing it to raise the dignity of The Notables as against The Council — nice little King — for no doubt the Notables can be considered as the more liberal of the two”.

“‘Liberal’ say you” — this warmed Nix to scorn — “don’t they both belong to the twelfth century? Your Council makes laws to increase his lordship’s ease, and your House of Notables dutifully seals them, never itself venturing to invent a law, except some village by-law prohibiting villager Jacabo from doing this or that trifle in his idle moments. A poor lot, we Balaincans, after all. Moderns, eh? — dozing still under an Absolute Monarchy, without a trace of popular representation in our Constitution. Presti, even Tsarist Russia moved on to a Duma; but we! sleep on, my Pretty One, it is”.

“And yet, no”, Haralda answered, “I don’t think we are sleepy-headed, Nix; I say that we are mentally animated, interested in ideas, addicted to theories and discussion — you, for instance; but we are like old folk who can’t modify their habit of life, an aged nation, rheumatic in the joints; we enjoy discussing change for other folks, we ourselves are too old. There is a Russian influence upon us, and there is a German influence; some of us, like me, speak English easily; and especially there is a French influence — I am one of the few Balaincans with some money who never spent a Summer in a *pension* in the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, and we speak French by nature. But none of these influences ever reach to the bed-rock of our Balaincanism: we are born Balaincans, and Balaincans we die. And Oh! superstitious — “white cat” — “cutting the cards” — “the stars” — we still consider a king a kind of Divine being come down from the moon, brother of the sun. I myself, as you know, can’t see anything wrong with Absolute Monarchy — on the contrary, I like it — if only the absolute monarch has some human acumen. I know that few of them have had, for though they aren’t born less intelligent than other boys, every influence upon them from babyhood is an influence tending to make blockheads of them; but by the Law of Chance one or other of them will sometimes come aberrant, stubborn, standing in his own boots, in the home of his own soul; and consider then the room to his elbow that his throne bestows! — Alexander, Aurelius, Peter, Henry the Navigator. Suppose our new Carol is like that? What a lark! If he only had a wife to influence him, eh? I dreamt of him one night, and the chap was rushing light, headlong, a falchion flashing in his hand, attacking something, like a champion. I fancy it was our Splendid Devil he was attacking!”

“He is rather a heavy-weight than a ‘light’-weight”, Nix remarked: “did you never see him?”

And Haralda: “Once I did when he was fifteen, on horseback — handsome boy — noble — and, then, his photographs. I was at the International Congress

in Vienna at the date of his Second Coronation three months gone; but I got a glimpse of him one day since”.

“Aye, I too saw him that day”, Nix said, “when he passed in that car through Kargo — saw him close. Twenty-five he is now, bit of a beard, pointed, biggish boy, about the same height as your Splendid Devil, but stouter, regular boxer they say he is, broadish face, palish, and his hands attract attention, pallid, fingers big, beautiful, beautified. . . . Well, the man *may* be some good — not very likely”.

“We’ll see”, Haralda muttered over the sick leg: “his mother was a commoner, an intellect, a poetess. . . . I suppose you know that the Executive Committee of your Union passed a resolution on Tuesday night to ask him to receive a Deputation on the Barrow-tax? We’ll see how he reacts to that. You are sure to be in the Deputation: then you can influence him with your oratory, Nix”.

Nix’s paste went pink a little at “oratory”, as he stood up, saying, “I’ll back out, if the leg’s no better then: had it pretty stiff last night. And every three months the same misery”.

“They seem to be rheumatoid in type, these pains”, the physician remarked, gazing up at Nix, with a knee slung, with a speculative frown, “though they are undoubtedly a reflex from the wound — How long ago, the wound?”

“Two years now. At that time Blucher used to” — Nix tossed off imaginary grog — “and no doubt he was half-seas-over that day; tossed a blob of melting metal; and she just nicely caught me in the calf”.

Haralda sighed. “Dear me, is there nobody in all Balainca man enough to give that Blucher a banging, and end his bullying?”

“Oh, well” — in a tone of indulgence — “that’s the man’s nature; can’t help himself”.

“A defeat would help him. As to the leg, I’m sure I don’t know what to do, except backslide to the old salicilate of soda”.

Nix clapped a little, saying, “Bravo for the only doctor who ever admitted not knowing what to do. But, then, Haralda Hásdruvol is Haralda, and there’s no other. My impulse now is to treat you to the pictures tonight: coming?”

“How can I?” — uplooking with her hint of a smile: “don’t I speak at The Club on ‘Trade Unionism in Russia’?”

“Aye, I forgot. How about tomorrow night?”

“Don’t you know? tomorrow night, Amalgamated Association of Clothing Workers’ reunion in rue Vruda”.

“Oh, well, my luck’s out . . . I’ll go in, then, for the salicilate again; see you at one o’clock” — going now hopwise out.

Then till eleven the patients were coming and going; after which Haralda had to lose some of her precious minutes, waiting until her Aunt Anna Lopescu had finished cooking for dinner a pinch of beef and a bowlful of neonati di luaro

(miniature fishes of silver not an inch long), before the kitchen-stoves were free for Haralda to cook her soup, her sphingi-and-pitzi (batter cooked in fat, sphingi spherical, pitzi cylindrical, popular stuff corresponding with British fish-and-chips). These she carried down with a brazier to a barrow in the basement, passing excrements of cat and dog on all four stairs below her own; and by twelve-thirty had set off, rolling the barrow for Public Square (Piazza Publica) — a prolonged tramp: for two diameters in a circle, one north-and-south, one east-and-west, make a map of Kargo with its two diameters, or arteries, or “Avenues”, at the middle of the north-west quadrant (Santa Lucia) being Piazza Publica, and at the middle of the south-east quadrant (Villa Novella, New Town) being Haralda’s flat: so that the tramp was long.

But she arrived in time for the one o’clock vomiting-out of the foundry-hands through the great gateway on the Square’s south side, where the foundry’s five acres of ground is, its tower a hundred and fifty feet high — a factory as well as a foundry, miscellaneous, uniting steel-manufacture with the making of cast-iron and foundry pig-iron, and turning out both gas-masks and razor-blades, both bayonets and bicycle-parts; and with Haralda’s barrow a flock of barrows thronged there; but she alone sold at the old rates that prevailed before the barrow-tax, selling lentil-soup, sphingi, fichi d’India — a ruddy fruit, these fichi, or figs, its pulp thick with seeds bigger than green-pea, prolate spheroids, which are swallowed with the pulp, the Balaincan peasants eating forty, fifty fichi for a breakfast: seeing which, one feels convinced that they must needs die of appendicitis; but they survive smiling.

And Haralda “sold out”, knowing almost all those “hands” intimately — Comrade Nix, Comrade Blucher, Comrade Tatarescu — though the more she was hail-fellow-well-met with all, the more willingly all acknowledged her specialness and distinction.

Then back to Villa Novella with the barrow, not without stoppings to talk, on meeting friends in streets, or in passing through Carol Market — a narrow street crammed with barrows, to which one descends by a stair, at each end a stair, so that it has a recluse and cloistral tone, and is the haunt of loitering housewives enjoying the lounging of their shopping-hour. Here she made some purchases, and, on meeting a girl-friend, gave her a peep of a pinch of meat, and in turn was given a peep of a pinch of devil-fish, tough stuff, which her girl-friend had purchased. Then on, past the Museum (not many things in it!), past the railway-station, the Square of Municipal Offices, the florid Cathedral — no lack of churches there in Kargo! from one of them now booming some resounding bell, bullying the town — and everywhere the Splendid Devil’s soldiers stepping, officers flaunting their gorgeousness, Solomon in all his glory not arrayed like one of them, and nuns, priests, friars, going their resolute way in spite of aeroplanes and the twentieth century, and an excess of sweet-shops exhibiting gaudy sweets which look nicer than any English sweets, but aren’t genuinely nice, and the University buildings, Boundary Barracks, to New Town, and home.

Then between two and five-thirty she was one of a troop of work-girls in a room high up in a New Town clothes-factory, sewing those tight little waist-coats which the chaps of Balainca wear to give them hips and a dash of elegance; and thence she was trudging homeward tired, her eyes now more troublesome, when a spinster lady whom she met, one Dominina (Miss) Aurelia (Balaincan being more like Latin than Italian is, than any language is, except Rumanian), pressed her to go to a séance of the medium Domina Gombok, near by. Haralda hung back — had not been invited — eyes weak — did not believe in mediums; but, then, suchlike mystics have an extraordinary attraction for all Balaincans, who are all, *au fond*, mystical: at this time one of the most well-to-do women in Kargo was a fortune-teller named Salva in the Corso Descartes, to whom work-girls went in herds, spending their scant centos, going again and again, to hear predicted at each pilgrimage a different fortune, but succeeding in coordinating and believing all. Anyway, Haralda in the end let herself be led that evening to the Gombok séance.

II

THE SÉANCE

A ground-floor room, darkened, venetians down, one door a little open upon a courtyard, the medium attired in white, fourteen people there, Nix and his crutch, with three other chums to whom Haralda threw her palm when her eyes grew used to the gloom.

Domina Gombok said to her, "I'm glad you've come: you will sing us a hymn, won't you?" — Haralda having a reputation, which she resented, of being a singer; and after a buzz of chat, when in a hush they sat around a centre-table, she did lift her voice in song, singing a stanza of the poet Nicolo Czecholok, to which she had herself composed the music:

*Caravan stumbling,
Starlit we stray,
Faith in us fumbling,
Hoping there's Day;
Morning-stars singing
"Morning-bell rings,
Morning-bright bringing
Warblings and wings".*

Now they remained waiting, while from the medium proceeded sighs, little sounds, as she spasmed into "entrancement"; and presently everyone could distinctly hear steps of someone coming in the courtyard, wearing sandals apparently, coming to the open door, coming into the room — steps (supposed to be) of a monk of the fourteenth century named Riemvo, who was the "control" of the medium, and the ruling spirit of the séance. Nobody was *seen* to come in, but some queer things did undoubtedly take place — a chill as of an icy wind sighing, a shine the size of a shilling shifting about from "sitter" to ceiling, from lighting up Nix's meandering length of nose to shedding sheen on Tatarescu's cheek, flitting fickle from floor to door, hither, thither; and no one could divine whence this shine could arise — except perhaps the lady whose practice contrived it? And table-rapping; writings in that darkness from the dictation of the "spirit-guide"; and finally, when lights were up, all flocked to draw from a bowl strips of paper on which had been written something relating to their destinies: for that drawing of strips, apparently haphazard, was itself said to be directed by Destiny — so that everybody would draw his proper strip. This added excitement to interest, as "the sitters" drew, read, read aloud, with round eyes; and perhaps four out of every seven strips had on them something relating to the new King Carol, who was at present in everybody's thoughts, in everybody's talk: Nix, for instance, got "You will lose your King, but will be his discoverer"; one Nana Gernox, a doll-maker girl, got "Peep into your mother's top back room in Old Town in seeking your King" — and it was quite true that the girl did live with a mother in Old Town (south-

west quadrant of the Kargo circle); Marreo Tatarescu, a blast-furnace-man like Nix at Crowdar's got "You will die in your cap, unless you give it to your King; and Haralda Hásdruvol got "Let your King see you, if you would like to be a Queen".

The contempt of Haralda's "pooh" was genuine, though undoubtedly at one moment her nose was struck rather pallid at it; and "What a *blague* it is!" she remarked to Tinski Nix, who went hopwise with her under a mounting moon toward the Coöperative Club in rue Vruda: "you and I, Nix, should be ashamed to encourage with our presence such an exhibition".

Nix's hip hopped twice ere he replied, "I don't see that. Why ashamed?"

And Haralda: "Think what it is that Domina Gombok is doing: she is stating that the persistence of personality after death happens, is a mode of the universe — a statement scientific in type; if it is false, it is false science, the greatest of possible sins against mankind. Be damned to the man who commits it".

"Agreed" — from Nix. "But if it isn't false? *I don't know*".

Haralda's lips went firm: "We ought to know. Isn't the idea of personality persisting after death an African idea? That is a fact. And we are white people".

"Oh, but, *presti*" — from Nix — "can't Negroes think something that's true?"

"No, Nix: truth is in a well, guessing's no good. We have lately got to know that the speculations of lower races, of children, of boors, of the ancients, are not only untrue, but have a quality of dog's-luck that makes them the *opposite* of true: so that, if they think that a person persists eternally, we are safe in betting that a person does not persist one wink; indeed, white people — some white people — now *know* that not even an electron persists one wink, all flows, alters, nothing persists, save One, save Force. During sleep last night your nails grew, your kidneys were renewed, your opinions veered; within twenty-four hours a thing named Nix is, even *visibly*, fifty things, one of them yearning abed for food, another turning at table from food, one drowsy, another roused to passion, one come to laughing, another come to sneezing, to humming, to hammering, to yawning, to frowning, willing to dress, willing to undress, congratulating one of your former selves, blaming one of your former selves; and though the illusion of personality is so deep-seated in us, that to many people it seems even absurd to say that all these different Nixes are different *persons*, the absurdity is theirs, since a person is a mind-and-body that is so-and-so, and, if changes take place in either mind or body, so that the person is changed, is different, how can a different person be the same person? But millions of changes in each square millimetre of you have taken place in a day; after sixty years of separation Nix and Haralda wouldn't even recognize each other; and, as you change, so your shirt-buttons change, the sun, the earth — different in a second by trillions of changes; so that when we say, 'Look, new moon', that is just the truth. How atheist, then, this idea of the persistence of personality after death, or before death! It is the fool, Nix, who says, 'there is no God there': for God is

evidently everywhere; that is, Agency, Energy, Force, is; that is, Motion is; that is, Change is: and to say that something persists somewhere is to say that no Force, no God, is there: that's atheism gone foolish".

Nix pondered it with his broad forehead aslant; and he answered, "Yes, I have always understood that I am not the same man on Tuesday that I am on Monday. Still, my Tuesday selves are so like my Monday selves, that I can have the illusion that they are the same self. And after death, too, may I not continue to have the illusion — don't you think?"

"A big 'may', Nix", Haralda answered: "death is not like the millions of little changes in you between Monday and Tuesday, it is millions of big changes, making together one huge change. We bear with the invalid, feed him patiently with milk, on one condition — that he keep living; let him leave off breathing, and we are done with him, that's too much, out we chuck him, bury him away; and better a living chick than a billion dead archangels. Oh, to live! be fitted together! in going order! aye, that's good, that's good. But death — the havoc, the ruin, pancreas become cat's-meat, blood become mud, dumbness, dullness, all done; and if ever someone found himself thinking without a brain, he could never surely have so huge an illusion as that he is the same as someone who used to think with a brain. If he did think such a thing, his thinking without a brain would be as feeble as we might expect it to be".

"Aha, aha", says Nix, meditating, "that seems true: I am a brook flowing, and must give up the idea of the persistence of any brook's personality; but a brook, mind, a new brook, is still there in all weathers. You have demonstrated that a person thinking without a brain cannot (1) be the same person as a person thinking with a brain, and can hardly (2) imagine himself to be the same; but you have not demonstrated that persons who think without a brain may not exist".

"But we know of no such persons" — from Haralda: "so what right has Domina Gombok to promulgate that there are such persons?"

"She may have special knowledge", Nix said: "for there *are* more kinds of persons than you and I know of — on Mars, say. And the things which we witnessed tonight do seem to indicate that there are persons who think without a brain. Where did that shine come from? how else did Nana draw the strip which stated that she lives in Old Town? while you drew the strip which stated that the King may make you his Queen — as the man will, if he has any sense".

Haralda laughed. "Oh, Nix, I think you are gone on me! But isn't the King engaged to the Princess Vasilissa? how can he make anyone else his Queen? Don't be foolish. As to those 'manifestations', the shine, the rappings, don't forget that when one concentrates one's faculties daily upon any task, in the end one gets to results that look miraculous to others — think of Marconi, Watt, jugglers, illusionists, Hindoo thaumaturgists, think where they get to after many days. So with mediums. If I made a cabinet now, a cabinet-maker would stand and laugh at it, but, if I kept on making cabinets ---" she was

about to add some argument to crush contradiction — Balaincans being addicted to suchlike discussions, sometimes discussing with much closeness, cogency, subtlety, their lower class being more cultivated than ours in Britain, their schools of a higher type; but now Tatarescu, walking up sharp behind, joined them — a mass of forty, stolid, a massive face, whose bottom lip hung somewhat. To his “Hello” Nix answered, “Hello, Tatarescu, where’s the cap, then?” — Tatarescu’s head being bare.

Upon which Tatarescu rather shamefacedly said, “Cap’s in my pocket, Comrade”.

“Pocket?” says Nix . . . “Ah! I see: your strip of paper at the séance!” whereupon Nix explained to Haralda: “His strip predicted that he’ll ‘die in his cap, unless he gives it to his King’, so he has decided never to die, by the simple plan of never having-on a cap — clever man!”

Tatarescu muttered, “Well, forewarned is forearmed”.

“Cap-à-pie!” — from Haralda, as they now all walked into the Club-house.

III

THE BARROW-TAX

There in the General-Council room an audience of some forty listened to Haralda's lecture on Russian things, her lectures being generally considered worth hearing, hard-headed, packed with facts and figures, though that evening she had some difficulty as to reading her notes, her eyes not right; at one point, talking of Balainca, when she said, "Trade-Unionism and the Splendid Devil do not flourish together", during some applause which followed she put her hand upon her eyes as at a smart, and was silent awhile. On coming home, she adjusted an eye-shade over, to shut out light, and shunned study that night.

The following morning one of her first thoughts was of the King's purposed visit at 12:30 p.m. to open The Notables, and the last of her patients had hardly departed when she went, earlier than usual, to the kitchen to cook her *sphingi*, etc., for she wished to be at Piazza Publica at 12:45, instead of at 1, as usual, to see the royal party's departure; and on most noontides some crux arose between her and her Aunt Anna Lopescu as to the use of the three kitchen gas-rings, they two getting into each other's way, their arrangements clashing: so Haralda, being peaceable, might find herself elbowed out, and sit idle, resigned, but bitter of lip.

The *ménage* was run on the basis of the aunt paying the flat-rent, the niece paying for what was eaten: so the flat was the aunt's.

And this day, early as Haralda went, Anna Lopescu was earlier — perhaps purposely, to keep her niece from seeing the King, with the notion in her that, since it was known to be a token of death for one to see a white cat and see the King at about the same time, it might also be a bad thing if an aunt saw the cat and a niece saw the King. Anyway, when Haralda entered, there the mass of her aunt was, moving about, briskly housewifely, priestess of the gas-rings that brabbled garrulously of business going on.

Haralda stood with an underlook at Miss Anna Lopescu's back; then: "Why begin so early?"

"Presti, haven't I devil-fish to cook?" — without looking round.

"Oh, but let one ---"

"Dear child, don't you go out to-day: yours eyes aren't in a fit state" — there was decision in that tone.

Haralda gave a shrug of resignation, dropped upon the kitchen-chair, done and dumb. With the phenomenon of her aunt she did not strive nor cry.

But, as no actual cooking had yet commenced, and, as she now noticed that hardly half-an-inch was left of the pigtail sticking out from her aunt's lips, she suddenly stood up, slipped out, to trip to her aunt's bedroom, where a tin

box which contained sticks of pigtail, packed together glossy and moist, lay on a bedside chair; and, taking four, she made two crosses of them; then, passing to the sitting-room, sat at her piano, playing singing, that stanza of which she was just now enamoured:

*"Caravan stumbling,
Starlit we stray,
Faith in us fumbling,
Hoping there's Day . . ."*

nor had she come to the end of it when the aunt, an agitated mass, struck palish, short of breath, was there, her torso involved in a gorgeous shawl of brocade, gold-yellow, brodered with roses, a going-out gaud; and she panted, "Something has happened! my pigtails gone into crosses—second time in two days—"

Haralda's piano-stool spun round. "Does that matter?" she muttered with that upward underlook of hers, humorous, discerning.

"Now, what a question!"—from the aunt: "isn't cross the same as trouble? The only thing to do in such a case is to *buttare* (chuck) the whole bunch out of window, as I have done. 'Take up thy cross', as the saying is, and *butta la di finestra*".

"Oh, well", Haralda muttered.

"But don't you cook today, Haralda", Anna Lopescu added, now stepping smartly out, "don't you go to Piazza Publica, listen for once, Girl—" she vanished; and since the nearest retailer of pigtail was a good distance away, Haralda could do her cooking meantime, was immediately at it, and, before her aunt came back home, was out in the streets—quite in time to be at Public Square before 12:45, and likely to spy something of her King, if with sick eyes.

But, as she was wayfaring westward in Avenue Voltaire, fate befel to bar her, when, as one of the two Kargo trams, droning on its eastward way, drew near her, a waistcoat-maker named Wanda sprang out of it to pant at her, "Oh, this is luck—I was going to you—Mother's down in a fit—"

"How can I now?—my barrow ---" came from Haralda in dismay.

"They say she may die, unless—I will take the barrow, and sell ---"

"Oh, well", Haralda Hásdrúvol muttered.

She now abandoned the barrow to Wanda, waited some moments until, "like ships that pass", the other tram came droning westward, in which she drove some way, then afoot went running southward across Conrad Bridge through that slum-labyrinth of Old Town, foul alleys darkling, but not like the slums of most towns—some mansions with pillars among its hovels, filthy palaces, vaulted halls of ordure, Gothic portals, groinings, marble stairways dilapidated, classical architecture in decay; and at every third house or so a dirty announcement of "One Makes to Eat"—sphingi-and-pitzi! and other suchlike cheapnesses.

In this way Haralda Hásdrúvol failed to see the King, but the lass Wanda on tiptoe managed to see him come out of The Notables, which occupied much of the west side of the square—a one-storied edifice with a facade of steps, pediment, pillars, like the Chambré des Députés, the British Museum, the Reichstag; on the square's south side is Crowdar's great gate, now agape in the wall which shuts away the foundry; east and north residential houses; in the centre a round of greenery, with seats; and in the centre of the green a statue in bronze of the Splendid Devil, smiling his everlasting smile, braggart on a war-horse which grandly pranced, sabre drawn, upraised, his chin pitched up an inch above our race.

When Wanda arrived, the Square, awaiting the coming-out, stood buzzing under the bright sun of that Summer day, the Crowdar-men ranked southward, while, ranked westward before The Notables, stood a troop of cavalry in Uhlan uniform, their lances hanging pennons; and bandsmen with bugle, bassoon; flags in holiday mood adorning all the houses; flags and faces thick at windows from ground to roof; ladies in gala costume in a mood of Summer, muslins, azure sashes; and the ground so crowded, that it was as much as mounted gendarmes, who rode fussily about, could do to hold the random movements of the multitude controlled.

And now a fanfare of trumpets, as the King appeared with the Princess Vasilissa, his betrothed, and their attendants, on the platform of The Notables' *perron*; and now the Square was a fluttering of handkerchiefs waved, and a droning which was the utterance of bravo, bravo, while the band broke into the National Anthem,

*March with his armies,
Pillar of fire,
Ride he, where harm is,
Harmless and higher . . .*

while the Royal Party descended the steps to their cars, the Princess all smiles, though somehow the King was frowning—and when he frowned, two arcs of a circle curved upward from where his eyebrows united, so that part of a little saucer seemed sunken, imprinted, into the substance of his muscular forehead.

Then the cavalcade, preceding and following the three cars, trotted clattering into a street at the south-west corner of the Square, making for Wratishaw Palace, which stands a mile west of Kargo; and the party was swept from sight.

Whereupon the Square more or less emptied itself, the barrows now obtruded themselves into evidence, and the lass Wanda sold Haralda Hásdrúvol food to the foundry hands at Haralda's lower tariff.

She then took the barrow through Kargo to Haralda's place, and was leaving that New Town neighbourhood when she came to a meeting with Haralda (now making homeward), to be told, "Your mother has pulled through"; then at once to be asked, "Did you see the King?"

Wanda was enthusiastic. "Yes, it was grand! he is handsome! And the

Princess Vasilissa, she was there — she is in love with him — one can see. . . .
Tell me about Mother”.

Haralda told, gave therapeutic instructions, then moved on homeward, to find at home a letter from the Executive Committee of the Amalgamated Iron and Steel Workers, inviting her to be a “Fraternal Delegate” in a Deputation which the King had now agreed to receive, re the abolition of the Barrow-tax.

As she was habitually associated with the Union — had a year previously been its Assistant General Secretary — she could hardly draw back from such a request, so that after all she was quickly to stand face to face with his Majesty the King.

This roused her interest: things that she might have a chance to say to him started to pass through her head.

IV

AT THE PALACE

On that same day of the Deputation the Princess Vasilissa, the King's cousin, entertained some friends in a little garden-party at Wratisslaw Palace, where she was spending some days. As she was not unduly exclusive in the selection of her "set", among the guests that afternoon was Lord ("Dom") Rostro, once a bourgeois (newspaper-owner), and there was Popkin, once a bourgeois, now a lord, because of the river of beer that streamed from him. On the other hand, present was the Duke ("Dux") of Nudicum — très-chic; and present was the Church, superber than all lords, in the person of his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Garbarin, little in weight, but big in weightiness: these being seated amid little tables on the lower of two terraces, close below a balustrade of stone that runs east-and-west between upper and lower terrace; in this balustrade are gangways or openings, where four steps lead down to the lower terrace, the garden-party being near that gangway which faces an avenue of elms extending from the palace-portico to the balustrade, the palace standing on the upper terrace a hundred yards south of the balustrade — three processions of windows which stretch like a street, in their middle over the portico a clock-tower, of which the clock chants the quarter-hours and preambles to the hours, the tremolo of those bells' trebles having a celebrity through Balainca, they have a meaning of nocturn and despondency so weird, a vox humana calling a warning of the everlasting passing of a quarter-hour.

During the preamble which was chimed before Five was tolled just a little silence visited the party, but then at once the Princess Vasilissa, as if to change the subject of the bells' threnody said, "Nice day, eh? Hot! Oh, dear, I have a frivolous feel today. And nice these new-fashioned French ices: they have maraschino in, I think" — she being a tall girl (of twenty-eight now), thin, hardly *pretty* perhaps, her upper lip a bow which revealed the teeth a little, until she deliberately shut it down; but beautiful her head of gold, beautifully erected into a gold seraglio with domes, a Mosque of Omar — castles in the hair, say. She added, "What's the name of that tune you're humming, Nadine?"

"It is called 'A Hot Time', your Royal Highness" — from Nadine, a pretty thing of nineteen with a brightness of defiant eyes.

"Show me the step?"

"Like this", says Nadine, springing up to dance with some effrontery, humming, laughing, all stopping their talk to attend to her, Lord Rostro beating time with a finger, smiling, Vasilissa saying, "They are nice, I like them, these up-to-date dances" . . . Then: "Let's see again?"

"Like this", says Nadine, showing the steps slowly, then dashing into dancing with still more effrontery.

Upon which —pressingly— his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Garbarin, leaning forward in his chair, called out, “Done like a Grace!” —small, he, quite a large part of his height consisting of the height of his head from the hair-line on his neck to the skull’s dome (which a skull-cap cupped), so that his neck seemed to stretch, and his chin pitched up, as if to insist upon his being thought taller than he was. “Done like a Grace!” —whereupon Vasilissa, leering aside at him seated beside her, asked, “Your Grace likes Graces?”

“Now, let me see” —the churchman surveyed her with those eyes which perkily surveyed the world, their lids arising out of a deep crease neat beneath the eyebrow to vault the eyeball, his lips thick, firmly built to fit together: “Let me see—a searching question, your Royal Highness. . . . Well, but dancing is religious in origin: David danced, Miriam danced ---”

“Hallo”, Lord Rostro called out at this, tossing back, as often, hair that dropped aslant across his forehead, a fellow of some sardonic humour, sharp-looking, if not sharp, “Hallo, here is his Grace the Lord Archbishop saying that jazzing and the Church are both religious in origin, though both have forgotten their origin”.

On which the Archbishop, quick and strict, a schoolmaster in mood, was holding up a forefinger that exhibited a big cameo of a garnet in a ring, with, “Don’t believe him! I said no such thing. Be good enough to leave the Church alone, Lord Rostro. No Church, no Aristocracy—remember!

And now Lord Popkin—a stoutish soul, heavy, red, nets of red veinlets shewing, a rough nose: “What I always say about Beer—mhm: no Beer, no Aristocracy, that’s certain”—he sipped wine.

And Rostro: “Popkin makes beer for other people: for himself he likes wine better”.

“Well”—from Popkin—“let your Lordship read his own papers—‘Girl’s Friend’—mhm—and I will undertake to drink my own beer”.

“No, rash men”—from Vasilissa—“don’t undertake”.

Some tittering arose, during which the Archbishop remarked, “Oh, well, everything serves a purpose to keep the country running in its customary rut. The Church offers a consolation for the trials of this life; beer, too—taken in moderation—makes for contentment; while the papers’ daily droning is an opiate that lulls the mob to a sense of monotonous order. I find all things good, all things nicely ordered”.

“Bravo”—Rostro clapped with his fingertips—“his Grace finds all things good. It is well to be born an Archbishop: your Archbishop has his cushioned seat in The Council by nature, while I, upholding my King and Country with nineteen papers, remain out in the cold, a common or garden Dom”.

This brought from Vasilissa, “Patience, Lord Rostro. The King has been on the throne only three months, and is still looking round him. Presently everybody will be getting whatever they want, I dare say”.

Rostro bowed. “Your Royal Highness is gracious to dare say so”.

And now Popkin, eyeing his wine-glass: "I shouldn't mind being up in The Council myself—oho, my boy! *Might* have been some fine day, if only the old King had kept alive. But now things are different, presti—change of weather, mhm. The King's a 'thinker', so people say—'*thinker*'!—I can't make it out. What's a King got to think about? Prince Alexander's not a 'thinker'—too busy to stop to think, the Splendid Devil is".

"Thinks without stopping to"—from Rostro, gazing with enthusiasm upward: "Ah, Alexander! just his name inspirits, inspires. Alexander, the Splendid Devil! master of Strategy, mason of Statecraft, the Prince, the Trickster: a spirit that knows so well which way men are to be commanded, flattered, foiled, destroyed ---"

"Men and women, I think, Lord Rostro"—from Vasilissa, her upper lip shutting down to firmness.

And Rostro: "Ha, ha, doubtless, your Royal Highness. Women are solid things, you see, and Prince Alexander thinks of solids, while his Majesty, King Carol, thinks of gases—being a scientist. The King has his laboratory at Serapi, his workshop here ---"

"Yes!" cried Popkin—"very curious. One day Tyrol, the Comptroller, showed me a sort of clock made by the King's own hands—wonderful thing, goes by electricity, mhm. Curious for a King ---"

Coldly now Vasilissa remarked, "Kings amuse themselves as they please, Lord Popkin".

And Popkin hurriedly: "Of course, of course, your Royal Highness".

But drowsily now out of the Duke of Nudicum came "Kings should be kingly"—Nudicum a tall bulk of fifty, rather handsome, fair, a beard which was a longish oblong going grey, gross lips protruding through, in his eyes a kind of sleepiness visible; and sleepily he added, "Prince Alexander is the model that Kings should follow".

"As I, too, say, your Grace!" cries Rostro, who, himself an aspiring mind, had a zest for spiritual distinction in the abstract: "even in that little way he has of digging with his finger"—exhibiting how his model's fore-finger often mounted in a vault that ended in a dig down at the air—"while he says his say in little maxims, pithy like the proverbs of nations, worthy to be preserved in a Bible entitled 'The Words of Alexander'—even in this you have a hint that he is one of your world-men and heroes of history, who ---" here he paused, for from the Duke of Nudicum a snore had intoned, as when the mosquito solemnly drones a viola's note across the eardrum; and Rostro added, "Hallo, here's his Grace the Duke expressing himself unguardedly again".

Upon which Popkin: "Oh, well, let him alone—President of the Council—Premier Duke of Balainca—mhm—nothing left for him to keep awake for, sleeps to dream of it. Once dropped off to sleep in the midst of making a speech. . . . Know the story? That day it was when Prince Alexander reentered

Balainca after the victory at Briscoi: Council had met to pass vote of thanks; duke on his feet, praising the Splendid Devil, when his forehead drops, falls asleep, half of people ---"

Popkin stopped at a whispering that tripped through the company. "The King! The King!", everyone springing upright, except the Duke of Nudicum, until the prelate stooped to his ear to wake him with "*The King!*", while King Carol, glove-boxing in his shirt-sleeves eastward, came stepping backward, urged by a dominant antagonist westward along the upper-terrace path that runs along the balustrade; but before he was driven so far west as to be opposite the garden-party, he got the upper-hand, became the aggressor, and, battering his antagonist, went stepping eastward away, until trees hid them.

And now Vasilissa, sitting again: "My! how strong Carol must be! That trainer he is driving there is a prize-fighter. I hope he means to beat me gently when we are married".

And from the Duke of Nudicum, who had now a stare of amazement, came, "It is extraordinary that he should be like that! — boxing. Prince Alexander's boxing is done with cannons".

On which Vasilissa leant a little toward him, conciliatory, to say, "It will be all right, your Grace, never fear, everyone is going to be contented, as before. The King's youth has been spent in his study at Serapi with his solitary thoughts, he is new to the Throne, and no doubt is a little strange these days; not in a very good temper, I'm afraid; not very accessible, I'm told; a little morose; but it will all come right presently".

À propos of which, the girl Nadine with a galloping glibness of Court-gossips now gave a Court-anecdote: "The King has said, 'You should be ashamed' to Groom-of-the-Chamber Lord Gommerik—that is the whisper now going round. Gommerik had been carrying-on an intrigue with Lady Lina Kapralova, who is barely fifteen, and the King said, 'You should be ashamed'; so Gommerick has vowed that, unless the King apologises, he will commit suicide, because it is unheard-of that one gentleman should so censure another; and then ---

"Yes", Vasilissa put in, "the anecdote has reached my ears. . . . Oh, well, everything will be arranging itself before ---"

She was still speaking when another whispering erupted, "Prince! the Prince!", everyone, except Vasilissa, afresh springing up, while Prince Alexander came down the avenue of elms from the Palace, stepping with his fling in his loose-limbed way, for, though he was big, his clothes ever looked still bigger and loose on him; and, attending him, came a pair of tall men, the Cavaliere Snarkski and Count Snifkin, who were something like twins, even the names Snifkin-and-Snarkski going naturally together on everyone's tongue like Box-and-Cox, these two being the Prince's familiar spirits.

THE CRUSADER LAW

When he stepped down to the party the ladies' sterns stooped through protracted curtseys, as down the men bowed themselves with palms upraised in the Balaincan manner.

And the Prince: "My reverences to my fair and exalted Cousin Vasilissa" — his voice oily, whining a singsong, high notes in it alternating with low, what he said thick with wit, often, but his way of saying it common somehow, spoiling it — "and to you also, Ladies all; good afternoon, My Lords" — all hanging upon his words, all eyes turned to those brown eyes, that were often peering narrow to see what was to be seen, his countenance brown, lean, dry, fixed in a smile, and it had two dimples, or rather two lines, inveterate, stale, there where dimples pit, fixing in nickel that smile at mankind of pretty lips under an oblong of moustache, which was of the size of a match-box's long narrow side; this set under a nose, bold but not big, vaulting from under a wrinkled forehead, and at the eye-corners little wrinkles that the fixed smile brought (the Prince at this time being quite forty years old) — "Hot today, as the ladies like it, aha! 'Souvent la chaleur d'un beau jour fait fillette rever a l'amour', aha! for God made the sun, but the Devil's in it, Girls. Aye, immaculate as you look there is the light, I seem to remember kissing some of you in the dark. . . . The King: anyone know the King's whereabouts?"

Lord Rostro was keen to answer. "Your Royal Highness: the King's Majesty has just passed out of sight down that way — boxing with a trainer".

And Alexander: "Boxing was he? They box best who have the longest breath" — his forefinger vaulted to come down somewhat, and dig the air outward, downward.

"What's that? what's that?" came quickly from Vasilissa: "another of the dark sayings, Prince?"

And Alexander: "Aye, another of the dark sayings, Cousin Mine. . . . But this King, where's he now? Look here, My Lords: Carol and I don't pull well together, and hell's coming — so there, you have it flat. You know me: I have been a dweller in tents, and have slept on beds of reed, dreaming in my head dreams that shifted empires, as children build edifices with play-bricks; I had a map, and I kept measuring the countries with compasses; then I went on to measure some of them afresh with the tread of regiments stepping: twice five hundred steps make one mile" — his finger vaulting to dig. "Balainca is already the bigger for it by eight hundred square kilometres — Ah, Nudicum approves me!" — pointing at Nudicum — "for in my dreaming was scheming, and, kissing here my man, killing there my man — Ah, Rostro takes me!" — pointing at Rostro — "I gambolled as the butting ram-goat ramps, goring the nations to north, to west, to south. This is the kind of chess I specially like:

nor did I want to be called 'a King': the old King hunted boars about the Balkan mountains, and drank at midnight to the Splendid Devil's health, dozing on the cushions of the chariot of State, while I drove for him the chariot, none but me knowing whither away. But all the time I had an unquiet eye on Carol — foresaw storm when he should come in. His mother had a high brow — aye, finger of Destiny there — bad luck — for our mothers make us most, and one little woman's belly can be as big as the globe. So we won't mix, he and I: he is for Man, I am for men; he is for 'the future', I am for your lordships — Ah, Popkin takes me there! — and now the apple of strife is ripe" — here that eerie theme of the palace-bells' preamble broke out before Six was tolled, and the Prince added, "The clock knows, and strikes the hour".

And now the Duke of Nudicum, sitting with his lids closed: "May we not venture to hope that some *modus vivendi* will be discoverable as between his Majesty and Prince Alexander? Compromise! The middle way! Live and let live!"

And Alexander: "Yes, your Grace, 'live and let live', as the lamb said to the wolf; but the wolf replied, 'Do you take me for a vegetarian?', and dined on lamb that night. No, Counsel and Compunction won't pull the same coach, your Grace. But wait: I shall eat the artichoke leaf by leaf" — his finger again going up to dip and dig.

On which Vasilissa sprang, flushed, to her feet to utter, "Oh, this is treasonable, Alexander Wratislaw!"

Alexander turned his smile upon her. "Sweet you look today, my fair and exalted Cousin: flushed for the wedding-night coming, are we? But it should be I, I think, that my Cousin Vasilissa loves really: you remember that day within the ruins at Sweet Waters, at Prune, when you were twelve? Weren't we close friends that day? Carol cannot finger a girl's strings as I can, Vasilissa".

Vasilissa pouted, with, "Oh, well, if your Royal Highness is pleased to express himself in ribaldries as usual ---"

"Patience! Compromise!", the Duke of Nudicum now called drowsily out. . . . "Why, a situation very like this, I recollect, arose in the fourteenth century as between King Basil II and his cousin Prince Boris; but in that case the trouble was solved by the operation of the Crusader Law. In this case things could ---"

"Crusader Law?" — this suddenly from Alexander — "I have heard of such a law. What was this Crusader Law?"

Nudicum turned to the Archbishop to ask, "What exactly is the Crusader Law, Monsignor?"

On which his Grace of Garbarin, with his ringed finger erect in his strict headmaster rigour of manner: "Your Royal Highness — the Crusader Law enacts that, if a King of Balainca has left the Throne vacant during six months, and may be dead, then the Council, in joint session with the House of Notables,

may resolve upon a Regency, upon a census of the nation being taken, and upon the election by the nation of a new King out of the Royal House on the last day of the Regency year—a wise law in the time of the Crusades, when Kings were flying off to Asia Minor to disappear for years. And that Crusader Law remains the sole instance of popular election in the Constitution of Balainca”.

“Is that it?”, Alexander muttered: “Crusader Law . . . six months. . . . And do you say that that old stuff is still in the Statute-book?”

“Why, yes”—from the Archbishop—“we of Balainca are not much disposed, you know, to revoke the venerable ancient”.

“But suppose the King. . . . Well, what is it?”—the Prince turned to ask this of one Lord Tyrol, a splendid fellow in epaulettes, his front a medley of stars, medals, festoons of coloured rope, who had come down the avenue from the palace; and he, bowing with palm upraised, answered, “I approach your Royal Highness to report that, his Majesty having consented to receive a Deputation of mechanics from Kargo, but having apparently forgotten the appointment, these have been lingering some time in the palace; and since his Majesty’s whereabouts are unknown to me at the moment, if your Royal Highness would decide to see these people a little ---”

Alexander peered at him an instant in his narrow-eyed manner prior to replying, “Pooh, Man, no time. . . . Just kick ’em down the palace-steps”.

And Tyrol: “Ha, ha, there is a girl among them!”

“Kiss the girl, and kick the men”—words of the Prince which were heard by the King, who had been walking westward along the upper-terrace path, now smoking a cigar, having-on now a jacket—of satin, such as many gentlemen of Balainca wear, “double-breasted”, with “frogs”, or barrel-buttons, and with ropes of silk running from frog to frog across the front. He was unnoticed till he got almost to the garden-party, who were attending to Tyrol and the Prince; but then all sprang in a flurry upright, as he stepped down the balustrade-steps, saying, “My royal Cousin . . . Ladies . . . pray resume your seats”; then, half-turning, with a reluctant eye aside, toward the Prince: “Why should he kick them down the palace-steps?”

Alexander peered narrow-eyed at him. “Why, to—see them roll, your Majesty”.

And Carol, half looking at, half not looking: “But if I don’t want them to roll? My job is to protect them from rolling”.

“Then, they’ll gather moss, your Majesty, and grow stout”.

“Good idea: at present they are thin, I think”. And now to Tyrol: “Pray, conduct the Deputation to me here”,

VI

THE DEPUTATION

The Comptroller of the Household bowed, started back for the palace; whereupon Alexander remarked, "I was looking about for your Majesty".

"Well?"—from Carol, half averted, as if reluctant to look the Prince in the face.

"It was to discuss with you the Autumn levée en masse ---"

"That is needless", Carol at once answered. "I have now decided: there will be no Autumn levy".

This brought a ray of wrath darting from beneath the Prince's lids, and "No?" says he: "your Majesty prophesies!"—turning without another word to return to the palace, murmuring to himself, "I give him today, and I take tomorrow", with him going Messrs. Snifkin and Snarkski, who had been standing rather apart from the party; and Carol, looking after him, laughed half a forced laugh, remarking, "One would say that the Prince is offended!"

Upon which Lord Rostro in an agitated manner remarked to no one in particular, "His Royal Highness Prince Alexander has not the habit of being frustrated".

"Ah?" says Carol: "habits can be aquired, Lord Rostro".

But it was a little insurrection, for now the Duke of Nudicum, too, remarked to no one in particular, "Prince Alexander is bright and high! is the sun of Balainca".

"Ah?" says the King, now frowning with that hint of saucer or watch-cover imprinted among the muscles of his muscular forehead: "'bright and high', the very sun. . . . How high, then, is the sun, your Grace?"

Nudicum's eyebrows lifted in surprise. "Sun? above Balainca?" Then, looking round: "Anyone know how high the sun is? . . . Hundreds of miles, I think".

"True, hundreds"—the King's underlook dwelling on the duke; then suddenly, with a flash, "And *this* is what I am King of! . . . Look now, my Cousin Vasilissa: you know, don't you? that in ancient ages the highest type on our globe was great alligator-brutes sluggishly guttling in their slush—just there where your shoe now touches the ground they have guttled and grunted in days not less real than this day. To them the sun was a mile high; to the premier duke of Balainca it is hundreds; and that is an advance; but, as they have passed away, so we shall utterly pass, that better than we may be, better to see that sun—thank the good God for that! better than we will be to see it better: for since there has been an advance, there will be an advance: we know that now, in precisely the same way that we foreknow the weather, by relying on experience. Even now some of us so see that sun as to exult in

the millionfold miracle and mystery of it: for already much joy is possible to men. But men seem not to know something, no messenger has come to them, something infects them, some screw's loose. Why, I was proud to become King! I was proud! But when I looked up from my tools and crucibles to look round me and ask myself 'what is it I am King of?' — ah, then the disillusionment! King of a mob of bumpkins yoked like oxen to the ox-cart that some mumping noblemen snore and mumble in. Why, if I haven't gumption and guts enough in me to discover the seat of this sleeping-sickness, I'll chuck my crown into the nearest gutter before ---"

He stopped short, catching sight of the shines of Lord Tyrol's attire trilling on the horizon of his eyesight; and, as he stopped, Tyrol mentioned, "The Deputation, Sire".

"Deputation?" — from Carol — "Oh, yes, Deputation — I remember. There they are. Very well, come over here" — going to sit on a garden-seat within a rose-arbour of rough poles some four yards away from the garden-party, a rose-arbour that stood by a road running through begonias in a glory of bloom; and, as he seated himself within it, Tyrol busily placed the deputation of six in a row before the rose-arbour, whispering admonitions to them — a deputation which, by Haralda Hásdruvol's suggestion, consisted, not of the Union officials, but of the actual iron-and-steel operatives, who, though tidy, were not in Sunday-best, but in their foundry togs, cord trousers, scarves, no collar-and-tie, cloth caps, she, too, with an aged shawl hooding her hair; and there was Blucher, a towering bulk; Nix with his crutch; Haralda with an eye-shade, which still left peeping the perfect curving of her cheek into her chin; Tatarescu, forced to have a cap for this high occasion, though, not to "die in his cap", he had forsworn caps since that séance of Domina Gombok; but, then, the cap being now in his hand, he could not die "in" it. And the garden-party suspended conversation to look on, with interest, with whisperings.

One by one Carol looks at the Deputation, and says he, "Well, how do you do? What is it you want?"

Upon which the Deputation looked toward Blucher, who had been appointed to be the leading speaker.

And Blucher: "Representing the Executive Committee of the Amalgamated Iron and Steel Workers of Kargo, we are here with the purpose ---" now a sudden consciousness of his voice's solitude got hold of him, he forgot his prepared phrases, and, smitten to shyness, nudged Tinski Nix, who stood beside him.

On which Nix wet his lips with tongue toward speech, but nothing came; and there was a stillness.

Carol muttered, "Lame . . . Blind . . . Born lame?"

No, not born", Nix answered; "someone tossed a blob of melted metal at me, and she just nicely caught and lamed me".

"Dear me. And your wronger, what punishment had he?"

"Why, he did it in fun — custom of the foundry. We're a roughish crew, you know".

"Dear me: fun . . . custom. And you, Dominina: blind?"

"No, no" — from Haralda with her smile — "not blind: a little opthalmia . . ."

Now Nix, bending confidentially toward the King: "It's the study: she's at it half the night through. . . . A doctor she is, qualified, could earn her hundreds, if she chose: only, she preferred to live as a workgirl among the poor folk. Sings nicely — you might like to hear her".

Here Blucher nudged, muttering, "Shut your bother, Nix".

And Lord Tyrol: "Order, order".

And Carol: "Prefers to live as a workgirl . . . I see. . . . And sings nicely. Well, then, perhaps you will now sing something".

"I have to pray to be let off" — from Haralda — "I don't really sing".

"I see" — from Carol. . . . "Well, what is it you want of me?"

On which Nix bent again to tell him in confidence, "It was about this Barrow-tax: makes things so much dearer, you see, for us poor folk" — all the formal oratory dropped.

Silence. And now Carol: "I see: there is now a tax on barrows. And *this* is what you care about? I imagined that you would come to me to say, 'Here we are, there you are, our King, make us pretty, make us glad-hearted, give us news of the sun and moon . . . but a tax on barrows! Was nothing, then, wrong with you before the tax? Oh, I think so — something wrong. But *you don't know* what it is; nor — do I. Something simple, I think; simple, deep; and it is my business to know, but I don't — O, forgive! . . . You, Doctor, you look knowing: do you know what a King should know, and do, and be?"

Now anew stillness a little; until Haralda: "I think that a King should be a scientist".

Carol's hollowed forehead frowned upward at her. "You do? A scientist!"

And Haralda: "Yes. Hell is paved with good intentions; Heaven is paved with science".

"Dear me, true", says Carol, with nods; then he added, "But *I* am a scientist! — something of a scientist — and I do not see that that helps me to read this riddle".

Haralda answered, "Science gives the eagerness to read it. Being dealers in facts, scientists can't help catching sight of the fact that *they* are shadows, about to vanish, and only worlds matter: so science makes men world-soldiers, ready to hurl themselves to death for the world, as Chervin drank black-vomit, as X-ray Christs die crippled, as Bosso died of tubercle bacillus, Garré of glanders, as Catterall inoculated himself with yellow-fever, Lola with tetanus — hundreds of them — holier far than martyrs, gallanter far than other vanguards of other armies. Science gives the world-mood. And, then, Science

trains the brain to grasp the science which is the most important of the sciences" — words which reached the garden-party, where one Lady Zurro, a beauty now *passée* and painted, observed to the Nadine girl, "Pert, that young woman!", to which Nadine murmured back, "He keeps gazing at her!", and Vasilissa, who heard, murmured at Nadine, "Well, a King can look at a cat!", Carol, meantime, asking Haralda, "Which science is it that you call 'the most important of the sciences'?"

"Economy, Sire", Haralda answered.

"Economy" — a mutter — "'the most important of the sciences'"; then louder: "That is quite possibly so; and just of it I chance to know nothing".

"The key of 'the riddle'", Haralda remarked, "is there".

"And what does Economy say?" — from Carol, keenly eyeing upward at the line of that cheek-and-chin within which was implicit just a mite of smiling: "Does Economy say that it is one thing that is wrong at bottom? Or is it different things?"

In a species of secrecy, keen, leaning, Haralda answered with emphasis, "No: one thing — only one — 'simple, deep' — as you very cleverly guess".

"Well!" broke from Carol: "Doctor! Mentor! What, then, pray, is — your name?"

"My name is Haralda Hásdruvol".

"Haralda . . . I thank you. . . . Yes, and what else, Dr. Hásdruvol, do you tell me?"

And Haralda: "I think this: that misery is of little importance in itself: 'misery of Man', 'misery of the masses', — matters no more, in itself, than the misery of pterodactyls, and of all the generations of the geologic ages that raged in sorrow. But this 'misery of the masses', not important in itself, is important for the reason that Progress is important. By 'progress' in a rick being built one means a growth in the amount of rick; as Progress of Life is a growth in the amount of Life, of what is the trait of Life — consciousness. And consciousness is a knowledge of facts: which is what science is. So Progress is a growth of science. And Progress is important, since it is a growth of what is the very trait of Life, of consciousness, or knowledge of facts. So, since each man has a genius of his own, a particular knack or luck in catching sight of this fact or that fact, the masses could doubtless produce as much Progress in a month as the present group of 'scientists' produce in a century: for it is by luck, mostly, that we become conscious of new facts: Voltaic cells, Röntgen rays, Hertzian waves — discovered by luck; and the luck of ten millions is exactly a millionfold more than the luck of ten. But, of course, the ten millions must not be in misery, must be free, freely interested like our bourgeois scientists, not distracted with prickly-heat, rushing in a rash of scratching, but dallying in luck's way, or no luck will be met; if they are in misery, it is a good man's business to know the reason why, and to be out with a sword, like a soldier, to down it".

"Soldier", King Carol muttered.

"I think, too", Haralda added, "that a King should discover for himself that those dim 'masses' really do consist of individuals, each with his own luck and genius".

"Dear me" — Carol's gaze still given up to her in a state of fascination — "Haralda your name is. . . . Live in the Capital, do you?"

"Yes, I live in Kargo".

"How if I engage you as a Mentor?"

She shook her head slowly. "No, I have other work".

Then a little dumbness, until the King demanded, "How, though, is a King to discover for himself that those 'masses' do consist of individuals?"

"Now, let me see". Haralda pondered it. "Could not your Majesty visit the — factories, say? somehow witness the life — No, I'm afraid I can't quite say. . . . Peter the Great got to know the people; but, then, *he* made himself a workman, *he* was 'great'".

Carol muttered, "Peter, yes; *he*, as you say — was great"; and now, waking himself from his fascination, he said shortly, with some touch of crossness, "Well, I have to thank you, I — thank you. As to that tax of yours on barrows, I may look into that, too. God's-guard, then. . . . But surely — pray, take some refreshment before you go: *there*, see, are things to eat. Manfred (to Lord Tyrol), you might see to it for me; and it might please them to look at the lakes, the gardens. . . . No (to the garden-party), don't you run way ---"

"That's all right", Vasilissa called, "we were just going"; then, stepping three steps toward him, she sent out in a confidential way, "Something to tell you! I will come again into the forecourt presently"; then, going again to her party, who had stood up, she said with a roguishness of glance, "Routed, my Lords and Ladies: retreat, retreat", then stepped up the balustrade-steps to pass up the avenue to the palace, drawing after her her lordly lot, last of all two lordly footmen.

Meantime Carol had stood up, saying to Haralda, "Well, I am glad that you came. If you will organize another delegation — No, no, that would not be in order". Then on a sudden, finishingly, "Well, God's-guard to you" — now lifting his palm, she lifting her palm, to touch; upon which he went in a species of haste up the balustrade-steps, a picture of meditation, and eastward away, his head bent, Tyrol's gaze resting on the retreating figure until a grove of trees hid it, that eerie preamble of the palace-clock at the same moment breaking out before Seven was tolled, and before the Comptroller said with some pleasantry to the Deputation, "This way, then — 'something to eat' by command" — this Tyrol, or "Manfred", as the King had called him, being a boyhood's friend of the King.

So now the Deputation moves to sit on nice chairs, two deputies at each dainty table, and that bright Tyrol turns himself into a waiter to serve them with

wines, ices, bonbons, cakes bridally attired, while they discuss the King's being and behaviour, and how Haralda Hásdruvol had boldly spoken. But Blucher dishonoured the Deputation by slipping a wedge of cake into his jacket pocket, an act which, though quick, was not unwitnessed; and Tatarescu dishonoured it by obstinately tossing over his left shoulder (for luck) the drops which were left of every lot of slivovitch or arrac that he finished.

VII

THE KING'S ACT

In the thick of which feasting the Deputation was aware of three men over them at the balustrade—Prince Alexander with Messrs. Snifkin and Snarkski, the Prince having come from the palace to come upon the King alone, knowing that the garden-party was no longer in the gardens; and, standing there, he peered through narrow lids at Haralda Hásdruvol—feminine face, nose's profile a little concave, humour at cheek-bones, two fat plats of hair: for there was still some light, though now darkness was coming fast down, the dinner-hour near, Balainca dining late, at eight, in the Summer months. And presently the Prince spoke: "What, turned garçon, Tyrol?"

And Tyrol: "Ha, ha, with a consciousness of inexperience, Your Royal Highness. But, then, *le roi le veut*".

"Oho, I assumed that a King was somewhere in it: he does not send a deputation empty away. But, *presti*, it is that filly you are doing it for, Man".

"Ha, ha, no, she rejects all my proffers!—no appetite".

"Pleases me, that filly". Now to Haralda the Prince tenderly said, "Well, Mimi, do you love me?"

Haralda did not tell.

And Alexander: "Well! no answer. If your tongue is dumb, I'll bite it, and make it bellow. . . . The King, Tyrol: now alone, is he?"

"I think that his Majesty is alone, Your Royal Highness. He went that way"—eastward.

Eastward Alexander turned, and, as he turned, murmured to Snifkin and Snarkski, with an eye aside on Haralda, "Track that filly for me, kidnap, bring before me at midnight", then went away over the balustrade-path, the pair of satellites remaining stationary.

And now Lord Tyrol remarked to the deputation, "If you have finished, I shall now be pleased to show you The Lakes", whereupon the six stood up to follow him in a group northward and eastward away through scenes of agriculture that have a notoriety, and are really not unlike those "gardens of spice", paradisaical, of the sultan of old—the males of the Deputation now having-on their caps, except Tatarescu, who still had his in hand, that he might not "die in" it; and fifty metres behind the group of sight-seers Messrs. Snifkin and Snarkski paced together, that they might get a chance to grab Haralda for the enjoyment of Alexander, whose sexual profligacy was celebrated—though this may not have been because he was uncommonly womanfond, but because it was soldier-like, marauding; and a lot of his talk was coarse and bawdy, as our admirals say "damn" every moment. "The Army" with a capital A was his pet and party.

These two, then, and the sight-seers, were out of sight of the palace, when the Princess Vasilissa came out from it, to keep her appointment with the King, her garden-party guests having now all gone away at the impending of dinner-time; and now, night having arrived, a riot of stars had started to bedew a cloudless blackness of sky, like crowds out in riots. So the Princess stepped with a seeking outlook down to the balustrade, seeing no King, no Tyrol, nor Deputation, and now was saying, "Why, is he gone away?" when she saw Carol walking smartly from east toward her along the balustrade-path; and he threw-up his hand at her, saying, "There you are".

"Good Carol", she fondly said, "I was thinking that you had forgotten me".

"No, no. You said that you have something to tell—Yes, and I have something to tell you".

She smiled fondly into his face, with "Well? What?"

And he: "You tell ---"

"Carol", she now said gravely, "I have to warn you that Alexander is in a strange and dangerous temper. He should not be too much opposed, because—" She paused when the palace-clock in its ominous manner warned that it was a quarter to Eight o'clock.

And Carol answered, "The Prince shall not be opposed at all—for a while—for a year, say. This is what I have to tell you: that I am going away".

"Going" came from Vasilissa: "going? When? Where to?"

Carol answered, "I may go in a day or two".

"For a year? Carol! Then, what is to become of my wedding-day a month away? Day or two? Year? Why, Heaven help me! What for?"

Carol bent a little to gaze into her face—a 'little', she being tall—then asked, "You care, then? Really?"

"Care?" says Vasilissa: "Oh, Carol, is it not with the heart that I love you? And a whole year more ---"

He picked-up her hand to put to his heart, with, "My dear Cousin Vasilissa!", but then at once, with some fretfulness: "But since it is decided. . . . You should bear with me in this, since it is not for my own pleasure, so to say, and, if you make it more difficult than ---"

"Heavens!" she interjected, "but let one know, can't you? What for? Where to? The thing seems so ---"

"I shall simply go under—disappear", he told her in confidence: "no one will know where to. Then after a year I shall reappear with as little fuss as I disappeared, to be before the Altar with my betrothed".

"Year. . . . But how odd, and how ---" Now suddenly, with a start, she added, "But stay --- No, Carol, don't you! Are you aware that there is such a thing as a law called 'The Crusader Law'?"

Pause. Then Carol: "Let me see—Crusader Law—Well, yes, the tutors appointed for me when I was a boy used to shovel into my skull a host

of suchlike informations under the names 'History', 'Geography', 'Grammar', the dull people, telling ever of conventions, accidents, what King happened to strut in 1550, what city manufactures mittens for the moment, the use of the subjunctive 'mood' in Balaincan since the eighteenth century—their interest, like savages', being in *men*, in temporary, local truths, and they bid me 'remember!', no interest in *things*, in universal, eternal truth, and no bidding me 'think!' But I pretty quickly twigged that those simple souls were dulling me, drugging me, lowering the stiffness of the prick of my intellect, whereupon by a definite rebellion, you remember, I effected a break-away. And I think I did hear from them something of this Crusader—What is this Crusader Law?"

"Carol"—in a solemn voice—"mind what you do. This old Crusader Law enacts that, if a King disappears for six months, the nation may then elect a new—Only this afternoon the Archbishop was telling Alexander about it, and Alexander ---"

Here Carol broke into laughing a little with, "Don't you take it rather heavily? That must be a pretty obsolete law. We ought still to be Crusaders, who, though they lacked light, had fire, but we no longer --- Oh, very well, I shall do as you suggest—shall go for six months only. This, I think, satisfies both the Crusader Law and my sweetheart Cousin".

"Six months", came despondently from Vasilissa, "half a long year, all of a sudden, and no explanation --- But stay, stay: Why, my old nurse Thyrsa foretold it from the cards last Tuesday! My goodness, how curious!—she foretold—Carol, let's go to her at once, and hear ---"

But now, on the contrary, Carol stopped short in their walk up the avenue toward the palace, to answer with half-a-laugh "I? to hear about cards?"

"Oh, Carol, do!" Vasilissa pleaded: "Thyrsa foretold that one beloved by me would roam away, never to come back: '*never*', Carol, the cards said, 'to come back'! Is it for ever, then, that we part? Come, will you? She shall cut the cards in your presence, and tell if they say the same ---"

But the King stood where he stood, for a new reason now, hardly now hearing her, his interest having been captured by two forms whom he saw come trotting together on the lower terrace toward the balustrade: a man with a woman, whose hand the man, as they ran, held; and in the woman the King seemed to see Haralda Hásdruvol, though they were three hundred yards afar, and only starlight to see with. In fact, they were Haralda and Tatarescu, he, as they stopped short of breath at a rose-arbour, panting at her, "Aye, it was you they were after, sure, those two: that was none else than the Splendid Devil himself that spoke to you when we were here eating, and he muttered something to them two, for I saw him".

"Yes", Haralda answered, "I guessed why you dragged me down that side-path—the idle people. We should be safe here: let's wait till the others come back"—sitting now within that rose-arbour where the King had sat to receive the Deputation, while Tatarescu, the garden-party chairs being

still there, stepped to sit on one of them; and he lifted his voice a little to call to Haralda, "What nice chairs, my God! and that ice-cake still here . . . I could do with some more" — now a silence, during which he cut two sectors of the cake, to push into two pockets; then afresh called out, "Well, this is a day: day of my life, this, if I am never to see another. Strange thing, I saw a white cat this morning, and the very same day I see the King: bad, that; that's bad. Well, well: take what comes, Tatarescu. But you: you spoke up pretty well to the King didn't you? by God, you did".

"Oh, well" — Haralda's voice rose out of the rose-arbour — "it seemed a chance to influence him, so I seized it. He is not ordinary — an intellect he is, mind, this little King of ours. I bet I'd influence him, if I once got well at him".

Now silence some time again, while somewhere in the offing of their consciousness a frog's great chops were agape guffawing, his jolly gorge crowing for rollick at the crowds and glories of the coronation rite of the night's reign. Then presently Tatarescu remarked, "I wonder if the others are coming: may be they'll go out another way". Then silence some time, broken by Haralda's voice: "They are sure to come with Lord Tyrol — unless he goes back to the palace some other way". Then again silence for the frog's night-thoughts to guffaw in. Then again Tatarescu's call: "I can't get over that cat this morning; presti, the animal hadn't a coloured hair; and two times the animal mewed". Then again Haralda's voice: "Mewed for milk! — addicted to white". Then again silence.

During which time Prince Alexander was somewhere eastward, seeking the King, and the King was standing southward in the avenue before the palace, somewhat absently ridiculing the urging by the Princess to consult the sibyl Thyrza (a privileged old nurse); and in one of the stillnesses, Haralda, slinging a knee betwixt knit fingers, her face agaze upward at the galactic tract, began to sing—to herself, for her own behoof, but audibly enough in a dumbness of the cosmos that the frog's raw comment, and that dumb anthem of the galaxy's agony, only gave more greatness to:

*Caravan stumbling,
Starlit we stray,
Faith in us fumbling,
Hoping there's Day,
Morning-stars singing
"Morning-bell rings,
Morning-bright bringing
Warblings and wings"*

"Hark!" King Carol muttered.

And Vasilissa: "It is that brazen woman again".

But since Haralda was being tracked, to sing at all was hardly cautious, and, in fact, she was hardly half through the stanza when Prince Alexander's Snifkin and Snarkski were within thirty yards of her, having heard her.

There was Snifkin's whisper, "*That's she!*"

And Snarkski's, "Come, we have her".

But they did not have her: for even as Tatarescu uttered, "Look out! here they are!", and Carol, for his part, uttered, "Why, what is the matter there?", Haralda, twisting out of the rose-arbour, like a wind was away westward, the two after her, and after the two Tatarescu, and after Tatarescu Carol.

As that part of the park into which Haralda chanced to dash was darksome with thicket, the paths twisty and intricate, it quickly happened to Tatarescu to lose sight of the fugitive and her two pursuers, whose flight of foot swept them away with a swifter wind of flight than this heaviness could vie with, and panting, he stopped; some moments after which Carol dashed past him, but stopped, he also, to trot back to Tatarescu, even as the Princess Vasilissa, for her part, who had run some steps down the avenue after the King, stood still, saying with an offended half-laugh, "Well! I seem to be left!", and pshawed, and walked away to enter the palace.

At the same moment Carol under a darksomeness of oaks was saying to Tatarescu, "What is it? What is it?"

And Tatarescu, after peering to recognize the King: "Well, Sire, I was for protecting the Dominina Haralda from those two, who are after her".

"*After . . . ?*" says the King: "what in the world are they after her for?" — moving now back toward the rose-arbour and that garden-party locality.

And Tatarescu: "Well, Sire — she being a comely lass, and you know what men are. I think they're doing it for Prince Alexander, for I saw the Prince whisper to them two ---"

Now the King, already flushed, flushed with a resentment which he vented upon Tatarescu, saying, "Pooh, man, that is less than credible. Within the palace precincts? Girls are not hares, My Friend, nor men greyhounds. There is some mistake ---" he stood still a moment.

"Anyway" — from Tatarescu, as they moved on anew — "I think she has given them the slip again, for I saw her dodge down a side-alley, and I saw them sort of halt at the alley, as if they'd lost --- She's pretty tricky on her feet — can take care of herself ---"

"Yes, yes, but is doubtless running under some misapprehension. . . . But now, look here" — now turning his eyes about with a furtive underlook, as if to discern spies lurking in the night — "I know an honest face when I see it" — he had been eyeing aside at Tatarescu in a wary and weighing way, and now, at the place of the garden-party, was stepping actively a few yards to and fro, looking steadfastly at Tatarescu — "an honest face when I see it, and — I propose trusting you with a --- Can you keep a secret without fail, My Friend?"

On which Tatarescu, with widened eyes: "Well, Sir, I think so!"

"Yes, I think so. Now look: I have determined to become a workman — be among you as one of you ---"

Tatarescu's start caused his cap to drop from his hand. He murmured, "Workman? What, you?" Then, with another start, "No, don't you, now! Why, you can't fancy: it would be doing you dead in two days".

Carol's eyes turned furtively about, as to discern spies hiding, then urgently he said in a sort of confidence, "*She* does it! it is a doctor — qualified — but prefers to live as a workgirl, ha, ha. Anyway" — breathlessly — "I have decided, am in for it now, nothing can alter it. I meant to wait a little — do it some days hence — there are arrangements which should be made — but my betrothed lady --- No, I won't wait — *you* are my great opportunity. If I pass out through the east gates for Kargo in your garments, with my beard off, I will hardly be recognized by the guard, while you in my garments will go through the north gates — the guard challenges only in-comers, not out-goers — and if, keeping your face concealed, you get yourself mistaken for me, it will afterwards be assumed that I have gone northward from Kargo, not eastward toward it — which will be what I wish. So now let us change clothes".

As breathless now as he, Tatarescu breathlessly said, "Well, if your Majesty commands ---"

"Yes" — from Carol breathless: "first I will run to the palace to get some crested paper, so as to write four or five necessary notes later tonight — shall be back in three minutes" — he was off up the avenue running, to be presently running back, saying breathlessly, "Here we are, beard first: take this little scissors" — producing a penknife which was a tool-chest in little — screwdriver, scissors, file, gimlet — and, as he sat on a garden-party chair, said, "Every part of the park will be scrutinized for clues: see that you leave not one hair: put all into your pocket".

But in Tatarescu's pockets were already two wedges of cake, and it was into the cap in his hand that, as he snipped and snipped, he kept putting the tufts of hair, snipping stooped close over to see darkly in the starlight, snipping by pressures upon the scissors' handles, which were straight, having no apertures for the fingers, but having a spring to spring them apart after every pressure.

"Good work!" the King said: "you have educated hands. What is your name?" — now fingering chin, cheeks, the job accomplished.

"Name of Tatarescu" — on a short breath — "day of my life, this, Sir, if I am never to see another, for I saw a white cat ---"

"That's well, that's done" — on a short breath — "now we had better go into that arbour to undress, as someone may come" — they were off for the arbour, trotting, caught in a fret of haste, Carol panting half-way, "See that, in putting-on the cap, you don't let any hairs drop — Stay, I had better put it on you".

They stopped; Carol took the cap; but Tatarescu shrank, suggesting, "Wouldn't it be better, Sir, if we put it on your head?" — shy of having-on any cap, lest he should "die in" it.

But Carol answered, "No, you take the cap—its peak to conceal your face, as you pass out; and, as I sometimes wear a cap of this kind, and want you to seem to be I—Steady, now: keep your head dead still".

No other word the workman ventured to utter, but stood now with a bowed head, like a victim submitting to the axe of destiny, while with tactful fingers the King, tricking the law of gravity, got the capful of hairs upon the head without the fall of one hair.

A minute after which they were within the rose-arbour, taking off boots, trousers, scarf, collar, Tatarescu, before taking the satin jacket of Carol, removing from his own the two wedges of cake, to lay on the arbour-seat in the dark. And in silence, in a kind of hurry, they worked at undressing, dressing, until Carol murmured, "That's well: now you are the King, and I the workman. . . . And remember: you are to burn those clothes of mine this night without fail. . . . Any money in the pockets?"

Tatarescu felt in the King's pockets, and said, "No, nothing, only this voltmeter, and this cigar-case, these matches, this handkerchief, and the penknife".

"Four gentos here in yours", the King said: "I will keep those; you take this ring instead—not to be pawned, remember—melt—throw the stone into the river".

Tatarescu's breast heaved, as, slipping the ring on, he breathed, "It shall be done, God willing. . . . This is a day—I seem to have a presentiment—I only hope it will end well, Sir".

Upon which the King seized the operative's sleeve to tell him with emphasis in confidence: "Every real end is good: that is now known, is science—believe it, My Friend, with religious joy—*every real end is good*, in so far as any end is really an end. Now our boots ---" But, as they now began, seated, to put-on each other's boots—their finishing touch—both started, paused, hearkening, Carol whisper-close, "Footsteps! Be quick!"

They were, in fact, footsteps of Prince Alexander coming from an east park-region, where he had been seeking the King, whom he wished to interview alone, as he could not at dinner and later, when others would be present; and the Prince was muttering to himself, "No Majesty visible that way", when he saw on the lower terrace something feminine running from west toward him, casting the backward looks of one eluding pursuit—Haralda Hásdruvol, who had now doubled back to this locality; and with instant briskness the Prince was springing upon the balustrade-top to leap down—a seven-feet leap—and intercept, and seize.

And "There!", says he to her, "got you. Filly! Running from the riders, are we? Don't you love me, then? All girls love me. I fill the fillies with filial things, and shall fill this filly with two, because I love her double".

Panting in his grasp, Haralda gasped with harsh reproach, "Oh, pity to waste—Nothing doing here, Sir, no hope, no hope".

And Alexander: "Look here, if you are naughty, know what I shall do? I shall shave off your eyebrows, and stick them on your lip for moustaches. Now a kiss-kiss".

But he found Haralda no loviedovie: she fought; and when he had conquered her wrists, and was near to kissing, she shrieked, "Nix! Tatarescu! *Al soccorso!*"

It was about fifteen yards eastward of the rose-arbour; and within six ticks now the King, having darted out of the rose-arbour, ran into the Prince, saying, "No, you may as well let her be off"; whereupon Haralda, wrestling herself free, was fleeing away eastward.

Staggered by the impact, the Prince breathed, "You hound!" — supposing that he spoke to a mechanic.

And the King: "Foxhound! — to cop foxes", then instantly as off, running after Haralda.

But his speaking had revealed him to the Prince's keenness of intuition: the Prince pointed at the receding form, breathing "*That* is Carol Wratislaw".

At the same time his Sifkin and Snarkski darted into sight, racing from westward after Haralda, who, they reckoned, was now bound to be somewhere about there.

Whereupon Alexander ran six steps to intercept and seize Snifkin's sleeve, and point keenly eastward: "Man running yonder — see? shadow, shadow" — no curve of the road having yet hidden Carol, though a first curve had hidden Haralda; and Snifkin spurted furtively eastward to track Carol, the Prince now spinning round to Snarkski to hiss in a secret manner, half to Snarkski, half to himself, "*That* is King Carol, *that* is Carol Wratislaw — beard off — in workman's-togs. Why in workman's-togs? To turn workman? Experience the life . . . ? That is it! it is *like* him. Now visit me quick, Spirit of Wit, the Weird Sisters are scribbling. There is that 'Crusader Law' . . . 'six months'. . . . The clothes! how did he get? There should be a workman now within that arbour there" — even as he pointed at the arbour, he darted, peered within, said, "Ah, Friend, I was expecting you, come forth".

Forth stepped Tatarescu, detected, Prince Alexander looking him up and down before saying, "Why, you are the King's self, Man — same height — King's clothes — King's ring — King has a firmer mouth — and, then, the cap — yet I have seen the King in a cap like that, too. But, then, aren't you afraid that someone may kill you, throw your corpse into The Lakes, then when the corpse is found rotted, everybody will be calling out, 'The King's body at last!' — if the King is then safe away in hell. By Christ, you would be having a grand funeral, Friend".

Astare Tatarescu stood, fascinated, unable to tear his stare from Alexander's face, his bottom-lip hanging agape, the cap on his head forgotten, though he got over his dumbness to mumble brokenly, "Well, if anyone likes to do for a poor man. . . . They call you the Devil. . . . This morning I saw a white cat . . ."

though he got over his dumbness to mumble brokenly, "Well, if anyone likes to do for a poor man. . . . They call you the Devil. . . . This morning I saw a white cat . . ."

A sudden hand was clapped upon his shoulder, Alexander now saying, "Friend, you are frightened of me. And you *are* in peril, I know; but *I* intend to protect you, don't be frightened: you will live to be ninety, a white cat signifies gray hairs"—picking meanwhile from a waistcoat-pocket a ring made of nickel, pretty thick, which he secretly slipped upon his middle finger: a ring craftily contrived, a sideward pressure upon it operating a spring, which caused a drop or two of liquid to ooze through a tiny tube within a spike, the liquid being nicotine; and Alexander added, "The King mentioned to me the step he meant to take—become a mechanic!—and though I said to him, 'Carol, you go, but you will never come back, Carol', I approve of you for helping your King. Don't take me for a bogey, give the Splendid Devil his due: there—you have my palm"—raising his palm to be pressed by a palm, the Balaincan manner of "shaking hands"—their "waving", too, different, for they do not, as we do, wave farewell from themselves, as if saying "go, and stay away", but they wave *to* themselves, as if saying "don't go, come back".

To that raised palm, then, of the Prince Tatarescu raised his palm, and pressed, saying, "Well, I am proud—" But then at once, agitating his hand, "Oh! something hurt ---"

That "hurt" was the workman's last word on earth. . . .

Within twenty seconds—for nicotine strikes like lightning—he began to stagger about, struggling with his legs' ataxy, Alexander constantly following his groggy dance, peering near through narrowed lids, until the dancer stopped to drop; and still the Prince stood over, stooping, gazing with interest at the grave convulsions of that tug-of-war with death. Within twelve minutes the victim lay still, his contest fought and lost.

"Hound!" the Prince hissed at him, "better a quick death than a slow life". Then, raising himself from poring over that death-agony of a cock whose gullet has been gashed, and the rough suddenness of his struggles, again and again begun, christens everything with drizzles of crimson, the Prince remarked to Snarkski, who also had been watching the cock-contest, "This body goes into the Second Lake, at the centre; it is to be the King's body when discovered: see to it that the under-clothes be suitable; remove that ring from the little to the middle finger. And you, or Snifkin, are to know every step of the King every day; make that your main occupation; keep bright eyes: a bright eye is like coins for the pocket, but a sluggish eye is of the shape of graves".

Now he steps up the balustrade-steps, to pace away with a bent head up the avenue to the palace; and, as pondering he goes, the palace-clock gongs its ominous preamble before Eight strokes are tolled.

VIII

THE FOUNDRY

After walking to Kargo, asking where Old Town is, and walking into it, King Carol found the reality of Old Town damping; and now something cold as the Pole told him, "You haven't a leg to stand on, you have gone and cut off arm and leg, goodbye now to your amateur modes, your tools and books, your Cuban cigars, and gardens of musing". People, it appears, are saying nowadays that the universe consists of groups, "islands", "galaxies", far apart, so that Light, flying faster far than fancy flies, requires millions of years piled on chiliads of millions to dive deep from island to island: on which hugeness, and suchlike, it had become the King's use to sit and brood, or stroll and smoke and brood; but now his universe had shrunk to this realness of Old Town, and to the question, where to sleep? — not in a hotel, with his four gentos!

At least, however, on asking a man who was eating pitzi out of a newspaper before a door, he was led through obscure alleys to an edifice that may once have been some nobleman's mansion, where he steered a course up marble steps through archipelagos of excrement (of dog, cat) to a large apartment, within which three lines of garments, drying, hung in catenaries, hyperbolas of swing-bridges' curve, in it an old woman smoking, earning "night's-repose" from washing-day exertions, lolling slattern, flabby, her thighs apart by life-habit, scant of breath, sighing at life, an inveterate Old-Towner — Carol having afterwards to ask himself whether every Old Town old woman sat fat and slattern, and sighed at life.

This one sighed to a daughter, "Nana, take this man to the room"; and in that room the King was taught that night that not all beds are soft things.

Yet before eight the next day he was at Crowdar's great gate, and, on recognizing Nix going in with his crutch, he approached Nix to say, "Can I get put to work here?" — an uncommon form of words, so that Nix looked quizzingly at him, and replied, "Not likely".

Carol frowned. "Why not? One has a kind of right ---"

"Right, eh? . . . Still, you might try. Know the ropes?"

"Are there ropes?"

"Aye. Come with me".

But when they had walked within, Nix disappeared so long, that the novice, left in a lane between big buildings, felt himself forgotten. The foundry began to sound round about him, to thump and bump and clamour — jeremiad, crash, crycry — and stubbornly to persist, like some jigger smitten to a madness of dancing, and still to jig and insist, and not let his jiggling legs give in; until the King ceased his to-and-fro stepping to rest his back, and stare down at his (or Tatarescu's) boots. But then Nix came in haste, with, "Come, Foreman says a chance for you" — now to hop down a long passage

in a house to another passage, and point, with, "Fourth door on left"; then hopwise away in haste he went.

When Carol had rapped and entered a room in which hung a large map of Kargo and a plan of the foundry, he found himself with a young bourgeois, managerial, bald of brow, a preoccupied and business air, bent at a bureau over a big book, totting up figures with the pipping lips of the arithmetician, and it was some minutes before he took sufficient notice of his visitor to mutter, "Well?"—still persisting in testing the taste of figures with the lips, even when Carol had told his will to be "put to work"; until suddenly with a swish of his swing-chair he dashed to the attack of the actual instant, facing round to say, "I'm afraid—Well, you look a strong—Who is it you remind me of? Let me see—somebody. Well, one of the blastfurnace hands hasn't turned up today, but he's certain to turn—What are you? Where have you worked? Know anything about converting?"

"Why, yes"—from Carol—"I have frequently made steel—tantalum steel, tungsten steel ---"

"Oh? what for? magnets?"—the level of the boss' eyebrows went to wry to a sardonic expression—"whereabouts was that?"

"At Serapi": a true statement, Serapi being a King's-seat, and a townlet near the seat.

"Serapi?" says the other. "I wasn't aware—And what do you know of—What is tungsten-powder used for?"

"Electric light filaments, high-speed steel".

"Aha! And do you know—How do you fit a piston in a hole?"

"Make it a shade too large, dust it with carborundum, then work it in the hole".

"Aha!"—now the foundry-man, pricked to prove himself the superior, continued to examine—about the dam method of pouring castings, about adjustable reamers, broaching machines, spur and worm gearings, the machining of electron, until, finding the applicant not less expert in workshop practice than himself, he said, "Anyway, come tomorrow, and we'll see"—swinging anew to aversions from the world in his big book.

So Carol spent in the street a day of emptiness that seemed everlasting: nothing to do but buy a cap, and get shaved; no home to go to: for he had a suspicion that he was not expected to use in the day-hours his room in Old Town—whose chair lacked a back: so it was tramp, tramp for him, hearing the trams drone, seeing the nuns' robes roaming on their nun-business about, the officers flaunting their right to be, and to be riding, brightly dight, along. And in the afternoon the air darkened, it started to rain, an exasperating attack upon the harmless, so that the tramp casts his eyes on high to damn the Almighty's impoliteness. Now first, too, the King's inwards learned a true yearning of hunger, until, goaded at last against his grain into a café, he spent every gento which was still his, and still was not filled. Here,

though, a new interest dulled hunger when a howling arose outside—of newsboys—and a newsboy flew into the café, to sell quick to every eater the fifth edition of "*Balainca*", Lord Rostro's leading evening-paper. Its placard had, "The King Disappears"; and on the placards of the other two Carol saw, "The Vanished King", "Where is the King?" That evening Rostro's sales satisfied him.

But the next day Carol obtained work at Crowdar's, where he soon found out that the furnace-man whose work he was doing was named Tatarescu: it was Tatarescu's clothes that he wore; and the question arose within him, "Where, then, is Tatarescu?" To obtain new labourer's-clothes would scarcely take Tatarescu two days?

Then at the dinner-hour he again got sight of Haralda Hásdrúvol, with her barrow bethronged by buyers. He liked this. On the night of his flight he had darted after her in the park, as she ran from Alexander's arms, but had not managed to catch her; now she stood there before his eyes, selling sphingi-and-pitzi, lentil soup; immediately the selling of soup seemed to him the natural business of the rapturous beings in Paradise: for Illusion was the name of the vapours through which he looked at this lady, saw her move in superhuman rooms, and what her soul in its jewels chose to do was what the exalted walkers do in heavenly places. Why it was of her that the sparrows prattled he did not know, nor why the trees did obeisance when the breezes breathed that her feet were near: he only knew, in his illusion, that it was so. When he could get at her, he said, "No money!"—making a face of burlesque—"no lunch: unless one may have something on credit?"

"Rather!"—she laughed—"he that has no money, let him come, buy without money! But I am a land-owner, I: better borrow of me ten gentos till pay-day, then you will be solvent. What, then, is your—name?"

"Lancelot", he answered—one of his many names.

"Lancelot. . . . And what job is it you are on? Tatarescu's, is it?"

When he said, "Yes", her forehead wrinkled with perplexity. "I can't think where Tatarescu can be! His wife doesn't know. Vanished! like the little King"—"King" being what every mouth now uttered, if it opened: the King! Whither gone? How so? On the fourth day a paper ventured upon the statement, "The King has been kidnapped"; on the seventh, "The King is dead" appeared. But the C.I.D. of Whitehall, disbelieving that was either kidnapped or dead, were sending their eyes through Britain to spy him out; Berlin's Gestapo was busy; the rue de Jérusalem was roused to ransack Paris, the Riviera; the secret police, Choka and OGPU, of Moscow revolved it; indeed, the general public everywhere, pricked to a craze of interest, expected "Carol" in its papers' captions; from Los Angeles to New York to Belgrade to Istanbul the radio described a face, the cinematograph, exhibiting it, asked, "Can you find Carol?"; only three persons on earth, meantime, knowing where the King lurked—Prince Alexander and the Prince's creatures, Snifkin and Snarkski.

And Prince Alexander, for his own reasons, was instigating and fomenting a belief in the notion that the King was dead: his Snifkin twice visited Kotelianski House, the palace-offices of the United Press; and one night Alexander had Lord Rostro to dine alone with him.

But, then, the Princess Vasilissa understood that the King was not dead, was due to reappear in six months, on the 7th of November coming, for the King just before disappearing had told her so; and that letter that her Private Secretary, the Primo Cyprus, sent to the papers, denying that the King was dead, and assigning the reason for the denial, was really a letter written by Vasilissa herself.

For the Princess, having some gumption and gift for intrigue, and fore-knowing that Prince Alexander would seek to use the disappearance for his own behoof, dared to pit herself against the Prince, a new antagonism now growing up between them, so that two parties sprang into being with the names "Alexander Clique", "Vasilissa Clique", Alexander designing to instil and till into the national mind the idea that the King was dead, so as to prepare the nation for a vote of The Notables invoking the old Crusader Law when that law should become à propos, while Vasilissa with persistent ardour got a party together, getting going, too, the new newspaper "The Pigeon", to insist that the King still lived.

These parties, indeed, were hardly *national*—were parties among the aristocracy and other top-ones, who alone could vote as Councillors and Notables; but the contrast of attitude was none the less marked; and Vasilissa's assiduity in intriguing was rewarded by gaining an unlooked-for strength of support: for the aristocrats, while in a condition of anxiety as to the King's will, admired his pride and mightiness of style, and while timid of the Prince's sting, little liked his violence and licence. Hence what strength the Princess won.

Seeing which, the Prince may have excogitated the means of gaining some fresh laurel of prestige that must render him too glorious to be opposed: anyway, with his customary profundity of motive, he resolved to pick, and did pick, a quarrel with Jailvia, by instigating a newspaper rumour that it was agents of Sinovich (Jailvian Foreign Minister) who had killed the King for being "on the Left", for being "Radical", perhaps "Red", so close to Jailvia (anti-Red crusader). This suggestion went on some days in several papers; whereupon Sinovich, in a speech to his Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber and Senate, said that "our friends of Balainca must mend their manners", or would be regarded as unfriendly; the answer of Alexander was truculent; the wrangle grew in rancour; the old question of a frontier territory arose—whose was it really? Jailvia's or Balainca's? Balainca raised higher her tariff-wall; in reply Jailvia raised her tariff-wall; the newspapers of both were full of mutual abuse; swords rattled; Prince Alexander left Kargo for Wolczek close to the frontier; army-manoevres in Balainca were cut short; every half-hour one saw some aeroplane wayfaring on some aim aloft, and all night parabolic mirrors jerked aloft light-beams to search the skies; Germany came in, France (which financed the Jailvia armaments) came in, backing

Balainca, backing Jailvia, while Britain, diagnosing “a grave situation”, breathed “Peace, peace”, where there was no peace; and with bated breath Balainca waited in dread—as Haralda Hásdruvol remarked to “Lancelot” some four months after the King’s disappearance, “Balainca can’t cope with Jailvia though ten Splendid Devils captain her: our defeat is sure”—seated near him at her kitchen-table, eating a supper of omelet and mortadel.

But he: “Don’t be afraid, there’ll be no war”,

When she glanced at him with, “You are pretty sure!”, he answered, “Yes, if it comes to war, the King will turn up, and avert it”.

“Not if he is dead!” cries Anna Lopescu with half-a-laugh, seated broad-based opposite her niece and Lancelot.

“No, not if he is dead”, the King agreed in a drowsy mumble.

“I like my Splendid Devil in a kind of way”, Haralda began to say, “but when his devilry gets to guns ---” she stopped, noting now that a morsel of mortadel stood suspended on Lancelot’s fork between mouth and plate, his brow now bowed in sleep that had seized him, work being stern in the converter-shed at Crowdar’s, within which one saw forms of men walking in redness amid swarms of sparks, as forms of the damned travail within the vaults of Tartarus, and ever their palms swept from their foreheads the sweat of their martyrdom. So, smiling now at his shut eyes, the whiteness of his hands soiled, his clothes not clean, a smudge smearing one cheek, she put out her arm to draw his head to rest on her shoulder.

“Well, I never!” Anna Lopescu explained, scandalized.

“Oh, that’s nothing, just a gesture”, Haralda muttered.

And now already Carol started awake, staring about, with “*Where* is he, then? *Where* is this Tatarescu?; then, collecting himself, “Pooh, it’s a dream—I seem to have dropped—had a dream about a fire, with Tatarescu in it. No, I had better go—one is no good at night—I made the speech in a species of dream”—“speech” made that evening at a National Association of Trade Union Approved Societies Reunion—“Was it any good, the speech, Haralda?”

“Words, words”, Haralda answered: “lack of facts; you must amass before you can give. How are you getting on with the Mill’s ‘Economy?’”—which she had lent him.

And he: “Still at page seven. No, it is no good, I cannot concentrate to study at night—so dog-tired—the light so dim: at once I find my head nodding, and drop upon the bed, saying to myself ‘tomorrow night’”.

“Poor Doter! I understand”—“Doter”, her stock name for him, because he doted upon her.

“Perhaps”, he said, “there is in me a reason deeper even than weariness, namely that I hope you, and am subconsciously depending upon you to tell me the substance of the books”.

“A big job to ‘tell’ a science”, Haralda remarked; but then added, “Unless

—Yes, I might write a little book—concentrated tabloid—giving the substance—How would that be? Perhaps it needs to be done”.

“Bravo. I shall never be too weary to read what you *have written*”.

“No? Doter?”

On which he complained to the Aunt Anna: “She mocks me, you see, for what I can’t help”.

“I think it is a pair of you”, Anna Lopescu remarked: and when, undone with drowsiness, he went away, she said to Haralda, “You are going too far, you know, Girl, with this man— bringing the man here, going together to the pictures, the cafés, taking him soup, spending Sundays with him at Nuppol (pleasure-place not far from Kargo): are you in love with the young man, then?”

Stretching herself, mixing half-a-yawn with half-a-smile, Haralda answered, “Doesn’t it look like it?”

And Aunt Anna: “Ah, you, to say that. . . . Not that I dislike the young man—though there’s something strange about him—more like a bourgeois—Take care his aim isn’t to lead you astray!”

“Pooh, doesn’t want to; I wish he did”.

“Well, I never! You *wish*, Haralda, he’d lead you astray?”

“Aye. Or wish he’d want to”.

“Ah, you! ‘wish’” —with a leer: “girls, eh?—Youth—Romance—there’s more going on in secret hearts than people dream. So the young man attempted to—kiss you?”

“One bit of me”.

“Which bit?”—her interest suspending her dishclout’s business.

“Hand! Hard outlying bit, no much juice”.

“Flippant thing that you are, like a kid, and your twenty-sixth birthday coming the 10th of next month”. . .

IX

THE SIX MONTHS

Which birthday was in that same hour being argued about, not far away, in a garden in rue Vruda, rue of the massive mansions, and garden of the Cavaliere Snarkski's mansion, who, pacing the garden-paths with Count Snifkin, remarked to him, "The Prince thinks that the girl's birthday on the 10th is certain to trick the King into deferring his reappearance by three days, his six months of disappearance being up on the 7th; and, if he defers at all, we have what we want" — Snarkski being even now back from visiting Morocastro, Prince Alexander's home in the mountains.

"'What we want'", Count Snifkin repeated, sniffing a breath down the nostrils, a sort of little snort that was his way every three minutes — a man uncommonly like Snarkski, thin-faced, tall, though in Snarkski's manners was a levity or gaiety of the army-officer, whereas Snifkin, grave, finical, a civil official, hardly ever laughed, nor, like Snarkski, tapped upon something with the finger-tips, humming some rum-tum of the towns — "'What we want': but what do we want? Much of the Prince's plan in the matter remains dark to me! Did he explain matters to you?"

"Oh, yes, he explained", Snarkski answered: "I enquired, and his reply was, 'You are right to enquire, for the left hand should know what the right does, each being unable to brush its own nails' — and he told me things. Great man, our Prince — oh, yes, deep. The effect of being in his presence is to be inspirited — whirls a fellow off, as when one is caught to heaven aloft on one's first excursion in the air. He and I were in his study — or 'lair', he says — quite half an hour; one side of lair all shelves with phials on them — poisons mainly — knows about poisons what no chemist knows, I think — I sipping after-dinner benedictine, he roaming the little room with mute footfalls, gowned in a robe of brown velvet that fits his figure, making every turn with a certain roughness of the shoulders, as when a tigress, in ranging her cage, gruffly lets out at every-go-round a growl of dangerousness. And what he says impresses the memory. 'Each', says he, 'being unable to brush —'"

"Quite so, quite so, my good fellow", Count Snifkin put in, "but did he explain, for example, his motive for delaying the kidnapping of the King, when it is obvious that any day the King may be visited by the caprice to turn up as the King, or, remaining a workman, to proclaim that he is the King. I quite fail to understand this delay!"

"That will be all right" — from Snarkski — "don't worry." When I asked him that, he answered, "Pooh man," no fear of the King saying now, "I am the King". The King is the subject of a superb King within himself, a superior King who is a workman. If the workman deigned to admit that he is a King, he is aware that a vastness of popularity would reward the King; but the reward that those sorts of quixotics want is the exaltedness of walking on roads of thorn

without reward: other reward spoils their reward. That Carol! Can you suck a woman's lip thin to a film like a sweetmeat? No; neither, I tell you, can you mete the height of Carol Wratishlaw's pride. To sigh "I and my brother-God" in the solitude of his water-closet, that is the secret grog to which that life of pride is addicted: he despises the pride of Kings'. That's what the Prince said".

Snifkin considered it with wry eyebrows, and said, "I see; yes, I take him there; yes, yes, a seer. But consider — if war be on the point of happening? May not the King *then* step out to stop it? I fear so".

And Snarkski: "I raised that point too, and it arrested the Prince's pacing three ticks. His answer was 'He *might* step out then; in fact — yes — I ought now to stop this war-talk'. Then he expressed surprise that I, too, could imagine that any war will actually happen — with Jailvia. 'The conqueror', he said, 'selects his enemy, Man, and, making war always upon the weaker, is a bully and, if a Counsellor, is a coward, as I now am a coward with a loud mouth, howling "War!", merely to make peace the sweeter. I even think I see my way, in arranging peace, to drug old Sinovich with heroin' — in saying which he laughed in his guffawing way".

Now Snifkin muttered, "No war, then: that is well". He added, "But the question remains — We take it that the Prince's intention is to make himself King: therefore at *some* time he must kidnap Carol; and the question remains, Why the waiting?"

Here Snarkski snapped thumb and finger aloft with "There is a reason, Bel Jovane (My Boy)! — Alexandrian transacting. Look now: a day or two after the expiration-day of the King's six months of disappearing — after the 7th, that is — the Notables will convene to vote as to whether or not a joint meeting of Council-and-Notables shall be called, in order to vote as to whether or not the Crusader Law is held to come in, and as to whether or not the nation shall vote at the year's end about a new King of the Reigning House being chosen. Very good. Now, in those two votings — of the Notables and of the Council-and-Notables — the majorities will probably be as the Prince wishes, if most people then think that the King is dead, as most people will, for the body of that foundry-man, Tatarescu, will be found about then in the lake, and will no doubt be taken to be the King's body. So the Prince will probably have the two majorities he wants. But they will pretty surely be small majorities. Vasilissa will still be insisting that the King is living; her group will be voting against the Prince's; and, if the votings are half-and-half affairs, the nation will vote half-heartedly as to a new King — may vote against. So Alexander wants hearty, large majorities. And how do you suppose he plans to have them? His statecraft! Plans to win Vasilissa to ask her party to vote, not as *she* wishes, but as *he* wishes, Vasilissa to be tricked into this round-about-face by having her anger roused against Carol, by being taken to see the King kissing the young lady, Haralda. But the King at present does not kiss the young lady: that's why the Prince is delaying the kidnapping to the last day of Carol's workman-prank. He reckons that the girl's birthday will tempt Carol into deferring by three days his return to the kingship; within those days the

Notables will vote; probably will vote for the joint sitting of Council-and-Notables; Vasilissa will be dispirited by that vote, may be half brought to a condition of indecision as to whether the operative's body, found shortly before the voting, is really Carol's; and just then Alexander will say to her, 'Come with me, I will shew you something positive about your Carol': for though the Prince knows that the King does not kiss, he counts that in that last hour of everlasting parting on the girl's birthday the King will certainly give in and kiss. Or he says, 'certainly', but he is not certain—I can see. He seems to consider this a weak point in his scheme, and wants Carol to be kissing habitually in advance. 'Snarkski', says he to me, 'you still say that he does not kiss?', and when I shook my head in sorrow, saying, 'no, Sir, doesn't kiss', he said impressively, 'You must make him, Snarkski. Organize a kiss. Wit, Man; wit will build a U-boat, and will seduce a pair of nuns who come to visit you, to beg you to be good'. I told him that the King kisses her hand, but that thrice on Sundays I have eyed them at Nuppol, riding merry-go-rounds, sipping eau-de-vie aux c  rises, dancing together, going home, and never a kiss, though it is easy to see that the King is on his knees to her, and the filly equally smitten with him. 'Then', says he, 'look to it: Carol is being stubbornly loyal to Vasilissa, but the greed to bring four lips into contact can be stronger than any other law of gravitation'. So we two, My Boy, have on our backs the task of organizing a kiss. I organize my own kisses not ill, but—Do you see your way?"

Snifkin's forefinger smoothed his right eyebrow musingly, while Snarkski added, "Oh, well, we have time, that can doubtless be invented. Anyway, you see why the kidnapping is delayed to the last day—to get things going with large majorities. Vasilissa is in love with the King: if she witnesses a kiss, she will doubtless be furious; the Prince even anticipates that she may then let herself become his mistress—splendid devil; *then* she will be his to command; at any rate, her party will break up with her heart".

Snifkin agreed: "I see the scheme. But"—warier than Snarkski, though less quick-witted, he had more "buts"—"the kissing must be in the open, for the Princess to see it? How is that to be assured? Then, again, the young lady may—possibly—not have told the King of her birthday—"

Snarkski flung his hand, with, "All such points will be seen to. There is the lady's aunt—easily handled—I've seen her, will visit her before long"—which visit duly took place one afternoon at an hour when Haralda was out at her garments-factory, Snarkski, nicely disguised, going to her flat-door with a pedlar's-tray, cheaply to sell thread, pegs, jujulina-seeds, cigarettes . . . and, as the aunt's gaze investigated his wares, he said to her, "I know your niece quite well. Aye, and I know that Lancelot who is after her—I could give into your ear a lot that you little suspect about that Lancelot".

"Come inside", says she.

And in the kitchen he and she sat with prolonged gossip; she gave him coffee, gave him egg fried with potato à l'espagnole.

He said to her, "An aunt gets to consider herself elderly owing to being older than her niece; but you—pooh—you are still a young woman in the

bloom of your youth. And fat you are! In Morocco all the men of the place would be crazily after you. On my side, am I not rather a good-looking fellow?"

Her answer was, "Shan't tell you: make you too vain!"

Also he said to her, "Know where I am from? — Koumcasa in The Mountains. No doubt you've heard tell of the Duke of Koumcasa?"

When she answered "No", he told her, "Lancelot is a son of the Duke of Koumcasa; Lancelot is no workman; nor is this the first time he has turned himself into a workman to get into the life of a workgirl whom he had a whim to entice from her virtue: he did it before, to get at a girl named Gruba, and Gruba gave birth to a baby now two years old, whom I know very well".

"My God!" Anna Lopescu breathed, "didn't I have the selfsame notion about that Lancelot?"

"No doubt you did — why, the man's hands, his manners . . . and now you know. But I am informing you of all this in confidence, being fond of you, and foreseeing that we two are bound to become intimates".

Good soothsaying: for he came again with his pedlar's tray, and again, ever when Haralda was away at her factory; the aunt got of him the gift of a box of "pigtail" (tobacco-sticks to which she was addicted); and although when he kissed her she slapped his face, this was affectionately done, nor was she permitted to see when he wiped his lips, to devitalize the kiss's vitamins sticking to them.

His wish was to cajole her into forbidding Lancelot to come into her flat (as Lancelot did on Friday nights), so that Lancelot's meetings with Haralda might be always in the streets (since one of the meetings was to be witnessed by the Princess Vasilissa); also his wish was to "organize a kiss"; and when she, dreading Haralda's resentment, exhibited some reluctance as to forbidding Lancelot to come into the flat, he organized a kiss and organized the forbidding in one *coup*, telling her, "Don't forbid yet — wait — let him come next Friday, and the Friday after. That Friday after will be the Splendid Devil's day of parade through Kargo to celebrate this marvellous peace-treaty with Jailvia, that day theatres will be free, so you and I together will go to a theatre in the evening, leaving those two here alone, and if within an hour they do not amuse themselves as lone lovers do, that will be peculiar; then you will slip out of the playhouse prematurely, trot home, steal in soft, soft, catch them nicely at it, then, being agitated, having a right to be indignant, you will feel the impulse to give Lancelot the command never again to darken this domicile. That's how you'll work it, see?"

Anna Lopescu answered, "Aye, that's how I'll work it: for an aunt has a duty to protect her niece's honour". And on that Friday of fête, in the forenoon, she mentioned to Haralda, "I intend going to the Teatro Franchese tonight".

"Ah, you are going —" leapt from Haralda.

"Will you come?"

"How can I? Isn't this a Lancelot night?"

The aunt leered at the niece. "Won't you be seeing the young man in the day-time? You can tell him then not to come this one night".

"What reason could I give?"

"Very well, go your own way".

Presently after which Haralda went out to rendezvous with Lancelot, passing through a Kargo garbed as for wedding-days, a flagrancy of flags, festoons of hues galore, bells here, bells there, deciding to break out into riots of self-expression, everywhere queues, at matinées, at picture-places, pavements populous, shops shut, brass-bands in squares, areas of dancing at the heyday, and all in the air a consciousness of holiday and novelty — not without cause, for, in a week when war seemed imminent, Sinovich and Alexander had appeared on a balcony in a piazza of Ub crowded with thousands of mouths which shouted cheers, as, breast clutched to breast, brother embracing brother, the two statesmen had exhibited themselves kissing each other's cheek in sweet reconciliation: and to Balainca was ceded by Jailvia the strip of territory called Rodoterra, long a cause of quarrel, Jailvia made Balainca a most-favoured-nation, Balainca timber, nickel, sheep thenceforth to enter Jailvia tariff-free — all that Alexander had asked for he got through some jugglery, as though Balainca had resorted to the use of morphia to soothe Jailvia to a maudlin mood. And this day Alexander was back in Kargo, drawing his Army after, as Lancelot and Haralda saw it from a little table amid the throng of little tables on the terrace before the Café Infanta in Avenue Pascal; seated not far from them, bending ear to their talk, being the Cavaliere Snarkski in one of his many beards and expressions of face; while throughout the afternoon troop after troop of the army of Alexander, that soft-soaper of the populace and master of poms, moved past like lengths of cloth which the arm of the shopman measures off and off — cavalry squadrons flashing, the rotary rattle of their hoofs on the asphalt showering a noising of showers rushing down and of audiences applauding — cavalry-squadrons of fusiliers, troopers, dragoons, uhlans, gallant lancers plumed, trotting, their mob of lance-flags bobbing up and down, a hotchpotch of irregularity glancing, like the numberless chuckling of a choppy sea which glints ajig in sunshine; and infantry battalions with their colours; and proud artillery-men with fifteen-pounders cocked aloft, with limbers, outriders, bombardiers; and a mouthing of military band-music, wearying the ear with sweetness of march after march, March of the Elephants, of the Guards, of the Tin Soldiers, Earl of Ross' March, Punchinello March, Marche Militaire, Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys Are Marching. But a chill of Autumn brought some shivers to long sitters, three drizzle-showers bothered the holiday, and at about four o'clock Lancelot and Haralda stood up after she had paid the "addition" (bill) for their coffee and pastries, he remarking to her, "Always the woman pays".

She answered, "Sometimes she alone can".

And he: "I often wonder how you can know just how much money is in my pocket!"

"Arithmetic", she said: "since I know your wage, and chance to know that you are supporting Tatarescu's wife and children. Why, you are as poor as a mouse".

"Oh, well" — standing up — "not so rich as Prince Alexander, anyway" — they two, followed by Snarkski, now walking away to join the throng that were passing through the Mantis Palace, Prince Alexander's Kargo palace in rue Vruda, four rooms of which were thrown open to the public view that day, rooms which proved that the Prince must in truth be rich, one an Oriental Room full of canghiars, daggers of Damascus, scabbards of gold, marghils of scarlet glass enamelled, gorgeous shawls, cloths of gold, silks shimmering in coffer of silver embossed, tapestries, garments of gaudy gauzes, gods of gold with more arms than two, josses, jars of ointments, bowls holding gold-dust, holding ambergris, frankincense, attar, chryselephantine tubs, cabinets of aromatic woods, Persian urns, ruby and pearl, moonstone and turquoise, turbans bejewelled, burnous, tarbooshes, vases of porcelain enamel, of intricate crystal, sashes which shimmer, fans which flash . . . in which room, moving with the musing troop of footsteps, Lancelot asked Haralda, "Have you never been to Morocastro?", and when she answered "No", he said, "Mountain-home of Prince Alexander. Morocastro consists of a street, one side of it inhabited by three thousand persons, the other side inhabited by one person in a castle surrounded by a wall sixteen kilometers long: the three thousand and the one blatantly confronting each other, saying nothing about it, thinking nothing about it. How on earth comes it to be so? *You* know, I think".

Haralda smiled, while the Cavaliere Snarkski's ear leaned keenly to hear her say, "Oh, well, that can hardly be answered convincingly off-hand: the answer is in those Economy-books waiting to be read in your room; you are too worn-out at night — might have been reading them today, instead of coming to see all this".

"Really!", he said bridling, hurt: "it is little likely that I would come 'to see all this'. I came to be with — you".

"So? Doter?", she tenderly said.

They were holding hands, and she now pressed his palm a little, discharging through him a thrill of electricity which encrimsoned his cheeks; whereupon he withdrew his hand, saying in a hurried way, "But above the compendium of the Economy-books that you are writing? — nearly finished?"

"Two months more. . . . But will you be any less tired then at night? The compendium will require awakedness as the books do. You are a problem. What can be done for anyone without leisure, whose life consists in slaving, eating, sleeping, and crying 'Bravo' to the Splendid Devil?"

"My cries are not vociferous, I think".

"No, I notice that. But there are others of you Crowdar men shouting themselves hoarse today. . . . Well, I don't know — unless I sketch a compendium of the compendium, and *tell* it you?"

He said at her ear, "Now, how dear of you! Yet when I call you a saint you mock me".

And she: "The saints did not smoke cigarettes at Nuppul on Sundays. . . . Very well, it shall be so. I'll tell it. We will fix some date for the telling, to keep me to the job of the sketch. What date shall we say?"

A little silence now. Then he: "It should be soon".

Which arrested Haralda's palm, that was being drawn across the softness of a carpet of Bagdad, as she glanced in alarm at him, asking, "Why soon?"

And anew a little silence of reluctance before he decided to bring out, "I am due to leave Crowdar's on the 7th of November; am — going away".

Her gaze remained riveted on his face, as the peach-pigment of her cheeks gradually bled away to ghastness. "Going away" — two words — no more she said, nor he, as they moved on, looking toward rarities of tray, brocade, bejewelled sword-sheath, but thinking of something else, while the Cavaliere Snarkski remarked to himself, "He knows nothing so far of her birthday coming on the 10th".

Which was so: for, birthdays being observed as immensely momentous days in Balainca, she had refrained from mentioning hers to him, nor purposed to mention it, knowing, with her customary alertness of sympathy, that he would then feel urged to make her some birthday-present, which he could ill afford to purchase.

So his "7th" remained in her fantasy as the last of days. But no reference they made to it in moving through the other rooms on view, nor afterwards when they were back in Avenue Pascal, where, occupying another café-table, they saw the last battalion pass, a fantastic drum-major gallivanting in front of it, stung as by the gadfly to a randiness of bragging, his enraptured wrist twiddling a staff that danced advancing; and now as from an ocean of mouths a roaring arose remotely, and rode, and came, a cloud of sound that moved and grew more real, and now was near, and now, a whelming fog, was here, when half-a-squadron of horse trotted past, evaporating the Nation Anthem —

*March with his armies,
Pillar of fire,
Ride he, where harm is,
Harmless and higher . . .*

then another half-a-squadron trotting, and, in between the halves, Alexander in a chariot-car with three chiefs-of-staff, swept to heaven on a storm of horse-power, he from time to time bowing on this hand, bowing on that, granting to the multitude a smile, or the muscles of a smile, that was not unmingled with some rigor of malignity — and indeed that smile as at some idea within his mind was as continual as the Sphinx's, two hard lines, where dimples mostly are, inclosing it. But no bow to the Café Infanta in passing, he not appearing to see the Cavaliere Snarkski toss an arm aloft, nor, though he had daily bulletins as to where the mechanic Lancelot had been, and would be, did he make any attempt to ferret out that mechanic

from the crowd, else he might have ferreted out a mechanic who was contemplating him with a kind of little smile that depressed the lip-corners, chin a little pitched up.

The dusks of night-time were now coming, and now for Lancelot and Haralda was the question—to take the tram to her flat, or wait in the streets some time to see some of the fireworks: for that night Kargo, reckless of cost, shot itself to the stars in rockets with a rollick gesture; everywhere, even in Old Town, the ear received sounds of bang and bang from someone somewhere darkly expressing himself; in front of the Cathedral a sea of onlookers saw the kiss of Sinovich and the Prince depicted in lines of fire; in front of the Municipal Offices a sea-fight in fire; everywhere in the air shines of fire-ships rising, shining; the Mantis Palace floodlit, the public strolling its grounds within a hell of glare of which the Prince was the devil, who, when he decided to be a “splendid” devil, and publish himself, was ever memorably splendid, and signed his name with a flourish. But Lancelot told Haralda that fireworks hardly amused him; he had fireworks every day in the converter-shed, where the sternness of the work of converting into steel had nurtured within him an indifference to unreal things; and soon they two were en route for her flat, Haralda having refrained from mentioning to him that they would be tête-à-tête there, the aunt being at a theatre.

But the Cavaliere Snarski's plot to “organize a kiss”, and to get Lancelot prohibited from the flat, went awry this time: for when the Aunt Anna Lopescu left the theatre after no more than an hour in it, and came slyly home to surprise the pair love-making, it was to find the niece seated solitary in the kitchen, a despondent object, and irritable as the fretful porcupine.

Hanging in suspense, the aunt asked, “So where's the Lancelot? Hiding, is he?”

“Pooh”, says Haralda, “*he* hide from you. Pitiable to guess so wild”.

“So where's he?”

“I don't care where the man is. Not here. When he understood that you were out, he thought it proper to go, and went. Don't care where he is”.

The next day, then, Snarski, on visiting the flat, was informed as to this, and then saw that the organising of a kiss might be a job beyond his skill to accomplish. That evening he obtained an interview with the Prince at the Mantis Palace, stated his case; on which the Prince said to him, “Pluck the plums which you can reach, leaving the top lot to taller retrieval; and pluck early, before the birds, that are tallest of all, spoil all”—which spurred Snarski the next afternoon to be procuring at least that the lovers' meetings should be nowhere but in the streets, and that the King-workman should learn of the birthday occurring on the 10th. He said to the aunt, “He is affianced to a high lady whom he has a blue fear of losing, and he knows that her spies' eyes are on him, that's the

reason he would not remain alone in a house with your niece for hours: too fly: decamped—though we do not know what they were up to, they two, before he went: for a kiss needs no kneading nor oven, and can be quickly done; there is a supreme convenience in a difference of sex, and kissing is an event that has taken place when no one, except the kissers, thinks that it has taken place: for here every man and woman is a sneak-thief, and has criminal tendencies inherent. Anyway, if intimacy has not yet taken place between that pair, it will; you can foresee that; and it would be against respectable behavior for you to grant it your blessing by having the man as a guest. On the 10th, the birthday, friends will no doubt be here; it will be a Lancelot-day, a Friday; and would you have your friends find him here with her? Since you are shy of forbidding him point-blank to come here, *write* to him; write that you cannot have him here on the young lady's birthday, and that, in fact, you prefer that he never comes ---"

"And if he tells Haralda that I have written?" the aunt objected: "I don't want to have Haralda sulking on my back".

"Say, then, in the letter", Snarkski answered, "that you write privately between you-and-him, then he won't tell of it. Lancelot is a gentleman, and a touchily proud gentleman".

"Gentleman at Crowdar's. . . . You say he is a gentleman, but what do I know?"

"Easily tested", says Snarkski; "tell him in the letter of the birthday, see if he doesn't make the young lady some superb present, a *rivière* of gems, I wager; then you will be sure. *She* may not have told him of the birthday, so you tell, and have a fortune in the family".

Which picture of a "*rivière* of gems" did not fail to capture the fancy of Anna Lopescu. "It *may* be so", she kept saying to herself with an excited mind, able for some time to think of nothing but rills of diamond rippling, strings of light dripping brilliance. But she conceived that the *rivière* might be still more brilliant, if it was Haralda herself who told the duke-workman of the birthday; she did not think that Haralda had yet told, since she had not heard Lancelot refer to it; and now she set herself to urge Haralda to tell: she suddenly asked, "So what does the Lancelot say about the birthday?"—arranging crockery on her dresser, her back to Haralda.

And Haralda, not looking up from writing her Compendium of Economy at the kitchen-table: "He knows nothing of it".

"I'd tell him, if I were you".

"No, I have a reason: I don't want him to spend money on any present; he is giving half his wages to the family of that Tatarescu who disappeared".

"But if the young man is rich really? Haven't you said yourself that he may be some nobleman's son? So tell him 'the 10th is my birthday': just those four words may bring you in a string of brilliants".

Now Haralda looked up with "Dear me". She added, "Your dreams are not restrained. Whatever put such an idea into your head?"

"What do you suppose?" — in a dropped voice, shamefaced. Then: "Anyway, you'll be a pap,¹ if you let this slip through your fingers. And the kind of present he makes you will show what class he really is of: don't you want to know?"

"Well, yes, I do rather. But, if he made me a rich present, wouldn't that reveal what he is hiding? — if he is hiding something. Do you suppose he'd do that?"

"He might — in his eagerness to give you something good. People in love — Isn't the young man in love with you?"

"Is he?" Then in a groan: "He is going away on the 7th".

"The Lancelot is?" — now Anna Lopescu spun round — "going where to?"

"Don't know. 'Going away'. The 7th".

"Not going to give you up?"

"Apparently".

"My goodness! you poor thing. But not he; don't you believe it: going to try to perhaps; but that young man, mark me, will be back, if he goes, for *I* know what Romance is. If you tell him of the birthday, he mayn't go for the three days from the 7th to the 10th, and, if he puts off going at all, he may put off altogether".

This struck Haralda: sharply she glanced at the aunt, this seed sinking into ground eager to receive it. She did not answer.

"So will you let him know of the birthday?" the aunt asked.

Haralda's lips went firm. "No".

And the aunt thought, "Then, I will".

¹ Ms: pap = soft substance. (Sap? account alliteration and definition of pap. Ed.)

X

THE BIRTHDAY

That same midnight Haralda had a dream—strangely vivid: she was telling Lancelot of the birthday (she dreamed), he and she seated under a statue; and, as she told it, the statue collapsed, and smothered them both.

Little enough regard had she for such things as dreams and visions; but some omen inherent in the mood and emotion of this particular dream did engrave itself in her neurons to a deep degree.

So the next day when she was with Lancelot in the foundry-square in the lunch-hour, some hand was on her to restrain her from mentioning the birthday: for there, as in the dream, was the statue at the square's centre (an equestrian statue of Alexander), under which they two sat, as usual now, on one of the four benches which lie along the statue's four-sided block of pedestal: for now she did not bring, daily, a barrow of things to sell, other hucksters having now brought down their charges to her level; but daily she brought for Lancelot's lunch a bowl of soup in a napkin, for which he paid her every Saturday, a soup thick, delicious, of peas mixed-up with shreds of beef, rich to the palate's fantasy with messages of banana, tomato, sultana. That day—a Thursday—she said to him, "As to that compendium-of-a-compendium of Economy which is to be told you by word-of-mouth, I have been making notes for it—will soon tell it".

He asked, "What is to be the date of the telling?"

And she: "I may tell some when you come tomorrow night".

"I shall come with both my ears. My good giver! but for whom I should have gone under long since. . . . And when will you tell me the rest?"

"For the rest I appoint the 10th, which will be my ---" she stopped: something stopped her.

Though the tone of woefulness inherent in her dream was still potent within her, she had yielded to the temptation to name that 10th as the day of telling, and to blurt further that the 10th would be her birthday: this was on the tip of her tongue to utter. She had also thought of saying that, since there should be a birthday present between them, and since she did not want *him* to make it, therefore *she* would make it, and it should be this telling; she actually got to saying, "I appoint the 10th, which will be my ---", tempted to say this, so that, if he insisted on making a present, its value might reveal his real rank, which the Eve in her sometimes itched to know, and tempted to say it, so that she might see if her birthday was a big enough thing to him to win him to defer his going away "on the 7th", and so that he might defer it—three more days of him being something, even if three did not lead to more than three. . . . But even as she said "the 10th, which will be my ---", hardly herself knowing her own heart's motives, up Lancelot darted with

clenched fists: for, going about among the Crowdar operatives and the costermongers, with whom the Square was now populous, was one Blucher, a tower in bulk, a brown bully with the black beard of Barabbas, who went meddling about, routing everybody, a smelter, an inveterate institution at Crowdar's, he bully and Lancelot bull, to whom the bully's reign had long been red. So Haralda left off saying "which will be my ---", to lay her hand upon Lancelot, and plead, "Oh, please, don't interfere, how could you fight Blucher?", and when he sat afresh some mist of memory of the catastrophe of her dream had rearisen in her, some mysterious reluctance to utter one word about "birthday" rescued her, and she repressed it. "A still tongue makes a wise head"! and, again, "Silence is golden".

But at the next lunch-hour—the Friday—when she chanced to say, "Tonight when you come—", he had another answer to make: for that morning he had a letter from Anna Lopescu, who, following Snarkski's recommendations, had written, "This is private between us, please . . . it is unpleasant to have to ask you not to keep on coming here, but you will understand it is for the appearances . . . you will not much mind, as I hear you are going away soon, even before Haralda's birthday on the 10th. . . . I do not know if you purpose making her any birthday-present before you go: that might be some comfort to her, but, if inconvenient. . . ." So at Haralda's "tonight when you come", Lancelot answered, "I am not coming tonight—nor at any time".

"Dear me. Why?"—those fine lines of her eyebrows' arches stretching half-an-inch larger.

Stooped over his soup, he answered, "Please let me off from saying why".

"I think you *like* being mysterious!"

"Think as you please".

"Are we quarrelling?"

"No. No quarrelling in Valhalla-hall. Valhalla is where you are".

"I shall be at home tonight".

"Then, I shall abstain from Valhalla tonight. Soon I shall be a total abstainer".

Now a silence. Then she: "Still thinking of 'going away', are you?"

"Yes. As I have to".

"Have to. . . . I see. . . . When?"

"I told you that day at the Mantis Palace, you may remember. I go on the 7th".

So that, though he now knew (from Anna Lopescu) of her birthday on the 10th, this had not determined him to defer, from 7th to 10th, his reappearance as King. But Haralda wanted to have him as long as possible, and went white when an impulse like a wild wind swept upon her to say, swept her away into saying, "Unfortunate, your date of going: I had fixed the 10th,

my birthday, as the date for telling my Economy-compendium: I wanted to make the telling memorable, a birthday event”.

Now his brow went troubled; he muttered, “Make it the 7th”.

But since he had not started, nor shewn any heartiness, at her announcement of her birthday (he having heard of it already!), this hurt her, and she shook her head with a curt “No”.

“Not the 7th”, he said: “you wish it to be on your birthday. Well, I am free-born: on your birthday it shall be”.

Now with her underlook, ever full of humour, dwelling tenderly on his face, she said in an enthusiasm, “King of Doters! Always good to me! And since you put off going three days, you will put it off many days”.

If now he had been rough enough to stamp out her gladsomeness of hope, he would have answered, “No, I go on the 10th”, but in a mood of complacency he only smiled mildly with her smile, and was mum.

“But no birthday-present—remember!” she added.

“Very well: we will see”.

“It is I who will be giving the birthday-present”.

“Yes”.

That was on the 20th of October, a Friday.

Eighteen days afterwards, on Tuesday, the 7th of November, the day completing the six months of the King’s disappearance, the Princess Vasilissa at the Wratismaw Palace, not far from Kargo, paced and sat, sat and paced, tossed, all the day, in a cauldron of expectation, saying with chronic iteration to her Court, “He will come, wait, he will come this day, you will see”. But the sun went, and no Carol came: Carol was converting into steel, and eating such soup as kings do not know.

Now, a meeting of The House of Notables had been called for the 8th, to vote as to drawing the attention of The Council to the appropriateness to the juncture of the old Crusader Law, and as to a joint sitting of Council-and-Notables on the subject.

This is why at midnight of the 7th the Princess rose from a bed on which she had not closed her eyes, and went trotting in a déshabille along corridors of the palace, until she was tapping at a door, then was saying to a valet who opened, “Quick—let Lord Cyprus (her private secretary) know that the Princess desires to see him”.

And when a young man, shewing a pretty moustache and an appearance of interrupted sleep, was with her in a dressing-gown, gallopingly she said to him, “The King has been seen—at the Opéra—is in Paris: pray ’phone the news instantly to ‘*The Cockcrow*’, and to ‘*The Pigeon*’, adding that you are writing them letters in your own name, to be sent by mounted messengers for their morning issues”.

The Primo Cyprus’s eyes flashed. “Bright idea, your Royal Highness!

Who, shall I say, saw the King—the Count Srolkin? He is in Paris”.

“No, not he, it was Lord Fonsico saw him: Fonsico died ---”

“Yes! died yesterday in Paris—great luck! and wrote, just before he died, to your Royal Highness that on the night of the 3rd he distinctly spotted the King with two ladies at the Opéra—fine! This checkmates Alexander”. . . .

Early, then, on the morning of Wednesday, the 8th, this bomb burst upon the world: Carol was living; Carol had actually been seen. . . . The meeting of The Notables was hurriedly adjourned, *sine die*.

But Carol was not long living, for Prince Alexander was living: at eleven in the forenoon of that 8th a corpse was found rotted in “The Second Lake” of Wratislaw Palace by a certain Cavaliere Curtius, adjutant of a battalion commanded by Sergius, an illegitimate son of Prince Alexander; this Curtius chancing to be fishing that day in that lake. The corpse had, for one thing, the King’s ring on a finger: could it be other than the King’s corpse? The news of it flew: it was all in New York, it commoved Stamboul. New writs for a meeting of The Notables on the 10th were issued.

On the night of the 9th the corpse, so rotted, was buried in the royal vault.

On the 10th, a little before One struck, the Cavaliere Snarkski, entering in one of his make-ups the Piazza Publica, seated himself on that one of four benches which is on the east face of the statue-pedestal—the bench on which Lancelot and Haralda had the habit of sitting—and he waited: the square, as usual, empty, scarcely a foot moving through its drowsy respectability; until on a sudden it was crowded, when some sellers came, and when, on a bell sounding, Crowdar’s spue oozed deliberately out of his mouth, as when deliberately the lips of Vesuvius spue and dribble.

Many of the foundry-men came out already eating, but most moved toward barrows now standing in a row near the east face of the square, Lancelot for his part stopping to sit on the bench on which Snarkski was seated, where within three minutes his face lit up, seeing Haralda spurt in, in her work-girl garb, head-shawl of the Venetian (and Lancashire) work-women hooding her head; on her breast, dangling fat, her pair of goldly-brown plaits aglow. “I am late!”—she sat with him—“through being born too soon for the Labour-saving Age-to-come—been writing birthday-letters one by one ---”

And he: “Happy returns of the day—happier! ‘meliorque revertere semper’! How does it feel to be twenty-six?”

“Not very nice when one has a man-friend who is twenty-five. But, for me, Time is not a real thing, as Space is: Time, for me, is just a rate, or ratio—a rate of motion inherent in Being, a ratio between Force, Space and Mass, varying directly as the product of Space and Mass, varying inversely as Force. Eat, please”.

He ate, saying, “Even on the birthday, you faithful being, you turn out for me this perfect mixture. I make no attempt to express the sacredness of my heart’s thanks; that would be a laughable failure: I can only say God bless you.

Never did I suspect, till lately, what it is to eat with passion; and this soup! if it were presented to me in some place where I was blindfolded, I'd still be able to say Haralda Hásdruvol had a hand in mixing this, and making it taste of her nature's flavour — sibyl that you are!"

"Doter", she muttered meditative, agaze at him; "dotard".

And he: "True; that wasn't what I meant to say. . . . About tonight: as I understand it, we meet here for the Economy séance an hour after knock-off: is that it?"

"Yes, seven o'clock, say. There'll be a birthday-party, mostly work-girls; but I'll invent an escape, abandoning them to my aunt".

On catching which rendezvous the Cavaliere Snarkski's eyes brightened; but though keen to be off to report it, he continued to sit, awaiting the coming of Count Snifkin to take his place.

And Lancelot said, "Invent a long escape, for a long, long talk — not at all about ourselves ---"

Haralda, eyeing him, suddenly remarked, "Lancelot, you are sad. Going to strike your friend tonight, Lancelot".

This last he evaded, answering, "May be I am sad" — and indeed his head hung sadly — "but what I meant to say was that this 'fundamental lesson', being fundamental, should be long ---"

"No", she said, "the more fundamental the simpler — needn't be long; but still a little difficult for me, because I don't know where to start, not knowing how much of the books you have digested ---"

"Oh, not much — I am just a stomach — soup has disappeared, see" — handing her back the bowl.

In the same moment up sprang the Cavaliere Snarkski to hasten away, released, seeing the coming of Count Snifkin.

But as Snifkin, made-up as a foundry-man, approached the bench to sit, into him butted the bully Blucher, who, pushing Snifkin's shoulder, shouted, "God, God, out of anybody's road, Man".

Upon which, up springs Lancelot, seeing red, mourning with reproach, "Oh, that Blucher again, going about like a roaring lion".

But Haralda, up too, seized his sleeve, with' "No, don't bother — patience — please".

"Well, but the man has become a public nuisance!"

"Poor beggar, his head's hungry for mental grub — has '*hunger-tollheit*' (hunger-madness), as the Germans say. It wouldn't be bad if he were banded once; but you, you haven't meat enough, nor reach enough. . . . I'll be off".

"Oh, pray" — from Lancelot — "not yet: just five minutes — let's listen a little to Pietro there" — nodding east toward a coster speechifying over a tray of fishes resembling bloaters.

When she acquiesced they strolled that way through the crowd. . . .

And this Pietro, tearing a passion to rags, with intervals to fling a little spit away in haste: "Look at 'em—pretty! goldy-brown! some of 'em wink their little eye. They are no ordinary bloater: I bought them of an old tar called Sinbad—queer fish himself, Sinbad—and Sinbad, he said that these be the Kings of fish: for they aren't sea-fish, they come out of that same lake that King Carol's body was dragged from all nibbled, so there's royal blood in 'em—bloated aristocrats, these bloaters, see how they turn up their little aristocrat noses, as if they could smell their little aristocrat selves—No, Ma, don't touch the fish: gaze at them, yes, lust for 'em, yearn for 'em, burn for 'em, but control yourself, don't touch: it's like a red rag to me if anybody touches my fish, as Catherine of Russia said to the Emperor Frederick. Touch 'em only with your tongue, your teeth: kiss 'em, eat 'em. Eat 'em, and [with rage] you'll never eat another; eat 'em, and you'll dream of 'em, you'll reek of 'em, you'll speak of 'em, and keep repeating 'em: for they are a special fish, I say, a fish that fill a want, a fish with a mission, a fish with a passionate purpose. O, learn to love 'em—learn; make 'em part of your daily lives, embody them, get 'em into your blood, delight in 'em, die of 'em, buy 'em. They are four [with fury] for four gentos, they are four for three gentos, they are four—God help me—for two gentos, four for—there! I can't say fairer—one gento [cooling down]. Who'll have 'em?"

But before anybody had time to buy, Blucher, having threaded a way through the throng with a threatening throat stretched forward, reached the preacher of fish, bawling, "My goodness, shut up this blasted blattering here: make yourself small, you!"

Now, though, he was close to Lancelot: and up pitched a King's chin to bid, "You are not to touch him!"

Blucher was all a snarl. "Hello! Old Lancelot again, asking for what's due to him!"—his jacket half off.

Holding back Lancelot, meanwhile, was Haralda, pleading at his right ear, "Oh, do, please ---", and at his left ear a bayonet-maker named Marbini, pleading, "No, Lancelot, keep it under, Man—blood's too hot—where's the good getting yourself smashed up? Keep it under".

Lancelot answered, "The man must obey!" eyeing Blucher with a malign eye.

In the same moments two were at Blucher, conjuring him not to bother, since all knew that he was the cock of cocks there; whereupon Blucher, smoothed, let himself be drawn away, calling backward to Lancelot, as he went, "This will be the last, Lancelot!"

He had once seen Lancelot box in fun Bucharin, a razor-blade operative, who was strong on boxing; and somewhere in him he may have had some voice of conscience as to Lancelot's knuckles.

And now the Marbini who was holding Lancelot back sighed, "Well, that's over"; and added—he being the Under-Secretary of "The Dribblers" (a political club)—"We are expecting you to speak tomorrow evening, Lancelot, in the debate on Women as Workers".

On which Lancelot had shy eyelids. "I shall be there in spirit, but ---" he began to say, then, aware of Haralda's gaze meditating on his face, changed it in haste to, "There is our Nix spouting — nature's own orator: let us go and listen": for Nix, as he often did in that dinner-hour, had taken his stand on the steps of the House of Notables — a one-storied edifice with a facade of pillars and steps, filling most of the Square's west face — to be making an oration to the crowd of men now lounging about him, smoking, digesting. When Lancelot with Haralda and Marbini strolled that way, Nix on his crutch was uttering, "Government, is it? Look, now: your Council, your House of Notables, are there for making laws, aren't they? so *some* laws must be made, to show; but, if those were genuine laws, they'd be national laws, broad as the nation, affecting everybody, solid laws, economic laws: and laws of that sort would draw solid coin from the law-makers' pockets. So the law-makers *play* at law-making, making unreal laws, not dealing with society, but interfering in private lives, not directing a nation to do something, but prohibiting Peter and Matteo from doing something: Peter mustn't marry two Mimis—in Siam, yes, not in Balainca—Matteo mustn't drink beer after 11 p.m.—in Styria, yes, not in Balainca—random whims which do some good to one in ten of us, which pester two, don't affect the other seven. That's 'Government': and every month or so a holiday from the law-making, that we all may see that cock, the Splendid Devil, parade the streets in State array, that we all may call 'Hurrah!' at his storm of scarlets, and at the pomposity of his storm of haughty horses that paw and snort. 'Government' that is. Why, that same day that King Carol vanished, he frankly confessed to a Deputation of us that he knew nothing about governing. Aye, *I* was in that Deputation — saw the man face to face, as I see you there — pleasant man — there are those who say that he was not unlike our Lancelot there — and where's he now? Who knows? Done with 'governing', anyway! lying perhaps with his fathers within the Cathedral crypt ---"

Here Lancelot broke in: "He's alive!"

And Nix: "May be alive — I myself shouldn't wonder — *not* lying in the Cathedral, no, lying drunk with riot at the feet of some venereal syren in some rotten metropolis" — here cries arose, "He's dead! He's dead!" — "May be dead, and may not be. Doesn't the Princess Vasilissa still declare that that wasn't his corpse drawn from the lake? Anyway, he, too, though the man meant well, knew little enough about what governing means, and I say 'Down with the lot of 'em ---'"

"Bravo, Nix!" rang out of Lancelot: "down with every John who doesn't know his job!"

"And down with Nix!" sounded nigh behind Lancelot — from Blucher, who, now shouldering his way toward the steps, added to Nix, "Clear out. *I* will make a speech" — as he sometimes did.

On which Lancelot shouted, "Stick to it, Nix!"

And Blucher, now in front of Lancelot, glancing backward: "Who said, 'Stick to it'?"

And Lancelot with a nod aside: "You know very well who said, 'Stick to it'".

"Oh, Lancelot, pray, pray ---" came from Haralda.

And from Blucher: "Friend Lancelot again. Man, I'll have you down! Lancelot with his Haralda, that was once a respectable lass, Lancelot with his woman ---"

Now that half-round valley, sunk among Lancelot's stout brow-muscles when he frowned, was afrown at Blucher; and now he calmly remarked, "No, that's not true: and now you are in trouble, Blucher. You have now to say 'I have told a lie'" — both of them now casting off jackets, and now all round about were ejaculations, agitations, turbid with the word "fight": "There's a fight!" "Fight!" "They'll fight!" "Going to fight!" "Fight!". . . .

Lancelot's jacket being now discarded, he said to Blucher, "Now you are to say after me 'I have told' — *quick-quick-quick*".

Blucher, a blanched brown, looking at him, repeated, "I have told".

"A lie", Lancelot said.

"The truth!" Blucher shouted, and, as he shouted, backward went Lancelot adance and down, felled by a left.

But, as if the ground was galvanic to invigorate and give spring, the instant Lancelot was grounded he bounced glibly upright again; and roughly they two set to it, Lancelot's hands more educated than Blucher's, whose, too, were educated, and had more mass and solid punching back of them, Blucher's aim being mainly the face, whereas Lancelot's was rather the heart and chin, to shock and astonish; but though Lancelot got in a rapid series of three, it was as if he was battering a rhinoceros, the next big incident of the battle being that his legs again went dancing the fandango backward in his career down to the ground — no lack of room for dancing, for though every soul within the Square, save those in its houses, had now run to peer and tiptoe near, they were wary as to leaving field enough for that blowy weather to bluster in. And silent they eyed it, uneasy about the outcome, only the three or four women present failing to repress some outcries of "Oh!" and "Don't!" at that roughness of man to man.

But, anew, Lancelot was no sooner down than, like Antaeus at the earth's touch, he was up re-energised, redetermined, as to quench a flame's insurgence; and a workman murmured to a workman, "There's style" at the elegance of his legwork, his two legs progressing ever as one, lithe of gait, at his male grace of waist, and the malign light of that eye aside, with which, "squaring", he eyed the obnoxious object sprung up there before him to be his manhood's job to smash and abolish. And, in truth, the third down was Blucher's: Lancelot got-in an upward clip under the chin's point, and at last Blucher with a stunned brain gave way, as a barbican at the insistence of the frown of obstinate gunnery at last gives up, and nods, topples, to go collapsing down in powder-clouds.

Then was exhibited which way the sympathies of the foundry-men in general lay: out broke a shower of cheering as from one mouth, and everywhere one could hear, "Blucher down!" "Done it!" "Lancelot!" "Blucher smashed!" For though Blucher soon collected his scattered parts, and was up anew, not much guts now was left in him; again within a minute he was down, and now stayed down. Lancelot, stooping over, was asking, "Done, are you?", and when Blucher nodded, Lancelot besought, "Please say now 'I told a lie'"; which thing Blucher admitted: "I did".

But no one but Lancelot could hear this, the Square being at present a scene of uproar.

In the midst of it out sounded the foundry-bell, the dinner-hour over; upon which Lancelot was picked up, willy-nilly, to be borne into the foundry shoulder-high within a brouhaha of sound. When his eyes from that height contrived to find out Haralda, he threw a hand at her; she threw a hand at him; and, as she ran out under the archway at the southeast angle of the Square, muttered, with a throw of the head at the foundry-gate, "Good doter, tough stuff".

After her Blucher, forgotten, diskinged, got his feet out of the Square, feeling all too queer for steel-smelting that afternoon; and soon after him the hucksters' carts moved in slow detail, leaving the Square to the sleepy lonesomeness that was its main mood.

XI

THE NOTABLES' VOTE

But it was invaded once more four hours later when a squad of gendarmes took stand before a House of Notables which stood illumined, when a posse of constables marched into it, and when the Notables came, entering the Square one by one, or in pairs, in threes, one pair being Lord Rostro (of "the Press") and Lord Popkin (of Beer), who, preoccupied with their deep converse, stopped at the Alexander statue, where Popkin said, "Deuced if I know how *I* am going to vote!", to which Lord Rostro answered, "I don't myself see the difficulty, since today's voting is only preliminary: we vote today whether or not The Council shall be invited in about five days' time to sit with the Notables, so as to decide or not it is in order to bring the Crusader Law into operation for the election of a King on Old Year's Day. So, whether you favour Alexander's party or Vasilissa's, you may safely vote Aye today".

To this Popkin answered, "That may be; but I feel like stepping in the dark, Man. Suppose the King's living, as Vasilissa persists in thinking? Then, if I vote for this Crusader Law, King will be saying 'Popkin didn't love Carol, Carol won't love Popkin'. Or, again, if I vote against Crusader Law, I'll have Prince Alexander wagging his grim finger at me — mhm. *Is the King living?* That is the question".

Rostro looked weighingly at Popkin before saying, "What would you give to know?"

"You know?" says Popkin: "I shouldn't wonder if you do, since they say that Alexander favours you. Tell me, Rostro, *tell me*".

And Rostro: "Well, perhaps that seeing eye of Prince Alexander does single me out for some special esteem: I may say this without vanity. But you want to know a lot, Popkin. Here you probe me deep, Man, as one of my largest shareholders did yesterday, asking that same question, '*Is the King living?*' My reply was, 'Your share, Friend, in the United Press is large, but hardly so large as to entitle you to ask me such a thing'" — Rostro's forefinger now vaulting to come digging downward in the manner of Alexander, while Popkin muttered to himself, "Mhm — points finger — copies Alexander", then stepped some steps away, meditating, then, coming back, asked, "And what may be the figure of that shareholder's share in the United Press?"

"Over seven hundred thousand gentos, Sir. . . ."

And at once Popkin: "Oh, very well, I will, I'll come in, and be a Press Lord: say eight hundred thousand. Now we two are thick" — he raised his palm, and Rostro, pressing palm with palm, said all in a flush of elation, "Bravo! this means seats in the Council for us both: I shall meet your Lord-

ship there in that rare air, seated on those rare chairs, there we shall share ---”

“Is the King a living man?”—from Popkin, interrupting that rhapsody.

And Rostro: “The King is a living goose”—his forefinger vaulting to dig down: “the King, Sir, is in Berlin. The King saw the actress, Dorothea Thraska, at the theatre, was madly enamoured, followed, and, presti, married her: for that hot blood of his is intolerant of restraint. Threw over the Princess; married an actress; is in hiding”.

“You *know* this, Rostro?”—with a grave underlook.

And Rostro: “Know it from the fountainhead!—the head that detects all, concocts all, and never fails. He gave it me only in hints, that’s true; but in plain hints”.

“But, then, the King may turn up any day!—tomorrow ---”

“The sun may fall. Ask yourself: why was that body deposited in the lake, with a ring like the King’s on a finger? It was because Alexander intends to be King in Carol’s stead. If Carol turned up tomorrow, though technically he’d be three days late, the voting next week would certainly be in his favour: so he won’t be turning up; be sure that some barrier of brass will be holding him back. Even so, the voting next week will be a close thing---”

“Yes, so I hear!” Popkin exclaimed: “people keep telling me that *my* vote may decide it”.

“Very possibly”—Rostro bowed low to a Notable passing, bound for the parliament-house—“Vasilissa has got her party together with remarkable capacity: she has vigour, a real gift for intrigue, and a cockiness which jogs her to pit her wits against the Splendid Devil’s self; but, then, after all, she is just a fly within the spider’s web, as you will see”.

“There goes Wanda”—Popkin bowed to a Notable passing, adding, “I am not so sure of that. Many of us think well of her for sticking to the King. King was a bit queer—dangerous notions—mhm—refractory—but he was liked, mind: young fellow, high-spirited, likeable: we don’t want to do him a wrong”.

“Compunction and Counsel will not pull the same coach, Sir”—again Rostro’s finger vaulted to dig: “the King is done for: and it is Vasilissa herself—somehow—who will be used to do for him. I’ll tell you: this afternoon I had a telephone-call from the Splendid Devil’s self—he mentioned your name, too, Popkin! yes, your name was mentioned, Man. And this is what he said, ‘I want to impress upon you, Rostro, that in the voting next week there should be no party-voting: I now abolish the Alexander Clique; let all henceforth be of one clique, the Vasilissa Clique, voting at Vasilissa’s instance, not at mine. Mention this to others—to Wanda, Popkin, Pascal, for example’. He said that. So you see”.

“My poor head!”—Popkin raised his hand to it—“We are to vote as Vasilissa wishes? I find it impossible to follow all their ins-and-outs!”

“It looks”, Rostro replied with a wise eye, “as if Vasilissa is somehow

to be forced to induce her group to vote not against, but for, the Crusader Law. Suppose that the Prince's genius for intrigue can inveigle her into doing such a thing? why, then, the vote next week, instead of being a weak half-and-half for the Law. Will be unanimous, and will seem to spring from the genuine wish of everybody. . . . There comes a pair of Councillors by divine right—We had better be going in”.

Now they two walked on toward the House, as the Duke of Nudicum entered under the south-east archway, accompanied by his Grace, my Lord Archbishop of Garbarin, the prelate's head hardly reaching above the duke's shoulder, the duke then saying, “We all deplore the young King's fate, but it is in the natural course of events that Alexander should be King”; upon which the prelate stopped before the Alexander horse-statue, that pranced, sword drawn, to say, “Look at him! his steel unsheathed for reaping the peoples—terrible in battle!”

Drowsily the Duke of Nudicum muttered, “The Prince is the sun of Balainca”.

“Verily! The Splendid Devil!”, the prelate warmly responded, adding in a heartfelt tone, “Your Grace highly admires him, as he, it is evident, deeply reveres the greatness of your Grace's elevation: it is well so, very well so”.

“Well so”, the aristocrat sleepily repeated, his elbow resting upon the prelate as upon a prop.

“My own feeling, I confess”, the archbishop added, “is that the Prince should be alone in the Regency, without Vasilissa. But the general sense seems to be otherwise”.

“That is so”, the duke droned, absent in a dreamland.

And the prelate: “The procedure, then, I take it, will be, that, following upon next week's vote of the Council-and-Notables conjoined, the Crusader Law will be held to come into operation, whereupon the Prince and Vasilissa will be appointed Joint-Regents, until Old Year's Day, when the election ---”

“That is so, that is so”, the duke droned, and now—snored.

Whereupon the prelate: “Heavens! he is asleep on me. Now, the sudden mishap to come upon one! Ugh, his elbow is digging right into my collar-bone, and his weight is like the Balkans—damned luck! Yes, I say it—*damned*: damned luck. I have committed no sin to be so entrapped, and a man says damned”.

But now the foundry-bell sounded—six o'clock—evening now deepening; and the high priest sighed, relieved, “Ah, here is Providence intervening: if I venture now upon waking him, he will think it is the bell”; and he called aloud, “Your Grace!”, and louder, “Your Grace!”, whereupon the Duke of Nudicum tore his lids open, muttering, “An impression of something resembling bells mumbling somewhere”; but then, starting, he looked down upon his prop, to ask, “What, did I drop off?”

"No, no", the prelate said, "your Grace was musing—I would not intrude—though it is now the hour for us to be in The House of Notables".

"Come, then"—now stepping toward The House, the aristocrat still leaning on the prelate, muttering meantime, "Few things are more luxurious than two winks of sleep; and I have reasons for believing that I am sometimes asleep without knowing that I am asleep, for people tell me ---" the two now disappeared within The House in the same moments that the Square once more became populous with the mob of operatives pouring out of Crowdar's, these immediately trickling away in five different directions—by the four Square-corners under arches, and, also under an arch by a street leading northward from the Square's north face, Lancelot for his part passing out at the south-east corner for some cocoa and a bloater—a little evening-meal at a little eating-house—before coming back to his meeting with Haralda Hásdrúvol an hour later.

XII

ORGANIZING A KISS

It was from that North street, called "*Strada del Nord*", that Prince Alexander entered the Square not long after half-past six, his car followed by another car, out of which second car, when the cars stopped under the arch, stepped four carles, stalwarts like army-Tommies; and two more stepped out of Alexander's car after Alexander himself and the Cavaliere Snarski.

When the Prince had looked about him he ordered the car-lamps to be put out, then said to Snarski, "I want to see the handcuffs and gags; and when Snarski handed him two handcuffs, two gags, he stooped over, scrutinizing them in the growing gloom, clipping and undoing the manacles on his own wrist before handing them back; then, at a run, robed in a cloak of ample broadcloth that orbed with flappings after him, he was off to the north-east corner to peer beneath the arch which ends a street there, then in haste to the south-east arch to peer and ascertain, and now to the south west corner, now to the north-west. When again at the cars, he tapped three arms, saying, "You three to wait in the shadow of that arch"—the north-west—"until my whistle thrice sounds"—he illustrated, sounding low whistle-notes—"you other three under the railway-bridge beyond that arch"—the north-east—"until my whistle thrice sounds"—anew he illustrated—"then run in and do. You, Snarski, mask yourself, come with me".

Now he trotted, masked, Snarski after, masked, to the statue, where he posted Snarski to sit on the west one of the four benches which are under the statue.

So within some minutes after entering it the Prince alone and Snarski were visible within the Square, except some pioupious¹ posted immobile before The Notables, stiff as tin soldiers; nobody passed through; the moon rose in cloudy pomp to soar like Rubens' Assumption aloft; the night sighed a little; only after five minutes a lamplighter, tramping with punctual rote, arrived, on which Alexander stepped behind the statue, shy of any eyes; but by just four touches of photo-electric cells the town-tramp set the four Square-lamps flaming, now to resume his punctual rote, and tramp away. Then anew lonesomeness, moonlight, dumbness.

"Come, my Vasilissa", the Prince muttered, "to be wooed and won"—pacing restlessly, peering frequently into the arch at North Street's end, which, opposite the statue, is not far from the statue, the "Square" not being square, but longer east-and-west than north-and-south; until, after some minutes, he muttered, peering, "She comes", trotting now to the North Street arch where his two cars were, whither she had come in a car; out of which she stepped close-veiled, saying coldly to him, as they met, "Here we are, Alexander, I decided finally to come".

¹ Slang: A French infantryman.

He said to her chauffeur, "Put out the lamps"; then to her, "Heartily I thank my Cousin, highly exalted, for coming to meet me".

And she: "Not that I am likely to swallow everything that you may have to say".

"No", he answered, "my Cousin Vasilissa is no Princess ninny; Vasilissa is a politician, and, knowing that Alexander is an architect of lies, is hardly likely to swallow Alexander at a hole so small as her ear. But she will absorb what enters her by the eye. You are about to see Carol, Vasilissa".

This directness abolished the Princess's aloofness from him. "'See'. . . . Carol is here? in Kargo? I was right, then all the time? Haven't I always sworn . . . ? 'See Carol'—So you openly admit now that Carol is living?"

Alexander bowed. "Openly—to you. I am quite open to my Cousin, as I don't doubt that my Cousin is about to be to me ---"

"Well! Carol in Kargo! So, then, that corpse was *put* into the lake? put by you?"—with an attitude of threat in the accusation.

"Why, yes, put, and by whom else than me?"—the Prince's innocent palms spread apart—"I had come to know that Carol had abandoned the throne of the Wratislaws to be in the low class of a young woman by whom he is bewitched, whom he is now about to marry, she being with child ---"

But Vasilissa broke in, "Oh, scandal! Why, I foresaw that you would be telling me something like this—I am foreseeing, too! Carol? Carol's soul is as pure as snow".

The Prince threw up his chin, with, "Snow owes its purity to its coldness, Cousin: we Wratislaws, on the contrary, are hot, even the ladies. Not everything that a Statesman says is fabricated: and this is fact, that Carol did fling the sceptre of his fathers off him to dart after a filly: on knowing which indignity I said, 'Carol has collapsed; Carol must not come back; Carol, as a King, is dead'; and when you broadcast the fiction that he had been seen, living, in Paris, I resurrected the dead man whom, to represent a dead King, I had placed in the lake".

"'Dart after her'", Vasilissa murmured, adding suddenly, "I don't believe one word ---"

"You have seen her!"—Alexander tapped her arm—"she was in that delegation of mechanics in the palace-gardens that day in April when he, aye, darted after her. And from the first she played to be a Queen—great-hearted little being—boundless ambitions—'Haralda' her name is".

Now the Princess was all a frown and fists drawn back. "What, that brazen ---? base tatter like that?"

"But don't whip the filly for Carol's kicking. Carol had no longing for you, Cousin: it is Alexander who is after Vasilissa".

Now Vasilissa suddenly covered her face, "Oh, nothing left me now, all my life robbed from me like this. . . ."

"Don't cry" — patting her arm — "live longer than your old longings, and reside in a new room of life, with me: for I now mean to be King, with you for consort, and I will comfort my Cousin with a dozen sons".

But a sob was throbbing upward, as a bubble rising, through a throat that ached, as it contrived to utter, "You? I am never to be married now, all over now and done!"

"So you say now" — the Prince kissed her hand — "but wait a month, until the moon swells out anew, influencing women to be swelling, too, and to being slim anew, and to swelling anew, in phases. I can do with your lips, your hips; and you remember that day in the Sweet Waters ruins at Prune when you were between twelve and fourteen: that was sweet; we'll play that way again".

"Oh, the miserable men!" the Princess broke out, "coarse, brutal! All right, Carol! You did that thing to me? *I* can sting, too, Carol!"

And the Prince: "Yes, revenge can be very entertaining, if one is unoccupied enough to bother with what is profitless. Carol will be imprisoned in your own Prune ---"

"The King!" — Vasilissa had a new start — "imprisoned? You'd really dare do such a thing?"

"I am a devil for daring, you know", Alexander calmly remarked with his undying smile — "I dare do whatever Good Counsel dictates, dare to bury a King of Balainca who is already dead — unless your Royal Highness can suggest some other way of restraining a Wratisslaw from marrying an alley-moll?"

"But to imprison — presti! I could hardly take part. . . . And why in my castle? Why not in one of yours? Risks too great! Your Royal Highness conceives the bright idea to shift them upon me. Nice that!" — cutting a sideward eye of satire.

At which difficulty, the Prince, after peering one instant into her through narrowed lids in his peering manner, as if to scan her heart's action, remarked, "Let it be in a castle of mine, then. I suggested yours for your own amusement: he would be your plaything up there in those mountains; open a door, and you would be alone with him, like a cat with a mouse in some alcove: you could kiss him, kick him, kill him, lick his lips, spit at him, pinch him with pincers, whip him, shew him your breasts, jeer at him, dance at him, comfort him, weep to him, kneel to him"; here Alexander ceased a little to speak, until he added, "But let it be in a castle of mine".

Standing now averted from him, Vasilissa murmured, "Well, perhaps in mine — since you see fit — supposing I consent to take any part ---"

"In yours, then, let it be, your Royal Highness" — that fixed smile of the Prince deepening a little at her — "on condition, of course, that his warders be *my* men".

"If any of it is true!" it now struck the Princess to cry out. "There was

a rag named Haralda, and he *did* gaze at her that day; but he told me that he was going away 'not for his own pleasure', he said—lying was foreign to Carol!—and only for six months. My goodness, how I have counted those days, like a slave! And now they are over: he may be back at the Palace tonight—tomorrow ---”

“Does not intend to come back”, the Prince answered, “has abdicated: I have you here to see that; to see him in his robes-of-office of the blast-furnace, see him meet the filly, kiss her ---”

“And you have men here to seize him?”

“Aye”.

“Goodness! it is like a blasphemy. . . . Seize that girl, too”.

“Of course, else she would be a witness. They will sit under that statue on that east seat—you will see: keep just here in the shadow, I will hist behind the statue to what they say, and keep you advised by messenger; then, when you are quite convinced, you will blow this whistle twice, as a sign that you and I are henceforth allies; then I will blow this one for my men—There—he comes! *that's* Carol, that navy ---”

“Is that—? Yes!—that is Carol”, the Princess breathed, agaze at Lancelot, who had entered at the south-east corner, two strips of sticking-plaster under his right eye; and he walked to the east bench, to sit there bowed-down, brow-sick, as when one bids farewell for ever. . . .

In the same moments the Notables commenced to come out of The House, singly, in groups, discussing, while the Prince, his face masked, and dark within the obscurity of a broad collar-flap, left the Princess under the arch of Strada del Nord to spurt softly on a westward curve to the statue, where he lurked on the north bench, adjacent to Lancelot's east bench, adjacent to Snarkski's west; and he waited.

Not long: until Haralda Hásdruvol tripped trotting in, no longer her factory-Gretchen self, but poshly got-up, glorified like Christmas-trees and altars all festal, her hair no longer dangling, but now a knot at her nape, rings of silver in her ears, discs of silver trickling about a bolero white, woolly, purpled with a rim of purple, a rim not sewn-on, but woven-in since in its width were tints deepening from light purple to deep purple. Lancelot started up to press palms, and mutter, “Miss Twenty-six”.

And she, sitting, “Here we are, Doter, Smasher-of-the-Blucher. Eye badly bruised?”, and, some Notables now moving by, she remarked, “Those are Notables going from the voting about the Crusader Law”.

“Extraordinary”, he frowned: “they are in some haste to vote, these Notables, are they not?”

“No reason to wait”, she said, “if the King may be dead. That poor Carol-boy: *I* know why he committed suicide, if he did”.

“Why did he?”

"Found himself in a job, and no knowledge how to do it: killed himself. Grand I call it. Had a kick in his inside, that little King".

Quickly on this the Prince scribbled, "Says she has a little King kicking in her inside", and passed the scribble, torn from a note-book, to Snarkski, to trip and deliver to Vasilissa.

Meantime Lancelot was saying, "The 'little King' would have done better to keep living, and discover among the millions of Balainca one brilliant spirit, to disclose to him what a King should know, as Haralda Hásdrúvol on her birthday is to disclose to me. Happy returns of the day, Haralda—happier! happiest!"—seizing her hand to squeeze in a spasm, and suddenly to be done with.

"Poor Haralda", says she, gravely investigating his face: "something bad impending upon her head, I know—bad birthday present".

"You don't know the whole present", he answered: "counting from today, an income of sixty thousand gentos will be for you in the Bank of Balainca: that is part of the present".

"There!"—she started—"at last—as I thought, Duke's Son. Sixty thousand thanks! But, really, I'd rather not ---"

"No use refusing"—pressing now the back of her hand—"the fund will be there for you".

"You admit, then, now—Are you a duke's son?"

"Something like that perhaps".

"There! as I have often --- But what in the world am I to do with sixty ---?"

"You will do good. Such as you should have power".

"Thanks, Doter-Duke! Riches, Girls! I'll think it over, and see. . . . But as to this Economy talk"—peering now in the dimness over a leaf of notes which she had written—"it is something of a task to drag a mind to grasp the guts of a science in an hour or so. Pity you haven't been able to stick a little to the books: one should be familiar with, at any rate, Smith, Mill, Ricardo, George, Rogers. . . . And yet, do you know, the inwardness of the whole thing is as simple as two-and-two: for it is all a question of facts—no opinion in it—and the *facts* can be unfolded in some minutes to anyone who already knows of what the wealth of nations consists. Tell me that: what is wealth?"

"Oh, I now know that much", he answered: "wealth is anything good in itself taken from land".

And she: "Oho. Money, for instance: is money wealth?"

"No", he said: "no good 'in itself'—except when coins are worn for ornament. Money represents wealth—in some places".

And she: "Tell me, then, something that *is* wealth".

"Blacking is", he answered, "a cab, a banana".

And she: "But a fish; that's 'good in itself'; that's wealth? Is a fish 'taken from land'?"

"Why, yes", he answered — "as economists use 'land', to mean Nature, to mean air, sea, earth, sun".

"Oho! You know something, Smasher of the Blucher — are always more than one thought you. But consider the importance of land in the view of economists, when 'land' means for them sun and star, sea and atmosphere and moon, and mines of diamond on Mars. Anyway, you know what 'land' means; so now let us get quite clear in our nuts what our other words mean: 'wealth is anything good in itself taken from land': so what does *good* mean? and what does *take* mean? Do you know?"

"Well, I suppose, yes", he said. "I know in some sort of way".

"But you have to know in an exact way" — her finger digging his knee, both seizing each excuse to touch the other. "And as to 'good': I shall first demonstrate what it means, then I shall formally state its meaning, so that you may always, in every case, be perfectly certain that it means nothing else: for not to know for certain what has been strictly demonstrated is unreasonable, sub-human, and the smasher of the Blucher is super-human. So what does 'good' mean? What exactly is a good egg, a good man, a good God? Tell me this: suppose the earth's foot erred tonight of her journey, and she turned aside to dive into the sun's furnace: would that be good? or would it be bad?"

"Bad!"

"Aye, there'd be a hot time in our town tonight — though it would take 64 days altogether. Yes, but fly forward in Time forty thousand million years, when, with no Life on her, she *will* decide, being chilly, to have a hot bath. Will the dive be bad then?"

"Then?" says he, frowning: "why, no; nothing bad about it, nor good about it — since no life".

"Suppose, though", she insisted, "that there are still then some living things on her, but inert, no nerves, careless, incapable of pain or pleasure. Will the dive be bad then?"

"No", he said, "nothing *bad* — no one to suffer ---"

And she: "Quite so: nothing can be bad for a stone, nor good for a stone. So you see: Bad and Good depend for their existence upon the existence of beings that can feel pain and pleasure: Bad is what gives pain, Good is what gives pleasure, the noun 'Good' meaning pleasure, the adjective 'good' meaning pleasant, and *nothing else* ever, a good egg, a good man, a good God, being one whose existence, on the whole, gives pleasure: for though something good may be, to some extent, unpleasant, like medicine, like self-control, it is more pleasant than unpleasant, if it is good. And it is appropriate that this word 'good' should occur in the definition of wealth: for well is good, or pleasant; wellth (or wealth) is goods, or pleasures; and

anything that is not, on the whole, pleasant is not wellth, or wealth, or goods. So a diamond on the ground—is that wealth?”

He reflected, then decided to reply, “No: no good on the ground”.

And she: “But if you pick it up? wear it in your scarf?”

“Then, yes, it is wealth”.

“If you take it, eh? *then* it is wealth: this ‘take’ being the third word that we have to understand after ‘land’ and ‘good’: for ‘wealth is anything good in itself *taken* from land’. So what does ‘take’ mean?”

Hurriedly, furtively, he determined to say at her ear, “You are a taking thing, and have taken me”.

And she: “Have I? Actually?”

“Aye”, says he, “so taken me as to make me timorous that the winds and drizzles which touch you may in some way change you; and I beseech the Heavens that one thing in a universe of changes may never change from being just what you are just now, it will be such a pity, such a charm is involved in just what you are, in all that you touch, in the aura that your soul throws off, in the home that every day knows your precious presence, the stair that you every day step on, the costumes which you choose, your old-worn shoes more holy than shew-bread loaves—O, my heart’s thanks to you, Haralda, for living, and for letting me see”.

And she: “Now you are not speaking, but singing: sing on, Lancelot, you have the voice of Israfel, chief of the archangel larks”.

“Well, in truth, you are a music”—something of moaning in his tone, as the mourning-dove moans for emotion—“and singing is appropriate to you. Just your eyes—what a poem there! Heaven knows on what planet of what star they were invented: I have tried in vain to analyse, to say to myself in what their strangeness consists: the same light-blue as millions of eyes, same black centre, dark ring round, as usual; yet with some mystery of light within them that never yet was on land or sea, news of some undiscovered country, of the Islands of the Blessed, some ultra-violet message, some suggestion of intelligence—lovely, summoning, desirable to aching, Heaven knows; and always astonishing: so that each time I am coming to meet you I come loving you, but, as we meet, each time, I find myself kidnapped by another added love, fresh and strange. And, Haralda, your lips—thick the bottom lip, feast of sweetmeat”—this he whispered, upon which she held them rather up to him, but now his jaw went fixed, and, instead of eating the meat of them, he mentioned, “But this is not what we were talking of”.

And she: “No! what were we—? I know—about ‘take’: I was asking, ‘What does “take” mean?’ and you said, ‘You are a taking thing’. So, if I am, what do I do when I *take*?”

“Dear”, he said tenderly, “you tell *me*”.

And she: "Well, to take is to do something, isn't it? and to *do* anything — what is that?"

He considered it with his frown; then: "To *do* anything is to move something".

"Lancelot for ever!" she cried, "*there's* a scientist's answer" — while Prince Alexander, stretched on his belly on his bench, peeped charily round the angle at their backs, with some disgust in him, muttering, "Christ! 'land', 'good', 'take' . . . 'take' *her*, Carol, seize, Man, kiss, kiss . . ."

And now Haralda: "Yes that's it: to *do* anything is to move something; if it is just thinking that you're *doing*, you are moving the neurons in your brain. Or, since everything is already moving, it is more strictly true to say 'to do anything is to affect the motion of something'; but 'move something' is near enough. So, then, since taking is doing something, and doing something is moving something, to *take* must be to move something. Now, on a planet, if you move anything, it is always against some resistance: so to move anything is to 'do work', as physicists say, the work done being $f \times d$, the force used multiplied by the distance moved over. So, since working is moving something, and taking is moving something, is there any difference between working and taking?"

"Now, let me see"; he meditated; then: "To take is to work, but to work may not be to take. To work is to move anything in any way; to take is to move anything toward oneself".

"Is that it?" — looking up now from stooping over her reticule, whose clasp she had been absently snapping and unsnapping — "No, that's not quite it. When the American pioneers went trekking west, if one of them chose a piece of land, moved the soil, ploughed it, it was now his ranch, his own, for he had *taken* it; but had he moved the soil '*toward*' himself? Or you may move a spoon full of medicine '*toward*' your mouth, yet not take the medicine. To take is to move something, to work, *for* oneself, with some prospect of getting wellth, wealth, good, pleasure, by so moving it. Remember, too, that motion is relative: you may take medicine by moving it to your mouth, or you may take it by moving your mouth to it; as in taking a chair, one usually moves oneself to the chair more than moves the chair to oneself. Anyway, to take is always to move something, to 'do work'. Now, taking is the only way in which wealth can be obtained: if someone has wealth that he did not himself take, someone else took it. Here are living things, and here round them is a universe, or 'land': where are they to obtain anything, except for land? and how obtain, except by taking? There is an English rhyme, 'The good old simple plan, that they should *take* who have the power'; but this 'plan' is not only good, and old, and simple, it is the *sole* plan — no other is conceivable; only, I think that the writer of the rhyme did not know what '*take*' means, and supposed that Normans *took* England. But taking is moving. If you suggest to a guest 'Take some mustard', he may shout 'Yes! Yes!' till he's hoarse; but *saying* is not taking; to take he must do work, use force, on the mustard, move it

relatively to his mouth; or, if Normans batter some English skulls with battle-axes, and make a 'law', and stick-up boards marked 'Trespassers will be prosecuted', that is doing work on other things than England, is *saying* that they have taken England. And since, in taking something, one uses force, one's *own* force, one *owns* what one has taken; and only something that has been taken, moved—only wealth—can be owned, land cannot be owned, until it is commuted into wealth by someone's own force. So when people, as they frequently do, speak of 'the mine-owners', is there any meaning in that?"

Now Lancelot started. "No!"

"Why not?"

"*Because*"—leaning keenly toward her a light arising in his eyes—"a mine, like a diamond-on-the-ground, has not been taken, moved—cannot be moved—is not wealth, goods is no pleasure to anyone!"

And Haralda: "Oho! we are coming to something now. We see that land, not being wealth, cannot be owned, that the coal-in-a-mine is no pleasure, that before commencing to become wealth, or wellth, or pleasure, it must be moved, lifted to the pit-mouth, where it is already a pleasure, less pains being now necessary to move it finally to give pleasure in a fire-box, a fireplace—motions alone making it wealth, every successive motion more and more raising its wealth from nothing, those who use their *own* force on the coal to move it being alone its *owners*. But even these do not move, do not own, the *mine*: so that 'mine-owner' is meaningless; and it is thinking that they know the meaning of meaningless words that is the cause of half men's sorrows. Anyway, we have got to this: a mine, Nature, land, is not wealth; and to be wealthy through *saying* that one owns something that is not wealth, and cannot be owned, is buffo.¹ Some day the Splendid Devil will claim this moonlight—Is moonlight wealth?"

"No, no"—from Lancelot.

"Why not? It is good".

"Yes, but not goods, not taken from land, *is* land, cannot be owned".

"But the air that is our life: isn't the air wealth?"

"No, no. The air that I have taken, moved by my own force into my lungs, is wealth, is my own; the atmosphere is land, cannot be owned".

"Oho! we are getting on. But Balainca: isn't Balainca wealth? Don't say No, off-hand. Think of some particular acre of Balainca: it has soil, it has site, it has subsoil (the earth's lithosphere)—those three: isn't the soil wealth, if someone has taken it, moved, hoed, manured, commuted it in some way for the better? Soil is not 'land', mind, no more than coal is, if it has been taken; taken, it is wealth, though it will once more become 'land' when the effects of the movements which changed it into wealth cease to exist in it, as coal taken from a mine, if flung back into a mine, would anew be land, whereupon the owner who took it is no more the owner: for how can one own Nature? So soil can be owned—for a time. But as to site? Can that be owned?"

¹ Buffo: comical, farcical.

"No, no", Lancelot muttered.

"Why not?"

"Cannot be moved".

"Not by a man, no; but by a big force? By a landslide? By Kargo? 'Site' means 'relative position', and you may move the site of some mustard either by moving the mustard to your mouth, or by moving your mouth to the mustard, as Kargo, by moving itself to Avenue Pascal has moved the site of Avenue Pascal from being outside a Kargo to being inside a Kargo, has taken the site by its *own* forces, and is the site's *owner*. And, of course, the site may be of vastly more value than the soil. You know of those seven acres, close outside Kargo, which my father left me, from which I get my three thousand gentos a year in rent; eighteen years gone I got hardly half that—grows and grows as Kargo grows. So tell me: how is that wealth which a town owns, which no individual can own, comes to me?"

Again Lancelot started. "Yes! how is it?"

"Ah, you see, there is unreason here".

"Haralda!"

"Unreason", Now Haralda snapped her reticule's clasp with finality, and sat upright. "All the seers see this thing, and call it loud out. Now, there are only three things in the universe—Land, Wealth, Life; or, as Wealth is taken from Land, we may say that there are only two things—Land and Life, planets and inhabitants: so, if there is unreason in living things in respect of Land, that is fundamental disease, the sleeping-sickness; the living things may even see the unreason, without realizing how profound its roots and omnipresent its effects, but in reality nothing else is of any importance in comparison, they may as well cut their throats *en masse*, if there is no prospect of rectifying their cross-eyed straying, for all's wrong with them, their corner-stone is falsity, they have gone against God's plan, God's anger, so to say, is out to nag them with many plagues: for land is the planet, land is Nature, without Balainca Balaincans are nowhere, and to go staggering along in empty space is going against the ordinance of Nature. If you build a house on a foundation of butter, there's bound to be trouble on sultry days; the inmates of that house, living in apprehension, will scarcely be inventors and discoverers; Progress will be a slug instead of a gazelle; Life will be dull, instead of inventive, and eventful, and elated".

Now Lancelot stood slowly, absently up, saying, "Dear me, God bless you for your beautiful mouth".

"You see?"

"I see, yes! I see!"

"Good. Not difficult to see. An acre of land has soil, site, sub-soil—nothing else: so, if your father, the duke, claims that he 'owns' acres, of which he cannot take the site nor the sub-soil, and has not taken the soil, nor has had the soil from anyone who ever took it, and if a 'law' calls abroad

'Let it slide, this unreason is not deep', and men are too *distract*, or too little reasonable, to refuse to breathe the deep unreason daily, then, tainted is their air-of-heaven, and ailed their health. Alter that nonsense, Duke's Son, and within six months the family of Man will have gone some way upward".

Quickly on this Prince Alexander scribbled, "Says she is six months gone in the family way", and handed it to Snarkski to deliver to Vasilissa, while Carol said to Haralda, "So this is it—land, land. And it is astonishing that everyone does not know it! for it is a matter of course, it stands to reason, it is God's simple truth. Dear me. Why, the words of your mouth are like the lighting-up of mines".

"Well, but they aren't *my* words, Doter Dear".

At which "Dear", secretly, pressingly, he asked, "Do you love me?"

And she: "I made no note about telling that—seemed too obvious".

"It is nearer and dearer than 'love': we are twins. . . . And to cut myself off you—of my own will to pluck out my right eye ---"

"Ah?"

"Yes, to go from you! never again to be near my dear, and hear her—to leave you off, my fond habit—that is, if I *can*. If I can't, I can't, that's all. At this moment one whiff of wind would blow me to take you ---"

"Yes, Carol!"—Prince Alexander's hiss round his corner—"take', Man, kiss . . ."

And Haralda: "It is come, then—duly as foreboded: this is the night of it. Oh, well, Lancelot's not the universe, Ladies; the sun's still left. . . . Lancelot, tell me: what is the matter between us? Are you married?"

"Engaged", he said, and with a bowed brow he groaned, "Engaged".

Now Haralda whistled to herself the air of her "Caravan stumbling, starlit we stray", her chin when she whistled being an exhibit of chiselling—this whistling being done to camouflage a mood of profound gloom that now grew down upon both their souls; when she left off it was to say, "Is that it? Engaged. Happy girl! I hope she is not some pretty ninny. . . . Oh, but you might have told your friend before".

"Yes, he confessed, "I have been a coward".

"Hero, Lancelot. Happy girl! I only hope she has some sense, and is made to be your mate. You are some nobleman's son, nobler far than your father, and have turned yourself into a workman to learn for yourself the servitude of workmen: I have almost known; and have looked to see you fail any day; but you have stuck it, bravo! the King of lads. I do hope she has some sense in her empty head".

With lowered lids, mournfully, he spoke: "Well, yes, that's true: I am not by birth a converter, and thrice I nearly failed". Now, glancing round at Crowdar's gate, he added, "Grim tyrant, the old foundry—old Crowdar's—yet not unloved now at the last. Aye, the twelfth morning when the

knocker-up woke me at dawn, I couldn't get up — said 'No, I can't'. But then your influence lifted my mass. In truth, I seem to be pretty dependent now upon you: you are the meat and wine that keep me vital".

Now his hand moved to enclose hers, but she said, "No, better not touch — loyalty, please, to the pretty lady. You keep at that end, and I at this. Or no, I'd better go now".

Up she sprang at once, and up he sprang, saying very gravely, "Haralda, would you leave me by myself tonight? I don't think I can bear ---"

And she: "What's the good of lingering over empty honey-pots? Nothing is left to say when the hounds of the inevitable are devouring one's bowels: just hum a tune, and say, 'Damn it, Dogs, I don't feel it' ". But she now sat anew, humming the tune of her "Caravan stumbling" — sat at the end of the bench, looking away from him when he, too, sat anew, saying to her, "I have come to love that little hymn, as if your own high mind had composed ---"

"God's-guard!" — up now again she suddenly sprang.

"But I didn't touch you!" he protested: "have I ever? Haralda, I haven't to be left alone just now, I run amok — Sing for me, then, one last time, that it may be part of my memories of this night".

Once more now she sat, with, "Oh, very well, may as well linger, and pretend it is to sing. And this little song does say 'faith', it says 'hope'. That's good, that the suns still go on evolving, though some little jaw is anguished".

"Yes, that's good. Sing it, then".

Now, slinging a knee, face upraised, she sang in a low tone

*Caravan stumbling,
Starlit we stray,
Faith in us fumbling,
Hoping there's Day:
Morning-stars singing
"Morning-bell rings,
Morning-bright bringing
Warblings and wings".*

A silence now. And now he, mournfully: "Yes, that's good, as you say, that this last day for me is not the last of days: that's good. 'Warblings and wings'. The earth is over three thousand million years old, and will no doubt be whirling thirty thousand million more, within which eternity there'll be rumpuses of universal shouting to thrill her mass, humanity's unanimous anthem shouted in orgies beyond the orbit of Saturn: 'Warblings and wings'. Credo, credo. I believe, God, though in pain". He threw a look upward, adoring.

And Haralda: "That's right; we are twins: I, too, believe and adore — or know and adore". Then, taking up her reticule, she again sprang up, saying, "Now I'd better go while I'm safe. God's-guard".

Something of pride was in Lancelot's tone when, he, too, rising, replied, "There is no need; you leave me ---"

"God's-guard" — she lifted her palm.

"God's-guard" — curtly from him, lifting his palm to contact, while from the Prince round the corner issued the whisper of a hiss, "Kiss, Carol, kiss . . ."

And Haralda, standing rather averted: "Tell me which way you go — north? west? that I may think of you in that quarter".

"West" — stiffly.

"So, God's-guard, Lancelot".

"God's-guard" — again they touched palms, while the Prince, peering round, hissed, "Kiss, kiss!"

And now Haralda, standing averted, "Write a book about Crowdar's: say that the men are mentally hungry, inventors too faint to invent".

"Yes" — stiffly polite.

"God bless you, then, Lancelot" — lifting palm.

"God's-guard" — once again touching palms.

Now at last she stepped away, and after one backward half-a-glance vanished at the Square's south-east angle; whereupon Lancelot ran three steps after, but then stopped, to drop back brow-sick upon his bench, bowed down.

In those same instants Prince Alexander had pitched round to the west pedestal-face to hiss at Snarkski's ear, "Sharp! dash after, snatch her hand-bag!"; upon which Snarkski, both soft and fast, was off on darting toes; nor had four minutes passed from the moment of his outrush, when Haralda was afresh within the Square, tripping at a trot upon Lancelot . . .

"This is silly" — bashful a little, laughing a little, short-breathed — "some man has snatched my reticule — poor wretch — won't get much — only three gentos in; please give me — '*was uns alle bändigt*' — a gento for my tram . . ."

At this apparition of her, he seemed as one coming up, scarcely awake, from a dream, as one beholding in a maze some vision, until now his brow flushed to rich rose, and up he bounded, uttering low in his throat in an owner's tone, "I have you! Now you don't budge from me — never, by God, any more for ever! I have earned ---"

"Dear, you frighten me" — shrinking a little, her underlook fixed on his face.

"If I die, I kiss you!"

On which she, making a step toward him, breathed in a secret way, "Kiss, Dear? Oh, you wouldn't, Dear, would you?"

And he, impending upon her: "My fair day's wage, I tell you ---!"

She, her head cast back, abandoned, grinning up at him, whispered,

"Aren't you my King?", whereupon the grins of their teeth were greedily pressed together.

But that chemical compound of mouths that a kiss is was not in this case stable: for no sooner had their lips communed than the Princess Vasilissa's two whistlings shrilled — signal agreed that she and the Prince were now in league — then without delay the Prince's three whistlings sounded, to summon his men — eight; and within a minute the Square was a scene of agitations, zeals, shuffling feet, commands gasped, blanched visages blood-smeared, legs which went astagger backward to succumb suddenly and tumble, some windows of the Square-dwellings opening to peer and see. Of the eight invaders two had to hold Haralda, who struggled, and, until gagged, screamed; three within three minutes had been banged to their backs: two and three are five; five from eight leave only three; and at one moment it almost looked as if Lancelot would manage the job of these remaining three; but by then his breath came rasping, his face pallid like milk, eyes wild — little fight left in him. Even so, the conflict had wandered like a waltz over nearly all the Square before he was down; and it was only two who were left to down him.

They started off in two cars. When well out of Kargo gags were taken out; and when the captives gave paroles, handcuffs, too, were removed.

And now mountains, mountains, mixed with moods of the moon: mountains and moon seemed to be in a collusion to build still new kingdoms of gnomes and dumbness and moody beauties: a bewitched ride that night-long, which so enraptured Haralda's heart, that she ceased to think of her captivity.

At three in the morning they stopped in the solitary bottom of a ravine, where a cataract, all solitary, lost in everlasting solitude, dropped sonorous, to ramble with everlasting song of waters along the ravine's bottom, Lancelot's car being at the ravine's north part, Haralda's some hundreds of yards in the rear; and grub of a higher type than they were accustomed to was put on the ground close to the brook, where by glimpses of the moon they picnicked to the shoutings of two owls, which out of deeps of wood shouted yoolaloo and yoolaloo to each other's midnight mood, the two parties of captors now inclining to be nice with the captives at the incitement of iced wines, of caviare, mortadel, salmi, foie gras, panna montata, gaudy dolciumi . . .

Then on anew: more of forest and ravine, mouth of cavern, cloud on mountain's top evolving, moon's leer peering out of cloud-screen with the complicity of the midnight thief and stealing feet, lonesome mansion, farmstead musing forlorn aloof, lost cot cocked inaccessible aloft on precipice's brink, until, before dawn had well broken, they saw from a mountain's top a castle-wall standing far off along another mountain's top, and about that mountain's base lights of the sun winking on a lake's face, haunt of wild swans' wings, here being Prunesé (the lake), and Pruneca (the castle), their destination.

XIII

A LADY'S SLIP

As the King was believed by half the people to be dead, and by the other half to be possibly dead, the joint vote of the Chambers as to the appropriateness to the situation of the Crusader Law was by the strong majority of 93 to 18; five days after which, on the 19th of November, came Prince Alexander's coronation as joint-Regent, the 26th being appointed for the Princess Vasilissa's as joint-Regent.

From the 20th to the 26th she entertained a large house-party at Prune, and during the afternoon of the 21st, the Autumn being still warm, the Prince, who liked riding, and was a furious rider, rode over, to dine and row, from his Morocastro to Prune, sixteen kilometres of rude country, accompanied by the Cavaliere Snarkski, both of them costumed as huntsmen in coloured clothes, Alexander's cap like a saucepan cocked askew, dropping a tassel, looking gallant, their gallop clattering the barytone of a rotary rumbling like a rolling of drums, up and down those mountain roads, as if pressing to some end, though at one point Snarkski remarked that they would still be late for the dinner, to which the Prince made the answer, "It is not for a dinner that I journey: I ride forth to conquer, Man".

Snarkski laughed. "Ah, I thought there must be a motive somewhere. This particular lady may be difficult ---"

"Pooh, Man", the Prince said, "difficulty is relative to strength, and strength to skill. I think I can get any woman: they were made of a rib, their nature is to bend. Women? They are nothing. The Creator is male, the invention of the female was an afterthought. In heaven there is no Woman's-Rights question: the difference between an angel and an archangel is that the archangels have larger harems, as Mahometans tell. It is the woman's duty to say yes, not rudely to refuse; if she refuses, her conscience reproves her, she suffers a compunction; and, if by strength, or ruse, or dope, you overcome her reluctance, she acknowledges you a sovereign, offers you homage, loves you *au fond*. Now, tell me: is not Olga, granddaughter of the Duchesa of Grommondo, at present at Prune? I have gathered that that is so".

"Yes, that's right, Sir, she is there", Snarkski replied, cantering neck-and-neck, as a pair of rocking-horses' necks compete seesawing: "the Princess seems fond of taking under her wing such fillies of fifteen — maternal instinct working, I think — this Olga being her third protégée this year — adopts them as pets, ushers them into Court-life. But does your Royal Highness consider Olga pretty? Leaves *me* cold ---"

"No, I don't consider — Presti, it isn't the filly I want, Man, not for herself; my design is to pretend to want her, to use the protégée as a decoy to lure the chaperon. You will see. Such as chaperons and nuns must be

entangled by guile, for their attitude of mind is guarded. Moreover, the Princess has every day near her that prisoner with whom she has been infatuated—a perilous thing. Has she not seen Carol at all?”

“Not up to yesterday when I left Prune”, the Cavaliere answered: “it would be useless if she did see him, for Carol, offended with the world, utters never a word—is become dumb—does not consider anything that is mortal worthy to hear his royal voice. If he wants anything, he does not ask for it—goes without”.

Alexander chucked up his chin, with, “Aye the arrogant archangel. But arrogance is ridiculous when the grip of Actuality has it in handcuffs. Can he even smoke? Has he cigars? Has he a razor?”

“Oh, yes, he shaves, he has cigars”, Snarkski hastened to answer: “Snifkin thought of cigars. And the young lady has cigarettes, which, however, she ---”

“Do they see each other, those two?”

“From windows, yes, when he or she is walking in the little garden—call it ‘garden’—a few metres of cobble-stones enclosed by tall walls, three lilacs in it and five old rose-trees, much bush and no blossom. There he takes exercise in the forenoon for exactly an hour—for his obedience to orders is immediate—and she then, I hear, looks down from her little window, waves to him, and may drop a bit of paper on which something is written; then in the evening when *she* descends to take exercise, she will sing a stanza, ever the same, commencing ‘Caravan stumbling’, on which he, hearing it, appears at his window, doesn’t wave to her, just shows himself; or at times they communicate by taps upon the old portal that divides her three rooms from his three”.

Peering in his narrow-eyed way, the Prince said, “Aye, I think I recollect that old portal: isn’t it of oak, all worm-eaten, with a pointed top? In my youth I might frequently moon away a month at Prune with my Uncle Theodore—I liked old Prune for its solitude and those winds that always haunt its walls and forests with sighings about old times; and I have often wandered about that same South-west Tower, never dreaming that I should some day come to deem it good counsel to imprison Carol, then a chick, in it. It has a spiral stair, its steps worn away, isn’t that so? And it has --- But are you sure, Snarkski, that none of the household suspects the presence of prisoners? I don’t like that singing, and I don’t like the two prisoners seeing each other—there are reasons—you will at once take measures to prevent it. And how about cooking? No smoke made?”

“No, there’s no cooking”, the Cavaliere answered, “only a little hot water for eggs, coffee. We live on eggs, fruit, groceries, except Snifkin and I, who dine at the Princess’ table. There are only nine of us—Stella and Teresa, your Royal Highness’ two women, functioning as wardresses to the young lady—to their mental improvement, by the way, for she is teaching them geometry! and though they two are much amused at the whole thing, she seems to be a born teacher, for she has them interested and looking

forward to the lessons with zest. Then there are the three pious, Rufus, Janek and Zbigniew, who are warders and also valets, Carol being 'a hero to his valet' in the case of Zbigniew, who ever says, 'There's a real King'. Lastly, there are Snifkin and I. Once a week Janek, unlocking the portal in the enclosing wall, steals out to trudge to the townlet Chocholow, and to steal back with a cargo of groceries: no one see him go or come; only Snifkin and I are seen; and however the household may account for our presence at Prune, it is little likely that any suspicion of *prisoner* has arisen in anyone—except in Thyrza, the old nurse, who may know, as I infer from certain looks of hers: Vasilissa, I think, may have told her”.

The Prince chuckled up his chin at this. “Now, look at that: to depend on a woman is like marching to attack over unsuspected case-shot, unless she is sexually yours: for your mistress is mistress to her master. No, I sit on prickles as to this whole situation: for what caprice may visit Vasilissa any day in respect of Carol cannot be exactly calculated. Hence I go forth, as I said, to conquer, for until I floor that exalted female, I sleep with one ear uneasy”.

“Well, the enterprise is through a hedge of difficulty”, Snarkski remarked, “but I don't doubt that your Royal Highness will go as far as usual”. He added with a nod, “And, à propos, yonder, see, the battlements of Pruneca: siamo arrivati”.

Soon now they were careering along the shore of the Prunesé, which sheet of water lies in the form of a sausage; then their steeds were climbing the steep of a path leading up to the castle, up to a yard where a line of men-at-arms were standing at attention; whence the riders, on tossing their bridles to stable-men, were led inward to a dinner that had already commenced.

When trumpeters sounded a fanfare, and his name was announced with the Prince's the Cavaliere Snarkski felt himself a King, as everyone, except the Princess, sprang up on his entrance into a hall long and narrow, having a series of pointed windows, all along its length of wall being a procession of shields, falchions, catafracts, halberds, battle-axes, helmets, and down its centre a table of rough board, gone grey with ancientness, tunnelled with little holes, without table-cloth, supported not on legs, but on trestles, its rudeness a contrast with the food on it, which was choicest Parisian, the chairs thrones, the attendants rich in liveries Louis XIV, strains of a Mozart movement coming from the orchestra drawn up at an entrance.

And the coming of the Prince dislocated the sitting, causing shiftings, transpositions: for his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Garbarin, who had been seated at the Princess' right at the table-head, precipitately relinquished his chair to the Prince; and the Prince made the disorganization greater by at once, on kissing the Princess' fingers, ferreting out from amid the guests the girl Olga Dimitri, who was thirteenth on the Princess' right, and he cried, “Why, Olga! I didn't know—there she sits, the filly! How are you, Olga, my friend?” Then to Vasilissa: “I crave to have my friend Olga sitting next me”.

Vasilissa started, frowned, did not like this, while the young girl, flattered

out of her wits, turned turkey-red, did not know where to put her embarrassments at her celebrity; until a duke who had been seated next to his Grace the Prelate rose to give up his place; and then a finger of Vasilissa sullenly summoned the young lady to come.

The Prince then proceeded to cosh the child with attentions in postures quite loverlike, speaking ten sentences to her and one to anyone else, all under Vasilissa's watchful eye and uneasy inquisitiveness of ear; until, on the setting-on of an *entrée*, the Prince produced a phial containing a kind of powder, saying to his young elect, "See this powder here—its name is Ambrosia—I sprinkle a pinch of it on many things that I eat, it makes things taste so divinely nice, and makes one feel nice and lively. There: I sprinkle a pinch on my *entrée*, and now shall sprinkle a pinch on yours".

But here Vasilissa went pale and intervened. "No, please, Alexander, I'd rather not, if you don't mind—You see, I am responsible for her"—not understanding, not quite liking, this sudden nice powder: the Splendid Devil had a reputation for adeptness in abstruse potions and powders, used sometimes for no good motive . . .

"Very well", he said to her: "but it is hardly a poison, you know, my Cousin, since I, who like myself, take it myself; and I like Olga, hence offer it to her". Tenderly he added, "Would you not like a little, Olga?"

"Oh, yes!" leapt from Olga, and "Please, Vasilissa, may I?"

Vasilissa shook her face shortly with shut lids, her lips shaping, "No".

But this did not unfix that fixed smile of the Prince, who said to her, "And you I like, hence offer you a little—precious as it is: it is Arabian, and I do not offer to everybody what little of it I can procure".

Now the inquisitiveness of Eve peeped in Vasilissa: she asked, "Is it really so nice?"

And Alexander answered, "Why ask? Try it and see: be heroic for Olga's good; then, if you like it, and do not drop dead, as I do not, you will not deprive my Olga of having what you find so nice".

"Oh, very well", the Princess now consented—"provided I try it on myself first".

And it was done. When after a minute the Prince asked, "Well, is it nice?", she laughed, saying, "I can't say that I taste any difference! Anyway, you may have some, Olga".

Olga then got a tenth of what had been given to Vasilissa, nor could *she* detect much difference in the taste; there was, though, a difference in the tasters; the thing modified their temperament, before long set their blood flowing with a warmer psoriasis,¹ was strongly tonic, blushed in the cheek, brightened the eye.

Which new temper only deepened the Princess' jealousy for her protégée's safety, and she saw to it that Olga was immediately under her wing in the going down to the water-fête that followed the dinner—a going down

¹ Psoriasis? Ms. is quite clear. Not in Webster's Third, 1961. Possibly psor(i), itch + osis, condition of.

by a stairlike path that has a lonesome mood at the castle-back, scarcely to be called "stair"—long, tortuous, mostly narrow, no three steps similar, some shallow, planks embedded in moss, or mere moss, or steep, of stone, cut out of the mountain, all deep in shade under lushness of bush now blushing to Autumn reds; the guests going down in straggling little groups, the Prince with his Grace of Garbarin and the Duke of Nudicum; until the strains of "Bolero" reached the ear from a military band on the lake's brink, and presently the lake's breadth broke into view with its boats and its groups of black swans seated at anchor like fleets of beaked gondolas.

Some of the boats were caïques, flimsy crescent-shapes painted to resemble the moon's flush, just touching the lake's face with the weightlessness of their frailty: in one of which Prince Alexander proposed to paddle the Duke of Nudicum; and since it was thought proper by all those exalted ones to be prompt in falling-in with the Prince's propositions, this idea immediately seemed the sole meet idea of the moment; but at the last moment, after stepping into the caïque, and holding out his hand to help the duke in, the Prince said, "No, this separates the two Graces, his Grace of Garbarin now standing there unmated": so you two had better go together, that will amuse you to paddle yourselves, and I will go with my Snarkski": upon which the Archbishop tripped forward with alacrity to say, "Happy thought, your Royal Highness!", and duke and prelate pushed off in one caïque, each plashing away with a paddle, though the duke was such a weight compared with the little archbishop, that the boat showed a jeopardous list to port.

By now some fifteen boats of different sorts were abroad on the water, the Princess with her pet of the moment, with her old nurse Thyrza, and with a Lady Zurro, in one of the stouter boats rowed by a household courtier and the young castle-priest. And the band discoursed band-music; a moon mounted up to muse over it, as the dusks of evening deepened; little breezes brindled the lake's face, which went rushing into blushes at the breezes' busses, to slop upon the swans' bows; now and again from some boat a rocket bounded upward, to pop soft aloft, and come again in glory—rockets taken from a case of fireworks provided for the night.

In the midst of which the Prince, steering a dhow with a lateen-sail, steered close to the duke to say, "Your Graces' coracle is leaning so steeply, it is a torment to me; you need the counterpoise of some light person: why not go and beg the Princess to lend you the little Olga Dimitri?"

"That indeed, Your Royal Highness, will solve the difficulty of our inequality", the duke said, heavy in more senses than one, and proceeded to board the Princess' boat.

When he asked for the girl to balance him, the nurse Thyrza gave her face a negative little shake at Vasilissa; but either Vasilissa did not see this, or did not see her way to saying no to a league of two Graces: so Olga stepped warily into the wobbling wherry; and the two boats separated.

But within fifteen minutes the little maid was in the Prince's skiff: for

the Prince had detected that still their Graces were not safe, their caïque still exhibiting a list, Olga's small body being insufficient to balance the big man's mass; and the Prince said to his Snarkski, "In telling them of it, I will tell you to step into their caïque to balance them, then you will hand out the filly to me".

This was adroitly accomplished, while the Princess, watching it, said, very annoyed, to Lady Zurro, "Now, look at that—the artfulness! He wanted to get Olga, and it was he who set the Duke and the Archbishop to ask for her. But that child's grandmother entrusted her to me. . . . What am I to do now?"

"Too late", the old Thyrza dryly observed, "you should have thought of all that before".

Meantime the Prince, seated beside the girl, leaning over her, murmured to her, "We will do a run to Sweet Waters together, shall we, we two?"

Her head hung low; she kept plucking at her dress, as the dying pluck and pinch their sheets; no reply came.

"Shall we?"

In an impulse she heaved up her lips; Alexander kissed her.

And Vasilissa saw this, as she was meant to see it: they were not forty yards from Vasilissa.

At once now the Prince directed his bow to a place where a gully between cliffs comes nearly down to the lake; there, on running his bow ashore, he jumped out, caught Olga's jump, and with clasped hands the couple went running away down the gully, like conspirators fleeing.

Alexander calculated that Vasilissa would now come after—with his customary shrewdness: for everyone is jealous and moral on witnessing the selfish joy of accomplices in love-doings; so that the Princess, on seeing that collusion of their scoot and disappearance into venereal secrecy, said, "Oh, no, this is too much: I go after that child".

"No! don't you go", leapt at her from the old nurse; but she turned a deaf ear, said imperiously to her rowers, "The shore!"; and, before the boat was properly ashore, jumped from off the bow upon soppy soil, to be gone at a run down the gully.

No one now in sight; the gully winding, narrow, granting to the eye the glint of hardly three stars at once above its hirsute cragginess; and nowhere in the world can be of a tone more hermit and averted from the presence of men. When the Princess ceased to trot in order to walk, she set to launching shrieks of "*Olga!*", each shriek rousing the gully's multitude of mouths to shout it again in an insurrection of echoes.

Meantime, walking eagerly, she was gaining on the runaways, who had not long kept on running; and within half a league from the start a shrill of "*Olga!*" reached their ears. At once the Prince stooped to his young lover to murmur hurriedly, "My Dear, it is an *affaire manquée*, we

are pursued! You slip back—there is another path yonder—leaving me to confront the foe”; whereupon, grasping her hand, he rushed her forward two hundred yards to a point where another gully, which, too, goes to the lake, joins their gully; and, busily brushing her cheek with a kiss, he packed her back that way, then stood awhile looking at the tripping of her white slippers’ toes, and smiled when, running, the little miss cast a glance rearward to throw half a finger-kiss at him.

He then walked a little back to join battle with Vasilissa.

The tactic now was brusquerie of attack, suddenness, storm, dominance, as the cock dominates the hen, tolerating no nonsense, astonishment of artillery, sheer weight of metal, and a getting done quickly what one did, and a high hand, and a stretched-out arm . . .

“Where is that child?” she sharply asked: “I am responsible, you know ---”

“Pooh—child: sent her back; what do I care about any female thing but you, Vasilissa? Look here, Vasilissa, I claim you, I have you. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but I shall have you, Vasilissa, desire of my life”—his arms stretched stiff toward her, appealing, while she, startled, rather ghast, short of breath, stood agaze, confronted with the phenomenon of maleness in him, musing on his sex-nature, and suddenly—took to her heels.

That would have been more rational if she had run back toward the lake, but she ran forward toward Sweet Waters. What her motive was she may not herself have known: apart from that ginger philter of his, which, eaten with her dinner, may have acted to charm her, “the heart is deceitful”, and, though not “wicked”, is a little—tricky, intricate.

He darted after, as the hound hunts the hare, bent, with inflexible intent, no fun about it; and though that fixed smile of his was still on his lips, a whiteness of the skin exhibited the seriousness of the task he had set himself, its cark and predicament, the winds of his business whiffing his hair backward, his stare an assassin’s. They were quickly at Sweet Waters.

This is a theatre of cliff, perpendicular, built on a grand plan, three different cataracts battering down its crags in raptures of raggedness, passions of soliloquy, so that one is listening to it ere one sees it; and about the theatre’s middle stand the roofless glooms of an abbey’s ruins, gables and big windows of Old Benedictine, a mass of blackness mingled now with glimpses of the moon’s silver mood.

Entering from the west through the west gateway, she sped past the remains of the Cellarer’s Building, making straight toward the three remaining walls of the Cathedral; but, conscious of his feet near behind, she shied southward, eastward, to find herself bolting out at old bell-cot of the Gatehouse at the south-east; as she emerged here, however, she saw him spurning along the south monastery-wall: for he, after entering the west gate, had doubled back to intercept and get her full-face; on which, uttering a little shriek at his nearness, she, too, doubled back through the old burial-

ground, now clamorous with a chorus of grasshoppers'-soprano pealing their moonlit litany, and so to the parlour-ruins, then by chapter-house, by slype,¹ into the east cloister, to the cathedral's south wall, where, seeing him still nearer, she shot round to the east cathedral-wall, round to the north wall; but now with an outcry saw him coming full-face: for he had anew doubled back, to intercept; upon which she, too, dodged back; and now, all but caught, short of breath, shot into the building by the south transeptportal, ran tottering, stumbling, among débris of fallen columns in the nave; and, sighting a pulpit, flew to it for hiding. But there is no stair; it is now nothing but a cone of stones, a (truncated) cone formed by blocks of a fallen column broken up, with a hole at the cone's summit; this she attained by scrambling up the cone's slope on hands and toes; during which climbing she was sighted, and was no sooner in hiding in the pulpit hole than she heard one of the stones hurtling down, disturbed by a climbing toe; upon which she shot upright from crouching, and was off down the cone at a new point invisible to him, wary now though hasty, concentrated, picking her steps, with balancing palms; but was hardly half-way down when he, above her, was coming, close now, wary though hasty, concentrated, picking his steps, with balancing palms; no word uttered there, and never anxious General on the verge of battle was more earnest, bowed over his map with a pallid brow . . .

At the bottom she was off afresh westward, where all trace of west wall is gone, and moonbeams gloat unobstructed among a Gomorrah of rock-fragments, he, too, in some moments anew hunting her close; and now the hunt finished when she, stumbling in the nave among rocks, fell with an outcry, and he fell with her.

She laughed . . .

A laugh hysteric, breathless, half sob; but still—a laugh.

Still no syllable uttered; only, when he kissed her, her soul moaned.

But, after all, her flight may have been a lark, *au fond*. One “No!”, strongly uttered, might not that have been a stronger negative than any flight? But sometimes one lies to oneself.

That was not Prince Alexander's way: his lying was ever to others. That midnight, as he rode alone over the mountains to his Morocastro, smiling his smile, at one point of his ponderings he said to himself, “Good counsel is more than crowns of gold”.

¹ Slype: A narrow passage. Specifically one between the transept and chapter house or deanery in an English cathedral.

XIV

THE CO-REGENT

That was on the 21st, the coronation of Vasilissa being for the 26th, a week later than the Prince's: for this was thought proper, to mark the fact that the Prince was the outstanding spirit in the coalition, a *primus in equalibus*.

That 26th, then, was a resounding day at Prune, anticipated by the household as a Yule in human history, the ladies putting-on new costumes for the day, three couturieres reeking of the rue de la Paix having come down from Kargo with silks glimmering soft, to sit and cut and sew and gossip, and make fairies of women.

The event was in the donjon-hall, or rittersaal, where of old the lord sat as a judge in his sort of magistrate's-court—a hall huge, rude, empty, its length north-and-south, at its north part a couple of cannons on carriages, little brass things, "rabinets", an inch in bore, breach-loaders; and between them, in wood, a Christ-on-cross, life-size, crude, wrought by some gaunt graver's burin, its paints obliterated, save here or there a hint of paint persisting: little else in the room's bigness, but fan-groups of flags, which, drooping ragged and blanché, with scraps of tapestry ragged and blanché, patched and darned, adorn all the walls; also there is an estrade or platform a foot high at the south end, on it being an ancient chair-of-state, not unlike our own coronation-chair, or throne; and glowing in front of it now a modern table, oblong, of mahogany—very incongruous with the rest of the hall, recently brought in for the coronation Councillors to take their seats at, on this table being a cushion, and on the cushion a crown which was the Replica of the Crown of Balainca, with which Replica the Prince, too, had been crowned as co-Regent a week previously—a replica owing to the double coronation of Balaincan Kings, once "within the hour of accession" in the so-called "Director Coronation" with the replica, kept generally at Wratishaw Palace, then publicly six weeks later in the Kargo Cathedral with the real old crown, kept among the relics of St. Agnes: for it was Agnes who had given the real old crown, found on her grave by a gravedigger in the eleventh century.

When the castle-clock struck Two, men-at-arms stood drawn-up along the east and west walls of the hall, hearing rumours of a music sounding somewhere eastward; and now immediately the Councillors entered in single file by the east portal, seven, in robes of office, like Alderman and Speaker, his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Garbarin leading, and next after him his Grace the Duke of Nudicum, to take their seats, with bowings between them and the Archbishop, on large chairs of mahogany now standing glossy about that glossy table of mahogany that had been planted before the platform.

Some minutes afterwards a single man, not "robed", garbed in plain

black, bearing a tin box, paced in by that east portal, to deposit his box on the table in taking his seat at its bottom, facing the Archbishop. This was the Keeper of the Records.

Then in some minutes more two trumpeters stood at that east portal, with them being a herald in robes of barbarian richness, and he, when the trumpeters' cheeks had ceased from stuttering a trumpeting, lifted his voice to call, "Hear! Hear! Her Royal Highness the Princess Vasilissa summons to her presence the Lord President of the Council!"

On this the Duke of Nudicum rose and bowed to the prelate before pacing out eastward, a crowd of household ladies and gentlemen meantime gathering to stand ranged with aspen agitations, gigglings, fuss of whisperings, in two groups, one on each side of that east-portal.

And presently the herald in his gewgaws again presented himself with his buglers in their gewgaws at the east portal, and, these having blown a fanfare, he lifted up his voice to call, "Hear! Hear! Comes her Royal Highness the Princess Vasilissa!"

Now the Councillors rose, while Vasilissa in the midst of a group, her fingers resting on his Grace the Duke of Nudicum's palm, paced in, looking not unqueenly, being tall, her hair a beautiful building of copper, her lip deliberately drawn down to cover her top teeth. And she took her seat on the chair of state. The Councillors sat down. The Duke of Nudicum sat. The lord seated next the Duke rose (he is called "The Lord Proctor"—probably corresponding to our Lord Privy Seal), and with a profound bow handed to the Princess a sheet of paper. She, after a short pause, lifted the sheet to read out, word by word,

"My Lords, I understand that, by the Act passed by your Two Houses appointing me interim Regent of the Kingdom, jointly with His Royal Highness Prince Alexander, I am required to take a certain oath prescribed by the said Act. I am ready to take that oath".

Now the Lord Proctor, after anew doing reverence, and anew approaching her, read aloud; she like an echo repeating, when he waited, each phrase which he had read.

"I solemnly promise and swear ---"

She repeated it.

"That I will truly and faithfully execute ---"

"the office of Regent of this Kingdom ---"

"according to an Act entitled ---"

"an Act for filling the vacant Throne, as provided by the Crusader Law'---"

"and that I will faithfully maintain the Constitution ---"

"so help me, God".

"so help me, God".

The Lord Proctor bowed.

He then presented her with a fountainpen and with a paper. She signed the paper. He then went to the table-head to present the paper to his Grace of Garbarin to sign, then presented it to the Duke of Nudicum, then moved round the chairs from Councillor to Councillor, presenting it to each to sign; and finally laid it before the Keeper of the Records, who deposited it in his box.

He now afresh approached the Princess to present her with two sheets of paper, from one of which she read out

"My Lords, I understand that, to complete the formality which makes me co-Regent of the Kingdom, it is my duty to despatch to the official residence of his Lordship, the Lord Proctor, a certificate of my attendance at the office of The Holy Eucharist during the past month. This, my Lord Archbishop, is such a certificate; and it will be duly despatched by a troop of messengers today".

On which the Archbishop rose, approached, did reverence, took, read the certificate, handed it back; then, taking up in both hands the crown from the table, and anew doing reverence, said, "It is now with the high privilege of my office to place upon your Royal Highness the Replica of the Royal Crown of Balainca".

Now a Lady Zurro, stepping out with a Lady Nadine Myado from the two files of Court-officials in attendance beside the throne, lifted with both hands the princely diadem from the Princess' head, to place it on a cushion of scarlet satin which the Lady Nadine supported on her palms; whereat his Grace of Garbarin gravely placed the royal crown upon the Princess' brow; then, spreading his draperied arms abroad, pompous though small in mass, he bawled with a wawling of his altar-voice, "May God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, keep you in all your ways, and give you peace. Amen".

He then bent the knee, kissed her fingers.

Everyone being now erect with bowed brow, now the Duke of Nudicum left the table to go, to bend the knee, and kiss Vasilissa's fingers; then came the Lord Proctor, bent, kissed; and so in rotation all came and kissed.

This ended it. The Princess now rose, bowed, to pace out, attended by her Court, through the east portal; somewhere eastward band-music anew broke out, rendering now the National Anthem,

*March with his armies,
Pillar of Fire
Ride he, where harm is,
Harmless and higher;*

next the Councillors in procession paced out eastward; then, on a captain-of-the-Guard calling out, "Form Fours!" and "March!", the detachment which had guarded the hall goose-stepped out by a west portal; and the hall was left emptied.

XV

COURT-LIFE

But half-an-hour afterwards Lady Zurro reentered it from the east side with the Lady Nadine, the one a woman going on in the thirties, but Nadine a girl of eighteen or so, each bearing a bunch of flowers, roses, dahlias, zinnias; and they walked to the north end to a table there, small but ponderous, antique, standing near to the east one of the couple of rabinet cannons. On this table were two vases of brass with bunches of flowers in, which bunches the ladies chucked out of window, to replace them with fresh; and they patted the cushions which comforted a settle, stark old wood, that had a canopy of wood and little glints of gilt still glancing amid its carvings, this standing in the neighbourhood of the table and the east cannon; and the Lady Nadine, as she patted the cushions, and moved a footstool into position, made the observation, "Well, it is all over and done; my new costume feels like the aftermath of banquets and the ashes of passion: Vasilissa is Regent until Old Year's Night".

"Isn't very exhilarated about it!" Lady Zurro leaned to say near Nadine's ear in the sort of Court-scandal confidence that is addicted to whisperings and leerings: "something gone wrong in her undercurrents".

"You think?" Nadine suspended her patings to ask. Then: "Well, seems so. Dregs stirred up somehow. Someone whispers that she is sipping quite a lot of wine this week; chooses to be much alone. What's she coming in here for now?"

Close, as if disclosing a murder, Lady Zurro murmured, "Is often in this part of the castle these days, all alone". Now she pointed southward: "Grazia Tzingari is whispering that she has some boy-lover hidden away in that South-west Tower, whom she visits when the moon's about".

Nadine pouted. "Oh, that Grazia Tzingari! she'd slander the Blessed Virgin. *Her* loves don't wait to be illumined: she's full before the moon".

"Aye", says Lady Zurro with relish, "the only heavenly bodies that occupy her are earth-born, and have gender. . . . Still, there is some mystery connected with that South-west Tower—I have the best evidence—a boy's voice has been heard singing, and none of the maid-servants—so they say—are now allowed there: something sweet *may* be concealed within it".

Nadine reflected. Then: "No, not Vasilissa, I think. Vasilissa is innately straight, regards gallantry as unladylike. And Vasilissa loved Carol, *cela se voit*, nor is her character vigorous enough to get forgetfulness quickly: it is her love, and his death, that is still affecting her".

"That may be", Lady Zurro admitted, "but there's sweetness going on now—there's the best evidence—between her and her co-Regent".

"You think?"

"Didn't Alexander dally here five hours on Wednesday night, he who is said never to waste a second? And I have the best evidence — She left the lake-fête to go after him and Olga Dimitri, but Olga was soon back, whereas *she* did not come back, nor he, for two hours. I would swear they were at Sweet Waters. Two hours in those improving ruins under the moon. How occupied? In taking the Holy Eucharist with the dead monks?"

Nadine's smile was cynic. "Well, hardly: Alexander Wratislaw does take the Holy Eucharist for public reasons, as to furnish certificates of his devoutness; but in general he prefers other love-feasts".

"Ah", the elder lady remarked with a tart smile, "so I keep hearing from ladies who know" — a sting for Nadine, whose name had once been coupled with the Prince's.

But Nadine stung back. "Let us not envy them, Lady Zurro: envy affects the complexion" — Lady Zurro being somewhat yellow when scant of maquillage.

"I'd rather pity them, for ---" she began to say, but hurriedly whispered instead, "Here she comes", as Vasilissa entered at the east portal, to come northward toward the settle, saying, "I thank you, Ladies", adding, "You might send me my nurse", seating herself on the settle, while Lady Zurro and Nadine went on eastward.

But, left alone, Vasilissa was soon up to pace to-and-fro along the east wall, passing in each trip the vault of an enormous hearthplace which had three benches forming a seat before it, above it being a rack carrying old-time guns, firelock, arquebus, blunderbus, some knouts, too, to flog thralls with, with daggers, torture irons, manacles, fetters; and at the sides of the hearthplace were twin cabinets, little, antique, with two shelves each, one of which she eyed, as thrice she moved past it, and the fourth time, deciding to open it, took out of it a tumbler and a pint-flask, poured wine into the tumbler, and stood sipping.

Now the sound of a stick hitting the floor, coming, was heard, and the old nurse Thyrsa appeared — thin, dry, as if fried, and a little bowed now, addicted to the stick, but still in her eyes' action a vigour, gimlet glances aside, glints of sagacity, of guile.

She stopped short to say, "What, not drinking wine again?"

Vasilissa sipped, and, grinning a little, replied, "It's nice, I like it".

And Thyrsa: "Of course it's nice; but the wise do what is nicest in the long run".

Vasilissa turned upon her. "I won't be preached to, I am free as air, by Heaven".

"Is that so?" says Thyrsa: "yes, but that's not you talking that way to me, that's the wine talking".

"Talk away, Wine!" — Vasilissa sipped — "I like it, it's nice".

And Thyrsa: "Don't you be treating me like that! Don't you dare me!"

Vasilissa's chin pitched up. "I'd dare the Devil, I'd dare the Splendid Devil, who is the Devil's heir-apparent. I am quite reckless and happy, I don't care a fig for anything"—heaving thumb-and-finger aloft to snap upward at Heaven, with a twist; "it is all your fault: it was you who cut the cards, and foretold that one beloved of me would never come back. Cards: cards are all lies. I only pretend to believe in them: I am one of the intelligensia; I am a politician: deep and dark *I* am".

Thyrsa contemplated her some moments, and said, "That I call rambling, that stuff you are talking there".

"Are cards true, then?"

"Gospel true—when *I* cut them".

"So I marry Alexander? Is that inevitable?"

"Certainly, if the cards say so".

"Go from me! Out of my sight! Old noser!"

"Thank you"—Thyrsa bowed, turned to go; but the Princess tripped to throw an arm round her, and say ruefully, "No, Mama Thyrsa, don't be hard on me like that. . . . Oh, Mama Thyrsa, I am in trouble!"

"My darling!" parted from the old woman's start.

"Come, sit down, I will tell you"—leading toward the settle, where, after placing the tumbler on the little table in passing, she sat, laying her face on the old woman's shoulder, gazing away at vacancy; and she said, "Three weeks ago I let myself be led into committing a wickedness, and one sin ends in another. . . . Ah, Mama Thyrsa, I have lost my innocence".

The old woman went pale. "Innocence?"

"All forfeited, all altered for ever. I am not Vasilissa now".

The old woman's shoulder shrank from her. "My God! You, girl? You let your lips utter such a thing to me?"

"Bear with me"—swallowing with gulps of sobbing in a sore gullet—"listen—bear. Last Wednesday it was—the lake-fête evening—at Sweet Waters: you told me not to go, and I went. He overpowered me somehow—heaven knows how—not by force, but somehow; hypnotised, did *something*; I wasn't myself, believe me, Mama Thyrsa; and his power drew me out of myself to him—Oh, gross of him and of me! I feel all sticky, I keep wanting to wash my body clean. It isn't as if I loved him, I don't love Alexander Wratislaw, I dread him, I think he will be killing me some day with some political motive. Mama Thyrsa, *don't* let him marry me, cut the cards again ---"

"Oh, nonsense"—in earnest now, Thyrsa brushed that trifling aside—"don't cry, don't worry, the cards are all lies".

"The cards are?"—from Vasilissa startled.

"Yes, don't cry, all lies. If you don't want him, he shan't have you—

should be ashamed of his violent life, the butcher. Well, my poor old ears, I was to live to hear this. Is it Vasilissa? my white lady, my silver idol? . . . But, then, who else is to wed you now? *He* is the one; you will be Queen, and will come to be in love with him, he was always such a dashing spark; and shrewd! and large-minded! all Europe acknowledges his mastery and his ---"

A knocking at the east portal stopped her, and when Vasilissa called "Enter", Lady Zurro came to say, "Your Royal Highness, my reverend Uncle, the Archbishop, in departing, expresses the wish to say a God's-guard to Madame Thyrza": upon which Vasilissa, who had already said God's-guard to her departing guests, said to Thyrza, "Very well, go to him".

The old woman then struck with her stick, and, on lifting herself over it, stooped to say privily to Vasilissa, "Don't fret, don't drink wine, I'll see, I'll cut the cards ---"

"Didn't you say the cards are all lies?" Vasilissa asked, uplooking at her.

And Thyrza: "Ah, not always—depends on how the stars are". She now went away out with Lady Zurro.

XVI

LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVE?

Now Vasilissa, left alone, stood up, to move about, her brow bowed down, musing, until, noticing the tumbler on the little table, she took it up, but did not drink, threw what was in it out of a near window, replaced it on the table; then resumed her pacing, musing. Suddenly she started, having come now to some decision, and muttered aloud, "Yes, I don't care, I *will*, if Carol will" — walking now to a gong that stood beside the wooden Christ, this gong being a great disc of copper hanging from within a ponderousness of frame, and one gives it a clang by raising and letting go a cannon-ball which hangs by a chain, as Vasilissa now did, liberating the gong's garrulity into bruited a long lingering bleat; and when in response the girl Nadine appeared at the east portal, Vasilissa said to her, "Pray request the Private Secretary to come".

On the appearance of this official, she asked, "Has my Holy Eucharist Certificate started out for Kargo?" And when he answered, "It is about to start", she said, "Do not let it, until I bid". He bowed and went away.

She now moved her eyes in a furtive mood around the room, then in a furtive kind of hurry hied to lock the east portal, spurted to lock the west portal, to lock the north, then tossed the three keys into a drawer of the bigger (mahogany) table hard by the platform of the day's pomp.

Now she ran to the rack above the hearthpiece, got a dagger from it, walked, slower now, with hesitations, to the south-wall portal west of the platform, and after some reluctance decided to strike the portal, to give it five hits, with the dagger's handle.

She stood then histing, one ear on the portal, until she could hear footsteps coming down a stair on the other side, then decided to flee some steps away as from a lion coming, until a key was heard to turn, and the Cavaliere Snarkski stood doing reverence in the portal's opening.

"Your Royal Highness' pleasure?"

Vasilissa's chin pitched upward with authority; in her voice, though, was a failure, a little ring apology, agitation. "The male prisoner; I wish to see him here".

The Cavaliere, doing reverence, stepped backward away.

The Princess then tripped to the one of the pair of cabinets that had a mirror hung above it, to see if her face was pretty; but, as the mirror was all a hotchpotch of spots and blotches, it was almost in vain that she peered into its dimness, while her titivating palms patted her hair, and while she raped out of shape with a lipstick the jelly of her lips' flesh, to freshen them to a rich crimson; then quickly she whisked back out of sight into its cabinet the flask from which she had tipped wine; and now tripped again to the

mahogany table to draw away one of its chairs, and sit on it with a graceful nonchalance, finger at chin; in some moments, though, chose another chair, only in some moments to jump up anew; and now the voice of Snarkski sounded at the opened portal: "The male prisoner, your Royal Highness".

The ex-King stood in the doorway, Count Snifkin on his right, the Cavaliere Snarkski on his left; and when the Princess replied to them, "You may retire", they two stepped backward away, closing the portal, leaving the Princess gazing ghast, suspended, as at a spectre, at ex-King Carol in his mechanic's garb, a Carol gone pallid now—rather pallid always, but gone a little gaunt now about the nostrils and underlids.

The Princess remarked, hardly to him, but to Outis, "Walls have ears"—taking up one of the chairs, with which she walked heavy-laden to the centre of the hall, then called, "Pray, come!"; upon which he followed to the chair, though when she said, "Pray, sit", he did not sit.

She stood averted, only furtively looking at him, and presently with a bent head, not looking at him, murmured, "Carol"; and presently again, "Carol, it is like this, Carol: Alexander was crowned co-Regent a week ago at Morocastro, and I was crowned co-Regent here today; but he is not really co-Regent until I am Regent, and I, it appears, am not really Regent until my Holy Eucharist Certificate is at the office of the Lord Proctor: so, as the certificate has not yet been sent off, there is no Regency at this minute; and, if you reappeared now, you'd still be King, since a Regency must precede an election for King. So say to me, 'Do not send the certificate, I command', and I, yes, obey—there. Say 'I command', meaning that you go back to your throne, giving up that workingman ignominy, giving up all yearning for that ignoble girl, and I break away, yes, I liberate you. They may think that I wouldn't—or couldn't, your warders not being my men—but I will shew them what I am, I will shew them that I am a politician, too. Say 'I command'. When free, you may publish, if you please, that you were a captive in my castle, I care about nothing now: I can go and hide my head in a convent, if you do not cut it off. You have only to say 'I command'".

Silence.

"Do you say it?"

Silence.

"Carol, I wait: please answer".

Silence.

Now Vasilissa flushed. "Oh, dignity again! dumbness to traitors! The privilege of hearing the royal voice is too much to be accorded. Ha, ha, you are dust and ashes now—forgotten—don't imagine that everybody always has 'Carol' in his mouth, saying 'poor Carol', 'poor, poor Carol'; the world is occupied with its own concerns; it is only I who say 'Carol', 'Carol', Caril lost now to me for always"—now her snowy gorge sobbed engorged—"for always, for always. So say 'I command'—two words".

Silence.

“Well, say *something* — one word — say ‘Vasilissa’ — or say ‘forgiveness’ — say ‘pity’ — just one”.

Silence.

“No? Won’t say? But, Carol, don’t exasperate me! It is *I* who should be dignified: you abandoned me for a straw — the miserable beast! it is that straw which has brought all, all, my sorrows upon me; I saw you bend the knee to her like a slave, saw you kiss her lasciviously — Carol, the high-browed, *Oh-h-h*, crushing Fanfan’s softness to his body, ha, ha, finds it nice, likes it, ha, ha. But to cling still to her is nonsense, you might say ‘I command’, for you won’t ever be licking that sugar-stick again, she is dead to you, that gutter-rat. So say ‘I command’: let’s forgive, and still be something to each other — partisans, confederates — say ‘I command’ — two words, two words. For it is on my conscience, Carol, what I have done. I am gashed to the heart to see your majesty outraged, to see you thinned and paled, good God. And what may happen to you here any day — who knows? Alexander is like the ancient Italians, the old popes, and their sons, he assassinates in politics, that’s certain, I’ve heard him to say so — Carol, I warn you: he is coming to Prune in four days. . . . So say ‘I command’ — two words — say them”.

Silence.

“Oh, Carol, I wait”.

Silence.

“Then” — leaning toward him, secretly, fiercely — “go back to your prison to dream of her, go back and dream sweet things in your bed: I *like* to see you pine, it’s sweet, the sin — go back!”

Now she tripped down to strike deliberately five times the south portal with the dagger-handle, lingering thereabout until the portal opened, revealing Snifkin and Snarkski.

“Take him away”, she curtly murmured.

Whereupon the pair of warders walked half the hall’s length to Carol’s back, where Snarkski said, “Pray, come, Sir”; and immediately Carol turned smartly to traverse between the couple the distance to the south portal, which, as the three walked out, was shut and locked outside; and a princess now flushed, frustrate, sore, was left shut in, alone, the devil in her.

She went straight to the cabinet that contained the flask, carried the flask to the small old table at the north-east, where the tumbler now was, poured wine into, and sipped; she now walked to the east portal, unlocked it; and now, going to the gong beside the Christ-on-cross, she struck its shivery tongue into shrilling a prolonged gibberish by a single clash of the cannon-ball knocker dropped.

In response the Lady Nadine appeared at the east portal. The Princess said to her, “Pray direct the Private Secretary to send off my Holy Eucharist Certificate”.

The girl curtsied and turned away. Vasilissa now paced about a little, angrily, something of a stamp mingled in her gait; then walked to the east portal, locked it again; then caught up the dagger from the mahogany table to strike five times with its handle upon the south portal; when the portal opened, and once more the Cavaliere Snarkski stood there, she said to him, "The female prisoner: I wish to see her here".

He, on doing a bow, withdrew.

XVII

LADY MEETS LADY

Left solitary again, the Princess walked again to the small old table north-east, took up the tumbler, swallowed what liquor was still within it; then, going again to the hearthplace, took down one of the knouts from the rack there, having now in one hand a dagger, in the other a knout; with the knout she gave a hit at the air, uttering a malignant little giggle with a menacing throw of the head; and now walked to sit on the settle north-east, and wait a little, until Haralda Hásdruvol stood at the south portal between the Cavaliere Snarski and a wardress appointed by Prince Alexander.

When Snarski called out, "The female prisoner", Vasilissa called back, "You may withdraw": upon which she and Haralda Hásdruvol were left solitary.

The Princess then beckoned to the prisoner, calling, "Come!", whereupon the prisoner walked northward to stand in front of the settle, which faced half northward, half westward, having the table at its back.

The two now looked at each other a minute without speech.

Then, still without saying anything, the Princess sprang sharply up, to wrench off one, two, three of some silver discs which Haralda had hanging about her bosom, and to throw them away.

Haralda smiled, while the Princess sat again, and again they gazed one at the other in silence.

Until the Princess spoke. "Now, then: when is your child to be born?"

Haralda smiled. "I am not with child".

And Vasilissa: "You see this whip: lie to me, and you are well peppered, you. Now, then: how many lovers have you had since you were twelve?"

Haralda smiled. "None since; two before".

"Gutter-rat".

Haralda bent toward her. "You are *cross* with me: I have done you some wrong; but not knowingly done it".

"Gutter-rat. See this knout? Not knowingly? Didn't know that he was betrothed to me?"

"Lancelot? No, I didn't know that Lancelot was betrothed to anybody, until that last night when he and I were kidnapped".

"But everyone knew!" — the Princess displayed her palms — "how not you? Or are you pretending now that you did not know the real name of this 'Lancelot' of yours?"

"No, I didn't know" — with shaken face, raised brows — "this is the first I've heard of his having any 'real name' other than 'Lancelot'".

"No lies, I say!" — placing the whip across her lap.

And Haralda: "Please believe one. One is not afraid of you. I have no motive for insincerity".

"But—*didn't know* his name?"—seated with a forward leaning now, a frown of the seeking lawyer—"how did you not? Were you not in that deputation of work-people to the palace that day? You saw him! heard him!"

"I did? Saw Lancelot?"

"Drop the 'Lancelot'!"—sharply—"Saw Carol".

"King Carol?"—her brows peering deeply knit into it, as the near-sighted peer at a needle's eye: "is Lancelot King Carol? Do you say that?"

"You can *act*, anyway"—from Vasilissa, with half a laugh of sarcasm.

And Haralda: "Lancelot—is—King—Carol! Presti! . . . Yes, I did see the King that day, but a little dimly—had some ophthalmia, I remember—he had a little beard—and I have been so obsessed with the conviction that the King killed himself—I seemed to see his reason. . . . Lancelot is Carol! It is so—simple Mimi, I!—some tones of Lancelot's voice have often evoked in me a sensation of memory. . . . And you—you are the Princess Vasilissa, the King's betrothed: I recognize you now from photographs. No wonder you are cross, and have a whip for me!"

"Oh, well"—Vasilissa tossed the knout off her across the floor.

And Haralda: "There! Bravo! Whip's gone: Princess Sweetface begins to believe and forgive me".

"I believe every word that you say", the Princess remarked with a resignation of expression—"ninny that I am".

"It isn't because you are a ninny"—from Haralda, leaning to impress it upon her with a teacher's emphasis—"it is not true that you are a ninny—but on the contrary—bravo!—it is because your instincts strike true, and your soul's sincere to divine rightly. . . . So that's how it was! Lancelot—was—the—King all the while, my goodness, simple Mimi! . . . But a King kidnapped? What for?"

"To rescue him", the Princess deliberately replied, "from the designing kind of creature that you were believed to be".

"No need of rescue!"—promptly from Haralda—"that night of the kidnapping he was going back to his betrothed—and to his throne no doubt. But he was kidnapped. . . . Oh, I see why now—Alexander!—Crusader Law! Prince Alexander, intending, to be King, kidnapped the King, and made you necessary to it by pretending to you that the King had left you for me: that was it. But, in fact, Lancelot's faithfulness to you was strict to primness ---"

"No, *that*, at any rate, is untrue"—Vasilissa fixed her with an accusing look—"I was there in that square that night, and saw".

"Strict, I say, to primness", Haralda insisted: "it is *not* untrue. That once, yes, in a paroxysm of passion at parting, he did relax control, never before ---"

"Although he left his throne to pursue you?"

A laugh that was starting from Haralda interrupted itself to say, "To pursue me? Oh, come, he'd hardly do that—could have had me dragged by the hair to his palace any day. Left his throne, mind you, to pursue a wilder delight than the love of Woman. He admitted to me that evening in the square that he is 'something like' a duke's son, and had turned himself into a workman for the purpose of winning a personal acquaintance with the weight of the world's bale and burden: *that* was why he left his throne. And, in doing it, he suffered hell, I know, and tasted tastes of heaven, you may bet".

Vasilissa, seated agaze at her, presently muttered, "This is all very strange"; and suddenly cried out, "Oh, was this why really?"

Haralda said, "Yes, this was why. And now our business is to see to it that that ordeal of his was not an inutility. Look here, let me tell you something: Lancelot—Carol—now has in his head a fact, a knowledge of Economy, which, if he is a Monarch, he will certainly be turning to the service of the world—Is Carol still a captive?"

Vasilissa bent her neck to say Yes.

And Haralda: "I used to see him at his window, but for five days now no sight of him: measures have been taken to prevent—Since he is still a captive ---"

"Yes", Vasilissa put in, "but I have been ready to free him, and confront Prince Alexander's resentment: it is Carol himself who has refused to be free at the cost of giving you up".

Haralda started. "He has refused? Perhaps he considers that your action in imprisoning him has annulled his betrothal, and he may now hope to have me for his companion in the climb of his mind. But he is awfully fond of the Princess Vasilissa also, as I happen to know—wanted you before he saw me, and will want you again, if I clear out, as I've got to: for, obviously, only you can be his consort".

On this a light of new hope of a new future lightened in Vasilissa's eyes; she stared at Haralda as at a herald who arrives with tidings of jubilant joy, and said very soft, "Sit down here, tell me"; but now suddenly, with shut eyes, banishing it with her shaken hand, she cried out, "But, ah, no, too late! too late!"

Slowly down by her Haralda sat now, as medical man intent on patient, asking, "How too late?"

Silence. Vasilissa's hand covered her eyes.

"Oh, I see"—from Haralda—"you have been led astray from him. Alexander again perhaps?"

Silence.

Then Haralda: "Yes, *he*. And his reason for misleading your feet is easy to see: for since you can free the King in any instant of caprice, the Prince

would wish to fix your will by an intimacy with himself—splendid devil, more devil than splendid: for even a lady as innately dainty as I feel that you are may easily be overcome in some moment of unguardedness by the arts of a gallant. But, then, Carol doesn't know of it, won't ever know; and since your soul is true to Carol, a moment's slackness doesn't matter".

Vasilissa started at this. "You think that? Really? Doesn't matter?"

"Not much".

"Oh, isn't there an everlasting loss of one's self?"

"May be. But—doesn't matter! We are not at present concerned with the private trifles in the life of Berto and Bertha, but with the welfare of a world. We want power to be in Carol's hands, not in Alexander's, because Carol knows something, and Alexander nothing—nothing worth mentioning. Probably Alexander was born with a brighter brain than Carol, but Carol is educated, a scientist, and Alexander uneducated, the powers of his intelligence never having been brought out to realize that *he* is a leaf's shadow, ready to vanish, and only worlds are real, eternal, and important. This is *the truth*, the simple matter of fact: let *you* and *me* realize it. Forgive yourself, then, for your little slip, and snap your fingers at Alexander".

A novel sort of talk, this, to the Princess, but not foreign to her human intelligence: she understood; it actually reached and touched her. With lowered lids she sat, thinking of it, her eyes on the dagger which she was fingering on her lap; but then she glanced aside at Haralda to say, "But Carol himself, I tell you, resists being liberated! I had him in here not an hour ago, and offered him his kingship, if he'd just say 'I command, do not send' a particular paper; and he would not".

"Of course he would not!" Haralda hastened to say; "he has been outraged: is it likely that a king who is anything of a real king would accept a freedom proffered him on condition that he did something? You must free him unconditionally".

"You are right"—the Princess pressed the back of Haralda's hand, and added, "But now the paper's gone off; its arrival in Kargo formally creates a Regency: so there will have to be an election".

"Pity". But then, at once brightening up: "But he may win! Let him once publish his reason for leaving the throne—if you can coax or force him to publish it—or you can publish it yourself!—and the people will sympathise, will vote for him, especially if he is then established at home in Wratislaw Palace as before, married to the Princess Royal".

Vasilissa had a far-away gaze. She muttered to herself, "Married to Carol, after all"; then to Haralda: "But if Carol demands you?"

"I clear out", Haralda brusquely stated.

"How do you mean—'clear out'?"

"Why, die".

Vasilissa's hands jumped two inches upward. "Heavens! You'd do this? When?"

"At once. Today".

"Oh, you splendid thing! kiss me".

Haralda bent to kiss her on the right cheek, to kiss her on the left; and "There!", she said, "we are sisters, both loving one man—the same tastes, the same aims".

"But to kill yourself!"—Vasilissa started—"do you imagine I'd consent to such a thing?"

"Pooh"—with a pout—"that's nothing, the death of a girl: no more than the death of a leaf—if I can still call myself 'girl': I've had twenty-six nice years of it. I do love life, that's true: healthy I am—live in heaven-high health; sometimes, looking upward in the face of heaven, I have high delights. The knowledge that there is an Agency which is good, a principle of progress, which, after achieving the feat of producing so curious a thing as Life, ceaselessly contrives to lead the career of Life to higher and higher, linnets coming from lizards, we air-mechanics coming from old Greeks and Romans who had no matches, no paper, and they from lake-dwellers, cave-dwellers, tree-dwellers, apes, this knowledge is too much for my feet, sometimes I can't keep from dancing mad for amorousness of that Captain Whose Name is Lovable, Lovable, Intolerable Joy of Music, Honey and Butter, Best-Beloved. Many men are still in misery, that's true, because economic science has not been applied, like other science, having been hampered by the wills of some pitiable little people, who haven't wit enough to see what sweets they lose in what they do; but these afflictions, one knows, are but for a moment: the principle of Progress, pitilessly good, is pitilessly driving Life to acquire science, finally to become more wildly delighted than ever entered into our little hearts to fancy. Aye, life's sweet, becoming sweeter; but whether it is this little Mimi that finds life sweet or other Mimis is of no importance. You will let him know, then, that I am dead and smelling dreadful, will tell him that you were misled when you gave your consent to his imprisonment, will forgive yourself for your little mishap, marry him quickly, restore him to the Throne. You are resolved?"

Vasilissa heaved her eyes on high. "Heaven help me, it is tempting, but it is big. 'Forgive myself for my little mishap', keep it always dark from Carol—if I can; let you kill yourself for me, and say nothing; 'snap my fingers' at Alexander—Prince Alexander is a pernicious being to snap one's fingers at—He is coming here ---"

Haralda snapped her fingers to show how, saying, "We care not a cent to for his perniciousness, we two. . . . Coming when?"

"Four days' time".

"Let him come. We act for the world's welfare perfectly unperturbed, absolutely reckless as to any other result. Look—the fleet feet of that fellow nailed to that cross: *He* ran rashly, laughing, and dashed himself to death,

not looking where he was going, looking upward. Suppose we go now, we two, and devote ourselves before him, vowing to be his sisters? *Shall we?*"

Up sprang Vasilissa in an impulse. "Very well, we will, we two—come".

And up sprang Haralda in a pentecost of impulse. Having gone past the east rabinet (cannon), they proceeded to kneel at the feet of that gaunt god of pearwood pegged to his grisly tree, kneeling with their hands grasped together, brows bowed down, the Princess at one time striking on her bosom the sign of the cross, her countenance convulsing toward crying. And "There!" Haralda said, standing up: "now we are nuns: nuns of that Order which is the Cosmos".

Vasilissa now walked away southward to the bigger (mahogany) table, took out of a drawer the three portal-keys which she had tossed into it, and replaced the keys in their portals, having no apprehension left that the captives might attempt to escape. She came back to the settle, saying, "Strange creature that you are! sincere and innocent thing. Presti! how was I ever to suspect that working-girls would be like this?—if you are a working-girl. But the others can't be: you are your own tune of music somehow. I think I should like to be sitting ever beside you like this, as bedside a winter-fire that sings a thing to itself. You do sing songs, too: you sang something to yourself that evening of the Deputation, you sang the same to him that evening in the Square, and one afternoon when I was lingering outside the courtyard-gate of your prison I could hear you singing it again. Sing it now, will you?"

"You wish?"

"Presti, yes, sing it, let me learn it".

"All right"—Haralda raised her voice and her face, and sang:

*Caravan stumbling,
Starlit we stray,
Faith in us fumbling
Hoping there's Day:
Morning-stars singing
"Morning-bell rings,
Morning-bright bringing
Warblings and wings".*

"Yes, it's nice, I like it"—from Vasilissa: "now hear me sing it".

She sang it correctly.

And Haralda: "Yes, that's it. But is this what we should be doing? Singing? Putting off?"

"We have four clear days", Vasilissa said.

"Yes, but now is our chance. Prince Alexander will violently react, if all's not accomplished fact when ---"

She was interrupted by a rapping outside the west portal.

Up sprang the Princess pallid. "God! he is come — *that's he* — I know his rap".

And up sprang Haralda pallid. "Don't open!"

"Oh, my God, what shall I do? — Vasilissa's fingers gripped together.

Now the rapping was repeated louder, as by a whip's handle.

"Don't open!" — a whisper from Haralda's lips at Vasilissa's ear.

But Vasilissa tripped away toward the portal.

"*Don't open!*" Haralda called after her.

Vasilissa hesitated, halted, stopped, casting her eyes on high.

Now anew the rapping rang out, pressing, imperative.

Wringing her hands, distracted, the Princess looked at the portal, looked at Haralda, looked at the portal, and now ran to the portal, to wring the key, to snatch her hand off it as from a scorch, and to dash back to Haralda to stand blanched, tall, stiff, chin pitched haughtily up.

Now Prince Alexander walked in, in a greenish hunting-coat, in top-boots furnished with spurs, in gauntlets, with a hunting-crop, with a cocky cap like a saucepan that has a tassel.

XVIII

POISONED WINE

He stopped close inside the portal to say, "To my fair and exalted Cousin my obeisances. . . . How, then, did the co-Regency function go off? I suppose that I was 'phoned to be told, but I know nothing, for since two o'clock I have been out with a lot of loons, boar-hunting; and I could not resist galloping still a little farther to get a glimpse of my Cousin, especially as I have three State-papers, which need my co-Regent's signature. . . . but who is this with us? Our prisoner! our great-hearted Haralda, who has played to be a Queen, but lost the game, so has had two miscarriages. And princess and prisoner both standing dumb aloof, shoulder to shoulder like staunch comrades, looking challenge at all comers — presti! — very strange". He added in a tone of reproach, "Vasilissa, to my cousinly arms".

Silence. . . .

And the Prince: "Well! not coming".

Now from Vasilissa, bent toward him, came, "No, Alexander Wratislaw; I am done with you; I don't like vicious people".

"No? Don't like 'em?" — mocking with a sideward head: "this, then, is why my exalted Cousin is always so holy and good whenever she is anywhere near Sweet Waters. O, Vasilissa!"

Now Haralda spoke. "That is hardly a gentle sarcasm, Sir. In reality, believe me, Sir, this lady's soul is truly princely, and as pure as that blue light which shines in her eyes".

"Well, you!" the Prince said: "speaking unbidden? See if I don't snip off your nipples, and gum them on your nose for moles". He added more seriously, sensing trouble here, "Vasilissa, you displease me".

"Oh, no appallingness, Sir!" came from Haralda: "that will be all wasted, I promise, upon the rock of this lady's resolve" — and it was quaint to see the littler of the two ladies being the protagonist, taking upon herself the grimness of the battle, the Princess being the taller by almost a head, and less daintily built into a female thing.

Peering now through narrowed lids at Haralda, the Prince said, "Wonderful! 'the rock of her resolve'. Well done, Haralda! you have wonderful powers of influence. What, then, have you wrought upon this lady's rock to resolve to do?"

"You had better know at once, Sir", Haralda answered: "the King's motives and intentions were misrepresented to the Princess, who is now resolved to free the King".

"Wonderful!" — picking from a little pocket a whistle, with which five times, quickly, he shrilled.

And at that act the chamber became loud, flashed into a paroxysm of loudness at the clash of countering passions, into a scene of shriekings, shoutings . . .

Vasilissa screamed, "What is it you are going to do?"

And angrily Alexander shouted, "Going to be 'truly princely and pure', like you!"

Then, seeing Snifkin and Snarkski running, within a minute from the summons, from the south portal toward the Prince, Vasilissa screamed, "This is *my* castle: I swear to God ---"

"Hand me the keys", the Prince commanded; upon which Snarkski handed him three large keys.

Then the Prince: "Take that young woman away".

"I am not going!" Haralda cried out.

And the Princess, encrimsoned, screamed, "Touch her, you Dogs, and I have you flogged like two dogs!"

"Drag her to hell", Alexander commanded.

The pair now ran to capture Haralda, Snarkski ahead; but she, slipping round the little table, dodged, until Snifkin, on trotting up, shot round at her in the opposite direction, so that at once they had her nipped as between pincers—but not caught, for, on the point of being caught, she vaulted upon the table to its centre, where though they could easily reach, they could not take, her, except by gawkily hoisting her legs; and they paused, hesitant.

"Better come, you know", Snarkski admonished her; but she stood where she stood.

Meanwhile Vasilissa was calling to Alexander, "Tyrant! you think we are two weak girls, but you won't dismay me — *she* is incapable of dismay, because her motives are lofty, not like yours or mine. It is false that she was with child, false that she played to be Queen; she has even offered to die that Carol may be King ---"

On this the Prince lifted his arm to his two, calling, "Stop! Wait".

He now sat down, muttering to himself, "Let's handle it, let's see", sitting on the edge of the chair which Vasilissa had placed there for the King, leaning, thinking, while the loudness that had suddenly broken out now suddenly subsided to a silence.

Until the Prince sprang abruptly upright, calling to the officers, "Withdraw, Gentlemen, please"; and when they had gone, Haralda having now got down from her table-fortress, the Prince remarked with a nod at her, "Well done, Haralda, great intriguer, trickily constructed. You craftily got to be pregnant, and though shock brought-on a miscarriage that evening of your arrest, you are still playing to be Queen. To that end the King-prisoner must be freed; the Princess alone could free him: so you have made her

an offer to die, to incite her to free him, telling her that, you dead, the prisoner will care for her afresh; and she, eager to be his, rushes into believing that you really mean to die: for you have contrived to impress her with the notion that your motives are high-flown. But I have you in my trap, Haralda, and you shall, really, die: for you have sinned against me"—his finger vaulting to dig at her. "You shall die *now*—or else stand before your dupe convicted of scheming: for I happen to have some poison on me, and, if you will drink it, I now vow to free the prisoner, as I alone now can, having possession of the keys—I vow to free him within one hour of your death, if the Princess' 'resolve' to free him is still a 'rock' then. So by dying now you get all that you pretended to want when you promised to die, and only by dying now can you get it. Therefore you die now. What do you say, Haralda?"

At this Vasilissa, now seated on the settle, sprang upright, sharply shouting at Haralda the command, "Say No!"

"I say Yes", Haralda answered to Alexander.

Whereupon the Princess dropped back upon the settle, to sit with closed lids, fingers gripped together, while Alexander strode actively to the table, saying, "Well done! you say Yes, as brides say: may Christ now be your soul's spouse"—taking up from the table the tumbler left there empty by the Princess, to let dribble into it some brown drops out of a phial, then to incline the pot-bellied fiasca¹ from which the Princess had poured wine, and pour some upon the poison-drops; but in this he paused, to say to Haralda, who was standing with a straightened hand on the Princess' bent back, "But stay: you have impressed the Princess, Haralda, as a being 'incapable of dismay', clay of a toplofty quality, better born than princes, eh? So now I make you a further offer: I fill this tumbler carefully—carefully—to the brim with this wine—there! quite full; there is poison in it; and, if you lift it to your lips without spilling one drop, then drink every drop, I vow now before the Princess to free the prisoner within one half-hour—half-an-hour the sooner for you. Do you play the game?"

Austere stood Haralda, white-faced, her lids veiling her eyes, her answer nearly a whisper: "I'll see".

"Come, then", Alexander bustlingly said: and, as Haralda moved to go and leave Vasilissa, a brief shriek gushed from the Princess' gullet.

"Don't grieve", Haralda, now at the table, said to her: "it is well so. . . . You will mention my name sometimes".

Now she put out her hand to the tumbler; but just before it touched snatched it back, as from a rattlesnake.

Whereupon Alexander, standing swaggeringly with his top-boots astraddle, arms akimbo, both hands, still in gauntlets, holding open his hunting-coat, cried in a highly spirited tone to her, "Now, Girlie! no 'dismay'—hero-high like us the Splendid Ones—transact it!—plunge!"

"No", Haralda protested, bending her neck at him, polite, standing all a whiteness, her hands drawn slightly back from that wine; then, afresh

¹ Fiaschi, or fiaschetta (Bottiglia Rotonda a collo stretto). (? Fiasca) Ed.

protesting, "No", she gently said, as when one gently protests, "No, you hurt"; then she said, bending her neck at him, "I am not ready"; then, suddenly determined, she turned in a flurry to rush from that accursed tumbler to a window some sixteen feet eastward.

On this the Princess, springing up, cried out, "God, I can't stand this!", to trip westward half-way across the hall to the crucifixion, wringing her hands, then to trip back distracted, and drop, and sit bent on the settle, her eyes tightly hiding from the rawness of the horror of it.

So now a little stillness there: Haralda at the window, standing; Vasilissa on the settle, seated, unseeing; the Prince at the table, standing, but then stealing catlike on tiptoe to the settle's back, to kneel, to peer into an interval between the settle's back and the settle's seat, and with fingers that glided silently into this interval to grasp a dagger that his remarking eye had previously remarked on the seat—the dagger left there by the Princess; he then proceeded to dig the dagger into the flooring through the bottom rim of the Princess' robe, to pin her to the spot, for the Princess was still wearing the long dress of the day's ritual; then, soft treading, he crept back to the table, Haralda being still away at the window, her back to the apartment—a window big, Gothic, its hangings of tapestry long gone ragged; and there she stood looking up at the heavens with as much astonishment as if she had never before beheld the enormousness of that appalling hollowness of hall, over whose blueness clouds of copper-colour now moved slow, solemn, like fumes floating, as though the rolling ball of the earth was all a burning world, awfully throwing off to roam abroad the smokes of its combustion. Yet, though so grossly great, gentle and good (in general): zephyrs of the afternoon, wayfaring with the welladays¹ that always haunt that fortress towering there aloft among its mountains, softly smote her brow, humming to her a cosmic hymning, bringing to her a solace. Down she bowed that brow; down she dropped to her knees, deeply bowed, in solitary traffic with Reality, fallen prostrate, solitary, upon the broad Altar-steps of Being, face to face in interview with the Infinite. But not for long; she stood up; and, coming back to the table, said, "Now, Sir".

She now took hold of the tumbler, but then let it go, lingering to look round at the Prince, palely simpering at him, claiming the sympathy of human with the fix of human.

She then bent to smell what was in tumbler; raised herself from smelling; bent afresh, as at sudden second-thought, to smell it better, smelling now with meditating eyes aside that waited to acquire information; and now muttered, "Hyoscyamus.² . . . Oh, well".

Now anew she took hold of the tumbler, but anew let it go, to look toward Vasilissa bent there on the settle, and say, "Stick to me when I am not there, be true to me, stick to me"; then, throwing a look upward, she muttered, "Now, my Maker".

¹ Var. of wellaway: Lament. Ed.

² A genus of poison Eurasian herbs. Henbane: containing hyoscyamine and scopolamine. Ed.

Now afresh she takes hold of the tumbler; charily, warily raised it; drank frantically fast.

“Bravo!” broke boisterously from the Prince, leaning across the table’s breadth, peering at her: “good for a filly! done it!”, while Vasilissa, on hearing this, screamed out in a nervous crisis, and sprung to her feet to dash to the rescue, only to find herself checked with a jerk by the dagger which pegged her skirt to the floor—checked, but not held: the rip of the skirt’s rent silk was heard, as she wrenched herself free, to pitch to Haralda, to dash the glass from Haralda’s grasp.

After one sob Haralda dropped into the Princess arms.

And at once the Princess was away, heavy-laden, with cries of “Help! Come!”, finding the trip to the east portal, though brief in distance, bitter in difficulty. “Will no one come?” she called, and only on becoming conscious of knockings pounding outside the portal, did she recall that she had locked the portal. So depositing now her load upon the floor, she tripped to unlock, whereupon three ladies and two gentlemen-ushers rushed in, and Haralda was carried out among a crush of shuffling shoes.

XIX

"SHE TOOK POISON"

Left alone, the Prince now stood looking down upon the table, arms akimbo, legs apart, gauntleted, broad-looking with his coat opened, smiling as always, though a kind of gravity, as of compunction, now clouded his countenance; and, glancing at the fragments of glass—the broken tumbler—on the floor, he mumbled, "Poor beggar: didn't drink the whole, but more than enough to kill".

Then he said, "Pooh, nothing", and now, picking a whistle out of a pocket, whistled five times.

When the south portal opened, and Messrs. Snifkin and Snarkski came to him, "Take the keys again", he said, handing the keys to Snarkski; and added, "Presently I may see fit to bid you release Carol, but you will not obey; disappear with the keys: you might go down to the Lake, have a sail, until I communicate with you. But if, in bidding you release, I strike my leg thrice with my riding whip—like this—obey, release. As for the young woman prisoner, you are rid of her—has taken poison".

"Presti!"—from Snarkski, starting—"wherever did she get the poison, Sir?"

"Make a guess", Alexander answered: "took it to win her King's release. Damn her, I hadn't taken into account her power to influence. Uncommon filly: her body more hollow than her soul. I am sorry that she is dead, though glad that she is not alive".

Now Snifkin remarked, "The rare die young, Sir—as the saying is".

"Ah?, says Alexander, spinning round to him, struck by this, he himself being still young: "Well, sometimes. . . . Well, yes, sometimes. . . . Stand ready, then, to be summoned": whereupon the two walked southward and out.

Now the Prince stalked about some minutes, slowly, with a pondering forehead. On seeing again the fragments of glass, he picked them all up, tossed them out of window; he then dragged upward the dagger that he had dug into the floor to pin the Princess, tossed it upon the settle again; and again he paced; until Vasilissa came in gaunt, her upper lip drawn down, grum-looking, resolved.

The Prince stood still to look at her, and remark, "You are back soon. . . . She not dead?"

With a tired sigh Vasilissa dropped upon the chair which she had placed in the room's middle for the King, replying with closed eyes, "Yes, dead".

"What, already?"—from the Prince, standing in front of her.

"Some minutes ago. 'Shock', the Castle-doctor says".

"'Capable of dismay', you see".

"Ah, ungenerous!"—she unshut her eyes to flash reproach at him.

"No", he replied, "I say she was a brave filly".

"'Better-born than princes', eh? You didn't like that—were jealous of her mind, one could see. You never heard of that, one better-born than princes".

"Yes, I have. There are better than princes, better than *you*"—malign spite lightning out of his eyes to smite her: "but there is none better than the Counsellor".

"Oh, yes, there is", Vasilissa hastened to say: "*she* told me that counsellors are apparitions, momentary shadows, and only One Being is real. That's what *she* found out; that was *her* counsel: she was better than counsellors. I'd rather be like her than be a politician".

Now Alexander flushed. "Pooh, you are neither".

And Vasilissa flushed. "I'll *try* to be like her. Now the keys, please".

"Presti! Why keys? She did not drink every drop, as stipulated! You interfered".

"Ha, ha"—a laugh wrathfully red—"she has won! she has beaten you! No discussing, no trickiness, will be of any use to you now: she has won!—unless I am stabbed quickly. They say you carry a dagger concealed".

"I carry two concealed".

"As well as poisons".

"And love-philters: two of each thing, one for men, one for women, to take life, and to make life".

Vasilissa held out her hand. "The keys, please".

But Alexander: "Even if I was bound, half-an-hour would remain for discussing ---"

Vasilissa shook it off her face, saying, "Oh, that's all irrelevant, 'hour', 'half-hour', 'discussing'; she has won! She had not nine lives, only one, and she has taken poison into her body: now I am her slave, and you are, too; her will be done".

"Yes"—Alexander's index-finger pointed her out—"because her will happens to be what you yourself want. Or fancy that you want. Look into yourself, and you will find that it is I really whom you want ---"

"The keys!"—with half a laugh.

"In fact", the Prince now said deliberately, "I no longer have the keys".

Upright at this the Princess sprang encrimsoned, screaming out, "Some trickiness coming, then?", and, infuriated, she flew to the Christ-on-cross, to drop in front, crying out, "Hear me, Christ, I vow that Carol is free this minute ---"

"Oh, you fury", was muttered with contempt by Alexander, stepping after her.

When she sprang up from kneeling, it was to say with a nod of threat at him, "I will shew you Wratishaw, Alexander — I, too, am a Wratishaw; I, too, am a politician. Now, My Guards, up to me! Blast those doors open!" — running now to the gong; and she had the knocker raised to let go when the Prince said, "Stay, stay, no need, I am yours"; and she refrained from knocking the gong.

The Prince now moved toward the settle, saying, "Let us sit and speak of it".

"Nothing to be said!", she replied, shying from his 'speaking', knowing that when he spoke, he spoke deceitfully, and achievingly.

"Yes, there is something to be said", he answered, as he sat: "come, you will see".

She let herself sit with him; and he, when he saw her sit, sure now of her, started up to walk fast away southward to the table in front of the platform, on which he had noticed the glow of a gold fountain-pen; taking this, he went back to sit on the settle, and say, "I am yours, I am beaten, I submit to liberate Carol; frankly now I admit you a better Wratishaw and a better politician than I: indeed, the ableness of Vasilissa amazes me of late. But I have proposals to make of which you will approve. . . . I assume, by the way, that your Holy Eucharist Certificate has duly gone off to the Lord Proctor today? Has it?"

Vasilissa's neck bent a little to say, "It has".

"There is, then, a Regency: there will be an election. If Carol stands to be elected, Carol and I will stand opposed. But an election is nonsense, if one of the candidates has no chance, as I shall have none, if Carol's motive for abandoning the throne be made known. I presume that that motive has been told you by your Haralda: so now you are one of the five who know it: there are my adjutants, Snifkin and Snarkski, who know; Carol and I know; and now you: no one else. As to Carol, I read in him that he will not wish to publish it, unless he is in a state of malignity against me; Snarfkin and Snarkski will not publish it; I will not; there is only you; and you, I think, will not: for whereas you now cherish the hope to be Carol's, you have had a love-affair with another, and some Court-rumour of that affair can scarcely fail to come some day to Carol's ears, unless you get me to make a bargain with you to take measures to keep the affair dark ---"

"Oh, you!" — a shrinking of reproach in the Princess' underlook — "'take measures' — what measures could you take? That is only a specious way of saying, what you mean, that unless I undertake not to publish Carol's motive for abandoning the throne, you will tell — will let Carol know what I — what you — what took — what may have taken place between us at Sweet Waters. Ugh! your delicacy, Alexander. Ugh, Jesu! a gentleman".

"My exalted Cousin" — the Prince peered an instant at her through narrowed lids with a grim malignancy of meaning: "do not be bitter after Sweet Waters, which should wash one sweet. Gentlemen are inefficient angels, but I am called a 'devil' for being efficient. Your Jesu himself, though gentle, was not a gentleman, being a peasant, and would not wash his hands. The

point is, that by promising me this thing you prevent Carol from finding you out, and so you escape dreadful perils: for Kings do not like to find their wives trite and used like old slippers, they cut off such wives' heads, considering such triteness high treason. Please undertake, then, not to breathe to any creature, before the elections, Carol's motive for his disappearance; and by binding yourself to silence for me you will bind me to silence for you. I think you undertake".

Now the Princess, terrorized, entrapped, told herself, what she did not know, that Carol himself surely would disclose his motive to the public — not seeing into Carol's character nearly so accurately as Alexander did; and after some hesitancy, flurry, very agitated, blanched, she rapidly answered, "Very well, very well, I undertake that much".

"Yes, you are wily, you are wise. We will have it, then, in writing" — taking now from a pocket a State-document which he had brought for her signature, and tearing off a blank piece at a crease, to write on it five lines with the fountain-pen which he now had, then to hand pen and piece to her, saying, "There: sign".

She read on it:

I solemnly promise not to breathe to any soul before Old Year's evening what Carol's reason was for leaving the throne.

"I have been Alexander's paramour".

And "Hoh!", the Princess went, "do you take me for a ninny? to sign that last line?"

"You dislike that? Why, then, I must be resigned if you run the pen through it" — he smiled at her, for he had divined that she would decline to sign that line, and he had merely written it so that she might score a win, might feel cheered at her own diplomacy in winning something, and might be the more inclined to sign the rest, since a more oppressive line was there to compare with the less oppressive rest. And always his conduct had in it this quality of finesse, his acumen being perhaps comparable with his ruthlessness.

So now the Princess inked out that unkindly line, signed the rest, then rent a piece from the piece, to write on it for him to sign.

"I will never tell anyone of any incident of the evening of November 21st at Sweet Waters, known to Vasilissa and to me. That would release her from any promise made by her to me".

She then handed him the pen and the piece of a piece, saying, "Please sign".

He signed it, smiling, handed it to her, she then handing him what she had signed.

"Good", he said, "now we are sure of each other's tongue, though we seem to have lost each other's lips. . . . Of course, you realize what further promises your promise to me involves ---"

"Involves?" — she started. "What, trickery coming, Alexander? You didn't say that it involved anything! And now comes 'involves'! Involves what?"

“Presti, how you mistrust one”, he said, “as though one was always being deep and devious! No, no, do not fancy that. Is it not obvious what your promise involves? If Carol’s motive for abandoning the throne is not to be known, as you have promised, then Carol must not be goaded to proclaim it, as he will be goaded, if he is mad with anger against me: so, since he doubtless knows that it was I who made him a captive, he must be won to forgive that, in believing that it is I who give him liberty. You see that. So your promise to me involves that you permit him to believe this. You agree?”

“Very well, I will permit him to believe it, if he will” —in saying which she chuckled sardonically, knowing that, since *she* had recently offered release to Carol, Carol would hardly be tricked into believing that it was Alexander who released him.

But Alexander, seeing into the meaning of her laugh, said, “You laugh, and I easily see that Carol has already been offered release by you; still, I think I can mislead him into believing it is I who release, on condition, of course, that you be quite dumb as to my connection with your Haralda’s death, and why she died: for to give to Carol any hint of that would be gravely to antagonize him against me, in which case your signed vow to me would be violated. Haralda, you will let Carol think, committed suicide in the usual manner, as prisoners do: you know nothing of her motive. Is that, too, understood between us?”

“Oh, I suppose so”, —she worked her shoulders, irked, as if to shuffle off twines which were tying her up— “let it be so: ‘I know nothing of her motives’, *My* motives, unfortunately, are not of the type of hers, or I should not be brought— Oh, very well! Any more things ‘involved’?”

“That is all, Vasilissa: now we are fully in sympathy”.

“So now, please, the release of Carol”.

“Carol is released”. The Prince rose, moved away to the room’s middle, blew five times on his whistle. He then paced about that central part, pondering, while the Princess sat still on the settle, all gaunt now, her face gone bony, gazing before her.

Now the south portal opens: Messrs. Snifkin and Snarkski stand there.

The Prince left off his pacing to face them, to strike his leg thrice with his hunting-crop—signal agreed that they were to do as instructed; and he said, “Pray, Gentlemen, bend the knee to his Majesty the King in saying to him that Prince Alexander at last sees his way to order the King’s release, and has the honour to await here the Royal Presence”.

The pair disappeared; the Prince remained pacing about the centre; the Princess stared; the room was a tenseness and a muteness; until the Princess, springing up, cried out, “Oh!”, her eye-corner conscious of Carol standing in front of the platform southward—a lower-class Carol, rough-clad, having round his throat a scarf for cravat.

Bowing, Alexander spoke. “Your Majesty. This is a glad day for me, in which my intrigues to see again your Majesty’s face have reached fruition”.

Carol inclined his neck slightly toward him, then toward Vasilissa, saying to her, "Your Royal Highness" — she now standing half-averted from him by the settle, head bent, eyes turned aside on the men; and to Alexander Carol, with an erect neck, with lowered lids, answered, "I am grateful for your Royal Highness' intrigues to see my face again, intrigues which this glad day reach fruition".

"Also to be thanked", the Prince added, "is the goodwill of the Princess, my co-Regent: for against her wishes I could have achieved nothing".

And Carol: "I see. The Princess, too, the Prince's co-Regent, wished: but for achieving my release I should bless the Prince. And whom should I blame for achieving my imprisonment?"

"Me also" — from Alexander — "great is my regret. Your Majesty may some time come to know of the forces, stronger than I, which pushed me from behind".

Carol's neck bent a little, the hint of a bow. "I see. There exist forces stronger still than the Prince; and they push him whither he would not. But one question more: there was a certain workman with whom I changed clothes, and a man — presumably he — was found in my clothes in a Palace-lake, to be then buried with royal pomps. Does your Royal Highness know to what that man's death was due?"

The Prince's fixed smile smiled fixedly. "Yes, I happen to know: died of heart-failure. One of my adjutants, Captain Snarkski, came across the man in the Palace-grounds in your Majesty's clothes, charged him with having assassinated your Majesty to rob the clothes, threatened to run him through, and the man in an access of terror dropped dead".

Silence. Then Carol: "Ah, that was how it was: his heart ceased to beat. I have been angry at that man's death, and meant to avenge it. But now I gather that I am powerless? no longer a King? since there are 'Regents'? — though your Royal Highness still addresses me as 'Your Majesty'".

Alexander bowed. "To me your Majesty is for ever your Majesty. Even when I myself shall have been swept by forces to become King of Balainca, I shall still be my Cousin Carol's liege".

"Dear me — still", says Carol, with the hint of a bow.

And Alexander: "Yes, I frequently see reason to speak insincerely, but your deepest instincts feel that in this I am sincere: for Carol Wratisslaw needs no sceptre to be veritably a King".

Upon this a sound which was a sob in struggle with a chuckle gobbled hysteric out of the Princess, who had now such a conception of the depth of the Prince's chicanery, that his insistence on his sincerity tickled her to derision; and she saw that he was employing upon Carol the technique of the hypnotist, stating "your deepest instincts feel", not "may" feel, "should" feel. He added, "As to being still a King, *de facto*, that, of course, you are not. There is now a Regency, and, by the law called 'Crusader Law', there has to be

a King elected on the last day of the year in which the Regency is set up—though, in this case, ‘elect’ is scarcely a correct expression, as *my* name alone will be before the nation, since you will have no desire to present yourself for election”.

But Carol’s response was prompt. “There you are mistaken, Prince: I shall have a desire to present myself”.

“Really?”—Alexander, born an actor, was all astonishment. “You will? Will oppose the hand that opens your prison-door? This is astonishing to one who knows the generosity of your Majesty’s soul!”

Now again a chuckle which struggled with a sob gobbled out of the Princess, causing Carol, touched by it, to walk halfway northward toward her, saying, “I shall have the desire, if only for the reason that I am under an engagement with the Princess to make her Queen of Balainca—if I am able to”.

Here Vasilissa cried out, “No longer worthy!”

And Carol: “Why, yes; my fair Cousin remains gentle and lovable”.

Now Vasilissa lowered herself to sit down on the settle, her countenance covered, letting slip sob upon sob.

And now Alexander: “Well, then, I am undone—by my own fondness: for, if your Majesty, in presenting yourself for election, publishes the fact that you left the throne to become a mechanic, and were then kidnapped by me, you would have so unfair an advantage in the election, that I should have no chance. I withdraw! I am undone! by my own softness”.

To this Carol, now standing hardly two yards from the Prince, answered, “Let the Prince be reassured: as to publishing the motive with which I left the throne, that I shall never be disposed to do; nor shall I publish—until after the election—that your Royal Highness ventured to arrest your sovereign. It shall be thought that during the seven months I have been abroad”.

“Good!”—Alexander’s finger vaulted to dig at him—“that is said: an undertaking”.

And upright now sprang the Princess with a flush, to say, “Oh, Carol, that would be a most rash undertaking! Don’t—*don’t*, Carol—do it!”

“I have done it”, Carol answered.

“Then, all’s lost!”—from the Princess. “Oh, Alexander, you’ve got what you were juggling for. You’ve won! You’ve won!”

“I think that Carol is the winner here”—the Prince bowed to her—“having won that pure soul of the Princess Vasilissa”.

“That is well said”—from Carol: “I am gratified if I have won that soul: for though I cannot but resent having been a prisoner in the Princess’ castle, I realize that she had some reason for exasperation at my admiration of another lady. . . . But—somehow—I do not see that lady here? my fellow prisoner? Whatever the reason may be that I am now freed, that reason doubtless includes her, too? . . . She at liberty?”

Silence. . . .

Then Alexander: "Escaped through the window!"

"Window?" says Carol.

"Took poison!"

"Ah, she took poison. . . . Dead. She's dead".

He had had no sight of her, as usual, during the last few days; this, then, was why: had taken poison; the light of his life had died out.

The Princess was driven to hide away her eyes from the sight of his face, while the Prince was moved by it to say with some ruth, "There are others, Carol. Fillies are fleeting incidents. My nicest two, as soon as I had broken them in, died and rotted. But others bore me".

And Carol: "Dear me, dead. . . . You are very obliging. . . . I will go" — now moving, bowed down, toward the west portal, but colliding blindly with a chair which Vasilissa had placed there in the centre for him earlier in the day, he hurting his knee in the stumble, nearly tumbling: so that the outcry was wrung out of the Princess, "How abominable!" — meaning "abominable in me", for all that was noble in her was reproaching her, since she did not really yet know that Haralda was dead, as she had said, but was letting Carol believe it, so that he might come back to loving herself alone.

And the Prince said to Carol, "'Go'? Where to? Can't go to anywhere on foot, Man: why not wait for a car, a horse?"

Now Vasilissa shouted lamentably, "Yes, Carol, for God's sake!"

And lamentably Carol shouted, "I am free! I am a King! I demand my liberty!" — moving blindly on.

The Prince then turned to the Princess to observe, "Wants to be alone: may come back when he discovers himself stumbling about the mountains".

By now Carol was at the west portal, fumbling to open it, and he complained in pain, "Door doesn't open!", but then suddenly, "Oh, yes", as he got out, and was gone.

With an underlook of sarcasm the Prince now remarked to the Princess, "He would have been less affected by the death of her Holiness the Princess Vasilissa".

Not heeding this, the Princess sprang suddenly upright, screaming "Carol!", to run to the west portal, and out.

On which Alexander, left alone, paced thrice, shortly, sharply, almost running; then five times he shrilled with his whistle, and when Snifkin and Snarkski looked in southward to come to him, he said to them, "Ha! more exciting things coming for you, My Friends, than residing with prisoners in a tower of mountains. Your male prisoner is free! and your female is freer".

"Pity the election did not come first, Sir", Snarkski remarked.

And Snifkin: "Yes, for if Carol publishes his motive for abandoning the throne ---"

“Won’t publish”, Alexander answered, “not he! as I knew before he promised, knowing that pride of his, many a mile higher than Imperial Caesar’s: a pride stiff as death is, and ‘going before destruction’. He will soon be a nobody, sighing in dull days of retirement ‘there have been days when I was a monarch’; and I shall love him then, for he is good, though not wise; it is better to be good than to be wise, but it is wiser to be wise than to be good” —his finger vaulting to dig at the officers: “so ’phone now to Lord Rostro: let him announce my coming in his newspapers; then order horses, you: we start at once, pass the night at Morocastro, and arrive tomorrow afternoon at the Capital”.

XX

SUSPENSE

On rushing out through that west portal, the Princess was on a stage of an outer stair of stone, below her being a scene of roofs of outhouses; and, seeing nothing of Carol, down the stair, shouting "Carol!", she ran, and into a steep street between outhouses, repeating "Carol!", without result. Carol was walking away, as sharply as to catch a train, without conscious object; though, subconsciously, he probably had his Serapi in view, the direction of which from Prune he well knew—twenty-five miles away, as the crow flies, though double as far doubtless to one climbing that labyrinth of mountain paths.

After skirting the south curve of the Prunesé, when he understood that he was unobserved, he let himself drop upon a rock, let himself sob and sob, his throat tolling sonorous, slow, it might have been the deathbell of Haralda Hásdruvol venting its bereftness. Then after looking at where the sun was going down, he started off northward, going right for his castle, till the glooms of a dark night overtook, misguided, duped him, so that, losing all sense of direction, he went on, swallowed up forlorn in an awfulness of raylessness, did not stop, unless some instinct of precipice ahead stopped him, or he hit upon some wall of rock—walking on and on, as if following some elf's voice that constantly called "come" and "come" to his infatuation.

Near midnight when his eyes spied out the dim form of a cot that climbed a hillside, he climbed to it, knocked, and presently was let in to a peasant highlander, upon whose settle he dropped sighing. Here coffee is constantly near and handy, so he had coffee with a slice of rye-bread (all those highland peasants' wives being "coffee-drunkards", as they are called), and to sleep on the kitchen-settle he was given for pillow some children's-gowns folded, with a lump of quilt to cover him, plump as five or six of our "eiderdown" quilts in one.

The next morning the peasant taught him how to rediscover the Serapi road, and he set out; but it was a day of rain, rain, and rambling mists in what seemed an uninhabited region of hills heaped on hills, region strange, enchanted, it might be on Mars afar, it might be on Venus. All day long he saw one solitary cart crawling, perhaps to some lorn market, the peasant seeming asleep in dreamland, the horse, too, its head drooped, seeming to muse in dream. At nightfall he sighted his Serapi pensive through veils of rain—a white block of limestone with battlements, machicolations, having at its corners half-turrets with conical tops, planted solitary on a flat far off northward; but now his walk was a tottering and a stumbling, nor did he quite attain to Serapi that night, for when its stable-clock was striking Four in the morning, and he was within five hundred metres of its front, he gave

in, failed, succumbed at the foot of a tree, to gain forgetfulness there, wet to the skin, face-down, in dew.

His steward, Hausmann, found him so in the early forenoon, and stirred him with a foot, saying sternly, "Be off!"—Hausmann, a strict being, the soul of method, who did all, including his morning stroll, with that bureaucratic punctuality of the sun's habits. But then he breathed, "The King!"—whom he considered to be dead; and presently had all the bells of Serapi clanging, calling it.

When by nine o'clock, Carol, in gentleman's-attire, had shaken hands with forty-nine retainers assembled in the Serapi library, and when these had trooped out, he remained seated some time staring before him; but then muttered, "I had better find some work", and stood up to traverse the mansion to its back, where his laboratory, a long room on the first floor, was.

But no work was done: half an hour afterwards Hausmann, on rapping there, found him on the chair, gazing at his legs stretched out; and, looking up with a brow all crosses at Hausmann erect before him, Carol said, "I intend to be let alone; I am not to be molested, and made to answer questions, and distracted with tasks. You are accustomed, you know, Hausmann, to domineer over me, but spare me now, Man, spare me. As to household affairs, estate-business, be a friend to me, take it off me, I am no longer capable. . . . Man, I have lost all. . . . And all I ask is to be left alone to bear it".

Hausmann stood with his smile, an iron smile, the slightest thing on earth—he a German-Moravian of Brno, some white now in his black hair, brown-skinned, blue-eyed, back of head flat, snout keen, head-and-face a neat unity, neat as a bullet, compact as a cat's face-plan—and slighter than anything that smile of iron.

Now, an hour before, Hausmann had been having some 'phone-calls—one from Prune, from Vasilissa, in confidence: Was Carol at Serapi? Then, Hausmann should see to it that Carol migrated without delay to Kargo, to Wratislaw Palace, to get himself in the popular consciousness, to gain popularity for the election, at any rate to demonstrate that he was not dead, as was said. Also Hausmann had got a 'phone-call from his gossip, the Morocastro steward, giving the news that Prince Alexander had started for Kargo; *he*, Alexander, at any rate, having no intention to let any grass grow under his feet. So now Hausmann remarked to Carol, "Of course, Sire, of course. From me, certainly, you have no 'molesting' to apprehend: for I see that what your Majesty needs is a day's perfect rest, whereas *tomorrow* you will have fully recovered yourself, will be spurred to more alertness, manful action, ardour for the journey to Kargo—though I may mention that Prince Alexander has with manful action already departed for Kargo to see to his interests, thus gaining a day in advance of your Majesty".

And Carol: "The Prince will be gaining more days than one in advance of my Majesty, Hausmann. *Let* him see to his interests, *let* him depart for Kargo: you will not see me departing for Kargo. Am I to strive, and cry, and compete to be a King? Ha, ha, *I*? If the people like to elect me, I will

say 'yes' to them, and that will be their luck, for I know something to do to bless them; but am I to go begging them, 'Do be lucky'? I have my own ill-luck to occupy me . . . eh, Man, I was born unlucky" —staring in that mood of the stare of melancholia, mood of melancholia's moan at a tasteless universe.

Hausmann bent his hard nut in a bow before passing out with a smile of iron that meant, "You will go to Kargo"; and there Carol, nothing but a stare, remained motionless most of that day, a lethargy possessing him, no shaving, no zest, and in bed through the night-hours wide eyes staring at the obscurity of a universe draped in the crape of funerals.

So for several days: Carol pressed by Hausmann, delicately but inflexibly; Hausmann imperatively pressed by the Princess, who at the telephone at most hours every day was fretfully craving to know *why* the delay? *when* did Hausmann intend to get Carol to Kargo? Hausmann needed no pressing, and meant business; even when Carol sat solitary at dinner in an enormous hall, its ceiling lost in dimness, Hausmann might dismiss one of the four footmen in waiting about the plain of the table, to take his place, on the chance of insinuating some suggestion of "manful action" at the ex-King's ear. On the fourth forenoon Carol walked out, as often of old, to loll in a thicket, with his eyes on a little river, "White River": for on the Serapi plain (plateau) a cliff, thickly timbered, rises four stone-throws from the building's east side, down which cliff a water-fall bickers, and at the cliff's bottom this White River winds, drawing its coil of waters northward along with a roystering noisiness, waltzing along through throngs of rocks, across waterfalls, all froths, frivolities, everywhere some hullabaloo of tumblings, bubblings, a ballroom washed in the joy of the waltz's reverie, thronged with steps, pirouettes, toeing it along to the sort of dulcet blubbing that psaltery-strings blub and sob. But he had not been twenty minutes there when a Serapi heifer crept hesitant up, venturing to stretch her neck reachingly out, all curiosity to see him, sniff him, not having known before that Man can bend double, sit down, halve his stature in that manner. Aware of her respiration fanning his nape, Carol said to her, "Get away: you, too, infesting me"; but this did not sever her from him, it was only when Hausmann, just then approaching, shooed at her, that she flung herself away, Carol now saying to Hausmann, "You have found me out, Hausmann: 'whither shall I flee from thy presence'?"

And Hausmann with his iron quietness: "There are things to be said, Sire. Since you quote me Scripture, I, too, will quote: 'A word spoken in season, how good is it!'"

"Well, then, speak it".

"On Wednesday, as directed by your Majesty, I sent to the Lord Proctor an intimation that it is your Majesty's will to be nominated a candidate in the forthcoming election; a reply has now been brought by the Proctor's Secretary, who arrived a quarter of an hour ago from Kargo. It is replied as follows: that, since Carol Wratislaw has been credibly said to be dead, the fact that he is alive, if he is alive, must be bureaucratically established, prior to any registration

of a nomination in his case. This bureaucratic establishment of the fact of *vis viva* is to be effected by the presentation of himself *in propria persona* by the said Carol Wratislaw at the Proctor's Office in Kargo — unless some responsible individual who knows Carol Wratislaw familiarly makes an affidavit, within the precincts of the Lord Proctor's Office, that he has recently seen the said Carol Wratislaw *in vire viva*. . . . I think you will agree now, Sire, that a trip by you to Kargo is indicated”.

Carol looked up at him with a muscular forehead all tortured, a saucer-form stamped in among the muscles, asking, “How about the ‘responsible individual’? You can go, Hausmann? make the affidavit?”

“That will convince the gens de bureau, Sire; the people will still be unconvinced. Surely, Sire ---”

“Heavens, Man, have it your own way!” Carol broke in: “you always do. . . . But not at once, you know. Any day but today”.

And Hausmann, smiling his fine smile of Mona Lisa: “I will arrange it, then, Sire, for tomorrow”. He bowed finishingly, clinching it, as he withdrew; and, as he stepped away, the heifer crept up again to investigate. . . .

By eight the next morning all was ready for the departure: a car waiting at the facade; Hausmann had on satin jacket and gloves to go with Carol, having a complete scheme in his scone to keep Carol in Kargo, if once he got Carol trapped within Kargo; Carol in satin jacket was at morning-coffee in the library, his final act prior to starting; but now arrives the *factore* (postman) on his bicycle from the townlet Serapi, four miles from the house Serapi: and Carol read a letter. It was from Prince Alexander, written by his own hand; and if the Prince, having a reason to keep Carol absent from Kargo and from the business of the election, meant the letter to produce that result, it was astutely done: a letter about a funeral, profoundly troubling to Carol's under-currents:

“ . . . You may care to know that I had an invitation from Vasilissa to attend the funeral of your Haralda Hásdrúvol on Tuesday, but could not go, so sent my Chief of Staff, Wincelas, to represent me. It appears she had wonderful powers of influence, that young lady, and quite won the liking of Vasilissa, who took her body over to the more inhabited part of the castle — to the South-east Tower — whence it was that the funeral set out, most of the Pruneca Court attending. . . . Vasilissa had told them the story that a friend who had come to visit her had had an apoplexy . . . posh coffin from Chocholow . . . Chopin's dead-march. . . . Funerals are the dress and rouge of Death, camouflaging Reality with trappings, so that the dead-one, jogging prettily to his grave, may meditate, ‘Death is swallowed up in frippery’. . . . The body, borne by bearers down the mountain, was then carried in a car to the old burial-ground of Benedictines at Sweet Waters. . . . When is your Majesty coming to Kargo? The populace and I look for you; but you are designing, knowing how, by making yourself scarce, to make yourself desired. . . . ”

An hour after Carol had read it Hausmann, surprised that he did not

come down to the motor-car, went to the library, to find him with the eyes, strained though dry, of one who suffers wild woe in silence; and he said to Hausmann, "No, I am not going to Kargo: I have to go somewhere".

"But, Sire — "

Carol sprang angrily up, with, "I implore to be left alone!"

That expedition, then, failed. Hausmann started alone for Kargo, to make the *vis viva* affidavit; and soon afterwards Carol drove away for the Prunesé, whence, with a species of stealth, he walked on to Sweet Waters, to pass the afternoon, not without one outburst of bereavement, wild tears of grief, beside a grave getting again to Serapi late in the night.

That same night, lying abed, he could be said to "see" her; and though when he sat up to stare she vanished, he had seemed for a minute to see her a shred of drapery floating a foot above the floor. Without any face, however. And so it was with him at other times, he would find a difficulty in picturing her face precisely, as one, having left the glass, half forgets one's face; and he had said to himself, "What folly! to have no photograph of her".

He now wrote as "Lancelot" to the aunt Anna Lopescu at Kargo, begging for a Haralda photograph; but the aunt, who apparently had heard no word of any death of Haralda, who supposed that Haralda had "run away" with Lancelot on that birthday-night of hers, who was hence inclined to be angry with Haralda, replied coldly: she had no photograph of Haralda, had lately given the one she had to a friend who had begged for it — that "friend", in fact, being the Cavaliere Snarski.

When Snarski encountered Hausmann at the Lord Proctor's in Kargo, they had coffee and arrac together on a café-terrace, Snarski there asking Hausmann if Carol chanced to have any lady's photograph which he seemed to cherish; not seeing any significance in the query, Hausmann said no, and went on speaking of other things — of some recent acrobatics of Alexander as a vote-seeker, of the tempo of the election-pother, of the pulse of the populace at the moment: subjects of which Hausmann went back full to his mountain-home.

He had with him some recent newspapers, and found means to induce Carol to listen to the reading aloud of them, little by little. He had had, too, an interview with Vasilissa, now at Wratisslaw Palace, and the history of this he detailed to Carol. He narrated how Alexander in Kargo was gallivanting in his grand, if rather saltimbanco, manner, to ingratiate himself with the mob, and was already on the top steps of popularity. "On three nights", Hausmann said in the Sarapi library in the forenoon after his arrival, "the park of (Alexander's) Mantis Palace (in rue Vruda) was thrown open to the public, floodlit; fountains in three of the walks showered Pilsener beer, free to all; there was a *tir* of bow-and-arrow — many competitors, both military and civil — and on the third midnight the Prince suddenly appeared in person, costumed in the tunic of an old-Roman foot-soldier, to shoot an arrow right to the bull's-eye, and carry-off the prize which he was offering, while a cry of applause rang

through the night. Another evening he appeared on the platform of a Town Hall election-meeting; it was believed that he would speak; but his faculty is the utterance of compact mottoes, he is no orator, and since he never acts unless it is with *éclat*, to dazzle and astonish, and catch the applause of the populace, that evening, when he rose, as if to speak, one of the speakers, his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Garbarin, rose also, to enwreath the Prince's brows with a crown of laurel-leaves; and Alexander resumed his seat without having uttered one remark, while all the hall broke into a roaring of hurrahs. To please the dregs of the people, the Prince has even agreed with the Municipality that the grounds of the two palaces are to be open to the public the whole of election-day, and are to be polling-stations, Wratisslaw Palace to be the polling-station for the Old Town Ward, Mantis Palace for the Santa Lucia Ward ---"

"The Prince is a keen intellect", Carol remarked, his head on his chair-back, "But is not all that a little common, touched with clownishness? A show-man is hardly the highest type of Man. The Prince might be more reasonable: he appears seriously to desire to be King! but I doubt if he could give a reason".

"The highest position in a Kingdom, Sire", Hausmann protested: "most men would like to be a King".

And Carol: "But if the man has no plan for making any scientific change, nothing to keep him interested when he is King? He will soon be gaping, undergoing boredom".

Now Hausmann lifted an admonishing finger. "Yes, and *you*, Sire, *you* have some such plan—you have told me so—yet you make no effort to obtain the power to operate it. Is not this a duty omitted? Pardon my importunity ---"

Carol sighed. "Ah, Hausmann, I have slain a young woman to my hurt; you see me here inert, blighted, struck by lightning".

With a countenance stern a moment in rebuke, the house-steward bent toward him sharply to utter, "Carol Wratisslaw is a son of Jove, a son of thunder, lightning should have no power over him. Manful Action, Sire!"

"With what hope?"—now Carol's muscular forehead was crossed with mounds of muscle contracted—"should I prevail against the arts of Alexander—if I consented to endeavour?"

"Yes, I think", Hausmann answered: "I know that people were full of you, at the period when you disappeared; they may still be; and I hear from the Princess Vasilissa that, if you will but publish some fact or other—as to what fact her lips, she said, were sealed—if you would even but mention it to anybody, so that it could get into circulation, Alexander would have no chance against you. If your Majesty mentions it to *me* ---"

"No, Hausmann"—Carol smiled sadly—"a private matter, nobody's business. And the Princess is too sanguine".

Again Hausmann's finger shot up to admonish, as he said, "'Sanguine' hardly describes that unfortunate lady's present state of mind. I was twenty

minutes with her at Wratistlaw Palace: she looks thinner; her eyes look to me of a lighter sky-blue, and somewhat sunken. If most men, as I said just now, would like to be a King, most women would like to be a Queen; and *she* had that prospect, was promised it by your Majesty, and now has lost hope of it; for she refuses to be Alexander's consort. Her disappointment is obviously poignant. She is at present making preparations to become a nun".

Now Carol's eyes opened. "That poor soul is? Nun?"

"Aye".

"Oh, *no*" — with a look of ruth.

"Aye".

"No, I can't have that. I'll see to it — I'll go to Kargo".

Hausmann smiled. "When, Sire?"

"In — a day or two. Three days' time. Yes, I go".

Hausmann's bow was like his smile — slight. Anyway, it was settled. But a photograph that came the next day gravely wrung Carol. In sending it, Alexander, who had doubtless had it from the Cavaliere Snarkski, wrote, "I have demanded this photograph of your Hiralda Hásdruvol from a lady of Vasilissa's Court to send to you, divining that you may find it acceptable. . . ." And Carol found it acceptable: here that Delightful that the sun's heat-rays had created stood revealed by the sun's light-rays, and once more Haralda smiled with him; he leant the photograph against a crucible, drew the laboratory-chair opposite, and made it the sun of his system of living. When the steward intruded into the sanctum, to ask, "You are not, then, going to Kargo tomorrow, Sire?", Carol answered, "I did say that I would go, but you might give one some time. You see that lady there? She was — Hausmann, do you like her?"

Hausmann bowed a little — stiffly.

"Aye, you like her, Hausmann, one can see. . . . I killed her, Hausmann: oh, the worm, the ache . . . of regret ever hungering, of emptiness ever aching . . . worm that dieth not. What had I to do with her? I came into her life, kept messing about her, couldn't help, she was such a special lady, Hausmann, and through that she got arrested, got locked in a prison, took poison; joyous soul, too, fondly in love with God; lost all through seeing me; now her life's cut short, she lies dead".

"And buried, Sire", Hausmann dryly remarked: "should the buried dead walk, and dominate the living? Birthtime (Christmas) is now near, the New Year soon to come: is not manful action on the part of Serapi pressingly indicated?"

"Well, yes", Carol agreed: "we must see to it".

On which Hausmann shrugged, went away.

But baffled, the iron man was not defeated, and immediately was writing to Manfred, Lord Tyrol — a half-scientist, a friend of Carol, a young spark who was "Comptroller" of Wratistlaw Palace — laying the whole situation before him, suggesting that he should present himself, uninvited, at Serapi as a

Christmas visitor, no invited visitors being at Serapi that Christmas; to which Tyrol, a sprightly spirit, replied that he would; and did, in fact, dine with Carol on Christmas night, afterwards dancing a czardas, a mazurka, and a polonaise, with three of the housemaids in the household's carousal in the ballroom, doing it instead of the Lord of Serapi, who every "Birthtime" joyously hobnobbed with his servants, but this Birthtime shirked it. When Tyrol went late to bed, Hausmann stood by appointment at his bedside, to ask, "What success, my Lord? Does his Majesty go with you in the morning?" But Tyrol in his sharp manner of speaking answered, "No; as to that, no go. So bring me now that photograph: I take it away with me".

Hausmann stared in awe. "Do we dare that, my Lord?"

"We dare anything. For desperate situations, desperate measures. It will act as a lure; and you will not be implicated: when it is missed, you will suggest that it was I who abstracted it; and afterwards I will easily contrive to be pardoned. Bring it".

Hausmann bowed. "It is manful action: the thing is done."

He now went to wake a gardener whom he could trust, who, on taking the photograph from its place, delivered it to Tyrol; and the next morning Carol kissed Tyrol on each cheek at Tyrol's car, as Tyrol departed, before, on going to his laboratory, he saw that the photograph was gone. And now an outcry — a row.

"Is there no answer?" Carol demanded: "I demand to be told how it has vanished".

And Hausmann: "Not by the hand of any of this household, Sire!"

"Not? Then, how, Man? Such a statement is maddening!"

"I suggest that Lord Tyrol may have had a reason for taking it".

Hausmann got a look of reproach; but after two days of staring bereavement this solution got to seem more possible to Carol. Then, setting his teeth, he entered a car for Kargo, to get there in the early evening of the third day preceding the election.

News of his coming had forerun him: the thoroughfares through which he drove in an open motor were becrowded to see him, but in a stillness which was complete: not a cheer, not a boo, but a dumbness that mused on him.

XXI

OLD YEAR'S NIGHT

The Balaincan election-day was troublous, especially in Kargo: was marked by a goodly number of deaths, notably that of his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Garbarin. At eleven in the forenoon two Uhlin soldiers at Boundary Barracks in New Town refused to obey a command; by noon all a battalion was involved in the mutiny, and the populace of New Town was now out in the streets seething in sympathy with the military *émeute*; for an hour (between two and four) *émeute* took-on a look of revolution when the Post Office, Telephone Exchange, and Council House were in the hands of Trade Union officials; about seven in the evening Boundary Barracks was a mass of flames.

It was as it is with people fasting: it appears that one can go without any food at all a good many days—twenty, forty—undergoing no great strain, getting in some days accustomed to emptiness; whereas, if one indulges in scraps, that rouses a jackal of appetite, and renders the test racking. So in the case of the French Revolution: at the date when Louis XIV could say, “The ‘State’? it is I!”, the French supported their famine of voting resignedly enough; but when States-General was once summoned, and they tasted the flavour of voting, away with a rush, as when young brutes taste blood, went every restraint in ruin and revolution. So (to some extent) in the case of Balainca: at the flavour of voting the notion “*Parliament*” arose! Why Council and Notables? Why not Upper and Lower House—as in other nations? It was not in Kargo alone that something volcanic was in the air of Balainca that election-day.

With his customary insight into the popular mind Prince Alexander had thought it well to throw open his Mantis Palace park as a polling-station, and also the Wratishaw Palace park: which latter especially was all the day frequented with voters and strollers—that part at least that is north of the long balustrade of stone that runs east-and-west north of the palace, three stonethrows from the palace-front. Here and there, at openings or gangways in the balustrade, four steps lead down to a lower terrace, where the people strolled over parklands, gardenlands, lakelands, got into groups, listened to orators. But the polling-place, a booth of new boards, was on the upper terrace, midway up, a little west of, the avenue of elms that runs from palace to balustrade: so through the day a streamlet of people were going up four steps to present voting-cards to the soldiers who stood on guard in groups of four at the balustrade-gangways; then the voters entered upon the upper terrace, had a drink, voted; went back to the lower terrace—the drinks being from two tuns, of beer and wine, standing in the avenue nigh the polling-booth, above the tuns being a board-banner, a curve, exhibiting the words, “Have A Drink, And Vote For Your Splendid Devil”. As to Carol, his only invitation to vote was a square of cardboard tacked to a staff,

and placed hard by the balustrade, having on it "Better Vote For Carol, Who Knows"—this having been planted there, if with Carol's consent, not by Carol, but by Manfred Lord Tyrol; and on the arrival of night it was obliterated, whereas the letters of Alexander's banner consisted of glass-bulbs, silvered at their backs like bicycle hind-lights; and, having glow-lamps before, they more proclaimed themselves in the dark than by day. A dark not dense, informed by moonshine, and warm; but the moon's shape was all lost in a heavenful of vapours; and a haze, an irritant little frizz of drizzle, always haunted the air. By ten o'clock all Wratistlaw Palace park—north of the balustrade—was a brawling of thousands of tongues; and, far and near, luridly illumining the gloomy scene, blotches of luminosity sheened like flambeaux-flares in fog, caused by the glare of naphtha-glows pouring inflamed smokes: for some eight or ten agitators had come with stools to which were attached uprights carrying naphtha-lamps; and always mixed with the noising of the oratory of these were the outcries of women moving among the crowd, screaming, "New Year Tulips!", these carrying baskets full of bowl-tulips, having-on high hats—*tajes*, cones, "foolscaps"—hung with little ribbons; and from time to time they pinned a tulip to some buyer's bosom—in Balainca, as in Scotland, France, Russia, not Christmas being the big fête-day, but New Year's. Every few minutes cheering broke out, as voting-results reached the palace by tape-machine from over the country, to be exhibited illuminated on a band extending across the clock-tower, above the palace portico, at the avenue's top. That solemn clock of Wratistlaw Palace, its preambles resembling sermons, reminding men in melody that the hours of Time are hours of Eternity, had just come to birth, chiming its dirgelike burden at Eleven, when the latest sum of votings was announced on the floodlit tower:

Alexander, 5,537,211

Carol, 2,183,723.

whereupon a silence while the clock chimed; then a changing of the three company-sections of Tommies standing at ease at the palace-front; and now a keener outlook to see the Old Year out an hour thence, the New Year in, while the stump-oratory resumed its flow, prominent among the orators being two Crowdar Foundry speechifiers—Nix, Blucher—Nix, something of a born orator, having his stool and naphtha-lamp close to the balustrade, exactly there where the Princess Vasilissa had given her garden-party that afternoon of the Deputation of work-people, when the words of Haralda Hásdrúvol had "influenced" the King, and the King had vanished; while Blucher's stool, close, too, to the balustrade, was three hundred feet east of Nix. And hear Nix spouting from his stool, surrounded by the thousand of his crowd, his elfin face lurid in the fume and flare of his naphtha-lamp:

" . . . Splendid Devil! Wine! Beer! It isn't wine they should be giving us now: we have already 'got out of hand', as they say, have got frisky and grim like the cat—all the Bourse windows cracked this afternoon,

Boundary Barracks now smouldering. It's 'Parliament' that we are after now — 'Government *by* the people *for* the people' it is: this voting has given us a fancy for voting, you see. But is it Parliament that we need, really? Or is it Knowledge? Haven't they got Parliament in America? in Britain? in France? Are they any better off there than we here? much the same, I gather! Troubled, stunted, tossing for ease in nightmare. Old Lancelot—some of you remember Lancelot? him that suddenly vanished from Crowdar's Foundry? Shrewd chap, mind, sometimes: he'd say to me, 'It doesn't matter a cent, Nix, whom government is *by*, provided it is *for* the people'. And I think I agree. An absolute monarchy, such as we Balaincans have, is the best, I say, if only we get a monarch who knows—*knows*—the secret of what is really 'for' the people, and also wills to do it. But that's the difficulty—to get him. Here we have our Carol saying that *he* 'knows'—pointing at Carol's cardboard placard—"but 'knows' what? He fails to mention what. Not he!—doesn't know anything much; he once confessed to a Deputation of us that he doesn't; and, as to willing to do it, when the spark of goodwill that he had on beginning to rule had gone cool, the man was off from his throne to run after an actress, if the rumour's true. I myself have voted for your Splendid Devil and 'had a drink'"—waving his crutch with a reckless gesture: "his drinks prove the depth of his disdain for us—damn the pompous cock, damn the pair of 'em. Talking of old Lancelot of Crowdar's, if he was with us still, I think he'd ---"

Here a voice out of the crowd called, "Where's that Lancelot now?"

And Nix: "Someone wants to know 'where's Lancelot now?' I'm afraid I can't answer that question. Nobody that I know knows. He may be among us now, or somewhere close to us, or he may be in some mansion of his fathers, for I have no doubt now that the man was some gentleman's son. That same day when he vanished—same day that he smashed Blucher—a young lady-doctor whom some of you knew—Haralda Hásdruvol—she vanished, too, and there are those who say—Oh, now, that Blucher brawler ---"

He broke off, for now, overpoweringly, the bull's-throat of Blucher on a stool not far started to shout, after an interval of stillness:

" . . . aye, Friends, you're a bit too soft! that's the bother. It isn't Kings you need, it's victuals you need! it's pay you need! it's Parliament you need! To hell with them—they can't buy *me* with a drink of wine [Cheers]. Smashing—that's what I'm out for; burning—that's what I'm out for. I have been wronged—I feel it, know it—and wronging them that wronged me is what I am out for [Cheers]. It was this hand that set fire to Boundary Barracks this night [Cheers]; and that there palace on fire would make a fine sight ---"

He stopped, for at this point the palace-clock broke into its solemn preamble before tolling midnight. Here was New Year, and the mood of the mob was moved to that emotion of solemn buoyancy which belongs to new voyagings, launchings, jubilees, orgies. When the band across the clock-tower shewed "Happy New Year", the universe seemed to be cheering,

the palace-chapel bells were blithely chiming the tidings of it, and everyone was in elated action, stranger embracing stranger, some touching mutual palms upraised, some pressing round the tulip-sellers to procure a tulip, some gravitating into different groups to carol in chorus the old madrigal;

*The New Year's come,
To bring, my Brothers,
Black lick to some,
But lambs to others.*

Only now the voting of the Old Town Ward, the last of all, was over; and as soon as the New Year jubilee cooled down, when the tongues of the palace-chapel bells had come to rest from blattering, Blucher was afresh bellowing to some new adjustment of the multitude. . . .

"Well, there's your Old Year gone: voting's over; the other votings have come in from the provinces, and from the other Kargo wards, and your Splendid Devil's the winner. . . . Why doesn't he come out and shew himself, man to man? That there palace is their fort; they feel safe hidden away in there—your Alexander, your Vasilissa, your Carol, who threw you over to run after an actress harlot. This is our last chance to see them face to face: call 'em out!" Bravos rang out at this; and now his voice vaulted to a still more resounding howl: "Come out there! Shew yourselves!"

This "caught on"—a mob being a living thing, having energy, can act, must act, in some way; but, having no particular will, no plan, in what way is it to act? It will act as someone who wills something particular indicates; and whoever pleases will be its leader. Like one man now the multitude of throats took up this, "Come out there!"; far and near, insistent, minute after minute: "Alexander! We want Vasilissa! Carol!", until all at once this halted to burst into universal hurly-burly of applause, as Alexander in the uniform of a colonel of Lancers—blue tunic, flat casque—stood floodlit in the portico at the avenue-end, laughing with his mouth wide open; and when he snatched-out his sword to hold it flashing in the light, twice higher waxed the cries of, "Alexander! Bravo! Splendid Devil", and lasted till he retired.

And now afresh Blucher was on his stool, shouting in his bull's way. . . . "Well, that's your Splendid Devil for you. The other one's ashamed to shew himself: let's have *him* out!" Now still louder he howled, "We want you, Carol!"

And this, too, the multitude of mouths took up, each man catching it from a near man: "Come, Carol! Shew yourself, Carol!"—this to begin, but pretty quickly the call organized itself into a rhythm, a singsong that beat time with the feet, right, left, right, left: "We want Caról! We want Caról! We want Caról!"—the accent on the *ol*, to turn the call into the first two feet of an iambic verse—a rather grim roar, an appalling volume of noise, seeming to proceed from the gruff guts of some monster dog, the voice of the people, the voice of God. And it insisted, persisted. Unfortunately, Carol was not the sort that comes when called: the more they called, the more he did not come. At last, when it still persisted, Prince Alexander

reappeared in the portico, to spread his arms open, as to say, "Hopeless!": and renewed outcries of, "Bravo! Splendid Devil!" broke out to salute him, but the moment he moved to go, again that gruff trolling arose and grew, gained in doggedness, got gruffer: "We want Caról! We want Caról! We want Caról!"—a thing so formidable, fundamental, cosmic, claiming to be obeyed, that presently, when it would not stop, the Princess Vasilissa, to stop it a little with a sop, appeared in the portico between his Grace the Duke of Nudicum and his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Garbarin, in her rear a group of three ladies; and this did not stop it, outcries of, "Vasilissa! Bravo!" now resounding far-spread; but the moment the portico-group moved to go, again the gruff trolling arose, to grow again to grossness: "We want Caról! We want Caról! We want Caról!"

Carol was as far from coming as if a crowd of hounds summoned him. . . .

And in the midst of it, hear Blucher, anew on his stool, howling. . . .
"Won't he come? Suppose we have a try at fetching the fellow. . . ."

Now he was down to force a path toward the balustrade four yards off, drawing after him some forty. One balustrade-stair being almost opposite, to this they made, but, as they came to its bottom, the voice of the palace-clock, a still small voice almost lost in the barking of, "We want Caról", but still audible, sang its preamble before tolling One: and whether the bell stayed them, or the levelled bayonets of four soldiers at the stair-top stayed them, Blucher and his followers thought better of it, stopped at the bottom, looking longingly upward, then moved backing to Blucher's stool and naphtha lamp. . . .

"We want Caról! We want Caról! We want Caról!"—at that deep hour of the midnight the crowd, in their mood of fête-day outing, rowdiness, new freedom, was not less numerous than at any hour of the evening, nor its roar less rough.

Jumping with decision in an impulse upon his stool, Blucher called, "He doesn't come!"—in a sort of astonishment. Then: "Oh, Carol, we'll have you! That there palace-bell won't warn us off you. We long to see you, Dear, because you left us. . . . Come, Boys, come, *try it on*. . . ."

Afresch a rush for the balustrade-opening—by many more now than before—and afresch the soldiers there levelled bayonets; but the lengths of balustrade *between* the openings were undefended, and easily scaleable: east and west they were scaled by several hundreds amid hubbub and upheaval, while the thousands who did not desire to be shot continued to mark time with stamps, addicted, rhythm-rapt, rollick, rocking, enjoying it, chanting, "We want Caról! We want Caról! We want Caról!"

XXII

VOTING RESULT

But the palace-front was well protected with three sections of a hussar-type company, having busby, dolman, armed with Bren rifles, every fifth guard carrying also either a hand-grenade or a tear-gas bomb; and their captain, on seeing the onslaught of the mob, promptly ordered, "Clear the forecourt—march—charge", whereupon the Tommies trotted forward, while the marauders fled pellmell. But since the rabble of marauders were swarming thicker east of the avenue, and within it, the throng of Tommies trotted that way, rather neglecting that gang advancing west of the avenue; and some fifteen of this lot, in fleeing back to the balustrade, stopped a minute at the polling-booth, where the Old Town votes were now being counted, and not until they had a cloud of voting-papers snowing in the air, and were aware of a squad of Tommies coming west at the double upon them, did they rush on to the balustrade, and jump.

The forecourt being now cleared, the soldiers went back to stand in rank as before; and as soon as the trouble was over, a trio of dignitaries issued from the palace, these having agreed together that they would do well to rebuke the rabble, lecture it back to a mentality of lawfulness and modest conduct: they were his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Garbarin, Lord Rostro, and Lord Popkin.

So they walked down to the balustrade—to that point of it where they had been at the Princess' garden-party, which was just where by chance Nix's stool stood; and Nix, who was much in political things, familiar with the names and faces of the great-ones, instantly recognized them, nor was pleased to see them, being in a condition of spleen at the recent scooting of the people before the troops.

So that when Lord Popkin got upon the broad balustrade-top, cleared his throat, and began with that bathos of the speech-giver's recitative to hold forth, saying, "*Men and citizens*. This way of behaving yourselves is bound to bring you into trouble before ---", Nix on his stool just opposite pointed his crutch at his Lordship, crying out, "Beer! Here is our Popkin! The beer has some spirit, but the man's as flat as fat—*boo!*"

"I tell you, Men ---" Lord Popkin commenced to say, but now his voice was drowned in a row of booing.

Whereupon Lord Rostro sprang upon the balustrade-top, to say, "Look here, Men, mark my words"—his finger vaulting to dig at them in the manner of Prince Alexander—"the country doesn't mean to stand any more ---"

But Nix, pointing out his Lordship with his crutch, interrupted: "Daily Humbug! Here is 'Papers!' *This* is Rostro! And who are 'the country'? We—we—are the country; and the country stands his print, but doesn't mean to stand his speech—*boo!*"

"The country, I say ---", Lord Rostro got out, but now his voice was lost in a typhoon of booing.

Whereupon his Grace of Garbarin got himself upon the balustrade-top, and, bending himself with a wagging finger in his martinet manner, said, "You must obey! You must submit yourselves! If more of this unseemly ---"

But Nix's crutch pointed him out. "Garbarin, this one! More arrogant than monarchs! Top Lord of your Church! I've heard him sermonize! He gives us ghostly counsel, for he's a ghost ---"

"I bid you be silent, you there!" — quickly uttered with chilling authority by the Lord Archbishop, his chin pitched chillingly up.

And Nix: "A ghost! an ancient going about among us moderns — ghostly! ghostly, really! — the man's dead long ago, dogs growl and bristle when he goes by, because he's a ghost, and is 'walking'. Ban the spectre!" Then in a lower tone, confidential, intimate: "At him, Lads! At him!"; and, after taking aim, he chucked his crutch like a javelin at the Archbishop; at the same time, "Come, Boys!" broke out of Blucher's lungs — Blucher, and others having been beguiled to migrate over from his stool to Nix's, to gaze near at the three grandees — and within some minutes Nix's naphtha-lamp was flaring on numbers of backs clambering the balustrade, nor did the four soldiers at the balustrade-opening near eastward in front of the avenue leave their post to interfere.

Before this turbulence the trio of noblemen, fright-struck, instantly turned in flight, Rostro and Popkin, being in evening-dress, quickly out-stripping his Grace the Archbishop, who, wearing a greatcoat on top of a frockcoat, may have been thereby checked in his escape; moreover, he was older. When nearly midway to the palace, his eye-corner now catching sight of his pursuers winning upon him, he shot aside a little westward to the shelter of the polling-booth; but just thereabout the ground was a slush, gradually saturated by hours of drizzle, and trample by two crowds — of voters and of scalers — the latter having trampled into its mud a snow of voting-papers, making it slippier: so here the tragedy chanced; here the Archbishop slipped, and instantly died: the crowd, nigh now behind him, overran, trampled down, his dying cry; his spine cracked.

As for Lords Rostro and Popkin, when they were on the point of being caught, the captain of the guard called the order, "Clear the fourcourt"; and, as the throng of busbies went trotting northward, westward, so also did the mob of man-hunters, reversing direction, hurry northward back. The "forecourt" was soon cleared, except for two, who, stooping over the dead prelate, were left untroubled by the soldiers; these two only going away when, the upper terrace cleared, a group of the soldiers came together to stoop and gaze in mute regret over his Grace's remains; and those two went away having, between them, all that had been in the Archbishop's pockets, with his watch-chain, his big finger-ring — one of the two being a fellow named Nero Czaky, a blastfurnace-man, an intimate of Nix.

Nix, who had left his stool to recover his crutch, which he had chucked

at the Archbishop, recovered it, and was returning to speechify, when a burst of cheering all about caused him to turn round, to see on the illuminated band at the palace-front a new last announcement:

Alexander, 5,832,143

Carol, 2,343,212

Long live King Alexander;

upon which he got upon his rostrum to say, "Well, you have a new King—though he's not formally King before the so-called 'Director Coronation' with the Replica, due to take place within the hour of accession. And you will be having a new Archbishop, too—there they are just bearing him off, poor soul—dead—more than I bargained for when I spoke against him. Now he is doubly a ghost, the ghost of a ghost, and has tasted the second death. Oh, well, all in the night's work. This night will be remembered for ---"

"But look at this, Nix"—the blastfurnace man, Nero Czaky, handed up a letter—"I got it out of the Archbishop's breast-pocket".

Nix bent to read it with frowning brows in the flare and reek of his blaring naphtha-lamp, everybody waiting, with interest in his actions; until, straightening up, he said, "Why, Friends, I am bound to announce to you that an outrage has been done among us ---"

"Right you are, Boys!" cries Blucher, still in Nix's crowd, after having been hunted back by the soldiers: "we are out for outrages".

And Nix! "I myself am no adorer of our ex-King Carol; in fact, I've been and voted for that splendid specimen of hell, 'now our Despot; but it does appear from a letter which I hold here that the ex-King has been the victim of a wicked conspiracy". Here he paused, hearing the palace-clock's preamble before tolling Three; and he said, "Three o'clock: well said, Bells: for this letter tells a tale of Three—of Vasilissa, Alexander, and Carol. This letter was got out of a pocket of his Grace of Garbarin, now a ghost's ghost; it is a letter written to his Grace by one Rita, a niece of his Grace, a lady of Vasilissa's Court (Lady Zurro): and the letter, Friends, makes two statements; one, that Carol has been a prisoner in Pruneca, Vasilissa's castle, and the other, that Vasilissa is Alexandria's mistress—two facts that, having recently got to be known, are now commonly tattled among the Court-gossips. What a set! Presti, if you like scandal, there you have it, Friends. The letter does not say why Carol stole away from his throne, but it says that he was probably coming back to it after six months' absence when he was kidnapped by Vasilissa, to do him out of his kingship, and push Alexander in. And Carol wasn't bad, mind you: ran after an actress, yes, but he had good-will, if no knowledge what a governor should be doing; Alexander of hell has neither. Note, too, that this letter is seven days old: so our Grace of Garbarin, now the ghost of a ghost, *he* knew the truth, but was mum; the ghost's mouth was accustomed to utter only ghostly things, no real things, he was mum, he let us vote for splendid hell—the whole Court more or less knew, but was mum ---"

"Carol himself was mum!", a well-dressed man now cried out of the crowd at Nix's side; "Carol is a gentleman! He was mum because he scorned to bias votes on a public question by bringing-in his private troubles. This is an infamy, this thing!"

At this such a cheering broke out as shut up Nix, but out of it arose the bull's shout of Blucher, now in the crowd near the balustrade in front of Nix: "Vasilissa is a harlot! She was Carol's girl, then her lust turned to Alexander, so she shut up Carol in her castle, and got Alexander made King. [Sensation. Uproar]. Let's *get* at this Vasilissa, let's *get*, some way, into that there palace!"

This met acceptance, resonance; all at once a ferment was stirring, this word "palace" permeating the populace, to a fervour, to a pentecost, as leaven works inevitably, as bees are mysteriously seized, caught up to beatific business in a third heaven of swarming, so that everywhere was heard a murmuring of "palace", "palace". It lasted several minutes. One of the balustrade Tommies ran up the avenue to drop a warning at the palace-front. Alexander came out in haste from the palace; walked along the front of the soldier-rank, as if inspecting them. But this did not restrain Blucher: as the mob had caught "palace" from him, so now he caught "palace" from the mob; he howled, "Here's off for *me*!", and leapt the balustrade there where he was, west of the avenue, to be followed by probably half the rabble.

But it was a mad adventure. They did not advance far. One truly ruthless was now commanding the soldiers. Quietly Alexander said, "Fire"; a volley followed; and, shrieking, the crowd rushed back to the balustrade, leaving twelve dead, twenty-two wounded.

"Bayonets. Clear the forecourt", Alexander said.

It was soon done.

He was King now: no longer wanted their votes. . . .

When the hussars darted after the fleeing people he walked down behind them, and now ordered them to be drawn up in line close behind the balustrade, this alone now dividing the soldiers from the crowd. Then with a pondering forehead he walked back up the avenue to the palace.

As he entered the portico, he was met by a group of three in glorious costume—Herald-King and two heralds; and Herald-King read out:

"To acquaint your Royal Highness that their Lordships, the Deputed of the Council, except his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Garbarin, deceased, await to put upon your Royal Highness for the Director Coronation the Replica of the Royal Crown, according to Law; and to enquire if it is the pleasure of your Royal Highness to accept the investiture; and in what place".

Alexander answered, "I accept. Let it be in the Solar-room Gallery".

The heralds bent heads, passed into the palace, Alexander following, as a doctor with four assistants issued out to look to the wounded.

But those wounded, those dead, failed to quell Blucher's pecker, only whipping it to a deeper-seated spleen; when he fled before those Bren bullets he did not run back to Nix's stool, whence he had started, but more eastward, to speechify on his own; leaping upon which, mourning now to the Tommies opposite in a tone of reproach, sorrowing he told them, "You've got the guns; aye, Comrades, you've got the guns: and may-be you think yourselves toffs to lay your comrades dead—see them there—down—dead—by your hands. But that doesn't alter the fact: Vasilissa is Alexander's harlot—it is proved ---"

No farther he got: the hussar-captain, a young spark, hot-headed, the points of his moustache still short, just sprouting, rushed opposite the orator to shout, "Stop that, you there! Get off that stool!"

And now "an incident". . . .

Blucher shouted, "Vasilissa is Alexander's harlot, for there's a letter ---"

He tumbled backward into the arms of the multitude: the captain of hussars in a flash of action had snatched a revolver and shot the operative.

A groaning arose, shouts out of the crowd of, "Shame! Shame!"

But Blucher was only wounded in the hand; in some moments he was standing on his stool once more, drooping now, reproachful, shewing the scarlet of his crucified palm, shouting, "Yes, he has wounded me ---"

"Shame! Shame!" was shouted—by dozens of the soldiers now!

But when the soldier, hired to suppress, decides to side with the suppressed, all's up with the suppresser. What now can the suppresser possibly do? Now he is the suppressed!

And Blucher: "*He's got the guns. But Vasilissa is Alexander's harlot. She shut up King Carol in her castle, to make Alexander King: it is proved. You've got the guns: there they lie, your mates, that you've laid low: well, lay us all low; we are coming to you*". Now to his crowd he proceeded to cry with grinding teeth, "Come on again, by Christ! The palace!"—leaping down to press toward the upper terrace, all the throng now on the flow, eddying, disposing itself to follow, as when bodies of water are revolving, evolving, to be moving into some new route, while a ferment, a millionfold murmuring of bees disturbed, that had a word inherent within the murmuring, was heard—the word "palace", "palace", "palace".

Then the deluge. "*Fire!*", the captain commanded—without result, however; and the crowd's unanimous outcry of, "Hurrah!" rang high when the line of hussars declined to fire one rifle, while quick, like feet of mice twinkling when they climb steps of a wheel, the people quick-succeeding came leaping over, some interrupting their rush southward to clutch to their bosoms the mutinous soldiers, who, when the flooding of the balustrade was over, suddenly broke rank, and ran helter-skelter after the rabble, partly to fraternize, partly perhaps to persuade to restraint.

At least three-quarters of the people, though, continued north of the

balustrade, undrawn into the Blucher gang, most of them having gathered round Nix, who, peering from his stool into the gloom southward, told them, "There seem to be two doctors with six Tommies bearing things like stretchers or truckle-beds, and I can see seven who seem to be dead. Now, those poor souls: down as in some battle. And to what end? Our friends over yonder have gained a little victory, have won over the soldiers, have actually got into the palace; but Alexander is already King, the country has voted, the deed's done, where's the good assaulting a stronghold of accomplished fact with popguns? Let us be sober now, and slow down. The night is far spent, we've had our outing, let's go home and --- Oho! they've got our Princess, then, I see!"

In truth, coming down the avenue now was a comus, some of those on its outskirts cutting dance-steps, tripudiary like some troop of cloud that surrounds the sunrise with carousal, some running to the tuns to gulp a drink; and in the midst Vasilissa ghastr, agaze in scare, Blucher's arm about her waist, her left waist all blotched with blood from his shot palm. On opening a door in the palace to peer into a *salon*, he, gadding ecstatic, cat-footed, with a gang, seeking her, had seen her among some ladies engaged in cutting up a sheet for lint, no male among them, or near: and now see the conquering hero come, pleased as Punch, grinning in victory, hugging her, calling out, "Here we are again, Boys! we got my lady!", many of the lower-terrace throng swarming with commotion to the upper to join the conqueror-body and accompany it down the avenue, down the steps, at the bottom of which they all bethronged her in a stoppage, with jostlings, dodgings, to peer in at the peepshow of a Princess prisoner. After some minutes of which peepshow, Nix, standing near on his stool, called to her, "Well, we've got you, you see; and now I am going to ask you to stand on this stool, and tell us, firstly, why you kidnapped King Carol; secondly, what is the relation between you and our Splendid ---" He broke off to say, "Prest! here, I think, is our ex-King himself coming like a vulture in a wind" — seeing Carol running full-pelt down the avenue, the wind of his career whiffing his hair, until, placing his palms for a pivot on the balustrade-rail, he vaulted to stand on it, and call out, "Now, Men! I demand that lady this instant!"; at the same time, chancing to catch sight of Blucher's face in the shine of Nix's naphtha-flare, "Ah, you Blucher", he cried out, "want to taste my fists again, do you?"

This slipped from him. . . .

In the same instant he leapt into the sea of heads on the lower terrace, to press toward Vasilissa, saying, "Come, Dear, come to me"; and he carried the Princess off without the least opposition from anyone, everyone standing ghastr — up the gangway-steps, and up the avenue at a trot of escape, grasping her arm, drawing her to a trot, step for step, with him; nor until they disappeared within the portico did any sound break that muteness of the crowd, every one of whom had doubtless heard some word of rumour about the battle of Lancelot and Blucher at Crowdar's Foundry; but now, as the pair passed away within the palace, words burst out of Blucher, a thunderclap

shout, a digging finger, "*That's Lancelot! That's him!*": and there was commotion, and an emotion in it.

See Nix despondent on his rostrum, decrepit with repentance, arms hanging heavy, saying half to himself, "That is Lancelot, that man is Lancelot. You see, King Carol, when he vanished, wasn't dashing after any actress; King Carol was being a serf named Lancelot in the furnaces of Crowdar's Foundry, that's where Carol was: and I have voted against him. Good mate, simple fellow; he'd press my arm; 'old Nix', he'd say. Once he borrowed a gento from me—hard up. I've been in his room in Syracuse Court down Old Town: *I* sat on the half-a-chair, *he* sat on the bed. To come to that the man stands up, he steps down the steps of his throne, he throws off his robes of State, now he is pacing a road of pain with his back to his palaces, his prancing cavalries, to come bare-breasted out into our crude cold, to say to Man, 'My Brother, I am duly here among you', and I have voted against him, blasphemously slapped him in the face. Oh, no, that's hard; aye, there you have blindness; I—didn't know. Then when he had learned something by his servitude—he says that now he 'knows' something or other"—pointing at placard—"and it is likely enough—when he had come to know something, and had decided to go back to his throne, the violent hand of our Splendid Devil grabs, ravishes, him, counting on my help to kick him out of his kingship, and I have kicked him". When a groaning now arose out of the crowd's soul, Nix stiffened his back, lax until now, to add, "Well, but I am willing to die for it, and to kill for it—can't do more. I am only a little man—cripple—not much use; but, then, I shall be having *your* strength with me, since you are men, since you have mouthed the breasts, not of ewes, but of human mothers. For Prince Alexander is not really a devil: devils are immortal; he can die, and ought to die. Therefore I call upon you all to utter now after me a vow that we are men. You will, I think".

"Aye!"—prompt response in that "voice of God", thousandfold, grum like rumpuses of grumbling going on down in the bowels of mountains about to blow up.

And Nix, his face lifted to heaven: "Say, then, this: 'We men of Balainca call Almighty God to witness ---'"

Thunder re-uttered it.

"That Lancelot of Crowdar's ---"

"That Lancelot of Crowdar's ---"

"Is Sovereign Lord—"

"Is Sovereign Lord—"

"And King of Balainca".

It was vowed in thunder.

Still gazing into the clouds, Nix now began to sing the National Anthem; then, the ground now trembling at the growl of it, the crowd began to carol it:

*March with his armies,
Pillar of Fire,
Ride he, where harm is,
Harmless and higher.*

MORNING-BRIGHT

And now the squeeze of a thousand up the avenue-steps, another thousand, intolerant of waiting, leaping the balustrade both east and west of the steps; the palace-clock now tolling Four; the two doctors who were seeing to the wounded fleeing with their assistants before the mob's coming, as when news is screamed of some flood broken loose, and people scoot appalled, leaving all; and yonder in the palace a pallid Lord Tyrol bursting in panic into a room, in order to blurt a warning to the new sovereign, now in shirt-sleeves, disrobing, in order to beseech with shivering urgency, "Flee, flee, this instant", and to have in answer an avalanche of laughter, "Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

Though the portico-door was found locked, mobs were soon swarming all about the palace, after Blucher, using Nix's crutch as a hammer, had crashed a window open, and had jumped within to open the portico-door: whereupon most nooks of the place were pretty quickly being visited by troops of staring proletarians, invading, prying, as when loosened effluvia fly out in a trice, pervading everything. The few of the New Year festival-keepers who, not disposed to have any hand in the to-do, remained outside the palace could hear, even from down by the balustrade, a buzzing like bee-business transacting itself within the building, and presently a steady prattling of gunnery going on, mingled for near listeners with a guffawing, a horrid grimness of mockery that guffawed, "Ha! ha! ha! ha!"—this bursting from the lips of King Alexander, who, in his shirt-sleeves in a gallery, was scourging with gusts of bullets two surging groups below him, his thumb shuddering alternately on the thumb-pieces of a couple of machine-guns which squirted murder in jerks, spitting quaver and semi-quaver, zip and zip-zip: for at the ends of that gallery are a pair of stairs, up each of which one gang pressed to get him; and when one gun had repelled for some seconds the climb of the right gang, his thumb pressed on the other to repel the left gang—little Vicker's carried on tripods, their belts thick with cartridges, originally; but still when they were no longer thick the gangs were doggedly climbing, ever got higher, nigher, like rising tides that rise and rise; and never for a moment did he let his howling mouth stop that howling at them, that garrulous damning of God and damning of Man, that ha! ha! ha! ha! of red laughter, revelling in the harvest of their massacre, cursing them to the depths of hell's inferno, hurling at them with gusto every vulgar word of the slum and the gutter. . . . This was his swan-song.

A minute after it ended, Carol and Tyrol came out from the portico, bearing a trucklebed, a lantern on it—no one now in the forecourt except a few wounded, nor on the lower terrace, everyone north of the palace

having gone off home, with shrugs, with a lifting of the eyes and hands, at tragedy brought forth by the night, morning not far, Carol and Tyrol trotting short of breath, pallor-struck, Tyrol remarking on a pant, "I 'phoned to Kargo for doctors: many wounded".

And Carol, breathless: "My fault, perhaps! I think I said, 'You Blucher'".

Then Tyrol, breathless: "Believe me, Carol, I was nearly on my knees, entreating Alexander to flee: he burst into a cackle of laughter—astonished perhaps at any insurgency of the mob, habituated to the mob's submission—and in a jiffy, snatching a sword, away he dashed headlong to quell them single-handed—mad, I think! mad with a forefeeling in him of death coming, stung to mad laughter at the sarcasm of destiny; then the guns—a second thought perhaps, instead of the sword—and the massacre ---"

Carol panted, "Oh, well. . . . This one first: knee shattered": on which they manoeuvred a wounded upon the truckle, to trot off with a loaded trot for the portico, now meeting a streaming of feet out of the palace, a streaming in groups, some numerous, some in twos and threes, everyone getting eagerly away, as if fleeing, casting backward glances at the palace, as Lot's wife at Sodom, getting right away in haste for home now, satiated with the night and the night's-work, feeling guilty of the outcome of the night: amid which guilty river see a group of two—Nix, Blucher—Nix riding Blucher's back, his right side bloodstained, Blucher carrying Nix's crutch, Nix panting, "Well dead, is he?"

And Blucher, trotting short of breath, casting a glance backward: "Dreadful devil. Aye, dead: still howling that laughing of his he went down to hell—with blasphemies—dirty words—aye, dreadful devil. When we got at him, we got at him like dogs—mad we were from his massacre of us: nor we had no weapons, you know, only our hands to do him; his left arm got wrenched sheer off, and was swung as a club to bludgeon him: dreadful affair, I'll dream of it".

Faintly Nix sighed, "I think *I* am done for, too, Blucher".

But Blucher: "No, you aren't, keep going", as he now descended to the lower terrace to collect his stool, and trot on northward away with his load.

Some minutes after which, when Carol and Tyrol afresh issued out, carrying a stretcher, the palace-park as well as the palace was empty of men. Carol panted, "One yonder with an abdomen-wound", but, as he stooped over that wounded, two doctors and six assistants came trotting up, whereupon he said, "Let us two sit down, Manfred"; and, shrinking from re-entering the shambles which the palace now was, he went down to sit with hanging legs on the balustrade-rail, hard by that balustrade-gangway that faces the avenue, the little drizzle that had haunted half the night having now dried up, and all the vault of sky now starkly lighted up, as altars are, with stars: for the moon had set, and the air become more pellucid. When Lord Tyrol brought forth cigars, Carol said, "One for me in pity", and, as they smoked together, he said, "This night, Manfred!—and crowded now with stars that more crown our brows than many crowns of Balainca".

And Tyrol, gazing upward: "Aye, exhibition of the crown-jewels on black velvet, this thirty-first of December: or that, say: for morning's not far. . . . There, see, comes Herald-King after you" — as a trio of heralds, richly pranked, walked down the avenue in the sheen of electric torches which they carried; their chief, on reaching Carol, proceeding to read out ---

"To acquaint your Royal Highness that their Lordships, the Deputed of the Council, except his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Garbarin, deceased, await to put upon your Royal Highness, as heir to the Throne, the King having deceased, the Replica of the Royal Crown for the Director Coronation, according to Law; and to enquire if it is the pleasure of your Royal Highness to accept the investiture; and in what place".

Carol answered, "I accept. Let it be in this place".

The heralds then paced away; and the two friends, looking at the removal of the final two of the open-air wounded, smoked some time in silence, until Tyrol cried out, "Alexander! to think that not two hours gone that crown was put upon his forehead!"

And Carol: "Manfred, I can't realize it: Alexander's dead. I admired him" — a sigh — "bright mind! about as bright as Napoleon's, I estimate. But a villager-mind, like Napoleon's, uneducated, living in the village of his life-time, thinking *his* life-time more real and tremendous than any other time, unfamiliar with the worlds and the eternities. . . . Here they come".

Putting down his cigar now, he stood up at the moving out of the palace of a group — The Duke of Nudicum, Lord Proctor, Keeper-of-the-Records, preceded by a crown borne on a cushion, forming a torchlit blotch of glow moving in the morning's gloom; and, on stopping before the new monarch, Nudicum proceeded to read out:

"We, Sir, are the Deputed of the Council, save one, deceased, to put the King within the hour of his accession the Replica of the Royal Crown for the Director Coronation, according to Law".

Carol answered, "I thank your Lordships, and am ready to receive the investiture".

Whereupon Nudicum, putting the crown upon him with both hands, said, "By virtue of the Office vested in me, I put upon you Petrarch Carol Lancelot Raphaelo, Grand-Duke of Grotia and of Serapi, and Prince of Grasvogl, this Replica of the Royal Crown of Balainca. Long live the King!"

"Long live the King!" all called.

And Carol: "Long live Balainca. I shall endeavour to make my reign a blessing to all, and only hope that nothing which I shall ever do will cause your Lordships to love me less. I thank you, wishing you a happy New Year".

The Deputed now moved up the avenue to the palace, while Carol, crowned, sat anew, smoking, remarking to his companion, "*They will*, I'm afraid, be loving me less, if only for a time; you, too, may-be, Manfred, my boyhood's friend: for I shall be meddling with them and you".

And Tyrol: "We need meddling with; long live the King".

"Long live Balainca", Carol said. "This nation is going to have a country, look: which means, Manfred, that the country, as created by the dead, is going to be taxed up to its rental value; which again means a recognition of the fact that every man has a father: for the rental, or site, value of a country's lands has been created by the activities of fathers; and for a country to be claimed by some men of a nation is a denial that the other men have fathers, or any rights of inheritance. So now the dead, who won't care, are going to be taxed, while the activities of the living will be liberated from taxes, to become more active. And how will you, and I, who live like vampires on the dead, like that? Why, Man, we won't have a cent, except what we earn by work".

"We-e-ll" — Lord Tyrol laughed — "so long as you don't have us starving ---"

And Carol: "Starving, no. On the contrary, I promise that we shall soon be happier, wealthier, if less rich. Riches — money — is, of course, not wealth, or well-being: as someone starving in the Sahara, with millions of gentos in notes on him, is rich, though destitute of wealth. Croesus was rich, Nero the Caesar was rich, but how enormously less wealthy than a costermonger now, who like a god can send out his voice across the continents, can dart from Kargo to Hamburg in a day — or in much less, if he decides to fly like an angel — can live to 57, instead of perishing at 17.3 of leprosy, or 'the palsy', or some appalling pestilence: wealths which Nero, if trillions of times richer, could not but, nor dream of buying, since eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had it entered into the heart of Man to conceive a heaven so welling with wealth. And Nero was about as much wealthier than a tree-dweller as a costermonger now is wealthier than Nero. Why? Because ploughing had been invented; fire (though not matches) discovered; how to build houses, tame cows, found out. So what makes living things happy, wealthy, is knowledge, science, truth, discovery, invention. And if a disinherited nation without a country becomes a landed nation, that can't help increasing invention in setting free inventors to invent; it is freemen who invent, not slaves; the definition of a slave is 'a landless man', and landless men have to act as they are directed, whereas inventors are emperors, who direct men, and determine the way that the world takes".

"Oh, I quite see, Carol", Tyrol said: "science, invention — that is happiness".

And Carol: "Yes, there needn't be two words, 'science', 'delight', for the two have one meaning. What would make the man starving in the Sahara happy is to get some grub, or get to the coast; but he doesn't know enough to transmute silica into food, or to evade gravitation and go soaring. What would make *me* happy at this instant is that presence of Haralda Hásdrúvol; but I don't know enough to have it. If I had invented a V-wave detector, to tell me when she was dying, or had known how to revive her when dead, as will doubtless be known some day, I should have her now: but not enough science. And, God help me, what I shall be doing in this Balainca will be a job, the harder because I shall be doing it without ardour,

since *she* is not here to see and clap hands at me; and I am listless without the stimulus of that fire and light that her life was to me. Haralda is—dead”.

Tyrol touched him, muttering, “Poor Carol”. Then: “What I have never understood, Carol, is how she contrived to procure the poison in her prison”.

“Nor I”, Carol replied, “nor quite why she did it: it was hardly like her, I think. Dead; she’s dead; my winter’s-fire. The gods, careful of the race, are so careless of us as individuals! hard of heart, You Stars. The generations of us come raging, teeming, streaming, like numberless lumber streaming to the drag of some Niagara cataract, then the rush down to perish, generation chasing generation down—violent ending, after finding ourselves somehow alive, like silly chickens hatched in incubators, knowing not much under the dumb constellations, knowing pain, every life under sentence of death without trial, destined to stink, to grin, be degraded to grotesqueness, ridiculousness—pitiless thing, eh?—pitiable—the daintiest edifice of a lady—Haralda Hásdrúvol—Time like a cannibal cat, *edax rerum*, Eater of them that breeds. Still, it is high drama, Manfred, star-high: for starlight is the theatre-lights turned low, the scene is deep in Eternity’s deeps, there is comfort—wait—it is not for nothing, out of the Eater shall come forth meat. The dinosaur sighed and died out in his mesozoic dusk, aye, but if, in dying, he had muttered, ‘Though He slays *me*, yet do I trust in Him’, that, we know now, would have been well said, for men and birds have turned up; and a day of science will be, in which the Eternal Worker shall have wiped from the eyes of Life all tears, save tears of love wrung from Life’s broken heart, a day in which Life will say, ‘It is well that once the muds mothered me, and I fluttered’, for wild is this delight of mine in that Might, under the shadow of Whose wing is Life’s refuge for ever”.

“Amen”—from Tyrol, looking up, like Carol, at the sky—“I believe that, too—‘when the day breaks, and the shadows flee away’. À propos, see there—just yonder—a sort of daub now, where this new year is dawning”.

“Yes, and sighings of little breezes arising, breathing the tidings of day breaking. Manfred, I feel as if her spirit were streaming within these breezes, gazing down into me with as many eyes as those gloating skies gaze with—if there are ‘spirits’”.

“Anyway, we can fancy them”. Glancing now at his watch, Tyrol added, “I am due in the palace: may I go?”

“Oh, yes”.

“Don’t grieve, cheer up”—going; and he had hardly gone when Carol got from a pocket that photograph of Haralda Hásdrúvol which Lord Tyrol had purloined from Serapi, which there was already daylight enough to see dimly; and he muttered, “How if there *are* some kind of ‘spirits’? One night did I not seem to *see* her?” And, looking upward, he muttered, “I seem to feel her near—here with me—this minute. Is that you, Haralda? No. And yet ---”

Now that vox humana of the palace-clock's preamble broke in upon his musing, before tolling One, Two, Three, Four, Five.

And this was no sooner over than he saw two women come and stand yonder within the portico—the Princess Vasilissa and another, whose hand the Princess was holding; and at once the Princess lifted up her voice in song, singing that song that Haralda Hásdrúvol had taught her:

*Morning-stars singing
"Morning-bell rings,
Morning-bright bringing
Warblings and wings.*

Peering at them, his muscular brow all in knots, the King breathed, "Heavens! how very like Haralda!" And keen, peering, he went stalking nearer, as cats stalk, like attackers cautiously stalking to attack, until his lips were breathing, "But it is Haralda, My good God. . . ."

The pair of ladies, meantime, had advanced to meet him down the avenue, and now Vasilissa was saying, "Yes, here she is, Carol, a New Year's étrenne that I have kept for you, hidden away: a consort worthy of you; I, unfortunately ---" averted, hiding her eyes, while he on his bended knee was at Haralda's hand, humble, broken-hearted before God, one sob getting vent from him.

Whereupon Vasilissa, a sob breaking out of her also, paced away to the palace, while Haralda, pressingly, closely, stooping, said to Carol, "Go after her, comfort, kiss her. I was dead, look, so to say, and am alive—through her; she had stones buried instead of me; now she is being as noble as any soul ever was. Please! Please! I will wait here".

Tugged two ways, Carol now suddenly decided to run to the palace, Haralda now going down to the balustrade, where, sitting on it, gazing skyward, her knee slung, she remained some time, humming her

*Caravan stumbling,
Starlit we stray,
Faith in us fumbling,
Hoping there's Day;*

and day there now was: a rabble of clouds, that backed before the sun's coming, was now carousing as in bacchanal, battering timbrel and cymbal, brow-smitten with beatitude; and now could be descried lying low about the ground a New Year's tulip or two, cigarette-ends, orange-skins, a handkerchief, dead relics of the crowd's night-out; and yonder in the avenue like a comment on life the Splendid Devil's, "Have A Drink, And Vote. . . ."

—AFTERWORD—

The reader should observe especially Mr. Shiel's punctuation and verbal orchestrations. This text has been precisely set following the author's own minutely detailed instructions as to the use of the dash, the colon, three or four periods, etc. His capitalizations have also been faithfully followed, as well as his hyphenizations, paragraphing, etc.

The result is sheer verbal music stylistically enhanced by alliterations and a succession of extraordinary and refreshing images not found in 'modern' books. It should be noted that his use of unfamiliar words (grum, pioupious, caïque, machicolations, tripudiary, etc.) is far less in *The New King* than in many of his earlier works.

Shiel's unique verbal magic obviously required the skill of a composer, the style of an experimenter, and his own recognitions of what really creative writing should consist: hard work.

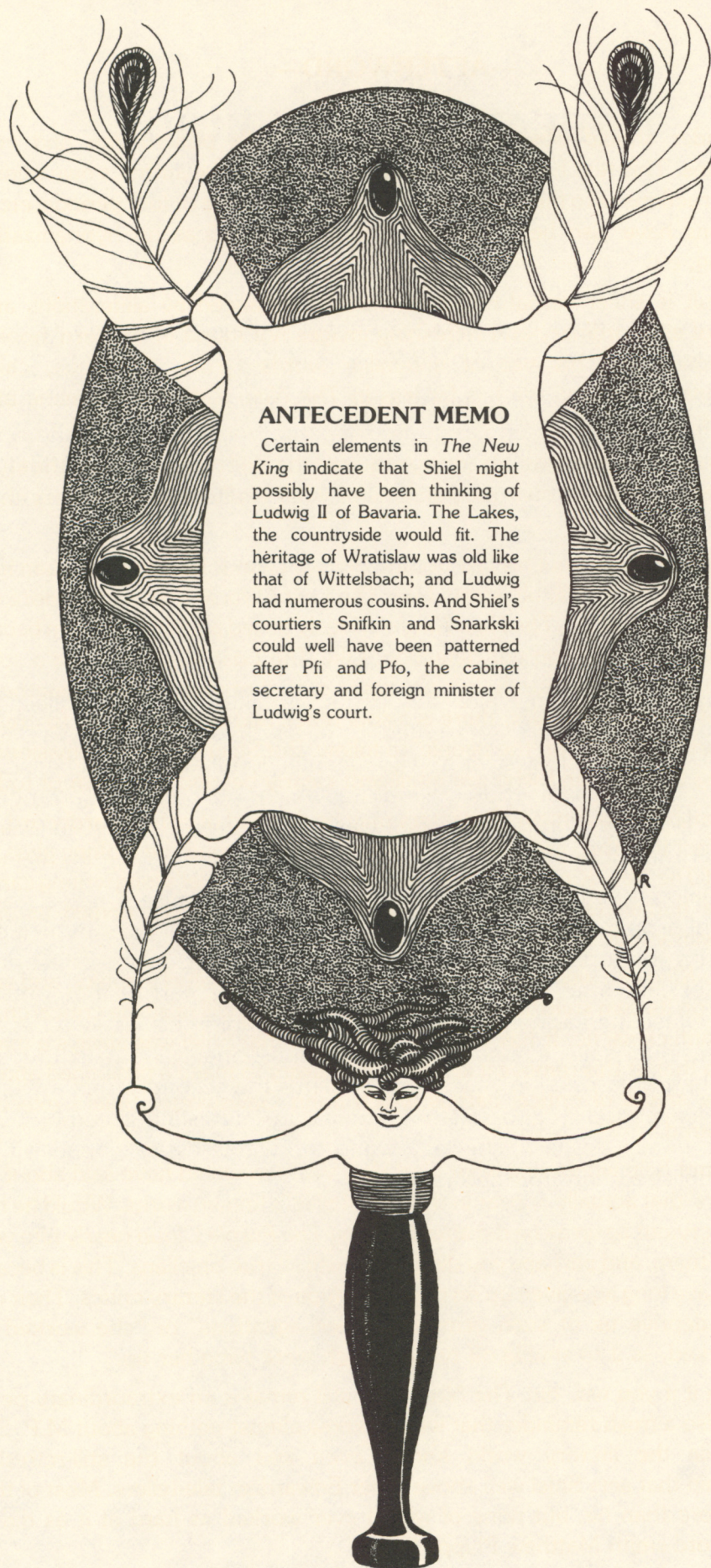
In this fantasy, kept until his last decade (for we cannot be sure just when it was written) he presents a 'difficult' story. Like *The Last Miracle* that waited more than eight years for a publisher, *The New King* obviously posed a selling problem because it was neither science-fiction nor detection. Like *The Last Miracle*, it has a sort of message, hortatory, anti-church, but pro some sort of private religion nonetheless. Like many of the author's tales, there is a soul redeemed by tribulations to create a latter-day sort of 'savior' for 'the people' to follow. But Shiel persists in envisioning a people willing to work, and who are intelligent clearly beyond the norm of today.

Even though the four main characters may be deemed of critical cardboard, and despite the fact that they are placed in a period world beyond the looking glass, still the climax of *The New King* offers one - at the very end of Shiel's long writing career - many of the human (and fictional) satisfactions he sometimes denied us in his preceding twenty-four books.

The New King can well stand at the end of any shelf of Shiel's books, and stand there strong on its own stylistic merits. Few real Shielians will raise the critical charge of its being anti-climactic. It has enough hard proof that Shiel was always a master verbalizer so that at this remove it seems unnecessary to make a prolonged apology to divert the shafts of critical bathos which John Gawsorth, Shiel's executor, obviously feared.

One cannot help wondering what Carl Van Vechten would have said about 'the morning stars' that actually appear in this last of Shiel's known works. Would he have heard them cry out again as he did after finishing *The Purple Cloud* nearly fifty years ago? I heard them, and perhaps you did too. So will all true Shielians. This is because most of us have long ago given up on the stereotype of the literary critics. Their cant would only deprive us of such gems as "aspen agitations" or "she worked her shoulders, irked, as if to shuffle off twines which were tying her up."

So damn it if you will, but *The New King* still remains an extraordinary period piece. It is also a fresh reminder that we still know almost nothing about M.P. Shiel himself, while the literary world knows even less about the still-refreshing wordsmanship that sets Shiel well above other Edwardian tale-tellers. Most of them wrote far more than he, but none of whom ever worked as hard at it as did the wondrous word-smith Matthew Phipps Shiel.



ANTECEDENT MEMO

Certain elements in *The New King* indicate that Shiel might possibly have been thinking of Ludwig II of Bavaria. The Lakes, the countryside would fit. The heritage of Wratisslaw was old like that of Wittelsbach; and Ludwig had numerous cousins. And Shiel's courtiers Snifkin and Snarkski could well have been patterned after Pfi and Pfo, the cabinet secretary and foreign minister of Ludwig's court.

MONK ON "GREATNESS OF MIND"

by

M. P. Shiel

Unpublished pages from the Brackenburn Manuscript

"An extended version of pp. 69-137 of 'The Pale Ape and Other Pulses' (1911) written to send to *The English Review*. M. P. S."

This 182 page holograph manuscript was apparently written during the 1920's or the 1930's. It has many minor textural variations from the original version, while the major difference is the insertion on ms. pages 103-125 of a dissertation never before published. This new material is here printed for the first time.

It is to be read in context, beginning at the bottom of page 113 of *The Pale Ape* (T. Werner Laurie, London, 1911). Or it can be read in context beginning at line 8, page (178) of *Prince Zaleski and Cummings King Monk*, Mycroft and Moran, Sauk City, Wisconsin, June 1, 1977.

The manuscript from which this extract is taken is in the collection of A. Reynolds Morse. It was "presented" (i.e. sold) to Sir Hugh Walpole on May 21, 1937 by John Gawsword, with the intention that it should be included in the large collection of 1890's literature which Walpole had arranged to leave to the Bodlean Library, Oxford. It was rescued from that fate in October, 1947 by Bertram Rota, who obtained it for me in November of that year.

The dialog is sufficiently important to preserve because it reflects Shiel's life-long philosophical tug of war between the 'old' religion involving the human soul's immortality and the new concepts of 'science'. These latter, in the author's life-time and with his background, are part of the conflicting dichotomy which increasingly pre-occupied the author in his last two decades. Man, the residual savage, and man, the scientist-angel about to touch the stars, raged and reasoned in Shiel's breast. Thus the second Monk adventure of Shiel's 'first period' (1896-1913) becomes an interesting preamble to the writer's last work, "Jesus", especially when the whole essay is read with the new text published here for the first time.

Cummings King Monk

The Unpublished Pages

The Pale Ape (T. Werner Laurie, London, 1911). Bottom of page 113.

Insert manuscript pages 103-125 as follows:

"I think I catch what you wish to point out," I answered.

"But," said Monk, "and if we, with the nonchalance with which one contradicts children, can say 'no, not true' of that immortality which Plato so elaborately fabricated for animals, as children fabricate castles of cards, will you not say that Plato was a child to us?"

"Yes, but *can* we say this 'no not true,' as to the immortality of souls?" I asked.

"Surely," said he, "since it is a piece of modern knowledge."

"Well, I don't know how you can say that," said I, "for you have just called Sir Oliver Lodge a 'high mind', and it is a fact that he, and others of high intelligence, still consider it a possible thing that some souls may be immortal, or at least 'persistent' in 'personality', as they say. How, then, could it happen that a high mind like Sir O. L. has not this piece of modern knowledge that no soul is immortal, if it is a piece of modern knowledge?"

"But," said Monk, "it is a piece of modern knowledge that currents of electricity heat conductors; also it is a piece of knowledge that all matter conducts heat: and it is an inference from these pieces of knowledge that the currents in the London feeders heat the air in Australia. Now, suppose that a busy citizen like Sir O. L. has never had the occasion, the imagination, or something, to make this inference — suppose that from a scientist — he has never developed himself a step higher into a philosopher — will you not still say that it is a piece of modern knowledge that the currents in the London mains heat the air in Australia?"

"Yes, I will say that," I consented.

"So, then," said he, "when a thing is a piece of knowledge, and when an inference from it is *very* consequent and obvious, we may call the inference also a piece of knowledge? even though nobody has ever bothered or happened to draw the inference?"

"We can," said I. "But is this the case as to the mortality of souls?"

"Why, yes," said he — "as those high intelligences you spoke of would themselves say, if ever they paused a moment in their career of intelligence to remind themselves what the word 'soul' means. Tell me this: are not all animals souls? and have no bodies?"

"Is that so?" said I, "I myself, I confess, have always considered that my sweetheart, Leda, has a body."

"A body of her own?" said he.

"Why, yes," said I.

"But my friend," said he, "that cannot well be. Does not Leda, like you and me, consist of plasm-cells? each of them animal? Can both she and another animal have the same body? and can she say of those other animal-bodies 'these are mine'?"

"No, I see that," I said.

"So, if those other bodies of which she consists are none of them, 'her' body, but the bodies 'of' others, do you say that she 'has' no body?"

"Yes, I will say so now," said I, "though, I confess, I am somewhat astonished that she is as she is."

"So she has no body? Yet she resists pressure? She is a solid? a body?"

"Yes, she is certainly a body," I said.

"Whose body is she?" he asked.

"She vows that she is mine," I answered.

"But in saying that," he said, "she was hardly, perhaps, in her most philosophic mood. We at present are conversing in a certain way of philosophers, who see things a little as they are, not merely as they seem, as children and savages see them. So, speaking in that better way, tell me — whose body is she?"

"She is the body," I answered, "of a *community*: a community of cells: whose communing produces a new thing with properties of its own, which is she."

"But," said Monk, "when the communing of two or more things produces a new thing with properties of its own, we call that new thing the *soul*, or abstraction, of the things whose communing produces it? That is the meaning of the word '*soul*'?"

"It is so," I answered.

"So, then, since Leda is a new thing with properties of its own produced by a community of things, Leda is a soul?"

"Yes."

"But she is a solid? a body? So she is a soul which is a body?"

"No, stay, I do not quite consent to that," said I: "I say rather that she is *two* souls, only one of which is a solid: for the body which she is is the soul of the bodies of the cells of which she consists — *that* soul is a solid; but that body has a soul of its own, as every body must, a soul which is the soul of the community of the souls of the cells of which she consists — and *that* soul is not a solid."

"Well! you say that," said Monk, "but stay: do you say that unicellular animals have a body?"

"Yes," I answered, "I say so."

"And a soul?"

"Of course."

"Have they anything else *beside* a body and a soul?"

"No, how can they?"

"But," said he, "when something is '*had*' it must be '*had*' by something. What, then, is it in the unicellular animal that *has* its body and its soul? You have yourself said that there is nothing left to *have* them."

"True," said I, "they cannot both be had."

"Evidently, then," said he, "if something is had, it must either be the body that has the soul, or the soul that has the body. Which, then, is it? is it the body that has the soul? or is it the soul that has the body? is it sulphuric acid that has the property of a lust for water? or is it the property of a lust for water that has sulphuric acid?"

"It is the acid that has," I answered, "for when sulphuric acid is destroyed, the lust for water then and there ceases to exist. So it is the body of the unicellular animal that has the soul, i.e. its total of properties, for when carbolic is poured upon the body, the soul ceases to exist."

"You are sure of this, of course?" he asked.

"Quite," I said: "for the *soul* is the total properties of the community of things, whatever they are, of which the animal consists, and at least one of these properties, visible motion, ceases to exist, if carbolic acid be poured upon the body."

"Very good; that is certain. So, then, it is the body that has the soul? And nothing of the animal is left to have the body? Therefore the animal has no body? But is a body? Is that certain?"

"Yes, that is so."

"But this body which the unicellular animal is is a soul? For is it not the product, with properties of its own, of the community of things of which it consists? those things being molecules in a certain living communion, whatever '*life*' may be? as those molecules are the souls of communities of atoms? and as those atoms are souls of communities of corpuscles? so that everything is a soul, except corpuscles? a soul which has no body? but is a body? and the body which it is has a soul of its own, i.e. a total of properties? Is all this so?"

"Yes, I see all this," I said.

"And as to Leda, is not this the case with her too? that the body which she is is the soul of a community of cells? and that her soul is the soul of the body which she is, i.e., its total of properties?"

"Yes, I consent," I said.

"So you abandon now the notion that her soul is the soul of the community of souls of the unicellular animals of which she consists? seeing that the souls of those animals are but the total properties of the bodies which they are? seeing that the body which she is is the soul of the community of those bodies, with their total of properties? and seeing that her soul is the soul of the body which she is?"

"All this is now evident," I said.

"And if you pour carbolic acid upon Leda, will not her soul cease to exist?"

"It will," I said.

"Tell me again how you know this."

"Because her soul is the total of the properties of the body which she is, and at least one of those properties, visible motion, will cease to exist."

"Very good. But will the body which she is cease to exist, if you pour carbolic acid upon it?"

"Yes, as a body which is the soul of a community of cells."

"And as to the bodies which the cells themselves are — they, too, will cease to exist if carbolic be poured upon them?"

"Yes, as bodies which are the souls of a community of molecules."

"And, similarly, by pouring acids upon the molecules, *they* will cease to exist as souls of communities of atoms? And atoms themselves will cease to exist as souls of communities of corpuscles under certain conditions of radio-action and discharges in Geissler tubes? And only corpuscles, which are bodies without souls (if *they* be simple) cannot eventually cease to exist, being of the nature of energy? So that only souls can cease to exist? but nothing else than souls can cease to exist?"

"Yes, I consent to all that," I said.

"But as to clocks," said he: "we have consented that, if the body which a particular clock is be broken, the soul which that body is, and the soul which that body has, both cease to exist. Now, suppose it is the escapement of a particular clock that gets broken, and a new escapement is put in: again there is a body which is a clock, and clock's soul; but is it still *the same* clock?"

"Why, no," said I, "for a particular clock is the soul of a community of particular individuals, and if one of those individuals is removed, and another introduced, there is another clock, and not the same."

"So," said he, "if instead of a new escapement-wheel, or a new pendulum, or mainspring that was introduced, there would be another clock? another 'personality,' as they say?"

"Obviously," said I.

"But suppose only *half* of a new escapement were introduced?" said he. "half of the old escapement being still retained, by brazing it to the new half? Would there still be another clock, another 'personality'?"

"Surely," said I, "since there be still be another escapement, and not the same."

"So that any change in the escapement, or in anything in the clock, would make another 'personality'?"

"Why, yes."

"But in that case the 'personality' of the clock is an illusion! — or at least can only persist one instant: for know well that at every instant there are a million changes taking place in each millionth of a millimeter of a clock by radioactivity, chemistry, heat, concussion, friction, magnetism, thermo-electricity, air-pressure, and a thousand other phases of energy?"

"I see that," I said.

"And if this is the case with the body which a clock is, how is it with the body which a man is? a body which is a *totally* different entity every four months or so? in which millions of millions of cells are at every instant *raging* into change? You will say that such a personality is a pure illusion, or at least only persists one instant. So that between that quadruped age of 'crawling', and that triped age when bipeds hobble on sticks — between these extremes of age and change, that which seems to the unphilosophic to be one personality is indeed a series of millions of personalities? flitting like the flitting films of the cinema? and producing a similar illusions of continuity? each personality very like the preceding one in the series, yet so different that the last of all has no semblance to the first of all, which consisted in a union of two unicellular entities? is all this certain?"

"All this," I agreed.

"Personality, then, is non-persistent?"

"Yes," I said — "at any rate, the personality of anything more complex than molecules and atoms."

"But we know so little about atoms and molecules!" he said: "is it not likely from what we have been saying that, if we knew much more, we should know that the personality of atoms and molecules, too, is non-persistent? As to molecules, we know already that when acids, for example, are diluted, the personality of the molecules is non-persistence itself; and think of Grothüs 'traveling' ions in electrolysis, so shall we not run the risk of saying generally that personality is non-persistent?"

"Very good," I said, "we will run that risk."

"But," said he, "since this is an inference very consequent and obvious from pieces of modern knowledge, will you not now say that the inference also is a piece of modern knowledge? even though so fluent and popular a publicist as Sir Oliver Lodge may not be a philosopher?"

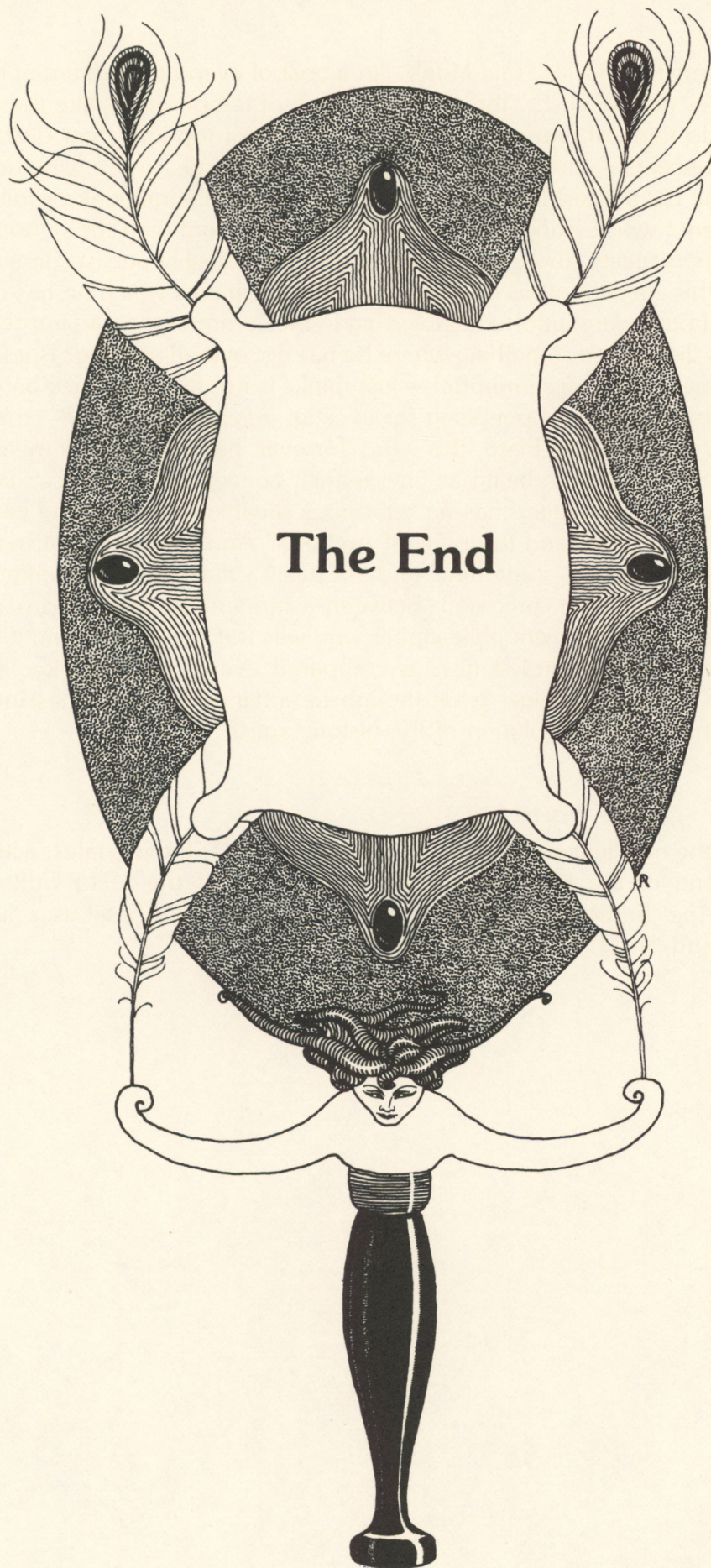
"All right, I will concede this, too," said I.

"Personality, then," he said, "is non persistent; souls are mortal; souls can only exist one instant; and nothing else than souls is mortal. Now this being so, consider the childish wildness of Plato's criticism of the cosmos, and that dog's-luck which ever attends the speculations of savages: i.e. matter, we know to be energy and eternal, and that he took to be eternal, i.e. souls, we know to be alone temporary, and to be incapable of more than an instant's existence. And is not this wild shooting savage?"

"But," said I, "as to this of immortality, is not Plato in a boat of somewhat similar build to Sir O. L.'s, a high mind?"

"But, my friend, no," said Monk: "in a boat of even *vastly* different build, surely. Does not Sir O. L., through some kink of temperment, like the common man to think of him, see! a scientist who is not top-lofty, nor disdainful of negro concepts! — how wisely balanced and moderate, and a wink deeper still than the deep ones! Does he not like this? through some kink or foible of temperament? which liking has pushed him to come out with the announcement that personality, though non-persistent, may possibly persist some time, he basing this concept of his on some sort of *experiments* which he has made in his play-hours, very unfortunately giving to the common man an impression that he has discovered something where he has discovered nothing? But Plato, *without* experiment, says *immortal* — just think. Is not the difference between persisting some time and persisting for ever an *infinite* difference? — the fact being that to savages, to Plato, this word 'for ever' has a quite wee meaning, their conceptions of time being as tiny as their conceptions of space? But to you, to Sir O. L., 'for ever' has an enormous meaning? prospecting beyond the writhing of Orion? and the ruins of Arcturus? And have you not here, in this difference between 'some time' and 'for ever' a measure of the difference in adulthood, scepticism, precision, between a modern scientist who is not a philosopher, and an ancient philosopher who was not a scientist? And if Plato was thus superstitious and skittish as compared even such a thinker as Sir O. L., was he not a savage, what though he attained to the highest moral, sociable, and physical evolution of the historic ages?"

Here the new text insertion in the manuscript ends. It terminates, actually, with the end of the first paragraph on page 114 of the 1911 Edition of *The Pale Ape*. In the transition, in the next to the last line, Shiel uses "us" in the book and Sir O. L. in the manuscript.



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designed, laid out and edited by
A. Reynolds Morse
who is solely responsible
for its format and contents.

It would not have been possible
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